

THE TRUTH ABOUT IRELAND—VI.

IN part V. in THE WEEK for February 27, there are some clerical errors, partly owing to the fact that Arthur Young calculated prices on various scales, and also to the fact that the Dublin *Warder*, from which the prices for 1891 were quoted, gives different measures for wheat, barley and oats. The draft was correct, but the mistake arose in fair copying for the press.

The comparative prices of the cereals should read as under:—

PER ARTHUR YOUNG—1779.	PER "DUBLIN WARDER" OF JAN., 1891.	£ s. d.
Wheat per 280 lbs. (he reckons by the stone of 14 lbs., pp. 53, 71, average.....)	Wheat, per 280 lbs., average.....	17 6
Barley, per 224 lbs., p. 71	Barley, per 224 lbs., average.....	14 1
Oats, per 112 lbs., p. 71.	Oats, per 112 lbs., average.....	6 5

These prices, and also the general average for meat, butter and cereals, are the same as in my last paper, and as there stated show that in 1891 prices average 56 per cent. higher than in 1779.

1852 COMPARED WITH 1886.

In 1852 Ireland was valued for the purpose of taxation under the Poor Law. It is known as Griffith's valuation. His valuation was based on the average prices of produce at that time. He valued at three-fourths or 75 per cent. of the letting value. Thus if a farm was fairly worth a rent of £40, it was assessed at £30, although it might be let for only £25 or £35. The same principle prevails in England. Farm land there is commonly valued for local taxation purposes at 80 per cent. of the letting value. The like principle rules here. If a farmer in Ontario was compelled by law to sell his land at its assessed value he would say that he was robbed.

In 1886 the London *Times* republished in two one shilling volumes all the numerous letters which had appeared in its columns from all sorts of people, respecting Gladstone's Home Rule Bill. They form a perfect Encyclopedia on Irish affairs.

The late Mr. Arthur Kavanagh was a wealthy Irish landowner, and was descended from one of the genuine kings of Ireland. He was a very able and intelligent man. In March, 1886 (see vol. 2, p. 375), there is a very elaborate letter from him; and on p. 305, there is another from Mr. Villiers Stewart, "a landlord and also a farmer on an extensive scale." I have collated the following tables of prices from their letters:—

PRICES IN 1852.				PRICES IN 1886.				Average.	
£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
2-year old Cattle.....	4 0 0	to 8 10 0	.....	6 5 0	.....	12 0 0	to 13 0 0	.....	12 10 0
1-year old Cattle.....	2 10 0	to 5 10 0	.....	4 0 0	.....	7 0 0	to 8 0 0	.....	7 10 0
Milch Cows.....	8 0 0	to 14 0 0	.....	11 0 0	.....	13 0 0	to 25 10 0	.....	19 5 0
Fat Pigs, per cwt. of 112 lbs.....	1 12 0	.....	.....	1 12 0	.....	2 8 0	to 2 12 0	.....	2 10 0
Beef, cwt.....	1 15 6	.....	.....	1 15 6	.....	2 5 0	to 3 5 0	.....	2 15 0
Mutton, cwt.....	2 1 0	.....	.....	2 1 0	.....	2 16 0	to 4 4 0	.....	3 10 0
Butter, ".....	3 5 4	.....	.....	3 5 4	.....	2 0 0	to 5 17 0	.....	3 18 6
Oats, per 112 lbs.....	.....	.....	.....	0 4 10	.....	0 5 6	to 0 7 0	.....	0 6 3
Barley, ".....	.....	.....	.....	0 5 6	.....	0 7 5	to 0 9 0	.....	0 8 2 1/2
Hay ".....	0 1 6	to 0 2 2	.....	0 1 10	.....	0 3 0	to 0 4 0	.....	0 3 6
Straw ".....	0 10 0	to 0 1 0	.....	0 0 11	.....	0 1 4	to 0 2 6	.....	0 1 11
Wheat ".....	0 7 6	.....	.....	0 7 6	.....	Average for '85	.....	.....	0 8 5

The average is 72 per cent. higher in 1886 than in 1852. In other words, on a wide average, the farmers got for the above 72 per cent. more than they did when Griffith made his valuation in 1852.

The total average of the six articles, priced in THE WEEK for February 27, was one-half of one per cent. higher in January last than in 1886.

These facts prove that the charges against the landlords, as a mass, of having unduly raised their rents are totally unfounded. The average rent of the seven and a half millions of acres under the Land Act, before being reduced under that Act, was only 13s. 4d. or \$3.24 per acre, although the yields and prices average much greater there than in Ontario.

FAIRPLAY RADICAL.

ON LOU'S BIRTHDAY.

TO-DAY is thy birthday, Lou,
And the dawn of thy twentieth year;
With happiness may it strew
Thy path, and its hours be few
That hold for thy life a tear.

On thee falls this gift of Time
As the leaf shade falls on the flower,
As sweetly as falleth the chime
Of bells on the air at prime,
Or the purpled vesper hour.

So cold is the opening year
In its glittering robe of snow,
So stormy this month, and drear,
God made it thy birth month, dear,
Some pleasure that it might know.

ARTHUR WEIR.

Montreal, January 3.

BESS.

HER pet-name suits her exactly, because it suggested, to my mind at least, just such a rosy, rustic, unspoiled, little lass as she really is. But she has herself a curious fancy for her stately, old-fashioned, christened name; and when I said once that it was too grand for such a simple little maiden, that the Elizabeth was a queen, she retorted with quaint dignity: "Well, am not I a queen?" In spite of this bold declaration of right, she is not conscious of her power; but that the word was spoken in jest, makes it none the less true. Her sovereignty over us all, father, mother, sisters, summer boarders, is complete and undisputed. Never had monarch more devoted subjects; and never were subjects ruled with such beneficent sway. The secret of her power is that she has founded her queenship on the divine right of service. Like another Elizabeth,

—waiting still
On the turnings of your will,

she is ready at any moment to do any thing she is bid. She pervades the old homestead like the light, doing her numberless errands in its quiet, cheering fashion. It is not always necessary to tell her what to do; she seems to know what you want before you are aware yourself and takes a quiet delight in forestalling your wishes. Old-fashioned people call her "biddable"; but never to her face. She is not praised, only loved; and so she has no notion that she is in any way different from other girls. This is her chief but not her only amiable quality. Is it any wonder that we all love her?

She is not a beautiful child in the usual sense of the term. She has grown too fast, is tall for her age and slim; but uncommonly graceful both in movement and in repose. Light, quick motions, as dancing and running, are natural to her and she delights in them. When I want a picture of Bess, it is the reed shaken in the wind that comes first before the inward eye; never at rest and never for a moment losing an atom of swaying grace, no matter how violent the agitation. Very few would have called her even pretty. She lacks brilliant colour, her frocks are always of neutral tinted stuff, grey or brown, to suit her eyes and hair. Her hair is without beauty of curl or gloss or special luxuriance; of that colour we call brown, for lack of a better word; but, flying round her shoulders and low on her forehead, it seems the only fitting frame for her face. As I said, she is a country lass, too fond of gathering flowers in a land where flowers are plenty, and too prone to consider hats and veils as Sunday nuisances to have a complexion of roses and cream. She has not escaped freckles; but these sun-printed beauty spots are only evidence of a fine textured skin. The contour of her face is evenly round, but not over full; and her cheeks are like the sides of softly rosy apples, in which the red fades into white by such subtle gradations that you can hardly be certain of the colour. When Bess plays, and she is fond of a hearty romp, her colour deepens but never changes into an unbecoming flush. Her eyes are only ordinary grey eyes; but they are large and very clear, and the eye-brows well defined and high arched. Their habitual expression is frank, kindly and merry; very honest eyes, that always look straight into yours. Her mouth is not a rose-bud or a cupid's bow; but an ordinary well cut mouth that breaks readily into a smile. Her nose is of even length and has just enough piquant upward curve to give to the whole face a bright air of curiosity. In a word, it is just the sort of face artists love in their models of rustic beauty, only not awkward or coarse. Birket Foster's girls are something like her. Bess is now what Perdita must have been at ten years of age, a nymph of the woodland rather than the flat fields.

It is simple justice to state that Bess possesses one physical charm that would go far to make a plainer child attractive—a pleasing voice. It is clear, low-pitched and well-modulated and charged with a becoming quality of shyness. Her laugh is unusually pleasant to hear, rippling and bubbling up from a pure, happy heart. It is well worth the trouble of burdening your memory with stories to witness her merriment at them; and taking time to explain picture books to her, to hear her confidential comments on them.

Bess likes books almost as much as flowers, pets and

play; and one of her favourite nooks is the corner of the huge old sofa, nearest the window, whither she always resorts to read. Curled up in her nest, her face bent over book and almost hidden by her veil of hair, she makes a picture I do not tire of contemplating. When I was first honoured with her friendship we used to get much pleasure out of an illustrated Shakespeare, she questioning and I explaining. I was amply repaid for the time and slight trouble expended. Bess had the habit of coming out to my big rocking chair on the verandah, after dinner, every summer evening, and chatting till bed-time. We discussed all sorts of questions, flowers, the painter, puppy's education, her doll's complexions (Bess laughing softly at the absurdity of this last debate), the state of crops, or whatever came into her head. These were pleasant conferences for both friends. One night after the Shakespeare exhibitions, Bess climbed up to her usual perch and said, without any preface:—

"I saw Romeo and Juliet to-day. Yes, I did. Charlie's white pigeon was up on the pigeon-house and the black one was on the ladder, talking to her. Just like the picture."

And she laughed merrily in enjoyment of my surprise. Nothing is wasted on her.

She has a fashion of making speeches which are gently and unconsciously ironical. One night the family was gathered round the dining-room table, papa reading his newspaper, the girls busy with woman's work and the children at their lessons. There had been a long pause in the talk, in which Bess had been trying to solve some problem, not laid down in her school-books. At last she broke the silence with "papa, doesn't everybody have to think before they speak?" There was a shout of laughter, which puzzled but did not abash her, and she repeated the question. Bess thinks before she speaks and was trying to arrive at a general law.

Poetry she liked, especially what she called funny poetry. It was a genuine pleasure to read "Edward Gray" or "The Lord of Burleigh" to her, and to find how thoroughly she felt the charm of the musical words. Once, to gratify her, I tried "The Skipping-Rope," as verse that might be justly called funny. Bess made no comment for a moment, after her fashion of thinking before she speaks, then, lifting a smiling but puzzled face, queried: "That doesn't sound like grown-up people's poetry, does it?" which seems to me the best possible critique on the unfortunate verses.

It is no wonder that she can appreciate beautiful poems. Some fine instinct of sisterhood with them must guide her subtly and unconsciously, for she is herself a living poem. She has a faculty for doing graceful things artlessly; for she is a perfect child. She likes to dress herself in the long pliant sprays of spiria, and manages to cover her frock completely with the white flowers. Then, with a coronal of the snowy, star-like blossoms on her dark, flowing hair, she looks like a little South Sea Island princess on a festal day. One afternoon in spring when Bess had arrayed herself in this fantastic garb, we all went for a stroll through the grounds of our rich neighbour; the fence was down between and we had permission to go where we liked. In a clump of trees beside the drive were two or three statues, Flora and Diana, if I remember rightly. What sudden fancy took possession of the child, I cannot say, but she went up to the marble woman, put her arms round the neck of stone and kissed the unbreathing lips; then taking the wreath from her own head, she placed it, in the prettiest way, upon moveless, braided tresses of the chaste goddess. It was over in a minute, but the cool, green centre of the little grove into which the bright spring sunshine shot between the looped branches, the flower-clad girl before the eyeless marble made an ineffaceable picture in my memory. When she came back, leaving her wreath to wither on Diana's brow, she offered no explanation for her pagan rite. No one put any question to her, but I pondered over it and tried to read the omens. And she was full of such unconscious poetry.

Few people could live under the same roof with her and not grow fond of such a child. There was one, at least, who could not, he who now dedicates with gratitude and humility this column to the memory of a serene and flawless friendship.

ARCHIBALD MACMECHAN.

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THE RAMBLER.

IT would be easy to fill very much more than one column of THE WEEK with notices and opinions, all favourable and expressed at great length, of Sir Arthur Sullivan's "Ivanhoe." The "four tons" of piano and vocal score, already subscribed for, bear flattering testimony to its wonderful success. I recommend all who wish to see sketches of the superb scenery and extracts (not so satisfactory) of the musical portion, to look over a recent number of the *Pall Mall Budget*, the very live journal, conducted by a nephew of John Morley, the well-known politician. In all details of stage management "Ivanhoe" appears to be vastly more thorough than previous similar productions on the English stage. To ensure the effect of having been worn for some time and subjected to rough usage, the costumes allotted to the Saxon churls and retainers have been "twice dirtied and twice cleaned" before being submitted to the gaze of the critical at the Royal English Opera House. This is realism, if anything is. The only comic character is our old friend, "Friar Tuck," whose song, "Ho, Jolly Jenkin," would appear to smack mightily