

WHAT HAS THE UNION DONE FOR IRELAND?

LETTER VI.

"Fifty tons weight of eggs and ten tons of live and dead poultry are sometimes shipped from the port of Dublin in one day."

"In 1829, the exports from the single port of Waterford reached £2,136,934, a sum less by £170,000 only than the whole trade of Ireland for seven years, a century before."

"Exports to Great Britain:—
1801.....£3,270,300 12 0
1825.....£7,048,934 5 6
Imports from all parts:—
1801.....£4,821,344 16 6
1825.....£5,696,785 8 11

—[Report of the Committee of the House of Commons on the State of the Irish Poor—1830.]

To the Editor of THE POST and TRUE WITNESS:

SIR,—The Irish Parliament in 1779, in a voice that could not be misunderstood, said that "It is not by temporary expedients, but by a Free Trade alone that this Nation can be saved from impending ruin." This unequivocal and spirited language opened the eyes of Lord North and the English Nation; and the English Minister, who contemptuously refused some trifling commercial advantages in 1777, brought forward his proposition in the English Parliament, granting a Free Trade to Ireland. I endeavored to prove, in former letters, that the Landed monopoly had undermined and subverted Irish manufactures. It is my intention in the present to prove that the same many-headed monster has annihilated Irish trade, with the exception of that portion of it which can scarcely be called trade—the transportation of her rude agricultural produce for the supply of the English markets. These are open to her; the colonies and every other market in the world are shut against her.

There is no simpler problem in Political Economy to be proved than that neither the Landed interest of England nor that of Ireland gained anything like what is generally supposed by the Corn monopolists, or a tenth of what the community lost by it; that it was the intermediate monopolists that reaped all, or nearly all, the advantages; and that the Landed monopolists were made the tools and instruments to bolster up the others. The innumerable monopolies that were generated by it would instantly vanish if the Landed one was done away with; but one might as well attempt to reason with the ocean billows, or the winds of heaven, as with monopolists of any description; no matter whether they are Landed monopolists, Mercantile monopolists, Railroad monopolists, or Slave monopolists—they will cling to their monopoly to the last, though they may at the same time bring down ruin on their own heads as well as on the heads of their victims. You may crash the monopoly—but it is the extreme of folly to think of reasoning with the monopolists. If reasoning could have any effect on the Irish Landed monopolists, the strongest have been given, and it has been proved, *ad infinitum*, that any measure that pressed on the industry of the country must be injurious to them, their interests and those of the community being identical.

The great object with the Committee of the House of Commons on the state of the Irish poor, from whose Report I have taken the extract that heads this letter, was to prove the vast increase in the trade of Ireland since the Union and the unrestricted intercourse with England. "Fifty tons of eggs and ten tons of live and dead poultry are sometimes shipped from Dublin in a single day," triumphantly exclaimed the Chairman of the Committee, Thomas Spring Rice, at that time M.P. for the City of Limerick, and shortly afterwards one of His Majesty's Under-Secretaries of State for the Treasury. Let not the Mercantile Princes and Lords of Tyne, with their purple and fine linen, nor the Argosies of Venice, freighted with the wealth and luxuries of the East, be longer the theme of the enraptured historian—let not the trade of Britain, guarded as it is by "That flag that braved a thousand years The battle and the breeze,"

be longer the boast of every Briton and the wonder of an admiring world—star-spangled banner of Columbia, that floats in every breeze and is wafted over the billows of every ocean in the universe, hide your diminished head! Spirit of Adam Smith, your economical principles have met with a stern rebuke! Thomas Spring Rice, M.P., announces to a wondering world that Dublin, the Capital of Ireland, of his native country, exports in one day "fifty tons of eggs and ten tons of live and dead poultry!" Strangely sympathetic with the language of Spring Rice is the annual speech of every Lord Lieutenant in the annual speech of every Lord Lieutenant who has graced with his presence a Mansion House banquet, down to that glorious exception, the Earl of Aberdeen.

I cannot say that feeling should predominate in any thinking man's mind—indignation at having such gross delusions foisted on the public as a proof of the prosperity of Ireland. Ridicule and laughter would be the most appropriate weapons to use on such occasions were it not that at the very time that committee was laboring to prove the rapidly improving state of Ireland, her wretched inhabitants were suffering all the horrors of famine, and the Premier of England was stating that there was no remedy for it; that famine was periodical in Ireland—a dispensation of Providence; that it should take its course; that it was beyond the power of legislation to meet or cure the evil! In the face of wretchedness, misery and famine stalking abroad in every corner of Ireland—in the face of the avowed of the Prime Minister—the Committee on the state of the Irish poor attempted to prove that the commercial, agricultural, and other interests of Ireland were rapidly improving! But they imposed on themselves—perhaps improving—and grossly deluded those who placed any reliance on their Report.

To show that trade is flourishing and agriculture advancing, it is not necessary for Parliament or their Committee to announce the pleasing intelligence. It is easy of proof. The questions to be asked, and which every man can answer, are these: How are the great body of the people situated? Are they well clothed, well fed, and well lodged—are they contented—are they happy? Let these questions be put with reference to Ireland; the answer will decide whether the country is prosperous or otherwise. The opinion of a great authority on this question is well worth quoting. Adam Smith says:—"The liberal reward of labor, therefore, as it is the necessary effect, so it is the natural symptom of increasing national wealth—the scanty maintenance of the laboring poor, on the other hand, is the natural symptom that things are at a stand—and their starving condition, that things are going fast backward." This opinion of that great man, like every other opinion of his, is at the same time based upon the most profound knowledge of human affairs and the most splendid principle of benevolence and humanity. What contrast does it not exhibit to the figures of the Committee on the state

of the Irish poor, who pretended to be political economists, and presumptuously arrogated to themselves knowledge sufficient to guide and direct the movements and actions of seven or eight millions of people! Can any man be found to-day who will have the audacity to state that the industrious and laboring classes of the Irish are even tolerably "well fed, lodged, and clothed?" Will any be found to deny "the scanty maintenance of the laboring poor," and that the only change in their unhappy lot is from base subsistence to "periodical starvation?"

But say the monopolists in the language of Sir James Graham, "Never was there a country that derived more benefit from another than Ireland has from England since the Union. That country derived 'wealth from this, and this found her the market for her produce.' If the first Lord of the Admiralty had said, found 'consumption' for her produce, and that, like hungry gluttons, the English consumed everything raised from the soil by the labor of the Irish people, without leaving them even the husks for the swine, there would have been some truth in the assertion; but I must dissent the opinion of Sir James Graham and his school, who appear to be as profoundly ignorant of the first principles of trade and the true source of national wealth as they are of the true state of Ireland or of the character of the Irish people.

I have given Adam Smith as an authority to prove that if the working, industrious portion of the community are poor and miserable, none of the superior grades can be much better off. A most striking illustration of this principle is given in souvenirs of Rome, written by Eugene Davis to the Dublin Journal, under the heading: "A Little Landlord Colony." (See TRUE WITNESS, Jan. 18, 1888.) I stated that the Irish population in 1830 was reduced to the lowest state of destitution; in opposition to this state of things, the Committee on the state of the Irish poor had the hardihood to aver that the commercial prosperity of Ireland was advancing with rapid strides. They triumphantly put forward their proofs, which appear at the head of this letter, in the amount of exports from Ireland in general, and from the port of Waterford in particular. Such has been the

renewing of Government hacks, Lord Lister, tenants, and Monopolists, all along the line from the Union to the present time, now 88 years. Out of the two months I shall condemn them. I shall show that no reliance can be placed in this school of Political Economists. From the facts they have placed at my disposal, I shall prove that Irish trade is equally subverted with Irish manufactures. What was true in 1830 is equally true in 1888. It will not, I presume, be disputed that the seven or eight millions of exports from Ireland consist chiefly of agricultural produce. "The last, the lowest, and most disadvantageous species of commerce," says Archdeacon Paley, "is the exportation of raw materials for wrought goods—as when wool is sent abroad to purchase velvets, hides or pelt to purchase shoes, hats, or linen cloth. This trade is unfavorable to population, because it leaves no room or demand for employment, or in what it takes out of the country, or in what it brings into it. Its operation on both sides is noxious—by its exports, it diminishes the very subject upon which the industry of the inhabitants ought to be exercised—by its imports, it lessens the encouragement of that industry in the same proportion that it supplies the consumption of the country with the produce of foreign labor."