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## Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

### MISERY IN IRELAND.

In the *Month* for September the Rev. Father Clarke S.J., gives his fourth paper on his visit to Ireland. —He found the village of Lacken, on the Coast of Sligo, in a miserable state. The marks of hunger met his eyes on every side, and a few days before his arrival there a man had died of it. "He had been ill some days, and at length the priest was summoned, and at first could not discover the cause of his mysterious ailment, till at last out came the melancholy truth. 'The truth is, your reverence, that I have not had a mouthful of food for days.' The priest gave what he could, and the relieving officer was summoned; but a day or two passed before that functionary paid his visit to the starving family. When he came he told them he could do nothing without a doctor's certificate, and so another day passed, when at last the relief came, it was too late and the poor sufferer died from no other cause than sheer starvation." The people of the village were living, or trying to live, on seaweed and limpets.—The proximate cause, says the writer, was the failure of crops and fisheries, "but the ultimate cause was to be sought in the history of Ireland, in the method in which she had been governed, in the crushing effect of ruined commerce, and fisheries destroyed in the interests of strangers, in the occupants thrust in to possess her soil, and in the policy of Government by force." It is true that there is also misery to be found in England, but the writer's experience tells him that in those cases where it is chronic or oft-recurrent, it may be traced to vice or recklessness as its cause. In English towns at ordinary times there is a sufficiency of wages to be earned—as there is also in Dublin, and in some of the larger provincial towns. Exceptional instances there may indeed be, as, for example, the distress of 1861 in Lancashire—as an effect of the American war.—Cases of individual misfortune there will also be everywhere.—But the misery in Ireland is different; it is that of "dwellers in the country, persons honest, sober, respectable, industrious. It is the misery on the verge of which they always live in spite of all their efforts, and into which they are plunged whenever the yield of earth or sea falls below the average. It is the misery which results from their surrounding circumstances, not from themselves. It is the misery not of an individual here and there, but of a large portion of the community. It is the misery which results from injustice, either in the past or in the present, from a system of Government by repression, from the neglect or cruelty of those who have forgotten that, in every position of trust or authority, the good ruler rules for the interest of the ruled, and with a keen sense of the duty he owes them, of the mercy, gentleness, compassion, not to mention the justice he is bound to exercise towards them." It is with English villages the Irish villages are to be compared, and the question is why are the conditions so different.—If the cases of apparent cruelty were few there might be room to suspect the fault lay with the sufferer. "But when not an individual here and there, but the great bulk of the population of a district are in destitution or distress, when there are famishing by the roadside not one or two evil-doers among the tenants, but scores of men, women, and children driven forth by the angry fiat of the landlord, when loud in their protest against the wrongs inflicted upon the people are not demagogue or socialist seeking to stir up strife, but the messengers of peace, the friends of order, the obedient subjects of lawful authority, priests and nuns, and monks and bishops, when the visitor who has no interest on either side, almost always returns home full of indignant sympathy for the peoples' wrongs and the peoples' sufferings—then, indeed, it is time to probe the wound and seek for a permanent remedy of so wide-spread a malady."

### IRELAND'S HOPE.

BUT what are the hopes that the condition of things in Ireland may be remedied, or that concord may ever exist between Celt and Saxon? Professor Baldwin, in his evidence before the Richmond commission, says, ill-feeling in Ireland towards England was

never stronger than it now is, and in America it is still stronger, among the Irish and their descendants. And this ill-feeling has entered on a new phase.—Education, and the very concessions made to Ireland, have done much to bring about the change of tone in which Irish newspapers and patriots speak of England.—But the New Ireland that has sprung up across the seas has done more towards this change. The heart of the Irish emigrant abides in Ireland, but he carries his country and his faith with him into other lands, and every act of oppression or cruelty at Home has added to the strength of the nation abroad.—"While the whole population of the States has increased 190 per cent, within the last forty years, the Catholic population, who are for the most part Irish, have increased to the astonishing rate of 810 per cent. Since 1880 I am told that the increase has been more rapid still. The close compact organisation existing among them adds not a little to their numerical strength, and every year they are a more important element in the political world." The consciousness of this growing power has emboldened the Irish of late to meet the English face to face in a way never before attempted. "It is this dawning sense of strength, this glimpse of success drawing nigh in the struggle which they regarded as a hopeless one, that has made them fasten with the quick intelligent instinct of those who have an object to gain and intend to gain it, upon their present leader, and as friends and foes alike must confess, their most successful leader in the House of Commons." And the writer is convinced that Ireland will ultimately succeed in winning her cause.—She will win it as a reward for her heroic devotion to the cause of God. "Nor does it need any dragging in of the supernatural to foresee this. Apart from any but purely natural causes she must in the end prevail. The Celtic race cannot fail to outrun the Anglo-Saxon ere many centuries have run their course. They will do so by the very force of numbers. The average of grown children in an Irish family is five; that in an English about three. Allowing thirty years for a generation, it follows that in a hundred years the descendants of an Irish family will be three times more numerous than those of English parentage." As to the causes of the difference, the writer is not concerned with them generally. "But one difference there is which tends more and more to tell in favour of the Irish, and that is their superior morality. The vice so common, so almost universal in England and Protestant America, not only tends to degenerate the Anglo-Saxon race, but actually to reduce its numbers. The dislike to large families which is prevalent at present in the upper class in England necessarily diminishes the population. Other forms of evil if they do not materially affect the numbers, at least undermine alike the physical and moral strength of the nation."—The superiority of the Celt, moreover, in quick intelligence to the Anglo-Saxon is developing itself now that restrictions on education and the Protestant ascendancy no longer stand so fully in the way, and the rapid manner in which the Irish race are gaining on the English is a security for success.—In America their superior power of organisation is confessed even by their greatest enemies, and the Irish vote is becoming every day more important in American politics. Even in England they are awaking to the conviction that in at least a score of Parliamentary boroughs the Irish vote might determine the election." In England, however, it is argued that English supremacy will outlive the present generation and that posterity may provide for themselves.—But dynamite scares are but a presage of what is to come. English Ministers point to the calm prevailing in Ireland as a sign that their repressive policy has succeeded. The calm, nevertheless, precedes the storm. "Agitation in Ireland has probably only just begun. The words of the Irish members do but faintly echo the feelings of the nation, when, emboldened by success, they openly declare that the sooner it is recognised the better that a state of war exists between England and Ireland, and that the people would break out into open insurrection if the people had the power." The true nature of Irish ill-feeling towards England, however, is best seen in America. "It is not the wild declamation of a few revolutionaries or demagogues, it is the expression of the calm, deliberate opinion of the great mass of Irish and Irish-born citizens of America." Not only in godless newspapers will abuse of England be found, but in religious papers, side by side with sermons of Cardinal Manning's or Father Burke's. Recent emigrants have left Ireland with no kindlier feelings than those who went before