

## CHAPTER XI.

### DUMPING GARBAGE.

**T**HIS gulf-stream of humanity that is setting on our shores with increasing volume is in all respects worthy of more attention than we give it. In many ways one of the most important phenomena of our time, it is one which forcibly brings to the mind the fact that we are living under conditions which must soon begin to change rapidly. But there is one part of the immigration coming to us this year which is specially suggestive. A number of large steamers of the trans-Atlantic lines are calling, under contract with the British government, at small ports on the west coast of Ireland, filling up with men, women and children, whose passages are paid by their government, and then, ferrying them across the ocean, are dumping them on the wharves of New York and Boston with a few dollars apiece in their pockets to begin life in the New World.

The strength of a nation is in its men. It is its people that make a country great and strong, produce its wealth, and give it rank among other countries. Yet, here is a civilized and Christian government, or one that passes for such, shipping off its people, to be dumped upon another continent, as garbage is shipped off from New York to be dumped into the Atlantic Ocean. Nor are these people undesirable material for the making of a nation. Whatever they may sometimes become here, when cooped up

in tenement-houses and exposed to the corruption of our politics, and to the temptation of a life greatly differing from that to which they have been accustomed, they are in their own country, as any one who has been among them there can testify, a peaceable, industrious, and, in some important respects, a peculiarly moral people, who lack intellectual and political education, and the robust virtues that personal independence alone can give, simply because of the poverty to which they are condemned. Mr. Trevelyan, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, has declared in the House of Commons that they are physically and morally healthy, well capable of making a living, and yet the government of which he is a member is shipping them away at public expense as New York ships its garbage!

These people are well capable of making a living, Mr. Trevelyan says, yet if they remain at home they will be able to make only the poorest of poor livings in the best of times, and when seasons are not of the best, taxes must be raised and alms begged to keep them alive; and so as the cheapest way of getting rid of them, they are shipped away at public expense.

What is the reason of this? Why is it that people, in themselves well capable of making a living, cannot make a living for themselves in their own country? Simply that the natural, equal, and unalienable rights of man, with which, as asserted by our Declaration of Independence, these human beings have been endowed by their Creator, are denied them. The famine, the pauperism, the misgovernment and turbulence of Ireland, the bitter wrongs which keep aglow the fire of Irish "sedition," and the difficulties with regard to Ireland which perplex English statesmen, all spring from what the National Assembly of France, in 1789, declared to be the cause of all public misfortunes and corruptions of government—the contempt of human rights. The Irish peasant is

forced to starve, to beg, or to emigrate; he becomes in the eyes of those who rule him mere human garbage, to be shipped off and dumped anywhere, because, like the English peasant, who, after a slave's life, dies a pauper's death, his natural rights in his native soil are denied him; because his unalienable right to procure wealth by his own exertions and to retain it for his own uses is refused him.

The country from which these people are shipped—and the government-aided emigration is as nothing compared to the voluntary emigration—is abundantly capable of maintaining in comfort a very much larger population than it has ever had. There is no natural reason why in it people themselves capable of making a living should suffer want and starvation. The reason that they do is simply that they are denied natural opportunities for the employment of their labor, and that the laws permit others to extort from them the proceeds of such labor as they are permitted to do. Of these people who are now being sent across the Atlantic by the English government, and dumped on our wharves with a few dollars in their pockets, there are probably none of mature years who have not by their labor produced wealth enough not only to have supported them hitherto in a much higher degree of comfort than that in which they have lived, but to have enabled them to pay their own passage across the Atlantic, if they wanted to come, and to have given them on landing here a capital sufficient for a comfortable start. They are penniless only because they have been systematically robbed from the day of their birth to the day they left their native shores.

A year ago I traveled through that part of Ireland from which these government-aided emigrants come. What surprises an American at first, even in Connaught, is the apparent sparseness of population, and he wonders if this can indeed be that overpopulated Ireland of which he has

heard so much. There is plenty of good land, but on it are only fat beasts, and sheep so clean and white that you at first think that they must be washed and combed every morning. Once this soil was tilled and was populous, but now you will find only traces of ruined hamlets, and here and there the miserable hut of a herd, who lives in a way no Tierra del Fuegan could envy. For the "owners" of this land, who live in London and Paris, many of them never having seen their estates, find cattle more profitable than men, and so the men have been driven off. It is only when you reach the bog and the rocks, in the mountains and by the sea-shore, that you find a dense population. Here they are crowded together on land on which Nature never intended men to live. It is too poor for grazing, so the people who have been driven from the better land are allowed to live upon it—as long as they pay their rent. If it were not too pathetic, the patches they call fields would make you laugh. Originally the surface of the ground must have been about as susceptible of cultivation as the surface of Broadway. But at the cost of enormous labor the small stones have been picked off and piled up, though the great boulders remain, so that it is impossible to use a plow; and the surface of the bog has been cut away, and manured by seaweed brought from the shore on the backs of men and women, till it can be made to grow something.

For such patches of rock and bog—soil it could not be called, save by courtesy—which have been made to produce anything only by their unremitting toil—these people are compelled to pay their absentee landlords rents varying from £1 to £4 per acre, and then they must pay another rent for the seaweed, which the surf of the wild Atlantic throws upon the shore, before they are permitted to take it for manure, and another rent still for the bog from which they cut their turf. As a matter of

fact, these people have to pay more for the land than they can get out of the land. They are really forced to pay not merely for the use of the land and for the use of the ocean, but for the use of the air. Their rents are made up, and they manage to live in good times, by the few shillings earned by the women, who knit socks as they carry their creels to and from the market or sea-shore; by the earnings of the men, who go over to England every year to work as harvesters; or by remittances sent home by husbands or children who have managed to get to America. In spite of their painful industry the poverty of these people is appalling. In good times they just manage to keep above the starvation line. In bad times, when a blight strikes their potatoes, they must eat seaweed, or beg relief from the poor-rates, or from the charitable contributions of the world. When so rich as to have a few chickens or a pig, they no more think of eating them than Vanderbilt thinks of eating his \$50,000 trotters. They are sold to help pay the rent. In the loughs you may see fat salmon swimming in from the sea; but, if every one of them were marked by nature with the inscription, "Lord So-and-So, London, with the compliments of God Almighty," they could not be more out of the reach of these people. The best shops to be found in the villages will have for stock a few pounds of sugar and tea weighed out into ounce and half-ounce papers, a little flour, two or three red petticoats, a little coarse cloth, a few yards of flannel, and a few of cotton, some buttons and thread, a little pigtail tobacco, and, perhaps, a bottle or two of "the native" hid away in the ground some distance from the cabin, so that if the police do capture it the shopkeeper cannot be put in jail. For the Queen must live and the army must be supported, and the great distillers of Dublin and Belfast and Cork, who find such a comfortable monopoly in the excise, have churches to build and cathedrals

to renovate. So poor are these people, so little is there in their miserable cabins, that a sub-sheriff who, last year, superintended the eviction of near one hundred families in one place, declared that the effects of the whole lot were not worth £3.

But the landlords—ah! the landlords!—they live differently. Every now and again in traveling through this country you come across some landlord's palatial home mansion, its magnificent grounds inclosed with high walls. Pass inside these walls and it is almost like entering another world—wide stretches of rich velvety lawn, beds of bright flowers, noble avenues of arching trees, and a spacious mansion rich with every appointment of luxury, with its great stables, kennels, and appurtenances of every kind. But though they may have these luxurious home places, the large landlords, with few exceptions, live in London or Paris, or pass part of the year in the great cities and the rest in Switzerland or Italy or along the shores of the Mediterranean; and occasionally one of them takes a trip over here to see our new country, with its magnificent opportunities for investing in wild lands which will soon be as valuable as English or Irish estates. They do not have to work; their incomes come without work on their part—all they have to do is to spend. Some collect galleries of the most valuable paintings; some are fanciers of old books, and give fabulous prices for rare editions. Some of them gamble, some keep studs of racers and costly yachts, and some get rid of their money in ways worse than these. Even their agents, whose business it is to extort the rent from the Irishmen who do work, live luxuriously. But it all comes out of the earnings of just such people as are now being dumped on our wharves—out of their earnings, or out of what is sent them by relatives in America, or by charitable contributions.

It is to maintain such a system of robbery as this that Ireland is filled with policemen and troops and spies and

informers, and a people who might be an integral part of the British nation are made to that nation a difficulty, a weakness and a danger. Economically, the Irish landlords are of no more use than so many great, ravenous, destructive beasts—packs of wolves, herds of wild elephants, or such dragons as St. George is reported to have killed. They produce nothing; they only consume and destroy. And what they destroy is more even than what they consume. For, not merely is Ireland turned into a camp of military police and red-coated soldiery to hold down the people while they are robbed; but the wealth producers, stripped of capital by this robbery of their earnings, and condemned by it to poverty and ignorance, are unable to produce the wealth which they could and would produce did labor get its full earnings, and were wealth left to those who make it. Surely true statesmanship would suggest that if any one is to be shoveled out of a country it should be those who merely consume and destroy; not those who produce wealth.

But English statesmen think otherwise, and these surplus Irish men and women; these garbage Irish men and women and little children—surplus and garbage because the landlords of Ireland have no use for them, *are* shoveled out of their own country and dumped on our wharves. They have reached “the land of the free and the home of the brave” just in time for the Fourth of July, when they may hear the Declaration of Independence, with its ringing assertion of unalienable rights, read again in our annual national celebration.

Have they, then, escaped from the system which in their own country made them serfs and human garbage? Not at all. They have not even escaped the power of their old landlords to take from them the proceeds of their toil.

For we are not merely getting these surplus tenants of English, Scotch and Irish landlords—we are getting the landlords, too. Simultaneously with this emigration is

going on a movement which is making the landlords and monopolists of Great Britain owners of vast tracts of American soil. There is even now scarcely a large land-owning family in Great Britain that does not own even larger American estates, and American land is becoming with them a more and more favorite investment. These American estates of "their graces" and "my lords" are not as yet as valuable as their home estates, but the natural increase in our population, augmented by emigration, will soon make them so.

Every "surplus" Irishman, Englishman or Scotsman sent over here assists directly in sending up the value of land and the rent of land. The stimulation of emigration from the Old Country to this is a bright idea on the part of these landlords of two continents. They get rid of people whom, at home, in hard times, they might have to support in some sort of fashion, and lessen, as they think, the forces of disaffection, while at the same time they augment the value of their American estates.

It is not improbable that some of these evicted tenants may find themselves over here paying rent to the very same landlords to swell whose incomes they have so long toiled in their old country; but whether this be so or not, their mere coming here, by its effect in increasing the demand for land, helps to enable those landlords to compel some others of the people of the United States to give up to them a portion of their earnings in return for the privilege of living upon American soil. It is merely with this view, and for this purpose, that the landlords of the Old World are buying so much land in the New. They do not want it to live upon; they prefer to live in London or Paris, as many of the privileged classes of America are now learning to prefer to live. They do not want to work it; they do not propose to work at all. All they want with it is the power, which, as soon as our population



increases a little, its ownership will give, of demanding the earnings of other people. And under present conditions it is a matter, not of a generation or two, but of only a few years, before they will be able to draw from their American estates sums even greater than from their Irish estates. That is to say, they will virtually own more Americans than they now own Irishmen.

So far from these Irish immigrants having escaped from the system that has impoverished and pauperized the masses of the Irish people for the benefit of a few of their number, that system has really more unrestricted sway here than in Ireland. In spite of the fact that we read the Declaration of Independence every Fourth of July, make a great noise and have a great jubilation, that first of the unalienable rights with which every man is endowed by his Creator—the equal right to the use of the natural elements without which wealth cannot be produced, nor even life maintained—is no better acknowledged with us than it is in Ireland.

There is much said of "Irish landlordism," as though it were a peculiar kind of landlordism, or a peculiarly bad kind of landlordism. This is not so. Irish landlordism is in nothing worse than English landlordism, or Scotch landlordism, or American landlordism, nor are the Irish landlords harder than any similar class. Being generally men of education and culture, accustomed to an easy life they are, as a whole, less grasping toward their tenants than the farmers who rent of them are to the laborers to whom they sub-let. They regard the land as their own, that is all, and expect to get an income from it; and the agent who sends them the best income they naturally regard as the best agent.

Such popular Irish leaders as Mr. Parnell and Mr. Sullivan, when they come over here and make speeches, have a good deal to say about the "feudal landlordism" of

Ireland. This is all humbug—an attempt to convey the impression that Irish landlordism is something different from American landlordism, so that American landowners will not take offense, while Irish landowners are denounced. There is in Ireland nothing that can be called feudal landlordism. All the power which the Irish landlord has, all the tyranny which he exercises, springs from his ownership of the soil, from the legal recognition that it is *his* property. If landlordism in Ireland seems more hateful than in England, it is only because the industrial organization is more primitive, and there are fewer intermediaries between the man who is robbed and the man who gets the plunder. And if either Irish or English landlordism seems more hateful than the same system in America, it is only because this is a new country, not yet quite fenced in. But, as a matter of law, these “my lords” and “your graces,” who are now getting themselves far greater estates in the United States than they have in their own country, have more power as landlords here than there.

In Ireland, especially, the tendency of legislation for a series of years has been to restrain the power of the landlord in dealing with the tenant. In the United States he has in all its fullness the unrestricted power of doing as he pleases with his own. Rack-renting is with us the common, almost the exclusive, form of renting. There is no long process to be gone through with to secure an eviction, no serving notice upon the relieving officer of the district. The tenant whom the landlord wants to get rid of can be evicted with the minimum of cost and expense.

Says the *Tribune's* “Broadway Lounger” incidentally in his chatter:

Judge Gedney tells me that on the first of this month he signed no less than two hundred and fifty warrants of dispossession against poor tenants. His district includes many blocks of the most squalid

variety of tenement-houses, and he has fully as much unpleasant work of this kind as any of his judicial brethren. The first of May is, of course, the heaviest field-day of the year for such business, but there are generally at the beginning of every month at least one hundred warrants granted. And to those who fret about the minor miseries of life, no more wholesome cure could be administered than an enforced attendance in a district court on such occasions. The lowest depths of misery are sounded. Judge Gedney says, too, that in the worst cases the suffering is more generally caused by misfortune than by idleness or dissipation. A man gets a felon on his hand, which keeps him at home until his savings are gone and all his effects are in the pawnshop, and then his children fall sick or his wife dies, and the agent of the house, under instructions from the owner, who is perhaps in Europe enjoying himself, won't wait for the rent, and serves him with a summons.

Awhile ago, when it was bitter cold, I read in the papers an item telling how, in the city of Wilkesbarre, Pa., a woman and her three children were found one night huddled in a hogshead on a vacant lot, famished and almost frozen. The story was a simple one. The man, out of work, had tried to steal, and been sent to prison. Their rent unpaid, their landlord had evicted them, and as the only shelter they knew of, they had gone to the hogshead. In Ireland, bad as it is, the relieving officer would have had to be by to have offered them at least the shelter of the almshouse.

These Irish men and women who are being dumped on our wharves with two or three dollars in their pockets, do they find access to nature any freer here than there? Far out in the West, if they know where to go, and can get there, they may, for a little while yet; but though they may see even around New York plenty of unused land, they will find that it all belongs to somebody. Let them go to work at what they will, they must, here as there, give up some of their earnings for the privilege of working, and pay some other human creature for the privilege of living. On the whole their chances will be better here

than there, for this is yet a new country, and a century ago our settlements only fringed the eastern seaboard of a vast continent. But from the Atlantic to the Pacific we already have our human garbage, the volume of which some of this Irish human garbage will certainly go to swell. Wherever you go throughout the country the "tramp" is known; and in this metropolitan city there are already, it is stated by the Charity Organization Society, a quarter of a million people who live on alms! What, in a few years more, are we to do for a dumping-ground? Will it make our difficulty the less that our human garbage can vote?