

7
Connacht & Kerry,

UNDER THE

CONGESTED

DISTRICTS'

BOARD,

BY T. O'DONNELL, M.P.

KILLORGLIN, KERRY, 1903.

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CHAPTER 1.
INTRODUCTORY.

THE work done by the Congested Districts Board since its establishment eleven years ago is of a kind which all true friends of this country who are anxious to alleviate the lot of the Gael, should wish to see extended. The Board was established in 1891, with considerable powers, to deal with the undoubted poverty and congestion that prevailed in certain districts along the western and south-western sea-board of Ireland. Its income was derived, partly from Irish money, and partly from a small Parliamentary grant. The districts given over to its care were taken from counties along the sea-board, from Kerry to Donegal, every district being included, if the valuation per head of the population did not exceed £1 10s.; and on this principle, considerable portions of the following counties were scheduled as "Congested"—Cork, Kerry, Galway, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, and Donegal. It will be seen that these are the counties where the Gaels most do congregate; and it is a rather sad reflection for those of us who wish to see a nation, Irish in thought, in language and in ideals, to find that the Irish-speaking peasant from Kerry to Donegal has been forced to live for generations under conditoinis of poverty unknown, in what, by way of contrast, I must call the Anglicised parts of Ireland; and it is sadder still for us to find that, from those same counties, the emigration, every year, of the brave and brawny peasants, on whose muscle and mind, whose tongue and heart, our hopes are set, is immeasurably greater than from any other part of the country. When we remember that a population of 547,710 were forced to subsist on a valuation of £573,700, we can realise the poverty of the people and the necessity for adopting some means of preventing the perennial famines which threatened the inhabitants of those impoverished districts, either by transplanting the labourers and small farmers, who toiled with little result on the mountains and swamps, to the rich grazing lands from which their ancestors were driven years ago; by developing existing industries or establishing new ones, and so giving em-

ployment to the population. When we view the economic condition of Connacht, with its small, miserable holdings of marsh or bog, on the one hand, and its large ranches of untenanted fertile plains, on the other; when we see the peasant and his family vainly endeavouring to eke out a subsistence from the miserable patch of bog on which he is forced to live, and then see the hundreds of thousands of acres of fertile land almost going to waste, we are reminded of one of the saddest chapters in the history of our country; and, making all due allowance for the terrible conditions that existed at the time those large clearances were effected, we of the South cannot feel admiration for the courage or the spirit of those Connacht men who tamely submitted to be despoiled of property, which not alone was theirs, but was held by them in trust for the generations that were to come after them. Be that as it may, the great question of to-day is re-plantation. Of land there is sufficient to support in comfort double the present population. Everybody had hoped that, at the establishment of the C.D.B., this question of re-plantation would naturally suggest itself as the only effective and permanent means of getting rid of the poverty which prevailed. Without going minutely into the history of the working of the Board during the first half dozen years of its existence, it is, broadly speaking, correct to say, that little or nothing was done in this direction until the establishment of the U.I.L. by Mr. W. O'Brien, M.P., in 1898, though we are aware that a few members of the Board tried to impress on their colleagues the wisdom, the necessity and the statesmanship of such a line of conduct as I have indicated. Since that year, however, considerable progress has been made, and excellent work has been done, of which I desire to speak in terms of the highest praise. Estates have been purchased, houses built, grazing ranches striped and let to tenants, factories aided in Connacht to the fullest extent which the funds available would permit. Anyone who has seen the excellent work done in Connacht, and who wishes to see it extended, must desire to see the amount set apart for such work at least trebled, while the English Government, which cannot escape responsibility for the unnatural poverty which

grew under their fostering care, are morally bound, even if there were no financial balance to be refunded us, to find means to undo that for which they are undoubtedly responsible, and therefore our claims should be—treble the annual income of the Board, give it compulsory powers to acquire land where it chooses, and make it representative.

CHAPTER II.
POPULATION AND VALUATION OF WHOLE
C. D. B.

With a view to more thoroughly understand the large number of souls who are entrusted to the care of the C. D. B., and the difficulties which they must be under to find the barest necessaries, the following statistics will be interesting to the reader:—

	Populn.	Populn.	Valuation
Counties partly Congested.	1891	1901	
Donegal	107,501	104,146	£100,847
Leitrim	35,240	30,628	47,199
Galway	72,345	66,491	67,588
Mayo	139,903	129,329	129,964
Sligo	31,587	27,415	40,245
Roscommon	32,758	29,576	38,481
Cork	38,678	34,555	47,069
Kerry	89,698	80,297	102,367
	547,710	498,437	£573,760

In other words, the average valuation per head in 1891 was £1 1s., and in 1901, £1 3s. These figures speak eloquently of the poverty and congestion of the districts scheduled, and of the necessity for large statesmanlike measures so as to open up a field of employment and of hope for those of our countrymen who are thus compelled to waste valuable lives and spend much unremunerative energy in striving to keep body and soul together on the fruits of their wretched little plots.

Let me now endeavour to give, from the published reports of the Board, an estimate of the amounts annually spent in Kerry, and in the whole congested area during

the past 11 years.

	Total expend. of Board during 11 years under following heads.	Expenditure in Kerry during same period.
Purchase of estates,	£430,827	Nil.
Improvement of estates	150,464	„
Industrial schemes	41,250	} A few classes in lace and domestic training.
Parish Committees	12,835	
Marine Works	50,865	£13,623
Inland Works	61,987	4,190
Industrial loans	14,052	700
Agriuctural loans	5,195	£60
Technical Instruction	32,307	Unascertained,
Agricultural schemes	150,160	A few donkeys, hens, bees, &c
Total for above head	£951,942	£25,000 (A liberal estimate)
Total under all heads	£1,259,000	£25,000

From those figures it will appear that, in the principal and most beneficial work of the Board—the purchase of estates, their improvement and sub-division amongst farmers and labourers, industrial schemes and parish committees—nothing whatever has yet been done in Kerry, while hundreds of thousands have been expended in other parts. I have only given the main items of expenditure. The total outlay of the Board up to the 31st March, 1902, has been about $1\frac{1}{4}$ millions sterling, out of which, on the most liberal estimate, Kerry has not got more than £25,000, though morally and equitably entitled to ONE-SIXTH. Let me not be taken as even insinuating that too much has been spent on any district; rather, on the contrary, that a miserably mean and paltry sum— $1\frac{1}{4}$ millions in 11 years—has been grudgingly given to the most useful constructive work to which any Government could give its attention; and, further, that in the distribution of the amount given, there has been no system, no inquiry into, and comparison of, the needs of districts.

All honour to Dr. O'Donnell and Fr. O'Hara. All honour to the sturdy peasants for whom they fought,

and who unswervingly supported them, for the attention they have compelled the Board to bestow on them. The work of replantation, of improvement of the homes of the peasants, effected by the purchase and sub-division of large grazing ranches, and by the working of the Parish Committee system, is of such a character that it is inconceivable how any Government can be so niggardly in bestowing Irish money on a work of such great social and national importance. Fancy $1\frac{1}{4}$ millions—nearly half of which is given in loans—being spent, in 11 years on the whole province of Connacht, on Kerry and Donegal, in alleviating the distress and in striving to brighten the homes of those people, while, every year, our country pays to the British Exchequer over 3 millions sterling beyond what would be her due. When one reads the statistics I have given, showing the poverty and disgraceful housing of our poor, and (when we read) in the official reports of the Board, of the good work done with the limited resources at their disposal, one will ask, Why not spend $1\frac{1}{4}$ million sterling, not in 11 years, but in one year, in purchasing estates, in improving the housing of the poor, in starting and developing industries? This great question of the West of Ireland, of what might be called the agricultural shuns, is one which must receive very careful attention in any final settlement of the land question.

Let me give a few quotations from the official reports, showing what has been done in the improvement of estates and by the working of Parish Committees.

“PORT ROYAL ESTATE.

“Conditions under which tenants will get assistance for the erection or improvement of dwelling houses.

“2. Any tenant who has not received assistance for the improvement of his house or offices, and who puts up suitable offices on an approved site before July, will get iron to roof same to a value not exceeding £4, without charge.

3. Any tenant who erects a new dwelling house with thatched or slated roof, on an approved site, before next July, will get a free grant of £10 for same, either in money or materials.”

&c., &c.

The official report says of the working of Parish Committees:—

“No one can pass through a district in which these Committees have been at work without noticing on all sides the new bye-roads, extensive drains, and numerous small buildings with galvanised roofs, which attest the success of the scheme and show that a real awakening of energy and industry has commenced amongst the small farmers and cottagers.”

And further Mr. Doran, Chief Inspector, says:—
“The scheme, in my opinion, has been a marked success, not only from the amount of work done, which is great, but also from the much more far-reaching moral effects it has produced—a spirit of rivalry in cleanliness, in agricultural and domestic progress, is being stirred up in localities which have been almost impossible to get at in any way hitherto attempted or suggested.”

From these extracts will be seen some of the advantages which follow the purchase of estates by the Congested Districts Board. They have powers which the Land Commission has not. Not alone do they purchase estates and re-sell them to the tenants, making them peasant proprietors at considerably reduced rent, but they take a general survey, “take stock,” as it were, of the estate. If it is in need of draining, fencing, planting; if roads are required, if dwelling-houses and out-offices are poor, the Board come in and do all this work. If there is land held under the 11 months’ grazing system, they divide it amongst the small farmers and labourers. Everybody must admit that this is excellent work. Considering the position that many of our farmers in poor districts have been reduced to, it is essential that, for the first few years after purchase, they should be helped to place themselves in positions from which it will be possible afterwards for them to advance. The small farmer barely struggling to live will, it is true, be benefited by purchase in any shape or form; but how much more rapid would his advance be, how much greater his progress, if he at once got his feet on firm ground, if he started with even a very small share of capital, and in a home and surroundings which would make him feel he was a creature of God, a man, not a dumb animal.

£430,827 have been LOANED in the purchase of estates mainly in Connacht; £158,464 additional have been SPENT in improving those estates. In Kerry, though the Act constituting the Board gave them power to purchase up to the value of £162,853, not one penny has yet been spent in purchase, nor, as a consequence, on improvement. The greater part of the Dingle and Kenmare Unions, the whole of the Caherciveen Union, are "congested." If Lord Ventry, who owns a considerable amount of property in the Dingle Union, would offer some of his property to the C.D.B., perhaps we may be able to get the Board to turn their attention to Kerry; we may then replace apathy and dearth of employment by hope and remunerative work; we may get the tenant who at present, with an uncertain rent and a load of arrears, will not improve land or dwelling house, to take a thorough interest in tilling the land, in improving and beautifying the house which he knows would be his own and his children's for all time. Throughout the whole of his vast estate there is little or no improvement—the tenant living on from day to day in the hope of something turning up;—there is no employment whatever for the labourer; the land has practically got out of cultivation, and Nature's stores are, for the time being, closed to the people through the power given one man, the result being decay in town and country, wholesale emigration of the young workers, and poor-houses filled to overflowing. If Lord Ventry feels he should still continue to hold the power of keeping a whole side of a country unimproved and unprogressive, perhaps there may be found some other men amongst the landlord class in Kerry reasonable enough to allow the Board do for the people that which they themselves either cannot or will not do.

CHAPTER III. KERRY AND THE C. D. B.

It will be seen from the figures given in Chapter II. that Kerry has a population of 80,297 scheduled as "congested," out of a total of 498,437 for the whole of Ireland; or, in other words, Kerry has ONE-SIXTH of the population of the whole congested area of Ireland; and, therefore,

judging from this standard alone, we in Kerry should be entitled to ONE-SIXTH of the annual expenditure of the Board since its inception. The Board may, however, say, "We have, entrusted to our care, 498,437 souls, of whom—it is true—one-sixth are in Kerry, but we give assistance where there is greatest need, and we are, further, engaged in experimental work which, if successful, we mean to extend." With the latter plea I shall not deal further than to say that there should be some reasonable limit to the experimental period of the C. D. B., and there should now be shown an earnest desire to put into practice, immediately, the lessons which 11 years of experience should have taught, if we are not to see the bravest of our race still further reduced.

Let me turn now to the argument of giving support where it is most needed. I do not want to paint a harrowing picture of the misery which exists in the congested districts in Kerry, neither do I wish to put forward any miseracordiam appeal on their behalf. I shall rely entirely for my case on published reports and on census returns.

The average valuation per head of the population within the whole congested area of Ireland is £1 3s., and for the whole of congested Kerry it is £1 5s. Here, it is true, we are a little better than the average, but we shall soon see that whatever advantage there is, is more than counterbalanced by the very heavy taxes, for the support of the poor, which we have to bear in Kerry.

The following statistics illustrate this point:—

	Supported out of rates indoor and outdoor.		
Donegal,	1	in	151 of the population.
Leitrim	1	„	57 „
Galway	1	„	52 „
Mayo	1	„	58 „
Sligo	1	„	56 „
Roscommon	1	„	48 „
Kerry	1	„	35 „

Thus it will be seen that we are in a far worse condition than the worst part of Connacht. In fact, our

number of paupers is nearly double that of Mayo, and is four times that of Donegal. The figures give above represent, in each case, the whole Co., rich and poor, not the congested parts only.

Let me now turn to the question of the housing of our poor, where, I am sorry to say, the picture is as dark in Kerry as in any part of Mayo or Donegal. I shall only give figures relating to houses of one room, which room serves the purpose of kitchen, bedroom, dining room, parlour, and, perhaps, at times, stable, cow-house and piggery—all rolled into one. I shall give the number of such houses where, from 5 to 11 human beings have to live in each of those hovels:—

	Houses (one room).						
	5 per room	6	7	8	9	10	11
Donegal	395	314	224	144	65	39	20
Leitrim	35	25	12	4	5	0	1
Galways	206	185	121	107	48	25	13
Mayo	351	304	198	143	69	50	15
Sligo	110	64	41	28	17	8	2
Roscommon	66	62	33	19	13	8	3
Kerry	333	271	180	126	77	36	30

I shall weary my readers still further by comparing Kerry, Mayo and Donegal—three typical congested counties—basing my comparison on the relative number of holdings under £4 valuation, and the population inhabiting these holdings in the three counties. It is true that Glenties, in Donegal, and Swinford, in Mayo, have a larger number of such holdings than any union in Kerry; but the condition which must exist in Caheriveen, where 5,673 souls have to subsist on a valuation of £2,523—an average of 8s. 10d. per head;—or in Killarney, where 7,307 have to subsist on a valuation of £2,531—an average of 6s. 10d. per head—is not equalled in Glenties or in Swinford, the average for Swinford being 10s. and for Glenties, over 8s. These figures must appear startling to many, even in Kerry, who have never carefully studied the economic condition of our county, and they should show the most unthinking bigot that it is not even in Irish human nature—too tolerant and patient

though, in my opinion, it has always been—to struggle quietly and uncomplainingly under conditions of government which have brought about such an intolerable state of things, making living in Ireland impossible for the Irishman.

	No. of holdings		
	under £4 val.	Valuatn.	Popln.
KERRY.			
Caherciveen Union	1073	£2523	5673
Dingle Union	450	951	2514
Konmare Union	502	1310	2380
Killarney Union	1450	2531	7307
Listowel Union	1747	2879	8175
Tralee Union	1262	2121	6345
DONEGAL.			
Ballyshannon Union	415	1050	1269
Donegal Union	1716	3650	6876
Dunfanaghy Union	2246	3875	11186
Glenties Union	5493	10242	25186
MAYO.			
Ballina Union	1362	3491	6775
Ballinrobe Union	1365	3177	5681
Belmullet Union	1700	3571	9457
Castlebar Union	1799	4929	8340
Claremorris Union	2422	3776	6758
Swinford Union	4768	12003	24002

I shall only add one further argument to prove that Kerry, from the point of view of needs and necessity, is equally entitled to the attention and assistance of the Board with Mayo and Donegal; and in my opinion, in face of the neglect which has been shown us during 11 years, and of the necessity for remedial measures, which must be apparent to anyone who reads the statistics I have given, the Board is, in duty, bound to turn its special attention to Kerry for a few years to come, and to expend there, not one-sixth of its annual income, but such a sum as would repair the neglect of the past 11 years. The last comparison I shall institute shall deal with emigration, in which it will be seen that Kerry is immeasurably worse than Mayo or Donegal.

	Present population.	Emigrn. during 50 years ended 1901.
Donegal	195,149	201,665
Mayo	199,166	164,589
Kerry	165,726	211,642

From this it will be seen that, though our population is, and always has been, considerably lower than that of Donegal or Mayo, the number who left our county during the past fifty years is very much higher, and has reached the alarming number of almost a quarter of a million souls. It would be out of place here to elaborate the economic and national loss which such a terrible drain is to the country. Each emigrant was reared and educated in Ireland during its helpless years. This, taken at an average cost of £10 per annum, would mean £200 per emigrant, taking 20 years as the average age. At this estimate, which must be considered a low one, Kerry has lost, during the past 50 years, 40 millions sterling in rearing workers who will afterwards give their muscle and brain to build up American prosperity. Why wonder at the marvellous growth of American trade, of American prosperity and power, when the insane and barbarous policy of the English government of our country is placing at her disposal every year 40,000 of the bravest of our race, in the prime of life, full of vigour, of energy and of true Catholic honesty! America has resources almost inconceivable awaiting the hands of the worker. England's policy in Ireland places yearly at the disposal of America a capital sum of £8,000,000 sterling, to build up her trade and commerce, to win for civilization her vast prairies, and therefore has she grown from a population of 3 millions, at the time she shook off the English yoke a little over a century ago, to a population of nearly 80 millions to-day, with wealth untold, with boundless energy, and a foreign trade which in a few years will entirely eclipse that of Germany or England.

Can nothing be done to preserve this energy, this capital, for Ireland? Much though we love America, we shudder at seeing the old land deserted, the old home broken up, the old race scattered and destroyed. Had we a government having an interest in the people of our

country, this terrible economic leakage would be inquired into and remedied. Capitalists invest their money in the hope of a fair return. How willingly would an Irish parliament invest its money in saving those 211,000 Kerry emigrants, or their capitalised equivalent, 40 millions sterling, for Ireland, by giving technical training, by helping to start industries, and so find remunerative employment at home for a people as intelligent, as energetic and as noble as exist to-day!

I shall not pursue this argument further. I have, I think, conclusively proved that there exists sore and urgent need for large, I would almost say lavish, expenditure on the part of the C.D.B. amongst us in Kerry. The picture I have painted may be uninviting and repulsive. The tender sympathies and humanity of some of my readers may be shocked at thus thrusting out into the public gaze, perhaps for the delight, the ridicule and contempt of our governors, this sad condition of a people, who, even in their poverty, have a very high sense of pride and national honour, and who would loathe the idea of appearing as mendicants at England's door. I have, perhaps, rather ruthlessly dissected the economic conditions that prevail. My only excuse is that I have given facts, which, however unpleasant, are still true, and solely with the object of having public attention directed and suitable remedies applied.

CHAPTER IV.

LOCAL TAXATION CHARGES AND IMPERIAL GRANTS.

The Local Taxation (I.) Returns for the year 1900-01 issued last year, show a condition of affairs along the west coast of Ireland that should demand the immediate and serious attention of the Government. From Kerry to Donegal, where the people are least able to bear the burden of taxation, the rates for local purposes run to an enormously high figure; while in the midland and some counties of the North the amounts contributed for local purposes is almost insignificant. I give the case of a few counties typical of both classes:

Total County, Union and Dist.
charges on land per £ Val.

Total on other Heredita-
ments.

	s	d		s	d
Antrim	1	6		2	10
Armagh	2	0		3	6
MEATH					
Dunshaughlin	0	8		1	8
Ardee No. 2	1	6		2	6
Edenderry No 3	1	4		2	4
Kells	1	8		3	0
Meath	1	10		3	4
Trim	1	2		2	4
KERRY.					
Caherciveen	4	0		6	10
Dingle	3	6		6	4
Kenmare	4	0		6	10
Killarney	3	4		5	4
Listowel	4	2		6	8
Tralee	3	4		5	8
DONEGAL.					
Average	3	0	Average	5	1
MAYO.					
Ballina	4	8		7	2
Ballinrobe	3	10		6	0
Belmullet	8	2		12	10
Castlebar	4	4		6	8
Claremorris	4	1		6	5
Killala	5	6		8	0
Swinford	4	6		7	10
Westport	4	2		7	4

Here is a disparity of charge and of capacity to bear the burden which the Irish Government, if presuming to attend to Irish affairs, should give some little attention to. The rich unions of Meath and Antrim, with rates varying from 8d. in the £ to 1s. 6d., get as large a proportion of the various Government grants in aid of local taxation as do the poor unions in Kerry, Mayo or Donegal, where, though poverty is general, the rates go as high as 12s. 10d. in the £. According to the official report there are in many of those congested districts only two classes—"the poor and the destitute,"—yet with charming disregard for the wants of the various districts, the Govern-

ment distributes its grants to rich and poor alike in such a manner that rich unions like Dunshaughlin can in a short time, with a little economy, maintain their poor and conduct their local affairs almost entirely on Government grants and without levying any local tax; while the districts officially described as comprising only "the poor and the destitute" have to bear a burden so great as of itself to create more paupers. The motto apparently seems to be: The poorer a people are the more tax they should bear, and the richer a union is the more support it should get. Were I to suspect that the English government of this country could, in so small but important a matter, even once stumble into doing the right thing, I would suggest that some effort should be made to distribute grants amongst the various unions or counties in proportion to their needs. The whole matter requires to be fully inquired into and remodelled, so as to make some attempt at equalising local burdens all over Ireland. Pending such inquiry, might I suggest that the balance of local taxation which has accumulated during the past 3 years, and which must now be close on £100,000, might reasonably be distributed in the manner I suggest amongst the various unions in the congested areas, special consideration being given to districts where poverty and consequent burdens are greatest. This is only one suggestion which can and should be acted on immediately. I do not by any means imply that it would solve the whole problem. The question of the distribution of Imperial grants for local purposes to congested and non-congested Ireland, is one which in the very near future must be fully considered, if "the poor and the destitute" are not to be made still more destitute.

CHAPTER V.

SOME SUGGESTIONS.—INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.

It may be thought that a people living for generations under such unfavourable conditions as I have described, must now have their manhood and integrity sapped, their energy and vigour destroyed. So far, however, from this being the case, there is a very high standard of intelligence amongst even the very poorest

of our people, there is a great desire for, and love of, education. The attendance at the national schools in Kerry was, according to the latest returns, the highest in all Ireland. This is the one pleasing fact I have to note, and one which, perhaps, should go furthest towards inducing the Board to try some comprehensive scheme of industrial development in our midst, as certainly it betokens one of the most important elements that go to achieve success in any undertaking where ability and intelligence are required. There is, furthermore, a splendid public spirit exhibited everywhere, as is plainly evident—to take only one instance—from the manner in which our public bodies have taxed themselves for works of public utility. Railways and harbours cost the county about £16,600 per an., or over 1s. 1d. per £ of the valuation of the whole Co. per an. As a further instance of the spirit of self-help and the desire for industrial development which exists, the Parish Priest of Killorglin, Rev. T. Lawlor, and myself were able to get from twenty shopkeepers of that small town a guarantee of £50 each for the purpose of starting some local industry, on condition that the C. D. B. were willing to give us financial assistance and expert advice. I am confident we could easily supply half-a-dozen other places in the county that would act in an equally spirited manner. Surely the C. D. B. must recognise that here are a people well worthy of support, that here is a field where a little attention and some financial assistance would repay a hundred fold. Will they rise to the occasion, will they awaken to their duty before it is too late?

Kerry has unrivalled opportunities for industrial development. We have an abundant supply of water power, we have cheap labour, fine harbours, a public eager for co-operation and advancement, and a tradition of former development. It will appear strange to some of my readers to learn that the small town of Dingle exported in the year 1750, linen to the value of £60,000, while to-day I am afraid there is scarcely a loom at work. This, of course, is part of that progress due to the Union. It is one of the glorious results that have followed our connection with a rich and world-wide empire. A small town which, 150 years ago, carried on a flourishing

trade direct with Spain, is now unable to get a paltry sum for its pier that its fishermen—the only occupants of its harbour and the only support of the town—may ply their perilous trade with the minimum of risk.

Besides the establishment or aiding of industries, the fishing industry along the sea-coast is well worthy of the attention and support of the Board. Owing to insufficient capital for the purchase of suitable boats and gear, the foreigner benefits more, every year, from deep sea fishing along our coast than do the natives. We do not want charitable doles or outdoor relief from the Board; but we do firmly demand of them that a little more practical support is required, if they wish to enable the willing workers along the coast to avail of the wealth which, with proper equipment, they could win from the sea. Several complaints have also been made that the fishing industry is very seriously injured because there is no "close season." It seems very natural that fishing boats must cause very material damage by working at a time when fish are about to spawn. We have game laws and inland fishery laws by the score to protect, not the welfare and means of support of the many, but the luxury and enjoyment of the few. Can nothing be done to protect this great industry, on which, in Kerry alone, thousands of our people depend for their subsistence?

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSION.

The time has passed for further dallying with this question. If we are scheduled as "Congested," and thus supposed to be under the protection of a Board which will relieve all our wants, we must see that the protection is a reality and not a sham. Our patience should be well nigh exhausted, and we should have learned, now, that a policy of silence meets invariably with the same reward from all Boards under the English Government. We are not, I trust, incapable of learning from the experience of the men of Mayo and Donegal. Dr. O'Donnell, the beloved Bishop of Raphoe, represents, not technically perhaps, but in reality and in fact, the County of Donegal on the C. D. B. Fr. O'Hara, in a

similar manner, represents Mayo. Both are men who take a deep practical interest in everything that concerns the people's welfare. They are earnest, uncompromising supporters of the National organisation, simply because they are convinced it will benefit a people whom they love. These men are with the people, of the people; and the people respect and follow them. On the Councils of the Board they are a power. Their word will be heard and respected, even though they never hide their national sympathies, and consequently we have a reason for the good work done in Connacht and Donegal. Kerry has been silent and apathetic. Connection with the cause of the poor and oppressed seems to be getting out of fashion. Poverty and emigration may continue, the Catholic and the Gael may leave our shores, the foreigner and the non-Catholic may take his place, thousands of our people may be compelled to herd in hovels unfit for human habitation, our asylums and our poor houses may be full, our schools and our churches may be growing emptier every year; yet still, blind to the inevitable fate that must soon come on the Catholic Gael if the present state of things continue, we are silent and heedless of it all. We have no special representative on the Board, we have no strong public opinion which would compel a Board or a Government to do its duty, or clear out. There are, however, very hopeful signs. May they grow and strengthen is my fervent hope. The path of duty, the road to success, is clear to all who have hearts to feel for their people, and courage and spirit to take a part in brightening the lot of our countrymen, and in saving the remnant of a race which, through seven centuries, has sacrificed, as no other nation has, possessions, power and material welfare, for principle, for religion and for liberty.

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