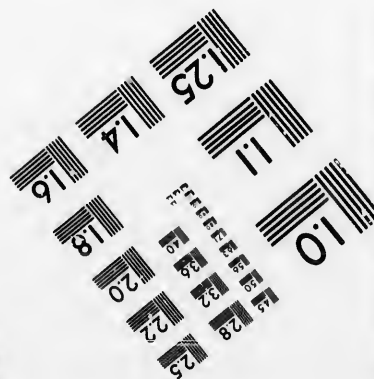
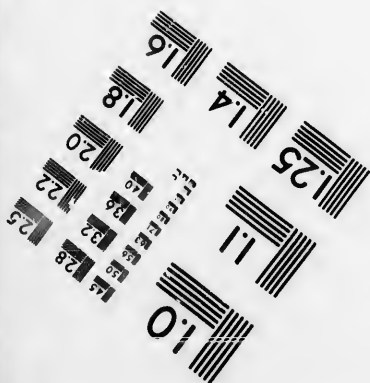
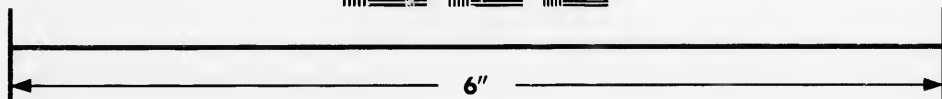
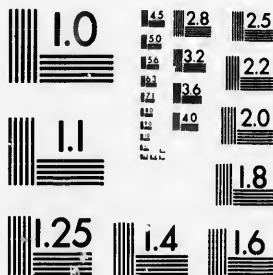


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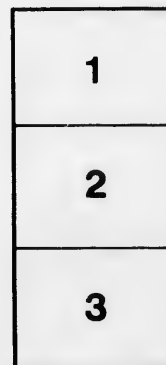
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T.R.

A LETTER

TO

Wilmot Horton, Esq. M. P.

ON

EMIGRATION

From Ireland.

BY THE

REV. M. I. KEATING,

Rector of Ventry.

LIMERICK:

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EMIGRATION.

—◆—
To Wilmot Horton, Esq. M. P.

AS to you belongs the distinguished honor of having originated the Emigration Question, I take the liberty of addressing a Letter to you on the subject, which has been written with a view of proving to the Landed Proprietors of Ireland the immediate benefits that would result from its adoption, and also to point out the means by which their assistance, in co-operation with Government, can be best applied and rendered most conducive, in forwarding so desirable a measure. A plan of Emigration is proposed, and a statement made of its general objects—the reasons are assigned for each suggestion—the motives by which they are dictated, and the ends for which they are designed. It refers to Upper Canada ; but, should the principles be sound and the details practicable, it might, simultaneously, be carried into effect in our other colonial possessions.

The condition of the Irish Peasantry has lately attracted much of the public attention, and also engaged the serious consideration of Parliament ; it may not, therefore, be either

presumptuous or intrusive, in an individual who has devoted some attention to the subject, to premise what appears to him the immediate cause of a state of society so deplorable, and also the practicable remedies that may be applied. I must observe, in the first place, that the obvious source of the miseries under which this Country at present labours, is, perhaps, beyond the reach of direct Legislative interference. I allude to the system adopted in setting land. To regulate the management of private property, is not the province of a wise Government. But there is a maxim of our law, founded equally in justice and expediency, "*Sic utere tuo ut non Lædas alieno,*" and it is the part of the Legislature to see that it is observed. Now the practice in Ireland is fraught with evil to every class of the community. Were it, indeed, intended to produce the greatest quantum of human misery, a more effectual plan could not be devised for accomplishing such an object than that which has been pursued, and of which its present state affords a melancholy illustration. The subdivision of land has been carried to a greater extent in Ireland than any other Country in Europe, and with the same effects that have, invariably, attended so injudicious a system. Small patches of land are granted out for the sake of the exorbitant rent offered. The landlord acquires new tenants and new freeholders. This design is seconded by the natural inclination of the people, the state of the country leaving the father little other means of providing for the sons but by dividing his farm. Hence, many Districts are occupied by as many families as its produce can maintain. This evil once prevailed in the Highlands of Scotland, and the remedies applied there, with success, must be adopted in this country, before any permanent improvement can be expected. A system of large

farms, Emigration on an extensive scale, and the concentration in villages of the scattered labouring population, are the means of amelioration which both theory and experience have proved efficacious under similar circumstances. The Act to regulate the sub-letting of land will, in future, restrain, in some measure at least, this prolific source of misery. It is, however, due to the English as much as to the Irish peasantry, to obviate the effects which a change in the management of landed property must produce in the distribution of the inhabitants. The class of small tenants who are dispossessed, will supply a continual influx of labourers into England, injurious to the situation of their own workmen, and tending thereby to increase the amount of their poor rates. Thus one evil engenders and perpetuates another, nor can we look for any other effectual remedy but in bettering the condition of the poor in this country. The resident landlords are now, in general, perfectly convinced, that the system hitherto pursued has been defective, and are anxious to adopt such measures of a remedial nature, as the peculiar circumstances under which they are placed will admit of. But, my appeal, in the first instance, is to the great Absentee Proprietors, whose duty and interest it is to set an example in ameliorating the condition of their tenantry, and on whom a great moral responsibility will rest, should they neglect the present opportunity for effecting a change, which the circumstances of the country render absolutely necessary, and which can be accomplished at present with greater facility than at any former period. I admit, however, that, to counteract evils of long standing, is an operation of no small difficulty, but the obstacles are by no means insurmountable. It is, evidently, the interest of the Proprietors to clear their estates

of the superfluous population, and to set their lands, in large farms, to individuals of capital and skill, without a power of re-letting in sub-divisions. During the operation of this change, and the temporary derangement it occasions, the population must be gradually cast into a new form.— The race of cotters, after filling up the demand for labour, which will be required under the new arrangements, and falling into the various fixed employments that are necessary for the business of an extensive farm, must be drained off by Emigration. A few of the small tenants, who, with some amount of capital, combine industry and good management, will take a part in the new system, and grow up into farmers on a greater scale, but the remainder must, in one way or other, seek for means of livelihood different from those on which they have hitherto depended; and, as the country affords little other means of living beyond that arising out of a possession of land, they must look for subsistence where there is a prospect of employment, and bring their minds to the resolution of removing from their native place. Two prospects present themselves—employment in public works and manufacturers, or emigration. It is easy to foresee which alternative will best suit the inclination of the Irish Farmer, when, by the easy acquisition of land in the Colonies, he may speedily attain a situation and mode of life similar to that in which his habits have been formed.— Thus it appears, that in the subversion of the present mode of setting land, emigration forms a necessary part in the general change. It is the unavoidable result of the state of the country, arising out of causes now above all controul, and essential to its welfare and improvement. That it does not, necessarily, imply a permanent diminution of actual numbers, but, on the contrary, may leave resources for a

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larger increase of a different sort of inhabitants, will be admitted by all who have examined the theory of population. Without such an expedient, however, at the present moment, common humanity will prevent many Landed Proprietors from dispossessing poor persons, without giving them a place where to lay their heads, independently of the danger with which such a measure would be attended in this country. The old system, therefore, is, in most instances, with all its concomitant evils, of necessity, persevered in. The assistance of Government is indispensable, and it remains for the wisdom of the Legislature to determine the principles which should guide, and the policy which should be pursued, under such circumstances. It is to be observed, that the disposition to emigrate is a strong indication of the feelings of the people on the subject, for, notwithstanding the local attachments and predilections of the Irish, thousands are, at this moment, seeking the most eligible means of leaving their native shores, with a hope to find, in the cultivation of the wilds of America, certain subsistence and ultimate comfort. Whether, then, they remain at home to struggle with poverty, or, by a better exertion of courage, endeavour to acquire land in absolute property, in the Colonies, is an alternative in which their choice will be determined by their ability. It is practicable, however, only to those who can afford the expense, and is of no benefit to the poorer classes, being confined to the most enterprising and industrious who are possessed of some capital. Since, then, emigration must go on and take its course, the attention of Government should be directed to the destination of the several emigrants, who are now dispersing in various situations in Foreign States, where they are lost to their native land. It surely is desirable that the overflow-

ings of our own population should be collected together in our own Colonies, where they would not only contribute to their strength and improvement, but become a substantial benefit to the mother country.

The undertaking of public works—the cultivation of waste lands—the encouragement of fisheries, and the introduction of manufactures, have been devised as substitutes for emigration, and measures calculated to attract the displaced population into new channels of industry at home. It is sufficient to observe, that not one of them is applicable to the circumstances of those who are inclined to emigrate, and can afford it. As to the expectation entertained from employment in public works, their appropriate utility must be sufficient praise, without ascribing to them effects for which they are quite inadequate. They ever are the result, not the cause of national prosperity—the sources of expenditure must come from the sister country, and, at best, they can give but temporary relief. The cultivation of waste lands appears, at first sight, a promising scheme, but we must not forget, that it never can be recommended as a speculation to which the national resources should be applied. It may be encouraged, but the execution must be left to the management of private individuals or Companies, and, though conducted on the most extensive scale, will never afford sufficient employment to prove incompatible with a judicious plan of emigration. The introduction of manufactures, were it practicable, would, obviously, present no object of employment suitable to the displaced tenants, and the same remark extends to the Fisheries. It is not easy to convert an agricultural into a manufacturing population, and the facility with which small farms are procured has tended to impede its progress. Agriculture being a simple

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and healthy occupation, requiring but little capital when conducted on a small scale, suited to the habits and character of the lower classes, it has become their sole pursuit. An exception, however, must be made with respect to the Linen Trade, which is the only manufacture that seems naturally to have sprung up of itself in Ireland, and it is worthy of observation, that even this is partly an agricultural employment. Manufactures are of slow growth; they cannot be forced, and are ever generated by the creation of markets, but the occupier of a small farm, who is contented to subsist on the lowest species of human food, and be clothed in rags, can be of no benefit either to the financial* or to the manufacturing interests of the State. By adopting the principles proposed, a new colonial and home market will be opened—the labour of the country will be brought into successful operation, and receive that direction in which it can be beneficially employed—the distinction will be marked out between the situations of farmer, manufacturer and labourer, in this manner—the commercial form of property and population will be established in Ireland, and the peasantry placed in that relative station which is best adapted to the purposes of national wealth. Agreeably to the observation of Dr. ADAM SMITH, “that the diminution of cottagers and other small occupiers of land has, in every part of Europe, been the immediate forerunner of improvement and better cultivation.” With respect to the concentration of the inhabitants of each district in villages, it is not difficult to calculate on the advantages that would result from such an arrangement. At present, the bulk of the population is scattered over the

* The population of Ireland is nearly one-third that of Great Britain, whilst the amount of Excise Duties paid are about one-tenth. Such is the disproportion of wealth and comfort!

face of the country—each individual peasant lives in an isolated spot, occupying a wretched hovel—in a great degree secluded from society, and reduced to a condition little better than the savage state. How can improvement be expected under such circumstances? It is also admitted, that the subdivision of land has tended to give a stimulus to the increase of population, by which the supply of labour is artificially kept up beyond the demand. Under the system which I advocate, the miseries attendant upon an unemployed, redundant population, will, in a great degree, be obviated, as the supply and demand will be brought to regulate itself—the price of labour will attain its just level—ready money payments will be introduced—markets for provisions established, and the peasant cease to depend, entirely, for subsistence on the potato. In another point of view, let us estimate the effects produced by individual influence and exertion—the facilities afforded the peasantry for attending places of public worship, and availing themselves of the means of education—the benefits arising from mutual intercourse and co-operation—all tending to advance man in the scale of civilized being, and to render him an useful member of the community. Considered as a measure of security in a country circumstanced like Ireland, the plan must be deemed important. With what facility could a few Policemen preserve the peace of a district, were all the inhabitants concentrated in a village which would require a large force to effect, while they continue dispersed, as at present, in all directions. The wretchedness of the lower orders is erroneously attributed to the depression of the agricultural interests. During the period when it was most flourishing, their condition was very little superior to what it is at present. The evil lies in the subdivision of land, and it is vain

to ascribe to any other cause, effects which it is quite adequate to produce, and that are strongly exemplified by the fact of the most destitute peasantry being found on the richest lands, where it prevails, while in the less fertile parts, particularly the mountain districts, under the opposite system, they are generally affluent.

The absence of Irish Landlords is the subject of continual complaint. Compulsory laws are impracticable! To induce Gentlemen to remain on their estates, their residence must become attractive, and the people around them improved. No one will reside from choice in a land of misery—continually liable to outrage and disturbance, and overflowing with a degraded, unemployed population. Should, however, the proposed means of amelioration be adopted, I am convinced, that Ireland would cease to be a blot in the British Empire, and its whole internal economy altered in a period of short duration. Capital would be invested in agricultural pursuits—the lands planted, fenced, † drained and properly laid out—the miserable cabins, which now disfigure the aspect of the country, will be removed, and be replaced by comfortable and neat villages. And how gratifying would it be, that the traveller, as he passes, should view, both on the face of nature and the face of man, that it is by wisdom and prudence the country he surveys is governed, and, while he sighs at the sterility which improvidence causes, and the miseries which a vicious system produce, he will leave a blessing on that land which the wisdom of its proprietors has made fertile, and on the people whom their benevolence has made happy.

† The difficulty of protecting plantations is a serious obstacle to that species of improvement. In some districts, the injury done to growing timber, and the devastation of hedge-rows, exhibit the fatal effects of the scarcity of fuel and the want of markets to afford a regular supply. Protection of trees is no easy matter in a country where there is a cabin and a numerous family in almost every field. The same remark applies to the preservation of game,

PLAN OF EMIGRATION.

That districts of land in Upper Canada be granted by Charter to a Company incorporated for the purpose of promoting Emigration.

That each Emigrant who pays, or for whom there shall be paid, the sum of £ deposit, be entitled to a share; the prices of shares and proportion of land attached to each to vary for men, women and children, and be regulated by the average expense incurred by their location & settlement.†

That the Directors of the Company be appointed by Government, and be entrusted with the conduct and management of Emigration.

That they be responsible Officers, and be remunerated with suitable salaries.

That the Directors be authorised to establish a Bank, with a limited capital (not exceeding the amount of expenses incurred by Emigration,) which should be guaranteed by Government and the colonial Legislature. That they be empowered to issue their own Notes, in payment of the expenditure, but not have the privilege of discounting.

That the Notes of the Company's Bank be payable in London in Gold, and be received in the Colonies in all public departments in discharge of duties and taxes.

That the deposits on shares be applied to meet the demands in London, for the exchange of Bullion for the Notes of the Bank. Should these means prove insufficient, that the Directors be empowered to negotiate a loan.

† The experiment already made by Government, with the view of ascertaining the actual expense of conveying and establishing Emigrants in Upper Canada, has been completely successful. The difficulties incident to the location of the settlers have been surmounted, and, from paupers, they have been transformed into industrious, thriving landholders. They received, on arriving at the place of their destination, a lot of 150 acres of land and a cow for each family of four persons, a supply of 12 months' provisions, seed corn and potatoes for planting, the utensils necessary to enable them to commence clearing and cultivating the ground, and assistance in the erection of their houses. The entire cost amounted to the average rate of £20 for each Emigrant, young and old. It would not, surely, be unreasonable to expect that the average sum of £3, which is one-fourth of the average expense, should be paid as a deposit on each share!

That after the interval of the first seven years, the Company commence the liquidation of the balance of their debt, for which their lands and possessions should be responsible. That the Share-holders be required to pay up at reasonable intervals the remaining instalments on their shares, until the amount of each is discharged, after which, they become, individually, exonerated; and that the lands of defaulters may be forfeited, for the benefit of the Company at large, in case of continued neglect of payment.

That the Notes of the Bank be taken in payment of all the instalments after the original deposit, and be cancelled on being received.

That a limited number of shares be appropriated to Emigrants of a higher class, at an increased price, which will entitle the holders to a proportionable quantity of land, to better accommodation and rations on their passage, and also qualify them for the situations of Local Directors, Managers, &c.

The objects contemplated in the establishment of a Company, are to form a bond of union that will connect the whole community together, and promote a system of mutual co-operation, by identifying individual interest with the good of the community at large, and extending to all a share in the common prosperity. Incalculable benefits are likely to result from the combined efforts of a well-regulated society, and effects will be produced which never could be accomplished by the exertion of individual skill and enterprize. The existence of such a body would afford the most feasible prospect of defraying the original expenses incurred by Emigration; and, certainly, no scheme can be deemed practicable which does not hold out the expectation of ultimate repayment. The plan of a collection by Government from each separate Emigrant is surrounded with difficulties, and the security would prove but unsubstantial for the money advanced. The proposed measure would in a great degree remove this objection, and obviate several of the inconveniences experienced in the occupation and settlement of a new colony. The holders of shares in the company would be relieved from many of those sufferings to which individual

Emigrants are exposed. The pride of belonging to so respectable a society would alleviate the pangs, which all must feel on quitting their native land, and the prospective advantages to be derived will create an interest sufficient to attach them to their own possessions, and prevent them passing over to other States. The payment of a deposit on shares will secure a portion at least of the capital embarked—will bestow a greater value on the acquisition than if it were gratuitously given, and will remove the appearance of any thing like the exercise of compulsion in the case. It is fair to expect, that many Landed Proprietors would avail themselves of so easy a mode of relieving their estates of a pauper tenantry, and that it will serve as an inducement with them for the immediate adoption of a more judicious system of setting land, particularly when the transition will be a change for the better to all parties, accompanied with no violation of the feelings of humanity, or attended with any great pecuniary sacrifice. Besides, many of the small Farmers are possessed of some means, which they may be inclined to appropriate in the manner prescribed, to the purchase of shares ; and, as it is a very usual practice with Landlords, to forgive rent and arrears, provided they receive possession of the land, this always leaves the tenants some disposeable property. In addition to the suggestions of the Committee, encouragement might be given to the formation of Emigration Societies in the several Towns and Counties in Ireland, to assist those who are entirely destitute of means, and Grand Juries may be empowered to make grants to a limited extent in aid of voluntary contributions, Surely, the public would be amply repaid for the charge, by the diminution of crime that would follow on the removal of many troubled spirits, who now disturb the peace of society ; and, by their settlement in a country, where those energies so prejudicial at home might receive a new direction, and be more beneficially applied. It also opens an extensive field for the exercise of private charity, and will give a new impulse to the benevolence and bounty both of relations and friends. From such a variety of resources, and from the combined exertions of all classes interested in promoting this great undertaking, there can be no doubt that ample funds would be procured ; and, I trust, it is not an over-sanguine expectation, that means would be provided, not

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only sufficient to relieve present distress, but adequate to carry on Emigration to any extent, to which it ought, rationally, be encouraged. With regard to the loan, should it prove necessary, I conceive there could be no more legitimate application of that unemployed capital of Britain, which, probably, would be otherwise absorbed by foreign States, or expended in fraudulent speculations, than in the improvement and occupation of our own Colonies. They certainly have the first claim on our consideration, and ought, at least, to be entitled to a preference. At the same time, it would be reasonable to expect, that the Colonial Legislature should join in the security, by which means their attention will be engaged, and a direct interest given them in the welfare of the Company. A controul will be thus established, which their local information will enable them, beneficially, to exercise, and their local authority empower them to enforce. It might also be just to stipulate, that, in case of a separation from the mother country, the liability of the payment of the debt due at that period, should devolve on them. In this manner, a connecting link will be formed between the Settlers, the Company, the Colonial Legislature, and the Government at home. The privilege to be granted to the Directors of issuing their own Notes in payment of the expenditure, will, perhaps, prove an application of the Banking system to the purposes of Emigration, unobjectionable in its principle, and most beneficial in its results.—Should it succeed, Government will be relieved from an enormous expense, and little more will be required than the credit of their security, and their superintending care. It will obviate the inconvenience always experienced in a new country, from the want of a sufficient circulating medium, and facilitate the arrangements arising out of the repayments to be made by share-holders. Though it will not confer on the Colonies all the benefits of a Joint Stock Bank, it will, at least, secure a safe currency, and, probably, save a considerable portion of the interest on the loan, which, otherwise, should be negotiated in the first instance. By permitting individuals of intelligence and experience to embark a moderate capital in the enterprize, by taking a limited number of shares at an increased price, the Company will gain a most valuable and useful description of persons, whose abilities may qualify them for conducting the higher

branches of their affairs, and who, in its progressive improvement, may discharge the duties of Local Directors, Magistrates, or Members of the Colonial Legislature. In conclusion, I will observe, that, without indulging groundless hopes, or entertaining visionary speculations, the re-appointment of the Committee on Emigration, must be regarded as a pledge that the question will be thoroughly investigated ; and when it is considered, that a Statesman of your distinguished talent has devoted his attention to the subject, it is natural to infer, that some legislative enactment will be devised which may, ultimately, be crowned with success. Emigration, thus placed in the hands of an enlightened Government, will not only be the means of correcting an immediate and pressing evil, but become the instrument of great and expansive good. It may be part of the wise dispensations of Providence for accomplishing the further peopleing of the earth, and the more extended happiness of the human race. The elements for constituting well-organized societies will be transplanted at once into districts at present uninhabited. The improvements of ages anticipated in the colonies, new kingdoms created in a period in the life of man, and but a moment in the existence of a nation, and the institutions of Britain, its laws, its language and its liberty, will acquire fresh vigour, and spread their genial influence in the most extensive quarters of the globe.

M. I. K.

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