

**SUGGESTIONS FOR THE
AMELIORATION
OF THE PRESENT
CONDITION OF IRELAND**

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Suggestions for the Amelioration of the Present Condition of Ireland by Montague Gore

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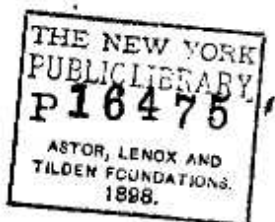
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MONTAGUE GORE

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I R E L A N D.

THE appalling news which almost every mail brings from Ireland ; and the dreadful atrocities which have lately been perpetrated in that part of the kingdom ; cannot fail to kindle the just indignation of every humane and feeling breast. They excite mingled feelings of sympathy and shame ;—of sympathy with the unfortunate victims ;—of shame, when we consider that these acts are perpetrated by men who owe allegiance to the same Sovereign with ourselves ; who enjoy the protection of the same Constitution ; and who perpetrate these foul deeds in the heart of a country calling itself civilized and Christian. Justice and policy alike demand that prompt and vigorous measures should be taken to suppress these horrid proceedings. Justice demands it ; for all those who owe allegiance to a state are entitled to protection in return. Policy requires it ; for vain and idle must be all remedial measures till the hand of the assassin is staid, and till life and property are secure.

The supremacy of the law must be asserted as the foundation of all other measures ; and I am sure that honest men of all parties in the State will zealously support the Ministers of the Crown in

carrying into full effect the existing laws; and will readily approve of their "going beyond" those laws, if it should be found necessary. Let prompt and speedy punishment fall on the heads of the guilty murderers; let all who connive at their bloody deeds—all who harbour them—all who, however indirectly aid in their escape, suffer the full penalty which the law awards; and let it be shewn that the *laws of the land cannot be violated with impunity*; and that no crafty combinations—no artful devices can screen the guilty from the stern and sure arm of avenging Justice.

This is the first—the most imperative—the paramount measure which the present state of Ireland calls for. But it must be attended; it ought to be accompanied by others of a very different character; and whilst no false delicacy should deter us from speaking of the miscreants who commit these atrocities in terms of merited opprobrium; and from holding them up to the detestation of their fellow-men; let not the crimes of a few blind us to the virtues of the many; or prevent us from appreciating, as they justly deserve to be appreciated; the many noble qualities; the many lofty feelings; aye, and the many kindly sentiments which distinguish the natives of Ireland. It is to protect the honest and peaceful majority from the sanguinary combination of a cowardly minority to which they are now subject; it is to purify the fair name of Ireland from the blood spots which now disfigure it; it is,

above all, to lay the foundation for the true, the real, the permanent amelioration of the peasantry by the introduction of capital, and the development of industry; that Government are called on to suppress outrages which scare away all capital; and to establish on a sure footing that dominion of order and peace, under the shelter of which alone can industry thrive and flourish.

But I would now wish to submit to public consideration some suggestions respecting the social condition of Ireland; and to point out some measures which might tend to improve it, and to promote the future prosperity of that country. And in so doing, let me first meet an objection which is made to all plans for the improvement of that island, but more especially to such as require energy and exertion. It is said, "These plans are all very fair and philanthropic; they might suit very well other countries and other people; but there is something in the character of the Irish people which renders useless and idle all attempts to improve their circumstances." Spenser mentions the same opinions as to the temper and character of the Irish as being prevalent in his times; although with that sound sense and judgment which characterized him, he admitted not their justice, but rather thought "the cause of evil which hangeth upon this country, to proceed of the unsoundness of councils and plots, which have been laid for its reformation; or of faintness in following

“and effecting the same ; than of any such fatal
“course appointed of God.”*

Now, I dispute not—no one can dispute—that there is in the Irish character much imprudence and much indolence. I admit at once that their sufferings are, in many instances, the result of their own recklessness ; I admit these premises, *but I deny that from them the conclusion ought to be drawn, “that all attempts to improve the condition of these people must be useless.”* On the contrary I ask, whence springs the improvidence ? Whence comes this recklessness ? If from any innate temper and disposition of their minds ; if from any idiosyncrasy of their nature ; then I should despair of seeing any amendment in their state.

But if I can trace their faults to bad or defective legislation, and to the influence of peculiar circumstances ; if I find that in other countries, and even in their own, under improved circumstances, this recklessness and improvidence does not prevail ; if again I find that the inhabitants of other countries when placed in the same situation as the Irish ; exhibit the same weaknesses ; then I am entitled to maintain that their minds may be enlightened and improved ; that their character may be altered ; that their condition may be amended.

Difficult indeed the task may be ; but that consideration should not deter us from undertaking it, for this would be, as Spenser observed, “the part
“of desperate physicians, who wish their diseased

* Spenser's View of the State of Ireland.

“patient dead, rather than apply the best endeavours of their skill for his recovery.”

Now, let us see what has been the result where means have been taken to improve the condition of these people; let us test by experience the theory that the Irish are incorrigibly indolent, and that all attempts to ameliorate their condition must be useless.

I find it stated by Mr. Griffith, in the Report of the Poor-Law Committee, 1830, in proof of the general tranquillity which remunerative employment introduced into the country, “that in the year 1822 there were large garrisons in the villages and towns of Newmarket, Millstreet, Castle Island, Listowell, Abbyfeale, Glynn, Newcastle, Drumculler, and Liscovol, the whole of which are situated on the borders of the inaccessible districts; at present, with the exception of Newcastle, there are no troops in any of these towns, and the same persons who formerly were engaged in night-marauding parties are now beneficially employed in cultivating their own farms, and have become quiet and useful members of society.” And in another place he says, “Since the works were begun no outrages have been committed in the mountains. *In the commencement we had much trouble with the labourers, who seemed to think that they should have every thing their own way, and refused to work by task or measurement, according to the system laid down by*

“ me, and demanded to be employed by the day ;
 “ but *by patience and perseverance* we at length
 “ overcame their prejudices, and on finding that
 “ when they worked fairly they always earned good
 “ wages, they gave up their opposition, and now
 “ prefer my system to their own, and none of our
 “ practised hands will work by the day who can
 “ get employment by task.”

Now let me call attention to another statement, that of Lord Headley's agent, with respect to Glenbegh, in the barony of Iveragh, in the county of Kerry. The statement was made before the Poor-law Committee of 1830. He says—“ This district in 1809 or 1810 was *an extremely wild and savage one*. It was an asylum for all the offenders, robbers, and murderers of that part, and of the whole country ; it used to be the boast of the people that no criminal was ever punished from it. . . . Their habitations were very miserable ; the very lowest kind of streets that are found in Ireland, without windows or chimneys, and perfectly miserable cabins of the worst kinds that you now see along the roads in Ireland. . . . They were constantly grumbling ; constant assaults and fightings taking place amongst them.” . . . This he describes as the state of the district in 1808. Speaking of it in 1830 he says, “ It exhibits a very extraordinary contrast to the condition I have described. The people are now well clothed, they are extremely

"industrious and orderly; and I have seen them
 "attending the chapel regularly twice a day; as
 "well clothed, and as neat, and as orderly, and as
 "well-conducted as you see in a country village in
 "England. The houses are very considerably
 "changed; there are about 150 new houses built
 "upon the place, and they are as neat houses as
 "you will see almost in England."

He was then asked, "Having described the
 "former state of Glenbegh, and its actual condition
 "at present; will you have the goodness to explain
 "what means were adopted to effect this extra-
 "ordinary improvement?" "The means adopted
 "were generally an attention to the character of
 "the people; and a constant desire on the part of
 "the managers of the estate to avail themselves of
 "the disposition of these people to the improve-
 "ment of the lands; and to the improvement of their
 "habits and character generally. It was done
 "with very little sacrifice of rent or of money; but
 "a constant and earnest attention to the object of
 "improving the estate by the industry of the
 "people; and whenever any particular instance of
 "good management or industry; or of care to
 "collect the sand on the road, or to reclaim or
 "cultivate the land; or to build a decent house;
 "was evinced by any of the people; they were en-
 "couraged by some little emolument, or attention,
 "or allowance, or something of the sort." . . .
 "Has there been an improvement in the character