

IRELAND:

SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND RELIGIOUS.

BY

GUSTAVE DE BEAUMONT,

AUTHOR OF "MARIE, OR SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES," "THE
PENITENTIARY SYSTEM OF AMERICA," &c.

EDITED BY

W. C. TAYLOR, LL.D.

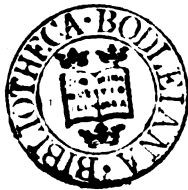
OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

VOL. I.

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1839.



LONDON :
PRINTED BY IBOYSON AND PALMER, SAVOY STREET.

P R E F A C E.

THE opinions of an enlightened foreigner, unconnected with the political parties that divide the nation, are always replete with valuable instruction to a people. "To see ourselves as others see us," is as difficult, and at the same time as useful, for societies as for individuals; but to no country is such an aspect of its condition so likely to be of service as Ireland, for in no other part of the world have all circumstances, small and great, connected with the moral, social, and political condition of the country, been so studiously and so grossly misrepresented. The Translator need only mention M. de Beaumont's works on the United States to prove his competency as a political observer; and the extraordinary success which the present work has already had on the Continent, is evidence that his testimony respecting Ireland will guide the opinions of a great part of Europe.

There are some who affect to disregard the opinions which foreigners form of the domestic economy of our empire; "the snail," says the Gentoo proverb, "sees

nothing beyond its shell, and believes it the finest palace in the universe;" but though such recklessness may be felt or affected by ardent partisans in Ireland, it is not likely that a similar course will be pursued in England. The political supremacy of the British Empire rests so much on public opinion for its support, that nothing by which that opinion may be changed or modified can be neglected with impunity.

M. de Beaumont designed his work exclusively for continental readers, and therefore, on many points, entered into long and minute explanations respecting the details of British law and administration, which are unnecessary for English readers, and have therefore been omitted. This is the only liberty which the translator has taken with the text, unless the consequent modifications of the division of the matter be deemed changes that ought to be acknowledged.

It was originally designed to add notes and illustrations to the body of the work on the same scale as those appended to the Introduction, but this design has been relinquished to prevent the work from being identified with any of the parties to which the discussions have given rise, and to keep intact its most characteristic and important feature,—its being the record of opinions formed by an enlightened statesman, whose views are obviously beyond all suspicion of being warped by prejudice or passion.

CONTENTS

OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

	<i>Page</i>
HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION	1
FIRST EPOCH—From 1169 to 1535	3
CHAP. I.	i.
Sect. I. Political Condition of Ireland in the twelfth century	3
2. The still recent invasion of the Danes	11
3. Influence of the Court of Rome	13
CHAP. II.	
Sect. 1. Political condition of the Irish an obstacle to the Conquest	16
2. Second obstacle to the completion of the Conquest: the relation of the Anglo-Norman conquerors to England, and of England to them	20
3. Third obstacle to the Conquest: the condition imposed on the natives by the conquerors	34
SECOND EPOCH—From 1535 to 1690.	
CHAP. I. Religious wars	41
Sect. 1. How, when England became Protestant, it must have desired that Ireland should become so likewise	43

2. Of the causes that prevented Ireland from becoming Protestant	46
3. How England rendered Ireland Protestant—Protestant Colonisation—Elizabeth and James I.	55
4. Protestant Colonisation—Charles I.	61
5. Civil War—the Republic—Cromwell	66
6. The Restoration of Charles II.	85
THIRD EPOCH—From 1688 to 1755.	
CHAP. I. Legal Persecution	100
CHAP. II. The Penal Laws	115
Special character of the penal laws	121
Another special character of the penal laws	135
Legal persecution beyond the limits of law	137
Persecutions continued when passions ceased	142
Which of the penal laws were executed, which not	145
The Whiteboys	149
FOURTH EPOCH—From 1776 to 1829.	
Revival and enfranchisement of Ireland	166
CHAP. I. Effects of American Independence on Ireland	169
Sect. 1. First Reform of the Penal Laws, 1778	174
2. Second Effect of American Independence on Ireland, (1778 to 1779.) The Irish Volunteers	175
3. Independence of the Irish Parliament	181
4. Legal Consequences of the Declaration of Irish Independence	183
5. Abolition of certain Penal Laws. Consequences of the Declaration of Parliamentary Independence	194
6. Continuation of the Volunteer Movement. Convention of 1783	197
7. Corruption of the Irish Parliament	200
8. Is a servile Parliament of any use?	209
CHAP. II. The French Revolution—Its Effects in Ireland	217
Sect. 1. 1789	ib.
2.—Other Effects of the French Revolution. Abolition of Penal Laws	227
3.—Other consequences of the French Revolution.—Reaction	228

4. French Invasion of Ireland. Insurrection of 1798	232
Consequences of the Insurrection of 1798. The Union	240
Constitutional and Political Effect of the Union	243
CHAP. III. Catholic Emancipation in 1829	245

IRELAND, SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND RELIGIOUS.

CHAP. I. External appearance of Ireland. Misery of its Inhabitants	249
CHAP. II. A bad Aristocracy is the primary cause of all the evils of Ireland.—The faults of this Aristocracy are, that it is English and Protestant	276
Sect. 1. Civil Consequences	287
Subsect. 1. Extreme misery of the farmers—Accumulation of the population on the soil—Absenteeism—Middlemen — Rack-rents—Want of sympathy between land and tenant	ib.
Subsect. 2. Competition for land — Whiteboyism — Social evils—Inutility of coercive measures —Terror in the country—Disappearance of landlords and capital	297
Sect. 2. Political consequences	313
Subsect. 1. The State	317
Hatred of the people to the Laws	329
A public accuser wanting in Ireland	330
Unanimity of the jury in Ireland	333
Legal functionaries peculiar to Ireland	335
Subsect. 2. The county	338
3. Municipal corporations	345
4. The parish	350
Judicial authority	359

CHAPTER II.

A BAD ARISTOCRACY IS THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF ALL THE EVILS OF IRELAND.—THE FAULTS OF THIS ARISTOCRACY ARE, THAT IT IS ENGLISH AND PROTESTANT.

We have just seen how wretched is the condition of Ireland. The first anxiety felt at the aspect of such misery is to discover its cause ; and this anxiety is the greater, because, in order to remedy an evil, it is necessary to know its origin and nature.

Let us begin, then, by declaring the cause of the ill ; we shall afterwards seek the remedy.

It is impossible to observe Ireland attentively, to study its history and its revolutions, to consider its habits, and analyse its laws, without recognising that its misfortunes, to which so many sad accidents and fatal circumstances have contributed, had, and still have, one principal cause,—a cause primary, permanent, radical, which predominates over all others,—and this cause is a *bad aristocracy*.

All aristocracies founded on conquest and on

inequality, doubtless contain many inherent vices, but all do not possess the same, nor in equal number.

Suppose conquerors, who, after the first convulsions of the conquest, were fast endeavouring to efface the memory of it, by mingling with the conquered people, assuming their language, adopting a portion of their habits, appropriating to themselves most of their laws, and practising the same forms of religious worship; suppose that these conquerors, formed into a feudal society, having to struggle against powerful and tyrannical kings, sought an auxiliary in the conquered population; and that afterwards, united by the bonds of mutual interest, the conquerors and conquered blended their cause in struggling against the common enemy; suppose that these struggles lasted during several centuries, and that the lords in their quarrels with the kings never failed to make stipulations in favour of the rights of the people whenever they conquered privileges for themselves; finally, suppose that these conquerors, after having thrown the violence of the conquest into oblivion by a rapid fusion with the vanquished, continually laboured to redeem the injustice of their privileges by the benefits of patronage; that, superior in rank, wealth, and political power, they incessantly showed themselves equally superior in talents and virtue; that

taking in hand the affairs of the people, they mingled in all their assemblies, discussed all their interests, directed all their enterprises, sacrificed half their revenues to banish poverty from their domains, gave instruction to one, capital to another, enlightened, charitable, and benevolent support to all;—that, placed at the head of a commercial society, they admirably comprehended genius and its requirements, gave it, with the freedom of industry, all the civil and political liberties which are the soul of that freedom; and in order to procure for that society a magnificent destiny, they opened for it the markets of the entire world, established for it flourishing colonies, founded for it colossal empires in India, rendered its vessels sovereign on every sea, and made the nations of the earth its tributaries; and that, finally, after having opened all the paths of fortune to commercial industry, these same men, throwing down the barrier which separated them from the *prolétaire*, should say to the latter, “Get rich, and you may become a lord:” without doubt, such an aristocracy may conceal within itself many germs of oppression, and more than one principle of ruin; still it is easy to comprehend how such an aristocracy may for a long time maintain itself in strength and prosperity, and that even succeeding to a conquest, and charged with all the injustice of feudal pri-

vilege, it may give to the country it holds under its sway the illusion, if not the absolute reality, of a just and national government. It is easy to conceive the long and brilliant rule of the English aristocracy.

Suppose, on the contrary, conquerors who, instead of arresting the violent outrages of conquest, should lend all their efforts to the perpetuation of them—should open a hundred times the wounds of the conquered country—instead of uniting with the vanquished, should force them to keep separate—refuse to adopt their laws or impart their own—suppose this conquering race to preserve its language, its habits, and to erect an insurmountable barrier between itself and its subjects, by declaring it a kind of high treason to celebrate a marriage between the descendants of the victors and the offspring of the vanquished; suppose that having been thus constituted in the face of the conquered people, as a faction distinct by race and power, the conquerors are still further separated by a deeper cause, difference of religion; that not content with having deprived a people of national existence, they should endeavour to wrest from it its creed;—that having spent centuries in despoiling it of its political independence, they should pass a second series of centuries in disputing its religious faith; suppose that these conquerors, political tyrants, despising the conquered

nation because of its race, hating it because of its creed, should be placed in such an extraordinary position that it has no interest in the protection of the people, and no peril in their oppression;—it may well be conceived, that an aristocracy composed of such elements could only produce selfishness, violence, and injustice on one side—hatred, resistance, degradation, and misery on the other. Such is the picture of the aristocracy of Ireland.

The English aristocracy, clever and national as it is, would not perhaps have been able to maintain itself, if, while it concealed its defects by splendid virtues, it had not been protected by fortunate accidents.

Subject like all aristocracies, whose principle is privilege to employ its strength for the promotion of selfish interests, it has carried to excess the resources by which it is supported, and disproportionately concentrated in its hands the property of the soil, which has become the monopoly of a very small number; the landed proprietors of England form so small a minority compared to the non-proprietors, that landed property might be placed in peril, if it were a desirable object in the eyes of the people.

But, by a fortunate event rather than any result of wise policy, the soil of England has not hitherto excited the envy of the lower classes; the English people leaves its aristocracy the monopoly of

the land, so long as it resigns to them the monopoly of industry. The immense estates of a peer excite no unpleasant feeling in the mind of a merchant to whom the commerce of the whole world presents an unlimited arena, and who thinks that if he makes a great fortune, he may perhaps some day obtain the estates of a lord with the title and honours.

The English agriculturist cares little about a political system whose effect is to drive the peasantry from the country into the towns, when this labourer, removed from the soil, finds in the factory equally regular work, and much better pay. This, we must confess, is the great guarantee of the English aristocracy, a frail and feeble guarantee, which will only last so long as English industry will supply the world with its products.

The Irish aristocracy, full of defects from which that of England is free, far from being aided like it by favourable circumstances, has to struggle against pernicious accidents.

It is a fatal chance for the Irish aristocracy that has placed Ireland in such close proximity to England; for this aristocracy has never ceased to be English in heart and almost in interest. Here is the cause why the aristocracy has always resided, and at the present day resides, more in England than in Ireland; and this material fact, which most frequently divides it from the people subjected to its

sway, is in its case the source of the evil most fatal to every aristocracy, which really exists only on the condition of governing. It is common to hear all the evils of Ireland attributed to absenteeism, but this is to mistake a consequence of the evil for the evil itself. The aristocracy of Ireland is not bad because it is absentee; it is absentee because it is bad, because nothing attaches it to the country, because it is retained there by no sympathy. Why should it, loving neither the country nor the people, remain in Ireland, when it has England near, inviting it by the charms of more elegant and refined society, which attract it back to its original country?

In general, every aristocracy contains within itself the corrective which tempers, if it does not arrest, its aberrations and its selfishness. It usually happens, that the very class which does not love the people fears them, or at least has need of them; it then performs from calculation what it would not do from sympathy. It does not oppress too far, through fear of revolt; it spares the national strength from which it derives profit; it may even happen that it appears generous when it is only clear-sighted and interested.

The Irish aristocracy has always had the misfortune of fearing nothing, and hoping nothing, from the people subject to its yoke; supported by Eng-

land, whose soldiers have always been placed at its disposal, it has been enabled to give itself up to tyranny without reserve: the groans, the complaints, the menaces of the people have never tempered its oppressions, because popular clamour had for it no terrors. Did insurrections break forth in Ireland? The aristocracy of the country never stirred; it was English artillery that subdued the insurgents; and when everything was restored to order, the aristocracy continued to receive the revenue of its lands as before.

The Irish aristocracy has exercised an empire of which no other country furnishes an example; during six centuries it has reigned in Ireland, under the authority of England, which abandoned to that body half the advantages of its dominion, and spared it all the expense. Furnished with rights, privileges, and constitutional guarantees, it has employed all these instruments of freedom to practise oppression; Ireland has thus been constantly the prey of two tyrannies, the more dangerous as they mutually protected each other. The Irish aristocracy, regarding itself as the agent of England, for that reason granted itself absolution for all its excesses and all its personal injustice; and England, whose rights this aristocracy exercised, was contented to throw upon that body the blame of any abuse of its power.

There are few countries in which the governors have not an interest, greater or less, in inducing the people subject to their laws to cultivate the arts of industry and commerce. Of what use, in fact, would large revenues be to the rich man, unless they served to obtain the objects fit to render his life pleasant and comfortable? And how could he procure them if the people did not work? But it is an additional fatality of the Irish aristocracy that it is abundantly supplied with all the most precious productions of art and commerce, though no industrial employment exists in Ireland; it has ready to its hand the products of English industry to satisfy its wants and caprices, as well as armed regiments to ensure the payment of its rents. In order to possess comfort and elegance, it has no need of exciting the people to industrial labour. Commerce and industry are, nevertheless, the means by which the lower classes may escape from their misery. Thus, the people of Ireland, to whom the land is inaccessible, see in the hands of the aristocracy an immense privilege for which they possess no equivalent. Thus the aristocracy of Ireland, deficient in all the primary bases on which that of England rests, is also deprived of that condition of existence without which probably the English aristocracy could not sustain itself. It is immovable and closed. As a principle, its ranks

are open to all, but, in fact, access to them is nearly impossible; to enter them, it is necessary to become rich; but what means are there of becoming rich in a country where commerce and industry are dead? So that this aristocracy, motionless in its wealth, living on the life of others, has for its support a population also motionless in its misery: in Ireland, poverty is a caste. Finally, this aristocracy, attached by no natural sentiment to the people, has the misfortune to be further removed from it by difference of creed.

Religious sympathy is, beyond contradiction, the most powerful tie that unites men together; it has not only the power of bringing nations together, but, what is still more difficult, of mingling classes and ranks, raising the most humble to the level of the most proud, mingling the rich and the poor; it is religion that invests alms with the dignity of christian charity, and which, stripping the benefit of its pride, renders the bestower and the recipient both equal. But, in the absence of religious sympathy, what is there to unite the rich and the poor, the Englishman and the Irishman, the race of the conquerors and that of the vanquished? What power shall bring them together when religion herself separates them? And in a country where all the laws are made against the poor for the profit of the rich, what will be the result if religion, instead

of checking the powerful, actually fortifies it, and, instead of supporting the feeble, crushes him to the earth?

The Irish aristocracy has two inherent vices, which include all others; it is *English* by origin, and has never ceased to be thus alien: it became *Protestant*, and has had to govern a people that remained Catholic.

These two vices contain the principle of all the evils of Ireland; in them are the key to all its miseries, and all its embarrassments: if this starting point be attentively considered, all the extraordinary circumstances, whose causes will be vainly sought elsewhere, will be found to flow from it as natural consequences. These consequences are of three sorts; the first, which we may call civil, because they relate to habits and manners; the second political, because they concern institutions; the third religious, because they arise from difference of creeds. The first more especially affect the relations between rich and poor, between landlord and tenant; the second, the reciprocal relations between the governors and the governed; and the third, the mutual position of Catholics and Protestants.