

or alleviate their dreadful ravages, and of bad men, to stimulate them, in order to exterminate a helpless and now cumbersome tenantry.

The famine was doing its work, and had already sent thousands to premature graves, and thousands to die in foreign lands, and thousands more to feed the fishes of the Atlantic.

You may ask me what was the Government doing all this time? Was it not passing remedial measures to give employment to the poor? England derives an immense revenue from Ireland; surely she could not let her starve. My friends, how was the Union carried, but by coercion and bribery; and now, what better levers could be found to upset an incipient rebellion—the yearnings of a people for nationality—than famine and starvation. Ah! they were a God-sent more effective than thirty thousand British bayonets!"

This potato blight and consequent famine were powerful engines of state to uproot millions of the peasantry, to preserve law and order, and to clear off surplus population, and to maintain the integrity of the British empire.

But, then, there were measures passed. England wished to show her humanity to the world. There were about ten millions voted for the relief of Ireland. How this was administered we mean to show. What could be expected from a government whose leading organ—when a wailing cry of starvation arose from Ireland, when such as could, fled, frightened at the dreadful ruin at home; when the grave closed over a million of starved peasants—called out in a jubilee of delight: "The Celts are gone—gone with a vengeance. The Lord be praised!" Hear ye that: "The Lord be praised!" For what? Because about a million and a-half of fellow-creatures had died of starvation; because about as many more had fled beyond the Atlantic to nestle beneath the sheltering wing of the glorious stripes and stars, or to sleep in its welcome bosom.

Ah! this was a grand new Christian consummation to sing a "Te Deum" over! But, then, they were mere Irish. Whilst the Irish were struggling to outlive a famine, such as never devastated a wretched country before, about six millions of the rental of Ireland were spent annually by absentee landlords in England. Irish produce, to the amount of about seventeen millions sterling, was annually exported to England, and yet the Irish were starving at home. It is strange that they should export beef and butter and corn to such a vast amount while struggling against a fearful famine. In no other country in the world but Ireland would this strange anomaly be allowed: for it was calculated that during the worst years the produce of the country was capable of supporting double its population. But the farmer had to sell his

crops to pay the landlord, who was as exacting as in the best of times, and even more so, for the spirit of eviction had gone forth, and now was the landlord's opportunity.

After parting with the produce of his farm to meet the landlord, the poor farmer was left as destitute as the laborer. He had not the potato; he had to try and till his farm to support his family and servants, and to meet poor rates and county taxes, and various other calls. Indeed, the only thriving classes now in Ireland were deputy sheriffs, bailiffs, and rate collectors. These had plenty of employment in levelling houses, distraining for rent and taxes, and the like pastime. These were very profitable transactions then, for the sheriff had constant employment and was well paid. The others, too, were not idle; and as the poor farmers were not able to buy up the stock, the considerate drivers bought them for about half their value themselves; add to this, large deductions by way of fees, and you may form some notion of the amount placed to the wretched owner's account.

It is true, we get in return for all our export, Coercion Bills, Arms Acts, and the like. We also got an additional force of about twenty thousand men to keep us from grumbling. So, you see, the Irish had no reason to complain, unless they were too hard to be pleased. We also got a loan of about ten millions, half of which had to be repaid by instalments; add to this some private grants, and we ought to be grateful indeed. When we consider that the same England gave about twenty millions to turn negroes wild from whom she never received the least benefit, we are not to be surprised at the noble generosity that urged her to give us, who send her about twenty-three millions of our produce and money annually, a loan of ten millions to keep us from starving, or rather to protract our wretched fate.

All this time the British Parliament was voting millions to enlarge English dockyards, to strengthen English fortifications, to beautify English parks and museums, and to make faster her iron grip upon her "dear sister island." When we complained of the apathy of the English government about an Irish famine, we got an Arms Bill. When we complained of the ruined state of our trade, war ships were sent into our ports with arms and ammunition. When we said we were starving, give us employment, powder mills and fortifications were set to work.

In 1827, after the defeat of the Catholic question, five millions of bullets were ordered to Ireland to quieten her; some one then wrote—

"I have found out a gift for my Erin,
A gift that will surely content her,
Sweet pledge of a love so endearing!
Five millions of bullets I've sent her."