

COLONIES AT HOME;

Or, means for rendering the industrious Labourer independent of Parish Relief, and for providing for the poor Population of Ireland by the Cultivation of the Soil.

(Continued from Supplement of the 15th.)

THREE ACRE PLAN FOR THE MANUFACTURER, &c.

As the moral instruction of the children is an object of the highest importance, every cottager, in one of these villages, should be bound to pay sixpence per week towards an education fund. One of the cottagers should have a room capable of holding all the boys; another a room capable of holding all the girls, and a third, a room for an infant school. One of the cottagers should be a man capable of teaching the children reading, writing and arithmetic, and other branches of useful knowledge, as netting, knitting, &c. four hours a day, for which he should receive 10s. per week; this would leave him ample time to cultivate his farm. A female, competent to the care of the girl's school, should receive 8s. per week for teaching the girls, and a woman of kind disposition 7s. per week for taking care of the infant school.

The boys, when of suitable ages, should be employed on the farm; they would thus become skilled in the rotation of crops, and the most profitable modes of cultivation. I have seen a girl of seven years old, who had been taught to milk a cow, and could do it as well as a grown person.

Upon this system, not only may the linen weaver be provided for, but any of the handicraft men enumerated. Thus there might be a village of shoe makers, stocking weavers, or any other trade. In the case of a village, it would be very desirable to put it under the care of a Committee of benevolent persons in the neighbourhood.

The theoretical objection which has been made against providing for the comfort of the poor, that they would thereby increase to an inconvenient extent, is best answered by matters of fact. With regard to Ireland, it is an undeniable fact, that the increase of the poor population is the greatest of all precisely in those districts where the means of support are the least, where the ignorance is the greatest.

Where the poor are the most miserable, they multiply in the highest ratio, because there are no moral checks, and because they seem to consider that marriage and a family cannot sink them lower in the scale of wretchedness. On the other hand, a good education, and a respectable standing in society, are actually found to operate as a moral check to improvident marriages; and we may fairly calculate upon it, that a young man and woman, educated as the poor upon this plan would be educated, would be earnest to save money, and secure a situation, where they might live in the same comfortable and respectable manner as their parents had done before them. Instead, then, of encouraging emigration, at an enormous expense per head, rather let that money be applied to the establishment of Colonies at Home, and the increase of our national strength. If these plans were judiciously pursued, it would soon be found, that we have not one man, woman or child, too many in Ireland, and that the country is capable of supporting many times the amount of its present population in high comfort.

One of the miseries under which the poor in many parts of Ireland groan is, the enormous rents exacted by middle men for small patches of ground; but it is in the power of benevolent individuals, by adopting the plans now recommended, to rescue the poor from the grasp of middle men, and diffuse comfort and plenty where want and distress reigned before.

The necessity for having recourse to the cultivation of the soil, for the support of a poor population, has been felt more or less, by those who have properly considered the subject, in all ages, and in all countries; and if this little pamphlet possess any merit, it is in shewing by the results of actual experiments, and calculations founded upon them, that the thing is practicable, and fraught with the greatest advantages to all classes of society. The necessity for attempting something of the kind in Ireland was felt so strongly by James Martin Pike, and some other individuals in Dublin, that during the last year they formed a plan, "To purchase, in the first instance, an estate of considerable extent, and to sell to each of the occupying tenants the fee simple of his farm." The money for this purpose was to be raised in shares. The pamphlet they published on the occasion ought to be read by every friend to Ireland; it is intitled "Statement of some of the causes of the disturbances in Ireland, and of the miserable state of the peasantry, with a plan for commencing on sound principles an amelioration of their condition thereby removing the cause of the disturbances, and bringing the country into a state of peace and quietness." The facts therein detailed prove that the poor, in many instances, are grievously oppressed. They have properly exposed the unfeeling system now in operation, of demolishing the cabins of the peasant, and attempting to get rid of a "supposed surplus population, by driving them from the pure air of the country, into pestilential hovels in the suburbs of towns, to be cut off by sickness, and by want almost amounting to famine." On the other hand, some bright examples are given in the instances of John Leslie Foster, and Lord Headly, in the south west part of the county of Kerry, of the happy effects of employing capital to enable the poor to subsist by their own honest exertions in the cultivation of the soil. They have shewn

that the poor of Ireland know how to appreciate kind treatment,—that they are grateful for it, and that persons and property are perfectly secure in those parts which are under the protection and management of such enlightened individuals. Instead however of creating a number of small freeholders who might at a future period sub-divide their estates, so as not to afford a comfortable subsistence for a family, it will be much better to make them leaseholders, with conditions such as are stated.

In the number of the Quarterly Review for July, 1828, there is an excellent article intitled, "Ireland—its evils and their remedies," in which the inexpediency of promoting emigration, and the necessity for increased attention to the natural resources of that country are thus stated:—

"We would recommend those who have evinced so much laudable interest in the improvement of the condition of the Irish Poor, to turn their attention to the internal resources of that island; as they cannot find the means of transporting the unoccupied labourers of Ireland to the Colonies; we should advise them to try what can be done towards furnishing them with employment at home. Without referring to manufacturing or mechanical employments, it would really seem, that at present, at least, there is room enough for the profitable employment of every arm in Ireland on the better cultivation of the land which has been already reclaimed there: and supposing that this should not be the case, it offers for the employment of the peasantry an extent of waste, which cannot be very speedily exhausted; but the constant cry with respect to Ireland is the want of capital; it is not, we believe seriously denied by any one who has at all studied the subject, that Ireland contains a large extent of highly productive waste land, which would produce abundant subsistence for a more numerous population than she at present possesses; if the capital existed which is required for cultivating it. We would take the liberty of asking those who make this admission whether an emigrant can be settled, either in Canada, or New South Wales, without a considerable outlay; must not a provision be made for supporting him and his family, until the time arrives when he may expect to reap the fruit of his own exertions. We have never heard that the most favoured soil of the American continent produces spontaneously the food required for the subsistence of a newly-arrived colonist. Before the field can become fruitful—before wheat, barley, and oats can be reaped, the forest must be felled, the land must be cleared and tilled; so evident indeed is the necessity of an advance of capital in settling an emigrant in our transatlantic colonies, that voluminous and minute calculations have been made, of the expense which must be incurred on account of each family, and this cost has been estimated at £60. If it be necessary to call upon the public, to raise any capital, for the employment of the unoccupied Irish peasant, would it not be at least advisable to expend it in settling him on some portion of those five millions of acres of fertile land, which his own country now contains in a state of waste. £60 would be a little fortune to an Irish labourer; it would build a far more comfortable residence than he has been accustomed to occupy, and would supply him and his family with every article of subsistence which he considers necessary, until the bounty of nature pours into his lap the fruit of his own industry; if in any district of that island the population has from any causes, become redundant, let the excess be employed in reclaiming and cultivating the bogs and wastes of their native country, while any such bogs and wastes remain; the benefit which the labourer himself would derive from such a measure would be at least as great as any that could be expected from his deportation to the colonies, and the advantages which would accrue from it to the proprietor of the Irish soil, would be incalculably greater; the unoccupied labourers who now impoverish and weaken the community, would thus be rendered the source of wealth and strength; idleness would give place to industry, poverty and insubordination to abundance and tranquil contentment, and the productive powers of this highly fertile island, would be gradually and fully developed; so amply are the resources which Ireland presents, for the profitable employment of a rapidly increasing population, that ages must elapse before they are entirely exhausted; to do full justice to the natural resources of her soil, merely (to say nothing at present of her fisheries, manufactures, &c.) would require a vast addition to her present population; the supposition that—while one-third of the whole surface of that island, although capable of cultivation, is in a state of nature; and while moreover the land already occupied might, by the application of additional labour, be rendered incalculably more productive than it is at present—the removal of any portion of the existing labourers would benefit the Irish landholders, is surely a wild delusion. That the owners and occupiers of this imperfectly cultivated soil, that the proprietors of these reclaimable but uncultivated wastes should conceive, that any serious and permanent benefit could accrue to them from the removal of the only instruments by which their tillage might be improved, and their wastes rendered productive, appears to us, all but, incredible.

To those who allege that no profitable demand can be created for the labours of the neglected and unemployed population of Ireland, we recommend the perusal of the evidence taken before the Select Committee [of the House of Commons] on the employment of the poor in 1823, every page of that evidence shews, that with proper management and very little exertion on the part of the landowners, there is ample scope for an indefinite extension of the lin-