



## **Terms and Conditions of Use of Digitised Theses from Trinity College Library Dublin**

### **Copyright statement**

All material supplied by Trinity College Library is protected by copyright (under the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000 as amended) and other relevant Intellectual Property Rights. By accessing and using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you acknowledge that all Intellectual Property Rights in any Works supplied are the sole and exclusive property of the copyright and/or other IPR holder. Specific copyright holders may not be explicitly identified. Use of materials from other sources within a thesis should not be construed as a claim over them.

A non-exclusive, non-transferable licence is hereby granted to those using or reproducing, in whole or in part, the material for valid purposes, providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. Where specific permission to use material is required, this is identified and such permission must be sought from the copyright holder or agency cited.

### **Liability statement**

By using a Digitised Thesis, I accept that Trinity College Dublin bears no legal responsibility for the accuracy, legality or comprehensiveness of materials contained within the thesis, and that Trinity College Dublin accepts no liability for indirect, consequential, or incidental, damages or losses arising from use of the thesis for whatever reason. Information located in a thesis may be subject to specific use constraints, details of which may not be explicitly described. It is the responsibility of potential and actual users to be aware of such constraints and to abide by them. By making use of material from a digitised thesis, you accept these copyright and disclaimer provisions. Where it is brought to the attention of Trinity College Library that there may be a breach of copyright or other restraint, it is the policy to withdraw or take down access to a thesis while the issue is being resolved.

### **Access Agreement**

By using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you are bound by the following Terms & Conditions. Please read them carefully.

I have read and I understand the following statement: All material supplied via a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of a thesis is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or for educational purposes in electronic or print form providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.







27 FEB 1975  
CALIFORNIA







TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ..... page 1

SECTION I ..... 14

THE IRISH MIGRATION TO NORTH AMERICA

Background of the process.

IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

SECTION II ..... 40

Submitted to the University of Dublin

by

SECTION III ..... 120

George Rex Crowley Keep

as an exercise for the degree of  
Doctor in Philosophy  
1951

SECTION IV ..... 200

The reception of the emigrants in  
British North America and the United  
States.

SECTION V ..... 240

Opinion and policy of the  
and some related problems.

SECTION VI ..... 270

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

APPENDIX





THE IRISH MIGRATION TO NORTH AMERICA

IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Submitted to the University of Dublin

THESIS

1775

George Fox Croker Esq

as an exercise for the degree of  
Doctor in Philosophy  
1881





TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<u>PREFACE</u> .....	page	2
<u>SECTION I</u> .....		16
The demographic and regional background of the process.		
<u>SECTION II</u> .....		45
The correlations of the emigration.		
<u>SECTION III</u> .....		153
The accessories of emigration.		
<u>SECTION IV</u> .....		300
The reception of the emigrants in British North America and the United States.		
<u>SECTION V</u> .....		344
Opinion and policy, on the emigration and some related problems.		
<u>SECTION VI</u> .....		393
Summary.		

APPENDIXES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PREFACE



PREFACE

The following study attempts a survey of the Atlantic migration of the Irish, during half a century. The Irish emigration to North America during the earlier nineteenth century was ably and systematically treated by the late William Forbes Adams; no comparable work on the years after 1850 has yet been published. I therefore felt that a not unworthy contribution to knowledge might be made in opening out a field of history that still awaited comprehensive treatment. If in the limits of time at my disposal I must be summary in dealing with so long a period as fifty years of this tremendous process, a beginning has been made which others if not I may elaborate in the future. To select the North American field of emigration is to follow the choice of the great bulk of Ireland's emigrants in the period, and enables me to draw upon certain material regarding the Irish settlement in Montreal which I collected in the course of research at McGill University.

The present study is principally concerned with the extrusive or Irish side of the emigration. The facilities for examining from the sources the attractive or North American side of the process are relatively imperfect in the British Isles; I have accordingly not aimed at tracing systematically the Irish dispersal, in the period, throughout British North America and the United States. This must not, and does not, preclude an attempted assessment of the balance of extrusion and attraction. For the rest, the first and third sections of the study are concerned particularly with the mechanism of the emigration; the first, with the emigration's demographic origins and regional context (this latter a baffling subject upon which a large series of local studies might profitably be made); the third, with the very elaborate nexus of official, commercial and individual



accessory enterprises which surrounded the emigrant host. Of these enterprises the commercial appear to me incomparably the most important for the study of the 'what actually happened' of the emigration process, and they would repay more investigation, for instance on the side of finance. The fourth section deals with the distribution of the emigrant Irish between British North America and the United States, with particular reference to the mainly fruitless efforts of well-meaning persons, Irish and other, to direct them to the former rather than the latter destination. Material was naturally more plentiful, if only by reason of the British parliamentary papers, for the Canadian than the United States portion of the immigration. In this section, as indeed throughout the study, my endeavour was to keep particularly in view that evidence upon the countries of reception which reached the prospective emigrants themselves, generally through letters or newspapers. The fifth section, upon opinion and policy, pays of necessity rather more attention to those who spoke, sometimes with imperfect credentials, on behalf of <sup>the</sup> emigrants, or of the people of Ireland in general.

The second section of the study, upon the correlations of the emigration, is an attempt to locate Irish emigration in a system of cause and effect. To select from half a century of Irish history, to say nothing of regressive causation, those factors jointly sufficient and individually necessary to the production of emigration was a formidable and perhaps an impossible task. The difficulty is that emigration was a resultant of other Irish 'questions' which in so lengthy a period can themselves scarcely be treated throughout from the sources. In the first part of this section I was therefore content to aim at a picture of the social and economic pattern which the Irish emigrant left, apparently



with so little regret. In the second part of the section are charted and discussed those few variable concomitants of the emigration that are measurable.

A treatment of the subject such as I have attempted, namely a foundation in political arithmetic followed by a series of analyses, seemed to me preferable to a continuous narrative. The writing of modern history at any considerable length presents this problem. The documentation, of printed matter alone, is so heavy that simple narrative is very difficult if that documentation must also be exhibited.

There appears to be scope for unprejudiced studies in any department of modern Irish history. James F. Kenney observed with moderation that 'much of the historical writing in Ireland during the nineteenth <sup>century</sup> has been vitiated by the abnormal political and other prejudices which have prevailed', and not merely amongst Irish writers. Extravagant statements such as de Beaumont's comparisons between the English and Irish poor of the eighteen-thirties, exalting the status of the former, could be repeated without reproof as late as a seventh edition of his standard work on Ireland. Woodward found the Irish point of view more explicit in nineteenth century polemical historiography than the English, 'though the assumptions of English nationalism are not less strong'. Some histories of Quebec by French-Canadian writers come strongly to mind as one peruses certain nationalist or unionist statements doing duty for modern Irish history. There is thus, perhaps, room for any portrayal of the Irish situation that shall discard and discount alike 'the steady and unconscious cruelty', as Hammond well calls it, of English arrogance, temperamental disturbances in Irish writers and the intolerance of the religious sectary. It must be remembered that in many this arrogance, these disturbances and this



intolerance constitute a deflection of judgment that passes far beyond mere bias into the sincerest form of belief. If I have fallen short of this achievement, it has been with malice toward none. The writer of unbiased history is in a hard case: aspiring to be more than human, condemned to be less than readable.

. . . . .

The great libraries and collections, primarily of Dublin but also of London and Ottawa, have furnished material for the study. At the National Library of Ireland, the Lalor papers and O'Donovan papers appeared to have nothing relevant to my purpose. The very large collection of W.S.O'Brien papers is of course richest for the years before 1850, but it provided a few, and occasionally striking, lights upon the emigration in my period and upon the Irish in the United States. The letters of Meagher, Mitchel and O'Gorman to Smith O'Brien are overwhelmingly concerned with preparations for '48 and lamentations on its failure. I familiarised myself with the Larcom papers by preparing a handlist of them for the National Library. They consist mainly, but by no means entirely, of news cuttings. This library has a very large quantity of uncatalogued MS material that is not yet accessible to investigators. The massive collection at the Dublin state paper office would absorb the labours of many months in pursuit of material upon the periphery of emigration; a great deal of <sup>the</sup> evidence for the real extrusive background of Irish emigration lies, for instance in the crime and outrage reports, in that repository. Over and above this, the collection afforded minute evidence upon some specialised aspects of my subject. In quoting documents from the state paper office which reflect discredibly upon anybody whatsoever, I have suppressed surnames. The Public



Record Office of Ireland afforded a little material upon the end of the process of estate clearance which fell within my period and produced an emigration numerically very trifling. The historical collection, which I was privileged to use, of the Dublin Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends contains, besides scarce pamphlets, some curious letters bearing upon Irish distress and emigration. The large MS collection in the care of the Irish Folklore Commission will be difficult to use until the catalogue is more forward; a great deal of the collection is in Irish.

The vast assembly of colonial office and foreign office documents in the Public Record Office of England afford much evidence for the official history of emigration from the United Kingdom; the proportion of this material after 1850 with a specifically Irish reference naturally tends (so far as my researches have gone) to diminish. Those series in the colonial office papers most important for my present subject were as follows.

C.O.42, the documentary basis of Canadian official history, is probably of much less importance for Irish emigration than C.O.384.

C.O.384 (emigration: original correspondence, secretary of state) is the outstanding series for Irish emigration to British territories, although it is much more ample for the period before than after 1851; for the earlier period it was used to great effect by Adams. The earlier volumes, perhaps nos. 1-30 (1817-c.1832), are concerned mainly with Irish emigration. Vol.86, of 1851, is useful for the present purpose, but as early as vols.98-9 (1857) there is a preponderance of material relating to Australia. So far as I was able to discern, from about the point (in 1869) at which British emigration first exceeded Irish the proportion of Irish references in the documents of C.O.384 diminishes.



This circumstance renders doubly unfortunate, for the purpose of the present thesis, the unexplained gap in the series between the years 1857 and 1872. The volumes on either side of the hiatus are in consecutive numbering. Between at least the years 1874 and 1885, also, the colonial office was much preoccupied with the importation of coolie labour from British India to the British West Indies, particularly Trinidad and Jamaica, and this subject, together with material concerning Australia, has much space in the documents, for example in vols.100-58.

Nevertheless, some of the registers of colonial office correspondence for the later years of the period, e.g. Ind. 13387 of 1883-4, and Ind.15551 (outletters on emigration) of 1874-87 record documents giving information on very diverse aspects of Irish and other immigration to Canada. Subsequent registers, Inds.15552-3, of colonial office letters on emigration for the years 1887-96 have very few items relevant either to Canada or Ireland. Similarly, the registers of miscellaneous colonial office correspondence for the period 1887-96 comprised in Inds.15519-21 show a steady diminution, between the earlier and later years, in the amount of Canadian and, particularly, of Irish reference. It is unfortunate that the P.R.O. typescript lists give so little indication of the scope of the registers - e.g. that certain of them are concerned wholly with the British West Indies.

C.O.386/85-6, which are entry books of Emigration Commission outletters relating to North America general, 1860-76, have almost nothing relevant.

In general, while many documents e.g. in C.O.384 are endorsed 'printed for Parliament' and have thus appeared in the parliamentary papers, as have some documents that are not so endorsed, there is a large residue of unprinted material which serves to elucidate points of detail over a



wide range of emigration topics.

F.O.5, the vast series of foreign office correspondence on the United States, includes some 1500 volumes in the period 1851-85. The consular correspondence to be found therein would be of first importance in a detailed study of the Irish dispersal in the U.S.A.; it was not used for the present thesis. There is an American series, complementary in some respects, which though very much smaller would be possibly even more fruitful. This is RG 59, department of state (national archives, Washington, D.C.), comprising thirty-eight volumes of consular despatches from Belfast, Cork, Dublin, Galway and Londonderry between the years 1796 and 1906. This also was not used. I worked in the United States only very briefly, at Harvard University, where the Houghton library has MS notebooks of the late Marcus Lee Hansen.

At the public archives of Canada, in Ottawa, I secured detail from census enumeration sheets, from other MS sources and from pamphlets, relating to the Irish immigration to the province.

Among other collections upon which I drew for printed sources I may mention the Haliday pamphlets and tracts, continued in the series Academy pamphlets (from 1867), of the Royal Irish Academy. These are copious throughout my period, and collectively of importance for modern Irish history; disappointingly few are of direct relevance to emigration. The newspaper collection of the National Library of Ireland is admirable as regards the Irish press in my period; the Redpath library of McGill University, some other repositories in the city of Montreal and the parliament library at Ottawa provided me with nineteenth century Canadian newspapers. Certain of these are now available on microfilm at the National Library of Ireland. Some observat-



ions upon the virtues and pitfalls of newspaper sources occur in the text of this study. The library of Trinity College, Dublin has some curious emigrant guide-books of the period. Like all other workers upon the nineteenth century, I drew heavily on the inexhaustible evidence of the British parliamentary papers. Upon these it may be well to remember Sydney Webb's reservation: 'Every statement by every witness, whatever his qualifications, is accepted as of equal value and enshrined in the blue-book, thus gaining a quite fictitious evidential value for future generations of students.' The statistical material to be derived from the parliamentary papers lies in that sphere wherein they are most safely to be regarded as a primary authority. Unfortunately, the statistical apparatus bearing upon emigration was assembled by more than one department of government, and their findings did not always agree. The statistics of Irish emigration for my period, and particularly for the earlier part, seemed to me at my entry into the subject in a state of formidable confusion. The central statistice office of Ireland afforded help in this technical problem. Since no generally available elucidation of the emigration statistics has appeared hitherto, I may perhaps proceed to a discussion of them here in some detail.

. . . . .

The investigator encounters the difficulties of the emigration statistics when, taking at random the year 1872, he finds that printed official sources provide three distinct figures of the current Irish emigration:

1. 72,763. The source is the last of the series of General reports published by the Emigration Commission (formerly the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission), and it purports to state the number of emigrants of Irish birth,



embarking at United Kingdom ports for places out of Europe, from returns furnished by the emigration and customs officers at the several ports.

2. 78,102. The source is the summary table in the emigration statistics of Ireland for 1901, giving the number of emigrants, natives of Ireland, who left Irish ports in each year since 1 May 1851, from which date the census commissioners collected returns of emigrants at those ports.

3. 78,781. The source is the agricultural statistics of Ireland for 1872, and gives the number of emigrants leaving the Irish ports. The discrepancy between this figure and that in (2) is trifling, and is due to the inclusion of the relatively few persons (679 in that year, and only some 44,000 between 1858 and 1901) belonging to other countries who embarked in Ireland. To consider the relation between (1) and (2), it is in the first place clear that they are concerned with distinct categories of emigrants. It must also be remembered that in this instance, as in so many, the sources upon which the historical investigator draws were not originally compiled for his enlightenment on any specific topic. The material used by the Emigration Commissioners and, after them, by the statistical and commercial department of the Board of Trade, which continued the series of emigration statistics from the cessation of the Commissioners' reports in 1873, was derived from passenger lists furnished by masters of vessels clearing from United Kingdom ports for places outside Europe. The obligation to furnish such lists was imposed by the Passengers Acts, and by their provisions as later embodied in the Merchant Shipping Acts, as part of the machinery devised by the legislature for the protection of emigrant steerage passengers. There was no primary intention of securing a statistical account of emigration.



The masters of vessels carrying cabin passengers only<sup>1</sup> were not obliged to furnish passenger lists, though in practice most, if not all, did so by the end of the century. From 1863, but not previously, the law provided that the passenger lists of ships carrying steerage passengers should include all passengers, cabin as well as steerage.<sup>2</sup> Just as some of the Emigration Commission's figures were probably too low by omission of cabin passengers, so some of the later Board of Trade returns on the basis of customs clearance were probably too high by reason of the growth of tourist traffic. In every year of the period 1892 through 1900, the Board of Trade's figures of Irish emigration were higher than those of the Irish registrar-general. Only from April 1912 was record taken of departures for permanent residence overseas, i.e. emigration and passenger movement were then distinguished.

In this characteristic pattern of changing legislation, of compulsory and quasi-voluntary returns by master mariners (never the best, perhaps, of statisticians) lies much margin for the perpetual inconsistencies, sometimes very considerable, between the emigration returns of the Emigration Commission or the Board of Trade, and the figures collected by the commissioners of the Irish census. The census enumerators, that is the constabulary, were instructed to make a count 'for each passenger ship which may sail from any port within their district, and...by "emigrant" is to be understood a person who leaves Ireland with the intention of settling elsewhere',<sup>3</sup> including Great Britain.

---

<sup>1</sup>Cabin passengers comprised about 14% of the total embarkation at United Kingdom ports in 1883, and about 28% in 1895; see the respective Board of Trade Statistical tables relating to emigration, H.C.1884 (9), lxxxv, and 1896(130), xciii.

<sup>2</sup>Statistical tables relating to emigration and immigration, 1898, p.17, appendix: Memorandum as to the sources of the information, H.C. 1899 (188), cvii.

<sup>3</sup>Census of Ireland, 1881, part II, General report, p.76.



In the labours of every enumerator of emigration the question of 'Irish nativity' must have been an intrusive difficulty reflected, no doubt, in the printed returns.

The Emigration Commissioners raised the point in 1852:

We have not, however, the means of forming a more accurate estimate [of Irish emigration] for past years, because, although the returns to the customs would show the birth-place of each emigrant, they would not distinguish between Irish who are only so by birth and those who had also been resident in their native country.<sup>1</sup>

From 1853 the emigrants' countries of origin were recorded, and the Emigration Commissioners were no longer under the necessity of performing annually a calculation, only to be described as rough-and-ready, whereby nine-tenths (before 1851 the index used was two-thirds) of the emigrants embarking at Liverpool, and one-third of those embarking at the Clyde ports were previously held to be Irish, no account being then taken of the other ports in Great Britain. That these factors could be either constant or in any year statistically accurate is incredible. Even so, the working of the new basis of reckoning, or at least the presentation of its results as illustrated in the Commission's fourteenth report, will scarcely allay the misgivings of the statistical precisian:

The additional resources placed at the command of this department enable us now to ascertain with greater accuracy the actual numbers of Irish who emigrate, and the returns for 1853 show that the whole number returned as Irish was 192,609, to which has to be added a proportion of 20,349 whose birth place is not described.

This calculation yielded a total Irish emigration of 199,392, whereas -

If the same data were adopted as in former years (excluding only the foreign [German] emigration from Liverpool, which is of recent growth, it would give -

---

<sup>1</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 12th General report, 1852, p.10.



9/10ths British emigration from Liverpool to America	158,391
1/3d from the Clyde to ditto.....	3,534
Direct from Ireland.....	33,833
In ships chartered by this Board.....	<u>10,973</u>
	206,731

making a difference of 7,393 = 3.68 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

This is a good illustration of the inherent inconsequence of emigration statistics; the third total being higher by some 7% than the first, which was the one actually used in the returns.

A like, indeed a more alarming example of imprecision may be found in a later report of the Commission. The chief immigration agent at Quebec has returned the United Kingdom emigration to Canada for 1862 as 14,401, whereas the Emigration Commission gives it as 13,277. Of the former figure the Commissioners say:

There is a difference between this number and the number given in the Appendix, No.2, as having sailed from the United Kingdom. It probably arises from omissions in the returns from the Emigration and Customs House Officers, which form the basis of the statement in the Appendix.<sup>2</sup>

The conclusion which emerges is that a definitive total of Irish emigration never was and never can be known. This is of little consequence to the present study, which will be concerned as much with the fluctuations of emigration as with its totals. 1876 saw the inauguration both of a record of emigrants' future permanent residence and, as an annual publication, of the excellently presented emigration statistics of Ireland, with retrospective tables, prepared by the registrar-general for Ireland, and this series will be made the statistical mainstay of the present thesis. From 1 May 1851 the commissioners of the Irish census collected at the ports, although they had no power of compelling returns, a

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 14th General report, 1854, pp.11-12.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 23rd General report, 1863, p.33n.



very detailed statement of emigration.<sup>1</sup> This series has the advantage, as compared with the statistics of the Emigration Commissioners and later the Board of Trade, of enumerating not passengers but only persons leaving Ireland for permanent residence in any other country; and further, it thus avoids including persons of Irish birth but British domicile embarking at British ports, many of whom might more properly be regarded as British emigrants. It is the opinion of the director of the Irish central statistics office that the registrar-general's figures of emigration, though admittedly imperfect, are the best available source for inquiry into the subject. I shall therefore prefer them, wherever they are available, to the Emigration Commission's figures whose disadvantages I have set out. It may be said that a very accurate derived figure of 'net emigration' was furnished for intercensal decades throughout the period (but not annually) by the census commissioners. Even this, however, has the drawback that it throws no light on immigration as offsetting emigration.

The difficulties which beset the search for an agreed total of Irish emigration do not, fortunately, recur with the same urgency in the various analyses, appropriate to the present study, of the respective totals. The Reports of the Emigration Commission and the Irish registrar-general's statistics present for the period an array of material in which the main problem is selection; but, again, the Emigration Commission's figures are for the present purpose much the less valuable in that they are concerned with United Kingdom, not specifically Irish, emigration. In the appendixes to this thesis will therefore be found tables illustrating -

---

<sup>1</sup>Census of Ireland, 1851, part IV, General report, append., p. cxxxv.



(a) as regards the population of Ireland, its town and country distribution at the decennial dates, and its degree of internal migration;

(b) as regards the Irish emigration, its annual amount, its analysis by sexes, age-groups and in relation to the United Kingdom emigration; its intensity in relation to the Irish population, the regional origins of emigrants and their ports of departure. Each table will be referred to in detail in its appropriate place.

. . . . .

I should perhaps point out that I have retained the forms of place-names, e.g. 'Connaught', which were in customary use throughout my period.

I conclude this preface with grateful acknowledgment for illustrative material prepared from my data: to my wife, for the map (append. II, fig. 10); to a friend, Mr F. Rogerson, B. Arch., for the line-chart at p. 131.



The demographic history of the Irish people in Ireland has been very precisely defined for the period 1851-1901 from the registers of their migration. It was easier to count a definite than a migrant population.

### SECTION I

#### The demographic and regional background of the process.

The sources of 1851, in the opinion of a later Irish registrar-general, was the first that results could regard with any confidence. The household inquiries of the grand jury, or the more dangerous enterprises of enumerators who believed they were to be paid by results, gave place to the householder's schedule and the help of the constabulary in completing it. Their labours provided a total population in little over eight millions which manifestly had increased and was decreasing. Recent research suggests that the piling up of Irish population between 1851 and 1861 was less extensive than has hitherto been supposed. According to Connell's revised estimates, the population of Ireland rose from 5,191,000 in 1784 to 6,662,000 in 1851, and from that figure to 8,170,000 according to the 1851 census.

M.J. Thompson, 'Development of the Irish people, a national importance', in *Irish Studies*, 1951, pp. 1-10. On the other hand, M.J. Connell writes 'The population of Ireland: a reliable picture of the growth of the population of Ireland and population in Ireland, 1784-1851', *Irish Studies*, series 2, 11, no. 2, 273, 1961.

M.J. Connell, The population of Ireland, 1784-1851, p. 10.



SECTION I

The demographic and regional background of the process.

It was the fate of the Irish population in the period of review to be the reservoir of an emigration which was the wonder of its age; it is therefore important to consider the demographic history of the stock from which these multitudes were drawn.

The numbers of the Irish people in Ireland have been more precisely defined for the period 1851-1901 than the numbers of their emigrants; it was easier to count a static than a migrant population. The provincial summary of the decennial census from 1841 to 1901, with the all-Ireland totals, will be found, together with the percentage decreases, in appendix I (tables 1,2). The census of 1841, in the opinion of a later Irish registrar-general, was the first whose results he could regard with any confidence.<sup>1</sup> The haphazard inquiries of the grand jury, or the more dangerous enthusiasm of enumerators who believed they were to be paid by results, now gave place to the householder's schedule and the help of the constabulary in completing it. Their labours revealed a total population (a little over eight millions) which manifestly had increased and was increasing. Recent research suggests that the piling up of Irish population between 1781 and 1841 was less intensive than has hitherto been supposed. According to Connell's revised estimate,<sup>2</sup> the population of Ireland rose from 3,191,000 in 1754 to 4,048,000 in 1781, and from that figure to 8,175,000 according to the 1841 census, at

1

Wm.J. Thompson, 'Development of the Irish census, and its national importance', in Stat. Soc. Ire. Jn., xii (Mar. 1911); on the other hand, K.H. Connell considers 'there can be little doubt that the first three censuses [1821, 1831, 1841], give a tolerably accurate picture of the growth of population', ('Land and population in Ireland, 1780-1845', in Econ.Hist. Rev., series 2, ii, no.3, 278: 1950.

<sup>2</sup>K.H.Connell, The population of Ireland, 1780-1845, p.25, tab. 4



the last enumeration before the famine. Comparable figures for England and Wales show an increase of population from an estimated 7,000,000 in 1760 to 9,000,000 at the first census in 1801, and 16,000,000 in 1841. That is to say, there was on this showing very little difference between the Irish and English rates of increase in the period 1781-1841. The Irish rate of increase is historically quite as important as the notorious total of 1841. In so far as the census figures of 1821 and 1831 may be trusted, there was already, before the great migration set in, a significant decline in the rate of increase of the total Irish population, from 14% 1821-31 to 5% 1831-41.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the annual rate of increase in the latter decade, 0.5%, was below that of north-western Europe, which for the decade 1830-40 was 0.8%.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the nineteenth century's advance in statistical processes, the data are lacking whereby to distribute with confidence the decline in the rate of increase of population before the famine amongst the agencies of fertility, mortality and emigration. It may nevertheless be said that although emigration obviously had a great share in causing population decline, so did diminishing fertility. There is no reason to suppose an increase in mortality after 1850, much the reverse with the ending of the famine epidemics. For an Irish birth-rate, which is the crux of the matter, the uncertain evidence of the parish registers was not supplemented by civil registration until 1864.

---

<sup>1</sup>The commissioners of the 1841 census were confident that this was the result of increasing emigration, not of a dwindling excess of births over deaths', K.H. Connell, 'Land and population in Ireland, 1780-1845', in Econ. Hist. Rev. as above, 287 n. But had the commissioners the data for a solid judgment?

<sup>2</sup>A.M. Carr-Saunders, World population, fig.3.



Since then, the Irish birthrate is known to have declined in this manner:

1871-80.....	26.5	per thousand
1881-90.....	23.4	" "
1891-1900.....	23	" "

and it was almost certainly declining from 1850, being thus in advance of the trend for north-western Europe as a whole, in which the birth rate began to fall from 1880. In Ireland this fall was not due, as it was in France, to a decline in specific legitimate fertility, the index of the acceptance of parenthood among the married; an index which in Ireland rose slightly 1861-1901, and began to fall only in 1911. It was due to some extent to a decline, into which no doubt emigration entered, in the percentage in the population of women of childbearing age; to a rise in the average age at marriage for women; and, preponderantly, to a decline in the amount of marriage. The Irish census yields the following information on the changing conjugal condition of the population:<sup>1</sup>

Percentage of population, 17 years of age and upwards, unmarried:

1841...41.2;      1851...44.0;      1861...43.1

Unmarried females 15 years of age and upwards, %:

1871...42.4      1891...47.5  
1881...44.8      1901...49.7

In the earlier decades after 1841, the conjecturally rapid fall in the birth-rate corresponded with a rise in the amount of celibacy; both sets of figures tended to stabilize from 1891. The dearth of marriages was noticed in Ireland in 1852, when a newspaper remarked that there were but few in the south and west, and that

---

<sup>1</sup>Census of Ireland, General reports:

1861, part V, table xxix.      1881, part II, table 82  
1871, " III, " xli.      1901, " II, " 87

The 27th General report of the Emigration Commission (1867) discusses (pp.2-3) the parts played in the decline of Irish population by emigration, etc., but not by deficiency of marriages.



we must not be surprised at this; when we remember that the ...Cottier System has received...a shock from which it can never recover. We shall hear no more, therefore, in our day, of imprudent marriages amongst the Irish Peasantry, or even of [sic] those considerably above them.<sup>1</sup>

A month later, the same journal was saying: 'the Peasantry have not been marrying for the last six or seven years - and of Bastardy...we hear no complaint'.<sup>2</sup> A generation later the opinion was put out 'that people are not marrying because they cannot afford to do so.'<sup>3</sup>

'The low birth-rate in Ireland' says Carr-Saunders<sup>4</sup> 'could only have come about as the result of a conviction that these painful habits were the only alternative to some worse fate'. It is commonly said that the great famine inaugurated a revolution in the Irish social pattern, but so far as the evidence goes it was also the Irish themselves who broke the deadly cycle of pauper reproduction by an abstention from marriage which has made their country a demographic curiosity. To what *precise epoch of the* ~~epoch of the~~ early nineteenth century the appearance of this custom should be assigned is not certain. Here was a supreme example of 'moral restraint', the convenient abstraction by which Malthus re-opened the door to human perfectibility, too precipitately closed in the first edition of his celebrated treatise. It is interesting that the Irish did not resume their former reproductive behaviour when the danger of famine had passed. Widespread famine passed, but emigration remained; and in 1914 Professor Oldham remarked: 'young people...never think of marrying so long as they still hope

---

<sup>1</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 22 May 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 26 June 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Freeman's Journal, 8 September 1887.

<sup>4</sup>Op.cit., p.114.



to be able to emigrate.<sup>1</sup> At the census of 1926, 80% of males aged 25-30 in the Irish Free State were unmarried, and in co. Clare 90% of females aged 20-25. It was in co. Clare that the studies of Arensberg and Kimball disclosed a family pattern long established among the small farmers who dominate Irish demography. This system rested as much upon late and little marriage as upon dispersal, though dispersal there must be: 'The sons and daughters who are not to be portioned at home, in the words of the Luogh residents, "must travel"'.<sup>2</sup>

In their twelfth General report (p.11) the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners said, however conjecturally, that the emigration of 1851 'exceeded any probable increase of the population by nearly 4 to 1', and this was the type of situation, though later modified, which prevailed during the remainder of the century. A solitary year of population increase occurred in 1876-7, adding a mere 9,000 to the numbers in Ireland, but the percentage decline in population during the inter-censal decade in which this occurred was 4.39, and reached the high figure of 9.08 in the following decade, falling again after 1891 (see appendix I, table 2). The interesting speculation arises whether or not, given the almost ascetic tendency to celibacy discussed above, the Irish might have become a nearly stationary population during the nineteenth century, even without significant emigration. Since there was but one Irish county, viz. co. Dublin, with fewer than thirty emigrants per hundred average population of the period 1851-1901 (see appendix II, table 8), there is no means of testing the conjecture by reference

---

<sup>1</sup>Charles H. Oldham, 'Incidence of emigration on town and country life in Ireland', in Stat. Soc. Ire. Jn., xiii.212 (June, 1914).

<sup>2</sup>C.M. Arensberg and S.T. Kimball, Family and community in Ireland, p.148.



to some standard area in Ireland. The census of Ireland for 1936 provides<sup>1</sup> the following information on this point for that part of the country which became the Irish Free State:

Rate of decrease in population, natural increase and net emigration per thousand of average population per annum:

Saorstát Éireann

	Decline in population.	Natural increase.	Net emigration.
1871-81.....	4.6	8.0	12.7
1881-91.....	10.9	5.3	16.3
1891-1901...	7.4	4.5	11.9

The table shows, from 1871, a population which, without emigration, would have increased at a modest rate. But this is to assume, and it is not a safe assumption, a continuance, in the absence of emigration, of the same reproductive behaviour in the population thus enhanced. The speculation is briefly pursued in a table of the 1861 census (as it was also in 1851) 'showing the probable Number of Persons which would have been in Ireland on April 7th, 1861, had Emigration and Immigration been equal during the previous decade, calculated on the Average Number of Births and Deaths in England and Wales'.<sup>2</sup> It is probable that any calculation on that basis was vitiated by the differing pattern of familism in the two islands; the result, for what it was worth, was an estimated Irish population of 7,242,000 against the actual 5,799,000. This table appeared in none of the subsequent Reports; perhaps it was politically too suggestive.

<sup>1</sup>Vol. IX, General report, table 17 (abstract).

<sup>2</sup>Census of Ireland, 1861, part V, General report, table VI.



The number, sex, occupation, age, conjugal condition and regional origin of the emigrants themselves may next be considered in turn.

The total emigration of the period, according to the registrar-general, was 3,881,032. This monstrous figure should not distract attention from the equally important rate of emigration per cent of population from year to year (see appendix II, table 7), in so far as this can be ascertained. After the decline of the famine exodus, the striking feature of this rate is its comparative immobility. Except in peak years of emigration (e.g. 1863, 1883) it is seldom far from 1% annually of the Irish population. The average of the annual rates of 1876-1901 was 1.2%; the average emigration rate of the years 1936-46 was 0.6% of the population of Éire,<sup>1</sup> during a period which included three years with an inward balance of passenger movement, for reasons irrelevant to Irish policy. It seems that we have here one of the great constants of modern Irish history. The annual emigration figures, as distinct from the emigration rate, show an interesting and to some extent cyclical fluctuation which can best be examined in a section of the thesis correlating these figures with some other measurable processes in Irish history (pp. 131 - 152 below).

The more meticulous inquirer may wish to qualify the emigration figures in sundry ways for which the evidence is not always to be had. No count, I believe, was ever attempted of the multiple emigrant, who might come and go several times; and of a more important figure, the returned emigrant who did not re-emigrate, the reckoning was at first unsatisfactory and later, for the purposes of this thesis, unreveal-

---

<sup>1</sup>Ireland, statistical abstract 1947-8, section II, table 7.



ing. In 1877 the Board of Trade observed: '...the record of immigration [to the United Kingdom], not yet complete, was most imperfect before 1870, and hardly existed before 1860',<sup>1</sup> and the figures were not broken down to show the Irish returning from North America. That the total may in fact have been not inconsiderable is suggested by such vague statements as that 30% of the persons entering the United States between 1821 and 1924 'are believed to have gone home again'.<sup>2</sup>

As regards the distribution of the emigration between the sexes, here also the gross figures are less instructive than some of the analyses that may be attempted. Table 3 of appendix II shows by sexes the yearly emigration for almost the whole period. The totals for 1851-1901 (table 4) show a very small excess of males (2,021,471) over females (1,859,561). The high proportion of women in the Irish emigration, as compared with that from England and Scotland, was often noticed. Towards the beginning of the period it was pointed out, of the United Kingdom as a whole, that 'the number of males who emigrate is always considerably larger than the number of females';<sup>3</sup> and towards the end, that the Irish emigration, compared with the English and Scots, had a larger proportion of women, and a smaller of children.<sup>4</sup> The numbers, and occasional excess, of women were thought to indicate a peculiar urgency of emigration.<sup>5</sup> The time was

---

<sup>1</sup>Emigration and immigration from and into the United Kingdom in the year 1876, with report to the Board of Trade thereon, p.3, H.C. 1877 (5), lxxxv.

<sup>2</sup>W.D. Forsyth, Myth of the open spaces, p.5.n.

<sup>3</sup>Emigration Commission, 18th General report, 1858, p.13.

<sup>4</sup>Statistical tables relating to emigration and immigration, 1885, p.8, H.C. 1886, (3-sess.1), lxxi.

<sup>5</sup>Financial relations commission, 1895, Q.9502. Royal commission on the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland, 1895, Q. 9502.



indeed one of distress in Ireland as well as in North America; but at this late stage in the emigration process the balance of extrusion and attraction is very difficult to determine.

Something may be learned from alterations in the male-female ratio of emigrants throughout the period. During the earlier years, female emigration exceeded male only in 1852, 1853 and 1855, and then by small amounts. These figures, particularly of 1853, probably reflect the winding-up of the famine exodus; the huge estimated totals of emigrant remittances in the years 1852-4 suggest that earlier male emigrants were then sending for their dependants. The later eighteen-sixties saw a rather high proportion (in relation to the ratio for the whole period) of male emigrants. If the distribution of the emigrants by age as well as sex could be ascertained for those years, the young male might appear as the typical emigrant during troubled times in the country of extrusion. On the other hand, the high ratios of female emigration from 1893 onwards show that female emigration persisted more successfully than male during the North American depression of the eighteen-nineties. In 1893 financial collapse in the United States followed agricultural depression, and by 1894 America had four millions unemployed. In 1892 Irish male and female emigration were equal; by 1894 the male emigration had fallen off by 10,000, the female only by 5,000 from the 1892 figures, and female emigration exceeded male for every year of the period 1893-1901.

The sex-distribution of the emigration by provinces appears in table 4 of appendix II. The male percentages of the provincial emigration, derivable from this table, are as follows:



Munster 55.2    Ulster 55.2    Leinster 52.6    Connaught  
47.5.

That is to say, the only province whose male-female ratio of emigrants differed markedly from Ireland's as a whole was Connaught, with a rather low proportion of male emigrants. This was the province par excellence of migratory agricultural labour. In 1880 Connaught furnished 18.6 migratory labourers per thousand population, compared with 2.8 from Ulster and 0.7 from Leinster and Munster.<sup>1</sup> For earlier years there are no available statistics. There is no separate record of female migratory labourers; in the Report for 1880 women were said almost to have given up the practice, although nearly 8,000 had so migrated in 1841.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, there were gangs, some years later, of migrant female Irish labour in Scotland, under Irish 'gaffers'.<sup>3</sup> It may however be concluded that periodic migration was for many men of Connaught, and in a greater degree than for women, an acceptable alternative, in an economic and perhaps a wider sense, to full emigration.

. . . . .

Reference was made above to the superior persistence of female emigration from Ireland during the hard years in the eighteen-ninties. Perhaps the record of these years should be regarded rather as a deficiency of male, than an excess of female emigration. In any case it must probably be related to an apparently insatiable demand in North America, manifest throughout the nineteenth century, for domestic servants. A letter in the press put the matter thus: 'Young Irishwomen, "Biddie", as they are jeeringly termed,

---

<sup>1</sup>Agricultural statistics of Ireland, Report and tables relating to migratory agricultural labourers, 1880, table I [C.2809], H.C., 1881, xciii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.12.

<sup>3</sup>Royal commission on labour, 1893-4, vol.IV, part IV, Report...upon the poor law union of Westport (Mayo), para.46.



felt [tend?] the unwholesome cockroach infested kitchens of half the United States.<sup>1</sup> At the census of Montreal city in 1861, in districts 35, 51 and 52, comprising parts of St Lawrence and St Ann's wards, the occupational category which predominated among those of Irish nativity, and either sex, was that of 'servant', with its variants of waiter, butler, coachman, cook, housemaid.<sup>2</sup> This is a type of evidence which must be accepted not without reserve; the occasion of the enumerator's visit, to judge from modern experience with the census, offered much scope to the Irish (or any other) imagination, and a man's calling might in his absence have to be assessed by his wife, or worse, by his landlady. It is evidence none the less a little surprising, even from a restricted area, since the great majority of male immigrants arriving at Quebec and Montreal described themselves as common labourers; the transition from this condition to a butler's was, in the circumstances of the time and place, perhaps less improbable than might be thought. Record was kept in Ireland of the occupations of Irish emigrants from 1876, and the only numerically significant categories were, among the males, 'labourers', and among the females 'servants', 'unspecified (including wives and children)'.<sup>3</sup> In conversation in Ireland in 1852, Nassau Senior learned that 'this emigration...has its inconveniences. I cannot keep a servant. The higher the wages the quicker I lose them: they go as soon as they have saved the passage-money.'<sup>4</sup> Where the year's wages were paid in a lump in

---

<sup>1</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 19 May 1874.

<sup>2</sup>Census of the Canadas, 1860-1, Montreal city enumeration sheets, Public archives of Canada.

<sup>3</sup>Emigration statistics of Ireland, 1876-1901, passim.

<sup>4</sup>Nassau Wm Senior, Journals, conversations and essays relating to Ireland, ii.53.



spring, this coincided with the opening of the normal emigration season. Later by many years, the Congested Districts Board stemmed the tide of girl emigrants from Eiris, somewhat surprisingly, with classes in lace and crochet, but the civil war in Ireland set it running again.<sup>1</sup>

Boards of Guardians in Ireland, as at Clonmel,<sup>2</sup> Ennis<sup>3</sup> and elsewhere<sup>4</sup> in the early 1860's, and private benefactors, habitually sent to North America, with little misgiving, groups of needy girls and women most of whom were quickly employed as domestic servants; to be sure, the total thus assisted was a mere fraction of the whole emigration. In 1869 the only persons to whom (in Australia) Victoria and (in New Zealand) the province of Canterbury would grant assisted passages were prospective domestic servants;<sup>5</sup> in 1883, a year of heavy emigration, the Beaver Line (Liverpool, Queenstown, New York) was offering assisted passages to female domestic servants.<sup>6</sup> To the housewife and the indigenous hired girl of the United States and the colonies, housework was in equal measure repugnant.

In sum, the typical Irish immigrant to North America arrived as a potential labourer or as a potential female domestic servant; in a crisis such as that of the 1890's, the survival value of the latter was the higher of the two.

The census commissioners of 1871 placed an ominous interpretation upon the male excess of nearly 90,000 in the

---

<sup>1</sup>William L. Micks, Account of...the Congested Districts Board for Ireland, 1891-1923, p.78.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration Commission, 22nd General report, 1862, p.34.

<sup>3</sup>Cork Reporter, quoted Freeman's Journal, 26 May 1863.

<sup>4</sup>Emigration Commission, 23rd General report, 1863, p.35.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 30th General report, 1870, p.6.

<sup>6</sup>Cork Examiner, 7 April 1883.



emigration of the preceding decade:

Let emigration ebb or flow, let it be at flood or neap, the pronounced and settled tendency of the movement is to abstract in yearly increasing proportions the elements of industrial activity and of military strength - the productive and protective forces of society...<sup>1</sup>

Their vaticinations are interesting but were in the event needless. The balance of sexes in the population remaining in Ireland was of course not disturbed by an emigration whose male and female components were in the long run almost equal, and the male proportion of the population, which in 1841 was 49.2% was 49.3% in 1901.<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

The statistical examination of the ages and conjugal condition of the emigrants may be conveniently unified. Detailed figures of percentage age-distribution are available only from 1876 (appendix II, table 5), and of conjugal condition from 1883 (table 6). The earlier figures of the Emigration Commission distinguish conjugal condition, and number of children, merely by ports of embarkation and not by the emigrants' nationality.

A combination in table 5 of the percentages for age-groups 15-25 and 25-35 reveals the true core of the emigration as regards age: together, these groups accounted for a proportion of the emigration which never, during the years in question, fell below 66%, and never but once after 1887 failed to exceed 80%. This is probably a truer statistical picture than that provided by the figures reproduced below, which in the age-group '20 and under 45' tend to mask the importance in the emigration process of the very young adult, and often the very young female adult, which persists to the

---

<sup>1</sup>Census of Ireland, 1871, part III, General report, p.191.

<sup>2</sup>Ibidem, 1861, part V, General report, table VIII; 1901, part II, General report, table I (abstract).



present day:

Percentage age-distribution of Irish emigrants.<sup>1</sup>

Ages	1861-70	1871-80	1881-90	1891-1900
under 10	10.8	10.4	9.7	5.7
10 and " 20	14.4	17.6	24.5	19.1
20 " " 45	65.8	67.2	61.3	71.5
45 and upwards	4.5	4.7	4.4	3.7
unspecified	4.4*	0.1	0.1	

\*approximate

Nevertheless, what may be designated the 'full adults', i.e. the 20-30 age-group, were not inconsiderable in the emigration, and increased after 1876 in the following manner:<sup>2</sup>

	%
1878	46.0
1881	49.9
1887	50.1
1893	54.8
1899	65.5

The Irish emigration of these years was in fact, what emigration has probably always been, preponderantly a movement of unmarried young men and women. Table 6 shows the single among the emigrants much outnumbering the married, in either sex, and the proportion in each sex of single to married rises throughout the period 1883-1901. Single women outnumber single men absolutely after 1892. This situation may be seen as a failing emigration among the married and widowed, particularly in the years of economic stress in North America. In the very chary measure in which it ever actively promoted Irish emigration, the British government tried to foster family emigration. In reality, the Irish emigration of the latter part of the century was not, so far as can be ascertained, one of family groups.

<sup>1</sup>Census of Ireland, General reports: 1871, table lxxxvi (abstract); 1881, p.75; 1891, p.73; 1901, p.73.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration statistics of Ireland, 3.a. (abstract).



Of this situation, perhaps the best single index is the presence or otherwise of children, given the high fertility of such marriages as occurred; and the comparative absence of children in the Irish emigration was noted by contemporaries. In the figures tabulated above, drawn from such statistics as are available on the subject from 1861, it may be seen that the proportion of young children in the emigration declined, at first steadily and after 1890 sharply. The detail of these figures, as available for the period 1876-1901 in table 5 (appendix II), elaborates the tendency: the three age-groups under 15 therein distinguished decline, though slowly, during the period. There was however a notable deviation in 1883, a year of heavy emigration, when children made up no less than 20% of the total.

Correlating to some extent with this decline is a decline, not in itself uniform, in the proportion of married and widowed women in the total emigration. They made up 9.5% in 1883, 7.4% in 1901 (see table 6); and, as shown in the same table, the gross number of married and widowed men is even lower than that of married and widowed women in every year of the period 1883-1901. There is no means of ascertaining or conjecturing the amount, if any, of kinship between the single adults and the married, except to notice that any considerable amount of such kinship would postulate a larger proportion of persons in the age-groups over 45 than in fact appears (table 5). Taken together, these figures and inferences indicate a proportion of family groups which, at its height in 1883, was probably little higher than one third of the emigration, and declined thereafter. It must, however, be admitted that 'family group' is a somewhat imprecise expression, especially in relation to



Irish countryfolk. In evidence before the select committee on Passengers' Act an emigration officer, Friend, said: '...there are many single females, but they are all more or less attached to families, either cousins or relatives or friends.'<sup>1</sup> The same loose meaning should perhaps be ascribed to 'family' in reports of 1852 and 1853, from counties Wexford,<sup>2</sup> Clare<sup>3</sup> and Galway<sup>4</sup> which speak of 'whole families' on the move.

Lastly, from the statistical evidence available in this rather brief period, the unmarried young woman emerges as the most persistent of the Irish emigrant types in the face of adversity in the country of attraction, a characteristic already noted in comparing the sexes in general as emigrants. This might foster the conjecture that she emigrated in search not so much of prosperity in the abstract as of a husband in particular. If comparable figures were available throughout the half-century, the unmarried young man would perhaps predominate equally during times of adversity in the country of extrusion. The excess of male over female single emigrants in 1883 was numerically nearly the exact equal of the excess of female over male in 1894 (table 6); a fortuitous but not meaningless figure. From at least the time of the Devon commission, it was frequently remarked that the emigration took off the young and able-bodied, leaving their dependants a burden upon the country. In the early 1850's the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission was selecting persons in Ireland for the assisted emigration to Australia, or rather, restraining the import-

---

<sup>1</sup>Report from the select committee on Passengers' Act, 1851, Q.4365.

<sup>2</sup>Wexford Guardian, quoted Dublin Evening Post, 20 April 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Clare Journal, quoted Nation, 2 October 1852.

<sup>4</sup>Tuam Herald, quoted Londonderry Standard, 24 February 1853.



unity of the numbers who wished so to emigrate; the Commission preferred families, and moreover families in which females exceeded males.<sup>1</sup> In a parliamentary debate of 1870, the opinion emerged that emigration by families would be a desirable measure not merely for Ireland, but for Britain itself, now newly haunted by redundant population; the view was even put out that money could as well be advanced to English colonists as to Irish tenants for land purchase,<sup>2</sup> an early and interesting attempt, which will be adverted to later, to co-ordinate thought upon the problems of the two islands. R.R. Torrens advocated the assisted emigration of middle-aged farm labourers and their families,<sup>3</sup> not perhaps the most hopeful species of emigrant from the overseas standpoint, and stated that £30 would transport to Canada two parents 'over forty years of age' and four children under ten;<sup>4</sup> he did not enter into the question of their subsequent fate. In 1880, and again in 1883, the earl of Dunraven advocated assisted family emigration from Ireland,<sup>5</sup> and in the latter instance merely echoed so weighty an authority as the Chief Secretary, who would have liked to see family emigration if not assisted emigration. Trevelyan said that 'there was much more hope that if a whole family emigrated the land left would be added to the neighbouring farm', and claimed that this beneficent process did in fact occur.<sup>6</sup> On the same occasion

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cxxi.894 (21 May 1852); Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 15th General report, 1855, p.20.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, cxcix. 1017 (1 March 1870).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1004.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1009.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., cclv. 605 (9 August 1880); cclxxviii.859 (23 April 1883).

<sup>6</sup>Hansard, cclxxvii, 2029-30 (10 April 1883).



he praised the Tuke scheme of emigration as embodying the government's ideas. James Hack Tuke was from 1880 to 1896 the formulant of the government's Irish emigration policy, such as it was. In his three seasons' work in the west of Ireland from 1882 to 1884, he did succeed in shipping a fair proportion of families among the 9,000 souls he sent to North America (see pp. 232-3). To this extent he upheld his principle that it cost no more to help a hundred families overseas than to keep five in the workhouse - but the Tuke emigration was only a fraction of the total emigration of those years. In evidence before the Cairns committee in 1882, Tuke,<sup>1</sup> King-Harman<sup>2</sup> and Vere Foster<sup>3</sup> concurred in advocating the assisted emigration of whole families, where possible; despite the greater responsibility and cost involved,<sup>4</sup> and the hostility of many priests to family emigration.<sup>5</sup>

Oldham thought individual emigration more damaging to the parent country than family emigration,<sup>6</sup> and individual emigration certainly was, and is, a form of natural selection to the advantage of the country of attraction. Governmental and other aspirations, as was observed above, were thus in the direction of family emigration; but they were largely belied by the facts.

. . . . .  
The distribution of the emigrants according to their

---

<sup>1</sup>Second report from the select committee of the house of lords on land law (Ireland), 1882, QQ. 7669, 7680-3, 7695-7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Q. 7513.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Q. 7551.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., QQ. 7698-7702.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., QQ. 7763-4.

<sup>6</sup>Chas. H. Oldham, 'Incidence of emigration on town and country life in Ireland', in Stat. Soc. Ire. Jn., xiii. 214 (June, 1914).



regional origins may next be considered; it presents baffling but also significant problems.

From 1851 to 1901 Ulster was always the most, and Connaught the least populous of the provinces; Munster and Leinster were roughly equal, Leinster drawing ahead of Munster only from 1891 (see appendix I, table 1). From pre-famine times, the distribution of the Irish population as between the north-east and south-west of the country took the following course:

Population in thousands

	<u>1841</u>	<u>1901</u>
Leinster and Ulster.....	4,400	2,700
Munster and Connaught.....	3,800	1,700

That is to say, the centre of gravity of the population was by 1901 even more firmly than hitherto fixed in the north and east. Men and women had shrunk away not specifically and solely from the solitude and poverty of the Atlantic fringe - some of that fringe was in 1901, as it remains, a 'congested' area; the depopulation of other parts of the south-west which, one should think, offered a good life, if a small livelihood, to any content to live on the land contributed no less to the growing predominance of the north and east. Population was moving in the direction of town life, of industrialism and of the busy communications between Ireland, Great Britain and the European mainland which draw Ireland back from the Atlantic negation.

Two processes were here at work, over and above any consideration of differential regional fertility. Internal Irish migration deserves a much wider treatment than could be accorded in the present thesis, which is



concerned with the dominant of the two processes, emigration, or the major part of it, overseas. The question was not, of course, one of absolute increase of population, by migration or otherwise, in the north and east, since all four provinces were decreasing in population; but they decreased at different rates. Thus, if one eliminates from the above table Leinster and Munster, offsetting their continuing equality in gross population, there remain Ulster and Connaught, and the differing rates of decrease in the two provinces are significant. For Ulster this rate was 33.8% between 1841 and 1901, but for Connaught it was 54.3%, and this was the measure, to be discerned not only in Ireland, in which a mainly peasant way of life lost ground to a mainly urban one. Overriding the internal distribution of population losses was the absolute loss of population in Ireland, outstanding among the west European countries. Concealed beneath the bald percentages which record Ulster's superior tenacity of numbers over Connaught's or Munster's was the myriad-threaded pattern of personal choices and needs, a Belfast mill instead of a New England mill, or 'Philadelphia in the morning' instead of either, which is the stuff of emigrant history.

Table 8 of appendix II shows the emigration for the period 1851-1901 from each Irish province and county, together with ratios to the average population of each district which provide an index, comparable in utility with Kuczynski's net reproduction rate, of regional intensities of emigration. From this table it may be seen that the gross emigration in the period was heaviest, not from the unfruitful wastes of Connaught, but from Munster, which also suffered the heaviest intensity of



emigration (97.9 emigrants per hundred average population). Connaught, however, provided the second highest intensity (75.8), and the third and fourth were found in Ulster (61.3) and Leinster (50.9) respectively. It should be observed that the emigration intensities and the figures of gross emigration are not correlative, although for each year of the period ~~of~~ 1892 through 1901 Munster had in fact the highest total emigration of the four provinces, and the remaining three followed in the order designated by the provincial intensities referred to.<sup>1</sup> In earlier years the situation was otherwise. For the decennium 1861-70 the average annual emigration per province was as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Munster.....	33,697
Ulster.....	22,238
Leinster.....	16,492
Connaught.....	12,558

Thereafter, Munster lost its bad eminence in the provincial list to Ulster, which had the heaviest emigration of the four provinces in each year from 1875 through 1883, excepting 1880 and 1882. This period included the years of depression in British industry, 1876-8, to which Ulster, or at least urban Ulster, was perhaps as responsive as was non-industrial Ireland to the potato blight and bad harvest of 1879, following which Munster's emigration exceeded Ulster's in 1880.

The emigration from Ulster, a peculiar among Irish provinces, deserves further examination in the present connection. There was very considerable emigration from Ulster in the period 1851-1901, including a quarter of a million souls from co. Antrim. This belies the impression which is sometimes held that Ulster's only significant contributions to emigration were two, namely the Scotch-Irish emigration of the

---

<sup>1</sup>See appendix II, table 9, for figures, available annually from 1875, of total emigration by provinces.

<sup>2</sup>Census of Ireland, 1871, part III, General report, p.193 (abstract).



eighteenth century, before the wars precluded nearly all immigration into North America, and again that of the years 1815 to 1835. Nassau Senior spoke in 1852 of Ulster as densely populated but with no emigration owing to the prosperity of handloom weaving.<sup>1</sup> This was an unfortunate year for such a pronouncement from a political economist. Not only was cottage industry in Ulster doomed by the advance of the factories, but the famine had shaken 'the agricultural prop which had enabled domestic industry to defy the progress of machinery. The end of the struggle which had begun with the building of the first cotton mill at Whitehouse [1784] was in sight.'<sup>2</sup> The ruin which this process had begun was for many cottagers completed by the cotton famine of 1862-3, and emigration was swelled thereby. In any case, Senior was contradicted by an Irish newspaper, which said that in spite of increasing prosperity in Ulster, excepting Donegal and part of Cavan, there was an 'epidemic' (a most significant word) of emigration from Ulster to Australia.<sup>3</sup> This statement is substantiated by the considerable embarkations, mostly of Ulster emigrants, at Belfast and Londonderry between 1851 and 1855.<sup>4</sup> Smith, the emigration officer at Londonderry, said in 1851 that most of the emigrants at his station came from Donegal, but also from Tyrone, Fermanagh and co. Londonderry, and that about three-fourths of the embarkation were Catholics.<sup>5</sup> There is unfortunately no official record of the religion of emigrants from which to develop and generalise this information. In 1873 the Irish Times<sup>6</sup> inquired the reason for the recent

---

<sup>1</sup>Nassau Wm. Senior, Journals, conversations and essays relating to Ireland, ii. 56.

<sup>2</sup>E.R.R. Green, The Lagan valley, 1800-50, p.160.

<sup>3</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 10 June 1852.

<sup>4</sup>Census of Ireland, 1851, part VI, General report, table XIII; and see below, pp. 280.

<sup>5</sup>Report from the select committee on Passengers' Act, 1851, QQ. 5627, 5749.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted Limerick Chronicle, 17 June 1873.



heavy emigration from Ulster, which (it alleged) provided nearly half the emigrants of 1872. The Times's explanation was that small farms in Ulster had declined in the previous decade, and that in 1872 potatoes and flax failed. 'It cannot be denied that the new land act aids the work of depopulation...The weak, instead of being cast out, are sold out, are bought out' - a somewhat oversimplified reading of the Act of 1870. It might in some respects be thought surprising that Ulster's intensity of emigration during the whole period remained so relatively low as it did. A witness before the Chelmsford committee explained that the Ulster tenant-farmer was well-placed for emigrating:

The Ulster tenant is more independent in his mind as well as his circumstances, in my opinion, than the other tenants throughout the country; he will not squat down on a small portion of land, he would rather emigrate, and generally does emigrate to Canada; and by the sale of his tenant-right he has the means of going and taking his family with him, whereas in the poorer parts of the country one member of the family emigrates first and then sends money to bring another, and so they bring them out by instalments. The Ulster tenant in consequence of having this price of his tenant-right can emigrate in a favourable way with his family altogether.<sup>1</sup>

This was an advantage which spread to other parts of Ireland when in these too there was a tenant-right to sell.<sup>2</sup> In Ulster the cottage industrialist, also, was thought to have resources of emigration denied to others; thanks to hand-weaving, 'the people from the county Antrim who would want to emigrate can always find the means of doing so themselves.'<sup>3</sup>

Leinster maintained a low, and from 1880 the lowest place in the provincial figures of emigration for 1875-1901. Connaught was peculiarly ravaged by the famine exodus, and the tide was still running, if with diminishing force, in 1852 and 1853.

---

<sup>1</sup>Report from the select committee of the house of lords on the Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870 (hereafter cited as Chelmsford committee), Q.391.

<sup>2</sup>Second report from the select committee of the house of lords on land law (Ireland) (hereafter cited as Cairns committee, II), 1882, Q.7520.

<sup>3</sup>First ditto, 1882, Q.3164.



The Galway Mercury<sup>1</sup> described the 'poor labouring classes in this part of Connaught' assembling to the number of three hundred fortnightly and holding a sixpenny lottery, the prize being a passage to America and a little landing money. In the Loughrea-Ballinasloe area two out of every three houses were said to be closed up, 'and the inmates gone either to America, the workhouse, or the grave.'<sup>2</sup> The Tuam Herald<sup>3</sup> stated that 'the stream of emigration from Mayo and Galway still continues to flow'. By 1861 Connaught was lowest in the list of provincial emigration figures, and so remained until 1879, returning to the second place which its rather high intensity figure might seem to indicate only in 1892.

A too nice comparison of gross emigration figures by historical regions is apt to be arbitrary, fruitless and even misleading. Many of the county boundaries, still more the provincial boundaries, were probably quite unimportant as determinants of a higher or lower emigration rate. Something however may be learned from a map, such as no. 10 of appendix II, that shows the twelve counties with higher intensity of emigration than the average (72.5 per hundred population of the period 1851-1901) for Ireland, and the six counties with the lowest intensity. These counties were as follows:

Emigration intensity per hundred average population, 1851-1901<sup>4</sup>

<u>High</u>		<u>Low</u>	
county Clare.....	110.0	county Wexford.....	54.6
Kerry.....	108.8	Louth.....	51.8
Cork.....	99.8	Down.....	47.6
Tipperary..	93.8	Kildare.....	45.0
Limerick...	92.8	Wicklow.....	38.3
Longford...	89.9	Dublin.....	26.8
Waterford..	84.2		
Cavan.....	83.9		
Galway.....	82.1		
Leitrim....	81.6		
Roscommon..	76.1		
King's.....	73.3		

<sup>1</sup>Quoted Dublin Evening Post, 20 April 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 18 May 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted Londonderry Standard, 24 February 1853.

<sup>4</sup>Emigration statistics of Ireland for 1901, table III.



It may be noted that the 'high' list includes only one Ulster county, and that the southernmost. Mayo, with an intensity of 70.2, was almost certainly preserved from a considerably higher intensity by the prevalence of migratory agricultural labour, mainly to Great Britain but also, to a very small extent, elsewhere in Ireland. Donegal (intensity 58.1) probably felt the same influence; on the other hand, Roscommon and Leitrim, with high intensity of emigration, had also around 1880 rather more than 1% of their population in the migratory labour reserve.<sup>1</sup> Between that year and 1895 the proportion of migratory labour fell away in Leitrim, but hardly at all in Roscommon.<sup>2</sup>

The admirable regional surveys in Freeman's standard geography of Ireland<sup>3</sup> may be closely perused without yielding any discernible principle, based for instance on modern farm sizes or land use, applicable with uniformity to the whole area of high emigration intensity. As regards farm sizes, there is, to be sure, a tendency for medium rather than small farms (that is, for farms of over 30 acres) to predominate to-day in some zones of heavy emigration, for instance in Clare, Kerry and west Cork, Tipperary, Limerick. This indicates perhaps nothing more than reduced pressure of population per acre - a result or concomitant of emigration, not a cause. If we turn to the question of land use in what were the emigration zones, the matter is riddled with anomalies. The only generalisation to be ventured is that the areas of Ireland having to-day considerable tillage were mainly, but by no means entirely, outside the main emigration zones of 1851-1901.<sup>4</sup> But the growth of arable

---

<sup>1</sup>Agricultural statistics of Ireland, Report and tables relating to migratory agricultural labourers, 1880, pp. 8, 12, [C.2809], H.C. 1881, xciii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1895, p.5, [C.7957], H.C. 1896, xcii.

<sup>3</sup>T.W. Freeman, Ireland, its physical, historical, social and economic geography.

<sup>4</sup>Op.cit., fig.38.



cropping in east co. Waterford did not save the county as a whole from heavy emigration, although it is true that Waterford is and always was mainly a pasture area. Counties such as Longford and Limerick, which for a century past have had a high proportion of improved land in crop and pasture, suffered not markedly less intensity of emigration than Clare, which has shown the same tendency to abandon land as some other western counties. Again, in the Suir, Nore and Barrow basins, Tipperary and Kilkenny counties have alike had at least 80% of improved land for the past century; Tipperary's emigration rate was 93.8, Kilkenny's 67.2. Agriculturally, Mayo and Donegal are comparable, with small subsistence farming and high local densities of population; yet the two counties show such differing emigration rates as were noted above.

In the Westmeath-Longford lowland why are two such different emigration rates as 63.1 and 89.9 found side by side? The area which to-day has the smaller farms, Longford, had the heavier emigration - reversing a tendency which was hopefully postulated above. In the Meath-Kildare 'fattening belt', why Meath with emigration at 67.6, Kildare 45.0?

A repetition of this kind of non sequitur might drive the investigator to desperate generalisations about rich and poor counties, did he not reflect that both Limerick, a 'rich' county, and Clare, a 'poor' one, are in the 90-plus group of emigration intensities for the period. In Kerry, on the other hand, there is a closer correlation between declining population and poverty than in other parts of western Ireland. Whatever the real facts, contemporaries firmly believed that the greatest emigration was not from the poorest counties; it was generally implicit that this state of affairs was to be regretted. James Hack Tuke, a cool observer of the problem over many years, wrote in 1882 that for the past twenty-eight years the



more prosperous Irish counties had contributed the larger share of emigration, 'want of funds being, no doubt, the cause of this anomaly.'<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Dublin Evening Post commented<sup>2</sup> in 1875 that the greatest emigration was not from the poorest counties; during the period 1861-71 Tipperary, Meath, Kilkenny, Roscommon and Limerick, 'noted for rich soils', had yielded more emigrants than Mayo, Galway, Kerry. This assertion, typically imprecise, deserves examining. Very possibly the five 'rich' counties did provide a larger gross emigration than the three 'poor' ones, but there is little meaning in the newspaper's strictures, or in Tuke's comment, unless some kind of county-for-county reckoning is implied. Striking a somewhat arbitrary balance between the emigration from Tipperary-Meath-Kilkenny and from Mayo-Galway-Kerry, for a period (1851-71) for which the figures are conveniently summarised,<sup>3</sup> one has the following result:

<u>Total emigration 1851-71 from</u>	<u>average annual rate per thousand population.</u>
I. county Tipperary...128,337	25.9
Meath..... 38,854	17.7
Kilkenny.... 46,348	18.7
<u>213,539</u>	
II. county Mayo..... 56,813	11.2
Galway..... 89,596	16.6
Kerry..... 95,152	23.7
<u>241,561</u>	

Here, then, is the poorer group of counties providing, over a span of twenty years, a larger body of emigrants, though not greatly larger, than the richer group. To this extent the contemporary theorists are disproved, in so far as the question is amenable to proof. It is significant that the counties in group I had the higher rates of emigration in relation to

---

<sup>1</sup>J. H. Tuke, 'Ought emigration from Ireland to be assisted?', in Contemporary Review, xli.701 (April, 1882).

<sup>2</sup>29 March 1875

<sup>3</sup>Census of Ireland, 1871, part III, General report: Summary tables, no 38.



population, i.e. the higher intensities of emigration. Did these engender as it were a climate of emigration which was more decisive than any statistics in moulding opinion?

However that may be, if the gross emigration from groups I and II is compared through the period 1876-1901, for which annual figures are available,<sup>1</sup> the preponderance of emigrants from group II becomes more and more marked. The emigration from group II exceeds that from group I in each year, and increasingly from 1880. I have not, it is true, found references to deficient emigration from poor counties in this section of my period, apart from Tuke's evidently too random comment.

Nevertheless the regional inconsistencies in emigration remain, and they seem inimical to any easy explanation of the process as related to a precise area; indeed the more the field of inquiry is spatially delimited, the greater becomes the difficulty of interpretation. Some aspects of Freeman's patient regional research make this abundantly clear. Speaking of the uneven rate of decrease of population from one area to another in west Connaught, he says this 'remains a puzzling feature of the region and one of the many possible explanations is the choice of the potential emigrants themselves.'<sup>2</sup> Of Donegal he says:

over 200,000 people have left Donegal in a hundred years and the loss has been spread through the whole county with no possible correlation between the relative wealth or poverty of the different districts and the rate of migration, for the richer east has lost as severely as the poorer west.<sup>3</sup>

The same phenomenon has been observed within co. Mayo.

From this impasse of detail a return may be made to the map of emigration intensities (appendix II, no. 10). This

<sup>1</sup>Emigration statistics of Ireland, 1876-1901.

<sup>2</sup>Freeman, op. cit., p.437.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p.480; and see the same author's 'Congested districts of western Ireland', in Geographical Journal, xxxiii, no.1 (Jan., 1943).



simplified portrayal of the whole Irish emigration in the half-century does perhaps yield one principle, if by such a name may be dignified an exceedingly obvious consideration: it is the principle of contiguity. No county of higher than average intensity of emigration is isolated from its fellows. Contemporaries spoke occasionally of an 'epidemic' of emigration. The map shows a contagion, of strongest hold in the counties Clare, Kerry and Cork, advancing thence north-eastwards to the outskirts of Ulster. Some light on the process of transmission may be cast by later sections of the present thesis.

## SECTION II

### The correlations of the emigration.



The correlations of the emigration.

During the past century of the emigration process, there is considerable difficulty in regarding these movements of Irish history as a whole. The emigration is a result of many other Irish questions, and the problem is to separate from the evidence the complex of factors which may be called extrinsic. This is all the more true the obvious extrinsic force of the general factor of the year 1845, extracted. It is therefore necessary to consider a picture of the

SECTION II

The correlations of the emigration.

having a better knowledge of the emigration process, it is properly assessed. It is not to be implied that during the latter period the extrinsic forces which Irish emigration was not so negligible in relation to the attraction of the age world. I do not feel certain that this was so. The elements of life in North America that came back during the latter nineteenth century were not uniformly poor.

In the first part of the present section of this thesis it is intended to attempt to examine the question of emigration and immigration in contemporary Irish society. The description is comprehensive not only the emigrant's population, generally from the last 1845, but also from the time of last emigration. The time is intended to be a study of the emigration process, and the correlation of the emigration process with the general process.

The emigration process is a complex one, and it is not possible to give a complete account of it in this thesis. The emigration process is a result of many other Irish questions, and the problem is to separate from the evidence the complex of factors which may be called extrinsic. This is all the more true the obvious extrinsic force of the general factor of the year 1845, extracted. It is therefore necessary to consider a picture of the



## SECTION II

### The correlations of the emigration.

Outside the mere machinery of the emigration process, there is considerable difficulty in isolating those elements of Irish history exclusively relevant, or most relevant to emigration. The investigator of emigration is dealing with a resultant of many other Irish 'questions', and the problem is to construct from the evidence the complex of factors which may be called extrusive. This is all the harder once the obvious extrusive force of the general famine is, by about 1855, exhausted. It is however necessary to attempt a picture of the Irish social pattern as it appeared to the prospective emigrant - that is to say, what he thought he was leaving - before the counterpoise of transatlantic attraction can be properly assessed. It is sometimes implied that after the famine period the extrusive forces behind Irish emigration were more or less negligible in relation to the attraction of the new world.<sup>1</sup> I do not feel certain that this was so. The accounts of life in North America that came back during the later nineteenth century were not uniformly rosy.

In the first part of the present section of this thesis it therefore seems desirable to examine the question of ascendancy and subordination in contemporary Irish society. In this description is comprehended not only the emigrant's revulsion, possibly from the land itself,<sup>2</sup> certainly from the terms of land occupancy as he knew them in Ireland, but also his implicit rejection of a social system. A certain Martin

---

<sup>1</sup>E.g. Oliver MacDonagh, Irish emigration during the great famine, 1845-52, preface; unpublished dissertation, University College, Dublin.

<sup>2</sup>cf. the assistant agricultural commissioner's Report, para.22, on the poor law union of Westport (Mayo): 'I am inclined to think that the Irish and English people are taking the same view, for in Ireland, as in England, the majority of the employers agree that the men take less interest in agricultural work than formerly', and the young men he spoke to said they intended to work in the American towns, not country. Royal commission on labour, 1893-4, vol.IV, part IV<sup>2</sup> (cf. p. 110 below).



Dooley, describing himself as 'an American woodsman' and writing from Sullivan county in New York state, put a point of view engendered in the dry light of the new world:

Why should our Catholic clergy exhort their congregations to remain in the land of poverty and hunger, where the poor but still honest peasant must work a long day for a paltry six-pence, and must put his hand to his hat whenever his Squireen of an employer may pass by...<sup>1</sup>

A similar sentiment occurs in an emigrant's letter from Canada some twenty years later: 'We have none of the "haw-haw", would-be gentlemen you have in Ireland.'<sup>2</sup> These attitudes are seldom explicit even in emigrant letters borne eastward over the Atlantic by strictly republican winds. The more eloquent formulations of class warfare though already printed still lacked readers, not least in Ireland; but those who did not read could yet perceive that social subordination would not, at all events after 1870, much longer remain the fashion of the nineteenth century.

The pattern of ascendancy and subordination in Irish life found its characteristic expression in the land system. This system turned upon the attempt of a population, still, after the famine exodus, very numerous in relation to resources, to extract from the Irish soil an ampler subsistence than it could yield under the techniques that were practised;<sup>3</sup> and the attempt, until the later years of the century, of the landowning minority to exact rent from the same overburdened soil as though, on the whole, the landlord-tenant contract were at least as favourable to the landlord in Ireland as in England. When that attempt was at length abandoned there

---

<sup>1</sup>Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator (hereafter cited as Limerick Reporter), quoted Newry Examiner, 26 June, 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Dominion of Canada: emigration to the province of Ontario, p.67 (Belfast, 1873).

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Gustave de Beaumont, L'Irlande, sociale, politique et religieuse, i.239: 'la terre d'Irlande, quelque féconde qu'elle soit, ne saurait donner tout ce qu'on lui demande.'



followed in due course the interesting discovery that the elaborate structure of the Land Acts had no perceptible effect upon emigration.

The question of land ownership and land occupancy in Ireland may be considered under two principal aspects. First, the attitude to the land, almost the Weltanschauung, of the Irish people. Second, the attitude to Ireland and its people of the ruling minority which may conveniently be designated British but included Irishmen. Something may be said for and against that minority; Ireland's rulers were in a position to help or hinder emigration, and their position requires discussion. The interplay, by way of conflict and occasional co-operation, of the Irish and their rulers may be traced in a brief examination of the periodic visitations of acute distress, of the views thereon of the government, the Irish and their parliamentary representatives, and of the eventual measures of relief, if any, that were adopted. Bound up with this subject is that of the normal resources of the Irish poor in the form of the poor law. Detest this as he might, the emigrant to North America left a country with a poor law for a country with none. This in itself is a commentary on the structure of Irish poor relief, or at least on the beneficiary's view of it. The whole policy of the British on poor relief, ordinary and extraordinary, forms a background to their attitude, to be considered in a later section, to emigration, which to many Englishmen was the sovereign process for allaying Irish distress and disaffection. A witty physician pointed this moral in a letter to an English newspaper saying that those who recommended emigration for Ireland reminded him 'of certain members of his own profession, who, when they have a hopeless patient, generally recommend him to go abroad.'<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> [London] Echo, quoted Freeman's Journal, 21 July 1880.



After this basic inquiry there may be attempted an assessment of the Irish standard of life, in terms of such components as labour supply, wages, and diet, a consideration which explains a great deal of emigrant history. Some contemporary opinions upon the Irish use, or misuse, of their own resources and opportunities should find a place here. It should then be possible to make some estimate, though with the available evidence a very incomplete one, of the economic status of the emigrants.

The second part of section II will comprise a search for measurable correlations between the emigration from Ireland and certain aspects of Irish life and of external history as it affected Ireland.

Foreign observers of Ireland seemed to agree that land was the centre of every Irish interest. Gustave de Beaumont wrote in the richest style of the prevalent French romantic historiography, describing, in a work which went through many editions, a 'mauvaise aristocratie' of English ogres and a population who felt themselves free nowhere but in church.<sup>1</sup> His prescription for Ireland was a fragmentation of land ownership on the analogy of France; perhaps a dangerous device for a peasantry which, unlike the French, still had a very high rate of increase. It was not infrequently asked, however, as by a correspondent of the London Echo,<sup>2</sup> 'how is it...that the French peasant never thinks of emigrating, and is never recommended to emigrate?...It is because the French peasant has an interest in staying at home.' Like Marx

---

<sup>1</sup>De Beaumont, op.cit., ii.38.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted Freeman's Journal, 21 July 1880.



after him, and some wiser heads than Marx's, de Beaumont made the miscalculation that, in Marx's words, land was 'the exclusive form of the social question in Ireland'.<sup>1</sup> The perennial emigration, continuing long after the great bulk of Irish agricultural land was owner-occupied, suggests a quite different view, and we may be inclined to think, with Mansergh, that a sentimental and not an economic grievance underlay Irish discontent. In that case, however, the end of the union might have been expected to herald the end of significant emigration; unless, finally, we are left with the notorious issue of partition as the ghost of the deceased union, 'sitting crowned upon the grave thereof'. The later stages of the question lie outside the scope of the present thesis; and at this point in a long inquiry, judgment should certainly be reserved.

De Beaumont, again, anticipated a judgment of Marx on the connection of the British aristocratic positions in England and Ireland:

Spectacle bien digne d'être médité! L'Angleterre mine peu à peu en Irlande tout l'édifice de la vieille société, au risque d'ébranler par ce travail souterrain la base d'aristocratie politique et religieuse qu'elle a commune avec ce pays.<sup>2</sup>

Marx, expressed the view in 1870 that the whole position in Great Britain of the aristocracy depended upon their hegemony in Ireland. It would perhaps have been truer to say 'changed concurrently with', rather than 'depended upon'.<sup>3</sup> De Beaumont, being of his age and order, did not press this point to the extent of the Marxian delusion that the English

---

<sup>1</sup> quoted N. Mansergh, Ireland in the age of reform and revolution, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> De Beaumont, op.cit., i.lxv.

<sup>3</sup> Paul-Dubois pointed out that rents in England, in a free market, fell by more than the amount of the 'judicial' reductions in Ireland, Contemporary Ireland, p.(1908).



working class would accomplish nothing until it 'got rid of' Ireland;<sup>1</sup> a delusion manifest, in inverted form, in Mill's pronouncement that 'the time is come when the democracy of one country will join hands with the democracy of another.'<sup>2</sup> Since it may be said that the English working class of the period, unless it was lashed by a Gladstone, was only intermittently aware that Ireland existed, Marx's and Mill's opinions seem odd. Sir William Gregory was on safer ground in his view<sup>3</sup> that the English lower classes, about the middle of the century, were unwilling to see any advance in the material status of 'them Hirish'.

If the land question was not, in fact, the repository of every Irish grievance, land itself was the necessary, because almost the only, outlet for the average Irishman's aspirations, so long as he remained in Ireland. In this sense, no doubt, more land, as it were a larger Ireland, would have meant less emigration. It was commonly noted that 'it is a fascinating occupation to Irishmen to buy, sell, and deal with land'.<sup>4</sup> Dufferin wrote in terms of censure of the 'blind, unreasoning hankering after a bit of land; the traditional failing of a people to whom for centuries land has been the only means of support, and which leaves them the moment they are surrounded by other associations', and thought that under a régime of emigration 'that morbid hunger for a bit of land which has been the bane of Ireland will gradually subside'.<sup>5</sup> Before

---

<sup>1</sup>Mansergh, *op.cit.*, pp.80-1.

<sup>2</sup>J.S. Mill, England and Ireland, p.26.

<sup>3</sup>Autobiography, 1894, p. 69.

<sup>4</sup>William L. Micks, Account of...the Congested Districts Board...1891-1923, p.101-2 Professor Baldwin thought land-jobbing 'the curse of Ireland', Royal commission on the depressed condition of the agricultural interest (hereafter cited as Richmond commission), Minutes of evidence, part I, Q.20,237 (1880).

<sup>5</sup>Lord Dufferin, Irish emigration and the tenure of land in Ireland, pp.204,8.



the house of lords committee on land tenure in 1867, a land agent from central Ireland, who spoke with approval of emigration, added: 'Very few have been induced to give up their holdings of any extent where the younger members of the family go, but there is generally a representative left to hold the land; they do not like getting rid of that.'<sup>1</sup> Twenty years later, a witness before the Cowper commission spoke of the same phenomenon: 'Then there is an unwholesome kind of emigration. The young and the energetic emigrate, but they still keep a grip on the land. They leave the old and sickly upon the land at home, and they really support them, to a large extent, by contributions...They seldom come back again.'<sup>2</sup> This almost mortmain hold on land from which nevertheless the family must inevitably die out was very curious; an extreme instance of the familial custom of 'keeping the name' on land or shop. To this extent the Bessborough commission's hope that free sale of tenant right would act as a 'much needed solvent'<sup>3</sup> in promoting mobility, emigration, and probably consolidation of vacated holdings was perhaps falsified. Cases however occurred in which complete severance of family from holding by emigration was preferred to work for daily wages which, in the persistent shortage of wage labour in Ireland, might have been relatively lucrative. Instances of this kind from co. Wick were cited before the Chelmsford committee by Bence Jones:

Under the old system, I suppose, you rarely, if at all, heard of a man who gave up a farm for the sake of emigrating?-

---

<sup>1</sup>Report by the select committee on the Tenure (Ireland) bill, 1867, Q.2140.

<sup>2</sup>Royal commission on the Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881, and the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1885 (hereafter cited as Cowper commission), 1887, ii. Minutes of evidence, QQ.18, 542-3.

<sup>3</sup>Report of her majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the working of the Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870, etc. (hereafter cited as Bessborough commission), 1881, para.68.



That has begun of late years, but that is in consequence of the great rise of wages amongst the labourers. The small tenants are gradually finding themselves at a disadvantage as compared with well-paid labourers, and they are just beginning to feel that they would be better ~~off~~ off by emigrating, and they do emigrate sometimes, and will do so, I believe, more and more.<sup>1</sup>

He thought the 1870 act had had not the slightest effect upon emigration.<sup>2</sup>

Against this background, the Irish mystique of land occupancy can be better appreciated than it perhaps was by many nineteenth century landlords. As Dufferin pointed out, the remote history of the Irish blended with their contemporary sorrows to inculcate a state of mind in which a year-by-year parol tenancy was as good as a perpetuity, and much better than many a leasehold - since the mere existence of a lease implied limitations. How this state of affairs, and some of its implications as regards the bitter problem of rent, appeared to some landlords will be considered later. For the tenant, there was the comfortable corollary that his interest in his holding was a saleable commodity, and saleable to the best bidder; a practice well known, of course, in Ulster at a time when, elsewhere in Ireland, it was recognised only by what the Bessborough commission called a 'fitful analogy' with that custom. Dufferin, perhaps forgetting the hard necessities of the situation, commented with some bitterness on the enthusiasm with which, in effect, Irish tenants rack rented each other<sup>3</sup> in this way, through the sinister agency of the village usurer:

---

<sup>1</sup>Chelmsford committee, 1872, Q.509.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Q.507

<sup>3</sup>The landlords' said Professor Baldwin 'in many cases are acting very badly, but I think the greatest scoundrels I have come across are some of the tenants themselves', Richmond commission, Minutes of evidence, part I, Q.29,024 (1880).



In Ulster it is the custom for the incoming tenant to pay the outgoing tenant a sum of money - nominally, for his improvements, really for an indeterminate value called his 'goodwill'. If the worth of the improvement corresponded with the amount of the payment, the arrangement would be unobjectionable. But it seldom does. An incoming tenant will give openly, or surreptitiously, £5 £10 or £20 an acre for land let at a high rent, in a bad condition... Payment is almost invariably made with money borrowed at a high rate of interest. This interest is, of course, a second or rack rent...It is amusing to observe that the same persons who are anxious to mitigate the effects of competition by imposing on the owner of the land a rent fixed by Act of Parliament, always contend that the person in whose favour the beneficial interest is to be created should have the right to dispose of it to the highest bidder.<sup>1</sup>

The point of immediate interest is that in these operations lay the possibility, increasingly after 1870 and 1881, of accumulating funds for emigration, and the truly revolutionary measure of 1881 was, in fact, followed by the highest emigration since the early eighteen-sixties, in 1883. Thus the land acts, inevitably amongst a people, to quote again the Bessborough commission, 'holding on, for life and living, to the soil of which they were not the owners', merely pushed back the competition for land to the sphere of tenant right; and the question arises to what extent the well-intentioned promoters of free sale were really 'exterminators'. As a tenant farmer said before the Richmond commission, 'You must either keep the land or go out by an emigrant ship to America.'<sup>2</sup>

In the debate on the address in February, 1901 Redmond pointed to 'the horrible and heartbreaking emigration statistics of the last twenty years' as merely one indication that the imposing structure of the land acts was worthless.

---

<sup>1</sup>Dufferin, op.cit., pp.116-21.

<sup>2</sup>Richmond commission, as above, Q.25, 364.



Mr. Gladstone had said the 1881 act 'would enable Irishmen to live and prosper on their own land; and after twenty years working of this system what do we find?' - a million and a half of emigrants in the period, spread over the whole country, with a rising rate in the years 1898-1900.<sup>1</sup> Of the great series of royal commissions and select committees whose scrutiny, in the generation following 1865, was bent specifically on Irish affairs, few had much to say on emigration in their reports. There is brief reference to emigration in the report of the Bessborough commission and the preliminary report of the Richmond commission, somewhat more in the report of the Cowper commission. None of the inquiries of this period was directly concerned with emigration; but the evidence volumes of their proceedings have much scattered material on the subject, a repertory of fact and opinion as useful today as when it was first compiled. Then as now, it must have been clear that the subjects of emigration and the land system touched at many points; but no government since the earlier decades of the nineteenth century ventured to isolate Irish emigration for separate inquiry.

Something may be said here about the farming of the land to which the Irish clung with such zeal, with reference to the habits of work which emigrants may be supposed to have taken overseas with them. Charges, recurrent throughout the period, of slovenly farming were probably founded, only too well, in overcrowding and undernourishment. In an Irish farmer's almanac for 1851 there occurs some opinion on the matter which was possibly disinterested; it was not

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, 4th ser., lxxxix. 716-7 (21 February 1901).



repeated in subsequent years:

Calendar of agricultural operations: The position of farmers at the present day is one of great difficulty... It is very evident that the manner in which land has been hitherto managed in Ireland, will not do under present circumstances...The people of Ireland have hitherto rested satisfied with a slovenly mode of farming...Of the modes of farming to which we refer, the great majority of those most interested in the matter are quite ignorant...<sup>1</sup>

In the same year, the reader in chemistry at Durham university condemned the bad farming of many immigrants, not specifically Irish, in lower Canada and the Maritimes: 'Having sacrificed themselves at home to their prejudices, they bear them religiously beyond the Atlantic, and transmit them as heir-looms to their descendants.'<sup>2</sup> These people, he held, emigrated because they were unsuccessful farmers at home. Modern observation suggests that no second-generation immigrant, and probably very few newcomers, would have the hardihood to pursue farming practices, whether good or bad, that offended the Canadian mores. Before two royal commissions in 1880, Irish farming was denounced by Lansdowne<sup>3</sup> and John Townsend Trench. The latter spoke of 'the three D's drink, debt and dirt...the dairies are dirty; the butter is dirty; the fields are dirty and full of weeds.' He thought, a little naively, that the cure was a minister of agriculture.<sup>4</sup> Somewhat later, the Belfast News-Letter<sup>5</sup> quoted, probably with much satisfaction, an anonymous correspondent of the Times on

---

<sup>1</sup>Purdon's Irish farmer's and gardener's almanac for 1851, p.17.

<sup>2</sup>James F.W. Johnston, Notes on North America, i. 292.

<sup>3</sup>Richmond commission, Minutes of evidence, part I, QQ.20, 988-9 (1880).

<sup>4</sup>Bessborough commission, Q.37886 (1880).

<sup>5</sup>24 May 1887.



this subject:

Nine-tenths of the disaffected and miserable small farmers have never known what it was to do a fair day's work on their own farms all the year round...If these men are ever forced by necessity to work upon public works under proper gangers [a frequent occurrence in North America and no doubt in the writer's mind] they will execute double the work per day that they would perform on their own land left to themselves...Of course men who are in a chronic state of conspiracy...are neither physically nor mentally fit for work.

The theme of 'if only they worked as hard at home as abroad' is persistent in contemporary observations on emigration. A newspaper, with an outlook different from that of the Belfast press, could nevertheless say: 'Many a hundred times we have read in the American letters of our peasantry, that if they had worked as hard at home as they were obliged to do in America, they would have been richer and happier in the old country.'<sup>1</sup> The Belfast News-Letter

was merely echoing this opinion when it said: 'It is pretty certain, as a rule, if they [the emigrants] had toiled as much in the land of their birth the majority of them would have fared as well in the end',<sup>2</sup> a pronouncement which aroused much controversy, to be referred to later. Editorial comment to the same effect appeared soon afterwards: 'If our people would abandon their combinations against England, and mind their business, instead of running after every demagogue',<sup>3</sup> prosperity would ensue. A letter from the United States pointed the same moral:

Irish farmers and Irish capitalists have America at home, but they do not work it. If Ireland was given to the farmers and capitalists of America for twenty years its produce would pay the American war debt, and cause its people to remain in their native climate in American comfort.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Galway Vindicator, 8 April 1863.

<sup>2</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 16 May 1874.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 25 May 1874.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2 June 1852.



There is a body of testimony, sometimes conflicting and often put out by persons with highly interested motives, upon how hard the immigrant to North America was expected to work, or did work. This will require to be reviewed as a whole later. It is so largely a question of a climate of opinion which, during a century, has changed considerably. Writing from Albany, N.Y. in 1852, a foundryman remarks carelessly 'My work is but 10 hours a day'.<sup>1</sup> The following shrewd and characteristic comment, by an Irish gardener in Connecticut, will serve to symbolize the reservation of judgment which seems proper at this stage: '...Those Yankees would teach a person to live; they would not spend anything foolish...They don't work very hard here. One Irishman would work as much as two of them. The only thing is, they are up very early...'<sup>2</sup>

I have suggested, above, that listless farming was likely to result on land which was overstocked with ill-fed 'farmers', though to use the word in its English sense is dangerous in an Irish context. The Daily News special commissioner in the west and south-west in 1880-1, one of the best of the contemporary observers who have recorded their impressions, said: 'In education, in knowledge of his trade, in the command of the comforts of life, a Mayo cultivator of six, eight or ten acres is the analogue of the English labourer at fourteen shillings per week.'<sup>3</sup> That the number of cultivators was too high in Ireland is a commonplace - a persistence, however modified by the emigration, of the condition noted earlier by Kohl, 'always six

---

<sup>1</sup>T. Kelly, 'Letters from America', in Carloviana, the journal of the old Carlow society, i.26 (Jan., 1947).

<sup>2</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 29 June, 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard H. Becker, Disturbed Ireland, p.42.



pairs of arms used where two would suffice.<sup>1</sup> In 1867 Dufferin tabulated figures showing the labour force per acre to be nearly twice as high in Ireland as in England.<sup>2</sup> Many years later, the select committee on colonisation registered a similar complaint,<sup>3</sup> although it bestowed an encomium upon Irish labourers.<sup>4</sup> What the Irish ate, or better, their own opinion of their diet in Ireland, may best be envisaged from the almost monotonous expressions of ecstasy with which the emigrant greeted his food in the new world. An eulogy of meat resounds in emigrant letters throughout the century, and an anti-vegetarian anthology might be compiled from them. The following quotations are typical: 'Tyendinago, Napanee, Canada, 22nd October 1872... No farmer could live in Ireland as he can here. Our pork was done last week. I will kill a sheep to do until the weather gets cool enough to kill my hogs. I am fattening two beef cattle...'<sup>5</sup> 'Toronto, Canada, June 1870. Dear Father, - This is a splendid country, and no man need be idle who will work...There is meat every meal you sit to eat...'<sup>6</sup> The last sentence (from a boy's letter) summarises, with a lapidary finality, all such emigrant opinion on the question as has been transmitted. Although the insistence on meat indicates the emigrant's view of the principal deficiency in his Irish diet, other items of food were occasionally mentioned as well. A labourer in Canada wrote, in 1873: 'I am well cared for. I get fleshmeat three times a-day, tea twice,

---

<sup>1</sup>J.G. Kohl, Ireland, p.77 (1844).

<sup>2</sup>Dufferin, op.cit., p.154.

<sup>3</sup>Select committee on colonisation, 2nd session, Minutes of evidence, Q.678 (1890).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 1st session, Minutes of evidence, Q.567 (1889).

<sup>5</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 21 May 1874.

<sup>6</sup>Dominion of Canada: emigration to the province of Ontario, p.26.



and butter in abundance. The wages I had at home would not purchase the food that I get here. Tell Jas. Castles that I am 14 lbs. heavier since I came here. The beef is doing the work.<sup>1</sup>

It is probably quite fortuitous that emigrants' accounts of high living tend to emanate from Canada rather than the United States; in this particular the two countries were, and remain, one. On the other hand, the letters are often from the countryside, and we hear little of what was eaten by the Irish in the city slums of the eastern United States, or for that matter of England - the 'many, many thousands... socially and morally wrecked in the foul waters of the great cities'.<sup>2</sup> This is a type of information on which first-hand emigrant literature is silent, or speaks with obviously polemical intent; but if he kept clear of slum life, the Irish emigrant with whatever destination could scarcely fail to find a more satisfying dietary than he left behind. This consideration begins to elucidate the mystery of the nameless multitudes whose monument is many a Canadian and American bridge, canal or railroad, built not without toil by hands little accustomed to such toil in their own country. It was sometimes emphasised that even on English food the Irish worker was a new man. A smallholder on Clare island said:

I have worked in mines in Northumberland, on public works, at house building, in chemical works, and on farms in the North of England, and I have seen Irishmen working under all these conditions. After three months, when they had sweated the water out of their bodies, and had good food, they could work as well as Englishmen.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 21 May 1874. (February 1899).

<sup>2</sup>J.F. Maguire, America in its relation to Irish emigration, p.19.

<sup>3</sup>Royal commission on labour, 1893-4, vol.IV, part IV, append B 3.



The same kind of evidence appeared in a house of commons debate in 1899, when an Irish member said: 'the population... no longer live on the wholesome food which they had a generation ago, and when they come to England for the purpose of seeking work it takes a week or two of good English food to give them proper health and strength'.<sup>1</sup>

An earlier and striking example of this principle, from Canada, was reprinted in an Irish newspaper from a brochure that was probably officially inspired; the booklet was made up of this and similar eulogies of the province as a resort for emigrants, and the evidence of the following extract might for safety be slightly discounted. The alleged source is 'a private letter, written by an Irish gentleman to a friend in Dublin':<sup>2</sup>

I am assured that Irishmen make better lumberers than the natives of any other country; for it appears that the good and abundant food that they begin eating from the moment they arrive here expands, not only the muscular frame, but also the intellect; and no one who has not seen the contrast between the down-cast, ill-fed and ragged Irish peasant in his own country, and the same man after even a few months' residence in these provinces, could believe in its completeness...I have not seen an Irishman since my arrival who has not an air of comfort, cleanliness and independence about him.<sup>3</sup>

Despite its air of the patent medicine advertisement, there is perhaps nothing inherently improbable about the quotation. It was fine propaganda for emigration. Yet if the 'Irish gentleman' had investigated the largest immigrant quarter of the city of Montreal, a few years earlier, he would have found, admittedly in a season of great distress, the conditions that alarmed the board of health at a meeting in June, 1847:

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, 4th ser., lxvi. 1372 (17 February 1899).

<sup>2</sup>Canada as a field for emigration, from Saunders' News Letter, July 16th, 1853, p.3.

<sup>3</sup>Reprinted Londonderry Standard, 4 August 1853.



Robert Everett, a proprietor, residing in Ann Street, appeared before the Board, and complained that one of his tenants who occupied a lodging containing two rooms of about 14 feet square each has a family of six persons, and has taken besides nine boarders, one of whom is sick of what we believe ship fever, which creates alarm among his other tenants... Ordered that the Chief of Police be requested to send an officer to the house complained of, - if any sick person be found, to send them to hospital or apply to Doctor Munro.<sup>1</sup>

[The Irish emigrant to North America, then, exchanged on the average a poor diet for a better, and moreover, in so far as such questions can be generalised, a peculiarly enervating, or soporific, for a rather bracing climate. Lowe, who was fond of portentous pronouncements on such subjects, told the house of commons 'we have, I believe, undervalued altogether the climatic influences in Ireland. We speak of it as if it had the same climate as England, only a little modified by geographical situation',<sup>2</sup> and later in the debate his views were endorsed by Palmerston. These men were not scientists, and indeed Lowe was concerned chiefly to point the familiar moral of Ireland's inability to grow satisfactory grain crops. None, however, who has lived successively on either side of the Atlantic will under-rate the possibility that the Irish emigrant's behaviour in the new world was due quite as much to the air as the food. Lecky's observation that the true culprit in Irish distress in the west was the Atlantic ocean, adding morass to the interstices of rock,<sup>3</sup> may well have had a wider application than to that apparently doomed coast; and Disraeli's well known arraignment, in the 1868 election, of Ireland's 'damp climate' and 'melancholy ocean', along with his ostensibly flippant judgment that the Irish were 'discontented because

---

<sup>1</sup> Montreal Transcript, 12 June 1847.

<sup>2</sup> Hansard, clxxvii. 771 (27 February 1865).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 4th ser. lxvi. 1485 (20 February 1899).



not amused'<sup>1</sup> possibly struck deeper than their author knew. An Irish visitor to the United States said: 'Men work harder here than in the old country, and those who are not willing to do so had better stay away; at the same time, owing to the bracing atmosphere, hard work is felt much less here than in Ireland.'<sup>2</sup> Much more recently, a physician published statistics tending to prove that the Irish degenerate physically even in the northern United States, and that in 1915 they had the highest death rate of the principal European immigrant groups in New York city. They were ravaged, the author said, with alcoholic insanity.<sup>3</sup> This echoes a very familiar theme from the nineteenth century, and if the charge were unfortunately true it was not, perhaps, to be imputed entirely to the American climate.

It must have been true of many a nineteenth century Irish landowner that, spending much of his time in the 'liberal' context of English society, he intermittently found himself entangled in Ireland in a pre-liberal property system which did not recognize his absolute ownership of his land. With the advent of free sale of tenant right, he lost even the power to surround himself with tenants of his own choosing. It is not perhaps surprising that a man of such antecedents, and as Irish landowner a man of such considerable sorrows, an insecure because a conscious confiscator,<sup>4</sup> showed little ability or inclination to formulate any emigration policy for

---

<sup>1</sup>Quoted W.F. Monypenny and G.E. Buckle, Life of Benjamin Disraeli, ii.431 (1929).

<sup>2</sup>Freeman's Journal, 3 July 1880.

<sup>3</sup>Austin O'Malley, 'Effects of the American climate on the European immigrant', in Studies, v.516-35 (1916); 'Irish vital statistics in America', *ibid.* vii.623-32 (1918).

<sup>4</sup>Cf. K.H. Connell, 'Land and population in Ireland, 1780-1845', in Econ.Hist. Rev., ii.no.3 (1950).



Ireland distinct from scattered attempts to emigrate his own liabilities in the shape of unsatisfactory tenants from his estate. French critics, from de Beaumont and Duval about the mid-nineteenth century to Paul-Dubois and Garnier in more recent years, though they sometimes differed on questions of Irish emigration were fairly unanimous on the iniquities of the British land system in Ireland. The earlier generation of them was not wholly unaware of the magnificence of this particular stick wherewith to beat the English. The French are fond of using, for specific purposes as at the time of the Rhineland separatist movement after 1918, arguments drawn from pan-Celtic theory, and Duval is to be found inquiring are not the Irish, like the French, Celts?<sup>1</sup> Whereas Garnier thought the Devon commission merely uncovered 'les injustices du système de la grande propriété, tel qu'il était appliqué en Irlande', and in so doing pointed the contrast between the success of that system in England and its failure in Ireland,<sup>2</sup> Cliffe Leslie thought the failure in Ireland was due to failure in England.<sup>3</sup>

Those elements of the land system that were an extrusive force in Irish emigration are very plain. Overcrowding is the most obvious. At a time, that is from 1850 to 1880, when according to Clapham consolidation of small holdings was going on 'more or less everywhere' in England, Wales and Scotland, regardless of 'the curse reserved for him who lays field to field',<sup>4</sup> this curse was vigorously invoked,

---

<sup>1</sup>Jules Duval, Histoire de l'émigration Européenne, Asiatique, et Africaine au xix<sup>e</sup> siècle, avant-propos, p. viii.

<sup>2</sup>Charles M. Garnier, Eire: histoire d'Irlande, p.176 (Paris, 1939).

<sup>3</sup>T.E. Cliffe Leslie, Land systems and industrial economy Ireland, England and continental countries, p.12 (1870).

<sup>4</sup>J.H. Clapham, Economic history of modern Britain, ii.262-3.



if necessary to the effusion of blood, in Ireland. The bloody annals of land warfare in Ireland, and the English villager's silent withdrawal to the city slums, show by their contrast the measure of the Irishman's reverence for his holding. Clearance and consolidation of holdings presented a thankless task which, <sup>as</sup> for instance as Steuart Trench found in his assisted emigration operations on the Lansdowne estate in co. Kerry, could earn a virtuous and, by his own showing a very reasonable land agent the name of exterminator.<sup>1</sup> Dufferin thought any land law would be vitiated by subletting. A witness before the Society of Friends' relief committee struck the same note of one who labours in the manner of Sisyphus; he 'stated that, by buying out or assisting to emigrate he had, during the last fifteen years, got rid of upwards of 700 small tenants from the estate under his management, and that he could well spare as many more...'<sup>2</sup> At the end of the period, Plunkett deprecated in the house of commons a mere distribution of land in the Congested Districts, because 'everybody knows' that marriage and subdivision would set in, and 'the last state of the congested districts would then be worse than the first.'<sup>3</sup>

That any man of property, to whom, presumably, alternative forms of property were accessible, should allow himself to get into the position of evicting a home-loving and penurious peasantry from his land, which in any case they regarded as in some sense their land, seems to the present age very strange. The later nineteenth century generation of Irish landlords was perhaps not to blame for a situation which, as

---

† <sup>1</sup>W. Steuart [recte Wm. Richard] Trench, Realities of Irish life, c.VIII.

<sup>2</sup>Final report of the central relief committee of the Society of Friends, p.10 (Dublin, 1865).

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, 4th ser., lxvi.1362-3 (17 February 1899).



de Beaumont observed,<sup>1</sup> might be charged to the selfishness of their predecessors. The Irish sense of injustice sometimes found by no means ignoble expression, as in certain leading articles of the Nation. During the exigencies of the Indian mutiny this newspaper pointed out that it had in the past appealed against the policy of extermination; 'we were answered by eulogies upon prize bullocks and mangel wurzel...by the crowbar of the exterminator, by the habere of the sheriff, by the bayonet of "the detachment"... England's sore want to-day is men...' <sup>2</sup> At the worst, the same sense of injustice ran away into fantasies such as those in letters of Mitchel's to Smith O'Brien: 'Dublin, 19 Mar....the deep & settled design of the English government to uproot the Irish race from the soil & make them a nation of labourers working for wages from day to day'; or again:

24 Apr. 1847...I say there is a very prevalent feeling amongst the landlord class (and you must be aware of it) that the people of Ireland ought not to be fed (now potatoes are abolished) upon the grain produce of this country - that there are too many of them to be supported in that way even should Ireland produce enough for the purpose - & that it is desirable to get rid of at least a couple of millions of them...<sup>3</sup>

This was a true enough prophecy of a process, but hardly of a policy.

From the side of the landlords, the answer to charges of extermination and the like, as was pointed out with some derision by Mill,<sup>4</sup> was often to the effect that a land law which appeared to be impeccable in England must be nearly

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit., i.xvii.

<sup>2</sup>Nation, 31 October 1857.

<sup>3</sup>W.S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I., MSS 438, ff. 1845, 1882.

<sup>4</sup>'What was not too bad for us, must be good enough for Ireland, or if not, Ireland or the nature of things was alone at fault', England and Ireland, p.8.



so in Ireland. In parliament, Lowe put the case thus:

How does the law stand in Ireland with regard to landlord and tenant? It is ridiculous to inveigh against a law which is the same in Ireland as in England...It is impossible that there can be any fundamental injustice in a law which works with entire satisfaction in a country like this.<sup>1</sup>

The ludicrous reasoning behind this pronouncement was probably quite sincere. There was also a cogent point, put in this way in 1852 by the Times: 'Those who are prepared to invade the landlords' property in the one country will speedily be called upon for a *similar* violation of principle in the other';<sup>2</sup> Ireland was in effect invoking the spirit of the welfare state almost half a century before its time. In the interim, the landowners of Ireland were quite inept to anticipate the functions of that bureaucracy which today supervises, in every land, the wellbeing of what Bury excellently called 'a menagerie of happy men'. It is nevertheless one of the gravest charges which has been made against the rulers of Ireland that they so lacked, in their dealings with the peasantry, that paternalism which in an earlier day, and even in the nineteenth century, tempered the sway of the English squirearchy. Disraeli noted that in Ireland government must be strong because 'society' was weak, the reverse of the English situation.<sup>3</sup> It was well said in the house of lords that what the Irish people demand 'is your sympathy, the actual presence of yourselves, your wives, and your daughters, moving among them in the villages'.<sup>4</sup> At that

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cxc.1489 (12 March 1868).

<sup>2</sup>Quoted J.L. Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish nation, p.27.

<sup>3</sup>Monypenny and Buckle, op.cit., i.455.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, clxxxii.396 (16 March 1865).1898).



particular date this was heroic counsel,<sup>1</sup> but the speaker, Dufferin, was apt enough in diagnosing the lack in Ireland of the sense of community that in England could often be relied upon to smooth over some rural difficulty. Before the Richmond commission an Irish witness of peasant origin, Peter O'Leary, who had lived in both islands, made the same point when he said that Ireland lacked 'local gentry, and the women do not receive that social and sanitary training which they receive in England.'<sup>2</sup>

It was in fact one of history's weighty imponderables, that which Hammond has called 'the steady and unconscious cruelty of egotism and arrogance'<sup>3</sup> in their rulers and their rulers' satellites, which did as much as anything else to send the Irish emigrants overseas. Whatever they found in the new world it was unlikely to be this. The 'unconscious cruelty' lay in a state of mind difficult to define, or to illustrate dispassionately, yet manifest in a score of ways to a people as proud as their masters. Gerald Balfour's appalling blunder 'if you could administer to the sick people champagne...you would be able to save a certain number of lives',<sup>4</sup> must no doubt be read in the context of nearly a generation of the parliamentary behaviour that Irish representatives thought proper to adopt, but it was irreparable. It is perhaps surprising that the appropriate counterpart of Balfour's state of mind found such very infrequent expression as the following in the Irish press: 'The pinchbeck aristocracy...riding after

---

<sup>1</sup>Although in point of fact only 10.6% of owners of Irish estates over 100 acres were in 1870 absentee, E.R. Hooker, Readjustments of agricultural tenure in Ireland, p.24.

<sup>2</sup>Richmond commission, Minutes of evidence, part I, Q.19, 545 (1880).

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit., p.6.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, 4th ser., lvi.832 (22 April, 1898).



a starved pack of hounds on their knock-kneed stageens...'<sup>1</sup> Even the Nation usually, though not always, kept its exposition of the Irish grievance on a different plane from this. The weightiest indictment of the attitude of the 'ascendancy' to their subjects may probably be found, not in any nationalist newspapers, but in the self-revelation of many pronouncements from the side of government that showed their authors to be living, or at least thinking, in another world from that of the contemporary British problem in Ireland. Such was the chief secretary's introduction of the fenians to the attention of the house of commons, in a debate of 1864. Peel's long account on that occasion of the fianna ('the ancient fenians') seems too turgid for irony, even though it includes the remark 'they all slept in trees like the gorillas of the present day.'<sup>2</sup> The choice of imputation lies between malice and gross insensitivity. A distinguished English historian, in recording his judgment that Catholic emancipation, without the union, would have meant merely the replacement of one ascendancy by another, could add that the mass of the people 'probably had no opinions on the matter.'<sup>3</sup> It is true that he wrote when that union had in effect been dissolved. Roebuck, who represented the bracing moral climate of Sheffield, characterised a recent Irish debate in these words: 'Really, Sir, the whole thing from the beginning to the end on the part of the Irish members was a sort of moan of a beggar - a sort of mendicant whine...without any thorough understanding...of

---

<sup>1</sup> Tipperary Advocate, 31 March 1883.

<sup>2</sup> Hansard, clxxiii.1876 (11 March 1864).

<sup>3</sup> W. Alison Phillips, The revolution in Ireland, p.25.



what an independent man ought to be.'<sup>1</sup> This was indecent language in which to refer to Hennessy's motion (almost a sessional event), phrased with great moderation, that deplored the declining population of Ireland.<sup>2</sup> Irish members frequently stressed that, in Maguire's words, 'it was humiliating and painful for any member to stand up to expose the miseries of his country'<sup>3</sup> sometimes to a bored House or to empty benches.<sup>4</sup> About 1860 in particular, members liked to count out an Irish debate.

The newspaper press of the respective countries affords evidence, some of it already referred to above, of apparently irreconcilable attitudes on Ireland's problems. As always, the great body of middle opinion, or no opinion, on either side is naturally the hardest to find. In England, the Times in the consulship of Delane was a fair mirror of opinion in the London clubs, an intermediary between the governing oligarchy and educated opinion,<sup>5</sup> and when the Times was quoted in the Irish press it must have spoken to Ireland as with the voice of her rulers. The following are extracts from what Ireland heard by way of commentary on one parliamentary debate. The British people 'have indeed turned aside from the threats, the execrations, the piteous whinings, and the furious demands of the blustering talkers who so often affect to speak in the name of the Irish.' Ireland was then instructed to count her blessings, outstanding among which was propinquity

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, clxxvii.751 (27 February 1865).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., clxxvii.661-73 (24 February 1865).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., clxv.548 (21 February 1862); and cf. 4th ser., liii.152-220 (9 February 1898), and lxvi.1380 (17 February 1899)

<sup>4</sup>Cf., as recording a thin house of commons for Irish debates, Hansard, clix.1026 (26 June 1860); ccix.773 (20 February 1872); 4th ser., lxvi.1358 (17 February 1899).

<sup>5</sup>R. L. Woodward, War and peace in Europe, 1815-70, p.174.



to England; for example, 'to the Imperial Parliament persons from the smaller country find a ready access, which is rigorously denied to men of the [same?] social standing in the larger nation.'<sup>1</sup> In the same issue of the Limerick newspaper appeared a still more self-righteous sample of the London press:

The truth is, the land [Ireland] is drenched and soaked... With a poetry that is but rhymed sedition; with a patriotism that wraps itself in rags and prates about past glories instead of handling the shovel and the spade to conquer present difficulties, these unfortunate Celts have no better enemies than the professed friends who do not mingle rebuke with their sympathy. This hapless sister of ours... must and shall be saved...<sup>2</sup>

To a modern eye this seems very like cant, not the less offensive for including several grains of truth. On the other hand, it was sweetly reasonable by comparison with the vulgar and frequently unchristian outbursts of some of the protestant Irish press, for instance the Dublin Evening Mail<sup>3</sup> on the occasion of a pope's illness: 'The entire Sacred College does not contain a person so likely to be at the beck of the disaffected priesthood of Ireland as the weak and ignorant bigot who is now said to be on his last legs.' In similar vein, the Belfast News-Letter<sup>4</sup> may be found censuring the viceroy for 'fawning' upon Catholic prelates and thereby impeding the chief secretary's policy. On the o

On the opposite side in the sterile logomachy of the Irish newspapers, the Dublin Nation may be selected as the most consistent and readable exponent in the period of the extreme indictment against Ireland's rulers. To the United States, itself not a country of journalistic reticences, the Nation,

---

<sup>1</sup>Times, quoted Limerick Chronicle, 18 June 1863.

<sup>2</sup>London Telegraph, quoted *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>7 July 1852.

<sup>4</sup>14 March 1862.



in the days of A.M. Sullivan's vigorous editorship, was 'astounding evidence that the Irish press is the freest press in the world. In no other country would a newspaper be allowed, as this is, to preach insurrection every week...'<sup>1</sup>

Its atmosphere of usually well controlled malevolence is preferable to the worst excesses of the opposing journalistic faction. But the downward slope from dynamic emotion to hysteria was easily trodden, and the Nation's editorial articles sometimes made the descent, forgetful of the great names of the founding fathers. Thus the British attitude to distress, or in governmental opinion alleged distress, in Ireland in 1863 was identified, as a revival of the persistent English plan to 'destroy' the Irish, and contemporary hardships in England were referred to in a sneering article as 'Pleasant Times in Lancashire...The English people always see after their own affairs.'<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously, a Catholic priest in Lancashire pointed out that in the prevailing distress Irish Catholics in the county were relieved impartially with others, and it was therefore inappropriate to try to divert charity from Lancashire to Ireland.<sup>3</sup> When severe distress returned to Ireland in 1883, the Nation again found that the government was bent upon depopulation, and was pursuing that end by 'artificially contrived famines, "the workhouse test", and forced emigration.'<sup>4</sup> Lesser occasions of spite were unfortunately not neglected.

From such examples it may be rightly concluded that the contemporary press, English or Irish, is hardly the place

<sup>1</sup>New York Times, quoted Cork Constitution, 5 June 1860.

<sup>2</sup>Nation, 3 January 1863.

<sup>3</sup>[Liverpool] Northern Press, quoted Freeman's Journal, 3 January 1863.

<sup>4</sup>Nation, 24 March 1883.



to seek a sober exoneration, in so far as this may be found at all, of the attitude in Ireland of landlords and rulers. Here again, certain self-revelations of a state of mind, or a state of confirmed confusion, may help to explain that which cannot always be excused. The primary confusion sprang no doubt from the union, and has already been referred to; a belief that Ireland was in every significant sense an extension of England, a geocentric delusion that has on occasion afflicted the British with regard also to Europe and North America. This accounts for the ingenuous wonder repeatedly apparent in references to some outbreak of violence, or access of misery, in Ireland: '...incredible that such things have been and are of frequent occurrence in our own times, and within a journey of twenty-four hours from the heart of the empire';<sup>1</sup> 'the state of a people within thirty hours of London'.<sup>2</sup> In conversation with Nassau Senior, Lord Rosse made essentially the same point: it was, he said, the worst prejudice of many English liberals

that Ireland can prosper under English institutions, without supplemental measures to render the laws and institutions really equivalent to those of England; that is to say, that one of the least civilised countries in Europe can be well governed by the same machinery as the most civilised.<sup>3</sup>

It is perhaps convenient to advert here to some of the real difficulties of the Anglo-Irish landowners, denationalized and yet as Bryce saw not truly independent, vis-à-vis their government. Sir William Gregory brings out well the schism between English and 'Irish' conservative opinion on the subject of Ireland about the middle of the century.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Edinburgh Review, Jan. 1869, reviewing W. Steuart Trench, Realities of Irish Life.

<sup>2</sup>Jas. Hack Tuke, Belmullet, co. Mayo, 1881, quoted E. Fry, Life of James Hack Tuke, & a memoir, p. 146.

<sup>3</sup>Nassau Wm. Senior, op.cit., ii.30-1.

<sup>4</sup>Autobiography, p.122.



Towards its end, Balfour had difficulties with certain Irish landlords of whose ethics, notably Clanricarde's, he had the lowest opinion: 'It drives me to despair to see the game so ill-played by the landlords, who will not apparently energetically combine for any other purpose than to abuse the Government.'<sup>1</sup> But then Balfour was aware of his responsibility to British public opinion. Senior, the least prejudiced of observers, reports various tales of woe which he gleaned from great men during his Irish jounies in the years 1852-62. Monteagle was emphatic upon the official policies of the famine days:

Those who governed from London had some general notions, and some special notions, the union of which produced our disasters. The general notion was, that it is the duty, and within the power of the owner of land, in time of famine, to provide sufficient maintenance, either in the shape of wages or relief, for all those whom he finds on his estate...I wonder whether they would...require the proprietors of the Marine Parade at Brighton to employ or relieve all the families who hire their apartments...<sup>2</sup>

The analogy was false, and the speaker may have known it; it is none the less an interesting demonstration of a government's trying to lean upon a squirearchy that was not, in the English sense, in being, and it is not an isolated example in the period under review.<sup>3</sup> Monteagle went on to deplore the advice of those who enjoined Irish landlords to grant leases: '...at least in the South, the Irish tenant is not to be trusted with a lease. His instinct is, while he is alive, to sublet the land, in order to have an income without trouble; and on his death to divide it among his children'<sup>4</sup> - a point substantiated some years later by

---

<sup>1</sup>quoted B.E.C. Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, i.150.

<sup>2</sup>Senior, op.cit., i.292-3.

<sup>3</sup>Official blame of landlords predominates over praise in the parliamentary papers; the notorious Law Life assurance society is probably an extreme case.

<sup>4</sup>Senior, op.cit., i.298.



Dufferin,<sup>1</sup> a good landlord and an able defender of his class. The Irish landlords, said Monteagle, were the sport of party politics<sup>2</sup> - a frequent complaint among all social groups that begin to feel the pinch of insecurity - and it has since become a commonplace that the landlords were, in fact, sacrificed by the government, fruitlessly as the event proved, in order to save the union.<sup>3</sup> Senior brings out well the atmosphere of a beleaguered garrison in which Irish landlords passed some of their life, to the detriment of christian charity in besiegers and besieged alike - a true 'encirclement', with the most sinister modern connotations of the word, by an anonymous and often invisible army. When he mildly inquired of the egregious Trench why did not an English proprietor acquire for £50,000 an estate in Ireland, yielding £4,000 per annum, which would be 'very cheap in England at £100,000', Trench replied 'he might fail, or he might be shot.'<sup>4</sup> Yet Trench could still maintain that the Irish were not a sanguinary people, and murdered only patriotically.<sup>5</sup> This statement is substantiated by the registers of the Dublin state paper office, wherein crimes against person and property are of the scantiest occurrence, except such as may be called 'political' on a very liberal interpretation of that word. Lord Rosse, in an observation to Senior, summed up the prevailing spirit of violence, begetting and begotten of violence:

---

<sup>1</sup>Dufferin, op.cit., p 214.

<sup>2</sup>Senior, op.cit., i.301.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Garnier, op.cit., p.183.

<sup>4</sup>Senior, op.cit., ii.13-4.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., ii.220-1.



We are under two different and repugnant systems of law. One is enacted by Parliament and enforced by the Courts - the other is concocted in the whisky-shop and executed by the assassin. And the law of the people is far better enforced than that of the government.<sup>1</sup>

This spirit rose and fell; it was seldom totally wanting in Ireland.

If these landlords, as was once maintained in the house of commons, were in the absence of an educated Irish middle class the only defence against chaos,<sup>2</sup> they were an imperfect one. Yet the air of no wholly unrighteous injury which pervades some of the utterances cited above deserves attention. It is apparent, too, in the commonsense or 'English' outlook upon a purchase of land in Ireland. This was well illustrated by Hussey, who should have known Ireland well enough to understand the temerity of his expectations: 'I bought my property, as any person would buy a chair or a table, in the Landed Estates Court. I acquired certain rights over it. There is a very fair chance of their being taken away from me, and I would be very glad to sell every inch I have in Ireland for what I gave for it.'<sup>3</sup> Some years later, he published an article<sup>4</sup> demonstrating that a south of Ireland estate of £5,000 per annum, which twenty years earlier yielded its landlord £2,600, now left him with £325 per annum net. This was a steeper reduction than one estate in England suffered, that of Guy's hospital, whose income from land was nearly halved between 1875 and 1887. On this catastrophe the Freeman's Journal<sup>5</sup> commented that an English newspaper 'can quite understand a fall of fifty per cent in the value of land in England, but it is horrified at

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., ii.34.      <sup>2</sup>Hansard, cxc.1315-6 (10 March 1868).

<sup>3</sup>Bessborough commission, Q.25378 (1880).

<sup>4</sup>Summarised Belfast News-Letter, 30 June 1887.

<sup>5</sup>8 February 1887.



the notion of a demand for thirty per cent of a [sic] rent reduction by Irish tenants.' On the question of Irish rent reduction, Lowe had already spoken in the house of commons, and he was listened to on such topics: 'But, after all, if only for the look of the thing, you cannot always be giving up your rent.' On the same occasion, he dismissed the whole topic of rent with the very voice of orthodox economics:

I entertain a prejudice, derived from Scotland and adopted by Adam Smith, that a man is at liberty to do what he likes with his own, and that having land, it is not unreasonable that he should be free to let his land to a person of full age upon the terms upon which they shall mutually agree.<sup>1</sup>

No doubt a man was 'at liberty' so to do, in Ireland as elsewhere; but in Ireland, only if he were prepared to face the risk of outraging extremely sensitive social customs which were old before Adam Smith was born.

This persistent blind spot in the British outlook on Ireland was not always a wilful blindness. Similarly, although as I have said the British often forgot that Ireland was a different country from their own, the Irish too could forget that Britain had its own problems and, emphatically in the nineteenth century, its own poverty. The frequent cry in the house of commons<sup>2</sup> that it was necessary to equate Irish ~~tax~~ reform with English public opinion was not necessarily insincere, even though it were perhaps the government's duty to lead and not follow opinion. Gladstone, a chancellor of the exchequer before he was a reformer, inquired: 'I should like to know what would be thought if Scotland, through her representatives, made a claim such as is sometimes made on behalf of Ireland -

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cxc.1495, 1493 (12 March 1868).

<sup>2</sup>E.G. ibid., clxxxii.358-9 (16 March 1866): cxc.1475 (12 March 1868).



77

that the amount of taxation raised in Scotland should be laid out within the limits of Scotland alone',<sup>1</sup> and left little doubt what he would think in such a contingency. Peel, during his tenure of the Irish secretaryship, was fond of drawing the comparison between Irish and English distress; thus, early in 1862 he pointed out that England had 899,000 on relief, indoor and outdoor, Ireland 59,000,<sup>2</sup> and that 7% of the inhabitants of Norfolk were on relief, 1.48% of the inhabitants of co. Cork.<sup>3</sup> A few years later Neate said in the house of commons he 'believed that there was more misery to be found at the present moment, at the East End of London, within three miles of that House, than there was in all Ireland',<sup>4</sup> and in truth the Irish seldom remembered that the united parliament deliberated with perhaps the largest and most wretched town proletariat in western Europe at its doors. In the debate on Davitt's amendment to the address in February, 1898, calling for relief of Irish famine, the member for south-east Essex observed that his constituency, having lately suffered a tornado and other afflictions, had sought a treasury loan in vain. 'What is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander, and if distress is to be relieved in Ireland...then I think the same measure ought to be meted out to us in the county of Essex. For this reason, I shall not vote for the Amendment of my hon. Friend.'<sup>5</sup> The reminder that Mayo was not alone in its fruitless appeal, if uncharitable, was not unseasonable.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., clxxvii.679-80 (24 February 1865).

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, clxv.82 (6 February 1862).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., clxv.574 (21 February 1862).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., cxc.1314-5 (10 March 1868).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 4th ser., liii.188 (9 February 1898).



Certainly the Irish members seem often to have invited some such retort, with their considered attitude of being in, but not of, parliament. It was in the same debate that Davitt said: 'We can offer no assistance whatever to Her Majesty's Government in their conflict with the people on the North-West Frontier of India, nor can we lend them any sympathy in their diplomatic difficulties with Russia in China. These matters do not concern either us or our country.'<sup>1</sup> It is surprising how much nearer 'Russia in China' has moved to Ireland since this pompous and short-sighted ultimatum, unworthy of the speaker.

Much parliamentary time was spent on Irish problems, for instance in 1881-2, while English reform was put aside. It is painful that Irish and British members passed so much of that time beneath a cloud of mutual misunderstanding, and that so many hours were lost in trivial recrimination. Even though Maguire could say 'except when the Treasury Bench had some pet scheme which they wished to carry, there was a coldness in all they said or did with regard to Ireland', it was in the same debate that Peel asserted: 'I do not like to hear it said that the people of Ireland are debased and disaffected. I will not share in that language', and that lord Robert Cecil (as he then was) admonished the House, in noble language:

You who have brought about these evils - though it may be in former times - though you are no longer morally responsible for them, and though your own Government of Ireland has been benignant, and kind, and just - are bound to repair the evils your fathers have done...to remove something like a moral slur from the honour of England.<sup>2</sup>

Very little later in the century, when rising population and rising unemployment brought Britain herself face to face

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, 4th ser., liii.152 (9 February 1898).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., <sup>3rd. ser.,</sup> clxxvii.728,716,721-2 (24 February 1865).



with the same anxieties that had beset Ireland for generations, there existed at least the possibility of an emigration policy common to the two countries; but no rapprochement on this footing took place. G.M. Young regarded 'the deflexion and absorption of English intelligence and purpose by Ireland' as 'the great disaster of our history', and its cause as 'a failure of historical perception'.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the persistent symptom of that failure was the restless and pragmatic British attempt to make Ireland, for her own benefit, as much like England as possible; examples of the process have been given, and others will emerge. In the attempt, it is possible that the British made the mistake that a recent writer attributes to the 'occidentalists' of czarist Russia:

A leurs yeux, la Russie était avant tout un pays arriéré, et qui devait 'rattraper' l'avance qu'avaient prise sur lui les pays occidentaux; ils ne voyaient pas assez que faire partie de l'Europe ne signifiait nullement ressembler à l'Occident au point de ne plus ressembler à soi-même.<sup>2</sup>

The contribution to the extrusive urge behind Irish emigration of rulers and landlords may thus be assessed as indirectly and in the main unwittingly very great, directly very small. As evictors or 'exterminators' the landlords made but trifling direct additions to the emigration statistics, a point which will be taken up in reviewing the measurable concomitants of emigration. In charity and in understanding of an environment which concealed deep peculiarities beneath ostensible resemblances to the English social pattern, the ruling minority fell short in Ireland of the best standards of its age and class in England. Exculpation may perhaps be sought more readily

---

<sup>1</sup>Victorian England, portrait of an age, p.186.

<sup>2</sup>Wladimir Weidlé, La Russie absente et présente, p.26.



for its British than its Irish elements. It was as a class incompetent, and probably unwilling, to attack two problems which were basic in the complex of extrusion, although, as we now in latter days see, not all-embracing: the persistence of the union, and the pressure of population upon accessible land, a pressure to relieve which was in Nassau Senior's view the duty for which providence created landlords.<sup>1</sup> Writing to Disraeli from Australia in 1867, Gavan Duffy said:

You could give Ireland peace, and, after a little, prosperity...A statesman must offer the agricultural classes terms which a reasonable man may regard as fairly competing with the terms upon which he can obtain land if he emigrates to America or Australia...<sup>2</sup>

Peace and a measure of prosperity have been achieved; emigration continues. None the less it may be observed that statesmanship failed to provide the Irishman with land in Ireland on terms which he judged acceptable until the end of free, or very cheap, land was in sight in all the expansion areas overseas.<sup>3</sup> As late as 1881, Tuke pointed out, in the course of a letter to Joseph T. Pim, of Dublin, that farming capital could be better invested in North America than in Ireland:

Bancroft, Hitchin, 18/1.1881 My dear friend, I have been so engaged since my return home that I have been prevented from thanking thee for thy Pamphlet<sup>4</sup> ...I need hardly say that I heartily agree with the general purport of the 'Suggestions'. As to 8 - I very much doubt whether financially any benefit wd result from such reclamation of waste land for agricultural purposes. That great benefit wd result from a wisely devised system of general Drainage (Sir R. Peels plan) in the West is very probable both for Cattle Grazing & planting - but for arable lands I have

---

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit., i.295.

<sup>2</sup>Monypenny and Buckle, op.cit., ii.347.

<sup>3</sup>But note that about 1870 it required \$1,000. to take up 'free' land effectively, if the immigrant went direct (which was exceptional) to the homestead area between the Missouri and the Mississippi, M.L. Hansen, The immigrant in American history, pp.72-4.

<sup>4</sup>Joseph T. Pim, Ireland in 1880, with suggestions, etc.



great doubt as to the result when we take into account the every day increasing competition with the States & the far greater benefit which wd result to the cultivation by employing the Capital needed for a 50 acre farm in the U States or Canada?...<sup>1</sup>

Tuke was then writing, or had lately written, an article<sup>2</sup> demonstrating that for £100 an Irish family of three adults and two children could be transported to an 'allotment' beyond Winnipeg and set up in a 'small house, 18x12 ft' on 160 acres of good land - a more hopeful undertaking than draining and cultivating Irish bog at a cost of £10-£15 per acre. To be sure, a Dublin visitor to these promised lands, John Sweetman, had recently reported in a somewhat different strain: 'I found that the land along the Red River was nearly all taken up by speculations, which forces settlers to go about 150 miles from a railroad to find desirable Government land...I left Manitoba rather disappointed.'<sup>3</sup>

If Sweetman was right, the grasping hand of the land company, which could be as bad a master as any Irish landlord, had reached the Red River. The great days of pioneering, in the United States and even in Canada, were in fact over; but the opening of the Mississippi valley<sup>4</sup> and the Canadian prairie, which Alison Phillips regarded as the root cause of Irish emigration, continued its work in Ireland as in the rest of western Europe. The 'ascendancy' is scarcely to be blamed for failing to find an adjustment to a new and strange force, whose impact has been fully grasped only in our own day.

---

<sup>1</sup>Society of Friends, Dublin Y.M. historical collection, port.9.3.

<sup>2</sup>J.H. Tuke, 'Irish emigration' in Nineteenth century, ix.359-71 (Feb.1881).

<sup>3</sup>Freeman's Journal, 6 July 1880.

<sup>4</sup>W. Alison Phillips, The revolution in Ireland, p.36.



The Irish workhouse was thus widely denounced, perhaps not more so than its English equivalent. So the Freeman's Journal<sup>1</sup> it was 'that living grave of our poor.'

It has been said that social services reduce emigration because the emigrant is reluctant to throw up a profitable group-membership.<sup>1</sup> In that case, the Irish emigrant turned his back unflinchingly on the emoluments represented by the medical charities act and the Irish poor law, and sought, in North America, a country which could offer him no comparable benefits. So far, indeed, was the poor law from providing a dissuasive from emigration that it has been called 'the great and permanent depopulator'<sup>2</sup> of Ireland. Monteagle inveighed to Nassau Senior against the poor law as enabling men to desert their wives and families, installed in the workhouse: 'The best of them are gone to America, and may send over for their families; those who have gone to England will stay there, and leave us [guardians] permanently in loco mariti and in loco parentis.'<sup>3</sup> The statistics, alike of female emigration, particularly down to 1855, and of emigrant remittances go some way to discount this nobleman's forebodings. Similarly, it was said that with a workhouse in the background a landlord could evict with a somewhat clearer conscience than hitherto.<sup>4</sup> Trench described<sup>5</sup> the stampede into the poorhouse when the tenantry learned that this was the gateway to the emigration which his employer rather thriftily endowed.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>W.D. Forsyth, Myth of the open spaces, p.49.

<sup>2</sup>M.L. Hansen, The Atlantic migration, p.267.

<sup>3</sup>Senior, op.cit., i.302.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., ii.43.

<sup>5</sup>Op.cit., pp.125-6.

<sup>6</sup>E.g., with 'a few shillings on landing' - much less than expatriated crown witnesses were then receiving.



The Irish workhouse was thus widely denounced, perhaps not more so than its English equivalent. To the Freeman's Journal<sup>1</sup> it was 'that living grave of our poor.'

Hennesy attacked the system in the house of commons, particularly the failure to segregate prostitutes.<sup>2</sup>

The repugnance to the workhouse, natural in either country, had not in Ireland the alleviation of a system of outdoor relief so liberal as the English, and controversy in Ireland and in parliament raged round the question of indoor as opposed to outdoor relief of the Irish poor. It should be noted that in England, as late as 1869, the central authority was striving to cut down outdoor relief, a tendency that was not entirely reversed until the eighteen-nineties, later, that is to say, than the worst onsets of Irish distress.<sup>3</sup> In the debate of March, 1864 Hennesy cited in detail the points in which the Irish provisions for outdoor relief fell short of the English, and proceeded to refute, by special instances, the frequent comment that widespread outdoor relief would in Ireland ruin the ratepayers.<sup>4</sup> In the manner of Irish debates, the chief secretary then refuted this refutation.<sup>5</sup> He also set out the precise provisions on outdoor relief of the English and Irish systems respectively, and very fairly emphasized that there was not in Ireland, as in England, a right in the individual to outdoor relief. This, he said,

<sup>1</sup> 6 January 1863

<sup>2</sup> Hansard, clxxiii.1835 (11 March 1864).

<sup>3</sup> A.V. Dicey, Lectures on the relation between law and public opinion in England during the nineteenth century, p.293 (1926).

<sup>4</sup> Hansard, clxxiii.1839 (11 March 1864).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 1870.



was thought 'inexpedient' at the time of the original Irish act of 1838, and its absence was much reprobated by migrant Irish who had experienced the benefits of the English dispensation. He observed, also, that under the Irish poor law extension act of 1847 it was left to the guardians to decide who were 'destitute'.<sup>1</sup>

A certain mystery surrounds the question of how the guardians, a proportion of them elected by the ratepayers, discharged this thankless and delicate office. In the debate mentioned, Vance<sup>2</sup> said 'in large unions...outdoor relief would be abused to an extent almost incredible'; O'Reilly,<sup>3</sup> that guardians gave less outdoor relief than the law already allowed; Herbert,<sup>4</sup> that 'in the southern and western parts of Ireland the ratepayers were often more fit to receive a relief than to pay a rate'. On the other hand, while the numbers receiving indoor relief decreased slightly between 1853 and 1893, those on outdoor relief rose enormously - from a daily average of 1,265 in 1857-8 to 59,137 in 1892-3,<sup>5</sup> and Neilson Hancock thought this tendency represented a growing liberality in the guardians.<sup>6</sup> Tuke leaves a general impression that the guardians in some western unions could not be trusted with public money; he was negotiating schemes of assisted emigration with them, a special activity which will be considered later. In 1880

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, clxxiii, 1867-70 (11 March 1864).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1847.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1856-7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1862.

<sup>5</sup>Royal commission on the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland (hereafter cited as Financial relations commission), Minutes of evidence, QQ.1882-3 (Henry A. Robinson, commissioner of the local government board, 1895).

<sup>6</sup>W. Neilson Hancock, Report on the state of Ireland in 1874, p.22.



the local government board had trouble with boards of guardians in Belmullet, Swineford and Newport, and these had eventually to be replaced by paid officers. Letters in May and June from the board to the clerks of those unions allege that insolvency has arisen from bad local administration; in the case of Belmullet, 'the Local Government Board are not surprised at the want of energy shown by the collectors when members of the Board of Guardians set the example of not paying their own rates...'.<sup>1</sup>

Also in 1880, certain letters to the Friends Irish distress committee suggest that some guardians were, as administrators unsuitable, and as administrators of relief, not impartial. One such letter relates to distress in Skibbereen:

...The sum and substance of my appeal is to ask for some aid to procure sufficient food for over 40 families of very poor Protestants (for I have scarcely any gentlemen in a congregation of about 400) who are in a great measure left destitute of any of the relief intended for the distressed Irish...Let not your society for a moment imagine that by asking for aid for Protestants that [sic] I by any means would wish my poor Roman Catholic neighbours to be neglected but they are getting whatever relief is sent by charitable societies to this district - The distribution of all aid is entrusted to a sub-committee appointed by the poor law guardians - the elected guardians are in general violent partisans and many of them bankrupts and drunkards so that the really poor are very often neglected - The Roman Catholic priest of this district seems to be a fair man but he is here only a few months and does not know the people yet...<sup>2</sup>

Another letter, from Dugort rectory, Achill, complains that protestants have been neglected in the distribution of relief - 'not a single blanket'<sup>3</sup> - but does not refer specifically to the guardians.

---

<sup>1</sup>Local government board for Ireland, 9th Annual report, 1881, pp.8-9; append., p.47.

<sup>2</sup>Wm.A Fisher, rector and vicar of Kilmore, to Friends Irish distress committee, 30 Apr. 1880 (Society of Friends, Dublin Y.M. historical collection, dr. 4 De 1).

<sup>3</sup>To J.H. Tuke, n.d. (ibid., dr.4 De 7).



Tuke was unlikely to be making any conscious case for the view that the Irish could not govern themselves. The same is not quite so certain of the chief secretary, when in 1898 he unfolded before the house of commons some examples of chicanery in Castlerea, Claremorris and Manorhamilton, where boards of guardians clamoured for government subsidies while in effect refusing to increase their rates in order to finance outdoor relief. He observed: 'I think I have said sufficient to convince the House that the statements made by Boards of Guardians must be taken with a grain of salt'.<sup>1</sup> The retort of Irish members was that 'it is simply asking paupers to support paupers',<sup>2</sup> but they did not effectively answer Balfour's point.

The foregoing evidence does not suggest a poor law system which, as a support against the normal hazards of Irish life, could be in any sense a deterrent to emigration. Sir Frederick Heygate was somewhat summary in his judgment that poverty was not a significant cause of emigration,<sup>3</sup> and might have added that if poverty itself were not, the prospect of poverty was; but in general, and in the period under review, very poor men did not emigrate, because they could not. Apart from abiding poverty, the periodical onsets of severe, though more or less local, distress became an almost predictable cycle; each recurrence apparently found the government and community of Ireland as essentially helpless in the emergency as the last. Here was the permanent admonition which

---

<sup>1</sup> Hansard, 4th ser., liii.208-9 (9 February 1898).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., <sup>3rd ser.</sup> clxxiii.1849 (11 March 1864).



urged hundreds of thousands to emigrate while yet they might. O'Conner Power calculated in 1883 that during the famine and the thirty-five succeeding years, fifty million pounds of public and private money (including emigrant remittances) had been poured into the bottomless pit of Irish destitution; he had no other remedy to propose than 'migration and optional emigration'.<sup>1</sup>

A review of the major visitations of local distress throughout the period will reveal the temper of the official mind, of Ireland's parliamentary representatives and of local opinion in these situations. The account begins ominously with the Report of a select committee on destitution, in Gweedore and Cloughaneely, co. Donegal, in 1858. This baffling record finds that the alleged destitution, attributed to enclosure of mountain and other depredations by landlords, 'did not, and does not exist.' Its rather voluminous Minutes of evidence fall into a marked pattern: a series of statements alleging miserable conditions of life in the district generally, by witnesses with Irish names, and another series, refuting the foregoing, by witnesses with English or possibly Scots names.<sup>2</sup> It is hard to discern any evidential <sup>value</sup> in the whole, apart from evidence of a shockingly divided community.

The bad seasons which set in with 1860 had their inexorable consequence in enhanced distress. In the spring and early summer of that year, Hennessy pressed the government for its intentions regarding the destitution in Mayo. In April, Cardwell replied that no special assistance was then needed, since the 'union-house at Balmullet' [sic] was

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., cclxxvii.1986-7 (10 April 1883).

<sup>2</sup>Report from the select committee on destitution (Gweedore and Cloughaneely), 1858.



nowhere near full.<sup>1</sup> This reply forecast accurately the government's attitude in the workhouse controversy for many years to come. In June, Hennessy renewed his campaign, quoting from the French and Italian press derogatory comments on the British administration in Ireland, a weapon which proved later of more effect when wielded by Gladstone. Cardwell blamed the weather, stood up for the workhouse principle ('the hon. Gentleman must not suppose for a moment that it was the intention of the Government to break down those laws which Parliament had provided for the relief of the necessities of the people') and for laissez faire ('any interference by the Government...would only have dried up the sources of private enterprise'), and concluded with a hopeful side-glance at the landlords ('considerable activity was displayed upon some of the estates').<sup>2</sup> Later in the month, Hennessy introduced a motion, which was defeated, praying for relief of distress in Erris (co. Mayo) and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> A memorial from Belmullet of landowners and others in Erris, in March, 1860, stated that although hundreds were 'flying to other shores, thousands have neither the means to emigrate nor to make a tillage', and requested an extension of outdoor relief.<sup>4</sup> Hennessy now pressed for application of the English system of outdoor relief in case of urgent need, or as the O'Donoghue put it, a departure from 'the letter of the Irish system'.<sup>5</sup> Such departure was apparently already in the discretion of

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, clvii.1885 (17 April 1860).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., clix.197-201 (8 June 1860).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1022 (26 June 1860).

<sup>4</sup>Commissioners for administering the laws for the relief of the poor in Ireland, Annual report, 1861: II Correspondence relating to the distress in Erris in 1860, p.32.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, clix. 1023 (26 June 1860).



guardians;<sup>1</sup> if so, no reason was advanced during the debate for their not acting. A remark from Lord Fermoy was significant of the abdication of the Irish squirearchy: 'The Government were bound to act as a paternal as well as a ruling power.'<sup>2</sup> So was the reply for the government, viz. that the poor law was not intended to cope with acts of God, the earthly responsibility for which was, on the whole, the landlord's, who in England 'was the first person looked to for a remedy in all cases of distress arising from what might be called the action of Providence.'<sup>3</sup>

In the last months of 1861, and the earlier of 1862, reports came in from those industrious watchdogs, the poor law inspectors, on distress, and local reactions to it, in the counties Galway, Roscommon, Sligo and Mayo, the first and second being counties of high emigration intensity. In November, 1861 a meeting at Clifden styling itself 'the clergy and gentry of Connemara' memorialised the viceroy with a recital of the situation that concluded: 'these facts leave no doubt but famine, with all its concomitant horrors, is imminent.'<sup>4</sup> The investigations of Dr. Brodie, the inspector concerned, threw much doubt alike on the competence and the good intentions of the meeting; in his words, 'the meeting...was attended but by a few of the inhabitants, and...one or two who were present suggested that an appeal should be made in the first instance to the landed proprietors: this wise suggestion was not favourably received...'.<sup>5</sup> It appeared that the chairman of the meet-

---

<sup>1</sup>Under 10 Vict. c.31.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, clix.1026 (26 June 1860).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1030.

<sup>4</sup>Report of Dr Brodie, poor law inspector in Ireland, dated 21st November 1861, on the condition of the western districts of Galway, and the correspondence connected therewith, append., p.8. H.C. 1864 (237), liii.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.1.



ing, Geo. J. Robinson, J.P., of Ballinahinch castle, was resident agent of the Law Life assurance society, owners of more than one quarter of the whole valuation of the Clifden union, with an estimated rental of £7,000 per annum. The directors comprised 'a large body of eminent persons, resident for the most part in London'<sup>1</sup> - the worst type of landlord for that kind of estate. Of these men, controlling an extent of country larger than many a German principality,<sup>2</sup> much, as Brodie said, was expected. On this occasion they protested to the home office that they would not be found wanting in the discharge of their duties, and a few years later they were still promising 'to keep drainage and other works going'.<sup>3</sup> But in 1868 they were publicised in the house of commons as having both a rental of £17,000 (not £7,000) and 'some very curious arrangements',<sup>4</sup> and in 1873 they were again mentioned as bad landlords.<sup>5</sup>

In a report of December, 1861 from the Ballinrobe union Brodie drew, with how much justice it is difficult to pronounce, a somewhat similar and even livelier picture of landowners and leading farmers earnestly seeking to transfer their responsibilities to governmental shoulders. His report arose from memorials by catholic clergy and others, and in particular a memorial from the deanery of Ballinrobe, representing to the viceroy the desperate plight of the population owing to shortage of food and fuel; inspectors' reports from about thirty unions and dispensary districts testified to wet turf rather than food shortage. Brodie's

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.5.

<sup>2</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 3 April 1862.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, clxxxvii.1745 (7 June 1867).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., cxc.1709 (16 March 1868).

<sup>5</sup>Local government board for Ireland, Annual report, 1873, append. A III.



report perhaps deserves extended quotation:

The memorial...advertises to a degree of destitution scarcely less than that of the famine period with which local exertion is powerless to cope. I cannot discover that such an extent of destitution is imminent...Up to the present time, generally speaking, there has been no want of food; the several memorials addressed to his Excellency show a common purpose, to raise a cry of famine, and to throw the whole onus of providing for the people on the Government; the Ballinrobe memorial anticipatorily exonerates the landed proprietors, by describing the calamity as so vast in its proportions, that even were they disposed, they are unable to cope with it...The recollection of the bygone famine years is creating exaggerated fears for the present...For some years past this country has been improving, and its increasing prosperity was a common topic...A bad year has now come...but there is surely no just reason why the landlords and strong farmers should not share in the loss...or look on with folded arms while piteous appeals are being made to the Government...<sup>1</sup>

The undercurrent of implication, in this and the former report, that the needs of a countryside were the sport of an obscure skirmish between government and the men who should have been local leaders is very shocking. On the other hand, the disposition to cry 'famine' in all good faith may well have been an abiding legacy from even worse times, and local government board reports show a rather consistent tendency in the period to play down any highly coloured accounts of distress and sickness. However that might be, a report in the Dublin press early in 1862 from a local relief committee in Scariff sounds all too convincing as a sample of contemporary conditions in the west: 'our outside poor are fearfully impoverished, nine-tenths are this moment living on one meal a day, and that Indian meal stirabout, with an occasional salt herring or mashed turnip to flavour it...'.<sup>2</sup>

The official response in parliament to this situation was

---

<sup>1</sup>Reports of poor law commission inspectors on the condition of the poor in counties Roscommon, Sligo, Galway and Mayo, Dec. 1861-Feb. 1862, p.4. H.C. 1862 (111), xlix-I.

<sup>2</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 7 January 1862.



not particularly warm. When in the debate on the address Maguire urged the claims not only of the west but also the south, Peel admitted that there was a little want, but breadstuffs were plentiful and there was much 'Christian charity' among the landowners of the west,<sup>1</sup> presumably with some notable exceptions. On the resumption of the debate, the chief secretary replied to a long-winded and personal attack by saying that the current complaints came from isolated members like Maguire, not from landed proprietors, tenant farmers or the people at large, and proceeded to refute circumstantial accounts of destitution such as that of Fr Conway's to the Tuam guardians concerning the Headfort tenantry.<sup>2</sup> The House heard accounts of misery arising from total failure of the fuel supply; and a Mr Whalley thought 'the priests alone' were at the bottom of the agitation.<sup>3</sup> On the subject of distress once more, in March, Peel maintained, on the strength of a report by Brodie, that there was no excessive distress in the islands off Mayo and Galway.<sup>4</sup> In May, Maguire produced on two occasions an appalling documentation of persons alleged to have died of starvation; one set of cases was drawn from a correspondent in a limited district of the south-west.<sup>5</sup> 'If similar cases could have been recorded as occurring under the King of Naples...it would have been said that the Government was maladministered'.<sup>6</sup> Peel recommended submission to providence

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, clxv.81 (6 February 1862).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 548-71 (21 February 1862).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 591.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1244-5 (10 March 1862).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., clxvi.1139, 2099-2110 (2<sup>d</sup> 23 May 1862).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 1147.



and to the principles of Adam Smith: 'it is impossible for the Executive to prevent altogether the misery...in very poor cabins'.<sup>1</sup> Comparisons were drawn between the distress in Ireland and Lancashire, and a member observed that it was not 'the duty of the Government to maintain the population of either kingdom at the public charge'.<sup>2</sup> During the first of the May debates, various remedies for distress were suggested; reclamation of waste land, new branch railways, drainage, but not emigration.

At the outset of the 1863 session of parliament it was thought ominous that the queen's speech did not mention Ireland.<sup>3</sup> In January, the Freeman's Journal<sup>4</sup> carried some powerful letters on distress. Palmerston, thus appealed to in the Irish press, resorted to another comparison with Lancashire: '...the misfortune in Ireland is the result of the act of Providence in the ordering of the seasons, while that in Lancashire is the result of human causes, which, however are beyond our control...'<sup>5</sup> - a rather fine distinction. Maguire brushed aside this verbiage with a vigorous recital of three successive bad harvests, distress rising from the labourer class into those of the small farmers and shopkeepers and Dublin crowded with poor.<sup>6</sup> He quoted protestant and catholic clergy in support of his facts; from Skibbereen the catholic bishop of Ross wrote: 'Should there be a cessation of hostilities between the Northern and Southern States of America, it is my conviction

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2108.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1150.

<sup>3</sup>Galway Vindicator, 7 February 1863.

<sup>4</sup>E.g., 23 January 1863, the archbishop of Tuam to Palmerston.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, clxix.132 (5 February 1863).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 591-6 (20 February 1863).



that half the population of Ireland would be across the Atlantic in a few months.<sup>1</sup> The country towns were said to be 'literally collapsed', just as, a few years later, despair was reported among their shopkeepers and business people, whose only hope was in emigration.<sup>2</sup> Constructional works were again suggested as a remedy, and Peel repeated his earlier assurances that there was little pressure on work-house accommodation.<sup>3</sup> The following year he had to admit that some of his recent optimism was misplaced, but took a further gambler's plunge with the remark 'Thank God! a happier time seems to have commenced.'<sup>4</sup> In 1867 the perennial theme was reopened by a question from sir John Gray on the starvation said to exist in western Mayo and Galway, including the islands. The chief secretary, like his predecessor, found Brodie's report a pillar of strength in this parliamentary exigency, and went on to say: 'the Government felt that it would be overstepping the bounds of its duty if it held out to the inhabitants of those districts that it was its intention to provide for their support. The Government would continue to remind the persons connected with the locality of their duty in that matter'.<sup>5</sup> - the customary nod to a blind horse. Connemara came under scrutiny again in 1873, lacking both food and fuel. On this occasion the emergency appeared to evaporate in fine weather and the resumption of advances for kelp, an illusory basis of subsistence, by the Glasgow iodine company.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 597.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., cxc.1292 (10 March 1868).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., clxix.603 (20 February 1863).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., clxxvi.57, 67 (21 June 1864).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., clxxxvii.1745 (7 June 1867).

<sup>6</sup>Local government board for Ireland, Annual report, 1873, append. A III: Correspondence on the subject of distress in the islands of Innis-Boffin and Innis-Shark.



The bad harvests of 1877, 1878 and, particularly, 1879 heralded probably the most widespread onset of distress in the half-century. On this occasion there were efforts to overhaul the official machinery against the peak of the emergency. In September, 1879 the local government board circularised their inspectors for information on the crops and the general outlook. A summary of their replies was sent to the Castle as early as October 18th. This forecast distress in all four provinces. Bad weather had been followed by lack of turf and a poor potato crop, but in Connaught there was also a falling off in kelp burning. Unemployment and the fuel shortage were said to be the chief problems. The treasury faced the question of affording 'relief, upon the least demoralising principle, to the distressed subjects of Her Majesty'.<sup>1</sup> The first step, of not very hopeful augury, was to promulgate a list comprising, to January, 1880, some seventy scheduled unions in the counties Donegal, Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Longford, Westmeath, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo. In these areas the treasury offered landowners facilities in obtaining loans under the land improvement acts. In Donegal, Mayo and Kerry the staff of local government board inspectors was strengthened.<sup>2</sup>

These gestures - they scarcely amounted to more - fell far short of the need, as indeed, must any conceivable official action of that time. Becker, already cited as a specially sober witness, gave a terrible description of the

---

<sup>1</sup>Correspondence relating to measures for the relief of distress in Ireland, 1879-80, p.13, [C.2483], H.C. 1880, lxii.

<sup>2</sup>At no point during the emergency could the administration have lacked information owing to the sloth or reticence of its inspectors; cf., the series of valuable Reports on crops and poverty in the local government board's Ninth annual report, 1881, append., particularly pp.79-84.



west as he found it in the winter of 1880-1; of some of its population he said: 'With the full breath of the Atlantic blowing upon them, they look as sickly as if they had just come out of a slum in St. Giles's.'<sup>1</sup> These were probably victims of the famine fever which in Donegal is still known in the Irish language as 'yellow fever', in contrast to 'black fever' or typhus. 'Famine fever', viz. relapsing fever, which possibly does not depend upon louse transmission,<sup>2</sup> spread more quickly than typhus. In the summer of 1880, questions were asked in the house of commons about the appearance of the fever in Mayo, and Forster cited the obvious in saying 'the difficulty was the overcrowding and the excessively bad condition of the cabins,'<sup>3</sup> There was typhus or typhoid fever in some unions in the west and south in 1880-1;<sup>4</sup> and to this day Ireland remains the last stronghold of endemic typhus in western Europe. In 1883, poor law inspectors were deprecating, or flatly disproving, exaggerated accounts of sickness, for instance of famine fever in Boyle union, as 'wholly untrue'.<sup>5</sup> It is extraordinarily hard to determine the weight to be attached respectively to the intercalated assertions and denials which are the staple of evidence for the history of Irish distress.<sup>6</sup> It is perhaps perfectly safe to say that local government board inspectors tended to over-optimism in their reports. For

---

<sup>1</sup>Bernard H. Becker, op.cit., p.104.

<sup>2</sup>W. MacArthur, The medical history of the great famine, a paper communicated to the Irish historical society, 22 November 1949.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, ccliv.176 (12 July 1880).

<sup>4</sup>Local government board for Ireland: Ninth annual report, 1881, p.8.

<sup>5</sup>Report by inspectors of the local government board with regard to the sanitary condition of the people in certain parts...of Donegal and Sligo, H.C. 1883 (141), lix, and of  
 1887 (145), lix.



the years 1880-3, every description of source teems with accounts of hardship in Ireland.<sup>1</sup> In 1880, a newspaper correspondent, reporting the famine in Connaught, noticed 'Emigration, Pawn and Discount' offices<sup>2</sup> - a shocking collocation. An English traveller in 1883 testified that distress in Gweedore and Glencolumbkille was a reality 'utterly unrelieved by the Poor Law...yet we went from one end to the other of Donegal without once being begged from. Such people are worth helping...'.<sup>3</sup>

Help in money and in kind came from the most various quarters, through the duchess of Marlborough's and mansion house funds, from the society of Friends, from public and private sources in North America. The chairman of the Moycullen relief committee, writing to the Friends Irish distress committee in 1880, said he had received help from the duchess's committee, the mansion house fund, the Land League, the New York Herald and the bishop of Galway.<sup>4</sup>

Among the many British subscribers to Irish relief, perhaps few were so querulous as to inquire, like a certain 'British Taxpayer', what the Irish were doing for themselves. 'Where', he wrote, 'are the public lists from the great towns?', and went on to complain that the Irish, having by their intransigence reduced their country to its present condition, were spending their money on 'testimonials' to Parnell, and the like.<sup>5</sup> A squadron of the British navy distributed food and clothing to the island and coastal populations,

---

<sup>1</sup>E.g., the account by Tuke, who should be a trustworthy witness, of the poverty in Connemara, Cairns committee, II, QQ.7653, 7673, 7679, 7825-9) (1882).

<sup>2</sup>Freeman's Journal, 2 July 1880.

<sup>3</sup>Times, 2 July 1883.

<sup>4</sup>Society of Friends, Dublin Y.M. Historical collection, dr. 4 De 25.

<sup>5</sup>Times, 1 January 1883.



from Tory island to Baltimore; not to be outdone, the United States navy sent a frigate to the west coast with supplies. The report of the senior British naval officer at Galway provides an interesting light on the theory of Irish distress from a mind probably untroubled by such speculations hitherto. Perceiving the very evident overpopulation of the west coast in relation to its resources, he attributed this redundancy to early marriage, to the decay of the kelp industry (now menaced by 'some other compound...in South America') and to the necessary but ultimately disastrous eking out of a livelihood by migratory labour from Donegal, Sligo and Mayo.<sup>1</sup>

The Dominion of Canada voted \$100,000. for the relief of Irish distress, and by the advice of Hicks Beach, then colonial secretary, the money was cautiously laid out in 'reproductive' works, mainly fishery piers, harbours, boats and gear, despite the treasury's complaint of very little visible result, in the form of a fishing trade, for the outlay of £200,000 on such projects during the previous thirty years.<sup>2</sup> The committee administering the fund was deluged with appeals, not all of them from genuine fishermen, and achieved much good by an outlay of £11,000 on fishing gear.

It is somewhat depressing to turn back, from the catholicity and resourcefulness of these schemes of charity in action, to the unyielding stand on the theory of relief

---

<sup>1</sup>Report from captain Digby Morant, senior naval officer at Galway, in reference to the relief of the distressed population on the west coast of Ireland, [C.2671], H.C. 1880, lxi.

<sup>2</sup>Report of the joint committee, selected from the committees of the duchess of Marlborough relief fund and the Dublin mansion house fund...to administer the sum of 100,000 dollars, voted by the parliament of the dominion of Canada towards the relief of distress in Ireland...1880, p.10, H.C. 1881(326), lxxv.



which the government manifested in the house of commons. In March, 1883 the chief secretary spoke with much the same intent as his predecessor of 1860: 'he might say that the principle of the Poor Law was that the workhouse existed, not only for the relief of distress, but as a test of distress; and it could not be too clearly understood that the Government intended to abide by that principle',<sup>1</sup> a principle which, now as formerly, the Irish members in the House were constantly trying to circumvent. It must be admitted that, by the session of 1882, there was much more parliamentary discussion than hitherto of apprehended distress (a tendency that continued<sup>2</sup>), and to that extent more forethought directed to the recurrent crises; whether or not there was any practical issue of these deliberations from the point of view of prospective distressed persons, or of prospective emigrants, is not so clear. The parliamentary history of the distress question in the half-century ends, much as it began, in debates which leave a painful impression of futility. In the session of 1897, Gerald Balfour announced that he had received a local government board report on alleged distress in the west which showed, as he anticipated, that there was no need to open relief works.<sup>3</sup> Alike in 1898 and 1899, in his last days in the house of commons, Davitt moved amendments to the address, drawing attention to distress in certain districts of Ireland, and calling for temporary relief and remedial legislation. As ever, the ill-fated west coast was the focus of destitution, a belt of poverty from west

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cclxxvi.1751 (8 March 1883).

<sup>2</sup>E.g., ibid., ccclxix.132-3 (November, 1890).

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, 4th ser., xlvi.16 (9 February 1897).



Donegal to west Cork, 'reaching 30 or 40 miles inland in various counties',<sup>1</sup> and including such islands as Arran and Achill. When Davitt said 'I am not one who believes that it is the duty of a Government to feed the people or find employment for them in normal conditions',<sup>2</sup> he seemed to beg the question whether or not there ever had been 'normal conditions' in that region, whose situation in 1898 was compared more than once during the debate with 1847. No new suggestion, hardly any constructive suggestion, arose from the debates of 1898 and 1899; speakers faced emptying benches, an Irish member complained he had gone through 'at least twelve of these miserable Debates on this subject'.<sup>3</sup> When Davitt launched the last of his annual appeals he observed that every few years for the past '50 or 60 years'<sup>4</sup> the House and the public had been providing money for the west coast. Was this a tribute to charity, or <sup>an</sup> indictment of a policy?

There was something symbolic about the two debates of February, 1899, which boil down to a triangular quarrel amongst Davitt, Balfour and Plunkett; and the record leaves no conviction that Irish distress was the uppermost thought in the mind of any of the three, although Davitt might possibly be excepted. Plunkett did not conceal his misgivings about the Irish as peasant proprietors,<sup>5</sup> and called, very wisely, for education and co-operation, which

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4th ser., liii.154 (9 February 1898).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 157.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4th ser., lvi.842 (22 April 1898).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 4th ser., lxvi.1348 (17 February 1899).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 1362.



another Irish member found 'distinctly reactionary'.<sup>1</sup> Balfour's position was that the current schemes of the Congested Districts Board for estate purchase were quite sufficient to meet the occasion, and that Davitt and others were using distress for political purposes. In short, within the wider disunity of rulers and subordinates as between Britain and Ireland, there existed stresses amongst the Irish themselves which probably hindered effective exploitation both of the normal resources of the Irish poor law and of such extraordinary aid in recurrent crises as the treasury was prepared to concede. The lack of real community ran right down the scale of administration to the poor law guardians, sometimes incompetent and corrupt, at the base. In the background was the workhouse, so repugnant in Ireland and so steadily invoked by the government.

The growing sense, in nineteenth century Ireland, of national identity and aspiration did less than might have been hoped to heighten the forbearance of the Irish one to another, apart altogether from the political and social schisms naturally engendered by the protean 'resistance movement', to use the now hallowed modern expression for privy conspiracy cum privilegio. This dearth of men of good will was noticed by contemporaries, in Ireland as well as abroad, and was probably a not insignificant element in the extrusive impulse that sent hundreds of thousands to lands where, relieved from some of the cramping insecurity

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1368



and bitterness of life in Ireland, they behaved to one another better than at home. It was Dufferin's opinion that the Irish had better risk exploitation by their landlords than by each other,<sup>1</sup> and a mot of Disraeli's that 'so far as I can collect, the absentee aristocracy seems more popular than the resident proprietary,'<sup>2</sup> many of whom, at all events, were not British. Lecturing at Cork and Limerick in 1869, Maguire used ominous words on this subject: 'We have too often had occasion to pray that Heaven might change the hearts of our rulers. We should rather pray that the hearts of Irishmen should be changed, and their minds enlightened to the truth - that a certain class of landlords and agents should abandon their hateful and unchristian theories...'.<sup>3</sup> The hard times in the early eighteen-eighties called forth similar pronouncements. An Irishwoman, writing to the Times,<sup>4</sup> said: 'our experience has been at home that land from which the people have emigrated is apt to fall into the hands of large graziers, and the poor who remained were not a whit better off than before...'. In the same year, the resolutions of the Irish national convention at Philadelphia included, among many nationalist ones, the following:

Resolved - That we sympathize with the labourers of Ireland, in their efforts to improve their condition, and as we have sustained the farmers in their assault upon the landlord garrison, we now urge upon the farmers justice and human consideration for the labourers...We demand that the farmers allow<sup>5</sup> the labourers a fair day's wages for a fair day's work.

---

<sup>1</sup>Dufferin, op.cit., p.126.

<sup>2</sup>1868. Quoted Monypenny and Buckle, op.cit., ii.357.

<sup>3</sup>J.F. Maguire, America in its relation to Irish emigration, p.10.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted Nation, 13 January 1883.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted Tipperary Advocate, 5 May 1883.



Lecky and O'Connor Morris were alike aware that the purchase policy carried the risk of erecting many small tyrannies; the former wrote: 'the tendency of the new proprietors to mortgage, to sublet, and to subdivide is already manifest';<sup>1</sup> and the latter, 'They are becoming middlemen lording it over rack-rented serfs...the prey of the race of local usurers'.<sup>2</sup> About the same time, an Irish member of parliament arraigned rapacious landlords, throwing also a little light on the ultimately insoluble problem of how emigrant remittances were actually expended:

I believe Irish-Americans, of this and of the last generation, have sent a great deal too much money, both for the relief of distress and the relief of the landlords. But what became, and what becomes, of most of the money that comes annually from Irish-Americans? It goes into the rapacious and avaricious maw of the Irish landlords. If the people of Ireland were left more to their own resources by their kinsmen in America it might tend more to the speedy solution of this land question... [any Irish-American] sending his money across the Atlantic for Irish landlords, or Irish shopkeepers, to grab...<sup>3</sup>

The Irish usurers have received as much execration as their analogues in other lands, and in the prevailing Irish attitude to landowning and land occupancy they appear to have flourished in almost oriental profusion. Distress in Connaught in 1879 was attributed partly 'to the farmers being deeply in debt to money-lenders and shopkeepers'.<sup>4</sup> About this time, 260% was said to be customary gombeen interest per annum on small loans.<sup>5</sup> Before the royal commission on labour, Fox said: 'It is the most common occurrence to find that sons and daughters, some of whom are mere children, are

---

<sup>1</sup>Quoted Elizabeth R. Hooker, Readjustments of agricultural tenure in Ireland, p.72.

<sup>2</sup>Wm. O'Connor Morris, Present Irish questions (1901), quoted *ibid.*, p.73.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, 4th ser., lvi.849 (22 April 1898).

<sup>4</sup>Correspondence relating to measures for the relief of distress in Ireland, 1879-80, p.4, [C.2483], H.C. 1880, lxii.

<sup>5</sup>Becker, *op.cit.*, p.210.



regularly remitting from America money to clear the debts at the village shop, to buy a cow, or to pay the rent for the holding...'.<sup>1</sup> In a debate on Irish distress of February, 1899 Drage described the gombeen system, and observed: '...If the tyranny of the landowning classes has been bad in the past, there has been growing up in Ireland a system of tyranny, or at any rate, supremacy, of the debt-owning shopkeeper, in some respects more terrible than that of the landlords in the past.'<sup>2</sup>

What I have called the 'resistance movement', a world of its own in which an attack upon the occupying power took in the first place the characteristically Irish form of an attack upon the land system, can be but briefly adverted to in an account of emigration. Begotten of violence and begetting it, all these political and agrarian associations were likely, or indeed of their nature obliged to persecute tenants as often as landlords,<sup>3</sup> and plain people as often as gentry. Four men who in 1859 suffered transportation as a result of a murderous quarrel over land were said by the crown solicitor to 'belong to the very worst & most dangerous class in the country viz comfortable farmers who for their own selfish purposes encourage and make use of these Whiteboy Combinations.'<sup>4</sup> In any socially poisoned society, such must thrive while they escape the law. A resident in Munster wrote to the Times<sup>5</sup>: 'Membership of the National League is, in many cases, as necessary a protection as ever was a certificate of civism under Robespierre. The real

---

<sup>1</sup>Royal commission on labour,<sup>1893-4,</sup> vol.IV, part IV, para.18.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, 4th ser., lxvi.1374-5 (17 February 1899).

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Trench, op.cit., pp.47-8.

<sup>4</sup>Registered papers, state paper office, Dublin, 1864/15794.

<sup>5</sup>5 November 1885.



Jacobins are few, but the masses groan and submit.' In 1887, when in parliament the government's attention was drawn to an 'alarming increase in the number of emigrants from Ireland during the month of April', the under secretary in his reply alluded to 'a considerable want of employment in the country, and...a fear on the part of many as to the consequences likely to ensue from their past misconduct. There is likewise a disinclination on the part of many others to join Secret Societies...'.<sup>1</sup> The societies were secret, and the disinclinations had to be not less so; they were in any case the inmost cogitations of an extremely secretive people. Here, none the less, was what may well have been a major determinant of emigration on which scarcely a reliable line is to be found in print or writing. The impression to be derived from a perusal of the crime and outrage reports is of intimate and indigenous tyrannies whose real working, best known to the participants and their victims, has of necessity escaped record. The fabrications of witnesses before courts of law are beside the point. Equally beside the point, in comparison with the authority exercised by the 'resistance', was the earl of Mayo's somewhat stupid demonstration that 'English tyranny' in Ireland was implemented overwhelmingly by Irishmen, from the judiciary down to the constabulary.<sup>2</sup>

Alike in the organisation of relief of the poor in Ireland, and in the texture of society amongst the Irish themselves, there was little to persuade the prospective emigrant that in crossing the Atlantic he had a great deal

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cccxv.512-3 (19 May 1887).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., cxc.1356-9 (10 March 1868).



of social security to lose - either in its modern application or in a specifically Irish and contemporary sense.

In attempting a brief assessment, first of all in general terms, of the Irish standard of life in so far as this can with difficulty be detached from the atmosphere of recurrent distress, the investigator relies to some extent upon the opinion of those who were comparing Ireland and some other country. Dufferin's indulgent descriptions of 'the good old days before the potato famine', when 'potatoes, pigs and children were propagated in a highly agreeable and freehearted manner',<sup>1</sup> was obviously the utterance of one who had seen things ordered differently, not to say better, elsewhere; he thought Ireland had improved by 1866. On the other hand, de Beaumont's extravagant statement: 'Il n'est pas douteux que le plus misérable de tous les pauvres d'Angleterre ne soit mieux nourri et mieux vêtu que le plus heureux agriculteur d'Irlande',<sup>2</sup> if it be taken literally may be thought to indicate an imperfect acquaintance with either country. Unlike Dufferin, de Beaumont thought the look of Ireland did not change much between 1840 and 1860. The years 1893 and 1895 provided a valuable retrospect of the Irish standard of life since about 1850 by two witnesses who were less concerned than some to adorn the tale with side-glances at the other island. To the royal commission on labour Arthur Wilson Fox, an assistant agricultural

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., clxxxii.390 (16 March 1866).

<sup>2</sup>De Beaumont, op.cit., i.224.



commissioner, rendered reports upon certain districts of the counties Cork, Mayo, Roscommon and Westmeath. In addition to revealing a condition of life in Westmeath much preferable to that in the west, these reports gathered some useful generalisations from landowners and land agents. Among such people there was a feeling that the Irish standard of life had shown a great improvement between 1850 and 1870, but had seen little change for the better between that point and 1890. This lagging advance was attributed to the abandonment of corn growing, the decline of harvest earnings in England, and the decay of subsidiary occupations such as the making for sale of linen, frieze, flannel and stockings, affected by the 'emigration to America of almost every able-bodied unmarried woman'.<sup>1</sup> Fox heightened the picture by citing from the first report of the Congested Districts Board the medieval stagnation of some of the coastal communities, subsisting miserably on some kelp-making, on the sale of seaweed, turf and illicit whiskey, and on the remittances which came from America. Two years later, Henry A. Robinson, a commissioner of the local government board, made essentially the same point viz. of a demarcation about 1870. In his opinion, the reports of poor law inspectors showed that 'the period during which the march of improvement among the poorer classes in Ireland was the greatest <sup>was</sup> from the famine years to about 1872 or 1873'.<sup>2</sup> In those years, communications and education were improved, cattle prices were high and labour cheap, people were content to live off the land on potatoes and oatmeal, stone

---

<sup>1</sup>Royal commission on labour, 1893-4, vol. IV, part IV, Report on the poor law union of Westport (Mayo), para. 61.

<sup>2</sup>Financial relations commission, Minutes of evidence, Q. 1942 (1895).



houses were replacing mud hovels. The drift of Robinson's rather rambling evidence seemed to be that people's expectations were higher than formerly, a significant opinion, and that there was more difficulty in living up to a higher standard of life in 1895 than to a lower about 1872. He thought, for instance, that the increase in the amount of outdoor relief (which has been noticed above) indicated 'the inability of the old persons to keep pace with the improved comfort of the population'.<sup>1</sup>

What these two men were in effect describing was the impact upon Ireland of the opening of new grain and livestock areas in North America and the southern hemisphere, combined with falling ocean freights and the development of the traffic in refrigerated meat. Robinson spoke of falling cattle prices and American competition after 1875,<sup>2</sup> These changes smote not merely Ireland. The emancipated peasantry of western Europe, free to sink or swim, found a new master in an impersonal economic force. For Ireland, where in Alison Phillips's view the eighteenth century peasant pattern prevailed far longer than elsewhere, until the year of wonders, 1881,<sup>3</sup> there was peculiar bitterness in the steady downward trend of the wholesale price index from 1873 to 1896. Davitt and the Land League had no answer to this enemy. The peasant, in Ireland as elsewhere, made his own accommodation with the new age. To leave the land altogether, by emigration if necessary, was a major resource, and the Irish during the period 1851-1901

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., QQ. 1884, 1887.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Q. 1943.

<sup>3</sup>W. Alison Phillips, op.cit., p.20.



showed a well-marked degree of internal migration. In appendix I will be found the decennial figures of the distribution of population as between town and country (table 3), and the percentages of persons not resident, at the respective censuses, in the county of their birth (table 4). Table 3 shows a decline, between 1851 and 1901, of 42.4% in the rural population, and an increase of 13.6% in the civic population. Thus the Irish town population rather more than held its own in spite of emigration, and it was the countryside that had to sustain two drains upon population, one to the towns and one overseas. In a sense, both movements were aspects of the same process, since so many emigrants went to transatlantic cities. In 1864 Monsell observed in the house of commons that the rural population was diminishing in almost every country,<sup>1</sup> and the following year Heygate pointed out that the Irish overseas migration was an exact counterpart of the drift from country to town in England.<sup>2</sup>

\* The cityward movement was in fact common to western Europe; equally with those who moved into the towns, the typical emigrant was a peasant when he set out, whatever he became in the land of his adoption.<sup>3</sup> J.F. Maguire asked why did the Irish, with their passion for land, flock to the American cities? His own answer was that they lacked the money and enterprise to go further, or, having the former, were cheated of it.<sup>4</sup> This, however, scarcely explains the revulsion from the land, which deepened in

---

<sup>1</sup> Hansard, clxxvi.72 (21 June 1864).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., clxxcii.698 (24 February 1865).

<sup>3</sup> M.L. Hansen, The immigrant in American History, pp.18-19.

<sup>4</sup> J.F. Maguire, America in its relation to Irish emigration, pp.16-17.



Ireland and elsewhere as the century proceeded and must be reckoned with in seeking the motives of emigration.

Fox found that the flight from Mayo was a flight from poverty, but also a flight from the land itself. He said: 'I am inclined to think that the Irish and English people are taking the same view, for in Ireland, as in England, the majority of the employers agree that the men take less interest in agricultural work than formerly',<sup>1</sup> and the young men he spoke to said they intended to work in the American towns, not country. Professor Oldham pointed out that the Irish census from 1881 to 1911 showed, among adults over twenty years of age, an increase in industrial and commercial occupations, a decrease in agricultural and domestic occupations, and an ominous increase in 'indefinite' occupations.<sup>2</sup> The whole story of what lay behind this process has never been elucidated, a story, in Gibbon's words, 'familiar to the most illiterate, and obscure to the most learned'. Should this be done, emigration, and not merely Irish emigration, would be a less intangible problem.

The commissioners of the 1851 Irish census recorded a large increase in internal migration as one of the consequences of the famine.<sup>3</sup> This appears in table 4 of appendix I, wherein perhaps the most striking feature is the great stability of the percentages from 1851 to the end of the period. The figures seem to suggest a uniform

---

<sup>1</sup>Royal commission on labour, as above, para.22.

<sup>2</sup>Chas. H. Oldham, 'Incidence of emigration on town and country life in Ireland', in Stat. Soc. Ire. Jn., xiii. 209 (June, 1914).

<sup>3</sup>'...Between 1841 and 1851 there has been a very great interchange of inhabitants between the several counties and cities', Census of Ireland, 1851, part IV, General report, p.li.



and rather high degree of mobility within Ireland of a population which, in the dearth of major diversities of occupation, might seem to have little to gain in the material sense by such movements. At all events, tables 3 and 4, taken together, show a tendency to population movement which might be a factor of importance in promoting states of mind favourable to overseas migration. A like conclusion may be drawn from the history of Irish migratory labour, to be reviewed later (see pp.389).

Turning to the supply of, and demand for labour at different points throughout the period, and the wages which labour could command, it appears that the immediate effect in these respects of the famine exodus was puzzling to contemporaries. In 1852 the Dublin Evening Post<sup>1</sup> was mystified by the concurrence of these phenomena: a huge emigration; a large emigration of 'Connaughtmen' to the English harvest, better clad and better found than formerly; and yet, no lack of labourers in Ireland, and no steady advance in wages. This anomaly gives some measure of the dense overpopulation in relation to developed resources which had prevailed before the famine. Between 1852, however, and about 1870, labour shortage was frequently foreshadowed though seldom demonstrated. An official letter of 1854 discussed the question of compulsory emigration of the destitute tenantry on the crown estates of Irvilloughter and Boughill, in co. Galway, and decided that they would be more useful at home:

Both Estates are situate in a comparatively improved district at a short distance from the thriving town of Ballinasloe in the neighbourhood of the residences of noblemen and gentlemen on whose demesnes and estates extensive agricultural improvements have been made and are

---

<sup>1</sup> 16 July 1852.



in progress and no doubt if the estates be sold the present pauper population will be immediately employed as labourers on the adjoining properties. I am therefore of opinion that it will be more advantageous to the country and to the people resident, that they be retained and employed at home, where at the present time the labour market is not sufficiently stocked, than that they be transferred as emigrants either to Canada or the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The advantage to the local 'noblemen and gentlemen' is fairly clear, that to 'the people resident' is perhaps more problematical, given their obstinate objection, discussed above (at p. 51) to wage-labour so long as there was any prospect, however unremunerative, of attaching themselves to a piece of land. Certain contemporary observations on this question seem to have been inspired by the reasoning that, since the emigration was visibly immense, its effect on the labour supply must necessarily be striking: 'Such a protracted drain of the native population must be attended with disastrous results, though political economy may refer it to a Providential law intended for the ultimate grandeur of the Irish race.'<sup>2</sup> 'If this drain is to continue unabated, the owners of property will soon be without hands to till the soil...'<sup>3</sup> Forebodings about labour for the Irish harvest came from widely separated areas: 'Should the drain continue - as in all probability it will - there will be a scarcity of labourers to perform the harvest work.'<sup>4</sup> 'It is feared that it will be impossible to procure labourers in some districts to gather in the harvest. There is not at

---

<sup>1</sup>Richard Griffith, office of public works, Dublin, to the hon. Chas. Gore, office of works, London, 7 August 1854 (P.R.O.I.. valuation office letter books, 2A-26-79A).

<sup>2</sup>Freeman's Journal, 1 January 1853.

<sup>3</sup>Galway Vindicator, quoted Freeman's Journal, 1 April 1853

<sup>4</sup>Newry Examiner, 26 May 1852.



present an able-bodied pauper in our workhouse.'<sup>1</sup> Some newspapers could not understand the continuance of emigration 'at a period when a return of better times should lead us to hope, that they might find remunerative employment at home...If emigration continue, there will not be hands to till the soil; and what then?'<sup>2</sup> 'We find...the impetus given to emigration by the famine years existing in full force in the midst of abundance.'<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the clue to the mystery of how, in fact, the Irish harvest did continue to be gathered was that already in 1852 or 1853 the average emigrant was by no means the poorer sort of labourer. By 1870 the shortage of hands may have been more a reality: a co.Fermanagh landlord wrote to the Times<sup>4</sup> in that year saying that labourers were not to be had 'at any money', and that he was obliged to 'procure servants and tradesmen from England'. In 1881 it was said that unemployment had appeared 'partly attributable to the unwillingness or inability of land-owners to employ their labourers in consequence of the land agitation and the non-payment of rents...'.<sup>5</sup>

The activities of getting a living, making a home and enjoying leisure may be taken as the specific components, apart from the general considerations advanced above, of what is meant by a 'standard of life'. In 1868 the chief secretary announced that Irish wage-rates had risen in the period 1841-66 without any 'material' increase in the cost

---

<sup>1</sup>Roscommon Journal, quoted Freeman's Journal, 26 May 1853; and cf. a similar complaint a generation later, in a letter to the Times, quoted Nation, 13 January 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Limerick Reporter, 5 May 1857.

<sup>3</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 26 December 1857.

<sup>4</sup>25 April 1870.

<sup>5</sup>Local government board for Ireland: Ninth annual report, 1881, p.10.



of food,<sup>1</sup> a somewhat surprising verdict in view of the rising wholesale price index. The cash income which in the eighteen-fifties an Irish newspaper could assess as 'comfortable' seems astonishing: '...If we take wages generally at five shillings a week, we shall not be far from ~~the~~ truth. With a good potato crop, and oats an average, we admit the Irish labourer can live comfortably on such wages. We hope, too, they will not stop there.'<sup>2</sup> The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission's report of that year stated that Irish wages were 'still at a minimum';<sup>3</sup> in 1855 the commission could mention an advance to six shillings a week.<sup>4</sup> In 1856 the Irish poor law commissioners, at the request of the Emigration Commission, furnished comprehensive information on wages 'as bearing on the continuance of emigration from Ireland'.<sup>5</sup> As regards some of the areas of heaviest intensity of emigration for the whole period, as shown on the map at appendix II, no. 10, the following were typical rates of wages:

Cork, Kerry, Limerick  
 Agricultural labourers.....7s6d per week  
 Artisans.....10s - 24s per week

Clare, Limerick, Tipperary  
 Agricultural labourers.....6s per week  
 Artisans.....15s - 19s6d per week

This variation of rates in widely overlapping areas indicates a somewhat uncertain process of assessment in the local inspectors. Reports from all districts agreed

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cxc.1365 (10 March 1868).

<sup>2</sup>Freeman's Journal, 24 September 1853.

<sup>3</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 13th General report, 1853, p.11.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 15th General report, 1855, p.11.

<sup>5</sup>Commissioners for administering the laws for relief of the poor in Ireland, Ninth annual report, append.A, no.3.



upon an increasing demand for labour, and a slight increase in agricultural wages since the previous year. But the news of wages in North America, in times of normal prosperity, sketched a very different picture for the prospective emigrant of the labouring and lesser artisan sort: only a few years previously Buchanan, the chief emigration agent at Quebec, reported that agents of the Illinois central railroad had been distributing handbills in the city offering work for 10,000 men at \$1.00 a day for three years.<sup>1</sup> This was a normal wage for work of that kind through much of the period, but even earlier, wages were to be had in North America which made Irish rates appear derisory; a resident of upper Canada wrote in 1847: 'With regard to the rate of wages for a labouring man - the average price with us and anywhere North of Toronto is 3<sup>s</sup> per diem without board or 2<sup>s</sup> with board...I never saw or heard of a steady, honest, contented labourer out of work...'.<sup>2</sup> There was evidently much confused thinking, or lack of precise information, on the relation between wage-rates and emigration. Thus, while in 1857 unskilled labour was said to fetch five shillings per day in Tipperary, Kilkenny and elsewhere, as 'a direct consequence of the human drain',<sup>3</sup> it was maintained some years later that wage rates had not increased perceptibly in districts of most emigration.<sup>4</sup> In 1873 a Canadian parish priest could write: 'I am surprised to find people in Ireland at the present high wages have

---

<sup>1</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 13th General report, 1853, p.46.

<sup>2</sup>W. Gibbard, Barrie, to Dr John Lee, 15 April 1847 (Public archives of Canada, John Lee papers, 26-3-D).

<sup>3</sup>Newry Examiner, 10 October 1857.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, clxxvii, 817 (27 February 1865).



difficulty in raising £4.15s', a sentiment not unconnected, it may be, with his next remark: 'please always keep in mind not to send any moderate or even occasional whiskey drinkers.'<sup>1</sup> Recent advances in Irish wages were commonly noted about that time, and in 1874 a correspondent of the Belfast News-Letter<sup>2</sup> maintained that, in relation to cost of living, Irish wages were as high as English or American. This calculation was not one which emigrants were always prepared to make. In the lean years towards the end of the century, wage-rates as low as £23 per annum were mentioned before the royal commission on labour.<sup>3</sup>

In housing and in some other necessities and amenities of life, the Irish standard was notoriously low. The decline of the mud cabin was hailed with approval by H.A. Robinson, but this process was so deliberate that 20,000 were said to remain in 1908.<sup>4</sup> In introducing a measure on 'labourers' residences' in 1871, W.H. Gregory said that Irish labourers, who 'despaired of...anything approaching to decent comfort in their own country', thought of nothing but America.<sup>5</sup> It was said that since the famine the Irish had lost their traditional gaiety; such was Hennessy's view: 'Formerly, when the people assembled at fairs or "patterns" they had music and other amusements; there was fun among them; but they had changed. The people were brokenhearted...'.<sup>6</sup> Fox's report on the Westport union revealed a way of life which would have appeared pinched

---

<sup>1</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 10 May, 1873.

<sup>2</sup>10 August 1874.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., vol.IV, part IV, para.43.

<sup>4</sup>Paul-Dubois, op.cit., p.299.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, ccv.576 (24 March, 1871).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., clxxiii.1841 (11 March 1864).



indeed to an English villager of the day. Benefit or insurance societies and burial clubs were apparently unknown; although to insure life might be regarded as unlucky.

Some of the great drawbacks to an Irish parish or village, when compared with an English one, are that there are no charities of any sort, no parish societies, coal, or clothing clubs, no mother's meetings, parish nurses, cottage hospitals, reading rooms, or other organisations to promote the well being, the comfort or the happiness of the people.<sup>1</sup>

In that area there were no trade unions. In sum, there were few or none of the externals, in Mayo at all events, of a profitable or stimulating group-membership, and it is perhaps safe to say of Ireland in general that the field was consequently clear, to a degree unknown in England, for political, religious and agrarian activities, legitimate or clandestine. Disraeli's 'discontented because not amused' comes once more to mind.

Of the diet which sustained this melancholy existence something has already been said, with reference to the marked change of food which the emigrant was likely to experience. The 'cabin-and-potato standard of life'<sup>2</sup> of those whom the Americans called the 'shanty Irish' is a commonplace. Opinion has varied<sup>3</sup> on the subsistence per unit of area afforded by potatoes as compared with wheat; the potato, at all events, had the advantage by twice or thrice. A diet of potatoes and milk has been extolled by historians who have not, perhaps, been obliged to live on it: 'a diet which the biochemist could hardly rate as other than excellent; he might, indeed, have

---

<sup>1</sup>Royal commission on labour, as above, vol.IV, part IV, paras. 58-9.

<sup>2</sup>E.g., Clapham, op.cit., i.54.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. E.L. Woodward, The age of reform, 1815-70, p.315 with K.H. Connell, 'Land and population in Ireland, 1780-1845', in Econ.Hist. Rev., ii.no.3 (1950).



difficulty in finding another community in which so large a class was continuously so well fed.<sup>1</sup> Emigrants' letters, already cited, present the matter differently. The dietetic virtues, and indeed every other attribute, of this 'least common denominator of Irish life'<sup>2</sup> have been set forth at length by Salaman. The crop from one Irish acre would feed a man, wife and six children for nine months of the year.<sup>3</sup> The supremacy of the potato was not shaken for a generation after the famine; it had ended by 1903, but the potato was still dominant in the west in 1883, where the local government board noted its malign if dwindling influence in 1891:

The failure of the potato crop in the western unions is the ninth occurrence of the same nature which we have had to record since the famine of 1848, but it is satisfactory to note that the area over which distress is caused by the loss of this crop appears to become less in extent on each occasion...the hope that the time is approaching when the poorer classes will cease to depend so much upon this uncertain article of food.<sup>4</sup>

In other parts of Ireland they were, in fact, ceasing so to depend, and other monitors were deploring the transition to the unwholesome tea and white bread! The Irish had in Ireland the dietetic conservatism of poor people in so many lands. Indian meal was reprobated from famine times onwards, perhaps from its connotations, and as late as 1880 was charged with promoting dropsy and phthisis, as well as fever.<sup>5</sup> No complaint was heard

---

<sup>1</sup>Connell, *ibid.*, p.288, and cf. the same author's Population of Ireland, 1750-1845, pp.151-6.

<sup>2</sup>Redcliffe N. Salaman, History and social influence of the potato, pp.121-5, 343.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p.338.

<sup>4</sup>Local government board for Ireland: Annual report, 1891, p.6.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, coliv.1948 (2 August 1880).



from emigrants of the equally alien foods they must occasionally have met, in North America.

Turning to the economic status of the emigrants, it is at first sight astounding that from such a stagnation of poverty as has been described there could apparently emerge, throughout the half-century, a steady outflow of emigrants whom contemporary testimony described, almost with one voice, though in variant phrases, as solid men. The purely relative, and possibly stereotyped use in Irish newspapers of such expressions as 'comfortable', 'respectable', 'extremely comfortable' as applied to the emigrants must of course be allowed for. There was perhaps by agreement a decent reserve in matters where accurate portrayal would have amounted to parading the country's poverty in the public press, and it is significant that such evidence as may be found as to the emigration, after the famine days, of the humbler classes tends to come from sources other than newspapers. Despite the visible poverty in Ireland, and the recurrent complaints of lack of capital in the country, it was often alleged that considerable resources existed. Peel said in 1864 that Irish farmers had the greater part of fourteen million pounds in the banks.<sup>1</sup> The Bessborough commission reported that when a farm came into the market, the money to buy it was always forthcoming,<sup>2</sup> and in 1887 the Belfast News-Letter scented large hidden resources since even in districts of alleged impoverishment there was

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., clxxvi.64 (21 June 1864).

<sup>2</sup>Bessborough commission, Report, para.100 (1880).



always money to finance agitation: 'There must be well-to-do people side by side with the poverty-stricken people, and doing very little' for their neighbours.<sup>1</sup>

As early as 1844 a Sligo witness told the Devon commission that 'it is the substantial man who is generally disposed to emigrate.'<sup>2</sup> From at least this point, onwards to the later eighteen-eighties, the testimony in favour of prosperous emigrants is massive. Whereas the representative of the Waterford Mail<sup>3</sup> perceived in 1851 merely 'several highly respectable' on a brig outward bound for New York with about a hundred passengers, at other ports in the following year the emigrants were described without distinction as 'the thrifty, the energetic, the resolute, the intelligent',<sup>4</sup> and as 'comfortable and respectable'.<sup>5</sup> In this year also, the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission expressed the obvious reason why this state of things should be: 'The labouring population seldom emigrate except under the pressure or anticipation of want; and before they make up their mind to do so, they have almost always arrived at a point of poverty which puts an expensive passage beyond their reach.'<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless the Commission was reporting, a couple of years later, that the 'labouring classes' were now induced to emigrate, not by fear of destitution but by hope of advancement;<sup>7</sup> how the passages were paid was not

---

<sup>1</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 7 March 1887.

<sup>2</sup>Evidence taken before Her Majesty's commissioners of inquiry ... in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland, part II, 356/16, [616], H.C. 1845, XX.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted Freeman's Journal, 12 June 1851.

<sup>4</sup>Newry Examiner, 31 March 1852.

<sup>5</sup>Wexford Guardian, quoted Dublin Evening Post, 21 April 1852.

<sup>6</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 12th General report, 1852, p.15.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 14th General report, 1854, pp.9-10.



explained, and on the basis of many assumptions about Irish poverty was perhaps inexplicable. A Dublin newspaper in 1852 said that emigrants embarking in the city belonged to 'what we would call a more comfortable class',<sup>1</sup> elsewhere they were poorer. A little later, the same paper described a kind of contagion of emigration beginning, presumably during the famine, in the cabins: 'The cottiers are gone - the Ten-pounders are gone - and the class of Gentlemen Farmers [peculiarly obnoxious to North America] are disappearing'.<sup>2</sup> The record of emigrant types continues in the same vein: '...the better sort of farmers, farm servants, artisans. The idle and ignorant, intemperate and bigotted, remain and are likely to remain' (1853);<sup>3</sup> 'comfortable',<sup>4</sup> 'not an indication of squalor or misery'<sup>5</sup> (1860); 'the most comfortable and respectable classes of our peasantry',<sup>6</sup> 'the better class of farmers' families...well supplied with luggage...scarcely any of the labouring class'<sup>7</sup> (1863); 'well clothed, and with money in their pockets' (1864).<sup>8</sup> Foreign observers of Ireland told the same story; thus de Lasteyrie in 1860: 'It is no

---

<sup>1</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 11 March 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6 May 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 25 March 1853.

<sup>4</sup>Cork Constitution, 12 April 1860.

<sup>5</sup>Cork Examiner, 18 May 1860. It should be noted that any evidence originating in Cork referred to a very large section of the Irish emigration.

<sup>6</sup>Galway Vindicator, 2 September 1863.

<sup>7</sup>Freeman's Journal, 9 January 1863.

<sup>8</sup>Hansard, clxxiii.1849 (11 March 1864).



longer the poorest of the population who emigrate, but artisans, domestic servants, those who have a trade or who have money of their own, and others who, already well provided for, wish to increase their gains...<sup>1</sup> This agrees broadly with de Beaumont's statement, originally made before 1840, 'ce sont les fermiers qui partent, et les pauvres qui restent'.<sup>2</sup> As early as 1868, 93% of emigrants to America went in steamers, whose fare was 30%-50% higher than sailing ships; but it was not recorded what proportion of these persons were Irish.<sup>3</sup>

The incoherence of statements on this subject before a select committee of 1865 well illustrates the uncertain and subjective aspect of all judgments upon the economic status of emigrants. While Longfield said the bulk of recent emigrants were landless labourers,<sup>4</sup> McCarthy Downing, a solicitor well acquainted with the counties Cork and Kerry, maintained that there had been great emigration among small farmers of the order of 15-25 acres, and even of 50-60 acres; and that 'it is the strong man, and the man that has capital' who emigrates.<sup>5</sup> The black years after 1879 appear to have made little change in the frequency of reference to prosperous emigrants, however much the distress temporarily swelled the numbers of poor and assisted ones. A correspondent from 'Iveragh, Derry' regarded young men who could get £15 a

---

<sup>1</sup>Jules de Lasteyrie, A few observations upon Ireland, p.11 (Dublin, 1861), R.I.A., *Holiday Tracts*, box 550.

<sup>2</sup>De Beaumont, *op.cit.*, i.xxvi.

<sup>3</sup>Emigration Commission, 29th General report, 1869, p.3.

<sup>4</sup>Report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the operation of the act 23 & 24 Vict. c.153, on the tenure and improvement of land in Ireland, QQ.420-3 (1865).

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, QQ.2446-61, 3142.



year wages, or 15s a week now at Spring work' as unsuitable candidates for assisted emigration<sup>1</sup> - a highly subjective judgment. The passengers leaving Queenstown, now by far the largest emigrant port, were said to be 'extremely comfortable-looking people...as a rule'.<sup>2</sup> In the same year, the board of guardians at Skibbereen, discussing 'extermination', heard statements that the gentry were emigrating their children, 'there was Captain Morgan who was not keeping a son at home', and an 'equally intelligent' class, the 'respectable farmers', were sending their sons to Australia. 'The only class staying at home were the poor and miserable class'.<sup>3</sup> In 1887, the young emigrants at Galway were reported to be prosperous and comfortable compared with the Tuke emigrants of a few years back (of whom it was complained at the time that they included 'numbers of persons comparatively well-to-do'<sup>4</sup>). If argued with, their 'universal reply is, that there is nothing to hope for at home'.<sup>5</sup>

Indications contrary to those in the above extracts were not entirely wanting, but were relatively few. A Cork newspaper classed the emigrants of 1857 as labourers and humbler farmers;<sup>6</sup> a Sligo one referred to 'poor Irish girls', probably some of Vere Foster's protégées, leaving the district in 1887.<sup>7</sup> Witnesses before a select committee

---

<sup>1</sup>Nation, 31 March 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Cork Examiner, 4 May 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 23 July 1883.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, cclxxviii.1868 (4 May 1883).

<sup>5</sup>Galway Vindicator, 21 May 1887.

<sup>6</sup>Southern Reporter, 4 May 1857.

<sup>7</sup>Sligo Champion, 18 June 1887.



of 1867 who asserted that the emigrants comprised labourers and insolvent farmers and tenants<sup>1</sup> were possibly envisaging the types of tenantry whom they would have liked to see emigrating; it is significant that these emigrants next appear at Cork or Belfast as 'comfortable', 'well clothed', and so forth. The transformation was doubtless financed in many cases by a payment for the goodwill of the holding.<sup>2</sup>

In the earlier years of the period, opinion was emphatic that leaseholders, or indeed landholders of any description, seldom emigrated. In 1867 Dufferin maintained that the moderate share in emigration taken by 'tenantry' at any time had decreased in recent years, until it was but 3-4% of the past twelve years' total.<sup>3</sup> In the same year, Maguire said that for the past '10 or 20 years' it had been rarely that a man with a lease emigrated.<sup>4</sup> The catholic bishop of Cloyne testified to the same effect in the previous year.<sup>5</sup>

The emigrants, prosperous or otherwise, had to find (assuming they left Ireland among that vast majority who were unassisted) their ocean fares and, in some cases, their rail fares in North America and the cost (during the greater part of the period) of a modest sea-stock of provisions, bedding and utensils. It is difficult to strike an average for every decade and for all the main routes, but somewhat less than £10 per adult might represent this

---

<sup>1</sup>Report by the select committee on the tenure (Ireland) bill, QQ. 486-92, 2413-8, 2583-9 (1867).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Q.1470.

<sup>3</sup>Dufferin, op.cit., pp.67-8.

<sup>4</sup>Select committee on tenure, as above, Q.2688.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, exc.1336-7 (10 March 1868).



population emerging from the famine years; there is here total outlay for emigrants to North America. In addition, men of substance who aimed at taking up land required at least the £200 or so which was needed to clear and stock even a nominally free holding; and all required as much 'landing-money' as would tide them through the longer or shorter time before they found work in the new world. In a letter of 1880, ~~from~~ F.R. Cruise, M.D., T.C.D. quoted American opinion on this matter as saying: 'If you send a shipload of emigrants to New York and leave them there, you might as well sink them in the middle of the ocean.' Cruise went on to say that Dr Ireland, coadjutor bishop of St Paul's, Minnesota could place at once farmers arriving in the spring with their families and £200; 'if they have but £100 he can do so also, but they must expect many privations at first.'<sup>1</sup> In sum, this was an ideal capitalisation which was far from invariably attained; but in general there were good grounds for contemporary complaints such as that of the Galway Vindicator<sup>2</sup> that on the lowest calculation an emigrant's outfit and passage cost £10, and that this was a drain on the country's capital. The newspaper did not, unfortunately for the historian, go on to explore the steady income accruing to passage brokers and emigration outfitters, the latter a peculiarly unpublicised species, from this capital drain. Before the select committee on passengers' act, Smith, the emigration officer at Londonderry, said small farmers took £200-£300 of capital, but the majority £20-£30.<sup>3</sup> These were very creditable sums of money for the emigrant section of a

---

<sup>1</sup>Freeman's Journal, 3 July 1880.

<sup>2</sup>2 May 1863.

<sup>3</sup>Select committee on passengers' act, QQ.5635-6 (1851).



population emerging from the famine years; there is here a suggestion, which there is little specific evidence to elaborate, of strenuous and purposeful accumulations, and of a decision to emigrate not lightly reached or quickly implemented. What these outgoings really represented in the shape of capital loss to Ireland is exceedingly obscure. If the estimate of £4 per emigrant, ventured on one occasion by the Newry Examiner,<sup>1</sup> appears palpably low, there must still be offset against the outgoings the astonishing reflux of emigrant remittances which might well prove to have yielded Ireland a handsome net profit on the whole emigration process. The problem, of course, is hardly amenable to the methods of the balance-sheet, and there is cogency in Carr-Saunders's judgment that the emigrants, 'millions of ready-made workers', were a valuable gift from Europe to the new world.<sup>2</sup> Americans, who in calculations of this description are seldom at fault, seemed to be of the same mind. Dr Kapp, an American emigration commissioner, was quoted in the house of commons as feeling 'safe in assuming the capital value of each male and female immigrant to be \$1500. and \$750. respectively',<sup>3</sup> a realistic if not entirely flattering assessment. Some years later, an American passenger watching the emigrants embark at Queenstown remarked that each was 'worth £1,000 to the American Government',<sup>4</sup> an idle but indicative observation.

It was the opinion of the commissioners of emigration

<sup>1</sup>10 October 1857. The Financial relations commission in 1895 was told that each emigrant was a loss to Ireland of £5 (Q.3677). But Grimshaw pointed out that the emigrant might be a greater loss if he stayed at home unemployed (Q.3682).

<sup>2</sup>A.M. Carr-Saunders, World population, pp.223-4.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, ccix.775 (20 February 1872).

<sup>4</sup>Nation, 2 June 1883.



of the state of New York that English immigrants exaggerated their resources of cash, while the Irish and Germans concealed theirs.<sup>1</sup> The disembarkation was an occasion par excellence for the arts of disguise in which the Irish could remember, in person or in tradition, many a harsh lesson. In these circumstances, the commissioners' statement that the average immigrant brought, or said he brought, \$68.08 does not accord too ill, as regards the Irish, with the Londonderry estimate quoted above of £20-£30. At the very height of the famine exodus in 1847, some curious evidence arose in Montreal, in circumstances which seem to attest its sincerity, to the effect that the supposedly destitute immigrants were not in fact entirely destitute. The situation was this. Typhus-stricken shiploads from Ireland had swamped the quarantine station at Grosse Isle, below Quebec, and were sent on upstream to Montreal, where by mid-July typhus was said to be in every street in the city, and in one or two localities almost in every house. The immigrants were landed on the St Lawrence wharves in the centre of Montreal, and those who were to proceed westward (a large number) took transport through the city to some old immigrant sheds, which also served, very inadequately, as a hospital, on the Lachine canal. Here the sick were detained, having breathed, so public opinion maintained, pestilence upon the city in passing, and the more ostensibly healthy were loaded into the canal boats for the next stage of their journey. A

---

<sup>1</sup>Richard J. Purcell, 'The New York commissioners of emigration and Irish immigrants, 1847-60', in Studies, xxxvii.39 (1948).



public meeting in July called for the building of new hospitals on Boucherville islands, a few miles below Montreal, no doubt on the analogy of Grosse Isle. The Montreal immigrant commissioners discussed this proposal, and cupidity outvoted caution; the immigrants had money to spend, and purveyors of food and cartage must not be denied access to it. The chairman of the commission, mayor John E. Mills, said:

In ordinary years,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the immigrants select and pay for their own conveyances, and purchase their own provisions - and even this year, more than half of the immigration is thus circumstanced. Should these fellow subjects whose coming among us is profitable to all concerned, be detained upon an island, they would be almost forced to become dependent upon Government.<sup>1</sup>

New hospital sheds were built, not as an island quarantine, but on the edge of the city; and the mayor died of typhus.

There is little doubt, though equally little hope of precise demonstration, that the principal source of the emigrant's journey-money lay in the remittances of former emigrants. Other resources were thrift, evasion of creditors, or a timely loan. Maguire said in 1864: 'the people ... hoarded their money with the object of leaving the country',<sup>2</sup> and urged the government to improve the attractions of investment in land. Besnard, weighmaster of Cork city, thought in 1851 that the prevailing caution of the butter merchants in making loans to small farmers was due to the chance that they might emigrate.<sup>3</sup> Some kind landlords had encouraging experiences of emigration loans; Trench's dramatic account of one such occasion is familiar.<sup>4</sup> A

---

<sup>1</sup>Montreal Transcript, 2 August 1847.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, clxxvi.69 (21 June 1864).

<sup>3</sup>Select committee on passengers' act, Q.6469 (1851); and of Besnard's evidence in Second report of the select committee on emigrant ships, Q.4693 (1854).

<sup>4</sup>W.S. Trench, *op.cit.*, c.IX.



pious man who inherited 20,000 acres in Donegal found that his loans were often repaid:

I frequently lent the required sum, then [?c.1845] only from £3 to £4...Contrary to what might perhaps be expected, these poor emigrants generally sent me back within a year the sum lent. The exceptions, I am ashamed to say, were the very persons of whom I had felt most secure, decidedly of a class looked upon as more respectable; while the poorer and less esteemed absolutely never failed me...<sup>1</sup>

The publicist F.H. O'Donnell had a thoughtful letter in the Irish press pointing out a source of emigration finance which then, in 1887, was certainly of growing importance; he said one must reckon with

the Irish farmer who may choose to turn into hard cash the value of the reforms won by the national agitation, and to carry the said cash in his pocket for investment in the prosperity of a foreign land...Unless Irish farmers are generally actuated by a patriotism above sordid considerations you need not be surprised to see every considerable increase of tenant rights converted in thousands of cases into cash, to be taken along with the tenants themselves, right out of the country.<sup>2</sup>

He went on to draw a contrast with the organisation of the Russian mir, which kept its emancipated serfs at home. The interesting point in his letter is the implied, and perhaps unanswerable, question why did 'thousands' of farmers choose as they did.

An attempt had now been made to review some processes in the history of Ireland itself during half a century that appear to have had most weight in determining perhaps a million individual decisions to emigrate. The difficulty of assembling significant evidence upon what amounts to a series of imponderables is very great. The obvious consideration that, even after the famine exodus, there were more people in Ireland, in relation to the accepted use of available resources, than could hope to fulfil all their expect-

---

<sup>1</sup>John Hamilton, Sixty years' experience as an Irish landlord, pp.210-1.

<sup>2</sup>Nation, quoted Galway Vindicator, 28 May 1887.



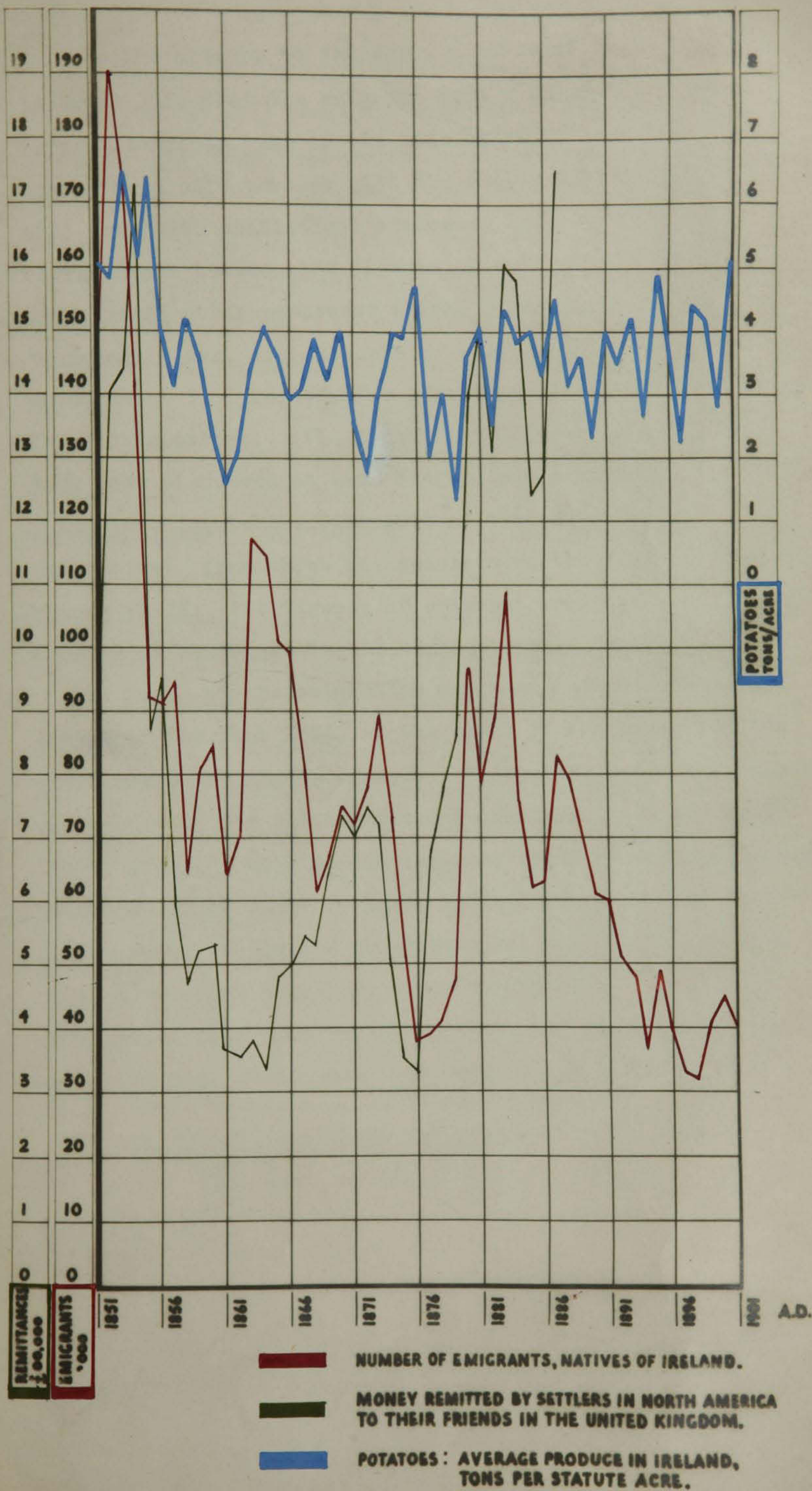
ations, invited a consideration of the mystique of land occupancy as it was observed by the Irish themselves and as it appeared to their landlords. Land tenure, by occupation or ownership, was treated less as an economic phenomenon, in which aspect it had as little meaning for the prospective emigrant as the differential calculus, than as the characteristic expression of a pattern of ascendancy and subordination which confronted him at every turn of his daily life. The lack of co-operation among rulers and ruled was examined in the working of poor relief, during ordinary times and in the ominously recurrent periods of 'distress'. Want of cohesion in the ruled was as apparent as want of understanding in their rulers. Some consideration of the Irish standard of life and standard of work was useful mainly in drawing a contrast with the situations which the emigrant found in North America. The impression left with the writer by this whole division of the study recalls Butterfield's<sup>d</sup> judgment of the industrial revolution and the rise of the capitalist system - 'the best that Providence can do with human cupidity at certain stages of the story...the total effect of all men's cupidity.'<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, the important and recondite question of the emigrant's personal finances leads forward, through emigrant remittances, from an account of the mainly extrusive factors in emigration to the mainly attractive ones; but this dichotomy is highly insecure if pressed too eagerly.

---

<sup>1</sup>Herbert Butterfield, Christianity and history, pp.34-5.







From the attempt to compose a picture of those elements in Irish life that the emigrant left with small regret, it is profitable to turn to the line chart at page 131. Here may be read off, perhaps with the rather misleading facility that goes with statistical analyses, some very striking correlations between the figures of emigration year by year and certain other processes which, unlike many of those discussed above, are amenable to measurement. Since measurement is involved, the precision of the data is exceptionally important. The emigration statistics themselves have been discussed at some length (preface, pp. 9-14); I know nothing to the discredit of the agricultural statistics<sup>1</sup> from which was constructed the graph of the Irish potato yield; the figures of emigrant remittances,<sup>2</sup> it may be said at once, are in the highest degree insecure.

The graph of the emigration may most suitably be read only from the year 1855, at the close of the steep decline which ended the famine exodus. Thereafter comes the 'normal' emigration of the later nineteenth century. In the next thirty years, a well marked ten-year cycle of emigration may be traced, with peaks in 1863, 1873, 1883. Some at least of the minor recessions in emigration, e.g. in 1861, 1871, 1881, also recur precisely every ten years. From 1887 the emigration falls away rather sharply, and in the last decade of the period, fluctuates with some symmetry about the

---

<sup>1</sup>Agricultural statistics of Ireland:

- for 1872: Summary tables, p.lxiii.  
 " 1879: Table VIII.  
 " 1889: Table VIII.  
 " 1898: Table VIII.  
 " 1900: Summary table D.  
 " 1901: Summary table J.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration Commission, General reports, 1859 et seqq.; Copy of statistical tables relating to emigration and immigration from and into the United Kingdom in the year [1876-87], with report to the Board of Trade thereon.



40,000 axis; but the figures of emigration should be read in conjunction with those of emigration intensity (append. II, table 7), discussed earlier. In seeking to fit these fluctuations into a system of cause and effect, it may be convenient to dispose first of some negative evidence. It is for instance, difficult and probably fruitless to attempt a correlation of the emigration with specific crises in the political history of Ireland. When Irish emigration rose from 1868 to 1873, to what extent were Irishmen escaping the possibly unpleasant consequences of fenianism, to what extent hastening to "the great barbecue"<sup>1</sup> that, in the triumphant North, followed the close of the war between the American states? The handful who can be identified as fenian prisoners, released on condition of departing to the United States forthwith, will be discussed later. The first substantial step in Irish land reform, the Landlord and Tenant Act of 1870, was followed by a year of falling emigration, after which the former rise was resumed. It is impossible to assign the causal shares in the rising emigration of 1881-3 between the poor potato crop of 1879 and 1882, and the land war. Vere Foster, who knew his Irish emigrants, was asked in 1882 if the desire to emigrate had increased 'since the agitation'; he replied: 'It is hard to say. I think it is about the same. The desire is the same.'<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, it is difficult to establish significant correlations between the figures of emigration and those of evictions ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ and of the various manifestations of agrarian crime. Although during the famine exodus evicted

---

<sup>1</sup>S.E. Morison and H.S. Commager, Growth of the American Republic, ii.9.

<sup>2</sup>Cairns committee, II, 1882, Q.7577.



persons may have made up a considerable proportion of the total emigration,<sup>1</sup> contemporary opinion in the next decade held that there was then no relation. Neilson Hancock was perhaps loose in his reasoning that, since evictions were but a fraction of current emigration, therefore there was no correlation between the two,<sup>2</sup> but his meaning is clear. In 1865 McCarthy Downing, well acquainted with the south-west, thought that eviction was not a cause of emigration.<sup>3</sup> The recorded number of evicted persons was high but falling from 1850 to 1855.<sup>4</sup> The annual average of the years 1855-86 was 7,379. This was exceeded only in 1855, 1863-4, when in each year there were about 9,000 persons reported as evicted, and the years 1880-6, when evicted persons ranged from 10,000 to 27,000 yearly. On a year for year reckoning there was as much correlation with falling as with rising emigration; in any case the totals evicted were too insignificant, and their condition probably too wretched, to bulk materially in the great mass of the unassisted and relatively prosperous emigration. The Irish press did not habitually link the subjects of eviction and emigration.<sup>5</sup> No great success attended William O'Brien's mission to Canada, on the occasion of evictions from the Lansdowne estate, to tell 'three millions of Canadians how Ireland is being depopulated by the brutal system which their governor, Lord Lansdowne [sic], represents.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cf., Jas. O'Connor, History of Ireland, 1798-1924, ii.3.

<sup>2</sup>W. Neilson Hancock, Report on the supposed progressive decline of Irish prosperity, p. 15 (1863).

<sup>3</sup>Report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the operation of the act 23 & 24 Vict.C.153, 1865, QQ. 3315-23.

<sup>4</sup>Return...of cases of eviction in each of the years 1849 to 1886 inclusive and of agrarian to general crime, Special Commission Act, 1888, reprint of...evidence, vol.7, [C.5891], H.C. 1890,xxvii.

<sup>5</sup>E.g., Nation, 18 April 1863; Sligo Champion, 19 February 1887; Freeman's Journal, 25 March 1887.

<sup>6</sup>Sligo Champion, 14 May 1887.



He was roughly handled by the Toronto Orangemen.<sup>1</sup>

Agrarian outrages, defined as including homicides, firing at the person or into dwellings, arson, cattle-maiming,<sup>2</sup> rose in 1869-70, a time of rising emigration, and again in 1879-81; but they fell off during the years 1882-4. 'Threatening letters and notices'<sup>3</sup> increased in number in 1862 and 1871, in each case to be followed, possibly with significance, by higher emigration. The whole of this aspect of crime and outrage, discussed earlier, was perhaps of very great weight in building up the extrusive complex which underlay emigration from Ireland; but it is idle to attempt a demonstration of the point constructed from the statistics. Speculation may range with equal freedom in the fields of foreign and of domestic Irish history in seeking significant concomitants, if not causes,<sup>4</sup> of greater or less emigration; and generally, with as little hope of numerical demonstration. The continued decrease of emigration in 1856 was attributed to the war in the Crimea;<sup>4</sup> later, the Indian mutiny was thought to have the same effect, since both increased recruiting. In 1860, another year of falling emigration, there was talk of Irish recruits for the papal army of General Lamoricière, in spite of viceregal proclamation against the practice.<sup>5</sup> The Dublin Evening Mail<sup>6</sup> thought they would return, if at all, without money. The

---

<sup>1</sup>Freeman's Journal, 18 May 1887.

<sup>2</sup>Return...of cases of eviction, etc., as above; and Return of outrages reported to the royal Irish constabulary office from 1st January 1844 to 31st December 1880, p.2, [C.2756], 1881, lxxvii.

<sup>3</sup>Return of outrages, etc., as above.

<sup>4</sup>Emigration Commission, 17th General report, 1857, p.10. A decrease of immigrants into Canada after 1854 was proportionately greater among those of Irish origin than among the total immigration, General Reports, passim.

<sup>5</sup>Cork Constitution, 23, 29 May 1860.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted *ibid.*, 22 June 1860.



business cycle or trade cycle in the United States and Canada may be selected with confidence as an outstanding external determinant of Irish emigration to North America, since herein lay the circumstances that would most quickly colour the letters from former emigrants upon which so much depended. Late in the period Gerald Balfour observed 'As far as I am able to judge, the number of emigrants from Ireland to America depends much more upon the state of trade in America than on any other cause',<sup>1</sup> and the figures of falling Irish emigration certainly reflect with great fidelity the onsets of depression in North America in 1857, 1873-6, and 1893-4. A time-lag of no more than, perhaps, six months was required to reveal the impact of these crises upon the emigration statistics. The Emigration Commission noted this factor during the Australian gold-rush, which reached notable dimensions only in 1852, and not in the latter half of 1851.<sup>2</sup> As regards the general immigration to the United States, Carr-Saunders notes<sup>3</sup> cyclical variations, elucidated by Dr Jerome, which correspond closely with opportunities of employment, with a time-lag of one to five months, and concludes that letters are the explanation. It was Oldham's opinion that Irish emigration fluctuated with American, not Irish, prosperity.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, 4th ser., lxxii.650 (8 June 1899). On the other hand, an Irish registrar general maintained that rising wages in the United States were not comparable with the state of agriculture in Ireland as a determinant of emigration, T.W. Grimshaw, Facts and figures about Ireland, p.16 (1893). The balance of evidence seems to be against him, but these contradictory pronouncements from responsible quarters are significant of the essential uncertainty of the question.

<sup>2</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 13th General report, 1853, p.16.

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit., pp.205-7.

<sup>4</sup>Charles H. Oldham, 'Incidence of emigration on town and country life in Ireland', in Stat.Soc.Ire.Jn., xiii, 213 (June, 1914).



Not only was 1857 a year of economic depression in North America generally,<sup>1</sup> in the United States the Know-nothing movement, though politically defunct, had left a legacy of dislike for catholic immigrants which was noticed in the contemporary Irish press:

Owing to the present disturbed state of parties in the United States...for the present, the Irish emigrants would do better in selecting the Canadas than the States. The Canadas contain a population holding the same faith as the Irish peasant, and there, it is imagined, he would be safer in every way than in the states, where there are millions of men of all religions and of no religion at all, all hating the Irishman because he is a Catholic. There is no disguising this fact.<sup>2</sup>

The assumption that there were no protestants, and extremely vocal ones, in the great catholic city of Montreal, not to mention the very existence of Toronto, was naive and will be adverted to later; but the warning was cogent, and was reinforced on the economic level, later in the year, by leading articles in other Irish newspapers on such topics as 'Awful panic in America',<sup>3</sup> 'Monetary and commercial panic in the United States'.<sup>4</sup> These may have helped to send the total of emigration sharply downwards in 1858, but the proportion of embarkations in Ireland for North America was heavily weighted, in that year and the following ones, on the side of America as against Canada.<sup>5</sup>

A special case of attraction in the United States arose with the civil war, and was associated with a sharp upturn of the graph of emigration from its low point in 1861. Irishmen were largely enlisted in this bloody contest, and on

---

<sup>1</sup>It was unfortunate that in 1856 the report of Hawke, the emigration agent at Toronto, held out glowing prospects for 1857, Emigration Commission, 17th General report, 1857, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>Limerick Reporter, 16 January 1857.

<sup>3</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 8 October 1857.

<sup>4</sup>Londonderry Standard, 29 October 1857.

<sup>5</sup>Emigration Commission, General reports.



either side;<sup>1</sup> a speaker in the house of commons in 1864 made a somewhat extravagant claim as to the numbers of them who fought for the North: 'In spite of the thousands of Irish who had perished in maintaining the Federal flag, the greater portion of the nearly million of soldiers who still fought for the preservation of the American Union were Irish...'.<sup>2</sup> Already in 1861 the rev. D.W. Cahill was dissuading Irish emigration on account of the war,<sup>3</sup> and early in 1862 the emigration trade at Liverpool, which up to May in the previous year had promised a heavy season, was said to be at a complete stand-still.<sup>4</sup> An enterprising passage-broker for the Allan Line advertised: 'Emigrants should bear in mind that the disturbed state of the United States does not affect the peace and prosperity of Canada';<sup>5</sup> Buchanan, as an equally enterprising Canadian, wrote to the Times extolling his country and warning against the dangers of the United States, where an emigrant might be kidnapped into the Federal army.<sup>6</sup>

The Federal government, in fact, not content with enlisting Irish and other immigrants after their arrival in America, was reaching out for soldiers, through its agents and through the notorious bounty system, as far as Ireland itself. It was an extreme and interesting case of the readiness of any 'colonial' government to tap the very sources of emigration

---

<sup>1</sup>J.F. Maguire's account of the matter is characteristic of his eulogistic book and, perhaps, of the American-Irish attitude to the war between the states: the Irish deplored the war, 'but they entered into it with a chivalrous and Christian spirit', The Irish in America, p.546.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, clxxiii. 1844 (11 March 1864).

<sup>3</sup>See I.H.S., vii.106n (Sept., 1950).

<sup>4</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 4 January 1862.

<sup>5</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 24-31 March 1862.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted, Limerick Chronicle, 31 March 1863.



once the need for emigrants grew sufficiently pressing.

The results for some Irishmen were unhappy, as appears in a letter of 1863, directed possibly to the crown solicitor:

Emigration Office, Bruff, May 21st. 63. My Lord I beg your lordships attention to the vile conduct practised by some heartless knave on the suffering poor of this country in taking from them three pound each under the pretence that he would send them free from Queenstown to America and to add to his base subterfuge he caused the people about Charleville to proceed to Cork & who had to journey back discomfitted

He took their names down for the purpose of enlistment in the North American Army - I trust your lordship will be pleased to issue directions to have this man arrested I have written a leading article in the Limerick Reporter calling upon you to have this man arrested -

I am My Lord, Your lordships obt servt, Patrick Wallis.<sup>1</sup> x

Faced with this situation, the Irish press was apparently unanimous in condemning Federal recruiting. The Freeman's Journal<sup>2</sup> in 1862 reproved American selfishness in trying to procure Irish emigrants for the war. The Galway Vindicator<sup>3</sup> deplored the stampede to the United States, and considered Canada, or 'even' Great Britain, 'quite as convenient' for emigration; Lincoln was said to be getting a thousand soldiers a week from the immigrants. The Londonderry Standard<sup>4</sup> thought the departure of two hundred labourers from Dublin, nominally to work on an American railroad, rather suspicious but probably in order, and quoted a letter from Montreal on the iniquities of the bounty traffic in Canada. The Limerick Reporter<sup>5</sup> noted that 'several young men have been leaving Ireland for the last few months, ostensibly to emigrate to America, but actually for service in the Federal army, for which they are engaged by American agents, and

---

<sup>1</sup>Registered papers, 1863/4736 (S.P.O.).

<sup>2</sup>21 January 1862.

<sup>3</sup>8 April, 30 September 1863.

<sup>4</sup>15 April 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted Freeman's Journal, 25 March 1863.



forwarded with gold watches, large bounties, etc., etc.' Two newspapers looked a little further than their contemporaries into the implications of this emigration of Irishmen to American battlefields. The Nation,<sup>1</sup> pointing out that the Irish brigade lost all but 250 out of 1,300 at Fredericksburg, wrote: '...the Irishmen in America could not gratify England more than by rushing into the midst of the deadly strife as if it were their own'. This was rather far-fetched. Much nearer the mark was Saunders' Correspondent,<sup>2</sup> with some paragraphs, dated from Cork, to the effect that federal recruiting-agents had revived anti-English feeling. Nocturnal military assemblies were training men for American battles, and the quid pro quo would be an American invasion of Ireland. Irish militiamen were disappearing with the emigrants, who poured out of Cork by the Inman Line. These dupes were estranged from their priests.

The rise in Irish emigration between 1861 and 1863 was indeed spectacular, from 64,000 to 117,000. Not all of this increment were attracted to the fighting. In the house of commons, sir George Grey pointed out that, owing to the war, America held out economic attractions with which Britain did not propose to compete:

Wages in America were very high, artificially high, in consequence of the war, while in Ireland they were comparatively low. Her Majesty's Government did not think it would be expedient, even were it practicable, to endeavour to resist such emigration by the providing industrial employment at the public expense.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of patient demonstration by the Emigration Commission<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>13 January 1863.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted Newry Telegraph, 8 April 1863.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, clxxv.99 (6 May 1864).

<sup>4</sup>E.g., 24th General report, 1864. Their 25th General report, 1865, p.13 pointed out that in 1864 there was indeed an increased proportion of single men in the United Kingdom emigration to the U.S.A., but hardly any increase in the proportion of Irish single men.



that the Federal armies were not in fact sustained solely by Her Majesty's Irish subjects, parliament took an interest in the matter that grew with the North's prospects of ultimate victory. Upon an inquiry in 1863 whether or not the government was aware that 'the Federals' were recruiting in Ireland, Peel replied:

...there was no open recruiting. A great number of young men had certainly gone from Ireland to America, and on inquiry the Government had found that their passages had been paid, and there was every reason to suppose that those Irishmen, in America, had been induced by the Federal authorities to enlist in the Federal army.<sup>1</sup>

The government, said Peel, were following the matter up, and negotiations went on between Britain and the United States over Irishmen who alleged they had been illegally recruited.<sup>2</sup> In the following year, Peel said about 23,000 Irish entered the Federal service during 1863,<sup>3</sup> but this figure, fairly innocuous in relation to the high emigration of that year, did not preclude a brisk debate on the subject, opened by Lord Edward Howard.<sup>4</sup> 'There was reason' he said, 'to believe that in all the passenger ships from the Mersey to America there were emissaries from the Federal Government on board with the view of enlisting young men as recruits,' and cases were cited of Irishmen who thus got £40 for emigrating. Many sold their liberty, or their lives, cheaper than that, according to papers, which were now brought in evidence, from consul Lousada at Boston. In March, 1864 he wrote:

The bounties both of the United States and of the several States, added to local premiums, amount to 700 ~~dolls.~~ <sup>dols.</sup>, and even 820 dols., besides 15 dols. to 25 dols. to the bringer in of a recruit, and as the poor Irish are generally

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, clxxi.175-6 (1 June 1863).

<sup>2</sup>Cf., RG 59, RG 84, department of state (National archives, Washington, D.C.).

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, clxxvi.60 (21 June 1864).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2161-82 (28 July 1864).



made drunk and given at the outside 25 dols., the sharks who prey on them collect the balance, and thus a cargo of 120, as in this instance, would net a very large profit to the speculators.

It is curious that these mercenaries were content, drunk or otherwise, with such a poor bargain. Later in the debate, Hennessy complained that the government did nothing to warn the Irish against miserable conditions in the United States generally, and quoted stories of Irish sufferings in Boston;<sup>1</sup> but this opened a wider perspective, and the subject was not pursued. Replying to the debate, Peel said the viceroy had issued a proclamation, which had been effective, against emigration for enlistment.

Stanley C. Johnson observes<sup>2</sup> that each year of the period 1863-87 in which the Irish potato crop fell below the average in bulk was followed by one of expanded emigration, and this may very well be so. At all events, as the graph at page 131 shows, there was between 1861 and ~~1890~~ about 1890 a very close positive correlation of the major deficiencies of the potato crop, measured in its yield by tons per acre, and rising emigration in the year or two following each failure of the crop. That is to say, Irish emigration moved in close relation with nothing more recondite than the weather in Ireland. We have here an obvious and easily measurable factor, but not on that account a sole and necessary cause; the inverse correspondences between potato yield and emigration are nevertheless very striking. There is of course a further correlation with the phases of acute distress, already considered. The potato yield was a

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf., Oscar Handlin, Boston's immigrants, 1790-1865.

<sup>2</sup>History of emigration from the United Kingdom to North America, 1763-1912, p. 52-3.



peculiarly sensitive index of Irish prosperity in that the pig population tended to fluctuate as the potato crop of the preceding year; and the pig was the rent-payer.<sup>1</sup> Setting aside, again, the years 1851-5, which also had potato yields far above the average, 3.6 tons, of the half-century, the statistics of the three years of major peak emigration, 1863, 1880 and 1883 all respond to the potato test. The years 1860-2 saw three bad harvests; the worst, in 1861, gave the second lowest potato yield of the period. The census commissioners considered that the high emigration after 1861 was due quite as much to bad harvests as to the war in America.<sup>2</sup> 1877-9 again saw three bad harvests, the last said to be the worst since 1816,<sup>3</sup> and having the lowest potato yield of the half-century. 1883, the last of those years in which emigration exceeded 100,000, followed three fairly good harvests, but that of 1882 was the worst of them and had a potato yield far below the average. Due weighting should be allowed here to factors other than climatic - the land war, and the land act of 1881, whose significance as possible promoters of emigration has been discussed.

Of the three years of minor peak emigration, 1860, 1873 and 1887 the first might in the present context be held an erratic, since, although potato yield was falling, it fell lower after 1860, while emigration fell with it. But the first gun of the American civil war was fired early in the emigration season of 1861. The 1872 potato yield was below two tons; that of 1886 was below, though not much below, the average. From about this point, the correlation begins to

---

<sup>1</sup>T.W. Grimshaw, Facts and figures about Ireland, p.10 (1893).

<sup>2</sup>Census of Ireland, 1871, part III, General report, p.192.

<sup>3</sup>J.T. Pim, Review of the economic and social condition of Ireland (1899).



break down, and the sharply declining potato yields of 1896-7 were followed, not by rising but falling emigration. Arthur Balfour's policy was perhaps bearing better fruit than the potato plants, and whatever the extrusive urges behind emigration, hunger or the fear of hunger was no longer prominently among them. Balfour's departure in 1891 occurred, in fact, at a turning-point in Ireland's emigration, whereat it finally (let us hope) fell away below 60,000 and settled into its modern phase.

. . . . .

The line chart includes a graph of emigrant remittances merely because these have pretensions, though nothing better, to the status of a measurable correlative of Irish emigration. All the evidence is agreed alike on the vital importance in the emigration process of the large sums of money which poured into the United Kingdom from former emigrants, mainly in North America, and the impossibility of ascertaining what these sums were or even how they were distributed as between Great Britain and Ireland. It is indeed unfortunate that, in so significant a branch of the subject, so much is conjectural. The Emigration Commission published annually a 'Return showing Amounts of Money remitted by Settlers in North America to their Friends in the United Kingdom' from 1848,<sup>1</sup> 'the first year in which we have any information'; although Neilson Hancock said the first unofficial reference to remittances went back to 1837.<sup>2</sup> The Commission's 27th Report, of 1867, revised drastically the figures previously published for the years 1859 to 1865, with the somewhat alarming admission: 'The above return for the years 1859 to 1865

---

<sup>1</sup>Emigration Commission, 19th General report, 1859, et seqq.

<sup>2</sup>W.N. Hancock, 'On the remittances from North America by Irish emigrants', in Stat.Soc.Ire.Jn., vi.281 (Dec.1873).



does not correspond with the similar returns printed in former Reports, the amounts remitted from Australia being here omitted, and some errors which have been discovered in former returns corrected...'.<sup>1</sup> From 1873 the returns were published by the Board of Trade,<sup>2</sup> with a thickening aura of unreliability. Variant readings of some of the figures began to appear, without explanation, in the recapitulatory tables;<sup>3</sup> and at length the Board of Trade abandoned the struggle, with the following explanation in their report of 1888:

Tables, formerly given for many years, showing, as far as could be ascertained, the amounts of remittances made by settlers in the United States, British North America, and other places, to friends at home, have been omitted in the present return. They have always been presented by the Department under protest as necessarily incomplete, while there is no possibility of making them complete, so that they have always been liable to misconstruction.<sup>4</sup>

A statement to the same effect was made in the house of commons.<sup>5</sup>

All this merely elaborated the doubts on the subject that the Emigration Commissioners had from time to time put out: 'there can be no doubt that a portion of the remittances through Liverpool [the great entrepôt for this business] and London are from English emigrants to persons in England';<sup>6</sup> 'these returns [of remittances], like those for preceding years, are necessarily imperfect, as we depend for them on the courtesy of the commercial houses connected with America. We

<sup>1</sup>Append. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., thesis, append. II, table 13.

<sup>3</sup>Hence some of my figures of remittances, e.g. for 1885, 1886, do not agree with the final recapitulation of the whole series, 1848-87, published in the Board of Trade's Copy of statistical tables, etc., tab.VII, H.C.1888 (2), cvii; in the circumstances, this seems to be of no consequence.

<sup>4</sup>Copy of statistical tables, as above, 1888, p.9.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, cccxxiii.855-6 (12 March 1888).

<sup>6</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 13th General report, 1853, p.10.



are unable to obtain any return from the Port of London'.<sup>1</sup> Somewhat earlier the Commissioners had reported to the same effect, adding an interesting speculation, equally unsupported by evidence, upon what actually became of the money:

We have no information respecting the sums, probably considerable, sent home through private hands, or through merchants or bankers from whom we get no returns. The money thus sent home has for many years been more than sufficient to pay the whole expense of Irish emigration. And as it is certain that the whole Irish emigration is not paid for out of such remittances, it follows that a considerable portion of them must go to increase the means of the small farmers and labourers in that country, and to improve the general condition of the people.<sup>2</sup>

When, therefore, in the Board of Trade's report of 1888 the dangerously precise figure of £34,040,564 is assigned as the total of remittances from North America to the United Kingdom in the period 1848-87, it is perhaps safer to read 'a very large sum of money'.

Conjecture surrounds equally the question of how this money was distributed among sundry means of transmission: banks, merchants, money-orders through the post office, passage certificates or the trusted emissary returning in person to Ireland. In 1863 the Emigration Commissioners complained that inter alia they lacked all record of the remittances through the post or through private hands'.<sup>3</sup> Maguire, in 1867, thought that passage tickets made but a small proportion of 'the enormous amount sent in the shape of assistance to relatives at home.'<sup>4</sup> Hancock pointed out that the money-order business with the colonies began in 1856, and a money-order convention with the United States in 1871.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 20th General report, 1860, p.14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 18th General report, 1858, p.13.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 23rd General report, 1863, p.12.

<sup>4</sup>Op.cit., p.322.

<sup>5</sup>W.N. Hancock, 'On the remittances from North America,' as above.



Granville, on the other hand, thought in 1869 that remittances to Ireland came almost entirely as passage warrants.<sup>1</sup> The colonial secretary and the recent visitor to America were at variance. Official facilities for buying a passage certificate from any port in the United Kingdom to Quebec were advertised in Montreal in 1854.<sup>2</sup> In 1883 it was said that a high proportion of the heavy emigration through Queenstown had 'tickets provided for them by their friends in America.'<sup>3</sup>

Whatever the sums, however transmitted, they witness to a filial piety and Christian charity of an order that history has seldom recorded. Maguire<sup>4</sup> has many affecting stories of raw emigrants who doubled their own privations to relieve those of relatives at home, and looked for no earthly recompense. As D'Arcy McGee's American Celt put it: 'Irish affection has no sooner secured a footing for itself than it must toil and moil to rescue those who remain from the perilous wreck, of an intolerable social despotism.'<sup>5</sup> The Emigration Commissioners printed repeated official tributes to 'a testimony of generosity and self-denial probably unparalleled in the world', and spoke of the rapid growth of the system and, in 1855, its changing character - 'it is now not merely a question of the first emigrant of the family's remitting enough to bring out the others.'<sup>6</sup> In 1874 Foy, the Canadian agent in Belfast, said 'I am in receipt, by every mail, of money forwarded from friends in Canada to send out

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cxv.955 (16 April 1869).

<sup>2</sup>[Montreal] True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 29 December 1854.

<sup>3</sup>Cork Examiner, 4 May 1883.

<sup>4</sup>Op.cit., c.XVI.

<sup>5</sup>21 August 1852, abstracted, Hansen MSS, box 3 (Houghton library, Harvard University, MS AM 9023).

<sup>6</sup>Emigration Commission, 15th General report, 1855, pp.11-13; 17th Report, 1857, p.10.



relatives, and even acquaintances."<sup>1</sup> Vere Foster found that girls were the most faithful remitters of money,<sup>2</sup> and this was the experience of a Boston agent, who reported 'having remitted 30,725 dollars to Ireland during January and February in small sums chiefly from servant girls'.<sup>3</sup> English emigrants seem not to have achieved a good name as remitters.<sup>4</sup> A little evidence arises in the early years of the period which may be highly significant, to the effect that emigrant remittances and emigrant letters were sometimes an attempt to put a favourable colour upon an enterprise that had not in the event fulfilled the emigrant's high expectations. A returned Irish-American stated this point of view in the course of a long letter to the Nation:<sup>5</sup>

Many parties in America send money to their friends in Ireland to assist them at home, and others send it to carry their friends out. Now, a great portion of that money is the hard earnings of those parties...Others resort to raffling goods of every description to raise money, which they send home, accompanied with lying letters as to their prosperity. Numerous are the stratagems to which recourse is had to raise a few dollars to induce people to join their friends in America; but when arrived out they find a different scale of things to what they expected...

Some of the guide-books for emigrants contained advice against painting the American lily in this manner: 'Irishmen living in this country [United States] and writing to their friends at home, should by all means avoid giving over coloured pictures of what they see and experience.'<sup>6</sup> There was also the danger of the humble emigrant 'accustomed in his letters to speak of his interviews with colonels, judges, and even

<sup>1</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 18 May 1874.

<sup>2</sup>Cairns committee, II, 1882, Q.7554.

<sup>3</sup>Roscommon Journal, 6 March 1880.

<sup>4</sup>Cf., Hansard, cxcv.951 (16 April 1869); Emigration Commission, 20th General report, 1860, p.16; Dublin Evening Post, 11 March 1852.

<sup>5</sup>15 May 1852.

<sup>6</sup>J. O'Hanlon, The Irish emigrant's guide for the United States, p.187 (Boston, 1851).



senators',<sup>1</sup> in a country where persons of this social eminence were at once more numerous and more accessible than their prototypes in Europe. Peyton's Emigrant's Friend spoke of remittances as sometimes raised by means of 'balls, suppers, tea parties, raffles...ingenious strategems, whereby they convey to distant friends erroneous notions of their prosperity and comfort...'.<sup>2</sup> This is another picture from that of the Irish servant-girl trudging to the remittance broker with her hoarded dollars; both are pathetic, and their modern analogue, the dispatch of food-parcels to Europe, is sometimes not less so.

Turning to the graph of remittances, one hesitates to generalise from such precarious evidence. As would be expected, the figures fall with waning prosperity in North America, e.g. in 1856-8, 1873-6. The very high ranges after 1879 may or may not indicate largely the adoption of some new basis of reckoning by harassed civil servants. There is however broad evidence of an American-Irish community which has as a whole succeeded in worldly matters and not failed. Hancock considered that remittances fluctuated merely with American-Irish prosperity (Canada is seldom mentioned in this connection), and with need ('pressure') in Ireland.<sup>3</sup> The apparent slump in remittances between 1857 and 1867 might seem to bear this out; Hancock said it 'arose entirely from the civil war in America'.<sup>4</sup> The Freeman's Journal<sup>5</sup> alleged in 1862 that 'American remittances have ceased'. This was hardly

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.189.

<sup>2</sup>J. Peyton, The emigrant's friend; or hints on emigration to the United States of America, addressed to the people of Ireland, p.45 (Cork, 1853).

<sup>3</sup>Loc.cit., p.284.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>21 January 1862.



the case. A letter of that year from the bank of Ireland to the registrar general said: 'the enclosed memorandum as to Remittances from America through this Bank may be taken as very nearly quite Accurate, and I trust will be sufficiently so for your purpose: - with the exception of £3000 or £4000 the money was transmitted by "the Irish Emigrant Society" [of New York].' The memorandum shows remittances as follows:

Year	1860	about	£73,500
"	1861	"	72,000
to July,	1862	"	34,000 <sup>1</sup>

From 1872 to 1880 there is an apparently good correlation of falling and then rising remittances and emigration, the former preceding the latter by an appropriate interval. Tuke in 1883 could refute stories of material hardship among his assisted emigrants by pointing to remittances of the order of £2,000 - £8,000 a year coming into the Clifden union alone;<sup>2</sup> in a letter to the press he said that in their 'wretched mountain homes... [the emigrants] could not in the same time scrape together as many shillings as they have now sent pounds.'<sup>3</sup> Even guesswork figures fail after 1887, but in 1895 it was said that 'the people do not get quite so much assistance to go across as they formerly did.'<sup>4</sup> As to their incidence throughout the year, the remittances were said to come in fastest during the early months preceding the normal emigration season.<sup>5</sup>

Remittances were clearly a prime promoter of two things: emigration, and official reluctance to help emigration. It

<sup>1</sup>Manager, bank of Ireland, to Wm. Donnelly, 30 July 1862 (N.L.I., Larcom papers, MSS 1605).

<sup>2</sup>E. Fry, Life of James Haek Tuke, pp.214-5. *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup>Times, 12 January 1883.

<sup>4</sup>Financial relations commission, 1895, Q.3675 (Grimshaw).

<sup>5</sup>Freeman's Journal, 29 March 1853.



of a young man who could not go to sea for want of a suit: is probable that their importance declined a little as the indigenous prosperity of the emigrant classes rose. Press references to remittance emigration are common in the earlier years of the period,<sup>1</sup> rather less so later. In 1860 a newspaper correspondent wrote that the emigration was not due to want of 'fixity of tenure', to evictions, so far as Kerry was concerned, or to the farmer who gave up his holding, but to remittances.<sup>2</sup> Maguire quoted an American opinion that as long as the emigrant half of a divided Irish family would send money to the residue, emigration there would be.<sup>3</sup> This situation carried much comfort in governmental circles, precluding or at least excusing the nightmare task of devising a real emigration policy for Ireland. The matter will be referred to in a later section; for the present, the following observation by the Emigration Commission, commenting on remittances from North America of the order of £650,000 per annum, states the case:

Is it possible to believe that such self-denial would continue to be practised, or such remittances to be made, if it were once proclaimed that Parliament had recognised the duty of providing passages for all who could not find employment, but were willing to emigrate?<sup>4</sup>

That they helped to inhibit the never ductile streams of official help for emigration is not the only disadvantage that may be charged to emigrant remittances. It has already been suggested, above (pp. 103 ), that much Irish-American money went to prop up a social system in Ireland which little deserved propping. In an anti-emigrationist letter, the archbishop of Toronto included a story

---

<sup>1</sup>E.g., Dublin Evening Post, 11 March 1852; Limerick Reporter, quoted Londonderry Standard, 24 February 1853.

<sup>2</sup>Kerry Post, quoted Cork Constitution, 4 May 1860.

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit., p.331.

<sup>4</sup>Emigration Commission, 30th General report, 1870, p.5.



of a young man who could not go to mass for want of a suit: 'I made a vow to God that I would not put a new suit on myself until I sent ten pounds to my father to help him to pay the rent and keep the cabin over his head in Ireland.'<sup>1</sup> Other hard-earned savings were sent back 'to the old folk at home...to help them to carry on the immemorial struggle',<sup>2</sup> presumably against poverty and the British alike. In a sense, such sacrifices deserved a better object. It was the opinion of a secretary of the Tuke committee that remittance money was positively harmful to the impoverished west:

...the amount sent over is not large, and in no way diminishes but rather increases the evils from which these districts are suffering. While on the one hand it takes away a few of the able-bodied (doubtless greatly to their benefit), on the other, by subsidising those who remain, it tends to keep families struggling on the land in a state bordering on destitution, and assists them to pay rent which could not be raised from the land itself. If, however, by degrees, a large number of entire families were removed, the over-crowding would be relieved and the holdings increased in size.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the whole question is of little moment beside the noble sentiment which inspired the remittances.

---

<sup>1</sup>Nation, 1 December 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Drogheda Argus, 18 May 1889.

<sup>3</sup>Emigration from Ireland, being the second report of the committee of 'Mr. Tuke's fund', 1883, p.23.



The accessories of emigration.

Agencies and persons who are engaged in such business shall be held responsible for the same. The law shall be applicable to all persons who are engaged in such business, whether they are citizens or foreigners, and whether they are acting as principals or accessories.

(2) The official reports of emigration shall be made to the Bureau of Emigration and Immigration, and the Bureau shall be authorized to require the production of such reports, and to make such investigations as may be necessary to enforce the law.

**SECTION III**

**The accessories of emigration.**

Whoever is engaged in such business, whether as principal or accessory, shall be held responsible for the same. The law shall be applicable to all persons who are engaged in such business, whether they are citizens or foreigners, and whether they are acting as principals or accessories. The Bureau of Emigration and Immigration shall be authorized to require the production of such reports, and to make such investigations as may be necessary to enforce the law.

Whoever is engaged in such business, whether as principal or accessory, shall be held responsible for the same. The law shall be applicable to all persons who are engaged in such business, whether they are citizens or foreigners, and whether they are acting as principals or accessories. The Bureau of Emigration and Immigration shall be authorized to require the production of such reports, and to make such investigations as may be necessary to enforce the law.

Whoever is engaged in such business, whether as principal or accessory, shall be held responsible for the same. The law shall be applicable to all persons who are engaged in such business, whether they are citizens or foreigners, and whether they are acting as principals or accessories. The Bureau of Emigration and Immigration shall be authorized to require the production of such reports, and to make such investigations as may be necessary to enforce the law.



SECTION III

The accessories of emigration.

Agencies and processes which were helpful, and in some instances essential, to Irish emigration in the period may be classified as (a) official, (b) philanthropic and individual, (c) commercial; a fourth category, (d) emigrant guide-books, pertains to all three classifications.

(a) The official adjuncts of emigration will here be examined rather in the guise of the machinery itself than of the policy which moved, or sometimes omitted to move the wheels; a consideration to which a later section of the thesis will be devoted. Such adjuncts were the Colonial Land and Emigration board, its emigration officers and the "passengers" acts with whose administration they wrestled, the Emigrants' Information Office upon which devolved some of the functions of the old emigration commission, the statutes with emigration clauses under which the Irish poor law commissioners or local government board assisted a trickle of pauper emigration. Here too may be considered the case of such "official" emigrants as crown witnesses, and persons detained under the habeas corpus suspension act of 1866 who were "discharged for America".

'Buried in a cul-de-sac called Park-street, where few emigrants could find them out',<sup>1</sup> the emigration commissioners, or 'government emigration board' as they were sometimes designated in official correspondence, represented, in this subfusc habitation, lord John Russell's reaction to some of the bolder ideas on planned colonisation of Durham and Wakefield.<sup>2</sup> That is to say, the commissioners were not

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cxviii.681 (14 July 1851).

<sup>2</sup>Cf., Fred H. Hitchins, Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 1840-78.



a policy-making assembly of dynamic possibilities, disposing of large imperial funds, but a trio and very soon a pair of conscientious officials who exercised, between 1840 and 1873, so much supervision of the British and Irish emigration process as successive governments were prepared to concede. Sir Thomas Wm. Clinton Murdoch (aliter Murdock) was a commissioner throughout nearly all that part of the board's life which falls in the period under review; he knew something of Canada at first hand. Wood, Rogers, Walcott were successively his associates. Between 1869 and 1872, the house of commons, newly aroused to an awareness of impending overpopulation in England, was inquiring what the emigration board was doing.<sup>1</sup> On the first occasion Monsell, as colonial under secretary, replied that the commission's duties had decreased but, if it were abolished, the government would have to pay some large pensions and 'there would be very little saving to the public'.<sup>2</sup> The central establishment then consisted of two commissioners, an assistant, and seven clerks, with the very modest annual budget of £12,000, of which £2,000 came from colonial funds. The remainder of Monsell's reply, together with a later sessional paper<sup>3</sup> on the subject, revealed the atrophy of function whose first sign was the dropping of the board's third commissioner in 1857.<sup>4</sup> Young and aggressive colonial governments were ready to take a larger share in administering matters that they regarded as theirs. The broad categories of the board's original duties had been to report on colonial laws and questions (in abeyance since 1856) of

---

<sup>1</sup>E. G., Emigration: original correspondence, 'secretary of state, 6 February 1872 (P.R.O., C.O. 384/100).

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, cxcv.579-80 (12 April 1869).

<sup>3</sup>Returns showing names of Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, etc., H.C. 1872(154), xliii.

<sup>4</sup>Emigration Commission, 17th General report, 1857, p.49.



colonial lands referred to it by the secretary of state; 'to deal with all matters relating to emigration', a very wide range of implied activities of which the chief was to implement the current passengers' act; 'to furnish information to the public respecting emigration and the British Colonies', an early and interesting example of a didactic function now arrogated as a matter of course by many government departments and commercial undertakings; and to select and despatch to Australasia, chartering the necessary ships, the many emigrants who then were assisted by colonial funds. This branch of emigration had by 1872 dwindled to a modest exodus of female domestic servants to New South Wales, but a new duty had been added to the board in the supervision of the coming and going of coolie labour between Asia and certain of the colonies. In the days of a considerable assisted emigration to Australia, the board maintained forwarding dep<sup>o</sup>ts, models of their kind, at Birkenhead, London and Plymouth, and Butt complained that another, at Cork, would be appreciated.<sup>1</sup>

A great part of the Emigration Commission's occupation was in fact gone, or imperilled, when the first colonial emigration agents began to appear in the United Kingdom in the eighteen-fifties. From that time, the colonies, and later the dominions showed a strong preference for selecting their immigrants at the source. This was in some degree a criticism of certain types of assisted emigration in the past. From the early eighteen-sixties, there were in Ireland resident agents of Canada, Australia and New Zealand,<sup>2</sup> offering (on behalf of Canada) free land and

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cxxxii.579-85 (6 April, 1854).

<sup>2</sup>Cf., Belfast News-Letter, 29 March 1862; Newry Telegraph, 17, 24 January 1874; Dublin Evening Post, 13 May 1862.



(on behalf of Australasia) free or assisted passages, and distributing emigration literature which will be considered in its place. The Emigration Commission's powers were transferred to the board of trade by the merchant shipping act of 1872, its reports ceased in 1873, and there is an almost elegiac note in a colonial office minute of 1878<sup>1</sup> which records the 'final dissolution of the Emigration Board'. When in 1884 somebody suggested that the 'Department of Emigration' should be revived, the parliamentary answer was that it would now have nothing to do - the passengers' acts were transferred to the board of trade, there were the 'successful Emigration Agencies of the Colonial Governments', the colonies controlled their own lands.<sup>2</sup>

The Emigration Commissioners discharged their function of publicity with a considerable output of emigration literature. Much of this may have had some bearing upon the decisions of Irish and other emigrants, although the heavy official English of at least the reports would need considerable mediation through a sympathetic interpreter before it could mean a great deal to any but the more literate. The curiosity of the house of commons in 1872 was not rewarded with an account of anything 'resembling the Volume...distributed by the Government of the United States'<sup>3</sup> on the opportunities of taking up land in that country, although four Canadian provinces individually issued something of the kind. Nevertheless the details given on the same occasion showed that the commissioners were producing, besides their annual reports, a colonizat-

---

<sup>1</sup>12 February (P.R.O., C.O.384/121).

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, ccxc.910-11 (14 July 1884).

<sup>3</sup>Returns showing names etc., as above, pp.12-13.



ion circular, price 6d, a pamphlet of information for emigrants to British colonies, price 2d, and a free notice relating to New South Wales. The circular included information, related to the different colonies, on the cost of passages, demand for labour, cost of living, wage rates and climate. The annual report was a solid production, with ample statistical appendixes analysing the previous year's emigration, and surveying in greater detail some topics touched on in the circulars, and many cognate ones; it included a record of the year's prosecutions under the passengers' act.

A colonization circular of the momentous year 1847 may be cited to illustrate the real advantage which emigrants might derive from some of these productions: its items included the following:

Names and duties of emigration agents in the United Kingdom.

Demand for labour, and wages and prices, in British North America.

Expenses of clearing land.

Hints to emigrants to North American colonies: these were comprehensive, and included practical advice on tools, maintenance on arrival, the danger of refusing good wages, the route to Canada west and from New York to Canada, and the expense of erecting a log hut ('These Huts, if properly constructed, are very warm and comfortable').<sup>1</sup>

The circular ends on the warning note that statements recently circulated concerning the amenities of Texas 'are reported by Authority to be greatly exaggerated'. Ad hoc cautionary notices of this kind, which appeared not infrequently, were perhaps for the simpler type of emigrant the commissioners' most important publication. Their twenty-fifth report included the text of one such warning 'which, by the assistance of the police, we had posted up far and

---

<sup>1</sup>Report of the select committee of the house of lords on colonization from Ireland, 1847, append. no.7.



wide in Ireland'.<sup>1</sup> This was to the effect that emigrants would be safe at the Castle Garden reception centre in New York, but must trust no strangers, who probably wanted to enlist emigrants in the federal army or to defraud them of their money. Similarly, some years earlier into the hands of every adult emigrant proceeding to New York was put a broadside of the information which before all things was necessary for a foreigner in that city, as that a dollar was 4s2d and a cent  $\frac{1}{2}$ d, with the corollary advice: 'Leave New York as quickly as you can, and go at once to the place where you intend to settle.'<sup>2</sup> These particulars were worth more to the average Irish emigrant than the more imperial sentiments of the reports. Such people the commissioners possibly had in mind in saying, in one of their reports, 'it must be remembered that the bulk of the communications sent from this office are addressed to an illiterate and ignorant class of people, on subjects involving very important consequences to their future prospects.'<sup>3</sup>

About the beginning of the period, when emigration was still at its heaviest, information or opinion put out by the Emigration Commission may be found reproduced in the Irish press. Thus, the Nation<sup>4</sup> quoted without comment a passage of the commission's report for 1851 foreshadowing the extinction of the Irish people; the Dublin Evening Post<sup>5</sup> had particulars of the commission's free passages to

---

<sup>1</sup>Emigration Commission, 25th General report, 1865, append. no.51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 12th General report, 1852, append.25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 17th General report, 1857, p.49.

<sup>4</sup>7 August 1852.

<sup>5</sup>8 June 1852.



Australia, and the Limerick Chronicle<sup>1</sup> had a long account of the new passengers' act.

At the time of Monsell's statement in 1869 on the duties of the Emigration Commission, and indeed throughout the commission's existence, it had no servants in its employment more important than the emigration officers, sometimes described<sup>2</sup> as 'agents for government emigration', of whom in that year there were twenty-three throughout the United Kingdom ports. These were the men who before each emigrant ship was cleared for sea, endeavoured to satisfy themselves, in concert with the medical officers, that it complied in every respect with the prescriptions of the passengers' act for the time being in force. In seasons of heavy emigration they faced these duties under the most difficult conditions of work, and at all times fortified only by their half pay from the navy together with the Emigration Commission's very modest stipend. Over and above implementing the law on emigrant shipping, the officers had various and perplexing calls upon their discretion and, as emigrant counsellors, their humanity. It does not appear whether or not the officers at Liverpool and the Irish ports spoke Irish; lacking it, they must certainly have needed interpreters. In 1851 the Emigration Commissioners had occasion to praise the work of Lieut. Chas. Friend, R.N., 'inspecting-officer' since 1834 at Cork, where he dealt with 'the poorest and most helpless class of emigrants'.<sup>2</sup> A little later, they similarly commended the work of Lieut. Henry at Dublin:

---

<sup>1</sup>26 May 1852.

<sup>2</sup>E.g., Thom's directory (Dublin), *passim*.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration: original correspondence, secretary of state, 6 June 1851 (P.R.O., C.O.384/86).



We continually have to employ him in matters that require great discrimination and probity - we allude particularly to the selection of Schoolmasters and Matrons to accompany Irish Emigrants - and also the approval of such Emigrants as may be recommended for Passages by the Irish Poor Law Authorities or Charitable Institutions.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the devotion to their duty in these men that Hodder's dismissal from Liverpool in 1851, for omitting to measure ships proceeding to the United States, was a rare event in the board's history.<sup>2</sup> His successor, Capt. Patey, proved to be a very new broom who sent in lengthy accounts of the improvements he projected.<sup>3</sup>

Hodder's narrative, before the select committee on passengers' act,<sup>4</sup> of the conditions in which he worked at Liverpool might seem to excuse a great deal.<sup>5</sup> With but two assistants, he was responsible for checking, as to the numbers on board, the medical inspection and everything required by the passengers' act, every emigrant ship that cleared from Liverpool, sometimes as many as fourteen vessels in one day.<sup>6</sup> This, which as Hodder put it 'is great labour for the three of us',<sup>7</sup> might well have been sufficient; but the emigration officers also supplied free information on sailings and ships' accommodation, and acted as a court of appeal on agreements between shipowners, agents and masters, and there was poignance in Hodder's remark: 'our office is filled with complainants almost all

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 31 October 1851 (P.R.O., C.O.384/86). The whole document (5 pp.) is in process of microfilming, to the order of N.L.I.

<sup>2</sup>There is a hint of Hodder's difficulties over measuring ships in his statement at pp.110-11 of the Report from the select committee on passengers' act, 1851. His pay from the commissioners was £150 p.a.

<sup>3</sup>Emigration: original correspondence, secretary of state, 30 July 1851 et seqq. (P.R.O., C.O. 384/86.

<sup>4</sup>Hereafter cited as Passengers' act committee, 1851.

<sup>5</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ.931-1030.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., Q.1003.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., Q.935.



day long, getting their grievances redressed'.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of such distractions, ships' stores and water casks must be checked, barrels tapped for samples of provisions,<sup>2</sup> and an attempt, which Hodder found fruitless, made to muster passengers for counting ('the difficulty is that they are spread all over the town; you cannot get at them').<sup>3</sup> A viva voce examination of the ships' crew might conclude the ritual.<sup>4</sup> That these officers did impose a healthy check upon some of the excesses of the emigrant trade appeared when, following the completion of the railway, a considerable emigration grew up from Galway. This led to the appointment of an emigration officer about 1851, and in a year or two shipments from the port were, according to Murdoch, reduced by the stricter supervision which now prevailed.<sup>5</sup> Well might the board point out that emigration officers should be well paid, since it would evidently advantage the master or charterer of a ship to bribe them, though this had not yet happened.<sup>6</sup>

Before 1840, the Irish ports having emigration officers were Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Limerick, Londonderry and Sligo. To these were added by 1854 Galway and Waterford.<sup>7</sup> Liverpool had in 1851 a staff of one captain, two lieutenants and one civilian clerk to deal with its horde of emigrants. In that year the only other ports with more than

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Q.982.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., QQ.937-8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., QQ.957,960.

<sup>4</sup>First report from the select committee on emigrant ships, 1854, QQ.2423-4.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Q.302.

<sup>6</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission to secretary of state, 17 December 1851 (P.R.O., C.O.384/86).

<sup>7</sup>First report from the select committee on emigrant ships, 1854, Q.304.



one officer were London, Sligo and Limerick; a curious collocation, but Sligo and Limerick needed temporarily two officers each, owing to emigration from their out-posts.<sup>1</sup> The changing incidence of emigration per port was marked by the shifting of the emigration officers. Thus, while Sligo lost its officers before 1861, the staff at Liverpool was increased in 1852<sup>2</sup> and by 1861 consisted of an officer and five assistants. In that year the Irish ports with officers were Belfast, Cork (Queenstown), Limerick and Londonderry. By 1871 this list had shrunk to Queenstown and Londonderry, and from 1881 onwards only Queenstown, by then far ahead of Cork itself as an embarkation port, had a board of trade emigration officer.<sup>3</sup>

. . . . .

In a revealing passage of a departmental letter to Merivale, the Emigration Commissioners referred to 'the spirit of all the Passenger Acts successively passed by Parliament, vizt. not to interfere with the operations of Trade further than is necessary to protect those who are unable to protect themselves.'<sup>4</sup> These statutes may thus be said to have aimed at an equipoise between philanthropy and five per cent; their frequency since the first passengers' act in 1803 attests the uneasiness of the compromise.<sup>5</sup> Since that date, except for an experimental period in 1827-8 when the passenger shipping trade was left

---

<sup>1</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ.7059, 7071.

<sup>2</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 13th General report, 18553, p.26.

<sup>3</sup>Thom's almanac and official directory of the United Kingdom, s.a.

<sup>4</sup>Emigration Commissioners to Merivale, 15 June 1857 (P.R.O., C.O.384/98)

<sup>5</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, append., no.1: Abstract of all the acts for the regulation of passenger ships.



unrestricted, certain aspects of the emigrant's voyage were always (as it was hoped) under official supervision. Of nine or ten substantive passengers' acts between 1803 and 1851, all had some provision against overcrowding on board: a passenger-tonnage ratio, a minimum height between decks, or a prescription of how many children equalled one 'statute adult'. Other enactments for the wellbeing of passengers on the larger ships include ventilating apparatus, a scale of victualling which was more than once amended, the shipping of a surgeon and even, by a consolidating act of 1849,<sup>1</sup> a 'lifeboat and two properly fitted life-buoys'. Bonds for observance of the acts were taken from shipowners early in the century, from passage brokers in 1849, from owners and masters jointly in 1852.

The act in force in 1851<sup>2</sup> was a statute of 1849, amended to enable the commissioners to assign different lengths of voyage (with reference to provisioning) to steam and sailing ships. Writing to Merivale, the commissioners said:

...Within the last twelvemonths a new class of vessels has begun to be introduced into the Passenger Trade. A vessel named the 'City of Glasgow' was built last year in the Clyde to carry passengers and fitted with a screw propeller [sic]...Similar vessels are being built in the United States for the Passenger Trade...It is desirable to throw no obstacles [i.e. requiring steamers to carry provisions for ten weeks] in the way of the introduction of this class of vessels into the Passenger Trade.<sup>3</sup>

This statute brought under the act all vessels with more than one passenger to 25 'tons of registered burthen', leaving out of the reckoning a considerable number of 'short-ships' not under the act, usually with a preponderance of cabin passengers. The manner in which this served to

---

<sup>1</sup>12 & 13 Vict. c.33.

<sup>2</sup>14 Vict.c.1.

<sup>3</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission to Merivale, 25 January 1851 (P.R.O., C.O.384/86).



confuse the emigration statistics has already been referred to. In 1854 Mrs Chisholm pointed to the many vessels too small for the act which ought to be under it;<sup>1</sup> from Liverpool in 1862 53,000 emigrants shipped under the act, and 11,000 outside it.<sup>2</sup> The 1849 statute required ventilating apparatus on ships with more than one hundred passengers; the fate of the ninety and nine is not clear. Separate berthing by sexes was prescribed (but not always observed) for adults. The ration scale was increased, and the food was to be issued in advance and at least twice a week, the water daily. The amending and consolidating statute of 1852<sup>3</sup> took further account of the introduction of steamships into the emigrant trade, and made the grand innovation that the food on board was to be issued daily, cooked, instead of twice weekly, uncooked.

The shortcomings in, and perhaps still more the possibility of evading this well-meaning legislation, as revealed by the great inquiry of 1851 into the passengers' act, and the subsequent select committee on passenger ships, were more than sufficient to prompt the cautious admission of two of the emigration officers, Lean from London and Friend from Cork, that the act could be improved.<sup>4</sup>

A radical defect of the passengers' acts was often noticed: the impossibility of enforcing them on board ships at sea. This accounts for the great emphasis, in advertisements of the earlier emigrant shipping, upon the sterling personal qualities of ships' masters. The

<sup>1</sup>First report from the select committee on emigrant ships, 1854 (hereafter cited as Emigrant ships committee), QQ. 3102-3.

<sup>2</sup>Liverpool Post, quoted Freeman's Journal, 3 January 1863.

<sup>3</sup>15 & 16 Vict. c.44.

<sup>4</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ. 817-19, 4303-4.



emigrant knew precisely where this particular shoe could pinch. Before the emigrant ships committee, Murdoch explained that the passengers' act was of no avail on foreign ships once they were three leagues (might he not have said three yards?) off shore, and that the broker's bond of £200 was the only hope of idemnity for wrongdoing.<sup>1</sup> He thought British ships could be controlled throughout the voyage even if sailing to foreign ports, a view controverted by a later report of his own Commission.<sup>2</sup> If sailing to a British port, the ship was boarded on arrival by an agent, and any emigrant who had the time and the temerity could then prefer a complaint against the master if such were needed. There was an astounding story of a ship's master, on the Australian voyage, who was thus prosecuted for 350 offences, and was fined upwards of £1800 with an alternative of twenty-nine years' imprisonment.<sup>3</sup> The voyage to British North America did not apparently produce a prodigal of this description; but there was much point in Friend's opinion that a superintendant was needed on board each ship.<sup>4</sup>

There was a large proportion, though it diminished later, of American shipping in the Liverpool trade to the United States in the eighteen-fifties, and herein lay a source of anxiety to the Emigration Commission.<sup>5</sup> The British vice-consul at New York reported to the Commission

<sup>1</sup>Emigrant ships committee, First report, 1854, QQ.1-7.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration Commission, 29th General report, 1869, pp.6-8.

<sup>3</sup>Emigrant ships committee, First report, 1854, QQ.135-6.

<sup>4</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ. 4248-58.

<sup>5</sup>Cf., their 14th General report, 1854, p.29; ibid., 18th General report, 1858, p.16.



that American ships' masters were heard to proclaim they did not intend to comply with the British passengers' acts 'as they considered them too troublesome'.<sup>1</sup> The second report of the select committee on emigrant ships ended with a recommendation, renewing that of the 1851 committee, 'to obtain the co-operation of the United States in an amended Passengers Pact, to be enforced in the United States' courts.'<sup>2</sup> In 1858 the Commission announced that American ships from Liverpool were great offenders, e.g. in passing the emigration officer with a bogus crew some of whom were subsequently put ashore.<sup>3</sup> Time brought some alleviation of this difficulty, in that by 1870 the U.S. passenger law approximated to the British. It was probably rarely that a shipping firm transferred its register to Canada, as did the Canadian and Montreal steam packet company in 1860, to gain exemption from the passengers' acts.<sup>4</sup>

There was thus in 1851, and indeed at any other time, difficulty in implementing existing legislation for the protection of emigrants throughout their voyage. Some specific and glaring iniquities of the emigrant trade, which led to the great passengers' act of 1855, may next be considered. With its great shipping facilities, its brokerage and remittances houses, and its splendid docks, in active extension between 1847 and 1857, Liverpool was for long the pre-eminent port of embarkation for Irish as well as British emigrants to North America, and hence the

---

<sup>1</sup>British vice-consul, New York, to Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 15 November 1851 (P.R.O., C.O. 384-88).

<sup>2</sup>Emigrant ships committee, Second report, 1854, p.xii.

<sup>3</sup>Emigration Commission, 18th General report, 1858, p.24.

<sup>4</sup>Emigration Commission to secretary of state, February, 1860 (P.R.O., C.O. 386/85, pp. 17-18).



focus of every fraud that could be practised upon emigrants at that stage of their journey. The total embarkation at Liverpool for North America in 1851 surpassed 200,000 souls, according to the not impeccable reckoning of the Emigration Commission.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the true figure, the official calculation that nine-tenths of the number were Irish was thought by some contemporaries to be an understatement. Conditions at two of the principal ports in Ireland, Cork, which in the same year embarked 12,000 emigrants for all destinations outside Europe, and Londonderry, which embarked 6,000,<sup>2</sup> were much better by reason of the lesser overcrowding. All the Irish ports, too, escaped the viciously cosmopolitan atmosphere of Liverpool; as Friend said in evidence, 'the captain of a Cork ship carrying out passengers from the county of Cork, must endeavour to get a good name that his ship may be again selected.'<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Friend and Besnard, who were equally well circumstanced for knowing the facts, gave highly contradictory accounts of the general conditions in the port. Friend said very little fraud was practised upon the emigrants,<sup>4</sup> Besnard depicted the city as afflicted with the 'lowest and filthiest' unlicensed lodging-houses, with fraudulent runners and many of the other phenomena of Liverpool itself, though in a lesser degree.<sup>5</sup> Londonderry, according to Smith, its emigration officer, handled a better class of passengers than Liverpool-

---

<sup>1</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 12th General report, 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.4362.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., QQ.4379-90.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Q.5726.



people of such substance that they all brought their own provisions on board.<sup>1</sup> A tremendous advantage over Liverpool, in the Clyde, at Londonderry and (according to Friend) at Cork, was that the emigrants were lodged, though not always fed, on board ship while they awaited sailing day. At Liverpool this was forbidden, owing to the danger of fire.

At Liverpool, therefore, possibly by something more than the connivance of those who profited by their presence,<sup>2</sup> hordes of Irish were thrown upon the town in the last days, harassing enough even for the well-to-do, which precede embarkation for a strange country. In this situation the emigrants were the prey, and before 1855 largely the lawful prey, of a hierarchy which controlled the Liverpool emigrant trade. This loose confederacy comprised ships' owners or charterers, the greater and lesser passage brokers, the proprietors of emigrant lodging-houses, emigrant outfitters and chandlers, exchange brokers and an obscene substratum of the notorious 'runners' (who nevertheless had considerable power over the brokers) and, distinct from these, the emigrant porters. As Montreal at the further stage of the pilgrimage, so Liverpool at its outset must early have appreciated that money, trivial in the contribution of each emigrant, was in the aggregate to be extracted in enormous sums from the emigration process. A big Liverpool passage broker such as Tapscott might handle 20,000 emigrants in less than six months, and for his pains charge 12½% against the charterer or shipowner.<sup>3</sup> On the

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Q.5726.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., the strenuous resistance of Liverpool interests to any such arrangement as the government depot at Birkenhead, Passengers' act committee, Report, pp.x-xi.

<sup>3</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ.2469,2773.



other hand Tapscott said in 1851 that the emigrant's fare was now so low as to make the business unremunerative<sup>1</sup> - but remained in the business. From the passage broker the runner, who brought in customers, took a minimum commission of  $7\frac{1}{2}\%$ ;<sup>2</sup> and Saul, a Liverpool broker, said that the broker who paid the best commission got the most passengers, whatever the state of his ship.<sup>3</sup> The cost of these several operations rested ultimately upon the emigrant's fare.

According to Sir George Stephen, cited below, the passage broker often controlled also the victualling shops and outfitters in which the emigrant, led thither by the runner, purchased according to his means a variety of necessary and unnecessary stores and utensils for his voyage. The emigrant's contract ticket bore, in 1854, advice to take extra food wherewith to supplement the ration scale,<sup>4</sup> and those who could afford it did so. A shipowner at Greenock said the Irish seldom brought anything with them,<sup>5</sup> but the weight of evidence given to the 1851 committee was that most emigrants carried some provisions. Kerr, the emigration officer at Dublin, said: 'I should suppose that a very large proportion of them bring their stock from home, they have brought it with the little money they have over from the sale of their things, or a collection from their friends.'<sup>6</sup> Irish evidence from an unassigned source describes, with much pathos, the belongings which some emigrants were accustomed to take at

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Q.2775.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Report, p.vi.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., QQ.3174-8.

<sup>4</sup>Emigrant ships committee, Second report, 1854, Q.4488.

<sup>5</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.5249.

<sup>6</sup>Emigrant ships committee, Second report, 1854, Q.5505.



the time of the famine exodus:

At that time emigrants always carried in their little tin trunks - Holy Water, an oat meal cake, a fat hen (cooked), a glass of whiskey in a small bottle in case of sea sickness - and they never, never on any occasion forgot to bring a bunch of shamrocks and a sod of turf cut from their parents' turf bank.<sup>1</sup>

In other records, less is heard of the turf and the shamrock than of cooking pots and bedding. Besnard thought it would be better if the ship provided at least the <sup>note</sup> ~~former~~.<sup>2</sup>

Before the passengers' act committee Sir George Stephen, a benevolent and hot-tempered Liverpool barrister, maintained that the emigrants, who 'will believe anything', were exposed to fraud before, during and after their sojourn in the port.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, a Liverpool newspaper, with commendable frankness, stated thus the outlook for the unhappy emigrant who found himself, even after the act of 1855, on Merseyside:

The emigrant has five enemies - the man-catcher, the outfitter, the lodging-house keeper, the beer-shopkeeper, and the passage-broker...and well if the Liverpool harpies of embarkation leave him even the chance of saving a crown piece ~~from~~ the American harpies of debarkation.<sup>4</sup>

It is perhaps proper to observe that without some at least of these persons, whose functions could only have been superseded at the cost of subverting the commercial ethos of the time, the emigrant could scarcely have emigrated at all. The Apollyon of the Liverpool docks was apparently the 'man-catcher' or emigrant runner, posing as a friend on the strength of some scraps of Irish and of local Irish information artfully gleaned by confederates on the cross-

<sup>1</sup>Collection of the Irish folklore commission, vol.485, pp.218-19.

<sup>2</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ.6552-3, etc.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., QQ.2861-2, 2866.

<sup>4</sup>Liverpool Chronicle, quoted Newry Examiner, 25 November 1857.



channel boats. In some such manner, emigrants, according to Stephen, were directed to a given runner almost before they left Ireland.<sup>1</sup> This argues, to be sure, a degree of credulity which is not the usual mark of any peasant people in their normal surroundings, but the psychological disturbance of travelling must be allowed for. The runner then exercised his persuasive arts, which Stephen described as 'tearing to pieces, only that they do not separate their limbs',<sup>2</sup> to the end of taking the prospective emigrant upon a conducted tour of the various purveyors above detailed, from each of whom the runner collected a commission.<sup>3</sup> At the exchange broker's, good British gold was perhaps exchanged for nearly worthless American local currency - the process known as 'dollarizing' against which Tapscott warned emigrants in his Guide,<sup>4</sup> but enough sterling must be left in the emigrant's pocket, when all other thieves were satisfied, and the runner had received a consideration for securing a better berth on board ship, which was not his to bestow,<sup>5</sup> to pay the lodging-house keeper, who was often the runner himself.<sup>6</sup> In the lodging-houses a fruitful extortion could be exercised, sometimes ending, according to Hodder, in detaining the lodger beyond the hour of sailing, in order to wring still more from him.<sup>7</sup> Consequently those emigrants might count themselves lucky

---

<sup>1</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.2866.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Q.2867.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Q.2869.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Q.2777.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Q.2874.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., Q.2882

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., QQ.1260-67.



who found a place in one of the emigrants' homes, Sabel's or Marshall's,<sup>1</sup> which for a charge in the region of one shilling a night provided a bed and three meals, for some 900<sup>2</sup>. Sabel did not venture bedding ('those people<sup>2</sup> are too dirty for us to give them a bed'), Marshall, more hopefully, provided bedding, writing-paper, baths and the use of maps and guide-books; he clearly expected a clientèle neither savage nor illiterate. Both men were of course much persecuted by the runners, who, as Marshall significantly added, were also local government electors.

Few such gleams of humanity as the story of the emigrants' homes enliven the dark picture of avarice in the pages of the reports. From their evidence, the emigrant runner emerges as the master, on the whole, of the sordid scene; a witness (Fitzhugh) said the runners were more powerful than the catholic clergy.<sup>3</sup> The comparison was no doubt hyperbolical and in any case unfortunate, but at all events the brokers thought it worth their while to break up the runner system by an attempted combination of their own, which failed.<sup>4</sup> The go-between, the 'front man' of the whole enterprise, who introduced the emigrant to the principals in this shameful trade, was indispensable.

The emigration officers deplored these scenes but to intervene actively in them on their own initiative was beyond their power. The steerage emigrant for North America did not come within the full ambit and majesty of the Emigration Commission's system until shortly before

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., QQ. 3715-72, 3938-69.

<sup>2</sup>They were mostly German, English, Scots, *ibid.* Q.3780.

<sup>3</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.6165.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Q. 2789.



the hour of embarking. They then underwent a medical examination which Vere Foster immortalised in his account of the same experience in 1850 - 'What's your name? Are you well? Hold out your tongue. All right.'<sup>1</sup> Since in 1851 200,000 tongues were thus held out before the several medical officers at Liverpool, these men may have been less neglectful than they seem. Sabel said the medical inspection was a farce.<sup>2</sup> It was held that to lump the intermediate class of passengers (amongst whom ladies had fainted at the proposal) with the steerage for medical examination was a mistake, and discouraged middle class emigration.<sup>3</sup> There remained the emigration officer's inspection and clearance of ship, ship's company, and passengers, in conditions whose general adversity has been referred to above. A pell-mell rush to embark at the last minute was often deplored; it afforded one more occasion of malpractices by runners and porters.<sup>4</sup> There were however sound reasons behind the emigrant's delay. Passages varied in price from day to day, and if more than one ship were about to leave for his destination the emigrant might drive a bargain. As Murdoch put it, 'it constantly happens that a vessel will take a number of passengers at one price, and finding that she cannot fill up at that price, then lower her price, and take passengers at a lower price.'<sup>5</sup>

Several witnesses before the 1851 committee agreed that

<sup>1</sup>The Liverpool medical officers were paid a capitation fee per hundred emigrants examined, *ibid.*, p.xiv.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, Q. 3738. 5-6.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, QQ. 3495-6.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, QQ. 2886-7.

<sup>5</sup>Emigrant ships committee, Second report, 1854, Q. 3820.



it would be better if the Liverpool officers could clear ships in the river, and not alongside with opportunities of subsequent illicit traffic with the shore.<sup>1</sup> The swift, crowded and sometimes foggy tideways of the Mersey made this impracticable. Friend described an efficient system of clearance which he and the medical officer practised at Cork;<sup>2</sup> this again would not have been possible at Liverpool.

The hazards of the actual voyage in an emigrant ship may next be reviewed, with particular though not exclusive reference to the abuses which the select committees of 1851 and 1854 uncovered. The sufferings of emigrants at sea were not related to ships from a specific port and were consequently a more pervasive feature of the emigration process than even the practices which disgraced Liverpool. The bulk of the remedial measures prescribed by the passengers' act of 1855 bore upon the routine of ships at sea.

John O'Connell took up, in the house of commons, the inquiry into emigrant shipping where the 1851 committee had left it. He moved for a select committee to inquire into 'the recent cases of extensive loss of life aboard Emigrant ships, whether by sickness, wreck, or other causes; and generally into the sufficiency or otherwise of the existing regulations for the health and protection of Emigrants from the United Kingdom.'<sup>3</sup> The motion was agreed to. Parliament, which did so little after 1850

---

<sup>1</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ.988-1001, 1459-72, 3747-51, etc. Hodder thought that this one reform, and some arrangement for cooking the emigrants' food, would together banish the worst evils of the existing system (Q.997).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4367.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, cxxxix.210 (2 March 1854).



to elucidate the causes of the emigration process, showed a curious solicitude in trying to ensure that the process itself should be conducted with some decency. Presumably the hackneyed taunt of earlier days about 'shovelling out paupers' had struck somewhat deeply into ministerial and other consciences. On this occasion, O'Connell developed a brisk attack upon several aspects of emigrant shipping. He condemned the wretched conditions on the deck crossing from Ireland to Liverpool, the filthy state of some of the Atlantic shipping, 'vessels which had just brought home a cargo of guano, of hides, or of old rags.' Some of these articles were forbidden<sup>1</sup> as cargo in ships bearing emigrants, but there was no enactment against their residuary stink; O'Connell said that convict transports were better ventilated. Even some vessels on the Australian run, regarded as well served in point of shipping, did not escape his censure, including the celebrated and beautiful 'Marco Polo...very much cried up'.

In proceeding to touch upon recent losses of emigrant ships at sea, O'Connell raised an issue which was much in the public mind. Sixteen such wrecks in 1852-3, with a loss of 524 lives,<sup>2</sup> had included a number of disquieting occurrences. Four emigrant vessels were lost in the gulf of the St Lawrence, a graveyard of shipping, in 1852.<sup>3</sup> In 1853 the Annie Jane, Staffordshire, California all went down; the Annie Jane, lost on the Hebrides, was overloaded with emigrants and heavy cargo. In the same year, the barque William and Mary was lost in the Bahamas, taking

---

<sup>1</sup>By 10 & 11 Vict. c.103.

<sup>2</sup>Murdoch, Emigrant ships committee, First report, Q.492.

<sup>3</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 13th General report, 1853, p.44.



Irish and railway iron (which was then and for some years to come a British export to the United States) to New Orleans. In an indignant article, the Freeman's Journal<sup>1</sup> observed: 'Captain Stinson provided for his own safety and that of his crew.' A few months previously, another captain was accused of cowardice when the St George, an emigrant ship, was burned, in the Atlantic.<sup>2</sup> The effect of the loading provisions of the 1855 passengers' act was to prevent a ship's carrying heavy cargo as well as passengers,<sup>3</sup> and this measure probably helped to reduce the accident rate subsequently. In evidence before the 1854 committee, it was said that 'a large proportion of the cargoes on board all sailing vessels from Liverpool is iron,'<sup>4</sup> and this might disturb the navigation since an azimuth compass was often lacking.<sup>5</sup> In replying to O'Connell, the colonial under-secretary could point out that even in 1852-3 the loss of life by shipwreck was only 0.06% of the emigration.<sup>6</sup> O'Connell's own opinion of delinquent ships' masters was that 'the great source of all the neglects and evils is paying the passage-money beforehand.'<sup>7</sup> In evidence before the 1854 committee, Murdoch admitted the virtues of withholding half the passage money on government emigrants to Australia, but thought the system inapplicable to the Atlantic voyages.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>31 May 1853

<sup>2</sup>Freeman's Journal, 20 January 1853.

<sup>3</sup>Explained *ibid.*, 18 April 1855.

<sup>4</sup>Emigrant ships committee, First report, 1854, Q.180.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, Q.2532.

<sup>6</sup>Hansard, cxxxix, 215 (2 March 1854).

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>8</sup>Emigrant ships committee, First report, 1854, QQ.566-8.



As regards the conditions of a voyage with no such untoward occurrences as wreck or fire, Stephen said the principal sources of the passengers' sorrows were the berthing and the food.<sup>1</sup> Stephen himself gave the 1851 committee a vivid description<sup>2</sup> of the hold of an emigrant ship, based to some extent upon the American vessel, Albert Galatin, which put back to port after six rough days out, in such a condition that three Lincolnshire farm-labourers declined the offer of another passage and went home. Pace the act of 1849, all down both sides of the steerage deck men, women and children were 'lying in one promiscuous heap apparently on the same platform,' in a condition of sickness such as may be imagined. Since Friend said<sup>3</sup> there had recently been a decided improvement in berthing, the earlier conditions are hard to envisage. Walsh maintained that this promiscuity was due firstly to the obscure statute and secondly to a paucity of emigration officers.<sup>4</sup> There was some evidence that the berths, mere boxes six feet square which contained four adults, were now being divided to hold only two. Lancaster, one of the medical officers at Liverpool, found a palliation in the thought that people in Ireland slept five or six in a bed in any case.<sup>5</sup> Friend, always optimistic, did not think there was much immorality on board, in spite of these conditions;<sup>6</sup> elsewhere in the report the indecency of the system, or lack of system, was

---

<sup>1</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.2887.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., QQ.2887-2907.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., QQ.4360-2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., QQ.2307-16, 2319-23.

<sup>5</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ.1415-16, 1474.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., QQ.4320-3, 4328.



much adverted to. As late as 1873 the arrangements for segregating the sexes received adverse comment from a 'sanitary commission of the Lancet' in an otherwise fairly favourable report on Liverpool emigrant ships.<sup>1</sup> The sensible suggestions by Murdoch<sup>2</sup> and Stephen<sup>3</sup> in 1851 that berths should be allotted by ticket foreshadowed other and dangerous innovations, and came to nothing.

Some nineteenth century newspapers were no more reluctant than some of their successors to purvey salacious stories, and there is a certain amount of evidence of this kind that impropriety was common on some emigrant ships. For some reason, the autumn of 1857 produced a minor crop of press comment upon this unsavoury subject. The Nation<sup>4</sup> may be found referring to 'the crammed hold of the pestiferous emigrant ship, where prostitution spread its nets for the escaped of death and disease.' The Newry Examiner raised the same cry with a fuller throat, printing<sup>5</sup> an allusive editorial ~~which~~ article on one of Vere Foster's female shiploads by the City of Mobile. The newspaper alleged there was immorality on the voyage, 'chronic emigration sores which legislative and administrative quackery have been so long tampering with'. The Examiner followed this up with a long leading article entitled 'Dont Emigrate Just Now,'<sup>6</sup> with lurid and circumstantial stories of seductions practised by the

---

<sup>1</sup>Quoted, Camb.hist. Brit. emp., ii.459.

<sup>2</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ.7377-82.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Q.2913.

<sup>4</sup>31 October 1857.

<sup>5</sup>2 September 1857.

<sup>6</sup>Newry Examiner, 28 November 1857.



officers of emigrant ships - 'the crew generally did not join their superiors in this matter.' The head and fount of this discreditable saga may possibly be detected from the evidence of an Emigration Commission letter to the colonial office in November, 1857. This draws the attention of that department to certain highly seasoned articles, during September and October, in a publication called Mona's Herald, on 'the Floating Brothels of England and America.' The author, a Dr Custis, recounted the corruption of Irish girls and others on ships, generally American, proceeding to the United States. The colonial office, in the best tradition of British official sobriety, discounted Dr Custis's allegations in view of 'the intrinsic evidence which his letters afford of an excitable imagination and of a taste for fine writing and effect.'<sup>1</sup> From about this date ~~xxx~~ little more was heard in the Irish press of this particular variant of the story; there is a tendency about 1880 to transfer the setting for the alleged iniquities to the Castle Garden reception centre in New York.<sup>2</sup> The design of the newer Atlantic ships appeared to take account of this aspect of human frailty; an enthusiastic description of 'the monster steamship Oceanic, the Irish boat' included the information that 'the married folks, the single men, and single women are kept as separately as if they were in three different steamships.'<sup>3</sup>

Light, air and sanitation were factors of comfort or misery ancillary to berthing. Passengers were anxious to get berths near the hatchways, for air;<sup>4</sup> this suggests the

<sup>1</sup>Emigration Commissioners to secretary of state, with reply, 11 November 1857 (P.R.O., C.O.384/99).

<sup>2</sup>Cf., New York Herald, quoted Roscommon Journal, 4 September 1880. But as late as 1881 Charlotte G.O'Brien discovered an American emigrant ship at Queenstown 'full of ravaging wickedness and all uncleanness', Reports with regard to the accommodation and treatment of emigrants on board Atlantic steam ships, p.22, [C.2995], H.C.1881, lxxxii.

<sup>3</sup>Nation, 6 May 1871.

<sup>4</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ.5779-80.



state of ventilation elsewhere in the hold. United States vessels were said in 1851 to be better in this respect, as indeed in other amenities, than English.<sup>1</sup> Bad ventilation was thought to promote cholera.<sup>2</sup> Water-closets were often so constructed as to be unusable, or even dangerous, in any but calm weather. Sabel said: 'In the regular packets they are very good...but in chartered ships, it is a mere humbug to call them water-closets.'<sup>3</sup> The distinction between the famous packet 'liners', and the ships taken up for perhaps a single voyage in a busy emigrant season, is significant. From these latter and from the 'short ships' came many instances of irregularities. To judge from the evidence before the 1851 committee, there was for steerage passengers apparently no provision at all for washing.<sup>4</sup>

The early dispensation as regards rations and cooking on board emigrant ships produced the sad stories which were narrated on the subject to the 1851 committee, and these have been repeated in subsequent literature with much dramatic effect.<sup>5</sup> A 'parliamentary scale' of foodstuffs was, until 1852 supposed to be issued, uncooked, at least twice weekly; apart from the daily allowance of water this comprised bread or biscuit, wheat flour, oatmeal, rice, tea, sugar and molasses,<sup>6</sup> probably quite sufficient to sustain life if not vigour in healthy persons who could get a modicum of these provisions cooked at reasonable intervals.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Q.1555.

<sup>2</sup>Emigrant ships committee, First report, 1854, QQ.161-3.

<sup>3</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.3881.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., QQ.2083-90.

<sup>5</sup>E.g., E.C. Guillet, The great migration: the Atlantic crossing by sailing-ships since 1770.

<sup>6</sup>12 & 13 Vict. c.33, 1849.



At the best of times the cooking galleys were naturally insufficient for preparing countless family meals, and Friend said that 'sticks were used and hats knocked off'<sup>1</sup> in the struggle to get at the stoves. In the hazards of rough weather and sickness emigrants might die of starvation.<sup>2</sup> Even after the 1852 act had in theory remedied this chaos, it was said that emigrants preferred, unaccountably, to cook for themselves.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the best hope lay, not in the law, but in the growth of competition in the emigrant trade. It began to be widely held that the parliamentary scale of rations was insufficient,<sup>4</sup> and by 1854 a superior diet, including preserved soups and jam, was offered as one of the attractions of Baines's ships.<sup>5</sup>

The appearance in the 1852 passengers' act<sup>6</sup> of a clause requiring that crews be as well fed as passengers touches a subject that has been curiously neglected in the evidence for this aspect of emigration. The sufferings of ships' crews must often have resembled those of emigrants. Friend said the ships were undermanned,<sup>7</sup> and in the later committee a naval witness recommended not less than four efficient seamen per cent of the ship's tonnage.<sup>8</sup> There were strictures at the 1854 committee upon the conduct

<sup>1</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q. 4280.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Q. 3790.

<sup>3</sup>Emigrant ships committee, Second report, 1854, QQ. 5504-11.

<sup>4</sup>Cf., *ibid.*, First report, 1854, QQ. 830, 832, 850.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Q. 3230.

<sup>6</sup>15 & 16 Vict. c.44, sect.xxviii.

<sup>7</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q. 4248.

<sup>8</sup>Emigrant ships committee, First report, 1854, Q. 2403.



of the French-Canadian crew of the wrecked Annie Jane.<sup>1</sup> If they could not understand orders in English they were scarcely to blame. Later, another shipwreck, that of the White Star liner Atlantic off Halifax, spread stories of an insubordinate crew, who were 'with difficulty kept under control during the whole voyage.'<sup>2</sup> The anxieties of a ship's master may on occasion have arisen less from a mutinous crew than from the 'sea-lawyers' among the passengers whom Friend mentioned.<sup>3</sup>

After 1851, there was of course no incidence of mortality among emigrants on the Atlantic voyage comparable to that of the famine exodus. There was some cholera (whose cause was not understood) in the early eighteen-fifties, and in 1853 the Emigration Commissioners circulated, in Ireland and elsewhere, warnings against embarking during the epidemic.<sup>4</sup> The Atlantic voyage was short compared with that to Australia, which gave the surgeons much more trouble; the Irish now embarked in better heart than formerly;<sup>5</sup> and children and the aged, among whom the incidence of mortality was heaviest,<sup>6</sup> did not bulk so large in the Irish emigration. Sample mortality rates put out by the Emigration Commissioners in 1863<sup>7</sup> were 0.12% on 139 ships proceeding to New York, 0.05 % on the total emigration to Canada for the previous year. There was talk of cholera

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Q.2410.

<sup>2</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 8 April 1873.

<sup>3</sup>Passengers'act committee, 1851, Q.4336.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, cxxxi.213-14 (2 March 1854).

<sup>5</sup>Cf., Emigration Commission, 17th General report, 1857, p.11.

<sup>6</sup>According to the quarantine officer at Grosse Isle, Quebec, Emigrant ships committee, First report, 1854, QQ. 2907-9. Murdoch said that three-fourths of the mortality in 1852 was among very young children, ibid., QQ.482-6.

<sup>7</sup>23rd General report, 1863, p.16.



on certain steamers bearing Irish from Liverpool to New York in the summer of 1866.<sup>1</sup>

The Emigration Commissioners thought that a diminishing mortality on the voyage was due to some extent to the passengers' act of 1855,<sup>2</sup> sometimes called the emigrants' Magna Carta. This repealed the previous act, and codified afresh, with various improvements, the many regulations which had been imposed on passenger ships during the previous half-century. All such ships for destinations outside Europe and bearing thirty or more passengers came within the act, except mail steamers. The number of passengers was limited both by tonnage (in sailing ships) and by deck space (in any ship). The berthing problem, so anxiously discussed, was firmly grasped. Henceforth a space of 6' x 18" must be allotted per statute adult, and 'not more than One Passenger, unless Husband and Wife, or Females or Children under Twelve Years of Age, shall be placed in or occupying the same Berth'.<sup>3</sup> A new and enhanced diet scale was issued, which comprised bread or biscuit, wheaten flour, oatmeal, rice, peas, potatoes, beef and pork (together 2 lbs 4 oz weekly per statute adult), tea, sugar, condiments and lime juice. On voyages exceeding eighty-four days by sailing vessel a greater allowance of flour was prescribed, a lesser of oatmeal and rice, and an extra ration of preserved meat, suet, raisins and butter.<sup>4</sup> To many modern eyes this diet, particularly in protein, in which the earlier ration scales were very deficient, may appear far from unattractive. The food must

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, clxxxiv.1618-25 (27 July 1866).

<sup>2</sup>18 & 19 Vict. c.119.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., sect. XXII.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., sect. XXXV.



be issued daily, cooked. For 100 passengers or more there must be stewards and cooks, and a surgeon for more than 300 passengers. There was a close definition of passengers' rights before, during and after the voyage, and all passage brokers and runners must be licensed annually. There were in Liverpool forty-four such licensed brokers in 1857.<sup>1</sup>

In 1863 the Passengers' Act Amendment Act embodied some minor amendments drafted by the emigration commissioners; the principal changes were to bring mail steamers, if carrying other than cabin passengers, within the act,<sup>2</sup> and to prescribe the inclusion of cabin passengers in the passenger lists. In 1870 the commissioners reported that they had prepared, as part of the merchant shipping code then before the house of commons, a draft slightly modifying, but otherwise incorporating, the existing passengers' acts.<sup>3</sup> Due account of emigrant ships was taken in the act of 1894 to consolidate enactments relating to merchant shipping.<sup>4</sup>

The committees of 1851 and 1854 focussed much attention upon the question of emigrant shipping in that epoch, and particularly upon the worse aspects of emigrant shipping. It is less easy to evaluate the rate of progress during succeeding decades. The 'magna carta' of 1855 was not final and conclusive as a remedy of evil. In 1857 the Emigration Commissioners reported that runners were still troublesome.<sup>5</sup> Some years later, an Irish passenger on the New York voyage wrote that 'he had never heard hounds after a fox cry louder than the passengers did for food.'<sup>6</sup> ~~In~~

---

<sup>1</sup>Emigration Commissioners to secretary of state, 7 March 1857 (P.R.O., C.O.384/98).

<sup>2</sup>26 & 27 Vict. c.51, sect.4.

<sup>3</sup>Emigration Commission, 31st General report, 1871, p.6.

<sup>4</sup>57 & 58 Vict. c.60.

<sup>5</sup>Emigration Commission, 17th General report, 1857, p.21.

<sup>6</sup>Hansard, clxxxiv.1620 (27 July 1866).



In 1872 the board of trade was impelled to make inquiries on the basis of recent newspaper articles touching the treatment of emigrants on the Atlantic.<sup>1</sup> The incidental references, in the years after 1860, to improvements in emigrant shipping are more numerous than to shortcomings; the natural play of competitive transport worked, slowly but still surely, to the benefit of the traveller. By 1860 there was healthy competition in Liverpool for passengers to Canada by way of the alternative routes (a) New York and (b) Quebec or Portland (and thence by the Grand Trunk).<sup>2</sup> In the same year, the Cork Examiner,<sup>3</sup> an outspoken newspaper, was warm in praise of the modern emigrant steamers as compared with the old packets, and the kindliness of captains and crews. The latter statement was corroborated somewhat later by an Emigration Commission report, which cited Buchanan at Quebec as bearing 'testimony to the general kindness which has been shown of late years by masters of sailing vessels to the passengers intrusted to their care'.<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to attribute these wonders wholly to the influence of the passengers' act; the new courtliness on the Atlantic, in sail or steam, was probably competitive rather than statutory. On the new White Star Oceanic the steerage accommodation, in 1871, was said to be of unexampled splendour, and to exceed that of the Inman and Cunard lines as those lines surpassed the old-time Tapscott and Miley hulks.<sup>5</sup> In 1874 the Mississippi and Dominion Steamship Co., doubtless unaware of the impend-

---

<sup>1</sup>Board of trade to secretary of state, 9 November 1872 (P.R.O., C.O.384/100).

<sup>2</sup>Cork Examiner, 20 January 1860.

<sup>3</sup>18 May 1860.

<sup>4</sup>Emigration Commission, 22nd General report, 1862, p.33.

<sup>5</sup>Nation, 6 May 1871.



ing depression in the emigrant trade, added a 'magnificent new steamer' to their Liverpool-Quebec-Montreal run, fitted for fifty saloon passengers and '1,000 emigrants'.<sup>1</sup> In 1883 we are already in the age of the luxury liner, and in that year the new Doric,<sup>2</sup> of the White Star Line, and the City of Rome, of the Anchor Line, foreshadowed some of the very unnecessary amenities of the present Atlantic crossing. Of the latter vessel it was said that 'her internal arrangements are simply bewildering in their magnificence'<sup>3</sup> - but it was admitted that the steerage had sawdust, not Turkey carpets, on the floors.

A final assessment of the spirit of the passengers' acts leads back to the observation with which this subsection began, on the uneasy balance between the claims of humanity and the unhampered operations of a trade. A third and perhaps equally important factor complicated the reckoning, namely the danger of hampering emigration by making it unduly expensive. Friend told the 1851 committee: 'The system of legislature has been to keep the expenses down as much as possible, lest you should prevent the emigrants from going':<sup>4</sup> hence the introduction of ration scales for the voyage, necessarily increasing the cost of the passage, had been made very cautiously. The Freeman's Journal<sup>5</sup> thought the new act would raise the cost of emigrating; the Emigration Commission said the act had been objected to as injuring the interests of the British shipowner and diverting traffic to the U.S.A., and as raising the cost of the

---

<sup>1</sup>Liverpool Journal of Commerce, quoted Belfast News-Letter, 7 March 1874.

<sup>2</sup>Described in Liverpool Daily Post, quoted Cork Examiner, 15 March 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Nation, 2 June 1883.

<sup>4</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.4314.

<sup>5</sup>18 April 1855.



passage.<sup>1</sup> The rates for the Atlantic crossing in the early part of my period were veiled in a certain mystery, rarely advertised in the press, and probably amenable to negotiation; but in 1853 there was a steam passage from Glasgow to New York advertised for £6 6s,<sup>2</sup> and in 1857 one from Liverpool to Quebec for £8 8s,<sup>3</sup> whereas in 1863 the Cunard<sup>4</sup> or Baines's ships<sup>5</sup> offered the same facilities for £5 5s. That is to say, even if the 1855 act occasioned a temporary increase in fares, within a few years these were lower than ever.

In replying to O'Connell's call for a select committee in 1854, the colonial under-secretary put a question which was never answered; how far was the government to interfere with 'the interest which the private shipowner had in the success of his speculations?' The shipping trade, he thought, was a special case, justifying cautious interference: 'the principle of that interference was simply to protect the interests of the great bulk of the emigrants from this country - the Irish emigrants - who were so poor and helpless as to be incapable of ensuring the consideration to which they were entitled.'<sup>6</sup> The last remark was a striking euphemism for the cynicism and chaos of the Liverpool docks. This giant vice the 1855 passengers' act carefully skirted, in that its eighty-second clause made it permissive, but not obligatory, for docks trustees to pass

<sup>1</sup>Emigration Commission, 20th General report, 1860, p.20.

<sup>2</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 12 January 1853.

<sup>3</sup>Cork Constitution, 27 June 1857.

<sup>4</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 6 June 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Londonderry Standard, 27 June 1863.

<sup>6</sup>Hansard, cxxxix (2 March 1854).



bye laws regulating the embarkation of emigrants. In a striking letter to Grey at the home office, Stephen delineated the system of 'purveying for Irish Emigrants' which disgraced Liverpool and to some extent Ireland:

Holt Hill, Birkenhead, 5 May 1851. My dear Sir, Permit me to call your attention to an evil here of some magnitude from its frequent occurrence; I venture to do so because it admits of an easy remedy by the insertion in a clause of some of the Law Amendment Bills now in progress through Parlt. A system of what may be called purveying for Irish Emigrants obtains in this port, it seems to be carried on by persons, by no means of the highest repute, under the name of passenger brokers. These men, through their Agents in Ireland, collect a great number of emigrants who, by the sale of all they possess, realise 3 or 4 pounds which they give in advance, in part payment for their passage to North or South America. They receive a voucher for this, & then wait till the passenger broker has collected a sufficient number to enable him to freight an Emigrant Ship. On embarking they give a note of hand for the rest of their passage money, payable out of their first earnings at their new domicile; these notes are transmitted to the broker's American correspondent. If this were always carried out, the arrangement might be unobjectionable.-

But it often happens that in the interval between the first payment & the embarkation, the passengers broker becomes insolvent, for his profit is essentially derived from the provision trade connected with these emigrant exportations. When this is the case, the poor Emigrant, after denuding himself of everything, finds himself abandoned at Cork or Liverpool, without passage or stores, & with only a trifling dividend in remote prospect.-

This has come to my knowledge from being engaged as Counsel for some of these insolvent brokers. In one case I found that more than 100 Irish poor were left by my client's failure, destitute in the streets, & in another case my client avowed in open Court that his creditors, chiefly of this class, exceeded 700 in number. The cruelty of such a system is obvious...<sup>1</sup>

In the sessions of the 1851 committee, voices were not wanting to name the bold innovation which would have ended this knavery. Stephen himself advocated a central booking office for the Atlantic passages.<sup>2</sup> Fitzhugh, a partner of the American line of Crook and Guion,

<sup>1</sup>Copy of letter, Stephen to Grey, 5 May 1851 (P.R.O., C.O.384/86).

<sup>2</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ.2908-39.



developed the plan, and while still adumbrating competition between the different lines, suggested that the different agents should be required to offer their terms in a central booking office, where the emigrant could choose his own ship and price.<sup>1</sup>

Tapscott closed the issue, perhaps unwittingly, before the other witnesses had spoken: he failed to see how such a scheme could be worked, except by government.<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

The Emigrants' Information Office was in some respects an embarrassed phantom of the defunct Emigration Commission. The Information Office had of course none of the Commission's concern with the passengers' acts, whose administration passed to the board of trade in 1872. It is a solid tribute to the worth of the Commission's advisory functions also that it was found desirable to revive them in some form before many years had passed. In this way the Information Office was 'pressed upon the Government from outside',<sup>3</sup> in the words of its secretary, Charles P. Lucas, by individuals who hoped the office would focus public interest upon emigration. Its small committee included James Hack Tuke, perhaps the most trusted private person of his day in the disputed field of Irish emigration.

The Information Office was the result of pressure inside parliament as well as outside. The numbers and misery of the urban unemployed in Britain were manifest in broken windows in Pall Mall in February of 1886, and in some pointed questions about emigration in the house of commons in April.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., QQ.6079-81.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Q.2818.

<sup>3</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, Q.1348.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, cciv. 734-6 (5 April 1886).



In the lords, the following month, noble members' hopes ran away with them in inquiries, 'on account of the great depression', about 'this Colonization Department',<sup>1</sup> than which nothing was further from governmental intention. The colonial office, indeed, scenting yet one more scheme of assisted emigration, a topic which in their opinion had been discussed ad nauseam,<sup>2</sup> showed strong reluctance to father this new and yet familiar device. In a memorandum of 1885 they said, referring to a resolution from representatives of emigration societies:

It is here proposed to re-establish the Emigration Office. I think this is a Home Office or Local Govt Board rather than a Colonial Office question, considering that the cost of sending out Emigrants, over and above those sent out by the agents general, can no longer be defrayed as formerly from Colonial Crown Revenues, but must be met from voluntary contributions, rates or parliamentary votes.<sup>3</sup>

A command paper of 1886<sup>4</sup> sets out much debate as to whether the Information Office should be attached to the colonial office or the local government board; the former, however reluctantly, was chosen. The same source contains the correspondence of sundry persons and organisations, notably the National Association for the Promotion of State-directed Emigration, interested in the project; none of these, apparently, was Irish. The heart of the matter is reached in a treasury communication<sup>5</sup> refusing firmly to finance state-directed emigration, but permitting the very modest outlay of £400 - £500 per annum on an emigration bureau 'of information only'.

Lucas's papers and reports show the creditable activities

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., cccvi. 305 (28 May 1886).

<sup>2</sup>C.O. minute, 19 December 1878 (P.R.O., C.O.384/121).

<sup>3</sup>C.O. memorandum, 9 July 1885 (P.R.O., C.O. 384/158).

<sup>4</sup>Correspondence on the subject of emigration...and the proposed formation of an emigrants' information office, [C.4751], H.C.1886, XLV.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., no.28; also append.10.



he contrived upon this small budget, from the establishment of his office in 1886, and his maps, displayed quarterly in the post offices presumably of Ireland as well as Britain, his circulars and his handbooks (to be reviewed later along with other emigration 'literature') make an impressive tale in the circumstances.<sup>1</sup> In summarising his first ten years' work, Lucas had few links to report with Ireland. There were by then 'little branches'<sup>2</sup> of his office in Glasgow, Newcastle-on-Tyne and elsewhere. As early as 1889 the Irish government was referring<sup>3</sup> to the opening of an information office in Ireland, and Lucas was urged to expand in this way into Scotland as well as Ireland by the select committee on colonisation. He did not do so, feeling, as so many then did, that England and its unemployed needed his services more; and of the inquiries on emigration which reached his office by letter, very few came from Scotland, Ireland or Wales.<sup>4</sup> Emigration as an established pattern and process in Ireland had less need of his advice than in England, where it was still relatively novel.

. . . . .

The most striking aspect of Irish emigration assisted under statute is its insignificance in proportion to the legislative and administrative labour entailed. The Irish local government board published in 1902 a table<sup>5</sup> showing emigration under 12 & 13 Vict. c.104 of 1849,

---

<sup>1</sup>The Belfast News-Letter, once a stout opponent of emigration, summarised current Information Office literature in a long leading article of 12 April 1887.

<sup>2</sup>Papers relating to the management and working of the emigrants' information office, no.1, para.18, [C.8256], H.C.1896, lviii.

<sup>3</sup>Register of C.O. letters on emigration, 1 May 1889 (P.R.O., Ind.15551).

<sup>4</sup>Report on the Emigrants' Information Office for the year ended 31 December 1891, pp.4-5, [C.6573], H.C.1892, lvi.

<sup>5</sup>Local government board for Ireland, Annual report for the year ended 31 March 1901, append. E. no.8.



which according to Ruttledge-Fair, one of their inspectors, was that one, of the seven statutes sanctioning assisted emigration from Ireland, under which most emigration had in fact taken place.<sup>1</sup> This table showed yearly totals which, after 1855, exceeded one thousand souls only in 1866 and 1881-4; 1884 had the highest figure, 2,161, since 1855. The summary reckoning of this long process showed the result:

Amount authorized to be expended.....	£161,238 . 13 . 5½
Emigrants:.....men.....	5,799
women.....	20,851
children under 15. <u>17,991</u>	
total.	44,641

Perhaps the best that can be said for these exertions is that, at a cost of less than £4 per emigrant, they were cheap. The select committee on colonisation discussed the significance of the numbers of emigrants, 67,376, who up to that point had left Ireland with statutory assistance, compared with the myriads who had left without. The committee could only suppose that some different kind of agency was required.<sup>2</sup>

The emigration clause of the Land Law (Ireland) Act of 1881 authorized the land commissioners to spend, under treasury tutelage, £200,000 on this purpose; but 'not one farthing!'<sup>3</sup> was used. A taste of the Irish parliamentary opposition to this subsidised 'extermination' appeared when Power asked Gladstone to postpone the emigration clause of the bill 'until the sense of Ireland could be taken with regard to it.' Gladstone said he was satisfied that the

<sup>1</sup>See his statement at Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, Q.2014.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., third session, 1891, Draft report, para.20.

<sup>3</sup>So Ruttledge-Fair, *ibid.*, first session, 1889, QQ. 2495-6.



majority of Irish members favoured the clause; Parnell said they did not.<sup>1</sup> Writing in the Contemporary Review, Tuke blamed the treasury's reluctance to make long-term advances to the Irish unions.<sup>2</sup> In evidence, also, before the Cairns committee one of the land commissioners put the view that the treasury's stringent terms on security for loans were at fault; and it appeared that, during the first year of the act, the commissioners had received no applications from public bodies for loans, though many from private (and no doubt optimistic) individuals.<sup>3</sup> Godley said that boards of guardians could not apply.<sup>4</sup> The comparable clauses of the Arrears of Rent (Ireland) Act of 1882 were vigorously invoked, and before it had been in force a year the chief secretary could report that the £100,000 allotted under it had been spent in preparing for emigration, or causing to emigrate, about 18-19,000 persons, of whom 10-11,000 had gone with government help.<sup>5</sup> The Arrears Act joined help from British funds, as grants in aid of emigration, to money raised by boards of guardians or by private committees such as Tuke's. The result was to finance such emigrants as those whose departure from Blacksod Bay, for Boston and Quebec, the viceroy personally inspected in 1883. He 'did not receive a single cheer.'<sup>6</sup>

Of the three statutes touching assisted emigration which were enacted in the half-century, this was the

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cclxiii. 862-3 (14 July 1881).

<sup>2</sup>J.H. Tuke, 'Ought emigration from Ireland to be assisted?', in Contemporary Review, xli (April, 1882).

<sup>3</sup>Cairns committee, I, 1882, QQ.4287, 381, 712, 2159-62, 2165-6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., QQ.713-16.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, cclxxxii, 780 (27 July 1883).

<sup>6</sup>Cork Examiner, 21 April 1883.



operative one. The Tramways and Public Companies (Ireland) Act of 1883 merely increased the grant assigned by the 1882 act from £100,000 to £200,000, and from a maximum of £5 to £8 per person. It afforded, also, an opportunity for Irish members to insist that of this sum £50,000 be used for migration and resettlement in Ireland. The 1882 statute particularised, what the Land Law (Ireland) Act left merely hortatory, an attack upon the black belt of overpopulation and poverty in the west. Grants in aid were now reserved for unions, scheduled or to be scheduled, in the counties Donegal, Clare, Cork (west riding), Kerry, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo.<sup>1</sup> By 1883 forty-four Irish unions were scheduled, and many had made applications.<sup>2</sup> The local government board was able to report,<sup>3</sup> three months after the enactment, that plans were well forward for enabling these provisions to play their part in the grave crisis which Ireland then faced; it was perhaps the time, of all her history, when administrative apathy was most firmly banished. The viceroy had appointed an emigration committee, 'Mr Redington and Major Gaskell', who received four colleagues in 1883, to supervise emigration under the act. Rules were promulgated; they included these precepts:-

As a rule, government will assist the emigration of whole families only, though individuals may be approved. Guardians shall use their discretion in requiring applicants to contribute part of the cost of their emigration. The emigrant's outfit shall consist of specified clothing and a 'ship outfit' of mattress and pillow, knife, fork, spoon, plate, mug, can and '1lb marine soap'.

---

<sup>1</sup>45 & 46 Vict. c.47, sect.20.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, cclxxxviii.1430-1 (30 April 1883).

<sup>3</sup>Report, dated 18th November 1882, made by the Local Government Board in Ireland, showing what has been done... towards carrying out the Emigration Clauses of the Arrears of Rent (Ireland) Act, 1882, [C.3422], H.C.1882, lv.



Male and female agents shall superintend embarkation and landing.

Emigrants to North America shall be landed at New York, Boston, Quebec, Halifax (Philadelphia was added later).

A glimpse of the emigration committee, or of one of its members, at work may be had in a press report of the visit to Westport in 1883 of 'Sir R.J. Jackson, Commissioner of Emigration'. Of a gathering of about 800, largely small farmers, only about one hundred were accepted for assisted emigration, and there was lively dissatisfaction among the rejected. Sometimes even young unmarried people were refused, since they could not guarantee their support in America.<sup>1</sup> The United States, not originally built by wealthy men, was already aware of the inconveniences of a pauper immigration.

In 1889, according to Rutledge-Fair, of the £400,000 made available for assisting emigration by the land act, arrears act and tramways act together, £265,000 was lying idle;<sup>2</sup> principally, of course, the original £200,000 which the land act offered upon unacceptable terms.

A general assessment of Irish reactions to the 'government emigration' will find a more appropriate place in the section of the thesis that deals with policy and opinion. Some of the less fortunate aspects of the process itself, from both an Irish and North American standpoint, may be noticed here. In 1886 an unexpended balance of money available for assisting emigration was offered by the local government board to some western boards of guardians in whose area families had asked for assisted emigration; but 'the Guardians do not appear to be disposed to take

---

<sup>1</sup>Freeman's Journal, quoted Nation, 7 April 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, QQ.2547-50.



advantage of the offer'.<sup>1</sup> This type of situation was no novelty, and the prime question was often asked why guardians were apparently reluctant to use the powers they already possessed under 12 & 13 Vict.c.104 (1849) for assisting the emigration process from, or upon the security of, the poor rates. This was an English as well as an Irish phenomenon. The difficulties, already referred to, that arose between the Irish administration and certain boards of guardians over relief of distress indicate local stresses on the question, too, of assisted emigration which might not always be appreciated in Dublin, and still less in London. The ratepayers' attitude to this problem, a problem at their own doorsteps, is well seen in a letter to the Times from the chairman of the Westport guardians:

The Government offers £5 a head towards emigration expenses, but £3 or £4 more a head is required, and how can these paupers get that sum? ...the ratepayers are strongly and unanimously opposed to borrowing money for this purpose; some because they think it unpatriotic to assist in 'the depopulation of the country' some because, they say, a large proportion of the ratepayers are nearly as poor as those proposed to be sent out; and others for various reasons I do not wish to dwell upon.<sup>2</sup>

In the last category are, of course, those whose hearts the historian would most like to search. Tuke, in his labours for the cause of assisted emigration, found the guardians apt to be hostile. They were generally shopkeepers, and feared among other things the untimely expatriation of debtors.<sup>3</sup> The Clifden board of guardians first passed and then rescinded a resolution to borrow £2,000 from the board of works for emigration, leaving

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, ccciv.448 (1 April 1886).

<sup>2</sup>Times, 5 January 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Cairns committee, II, 1882, QQ.7722-6, 7740-3; and cf. evidence of Greer, Q.7336, Foster, Q.7632.



Tuke's committee to bear the whole expense, to the detriment of the work elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

In evidence before the select committee on colonisation, Sir Baldwin Leighton was probably speaking of English conditions when he said: '...The persons with whom boards of guardians comes [sic] in contact are not, generally speaking, proper subjects for emigration; they are rather the ne'er-do-wells or helpless persons.'<sup>2</sup> This was probably applicable to Ireland as to anywhere else; his further remarks, on the disinclination of employers to spend the rates in sending away cheap labour, perhaps less so. The poor law emigrants, particularly in periods of deep distress, were indeed all too likely to be improper 'subjects for emigration', although as Buchanan's reports testify in earlier days, they often did well enough in Canada. Gaskell, in a report of 1882 to the local government board on the prospects for assisted emigrants in the U.S.A., wrote: 'the universal advice with regard to Irish emigrants is, "Put them on the land"...But it is pretty certain, from experience, that the class of people who will emigrate under the Arrears Act are not, as a rule, ripe for colonisation.'<sup>3</sup> There was much point, also, in H.A. Robinson's opinion that any scheme of emigration should be unconnected with government if only to avoid that odour of pauperism for which American nostrils had acquired a keen scent.<sup>4</sup> There remained the insuperable difficulty that, from a country with such an old tradition of emigration as Ireland's, any planned emigration, statutory or philan-

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Q.7672; and cf. Reports and papers relating to the proceedings of the committee of 'Mr. Tuke's fund': First report of the committee, June, 1882.

<sup>2</sup>Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, Q.4112.

<sup>3</sup>Report, dated 18th November 1882, made by the Local Government Board, as above, Enclosure D.

<sup>4</sup>Qq.5719-21, 5781-90, Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890.



thropic, was likely to recruit mainly the dregs and rinsings of the voluntary process. This was apparent in the reflux of emigrants returned to Ireland during 1883 by the authorities at Castle Garden. The Nation frequently during that year chronicled the arrival of such unfortunates - the woman with small illegitimate children, sickly middle-aged men, widows with small children - all unable to find work. In July, Trevelyan had to admit that a few Irish had been sent back from the United States.<sup>1</sup> Irish members complained that the local government board did not meet some of them at Queenstown, at 4 a.m.<sup>2</sup> The Cork Examiner<sup>3</sup> described the return of pauper emigrants who had been sent out by the unions of Tralee, Cahirciveen and Milford (co. Donegal); they complained of ill-treatment in America, and of young men hanging about Castle Garden unemployed.

Vance, early in the period, thought political manoeuvre determined who should get assisted emigration.<sup>4</sup> Later, the Vesey Stoney case in 1887 uncovered some of the innumerable manipulations to which in Ireland an outpouring of public money or private charity could be subjected. Vesey Stoney, a landowner and person of consequence, was accused by one of the local catholic clergy of improper administration of public funds in state-aided emigration from co. Mayo. Cases were substantiated of impersonation among the emigrants with Stoney's connivance and, it was alleged, to his benefit in a small matter of laying field to field. At all events if an accommodation was made it benefited all the participants, since the government's stipulation for family emigration was,

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cclxxxi.469-70 (5 July 1883), 604-6 (6 July 1883).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1225-6 (12 July 1883).

<sup>3</sup>11, 12, 17 July, 1883.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, cxlvi.911 (3 July 1857).



it appeared, strictly enforced at that time, and some unattached persons wished to evade it. The root of the matter probably lay in two considerations. Firstly, that Stoney maintained he was persecuted by the National League; secondly, that the curate's charges bore a general implication that Stoney was pursuing a kind of selective 'extermination' under the guise of helping emigrants: 'I may also notice that any Protestant would not be passed on the Emigration; they were refused...The Emigration move here is a swindle of public money and an effort to wipe out the Catholics.'<sup>1</sup>

Finally, there is the prospectively assisted emigrant's view of the matter. Multitudes clamoured for a passage; but some put what seemed to them an obvious alternative. In the bad year 1883, an address by a poor law inspector to a starving assembly in Donegal was reported as follows: "the Government scheme was that any family wishing to emigrate would get £5 per head" etc. (A Voice - Give us the money and we'll stay at home).<sup>2</sup> It was a point that, like so many points, had been anticipated in the house of commons by Mr Gladstone, in 1870.<sup>3</sup>

The Congested Districts Board appeared in 1891, and in its first annual report defined its own functions as ranging over the very wide field of agricultural development, forestry, livestock and poultry, seed potatoes and seed oats, amalgamation of small holdings, migration, emigration, fishing and related topics, weaving, spinning and 'any other suitable industries'<sup>4</sup> as applied to a defined strip of

---

<sup>1</sup>Copy of correspondence in the case of Mr. R. Vesey Stoney, J.P....p.5, H.C.1888 (88), lxxxiii.

<sup>2</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 10 February 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, cxcix.1075 (1 March 1870).

<sup>4</sup>Congested Districts Board for Ireland, First annual report, p.5, [C.6908], H.C. 1893-4, lxi.



western Ireland embracing almost the whole of that coast-line, from north to south, except co. Clare. This area of operations was later extended, and the criterion throughout was a population steeped in poverty, with family incomes of the order of £15 - £80 per annum at the outset of the board's work, and with overcrowding as the usual concomitant or indeed cause. Under the act of 1891 the board's powers included the purchase of tenants' interests in their holdings with a view to arranging the amalgamation of the holdings and the emigration or migration of the surplus tenants. The board's historian and first secretary explains the fate of this part of a great project: 'It may be stated at once that in not a single case did the Board purchase the interest in a tenant's holding, as no tenants were willing to sell; and it was decided by the Board that they would not, as far as could be foreseen, assist in the emigration of tenants.'<sup>1</sup> Arthur Balfour's whole policy in its velvet glove aspect, of which light railways and the Congested Districts Board were manifestations, did something to forward what he himself referred to as 'the social revolution in Ireland',<sup>2</sup> and was to this extent a force that possibly retarded, certainly without either undermining or deliberately advancing, the emigration process. As I observed earlier, the index of emigration intensity for the whole of Ireland, at least in the latter half of my period for which reliable figures are available, was rather constant (see append. II, table 7); but it fell in 1894 and again in 1896-9. On the

---

<sup>1</sup> William L. Micks, Account of the constitution, administration and dissolution of the Congested Districts Board for Ireland, 1891-1923, p.16.

<sup>2</sup> Blanche E.C. Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, i.172.



other hand, the total emigration from Connaught, the province most affected in relation to its size by the board's operations, though it fell in 1894 did not do so in 1896-9 (see append.II, table 9). Tuke turned from 1887 to the ideas eventually developed by the board, of which for five years he was a member, as a pis-aller to emigration.<sup>1</sup> Rutledge-Fair maintained that the congested districts could be relieved only by emigration.<sup>2</sup>

That they were so relieved is shown in fig. 19 of Freeman's Ireland,<sup>3</sup> delineating the congested districts of 1891 and, on the same basis of reckoning, of 1936. No easy equation, however, can be established of these maps with my map of emigration intensities (append.II, fig.10). It is true that co. Clare, with high emigration intensity in the period 1851-1901, had little or no congestion in 1891, while Mayo and Donegal, with less than average emigration, had much congestion. But co. Galway had both high emigration intensity and a much congested population. The indication is that the work of the Congested Districts Board, as indeed its secretary stated, was merely on the periphery of the emigration problem; the board eschewed ad hoc functions of relief: '...it is quite clear that our Board was constituted with a view to bringing about a gradual and lasting improvement in the poor districts in the West of Ireland, and not for the immediate "relief" of exceptional distress.'<sup>4</sup> The 'gradual and lasting improvement' was happily attained; how much of it is to be directly imputed to the board, and how much to the silent

---

<sup>1</sup>Edward Fry, Life of James Haek Tuke, p. c. VIII  
*op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, QQ.2369, 2377, 2385.

<sup>3</sup>T.W. Freeman, *op.cit.*, p.127.

<sup>4</sup>Congested Districts Board, as above, p.5.



and unceasing abstraction of surplus numbers by emigration, may be debated. It may be safely conjectured that the board's labours raised many above that level of poverty below which emigration cannot be attempted in the manner that the Irish have always preferred, namely as a strictly private enterprise.

. . . . .

The state paper office of the republic of Ireland provides evidence of certain emigrants who were officially helped to emigrate, indeed were officially expatriated for their own good - the crown witnesses, informers or 'approvers'. When others, through fear or interest, were silent, these men ~~or~~ <sup>and</sup> women, or occasionally mere children, came forward with evidence that might hang or transport a man and enable justice to be done. Their range of motives was probably considerable and is not sufficiently explicit in the documents to warrant generalisation; one or two of the crown witness petitions to authority, for protection or reward, are nauseating productions. To judge from some of the crown solicitor's returns of witnesses at assizes,<sup>1</sup> there were many crown witnesses who did not find it necessary to emigrate. In the years between 1855 and 1874<sup>2</sup> (lacking 1865-6), about 150 names appear in the indexes of the Dublin state paper office as involving official correspondence with the emigration agent. Many of the relevant files are missing. The distribution of cases per year is fairly even, until the troubled year 1867 provides the peak number of twenty-nine cases; thereafter

---

<sup>1</sup>E.g., Leinster circuit, summer assizes, 1854, Registered papers, Dublin state paper office (hereafter cited as S.P.O.), 1855/6495.

<sup>2</sup>This was the terminal date prescribed in 1949 by the department of the Taoiseach for the inspection of political papers.



comes a rapid falling off, until 1873 and 1874 furnish only one case each. Even allowing for the point that a number of these files involve the emigration of two or more members of a family, the indication is of a type of emigration that, throughout the half-century, was numerically of the utmost insignificance. None the less, this emigration has considerable qualitative interest, and a review of specific crown witness cases throws light not only upon these equivocal figures themselves, but to some degree upon that underworld of emigration in which moved sundry fugitives from justice or from violence whose total, could it be known, might amount to no inconsiderable fraction of the whole emigrant host. X

Among the 150 cases mentioned, most emigrants went to the United States, a lesser number to Canada, and a small minority to Australia or New Zealand. A detailed examination of some thirty files, taken throughout the years 1855-68, showed ten adults recorded as choosing their own destination, though presumably all were free to do so. Of these, four chose the United States or some location therein, one 'New Jersey city or Queensland',<sup>1</sup> and five Canada - one of them, very inauspiciously if he meant Canada east, as being a suitable place for a gardener.<sup>2</sup> There is of course no certainty that emigrants who were shipped, as were many, to Quebec were not in fact on their way to the United States.

Some typical cases will illustrate the manner in which some crown witnesses left Ireland. The first, a non-political case, involved two sisters as crown witnesses.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>S.P.O., 1867/7654.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1868/2476.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1856/14374.



They unfolded a story of a sordid family dispute about money, as the result of which an aged co. Wexford farmer was shot, in June, 1853. A conspiracy was involved, in the course of which the husband of one witness showed signs of repentance and was sent overseas passage paid by the other conspirators. To make assurance sure, he was seen off, ten miles downstream from New Ross. By the summer of 1855 three men were charged with conspiracy to murder, and a head constable was dispatched in search of the émigré, now employed at the Montreal waterworks and a key witness for the crown, in spite of the very questionable part he had already taken in the conspiracy - e.g. in passing on £10 to the prospective murderer 'to shoot Mr - '. This 'approver' was duly found, brought back to Ireland and, by October, 1855 the resident magistrate concerned in the case no longer needed him, did not trust him if at large in Ross, and wanted him 'removed from this as immediately as possible and placed in the Depot for Crown Witnesses in the vicinity of Dublin' [Ballybough].

While he was at Ballybough the approver occupied his leisure in prosecuting a wages claim against his late employers in Canada. The prisoners were tried and acquitted, and in March, 1856 the resident magistrate wrote 'it remains to dispose of the Witnesses brought forward upon the part of the Crown'. The spring assizes return of witnesses by the crown solicitor recommended free passages to Quebec for the approver, his wife and children, and his wife's sister, free outfits, and £10 (later reduced to £5) per head for the adults; and this although the single woman's 'Sworn Information was full of contradictions'. The crown solicitor further observed: 'in this Case the prisoners were tried for a conspiracy to



murder and acquitted. It is not usual to reward Witnesses under such circumstances. But the approver in this case as well as his Wife sustained their Informations and there is no reason to doubt the truth of their statement although the corroboration was not sufficient for the Jury." A principal beneficiary of this lengthy and inconclusive case, as of so many, was Miley the passage broker, and at his office, in May, 1856, these emigrants passed from the purview of the government in Ireland.

The year 1859 provides an example, rather more characteristic than the foregoing, of crown witness activities in the later eighteen-fifties. For 'a Commencement of the Agrarian system'<sup>1</sup> two men received seven years' penal servitude. Daniel - and his wife were the witnesses and 'very straight forward'; they would willingly have returned to their native Limerick, but the crown solicitor considered this dangerous and recommended free passages to America, with emoluments. The emigration agent bought them an emigrant chest for 7s 6d and sent them on their way to Quebec, via Liverpool and New York, in the Great Western, at the following additional cost per head:

Fare to New York, 2nd class.....	£	4	15	0
Mess Utensils, Bedding, extra Provs.....		1	0	0
Railway fare from New York to Quebec.....		1	15	10
To be handed on landing.....		3	0	0
	£	10	10	10

In the same year, a shoemaker in King's County appeared as plaintiff in a case arising from a murderous quarrel over land, and helped to secure the transportation of four men.<sup>2</sup> After living for nearly five years under a constabulary guard he found himself boycotted by the neighbours, his

---

<sup>1</sup>S.P.O., 1859/3909.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1864/15794.



trade gone, and two of the convicted men back in Ireland on ticket of leave. It was clearly time to emigrate, and despite his, and his wife's, age and infirmity he petitioned for passages to New York. These were granted, and the old people, with their two sons, were shipped away at a total cost to government of £63 10s 8d. On the credit side, the crown solicitor claimed, as a result of the convictions, a 'marked decrease of agrarian Crime in the district'. This case affords a good example of the local vendetta against one who has helped to bring to justice a person or persons whom the opinion of the neighbourhood clearly preferred to regard as innocent. The grounds upon which this opinion was formed do not of course appear in the crown witness files, or probably in any other document. The whole problem recalls the observation, already quoted, of an Irish landlord to Nassau Senior, on the 'two different and repugnant systems of law. One is enacted by Parliament and enforced by the Courts - the other is concocted in the whiskey-shop and executed by the assassin.' The difficulty for the historian is that the 'whiskey-shop' secreted no records to match the elaborate documentation of the courts; thus half the evidence is lost.

Two examples of local pressure brought to bear on the crown witness come from the year 1855. A boy of 15, the sole support of his widowed mother, is instrumental in securing three convictions, with four more in prospect.<sup>1</sup> < The parish priest and the local constable testify to his danger; the former writes: 'Threats are held out against him. His evidence and interference in the above mentioned case are made matters of very improper interrogation etc.

---

1S.P.O., 1855/3786.



etc. in the most public places he may be met" - for instance, at dances and wakes. The government supports him for some time in Dungannon bridewell and later in the Ballybough depôt; he and his mother are eventually sent to Philadelphia, to join other members of the family. Of another crown witness, a sub-inspector of constabulary writes:

I was obliged to take him into protection as no person wd. either give him employment & shelter. A most rancorous spirit exists against him as having been the instrument of convicting Patrick - at the last Assizes. Without his evidence no conviction could have been had & it required no little management on my part to induce him to give it...<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, a witness who secured the conviction of seven men for treason felony finds he cannot get employment because nobody will work with him;<sup>2</sup> another, in Queen's County, who sends two men to fifteen months' hard labour for sheep stealing, petitions for emigration because 'those two Men have Numerous [sic] friends in the Country'.<sup>3</sup>

In 1866 a gas-fitter in Galway town, an intelligent young man, lays an information against local fenians.<sup>4</sup> On failing to identify one alleged fenian in Dublin he is discredited by the authorities there and discharged from Ballybough with only £1. Not unreasonably, he refrains from returning to Galway, and in his absence his wife and children fall into want. They are refused admission to the workhouse, on the grounds that the government ought to provide for the woman; and documents in the case show that the guardians are keenly aware of the possibilities of their position. Later, in a memorial to the viceroy, the woman refers to '...the odium reflected from her husband to

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1855/3187.

<sup>2</sup>S.P.O., 1868/2476.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1868/10468.

<sup>4</sup>S.P.O., 1867/16078.



herself on account of the deeply-rooted aversion entertained by persons of her own class in life to any one who gets the name of "an informer". She and her children are eventually sent to Quebec.

At some point in each crown witness case, a petition or memorial to government usually occurred. Some of these appear to be professionally drafted, such as one that ends:

Your memorialist therefore prays your Excellency will take into your Gracious and Humane consideration her deplorable and homeless condition, and give such means as will enable her to Emigrate, and join the only relatives on earth [in New York state] who may be inclined to assist her.<sup>1</sup>

A destitute orphan girl of Newcastle, co. Limerick, an unsuccessful prosecutrix in a charge of rape, petitions the viceroy for emigration, in language more artless yet more effective, since she is 'now thrown on the World'.<sup>2</sup> The worst of these petitions, as was said above, are indeed repellent. Such is a memorial of 1863 to the viceroy, from a crown witness who was at last sent to Australia; he urges his merits in having secured one execution and one sentence of ten years' penal servitude, and continues: 'I now appeal to the authorities...to know if My evidence was not of the greatest importance in both Cases of Convictions Memorialist earnestly hopes that His Excellency will...allow him as much as he may think his Case deserves...',<sup>3</sup> and what about a 'little weekly allowance' for his aged father? A memorial from a crown witness in Ballybay, addressed to the constabulary sub-inspector, summarises perhaps better than most other single documents the wretched condition of approvers; denied employment and in constant danger, so long as they remained in Ireland, of retributory violence if not death.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1863/4034.

<sup>2</sup>S.P.O., 1856/14478.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1863/7151.



It is perhaps curious that no evidence has appeared of an extension of these proscriptions to the other side of the Atlantic.

...The memorial of John - Crown Witness in the case of the Homicides of - and - which took place in Ballybay on the 17th June last. Humbly sheweth that I was arrested by you and Head Constable - in the above case to give evidence at the last Assizes of Monaghan and was supported as a Crown Witness from the 19th June till the 15th Instant and after I gave evidence at the Assizes was discharged on receiving only 15s/o your Memorialist begs to show that I have been deprived of my situation as Servt Man and can get now no employment as those who would employ me are afraid to do so as I have made myself obnoxious to the lower order of people by giving evidence against the parties Charged it being a ribbon quarrel in which those two men lost their lives I am now cast off and left in great danger of personal injury and no person will take me into their employment lest they may be visited by the ribbon Code and have no means of support...<sup>1</sup>

So much for the situation as the typical crown witness saw it. The attitude of the 'crown', or its more or less worthy representatives, is rather less easy to evaluate. There are numerous and generally eulogistic references to these witnesses in the documents, by magistrates or by the crown solicitor;<sup>2</sup> but it is not always clear whether official solicitude was really concerned with the safety of witnesses' persons per se or with the sometimes pressing need to keep them alive at least until the next assizes. Thus, a resident magistrate's statement bears the endorsement: 'As the men are still required - they must be protected'.<sup>3</sup> In another file there is preoccupation with the difficulty that the approver could not be assisted to emigrate until all the important convictions had been made.<sup>4</sup>

When these dubious but necessary instruments of justice had served their purpose, they must be disposed of. Assist-

<sup>1</sup>S.P.O., 1855/3187.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., also, the type of supporting testimonial from some local magnate, as in S.P.O. 1863/2423.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1863/6694.

<sup>4</sup>S.P.O., 1868/2476.



ed emigration was clearly a cheaper alternative than a quasi-permanent residence in police barracks, a way of life to which some witnesses were apparently quite amenable. A married woman, arrested at Rathkeale, co. Limerick in connection with an armed burglary by a gang, turned king's evidence and promoted two convictions, with heavy sentences. She petitioned to be 'sent out of the country'<sup>1</sup> only when told she could no longer stay in the police barracks. After a case which ended in acquittal, a crown witness was maintained for three months in Tuam barracks.<sup>2</sup> There is frequently, in fact, a suggestion in these files that the crown incurred, not merely an obligation for the witness's personal safety, but an almost unlimited liability ramifying into all the convolutions of an Irish family group. Children were born to informers in the Ballybough depot, and became automatic participants of official bounty. While in protective custody, a man required the authorities to trace a missing daughter for him;<sup>3</sup> a witness might send begging letters to the under secretary on behalf of his aged parents.<sup>4</sup>

The cost in money to government of crown witness evidence was considerable, especially on the principle of payment by results, when cases ended in acquittal, as they not infrequently did. In spite of the crown solicitor's opinion of 1856, already quoted, to the effect that no conviction meant no reward, there seems no evidence in the crown witness files that this harsh precept was ever applied, and fairly frequent positive evidence that the

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1864/15822.

<sup>2</sup>S.P.O., 1867/7650.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1855/10016.

<sup>4</sup>S.P.O., 1867/7654.



witness got his emigration and other emoluments whatever the verdict. It is difficult to assign a sum as the average cost involved, for passage, ship outfit of bed, bedding and mess utensils, sometimes clothing, and almost invariably landing-money. Averaging the cost over adults and children alike, where a family emigration was involved, £8 10s and £10 10s per head are representative figures for emigrants to North America in 1856 and 1859 respectively; in the former year an emigrant witness sent to Australia cost the government £18. There was a rising tendency in the expense, and in 1863 some witnesses sent to America were costing from £12 16s to £14 17s per head. Landing-money was not a rigid tariff, but £5 per adult was very common throughout, and £2 - £3 apparently a minimum. On one occasion a boy under 15 received £20.<sup>1</sup> Since, in the eighteen-fifties, Buchanan was recording the arrival in Quebec of poor law emigrants with twelve or fifteen shillings a head from their unions, and of landlord-assisted emigrants with no landing-money at all,<sup>2</sup> the crown witness emigrants were in comparison very well treated.

Under the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act of 1866 in Ireland,

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1867/7650.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., Papers relative to the emigration to the North American colonies, [1650] H.C.1852-3, lxviii; [1763] H.C. 1854, xlvi. But some evacuee tenants, shipped from Limerick to Quebec in 1852, had as much as 25/- landing-money, Limerick Reporter, quoted Dublin Evening Post, 19 August 1852. A generation later, the 'government emigrants' of 1883 received, according to Trevelyan, £1 to £3 10s in landing allowances, besides the cost of their outfit, Hansard, cclxxx, 1700-3 (28 June 1883). The Toronto Globe (17 November 1883, quoted Nation, 8 December 1883) took a rather grudging view of this bounty, reporting that the emigrants were landed merely in the clothes in which they stood, with £1 per adult, 10s per child and 'a couple of poor rugs', provided on shipboard. There was no approach to an emigrant's outfit.



of about 1240 arrested persons about 260 are recorded<sup>1</sup> as 'discharged for America', or as having left for America after discharge, these being a minority of the 260 cases. In one or two instances only, discharged persons emigrated to Australia; a considerable number returned to England, whence they had come to swell the fenian ranks. From the emigrants to America there were occasional requests for payment of passage;<sup>2</sup> there is no record of the result. In this manner some characters whom the government might well be supposed anxious to keep in custody were discharged, although emigration to America was no guarantee against subsequent return.<sup>3</sup> Official intervention by the United States smoothed for some the path to release. A prisoner who stated he had a passage ticket from his wife in America was nevertheless detained, and identified as a prominent fenian. But the United States consul intervened, and the fenian was discharged 'on the terms of going direct to America'.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, a man who appears to have claimed American citizenship was detained, and convicted of high treason by the special commission.<sup>5</sup> A few years later, other amnestied fenians joined these forerunners. The Nation records in 1871 the departure for New York of several recently pardoned fenians; they were received with great éclat by the Tammany Hall society.<sup>6</sup> The Philadelphia correspondent of the Times wrote: 'the

---

<sup>1</sup>Abstracts of cases, Habeas Corpus Suspension Act, 1866: list of warrants issued and the grounds of detention, 2 vols. (S.P.O.).

<sup>2</sup>E.g., *ibid.*, ii.58.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, ii.82B, 87,94.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, ii.6B, 7A; and cf.72, where the consul is called to give evidence of naturalization and secures a prisoner's discharge.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, ii.3.

<sup>6</sup>Nation, 18 February 1871.



best speculation these Irishmen have yet indulged in has evidently been their incarceration in England.<sup>1</sup>

What I have designated the official adjuncts of Irish emigration in the period have now been reviewed. Of their nature, these were largely concerned with emigrants of the less fortunate classes, and it is easy to forget that, for instance, cabin passengers comprised a considerable minority of the total embarkation at United Kingdom ports towards the end of the century.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of what were numerically a handful of poor law emigrants, along with a like minority of more doubtful characters, either penally transported in earlier days, deported, as some of the fenians, from the actual grasp of the law, or fugitives from its imminent approach, was presumably built the long surviving legend that the 'colonies' and 'America' were a general receptacle for the wastrels of European society, and largely populated by such. An awareness, perhaps not explicit, of this mischievous delusion still survives overseas to complicate, for instance, the human relationship between British subjects and citizens of the great self-governing dominions.

(b) The philanthropic and individual adjuncts of Irish emigration were often, as in the instance of Tuke and his committee, bound up with official work to the same end, and they may therefore be considered next. These parallel enterprises sometimes had, as it were,

---

<sup>1</sup>Quoted Nation, 18 March 1871.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., p. 11, note 1.



interlocking directorates; the barrister Howard Hodgkin, an honorary secretary of Tuke's fund, also sat on the committee of the Emigrants' Information Office; Tuke's committee, and some others, co-operated with the Irish government's emigration committee of 1882.<sup>1</sup> A variety of privately-inspired organisations waxed and waned in the later nineteenth century, their common aim to encourage emigration in general, though hardly ever Irish emigration in particular.<sup>2</sup> These bodies canalised from time to time the energies of well-meaning individuals; and then, in turn, the unofficial committee begins to drift towards quasi-official status, and an 'association for encouraging state colonisation' re-appears as a 'parliamentary colonisation committee', drawn onwards by the strong magnetism of the public purse. This last citadel the treasury successfully defends, throughout the period, against those who would promote general state-assisted emigration. Here was the office that

' Umpire sits,  
And by decision more imbroides the fray?'

The boundary that divided philanthropic from commercial motives in some who would help emigration is equally impossible to trace with precision.

As was the reckoning of persons assisted to emigrate under statute, so was the total of other assisted emigrants, out of the whole tale of Irish emigration: numerically trifling. Tuke's scheme, by far the largest of the philanthropic projects, accounted in three years for the emigration of fewer than 10,000 persons; Vere Foster was said

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf., Trevelyan's reference to disbursement of grant through these committees, Hansard, ccxc.658-9 (28 July 1884).

<sup>2</sup>W.A. Carrothers, Emigration from the British Isles, has a ~~list~~ list (append.XIIA) of forty-nine such societies.



personally to have aided 25,000 Irish emigrants during his long life;<sup>1</sup> he himself spoke of about 15,000 to 1882.<sup>2</sup>

Vere Henry Lewis Foster, born in the same year, 1819, as Tuke, was like Tuke called twice specifically into the field of Irish relief, first by the famine and then by the black years following 1879. It is significant that both these men, coming unsolicited to wrestle with the problem of Irish distress, chose to devote their major efforts to promoting emigration. Foster, however, gave much attention and money in the long interim to Irish schooling, and attributed the success of his emigration project to his connection among national school teachers, since he said he neither travelled, advertised, wrote to the press, nor attended public meetings.<sup>3</sup> In the years immediately after the famine he lived in Ireland and sent out 'a good many young men and women'<sup>4</sup> from the counties Clare and Louth, paying the charges, about £8 per head, himself. He told the Cairns committee: 'I paid their entire expenses. I asked them to write and inform me of their success. After waiting some months and receiving no answers...I went as a steerage passenger in the largest emigrant ship then in existence'.<sup>5</sup> This was his celebrated voyage in the Washington, long remembered, one presumes, by the owners, who must have found his published report<sup>6</sup> damning. He was at this time in touch with Buchanan, the emigrant agent at Quebec, who wrote to him puffing Canada and urging (as he so often had occasion to) that assisted emigrants, especially

---

<sup>1</sup>D.N.B., xxii (supp.), 657.

<sup>2</sup>Cairns committee, II, 1882, Q.7540.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Q.7610.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Q.7527.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Q.7529.

<sup>6</sup>Vere Foster, Emigration to North America (1852).



'females', should land not later in the year than July.<sup>1</sup> After Foster resumed his emigration activities, in 1880, he received donations from the duchess of Marlborough's fund and from Tuke personally. Foster concentrated now upon the emigration of girls aged 18-30, vouched by their parish priests to be poor, of good character, anxious to go and unable to pay their full passage;<sup>2</sup> from Clifden alone over 400 girls were thus helped to emigrate. To such, Foster offered passage vouchers for £2, circularising teachers and catholic clergy 'from Donegal to Kerry' with this information, and receiving 24,000 applications in all.<sup>3</sup>

Later, burdened no doubt by the heavy expense, he paid the shipping companies only £1 towards the passage, but had value for £2 10s or £3 'by arrangement with all the steamship companies.'<sup>4</sup> In 1883 the Beaver line (Liverpool, Queenstown, New York) was advertising 'assisted passages, female domestic servants, for £1 5s cash, and Vere Foster's vouchers for £2 10s.'<sup>5</sup> The whole transaction suggests either a very comfortable margin of profit to the companies in the unassisted emigrant trade of that time, or, more probably, a growing excess of Atlantic tonnage which made 'reductions for quantity' an attractive or even a necessary policy for any given steamship line. It is perhaps significant that all the transatlantic lines offered Foster a free return passage to America.<sup>6</sup> In 1881 he issued, to Americans in the first instance, an 'appeal

<sup>1</sup>Newry Examiner, 27 March 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Cairns committee, II, 1882, Q.7547.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Q.7529.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Q.7535.

<sup>5</sup>Cork Examiner, 7 April 1883.

<sup>6</sup>Cairns committee, II, 1882, append.O.



for funds in aid of the emigration of young men and women of good character between eighteen and thirty years of age', suggesting particularly that conventual and lay societies in New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Montreal should be financed to receive the girls; and he described the failure of his appeal to the Land League and the Irish press. Extracts from some eighty letters were appended, from clergy in the west and south of Ireland, saying that Foster's girls were almost all doing well.<sup>1</sup> Foster's own precepts for success in promoting emigration of this kind were (besides wealth, which he modestly refrained to mention), 'to raise no prejudices; not to take any part in evictions; not to take any part in religious controversy; or in directing them to any particular country'.<sup>2</sup>

No individual besides Foster, not even James Hack Tuke, seems to have done single-handed so much for Irish emigration in the period. Two women, Annie Macpherson and Maria S. Rye, attained a certain publicity or even notoriety, about 1875 and later, for practices which may slightly have affected Irish emigration. Miss Rye was previously noted as having, by 1863, taken 100 young women emigrants to New Zealand.<sup>3</sup> A report of 1874 to the English local government board disclosed a quasi-religious and charitable enterprise, in which the Misses Macpherson and Rye were the principals although others were said to be associated, for transferring waifs and strays, or 'arabs' and 'paupers', the latter provided by the guardians, from the streets of

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Q.7636. Foster omitted also to say, what was narrated to the select committee on colonisation by Tuke, that none of the thousands of women who signed undertakings to repay a portion of his loan sent him a penny (Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, Q.3532).

<sup>3</sup>Emigration Commission, 23rd General report, 1863, p.14.



the United Kingdom to the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, where distributing Homes were maintained. The inspector concerned reported: 'In apparently direct connection with Miss Macpherson's mission there are "Homes" in Liverpool, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dublin, from all of which considerable numbers of children of a similar character are sent out to Canada'.<sup>1</sup> It appeared that the practice had led to considerable abuses, in that these women were handling more children than they could properly supervise. A controversy continued in a correspondence, afterwards laid before parliament,<sup>2</sup> which seemed finally to distinguish Miss Macpherson's undertaking as being better conducted than Miss Rye's; the parliament of Canada had already decided that the work of both women was on the whole satisfactory.<sup>3</sup> It is of interest to note that it was apparently a grave disadvantage to these children to go to Canada branded as paupers; the 'arabs' were said to do better.

The great select committee on colonisation of 1889-91 reviewed, amongst much else, some curious paper schemes of subsidised emigration, mainly the projects of self-sponsored amateurs of political economy. None was ever implemented, and perhaps few of them deserved to be. The schemes were primarily of British, not Irish, reference,<sup>4</sup> and the product of the new enthusiasm in England of the eighteenthies for seeking in the 'colonies' a solution to mount-

---

<sup>1</sup>Report to the president of the local government board by Andrew Doyle, local government inspector, as to the emigration of pauper children to Canada, p. 6, H.C. 1875 (9) lxiii.

<sup>2</sup>In Letters from Miss Rye (Dec. 1876), Mr Doyle (May 1877) to the president of the local government board, H.C. 1877 (392) (263), lxxi.

<sup>3</sup>Cf., First report of the select committee of the parliament of Canada on immigration and colonisation, H.C. 1875 (275) lii.

<sup>4</sup>Thus, Boyd's scheme of 'state-directed emigration and colonization', argued exhaustively under thirty headings, has no specific reference to Ireland (Scheme of Mr. Boyd, relating to state-directed emigration and colonization, H.C. 1884 (235) liv).



ing English problems of poverty and population. Lord Meath expounded in 1890 the current philosophy of emigration:

...the remedy of inducing those to emigrate who here are starving, struggling with misery, struggling with incessant disappointment in their efforts to maintain themselves by honest labour, and placing them where they can cull from the fertile earth produce which in due time will be exchanged for the products, and stimulate the industry of our manufacturers at home.<sup>1</sup>

But 'here' meant Britain rather than Ireland. Some of these projects shared a common tendency to make demands upon the British treasury or the Canadian government which neither was prepared to accept. Thus, a member of parliament, Kimber, produced a plan of colonisation, that is, the settlement of emigrants, which would involve the Canadian government in collecting land annuities and in guaranteeing the payment of interest on advances to immigrants. They declined both offices.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, Professor Henry Tanner asserted, from the Canadian side, that the Dominion government would do all in its power if only the imperial government should be 'willing to aid emigration by a special loan.'<sup>3</sup> But

'Great Chatham with his sabre drawn  
Stood waiting for Sir Richard Strachan'.

Other individual memorialists of the colonial office on the same topic were E.T. Wakefield, who thought state-aided emigration the only solution of the Irish difficulty,<sup>4</sup> and R.W. Prittie, of whom the office had, on pressure, to admit that they did not know who 'Mr.

<sup>1</sup>Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, Q.3166.

<sup>2</sup>Correspondence respecting a scheme of colonisation referred in 1887 for the consideration of colonial governments, p.17 [C.5361], H.C.1888, lxxiii.

<sup>3</sup>Correspondence on the subject of emigration, etc., as above, [C.4751], H.C.1886, xlv.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



Prittie' was.<sup>1</sup> The registered correspondence of the colonial office very possibly contained some scores more of such well-intentioned productions, summarily interred without meeting even the somewhat diffused light of the parliamentary papers. Such was the scheme of one Pennefather for Irish emigration to Manitoba, which reached the colonial office from Dublin Castle with a request that it be sent to the Dominion government.<sup>2</sup>

Two schemes of colonisation, involving the Canadian government and requiring the conjunction of emigrants and capital, belong to this period and refer specifically to Ireland. They raised, in its baldest form, the question how much risk the British treasury would contemplate, with a greater or less degree of underwriting from Canada, in order to make some impression upon the belt of overpopulation in the west of Ireland. The first might be classed also among those plans of assisted emigration that were individually inspired, the individual being Galt, the high commissioner for Canada in London. On his suggestion, the Canadian minister of agriculture submitted in 1880 a proposal for organised Irish immigration into Manitoba and the north-west territory. As Ottawa put the matter:

the Canadian government, sympathising with their fellow subjects in Ireland in their distressed circumstances, would cheerfully co-operate in a well considered measure of relief by means of a systematic immigration from Ireland...It is evidently a condition precedent to obtaining the cordial co-operation of Canada, that the immigrants should not become a burden upon the existing population.<sup>3</sup>

Instead of direct action by H.M. government, it was suggested that there should be a commission or national

<sup>1</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session,  
first session, 1889, Q.1024.

<sup>2</sup>Colonial office, registers of correspondence, 15  
February 1884 (P.R.O., Ind.13387).

<sup>3</sup>Copy of a dispatch...on a proposal for the organis-  
ation of an Irish immigration to Manitoba and the north-  
west, [C.2835], H.C. 1881, lxx.



emigration association, with organization both in the United Kingdom and Canada, through which the financing should be done. Canada, for her part, would put land at the commission's disposal, but finance there must be too, and the imperial government would have to provide a loan, since experience was yearly demonstrating that a settler on uncleared land with no money behind him, of the order of at least £100, was but lost. These sums were to be repaid by annuities, secured on the land - security at which the treasury was apt to look very closely indeed. It is possible that on this occasion the treasury had not the opportunity to say "no". At the select committee on colonisation, Herbert, the under secretary for the colonies, said that this despatch was sent to Dublin Castle 'and apparently no action was taken in the matter'.<sup>1</sup>

The second of the two projects came much nearer fulfilment. It was of that class of proposals touching emigration wherein philanthropy went hand in hand with an optative five per cent, not necessarily to the detriment of either. Its promoter was one of the last of that great hierarchy of Montreal Scotsmen who made the empire of the St Lawrence their footstool, whose mansions still, from the heights of Mount Royal, look out masterfully over the alien city of Mary. George Stephen, president of the Canadian Pacific railway, later a baronet and then Baron Mount Stephen, proposed in 1883 that the imperial government should loan to the North West Land Company of Canada one million pounds for ten years, free of interest. With this sum the company undertook to remove from the west of Ireland to Canada 10,000 families, or perhaps 50,000

---

<sup>1</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, Q.1197.



persons, and settle them on the customary 160-acre holdings given by the Canadian government.<sup>1</sup> In return for setting these families up the company was to take a mortgage upon the lands. In this way the cost to the British government was to be only the interest upon £100 for ten years, say £25 per family. The plan was warmly supported by the colonial office and the Irish administration; the latter stipulated that emigration should be from the Congested Districts, in entire families, and should lead to consolidation of holdings. But the treasury stipulated that the Canadian government, not the company, should be responsible for recovering advances from the settlers. This commitment the Dominion refused, fearing the obvious political pressure that enfranchised debtors could apply. Stafford Henry Northcote, who had married an adopted daughter of Stephen, threw his weight in vain into a letter on the subject to the Times, elaborating the virtues of the scheme, and saying that the Canadian government obviously <sup>^</sup>cannot undertake to collect the mortgage money from settlers, as a political agitation would infallibly arise to obtain from the Government a free gift of the settlement money, which settlers' industry is intended to repay, and which a commercial company can easily secure.<sup>2</sup>

Other schemes that involved a like colonial commitment met a like fate; in the last resort the 'colonies' were not willing to buy their immigrants at a heavy political price. If that difficulty, which in effect was a difficulty domiciled in the British treasury, could be overcome, there was clearly the germ of much hope for Irish emigration in some such large and frankly commercial under-

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., third session, 1890-1, append. I, Summary of evidence, p.45.

<sup>2</sup>Times, 4 August 1883.



taking as Mount Stephen's. The difficulty was not overcome, and moreover no other man of his quality came forward with a like proposal. The Commercial Colonisation Company of Manitoba preferred colonists of some substance, from Scotland, northern England or northern Ireland. The company's manager, J.A.W. Oliver, sounded the knell of small-scale commercial emigration from Ireland when he gave his opinion that the west and south of Ireland must be 'put aside as a commercial speculation'.<sup>1</sup>

A number of British societies or associations, quae longum est perscribere, promoted emigration, or, more often, colonisation; scarcely one had a headquarters or even a branch in Ireland. Such were the Emigrant Aid Society, the British and Colonial Emigration Fund, or Society, the Parliamentary Colonisation Committee, the Central Emigration Society, the Colonisation Board, the National Association for promoting state-aided Colonisation. These were **not** profit-making organizations. The history of some of them may be drawn upon later for illustration of policy and opinion in relation to emigration after 1870.

There were other philanthropic organizations, not at the <sup>out</sup> ~~onset~~ relying upon official backing, whose work in behalf of emigration, unlike that of the foregoing associations, was directed specifically to Ireland. Into this category falls the Dublin Emigrants' Protection Society set up, somewhat late in the day of the famine exodus, in 1851 by the society of St Vincent de Paul.<sup>2</sup> The volunteer workers who met daily in this cause cared for the moral and worldly

---

<sup>1</sup>Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, QQ.2156-7, 2157-8, 2226-32.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. an editorial article commending the project, Freeman's Journal, 7 April 1851.



welfare of the emigrants, and particularly of the young women emigrants, who thronged the city quays. The second report of this society showed that its work was carried on amongst protestants and catholics impartially,<sup>1</sup> and that a principal object was to combat the defrauding of emigrants by the various practices which disgraced Liverpool and New York particularly. To this end the society enlisted the help of clergy abroad. Perhaps the finest charity that the Emigrants' Protection Society exercised was in relieving those most helpless persons, poor emigrants who had received from their gullible friends in America fraudulent contract tickets which were dishonoured at the port of embarkation. The Nation, too, commended the society in the following year;<sup>2</sup> the report on the society's work from its establishment to the end of 1852 showed that it had given advice and protection to 980 applicants at its office in Northumberland Buildings, that the society was spending £100 a year and lacked public support.<sup>3</sup> This was an acquiescence in emigration, and not an advocacy; neither government nor church in Ireland ever crossed the line that separates those climates of opinion, and indeed the natural advocate of emigration has always been the zealous or opinionated individual, the entêté. It is a matter where example is significant; no government, no great corporation can emigrate. To pass forward again to the golden age of such advocacy, two philanthropist-organisers attempted, between 1880 and 1882, to settle poor Irish families from the west upon farms in

---

<sup>1</sup>Second report of the Emigrants' Protection Society... July, 1851, p.7 (R.I.A., Haliday pamphlets, 1851/2094.

<sup>2</sup>3 July 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Freeman's Journal, 28 January 1853. The Dublin collections appear to contain no Report of this society later than the second.



Minnesota; both failed. These were Fr Nugent, of Liverpool, and John Sweetman, a wealthy and benevolent Irishman. Nugent had the co-operation in Minnesota of bishop Ireland and the Catholic Colonisation Association, and took out about 300 penniless Irish settlers to a settlement near St Paul; but no more than five families stayed on the land. Sweetman had a like experience. Forming a small company which included Tuke, he bought land in Minnesota and tried to settle Irish families on it, but in two or three years like Nugent's settlers they had all succumbed to the tempting wages of the towns, and learned to fear the loneliness of the prairie. Thereafter Sweetman would take none but emigrants with £100.<sup>1</sup> Sweetman deserved a better reward for his pains. He took trouble in looking into the prospects of settlement, in Canada as well as the United States, himself;<sup>2</sup> the Nation chronicled the failure of his 'Irish-American Colonisation Co. Ltd'.<sup>3</sup>

The most successful of the philanthropic and non-commercial enterprises for aiding emigration from Ireland was certainly that of the Society of Friends and their member, James Hack Tuke. Briefly, Tuke and his committee aided, between the spring of 1882 and the summer of 1884, the emigration of nearly 10,000 persons from the west of Ireland to the United States and Canada, at a cost of nearly £58,000.<sup>4</sup> Two main reasons seem to have determined the success of the scheme; firstly, it was shrewdly organised by one whom even the enemies of emigration seemed

---

<sup>1</sup>Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, QQ.2575-9.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., Freeman's Journal, 6 July 1880.

<sup>3</sup>Nation, 10 February 1883.

<sup>4</sup>Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, Q.3530.



to like, and he had the backing of an old and trusted body, the Quakers of Ireland and England; secondly, the scheme received support from the Irish government. Here was that typical combination of self-help, voluntary organisation and, in moderation, official finance with which the British have been wont to face other problems of the kind.

James Hack Tuke was in the fourth generation of a York family of Quakers, all celebrated for philanthropy. As a young man, and later when far from young, he made two series of journies in Ireland, in the distressed times of 1846-7 and again 1880; and on the latter occasion, ~~in~~ a tour as well in Canada and the United States, in order to survey, in the principal countries of reception, the chances for emigrants.<sup>1</sup> He was a busy publicist of emigration, as well as an organiser; and articles from his pen in the Nineteenth Century<sup>2</sup> and other reviews kept the more seriously-minded part of the reading public informed, between 1880 and 1890, on the question of specifically Irish emigration at a time when public and parliamentary attention was veering towards the English aspects of the question. In 1880 Tuke spent some time in the west of Ireland, distributing relief from the Society of Friends in England; and then, meeting Sir John Macdonald and Galt in the autumn of that year, proceeded to North America, where he visited sundry areas of Irish settlement in Iowa, Minnesota and the province of Manitoba. This was the time when ambitious schemes of state-aided colonisation,

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf., Edward Fry, Life of James Hack Tuke.  
*op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup>E.g., Peasant proprietors at home (Aug., 1880); Irish emigration (Feb., 1881); With the emigrants (July, 1882). Cf., also, his pamphlet Irish distress and its remedies, 1880. This went into six editions.



such as Galt's, were breaking on the rocks of finance; but Tuke saw good prospects for a more modest influx of labour into Canada, which he regarded as a country more suitable for Irish settlement than the United States. The vision of an imperial emigration commission, British-financed, which from time to time mocked Macdonald and other Canadians, might never come down to earth; but Tuke perceived openings along the C.P.R. for family settlement: 'I believe that while there would be a natural and strong objection to the sudden importation without due notice into their midst of thousands of Irish labourers, the colonists would heartily welcome a limited number of families...'.<sup>1</sup>

Thereafter, Tuke took a great share in laying out the money collected by 'Mr. Tuke's Fund'. Its operations ceased in June, 1884,<sup>2</sup> not long after Tuke had written to Sydney C. Buxton, an honorary secretary of the fund: 'Emigration ...is opposed by one party and is merely a plaything of the Government on the other [sic], or left to amateurs to carry out.'<sup>3</sup> Tuke was not deterred by this from continuing his work in behalf of Irish distress. He collected subscriptions in 1886 wherewith to buy and distribute seed potatoes in Achill, and later in Donegal; besides serving for a time on the council of the Emigrants' Information Office, he joined the Congested Districts Board at its formation and remained a member until his death in 1896.

It is hard to find a disparaging reference to Tuke himself. A typical Irish attitude in 1883 was to distinguish

<sup>1</sup>J.H. Tuke, 'Irish emigration, in Nineteenth Century, ix.362 (Feb., 1881).

<sup>2</sup>Although there was still some money in hand; cf., Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, Q.2335 (Hodgkin).

<sup>3</sup>Quoted, Fry, op.cit., p.204. The end of the 'Tuke' emigration was heralded not only by this opposition, but by better times in Ireland and worse times in North America, Third report of the committee of 'Mr. Tuke's Fund'...July, 1884, private memorandum by Rathbone.



between the man and his work. Thus, the Cork Examiner<sup>1</sup> felt in duty bound to censure the duchess of Marlborough for handing over to Tuke's committee the balance of her relief fund, a sum of £3606;<sup>2</sup> but the editor said:

This feeling, it is right to say, is not directed against Mr. Tuke. That gentleman's excellent motives and judicious mode of operations have been fully appreciated. But few will deny that emigration has been rendered absolutely hateful by the conduct of the authorities which has so ostentatiously declared that they will offer no remedy for Irish distress save the banishment of the poor.

Similarly, various, and usually unsubstantiated, allegations in the house of commons about the methods of operation of Tuke's committee<sup>3</sup> never attacked Tuke himself. In the house of lords, if Dufferin in 1880 could point out some misapprehensions of Tuke on the subject of landlord's improvements in Donegal,<sup>4</sup> Tuke was warmly praised in a debate of 1883.<sup>5</sup> Among the Irish people at large, Tuke's co-religionists in the Society of Friends were well thought of. Their central relief committee, in being in Ireland from 1846 to 1865, had worked on an excellent maxim set out in their final report: 'It may be said that their landlords should assist them [the distressed peasantry]. This is true; and many landlords have done their duty in this respect...We cannot make all men do as they ought, but that is no valid excuse for our own neglect of duty.'<sup>6</sup> During the good years of the eighteen-fifties the society's relief work was dormant, but its watchful charity sprang to life in

<sup>1</sup>22 March 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., Emigration from Ireland, being the second report of the Committee of 'Mr. Tuke's Fund', July, 1883, append.D.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., Hansard, cclxxix.383-4 (10 May 1883), cclxxxvi.35-6 (17 March 1884), ccxcii.595-7 (12 August 1884).

<sup>4</sup>Richmond commission, Minutes of evidence, part I, 1880, QQ.25,417-8.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, cclxxviii.882 (23 April 1883).

<sup>6</sup>Final report of the central relief committee of the Society of Friends, p.25, Dublin, 1865 (R.I.A., Haliday tracts, 557/12).



an emergency such as that of 1863, when an appeal was addressed to Friends: 'three bad harvests in succession have greatly reduced the capital of the farmers in all parts of Ireland...Food is cheap...but many of the holders of small portions of land have been gradually reduced...to extreme destitution.'<sup>1</sup> This good work was remembered.

If Tuke's committee found one source of strength in popular approval, another lay in substantial government backing. The Tuke fund committee began its work on a private footing in April, 1882 under the presidency of the duke of Bedford.<sup>2</sup> Its first prospectus set forth the aims of helping to emigrate, from a defined area of deep poverty, those who were willing to go, and could find some of the cost. A desirable, often an unattainable contribution of £3 per head was later named, which was roughly the difference between the original government capitation grant of £5 and the average cost of emigration. The second report of the committee set out in more detail the principles on which their emigrants were selected; they were these:

1. That the Emigration should be 'family' as distinct from 'individual' emigration.
2. That no pressure of any sort should be put on the people to induce them to emigrate.
3. That where they could afford it, the emigrants should be asked to contribute something towards the cost.
4. That those only should be sent to the States who could produce recent letters from friends willing and anxious to receive them out there.
5. That the rest - where suitable - should be sent to Canada, either to the Government agents, or to the friends with whom the Committee were in communication; and who had most kindly undertaken to receive some of the emigrants.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., append. I, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Reports and papers relating to the proceedings of the committee of 'Mr. Tuke's Fund' for assisting emigration from Ireland, during the years 1882, 1883 and 1884, collected for the private use of the committee [1885].



6. That each family should be booked through to their destination; should receive a sum for landing money on arrival at the port; and should be supplied with proper clothing and outfit.<sup>1</sup>

Certain of the above 'principles of action' deserve comment. The committee found that family emigration raised the question of 'leaving the name on the land' which has been noticed earlier in the present thesis (p 51 ). The report of Buxton, a joint secretary, observes: 'An inclination was occasionally shown to leave one or two members of the family behind on the land - an old father or mother, a brother, or someone; an idea which had to be sternly resisted if any permanent good were to accrue to the country.'<sup>2</sup> The outfits and landing money of the Tuke emigrants were better than those of the average poor law emigrants,<sup>3</sup> and it was indeed objected that Tuke's scheme was more costly than those of the guardians.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the boast of the honorary secretaries, that 'neither in the States nor in Canada, have any of the emigrants sent out by the Committee gone to swell the ranks of the "pauper invasion" of which so much has been lately heard',<sup>5</sup> may have been a little hardy. Among the spate of North American complaints against pauper immigrants in 1883 was a letter from Toronto signed 'Irish Priest' which said: 'Among its paupers at the beginning of Winter, Toronto has a number of Irish enticed from home by the specious promises of the Tuke and other committees.'<sup>6</sup> Tuke had the misfortune to be sending out emigrants at a time when there was

---

<sup>1</sup>Emigration from Ireland, as above, p.4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.20.

<sup>3</sup>Cf., above, p 211, note 2.

<sup>4</sup>Cf., Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, QQ.2798-2812 (Ruttledge-Fair).

<sup>5</sup>Emigration from Ireland, as above, p.4.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted, Nation, 1 December 1883.



in fact much destitution in North America, in which some of the immigrants were quickly submerged; he was not necessarily promoting the emigration of paupers.

His committee had, however, undertaken an ambitious programme of work. It could scarcely be sustained upon subscriptions which were coming in, during 1832-3, at the rate of about eight or nine thousand pounds per annum. The committee's first report had included the hope that the government would see their way to making a grant, and under the Arrears of Rent (Ireland) Act of 1832 this came to pass. Of the £100,000 allotted under the act for the help of emigration, more than a quarter was placed at the disposal of Tuke's committee,<sup>1</sup> which was requested by the viceroy to take charge of the aided emigration from twenty electoral divisions in all, distributed throughout the unions of Belmullet, Clifden, Newport and Oughterard.<sup>2</sup> Some of these divisions were too poor to borrow, and in such cases the Tuke committee was asked to supplement the £5 grant per head allowed by the act. To these areas were later added Swineford union, co. Mayo, and the island of Arranmore, co. Donegal,<sup>3</sup> so that Tuke and his helpers were operating over a scattered area with some of the worst communications in Ireland.<sup>4</sup> As Tuke himself wrote (July, 1833):

The amount of detail in connection with the Emigration work can hardly be estimated, and caused a strain and perpetual tension of mind and body only made possible by the sense of the benefit which was conferred on these poor people, and which they so evidently felt and constantly acknowledged.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Emigration from Ireland, as above, p.3.

<sup>2</sup>Report, dated 18th November, 1832, made by the Local Government Board, as above.

<sup>3</sup>Third report of the committee of 'Mr. Tuke's Fund'... July, 1834, pp.4,11.

<sup>4</sup>At this time there was neither railway nor telegraph within forty miles of Belmullet.

<sup>5</sup>Emigration from Ireland, as above, p.12.



This was, in the physical sense alone, no small achievement for a man of Tuke's age.

Tuke was thus, thanks to official backing, able to implement, for a considerable sample of the western population, the theory of emigration, as a major though not exclusive form of relief, that he had advocated for some time. The selected districts were placarded, and the resulting applicants for emigration carefully sifted, often with the help of an interpreter. As the lists were made up, they must be carefully checked for criminals and debtors. Poverty alone was no bar to emigration,<sup>1</sup> otherwise, in those destitute districts, there would have been little emigration indeed. Working separately from the boards of guardians and yet through agents with local knowledge,<sup>2</sup> Tuke escaped entanglement in the petty intrigue which led him to the strong opinion that no local authority could be trusted to distribute money without peculation.<sup>3</sup> A principle of age-distribution was adopted in choosing emigrants which cut across the vicious concentration on the young adult so characteristic of self-selecting emigration. Family emigration was aimed at, not in the sense of excluding unmarried adults,<sup>4</sup> but of making up little groups who could face life in North America as a unit. Thus Buxton, in his report of 1883, wrote:

It would be useless, and worse than useless, to send away a long weak family, depending solely on the health and strength of one man. It was necessary, therefore, as a rule, to accept those families only in which the workers more than outnumbered the non-workers.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, QQ.2454-59 (Ruttledge-Fair).

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, QQ.2569-2609 (Ruttledge-Fair).

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, second session, 1890, QQ.3437, 3446, 3502, 3526, 3550, 3617 (Tuke).

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, Q.3480 (Tuke).

<sup>5</sup>Emigration from Ireland, as above, p.21.



In the upshot, the 9,482 souls whom the committee sent overseas included about 1500 families.<sup>1</sup> No other feature of Tuke's work was so likely to recommend him to the support of the government. It was a principal point, too, of his plan that there should be supervision both at the <sup>re</sup> sending and at the receiving end. This was possibly more necessary in the United States, over some ninety districts of which 70% of the Tuke emigration was distributed, than in Ontario and the North-West Territory, which received most of the remainder.<sup>2</sup> Here, the Dominion's emigration agents could be relied upon to help; indeed, in 1883 all the emigrants who could not prove sponsorship by friends or relatives in the United States were sent, often against their will, to Canada. The statement of the joint secretaries on the 1882 emigration said that, while the emigrants to Canada were met by agents of the Canadian government, 'others were looked after on arrival by gentlemen in Boston and Philadelphia'.<sup>3</sup> In 1883, the services of a priest were secured for receiving parties of emigrants in Minnesota.<sup>4</sup> Tuke held this after-care to be an essential part of successful emigration, and at the end of the 1883 season the committee sent Rutledge-Fair and Hodgkin to the United States and Canada to see that all was well.

As a result of his committee's labours, Tuke was able to claim a decided improvement in some of the most miserable parts of what, later, were officially the Congested

<sup>1</sup>Fry, op.cit., p.207.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 221 Only were sent to Australia.

<sup>3</sup>Reports and papers relating to the proceedings of the committee of 'Mr. Tuke's Fund', as above, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup>Emigration from Ireland, as above, p.13.



Districts.<sup>1</sup> In his report of June, 1883 Rutledge-Fair stated that in his district, Belmullet and part of Newport, the emigration had in 273 out of 293 cases led to consolidation of holdings, since only twenty new tenants had come in as purchasers.<sup>2</sup> None the less he had to admit some years later that he doubted if there had been a resultant reduction in the Belmullet poor-rates;<sup>3</sup> and Belmullet long remained a 'congested' area.<sup>4</sup>

Tuke's work took many out of poverty, although it transferred some from poverty in Ireland to poverty in North America; their cases will recur. The most significant point in his scheme is that it was cut short, probably by the mounting resistance to which Tuke himself referred, in some quarters, upon the brink of much larger achievement. It was Tuke's claim that, on the lines he had traced out, 20,000 persons per year could be helped to emigrate at a cost of £7.10s each,<sup>5</sup> and there is little reason to doubt him, since, in the event, his committee did move a lesser number of people at rather less cost per head. This cost, Tuke held, was irrecoverable, and it was idle to suppose otherwise; but 'colonisation' would cost four times as much<sup>6</sup> (probably a very conservative estimate), and costliest of all was to consign these families, permanently and hopelessly, to the poorhouse.

Tuke, then, brought the government in Ireland very near to the perilous frontier of a sustained emigration policy. But as early as 1881 he wrote: 'I cannot but see that any

<sup>1</sup>Cf., Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, QQ.3454, 3534, 3572, 3614.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration from Ireland, as above, p.31.

<sup>3</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, QQ.2610-15.

<sup>4</sup>Cf., Freeman, op.cit., fig.81.

<sup>5</sup>Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, Q.3529 (Tuke).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., QQ.3532, 3539 (Tuke).



Government emigration scheme at present for Ireland would meet with hot opposition',<sup>1</sup> and the opposition might by no means have been confined to the ranks of the government's opponents. After 1884, he therefore wisely refrained from pressing emigration in season and out, and turned rather to expedients that he regarded as ancillary but not negligible in the assault upon Irish poverty. These he had outlined in his report of 1883:

...Emigration is not the only remedial measure required... It is more than 'a palliative' as it is often called; it is a remedy but not the only one needed, and...some means other than the workhouse or outdoor relief, ought, in my opinion, at once to be carefully considered for the relief of the small holders of land in these Western Unions...I cannot help again advocating as I have done previously in various ways, the importance from every point of view of piercing these districts, now forty, fifty, or sixty miles distant from the railway, with light narrow gauge railways or steam tramways.<sup>2</sup>

On these and other matters subsequently taken up by the Congested Districts Board Tuke, who from 1887 was in touch with Balfour, was thus in some degree a formulant of Balfour's policy for the congested districts, as the Tuke committee was a formulant of current emigration policy, such as it was. The committee remained in being, and in 1889 Balfour stated that it had his backing and an unexpended balance of £18,000.<sup>3</sup>

. . . . .

It is very doubtful whether emigration promoted by landlords as part of a policy of estate clearance falls to be considered in the category of individual philanthropy or of a thoroughly commercial undertaking. A scale of motives, including either extreme, was probably represented even in

---

<sup>1</sup>J.H. Tuke, 'Irish emigration' in Nineteenth Century, ix.370 (Feb. 1881). His final report called for a permanent board of emigration, with staffs both in Ireland and America, Third report of the committee of 'Mr. Tuke's Fund...July, 1884, p.18.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration from Ireland, as above, p.10.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, cccxxxiii.1379 (11 March 1889).



the small collection of instances after 1850 which has come to light. The great days of this process occurred before and during the famine; they attracted much, perhaps too much obloquy, and have been very fully expounded by Oliver MacDonagh.<sup>1</sup> He notices the sharp decline in landlord assisted emigration from 1850. Death and emigration had by that time thinned out in many areas the small or tiny holdings to a point whereat they tended to stabilize for some years to come, and the embarrassments of landlords were to that extent reduced. Reference has already been made to the free emigration that Trench persuaded Lord Lansdowne to offer to everyone on his Kenmare properties who was on relief and chargeable to the estate.<sup>2</sup> Trench made the same discovery as, later, Hack Tuke, namely that a free passage, a 'small sum' per head for outfit and a 'few shillings on landing' compared very well, in point of expense, with even one year's maintenance in the workhouse; but Trench's enterprises for his successive employers, Lord Lansdowne in Kerry, Lord Bath in Monaghan and Lord Digby in King's County, between 1851 and 1867, had possibly to show a profit in a sense that Tuke's had not. Trench is suitably vague as to what precisely this commitment amounted to on any given estate. In one of the somewhat stylized anecdotes in his book, he mentions, as Lord Bath's idea of how the emigration should be assisted, 'a free passage to any port in America..., a respectable outfit, and a sovereign in his hand on landing.'<sup>3</sup> This may have been a visionary arrangement; elsewhere, Trench states that from 1857 to 1867, £589 was spent on emigration from Lord

---

<sup>1</sup>Irish emigration during the great famine, 1845-52, pp. 186-221 (unpublished dissertation, 1946, University College, Dublin).

<sup>2</sup>Trench, *op.cit.*, p.124.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p.297.



Digby's estate.<sup>1</sup>

To turn to a more precise informant, there is in Buchanan's annual reports no indication whatsoever of 'sovereigns' in the hands of any landlord-assisted immigrants reaching Quebec up to 1861. For the years 1852 through 1861, the reports record 1225 persons sent out from Ireland by private individuals; in each year it is implied, or specifically stated that these immigrants received nothing more than a free passage.<sup>2</sup> In the same period, between six and seven times as many emigrants were sent by the Irish poor law unions, and these received in landing money, paid either in Ireland or through Buchanan's hands, a sum which appeared to average rather less than £1 per head. The figures of assisted emigrants, of all descriptions, entering Canada from Ireland decline throughout the decade from the highest total, of 5,971, for 1851.<sup>3</sup> Buchanan's complaints (as in that year and 1852) that assisted emigrants arrived too late in the season to get good employment tend to become less frequent.

Among the landlords promoting emigration, Buchanan recorded: \*

shipping from New Ross:.....	Earl Fitzwilliam (1852, 1855).
" " Waterford:.....	Lord Ormond (1852).
" " Cork:.....	Lord Lansdowne (1852-3), Lord Erskine (1853).
" " Limerick:.....	Lord Ashton (1852), 'landlords' (1853).

Forty emigrants were recorded from Palmerston's Sligo estates in 1860, and a further eighteen, 'an eligible class of immigrants', in 1862.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.330.

<sup>2</sup>A.C. Buchanan, Annual reports, 1852-61: Papers relative to the emigration to the North American colonies, [1650], H.C.1852-3, lxviii; [1763], H.C.1854, xlvi. Copies or extracts of despatches relative to emigration to the North American colonies, H.C.1854-5 (464), xxxix; H.C.1857 (14 - sess.1), x; H.C.1857 (125 - sess.2), xxviii; H.C.1857-8 (165), xli; H.C. 1859 (218 - sess.2), xxii; H.C.1860 (606), xliv; H.C.1861 (186), xl; H.C.1862 (355), xxxvi.

<sup>3</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 12th General report, 1852, p.48.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 23rd General report, 1863, p.35.



Earl Fitzwilliam's second shipment was said to have landed 'destitute of means'.<sup>1</sup> The totals of privately assisted emigration to Canada fall off sharply after 1853; there was apparently none at all in 1854, 1856-7, 1859+~~60~~.

Contemporary Irish comment on this process was extraordinarily restrained, if it be read in the light of the outcry, a generation later, against extermination; or even by comparison with some aspects of the newspaper press in the early eighteen-fifties on the subject of Irish emigration in general. Two Limerick newspapers record the shipment of emigrants from the estate of Lord Ashtown [sic] without comment.<sup>2</sup> The Nation, in an article on 'Landlordism in the wilds of Donegal', showed a rather surprising tendency to bless the work: 'the people are ready, and even anxious, to emigrate, in a body, from the scene of their miseries if the landlords or the government will only supply the necessary means.'<sup>3</sup> A possibly typical landlord attitude to the question appeared in a published letter by the earl of Stradbroke ('an extensive landed proprietor in the south'). He was discussing poor law emigration, and wrote: 'the object to be attained is to have gradually two distinct classes - the farmer and the labourer; this last, with ~~the~~ regular employment from a farmer, will become more content and better off than by cultivating a few wretched acres, generally set at a high rent.'<sup>4</sup> This was a consummation very long delayed. The Irishman's attachment to his 'few wretched acres' has already been discussed.

---

<sup>1</sup>Copies...of despatches, as above, append.6, p.23, H.C. 1857 (14 - sess.1), x.

<sup>2</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 3 November 1852; Limerick Reporter, quoted Dublin Evening Post, 19 August 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Nation, 4 July 1857.

<sup>4</sup>Dublin Evening Mail, 6 May 1857.



The clearance, by emigration, of the crown estates of Kingwilliamstown, Ballykilcline, Boughill, Kilconcouse and Irvilloughter (aliter Irvilloughtra) had, like so many other estate clearances, progressed before 1851, was probably complete not later than 1855, and involved at most a total of 700 or 800 emigrants from the five estates.<sup>1</sup> The projected removal to New York of 195 destitute persons, the population of the Irvilloughter and Boughill estates, was described as 'voluntary migration at the expense of the Crown', and was estimated to cost about £1,200 for passages, clothing and other necessaries.<sup>2</sup> The total of Irish emigration in the period promoted by agencies that can in any interpretation be called philanthropic was extremely insignificant in relation to the host that year after year made their own way to the ships, and, unfortified by free passages, their own terms with purveyors of transport whose outlook was firmly commercial.

(c) The commercial adjuncts of the emigration process, alone among all the accessories of emigration, were those without which emigration itself could not have been. Guide-books, philanthropists and statutes, even subsuming under these the invaluable structure of the passengers' acts and the Emigration Commission, rather smoothed the way for Irish emigration than promoted much emigration, that, without them, would never have taken place; on the other hand, not one emigrant of the four millions with whom we

---

<sup>1</sup>For this information I am indebted to Mrs Ellis, of Sandyford, co. Dublin, who has worked on the question.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Griffith, office of public works, Dublin, to the hon. Chas. Gore, office of works, London, 7 August 1854 (P.R.O.I., valuation office letter books, 2A - 26 - 79A).



are concerned could leave Ireland without taking ship.

To the men and women of earlier generations and of the emigrant class, the journey from any point in Ireland to a port was of small account, always given the major decision to cross the Atlantic. Nobody within thirty or forty miles of the chosen port of embarkation need then be at a loss who had the use of his legs and of his own cart, or a neighbour's. In 1851 the passengers' act committee heard how the emigrants generally arrived at the ships 'in their own carts', or were helped by friends;<sup>1</sup> the streams of passengers who made for Cork found the butter carts useful.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to assess the contribution of the Irish railways to the emigration process; in a country wherein many closely-settled areas still lack public transport of any kind,<sup>3</sup> it could scarcely have been of the first importance. There is a striking coincidence between the maps in Freeman's Ireland showing respectively the 'congested' districts (fig.19, p.127), and the major areas which were, and are, more than ten miles from a railway station (fig. 47, p.245). There is a further resemblance between these and my map (append.II, fig.10) showing the western and north-western belt of low emigration intensity. It cannot, however, be therefore argued that good rail communications would have quickened emigration among those of whom so many lacked an ocean fare, if not also a train fare. Some of the seasonal migrant labourers from the west used the railways; a newspaper of 1860 refers to hundreds of 'labouring boys' who reached Dublin by train from the south and west

---

<sup>1</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.4461.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Q.6468.

<sup>3</sup>Freeman, op.cit., p.239.



of Ireland on their way to the English harvest, to return in due course on the 'pig-packets'.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the men of Donegal walked into Derry to take the steamer to Scotland.<sup>2</sup>

Canals were probably of little consequence for passenger traffic after 1850;<sup>3</sup> the Bianconi cars were an important adjunct of transport even after the railway age began, and new car routes were opened as late as the decade 1855-65;<sup>4</sup> but it is always the railways, if anything, that appear in incidental references to the internal transport of the prospective emigrant.<sup>5</sup> The years 1851 to 1855 saw Dublin linked with Belfast, Cork and Galway by the trunk lines,<sup>5</sup> and already in 1851 the railways were widespread enough for O'Hanlon's Guide to recommend them as the means of reaching Liverpool for those in the interior of Ireland.<sup>6</sup> The Tuam Herald<sup>7</sup> wrote: 'Every day we see whole families passing through this town in carts and other vehicles, to join the railway at Athenry.' A few years later, the Times<sup>8</sup> appeared to see in the Irish railways a major extrusive force:

It is the railway system, which, in the eyes of every Irishman, appears to have one common terminus across the Atlantic. He sees trains of hopeful, if not happy, faces going off to the Land of Promise...A train starts to catch an emigrant-vessel as regularly as in England to catch a steamer across the Channel. The emigrant ships have no longer to peep into every little port to pick up their passengers. They assemble at Cork, and pass in a continuous stream...

---

<sup>1</sup>Dublin Evening Mail, quoted Cork Constitution, 22 June 1860.

<sup>2</sup>W. Neilson Hancock, 'On the equal importance of... education, poor-law' etc., in Stat.Soc.Ire.Jn., viii.52 (Apr., 1880).

<sup>3</sup>But a canal steamer, from Athlone to Killaloe, was advertised in 1863, Freeman's Journal, March 23-31.

<sup>4</sup>Freeman, op.cit., fig.46, p.241.

<sup>5</sup>Cf., J.C. Conroy, A history of railways in Ireland.

<sup>6</sup>J. O'Hanlon, The Irish emigrant's guide, as above, p.34.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted Londonderry Standard, 24 February 1853.

<sup>8</sup>Quoted Cork Examiner, 7 May 1860.



Cork was establishing, in 1860, the primacy which, with its later satellite Queenstown, the city enjoyed among the Irish ports,<sup>1</sup> and it was to Cork that many emigrants took train, sometimes from very long distances. A local newspaper observed, in the spring of 1860, that the current emigration seemed heavier than for several years past (which was correct, as regards embarkations at Cork for North America<sup>2</sup>); and railway officials said these passengers had mostly come from the north of Ireland, and very few were picked up en route.<sup>3</sup> The reason, no doubt, was that Cork or Queenstown had regular direct sailings to New York and Boston; Belfast and Londonderry had not. Even Galway, in spite of its fine anchorage and the intermittent attempts to make it a thriving Atlantic terminus, saw its sons take land transport to other ports: 'Every morning at 10 o'clock we have a convoy from the country to Bianconi's car, accompanying some fine young fellows going to take shipping at Limerick or Cork...A similar scene [of tearful parting] occurs every day at the departure of the Dublin train at 4 o'clock.'<sup>4</sup> When, in the same year, the Galway steamship line was re-opened, the Ulster railway brought passengers to it from the north of Ireland.<sup>5</sup> From the south-west, emigrants caught early trains:

Every other night a wailing cry passes over the roads of the country from the friends of emigrants conveying them to the different railway stations, and lamenting their departure...It is melancholy to hear this mournful lament before daybreak in the silent country...<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>See append. II, table 11 for the Irish ports in order of traffic, 1851-1901.

<sup>2</sup>See Emigration Commission, General reports.

<sup>3</sup>Cork Constitution, 10 April 1860.

<sup>4</sup>Galway Vindicator, 25 April 1863. The newspaper admitted that more emigrants left Galway by rail than by sea.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 2 September 1863.

<sup>6</sup>Munster News, quoted Nation, 9 May 1863.



Occasionally, an extension of the railway brought a new out-port into operation, as when a cross-channel steamer from Greenore to Holyhead was advertised, following the completion of the line from Dundalk.<sup>1</sup>

. . . . .

The prospective Irish emigrant who had made his decision to go became ipso facto a unit in possibly the most elaborate and lucrative commercial process that operated in Ireland in the nineteenth century, the emigrant shipping trade, whose finance awaits its historian. The contribution of emigrants to the railway receipts in the island was in the aggregate necessarily paltry compared with the huge sums which reached the owners or charterers of emigrant ships and, later, the great transatlantic shipping lines. Other commercial beneficiaries of the emigration process were the passage brokers or agents of every degree, and the newspapers in which ship advertisements took a prominent place.

These advertisements were the emigrant's guide, not to the wider implications of his enterprise, in the manner of the guide-books to be discussed shortly, but to the immediate problem of his sea transport. The Irish press, in its greater and lesser organs, was well laden with such information throughout the half-century. It was a minority of newspapers in which emigration news and ship advertising were alike scanty; such, during the eighteen-fifties, were the Dublin Evening Mail, Saunders's News-Letter, the Southern Reporter, the Limerick Reporter, the Newry Examiner. Some newspapers which, early in the period, deprecated emigration on principle nevertheless published

---

<sup>1</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 1 January 1874.



ship advertisements, like the Nation and the Londonderry Standard. Later, in the decade 1880-90, some small-town newspapers in areas from which there was considerable emigration had little news of the subject but fairly frequent ship advertisements: the Drogheda Argus, Roscommon Journal, Tipperary Advocate and Tyrone Constitution are examples. The abolition of the advertisement duty in 1853 helped the small advertiser to publish those minutely detailed accounts of this or that emigrant ship which are among the curiosities of emigration literature.

In the early days, before the growth of a year-long transatlantic steamer service, emigration, and hence the advertisements aimed at emigrants, were largely seasonal matters concentrated on the spring. In 1853 the ship-advertisements in the Belfast News-Letter were already diminishing in April. In 1857 the Cork Constitution had only one Atlantic line advertising at the end of December. At the end of 1853, the Londonderry Standard, which had fairly plentiful Atlantic advertisements from March to June, sought ocean passengers only for Australia and for Tapscott's New York packets. Even in 1852, a year of 190,000 emigrants, the Nation's ship advertisements dwindled in December;<sup>1</sup> by 1871 the same newspaper had much the same amount of advertising in December as in March. In 1852, again, what was apparently the last ship from Cork to New York was advertised to sail on October 5.<sup>2</sup> The Freeman's Journal during the eighteen-fifties

---

<sup>1</sup>Although in that year a newspaper could say: Old, middle-aged and young are on the move...Before this period of the year, until the present, all idea of leaving for America was deferred until 'spring returned again'. The season for emigration closed at the beginning of our harvest, and the people never thought of facing the wintry blast...but now spring, summer and autumn are alike.... Clare Journal, quoted Nation, 2 October 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 29 September 1852.



carried few ship advertisements of any kind later in the year than July; pleasure trips and some announcements for Australia were among the exceptions.

The arrival of ships in the St Lawrence was of course dependent upon the duration of the river's freezing, and the first ships from Ireland for Quebec were generally advertised in March,<sup>1</sup> to sail early in April. The opening of the railway from Portland to Montreal in 1853 offered a winter approach to eastern Canada, which the New Brunswick shippers, with a steamer service from St John to Portland, were quick to point out,<sup>2</sup> but from Quebec Buchanan's uniform advice to the ordinary immigrant was to arrive in spring or early summer. Even to the ice-free coast of the United States, winter sailings, before the days of the great steamship lines, were few; and the growth of the regular steamer services themselves made very little difference to the established pattern of seasonal emigration from Ireland. From 1876, when figures of the monthly embarkations at Irish ports become available, until 1901, April was the month of most embarkations in fifteen years, and May in eleven years.<sup>3</sup> The month of second highest emigration was always the alternate of these two except in 1898, when, owing to very low emigration in May, it was September. There was a well-marked tendency throughout these years towards <sup>a</sup>second and much smaller peak of emigration in August and/or September; but spring remained firmly the favourite season of departure, and

---

<sup>1</sup>E.g., Londonderry Standard, 24 March 1853; Limerick Chronicle, 10 March 1863; Belfast News-Letter, 2 March 1853.

<sup>2</sup>Report of M.H. Perley, in Papers relative to the emigration to the North American colonies, [1763], H.C. 1854, xlv.

<sup>3</sup>Emigration statistics of Ireland, 1876-1901.



1883, the year of highest emigration since 1864, merely prolonged the period of greatest embarkation from April into June.

A perusal, or for the illiterate a discussion, of the shipping news and advertisements was clearly an important element in the emigration process for many; otherwise the Irish press would have lacked some of the substantial revenue which must have accrued from advertisers. For other emigrants, however, the way on board a ship was made easy by consultation with one of the many out-agents of Irish brokerage firms or of the big Liverpool offices. These agents were widely scattered in Ireland; they were often shopkeepers in village or small town, as some of their successors today. They appear to have been most numerous in the south and south-west, that is to say in the areas of most intensive emigration. In 1852 Ryan Bros. & Co., of Limerick, who handled much traffic for Quebec and New York, had out-agents at Ennis, Kilrush, Tarbert, Corofin, Kilfinnan, Cloughjordan and Nenagh.<sup>1</sup> Some years later, the same firm appeared to have one associate in Limerick itself, and agents at Bruff, Charleville, Glin and Tarbert.<sup>2</sup> Daniel Shea, of Killarney and Tralee, advertised his appointment as agent for one Atlantic and one Australian line.<sup>3</sup> He was possibly the same man that, a few years later, was proceeded against at Killarney 'for having acted as emigration runner, without being licenced and for not wearing a badge.'<sup>4</sup> The confusion of function

---

<sup>1</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 14 April 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 23 September 1863.

<sup>3</sup>Cork Examiner, 2 July 1860.

<sup>4</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 7 July 1863.



would not be difficult in a zealous agent. Since in no construction was Killarney a seaport nor within five miles thereof, his case was dismissed. In 1871 the National line had agents in Cork, Queenstown, Mitchelstown and Skibbereen.<sup>1</sup> Jas. M. Murphy advertised the 'Carrick on Suir Emigration Office' in 1873.<sup>2</sup> Some years later, the leading Atlantic lines were well represented in the south. The Allan Line had six agents in Cork and Queenstown, two in Tralee, and others in Listowel, Mitchelstown, Bandon and Mallow. The Inman Line besides numerous agents in Cork had others at Youghal, Middleton, Killorglin and Glin. There were White Star agents in Cork, Newcastle West, Sneem, Killorglin, Killarney, Dingle, Charleville, Fermoy, Kiskeam, Clonakilty, Lismore, Mitchelstown, Mallow, Macroon, Youghal, and agents of the American and National Lines in ten or a dozen small places apiece, apart from Cork.<sup>3</sup> The indication is that although one out-agent might represent more than one line, there was not much overlapping of this kind; and the possibility of four distinct ticket-agents in a township such as Mallow suggests four unofficial but industrious propagandists of emigration. In 1885, the American Line had agents at Waterford, Clonmel, Dungarvan and two in Carrick-on-Suir.<sup>4</sup>

Though perhaps less numerous than in the south, similar agencies were not wanting in the west and middle west. In 1863 Sabel and Searle's had agents in Galway, Ballinasloe, Loughrea and Tuam.<sup>5</sup> In 1880 the American,

<sup>1</sup>Cork Constitution, 3 January 1871.

<sup>2</sup>Waterford Mail, June 21.

<sup>3</sup>Cork Examiner, 1883: January, passim; June 30.

<sup>4</sup>Waterford Daily Mail, 31 March 1885.

<sup>5</sup>Galway Vindicator, 23-31 May 1863.



National and White Star lines were between them represented in Roscommon, Castlerea, Elphin, Stokestown, Boyle and Creggs. Passengers were 'advised to secure their passages from Local agents before leaving home'. 'Michael Carney, Draper, Grocer, etc., Elphin' was agent for all three lines.<sup>1</sup> Some years later, the Allan Line had agents in Galway, Athenry, Oughterard and Clifden.<sup>2</sup> In the north, in 1863 passengers by the Cunard were directed to apply to McCarter of Derry 'and the several agents appointed by them for Country Towns.'<sup>3</sup> The White Star advertised agents in Newtownards, Ballymena, Lurgan, Maghera, Portglenone, Larne and Portadown; and the Guion Line,<sup>4</sup> in Londonderry, Strabane, Downpatrick, Ballymena, Newry, Rathfriland and Castlewellan.<sup>5</sup> In 1890 the American Line had agents in Omagh, Strabane, Gortin, Castlederg, Fintona, Fivemiletown, Pomeroy, Dungannon, Aughmacloy, Plumbridge and Dromore;<sup>6</sup> and a few years later at Cookstown (a firm of tailors), Maghera, Portglenone, Killyleagh, Kilrea and Newry, and these although the line did not call at an Irish port.<sup>7</sup> The eastern side of Ireland was significantly less provided with out-agents than the rest of the country; but the geographical spread of these important 'front-men' is very striking. Very little evidence of dishonesty, amongst out-agents specif-

---

<sup>1</sup>Roscommon Journal, 3 January 1880.

<sup>2</sup>Galway Vindicator, March 1887, passim.

<sup>3</sup>Londonderry Standard, 4 July 1863.

<sup>4</sup>In 1863 this line had agents in thirteen towns besides Dublin, Nation, January-June 1863, passim.

<sup>5</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 24 March, 1 January 1874.

<sup>6</sup>Tyrone Constitution, 3 January 1890.

<sup>7</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 19 January 1895.



ically, comes to light. Friend gave evidence in 1851 of persons who sold passages merely to Liverpool, without ensuring that the passenger then had the money to proceed,<sup>1</sup> and Marshall thought that in consequence all bookings should be through to destination;<sup>2</sup> but surely this was the emigrant's responsibility. An 'emigration broker' was convicted at Liverpool of buying tickets from one of the packet companies at sixteen guineas, to resell them at eighteen guineas; which led the magistrate to observe 'there was a great deal of knavery carried on against emigrants'.<sup>3</sup>

In the larger Irish ports themselves, the passage-brokers were very numerous. Belfast had at least six in 1853, seven in 1862.<sup>4</sup> Londonderry had ten advertising in the former year.<sup>5</sup> In Dublin, at least ten agencies advertised in 1852;<sup>6</sup> in 1871, five Dublin agents were named for the Allan Line, three of them on Eden Quay, apparently next door to one another.<sup>7</sup> In Limerick, five agents advertised in 1857,<sup>8</sup> three in 1863.<sup>9</sup> Of these, one firm, Spaight's, advertised flaxseed also, a useful American cargo to handle in conjunction with the emigrant trade. Cork, or Cork-Queenstown, probably had the most numerous agencies of all, some of them already referred to. Against a background of changing names among their competitors, several of the agencies attained considerable solid-

---

<sup>1</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.4454.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., QQ. 4010-17.

<sup>3</sup>Southern Reporter, 17 March 1857.

<sup>4</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 1853, 1862, passim.

<sup>5</sup>Londonderry Standard, 1853, passim.

<sup>6</sup>Nation, 1852, passim.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., March, 1871, passim.

<sup>8</sup>Limerick Reporter, January-May, 1857, passim.

<sup>9</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 1863, passim.



ity: Charley & Malcolm, of Belfast; Ryan, of Limerick; and in Dublin, Henry L. Allen, Cornelius Carleton and James Miley, who had a fairly steady supply of emigrant crown witnesses from the Castle in the eighteen-fifties.

It may next be convenient to review, in a more compendious fashion than was possible for the successive generations of emigrants, the types of transport in which these brokers and their successors dealt. As with some other aspects of the emigration process, the colour and diversity of the subject seem to lie more manifestly in the remoter years of its history. With the growth of the great steamship lines, traversing the Atlantic with all the assurance, and more than the punctuality, of a contemporary Irish railway train, the individual, picturesque and occasionally mendacious announcements of the earlier passage-brokers subside into the prosaic timetables of the modern rond-de-cuir. It is the transition from the individual enterprise of shipowners to highly organised agencies. The evolution of the Atlantic passenger trade was a process of considerable intricacy, reaching far behind the terminus a quo of the present thesis; its outlines in the period of review may be attempted here.<sup>1</sup> Evidence before the select committee of 1851 and 1854 illustrated well the casual evolution, in the history of United Kingdom shipping, of the emigrant ship from the cargo boat, compared with the purposeful development of specifically passenger ships by the great New England designers. The year 1851 fell very near the end of a generation's leadership, though not monopoly, of the

---

<sup>1</sup>For the subject in the earlier nineteenth century, see W.F. Adams, ~~op.cit.~~ Ireland and the Irish emigration to the new world, from 1815 to the famine.



Atlantic passenger trade by such vessels or by American ships that, but for the emigrants, must return in ballast after unloading in Europe their timber, cotton, tobacco or flaxseed. In the 1851 committee, Bunch, the British vice-consul at New York, spoke of the difference between American ships built for the emigrant trade and English ships going out for timber and taking emigrants; he thought three-quarters of the immigrants at that time came in American ships.<sup>1</sup> Besnard<sup>2</sup> and Friend<sup>3</sup> described the boats coming into Cork with timber, generally small, that is below 600 tons; and about thirty boats, of only half that size, belonging to the port. This helps to explain the general praise, in the committee, of the American vessels in point of size,<sup>4</sup> dietary (though the meat was often bad),<sup>5</sup> sanitation<sup>6</sup> and the better standard (compared with the British) in their captains, said to be mostly part-owners, crews and discipline.<sup>7</sup> 'An English ship' as E.A. Smith ruefully remarked 'would stand a chance of being severely looked at there';<sup>8</sup> there was perhaps some consolation in Lean's statement, before a later committee, that American-built ships, owing to their timber, were usually defective in five or six years, and useless beyond ten.<sup>9</sup>

However that might be, no Cork-owned boat of 300 tons, nor any Irish or English vessel like it, could compete in

<sup>1</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ.565-7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Q.6649.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., QQ 4372-3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Q.30 (Murdoch).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., QQ.2018-24.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., QQ. 6894-6913.

<sup>7</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ.2384(Prior), 248-51 (Bunch), 3331-5.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., Q.5915.

<sup>9</sup>Emigrant ships committee, First report, 1854, QQ 1888-90.



amenities with the 'magnificent' United States craft, carrying 'their bed-places as permanent structures',<sup>1</sup> that were described to the 1854 committee. It is small wonder that there was eulogy, in unofficial quarters also, of American ships and captains in the early eighteenth-fifties. An Irish advertisement of the Bowman, Grinnell line included the advice: 'the advantages which Emigrants derive by sailing from Liverpool on board American Ships are the cheapest rates of passage, the greater speed and safety [Americans were at this time in high repute for navigation] ...and the better health in which they land.'<sup>2</sup> The last statement was controverted two years later in the house of commons, when the colonial under-secretary, while admitting that two-thirds of the emigrants to Canada and the United States 'were taken out by American vessels', claimed that these had a mortality on the voyage of 8% among their passengers, compared with 1% in British ships.<sup>3</sup> Peyton's Emigrant's friend recommended, in 1853, American ships rather than British, 'from the character given by emigrants at the other side of the humanity, kind feeling and attention of the American Captains'.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the truth concerning these somewhat unexpected attributes<sup>5</sup> in contemporary ships' masters under the United States flag, it is clear enough that American shipowners grasped, and much more quickly than their British rivals, the possibilities inherent in the Atlantic migration.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., QQ.176-7.

<sup>2</sup>Newry Examiner, 19 June 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, cxxxi.223 (2 March 1854).

<sup>4</sup>A.J. Peyton, *op.cit.*, p.10.

<sup>5</sup>Cf., Basil Lubbock, 'The mercantile marine', in G.M. Young (ed.), Early Victorian England, 1830-65, i.405: 'American masters were highly educated men of good social position, whilst British officers, except in the first-class passenger trade, were ill-educated bears', etc.



The fast and famous American packets of Marshall's Black Ball Line<sup>1</sup> specialised, in the earlier nineteenth century, as transatlantic carriers of news, cabin passengers and fine freight. From 1840 they felt the competition of steam, as their better class traffic began to leave them for this dernier cri; until the mid-fifties they could count on a revenue from the emigrant trade, and this is the phase of the American packet-ship's history to which the foregoing instances refer. At length even the steerage deserted them for steam, and there was nothing left for them but heavy freights.<sup>2</sup> Before this decline had run its course, some of the American packet-lines probably yielded their owners a very considerable profit. Such was the White Diamond Line of Enoch Train and Co. Train created this line with a particular eye to comfort in the steerage, and to speed; and indeed, the best of the square-riggers would go through any weather, though they were slow in light winds. At the end of 1853, the attractions of the White Diamond Line were advertised at considerable length in the press of Montreal among, presumably, other North American cities.

This 'Boston and Liverpool Line of Packets' offered a passage from Liverpool to 'Montreal, C.E., via Vermont & Canada Railroads' for \$24.00, and the price included:

a steerage passage from Liverpool to Boston, by any of our splendid Line of Packets; provisions at sea according to the undermentioned dietary scale; doctor's attendance and medicine on board when required; port charges at Boston, and all expenses of transportation of passengers and baggage from the ship at Boston to the destination agreed upon. In addition to any provisions which

---

<sup>1</sup>To be distinguished from James Baines's (Liverpool) Black Ball Line.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., R.G. Albion, Square-riggers on schedule.



passengers may themselves bring, the following quantities, at least, of water and provisions will be supplied, to each steerage passenger of twelve years of age, and over, every week during the passage, commencing on the day of sailing, and at least three quarts of water per day. Two oz. of Tea; 8 oz. of sugar; 5 lbs of Oatmeal; 2½ lbs Navy Bread; 1 lb Wheat Flour; 2 lbs Rice.

There follows a list of the line's twelve vessels, with their captains, and an eulogy of the ships' comfort, safety and speed.

These magnificent Ships are all American Built, and constructed expressly for Packets. They are all New and of the first class, being built on the most improved principles...The Captains have been carefully selected as first rate Sailors and men of humanity, and an experienced Surgeon is attached to each Ship, and no expense is spared to render this the very best and most popular conveyance to America...

Testimonials are appended from the Very Rev. Theobald Mathew, and from Bishop Fitzpatrick of Boston, names of power among the Irish on either side of the Atlantic.<sup>1</sup> In that year there was still no steam (or more properly sail-and-steam) passage to be had into the St Lawrence from Liverpool, much less from Ireland, so that Train's line faced no new-fangled competition of that kind. There were, however, passages to be had in sail to Quebec direct from Ireland, e.g. from Londonderry,<sup>2</sup> probably at no more cost than Train's,<sup>3</sup> and saving the journey to Liverpool; while the deck passage up to Montreal on a river steamer was very cheap. On the other hand, Train's route was open in the winter. The reason for his advertising it in an English-language Catholic newspaper and in a city which contained upwards of 10,000 natives of Ireland<sup>4</sup> may

---

<sup>1</sup>[Montreal] True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 30 December 1853.

<sup>2</sup>Londonderry Standard, 12 May 1853.

<sup>3</sup>In 1863 a passage in sail from Londonderry cost £4, Emigration Commission, 24th General report, 1864, pp.15-16.

<sup>4</sup>Census of the Canadas, 1851-2: Personal census, vol.I.



probably be found in an earlier advertisement, in the same newspaper, offering facilities for sending passage certificates and remittances to the British Isles: there was special reference to 'drafts from £1 upwards, payable at sight, free of charge, at the Bank of Ireland, Dublin, and all its branches'.<sup>1</sup> Here were two elements of a huge commercial complex that fitted each other even as hand and glove.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that, between 1851 and 1859, 82% of the emigration from the British Isles was carried in United States ships; and at first sight strange that by 1863 the proportion sailing under the British flag had risen to nearly 46%,<sup>2</sup> and that by 1869 the Commission could say that the emigrants were now 'carried principally in British ships'.<sup>3</sup> The secret was that, whilst America concentrated on the design and building of fine sailing packets, the British were quietly perfecting the iron screw-steamer; the change from American to British transport was thus a change also from sail to steam; and it was mainly British steam. In 1851 there was a mail steamer (it is true, an American one) from Liverpool to New York.<sup>4</sup> Among British lines, the first Cunarder sailed as far back as 1840; the Inman appeared in 1850, the Anchor and Allan lines, the latter with the Canadian mail contract, in 1856; the White Star was hoisted by the Oceanic Steam Navigation Company in 1869. Already in 1860 Buchanan, at Quebec, noted the

---

<sup>1</sup>True Witness, as above, 24 June 1853.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration Commission, 24th General report, 1864, p.15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 29th General report, 1869.

<sup>4</sup>Freeman's Journal, 11 April 1851.



growing preference for steamers among the immigrants there.<sup>1</sup> Silver's emigration guide in 1866 praised 'the superior accommodation of the steamers, the more rapid passage secured by them, and the capital bill of fare which their stewards daily offer to the emigrant, with their low rate of steerage passage...'.<sup>2</sup> There were no emigrant sailing vessels at all from Liverpool to British North America in 1865,<sup>3</sup> and by 1868 93% of 'emigrants to America' went in steamers.<sup>4</sup> It is odd that as late as the 'seventies and 'eighties the ship advertisements in the lesser Irish newspapers were still embellished with cuts of sailing-vessels, or of sail-rigged steamers, abandoned long since by the more progressive press.<sup>5</sup>

Little or no evidence arises during the half-century of serious rivalry, in relation to Irish passengers, between British shipping and foreign lines other than American. About 1870 Liverpool shipowners memorialised the board of trade upon the unfair competition of German ships which took on passengers and mail by tender at Southampton and thus evaded the passengers' acts. By this means, it was alleged, the German ships could be built and worked more cheaply than English ones.<sup>6</sup> Some years later, it appeared that the agents of foreign steamer lines were selling in England passages to the United states via Antwerp and

---

<sup>1</sup>Copies or extracts of despatches relative to emigration to the North American colonies, p.4, H.C. 1861 (186) xl.

<sup>2</sup>General hints to emigrants, p.78.

<sup>3</sup>Emigration Commission, 26th General report, 1866, p.12.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 29th General report, 1869, p.3.

<sup>5</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 1873, passim; Waterford Daily Mail, January, 1885.

<sup>6</sup>Copy of any letters, to or from the Board of Trade on... conveyance of passengers from the United Kingdom to America by British and foreign steam ships, H.C.1870 (288),lx.



Rotterdam, where passengers were transferred to foreign ships. Chamberlain thought the practice was not fraudulent.<sup>1</sup> No continental lines called at Irish ports.

. . . . .

When in 1860 the Cork Examiner, that some years later was to be found arraigning 'the fanatical belief in emigration as a cure for Irish evils',<sup>2</sup> praised the accommodation of the modern emigrant steamers and the advantages of sailing direct from Ireland,<sup>3</sup> a turning-point may be noted in the history of the Irish emigrant trade. The impression is heightened by a statement, the following year, in the house of lords that Ireland now had three steamship services weekly with North America; the Cunard, calling at Queenstown on Sundays, the Inman Line, at Queenstown on Thursdays, and the Canadian packets, at Londonderry on Fridays.<sup>4</sup> These two years indicate roughly the point before which the Irish agency business was sui generis, and after which it became largely a matter of selling tickets on behalf of great houses in Liverpool or the United States.

The interlocking of the cargo and emigrant trades lingered on in Ireland, at least through the eighteenth-fifties. This type of business was portrayed earlier in an English emigrant guide-book:

The cheapest passages may generally be had in vessels that resort to St. John's,<sup>5</sup> Pictou, or Miramichi, for cargoes of timber...but as those vessels which are employed in the

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cclxxi.771 (29 June 1882).

<sup>2</sup>Cork Examiner, 9 August 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 18 May 1860.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, clxiv.290-2 (4 July 1861).

<sup>5</sup>Very probably Saint John, New Brunswick, and not St John's, Newfoundland. The conflation of the two was frequent.



timber trade, and go out in ballast...are generally of an inferior class, they often make longer...passages than the others.<sup>1</sup>

A return cargo, over and above emigrants, on the westbound voyage helped to reduce fares; it was pointed out in 1851 that for this reason it was cheaper to ship to the United States from Liverpool than from Derry, because 'ships almost always have cargoes from Liverpool but from Londonderry very few have cargoes'.<sup>2</sup> Another example of outward cargo on an emigrant ship is found in the case of <sup>the</sup> Jeanie Johnson, out of Tralee with 180 passengers for Quebec, which had to put back into Cork because her cargo of iron had shifted,<sup>3</sup> and the dangers in this practice received legislative attention, referred to above. Passage brokers in this era were not uncommonly importers also. Londonderry had an old commercial connection with Philadelphia which determined the destination of many Irish emigrants: in 1853 the Standard advertised<sup>4</sup> cargoes expected in the city by ships which then made a quick turn-round and in about twelve days were ready to embark passengers. From Philadelphia came deals, Indian corn and wheat, and from Quebec, timber. Corscaden's of Londonderry were advertising in April of 1857 passages by the 'well-known, fast-sailing, fortunate ship Creole, Captain Shields';<sup>5</sup> in July,<sup>6</sup> the same firm announced for sale red and yellow pine timber, pipe staves and hogsheads, fresh from Quebec by the same ship.<sup>6</sup> The import trade of course continued long after

---

<sup>1</sup>Robert Mudie, The emigrant's pocket companion, p.201 (1832).

<sup>2</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.5643 (Smith).

<sup>3</sup>Cork Reporter, quoted Dublin Evening Post, 22 May 1852.

<sup>4</sup>Londonderry Standard, 5 May, 30 June, 18 August 1853.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 9 April 1857.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 23 July 1857; and cf., 1 January.



the supremacy of the great emigrant lines was established; it is hard to say how far, if at all, emigrants alternated in later years with deals, battens and white oak pipe staves in the holds of the small ships. In 1872 two Galway firms were advertising imports from Quebec and the Maritimes,<sup>1</sup> but there were no embarkations at Galway for destinations outside Europe in that year or for several years previously.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, firms at Sligo<sup>3</sup> and Dundalk<sup>4</sup> advertised timber imports from Canada in 1887 and 1891; Sligo had insignificant direct emigration, but Dundalk had about 1,000 embarkations in 1891.<sup>5</sup>

Vessels of this kind, or emigrant ships perhaps fitted out for a few trips, in a season that looked profitable, by a small owner or firm, received considerable and often bizarre advertisement. A minority only of these testimonials to the peculiar virtues of this or that vessel were aimed at cabin passengers. Thus, a Liverpool packet for Australia was said to present 'a rare opportunity for one or two families, or a party desirous of avoiding the danger or annoyance arising from steerage passengers.'<sup>6</sup> In days when the ship's lifeboats were at the best quite inadequate, the 'danger' could be real enough, and in an emergency the steerage passengers might be battered down, to drown.<sup>7</sup> Miley's direct sailings from Dublin for New

---

<sup>1</sup>Galway Vindicator, 31 August, 28 September 1872.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration commission, Reports, 1867-73.

<sup>3</sup>Sligo Champion, 19 March 1887.

<sup>4</sup>Dundalk Democrat, 3 January 1891.

<sup>5</sup>Emigration statistics of Ireland, passim.

<sup>6</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 2 June 1852.

<sup>7</sup>In 1871 the Cunard advertised higher cabin fares on ships carrying no emigrants, Cork Constitution, 1871, passim.



York were thus recommended to the better sort of emigrant: 'these Packets afford all the advantages of direct embarkation, particularly to respectable parties who have much extra Luggage, any quantity of which will be taken **WITHOUT ANY CHARGE**, besides avoiding the wear and tear, expense, etc., of transhipment.'<sup>1</sup> A Belfast vessel was described, in the common form of these advertisements, as known for her fast passages, kind captain and healthy passengers; with the corollary that 'respectable Families, wishing to be select, and arriving out in time for the Canadian Spring business, will find this a most desirable opportunity.'<sup>2</sup> The rank and file of emigrants, however, who could not afford, and perhaps did not wish, to be 'select', were more likely to be attracted by one of the familiar slogans: 'the favourite and fortunate ship Fortuna',<sup>3</sup> 'fine fast-sailing Ship Envoy',<sup>4</sup> 'for New York, the fine fortunate fast sailing Ship Fanny...made the shortest passage of any Ship that sailed from Derry to the States this Spring',<sup>5</sup> 'the fine, fast-sailing coppered ship Argentinus'.<sup>6</sup> Space was lavished, in a manner few modern advertisers would essay, upon the advertisements of one voyage of one ship.

Direct from Cork to Quebec will Sail on May 8th the magnificent, British built, first class, Coppered and Copper fastened full rigged Ship SULTAN, 848 tons Register, 1,500 Tons Burthen. Morton Leslie, Commander. This Ship offers a most eligible conveyance for Emigrants to Quebec, is upwards of eight feet high between decks, possessing superior light and ventilation, has Poop Cabins, carries a Surgeon, Cook, and Steward, for passengers' use.'

<sup>1</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 20 May 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 2 March 1853.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 18 May 1853.

<sup>4</sup>Londonderry Standard, 24 March 1853.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 23 June 1853.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 9 April 1857.



The provision scale follows.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis upon those features which the steerage emigrant might know, by report, to be most germane to his comfort on board may be noticed; 'this well-known, safe and powerful ship, has nearly nine feet between Decks, with great breadth of beam, and being lighted and ventilated with stern and side ports, presents one of the best opportunities for Intermediate and Steerage Passengers.'<sup>2</sup> Height between decks was often stressed; Spaight's made much of it, in advertising three ships for Quebec: 'Ample accommodation and fine height between Decks, as fully testified by the thousands who have crossed the Atlantic in them'.<sup>3</sup>

First and last sailings of the season were a rallying point in emigrant transport, and if the 'last sailing' proved in fact not to be the last, the previous shipload was not there to argue the matter: 'first spring ship for Quebec';<sup>4</sup> 'the Merker will probably be the last ship for St. John's [sic] this Spring from Derry';<sup>5</sup> 'last Passenger Ship from Derry for Quebec this Spring'.<sup>6</sup> At least equal importance seems to have attached to the personality of the captain, and he was often named and not infrequently described: 'Early application is recommended as numbers are desirous of sailing with Captain Gorman'.<sup>7</sup> This vessel was Spaight's Jane Black, for Quebec, and another Limerick ship

---

<sup>1</sup>Freeman's Journal, 5 May 1853.

<sup>2</sup>Londonderry Standard, 3 March 1853.

<sup>3</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 24 March 1852. Cf., 'the STEERAGE accommodation is unequalled for space, light and ventilation', Waterford Daily Mail, 1 January 1873, and to these amenities the White Star Line could add, in an advertisement of the following year, warmth, civility, free medical comforts and 'stewardesses to attend the women and children'. Belfast News-Letter, 24 March 1874.

<sup>4</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 10 March 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Londonderry Standard, 28 April 1853.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 12 May 1853.

<sup>7</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 23 July 1852.



was apparently commanded, later, by the same nautical paragon:

the Splendid Fast Sailing Ship, 'Jessy', Daniel Gorman, Master, will Sail for Quebec, wind and weather permitting... this fine Ship is well-known in the Passenger Trade, she has great height between Decks, and the repeated compliments paid to Captain Gorman by Emigrants on their arrival, prove his invariable care and attention. As the Ship will only carry a limited number of Passengers, an early application is recommended.<sup>1</sup>

The last sentence embodied a well-tryed device of brokers. A phrase commonly used in the advertisements, 'commanded by men of experience and humanity',<sup>2</sup> or words to that effect, was more than verbiage to emigrants taking not only their first voyage but possibly their first sight of deep sea. A formal address or presentation from passengers was apparently the not uncommon lot of masters who won the emigrants' approval. Among the emigration advertisements there appeared in 1853 an adulatory testimonial, from the passengers of a government emigrant ship to Adelaide, to the master and surgeon, together with the master's reply, in the language almost of the old diplomacy: 'After well weighing the encomiums you have been pleased to pass on my character', etc.<sup>3</sup> Jones's Emigrants' friend, of 1880, thought 'the character of captains or commanders of steamers'<sup>4</sup> was still a point of high importance; and as late as 1883 the Beaver Line advertised captains' names.<sup>5</sup>

On the subject of fares, and particularly steerage fares, the advertisements of Atlantic shipping before 1860 tend to be silent or non-committal. The silence was eloquent and

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 10 March 1863.

<sup>2</sup>Newry Examiner, 3 January 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 17 January 1853.

<sup>4</sup>[E.R.] Jones, The emigrants' friend.

<sup>5</sup>E.g. Cork Examiner, 3 January 1883.



possibly opened the way to a great deal of esoteric bargaining; Tapscott's remark that "we last winter took them at £2"<sup>1</sup> has this air. It behoved the brokers to be discreet on this point; as regards migratory agricultural labourers, at all events, it was found in 1841 that a trifling reduction in the cross-channel fare at one port, industriously advertised, was enough to switch thousands of emigrants from Dublin to Drogheda.<sup>2</sup> Thus, many brokers were content to say "the rate of Passage will be made moderate to meet other Ports",<sup>3</sup> "the Passage Money [London-derry-Philadelphia] has been reduced to the Liverpool rates",<sup>4</sup> "£1 deposit secures berth" [Dublin-New York],<sup>5</sup> "Passengers Booked for this magnificent Ship at same rates as those charged in Liverpool".<sup>6</sup> Fares for cabin and "intermediate cabin" passages were from the outset more freely displayed.<sup>7</sup> The general run of Atlantic steerage rates may be gleaned from occasional press references, and showed a rising tendency in the eighteen-fifties. In 1852 they were said to have risen at Liverpool from £3 10s to £4 10s in average figures, owing to large embarkations of German peasantry; it was thought, probably on insufficient grounds, that the higher fare had diminished the number of Irish using the port.<sup>8</sup> In 1857 Londonderry fares were £ 3 19s to New

---

<sup>1</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.2775.

<sup>2</sup>Agricultural statistics of Ireland, 1880: Report and tables relating to migratory agricultural labourers, p.4, [C.2809], H.C.1881,xciii.

<sup>3</sup>Londonderry Standard, 16 June 1853.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 14 July 1853.

<sup>5</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 20 May 1852.

<sup>6</sup>Londonderry Standard, 4 July 1863.

<sup>7</sup>Cf., ibid., 1 January 1857.

<sup>8</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 20 April 1852.



York, £4 9s to Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup>

Commercial strategem, passing on occasion into plain fraud, was not absent from the brokerage trade. In one breath an advertiser would say that his ship would 'sail on 10th March next, wind and weather permitting', and that 'this magnificent vessel will be despatched punctually on the advertised day.'<sup>2</sup> The two propositions, as applied to sailing ships, were naturally at variance on many occasions, and more logical brokers merely announced 'the Ship will sail as near to the above date as possible'.<sup>3</sup> There was also the problem, sometimes even in a busy year, of making up a full passenger-roll. The Anna Maria of Limerick, in spite of always, according to formula, landing her passengers at Quebec in good health, experienced this difficulty in 1852; she was advertised successively, to sail 'on or about' April 12 and April 20, and left eventually with ninety-two passengers.<sup>4</sup> The Nubia of Derry, in sail for Quebec at a time when sail was already passing out of fashion, was originally advertised to leave about April 1 ('this will be the only opportunity of a direct Ship this Spring from this Port'), and then re-advertised to sail a week later ('a few more Passengers will be taken').<sup>5</sup> The journalistic signs were clear when a ship was not selling out very well: 'those holding Orders from Messrs Robert Taylor & Co. Philadelphia, will require to return them immediately and have their names entered...A few more

---

<sup>1</sup>Londonderry Standard, 24 September 1857.

<sup>2</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 14 February 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Londonderry Standard, 18 March 1863.

<sup>4</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 24 March, 14 April 1852.

<sup>5</sup>Londonderry Standard, 18, 21 March 1863.



Passengers will be taken, if immediate application be made...'.<sup>1</sup>

The grosser deceptions practised by some brokerage firms have been noticed in reviewing the conditions at Liverpool which received such searching inquiry in the select committees. The American order drawn on an insolvent Liverpool agent was a case in point.<sup>2</sup> The frauds of pseudo-agents in Ireland who sent passengers to Liverpool houses for which they had no agency are to be charged to Ireland rather than Liverpool.<sup>3</sup> There was also the fraudulent advertiser, who received commission for filling up ships not his own; 'they have a kind of arrangement with the owners of vessels; they are like recruiters, they collect emigrants; their ships are known in the trade by the name of "paper" ships.'<sup>4</sup> The emigrants brought on their own heads a certain amount of deceit by their known partiality for large over small ships, despite the professional opinion of Friend, which many modern emigrants could share, that the smaller ships were preferable.<sup>5</sup> Hence, as Friend said, 'nearly all the agents for the Glasgow and Liverpool houses advertise the ships as being much larger than their registered tonnage', and this was done by ringing the changes, in advertisements, upon the registered and burthen tonnages, respectively, of the same ship. A ship of registered tonnage 530 might be about

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 10 March 1853.

<sup>2</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.2862 (Stephen).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., QQ.5645-50 (Smith).

<sup>4</sup>Emigrant ships committee, Second report, 1854, QQ. 4127-34 (Sidney).

<sup>5</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.5667. Advertisers of emigrant shipping for Australasia were specially given to stressing size ('her noble size...vast accommodations'), cf., Limerick Reporter, 21 April 1857, Londonderry Standard, 4 July 1863.



1,000 tons burthen with some kind of cargo.<sup>1</sup>

The emigrant who wished to ship direct from Ireland to North America before about 1860 was thus meagrely served, once the famine exodus had ended, by sailing craft which were apt to leave at irregular intervals. Counting advertised spring ships for North America, in 1853 Belfast had but four for New York and Quebec together,<sup>2</sup> Cork apparently had one in 1857,<sup>3</sup> a year of 95,000 emigrants, Dublin in the same year had one,<sup>4</sup> Londonderry in 1857 had three.<sup>5</sup> The Emigration Commission credited Cork with 166 embarkations for direct emigration in 1857,<sup>6</sup> possibly the company of the Eliza Keith, the one vessel advertised. If it be considered that embarkations, at Cork and Queenstown combined, amounted to more than 40,000 in 1887,<sup>7</sup> we have an index both of the growth in a generation of Queenstown as a port and of the influence of the steamship upon direct emigration from Ireland. The lesser Irish ports fitted out transatlantic ships so long as the pressure of emigration made this necessary and profitable. Limerick was a busy port from 1851 to 1854,<sup>8</sup> and in 1852 dispatched nineteen ships to New York and Quebec between March 20 and May 1,<sup>9</sup> Waterford and Tralee were shipping to Quebec and the

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., QQ.5651-64.

<sup>2</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 1853, passim. In the previous season, 2,000 had sailed direct from Belfast to the United States up to June, Banner of Ulster, quoted Dublin Evening Post, 8 June 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Cork Constitution, 1857, passim; Southern Reporter, 19 March 1857.

<sup>4</sup>Dublin Evening Post, Nation, 1857, passim; Freeman's Journal, 10 March 1857.

<sup>5</sup>Londonderry Standard, 1857, passim.

<sup>6</sup>Emigration Commission, 18th General report, 1858.

<sup>7</sup>Append. II, table 12.

<sup>8</sup>Cf., Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, General reports, 1852-5.

<sup>9</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 5 May 1852.



United States in 1853;<sup>1</sup> but in a single day of September, 1852 no fewer than 800 passengers left Waterford by the Liverpool steamers.<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

The average emigrant to North America in this decade, although accessible figures to prove it are lacking, began his long westward journey by an eastbound passage across the channel to the Liverpool packets. In 1857 the boats to Liverpool from Londonderry were thronged with emigrants 'from different parts of this and the surrounding counties';<sup>3</sup> even in 1863, emigrants for the United States and the Canadas were starting from Sligo and Waterford by way of the steamers to Liverpool.<sup>4</sup> The reason was that although the steerage rates at Liverpool had risen, under the growing demand for passages, from £3 5s to £3 15s,<sup>5</sup> the lowest rate direct from Cork, now openly advertised by two Atlantic lines, was still 6 guineas;<sup>6</sup> and a deck passage by the Cork Steamship Company's vessels to Liverpool cost but 10s 6d.<sup>7</sup> The additional hardship meant little to those who could thus save a couple of pounds. Hardship, and danger, were certainly not wanting on the Irish channel crossing; it is a considerable testimony to the effect of the passengers' acts to remember that these steamers were outside that law. In 1851 Besnard said:

---

<sup>1</sup>Freeman's Journal, 1 April, 24 May, 26 May 1853.

<sup>2</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 16 September 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Londonderry Standard, 2 July 1857.

<sup>4</sup>Sligo Independent, Waterford Mail, quoted Freeman's Journal, 25 March 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Cork Constitution, 10 April 1860.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 7 March, 28 March 1860.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 2 January 1860.



I have seen...twelve hundred people proceed as deck passengers from Cork to Liverpool in steamers, without boats sufficient to save the lives of 40 if any accident should have occurred, while the between-deck was filled with pigs.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1854 committee it emerged that the boats from Cork and Dublin to Liverpool were miserable but cheap; the Dublin and Liverpool Steam Packet Co. had to admit that 'covered places on the deck' served indifferently for cattle or passengers,<sup>2</sup> but put up a good defence. A similar firm, the British and Irish Steam Packet Co., was paying 5% in 1852.<sup>3</sup>

Among Irish ports with cross-channel services in some or all of the period 1851-1901 were Belfast, Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, Limerick, Londonderry, Newry, Sligo, Waterford. Very cheap passages could be had; deck crossings to Liverpool cost 1s to 10s 6d. The cheaper rates prevailed earlier in the period; typical fares were, from Belfast 4s (1862),<sup>4</sup> 5s (1874);<sup>5</sup> from Dublin, 1s (1851),<sup>6</sup> 2s 6d to Holyhead (1863);<sup>7</sup> from Dundalk, 2s 6d (1852);<sup>8</sup> from Limerick and Tralee, 6s (1863);<sup>9</sup> from Newry, 4s (1857);<sup>10</sup> from Sligo, 'very moderate' (1887);<sup>11</sup> from Waterford, 10s (1873).<sup>12</sup> The cabin fare from Dublin

---

<sup>1</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, Q.6661.

<sup>2</sup>Emigrant ships committee, Second report, 1854, QQ.5684-6.

<sup>3</sup>Freeman's Journal, 26 January 1853.

<sup>4</sup>Belfast News-Letter, March, 1862.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 1 January 1874.

<sup>6</sup>Freeman's Journal, 1 January 1851.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., January, 1863.

<sup>8</sup>Newry Examiner, 3 January 1852. The passage cost 4s by 1891, Dundalk Democrat, 3 January 1891.

<sup>9</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 23 June 1863.

<sup>10</sup>Newry Examiner, 3 January 1857.

<sup>11</sup>Sligo Champion, January, 1887.

<sup>12</sup>Waterford Daily Mail, January, 1873.



to Liverpool was 7s 6d between 1851 and 1855.<sup>1</sup> There were cross-channel services from Ireland to many British ports besides Liverpool, notably to Glasgow and Greenock but also to London and ports on the English south coast. A small amount of Irish coastal shipping developed, e.g. between Dublin and Newry,<sup>2</sup> or a steamship line such as the Clyde Shipping Company's linked several Irish ports with one British terminus, ~~xx~~ in this case Glasgow.<sup>3</sup> There was at all times one strong motive in favour of the emigrant's shipping from Liverpool, namely that he was so often sent for by means of a remittance drawn on that port; otherwise, Besnard thought Irish emigrants would leave from their own ports.<sup>4</sup>

. . . . .

It was no doubt a black day in the annals of the Cork Steamship Co. when, in 1860, a local newspaper recorded the embarkation of more than a hundred emigrants at Queenstown, the largest embarkation

since the Ocean steamers began to call at this port...It is evident that the dangers of the Channel and the facility of shipping here are being understood by intending emigrants, and equally evident that the steam lines whose vessels touch here will find it a remunerative venture.<sup>5</sup>

The prophecy was correct, and so was the reference to the dangerous 'Channel', since hitherto most of the wrecks of emigrant shipping had occurred in the enclosed waters of either the European or the American continent. In April of the same year there were three river boats, where

---

<sup>1</sup>Freeman's Journal, passim.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., February, 1857.

<sup>3</sup>Cork Examiner, 23-31 March 1853.

<sup>4</sup>Emigrant ships committee, Second report, 1854, Q.4889.

<sup>5</sup>Cork Constitution, 9 March 1860.



formerly one had sufficed, taking emigrants down to Queenstown from Penrose's quay in Cork.<sup>1</sup> The year 1863, which in spite of (or, as some maintained, because of) the American troubles was a year of 117,000 Irish emigrants, may be selected to illustrate this new concentration of the Atlantic transport upon Irish ports. It was in that year stated in the house of commons, in a discussion of the Galway Packet contract, that already in 1861 there were fifty 'large steamers employed on the North Atlantic Ocean', making 226 voyages a year. In 1862 Inman's line, the Liverpool, New York and Philadelphia, carried 29,000 passengers, one third of the whole number that crossed in steam.<sup>2</sup> In a letter, some years later, to the treasury over a quarrel with the chief emigration officer at Liverpool, William Inman was in the strong position of being able to say: 'I have the feeling that my Company's Steamers have conveyed to America 1 in 60 of the whole population of the United States...'.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to find, after 1860, advertisements in the Irish press of Atlantic steamships not calling at an Irish port. The situation earlier was very different, when Tapscott's packets or Bowman, Grinnell's Swallow Tail Line<sup>4</sup> often appeared in Irish newspapers, as well as the many single vessels fitted out at Liverpool for the direct voyage to North America. The Guion Line from Liverpool to New York nevertheless continued to advertise in Ireland, though its fare, £6 6s, was in 1863 the same as that for which an

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 13 April 1860.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, clxix, 1662 (20 March 1863).

<sup>3</sup>6 April 1872 (P.R.O., C.O.384/100).

<sup>4</sup>E.g., Londonderry Standard, 24 September 1857.



emigrant could ship from Queenstown.<sup>1</sup> In the same year the 'magnificent' Great Eastern, Liverpool to New York, was advertised in Londonderry with the steerage passage at £6 10s, but the hook was baited with the offer of a free passage to Liverpool.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the American Line from Southampton was obliged in 1895, although quoting no fares, to offer a free 'steerage outfit' and a free passage to Southampton from Queenstown or Liverpool.<sup>3</sup>

The figures of embarkation at Irish ports show that these inducements can have tempted very few to take ship outside Ireland, when to do so in Ireland was so easy. From the evidence of the advertisements, there were no fewer than five Atlantic lines calling at Cork or Queenstown early in 1860 - the Liverpool, New York and Philadelphia (Inman Line), the British and North American Royal Mail, the U.S. Mail Steam Packet Co., the Montreal Ocean Steamship Co. (Allan Line) and the Cunard.<sup>4</sup> Later in that year, the Allan Line transferred its call from Queenstown to Londonderry,<sup>5</sup> but in 1863 Sabel and Searle's and James Baines's lines were advertised, from Cork and Queenstown respectively.<sup>6</sup> The next busiest emigration port in 1863 was Londonderry, which could offer, 'all the year round', the Allan Line, at least one odd steamer for Quebec<sup>7</sup> and four sailing vessels.<sup>8</sup> Belfast appeared to have merely

---

<sup>1</sup>Freeman's Journal, 23-31 March, 1863.

<sup>2</sup>Londonderry Standard, 4 July 1863.

<sup>3</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 19 January 1895.

<sup>4</sup>Cork Constitution, January-June, 1860, passim.

<sup>5</sup>Noted in Buchanan's annual report, Copies or extracts of despatches, as above, p.4, H.C.1861 (186), xl.

<sup>6</sup>Galway Vindicator, 23-31 May, 1863; Limerick Chronicle, 27 June 1863.

<sup>7</sup>Galway Vindicator, 23-31 May 1863.

<sup>8</sup>Londonderry Standard, 18 March 1863.



the Anchor Line, for Quebec and Montreal at £5 5s steerage.<sup>1</sup> Galway had the re-established mail line for New York and Boston,<sup>2</sup> and managed to fit out as well two private-venture ships, not apparently advertised.<sup>3</sup> Limerick sent a spring sailing-ship to Quebec.<sup>4</sup>

Thereafter there was no significant change in the pattern of emigration transport thus established. It was noted in 1873 that most Irish emigrants now preferred Queenstown or Londonderry to the Liverpool route, which was still crowded by German and Scandinavian emigrants.<sup>5</sup> A Cork newspaper commented on the business of Queenstown in 1883: 'Not less than nine or ten steamers per week now call at this port for passengers, [but]...the accommodation falls somewhat short of the demand...Some of the assisted people have also made this their route...'.<sup>6</sup> About six Atlantic lines were advertising at the end of December.<sup>7</sup> Londonderry in 1885, with 9,000 emigrants to 31,000 at Queenstown/Cork,<sup>8</sup> was now served by both the Allan and Anchor Lines.<sup>9</sup>

Owing to diplomatic vagueness on this point in many advertisers, the fares which emigrants paid for the Atlantic crossing throughout the period are difficult to trace with

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 23 September 1863.

<sup>3</sup>Galway Vindicator, 25 April 1863.

<sup>4</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 10 March 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Herapath, quoted Waterford Mail, 5 May 1873.

<sup>6</sup>Cork Examiner, 21 May 1883.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., December, 1883.

<sup>8</sup>See append. II table 12.

<sup>9</sup>Londonderry Standard, 1885, passim.



precision. Of the Cork to New York steerage crossing it may be said in broad terms that the rates rose between 1846 and 1860, stabilised for some twenty years and then broke rather sharply towards 1883, to stay for the remainder of the century at much the same level as before the bulk of the famine exodus. Thus, the fare from Cork to New York was said to be £3 15s - £4 in 1846.<sup>1</sup> In 1860 it was £6 6s, e.g. by the Inman Line,<sup>2</sup> while the rate at Liverpool had dropped to £3 15s, as referred to above. £6 or £6 6s was quoted as the fare at Cork, Queenstown or Londonderry for many years: e.g., by the Allan Line in 1862<sup>3</sup> and 1881,<sup>4</sup> the Inman Line in 1874.<sup>5</sup> Then, in 1883 the Beaver Line offered the low rate of £3 15s,<sup>6</sup> and in 1887 the White Star was advertising the Liverpool-New York crossing for £3 including the fare from Ireland to Liverpool.<sup>7</sup> In 1895 the Anchor Line from Londonderry charged £3.<sup>8</sup> Cabin fares for the Atlantic crossing moved less irregularly throughout the period, with a fairly steady downward tendency. Examples may be tabulated as follows:

1857.....	Allan Line.....	15-18	guineas <sup>9</sup>
1860.....	Inman "	15-21	" 10
1872.....	Allan, Dominion Lines..	9-15	" 11
1883.....	Beaver Line.....	10	" 12
1887.....	Anchor "	8-12	" 13

<sup>1</sup>Select committee of the house of lords on colonisation from Ireland, 1847, Q.4427.

<sup>2</sup>Cork Constitution, 2 January 1860.

<sup>3</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 24-31 March 1862.

<sup>4</sup>Handbook to Canada: S.W. Silver & Co.'s handbook advertiser, p.1.

<sup>5</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 1 January 1874.

<sup>6</sup>Cork Examiner, 7 April 1883.

<sup>7</sup>Sligo Champion, January, 1887.

<sup>8</sup>Belfast News-Letter, March, 1895.

<sup>9</sup>Cork Constitution, 27 June 1857.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 2 January 1860.

<sup>11</sup>Galway Vindicator, March-April 1872.

<sup>12</sup>Cork Examiner, 3 January 1883.

<sup>13</sup>Freeman's Journal, February, 1887.



Behind the movements of steerage rates probably lies a history of spasmodic attempts among the Atlantic shipping firms to form a price-ring. The Emigration Commission observed in 1872: 'The price of passage [to the United States and Canada] in steamers had been fixed by arrangement among the steam shipping companies of Liverpool at £6 6s per statute adult.'<sup>1</sup> According to one newspaper, the posture of the companies' affairs was bad a few years later:

the decrease of emigration from Ireland is serious, and what between the crisis in the United States and the decline of emigration, the shipping interests are suffering severely, some of the Lines losing £5,000 a week, some insolvent, and none paying their expenses.<sup>2</sup>

Vere Foster had something to say on the same subject in 1882: 'There may be a break up of what is called the Conference of the Steamship Companies...There is a ring; there is a sort of trades union among all the steamship companies to keep up the prices', and in consequence there was an agreed fare of £6 6s for many years.<sup>3</sup> The 'conference', like the fares, presumably broke soon afterwards, since in 1885 the Atlantic lines were reported as trying to form one: 'The present ruinous rates to America and Canada has [sic] been most disastrous to several lines. The result of the meeting is, that it is proposed to increase the steerage rates one pound, and to arrange a minimum for freight.'<sup>4</sup> Since in 1887 tickets from Queens-town were sold, in January, as low as £2 10s,<sup>5</sup> and in

---

<sup>1</sup>Emigration Commission, 32nd General report, 1872, p.4.

<sup>2</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 14 April 1875. *Cf., below, p. 353, n. 7.*

<sup>3</sup>Cairns committee, Second report, 1882, QQ.7586; 7588-9.

<sup>4</sup>Liverpool Journal of Commerce, quoted Waterford Mail, 8 August 1885.

<sup>5</sup>Times, quoted Belfast News-Letter, 12 May 1887.



1895 the Cunard company passed a dividend,<sup>1</sup> the indication is that this new conference was not of long validity.

Lastly, it is desirable to review the whole of the Irish ports as places of embarkation for emigrants throughout the period. The figures furnished by the Emigration Commission's reports to 1872 record only the embarkations for places outside Europe, including of course Australasia. The busy cross-channel traffic of some ports during those years, sustained largely though not wholly by emigrants, is thus discounted. Belfast, for example, is credited with 326 emigrants in 1855,<sup>2</sup> although from another source, available only during a few of these years, the emigrants appeared in fact to number 17,869<sup>3</sup> - a good index of the superior weight of the Liverpool and Glasgow trade at that time. The figures of the census commissioners from 1876 counted all emigrants.<sup>4</sup>

With that important reservation, table II of appendix II shows the total embarkation of emigrants, in all but three years of the period, at thirty-three recorded Irish ports. In this summary, the contribution to emigration, even of the group of nine ports, with total embarkations between 10,000 and 100,000 each, appears very trifling compared with the massive totals at Queenstown, Cork, Londonderry, Dublin and Belfast. The relevance of the smaller ports was possibly to set going, in the familiar process whereby emigration begets emigration, a myriad small systems of personal or family movement whose elements

<sup>1</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 30 March 1895.

<sup>2</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 16th General report, 1856.

<sup>3</sup>Census of Ireland, 1851, part VI, General report, tab.XIII.

<sup>4</sup>See append.II, table 12, for the five largest Irish ports.



later contributed to the flood that for the greater part poured away from Ireland's four main exits. In the two groups of lesser ports with embarkations respectively below 10,000 and 1,000 were some that necessarily saw very few emigrant ships. Youghal, Skibbereen, Donegal are recorded<sup>1</sup> as having embarkations only in one or two years of the waning famine exodus; in addition Youghal is recorded, very unaccountably, as dispatching one emigrant, in 1876.<sup>2</sup> It was doubtless a question of small ships in small anchorages on those coasts which nevertheless had so many neglected harbours.<sup>3</sup> The Furnessia, second largest of the Anchor Line, failed to get well into Tralee Bay when embarking 'government emigrants' in 1883.<sup>4</sup> In 1852 many emigrants were said to be leaving for America 'by the splendid vessels of the Messrs. Graves, of New Ross';<sup>5</sup> but New Ross ceased to appear continuously in the emigration returns after 1861. The black year 1883 saw many small ports pressed into service for embarking the host of emigrants: such were Ballina, Ballyvaghan, Blacksod Bay, Blackwater Pier, Cahersiveen, Fenit, Foynes, Glin. Coleraine, Greenore and Killala were added in 1884; but of all these places, only Greenore thereafter had significant embarkations.

Blacksod Bay (Belmullet) and Cahersiveen were among the out-of-the-way places at which the government obliged steamship companies, no doubt under threat of withdrawing profitable contracts, to pick up the Tuke emigrants, and other

---

<sup>1</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, General reports, passim.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration statistics of Ireland, 1877.

<sup>3</sup>Foynes was recently described as 'the finest deep-sea port in Europe', Irish Times, 16 September 1950.

<sup>4</sup>Kerry Evening Post, quoted Limerick Chronicle, 24 July 1883.

<sup>5</sup>Dublin Evening Mail, 26 April 1852.



assisted or 'government' emigrants, in 1883. A Cork newspaper explained this process:

This class of emigration has gone on from the western part of the country, and the Government have been getting some lines to call at convenient ports on that coast, to pick up the hordes that assemble from the distressed districts. Kerry comes under this category. Any emigration from that county hitherto has passed through Queenstown, but this week arrangements have been made to embark at Kenmare [by the Beaver Line] three or four hundred people, whose passages are paid by Government grant. Kenmare is made the centre of the district with a radius of twenty miles or more...<sup>1</sup>

Later, the same newspaper recorded similar embarkations at Cahersiveen and Valentia.<sup>2</sup> The reasons which prevented regular commercial exploitation of these ports would in some cases be apparent to a sailor.

Among what may be called the upper middling group of ports, it is surprising to find a new port such as Larne, with no recorded embarkations before 1876, exceeding in aggregate embarkations old ports such as Waterford and Limerick. Larne, like Greenore, was not tied into the Irish railway system until the eighteen-seventies, with repercussions on its emigrant trade. Waterford's embarkations tailed off very rapidly after 1854, and thereafter saw a sustained revival only between 1882 and 1890. It is startling to read in the colonial office correspondence of 1851 that 'Limerick is now the largest Emigration Port in Ireland',<sup>3</sup> which statistically, even in that year, it was not. By 1857 ships were leaving Limerick for Quebec in ballast,<sup>4</sup> and after 1876 the highest embarkation in one year was 267 (1880). A year or two later a newspaper said

<sup>1</sup>Cork Examiner, 4 May 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1 June 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Letter from Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 13 November 1851 (P.R.O., C.O. 384/86).

<sup>4</sup>Limerick Reporter, 17 April 1857.



that recent accidents in the river had almost ruined Limerick's reputation as a port.<sup>1</sup> Galway owed its leading place among the middling ports to some extent to the intermittent success, in 1859-60 and 1863, of strenuous attempts to make it the terminus of an Atlantic mail route, and to a sharp revival in embarkations there between 1881 and 1893.

Agitation in Ireland was already brisk in 1851 on behalf of the reasonable proposition of landing mails direct from the United States; it was said 'the Irish people pay Atlantic postage more than sufficient to make up the whole subsidy paid to the Cunard ships.'<sup>2</sup> It was thought that there were 360,000 letters a year from America to Ireland.<sup>3</sup> A correspondent shortly afterwards contributed an historically most interesting point of view: '...If England does not speedily select and occupy in Ireland a western port of departure, America will soon establish there her port of arrival,'<sup>4</sup> and the New York Sun began to take the matter up.<sup>5</sup> The Galway Packet commissioners quashed the proposal for the time being, a decision dictated, according to a Dublin newspaper, by 'sheer and envious ill-will towards this country.'<sup>6</sup> But by January, 1859 the Atlantic Royal Mail Steam Navigation Company could advertise their 'Powerful Steamships' between Galway and New York, at £7 for steerage,<sup>7</sup> and in that year

---

<sup>1</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 31 July 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Freeman's Journal, 23 January 1851.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 18 January 1851.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 4 February 1851.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 12 March, 8 May 1851.

<sup>6</sup>Dublin Evening Mail, 16 June 1852.

<sup>7</sup>Freeman's Journal, 3 January 1859.



and 1860 Galway saw 5,000 and 6,000 embarkations respectively. Envious eyes in Limerick and Cork regarded the scheme with more avarice than patriotism,<sup>1</sup> and observations appeared in the Dublin press about the 'bitter and unmanly assaults of all who have local interests to serve'; this was the kind of reason why Ireland was 'helpless and hopeless.'<sup>2</sup> The mail contract lapsed in May 1861,<sup>3</sup> but was renewed briefly in 1863, with the steerage rate wisely reduced to £5 5s.<sup>4</sup> In consequence, the Galway embarkations rose sharply in that year. By 1865, Gregory was lamenting the Galway Contract, which had failed 'partly through gross mismanagement and partly through the stringent conditions attached to it.'<sup>5</sup> In a scheme of this kind, the British government had many, too many, clients to please. The Toronto Leader of 27 April 1861 complained of the imperial subsidy to the Galway line instead of 'our line;...let us hope that the money of the British people will not be used against the colonies for the benefit of a line which runs to a foreign port.'<sup>6</sup>

For any attempt to assign a given port or ports as the natural outlet for the emigration of a given region, the evidence is scanty and, so far as it goes, very inconclusive. The conjecture may be hazarded that the propinquity or otherwise of a large emigration port had little to do with the intensity of emigration from the natural drainage area

<sup>1</sup>E.g., *ibid.*, 15 February 1859.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 7 April 1859.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, clxiv.290 (4 July 1861).

<sup>4</sup>Galway Vindicator, 12 August 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, clxxvii.726 (24 February 1865).

<sup>6</sup>Enclosure, sir E. Head to duke of Newcastle, 19 November 1861 (P.R.O., C.O.42/626).



behind it. This view could be sustained by considering the relatively low emigration from counties adjoining Londonderry and Belfast; it might be controverted by the example of Cork/Queenstown. In England, the Emigration Commissioners found that lack of shipping facilities at Bristol did not interfere with the assisted emigration from neighbouring counties, much the reverse.<sup>1</sup> There is much evidence, which has been largely reviewed above, that in Ireland the determinant of embarkation was the prevailing fare at, and not the location of, a given port. In 1860 it was noted that emigrants at Cork by the Allan Line included some from 'Waterford, Tipperary, Wexford, and other counties, preferring to embark from Cork than from ports more convenient to their native places'.<sup>2</sup>

The census commissioners furnished, for the years 1851-5 only, a very valuable return relating emigrant embarkations to counties of origin.<sup>3</sup> From this may be selected for analysis three ports of large, and three of small embarkations. In the former group, the evidence as to origins tends to isolate Dublin from the other two ports. In the Belfast embarkations of 1855, although every Irish county was represented, the great majority of emigrants came from Ulster, particularly from the counties Antrim, Down and Armagh. At Cork, also, in each year of the period 1851-5 the embarkations were heavily concentrated on emigrants of Munster origin. In 1855 only eighteen Irish counties were represented in this way at Cork, and counties Cork and Kerry produced the great majority of the

---

<sup>1</sup>Report...on the application...that Bristol should be made a government emigration port, p.3, H.C.1854-5 (523), xvii.

<sup>2</sup>Cork Examiner, 9 March 1860.

<sup>3</sup>Census of Ireland, 1851, part VI, General report, tab.XIII.



emigrants. In Dublin, on the other hand, embarkations were widely distributed as to counties of origin for the whole period 1851-5. In 1855 every Irish county was represented, with a surprisingly even distribution; the three counties contributing most embarkations were Tipperary, Galway and Clare - in spite of the fact that there were sailings, in 1855, from Limerick, Tralee and Galway. If all the evidence were available, it might well emerge that after perhaps 1860 Cork assumed the place of general emigrant depot which Dublin appeared to hold in 1855. x

The evidence from the group of small ports is even more indeterminate. The Waterford embarkations of 1855 were chiefly from Munster, but with a substantial minority from Leinster; Drogheda in the same year drew upon sixteen counties, though mainly Cavan, Meath and Louth; most of the emigrants at Limerick came from the counties Limerick and Clare.



(d) The guide-book or handbook designed specifically or mainly for the emigrant falls into all three of the categories which have been designated 'accessories of emigration' - official, commercial, philanthropic and individual. Under the last of these may probably be classified also some miscellaneous travel literature which would appeal particularly to the intending emigrant in so far as he was responsive at all to the printed word.

It is difficult to assess the influence upon the intending emigrant of these productions; they were probably resorted to, if at all, after the dominant decision had been taken. In any case few of them seem to have been written with an eye to persons not, of course, illiterate but of a low degree of bookishness. One of the Emigrants' Information Office handbooks of 1893 is almost a learned compilation, with citation of statutes.<sup>1</sup>

In Great Britain the Emigration Commission, during its lifetime to 1878, and subsequently the Emigrants' Information Office, in being from 1886, were the sources of official emigrant literature. The publications of the commission, which have been noticed in reviewing its history (pp.156-8), may have helped many Irish and others to reconcile themselves to the prospect of life in Canada rather than in the more magnetic United States. The Emigrants' Information Office handbooks appeared under the direction of the Colonial Office. In a discussion in parliament in 1891, this literature was invoked as an antidote to 'delusive or misleading prospectuses and other circulars, emanating from various foreign countries, addressed to intending emigrants, and largely circulated in the United Kingdom.' It was

---

<sup>1</sup>Emigrants' Information Office handbooks, 1893, no.12, Emigration statutes and general handbook.



asked if some of the Emigrants' Information Office output, largely based on reports of British diplomatic and consular agents abroad, could 'be annually issued in such a manner as to give it a good chance of wide diffusion'? In replying, it was stated that among its further functions the Information Office should 'cause printed warnings to be exhibited as occasion arises at the various ports of the United Kingdom, and compile an annual summary [of consular reports] as suggested.'<sup>1</sup> Some of the valuable monitory activities of the Emigration Commission were thus to be ~~reviewed~~ *renewed*. By 1901 circulars and information on emigration could be had free at 600 public libraries in Great Britain, although (under the auspices of the Information Office) at none in Ireland. The handbooks, an annual collection of twelve bound together, cost two shillings. The collection for 1893 comprised:

1. Canada handbook. This included a description of the Dominion, with a good map; details of shipping lines, with the companies' addresses including those in Queenstown and Belfast; assisted passages to be had from the Canadian government; the appropriate outfit for colonists; demand for labour; wage-rates, including those for women and girls; cost and conditions of living. Hints to emigrants included the remark, perennially significant for the foreigner in Canada, 'all emigrants, and especially farm labourers, should be content to learn and not forward to teach'.<sup>2</sup> There were excellent descriptions of the separate provinces, and the handbook ended by inviting 'suggestions and information especially from colonists'. A revision of the text was made each spring. Canadian 'government agents' in Belfast and Dublin were listed in 1893, but apparently not continuously to 1901.

2 - 10. Similar handbooks for New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, West Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, Cape Colony and British Bechuanaland, Natal.

11. Professional handbook.

12. Emigration statutes and general handbook. This included a section 'emigration statutes and information relating to Ireland only'.

Canada gave much official publicity to immigration, and

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cccli.919-20 (13 March 1891).

<sup>2</sup>Information Office handbooks, as above, no.1, Canada handbook, p.11.



precept to immigrants, before as well as after 1867.<sup>1</sup> This was imparted to Europe and to the British Isles not only through the medium of copious pamphlets in several languages, and maps, but also by the exertions of Canadian government agents, who often found themselves in stern competition with similar emissaries of sundry American states, railroads and land companies. Most of North America was periodically interested in immigrant labour, and if this could not be captured in the St Lawrence it must be cajoled or indentured before embarkation. The employment 'runners' were familiar figures round the incoming boats at Quebec and Montreal, and the Canadian government tried to control them by a licence system. The first Canadian appropriation for immigration was made in 1854, and in that year an agent of the Bureau of Agriculture, William Hutton, was distributing literature on Canada in Great Britain, Ireland and Belgium.

Following three select committees on immigration in 1859-60, the Canadian government appointed resident agents abroad. In 1859 A.B. Hawke was sent from his post in Upper Canada to open an office in Liverpool and to publicize its facilities, and agents were assigned to Germany and Norway, where the ubiquitous Illinois Central Railroad was also in the field. By 1863 the celebrated A.C. Buchanan had succeeded Hawke in Liverpool, and was advertising in Ireland the opening of his office, for personal or postal information on Canada.<sup>2</sup> He spent much time in the rural areas of Ireland, Scotland and the English midlands; he recommended additional agents

---

<sup>1</sup>Paul W. Gates, 'Official encouragement to immigration by the province of Canada', in Canad. Hist. Rev., xv (Mar. 1934).

<sup>2</sup>Londonderry Standard, 6 May 1863. Buchanan was apparently first in Liverpool early in 1861; cf., his report, pp. 16-17, in H.C. 1862 (355), xxxvi.



for Ireland, which he regarded as the likeliest source of emigrants. Accordingly John A. Donaldson was appointed to Derry, where he was assisted by agents of the Grand Trunk and the British American Land Company, and in 1861 E.J. Charlton was sent to southern Ireland. About 1860 large Canadian land-maps were circulating in Belfast, Dublin, Galway and elsewhere. In 1874 Charles Foy, the energetic Irish-Canadian emigration agent in Belfast for the Canadian government, stirred up in the press a furore on the question of emigration which will be examined elsewhere (pp. 366-70). The results of all this publicity were thought to be numerically trifling. A flood of Canadian advertisement is said to have been put out in Ireland in the later 1860's; little or no trace of it appears in the Irish repositories. Both Donaldson and Charlton advertised in the Irish press,<sup>1</sup> and the former offered free maps and pamphlets.. The pamphlets were replaced from 1865 by the Canadian emigration gazette, and the work of propaganda went on after confederation. The readjustment of emigration propaganda as between the dominion and provincial governments was officially discussed in Canada in 1875.<sup>2</sup>

A typical Canadian government brochure of 1861 stated its aim as follows:

...Let it be our aim to undeceive Europeans and to shew that Canada is a country totally distinct from the United States [a point in which earlier Irish immigrants were frequently confused] - free from the blight of slavery, and free, too, from many of the faults which have crept into the social and political relations of our Republican neighbours.<sup>3</sup>

This production was 'intended for extensive circulation in

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf., Belfast News-Letter, 29 March 1862; Dublin Evening Post, 13 May 1862.

<sup>2</sup>First report from the select committee of the parliament of Canada on immigration and colonisation, H.C. 1875 (275), lii.

<sup>3</sup>Canada: a brief outline of her geographical position, production, climate, capabilities etc. (Quebec, 1861), Introduction.



Great Britain and Ireland, and...Europe'. The note of competitive advertisement was marked, and it reappeared, in a quaintly different key, in a publication of the State Board of Immigration of Minnesota of 1879. This was a solid forty-page pamphlet<sup>1</sup> with excellent maps, 'for gratuitous distribution, free of postage', and dedicated 'to all who would escape the exhausting competition and hopeless drudgery of the overcrowded countries of Europe and the eastern portions of our own continent, or the debilitating humid southern atmosphere...'. The attractions of the state, including its 'aesthetic features', are then set out, a little larger, it may be supposed, than life. A budget of \$465.00 (the sterling exchange was \$4.86) is drawn up for founding a farm, and

the attention of readers living in Great Britain and Ireland, especially, is called to the fact that the title which a settler acquires to lands in this country is in fee simple... There is no landlord, no yearly rent to pay, nor are any church rates or tithings exacted...He becomes his own master and his own man for life.'

The competitive, one would think the almost actionable gibe is directed at a sister state of the Union, and occurs in the course of remarks upon Minnesota's agriculture: 'Mr. Baihly declared that he never slaughtered a hog in this State that had any marks of disease and never one in Indiana that had not'. A not dissimilar example of inter-state rivalry appeared in the 'American Letter' of a local Irish newspaper. This coupled an eulogy of Texas ('offers a home to the oppressed and the poor of all nations') with some derogatory remarks on Dakota which seem to imply an official Texan origin ('In Dakota and the west generally wild prairie land is held at from 8 dols to 10 dols per acre; in Texas

---

<sup>1</sup>Minnesota, her agricultural resources, commercial advantages, and manufacturing capabilities...and the inducements she offers to those seeking homes in a new country (St Paul, Minn., 1879).



from 1 dol to 5 dols').<sup>1</sup>

A publication of about the same date by the U.S. consul at Newcastle-On-Tyne may be classed as quasi-official, and contains admirable advice, for instance comparative wage-rates of Britain and the United States.<sup>2</sup>

The verbose General hints to emigrants, of 1866, may be taken as the type of commercial publication aimed at the emigrant. So far as may be judged from the imperfect copy consulted, this work was Silver's emigration guide, prepared by the London firm of S.W. Silver & Co., the publishers of a Handbook to Canada to be noticed later. Their General hints ran to more than 200 pages and to the historian at all events are very revealing. Each of the main fields of emigration, in North America, Australasia and South Africa is considered in turn, and useful information on wages, prices and demand for labour is furnished. To prospective emigrants at either extreme of the social scale the 'hints' are coldly admonitory: 'America does not require one class of people; we mean gentlemen with "white hands", and a courtly style...';<sup>3</sup> and a little later:

...the great error lies in supposing that the classes of persons who are over abundant at home, and consequently least wanted, are exactly those most needed by the colony - broken-spirited paupers, hand-loom weavers, and other persons unaccustomed, and frequently quite unfit, for the kinds of labour in demand by the colony; as also a description of Irish labourers who either cannot or will not work, except upon canals, and who flock out to the United States and to Canada, and are the cause of serious disturbances on account of their large numbers.<sup>4</sup>

'Except upon canals' is no doubt the naivety of sedentary

<sup>1</sup>Drogheda Argus, 2 March 1889.

<sup>2</sup>Major [E.R.] Jones, The emigrants' friend...for persons intending to emigrate to the United States (London, 1880).

<sup>3</sup>General hints to emigrants, containing notices of the various fields for emigration, with practical hints, etc. (1866), p.41.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.49.



ignorance; accusations of this kind, from any country, are extremely rare. The writer pursues the theme in a quotation from a lecture in Dublin by a former governor of South Australia: "These three great hulking fellows, who had been leading a "loafing" sort of life between Kingston<sup>w</sup> and Dalkey, could not abide forty pounds per annum and plenty of wholesome food, because they were expected to "work".<sup>1</sup> Much useful information follows on sea passages to North America, and the book ends with sections on landing, looking for work and proceeding to destination, with final instructions for going on land, building a log hut and preserving health. To make very much of all this an emigrant would have to be fonder of reading than his other attributes would lead one to expect.

The same firm's Handbook to Canada<sup>2</sup> leaves a like impression of being aimed, as indeed the title indicates, at 'travellers' of some substance rather than at emigrants. By the standards of earlier guides it is a superior production, selling at five shillings, and it carries, besides the customary historical and descriptive accounts of the provinces, notes upon natural history and even moose-hunting, neither of them what may be called an emigrant interest. Silver & Co. published at this time a score or so of handbooks and maps on the colonies and India, as well as the weekly Colonies and India; and their establishment sold (perhaps this explains the copious literature) tropical and other clothing, 'oriental and overland trunks', firearms, colonists' tools, and the like.

From passage-brokers, shipping houses and similar sources

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.52.

<sup>2</sup>S.W. Silver & Co., Handbook to Canada, a guide for travellers and settlers, 1881.



came a flood of evanescent emigration 'literature', ranging down to handbills and posters, which appears to be almost unrepresented in the Irish public collections. Of the period before 1845 William Forbes Adams wrote: "We know that the publication of handbills for all sorts of purposes was general in Ireland, and it is probable that these were used for advertising emigrant ships. Unfortunately none of them seem to have been preserved".<sup>1</sup> For the latter half of the century a casual reference to such material may be gleaned here and there in other sources. There was for instance a free pamphlet on the Atlantic voyage put out (not later than 1851) by W. Tapscott & Co., of Liverpool and New York.<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere we learn that Tapscott, the great Liverpool broker, operated in New York a 'Poor House and Hospital not fit for animals to live in'.<sup>3</sup>

Of the somewhat meagre surviving total of emigrant guide-books and handbooks, those with a distinctively Irish reference are mainly to be found in the category of philanthropic or individual productions. On the other hand, the author's professed philanthropic intention did not always, on other evidence, entirely exclude him from the category of writers with a commercial interest in emigration. A case in point is The emigrant's guide, by an experienced traveller...containing all the necessary instruction for persons leaving Ireland for New York...with truly important and recent information respecting Canada, published in Dublin in 1848 by J.H. Scott, Lower Ormond Quay, price four pence.<sup>4</sup> In his preface the author says: 'I have often

<sup>1</sup>W.F. Adams, Ireland and the Irish emigration to the new world, from 1815 to the famine, p.77.

<sup>2</sup>J. O'Hanlon, The Irish emigrant's guide for the United States, Boston, 1851, p.19,n.

<sup>3</sup>Richard J. Purcell, 'The New York commissioners of emigration and Irish immigrants, 1847-60', in Studies, xxxvii (1948).

<sup>4</sup>Haliday tracts, R.I.A., box 508, no.26.



wondered why some Irishman has not written long ere this, instructions for his fellow-countrymen, on leaving their native land - ...no one has been philanthropist enough to take the trouble'. At the end of the pamphlet is advertised inter alia the 'respectable Shipping Agents for Emigrants', H. & W. Scott of Eden Quay. Again, Mooney's Nine years in America,<sup>1</sup> a work highly recommended in its day, bears on the verso of its titlepage an ingenuous address by the author, 'A Voice from America', to 'The Industrial Classes of Great Britain and Ireland':

Mr. Mooney has returned from America by the last Steamer, with the special intention of giving detailed and practical Instructions to those of every class, who meditate a removal of their enterprise to the Land of Liberty - which, if accepted and attended to, will lead them from poverty to affluence and independence...Mr. Mooney is not connected in any way with any shipping agency...

The force of this qualification is a little blunted when Mr Mooney goes on to offer 'Special Advice' for capitalists and professional men (these last a class of persons almost universally admonished not to emigrate) for 'a fee of Half a Sovereign...; according to the custom of professional men, who sell their knowledge for money'. Nevertheless, the book is forcefully written, even though a little over-eulogistic of the United States government (for whose offices 'men only of the greatest moral worth in the state are selected'<sup>2</sup>), and it includes that which the Minnesota Board of Immigration did not omit, a generation later: 'The American farmer, Patrick, never pays any rent. When he takes a farm he BUYS it for ever'.<sup>3</sup> This was all that many an Irishman needed to know about the new world.

---

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Mooney, Nine years in America...in a series of letters to his cousin, Patrick Mooney, a farmer in Ireland, 2nd edn., Dublin, 1850.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.19.



A little later than Mooney's came two interesting books, from Boston, O'Hanlon's Irish emigrant's guide, already cited, and from Cork, Peyton's Emigrant's friend,<sup>1</sup> both by priests. Peyton repeats many stock instructions, e.g. on the correct time of year to emigrate, from O'Hanlon. Each work seems alike very adequate on the routine of transport, getting work and so forth which makes up the common form of all the better guide-books. For our purpose the significance of the two books is in their general concurrence against emigration, which brings them almost into the category of anti-emigration tracts and as such more suitably to be treated elsewhere. In O'Hanlon the educated, en bloc, are at the outset warned against emigrating: "we will only consider at present the condition of the poorer classes, or those immediately above them".<sup>2</sup> "The Utopia of the imagination, is not the United States of our experience".<sup>3</sup> Unreasoning abuse of the English administration of Ireland, "to flatter the national pride of free born Americans",<sup>4</sup> is to be deprecated - an unusual precept. Both writers unite, as perhaps becomes their calling, in warning against life's convivialities as interpreted in the United States - "low grogeries",<sup>5</sup> "all kinds of secret societies, company keeping, and grog shops".<sup>6</sup>

Peyton is outspoken in his opinion that nobody who can get work in Ireland, and least of all anyone who can buy land in Ireland, should think of emigrating; that the emigrant's faith, or rather his total morality, is in danger; and that

---

<sup>1</sup>Alex. J. Peyton, The emigrant's friend; or hints on emigration to the United States of America, addressed to the people of Ireland, Cork, 1853.

<sup>2</sup>O'Hanlon, as above, p.11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.12.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.169.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.167.

<sup>6</sup>Peyton, as above, p.6.



in general more Irish fail than succeed in the United States. It is a heavy indictment, from one who had travelled widely in America and the Canadas collecting funds for the Irish Catholic university. Both O'Hanlon and Peyton maintain that land in the encumbered estates court is a better bargain than anything to be had in the eastern United States, or would be if the purchasers were not addicted to idleness and dissipation (cf. pp. 55-6 ). On this topic Peyton:

Let people only exert themselves at home as they do abroad, let them shake off that sluggish inertness, that drowsy listlessness, which forms a striking feature in their manner of doing business...and by unwearied activity and firm perseverance, they will acquire in the land of their birth more rational and agreeable comforts.<sup>1</sup>

These far from comfortable words were directed to the better sort; for the labourers:

Irish labourers know not what they have to endure in America [e.g. deprivation of religion]. I was told by a wealthy planter, who resided at Natchez, that when he wanted to drain any marshy ground, he went to New Orleans, and got Irish labourers, at a dollar and a half a day... he lost nothing by the death of an Irishman, but the death of a negro would be a loss of 800 or a thousand dollars... Under all these circumstances, pro and con, I would recommend the labourer who has constant employment and fair wages to remain content at home,<sup>2</sup>

since in the United States he will get only harder work, a higher cost of living to match his higher wages, indiscipline in his children and irreligion; and anyone emigrating over fifty should prepare his soul 'for another world.' Peyton's readers might well echo Bunyan, 'I perceive by the book in my hand that I am condemned to die'. They might draw a residual comfort from Peyton's opinion that in America rather than in Ireland they had some <sup>prospect of</sup> ~~respect for~~ founding a prosperous family.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Intro., p.vii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.19-23.



The question remains, and it is unanswerable, to what extent were these vaticinations read, or if read, heeded? One may conclude that, partly from the emigration literature but much more from experience transmitted orally and by letter, was distilled a folklore or rule-of-thumb wisdom: trust nobody but yourself, i.e. avoid the 'runners' alike of Liverpool and New York; don't drink; if farming is your inclination, go west but be wary of taking up uncleared land too soon; keep out of politics; shopmen, clerks, teachers had better stay at home. Once installed in the new world, the emigrant found a choice of American guide-books replete with realistic injunctions for those who were inclined to essay the ever-moving frontier.<sup>1</sup> He might even be ready to read and appreciate, if read he could, such highly technical productions as Robert Scott Burn's Colonist's and emigrant's handbook of the mechanical arts,<sup>2</sup> with its instructions, admirably not to say intricately illustrated, for house construction (including the inevitable 'log shanty'), joinery, brickmaking, fencing, roadbuilding, well-sinking.

Particularly in the early years of my period, a certain amount of information, official or otherwise, on how to emigrate appeared in newspapers or other cheap periodicals where it was more likely than in some of the foregoing forms to find appreciative readers. Some examples have already been cited of the appearance in the Irish press of information put out by the Emigration Commission. (pp. 158-9 ). The Dublin press, particularly the Freeman's

---

<sup>1</sup>E.g., Josiah T. Marshall, The farmers' and emigrants' complete guide...with copious hints, recipes etc. (Cincinnati, 1854). The hints included appalling instructions for home abdominal surgery, with special reference to bullet wounds.

<sup>2</sup>(Edinburgh, 1854).



Journal, sometimes reprinted general emigration news from provincial sources. In 1852 the Nation printed long extracts<sup>1</sup> from Vere Foster's recent emigration pamphlet, based on some of his Dantesque experiences in the Washington. These extracts extolled the advantages of America over Australia, and discoursed upon American wages, the time to sail, the place to settle, the passage-money, provisions and outfit for the voyage, and the like. Chambers's Journal<sup>2</sup> began its long career, in 1832, with a care for the then lively public interest in emigration: 'It has been mentioned in our prospectus, that the furnishing of valuable and correct information on the subject of Emigration from Britain shall, if possible, be a prominent object in the design of the present publication.'<sup>3</sup> The proprietors thought, very rightly, that existing works on the subject 'of a respectable character' were too dear; in the Journal, for 1½d weekly, British and Irish readers could find over a dozen articles on emigration in the course of the first volume alone, but this rather intensive cultivation of the topic had ended by 1851.

. . . . .

Emigrant letters probably came next only to emigrant remittances as an attractive force in drawing population overseas. There were letters without remittances;<sup>4</sup> there could scarcely be remittances without letters. In the transatlantic mail lay the mechanism that justifies the commonplace on 'emigration begetting emigration'. As late

---

<sup>1</sup>E.g., 6, 27 November.

<sup>2</sup>Successively published as Chambers' Edinburgh Journal, Chambers's Edinburgh Journal, Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature Science and Arts.

<sup>3</sup>Chambers' Journal, i.3 (4 February 1832).

<sup>4</sup>Such sometimes ended 'my next letter will not be a hungry one.'



as the census of 1871, the all-Ireland percentage of illiteracy was as high as thirty-three,<sup>1</sup> and much of this correspondence must have involved a certain process of mediation through literate persons, both in Ireland and overseas, of which little record survives. A provincial newspaper of 1852 contained an edifying short story, 'The Tutor's Trial', of an ex-pedagogue who takes a steerage passage, not the last of his kind to do so, to Australia: Stephen received much useful advice and information from his companions. The tracts on emigration had been eagerly perused by them, and not lost in the multiplicity of other matter. They had also their relations' letters, curious in the extreme minuteness of their details; and well knew what they were about. These poor men [sc. the relations] summoning their distant friends...<sup>2</sup>

Another Irish newspaper observed some years later: 'post after post brings hundreds of letters which are speedily followed by symptoms of moving amongst the recipients.'<sup>3</sup> In the early eighteen-seventies, two Atlantic steamship lines, the Dominion and the Allan, were said to be publishing pamphlets containing emigrants' letters from Canada under such titles as The New Dominion, Canada the Land of Homes (the modern formula is 'land of happy homes'), Information to Emigrants.<sup>4</sup>

The temptation, in publications of such provenance, to make textual emendations in the letters, not to say to fabricate them in toto, may have been considerable; and the originals, in so far as there were any, seem to be beyond the reach of history. This consideration must be kept in mind in reviewing the most remarkable printed collection of emigrants' letters, or alleged emigrants'

<sup>1</sup>Census of Ireland, 1871, part III, General report, p.57.

<sup>2</sup>Newry Examiner, 14 January 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Cork Constitution, 16 April 1860.

<sup>4</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 21 May 1874.



letters, that I have been able to find. This was an eighty-page brochure published in Belfast in 1873<sup>1</sup> on behalf of the provincial government of Ontario. This work described the province and its free-grant lands, the passage from Britain (puffing the Allan line, which was the Ontario government's medium for assisted passages), the progress of the city of Ottawa, and included an estimate of the number of immigrants in each trade required that year in various districts; these estimates had the imprimatur of the several government immigration agents. The interesting feature of the book was a large collection of letters, addressed mainly to Charles Foy, the Canadian government's commissioner of emigration for the north of Ireland; some of his activities have already been mentioned. It is possibly ominous that one of his correspondents observes: 'Yours is the pen of a ready writer.'<sup>2</sup> The following extracts illustrate the impression of Ontario which intending emigrants might glean:

Letter from Mr. Edward McCollum, who emigrated from Cootehill, Co. Cavan. Durat, Province Ontario, Canada, April 20, 1870, to Charles Foy, Esq....It was with great pleasure I read your able and truthful address to our countrymen, advising them to come out to this happy land... I differ with you on only one point of your address - where you talk of hard work in Canada. I am now some twelve years here, and I never saw as hard work as in Ireland...Any steady industrious man, can in a few years, become...independent...It is accountable folly for farmers with from 10 to 20 acres to remain in Ireland in a state of wretched servility when twelve days would bring them to a land of independence...As to the working classes, we cannot get tenth [sic] the number of farm labourers or servant girls required...I would express a hope that your mission will prove a very successful one; your countrymen in Ontario, and all through Canada, were unanimous in approval of your appointment. You have powerful influence in the North of Ireland...<sup>3</sup>

6

---

<sup>1</sup>Dominion of Canada: emigration to the province of Ontario: free grants of land...immediate employment at good wages, etc. (Belfast, W.&G. Baird, 1873).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.24.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.23-4.



A linen lapper from Belfast is happy working in a lumber yard at 5s a day, with prospects of 8s a day in a grist mill

in Strathroy...I would rather be there; it is more lively than this place; it is where my cousin Thomas is. There is a new brass band there belonging to the volunteers; they are wanting me to join...You say that George - is saving to come, and I would recommend you all to come out... There is no such thing as linen-lapping here; you would have to take anything at first, like me...I am telling you nothing but what I can stand over. You would do well; no person need be idle here if they want to work...<sup>1</sup>

Another **satisfied** customer wrote from Goderich to the Montreal steamship company's agent in Armagh: 'This is a nice country, and the people here are very kind...I am well pleased, for all Mr. Foy said is true and I only wish I had come here ten years ago...'.<sup>2</sup>

A letter from a boy sent out to Toronto could have been concocted, if not by himself, by only an even readier pen than Foy's was reputed to be:

I am a week to-day at the farming, with a very nice man, a Canadian. The people out here are very friendly. Dear father, I can't think I am so far from home as I am; this place is like the poor old grove in Stillorgan...Don't think that it is one of the log huts I am in, for it is a great brick house, and I have a room to myself...About seven o'clock we have to take a bath, and wash ourselves all over before we go to bed...May God bless Miss L. and Mr Foy for what they have done for me.<sup>3</sup>

Writing on another occasion to his sister, the boy says:

'If God spares me to the Spring, then I will be sending you something worth while'.<sup>4</sup> A co. Leitrim emigrant refuted the opinion sometimes heard that Irishmen would not work: 'I and Charles has the nicest master in Canada I think...He has said in many places where he is in company, that he defies Canada to produce two men more able and

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.26.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



willing to work than what we are...It is a good country for earning money, no mistake in that, if you keep out of the taverns...".<sup>1</sup> The Portadown agent of the Allan line writes a letter to Foy which modesty might well have withheld from the collection; it ends: 'When may we expect you again in Portadown? Please send me a fresh supply of your admirable lecture...'.<sup>2</sup> There are letters stressing the perennial demand for 'a thousand good servant maids', for '1,000 farm labourers', and specifying very high wages for bricklayers. The catholicity of Ontario's labour market is equal to finding a niche, though not without difficulty, for a Trinity graduate, whose progress in the Ottawa country is traced from employment by a 'respectable Scotch farmer', through pedagogy in Carleton county to the nirvana of 'the engineer staff at present engaged on a survey of the Pacific Railway...A fine spirited manly lad...'.<sup>3</sup>

The collection reprints some letters to the press by Foy himself. One of these contains reassurance, of a kind fairly frequent in the book, on the delicate subject of the Canadian climate, a subject upon which another writer commits himself to the remarkable meiosis: 'The climate is very similar to that in England, only the frosts are sharper here.'<sup>4</sup> Foy was a publicity agent of a very high order for his day; as such men do, he occasionally overreaches, as in printing the following statement from a co. Tyrone emigrant: 'This township is twelve miles square, and the Indians have three miles by twelve in the front of

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.27.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.28.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.35.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.39.



it...They are all civilised and christianised; they are the Mohawk tribe; splendid men, and every one of them an Orangeman.<sup>1</sup> But the cumulative effect of this production must have been tremendous, and no pronouncement in it was more striking than one of Foy's own: 'The Irish labourer, when too old to work, has only the workhouse to look to. I never met or heard of the second generation of labourers in Canada.' A proud boast on behalf of the country of his adoption, and one which, all unconsciously, brings together the extrusive and the attractive elements of the emigration process: Ireland must have emigrants, to cheat the workhouse; Canada must have immigrants, to be the missing 'second generation of labourers'.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.62.



SECTION IV

The reception of the emigrants in British North America and the United States.

It is not expected in the present thesis to offer more than an extended history of the Irish, during the period, in Canada and the United States, a subject which was originally the principal in North America. It is however necessary and practicable, with the aid principally of British and Irish sources, to assess the relative attractions of the two countries for the Irish emigrants, and, so far as imperfect statistics admit, the proportions who migrated to either.

SECTION IV

The reception of the emigrants  
in British North America and the  
United States.

Smaller Irish community I am able to find than any country source. Differences may be traced between Canada and that of the United States. No comprehensive Irish opinion of the two North American countries can be gathered from the Irish press and Irish emigrants' letters. The designation 'Canada' will, for brevity, frequently be used where no ambiguity arises, although strictly speaking 'British North America' would be more correct.

The United States was of course pre-eminently the great goal of Irish emigrants during the period in question. The statistical appendices to the Registrar-General's Reports 1852-73, give a total of 520,721 emigrants of the Irish race for the U.S.A., against 223,271 for British North America. The comparable figures for the period 1847-51 are 401,000 emigrants of Irish nationality, and 187,000 for British North America.



## SECTION IV.

The reception of the emigrants in British North America and the United States.

It is not expedient in the present thesis to embark upon an extended history of the Irish, during the period, in Canada and the United States, a major subject whose materials lie principally in North America. It is however necessary and practicable, with the aid principally of British and Irish sources, to assess the relative attractions of the two countries for the Irish emigrants, and, so far as imperfect statistics admit, the proportions who emigrated to either. The partiality of British official opinion, and of some weighty Irish opinion, for Canada ~~as~~ rather than the United States as a field of Irish emigration deserves attention; it was an aspiration like some others connected with emigration, not justified in the event. For the development of the Canadian-Irish community I am able to draw upon some Canadian sources. Differences may be traced between Canada's attitude to the Irish immigrants, as to emigration in general, and that of the United States. Much contemporary Irish opinion of the two North American countries may be gleaned from the Irish press and from emigrants' letters. The designation 'Canada' will, for brevity, frequently be used where no ambiguity arises, although at all events before 1867 'British North America' would be more correct.

The United States was of course pre-eminently the American goal of Irish emigrants during the period, as always. The statistical appendixes to the Emigration Commission's Reports, 1852-73, give a total of 519,731 embarkations at the Irish ports for the U.S.A., against 133,320 for British North America. The comparable figures yielded by the census commissioners' returns for the period 1876-1901, counting all emigrants of Irish nationality, are respectively 1,251,541 and



67,471.<sup>1</sup> That is to say, the percentage distribution of the emigrants, during those periods, between the two destinations was as follows:

Irish emigration to Canada as % of Irish emigration to North America:

1851-72.....	20.4
1876-1901.....	5.1

Only in each of the years 1853-5 was there an absolute majority of Irish emigrants to British North America.<sup>2</sup> Even so, the question of how many stayed there is another matter. Earlier in the century, Canada and New Brunswick, owing to cheap passages on the timber boats, were the accepted emigrant route to New York and Philadelphia as well as to the west,<sup>3</sup> and a pattern of this kind is persistent. Re-emigration was a familiar bogey to Canadians who wished to see their country fill out, as the magnetic United States frontier is today. Durham placed re-emigration as high as 60%.<sup>4</sup> Even later, the evidence on this point is extremely obscure; an open frontier has statistical drawbacks. As the Emigration Commissioners said: 'It has at all times been difficult to ascertain the exact number of the immigrants into Canada, who settle permanently in the Province, and the relative proport-

<sup>1</sup>Emigration statistics of Ireland, 1876-1901. In Imre Ferenczi and Walter F. Willcox, International migrations, i. Tab.11, Intercontinental emigration of citizens by country of future residence : country of emigration Ireland, are to be found quinquennial summaries of the emigration, but only, apparently, from Irish ports, for 1876-1900.

<sup>2</sup>In spite of a slight increase, in 1853, in the incidence of the Canadian provincial immigrant tax, Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 14th General report, 1854, p.59. At the same time, the remission of half the tax on transients to the United States, instituted in an act of 1850, was now discontinued (*ibid.*), in an attempt, no doubt, to check this leakage. But in 1850 Buchanan was apparently advancing the claims of Canada as a highway to 'the North-Western States', cf., his Report for 1849, p.12, H.C.1850(173), xl.

<sup>3</sup>W.F. Adams, Ireland and the Irish emigration to the new world, from 1815 to the famine, pp.87-9.

<sup>4</sup>W.A. Carrothers, Emigration from the British Isles, pp. 165-6.



ions of those who depart, and those who arrive, by the United States frontier.<sup>1</sup> Buchanan's returns included to 1854 a statement of the numbers of immigrants remaining in the Canadas, and to 1855 the numbers proceeding to the United States, in neither case distinguishing Irish immigrants; but in 1856 and 1857 he reported that the opening of the railroads made a check of re-emigration 'difficult', and by 1867 he very sensibly endorsed this item 'unknown'.<sup>2</sup>

Before there was decisive federal legislation on immigrants, the varying enactments of individual American states and ports against pauper immigration had something to do with the routes which the poorer emigrants to the United States chose. About 1847 many overcrowded vessels, cleared for New York, changed course to the St Lawrence. Their passengers might enter the central and western United States by the St Lawrence canal system and the Lakes, or New York state by the Richelieu-Champlain route, and there might be excellent reasons for preferring either to the stricter port supervision at New York or Boston.<sup>3</sup> In any case such immigrants as these were lost to Canada. In 1855 the state department informed the mayor of New Orleans that

Circulars issued by the immigration agents in the interior of Germany caution immigrants who are deformed, crippled, or maimed, etc., against taking passage to New York, and advise them to go by way of Baltimore, New Orleans, or Quebec, where the laws prohibiting the landing of immigrants of the above classes do not apply...<sup>4</sup>

A Montreal newspaper noted, at the height of the famine emigration, the drain of immigrants which lower Canada suffered, both to upper Canada and the United States. The

<sup>1</sup>Emigration Commission, 17th General report, 1857, p.38.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., General reports, 1849-68.

<sup>3</sup>R.L. Garis, Immigration restriction.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted, ibid., p.44.



editor, a Scottish Presbyterian, drafted a highly pragmatic balance-sheet of local immigration in the following manner. He calculates that 60,000 immigrants have arrived that season in the St Lawrence, but of these probably only one quarter were men aged 16-60, of whom one third are dead or sick. Of the remaining 10,000, 'at least one half, including Germans, have found their way to the U.S.', leaving the paltry figure of 5,000 labourers for the whole of Canada. The immigrants, he complains, 'are all hurried past to Toronto and Hamilton', in spite of shortages of labour en route, both on the Lake shore and in the back townships. 'It will only be' he observes elsewhere 'after they have got all that they can get, that they will cross over <sup>into</sup> ~~the~~ the U.S.'; and 'the great mass of the emigrants appeared well and hearty, earnestly seeking for free passages, and bent on going westward as soon as possible'.<sup>1</sup>

In their Report of 1849, the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners stated: 'Under any circumstances, it is in the United States that the great bulk of [the emigrants] must eventually settle, as Canada does not possess a tithe of the capital necessary for their employment.'<sup>2</sup> They elaborated this proposition three years later, when they pointed out that the population of Canada and New Brunswick together was no more than 1,750,000, against twenty-three millions in the United States; that Canada had a head-tax on immigrants; that the bulk of Irish passages were financed, by prepayment or remittance, from the United States and not Canada.<sup>3</sup> In such circumstances, the higher absorptive

---

<sup>1</sup>Montreal Witness, 24 May, 14 June, 9 August 1847.

<sup>2</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 9th General report, 1849, pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 12th General report, 1852, p. 14.



capacity of the United States was palpable. There were other considerations that heightened the odds against Canada. The United States offered in greater measure than Canada, both the sociability of town life which meant much to many emigrants, and the rough construction work on canals and railways in which the immigrant Irish were prominent, however much they might be exhorted by numerous monitors to go on land. Again, among that large proportion of all the American Irish who, according to the United States census of 1850, lived in the north-eastern states, accessible from lower Canada, an influential American-Irish priesthood was growing up. A committee on emigration set up by the Canadian legislature reported in 1857 that re-emigration, generally to the United States, had been 'perceptibly more extensive' from lower than upper Canada. It is therefore not surprising that in the generation following 1851 the numbers of the Irish in Canada declined in the following manner:

1851

	<u>Of Irish origin</u>	<u>% of population</u>
Upper Canada	175,963	18.5
Lower Canada	51,499	5.8

1861

	<u>Of Irish origin</u>	<u>% of population</u>
Upper Canada	191,231	13.7
Lower Canada	50,192	4.5

1871<sup>1</sup>

	<u>Of Irish origin</u>	<u>% of population</u>
Upper Canada	153,000	9.4
Lower Canada	35,828	3.0

The Irish in Canada, possibly like other minority immigrant

<sup>1</sup>Census of the Canadas: 1851-2, Personal census, vol.I. 1860-1, Personal Census, vol.I; Censuses of Canada, 1608 to 1876, vol.V. In 1850 there were almost a million persons of Irish birth in the United States.

H.C. 1854-5 (464), xxxix.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.20, H.C. 1862 (355), xxxvi.



groups, were much addicted to exaggerating their own numbers, knowingly or otherwise. A gathering of the Irish in Montreal, in 1857, claimed to speak for 'fully one-third of all its inhabitants',<sup>1</sup> although the census of 1851, for what that was worth, showed them to number considerably less than one quarter. It is to be supposed that the doubtful expression 'Irish origin' meant Irish nativity, since the enumeration sheets of the census adopted this classification. Similarly, J.F. Maguire, following his North American tour in 1867, made some very liberal estimates of the numbers of the Irish in the Dominion. His statement that 'the Irish form fully half the population of...Upper Canada',<sup>2</sup> at a time when their proportion was in fact falling somewhere between 14% and 9%, shakes faith in his ascription of very large Irish catholic populations to Nova Scotia and Montreal.<sup>3</sup> <sup>New</sup> Brunswick suffered a similar large proportional drain in the early years after 1851, although the reports do not always distinguish Irish immigrants from others. For the year 1852 Perley, the emigration agent at St John, reported that nine-tenths of the immigrants, as in the previous year, were Irish, but that two-thirds of the whole immigration went on to the United States, having taken cheap passages to New Brunswick in the timber boats.<sup>4</sup> But in 1854<sup>5</sup> only 10% of the immigration left the province, and in 1861<sup>6</sup> of a shipload from Londonderry only six persons went on to the United States.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Montreal] True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 4 December 1857.

<sup>2</sup> John Francis Maguire, The Irish in America, p.103.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp.3,11,97.

<sup>4</sup> Papers relative to the emigration to the North American colonies, p. 43, [1650], H.C.1852-3, lxviii.

<sup>5</sup> Copies or extracts of despatches relative, etc., p.44, H.C.1854-5 (464), xxxix.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.20, H.C.1862 (355), xxxvi.



It was thus in vain, and counter to a tradition, that many voices after 1851 united to tell the Irish emigrant that he ought to settle in Canada rather than the United States. Ubi bene ibi patria must ever be the emigrant's motto, and the Freeman's Journal translated it, in a striking phrase, within a leading article on emigration: 'Where their friends are, there is home'.<sup>1</sup> It is a matter of arithmetic that Irish friends in general, and kin particularly, must always after 1850, and indeed sooner, be more numerous in the United States than Canada. The localisation of emigration, as between a given, often small, Irish district and a given overseas area has often been remarked.<sup>2</sup> In such a way 'the double stimulus of adventure and affection',<sup>3</sup> to quote the same newspaper, could be satisfied. There was also the great impression made by American relief in the famine, although Canada helped too. Of the former country Hansen said:

...The New York commission agents sent the surplus of the New World to the starving Irishman. In so doing they fed not only his mind but his imagination, for he learned convincingly of a land where there was an abundance of food to spare.<sup>4</sup>

It is hard to distinguish in the figures of Irish emigration any specific diminution due to one of America's periodic onsets of xenophobia in the Know-nothing movement. The Limerick Reporter,<sup>5</sup> already quoted on the subject, thought

<sup>1</sup>Freeman's Journal, 29 March 1853.

<sup>2</sup>Tuke, speaking of his committee's work in aiding emigration, said: 'we found wherever anyone had gone out and sent home a good report, immediately in that little town-land everybody wished to go into that particular district', Cairns committee, II, 1882, Q.7665.

<sup>3</sup>Freeman's Journal, 24 September 1853, p. 243.

<sup>4</sup>M.L. Hansen, The Atlantic migration, p.248.

<sup>5</sup>16 January 1857.



the Irish would do better to direct their steps to the country [Canada] where their own faith

is not insulted and despised, and where they can earn quite as good wages as elsewhere, than to a land filled with slavers, know-nothings and infidels, who make it a special point to lessen and degrade the Irish faith and character...

The newspaper noted that Vere Foster made it his object to direct destitute Irish girls to Canada; being destitute, they had the less choice. Smith O'Brien was rapturously received at two lectures in Dublin wherein he pointed somewhat the same moral as the foregoing. He described his tour of that year, 1859, in North America, and although he maintained that the American Irish were not the mere Gibeonites of that noisy Israel, since even labourers could live well on 50¢ a day, nevertheless it was a pity the Irish did not avoid the United States and build up their own communities in Canada and Australia.<sup>1</sup> In this and some other particulars he seemed to echo, or anticipate, D'Arcy McGee, whose very individual and striking point of view will be examined later. Smith O'Brien, for instance, had to admit: 'I have stated frankly some points in regard of which the practice of the British Government appears to me to be preferable to that of the United States.'<sup>2</sup>

The fact<sup>was</sup> that, as the Emigration Commission pointed out in 1872, Canada could not absorb, and never had absorbed, more than thirty to forty thousand immigrants a year,<sup>3</sup> although McGee, always given to statistical optimism, put Canada's capacity at 20,000 families.<sup>4</sup> Both estimates differed

<sup>1</sup>Wm. Smith O'Brien, Lectures on America, delivered in the Mechanics' Institute, Dublin, November 1859, p.15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.41.

<sup>3</sup>Emigration Commission, 32nd General report, 1872, p.2.

<sup>4</sup>Isabel Skelton, Life of Thomas D'Arcy McGee, p.412.



widely from a rather reckless official Canadian pronouncement, also of 1872, saying: 'the numbers of immigrants which might be absorbed by the immense agricultural and other resources of the Dominion are practically unlimited.'<sup>1</sup> As regards Irish immigrants, the highest number by far to enter Canada in any year between 1876 and 1901 was 12,000, in 1883.<sup>2</sup> The Irish government's emigration committee of 1882 laboured in vain to popularise Canada, with its assisted passages for labourers and domestic servants. The committee's preliminary report came out strongly for Canada, reinforced by the expert opinions of Redington and Gaskell. These found that, for assisted emigrants, the Australasian passage was too dear, and the American cities morally dangerous; and the C.P.R. wanted men.<sup>3</sup> But the United States took 68,000 Irish that year to Canada's 8,000. ~~A~~ *Vere Foster*, witness before the Cairns committee, spoke of the Irish preference for the United States as arising from dislike of British territory, and attraction to friends in America.<sup>4</sup> Tuke thought the dislike for Canada in his emigrants arose from mere ignorance, such as the idea that Canada was 'a great iceberg',<sup>5</sup> a poor reward for the Dominion's assiduous publicity, which did not forget to mention the Ontario peaches. More politically-minded persons thought 'Canadian emigration to be a subtle device for keeping the emigrant under the British Crown, even when he had left Ireland.'<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Further correspondence respecting emigration, p.4, [C. 614], H.C.1872. xliii.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration statistics of Ireland, 1884.

<sup>3</sup>Report, dated 18th November 1882, made by the Local Government Board, as above, Enclosure C.

<sup>4</sup>Cairns committee, II, 1882, QQ.7564-5, 7600-1, 7605-6, 7616 (Foster).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Q.7665.

<sup>6</sup>Emigration from Ireland: being the second report of the committee of 'Mr. Tuke's Fund', July, 1883, p.18.



At the select committee on colonisation, Rutledge-Fair referred to the same indisposition among the Tuke emigrants to go to Canada.<sup>1</sup>

In face of such attitudes, it was of no great avail to point out that Canada and not the United States was the desirable destination for state-aided family emigration, since after-care could be exercised;<sup>2</sup> or for an Irish witness of peasant origin, who had sampled both Canada and the United States, to praise the Canadian reception of immigrants, with an agency service and free rail tickets, compared with the American.<sup>3</sup> The record of the census was inexorable; and in 1893 the Irish registrar-general stated that the United States had more than a million and three-quarters of Irish-born citizens, Canada only 186,000.<sup>4</sup>

The loyalty and content of the Canadian Irish were more than once commented upon in the British parliament - 'a remarkable instance of what a change of country would effect',<sup>5</sup> and it was asked what was the secret 'which gave one character to the Irishman in Canada or Australia, and another to the Irishman in Ireland?'<sup>6</sup> In the dark year 1883 Lansdowne urged that Irish emigrants should be sent, not to join 'the disloyal Irish population' in the United States, but to 'the loyal subjects of Her Majesty now settled in the Dominion of Canada'. Another speaker thought that the Canadian Irish, 'once the influence of example was

<sup>1</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, QQ. 2630, 2664.

<sup>2</sup>Cairns committee, II, 1882, Q.7517 (King-Harman); QQ. 7694, 7709-10 (Tuke).

<sup>3</sup>Richmond commission, Minutes of evidence, part I, 1880, QQ. 19, 795-9 (Peter O'Leary).

<sup>4</sup>T.W. Grimshaw, Facts and figures about Ireland, p.7n.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, clxxvii.724 (24 February 1865); and cf., *ibid.*, cxc.1694 (16 March 1868).

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, cxc.1744 (16 March 1868).



brought to bear upon them...turned out the most useful members of the Colony.'<sup>1</sup> Some provisional solutions of the enigma may be assembled from several sources. In 1860 Smith O'Brien had occasion to write to the committee of the Cork Reading Rooms, deprecating an attempt to get him to lecture in support of Franco-Irish co-operation against Britain. He writes that he will not 'recommence a career of agitation', and expounds the need for 'such public virtue and such public spirit' in the Irish people as shall qualify them for a measure of self-government. He adds:

I have seen in Canada and in Australia the principle of selfgovt carried into effect by means of local legislatures. The unequivocal recognition of the right of local selfgovt in these colonies has commuted [sic?] discontent into enthusiastic loyalty...<sup>2</sup>

It is perhaps understandable that the collection yields signs that Smith O'Brien's popularity in Ireland was waning about this time.<sup>3</sup> A few years later, the effervescent Maguire put another aspect of the same interesting point of view:

If a similar state of things as exists in Ireland were introduced into Canada, in six months there would be an uprising of the people, and in twelve months the Stars and Stripes would be floating upon the ramparts of Quebec and upon the Senate House of Ottawa.<sup>4</sup>

Lastly, the Times in 1885 illuminated another facet of this truth: 'We cannot make Ireland like Canada, first because Canadians are our friends, whilst the majority of Irishmen are our enemies, and second because Canada is 3,000 miles away, and Ireland is at our doors.'<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., cclxxxviii.878-9, 886 (23 April 1883).

<sup>2</sup>12 October 1860, W.S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MSS 447, f.3186.

<sup>3</sup>But cf., *ibid.*, f.3243, for condolences in his bereavement, June, 1861.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, cxc.1303 (10 March 1868).

<sup>5</sup>19 December 1885, <sup>quoted,</sup> J.L. Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish nation, p.524.



Responsible government, remoteness from Britain and propinquity to the United States are the highly significant elements of Canadian-Irish contentment in the nineteenth century that may be drawn from the foregoing pronouncements; and the opinion may be ventured that the last was the greatest. The 'Stars and Stripes' have never been far from Quebec, Montreal or Toronto, and in the doubtful disguise of fenianism they crossed the frontier, very momentarily, less than two years before Maguire's speech. The American-Irish, like the Canadian-Irish, had put the ocean between themselves and Britain; but in so doing they had lost, by entering perhaps the most assimilative society on earth, the not illusory independence which Britain's remote control permitted, increasingly after 1867, to all Canadians. That the control remained may be gathered, not without amusement, from an address of the Dominion parliament to Queen Victoria, with whose habits of mind they were no doubt imperfectly acquainted, touching the government of Ireland. The address sets out that Canada has observed recent troubles in Ireland with 'profound regret and concern'; that the Canadian-Irish are 'among the most loyal and prosperous, and most contented of Your Majesty's subjects'; that Canada does not, however, get its due share of Irish emigration, because the Irish are estranged from the imperial government; that Canada is thriving as a federation, so why not adopt the same system for Ireland, and would not an amnesty be possible for the Irish political prisoners? The queen's reply was not phrased 'mind your own business', but came to that effect. Canada was advised to leave Ireland to the government of Queen Victoria with 'the advice of the Imperial Parliament and Ministers, to whom all matters relating to



the affairs of the United Kingdom exclusively appertain.<sup>1</sup>

Some illustrations of a local Canadian-Irish community, in Montreal, may profitably be given after a further consideration of emigrant experiences in Canada and the United States.

At this point it should be noted that British anxiety to see the Irish emigrate to Canada rather than America was but one aspect of a need, increasing after 1870, to find a colonial repository for intermittently unemployed elements of the growing British population. This need was matched by the desire of Canada for immigrants, tempered by a dislike, which grew vocal in the colonial working classes as the century advanced, for immigrant paupers. The distress in Lancashire in 1863 caused the colonial office to circularise the colonies on the subject of openings for the distressed operatives, <sup>and</sup> from some of the provinces of British North America came offers to receive a limited number of labourers, and a probably unlimited supply of female domestic servants.<sup>2</sup> These were the staple and unvarying requirements of the Canadian department of immigration, and they did not always fit the British problem of unemployed artisans. Monsell pointed out in 1870 that, since Australia would not 'have our pauperism shovelled out upon them', Canada was the only hope as the goal of state-aided emigration.<sup>3</sup> The famous phrase echoed down the years, a sure sign that it touched the British conscience. The year 1870, with one million on the rates in Britain and another million nearly so, found the

---

<sup>1</sup>Address to Her Majesty from the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, in relation to affairs in Ireland, and reply thereto, [C.3294], H.C.1882, xlv.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration Commission, 24th General report, 1864, p.17.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, cxcix.1021 (1 March 1870).



colonial office once more asking various colonies for news of possible outlets, and pointing out that the unemployed are now not artisans, as in 1863, but 'men who have been accustomed to hard out-door labour'.<sup>1</sup> Voluminous replies were published in the following year. From these it appeared that South Africa, content with its black underworld, was firmly opposed to any kind of immigration; that Australian employers would welcome immigrants, Australian workers, entrenched behind good wages agreements, would not; and that upper Canada (but not Quebec or the Maritimes) could absorb annually thirty to forty thousand immigrants 'of a good description',<sup>2</sup> which did not, probably, comprise the poorer sort of Irish. Further observations from Canada on their 'unlimited' capacity for accommodating immigrants have been referred to above. They were unhappily timed, as these forecasts sometimes were, on the brink of a North American trade depression; they specified agricultural wages of £24-£30 per annum with board, stated that an immigrant's family was a great source of strength if industrious, and detailed the assisted transport afforded by the Dominion and provincial governments.<sup>3</sup>

By the latter part of 1883 the catholic archbishop of Toronto was asking the north Dublin union not to send any more female paupers to Toronto,<sup>4</sup> and this was symbolic of the condition to which that year's heavy Irish emigration had reduced the Dominion's boasted powers of absorption. The crisis of the early eighteen-eighties found Dublin Castle as

---

<sup>1</sup>Circular despatched to the governors of different Colonies on the subject of emigration, H.C.1870 (179), xlix.

<sup>2</sup>Correspondence respecting emigration, particularly pp. 63-4, [C.335], H.C.1871, xlvi.

<sup>3</sup>Further correspondence respecting emigration, pp.3-4, [C.614], H.C.1872, xliii.

<sup>4</sup>Times, 19 October 1883.



eager to promote as Canada to eschew what Canada could only regard as low-grade emigration.<sup>1</sup> In 1884 Lansdowne, now in the Dominion, sent a confidential despatch to Derby on the subject of pauper Irish immigrants, who tended to arrive too late in the season and among whom a few deplorable cases gave the whole immigration a bad name in Canada:

...There is no reason for apprehending that the demand for Immigrants of a suitable class is likely to diminish, but that the utmost strictness is necessary on the part of the authorities in Ireland in order to prevent helpless or incompetent persons from coming out. The amount of mischief created by a few such cases is out of all proportion to their number. A very considerable amount of adverse comment has been provoked by the distress which has recently existed among the Immigrants at Toronto...Owing to recent occurrences in Ireland the Canadian Farmers look with a certain amount of suspicion upon Irish immigrants of the class who have been sent out lately and object to receive a large number of them in any one place...Many of the men though strong and able-bodied did not appear to know how to work in a style which would satisfy Canadian employers...some of the men refused work when it was offered to them at remunerative rates...The beginning of the month of June has been mentioned to me by good judges as the date after which Immigrants should if possible not arrive in the country...<sup>2</sup>

Enclosed was a report from a committee of the Canadian privy council, replying to an inquiry from Derby as to whether Canada would again, as in the previous year, receive poor immigrants from the west of Ireland. The council's very precise stipulations on immigration indicated only too clearly their view of the Irish influx of 1883. Their suggestions, in effect, were these:

That Canada required only work-loving and able-bodied immigrants.  
 That each immigrant family should contain a proportion of such.  
 That immigrants should avoid 'crowding into the towns'.  
 That recent rate-aided emigration from Ireland was insufficiently selective.  
 That persons 'so far pauperised as to have lost the sense of self-respect' were not required.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cf., Colonial office, registers of correspondence, 17 April, 1 May, 10 May, 13 December 1883 (P.R.O., Ind.13387).

<sup>2</sup>Lansdowne to Derby, 30 January 1884 (P.R.O., C.O. 384/151).

<sup>3</sup>28 January 1884, *ibid.*



Lord Lansdowne and Lord Derby might perhaps consider that, for persons so little concerned as the Canadians with paying the piper of assisted emigration, they called a rather austere tune; but immigration, unlike the administration of Ireland, was a subject upon which Canada could speak of her own right. The very Trades and Labour Council of Toronto was to be found, in the same year, corresponding with the colonial office on pauper immigration.<sup>1</sup>

In 1887 the report of the Cowper commission included an idyll of planned emigration, including Irish emigration, to Canada:

Beyond the sea, west or east, this country in its Colonies possesses immense regions of fertile land. That which is the nearest is also the most suitable for an agricultural population. The fertile plains of North-west Canada can be reached from this country in about ten days, not much longer in time than was occupied by a Galway or Donegal labourer, in former years, in reaching his harvest labour in Lincoln, or East Lothian. The people are here, and the land is there. It is for the benefit of the people and in the interest of the United Kingdom and Canada that the people should for their own comfort and future prosperity be placed upon the land. It should be a National undertaking, and one great business of the Irish Office, and the Colonial Office, in conjunction with the Government of Canada, would be to arrange the best method to carry it out...Communities with their pastor and schoolmaster, should go together, and settle near each other for mutual help and neighbourhood. This may become only a part of a larger scheme for the systematic movement of the unemployed population from any part of the United Kingdom...<sup>2</sup>

This very interesting forecast proved quite irrelevant to the dwindling Irish emigration to Canada, less than a thousand persons yearly in the closing years of the old century, though the heavy English emigration in the early years of the new might seem to bear out to some degree the commissioner's hopes. The passage stands, however, as a noble aspiration which the march of time, in circumstances little dreamed of by the commission, might bring to pass.

---

<sup>1</sup>Colonial office, registers of correspondence, 19 March 1884 (P.R.O., Ind.13387).

<sup>2</sup>Cowper commission, 1887, Report, para.33.



A couple of years later the select committee on colonisation reviewed the now familiar difficulties of planned emigration - above all, that the colonies did not desire the people whom Britain would most willingly lose<sup>1</sup> - and no new light was shed on this ultimately insoluble problem.

In extenuation of the earnest attempts of the English and Irish administrations to ship to Canada emigrants of a possibly undesirable kind, it should be noted that Canada was, as the United States had no need to be, an emigrant-soliciting country, a would-be land of attraction. Some account has already been given of the industrious emigration agents whom the Canadian government maintained in Ireland and elsewhere. References to American agents seldom appear, although in 1872 the Emigration Commission stated: 'It cannot be denied that the United States Emigration Agency in this country is very energetic, and probably contributes to direct to the States a larger proportion of the British emigration than would otherwise go there.'<sup>2</sup> ~~Nothing~~ In that year the Irish emigration was about one third of the United Kingdom emigration.<sup>3</sup> Nothing is more striking in Canadian history during the half-century than the determined official efforts to attract to the 'ample appanage' those emigrant streams who appeared so reluctant to enter into their inheritance. Of this system of advertisement much would do no discredit to modern and presumably more scientific practitioners of 'publicity'; and Ireland received a share of the outpouring. In 1852 the Dublin press had letters from A.B. Hawke, the emigration agent at Toronto,

---

<sup>1</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, QQ. 997-1000 (Herbert).

<sup>2</sup>32nd General report, 1872, p.2.

<sup>3</sup>Append. II, tab.2.



enlarging on opportunities in upper Canada; Vere Foster was drawn into the series.<sup>1</sup> Possibly the Nation's turgid and allusive column on Canadian politics, in the same year, from 'our own correspondent' at Montreal, was officially inspired.<sup>2</sup> Buchanan wrote to the emigration officer at Waterford, dangling the bait of \$1.00 a day for unskilled immigrant labour.<sup>3</sup> These puffs were timed early in the emigration seasons, and appeared in newspapers which, then or later, were not necessarily sponsors of emigration in general. A Liverpool newspaper was quoted, setting forth the glories of Canada ('a free press, and a fee simple of the soil; no state church; no costly armaments; free schools at every cross-road, and in every ward'), and drawing attention to Buchanan's agency in Liverpool.<sup>4</sup> Following this, Buchanan himself wrote as follows:

The number of letters which have been addressed to me since the publication of my letter...necessitates my...explaining that the Government of Canada do not contemplate nor authorise me to offer free passages to any class of emigrants whatever...I am in receipt this day of a letter from Western Canada, from which the following is an extract:-'...for clerks, half gentlemen, and all who have no trade or handicraft and unaccustomed to labour, I can hold out no encouragement'...<sup>5</sup>

In the same year, Buchanan had a letter to the Times reprinted in Ireland, calling, inevitably, for 'agricultural labourers' and 'female domestic servants';<sup>6</sup> one asks, could their prospective employers have included 'half gentlemen' of indigenous growth?

In 1872 came a letter (dated from the Shelbourne Hotel)

<sup>1</sup>Saunders's News-Letter, 4 March 1852; Nation, 6 March 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Nation, 3 April 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Freeman's Journal, 4 April 1853.

<sup>4</sup>Liverpool Albion, quoted Galway Vindicator, 1 April 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 18 April 1863.

<sup>6</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 31 March 1863.



of the commissioner of emigration for Quebec, setting out once more the amenities of Canada, and squinting at the United States; the commissioner had formed a rather unusual opinion of the Dubliners:

...With your permission I shall observe, that the hardiest race in America are the Canadians. This fact will be borne out by any man who has ever visited the New World. Our people, owing to our climate, are the same robust, full-formed and florid complexioned people that I meet with here...<sup>1</sup>

In 1878 the 'Canadian Government Agent' in London secured the renewal of a sanction, originally granted in 1875, to display Canadian emigration bills 'in the various Post Offices throughout the United Kingdom'.<sup>2</sup> In 1880 the Canadian high commissioner wrote to the colonial office citing the large emigration to the United States, and urging state encouragement of emigration to Canada.<sup>3</sup> In but a year or two he had this, with a vengeance. In 1883 a writer to the Times<sup>4</sup> pointed out that, unlike the United States, Canada welcomed families and gave them 160 acres of land. From the United States came nothing resembling this sustained effort to influence emigrant choices.

As appeared pre-eminently in 1883, Canadian advertisement could in a manner over-reach itself. When, even earlier, this mishap occurred, the watchful Buchanan was ready with his somewhat wearisome injunctions against the emigration of those unhandy with axe, shovel, or scrubbing-brush. Some of the young women shipped out by Irish boards of guardians did not apparently qualify in this sense; twenty females from the

---

<sup>1</sup>Londonderry Standard, 19 June 1872. A rather similar opinion was expressed twenty years earlier, by an Irishman writing from Toronto: 'the climate of Upper Canada is more healthy, and the morals of the people far beyond those of the United States', Dublin Evening Post, 8 June 1852.

<sup>2</sup>February, 1878 (P.R.O., C.O. 384/121).

<sup>3</sup>4 June 1880, Colonial office, registers of correspondence (P.R.O., Ind.15551,p.356).

<sup>4</sup>5 March 1883.



Dublin union were in 1854 committed to Montreal gaol as loose and idle,<sup>1</sup> and later Buchanan had similar trouble with young women from the Limerick union.<sup>2</sup> These were exceptional irregularities, and the staple of warning in his official reports was against the emigration of 'merchants and clerks',<sup>3</sup> or the admonition, at startling variance with some of his propagandist statements, that newly arrived labourers must expect only \$6.00 to \$8.00 per month, with board.<sup>4</sup> In 1860 a letter from Buchanan to the clerk of the New Ross union was circularised to Irish boards of guardians: it bore the warning that immigrants were acceptable to Canada 'provided they are able and willing to work'.<sup>5</sup> Each onset of deep distress in Ireland called for a levelling up of selectivity in Canada. The close of this unhappy phase of Irish history coincided to some extent, from 1892, with the adoption in Canada of Sifton's aggressive immigration policy, and to that extent the Dominion could promulgate with an easy mind the rosier prospects for capitalists, farmers, tenant farmers, apprentice farmers and, the alpha and omega of the subject, the 'large and growing demand for male and female farm servants'.<sup>6</sup> But it was no longer to Ireland that Canada spoke.

---

<sup>1</sup>Copies or extracts of despatches relative to emigration to the North American colonies, Buchanan's report, p.5, H.C. 1854-5 (464), xxxix.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration Commission entry book, p.367, June, 1865 (P.R.O., C.O. 386/85).

<sup>3</sup>Copies or extracts, etc., as above, p.12, H.C. 1857-8 (165), xli.

<sup>4</sup>Papers relative to the emigration to the North American colonies, p.34, [1763], H.C.1854, xlvi.

<sup>5</sup>Commissioners for administering the laws for the relief of the poor in Ireland, Annual report, 1861, append.A, pp.26-7. In the previous year Canada complained of difficulty in placing fourteen widows with twenty children sent out by Irish unions, Emigration Commission, 20th General report, 1860, p.39. Even the Canadian domestic labour market was not without consumer-resistance.

<sup>6</sup>Memorandum of the Canadian Minister of the Interior upon the advantages...of Canada...to...emigrants, [C.7697], H.C. 1895, lxx.



It is perhaps significant that Tuke advanced, as a reason why the Irish ought to (and clearly did not) find Canada a 'more suitable field' of immigration than the United States, the argument that Canadian land was still free, when the United States, where the historic 'frontier' was by 1890 no longer identifiable,<sup>1</sup> was charging 10s to 30s per acre.<sup>2</sup> That is to say, Tuke's voice was but one of a sustained chorus that urged the Irish immigrant at all costs to go upon land; many did so, but in the mass the Irish immigrant's answer was to be seen in the swarming tenements of New York and Boston, or the foundries of Pittsburg. The elucidation of this intricate question belongs to North American history; some indications have already been canvassed in the course of the present thesis - the revulsion from the countryside, the hardship and expense of taking up nominally free land in a new country. Nothing but a very strong, an almost instinctive resistance in the Irish immigrant to the idea of the North American back country would explain or justify exhortations, repeated for instance ad nauseam in Maguire's book, of this description: "Do, in God's name, advise your countrymen to stick to the land - what they know most about."<sup>3</sup> There generally followed the sensible advice that a man should work out first before attempting to take up land; even so, it may be doubted whether Irish experience was relevant or not to a country where, in pioneer conditions, the first tool needed was an axe.<sup>4</sup> If inducements to a life of this kind were of any

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf., superintendent of United States census, quoted Morison and Commager, op.cit., ii.99. Maguire thought America could absorb Europe's surplus population for 'centuries', The Irish in America, p.248.

<sup>2</sup>J.H. Tuke, 'Irish Emigration', in Nineteenth Century, ix, 358-71 (Feb. 1881).

<sup>3</sup>J.F. Maguire, op.cit., p.238.

<sup>4</sup>Cf., W. Gibbard, Barrie [Ont.] to Dr John Lee, 15 April 1847: '...A new settler...his sole business is to chop, log up with his oxen and burn off' (Public archives of Canada, John Lee papers, 26-3-D).



moment, Canada towards the close of the century should have been thronged with the immigrants who could no longer perceive them in the United States. In the autumn of 1891, since Tuke, 'the highest authority on the subject', was not available, Plunkett spent six weeks in Canada looking into the prospects for emigrants from the congested districts of Ireland and Scotland. Generalising, perhaps rather dangerously, from the success of some crofter settlements he visited, Plunkett thought emigrants from the west of Ireland could do well in Manitoba and the North-Western Territory, where the Canadian government helped settlers with cash as well as free land. Opportunity had moved west of Winnipeg. But he made the important reservation that such immigrants must be rather elaborately 'colonised', and that the Congested Districts type of emigrant represented a financial risk which North America was in fact unwilling to bear. Hence, he thought, the Congested Districts Board must bear it;<sup>1</sup> but this the Board never did.

In the matter of assisted transport the Canadian government, and some of the provincial governments, offered facilities for which there was no parallel, because no occasion, in the United States. Up to 1868 it was the Canadian custom to give all immigrants by the St Lawrence free rail tickets. These were abused by people en route for the western U.S.A., especially 'foreigners' from Europe, and the privilege was then restricted to the needy. The Ontario and Quebec governments also paid passages up country.<sup>2</sup> Then came experiments with assisted sea passages; 10,000 warrants were sent to the Dominion agent in England giving reduced

---

<sup>1</sup>Congested Districts Board for Ireland, First annual report, Append.E; Report (15 May 1892) upon emigration to Canada by the Hon. Horace Plunkett, [C.6908], H.C.1893-4, lxi.

<sup>2</sup>Further correspondence respecting emigration, 1872, as above, p.4.



rate passages by the Allan Line to approved emigrants.<sup>1</sup> The Dominion Line came into this scheme in the following year; applicants for passages were required to state their age and occupation, and to produce a certificate of character.<sup>2</sup> Political pressure from labour elements in Canada forced the abandoning of the scheme.<sup>3</sup>

The service of imperial emigration agents in Canada was a matter of legitimate pride to the Emigration Commission and of help to <sup>n</sup>may immigrants. Buchanan at Quebec was watchful to prosecute those breaches of the Passengers' Acts which, as was noted earlier, came to light if at all at the end of the voyage in whose course they were committed. His Reports mention thirteen prosecutions under the act during the years 1852 through 1861,<sup>4</sup> a very trifling number. They were often concerned with short issues of water or provisions, and as Buchanan said of the year 1854 were probably 'almost exclusively confined to transient vessels taken up for the trip.'<sup>5</sup> In 1863 Canada was imposing penalties on unlicensed emigrant runners on the lines of the 1855 act.<sup>6</sup> At New York the runners were said in 1851 to be no better than the Liverpool ones, in spite of strict legislation on them and on lodging-houses; and Sabel recommended the 'British Emigrant Protective Society' in consequence.<sup>7</sup> The emigrants' need for protection continued, and in 1860 a letter, referring to

---

<sup>1</sup>Emigration Commission, 32nd General report, 1872, p.38.

<sup>2</sup>Londonderry Standard, 15 June 1872.

<sup>3</sup>Plunkett, Report, 1892, as above.

<sup>4</sup>Cf., Papers relative to the emigration, etc.; Copies or extracts of despatches relative to emigration, etc., as above, 1852-3 - 1862.

<sup>5</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 15th General report, 1855, p.44.

<sup>6</sup>Emigration Commission entry book, p.277, 19 February 1863 (P.R.O., C.O. 386/85).

<sup>7</sup>Passengers' act committee, 1851, QQ.2980, 168, 3896.



New York, observed: 'From certain well known distinctive traits, the Irish are immediately recognised on their arrival.'<sup>1</sup> In 1867 Maguire,<sup>2</sup> and in 1870 the Emigration Commission<sup>3</sup> could describe with enthusiasm New York's arrangements for receiving immigrants at Castle Garden and Ward Island. In 1882 Castle Garden's many amenities included restaurant, currency exchange bureau, telegraph office, railroad and baggage agencies, doctor, licensed boarding-house keepers and interpreters, though Gaskell doubted if their attainments included Irish.<sup>4</sup> In this manner the green immigrant was insulated very effectively from the various kinds of roguery that formerly preyed upon him almost before his ship was anchored.<sup>5</sup>

A more general view of the Irish in Canada and the United States respectively may now be taken, from evidence, particularly, which throughout the period was current in Ireland and thus came into account as hastening or retarding further emigration. At irregular intervals in the eighties, depending on the arrival of the mail, the Freeman's Journal carried a substantial dispatch from 'our New York correspondent'. An item of this kind became much more frequent in the Irish press towards the close of the century. In 1890 the Tyrone Constitution had at intervals an 'American Letter', setting out the attractions of an emigration with which the newspaper editorially disagreed, and a 'Canadian

<sup>1</sup>Cork Constitution, 13 April 1860.

<sup>2</sup>The Irish in America, pp.198 - 202.

<sup>3</sup>30th General report, 1870, pp.14-15.

<sup>4</sup>Report, dated 18th November 1882, made by the Local Government Board in Ireland, etc., as above, Enclosure D, pp. 11-12, [C.3422], H.C. 1882, lv.

<sup>5</sup>An emigrant writing from Albany, N.Y., in 1851 said: '... I can assure you that there is greater robberies, done in New York on emigrants than there is in Liverpool', T. Kelly, 'Letters from America', in Carloviana, i.25 (January, 1947).



'Letter' which on at least one occasion hotly disputed the facts and arguments in the American one.<sup>1</sup> In 1895 the Belfast News-Letter had a 'Life in America' column, and earlier an occasional intelligent column of Canadian news.<sup>2</sup> There was in all these newspapers a very curious lack of information about local people in North America. Headlines such as 'Success of a Newryman in New York' (in an examination),<sup>3</sup> 'Tyrone Men in America',<sup>4</sup> or a description of a 'County Sligo Men's Ball in New York'<sup>5</sup> were of the rarest occurrence.

Rather more frequently, the Irish reader was supplied with news of the Irish societies, in Canada and the United States. In 1851 the Freeman's Journal gave an account at some length of celebrations of St Patrick's day in New York by the 'Friendly Sons of St. Patrick'. The gathering was at Astor House and cost its participants, rather surprisingly, '\$7.00 cash'. The toast-list deserves quotation for its extraordinary catholicity:

The Queen. This society was always in the habit of drinking the Queen's health, but it has been rather a compliment to the woman than the Sovereign.  
John Mitchell [sic] and William Smith O'Brien.  
Ireland and Germany - the two countries in Europe, from which the land of our adoption, the United States, draws so large a share of its life-blood.  
The regeneration of Ireland - not by Catholics - not by Protestants, but by Irishmen. This last toast was the most warmly received of the entire list.<sup>6</sup>

Two years later, the same newspaper could record that 'St. Patrick's Day was observed with great eclat at Quebec, Montreal,

<sup>1</sup>Tyrone Constitution, 16 May 1890.

<sup>2</sup>E.g., 12 March 1874.

<sup>3</sup>Newry Telegraph, 11 April 1889.

<sup>4</sup>San Francisco Chronicle, quoted Tyrone Constitution, 25 July 1890.

<sup>5</sup>New York Tablet, 5 March 1887, quoted Sligo Champion, 19 March 1887.

<sup>6</sup>Freeman's Journal, 2 April 1851.



Toronto [etc.]...In the evening many of the leading Irish societies had grand banquets, where able, eloquent and truly loyal speeches were delivered."<sup>1</sup> The cohesive force of the Irish national societies in North America, where, as conforming Americans or Canadians, their members could be 'national' in this very limited sense with no fear of rebuke from the indulgent countries of their reception, is extremely interesting. Not less so is the ostensible and possibly very real loyalty of their traditional toasts, 'The day and all who honour it', 'The Queen, God bless her'.<sup>2</sup> The incoherence of the emotions generated by these occasions was seen at Montreal when, at the St Patrick's day 'Grand Promenade Concert' of 1864, the inscriptions displayed in the hall included:

Canada the land of our adoption  
The spirit of a nation never dieth  
Erin-go-Bragh<sup>3</sup>

In such ways, as Hansen wrote, "nearly every immigrant nationality managed to perpetuate the atmosphere of the motherland";<sup>4</sup> upon the immigrant Irish lay the burdensome difficulty, as it were, of identifying the mother. Nevertheless, the smooth integration during the nineteenth century of a substantial Irish minority with the motly<sup>e</sup> community of Montreal was probably achieved as largely by the St Patrick's Society as by the powerful mediation of the catholic church between the 'island of saints' and the 'city of Mary'. The Montreal society held monthly meetings for business, maintained with great regularity; a 'grand annual soiree' in the winter, and in the summer a 'grand annual pic-nic' at some riverside or garden resort, at one period conducted 'on strictly Temperance

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 12 April 1853.

<sup>2</sup>At a St Patrick's day dinner in Beauharnois county, Quebec, 1851.

<sup>3</sup>Montreal Gazette, 18 March 1864.

<sup>4</sup>M.L. Hansen, The immigrant in American history, p.140.



principles.<sup>1</sup> Around the parent society grew a complex of Irish organisations with objects so diverse as mutual aid and social intercourse, total abstinence, athletics. The St Patrick's Society had an emigration committee, which advertised its function as being: 'to give Advice and Assistance to Emigrants in need, and to endeavour to procure employment for those of them who wish to remain among us'. Prospective employers were invited to communicate.<sup>2</sup> The Irish vote, marshalled in the Society, was to be reckoned with. In 1857, on their first adopting D'Arcy McGee as their parliamentary candidate, the Montreal Irish declared themselves 'on every principle of equity and justice, entitled to name one of the three members allowed by law, to represent this city in Parliament'.<sup>3</sup> The very loose numerical reckoning behind this pronouncement has been referred to, above; as a political gesture by the group that, only ten years earlier, faced the impact and ensuing obloquy of the famine immigration, ~~ix~~ the declaration was superb.

Alongside the Irish, or mock-Irish, life of the St Patrick's Society in all its ramifications, the assimilation of the membership to the cultural pattern imposed by Montreal and by Canada proceeded imperceptibly and at levels below consciousness; the fact that these Irish had settled in the city, and not, like many of their compatriots, in the Quebec countryside, was itself acceptance of the North American way of life. At the same time, the attractive force of the Irish national societies in great cities such as Montreal and New York must be reckoned with in weighing the question why the

---

<sup>1</sup>[Montreal] True Witness, 26 June 1863.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 27 June 1862.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4 December 1857.



emigrant Irish flocked to the cities. As regards Montreal, there was also the attraction of an established Irish community which, since the beginning of the century, had acquired in the city a share of prosperity and patronage quite commensurate with its numbers. It may serve for an illustration that the corporation of Montreal had at least one Irish councillor in every year of the period 1847-67; in 1850 and 1855 there were three, and in 1854, 1856 and 1863-6 there were two.<sup>1</sup> Such as these constituted an important foothold for successive generations of immigrants in the painful social ascent from the river flat to the lower slopes of Mount Royal;

*Sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,  
Hoc opus, hic labor est*

and for many Irish, as for others, there may have been a peculiar satisfaction in this very toil. To such immigrants, 160 acres and a log cabin, two days' journey from the nearest alderman, meant nothing.

As early as 1864 isolated voices from Canada sounded a warning against immigration that swelled to a chorus when, twenty years later, distress in Ireland grew still worse. In 1864 the catholic bishop of Toronto was quoted in the British house of commons as writing:

...the hospitals, the poorhouses, and gaols in the states, and to a great extent in Canada, have more than their proportion of inmates of Irish or their descendants [sic]... It is humiliating, indeed, to see numbers of poor Irish girls, innocent and guileless, sitting round in those large depots in seaport cities waiting to be hired...How many of them found the protection of the wolf is known only to God!<sup>2</sup>

The Ontario catholic clergy's view of what constituted desirable immigration may be learned from the letter of a

<sup>1</sup>J.C. Lamothe, Histoire de la corporation de la cité de Montréal.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, clxxvi.51 (21 June 1864).



parish priest in Victoria county, addressed to Larkin, the Dominion's emigration agent for the 'West, Centre and South of Ireland'. He thought that a farmer 'or two' with £2,000-£3,000, farm labourers, domestic servants and young boys and girls would be acceptable, and asked Larkin to make it clear that in Canada, unlike the United States, the catholic could educate his children as he pleased, 'and tax his own property for the education of his own children'.<sup>1</sup> In his extended tour in the United States and Canada, including the Canadian north-west, in the autumn of 1880, Tuke learned that on the land the Irish were thrifty and industrious, whatever they might be in the towns. He was thus able to imply an affirmative answer, if a slightly qualified one, to his own rhetorical question in a subsequent article on the subject: has 'the poor Irish peasant...got...the necessary qualifications?...Has he got the self-help, the industry, the forethought, the self-command?'<sup>2</sup> His evidence on the point at the select committee on colonisation was equally favourable.<sup>3</sup>

With the onset of the bad seasons in Ireland in 1879, the Irish immigration into Canada rose from 900 in 1877 to 12,000 in 1883, with only a slight recession in 1881.<sup>4</sup> By 1882 the St George's Society of Toronto was urging that publicly aided emigrants should be provided with landing-money.<sup>5</sup> A few years later, the Toronto city corporation was protesting against pauper immigration.<sup>6</sup> In 1883 and onwards

<sup>1</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 10 May 1873.

<sup>2</sup>J.H. Tuke, 'Irish emigration' in Nineteenth century, ix. 369 (Feb., 1881).

<sup>3</sup>Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, QQ. 3408, 3410.

<sup>4</sup>Emigration statistics of Ireland, 1878-84.

<sup>5</sup>27 May, 1882, Colonial office, registers of correspondence (P.R.O., Ind.15551, p.357).

<sup>6</sup>12 May 1888, *ibid.* (P.R.O., Ind.15552).



a quantity of letters and news items from Canada, of the gloomiest description, were published in Ireland, mostly in the Nation. An inhabitant of Quebec wrote: '...some philanthropic men have been sending out here the clearings of the poorhouses and of different asylums, to anything but the satisfaction of the people of Canada.'<sup>1</sup> 'An Irish Priest, Canada' contradicted a recent statement by Blake, member of parliament for Waterford, who had advised the Irish to choose Canada in preference to the United States. The priest inquired, why is the Irish population of Quebec decreasing? 'If an Irishman can succeed as easily in Canada as in the United States, why do the sons of Irish farmers in the province of Ontario prefer to go and settle in Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota' and elsewhere?<sup>2</sup>

The Toronto press was full of distressing tales of the new immigrants, and these were re-told for readers in Ireland. A meeting of the Combined City Charities heard of 'over 600 people, in a more or less destitute condition, living in Conway and Garrison-streets, Brown's-lane, and other sections of the West end. They are Irish emigrants sent out by Government agents from Galway, Mayo and Kerry.'<sup>3</sup> The Globe, true to a great Radical tradition, turned a wholesome light upon aspects of the question seldom touched by publicity: 'People will crowd into the cities, where they soon learn that they are not needed, and as long as the capitalist employers of labour and the landlords of cheap, unwholesome houses can profit by this propensity it is not probable that anything like a suitable effort will ever be made to check it.' The newspaper went on to furnish a long

---

<sup>1</sup>Nation, 10 February 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 14 April 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Toronto Evening News, 17 November 1883, quoted Nation, 8 December 1883.



list of specific hard cases, the description of each household ending 'Irish Roman Catholic', and commented that these emigrants were sent out on false accounts of wages, etc. in Canada, and that the girls among them were too ragged and dirty to be taken as servants. The whole was chronicled by the Nation with much wrath.<sup>1</sup> A Toronto correspondent of the Nation, signing 'Irish Priest', gave an unpleasant picture of the established Irish community in his city:

There being no organised charity in this place to meet their cases, whole families are now here in absolute want [they are represented in brothel, jail, morgue, hospital etc]. ... The notion that their countrymen here meet them with a word of welcome or needed assistance in any shape is misleading. There are two classes of Irish represented here - the aristocratic and labouring. The latter have enough to do to help themselves; the others have all the empty vicious vanity of your shoddy gentry at home, and accordingly are above sympathising with their poorer countrymen...<sup>2</sup>

Another Toronto newspaper had heartrending accounts of the 'Government' emigrants from Ireland: 'It is bad enough to send strong, healthy people out to this country without any prospect of earning a living, but what is to be thought of shipping infirm and aged people who cannot speak a word of English?'<sup>3</sup> In view of the foregoing material, an Irish newspaper seemed to labour the obvious when it told its readers:

Intending emigrants to Canada may as well learn that so great is the depression in the Dominion that a more than ordinary bitter agitation against assisted immigrants is in full swing in Toronto...It is evidently almost suicidal to emigrate there at present.<sup>4</sup>

Hard cases, which are said to make bad law, are apt also to make bad social history, especially when they are selected by journalists. Tuke and his committee, whose work in

<sup>1</sup>Toronto Globe, 17 November 1883, quoted *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>Nation, 1 December 1883.

<sup>3</sup>[Toronto] Evening Canadian, quoted Nation, 15 December 1883.

<sup>4</sup>Waterford Mail, 21 January 1885.



aiding and promoting emigration has been described, we at pains to dissociate their emigrants from other and worse types of poor law emigrant who probably swelled the mass of poverty in Toronto.<sup>1</sup> It is nevertheless easy to perceive the foundation, only too solid, of the rumours whose circulation did much to put an end to the committee's work. As the committee's third report put it,

A considerable agitation against state-aided emigration had sprung up. All sorts of absurd stories were circulated, especially with regard to Canada; and the Committee and their assistants were often denounced by name from the pulpits and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

The Irish in the United States, so much more numerous than their compatriots in Canada, seem in some respects less easy to identify. Assimilation was swift and thorough. There was bitterness in O'Gorman's description of one aspect of the process:

It is refreshing however to find that in this effervescing process, our countrymen have their share - In all political proceedings - primary Elections - smashing Ballot boxes - persecuting citizens...the children of our native land are eminently successful.<sup>3</sup>

A curious letter appeared in an Irish newspaper from a young (and anonymous) emigrant of 1849. Arrived in New York, he quickly 'learned that "Emigrant" was synonymous with filth, disease, poverty, laziness...'. He eventually did well in the Minnesota Territory. His account of his countrymen in America was unflattering, and particularly to the exiles of '48:

When I lived in Ireland I was ready to attribute all the evils that befell that country to the wicked agency of England, but, viewed from here, and with some experience

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf., Reports and papers relating to... 'Mr. Tuke's Fund' ...during the years 1882, 1883 and 1884, passim.

<sup>2</sup>Emigration from Ireland, being the third report of the committee of 'Mr. Tuke's Fund'...July, 1884, pp.4-5.

<sup>3</sup>Richard O'Gorman to Smith O'Brien, 1 June 1859, W.S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I., MSS 445, f.3082.



since, it presents another aspect. In Ireland I, and most persons of my class, formed our opinions from what escaped that (in its circle) absolute little directory, the coterie of the P.P. and his faithful coadjutors... Amongst the Irish emigrants to America there are no doubt many fine minds, but the aggregate mass present less intelligence than that of any other people... the great mass of this class is to the self styled 'Republicans' of the North what the 'blacks' of Virginia are to the south. Escaped from the contagion of their fellows in the cities they congregate upon the public works - railroads, canals, etc., and thus, obedient to the lash, like slaves all day, and revelling in whiskey, and fighting at night, they show themselves worthy representatives of the historical Helots... A few 'wind falls' of 1848 have found their way here [denigration of American activities of John Mitchel] ... others of them vegetate in New York, where, between the precarious practice of equivocal professions and occasional 'levies' of contributions 'for the regeneration of Ireland', they manage to live...<sup>1</sup>

The Freeman's Journal, in grave leading articles, warned its readers against the Know-nothing party<sup>2</sup> and pauperism in New York, said to be worse than in Ireland, and unmitigated by a poor law.<sup>3</sup> Descriptions of the miserable lot of the Irish who hung about New York were common, as in Maguire's book,<sup>4</sup> with its shocking account of the tenements, or in a communication from O'Donovan Rossa, who reappears as a passenger agent for the White Star Line and excuses himself from the charge of helping to depopulate Ireland.<sup>5</sup> These and others urged upon the emigrant Irish the claims of 'the Mighty West',<sup>6</sup> with no great result. In 1874 the Belfast News-Letter<sup>7</sup> commented with severity on 'a disgraceful war against Celtish servants' waged by the Boston Globe, quoted as printing:

<sup>1</sup>Cork Constitution 12 March 1857.

<sup>2</sup>Freeman's Journal, 10 April 1855.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 27 May 1859.

<sup>4</sup>The Irish in America, p.220 et seqq.

<sup>5</sup>Irishman, quoted Galway Vindicator, 24 April 1872.

<sup>6</sup>So called by Freeman's Journal, 3 July 1880.

<sup>7</sup>7 March 1874.



The tyranny of Bridget...Economy she hates; poverty she despises; and no continuation of her ridiculously high wages will make her condescend to treat her mistress with common civility...She will not do, as other people do, honest work for honest wages. Her male prototype can be trusted; she is thoroughly untrustworthy.

This effusion happily produced a reply<sup>1</sup> from the celebrated Harriet Beecher Stowe, bestowing a general blessing on Irish girls. They needed 'careful watchfulness to keep them in order. Even our public servants at Washington need this... Let any father or mother imagine their own daughter, at sixteen or eighteen, landed in Ireland to seek self-support ...'.

In the same year the Louisville Journal<sup>2</sup> decried the 'great-western-railroad-public-land-grant-reservation-quarter-section-swindle', i.e. the puffing of the 'great west' for immigrants as opposed to the Ohio valley:

From Omaha to the San Joachin there is an unbroken series of crossties placed in their position by Irish hands. Every one of these served as a head stone for an emigrant... If emigrate you must, go amongst a civilised, settled community, with churches, schools, and priest...

This advice was probably congenial to many. It was in somewhat the same spirit that an Irish teacher wrote from Texas begging his countrymen to stay at home 'in a Christian country.'<sup>3</sup> The year 1883 brought reports of American protests against pauper immigration, though in perhaps less volume than the Canadian reactions discussed above. The governor of Massachusetts objected to the landing of penniless emigrants at Boston.<sup>4</sup> The New York correspondent of the Freeman's Journal<sup>5</sup> reported the compulsory repatriation of a

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted Ulster Examiner, 24 June 1874.

<sup>3</sup>Waterford Mail, 22 April 1873.

<sup>4</sup>Nation, 12 May 1883.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted Nation, 7 July 1883.



of a man and his blind wife who were sent to America 'straight from the workhouse in Tralee'. Another Irish newspaper<sup>1</sup> quoted several American contemporaries, the burden of whose complaint was that the assisted emigrants from Ireland were 'nearly penniless, and many were feeble old men, children and women...this brings a serious question before Americans'. In the same year, the Limerick Chronicle<sup>2</sup> started a minor furor in the Irish press with an account of a 'gentleman' then in Dublin seeking 'skilled female labour for a large cotton factory in Massachusetts'. The Chronicle alluded to the New England states as 'vice-reeking localities'; Charlotte G. O'Brien entered the discussion,<sup>3</sup> which continued for some time in terms highly derogatory to various North American cities.

Opinion was apparently universal that the Irishman's drunkenness was his greatest stumbling-block in the New World. Maguire was repetitive on the subject,<sup>4</sup> and seemed to agree with the view, that the Irish were exuberant rather than notably drunken, in an earlier emigrant's letter:

'What destroys the Irish is, when they get plenty of money <sup>i</sup> in their pockets and good clothes to wear, they get too hot in themselves; then they begin to drink and fight. If they would but behave themselves...'<sup>5</sup> A communication in the same year, from a suspiciously literate 'American woodsman', stressed the convivial pitfalls of the construction camps:

<sup>1</sup>Cork Examiner, 14 June 1883.

<sup>2</sup>3 March 1883. 26 June 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Nation, 24 March 1883. *John Maguire*, quoted Nation, 11 March 1883.

<sup>4</sup>E.g., *op.cit.*, pp.8-9, 81,282. He was epigrammatic, however, in his public lecture: 'Let the drunkard remain at home', America in its relation to Irish emigration, p.26.

<sup>5</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 21 August 1852.

<sup>6</sup>Harvard, class 11.733 (24 February 1883).



The conduct of the Irish is pretty good, with the exception of those who are so unlucky as to obtain employment on public works, such as railroads, plank roads, and canals, and who are so much exposed to every kind of vice and dissipation that before long they become inferior in disposition to the wild and savage Indian. But were it possible that Irishmen could refrain from indulging so freely in intoxicating liquors, no people from any part of the globe would stand higher in the eyes of the Americans, or attain wealth sooner...<sup>1</sup>

The Americans were often said to hold a temperate Irishman in peculiar esteem, perhaps on the principle nigroque simillima cycno: 'In the eyes of the American people nothing so much elevates an Irishman as strict teetotalism. It actually makes him a different man...'.<sup>2</sup> An Ontario parish priest thought whiskey the great promoter of Irish infidelity;<sup>3</sup> one of Foy's Canadian correspondents epitomised the whole topic with much vigour: 'Keep clear of Mr. Damnation Whiskey and you must become independent'.<sup>4</sup>

The outstanding importance of letters from former emigrants, as second only to remittances themselves in attracting further emigration, has already been referred to. That these were by no means always favourable pictures of emigrant life in Canada and the United States should, however, be remembered; and may be seen in the following collection, wherein good report, from both countries, may be balanced against bad. Perhaps the counter-indications should receive special weight. Maguire maintained that emigrants' letters 'breathed a bitter and undying spirit of hostility to England';<sup>5</sup> nothing is of rarer occurrence amongst those most

---

<sup>1</sup>Newry Examiner, 26 June 1852.

<sup>2</sup>A returned traveller, Irish Times, quoted Nation, 11 March 1871.

<sup>3</sup>Limerick Chronicle, 10 May 1873.

<sup>4</sup>Dominion of Canada: emigration to the province of Ontario, as above, p.67.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, clxxvii.733 (24 February 1865).



easily accessible in print, which mainly ignore the subject, and it was a Mitchel who could write: 'I shall die either a rebel or the citizen of a free Irish State...I would clear our country of the English, at the price of levelling all that now stands there...'.<sup>1</sup>

The mainly favourable side of the symposium may be sampled first. The 'American woodsman' already quoted, of Sullivan county, New York state, gave a vivid account of the material blessings of American life compared with the poor lot of the home-keeping Irishman, who

even after ~~all~~ his toil and servility, is unable to supply his family with the common necessities of life? Neither can he afford a good bonnet or even a clean cap on his wife, shoes on his children, or tobacco for himself; whereas in this country our wives have good new bonnets, with ribbons and veils on them, and water silk parasols, waving as proudly over their heads as if they were going up George's-street. Our children have boots and dancing pumps, and ourselves the best grasscut and Havannah cigars, and newspapers also, together with all the other little luxuries of life...<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the writer complains that priests, who are plentiful in New York, Baltimore or Charleston, are hard to find 'back in the woods':

But we who are situated back in the woods have no chance whatever of hearing mass unless we go a far distance to listen to either an American or a Dutchman, who come round a few times in the year, lauding his own countrymen while he throws reflections on us. Therefore we loudly call on Ireland for her assistance. Here in the village of Monticello and its vicinity there are over six hundred Roman Catholic Irishmen, who subscribed and purchased a lot of land close to the village with a site for a building thereon, and we are now ready farther to subscribe as much as would be necessary to erect a Roman Catholic Church had we an Irish clergyman who would...visit us here in the land of freedom...I, therefore, trust that Father Scanlan will say to all his people about 'sweet Cloughjordan', and elsewhere, 'come on, boys, let us be [off], to America...and have an Ireland for ourselves'.

An Irish gardener in Connecticut has wages of '25 dollars

---

<sup>1</sup>Mitchel to Smith O'Brien, 6 October 1852, W.S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I., MSS 438, f.2813.

<sup>2</sup>Newry Examiner, 26 June 1852.



per month, or 60l. per year, with house, milk and potatoes, which I think is very good.' His complaint is against the Irish 'man catchers' or boarding-house runners in New York: 'Let me ask you, what countrymen are those that treat the emigrants after this manner?'<sup>1</sup> A Minnesota farmer, writing to his cousin in Ireland, is well pleased with the state but finds it lacks timber and wives:

It is a fact, John, women of all kinds are rather scarce here in Minnesecta [sic] but especially good ones. Pick out one for me and tell her I will take her on your recommendation and pay her passage into the bargain...and will give her all the tea and coffee and pork she can possibly get out of sight...<sup>2</sup>

The homely comparison with the lot of some local celebrity in Ireland was probably the most striking advertisement that the New World could receive: 'Every farmer has his 120 dols. or 200 dol. vehicle, and as good a span of horses as ever Colonel Clements drove.'<sup>3</sup>

Tuke published some glowing accounts, both of Canada and the United States, from his emigrants of 1883. The difficulty with this kind of collection is the probable omission from it of contrary instances. The favourable opinions are sometimes strikingly expressed:

If you can come on the emigration, if you have fields of wheat, and the ears falling off it, don't delay one day if you get the chance. This [neighbourhood of St Paul, Minn.] is the best place from Heaven to have money and supply...It is not starving with the hunger you will be here...<sup>4</sup>

'Toronto, Ontario, July 8th, 1883...I could not describe it [Toronto] to you its more like a Paradise...the last letter I wrote you I did not like it. The boy that wrote

<sup>1</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 29 June 1852.

<sup>2</sup>T. Kelly, 'Letters from America', in Carloviana, i.28 (Jan., 1947).

<sup>3</sup>Dominion of Canada, as above, p.67.

<sup>4</sup>Emigration from Ireland; being the second report of the committee of 'Mr. Tuke's Fund', July, 1883, p.9.



it did not put in half what I wanted to say...'.<sup>1</sup> There is an interesting hint here of the professional letter-writer. The immutable Canada is graven in a sentence describing the blessed state of a former emigrant: 'She has a nice house and is well off. Rocking hir self every day in hir rocking-chare.'<sup>2</sup>

Adverse comment on North America<sup>is</sup> in normal times rather rare, the more striking on that account, and sometimes shown in the form of a significant suspension of judgment. The Irish foundryman already quoted, writing from Albany in 1851 and 1852 to his aunt in co. Carlow, is decided only as regards the emigration of the young:

This is a good place for smart young boys and girls that wish to go in situations. Dear Aunt, I am not going to encourage you to come to this country, but neither will I discourage you...I would not encourage any persons to come here that could live middling well at home...But any boy or girl that has to labour for their living, this is the country for them.<sup>3</sup>

The hard times of 1883 produced a crop of warnings against emigration, addressed particularly to Irish girls, from the United States. A convent in co. Mayo received bad tidings of the situation from Providence, R.I.:

I don't know what we are going to do with the great tide of forced emigration that is coming here this Spring and Summer...the best thing the English Government could do is to let the people stay in their own country, where they have a mild climate, and, besides, our people don't improve in faith or morals by coming here...'<sup>4</sup>

An Irishman of New Bedford similarly urged Irish girls 'to try and live and die in holy Ireland',<sup>5</sup> and a letter

<sup>1</sup>Reports and papers relating to the proceedings of the committee of 'Mr. Tuke's Fund': supplementary report, being extracts from letters received from emigrants sent over to Canada and the States, p.8 (Sept., 1883).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.14.

<sup>3</sup>T. Kelly, 'Letters from America', as above, pp.25-6.

<sup>4</sup>Nation, 10 March 1883.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 17 March 1883.



from New York said: 'to see some of the lately landed girls it is something to be seen...They are even hunted out of the churches for want of a few cents to pay.'<sup>1</sup> A New York Irishman wrote in the same year with dramatic effect: 'Stay at home! Starve at home! There is no home here! The very weather, so charming to Americans...is a perpetual annoyance.'<sup>2</sup> The most telling criticisms of emigrant life, sometimes by former emigrants, were called forth by a press controversy on emigration which raged in 1874, and will be reviewed in the following section of this thesis.

. . . . .

The humble Irishman, who is above quoted as writing 'I would not encourage any persons to come here that could live middling well at home', was echoed by Canada's most famous emigrant Irishman. Moreover, when Thomas D'Arcy McGee, in a lecture at Wexford in 1865, said 'I am not here to advise any man to emigrate',<sup>3</sup> he spoke as Canada's minister of agriculture and immigration. A perusal of the foregoing pages of this thesis will have assured the reader that McGee's next words were that farm labourers and domestic servants contemplating emigration might, nevertheless, consider British North America. In McGee's whole career are epitomised the choices which lay before the Irishman emigrating to North America - the United States, a severance of the British connection and, for the few, a continued hostility to Britain; or Canada, reconciliation, and loyalty to the Crown rediscovered as loyalty to the 'Canadian nationality, not French-Canadian, nor British-Canadian, nor Irish-

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 28 April 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3 February 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Dublin Evening Mail, 16 May 1865.

<sup>4</sup>~~T.D. McGee, Speeches and addresses, p.35.~~



Canadian - patriotism rejects the prefix<sup>1</sup> that McGee postulated. It was the reward of McGee's work, and of the minority of Irish emigrants who chose Canada, that in the new colonisation<sup>alism</sup> of British North America those emigrants found the perfect solvent of wrongs endured and grievances nurtured in the old colonisation<sup>alism</sup> of Ireland.

Between his escape from Ireland in 1848 and his migration from the United States to Montreal in 1857 McGee took an extended sabbath, as a mainly unsuccessful promoter of Irish-American newspapers, of life in the republic. From 1852 his second newspaper, the American Celt, reflected a spiritual change in its editor<sup>2</sup> that cost him subscribers and eventually brought him to the Canadian cabinet. The early results of this renaissance were little appreciated by McGee's former associates, to judge from a letter of Richard O'Gorman:

Magee is a man of much prudence and versatility of principle - Although he has long since repented of his connection with that infidel Young Ireland Party of 48 he still seizes every public opportunity of energetically and angrily protesting against his former self and the dangerous companions who led his young feet astray - Magee is now a pious Catholic and believes in Divine right as applied to all manner of respectable officials - I have long since ceased to be angry at him. Doheny, however, who is Colonel of a Regiment of Irish Infantry and therefore warlike and choleric, took occasion to express his disapprobation of Magee's courses by knocking him down a cellar which was conveniently open...<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, McGee's Wexford lecture, wherein he said that Young Ireland was political folly, made enemies for him among the Montreal Irish;<sup>4</sup> and in 1868 he was murdered,

<sup>1</sup>T.D. McGee, Speeches and addresses, p.35. — X

<sup>2</sup>Cf., his very curious and moving Letter to a friend, reprinted in T.D. McGee, Poems, ed. Mrs J. Sadlier; Biographical sketch, pp.24-6. — X

<sup>3</sup>Richard O'Gorman to Smith O'Brien, New York, 12 December 1852, W.S.O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MSS 445, f.2842.

<sup>4</sup>Cf., the entry of a Montreal diarist for 2 October 1867: 'Devlin spat in McGee's face near Post Office. Much talk...', Diary of George Edward Clerk, transcripts in the possession of Professor J.I. Cooper, McGill University.



it was supposed by a fenian, in Ottawa.<sup>1</sup>

McGee died untimely, but not before he had played his part in giving the Irish in Montreal, and at length in the Canadian confederation, a voice in public affairs commensurate, and perhaps more than commensurate, with their numbers. This was no small achievement in Montreal itself, where at the time of the famine influx there was not lacking a protestant newspaper editor to express 'nativist' sentiments: 'Of the thriftless Romanist population of Ireland we obtain enough without urging; but of the young agricultural population of England, Scotland, the North of Ireland, etc. ...we desire to have as many as possible.'<sup>2</sup> A great part of McGee's life and work belong to the history of Canada, where his name is still honoured; but he played a part, which none other ever attempted, in interpreting the two great North American countries to the Irish emigrant or prospective emigrant. Moreover, although to judge from his writings he was innocent, as who in his day was not, of an economic interpretation of history, McGee saw with a clarity in advance of his time the significance of the emigrant to the countries of reception; the emigrant, he said, 'brings thews and sinews into a market where they are the one commodity most needed, and so brings everything.'<sup>3</sup> Like Parnell after him,<sup>4</sup> McGee thought the Irish in the United States had not a level chance; and that the Irish emigrant anywhere faced a hard world.

This message McGee brought back to the United Kingdom

<sup>1</sup>Cf., despatch, 4 July 1867, colonial secretary to Monck, inquiring about the rumour 'that a person living at Ottawa is acting as a Fenian Agent there' (P.R.O., C.O. 42/626).

<sup>2</sup>Montreal Witness, 12 March 1849.

<sup>3</sup>Nation, 2 June 1855.

<sup>4</sup>E.g., Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, Q.5568.



during four weeks' lecturing in Limerick, Cork, London, Leeds and Bradford<sup>1</sup> in 1855, and in the Wexford lecture in 1865; he followed up each visit with a letter to the Irish press in general. His campaign of 1855 was directed against the Know-nothing movement,<sup>2</sup> of 1865 against fenianism in America, 'this weak and wicked yearning after the impossible'.<sup>3</sup> American republicanism, in 1855, McGee saw as 'but an experiment', American democracy he equated with Know-nothing or 'mobocracy', and the only antidote was the catholic church, which in any case, he said, was in America losing 60% of the children of catholic parents.<sup>4</sup> The Irish recently arrived in the United States had concealed the truth from their kinsmen - that catholicism and Irish birth were impediments to an immigrant's success, and that British North America was 'not necessarily miserable and uninhabitable, because the British flag flies at Quebec.'<sup>5</sup> In 1865 McGee told his Wexford audience why 'I preferred an orderly British province in which to live, and a moral city like Montreal in which to bring up my children.'<sup>6</sup> The Times was delighted with his observations on the United States (McGee's sympathies lay with the south): 'We rejoice

---

<sup>1</sup>Freeman's Journal, 6 April 1855.

<sup>2</sup>In his 'closing address to the readers of the American Celt', abridged in the [Montreal] New Era, 25 May 1857, McGee claimed that he had successfully fought the Know-nothing movement by discouraging emigration ('I therefore took that tour to Ireland') and by advocating a dispersal of the existing Irish immigrants in the American west.

The New Era is now available on microfilm at the National Library of Ireland.

<sup>3</sup>T.D. McGee, The Irish position in British and republican North America: a letter to the editors of the Irish press, irrespective of party, p.7 (2nd edn., Montreal, 1866).

<sup>4</sup>Cork Examiner, quoted Nation, 24 March 1855.

<sup>5</sup>Nation, 2 June 1855.

<sup>6</sup>Dublin Evening Mail, 16 May 1865.



exceedingly that a person has at last appeared to whom the Irish must listen.<sup>1</sup> His letter, following this address, was one of McGee's most powerful productions. In it he returned to the theme that emigrants' letters, written 'to dazzle the neighbours', were one source of 'an excessive attachment to preconceived opinions' in Ireland upon the United States as compared with Canada.<sup>2</sup> For 'those whose minds were full of a fancy America'<sup>3</sup> he drew contrasting pictures of the urban squalor in which lived most of the American Irish, and the connection with the land maintained by most of the Canadian Irish. He indicted American fenianism, whose 'rank and file feel that while their stomachs are filled, their affections are starved in that hard and fast new state of society'.<sup>4</sup>

The inexorable statistics of embarkation show that relatively few emigrant Irish heeded McGee's final plea:

...I did not, when in Ireland, gentlemen, and I do not now ask you to circulate these views and arguments in order to stimulate emigration from Ireland to British America. I say now, as I said then, 'let every man who can live at home, stay at home.' Too high a price in body and soul may be paid for butcher's meat, and the wearing of glazed shoddy instead of honest frieze...Come, you who must emigrate, to us...<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Times, 19 May 1865.

<sup>2</sup>T.D. McGee, The Irish position, etc., as above, pp.4-5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.8.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.7.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp.17-18.



...the ...

It remains to consider the ...

Some contemporary opinion on the ...

SECTION V

Opinion and policy, on the emigration and some related problems.

...the ...

...the ...

A ...

...the ...



SECTION V

Opinion and policy, on the emigration and some related problems.

It remains to consider that which ~~dominates~~ the whole subject, the climate of opinion, official and other, on Irish emigration throughout the period. The difficulties of an objective assessment are such that the attempt is best made when all attainable evidence has been set out on the emigration as process and effect.

Some contemporary opinion on the numbers of the Irish people and their emigrants, on the age-composition of the emigration and on the returned emigrant may first be reviewed. The whole concept of population was charged with emotion and deeply involved in the controversy over 'extermination'. Irish opinion about population was darkened by a well-founded pessimism. A contrary instance in the press is quite exceptional, such as one in 1859<sup>1</sup> to the effect that, despite the ravages of the famine and the exodus, population will in a few more years have reached its old numbers. This pessimism often took the form of estimating, seldom with close reasoning, the numbers that Ireland could easily support; the practice is perennial.<sup>2</sup> These of course were generally found to be greater than the current population, and it was an easy step from this conclusion to an attack upon the administrative malevolence which was held to be responsible for the deficiency. At one end of the scale of opinion on the subject, few public pronouncements had the hardihood of Duval's, when he wrote in 1862 that Ireland was already heavily overpopulated when it had eight million souls:<sup>3</sup> but he stood outside Irish politics. Not so, a

---

<sup>1</sup>Freeman's Journal, May 27.

<sup>2</sup>A contributor to the Irish Times of 4 October 1950 wrote: 'All our national leaders for a century have preached that the natural population of Ireland should be at least 20,000,000.' The word 'natural' in this context is very interesting.

<sup>3</sup>Duval, *op.cit.*, p. 21.



couple of years later, the Earl of Carlisle, who probably found numerous occasions to regret his notorious, though by no means inaccurate, forecast<sup>1</sup> of an Ireland of 'flocks and herds'; in the house of commons he was arraigned for it by Hennessy.<sup>2</sup> In the same place, Sir Hugh Cairns was perhaps emboldened by the viceroy's indiscretion to congratulate Ireland upon not having a population of eight or nine millions in 1865.<sup>3</sup>

By contract, the cry for more population came from many Irish quarters. The choice of an optimum figure varied widely. A favourite device, reappearing over a span of at least twenty years, was to say that Ireland could support three times its current populations: 'Three times the present population of Ireland could live happily at home, if agriculture and commerce were as prosperous as in England and Scotland';<sup>4</sup> 'If all the natural resources of Ireland were utilised...they could suffice to maintain in comfort probably three times our present population'.<sup>5</sup> In 1883 also, a board of guardians at Scariff was asked the very leading question: 'would they, as intelligent men, knowing the resources of their country, hesitate in saying that Ireland was capable of supporting thrice its present population'.<sup>6</sup> Other arguments, or statements, discarding the factorial method, came out boldly with gross figures ranging from seven to thirty-seven millions, a dangerous degree of variation. Lecturing at Cork and Limerick in 1869, J.F. Maguire said that

---

<sup>1</sup>Later repeated by Lecky, Hansard, lxvi.1496 (20 February 1899).

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, clxxiii.1832 (11 March 1864).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., clxxvii.762 (27 February 1865).

<sup>4</sup>Galway Vindicator, 8 April 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Nation, 10 February 1883.

<sup>6</sup>Tipperary Advocate, 20 January 1883.



Ireland could support seven millions instead of its then five and a half.<sup>1</sup> In 1874 the editor of the Belfast News-Letter<sup>2</sup> considered that 'over and over again it has been proved that our country could support ten millions of people in decency', and that it would be time enough to emigrate to Canada when overpopulation had set in. Some still higher figures remain to be noticed; it is curious how few of their authors made any collation, in the light of the famine experience, with the question of sustenance. In 1864 Hennessy said that Irish population ought then to have been twelve millions, 'so that the actual loss of people had been something like 6,000,000 or 7,000,000 - a greater loss numerically than if the Queen were to lose the whole of her colonial empire.'<sup>3</sup> Henry MacCormac, a Belfast doctor and a keen anti-emigrationist, pointed out that if Ireland had the same population density as Kent (a strange comparison) it would support fifteen millions.<sup>4</sup> Another correspondent of the northern press affirmed that, with land reclamation, twenty millions might live in Ireland;<sup>5</sup> but an essayist had some years before received a medal from the Royal Dublin Society for his thesis that, given good drainage, Ireland would support no fewer than thirty-seven millions.<sup>6</sup>

During some of these years an argument in favour of population was occasionally heard which was more likely than most of the foregoing examples to reach appreciative ears in the circles of government. It recalls an earlier school of

---

<sup>1</sup>J.F. Maguire, America in its relation to Irish emigration, p.6.

<sup>2</sup>May 28.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard, clxxiii.1831 (11 March 1864).

<sup>4</sup>Ulster Examiner, 4 June 1874.

<sup>5</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 19 May 1874.

<sup>6</sup>Hansard, clxxvii.671 (24 February 1865).



political economy, and refers to Ireland as a recruiting-ground for the British armed forces. Europe in the third quarter of the nineteenth century looked much less pacific to contemporaries than it appears in retrospect to us, and both the slaughter in Italy and the American explosion were a forecast of modern war not altogether unworthy of the sequel. Already in 1857 the Limerick Reporter pointed out<sup>1</sup> that the English government was subsidising the emigration to Australia of Irishmen who might be needed in war. In 1865 Lord Robert Cecil (as he then was) made a thoughtful reference to Ireland's possible significance in the new age:

The population of Ireland is draining away year by year... Those who in any future complications in which this country may be involved would be looked to fight [sic] her battles are going away at the rate of an army a year...<sup>2</sup>

He was echoed in the following session by the marquess of Clanricarde.<sup>3</sup> With somewhat different intent, the Nation noted complacently in 1871<sup>4</sup> the low proportion of Irish recruits to line regiments - 'what a serious change for England since the famous days when Irish heroism upheld her flag' - and a few years later some of the Ulster press found this situation thoroughly disquieting:

Ireland has...been depopulated to make room for graziers and their bullocks. Should the Stars and Stripes ever appear in hostile form at Galway or Bearhaven, what kind of defenders will these make of the Empire ruled by her Majesty the Queen?<sup>5</sup>

When Europe is one vast military camp it is not the time to be stripping our island of its brave fighting men.<sup>6</sup>

On the whole, the argument from many Irishmen in behalf of population was but a surrogate of their passionate dislike of

<sup>1</sup>May 5.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, clxxvii.718 (24 February 1865).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., clxxxii.406 (16 March 1866).

<sup>4</sup>April 22.

<sup>5</sup>Ulster Examiner, 25 May 1874.

<sup>6</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 18 July 1874.



the emigration process and all it implied.

As regards the emigration proper, whose numbers are set out in table 1 of appendix II, it may be noted that erroneous statements of those numbers, either misguided or purposely exaggerated, were from time to time put out. The high-water mark of emigration, by the census figures, was the 190,000 of 1852, and the Times was undoubtedly referring with a certain satisfaction, not to the census figures of 1851 but to those of the Emigration Commissioners, in its well-known and unfeeling pronouncement: 'the abstraction of the Celtic race at the rate of a quarter of a million a year, is a surer remedy for the inveterate Irish disease than any human art could have imagined.'<sup>1</sup> The Dublin Evening Post bid even higher, and an impressive round number of 300,000 a year for the emigration became at one time almost obsessional with this newspaper, much as the advocates of population called ever for three times what Ireland had. A leading article on 'The Exodus' put the average emigration of 1851-2 at nearly 300,000,<sup>2</sup> an estimate repeated twice within the next couple of months,<sup>3</sup> on the last occasion with a hint, perhaps, of misgiving: 'the young and the healthy - the men and women, are going at the rate, certainly, of 300,000 per annum'. But those were the days of heavy emigration, whatever its real total, and towards the end of the period another newspaper seems at first sight merely fatuous when it says, in a year of 70,000 emigrants, 'to-day the curse of emigration is as rife almost as it was in the fearful famine times'.<sup>4</sup> A statement of that kind is of no veridical but much historical

---

<sup>1</sup>Times, 14 January 1851, quoted Nation, 3 January 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 11 March 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6 May, 22 May 1852.

<sup>4</sup>Drogheda Argus, 18 May 1889.



interest; the shadow of the famine emigration lies over the latter years of the century and beyond.

It is clear that there was little doubt in the minds of contemporaries as to which age-groups Ireland was losing by emigration, and those the most valuable. The expression 'bone and sinew of the country', or a variant of it, recurs like an incantation throughout the half-century in descriptions of the emigrants; the alarm at one point of the census commissioners on this score has already been mentioned. A northern newspaper of 1851, commenting, as many so strangely did, on the 'comfortable circumstances' of the emigrants, concluded 'so we are drained at once of our gold, and of the bone and sinew of the country'.<sup>1</sup> In the following year the Emigration Commission says that since the emigrants comprise the youngest and healthiest adults, depopulation is in sight 'unless the emigration be soon arrested.'<sup>2</sup> At the distance of a century, it may perhaps be observed that statements of this kind tend to neglect the long perspectives of history which so constantly falsify prophecy. Further, it is worth noting the different viewpoints of Americans and Irish in the matter:

A Fine Body of Emigrants. - The ship Glenlyon...from New Ross arrived here...with two hundred and twenty emigrants from Wexford, Ireland. We have never seen a finer body of people from the old country...healthy looking and well clad, having the air and manners of worthy and industrious people...<sup>3</sup>

Later in the century, North America had much less flattering comment to make on the Irish immigrant. Nevertheless the lamentation of the Irish press continued, very naturally, with no dissentient voice: 'those who are going are the

---

<sup>1</sup>Derry Journal, quoted Freeman's Journal, 2 May 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 12th General report, 1852, p.11.

<sup>3</sup>Savannah Daily News, 10 December [1851], quoted Dublin Evening Post, 8 January 1852.



ablest bodied',<sup>1</sup> 'they were of all ages...but the majority were hale and hearty young boys and girls',<sup>2</sup> 'the country is rapidly losing its young people of both sexes',<sup>3</sup> the emigrants are largely young men,<sup>4</sup> 'principally young men... Young women of excellent character are also moving...',<sup>5</sup> 'the...emigrants...were generally young...Few old persons joined the efflux' (of 1862),<sup>6</sup> 'only those are going who are required at home - the healthy, athletic male population of the country'.<sup>7</sup>

Evidence from every quarter of the country thus echoes the same theme, and the list may be extended through the years. 'Bone and sinew' became the password to the subject in the house of commons, and to that extent, no doubt, throughout that portion of the United Kingdom's population which habitually followed the parliamentary debates. In 1865 Maguire was saying:

If hon. Gentlemen would stand on the pier at Queenstown, as he had done, they would see that it was the very bone and sinew of the country that was now leaving it, the same class who were the hope and strength of other countries.<sup>8</sup>

In 1869 English emigrants outnumbered Irish, and the attention of the House was consequently focussed with unusual determination upon the phenomenon of emigration; Earl Grey said we must not encourage the emigration of 'the very sinews and strength of the country'.<sup>9</sup> In evidence before the

<sup>1</sup>Londonderry Standard, 21 April 1853.

<sup>2</sup>Southern Reporter, 4 May 1857.

<sup>3</sup>Londonderry Standard, 24 September 1857.

<sup>4</sup>Cork Constitution, 10 April 1860.

<sup>5</sup>Carlow Sentinel, quoted *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Freeman's Journal, 9 January 1863.

<sup>7</sup>Galway Vindicator, 25 April 1863.

<sup>8</sup>Hansard, clxxvii.732 (24 February 1865).

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, cxcv.961 (16 April 1869).



Richmond Commission in 1880, the bishop of Clonfert spoke of the emigration of the young, the 'bone and sinew' of the country.<sup>1</sup> The chairman pro hac vice of the Cairns committee in 1882, Lord Tyrone, inquired: 'You are not afraid then of the effect upon Ireland of sending the bone and sinew out of the country and keeping the old and useless behind?'<sup>2</sup> Reverting to the press commentary, the Waterford Mail<sup>3</sup> records in 1873 that Queenstown (then rapidly approaching its position as the pre-eminent port of embarkation) is thronged with healthy young emigrants, and that 'the sight is one to awaken many sad reflections'. Other newspapers continue the familiar story: 'the bone and sinew of the country gone, gone to clear the forests of Nebraska and Ohio',<sup>4</sup> the 'bone and sinew' of the land' are being encouraged to emigrate under the government scheme, e.g. 'a dashing young man of over twenty years, with no one depending on him',<sup>5</sup> most of the emigrants at Galway are young people,<sup>6</sup> and amongst the rush of emigrants at Queenstown nearly all are young men and women of the farming class, aged 18-30.<sup>7</sup>

From such accounts it is difficult to believe, notwithstanding the statistical evidence, that anyone outside the latter ages ever emigrated; an excellent commentary upon the limitations of newspaper evidence for the historian, as likewise upon its virtue in presenting the contemporary

<sup>1</sup>Richmond Commission, Minutes of evidence, Dec.1880, Q. 14, 199.

<sup>2</sup>Second report of the select committee of the house of lords on land law (Ireland), 1882, Q.7558.

<sup>3</sup>30 April 1873.

<sup>4</sup>Tipperary Advocate, 31 March 1883.

<sup>5</sup>Nation, 31 March 1883.

<sup>6</sup>Galway Vindicator, 30 April 1887.

<sup>7</sup>Times, quoted Belfast News-Letter, 12 May 1887.



collective mind.

The Irish press and other sources during the period carry occasional references to the returned emigrant. Trade depression in North America in the later 1850's set flowing a certain return tide; owing to this cause, and to the Know-nothing agitation, 12,578 persons were officially said to have returned from the United States to Liverpool during 1854.<sup>1</sup> In view of this figure, a newspaper estimate in the following year was wildly improbable: 'The Irish emigration has died out [there were more than 90,000 emigrants that year]. More now are returning from than passing to the land of promise.'<sup>2</sup> It is important to notice upon what imperfect evidence a prospective emigrant might come to rely in making his decision. In 1857 the Munster News<sup>3</sup> has word from merchants in Limerick that many Irish are preparing to return from America but are not coming back empty-handed: an agreeable spoiling of the temporarily embarrassed Egyptians. In the same year, the Dublin Evening Post<sup>4</sup> considered, not perhaps without pathos, that 'the vast improvement in the condition of this country' had combined with hard times in America to cause many Irish families to return; and in 1858 the Cork Constitution, well placed in that city to observe a reflux of immigrants, said that over-crowded labour markets in Boston, New York and St John, New Brunswick had set a return tide of emigration flowing to Ireland.<sup>5</sup>

The war between the American states caused, or was

<sup>1</sup>Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 15th General report, 1855, p.12.

<sup>2</sup>Freeman's Journal, 10 April 1855. In the same year D'Arcy McGee maintained that 500 Irish a week were returning from the United States, Nation, 2 June 1855.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted Londonderry Standard, 3 December 1857.

<sup>4</sup>26 December 1857.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted Times, 30 December 1858.



accompanied by, not only the sharp falling-off already noticed in Irish emigration after 1863 but also, apparently, some return of former emigrants:

...whereas in former years people made remittances to this country in order to assist their friends 'at home' to emigrate to the States, affairs are now reversed, and money is forwarded through agents to bring people from America.<sup>1</sup>

If indeed there were such remittances in reverse, no record of them was published; and the Freeman's Journal<sup>2</sup> thought the returned emigration from the United States as a result of the war was 'the merest trifle'. A few years later Dufferin mentioned in his book the demand in the Landed Estates Court for small parcels of land (at uneconomically high prices) set up by 'many of the farming class returning with money from the gold diggings, etc.',<sup>3</sup> and the consequent rack-renting; and in 1872 the Emigration Commissioners reported a 'considerable' return immigration into the United Kingdom of late years, but confessed they had no precise details.<sup>4</sup> References in 1874 and 1875 to a 'rush of steerage passengers' on eastbound vessels, 'on the reduction of the fare from thirty dollars to fifteen dollars to Liverpool or Glasgow',<sup>5</sup> and to a 'continued rush of American travellers to Europe',<sup>6</sup> are probably some of the first signs of modern tourism, stimulated perhaps by the happy results for passengers of the Atlantic/war.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 4 January 1862.

<sup>2</sup>9 January 1863.

<sup>3</sup>Dufferin, Irish emigration and the tenure of land in Ireland, 1867, p.213n.

<sup>4</sup>Emigration Commission, 32nd General report, 1872, p.3.

<sup>5</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 13 July 1874.

<sup>6</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 9 June 1875.

<sup>7</sup>The North Atlantic Steamship Conference, a rate-fixing association, broke up in May, 1874, First report of the select committee of the parliament of Canada on immigration and colonisation, p.7, H.C. 1875(275), lii. At one time in the summer of that year passengers from Chicago to Queenstown or Liverpool could get through tickets for \$17.00, Edith Abbott, Historical aspects of the immigration problem, p.185.

cf. above, pp. 274-5.



In 1949 I took a somewhat random sample of thirty-six households in co. Roscommon, and found in them seven returned emigrants, all from the United States. If anything like this proportion prevails in the Irish population, there are more than enough returned emigrants now in Ireland to be in all probability a serious factor in the problem of continued emigration. It may reasonably be conjectured that, although opinions both favourable to emigration and the reverse will be, and always have been propagated in this way, the favourable voices among returned emigrants have tended to predominate. The worst cases of 'failure' among the emigrants could never afford the fare home, still less the store clothes and other visible appurtenances of the higher civilisation wherewith to outshine the frieze and homespun of the cabins. In a report upon the poor law union of Westport, made to the royal commission on labour in 1893, the assistant commissioner said:

I interviewed one young woman of 21 years of age who had recently returned from America to see her friends [she had worked as a cook in the United States since the age of 15]... This girl, in her well-fitting cloth dress and jacket, looked strangely out of place in the small cottage where I found her, and she herself said that her home surroundings seemed very poverty stricken after her experiences in America.<sup>1</sup>

A Catholic writer commented as follows, a few years later, on the same phenomenon: 'A constant, sad yet significant, sight each recurring year in Ireland is the returned American - ailing, if a woman, her fine dresses, but with a complexion far different from what she had when she emigrated...'<sup>2</sup>

There is record of returned emigrants who were responsible for building development in some of the most admired

<sup>1</sup>Royal commission on labour, 1893-4, vol.IV, part IV, para.18.

<sup>2</sup>Richard J. Kelly, Evils of emigration, p.5, Catholic truth society, Dublin, 1902.



quarters of Dublin and its neighbourhood:

Who built the International Hotel at Bray? A returned emigrant, who went away a poor man and returned a millionaire. There is a returned emigrant building terraces in Rathmines, where he resides amid the scenes of his youth, though he owns a large portion of Staten Island.<sup>1</sup>

The International Hotel stands, a monument, to judge from its appearance aere perennius, to successful emigration.

There were contrary indications, but of their nature they were apt to be fleeting and less impressive. The type of ill-advised emigrant, who nevertheless managed to return, was a young widow with several children who was sent back to the Tralee union in 1883 by the Castle Garden authorities, at the expense of the steamship line which had unwisely taken her out. When asked why she emigrated, she

replied, with some warmth, she was like many other fools in the country who were led to believe they would pick up money in the streets of America. She thinks she made a very grave mistake in emigrating.<sup>2</sup>

Giving evidence before the Cowper Commission in 1887, a Connemara Resident Magistrate spoke of many returned emigrants:

I have heard a great many stories, everyone has a different story to tell why they came back; the country did not suit them, or they got into bad health... Sometimes I have known instances where emigrants went out and stayed out only three months.<sup>3</sup>

It is impossible to assess the influence upon opinion of the very numerous Irishmen in the British armed forces who returned from overseas service with no doubt detailed accounts of life in British North America, among other stations, before this was handed over to indigenous defenders. As A.F. Hattersley observes, 'officers and men of regiments on colonial garrison duty spread accurate information on the

---

<sup>1</sup>[Dublin] Daily Express, 14 January 1864.

<sup>2</sup>Cork Examiner, quoted Nation, 4 August 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Cowper commission, 1887, vol.II, Minutes of evidence, QQ.1250-57.



stations where they had served."<sup>1</sup> The witness afforded by this kind of returned emigrant must have depended entirely upon the man and his mind, since he did not leave his country with any expectation of making a fortune.

The visits of distinguished Irishmen, such as W. Smith O'Brien, to North America scarcely qualify them for the category of returned emigrants; Thomas D'Arcy McGee belongs to the category in one highly significant sense; but his case has already been considered (see pp. 339-43).

. . . . .

In a review of opinion on the Irish emigration in general, the Irish attitude may reasonably be considered first. On the broadest issue, of emigration or no emigration, the opinion of the Irish is recorded, with varying emphasis but the same meaning, on the emigration graph for the period; as was observed earlier, they voted with their feet.<sup>2</sup> This in itself would be enough evidence that the report of former emigrants, in letters or otherwise, was not so adverse as seriously to inhibit further emigration; and the majority of such letters already quoted were, in fact, favourable to emigration.<sup>3</sup> None the less, it appeared from similar sources that a minority of opinion, far from negligible, existed against emigration, and further striking examples of the same tendency remain to be considered. That is to say, there was an ambivalence, in reference to opinion on emigration, about this type of evidence. A like uncertainty may be perceived in the

---

<sup>1</sup>A. E. Hattersley, 'Migration within the empire 1849 and 1949', page 245, in History, N.S. xxxiv. 235-45 (Oct., 1949).

<sup>2</sup>Cf., Smith O'Brien's retrospect of 1848: '...the people preferred to die of starvation at home, or to flee as voluntary exiles to other lands, rather than to fight for their lives and liberties', quoted Denis Gwynn, Young Ireland and 1848, epilogue, p. 269.

<sup>3</sup>We seem to lack almost entirely the outletters from Ireland to these correspondents; it is a rather serious lacuna.



views of some Irish newspapers, in conjunction, particularly, with their practice of printing advertisements of emigrant shipping. The phase of confused opinion in the press is more marked in the earlier years of the period; the crisis associated with the 'government emigration' of 1833 left few signs of indecision in the Irish newspapers, and saw a hardening of anti-emigration opinion in other quarters as well.

Throughout the summer of 1852, the Dublin Evening Post, at frequent intervals, had long articles on some aspect of the 'Exodus', preponderantly on emigration to Australia. By September these trailed off into incidental vituperation of England, but not of emigration in itself. By that time the Post had decided that 'THERE CANNOT...BE ANOTHER ENGLISH PLANTATION IN IRELAND' (to replace the emigrants), because the English, happily, were going to Australia themselves.<sup>1</sup> A few years later, the Limerick Reporter,<sup>2</sup> while raising no objection 'to a rational, voluntary emigration', deplored the loss of Ireland's 'best children, at a period when a return of better times should lead us to hope, that they might find remunerative employment at home.' Like some other newspapers, this one blamed the state of the land question. The Freeman's Journal, which commented with great feeling in 1851 on the 'depopulation of Ireland',<sup>3</sup> showed only qualified disapproval of emigration in a leading article in 1853.<sup>4</sup> This observed that it was all very well for the Times to say that emigrants exchanged misery for comfort, but had they not better enjoy comfort in Ireland? Within a week

---

<sup>1</sup>Dublin Evening Post, 12 August 1852.

<sup>2</sup>5 May 1857.

<sup>3</sup>Freeman's Journal, 24 June 1851.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 29 March 1853.



the Freeman's Journal printed a letter from Buchanan, already cited, setting out the attractive prospect for immigrants to Canada;<sup>1</sup> and neither this nor any other Irish newspaper that, consistently or at intervals, deplored emigration seemed able to refuse the advertisements of emigrant shipping which must have been such an important item of revenue. Thus, in 1874 the Belfast News-Letter, which printed lavish advertisements of Atlantic and Australian steamship lines, published also the comment: 'when shipping companies are carrying our people to other lands for a trifle, some means ought to be devised for keeping them at home.'<sup>2</sup> The same newspaper stated, some years later: 'under ordinary conditions, we should feel bound to oppose emigration'<sup>3</sup> - a somewhat half-hearted pronouncement. The Tipperary Advocate had, in successive issues in 1883, a poem denouncing emigration and a notice of where to obtain a helpful pamphlet on Canada;<sup>4</sup> the Tyrone Constitution<sup>5</sup> carried accounts of the attractions of the United States for emigrants, while disagreeing editorially with the principle of emigration. These inconsistencies cannot, perhaps, be pressed too far; but they may indicate a divided mind upon the theory and practice of emigration, not confined to editorial precincts.

The air of indecision surrounding some newspaper attitudes to emigration thickens upon the investigator who attempts, from newspaper and other sources, so simple an assessment as that of the actual bearing of the emigrants and their friends

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4 April 1853. Cf., also, the same newspaper's issue of 7 March 1871, summarising the Iowa board of immigration's treatise, although 'we would not have it supposed that we favour emigration'.

<sup>2</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 16 May 1874.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 12 April 1887.

<sup>4</sup>Tipperary Advocate, 17, 24 March 1883.

<sup>5</sup>January - April 1890, passim.



at the solemn moment of parting and embarkation. A rapid survey of typical accounts will indicate the difficulty. 'Not weeping, like those who went before the famine, but exulting, like those who escape from the house of bondage' (1853).<sup>1</sup> 'This mournful lament [of emigrants' friends] before daybreak in the silent country...' (1863).<sup>2</sup> 'There is no wailing and no crying' (bishop of Cloyne, 1865).<sup>3</sup> In 1880 Professor Baldwin said the current emigration was cheerful, Major Robertson said it was not.<sup>4</sup> 'The wail of sorrow...as each boatload [of Tuke emigrants] shoved off from the shore' (1883).<sup>5</sup> 'The usual impressive leave-taking was comparatively nil' (Tuke emigrants, 1883).<sup>6</sup> 'It is remarkable how cheerfully they take their departure. It would seem almost an everyday business with them' (1887).<sup>7</sup> 'Stern they look and sadly they go, for theirs is the doom of Israel' (1889).<sup>8</sup> Allowing for journalistic cliché, there was evidently a very wide range of local reactions to the drama of emigrant embarkation. At this distance it is hard to say which state of mind in the emigrants themselves appears the more terrible - of those who left Ireland, most of them forever, in joy, or in sorrow. Emigration had probably ceased to be news in the journalist's sense before the end

---

<sup>1</sup>Londonderry Standard, 21 April.

<sup>2</sup>Munster News, quoted Nation, 9 May.

<sup>3</sup>Report from the select committee...on the tenure and improvement of land in Ireland, Q.3400, H.C.1865 (402),xi.

<sup>4</sup>Richmond commission, Minutes of evidence, part I, 1880, Q.19,901.

<sup>5</sup>[Dublin] Express, quoted Nation, 7 April.

<sup>6</sup>Emigration from Ireland; being the second report of the committee of 'Mr. Tuke's Fund', July, 1883, p.29.

<sup>7</sup>Galway Vindicator, 30 April.

<sup>8</sup>Drogheda Argus, 18 May.



of the century. In 1887, a year of more than 80,000 emigrants, the Sligo Champion, a violently anti-British newspaper, had no comment on emigration. Newspapers in Dundalk, Drogheda, Cavan, Tyrone, Roscommon and Tipperary had little emigration news between 1880 and 1891, although the areas they served had considerable emigration during those years.

Other examples of Irish or quasi-Irish states of opinion either favourable, or not hostile, to emigration may be found, but they are not many. The guardians of the south Dublin union were from time to time petitioned for assisted emigration by female paupers.<sup>1</sup> It was Tuke's opinion that the attitude of the people towards emigration had changed during his long acquaintance with Ireland; they went unwillingly, he thought, in the famine exodus, but were reconciled to emigration a generation later.<sup>2</sup> His committee had no difficulty in finding volunteers for assisted emigration; the alternative to emigration was not, however, encouraging. Amongst opinion other than that of the emigrating classes, Neilson Hancock's Supposed progressive decline of Irish prosperity ~~property~~ proved satisfactorily that Irish emigration did not arise from English machinations, and the work was consequently reviewed without disapprobation in the Londonderry Standard.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to compare the published views, only a few days later, of the Galway Vindicator,<sup>4</sup> which in a leading article deploring the emigration pointed out that the fortunes of the aristocracy and landed gentry were particularly involved in it, and that in consequence these classes should

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, clxxiii.1848 (11 March 1864); Cork Constitution, 27 May 1871.

<sup>2</sup>Cairns committee, II, 1882, QQ.7713-14, 7750, 7752, 7765.

<sup>3</sup>25 April 1863.

<sup>4</sup>29 April 1863.



extract some money from the Treasury, heroic counsel, for 'remunerative public works'.

Maguire's attitude to emigration shows the divided mind to which I have referred. In the house of commons he warned against regarding emigration as a panacea: 'The difficulty is not diminished because it is transferred to the other side of the Atlantic', but he also admitted, in the same speech, that emigration was now a permanent factor in Irish history: 'I believe that emigration will go on from year to year, and there is only one way of making that emigration not dangerous - namely, by sending friends, not enemies, across the Atlantic.'<sup>1</sup> This was not the language of an altogether unbending anti-emigrationist; ~~was~~ nor was his lecture on America, delivered at Cork and Limerick, in the following year. In this he certainly condemned emigration as 'a national calamity', and said every emigrant ship robbed Ireland of 'so much capital, wealth, and power';<sup>2</sup> but the main purpose of the lecture was apparently to implement the advice so freely given him during his American tour, namely to enjoin his countrymen, once emigrated, to avoid the American cities. Accordingly he called for the attention of the Irish people 'to an evil of the most serious magnitude...that of the emigrant, on arriving in America, not at once seeking the right place for his special industry...'.<sup>3</sup> This was surely a more fruitful line of argument than a mere denial of the validity of all emigration.

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cxc, 1311-12 (10 March 1868).

<sup>2</sup>J.F. Maguire, America in its relation to Irish emigration, pp.6,8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., preface. Maguire's attitude to emigration may be compared with his opinion that the American-Irish would be better employed in advancing their own status than in regenerating Ireland, The Irish in America, pp.245-6.



In the eighteen-eighties, Baldwin alleged that Parnell regarded 'emigration or migration'; a very significant distinction, as one remedy for Ireland's ills.<sup>1</sup> Vere Foster further defined the range of Parnell's sympathies in the matter by observing that the leader 'did not approve of assisted emigration';<sup>2</sup> Foster himself found that while shopkeepers and employers were against emigration, the 'leaders of the land movement' raised no opposition.<sup>3</sup> O'Connor Power, a member of parliament for Mayo, took more explicitly the view that Maguire before him may be thought to have held, and said he would neither promote emigration nor oppose it; but recognising that in the existing condition of Ireland it was inevitable, he would regulate it.<sup>4</sup>

In sharp contrast with most of the foregoing opinions, forthright opposition to the whole emigration process is easy to find, in the Irish press and elsewhere. Sharman Crawford avoided, in a definition of the subject, the very word emigration: 'If these economists be correct, who say no amelioration of the condition of the Irish people can be produced except by a reduction of their number...then there is no remedy but by the extermination, new location, or transportation of the people'.<sup>5</sup> The Newry Examiner,<sup>6</sup> after a long silence on the subject, printed in 1857 a leading article against emigration 'just now', when there was relative prosperity in Ireland, and want in the United States

<sup>1</sup>Richmond commission, Minutes of evidence, part I, 1880, Q.19,931.

<sup>2</sup>Cairns committee, II, 1882, Q.7529.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., QQ.7630-2.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, cclxxvii.1990 (10 April 1883).

<sup>5</sup>William Sharman Crawford, Depopulation not necessary (R.I.A., Haliday pamphlets, 1850/2074).

<sup>6</sup>28 November 1857.



and Australia. A few years later, the Cork Examiner<sup>1</sup> had a blistering editorial on the sufferings of the poor Irish in the United States, and a detailed account from an American correspondent of the exploiting of immigrants by land companies, construction firms, and the like. During the years from 1880, anti-emigration opinion was very common. A letter in the Freeman's Journal<sup>2</sup> stated the view that 'those who encourage Irish emigration are, in my judgment, aiding and assisting the English Government to stamp out Irish patriotism, and to keep Ireland and her people the slaves of England.' It is extraordinarily hard to judge the real significance, in the massive process of Irish emigration, of a few voices of this kind, crying mainly to each other in a politico-literary wilderness remote indeed from the purposeful march of the emigrant host. Their pronouncements, of no effect in Ireland, were perhaps pondered in America. The bishop of Clonfert was shrewd in his judgment that emigration was a disaster for Ireland, an advantage for the individual 'who leaves the country and takes his youth and strength to America'.<sup>3</sup>

The nationalist reaction to the government's one positive sally into the field of assisted emigration was pronounced. The Cork Examiner was possibly the mildest among the newspaper ~~articles~~ critics of the scheme, and held that the unfortunate Trevelyan honestly thought he was doing the best he could for Ireland, although 'he means by withholding relief to compel them to accept emigration'.<sup>4</sup> This newspaper admitted that there was undoubtedly a desire to

---

<sup>1</sup>11 June 1860.

<sup>2</sup>21 July 1880.

<sup>3</sup>Richmond commission, Minutes of evidence, part I, 1880, Q.14,199.

<sup>4</sup>Cork Examiner, 10 March 1883.



emigrate, but thought the government's plans looked too like forcing people away with starvation as the alternative.<sup>1</sup> In August of 1883 the Cork Examiner had moving stories, already quoted, of pauper emigrants rejected by Castle Garden,<sup>2</sup> and a critique of the government's strange juxtaposition of tramways and emigration in the new bill - the emigration taking away 'the very raison d'être of the tramways'. At the same time, the Examiner said: 'The agricultural population are only too anxious to go. The belief has not yet faded out of the popular mind that America is a land not only of promise but of Irish performance...'.<sup>3</sup> This remark touched the heart of the matter, and is not offset by the unsophisticated opinions of the land of promise which still were heard on occasion in Ireland.<sup>4</sup>

The Nation had no troublesome doubts about the iniquity of emigration in general, which 'we have always contended... is not necessary',<sup>5</sup> or of 'the Emigration Fraud' in particular, namely 'the Spencer-Trevelyan scheme for the deportation of the Irish people to Canada'.<sup>6</sup> The government's plans had in fact been swollen by rumour into a projected general deportation, an idea which had many repercussions;<sup>7</sup> the stories probably grew out of Mount Stephen's proposal (see p. 221). Whatever the government's plan, the Nation

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 21 April 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., quoted Nation, 4 August 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 9 August 1883.

<sup>4</sup>E.g., from a witness before the Bessborough commission, 1880, who thought the emigrant 'might be alive to-day and not to-morrow. If he had a few dollars about him he was shot', Q.17271.

<sup>5</sup>Nation, 10 February 1883.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 1 December 1883.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 17 November 1883.



thought it 'simply a cold-blooded scheme of extermination',<sup>1</sup> and appealed for witness to reprints of the Toronto press, discussed above, with their sad tales of the suffering Irish in that city. 'Is the Castle Ring to continue by fraudulent representations to entice more and more of the poorer portion of the Irish peasantry to ruin in a foreign land?'<sup>2</sup> Even the Tuke committee's work, usually exempt from hostile comment, seemed to be squinted at: 'It is now notorious that in selecting the State-aided emigrants but little care is given to reducing the population in districts where the inhabitants are too thickly crowded on plots of land insufficient to yield them adequate support;'<sup>3</sup> and the 'simple happiness' of Irish girls at home was contrasted with 'their perilous condition in foreign parts.'<sup>4</sup>

The Scariff board of guardians debated, in January of the same year, the recent 'emigration clauses', and outvoted by only one a resolution that the government 'should resort to other means than the workhouse and emigration ship - the old game of extermination'.<sup>5</sup> Much more weighty, and published in the Irish press, was a resolution of the Irish National Convention at Philadelphia:

Resolved - that the policy of the English Government in first reducing the Irish peasantry to abject poverty and then sending them penniless to the United States, dependents upon American charity, is unnatural and inhuman and an outrage upon the American Government and people...<sup>6</sup>

This was the kind of fuel that stoked anti-emigration

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 10 February 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Nation, 8 December 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 28 April 1883.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Tipperary Advocate, 20 January 1883.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 5 May 1883.



sentiment in Ireland.

The work of the egregious Charles Foy, the Canadian government's commissioner of emigration for northern Ireland, has already been described (cf., pp. 296-9 above). He was the moving spirit of a controversy on emigration, sustained in the Irish press with great vigour during several months of the year 1874. This began in an innocent comment by the Belfast News-Letter,<sup>1</sup> expressing their pleasure in the declining figures of emigration. Foy came into the next issue of the newspaper, dating his letter from 'Can. Govt. Emigration Dept. Offices', and saying: 'I love the "green hills" of Ireland...But a beautiful landscape will not give good meat three times daily to the farm-labourer - will not enable him to become the owner of a good farm, acknowledging no superior but his Creator.'<sup>2</sup> The artful allusion to meat-eating shows Foy's familiarity with a leading sentiment in emigrants' letters. One of the weightiest writers against emigration thereupon betook himself to pen and ink. This was one Henry MacCormac, a Belfast physician and almost a professional anti-emigrationist. He made a dramatic exposure of the sorrows of the Irish in the United States, a subject and country with which he professed wide personal acquaintance;<sup>3</sup> he added:

People here have little idea of the terrible mortality among Irish emigrants, whose graves in long rows border the canals and railways which their labour had served to construct...Let the Irishman...stay at home, and do for green Ireland what he has done for the States.<sup>4</sup>

A correspondence ensued that involved many contributors, the Ulster Examiner and Northern Whig besides the Belfast

<sup>1</sup>16 May 1874.

<sup>2</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 18 May 1874.

<sup>3</sup>Cf., *ibid.*, 27 June 1874.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 19 May 1874.



News-Letter and some of the London and Canadian press as well.

Foy was shrewd, and by no means without parts; his somewhat fulsome letters (sometimes inserted in the press as advertisements) were adorned with scraps of latin, correctly spelled. He was under attack from writers who denounced his profession: 'The emigration jobber in his private capacity may be an angel of light, but as jobber he is a link in what I must consider a great social iniquity'.<sup>1</sup> 'These bombastic emigration agents who work for gain...We know where we are, but where these men would send us we know not.'<sup>2</sup> MacCormac, on the subject, broke into something resembling Irish:

TA ANAIM FOS AN EIRIN [sic]. To the People of Ireland. My Countrymen, - Do not forsake your native land...there is no better or wholesomer place for honest men and healthy women than Ireland. The paid jobber says there is, and I, who am not paid, say there is not...<sup>3</sup>

By way of reply to this type of charge, Foy skilfully developed the theme that there was an employer-interest in thwarting emigration: 'I care nothing how unpopular emigration may be with landlords, capitalists, and all employers of labour'.<sup>4</sup> Later he wrote, castigating the anti-emigrationists: 'The simplest ploughmen see through their dodging, and know well what their pretended patriotism means - cheap labour; in other words, self.'<sup>5</sup> Tempers were rising a little, and correspondents about this time even suggested an anti-emigration society,<sup>6</sup> or a free circulation of anti-

---

<sup>1</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 27 May 1874.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 15 June 1874.

<sup>3</sup>Newry Telegraph, 18 July 1874.

<sup>4</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 28 May 1874.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 16 June 1874.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 10 June 1874.



emigration pamphlets.<sup>1</sup> Foy, never to be outdone, proposed (or threatened) to publish the whole correspondence.<sup>2</sup> One of Foy's most successful strokes in this special branch of the larger controversy was to publish a letter addressed to himself and so exceedingly à propos as to be attacked, later, as a hoax.<sup>3</sup>

To Charles Foy Esq. Dear Sir - I am a man reared to farming, and has good skill of the same, being a native of the County Tyrone, some reckons it the gardening of Ireland; and the farm I was brought up on was a model for the county, from which I was cruelly dispossessed and barbously treated, which left me lonely and a wandering labourer...Believes I would do well in Canada, though at the advanced age of 40 years, I was int ending to call at your office for an assisted passage only for the disencouragements of a ridicilous letter against emigration, calling himself D R McCormick...[The writer therefore applied for a situation at home and was offered by a 'revd gentleman' 9s a week, if married - he was single]. Therefore I intend, before taking this situation, applying to you<sup>4</sup> for an assistance to Canada. Ballymacarett, June 10, 1874.

Foy supposed he would be called unpatriotic, etc., if he engaged the writer at £36 - £40 a year in Canada, with board.

Foy's statements about Canadian wages did not go unchallenged, and 'one who has travelled in Canada' wrote pointing out that any Canadian farmer engaging labourers at that rate would soon be bankrupt, and bailiffs could get nearly as much in Ireland.<sup>5</sup> Disappointed emigrants, to both Canada and the United States, aired their grievances. An Irishman in Canada refuted most of Foy's encomia upon that country, pointing out in a well-reasoned letter that bad trade in the United States (as in 1873-4) meant bad times in Canada - 'the condition of the country is helplessly dependent on the States'.<sup>6</sup>

Another provided an exposé of the politics of immigration: 'two sections of rival Canadian place-hunters...has each now

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 13 June 1874.

<sup>2</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 23 June 1874.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 15 June 1874.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 13 June 1874.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 25 May 1874.

<sup>6</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 9 July 1874.



taken up immigration as its "little game".<sup>1</sup> Foy had already risked the assertion, hotly disputed by a later correspondent, that 'whilst work is not to be had in the States we have work for all in Canada at good wages'.<sup>2</sup> Foy's tactical adroitness was remarkable; he was equal to every emergency. Reports of suicides among emigrants to Canada found him ready with explanations within the week: this man had delirium tremens, that was of the pariah 'clerical' class advised not to emigrate.<sup>3</sup> His safest weapon was always the quoting of success stories, of the type widely illustrated in the present thesis, from letters or alleged letters of emigrants. 'One man told me that he had 6d when he landed at Quebec, and now his property could not be bought for £7.000...there are hundreds like him...'.<sup>4</sup> The familiar emphasis upon the emigrant's meat diet caused the exasperated editor of the Belfast News-Letter<sup>5</sup> to point out that meat had been eaten four times daily in Belfast on occasion.

As a 'cure' for emigration nothing very new was advanced in the course of this lengthy correspondence. Social reform and land reclamation<sup>6</sup> were both canvassed; much was made of the argument, already examined, that if emigrants worked as hard in Ireland as they had to in America, all would be well. About the end of August the controversy appeared to peter out. Foy, on the whole, remained victor of this rather inglorious field, and his typical thrust that 'the arguments against emigration might be condensed into two lines -

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1 August 1874.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 18 May 1874.

<sup>3</sup>Northern Whig, 8 June 1874.

<sup>4</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 21 May 1874.

<sup>5</sup>27 May 1874.

<sup>6</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 19 May 1874.



"There's a good time coming, boys;  
Wait a little longer,"<sup>1</sup>

was more telling than the more stereotyped pictures provided by the anti-emigrationist MacCormac: 'The [American] Irishman's position in the towns, in effect, is too often one of extreme misery and demoralisation; in the wilderness, companion of the bear, the wolf, and the serpent, it is not always better.'<sup>2</sup> Above all, Foy shrewdly perceived that 'emigration' was made the stalking-horse for any and every Irish trouble, an aspect of the matter that appeared also in the parliamentary debates. He summed up this side of the question with much ability:

Not only have I answered all attacks, but my opponents are quarrelling with the position they at first took. The News-Letter asserted at first 'that if the emigrants worked as hard at home they could do as well'. The News-Letter now says, 'if the waste lands of Ireland were reclaimed'; 'but' replies the Examiner, another of my opponents, 'if the News-Letter is sincere let it join us in demanding our native Parliament. Nothing else will stop the artery. Without this emigration will go on.' 'No Home Rule' cries the News-Letter. ...Settle it among yourselves, gentlemen. I say, meanwhile, thousands are carving out for themselves an independence in 'The Land of Happy Homes', Canada.<sup>3</sup>

... ..

|| The catholic church did not pronounce upon emigration; in a situation where any utterance at all might have promoted incalculable schism in Irish catholic opinion, the immemorial voice was wisely silent. Individual catholic clergy were not thereby precluded from views in the matter, and these they sometimes expressed with much vigour. From such instances it appears that most opinion in the priesthood, but by no means all, was adverse to emigration. In 1859 an Irish newspaper could report that the Emigration Commission and local clergy co-operated in effecting emigration from

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 27 May 1874.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 27 June 1874.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 24 June 1874.



to New South Wales, and that the standing argument of the Times as to the clerical vested interest in a dense and miserable Irish population was thereby disproved.<sup>1</sup>

About the same time, the rev. Dr Cahill, deeply engaged towards the end of his life in religious polemics of an anti-British tendency, was an advocate of emigration.<sup>2</sup> A young emigrant said: 'My brother is doing well in America during six years, and Father Cahill has written letters giving such encouragement to young people, I am resolved to go...'.<sup>3</sup>

The Irish catholic clergy were not unanimously against even the "government emigration", although the hierarchy left no doubt of their own opposition. Tuke found the attitude of the priests undecided, 'an individual feeling.' For instance, at Oughterard the rector favoured emigration, 'his curate is so bitter that he would scarcely speak to me'.<sup>4</sup>

Vere Foster said the priests nearly all favoured the emigration of individuals.<sup>5</sup> His own relations with the priesthood appear to have been particularly friendly. Three-quarters of the clergy in the west applied for his passage vouchers on behalf of their flocks.<sup>6</sup> One 'young curate' denounced Foster at a public meeting, but got no support and later he backed one application a week for vouchers during two years.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Freeman's Journal, 28 January 1859.

<sup>2</sup>His Letter from the Rev Dr Cahill on the Irish emigrants to America returning to Ireland, and his Dr. Cahill on Irish emigration, tenant-right and sectarian animosity, both of the year 1857, were small pamphlets, among a torrent of such productions by Cahill, in which he was more concerned with the contemporary wrongs of Ireland than with the emigration. They leave the impression that the word may have been a catch-penny device (R.I.A., Haliday tracts, 535/13,26).

<sup>3</sup>Carlow Sentinel, quoted Cork Constitution, 10 April 1860.

<sup>4</sup>Cairns committee, II, 1882, QQ. 7759-62, 7766-8 (Tuke).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., QQ. 7577-8. 7628-9, 7633-5.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., Q.7540.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., Q.7538. The need for clergy on board the actual emigrant ships was sometimes referred to. That they were often or usually lacking is implied in a recommendation to the Richmond commission that emigrants should be accompanied by clergy. Richmond commission, 1881, Preliminary report, p.7.



The parish priest of Carna wrote to Foster: 'I say with all the energy of my existence, let the people leave in any and every way that may take them out of the slough of poverty and misery in which they are at present sunk.'<sup>1</sup> Foster held that the clergy did not favour the United States as a destination more than Canada;<sup>2</sup> Quebec, indeed, was the stronghold of a catholicism whose like was not to be found in the republic. Some years later, Samuel Hussey thought the priests would support 'a proper system' of emigration, but they objected to 'letting girls and boys be thrown upon the quays of New York.'<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the half-century, there were many voices amongst the Irish priesthood against emigration; the protestant clergy were apparently silent. Many people ascribed sordid motives to this opposition. When Lord Rosse told Nassau Senior that 'the emigration deprives the priests of income as well as of power', and Senior himself wrote, of the priests, 'all that they desire is population, christenings, marriages, dues, and fees',<sup>4</sup> these were views widely held in such circles. Lord Houghton thought the catholic clergy, as 'dependent solely on the dole of the people',<sup>5</sup> took the inevitable view of emigration. The Irish protestant press followed this kind of lead, not without animus. The priests banned emigration because they lost thereby money and catholics at once; 'those, therefore, remain who dare not disobey their priests'.<sup>6</sup> 'If they [the emigrants] are fly-

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Q.7542.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Q.7605.

<sup>3</sup>Cowper commission, 1887, vol.II, Minutes of evidence, Q. 18,075.

<sup>4</sup>Senior, Journals, as above, ii.23,83.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, clxxxii, 403(16 March 1866).

<sup>6</sup>Belfast News-Letter, 25 March 1853.



ing from any one, it is from that injusta noverca, the church of Rome, and her endless exactions and impositions.<sup>1</sup> A letter-writer to the Times<sup>2</sup> thought 'the only people who gain by "small farms" in Ireland are the priests'. Perhaps these somewhat uncharitable states of mind arose from political forebodings, expressed thus by the New York Times:<sup>3</sup> 'the tremendous power which the Emancipation Act raised into existence - the power ~~was~~ of a turbulent and ill-educated clergy over hosts of ignorant and fanatical voters...'.<sup>3</sup>

At least in the earlier part of the period, catholic objections to emigration appeared to rest on the danger of loss of faith in the emigrants; a letter in the Nation<sup>4</sup> referred to 'the sirocco of American liberalism, vice and infidelity', and this highly coloured statement of the condition of faith and morals in the republic may be matched by many others to the same effect, for instance in McGee. There was also the question of the temporal welfare of catholic emigrants, and of this also their church was not unmindful; Archbishop Cullen adverted to emigration in the course of a pastoral letter, writing: 'I have heard an illustrious bishop of the United States declare that, in his opinion, one-half of the workmen who left Ireland were generally in their graves within twelve months after their arrival in America',<sup>5</sup> and consequently those only should emigrate who could not subsist at home. But words, even from such a source, were weak compared with circumstances and impulses such as drove the emigrant, and Maguire

---

<sup>1</sup>Dublin Evening Mail, quoted Cork Constitution, 23 May 1860

<sup>2</sup>28 October 1863.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted Cork Constitution, 5 June 1860.

<sup>4</sup>22 May 1852.

<sup>5</sup>Cork Examiner, 6 June 1860.



confessed that although the catholic church and the Liberal press 'had done their best to dissuade the people from reckless emigration...they could not stop the rush'.<sup>1</sup> Later in the century, the view seemed to prevail that in the Catholic sense Ireland's loss was the gain of the United States and other countries of settlement.<sup>2</sup> It was possibly for this reason that Rutledge-Fair spoke of the opposition to emigration of Irish but not American priests.<sup>3</sup>

The year 1883 focussed the most emphatic catholic opposition to emigration. Subsidised emigration touched alike in the Irish clergy and in some other Irish leaders, a peculiarly resilient spring of antipathy. A letter from Quebec early in the year suggested patriotism as the motive for this hostility: 'Irishmen should hearken to the warning voice of their patriotic prelates, who, like the Archbishop of Cashel, tell them "the proper place for an Irishman is Ireland", and who all alike discourage emigration.'<sup>4</sup> Further Canadian evidence on the religious and social disabilities of the Irish immigration may be found in a rambling letter to the press from a writer already cited, the catholic archbishop of Toronto. He laments the 'evils of wholesale emigration', and says 'millions of the Irish race' have been lost to the church on the American continent, owing to scarcity of priests, the degradation of city life and the 'unprepared condition' of the immigrants, the isolation of life in the countryside, the mixed common schools ('it is well to remember...that the majority of the American people

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, clxxvi.70 (21 June 1864).

<sup>2</sup>Cf., P.A. Sheehan, 'Effect of emigration on the Irish church', in I.E.R., III (Oct., 1882).

<sup>3</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, QQ.2165-7.

<sup>4</sup>Nation, 10 February 1883.



are unbaptised') and mixed marriages.<sup>1</sup> The year saw two weighty memorials on state-aided emigration from the Irish catholic hierarchy, or elements thereof. The first, addressed to the viceroy by the archbishop of Tuam and the bishops of Elphin, Clonfert, Killala and Achonry, described the prevailing distress, commented on the proposals for relief and advocated a scheme of loans to small tenants upon which the Treasury subsequently poured cold water. The landlords, the memorialists alleged, were doing nothing. The bishops' opinion on the assisted emigration was as follows:

In the event of loans being refused to householders and small tenants, and poor law out door relief being at the same time withheld, whilst aid for emigrations would be proffered and pressed, there is no doubt but angry vindictive feelings would be aroused; the restoration of order would be made immeasurably more difficult, and an organization, partly secret, partly public, with the black flag of famine for its banner, would, in all probability, soon overspread the destitute counties, and lay the country under a lawless tribute. The people will not starve, as in 1847, neither will they, at the present time, leave their homesteads, however wretched, for a possible home in America, still less for imprisonment in a workhouse.<sup>2</sup>

The assertion, in a year of more than 100,000 emigrants, that people would not 'leave their homesteads' for America was unfortunate. The viceroy's reply ignored the hint of Parnellite bluster, little befitting the memorialists' office.

The second pronouncement of the kind took the form of resolutions at a meeting of the catholic archbishops and bishops of Ireland in July, before the passing of the Tramways Act. The resolutions set forth that the state of the Congested Districts sprang from the past misgovernment of

---

<sup>1</sup>Nation, 1 December 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Copy of the addresses and statements relating to distress in Ireland submitted in January [1883] to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant by five catholic bishops of the west of Ireland, and the reply thereto, para.8(d), H.C. 1883 (128), lix.



Ireland and that their surplus population could be comfortably maintained on land from which it was driven out in recent times; 'that State-aided emigration, as a means of curing this evil, is unwise and impolitic, and tends only to promote disaffection amongst the Irish race at home and abroad'; that the true remedy for these ills was internal migration.<sup>1</sup> This document posed the issue of emigration as compared with migration, much agitated at that time and to be here discussed in later pages. The Times<sup>x</sup> commented that the bishops 'regard with undisguised satisfaction the action of the American Government in sending back some of the assisted emigrants. On the other hand, many who admit the utility, if not the absolute necessity, of emigration advocate the adoption of migration as a supplementary scheme...'.<sup>2</sup>

Towards the end of the year, the Tuam clergy were hot on the scent of the alleged 'confidential' circular concerning mass emigration, and pledged themselves 'to resist the latest desperate attempt (as reported in the public Press) on the part of the Government to depopulate the country by a system of subsidized emigration';<sup>3</sup> and <sup>an</sup> ~~the~~ archbishop corresponded with the government upon this subject in language sodden with emotion.<sup>4</sup>

. . . . .

The official British attitude to Irish emigration in the period was favourable and even thankful, with scarcely a dissentient voice. Of popular British opinion in the matter it is impossible to write, since none is discernible: the British public had little interest in Irish emigration as

---

<sup>1</sup>Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, p.494, Append.no.11.

<sup>2</sup>Times, 9 July 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 8 November 1883.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 12 November 1883.



such. It may be instructive to examine first the British and Anglo-Irish attitude to the general Irish emigration. The dangerous question of assisted emigration, both Irish and English, may then be reviewed along with the parliamentary treatment of these topics, as revealed in the more important debates.

It may not be fanciful to link up the well-known and comfortable reflections of the London Times, on Irish emigration as a kind of self-effacement of that inconvenient nation, with a document, quite unconnected with Ireland, in the papers of the colonial office. This was from the pen of the government emigration agent for Trinidad resident in Calcutta. He described thus the process of Indian coolie migration to the British West Indies and elsewhere:

...A system, which has benefited the natives of this country so largely, that had it been undertaken in the name of philanthropy, instead of a matter of business, the great good it has achieved would have caused it to be lauded to the skies.<sup>1</sup>

Allowing for a cobbler's partiality for leather, this is no bad transliteration of some weighty opinion upon the virtues of the Irish dispersal as a self-regulating and beneficent process. The Times continued its previous train of thought on the subject with observations that the New World was just the place for 'the Celtic race',<sup>2</sup> even if this should mean that 'we must gird our loins to encounter the Nemesis of seven centuries' misgovernment', viz. that America would become 'more than half Celtic'.<sup>3</sup> Dufferin held that emigration was always preferable to subdivision of land.<sup>4</sup> Another Irish landowner thought, in 1870, that

---

<sup>1</sup>7 August 1877, to H.M. Emigration Commissioners (P.R.O., C.O.384/116).

<sup>2</sup>Times, quoted Cork Constitution, 4 May 1860.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., quoted Cork Examiner, 7 May 1860. Twenty years later, Charlotte G. O'Brien thought it natural that the English should wish to see emigration from Ireland, and that the Land League and clergy should oppose it, 'The emigration and waste-land clauses', in Fortnightly Review, xxix, (June, 1881)

<sup>4</sup>E. O. O. op.cit., p.274.



the character of emigration had changed, and emigrants now left 'for convenience' and not 'from discontent'.<sup>1</sup> The Richmond commission advocated voluntary, planned emigration, with migration as a doubtful alternative.<sup>2</sup> To Rutledge-Fair, with his experience of local government board work, emigration was a necessity for Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

Opinion of this type and in parliament was equally decided that nature's way with the Irish emigration was the best, and that there must be no intervention by an over-officious government. A belief in a form of free-trade in humanity survived even the manifest difficulty of getting the supernumerary population away not from Ireland but England, after 1870, as fast as they fell out of employment. The increasingly strong position of overseas governments as arbiters of this question has been discussed, above.

The annual appropriation for the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission was sometimes closely scrutinised in the eighteen-fifties. In 1855 a member thought it bad policy 'to send out of this country the industrious and enterprising, while the drones were left at home. The Government...ought rather to check than encourage emigration.' In reply, Grey explained that it was not the government's policy to promote emigration, but to protect emigrants;<sup>4</sup> and Labouchere after him had to advance the same assurance.<sup>5</sup> The significant debate, primarily on English pauperism, in 1869 included the argument, enunciated by Granville, that emigration must not be financed from Imperial funds, because such expenditure

---

<sup>1</sup>Times, 25 April 1870.

<sup>2</sup>Richmond commission, 1881, Preliminary report, p.7.

<sup>3</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, QQ.2230, 2293, etc.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, cxxxviii.208-9 (7 May 1855).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., cxli.1010 (14 April 1856).



would have to include Ireland, and then what would become of the process of Irish emigration financed by remittances?<sup>1</sup> Of 'this flow of money' he said: 'I believe it now comes, almost without exception, in the form of passage warrants; but in future they would of course send money to the person who wished to emigrate, and he would then claim to be carried over the sea at the public expense.'<sup>2</sup> In the following year the Emigration Commission<sup>3</sup> made it a prime argument against assisted emigration that the flow of remittances would thereby be stopped. There were a dozen useful reasons against doing anything striking in behalf of a process that for decades in Ireland, and now more recently in England, was from the Treasury's point of view so cheap and painless. In a continuation of the debate on pauperism, Monsell exalted the leave-it-to-nature principle in what seems a peculiarly brutal piece of reasoning:

Did his hon. Friend conceive that the poor Irish who went over to America and half starved themselves...to pay for the emigration of their friends, would have contributed anything had they known that by dragging at the public coffers they would be able to procure the money?<sup>4</sup>

Monsell thought the whole question had been dead since 1848, 'because then it was seen what effect would be produced by leaving migration to natural causes'.<sup>5</sup> The air of parsimony which pervaded the debate was heightened when Gladstone inquired how the emigration was to be subsidised, and whether or not by the colonies. He made a soundly laissez-faire statement of the position, and posed the dilemma: either no money from the colonies, or the colonies must choose their

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., cxcv.957 (16 April 1869).

<sup>2</sup> Hansard, cxcv.955 (16 April 1869).

<sup>3</sup> 30th General report, 1870, pp. 4-11.

<sup>4</sup> Hansard, cxcix.1022 (1 March 1870).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 1019.



own immigrants.<sup>1</sup> A colonial office minute of 1878 slightly extended Monsell's argument: 'An Imperial vote would perhaps relax the efforts of Colonial Governments and Colonists in making pecuniary provision for the passages of Emigrants, however glad they might be to get Emigrants at our expense.'<sup>2</sup>

The Bessborough commission thought no case had been made for state-aided emigration or migration.<sup>3</sup> In the house of lords in 1883 a motion by the earl of Dunraven for a 'larger scheme of emigration', with the corollary of assisted family emigration to Canada, was withdrawn, in spite of Lansdowne's ominous pronouncement that it was 'almost...a mathematical demonstration, that the only thing to be done was to emigrate them altogether',<sup>4</sup> a precept he was fond of implementing on his own Irish estates. In the same year Viscount Lynton spoke, a lonely voice, in favour of state-aided emigration for Ireland, opposed, as he said, by the priests.<sup>5</sup> About the same time, Goldwin Smith was writing with acerbity and some originality on the emigration problem of Ireland, where 'misery and barbarism have multiplied on the brutish, precarious and philoprogenitive potato', the last attribution a revival of an Elizabethan superstition. He was therefore in favour of removing the redundant Irish, by means unspecified, but neither to the United States nor Canada, in both of which countries the enemies of England, including the imperfectly loyal Canadian parliament (he wrote from Toronto), were already numerous enough.<sup>6</sup> By the mid-'eighties the point,

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1065.

<sup>2</sup>19 December 1878 (P.R.O., C.O.384/121).

<sup>3</sup>Bessborough commission, 1880, Report, para.101.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, cclxxviii.859-86 (23 April 1883).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., cclxxvii.2005 (10 April 1883). He had, of course, the concurrence of such specialists in the subject as Tuke and Foster, cf., Cairns committee, II, 1882, QQ.7707-8, 7654, 7657, 7758.

<sup>6</sup>Goldwin Smith, 'Why send more Irish to America?', in Nineteenth Century, xiii.913-19 (June 1883).



alluded to earlier, was reached at which the Canadian government was declining responsibility in any private schemes of emigration, and the British Treasury was declining, broadly, responsibility for anything.<sup>1</sup> The likelihood of a new scheme of state-assisted emigration, on a significant scale, from the United Kingdom or any part thereof was thus small. It should perhaps be recorded that the Colonisation Board, constituted in 1888 to promote the emigration to Canada and settlement therein of Scots crofters, did receive an advance of £10,000 from the Treasury, and was the only colonisation scheme to be so financed.<sup>2</sup>

It is significant that the Colonisation Board, and the Parliamentary Colonisation Committee,<sup>3</sup> formed in 1887 after some years' spade-work, bore these titles and not any ascription of 'emigration'. The time had gone when the feelings of the imperial settlement areas to which emigrants must go could be ignored; assisted emigrants must therefore become 'colonists', that is, persons upon whom attention and public money must be bestowed after as well as before their arrival in Canada or elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> In view of the attitude to this problem of the British Treasury it is not surprising that colonists, so defined, were exceedingly few, and perhaps none of them Irish. The transition about 1870 from theories of emigration to theories of colonisation was a very important turning-point in British opinion, coincident also

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf., Colonial office, registers of correspondence, 1884-6 (P.R.O., Ind. 15551, pp.360-1).

<sup>2</sup>Select committee on colonisation, third session, 1890-1, Append. no.1, Summary of evidence, ix.

<sup>3</sup>Also known as the 'state-directed colonisation committee of the house of commons', *ibid.*, second session, 1890, Q. 3181.

<sup>4</sup>The Colonisation Committee made the following definitions: 'Emigration is merely the transfer of surplus labour from the Mother Country to the Colonies...Colonisation... is the settlement of unoccupied colonial lands', and proposed a publicly subscribed colonisation stock, with interest guaranteed by the imperial government, etc., Select committee on colonisation, third session, 1890-1, Append. p.87, Memorandum by Parliamentary Colonisation Committee.



with the reviving interest in Britain's imperial destiny. It was perhaps one more misfortune for Ireland that Irish emigration as an autonomous problem lost thereby a little more of whatever status it hitherto held in the British mind. This evolution, or regression, may be traced to some extent in the parliamentary treatment of the topic.

Between 1864 and 1868, government opinion as it emerged in parliament was naturally consonant with other British views, already summarised, upon the Irish emigration. In 1864 the chief secretary said: 'You should not blame the emigration which is going on. The Government has nothing to do with it. Politics and religion have nothing to do with it.' It was in fact a 'result of natural laws;<sup>1</sup> and in the following year Lowe thought the Irish emigration a benefit to those who went and those who stayed,<sup>2</sup> a view echoed, of course, in the house of lords by Dufferin.<sup>3</sup> Grey, although on the same occasion he deplored the emigration, thought it had its uses.<sup>4</sup> Consciences could be easy about the Irish emigrants after a debate, such as that of 1864, wherein Peel could pronounce: 'These people are quite right. They are going where they will earn an adequate remuneration for their labour;<sup>5</sup> or after another which Palmerston would up with an emollient advocacy of the natural forces which drew the Irish away, gratuitously, to the high wages of the United Kingdom or the United States.<sup>6</sup>

In the debate of June, 1864 Hennessy statistically refuted,

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, clxxiii.1872 (11 March 1864).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., clxxvii.767 (27 February 1865).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., clxxxii.390 (16 March 1866).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 360.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, clxxiii.1872 (11 March 1864).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., clxxvi.76 (21 June 1864).



to little purpose, the government's expressed hope that emigration would produce an increase in livestock and green crops, and a diminution in poor law expenditure.<sup>1</sup> He was one of the most persevering fighters for the Irish cause. From the Irish debates of 1864 and 1865 the impression nevertheless arises that, for these fighters, 'emigration' was a convenient because permanent stalking-horse. Behind it the attack could be directed upon any other Irish grievance. Thus, in March, 1864 Hennessy, O'Reilly and others were lamenting emigration as due, to some extent, to the condition of the Irish workhouses; therefore, their argument ran, assimilate the Irish to the English provisions for out-relief.<sup>2</sup> Returning in June to the subject of emigration, Hennessy moved: 'that this House observes with regret that the Agricultural Population of Ireland are rapidly leaving the Country', and urged appropriate legislation in the spheres of tenant right, drainage and reclamation.<sup>3</sup> Maguire and McMahon followed, on the land question. One is not perhaps entitled to reproach such men with lacking the foreknowledge, which to us is hindsight, that none of these reforms in itself touched the problem of emigration from Ireland. Again, in February, 1865 Hennessy was moving for 'any well devised measure to stimulate the profitable employment of the people', and pointing out that the imperial parliament had voted nearly a million pounds for canals in Canada.<sup>4</sup> The Irish who dug canals in Canada were not given the same scope in their own country; but it is doubtful if

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 47-57. For a similar demonstration in 1883, see A.M. Sullivan, 'Why send more Irish out of Ireland?', in Nineteenth Century, xiv.137 (July, 1883).

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, clxxiii.1835-72 (11 March 1864).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., clxxvi.47-76 (21 June 1864).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., clxxvii.661-73 (24 February 1865).



'emigration' forensically so valuable, was really closely linked with lack of 'profitable employment'. If that were so, Peel himself was equally at fault when he said: 'I want to see that employment for the agricultural labourers which will do away with all this talk about emigration being the safety-valve for Ireland'.<sup>1</sup> In an extended debate on the state of Ireland in March, 1868,<sup>2</sup> although Maguire and others pressed the emigration problem upon the attention of the House, there is little sign that members in general regarded it as a separate or serious phenomenon.

The important house of lords' debate<sup>3</sup> on pauperism, in 1869, was held in the year when British emigration first exceeded Irish. The House would no doubt gladly have seen a still greater excess, since Lord Houghton pointed out that, in spite of the nation's increasing wealth, Britain's pauper population was nearly one million and apparently increasing at 5% per annum. He discreetly blamed the high birth-rate, almost never referred to, unless by a curmudgeon like Goldwin Smith, in discussions of the analogous Irish problem. From this time onwards, the problem of population was never far from British discussion of the question of poverty, and expressions such as 'population, increasing as it does at the rate of 1,000 a day'<sup>4</sup> haunted the statesmen of the later nineteenth century. The question imposed itself, although it was never framed in the 1869 debate: was the misery of Ireland to be a foreshadowing of the doom of England herself?<sup>5</sup> The whole debate carries a most suggestive implication of an

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, cxc.1288-1744 (10-16 March 1868).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., cxcv.943-71 (16 April 1869).

<sup>4</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, Q. 1179, etc.

<sup>5</sup>Cf., G.M. Young, Victorian England, portrait of an age, pp.20-21.



England now for the first time faced with sundry elements of the Irish problem, over and above the pressure of poverty and population. English guardians of the poor, like Irish ones, are unreliable in the disposal of public money;<sup>1</sup> the English, like the Irish, get drunk in the colonies,<sup>2</sup> and unlike the Irish seem indisposed to offset this failing by sending home remittances.<sup>3</sup> But the House took heart, decided that there was no real overpopulation because imports of food could be indefinitely increased and finally Houghton, who earlier was pressing for a royal commission, agreed that 'any general system of emigration'<sup>4</sup> was unnecessary. The English problem was thus evaded in the same manner as the Irish. In a Commons debate on the same subject in the following year, it was decided that, although there was much unemployment and hardship in Britain, it was immoral to pour 'the scourings of our population on Colonies which had not the protection of the Poor Law'<sup>5</sup> - again a striking but unspoken analogy with the Irish position. Two years later, the colonial under-secretary had the courage to inquire: 'Are we striving to supply colonial wants, or to relieve an Imperial embarrassment?'<sup>6</sup> It was perhaps with a new understanding of what the policy of 'leave it to nature' might mean that the house of lords heard Dunraven assert that '2,000,000 of people had disappeared [from Ireland] somehow, and in a way far from creditable to our administration'.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, cxcv.954 (16 April 1869).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 964.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 951.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 970.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, cxcix.1057 (1 March 1870).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., ccix.781 (20 February 1872).

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., cclv.610 (9 August 1880).



The Irish opposition to the 'government emigration' was mobilised in the house of commons as keenly as in the instances, already examined, in the nationalist press. A debate in 1882, on the Arrears of Rent Act, brought upon the Irish members a measured rebuke from Bright:

I think that the course which hon. Members opposite have taken on this matter is a shocking one...and it...convinces me, either that they do not understand the condition and the interests of the population they profess to represent, or that they do not deal honestly with the House in reference to it.<sup>1</sup>

Irish members pressed an alternative to emigration, namely internal migration, described by Gregory as 'rooting them in a part of the country where they could never prosper'.<sup>2</sup>

Grantham thought Dillon and his friends opposed emigration 'because it was only among a discontented tenantry that disorder and sedition could prosper'.<sup>3</sup> Bitter language marked these debates.

The following year, O'Brien described the assisted emigration as transportation, and accused the government of saying: 'Let us buy them off [a significant dramatisation] and ship them away to another hemisphere, so that whatever happens to them we will be out of earshot.'<sup>4</sup> This argument rather overlooked the multitudes then, unbought, taking ship at Cork; but it was cold comfort afforded by W.H. Smith, who said: 'Emigration is, no doubt, a misfortune; but it is a misfortune which many English people have to face, and do face.'<sup>5</sup>

As Palmerston and Peel in 1864, so Wyndham in 1901 assured the house of commons that nothing could be done to halt/<sup>Irish</sup>emig-

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., cclxxi.1639 (6 July 1882).

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, cclxxi,1655 (6 July 1882).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1654.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., cclxxvii.2016 (10 April 1883).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 2040.



ration; he implied that nothing need be done. In answer to the member for Mayo west, he said:

There is no official information showing to what causes this emigration is due, though I conceive it is attributable to the state of the labour market abroad. I fail to see how legislation could be designed to interfere with the demand for labour.<sup>1</sup>

In its field, it is an epitome of half a century of British opinion.

The important select committee on colonisation of 1889-91 heard much evidence, a great deal of which has already been cited, on Ireland. The reference, however, to Ireland in its draft report was confined to a somewhat platitudinous remark about the congested districts. Their needs were linked with those of the Highlands and Hebrides, and the Irish portion of the area was said to be amply catered for by the Land and Congested Districts (Ireland) bill.<sup>2</sup> The problems of the Scottish crofters received more attention. It was perhaps symbolic of the place that Ireland took in what was primarily an inquest of empire when the colonial under-secretary was 'ashamed to say that I know nothing about Ireland - I have never been there.'<sup>3</sup> A long discussion in the first session of the committee<sup>4</sup> served to reveal its mind upon general aspects of colonisation and, distinct from this, emigration. Colonisation ideally meant settling families on land; emigration might mean the evacuation of unmarried unemployed and unemployables. Into which category the Irish emigration was considered principally to fall did not appear, and there was throughout the discussion little reference to Ireland. The committee was absorbed with the crises of

---

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, 4th ser., xciii, 614 (3 May 1901).

<sup>2</sup>Select committee on colonisation, third session, 1890-1, Draft report.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., first session, 1889, Q.1223.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., QQ.707-986.



English unemployment in 1880 and 1886. The impression that remains is that the colonial office did not believe in colonisation in this sense. The burden of testimony to be gathered from the whole of the voluminous evidence which the committee heard appears to be that it was relatively easy to turn an emigrant into a more prosperous and contented person than he was at home; decidedly difficult to put a colonist on land and recover your outlay from him, not to speak of any profit on your investment. The abiding problem was this. An emigrant of any kind might be a public liability or a public asset to the country of attraction: how was the financial incidence of ~~attraction~~ the former possibility to be distributed between the country of attraction and the country of extrusion? Recurring attempts to deal with this situation ad hoc have been traced in the history of Irish emigration.

The committee's final report<sup>1</sup> recommended that, since no general scheme of state emigration was needed, matters might be left, broadly, where they were. Ireland provided a convenient testimonial in support of this principle of inertia:

The most wholesome process is the most natural, viz., where supply meets demand, or where surplus finds vent in a vacuum seeking replenishment, spontaneously or with voluntary assistance; and of such character, as has been shown, has been by far the largest portion of the emigration from all parts of the United Kingdom, and notably from Ireland.<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

The subject of internal migration within Ireland, as a hopeful alternative to emigration overseas, was much ventilated about 1883 by Irish nationalists and some others. The former secured the allocation of £50,000 to the support of migration in the Tramways Act of 1883. No use could be made of the money, briefly owing to the obstinate preference for emigration

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., third session, 1890-1, p.xvi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.xii.



of the prospective migrants.

In reviewing the subject, some definitions are first required. 'Migratory labour', to the English or Scottish harvest, sometimes even to America,<sup>1</sup> was a familiar phenomenon of old standing in Irish life. This involved temporary emigration, for a longer or shorter period and for a specific employment, with the intention of return. The practice was condemned by Professor Baldwin, an advocate of emigration in the other sense, who thought 'neither the habit nor tone' of the migrants was improved by frequenting the British lower orders;<sup>2</sup> and by Trevelyan, who said that his department's investigation of migratory labour had only confirmed the Irish government in their belief that they were right in helping people to emigrate.<sup>3</sup> In any case, the custom seemed then to be dwindling.<sup>4</sup> It is difficult or impossible to say whether or not migratory labour predisposed to permanent emigration. Evidence was brought (see p. 25, above) to show that harvest migration from Connaught was accompanied by a lower proportion than usual of male permanent emigrants.

Migration proper was described ~~as~~ an inapt word by O'Connor Power in a debate on the subject in 1883. 'He proposed to remove people from one place and to re-settle them permanently in another',<sup>5</sup> to the extent of no fewer than 50,000 families; however hopeless the ambition, it served for a definition. Later in that year, the Nation had a series of articles favouring the project of migration, and attributing the idea to Davitt; there was said to be plenty of land for re-settle-

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf., W.L. Micks, *op.cit.*, p.9; Royal commission on labour, 1893-4, vol.IV, part IV, para.61.

<sup>2</sup>Richmond commission, Minutes of evidence, part I, 1880, Q. 2928.

<sup>3</sup>Hansard., cclxxvi.303 (19 February 1883).

<sup>4</sup>Cf., Report...by the registrar general for Ireland...as to...migratory labourers, H.C. 1884 (218), lxii.

<sup>5</sup>Hansard, cclxxvii. 1992 (10 April 1883).



ment west of the Shannon.<sup>1</sup> A warning note came in a letter stating that: 'To put a man upon twenty acres of land with antiquated notions and means insufficient to manage five acres is simply to lay the foundation for another 1847.'<sup>2</sup> The migration policy had at one time the active support of Parnell, whose feeling seems to have been against, though not outspokenly against, emigration. In 1890 he admitted that emigration did tend to prevent further congestion of already congested areas,<sup>3</sup> but he would rather the emigrants stayed in Ireland, in which he thought there was 'ample room for the employment of those people'.<sup>4</sup> Parnell had already put this belief to the test as chairman of an Irish Land Purchase and Settlement company, which bought Kilclooney estate in 1884 for a projected experiment in migration. Difficulties arose, and the migration did not take place.<sup>5</sup> Parnell was said to have subscribed £2,000 to the venture;<sup>6</sup> the managing director of the company, while it lasted, was Baldwin.<sup>7</sup> He was a keen advocate of 'lifting' the population, as he termed the migration policy, and claimed that the catholic bishops took his own view of emigration, viz. as not in itself undesirable, but less eligible than migration.<sup>8</sup> There was sufficient indeterminacy in the Catholic attitude to enable the most diverse theorists of emigration to claim the support of the

---

<sup>1</sup>Nation, 20 October - 10 November 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 15 December 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Select committee on colonisation, second session, 1890, Q.5534.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Q.5460.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Q.5469, etc.

<sup>6</sup>Cork Examiner, 15 September 1883.

<sup>7</sup>Galway Vindicator, 16 April 1887.

<sup>8</sup>Richmond commission, Minutes of evidence, part I, 1880, Q.2840.



hierarchy. In sum, Baldwin wished to offer assisted emigration or migration to 50,000 families, but in such a way that 40,000 of them would accept migration, to holdings of at least ten acres.<sup>1</sup>

In the debate on O'Connor Power's motion of April, 1883, calling for a scheme of migration and optional emigration, Trevelyan raised practical difficulties. He said the cost of the process to the government had been underestimated, and that according to sir Richard Griffith (later in the debate referred to as an 'antiquated authority') thirty acres was the minimum size of farm to which the migrants should go.<sup>2</sup> Gladstone later clinched the matter by declining any financial responsibility at all for the migration.<sup>3</sup>

The response of some Irish members was naturally bitter, and a reference was heard, echoing an earlier day, to Ireland's place as the grazing farm of the United Kingdom;<sup>4</sup> but the real executioners of the migration project were the people of Ireland. Paul-Dubois commented in the early twentieth century on the difficulty of moving western peasants even a few miles;<sup>5</sup> and, discussing Parnell's Company, Rutledge-Fair said that people would rather go to the United States than, for instance, to Galway.<sup>6</sup> Sir John Colomb said that people in Kenmare, whence there was assisted emigration in 1883-4, declared 'that if they were going to be moved at all it was not to another part of Ireland that they would go, but that they would rather go to

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., QQ.3480-6.

<sup>2</sup>Hansard, cclxxvii.2022 (10 April 1883).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2041-3; Tuke always stressed the expense of migration as compared with his own scheme of assisted emigration.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2032.

<sup>5</sup>L. Paul-Dubois, Contemporary Ireland, p.316.

<sup>6</sup>Select committee on colonisation, first session, 1889, QQ.2184, 2331.



another country altogether.<sup>1</sup> The social psychologist may ponder this reaction;<sup>2</sup> it doomed the hopes of some social theorists. A letter in 1883 from the O'Donoghue deplored the current migration proposal as threatening the position of every farmer in Ireland, because 'it must at once suggest the idea that he could very well spare a few acres for the benefit of those who may desire to migrate.'<sup>3</sup>

For Gerald Balfour, the same threat of compulsory expropriation lurked behind schemes of migration;<sup>4</sup> and he was unsympathetic when the Mayo county council sought powers of compulsory land purchase 'for purposes of migration and enlargement of holdings'.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., second session, 1890, Q.7443.

<sup>2</sup>At least one Irish member (for Mayo east) could not understand it; cf., Hansard, 4th ser., lxvi.1473 (20 February 1899).

<sup>3</sup>Times, quoted Limerick Chronicle, 21 August 1883.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, 4th ser., lxvi.1383-8 (17 February 1899).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., lxxii.439-40 (6 June 1899).







SECTION VISummary.

The salient points of the thesis as a whole may now be reviewed, and where necessary elaborated, with due regard to conclusions established and conclusions that must remain tentative.

The inquiry into the stock from which, in half a century, came almost four millions of emigrants showed that emigration was not the only agency at work in reducing the population of Ireland. There was likewise diminishing fertility, a process voluntarily instituted by the Irish, at what epoch of the nineteenth century is not certain (p.19). In entering upon this phase of its demographic history, Ireland merely anticipated a trend which became common to western Europe; but Ireland was unique in choosing late and little marriage as the means. Moreover, when widespread famine had passed, the Irish did not recur, and have not recurred, to their former pattern of marriage. Young people preferred emigration to marriage, or possibly emigration as a preliminary to marriage. Thus, even without significant emigration, Ireland might have attained a population increasing only very slowly (pp.20-1); but this is speculative.

A statistical analysis of the emigrants themselves revealed the young unmarried adult as the core of the emigration (pp.28-9). During some years of economic stress in the countries of reception, young women emigrants outnumbered young men, although in the period as a whole male emigrants preponderated slightly over female. In spite of official encouragement of family emigration, family groups possibly never accounted for more than one third of the emigration (p.30). The distribution of the emigration by its regional origin showed a subsidiary and familiar phenomenon, a



peasant way of life losing ground to an urban one (p.35). It appeared that the comparison of emigration figures by regions is an imperfect guide to the determinants of the process itself, and I advanced a theory of 'contagion' as being as good an answer as any to the problem of varying regional intensities of emigration (pp.39-44).

. . . . .

When I sought significant correlations of the emigration, there was difficulty in isolating the relevant aspects of Irish history which account for the extrusive urge to emigrate. It was nevertheless possible to discern a pattern of ascendancy and subordination, expressed first of all in landlord and tenant attitudes to the land system, in many respects the crux of Irish social and economic life. It is important to remember also that the land question was probably not the repository of every Irish grievance (pp.49, 67). Some aspects of Irish farming were examined in the light of the common theme 'if only they worked as hard at home' as in America; in this connection, too, standards of subsistence, in Ireland and North America respectively, seemed to be important. The general case for and against the ruling minority in Ireland seemed to indict them as lacking in the paternalism which marked the comparable group in Britain, and in this sense their contribution to emigration was indirectly very great (p.79).

The 'social services' in Ireland proved upon examination to be a very imperfect deterrent to emigration, as appeared in recurrent failures to cope with periodic severe distress. There was a lack of community throughout the scale of Irish administration (p.101); an imperfect forbearance of the Irish one to another appeared perhaps most in the activities of the 'resistance movement' (pp.104-5), and this movement



probably contributed to emigration in a much wider sense than the expatriation of crown witnesses or discharged fenian prisoners. The Irish standard of life appeared as a special case of that of landowners and peasantry in western Europe at large, at the mercy of the new food-raising areas overseas; the Irish peasants made their own accommodation, of which emigration was one aspect, with the new forces (pp.108-11). Labour supply, wages and dietary were briefly examined as components of the Irish living standard.

The question of the economic status of the emigrants was full of obscurities (pp.119-29). Some Canadian evidence suggested that the Irish were sometimes less destitute than they seemed (pp.127-8). The New York commissioners of emigration, cited at pp.126-7, later revised their opinion that the average immigrant of 1856 brought with him \$68.08, since 'subsequent but reliable information showed that the concealment of large amounts had been constantly and successfully practised.'<sup>1</sup>

The strictly measurable correlations of the emigration, as set out on the chart at p.131, showed the emigrants responding more markedly to the weather in Ireland in its effect upon potato supply than, for instance, to some events in world history, or in Irish history. The place of remittances appeared to be as important in the emigrant process as their precise amount and distribution is obscure. It is clear, none the less, that remittances promoted both emigration and official reluctance to help emigration; and

---

<sup>1</sup>Friedrich Kapp, 'Immigration, and the commissioners of emigration of the state of New York', quoted Edith Abbott, Historical aspects of the immigration problem, p.370.



possibly they also financed elements of Irish society which little deserved that support (pp.103, 144-52). The graph of the emigration figures themselves raises inexorably the vexing problem: were the extrusive forces in Ireland, or the attractive forces overseas, the more powerful in determining emigration? Some conflicting contemporary opinions were noted at p.136. An American rule of thumb on the subject is hard to disprove; it was enunciated in 1875: 'Bad times in Europe regularly increase, and bad times in America invariably diminish, immigration.'<sup>1</sup> Tuke stated this in terms of Ireland when he said: 'In well-to-do years the number who leave is small, but in years of bad trade (supposing the American trade to be good at any rate) the number who leave is large.'<sup>2</sup> Irishmen of lively nationalist sympathies tended to be 'extrusionists', naturally overlooking the attractive side of the emigration process in their concentration upon the wrongs that drove their countrymen abroad. Thus, Maguire's book on America contains assertions such as: 'People rarely migrate to a strange country, and face the hardships incidental to a new existence, from the mere love of change...'<sup>3</sup> We have no evidence that 'people' did not, in fact, often emigrate from that very motive; and no particular evidence that they did. Every conceivable combination of extrusion and attraction surely operated in the million separate decisions to emigrate whose authors have left so little to help the historian.

. . . . .

In what I have called the accessories of emigration are comprised many aspects of the process that touched the

---

<sup>1</sup>Quoted Abbott, as above, p.184.

<sup>2</sup>Cairns committee, II, Q.7750.

<sup>3</sup>J.F. Maguire, The Irish in America, p.30, etc.



emigrant most nearly. On the official side, the entry of the colonial governments into the field as selectors, in growing measure, of their own immigrants was highly significant, and began early in my period (p.155). During the journey itself, the emigrants were exploited at Liverpool by large as well as small practitioners (p.168); but some of these persons were necessary to emigration itself (p.170). At the great ports, such as Liverpool and Montreal, on either side of the Atlantic, those who sat in the seats of power were not slow to grasp the lucrative possibilities of the emigrant trade (p.168). The spirit of the passengers' acts represented a nice balance between the claims of commerce and humanity (pp.162, 186); and there was the danger of making the voyage too dear for most emigrants. The total assisted to emigrate under statute was very small in relation to the whole, and the difficulty, more insistent with each onset of distress in Ireland, was that of exporting pauperism to unwilling recipients. The general amelioration of life in Ireland, as by the labours of the Congested Districts Board towards the end of the century, was the way to help emigration, however unintentionally: it enabled the Irish to leave as they have always preferred, on their own resources (pp. 201-2). A study of the emigration of crown witnesses uncovered the underworld of emigration, not elsewhere recorded.

Philanthropy, an English virtue or mania, was not likely to neglect emigration. The Treasury appeared as a very jealous arbiter of numerous proposals for state-aided emigration (p.214); and the colonies, anxious as they were for population, were unwilling to buy their immigrants at a high political price (p.222). James Hack Tuke was successful in promoting the emigration of the very poor by a skilful



combination of charity, voluntary organisation and cautious official backing (p.226). He brought the Irish government very near to a sustained emigration policy (p.234), and he pressed in vain for a permanent board of emigration.

The commercial adjuncts of the emigration were those without which the Atlantic migration could not have been, and I accorded them a great deal of attention. The evolution of the passenger trade in the period was traced, and the course of competition between Britain and the United States for this considerable prize. Small Irish shipowners lost trade to the growing transatlantic lines, just as the leading Irish ports, Queenstown, Cork, Londonderry, Dublin and Belfast, surpassed in traffic some anchorages almost as good, but fallen into decay, elsewhere on the coast. I found it as difficult to identify the area of Ireland tapped by a specific port of embarkation (pp.279-81) as, previously, to assign reasons for differing intensities of emigration from given areas.

The guide-books, and other printed information aimed at the emigrant, afford perhaps more entertainment for the modern reader than they provided instruction for the emigration in general (p.293). Self-advertisement by Canada and, to a less degree, the United States appeared from 1850. Certain alleged letters from emigrants were so appropriately used for this purpose as to suggest they may have been emended (p.295).

The reception of the Irish in the North American countries was considered principally in the light of how those alternative destinations were presented to the prospective emigrant, by the press, by former emigrants and by other interested or disinterested informants. The loyalty and content-



ment of the Canadian Irish were often remarked by contemporaries (p.309). For purposes of publicity, Canada was apt to overestimate its power of absorbing immigrants, and after the experience of 1883 grew more selective. The Irish showed an obstinate preference, throughout the period, for migration to the United States and to city life, in spite of much exhortation intended to deflect them to Canada and to life on the land. I advanced the example of a vigorous social life in the Irish national societies of the cities as a powerful argument against remote settlement (pp.324-7). British anxiety to see the Irish migrate to Canada was matched, with the reservations noted, by the desire of Canada for immigrants (p.312).

The evidence on emigration to be drawn from emigrant letters was by no means all favourable (p.335). The career of D'Arcy McGee, equally with his advice to his countrymen in Canada and in Ireland, showed how the satisfactions of new colonialism in Canada could atone for the wrongs of old colonialism in Ireland; it is striking that the burden of McGee's advice was against any emigration (pp.339-43).

. . . . .

Finally, opinion and policy, upon the emigration itself and on some related questions, came under review. It appeared that the marked and continuing pessimism of the Irish on the subject of their own numbers (pp.344-8) was often bound up with their dislike of the whole emigration process. The same may be said of exaggerations in the contemporary Irish press of the numbers of the emigrants, and the emphasis upon their youth. The type of returned emigrant was likely to be one who would propagate, by his visible affluence in relation to standards of Irish life, a somewhat too favourable opinion of the prospects for all emigrants (pp.354-5).



Some newspaper opinion, and some writers or publicists, showed a significantly divided mind upon emigration (pp. 356-61). The reaction of nationalist opinion, and some clerical opinion, against the emigration assisted under the Arrears Act was peculiarly emphatic (p.363).

The British, or more properly the governmental, attitude to the Irish emigration was in general thankful (p.376). Together with this reaction there may be perceived a resolve not substantially to assist with public funds the emigration of either Irish or British. There was an important transition about 1870 from theories of emigration to theories of colonisation (p.381). The British attitude to Ireland's emigrants deserves a little further elucidation. The foundation of this attitude is not difficult to perceive. As Ensor observes with great cogency, as late as 1850 a free Irish state would have ruled from Dublin nearly a quarter of the population of the British Isles.<sup>1</sup> By the time Gladstone could first propose home rule, the Irish population was smaller than in 1800 whereas Great Britain had trebled hers.<sup>2</sup> If after 1848 disorder continued intermittently in Ireland, as it did not in England, it was at least the disorder of a declining population. There was another, and probably a more important, aspect in which English and world opinion saw the huddled Irish masses of 1841, 'the opprobrium of the empire'.<sup>3</sup> The greater part of Ireland was untouched by that industrial development which, elsewhere in so much of western Europe, rested upon and seemed to justify increasing populations. Duval, an economist and perhaps

---

<sup>1</sup>R.C.K. Ensor, England 1870-1914, p.270.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.103.

<sup>3</sup>Jonathan Pim, Condition and prospects of Ireland, p.38.



the most realistic of a number of French commentators upon the contemporary English problem in Ireland, perceived the alternatives for Ireland as factories or emigration; and, in the circumstances of Ireland and of the age, he was probably right to prefer emigration, of which he wrote:

...c'est la conséquence d'une nécessité sagement comprise, et qui ne pourrait être un peu atténuée, nullement supprimée, que par un vaste développement de travaux industriels. On n'ose pas le souhaiter, tant le sort d'un paysan canadien ou australien, roi dans son domaine...nous parait supérieur à la condition des ouvriers des manufactures anglaises!<sup>1</sup>

However that might be, Ireland was an offence and a challenge to the demographic optimism of the middle of the century, when increasing returns could be expected from every dose of capital and labour applied either to agriculture in the new world or manufacture in the old, to the apparent discredit of Malthus and Ricardo. In Ireland alone, the Malthusian prediction seemed to approach fulfilment. Emigration was clearly the solution for most of these difficulties. On the other hand it raised its own problems for the British government in the comments of European critics upon the administration of an island whence so many fled; and in even more outspoken North American opinions, many of which I have quoted, upon the condition of these fugitives.

In the parliamentary debates of the period, the subject of Irish emigration was for some English members a stirring of the conscience, for others a weariness of the flesh. For the Irish members themselves, it was often a useful stalking-horse (p.383). Towards the end of the period, the example of Ireland provided a useful official argument for non-intervention in the emigration process of the United Kingdom at large (p.388). Opinion was divided upon migration and

---

<sup>1</sup>Jules Duval, Histoire de l'émigration...au xix<sup>e</sup> siècle, p.22 (Paris, 1862).



resettlement within Ireland as an alternative to emigration. I adduced earlier some evidence from Connaught (p.25) tending to show that migratory labour as practised in that province was a deterrent to emigration; but this was a different process.

. . . . .

Almost as many causes have been assigned to Irish emigration as there have been diagnosticians. From the side of the ascendancy have come appeals to Irish history in general, to the lack of capital in the country (a favourite argument with Palmerston), springing from the contumacy of the Irish, and other explanations. To many Irish the emigration has seemed at one time or another the natural result of the union, a device to ruin Ireland, or the product of whatever particular grievance was then uppermost in Irish thoughts. It is as though the point at debate were less an aspect of human history than a force of nature. Let us, who have seen and still survive what followed the virtual closing of the frontiers between two world wars, not be hasty to condemn the open if laborious paths of nineteenth century emigration, and its most dramatic episode, the Irish exodus. A century ago, a somewhat sanctimonious American writer could see the process only as the dispersal of the Irish race after its last defeat, 'a horde of discouraged, starved, beaten men and women...'. He spoke too soon. Wiser in our generation, we may salute the pilgrims who sailed westward into the future.

'Westward the course of empire takes its way;  
The four first acts already past,  
A fifth shall close the drama with the day:  
Time's noblest offspring is the last.'



	1947	1951	1955	1961	1967	1971	1974	1978	1981	1984
Wheat	1,712,135	1,638,300	1,457,630	1,389,651	1,379,989	1,191,782	1,150,480			
Barley	2,404,400	2,065,000	1,818,800	1,388,465	1,381,116	1,179,463	1,078,075			
Oats	3,309,855	3,013,872	1,914,234	1,833,220	1,763,076	1,619,614	1,581,631			
Grain Total	7,426,390	6,717,172	5,186,664	4,611,336	4,524,171	4,000,859	3,800,186			
Hay	2,196,597	2,374,178	2,556,967	2,512,577	2,174,056	2,704,700	2,654,346			

(3177.)

APPENDIXES

Source of Statistics: 1967, part II, Federal exports, General

Table B. Percentages decline per decennial

1947-51	10.15	10.71-11.11	11.34
1951-61	11.58	11.01-11.41	11.93
1961-71	6.67	10.01-10.41	11.25

Table, General Exports, 1947-81



Table 1. Provincial summary of seven decennial enumerations.

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
Leinster	1,982,169	1,682,320	1,457,635	1,339,451	1,278,989	1,191,782	1,150,485
Munster	2,404,460	1,865,600	1,513,558	1,393,485	1,331,115	1,173,643	1,075,075
Ulster	2,389,263	2,013,879	1,914,236	1,833,228	1,743,075	1,619,814	1,581,351
Connaught	1,420,705	1,012,479	913,135	846,213	821,657	719,511	649,635
Ireland	8,196,597	6,574,278	5,798,967	5,412,377	5,174,836	4,704,750	4,456,546

Census of Ireland, 1901, part II, General report, General summary, p.4, [Cd.1190], H.C. 1902, cxxix.

Table 2. Percentage decline per decennium.

1841-51.....	19.85	1871-81.....	4.39
1851-61.....	11.50	1881-91.....	9.08
1861-71.....	6.67	1891-1901.....	5.23

Ibid., General report, table 43.



Table 3. Distribution between town and country.

	Total of persons in	
	<u>Rural districts</u>	<u>Civic districts</u> *
1851.....	5,333,709	1,218,676
1861.....	4,658,196	1,140,363
1871.....	4,211,033	1,201,344
1881.....	3,929,333	1,245,503
1891.....	3,460,637	1,244,113
1901.....	3,073,846	1,384,929

\* defined as towns of not less than 2,000 inhabitants.

Census of Ireland, General reports:

- 1851, part VI, table VI, [2134], H.C. 1856, xxxi  
 1861, part V, pp.454, 458, [3204-IV], H.C. 1863, lxi.  
 1871, part III, p.13, [C.1377], H.C. 1876, lxxxix  
 1881, part II, p.6, [C.3365], H.C. 1882, lxxvi.  
 1891, part II, p.9, [C.6780], H.C. 1892, xc.  
 1901, part II, p.10, [Cd.1190], H.C. 1902, cxxix.

Table 4. Irish-born persons enumerated in Ireland, not resident in county of birth.

<u>Census</u>	<u>percentage of Irish-born population of counties</u>
1841.....	5.38
1851.....	9.69
1861.....	9.42
1871.....	9.4
1881.....	10.2
1891.....	10.8
1901.....	11.2

Census of Ireland, General reports, as above:

- 1861, table XXVII.  
 1871, table L.  
 1881, table 90.  
 1891, table 92.  
 1901, table 95.



II EMIGRATION

Table 1. Number of emigrants, natives of Ireland, 1 May 1851 - 31 December 1901.

1851	152,060		1876	37,587
2	190,322		7	38,503
3	173,148		8	41,124
4	140,555		9	47,065
5	91,914		80	95,517
6	90,781		1	78,417
7	95,081		2	89,136
8	64,337		3	108,724
9	80,599		4	75,863
60	84,621		5	62,034
1	64,292		6	63,135
2	70,117		7	82,923
3	117,229		8	78,684
4	114,169		9	70,477
5	101,497		90	61,313
6	99,467		1	59,623
7	80,624		2	50,867
8	61,018		3	48,147
9	66,568		4	35,895
70	74,855		5	48,703
1	71,240		6	38,995
2	78,102		7	32,535
3	90,149		8	32,241
4	73,184		9	41,232
5	51,462		1900	45,288
			1	39,613

Total: 3,881,032

Emigration statistics of Ireland for 1901, table II, [ca.976],  
H.C. 1902, cxvi.

Table 2. Persons of Irish birth leaving the United Kingdom for places out of Europe, as a percentage of United Kingdom Emigration.

1851	75.76	1868	47.02*	1885	29.0
52	61.01	69	39.33*	86	26.0
53	58.37	70	36.66*	87	28.0
54	46.44	71		88	26.0
55	44.59	72	34.57*	89	26.0
56	40.62	73		1890	26.0
57	40.51	74		91	27.0
58	38.0	75		92	25.0
59	43.95	76	24.0	93	25.0
1860		77	24.0	94	27.0
61		78	26.0	95	29.0
62	40.98	79	25.0	96	26.0
63	52.02	1880	41.0	97	24.0
64	61.69*	81	31.0	98	24.0
65	47.98	82	30.0	99	29.0
66	48.26	83	33.0	1900	27.0
67	45.22	84	30.0	01	23.0

\*excluding foreigners and unstated origins.

1851-72: General reports of the (Colonial Land and) Emigration Commission;

1876-1901: Statistical tables relating to emigration and immigration; for which see Bibliography.



Table 3. Total emigration by sexes, 1851-30 June 1875, 1876-1901.

Natives of Ireland leaving Irish ports.

	M.	F.		M	F.
1851*	114,189	113,903	1876	20,077	17,510
2	95,117	95,205	7	20,847	17,656
3	84,955	88,193	8	20,916	20,208
4	71,830	68,725	9	25,807	21,258
5	45,032	46,882	1880	49,937	45,580
6	47,570	43,211	1	40,106	38,311
7	52,242	42,839	2	46,978	42,158
8	35,101	29,236	3	55,264	53,460
9	43,752	36,847	4	38,054	37,809
1860	42,658	41,963	5	30,873	31,161
1	32,373	31,919	6	31,950	31,185
2	36,546	33,571	7	43,176	39,747
3	61,306	55,923	8	41,310	37,374
4	60,692	53,477	9	36,226	34,251
5	55,214	46,283	1890	31,361	29,952
6	59,561	39,906	1	30,046	29,577
7	45,215	35,409	2	25,495	25,372
8	35,412	25,606	3	23,044	25,103
9	39,614	26,954	4	15,318	20,577
1870	43,884	30,971	5	21,398	27,305
1	41,358	29,882	6	17,751	21,244
2	46,212	31,890	7	13,966	18,569
3	51,930	38,219	8	14,030	18,211
4	39,096	34,088	9	18,621	22,611
5	15,691	15,404	1900	21,901	23,387
(to June 30)			1	18,127	21,486

\* January-April estimated.

1851-75: Census of Ireland, 1871, part III, General report, table LXXXVII.

1876-1901: Emigration statistics of Ireland: for which see Bibliography.

Table 4. Total emigration by sexes and province, 1 May 1851-31 December 1901.

	M	F
Leinster	360,769	325,840
Munster	697,548	665,722
Ulster	603,485	489,469
Connaught	297,903	329,628
County unspecified	61,766	48,902
Total	2,021,471	1,859,561

Emigration statistics of Ireland for 1901, Table III (abstract).



Table 5. Age-distribution of emigrants, 1876-1901

Proportion % at each age period.

Age	1876	1877	1878	1879	1880	1881	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888
under 1	1.0	1.2	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
1 & under 5	5.2	5.4	6.2	4.8	4.7	4.7	4.9	6.0	5.3	4.3	3.7	3.4	3.5
" " 15	9.4	9.3	9.7	8.3	8.8	9.2	9.6	13.1	10.8	8.0	6.8	6.6	6.3
" " 25	38.0	39.1	43.1	47.5	54.4	56.9	55.9	51.7	51.8	55.8	57.8	60.8	61.4
" " 35	28.2	28.1	25.4	25.7	21.3	19.1	18.9	16.2	18.7	19.4	20.3	19.0	18.7
" " 45	12.0	10.0	8.5	8.1	6.0	5.3	5.9	6.8	6.9	6.6	6.0	5.2	5.3
" " 55	4.5	4.5	4.0	3.4	2.8	2.7	2.8	3.9	4.2	3.8	3.3	3.0	2.7
" " 65(60)	1.5	0.9	0.8	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5
65(60) & over	0.2	1.5	1.2	0.9	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.6

Proportion % at each age-period.

Age	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901
under 1	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.9	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8
1 & under 5	3.6	3.4	3.1	2.9	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.6	2.7	3.1	3.5
" " 15	6.5	6.1	5.7	5.5	5.0	4.6	3.9	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.7	5.2
" " 25	61.0	62.2	64.6	63.6	64.7	57.6	58.3	55.5	56.6	55.1	55.6	57.0	56.4
" " 35	18.7	18.8	18.0	19.5	20.3	25.5	26.4	28.2	26.4	27.2	27.3	25.2	24.1
" " 45	5.2	4.9	4.5	4.4	4.0	4.8	4.5	5.1	5.4	5.7	5.6	5.4	6.4
" " 55	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.2	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.8	3.0	2.5	2.4	2.3
" " 60	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7
60 & over	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.6

Emigration statistics of Ireland; for which see Bibliography.



Table 6. Conjugal condition of adult emigrants.

<u>Total natives of Ireland</u>		1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892
<u>Male</u>											
single		47,515	31,993	26,392	27,626	38,187	37,229	32,292	27,967	27,096	23,118
married & widowed		7,749	6,061	4,481	4,324	4,989	4,081	3,934	3,394	2,950	2,377
<u>Female</u>											
single		43,179	30,016	25,636	25,761	32,982	31,328	28,804	25,211	25,341	21,315
married & widowed		10,281	7,793	5,525	5,424	6,765	6,046	5,447	4,741	4,236	4,057
<hr/>											
<u>Male</u>		1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	
single		20,961	13,574	19,299	16,063	12,588	12,641	16,950	20,089	16,350	
married & widowed		2,083	1,744	2,099	1,688	1,378	1,389	1,671	1,812	1,777	
<u>Female</u>											
single		21,871	17,877	24,141	18,678	16,300	16,127	20,049	20,410	18,548	
married & widowed		3,232	2,700	3,164	2,566	2,269	2,084	2,562	2,977	2,938	

Emigration statistics of Ireland, 1883-1901: for which see Bibliography.



Table 7. Irish emigration per cent of the population of Ireland.

1851	3.88	1876	0.69
52	3.47	77	0.71
53	3.01	78	0.76
54	2.37	1879	0.87
55	1.26	1880	1.76
56	1.16	81	1.52
57	1.41	82	1.72
58	0.72	83	2.10
59	0.89	84	1.47
1860	1.04	85	1.20
61	0.63	86	1.22
62	0.86	87	1.60
63	2.02	88	1.64
64		89	1.48
65		1890	1.30
66		91	1.27
67		92	1.10
68		93	1.04
69		94	0.78
1870	1.33	95	1.06
71	1.31	96	0.85
72		97	0.71
		98	0.71
		99	0.91
		1900	1.01
		01	0.89

1851-72: General reports of the (Colonial Land and) Emigration Commission.

1876-1901: Emigration statistics of Ireland; for which see Bibliography.

---



Table 8.

Emigrants from each province and county, 1 May 1851 - 31 December 1901, with ratio to average population.

<u>Province of Leinster</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Emigrants per 100 Average Population*</u>
Co. Carlow	32,395	64.3
Dublin	112,201	26.8
Kildare	36,074	45.0
Kilkenny	73,815	67.2
King's	58,281	73.3
Longford	56,757	89.9
Louth	42,914	51.8
Meath	65,236	67.6
Queen's	56,870	71.5
Westmeath	50,423	63.1
Wexford	72,484	54.6
Wicklow	29,159	38.3
	<u>686,609</u>	<u>50.9</u>
 <u>Province of Munster</u>		
Co. Clare	152,316	110.0
Cork	508,222	99.8
Kerry	214,437	108.8
Limerick	178,937	92.8
Tipperary	208,334	93.8
Waterford	101,024	84.2
	<u>1,363,270</u>	<u>97.9</u>
 <u>Province of Ulster</u>		
Co. Antrim	253,917	62.5
Armagh	95,163	57.2
Cavan	112,961	83.9
Donegal	123,591	58.1
Down	139,541	47.6
Fermanagh	54,524	60.7
Londonderry	103,545	61.4
Monaghan	74,246	68.9
Tyrone	135,466	66.1
	<u>1,092,954</u>	<u>61.3</u>
 <u>Province of Connaught</u>		
Co. Galway	204,234	82.1
Leitrim	74,847	81.6
Mayo	168,570	70.2
Roscommon	104,115	76.1
Sligo	75,765	68.6
	<u>627,531</u>	<u>75.8</u>

average of total natives of Ireland 72.5

\* based on decennial census returns, 1851-1901

Emigration statistics of Ireland for 1901, table III.



Table 9. Emigrants by provinces, 1875-1901

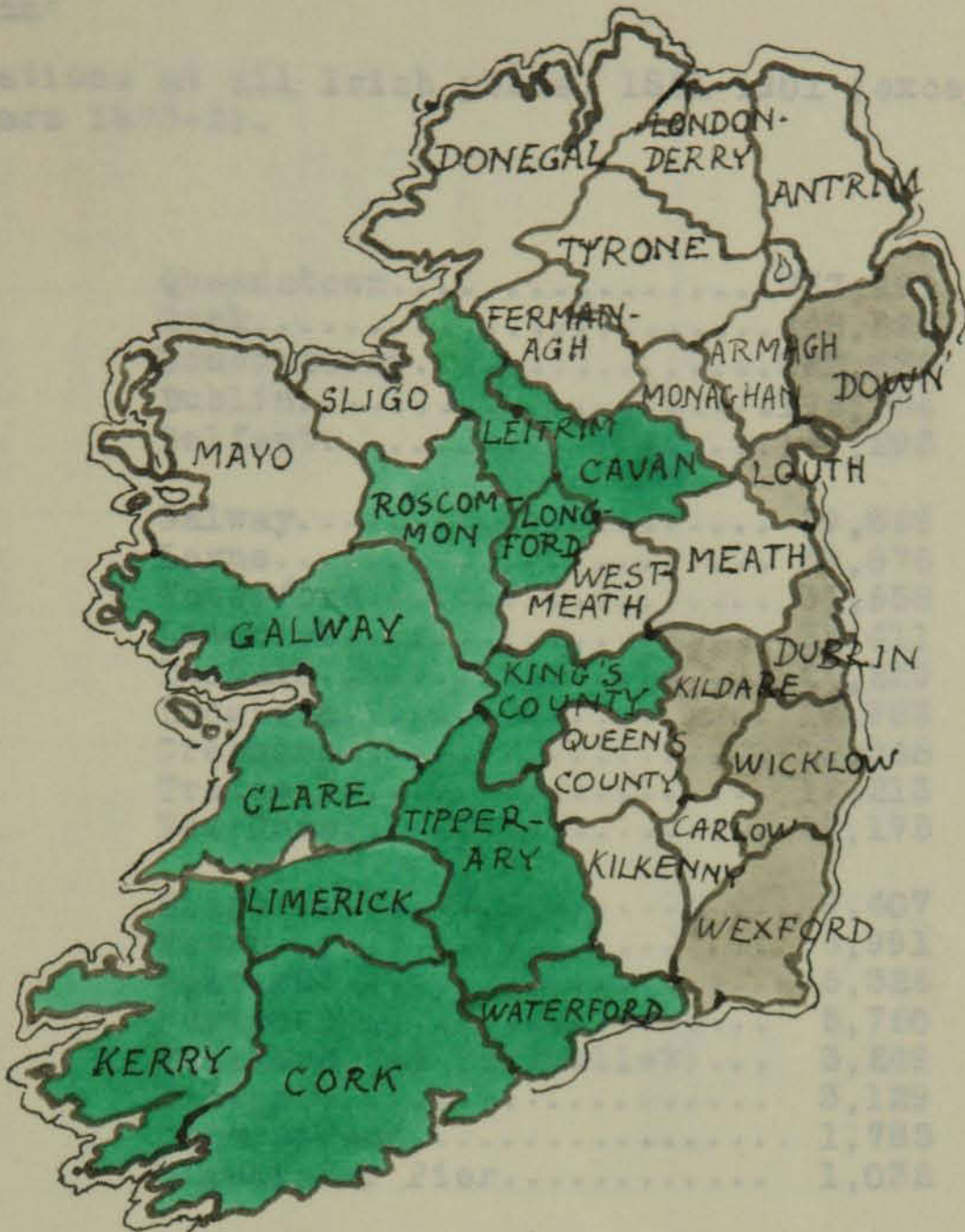
Emigrants from	1875	1876	1877	1878	1879	1880	1881	1882
Leinster	7,770	4,427	5,142	7,371	6,125	16,169	16,232	16,057
Munster	18,311	13,275	13,602	12,833	17,255	30,654	21,752	28,848
Ulster	20,226	16,870	16,723	16,240	17,619	28,122	24,101	26,081
Connaught	5,130	2,973	3,036	4,680	6,066	20,519	16,332	18,150
	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890
Leinster	20,708	14,063	10,152	10,350	14,234	13,830	12,621	10,415
Munster	29,279	24,363	20,436	21,106	27,078	27,719	27,404	23,554
Ulster	26,081	21,704	19,498	19,637	24,654	21,667	17,108	14,277
Connaught	18,150	15,733	11,948	12,042	16,957	15,468	13,344	13,067
	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898
Leinster	9,276	7,148	6,322	4,916	4,923	3,842	3,210	3,340
Munster	24,678	20,050	19,820	16,299	22,176	15,485	12,798	13,013
Ulster	13,264	11,465	10,525	6,242	8,109	7,434	6,266	5,577
Connaught	12,405	12,204	11,480	8,438	13,495	12,234	10,261	10,311
	1899	1900	1901					
Leinster	3,542	3,857	3,400					
Munster	15,758	17,933	16,381					
Ulster	8,701	9,438	8,740					
Connaught	13,231	14,060	11,092					

Emigration statistics of Ireland, 1876-1901; for which see Bibliography.



Table 11.

Emigration of all Irish natives, excepting the years 1870-1871.

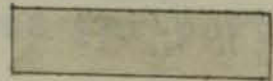


Intensity of emigration per 100 average population of the period 1851-1901. Average of total natives of Ireland 72.5.

Counties with intensity of emigration above 72.5



Counties with intensity of emigration below 55



Emigration statistics of Ireland for 1901, table III.



Table 11.

Embarkations at all Irish ports, 1851-1901 (excepting the years 1873-5).

Queenstown.....	733,991
Cork.....	448,497
Londonderry.....	322,836
Dublin.....	196,264
Belfast.....	149,293
Galway.....	59,866
Larne.....	39,876
Waterford.....	37,658
Limerick.....	37,411
Dundalk.....	25,259
Drogheda.....	19,983
Greenore.....	18,048
Tralee.....	17,213
New Ross.....	17,175
Sligo.....	9,407
Newry.....	6,991
Wexford.....	6,326
Portrush.....	5,760
Blacksod Bay (Belmullet)...	3,249
Westport.....	3,129
Cahersiveen.....	1,785
Blackwater Pier.....	1,032
Coleraine.....	897
Killala.....	674
Donegal.....	527
Ballina.....	423
Glin.....	370
Skibbereen.....	313
Warrenpoint.....	246
Foynes.....	242
Youghal.....	214
Fenit.....	189
Ballyvaghan.....	169

1851-72: General reports of the (Colonial Land and) Emigration Commission; embarkations per port for all destinations outside Europe.

1876-1901: Emigration statistics of Ireland; number of emigrants - natives of Ireland - who left Irish ports.



Table 12. Number of emigrants - natives of Ireland - who left the five principal Irish ports, annually 1876-1901.

	1876	1877	1878	1879	1880	1881	1882	1883	1884
Queenstown	8,907	6,786	8,293	13,269	42,563	32,519	37,151	42,191	30,286
Cork	5,479	6,830	4,847	5,404	5,087	3,539	3,881	3,928	4,158
Londonderry & Moville	6,646	5,035	4,279	5,265	10,443	9,677	10,285	14,243	8,907
Dublin	4,033	5,692	9,956	8,941	14,734	12,713	14,243	13,208	9,101
Belfast	7,527	8,669	8,092	7,554	9,961	8,620	9,579	10,717	8,333
	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893
Queenstown	27,577	27,530	38,902	38,785	37,048	32,866	33,999	30,554	29,610
Cork	3,117	3,298	3,228	3,109	2,592	2,317	2,366	1,011	1,094
Londonderry & Moville	8,859	9,405	12,516	10,692	8,197	8,819	8,447	8,256	8,541
Dublin	7,113	7,043	8,799	8,532	8,096	6,858	5,620	4,199	3,748
Belfast	5,996	4,948	6,182	5,238	4,262	3,728	3,578	2,407	1,938
	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	
Queenstown	24,360	34,325	26,668	22,132	22,275	28,378	30,805	26,112	
Cork	829	830	723	967	619	199	1,053	2,364	
Londonderry & Moville	4,230	5,732	5,190	4,025	3,368	3,794	3,845	3,596	
Dublin	2,603	3,214	2,459	1,881	1,951	1,913	1,601	1,264	
Belfast	1,470	1,818	1,537	1,415	1,481	3,705	4,411	3,986	

<sup>1</sup>from 1881 'Londonderry'.

Emigration statistics of Ireland: for which see Bibliography.



Table 13. Money remitted by settlers in North America to their friends in the United Kingdom, 1848-87.

1848	£	460,000 <sup>1</sup>	1868	£	530,564
49		540,000	69		639,335
1850		957,000	1870		727,408
51		990,000	71		702,488
52	1,404,000		72		749,664
53	1,439,000		73		724,040
54	1,730,000		74		485,566
55	873,000		75		354,356
56	951,000		76		334,643
57	593,165		77		667,564
58	472,610		78		784,067
59	520,019		79		855,631
1860		534,476	1880		1,403,341
61		374,061	81		1,505,794
62		360,578	82		1,305,732
63		383,286	83		1,611,201
64		332,172	84		1,575,756
65		481,580	85		1,241,585
66		498,028 <sup>2</sup>	86		1,276,033
67		543,029	87		1,751,353

<sup>1</sup> 'the first year in which we have any information'

<sup>2</sup> 27th General report, 1867, append. 25, and subsequent Reports: 'Note.- The above return for the years 1859 to 1865 does not correspond with the similar returns printed in former Reports, the amounts remitted from Australia being here omitted, and some errors which have been discovered in former returns corrected...'

1848-72: General reports of the (Colonial Land and) Emigration Commission, 'Return showing Amounts of Money remitted by Settlers in North America to their Friends in the United Kingdom'.

1873-87: Copy of statistical tables relating to emigration and immigration from and into the United Kingdom in the year..., with report to the Board of Trade thereon, 'Money remitted by Settlers in the United States and British North America to their Friends in the United Kingdom'.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscript sources

Spain

Public Record Office of England

Colonial Office Records.

Public Record Office of Ireland

Valuation Office letter books.

State Paper Office of Ireland

Registered Papers BIBLIOGRAPHY  
Abstracts of cases, as Suspension Act, 1858.

National Library of Ireland

Baron Papers.  
W.S. O'Brien Papers.

Collection of the Irish Folklore Commission

Society of Friends, Dublin Yearly Meeting historical collection

Correspondence, particularly on Irish distress.

Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa

Papers of John Lee,  
Governor of the Canadas, Montreal.

Rockton Library, Laval University

Manuscripts

Inaccessible MSS

Diary of George George Clark of Montreal. Manuscript  
in the possession of Dr J.L. Coopers, McGill University.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscript sources

Repositories

Public Record Office of England *United Kingdom*

Colonial Office Records.

Public Record Office of Ireland

Valuation Office letter books.

State Paper Office of Ireland

Registered Papers.

Abstracts of cases, Habeas Corpus Suspension Act, 1866.

National Library of Ireland

Iarcom Papers,

W.S. O'Brien Papers.

Collection of the Irish Folklore Commission

Society of Friends, Dublin Yearly Meeting historical collection

Correspondence, particularly on Irish distress.

Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa

Papers of John Lee.

Census of the Canadas: Montreal.

Houghton Library, Harvard University

Hansen Manuscripts.

In private hands

Diary of George Edward Clerk of Montreal, transcripts in the possession of Dr J.I. Cooper, McGill University.



## Official Publications

### Parliamentary Papers

(all references are to house of commons papers)

### Reports of commissions and committees

### General reports of the (Colonial Land and) Emigration Commissioners

8th.....	961	, 1847-8,	xxvi.
9th.....	1082	, 1849,	xxii.
10th.....	1204	, 1850,	xxiii.
11th.....	1383	, 1851,	xxii.
12th.....	1499	, 1852,	xviii.
13th.....	1647	, 1852-3,	xl.
14th.....	1833	, 1854,	xxviii.
15th.....	1953	, 1854-5,	xvii.
16th.....	2089	, 1856,	xxiv.
17th.....	2249	, 1857,	xvi.
18th.....	2395	, 1857-8,	xxiv.
19th.....	2555	, 1859,	xiv.
20th.....	2696	, 1860,	xxix.
21st.....	2842	, 1861,	xxii.
22nd.....	3010	, 1862,	xxii.
23rd.....	3199	, 1863,	xv.
24th.....	3341	, 1864,	xvi.
25th.....	3526	, 1865,	xviii.
26th.....	3679	, 1866,	xvii.
27th.....	3855	, 1867,	xix.
28th.....	4024	, 1867-8,	xvii.
29th.....	4159	, 1868-9,	xvii.
30th.....	C.196	, 1870,	xvii.
31st.....	C.369	, 1871,	xx.
32nd.....	C.562	, 1872,	xvi.
33rd.....	C.768	, 1873,	xviii.

### Annual reports of the commissioners for administering the laws for relief of the poor in Ireland

4th.....	1381	, 1851,	xxvi.
9th.....	2105	, 1856,	xxviii.
14th.....	2803	, 1861,	xxviii.
20th.....	3877	, 1867,	xxxiv.
24th.....	C.361	, 1871,	xxviii.



Annual reports of the Local Government Board for Ireland

1st.....	C.794	, 1873,	xxix.
2nd.....	C.967	, 1874,	xxvi.
3rd.....	C.1221	, 1875,	xxxii.
4th.....	C.1493	, 1876,	xxxi.
5th.....	C.1761	, 1877,	xxxviii.
6th.....	C.2116	, 1878,	xxxviii.
7th.....	C.2363	, 1878-9,	xxx.
9th.....	C.2926	, 1881,	xlvii.
15th.....	C.5124	, 1887,	xxxvii.
19th.....	C.6439	, 1890-91,	xxxiv.
29th.....	Cd.1259	, 1902,	xxxvii.

Devon commission

- 1845..... [616], xx. Evidence taken before Her Majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland, part II.
- 
- 1847..... (737.737-II), vi. Report by select committee of house of lords on colonization from Ireland.
- 1851..... (632), xix. Report from the select committee on Passengers' Act.
- 1854..... (163), (349), xiii. First report, second report from the select committee on emigrant ships.
- 1857-8.... (412), xiii. Report from the select committee on destitution (Gweedore and Cloughaneely), 1858.
- 1861..... (408), x. Report from the select committee on poor relief (Ireland).
- 1865..... (402), xi. Report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the operation of the Act 23 & 24 Vict. c.153, on the tenure and improvement of land in Ireland.
- 1867..... (518), xiv. Report by the select committee on the tenure (Ireland) bill.



### Chelmsford committee

1872.....(403), xi. Report from the select committee of the house of lords on the Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870.

---

1878.....(249), xv. Report from the select committee on the Irish Land Act, 1870.

### Bessborough commission

1881.....[C.2779. C.2779-II], xviii-xix. Report of Her Majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the working of the Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870, and the Acts amending the same.

---

### Richmond commission

Royal commission on the depressed condition of the agricultural interest:

1881.....[C.2778. C.2778-I], xv; [C.2778-II], xvi; [C.3096], xvii.

1882.....[C.3309], xiv.

---

### Cairns committee

1882.....(249), (379), xi. First report, second report from the select committee of the house of lords on land law (Ireland).

1883.....(204), (279), xiii. Third report, fourth report from the same.

---

### Cowper commission

1887.....[C.4969], xxvi. Report of the royal commission on the Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881, and the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1885.

---

1889.....(274), x. Report from the select committee on colonisation.

1890.....(354), xii. The same, second session.

1890-91...(152), xi. The same, third session.

1893-4.....[C.6894.XVIII-XXIII], xxxvii - I. Royal commission on labour. The agricultural labourer, vol.IV, Ireland, parts I - V.



Congested Districts Board for Ireland

1893-4.... [C.6908], lxi. First annual report.

---

Financial relations commission

1895..... [C.7720 I, II], xxxvi. Royal commission on the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland, 2 vols.

Papers

Census of Ireland, General reports:

1851, part VI: [2134], 1856, xxxi.  
1861, " V: [3204-IV], 1863, lxi.  
1871, " III: [C.1377], 1876, lxxxix.  
1881, " II: [C.3365], 1882, lxxvi.  
1891, " II; [C.6780], 1892, xc.  
1901, " II; [Cd.1190], 1902, cxxix.

Emigration statistics of Ireland, 1876-1901.

1877..... [C.1700], lxxxv.  
1878..... C.2066, lxxvii.  
1878-9.... C.2221, lxxv.  
1880..... C.2501, lxxvi.  
1881..... C.2828, xciv.  
1882..... C.3170, lxxiv.  
1883..... C.3489, lxxvi.  
1884..... C.3899, lxxxv.  
1884-5.... C.4303, lxxxv.  
1886..... C.4660, lxxi.  
1887..... C.4967, lxxxix.  
1888..... C.5307, cvii.  
1889..... C.5647, lxxxiv.  
1890..... C.6010, lxxix.  
1890-91... C.6295, xcii.  
1892..... C.6679, lxxxviii.  
1893-4.... C.6977, [C.7288], cii.  
1895..... C.7647, cvii.  
1896..... C.7959, xciii.  
1897..... C.8366, xcix.  
1898..... C.8740, ciii.  
1899..... C.9193, cvii.  
1900..... Cd.111, cii.  
1901..... Cd.531, lxxxviii.  
1902..... Cd.976, cxvi -II.



Statistical tables relating to emigration and immigration from and into the United Kingdom, with reports to the Board of Trade thereon, 1876-1901.

1877.....	(5)	, lxxxv.
1878.....	(9)	, lxxvii.
1878-9.....	(32)	, lxxv.
1880.....	(8)	, lxxvi.
1881.....	(89)	, xciv.
1882.....	(87)	, lxxiv.
1883.....	(89)	, lxxvi.
1884.....	(9)	, lxxxv.
1884-5.....	(52)	, lxxxv.
1886.....	(3-sess.1)	, lxxi.
1887.....	(32)	, lxxxix.
1888.....	(2)	, cvii.
1889.....	(10)	, lxxxiv.
1890.....	(103)	, lxxix.
1890-91....	(147)	, xcii.
1892.....	(134-sess.1)	, lxxxviii.
1893-4.....	(138)	, cii.
1894.....	(90)	, xciv.
1895.....	(213)	, cvii.
1896.....	(130)	, xciii.
1897.....	(165)	, xcix.
1898.....	(154)	, ciii.
1899.....	(188)	, cvii.
1900.....	(163)	, cii.
1901.....	(176)	, lxxxviii.
1902.....	(183)	, cxvi-II.

Agricultural statistics of Ireland

1874.....	C.880	, lxix.
1880.....	C.2534	, lxxvi.
1881.....	C.2809	, xciii.
1886.....	C.4806	, lxxi.
1890.....	C.6099	, lxxix.
1896.....	C.7957	, xcii.
1899.....	C.9389	, cvi.
1901.....	Cd.557	, lxxxviii.
1902.....	Cd.1170	, cxvi-I.



Papers and copies or extracts of despatches relative to emigration to the North American colonies

1852-3.....	[1650], lxviii.
1854.....	[1763], xlvi.
1854-5.....	(464), xxxix.
1857.....	(14-sess.1), x.
1857.....	(125-sess.2), xxviii.
1857-8.....	(165), xli.
1859.....	(218-sess.2), xxii.
1860.....	(606), xliv.
1861.....	(186), xl.
1862.....	(355), xxxvi.

Miscellaneous reports and papers

1854-5....	(523), xvii. Application to make Bristol a government emigration port.
1862.....	(111), xlix-I. Poor Law reports on counties Roscommon, Sligo, Galway and Mayo.
1864.....	(237), liii. Report on western districts of Galway.
1870.....	(179), xlix. Circular to colonial governors on emigration.
1870.....	(288), lx. British and foreign passenger ships in the Atlantic trade.
1871.....	[C.335], xlvii. Correspondence on emigration.
1872.....	[C.614], (154), xliii. Further correspondence on emigration; names of Emigration Commissioners, etc.
1875.....	(275), lii. Report of parliament of Canada on immigration.
1875.....	(9), lxiii. Report on emigration of pauper children to Canada.
1877.....	(263), (392), lxxi. Miss Rye, Mr Doyle to Local Government Board.
1880.....	[C.2483], [C.2671], lxii. Correspondence on distress in Ireland; report on distress from senior naval officer at Galway.
1881.....	[C.2835], lxv. Proposal for Irish immigration to Manitoba.
1881.....	(326), lxxv. Report on \$100,000. voted by Canada for relief in Ireland.
1881.....	[C.2756], lxxvii. Outrages reported to Royal Irish Constabulary, 1844-80.



- 1881..... [C.2995], lxxxii. Treatment of emigrants on Atlantic ships.
- 1882..... [C.3294], xlv. Address of Canadian parliament to Her Majesty on Ireland.
- 1882..... [C.3422], lv. Report on emigration clauses of Arrears Act.
- 1883..... (128), (141), lix. Statement on distress by five catholic bishops; report on parts of Donegal and Sligo.
- 1884..... (210), (235), liv. Correspondence on state-aided emigration to Canada.
- 1884..... (218), lxii. Report on diminution in migratory labourers.
- 1886..... [C.4751], xlv. Correspondence on proposed Emigrants' Information Office.
- 1888..... [C.5361], [C.5391], lxxiii. Scheme of colonisation referred to colonial governments; report on Emigrants' Information Office.
- 1888..... (88), lxxxiii. Correspondence on Mr R. Vesey Stoney.
- 1889..... [C.5725], lv. Report on Emigrants' Information Office.
- 1889..... (106), (232), (314), lv. Parliamentary Colonisation Committee.
- 1890..... [C.5891], xxvii. Cases of eviction and agrarian crime, 1849-86.
- 1892..... [C.6573], lvi. Report on Emigrants' Information Office.
- 1892..... (85), lxiv. Relief works in certain parts of Ireland.
- 1895..... [C.7697], lxx. Advantages of Canada to emigrants.
- 1896..... [C.8256], lviii. Management and working of Emigrants' Information Office.

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, third and fourth series.

Public General Statutes.

Census of the Canadas:

1851-2 Quebec, 1853.

1860-1 Quebec, 1863.

Census of Canada, 1870-71. Ottawa, 1873.

Censuses of Canada, 1608-1876. Ottawa, 1876.



## Newspapers

Times

[Dublin] Daily Express  
Dublin Evening Mail  
Dublin Evening Post  
Freeman's Journal, and Daily Commercial Advertiser  
Irish Times  
Nation  
Saunders's News-Letter and Daily Advertiser

Belfast News-Letter  
Northern Whig  
Ulster Examiner and Northern Star

Constitution, or, Cork Advertiser [cited 'Cork  
Constitution']  
Cork Examiner  
Southern Reporter and Cork Daily Commercial Courier

Drogheda Argus and Leinster Journal  
Dundalk Democrat and People's Journal  
Galway Vindicator and Connaught Advertiser  
Limerick Chronicle  
Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator  
Londonderry Standard  
Newry Commercial Telegraph [cited 'Newry Telegraph']  
Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser  
Roscommon Journal and Western Reporter  
Sligo Champion  
Tipperary Advocate  
Tyrone Constitution  
Waterford Daily Mail and Daily Telegraph Sheet [cited  
'Waterford Mail']

Montreal Gazette  
[Montreal] New Era  
Montreal Transcript  
[Montreal] True Witness and Catholic Chronicle  
Montreal Witness



### Other Periodicals

Canadian Historical Review  
Carloviana: The Journal of the Old Carlow Society  
Chambers's Journal  
Contemporary Review  
Economic History Review  
Fortnightly Review  
Geographical Journal  
History  
Irish Ecclesiastical Record  
Irish Historical Studies  
Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society  
of Ireland  
Nineteenth Century  
Purdon's Irish Farmer's and Gardener's Almanac  
Studies

### Reports and Pamphlets

- CAHILL (Dr.) on Irish emigration, tenant-right and  
sectarian animosity. 27 June 1857.
- CANADA as a field for emigration, from Saunders' News  
Letter, July 16th, 1853. [?1855]:
- CRAWFORD (William Sharman). Depopulation not necessary:  
an appeal to the British members of the  
imperial parliament against the extermination  
of the Irish people, 2nd edn. 1850.
- DE LASTEYRIE (Jules). A few observations upon Ireland.  
Dublin, 1861.
- IRISHMAN who knows (An). What is state-aided emigration?  
Dublin, 1884.
- LETTER from the Rev. Dr. Cahill on the Irish emigrants to  
America returning to Ireland. 28 November 1857
- REPORTS and papers relating to the proceedings of the  
committee of 'Mr. Tuke's Fund' for assisting  
emigration from Ireland, during the years  
1882, 1883 and 1884.  
collected for the private use of the  
committee [1885].
- REPORT of the Transatlantic Packet Station committee,  
appointed at a meeting held on the 21st  
August 1851 at the Mansion House, Dublin,  
the right hon. the lord mayor in the chair.  
Dublin, 1852.
- [SECOND, and] FINAL REPORT of the central relief committee  
of the Society of Friends, established  
during the famine in Ireland in 1846 and 1847  
and dissolved in 1865. Dublin, 1865.
- SECOND REPORT of the Emigrants' Protection Society, July, 1857



SUGGESTIONS for the immediate establishment of a direct communication by steam navigation between Ireland and the United States of America, without the aid of the British government, 2nd edn. Dublin, 1851.

TUKE (James Hack). Irish distress and its remedies. 1880.

#### Unpublished Thesis

MacDONAGH (Oliver). Irish emigration during the great famine, 1845-52. Unpublished dissertation, University College, Dublin. 1946.

#### Emigrant Guide-Books

(the place of publication of books is London unless otherwise indicated)

BURN (Robert Scott). The colonist's and emigrant's handbook of the mechanical arts. Edinburgh and London, 1854.

CANADA: a brief outline of her geographical position, production, climate, capabilities, etc. Quebec, 1861.

DOMINION of CANADA: emigration to the province of Ontario: free grants of land...immediate employment at good wages... Belfast, 1873.

EMIGRANT'S GUIDE (The), by an experienced traveller...containing all the necessary instruction for persons leaving Ireland for New York, or other parts of the United States...together with truly important and recent information respecting Canada. Dublin, 1848.

EMIGRANTS' INFORMATION OFFICE handbooks, 1893-1901.

GENERAL HINTS to emigrants, containing notices of the various fields for emigration, with practical hints on preparation for emigrating... [?Silver's emigration guide]. 1866.

HANDBOOK to Canada, a guide for travellers and settlers... with a map showing the railway system etc. S.W. Silver & Co., 1881.



- JONES (Major [E.R.]). The emigrants' friend...for persons intending to emigrate to the United States. 1880.
- MARSHALL (Josiah T.). The farmers' and emigrants' complete guide, or a hand book with copious hints, recipes and tables designed for the farmer and emigrant. Cincinnati, 1854.
- MINNESOTA, her agricultural resources, commercial advantages, and manufacturing capabilities...published by the State Board of Immigration. St Paul, Minn., 1879.
- MOONEY (Thomas). Nine years in America...in a series of letters to his cousin, Patrick Mooney, a farmer in Ireland, 2nd edn. Dublin, 1850.
- MUDIE (R.). The emigrant's pocket companion. 1832.
- NETTLE (G.). Practical guide for emigrants to North America. London and Liverpool, 1850.
- O'HANLON (Rev. J.). The Irish emigrant's guide for the United States. Boston, 1851.
- PEYTON (Rev. Alex. J.). The emigrant's friend; or hints on emigration to the United States of America, addressed to the people of Ireland. Cork, 1853.

#### Secondary Works

- ABBOTT (Edith). Historical aspects of the immigration problem: select documents. Univ. Chicago Pr., 1926.
- ADAMS (W.F.). Ireland and the Irish emigration to the New World, from 1815 to the famine. New Haven, Yale Univ. Pr., 1932.
- AIBION (R.G.). Square-riggers on schedule: the New York sailing packets to England, France, and the cotton ports [1818-58]. Princeton Univ. Pr., 1938.
- ARENSBERG (C.M.) and KIMBALL (S.T.). Family and community in Ireland. 1940.
- BAILEY (William F.). Local and centralized government in Ireland. London and Dublin, 1888.
- -- Ireland since the famine, a sketch of fifty years economic and legislative changes. ibid. [1902].



- 13
- BECKER (Bernard H.). Disturbed Ireland, being the letters written during the winter of 1880-81. 1881.
- CARROTHERS (W.A.). Emigration from the British Isles. 1929.
- CARR-SAUNDERS (Sir Alexander M.). World population, past growth and present trends. Oxford, 1936.
- CONNELL (K.H.). The population of Ireland, 1780-1845. 1950.
- CONROY (J.C.). A history of railways in Ireland. 1928.
- COOPER (J.I.). Montreal, the story of 300 years. [Montreal], 1942.
- COULTER (Henry). The west of Ireland: its existing condition and prospects. Dublin and London, 1862.
- DAVIN (N.F.). The Irishman in Canada. London and Toronto [1877].
- DAVITT (Michael). The fall of feudalism in Ireland, or the story of the Land League revolution. London and N.Y., 1904.
- DE BEAUMONT (Gustave). L'Irlande, sociale, politique et religieuse, 2 t., 7<sup>e</sup> edn. Paris, 1863.
- DUFFERIN (Rt Hon. Lord). Irish emigration and the tenure of land in Ireland. 1867.
- DUVAL (Jules). Histoire de l'émigration européenne, asiatique et africaine au xix<sup>e</sup> siècle, ses causes, ses caractères, ses effets. Paris, 1862.
- FERENCZI (Imre). International migrations, ed. Walter F. Willcox: vol. I, Statistics; vol. II, Interpretations, by a group of scholars; 2 vols. N.Y., 1929-31.
- FORSYTH (W.D.) Myth of the open spaces. Melbourne, 1942.
- FREEMAN (T.W.). Ireland, its physical, historical, social and economic geography. 1950.
- FRY (Rt Hon. Sir Edward). James Hack Tuke, a memoir. 1899.
- GARIS (R.L.). Immigration restrictions: a study of the opposition to and regulation of immigration into the United States. N.Y., 1927.



- GARNIER (Charles M.). Eiré: histoire d'Irlande.  
Paris, 1939.
- GREEN (E.R.R.). The Lagan valley, 1800-50.  
1949.
- GREGORY (Sir William). Autobiography.  
1894.
- GRIFFITH (G. Talbot). Population problems of the age of  
Malthus.  
Cambridge, 1926.
- GRIMSHAW (Thomas Wrigley). Facts and figures about Ireland.  
Dublin and London, 1893.
- HAMILTON (John). Sixty years' experience as an Irish land-  
lord, ed. Rev. H.C. White.  
1894 .
- HAMMOND (J.L.). Gladstone and the Irish nation.  
1938.
- HANCOCK (W. Neilson). Report on the supposed progressive  
decline of Irish prosperity.  
Dublin, 1863.
- -- Report on the state of Ireland in  
1874.  
ibid., 1874.
- HANDLIN (O.). Boston's immigrants, 1790-1865: a study in  
acculturation.  
Harvard Univ. Pr., 1941.
- HANSEN (M.L.). The Atlantic migration, 1607-1860, 2nd edn.  
Harvard Univ. Pr., 1941.
- -- The immigrant in American history, 2nd edn.  
ibid., 1942.
- HITCHINS (F.H.). Colonial Land and Emigration Commission,  
1840-78.  
Philadelphia, 1931.
- HOOKE (Elizabeth R.). Readjustments of agricultural tenure  
in Ireland.  
Chapel Hill, Univ. N. Carolina Pr.,  
1938.
- HUSSEY (S.M.). Reminiscences of an Irish land agent.  
1904.
- JOHNSON (Stanley C.). History of emigration from the United  
Kingdom to North America, 1763-1912.  
1913.
- JOHNSTON (James F.W.). Notes on North America, agricultural,  
economical and social, 2 vols.  
Edinburgh, 1851.
- KELLY (Richard J.). Evils of emigration.  
Catholic Truth Society, Dublin,  
[1902].



- KENNEY (James F.). The sources for the early history of Ireland...vol.I [all pub.], ecclesiastical. N.Y., Columbia Univ. Pr., 1929.
- KOHL (J.G.). Ireland [translated]. 1844.
- LAMOTHE (J.C.). Histoire de la corporation de la cité de Montréal. Montréal, 1903.
- LESLIE (T.E. Cliffe). Land systems and industrial economy of Ireland, England and continental countries. 1870.
- McGEE (T.D.). Speeches and addresses, chiefly on the subject of British-American union. 1865.
- -- The Irish position in British and in republican North America: a letter to the editors of the Irish press, irrespective of party, 2nd edn. Montreal, 1866.
- -- Poems, ed. Mrs J. Sadlier. N.Y., 1869.
- MAGUIRE (John Francis, M.P.). The Irish in America. 1868.
- -- America in its relation to Irish emigration: a lecture delivered at Cork and Limerick. Cork, 1869.
- MANSEERGH (N.). Ireland in the age of reform and revolution: Anglo-Irish relations and political forces in Ireland, 1840-1921. 1940.
- MICKS (William L.). Account of the constitution, administration and dissolution of the Congested Districts Board for Ireland, 1891-1923. Dublin, 1925.
- MILL (John Stuart). England and Ireland. 1868.
- O'BRIEN (Wm. Smith). Lectures on America, delivered in the Mechanics' Institute, Dublin, November 1859. Dublin, 1860.
- PAUL-DUBOIS (Louis). Contemporary Ireland. Dublin and N.Y., 1908.
- PHILLIPS (W. Alison). The revolution in Ireland, 2nd edn. 1926.
- PIM (Jonathan). The condition and prospects of Ireland. Dublin, 1848.



- PIM (J.T.). Review of the economic and social condition  
of Ireland. 1899.
- POMFRET (John E.). The struggle for land in Ireland,  
1800-1923. Princeton Univ. Pr., 1930.
- SALAMAN (Redcliffe N.). The history and social influence  
of the potato. Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1949.
- SENIOR (Nassau William). Journals, conversations and  
essays relating to Ireland, 2 vols. 1868.
- SKELTON (Isabel). Life of Thomas D'Arcy McGee.  
Gardenvale [Que.], 1925.
- SULLIVAN (A.M.). New Ireland, 2 vols. 1877.
- TRENCH (W. Stewart; recte William Richard). Realities  
of Irish life, new edn. [1868].





