

Irish culture, on the poets, historians and brehons, they who "by their Irish gifts and minstrelry provoked the people to an Irish order." Similarly the schools, that had won for Europe the basis of much of its culture and the new beginnings of much of its learning, were sought out and uprooted. Not only they themselves, but their manuscripts were marked for extirpation. "The English burned," said Lynch, "with savage rage for the annihilation of our Irish documents," in the same campaign that sought to pluck away "the evil education and instruction of children by schoolmasters in Ireland." There is a lament\* entitled *The Empty School*, where one of the schoolmasters so ruined gives his grief a characteristic and poignant expression.

"Hard is their toil when men of learning find not the bright-threaded artistry of illustrious scholars, to whom belonged the mystic import of words.

"Woe to the quarter whence came their slackness in meeting together! The cause of the dispersion of the schools is that the Gaels of Macha are in bondage."

Thus the provisions of the Statute of Kilkenny, inoperative through many centuries, began to find themselves coming into effect because of the steady malignity of those who were interested in extinguishing all that was fair and desirable in the nation. The trade was being slowly ruined; the learning starved; and the culture despoiled. The weaver at the loom, the tradesman with his commerce, the scholar at his books, the historian at his manuscripts, the brehon administering the equity of an old and intricately devised law on a hilltop in the presence of a confirming people, and the poet with his poems that were the result of many years' study and discipline: all were broken, ostensibly in the name of government, but truly by shameless avarice, and the hatred with which the oppressor inevitably hates the victim whom chance has placed in his power.

But these things were twined in with the polity of the people; and it was not easy utterly to break them. Though no Irishman was allowed to open a school, keep or hear a poet, or submit to a brehon, yet it was not easy to destroy these things root and

\* See *The Irish Review* for January, 1912, where the poem is given, with a translation by Osborn Bergin.

branch as it was hoped. The polity itself first would have to be destroyed. Even as the culture lay before the prosperity, so the organization lay before the culture; and it would be necessary to uproot the organization before the culture could perish, since, in the principle and memory of things, the polity nurtured the culture. And so was born that "suppression of the native race" which, says Lecky, "was carried out with a ferocity which surpassed that of Alva in the Netherlands and has seldom been exceeded in the pages of history."

The first credit of this policy must be given to Queen Mary of tender memory. Yet the Pale administrators, in their attempt merely to subjugate rather than govern the people, had for many years advocated the policy that was now adopted. They had continually, in the course of this subjugation, been compelled to realize how unbreakable the nation was, so long as it was framed in its system of tribes and sustained by its evidences of culture. It was so not only in general strategy—in the complicated texture that made victories merely local affairs, soon remedied; it was not less so in the particular details. For instance, if a chief were defeated, his victor would formally depose him and put another in his place. But this called out a fury of resentment that it was plain the Crown officials could not understand: and which, therefore, they considered as original sin. Yet the matter was exceedingly simple. The Crown, interpreting another nation in terms of its own usage, had conceived of a chieftain's lands as belonging to him, which, for some misdemeanor, it took from him and gave to another. But they did not belong to him: they were the people's possession. And his chiefdom, with its mensal lands, lay at the election of the people. Consequently the whole tribe (the nine-tenths that had not been in the war together with the one-tenth that had) stood fiercely out at once against the arbitrary nomination of a chief. It stood in defence of its age-long proprietary. And it stood, too, in defence of law and order, an old law and an excellent order, against those who were acting lawlessly. So that victories became not only local affairs: even as local affairs it was difficult to wrest permanent advantage from them.

Therefore, now at the bidding of the Crown, oppression

was turned to repression, and repression in its turn became merciless extermination. The people were not only to have injurious regulations put against them; they were not only to be considered as seditious in struggling against such regulations; but they themselves were to be rooted out of the soil, driven from their ancient proprietaries, and left to starve in waste-lands or on the mountains. Incoming adventurers, called undertakers, were then granted the lands so cleared, with the condition that they should "plant" them with colonists brought in from England.

It was not to be supposed that the owners of the soil would make this supplanting quite an easy matter—however much their natural defence might call down on them the epithet of rebels in some Lord Deputy's despatch. But their very resistance was overcome, in many cases, by methods as debauched as the system of plantations itself. In one instance the chiefs were invited to a conference, and urged to bring all their tribesmen with them. When they arrived and took their place for the conference, soldiers surrounded them, firing on them till all were killed. In another case Essex, having accepted the hospitality of Brian O'Neil, went with soldiers, who, as the company sat at meat, surrounded the place and slew all that were there. Torture was freely resorted to. Soldiers went everywhere, and, since it was to be extermination, they did not stay their swords or pikes at women or children. And when, during this time, a man like Shane O'Neill arose, the Lord Deputy Sidney (with Elizabeth's connivance, as Sidney's own despatches and subsequent words make evident) after several futile attempts secretly had him assassinated.

Succeeding to Ireland's period of renewed prosperity, these things fell on her and broke her in all places. It cannot be denied they were an effectual method of severing that connection with her past, that continuity with it, that was so earnestly desired by the incomers. The Meath O'Conors, the O'Moores, the O'Kellys, O'Dowlings and O'Lalors, had for centuries possessed the tribe-lands of Leix and Offaly, and round about Kildare. Many were killed, as already said; and the others were driven to starve on the bogs and waste places. In Munster, not only were the tribe-lands so despoiled, but the miserable

fugitives themselves were hunted out and destroyed. The Lord President of Munster declared that his soldiers "burnt all the houses and corn, taking great prizes—and harassing the country killed all mankind that were found therein"; and proceeding on their journey, again "did the like, not leaving behind them man or beast, corn or cattle, except such as had been conveyed into earth." Famine itself was turned to as a means to the desired end; for as the gentle Spenser was careful to explain, if such methods were sufficiently employed the people "will soon be compelled to devour each other." In Munster in six months over thirty thousand people starved to death, besides those that fell by the sword; and, as Lecky puts it, "no spectacle was more frequent in the ditches of the towns, and especially of the wasted counties, than to see multitudes of the poor people dead with their mouths all colored green with eating nettles, docks, and all things they could find above ground."

From Mary's reign to the days of William III, plantations, on the one hand, and extermination, on the other, continued almost without intermission. During the eleven years of Cromwell's wars in Ireland it was computed that 616,000 persons were destroyed out of a population of 1,466,000. It was he who was responsible for the plantation of Ulster; in fact, he sought to drive the Irish completely out of the provinces of Ulster, Leinster and Munster, confining them to Connacht. He was not successful. The incomers required assistance in the cultivation of the soil, and the native owners of the soil continued in large numbers, in far larger numbers than the new colonists, throughout the interdicted areas. It was a plan impossible to execute. The way in which the people of Ulster, where the plantations had been most successful, rose to the aid of the Stuarts, in the hope that the Stuarts in turn would ameliorate their lot, is sufficient to prove how very far the plan failed of its intention. Yet such was the intention.

While, however, it was not possible to exterminate the people, or even to reduce them so that the colonists could maintain their own ascendancy even in the most successful areas, the result in the country was its final ruin. Both under her own rulers and under the English Crown she had proved her capacity to win

to a prosperity that was the result of a national entity: not a sporadic outgrowth but a natural achievement: and now this was utterly destroyed. It seemed, too, that the constituents of that prosperity were also destroyed; for the blow, as we have seen, had always fallen, designedly fallen, on the national characteristics. And this in a measure was true; though only in a measure, for Celtic memory is an unusually tenacious thing.

Yet out of the troubles of the past more troubles were born for the future. Seeking to remedy their evils, deluded by fair promises, the people espoused the cause of the Stuarts, and so were drawn into complications that were truly outside the national orbit. It mattered nothing to Ireland if Stuarts from France or princes from Holland were chosen to fill an English throne. The only thing that concerned her was that she should have peace from vicious legislation, from vindictive injuries, and be permitted, as best she might, to give her wounds time to heal. In that case, there is little reason to doubt that the memory of her ancient distinctions would work themselves again into a constructive polity. In spite of the religious difference that now seemed to give an entirely new complexion to the two races living side by side in the country, the newcomer would again have been caught into the national life, as so often in the past. And this peace, based on a more intelligent understanding and a better will, the Stuarts, with their quick perception for a position of intrigue, only too glibly led her to expect. In return for which, she espoused their cause, though they were to her little more than a rumor.

Yet, in spite of all, for some time it seemed as though Ireland was to win by her national self what she had lost in war, as she had ever done. Indeed, the early days of the eighteenth century have in many ways a remarkable resemblance to the days succeeding the Norman invasions; and were, like them, the clue for the repressions that followed. Cromwell's Ironsides married Irishwomen; and their children scarcely knew a word of English. The very stalwarts with which William had won the battle of the Boyne were, within seven years, Roman Catholics living in amity with the people. Their descendants were some of the first to rise up in indignation against the senseless vindictiveness

of the future. But even as the Pale in olden times had regarded the submergence of one nationality in another with bitter anger, so now the Garrison viewed the same movement with the same spirit and desire for vengeance. In other words, even as one led to the Statute of Kilkenny, so the other led to the Penal Code.

The religious character of this Code has been over-emphasized. In spite of the fact that it seemed purely a religious document, it was, in truth, far more an instrument for the wounding of national life than for the achievement of religious conformity. When, for example, it was decreed that the law of primogeniture should prevail only with Protestants, Catholic moneys being distributed in equal portions to his children whatever the testator might have desired, it is not difficult to see how this would naturally tend to maintain the Garrison ascendancy, and so cause the national life to sink in value. The intention may be seen more clearly, especially in the light of the past, in the provisions whereby Irish education, or any education other than English, was forbidden; or when Catholics were debarred from holding any real estate—whereupon, be it said, their Protestant neighbors often came to their assistance, holding their lands nominally on their behalf. Even when prices were offered for information against priests, when they were forbidden to exercise their office, or when the Garrison Privy Council desired to have unregistered priests castrated (at which the authorities in London thought it well to cry a halt)—the intention was much the same. For in the zeal of the people for learning the priests held hedgerow schools all over the country, in waste and secret places; even as, by the very function of their office, they provided centres for the meetings of the national units. The Penal Code is usually spoken of as an oppressive measure, whereas, if the truth be told, it was far more repressive than oppressive in its intention. And the fact that its intention was repressive is a tacit testimony to the vigor with which the national life still flowed through the wounded national frame. A more open testimony may perhaps be found in the statement made by a Protestant Archbishop that, despite the fiercest persecutions, the driftage from the Protestant to the Catholic camp was far greater than from the Catholic to the Protestant; since by the very will

of the Ascendency, religion had become a badge, as it need never have become, for national entities.

Not only the intention, but the very course of the old repressions began to repeat itself. Famine after famine laid waste the country. In one winter it was said that nearly half a million died from hunger. In all parts of the country it was the same; and the same terrible scenes that were the result of the plantations were again to be witnessed, only, if possible, in a darker form.

It is a terrible tale, as senseless as it is debauched. From their very misery the people were driven to revolt; and they were crushed without mercy, and with every brutality, immediately they did so revolt. One fails to find a single circumstance throughout the continued persecution in alleviation of the crime it meant. Its results were not less deadly on those in whose interests the repression ostensibly was prosecuted than on those against whom it was carried. It would probably be difficult to find a more thoroughly debauched race of men than the squirearchy of that time. As Henry Grattan declared, "The poor were struck out of the protection of the law, the rich out of its penalties"; and if the result on the former was unexampled misery, the result on the latter was an unparalleled profligacy. Absenteeism became prevalent; and worse even than the dissolute squirearchy were the questionable agents who took their place. Indeed, to such a state was the country reduced that the Protestants themselves began to form a main part of the stream of emigration; and it was they who, from Ulster, originated and led the insurrection of the United Irishmen. And when that insurrection was first spoiled of its force by the apple of discord being thrown into it in the shape of religious bigotry, and finally crushed, scenes were witnessed not to be exceeded in the most violent outrages of the French Revolution.

This was the immediate prelude to the Act of the Union. The corruption and chicanery with which that act was passed through the Irish Parliament are a small matter beside the centuries of repression that led towards it. It is true that the Parliament had never played a part in the true life of the nation. The national life expressed itself in ways that have already been



seen; while the Parliament had been the expression of the Pale and Garrison, in their activities either against the major authorities in London or against the life of the people over whom they sought to maintain an ascendancy. Yet it stood as a kind of a symbol: the more truly so as the oppression immediately preceding the Union had thrown the two races somewhat together: and its abolition signified the logical bent of a policy that had ruthlessly been prosecuted since the day when Henry II came over to claim the fruits of Strongbow's personal enterprise.

It might well be asked what remained, at the end of these centuries of repression and hatred, of that polity in which the national life had once expressed itself, which in its turn flowered into a distinction that won honor in all lands within the extended reach of its influence. To pick some characteristic examples of that polity: what became of the zest for learning; the instinct for culture; the honor accorded to the poet; the poet himself, the historian and the seanchaidhe; the Brehon system of laws, of customs and institutions; the tribal life? It was scarcely to be expected that many vestiges of these remained. Vindictiveness had taken too particular a care for that. It was scarcely even to be expected that the national memory would hold a very concise and well-ordered picture of what once had been. But a national instinct cannot deny itself. What it once expressed it may express again; and the dim memory of an earlier expression cannot help but give an especial poignancy to that instinct. At least, in examining Ireland to-day, as we have said, its acutest problems fail to be understood, as many of its most interesting experiments lack appreciation, without a knowledge of how they carry forward the memory of things that have been. For the roots of the present, there particularly, as everywhere, are fixed firmly in the past.



## THE LEGAL MINIMUM WAGE

JAMES BOYLE

THE propaganda for a legal minimum wage now under way with so much enthusiasm suffers from too much dogmatism. It assumes that wherever the principle has been tried it has been successful, and it insists that the same remedy be applied everywhere, to all sorts and conditions of wage-earners.

It is a matter for rejoicing that political economists, enlightened and democratic Governments, and the courts, have come to recognize that human welfare must be taken into account in the relations between employers and employees. The new century has brought many changes, but none greater than the dissipation of the old doctrine of *laissez faire* and of "free and unrestricted contract."

The justification in England and America for the State's interference in the relations between capital and labor has been that there has not been equality of position in making bargains—that capital has had all the advantage and that labor was helpless. But since this doctrine has been accepted by our legislatures and courts, to a greater or less extent, there have been great changes going on in a directly contrary direction. These changes have affected not only labor in its ever-increasing ability through organization to meet capital on more equal terms, but have permeated even the supposedly soul-less corporations. The power of the strike—barbarous though it be—has within the last two years impressed itself forcibly in England; and, subject to the natural laws of economics, the participants have forever lifted themselves—to some extent, at least—out of their former deplorable condition. In the United States, trade agreements have practically ended conflicts between employers and employees in many branches of industry, and have secured at any rate approximately "living wages,"—to a greater degree, indeed, than has been done in Australia and New Zealand through the law. As to the capitalistic side, he must be a pessimist indeed, who does not recognize its changed attitude with respect to labor—all in