

CALUMNIES AGAINST IRELAND AND HER RELIGION.

The hereditary enemies of Ireland have been constantly asserting that the Irish themselves are to be blamed as well as their Religion, for all the miseries which desolate that unhappy land. Dr. Miley of the Metropolitan Church, Dublin, has lately addressed an able Letter on the subject of the famine to the celebrated Count Montalembert, from which we extract the following passages, and commend them to the special attention of the unprejudiced of all nations and creeds:—

Be it remembered, then, in the outset: that up to the opening of the 17th century—from 1600 to 1613—that all the lands of Ireland were in the hands of the Catholics. Even the sway of the English sceptre was at that period restricted to a mere patch on the map, a fractional part of about 1-20th, as compared with the whole. Beginning at Dundalk the marches of the *English Pale*, as that part of Ireland was called—at that time the only part under English dominion—made a circuit round by Ardee, Kells, Dangan, Killeck, Naas, Killecullen, Ballymore, Eustace, Rathmore, and so on by Tallaght, to the gates of Dublin. The whole was not half the size of the county of Cork; and of this much, even, the hold was precarious in the extreme. In dispatch, 5th May, 1602, the Lord Deputy Mountjoy writes that he had to “begin the warre at the very gates of Dublin;” and his secretary says, that up to the same period all to the south of the River Liffey was in the hands of the Irish. As to the country outside the English marches—more than 19-20ths of the island—the following description of it is from a government report of that period, found in a volume of the English state papers, now before me:—

“And first of all, it says, yt is necessarye to make known his Graco (Henry VIII.) that there were more than 60 countries, called Regyons, in Ireland, inhabited with the Kinges Irish enynges; some regyon as hygge as a shyre, some as lesse, unto a lytyll; some as hygge as a shyre; and some a lytyll lesse; where wygeith more than sixty chief capytaynes, whereof some callyth themselves Kynges, some Kynges Peeres; in their langage, some prynces, some dukes, some archdukes, that liveth onely by the sworde, and obryeth to no other temperall person, but only to himself that is, stronge, and every of the said capytaynes maketh war and peace for hymself, and holdeth by the sword, and hath imperiall jursydycion within his realm, and obeyeth to noe other person, Englyshe, ne Iryshe.”

The report then proceeds to give the roll of those Iryshe kyngs, princes, and toparchs who had “imperiall jurisdiction each within his realm.” Reflect, that it is by the lineal descendants of this people that our lazar houses are at present crowded—that they are the posterity of those “kynges, prynces, and toparchs” who are now famishing houseless, naked, and unquipped outcasts on the thoroughfares and in the ditches of the “land of their fathers,” and you may conjecture what an amount of rapine and every sort of iniquity it must have demanded to bring about this contrast. But no matter how high the estimate you form in imagination, be assured it will not come up even to what history has but briefly and feebly recorded.

I should remark before I proceed, that the Pale land was just as Catholic at and even long after the period in question as that beyond the marches—for the old Stronphonian English were hardly less steadfast in supporting the faith than the ancient Irish were.

But, to resume; we have seen that the first idea was to “exterminate” the inhabitants, or, as the lord deputy has it—“to make this country a razed table—a solitude.” We have seen what justice was done to the first experiment resorted to for that purpose. Sir John Davies who came in as Attorney General of James I. upon the footsteps of the said lord deputy of Elizabeth, informs us that he found the Irish had been, as it were, “brayed in a mortar” by him. However, it was reserved for the genius of the “greatest, basest of mankind”—Lord Bacon—to suggest to his royal master a different method, and one which it was reserved for the last of that execrable Stuart dynasty to complete, to the irretrievable destruction of the Irish Catholics, had it not been for that adorable Providence which has rescued them by miracle so repeatedly from ruin, who by which they will not be deserted even in their present distress. The six Ulster counties, 500,000 acres, were granted, anno 1615;

“on condition that the native population shall be expelled, and none allowed to live within the said grants but men who take the oath of supremacy”—that is—abjure Catholicity. There was a relapse however into the more stringent primitive policy of extermination under the commonwealth.

“Sir John Clotworthy, who well know the designs of the faction that governed the House of Commons in England, had declared there in a speech that the conversion of the Papists of Ireland was only to be effected by the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other; and Mr. Pym gave out that they would not leave a priest in Ireland. To the like effect Sir William Parsons asserted at a public entertainment, that within a twelvemonth no Catholic should be seen in Ireland.” (Carte’s Ormond, l. 235). The same is attested by all the historical monuments of that period; and it must be confessed that if the agents in this effectual clearance fell at all short of the mark, it was not through any lack of exertion and zeal to carry out their threats to the letter. Fire, famine, and the sword made fearful havoc. Of the survivors there went into the continent to recruit its armies, between officers and men, to the number of 100,000; the youth of both sexes, the young girls and boys, were torn away by brute violence, and shipped to the number of 60,000 to the West Indies, and chiefly to the Island of Barbadoes, where they were sold as slaves, and speedily perished; the rest were ordered “to hell or Connaught.” I have now before me the orders for the several counties, and also the description of how in the “clearance” thus effected, the wolves were multiplied, and hunted down their human prey—fornicatory wanderers, widows, orphans, and aged men; and so formidable did they become, that the destruction became one of the chief, and a very lucrative pursuit of the new settlers—the same price, £5, being set on the head of a wolf and of a priest.”—Curry’s Review, p. 393.

“After near 100,000 of them being transported into foreign parts, for the service of the two Kings of France and Spain, and after double the number consumed by the plague, the famine, and cruelties exercised upon them in their own country, the remainder of them had been by Cromwell, who could not find a better way of extirpation, transported into the most inland, barren, desolate, and mountainous parts of Connaught; and it was lawful for any man to kill any of the Irish who were found in any place out of those precincts within that district.”—(Lord Clarendon’s History of the Rebellion, v. iii. p. 434.)

But more fatal to the Irish Catholics than the sword of Cromwell was a law passed against them by Charles II. in 1662. It is called by the Irish “the Black Act,” and certainly, if the colour of ingratitude be such as is usually assigned it, the title is apposite. “By this act (says the historian) the Catholics were robbed of 2,700,000 acres of arable and pasture lands, besides immense wastes, which had been guaranteed to them by the peace of 1649, as well as by their long and faithful services to his Majesty, and by every title which immemorial possession, &c. could bestow. The only sufferers were those of Irish name and descent. Whatever remnant had been left on former confiscations was now absorbed in the vortex. The MacGuire, MacMahons, MacGuinnesses, MacCarthys, O’Rourkes, O’Sullivan, O’Moore, O’Farrells, O’Reillys, O’Connors Rue, O’Connors Sligo, O’Crears, &c. were involved in one, promiscuous ruin. Henceforth they disappear from the page of Irish history. Their descendants had continued long known and revered under the cloud of poverty.”

Is it not a deep and affecting tragedy! Is it graceful of these “comforters” to taunt them with poverty as a crime, the posterity of this people of princes, and to call them “vermin?” Believe me there is no other page in the history of the human race to be compared in sublimity to that which records the vicissitudes of our reviled, but Heaven protected nation.

“This unconquerable constancy (says one of your own most gifted historical writers)—this lengthened remembrance of departed liberty—this faculty of preserving and nourishing through ages of physical misery and suffering the thought of that which is no more—of never despairing of a constantly vanquished cause, for which many generations have successively perished in the field and by the executioner, is, perhaps, the most extraordinary and greatest example that a people has ever given.”—History of the Norman Conquest, vol 3, p. 168, 173, 174.

But for the rest I must be done with quotation, and merely put down the heads from my notes. After the peace of Riswick, when it became safe, the treaty of Limerick was violated. The Catholics were not only stripped of all the property they still possessed, but were debarred from the hope of acquiring any. By an act in the first year of Ann, they were disabled from purchasing any of the confiscated estates—they were not allowed to hold over two acres even by lease—they were expelled from the cities and towns; shut out from manufactures, from commerce, from even the vilest crafts—they were incessantly pushed back, like the red race in America, to the bogs, and forests, and mountains; and in proportion as they reclaimed the wilderness, it was taken from them to form pastures, and sheepwalks of three and four thousand each. They were decimated by famines which came upon them in swift succession. I wish heartily I could quote a memorial which was presented by the old nobility of the Pale to George the Second on his accession. It lets in a flood of light on the emaciating and detailed tyranny by which the Catholics were victimised without respite or mercy, as well as on the revolting perversion of all the finer and most sacred principles and feelings which flowed from the Popery Code. “The Popery Code,” says another writer, “had for its object to engender and foment without ceasing a system of disunion and discord—to counterpoise a superiority of numbers on one side by wealth, rank, power, and English support on the other—to reduce the mass of the people to a spiritless, ignorant, and indolent rabble—to exclude them from all the avenues to riches, and to detach from them every man of property or influence.”

And Arthur Young says—“I attended the debates (of parliament in Dublin), with my mind open to conviction.—I have conversed on the subject with some of the most distinguished characters of the kingdom, and I cannot, after all, but declare that the scope, purport, and aim of the laws of discovery as executed, are not against the Catholic religion which increases under them, BUT AGAINST THE INDUSTRY and prosperity of whoever professes that religion. In vain has it been said that consequence and power follow property, and that the attack is made in order to wound the doctrine through its property. If such was the intention, I reply that seventy years’ experience prove the folly and futility of it. Those laws have crushed ALL THE INDUSTRY, and wrested most of the property from the Catholics; BUT THE RELIGION TRIUMPHS; it is thought to increase. Those who have handed about calculations to prove a decrease, admit on the face of them that it will require 4,000 years to make converts of the whole. The system pursued in Ireland has had no other tendency but that of driving out of the kingdom all the personal wealth of the Catholics, and prohibiting their industry within it. The face of the country, every object in short which presents itself to the eye of the traveller, tells him how effectually this has been done. I urge it not as an argument—the whole kingdom speaks it as a fact.”

But I must not for the present trespass any further than to place in contrast with this state of things, and with that which exists at present, a passage or two descriptive of the state of the common people under the rule of Popery and of the barbarous “Wild Irish.” After describing how the officers and “soldiers” destroyed with their swords £10,000 worth of coin in Leax, King’s County—“It seemed incredible (continues the Lord Deputy’s Secretary) that by so barbarous inhabitants the ground should be so manured, the fields so orderly fenced, the towns so frequently (thickly) inhabited, and the high-ways and paths so well beaten as the Lord Deputy here found them; the reason whereof was that the Queen’s forces never till then came among them.” What a picture! Again of the southern moiety, another eye witness says—“The land itself, which before those wars was populous, well inhabited, and rich in all the good blessings of God, being plenteous of corn and full of cattle, well stored with fish and sundrie other good commodities, is now become waste and barren, yielding no fruits, the pastures no cattle, the air no birds!” Oh! how beholden we are to our “comforters!” Take a description of the aspect presented by the country, which is now decimated by famine—and that too to the eye of an Italian traveller in the year 1641. It is one of the Nuncio Binuccini’s suite, who gives the following picture of the south west coast country of Ireland:—“The country through which we have passed, though a mountainous and agreeable; and being

entirely pasture land, is most abundantly stocked with cattle of every kind. Occasionally one meets a long tract of valley, interspersed with woods and groves, which, as they are neither high nor densely planted, partake more of the agreeable than the gloomy. For seventy miles the country which we met was almost all of this character; but having once crossed the mountains, we entered upon an immense plain, occasionally diversified with hills and valleys highly cultivated, and enriched with an infinite number of cattle, especially oxen and sheep; from the latter of which, is obtained the very finest of what is called *English wool*. The men are fine-looking and of incredible strength; they are stout runners, and bear every sort of hardship with indescribable cheerfulness. They are all devoted to arms, and especially now that they are in war. Those who apply themselves to the study of literature are most learned; and you meet persons of every profession and science among them. The women are remarkably tall and handsome, and display a charming union of gracefulness with modesty and devotion. Their manners are marked by extreme simplicity, and they freely mix in conversation everywhere, without suspicion or jealousy. Their costume is different from ours, and somewhat resembles the French, except that they wear besides a long cloak and profuse locks of hair, and go without any head dress, contenting themselves with a kind of handkerchief, almost after the Greek fashion, which displays their natural beauty to great advantage. They give most superb entertainments (fanno banchetti superbissimi di carne e di pesce) of both fish and flesh, for they have both in the greatest abundance—the usual drink being Spanish wines, French claret, most delicious beer, and most excellent milk; butter is used on all occasions, and there is no species of provision which is not found in the greatest abundance. They also eat fruit—as apples, plums, pears, artichokes—and all eatables are cheap.—A fat ox costs a pistole, a sheep 30 bajocchi (2s. 6d.), a pair of capons or fowls a paul 10d., eggs a farthing apiece; game is so abundant they make no account of it at all. Both the salt and fresh fish are most exquisite. The horses are very plenty, stout, handsome, swift and cheap.—In Spain, con replicate a V. S. Ilma che siamo in Ibernia tutti per grazia di Dio. sani e salvati se non fosse la rognia che travaglia Monnignor, carissimo saremmo i put felici uomini di questo monde.”

In the above inventory of the people’s food under Popery not a syllable is said of the potato. Like the other blessings they owe to their enlightened “comforters,” potatoe food was brought in by the Popery code—that is, by their diabolical endeavours to cram the gospel of Harry VIII., and his blessed daughter, down the throats of the people—anno 1741. “The food of the Irish peasants (says the historian) which long after the revolution was supplied by the various crops of rye, oats, barley, and potatoes, now (for the first time) was reduced principally to potatoes.”

Behold how plain it is that the Irish Catholic millions have nothing, foresooth, but their own apathy in availing themselves of the blessings held out to them by their rulers to blame, that they are brought down to a perfect resemblance with their prototype, the holy and afflicted Job, who, by malice of Satan, “being struck with a very grievous ulcer from the sole of the foot even to the top of his head, did take a plashed and scrape away the corrupt matter, sitting on a daughill.”—Job, c. ii, vs. 7 & 8.

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Metropolitan Church, Dublin,
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BRISTOL, February 21.—The Reverend Dr. Gentili and the Rev. Mr. Furlong opened a second, Spiritual Retreat in this city yesterday evening (Septuagesima Sunday). Our venerated Bishop presided on the occasion. The Mission is expected to continue for a month; there are to be four services with instructions every day, and Confessions will be heard at all hours. The former Mission, of a fortnight’s duration, was attended with highly beneficial results. Many Protestants were converted, hundreds of Catholics reclaimed.—*Tablet*.

There are about one hundred old ten. informants families included, and supported in Limerick.—*Limerick Examiner*.