
**[RECORD OF KARL MARX'S SPEECH CONCERNING
THE "BEE-HIVE" NEWSPAPER**

*(From the Minutes of the General Council Meeting
of April 26, 1870)]¹⁷⁶*

Cit. Marx proposed that the Council should cut off all connections with the *Bee-Hive*. He said it had suppressed our resolutions and mutilated our reports and delayed them so that the dates had been falsified, even the mention that certain questions respecting the Irish prisoners were being discussed had been suppressed.

Next to that, the tone of the *Bee-Hive* was contrary to the Rules and platform of the Association. It preached harmony with the capitalists, and the Association had declared war against the capitalists' rule.

Besides this, our branches abroad complained that by sending our reports to the *Bee-Hive* we gave it a moral support and led people to believe that we endorsed its policy. We would be better without its publicity than with it.

On the Irish Coercion Bill¹⁷⁷ it had not said a word against the government.

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**Frederick Engels
HISTORY OF IRELAND¹⁷⁸**

NATURAL CONDITIONS

At the north-western corner of Europe lies the land whose history will occupy us, an island of 1,530 German or 32,500 English square miles. But another island, three times as large, lies obliquely interposed between Ireland and the rest of Europe. For the sake of brevity we usually call this island England; it blocks Ireland off completely towards the north, east and south-east, and allows a free view only in the direction of Spain, Western France and America.

The channel between the two islands, 50-70 English miles wide at the narrowest points in the south, 13 miles wide at one point in the north and 22 miles wide at another, allowed the Irish Scots to emigrate from the north to the neighbouring island and to found the Kingdom of Scotland even before the fifth century. In the south it was too wide for Irish and British boats and a serious obstacle even for the flat-bottomed coastal vessels of the Romans. But when the Frisians, Angles and Saxons, and after them the Scandinavians, were able to venture beyond the sight of land on the open seas in their keeled vessels, this channel was an obstacle no longer; Ireland fell a victim to the raiding expeditions of the Scandinavians, and presented an easy booty for the English. As soon as the Normans had built up a powerful, unified government in England, the influence of the larger island made itself felt—in those times this meant a war of conquest.¹⁷⁹

If during the war a period set in when England gained control of the sea, this precluded the possibility of successful foreign intervention.

When the larger island finally became unified into one state, the latter had to strive to assimilate Ireland completely.

If this assimilation had been successful, its whole course would have become a matter of history. It would be subject to its judgement but could never be reversed. But if after 700 years of fighting this assimilation has *not* succeeded; if instead each new wave of invaders flooding Ireland is assimilated by the *Irish*; if, even today, the Irish are as far from being English, or West Britons, as they say, as the Poles are from being West Russians after only 100 years of oppression; if the fighting is not yet over and there is no prospect that it can be ended in any other way than by the extermination of the oppressed race—then, all the geographical pretexts in the world are not enough to prove that it is England's mission to conquer Ireland.

To understand the nature of the soil of present-day Ireland we have to return to the distant epoch when the so-called Carboniferous System was formed.*

The centre of Ireland, to the north and south of a line from Dublin to Galway, forms a wide plain rising to 100-300 feet above sea-level. This plain, the foundation so to say of the whole of Ireland, consists of the massive bed of limestone (carboniferous limestone), which forms the middle layer of the Carboniferous System, and immediately above which lie the coal-measures of England and other places.

In the south and the north, this plain is encircled by a mountain chain which extends mainly along the coast, and consists almost entirely of older rock-formations which have broken through the limestone. These older rock-formations contain granite, mica-slate, Cambrian, Cambro-Silurian, Upper-Silurian, Devonian, together with argillaceous slate and sandstone, rich in copper and lead, found in the lowest layer of the Carboniferous System; apart from this they

* Unless otherwise stated, all the geological data given here is from J. Beete Jukes, *The Student's Manual of Geology*. New Edition. Edinburgh, 1862. Jukes was the local superior during the geological survey of Ireland and therefore the prime authority on this territory, which he treats in special detail.

contain a little gold, silver, tin, zinc, iron, cobalt, antimony and manganese.

The limestone itself rises to mountains only in a few places: it reaches 600 feet in the centre of the plain, in Queen's County,¹⁸⁰ and a little over 1,000 feet in the west, on the southern shore of Galway Bay (Burren Hills).

At several points in the southern half of the limestone plain there are to be found isolated coal-bearing mountain ridges of considerable extent and from 700 to 1,000 feet above sea-level. These rise from depressions in the limestone plain as plateaus with rather steep escarpments.

"The escarpments in these widely separated tracts of coal-measures are so similar, and the beds composing them so precisely alike, that it is impossible to suppose otherwise than that they originally formed continuous sheets of rock, although they are now separated by sixty or eighty miles.... This belief is strongly confirmed by the fact that there are often, between the two larger areas, several little outlying patches in which the coal-measures are found capping the summits of small hills, and that wherever the undulation of the limestone is such as to bring its upper beds down beneath the level of the present surface of the ground, we invariably find some of the lower beds of the coal-measures coming in upon them." (Jukes, pp. 285-86.)

Other circumstances, which are too detailed for us here and can be found in Jukes, pages 286-89, contribute to the certainty that the whole Irish central plain arose through denudation, as Jukes says, so that the lower layers of limestone were exposed after the coal-measures and the high limestone deposits—of an average thickness of at least 2,000-3,000 and possibly 5,000-6,000 feet of stone—had been washed away. Jukes even found another small coal-measure on the highest ridge of the Burren Hills, County Clare, which are pure limestone and 1,000 feet high (p. 513).

Some fairly considerable areas containing coal-measures have survived in Southern Ireland; but only a few of these contain enough coal to justify mining. Moreover, the coal itself is anthracite, that is, it contains little hydrogen and cannot be used for all industrial purposes without some addition.

There are also several not very extensive coal-fields in Northern Ireland in which the coal is bituminous, that is, ordinary coal rich in hydrogen. Their stratification does not

coincide exactly with that of the southern coal deposits. But a similar washing away process did occur even here. This is shown by the fact that large fragments of coal, as well as sandstone and blue clay belonging to the same formation, are to be found on the surface of limestone valleys to the south-east of such a coal-field in the direction of Belturbet and Mohill. Large blocks of coal have been discovered by well-sinkers in this area of the drift; and in some cases the quantity of coal was so considerable that it was thought that deeper shafts must lead to a coal-bed. (Kane, *The Industrial Resources of Ireland*, 2nd edition, Dublin, 1845, p. 265.)

It is obvious that Ireland's misfortune is of ancient origin; it begins directly after the carboniferous strata were deposited. A country whose coal deposits are eroded, placed near a larger country rich in coal, is condemned by nature to remain for a long time the farming country for the larger country when the latter is industrialised. That sentence, pronounced millions of years ago, was carried out in this century. We shall see later, moreover, how the English assisted nature by crushing almost every seed of Irish industry as soon as it appeared.

More recent Secondary and Tertiary layers¹⁸¹ occur almost exclusively in the north-east; amongst these we are interested chiefly in the beds of red marl in the vicinity of Belfast, which contain almost pure rock-salt to a thickness of 200 feet (Jukes, p. 554), and the chalk overlaid with a layer of basalt which covers the whole of County Antrim. Generally speaking, there are no important geological developments in Ireland between the end of the Carboniferous Period and the Ice Age.

It is known that after the Tertiary Epoch there was an era in which the low-lying lands of the medium latitudes of Europe were submerged by the sea, and in which such a low temperature prevailed in Europe that the valleys between the protruding island mountain tops were filled with glaciers which extended down to the sea. Icebergs used to separate themselves from these glaciers and carry rocks of all sizes which had been detached from the mountains, out to sea. When the ice melted, the rocks and other debris were deposited—a process still daily occurring on coasts of the polar regions.

During the Ice Age, Ireland too, with the exception of the mountain tops, was submerged by the sea. The degree of submergence may not have been the same everywhere, but an average of 1,000 feet below the present level can be accepted; the granite mountain chains south of Dublin must have been submerged by over 1,200 feet.

If Ireland had been submerged by only 500 feet, only the mountain chains would have remained exposed. These would then have formed two semi-circular groups of islands around a wide strait extending from Dublin to Galway. A still greater submergence would have made these islands smaller and decreased their number, until, at a submergence of 2,000 feet, only the most extreme tips would have risen above the water.*

As the submersion slowly proceeded, the limestone plains and mountain slopes must have been swept clean of much of the older rock covering them; subsequently there followed the depositing of the drift peculiar to the Ice Age on the whole of the area covered by water. Pieces of rock eroded from the mountain islands and fine fragments of rock scraped away by the glaciers as they pushed their way slowly and powerfully through the valleys—earth, sand, gravel, stones, rocks, worn smooth within the ice but sharp-edged above it—all this was carried out to sea and gradually deposited on the sea-bed by icebergs which were detaching themselves from the shore. The layer formed in this way varies according to circumstances and contains loam (originating from argillaceous slate), sand (originating from quartz and granite), limestone gravel (derived from limestone formations), marl (where finely-crumbled limestone mixes with loam) or mixtures of all these components; but it always contains a mass of stones of all sizes, sometimes rounded, sometimes sharp, ranging up to colossal erratic boulders, which are commoner in Ireland than in the North-German Plain or between the Alps and the Jura.

During the subsequent re-emergence of the land from the sea, this newly-formed surface was given roughly its present

* Ireland has an area of 32,509 English square miles. 13,243 square miles are 0-250 feet above sea-level; 11,797 are 251-500 feet above sea-level; 5,798 are 501-1,000 feet above sea-level; 1,589 are 1,001-2,000 feet above sea-level; 82 square miles are over 2,001 feet above sea-level.

structure. In Ireland, little washing away appears to have taken place then; with few exceptions varying thicknesses of drift cover all the plains, extend into all the valleys, and are also often found high up on the mountain slopes. Limestone is the most frequently occurring stone in them, and for this reason the whole stratum is usually called limestone gravel here. Big blocks of limestone are also extensively strewn over all the lowlands, one or more in nearly every field; apart from limestone, a lot of other local rocks, especially granite, are naturally to be found near the mountains they originated from. From the northern side of Galway Bay granite appears commonly in the plain extending south-east as far as the Galty Mountains and more rarely as far as Mallow (County Cork).

The north of the country is covered with drift to the same height above sea-level as the central plain; a similar deposit, originating from the local, mainly Silurian rocks, is to be found between the various more or less parallel mountain chains running through the south. This appears plentifully in Flesk and Laune valley near Killarney.

The glacier tracks on the mountain slopes and valley bottoms are common and unmistakable, particularly in the south-west of Ireland. Only in Oberhasli and here and there in Sweden do I remember seeing more sharply-stamped ice-trails than in Killarney (in the Black Valley and the Gap of Dunloe).

The emergence of the land during or after the Ice Age seems to have been so considerable that Britain was for a time connected by dry land not only with the Continent, but also with Ireland. At least this seems the only way the similarity between the fauna of these lands can be explained. Ireland has the following extinct large mammals in common with the Continent: the mammoth, the Irish giant stag, the cave-bear, a kind of reindeer, and so on. In fact, an emergence of less than 240 feet over the present level would be enough to connect Ireland with Scotland, and one of less than 360 feet would join Ireland and Wales with wide bridges of land.* The fact that Ireland emerged to a higher

* See Map 15a in Stieler's Handatlas, 1868.¹⁸² This map, as well as No. 15d, specially of Ireland, picture the ground structure very clearly.

level after the Ice Age than at present is proved by the underwater peat bogs with upright tree trunks and roots which occur all around the coast, and which are identical in every detail with the lowest layers of the neighbouring inland peat bogs.

From an agricultural point of view, Ireland's soil is almost entirely formed from the drift of the Ice Age, which here, thanks to its slate and limestone origin, is not the barren sand with which the Scottish, Scandinavian and Finnish granites have covered such a large part of North Germany, but an extremely fertile, light loam. The variety in the rocks, whose decomposition contributed and is still contributing to this soil, provides it with a corresponding variety of the mineral elements required for vegetable life; and if one of these, say lime, is greatly lacking in the soil, plenty of pieces of limestone of all sizes are to be found everywhere—quite apart from the underlying limestone bed—so it can be added quite easily.

When the well-known English agronomist, *Arthur Young*, toured Ireland in the 1770s, he did not know what amazed him more: the natural fertility of the soil or the barbaric manner in which the peasants cultivated it. "A light, dry, soft, sandy, loam soil" prevails where the land is good at all. In the "Golden Vale" of Tipperary and also elsewhere he found:

"the same sort of sandy reddish loam I have already described, incomparable land for tillage". From there, in the direction of Clonmel, "the whole way through the same rich vein of red sandy loam I have so often mentioned: I examined it in several fields, and found it to be of an extraordinary fertility, and as fine turnip land as ever I saw".

Further:

"The rich land reaches from Charleville, at the foot of the mountains, to Tipperary, by Kilfenning, a line of twenty-five miles, and across from Ardpatrik to within four miles of Limerick, sixteen miles." "The richest in the country is the Corcasses on the Maag, about Adair, a tract of five miles long, and two broad, down to the Shannon.... When they break this land up, they sow first oats, and get 20 barrels an acre, or 40 common barrels, and do not reckon that an extra crop; they take ten or twelve in succession, upon one ploughing, till the crops grow poor,

and then they sow one of horse beans, which refreshes the land enough to take ten crops of oats more; the beans are very good. . . . Were such barbarians ever heard of?"

Further, near Castle Oliver, County Limerick,

"the finest soil in the country is upon the roots of mountains; it is a rich, mellow, crumbling, putrid, sandy loam, eighteen inches to three feet deep, the colour a reddish brown. It is dry sound land, and would do for turnips exceedingly well, for carrots, for cabbages, and in a word for everything. I think, upon the whole, it is the richest soil I ever saw, and such as is applicable to every purpose you can wish; it will fat the largest bullock, and at the same time do equally well for sheep, for tillage, for turnips, for wheat, for beans, and in a word, for every crop . . . you must examine into the soil before you will believe that a country, which has so beggarly an appearance, can be so rich and fertile."

On the river Blackwater near Mallow,

"there are tracts of flat land in some places one quarter of a mile broad; the grass everywhere remarkably fine. . . . It is the finest sandy land I have anywhere seen, of a reddish-brown colour, would yield the greatest arable crops in the world, if in tillage; it is five feet deep, and has such a principle of adhesion, that it burns into good brick, yet it is a perfect sand. . . . The banks of this river, from its source to the sea, are equally remarkable for beauty of prospect, and fertility of soil." "Friable, sandy loams, dry but fertile, are very common, and they form the best soils in the kingdom, for tillage and sheep. Tipperary and Roscommon abound particularly in them. The most fertile of all are the bullock pastures of Limerick, and the banks of the Shannon in Clare, called the Corcasses. . . . Sand, which is so common in England, and yet more common through Spain, France, Germany, and Poland, quite from Gibraltar to Petersburg, is nowhere met with in Ireland, except for narrow slips of hillocks, upon the sea coast. Nor did I ever meet with, or hear of a chalky soil."*

Young's judgement on the soil of Ireland is summarised in the following sentences:

"If I was to name the characteristics of an excellent soil, I would say *that* upon which you may fat an ox and feed off a crop of turnips. By the way, I recollect little or no such land in England, yet it is not uncommon in Ireland." (Vol. 2, p. 271.)—"Natural fertility, acre for acre over the two kingdoms, is certainly in favour of

* Arthur Young, *A Tour in Ireland*, 3 vols. London, 177 . . . , Vol. 2, pp. 92, 125, 142, 154, 165. Vol. 2, Part II, p. 4.

Ireland." (Vol. 2, Part II, p. 3.)—"As far as I can form a general idea of the soil of the two kingdoms, Ireland has much the advantage." (Vol. 2, Part II, p. 9.)

In 1808-10, Edward *Wakefield*, an Englishman likewise versed in agronomy, toured Ireland and recorded the result of his observations in a valuable work.* His remarks are better-ordered, more extensive and fuller than those in Young's travel-book; on the whole, both agree.

Wakefield found little disparity in the nature of the soil in Ireland on the whole. Sand occurs only on the coast (it is so seldom found inland that large quantities of sea sand are transported inland for improving the turf and loam soils); chalky soil is unknown (the chalk in Antrim is, as has already been mentioned, covered with a layer of basalt, the products of the decomposition of which produce a highly fertile soil. In England the chalky soils are the worst), "... tenacious clays, such as those found in Oxfordshire, in some parts of Essex, and throughout High Suffolk, I could never meet with. . . ." The Irish call all loamy soils clay; there might be real clay in Ireland as well, but not on the surface as in several parts of England in any case. Limestone or limestone gravel is to be found everywhere. "The former is a useful production, and is converted into a source of wealth that will always be employed with advantage." Mountains and peat bogs certainly reduce the fertile surface considerably. There is little fertile land in the north; yet even here there are highly luxuriant valleys in every county, and Wakefield unexpectedly found a highly fertile tract even in furthest Donegal amongst the wildest mountains. The extensive cultivation of flax in the north is in itself sufficient proof of fertility, as this plant does not thrive in poor soil.

"A great portion of the soil in Ireland throws out a luxuriant herbage, springing up from a calcareous subsoil, without any considerable depth. I have seen bullocks of the weight of 180 stone, rapidly fattening on land incapable of receiving the print of a horse's foot, even in the wettest season, and where there were not many inches of soil. This is *one* species of the rich soil of Ireland, and is to be found throughout Roscommon, in some parts of Galway, Clare, and other districts. Some places exhibit the richest loam that I ever saw

* Edward Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*, London, 1819, 2 vols.

turned up by a plough; this is the case throughout Meath in particular. Where such soil occurs, its fertility is so conspicuous, that it appears as if nature had determined to counteract the bad effects produced by the clumsy system of its cultivators. On the banks of the Fergus and Shannon, the land is of a different kind, but equally productive, though the surface presents the appearance of a marsh. These districts are called 'the caucasses' (so designated by Wakefield as distinct from Young); the substratum is a blue silt, deposited by the sea, which seems to partake of the qualities of the upper stratum; for this land can be injured by no depth of ploughing.

"In the counties of Limerick and Tipperary there is another kind of rich land, consisting of a dark, friable, dry, sandy loam which, if preserved in a clean state, would throw out corn for several years in succession. It is equally well adapted to grazing and tillage, and I will venture to say, seldom experiences a season too wet, or a summer too dry. The richness of the land, in some of the vales, may be accounted for by the deposition of soil carried thither from the upper grounds by the rain. The subsoil is calcareous, so that the very richest manure is thus spread over the land below, without subjecting the farmer to any labour." (Vol. 1, pp. 79, 80.)

If a thinnish layer of heavy loam lies directly on limestone, the land is not suited to tillage and bears only a miserable crop of grain, but it makes excellent sheep-pastures. This improves it further by producing a thick grass mixed with white clover and. . . * (Vol. 1, p. 80.)

Dr. Beaufort** states that there occur in the west, particularly in Mayo, many turloughs—shallow depressions of different sizes, which fill with water in the winter, although not visibly connected with streams or rivers. In the summer this drains away through underground fissures in the limestone, leaving luxurious firm grazing-ground.

"Independently of the caucasses," Wakefield continues, "the richest soil in Ireland is to be found in the counties of Tipperary, Limerick, Roscommon, Longford, and Meath. In Longford there is a farm called Granard Kill, which produced eight crops of potatoes without manure. Some parts of the County of Cork are uncommonly fertile, and upon the whole, Ireland may be considered as affording land of an excellent quality, though I am by no means prepared to go the length of many writers, who assert, that it is decidedly acre for acre richer than England." (Vol. 1, p. 81.)

* There is an omission in the manuscript. According to Wakefield it is "wild burnet".—Ed.

** Beaufort, Revd. Dr., *Memoir of a Map of Ireland*, 1792, pp. 75-76. Quoted in Wakefield, Vol. 1, p. 36.

The last observation, directed against Young, rests on a misunderstanding of Young's opinion, quoted above. Young does not say that Ireland's soil is more productive than England's, each taken in their present state of cultivation—which is naturally far higher in England; Young merely states that the *natural* fertility of the soil is greater in Ireland than in England. This does not contradict Wakefield.

After the last famine, in 1849, Sir* Robert Peel sent a Scottish agronomist, Mr. Caird, to Ireland to report on means of improving agriculture there. In a publication issued soon afterwards he said about the west of Ireland—the worst stricken part of the country apart from the extreme north-west:

"I was much surprised to find so great an extent of fine fertile land. The interior of the country is very level, and its general character stony and dry; the soil dry and friable. The humidity of the climate causes a very constant vegetation, which has both advantages and disadvantages. It is favourable for grass and green crops,** but renders it necessary to employ very vigorous and persevering efforts to extirpate weeds. The abundance of lime everywhere, both in the rock itself, and as sand and gravel beneath the surface, are of the greatest value."

Caird also confirms that County Westmeath consists of the finest pasture land. Of the region north of Lough Corrib (County Mayo) he writes:

"The greater part of this farm" (a farm of 500 acres) "is the finest feeding land for sheep and cattle—dry, friable, undulating land, all on limestone. The fields of rich old grass are superior to anything we have, except in small patches, in any part of Scotland I at present remember. The best of it is *too good for tillage*, but about one half of it might be profitably brought under the plough. . . . The rapidity with which the land on this limestone subsoil recovers itself, and, without any seeds being sown, reverts to good pasture, is very remarkable."***

* In the manuscript the word "Ministry" appears above the "Sir".—Ed.

** "Green crops" embrace all cultivated fodder crops, as well as carrot, beetroot, turnip and potato, that is, everything except corn, grasses and garden plants.

*** Caird, *The Plantation Scheme, or the West of Ireland as a Field for Investment*, Edinburgh, 1850. He also wrote travel reports on the condition of agriculture in the main counties of England for *The Times* of 1850-51. The above quotations are found on pp. 6, 17-18, 121.

Finally we note a French authority*:

"Of the two divisions of Ireland, that of the north-west, embracing a fourth of the island, and comprehending the province of Connaught, with the adjacent counties of Donegal, Clare, and Kerry, resembles Wales, and even, in its worst parts, the Highlands of Scotland. Here again are two millions of unsightly hectares, the frightful aspect of which has given rise to the national proverb, 'Go to the devil or Connaught'.** The other, or south-east and much larger division, since it ... includes the provinces of Leinster, Ulster, and Munster, equal to about six millions of hectares, is *at least equal* in natural fertility to England proper. It is not all, however, equally good; the amount of humidity there is still greater than in England. Extensive bogs cover about a tenth of the surface; more than another tenth is occupied with mountains and lakes. In fact, five only out of eight millions of hectares in Ireland are cultivated [pp. 9, 10]. Even the English admit that Ireland, in point of soil, is superior to England... Ireland contains eight millions of hectares. Rocks, lakes, and bogs occupy about two millions of these, and two millions more are indifferent land. The remainder—that is to say, about half the country—is rich land, with calcareous subsoil. What better could be conceived?" (P. 343.)

We see therefore that all authorities agree that Ireland's soil contains all the elements of fertility to an extraordinary degree. This, not only in its chemical ingredients but also in its structure. The two extremes of heavy impenetrable clay, completely impermeable, and loose sand, completely permeable, do not occur. But Ireland has another disadvantage. While the mountains are mainly along the coast, the watersheds between the inland river basins are mostly low-lying, and therefore the rivers are not capable of carrying all the rain water out to sea. Thus extensive peat bogs arise inland, especially on the watersheds. In the plain alone 1,576,000 acres are covered with peat bogs. These are largely depressions or troughs in the land, most of which were once shallow lake basins which were gradually overgrown with moss and marsh plants and were filled up with their decomposing remains. As with our north-German moors, their only use is for turf cutting. With the present system of agriculture cultivation can only gradually reclaim their edges. The soil in these former lake basins is mainly marl and its

lime content (varying from 5 per cent to 90 per cent) is due to the shells of fresh-water mussels. Thus the material for their development into arable land exists within each of these peat bogs. Apart from this, most of them are rich in iron ore. Besides these low-lying peat bogs, there are 1,254,000 acres of mountain moor. These are the result of deforestation in a damp climate and are one of the peculiar beauties of the British Isles. Wherever flat or almost flat summits were deforested—and this occurred extensively in the 17th century and the first half of the 18th century to provide the iron works with charcoal—a layer of peat formed under the influence of rain and mist and gradually spread down the slopes where the conditions were favourable. Such moors cover the ridges of the mountain chain dividing Northern England from north to south almost as far as Derby; and are found in abundance wherever substantial mountain ranges are marked on the map of Ireland. Yet, the peat bogs of Ireland are by no means hopelessly lost to agriculture; on the contrary, in time we shall see what rich fruits some of these, and the two million hectares of the "indifferent land" contemptuously mentioned by Lavergne, can produce given correct management.

Ireland's climate is determined by her position. The Gulf Stream and the prevailing south-west winds provide warmth and make for mild winters and cool summers. In the south-west the summer lasts far into October which, according to Wakefield (Vol. 1, p. 221), is there regarded as the best month for sea bathing. Frost is rare and of short duration, snow usually melts immediately on the low-lying land. Spring weather prevails throughout the winter in the inlets of Kerry and Cork, which are open to the south-west and protected from the north; here, and in certain other places, myrtle thrives in the open (Wakefield mentions a country-residence where it grows into trees 16 feet high and is used to make stable-brooms, Vol. 1, p. 55), and laurel, arbutus and other evergreen plants grow into substantial trees. In Wakefield's time, the peasants in the south were still leaving their potatoes in the open all winter—and they had not been frost-bitten since 1740. On the other hand, Ireland also

* Léonce de Lavergne, *Rural Economy of England, Scotland and Ireland*. Translated from the French. Edinburgh, 1855.

** This expression, as will be seen later, owes its origin not to the dark mountains of Connaught, but to the darkest period in the entire history of Ireland.¹⁸³

suffers the first powerful downpour of the heavy Atlantic rain clouds. Ireland's average rainfall is at least 35 inches, which is considerably more than England's average, yet is definitely lower than that of Lancashire and Cheshire and scarcely more than the average for the whole of the West of England. In spite of this the Irish climate is decidedly pleasanter than the English. The leaden sky which often causes days of continual drizzle in England is mostly replaced in Ireland by a continental April sky; the fresh sea-breezes bring on clouds quickly and unexpectedly, but drive them past equally quickly, if they do not come down immediately in sharp showers. And even when the rain lasts for days, as it does in late autumn, it does not have the chronic air it has in England. The weather, like the inhabitants, has a more acute character, it moves in sharper, more sudden contrasts; the sky is like an Irish woman's face: here also rain and sunshine succeed each other suddenly and unexpectedly and there is none of the grey English boredom.

The Roman, *Pomponius Mela*, gives us the oldest report on the Irish climate (in *De situ orbis*) in the first century of our era:

"Above Brittain is Ireland, almost of like space but on both sides equall, with shores evelong, of a evyll ayre to ryphen things that are sown, but so abundant of Grasse which is not onelie rancke but also sweete, that the Cattell may in small parte of the daye fyll themselves, and if they bee not kept from feedying, they burste with grazing over-long."

"*Coeli ad maturanda semina iniqui, verum adeo luxuriosa herbis non laetis modo sed etiam dulcibus!*" We find this part amongst others translated into modern English by Mr. Goldwin Smith, Professor of History formerly of Oxford and now in Cornell University, America. He reports that it is difficult to gather in the harvest of wheat in a large part of Ireland and continues:

"Its [Ireland's] natural way to commercial prosperity seems to be to supply with the produce of its grazing and dairy farms the population of England."*

* Goldwin Smith, *Irish History and Irish Character*, Oxford and London, 1861.—What is more amazing in this work, which, under the mask of "objectivity", justifies English policy in Ireland, the ignorance of the professor of history, or the hypocrisy of the liberal bourgeois? We shall touch on both again later.

From Mela to Goldwin Smith and up to the present day, how often has this assertion been repeated—since 1846,¹⁸⁴ especially by a noisy chorus of Irish landowners—that Ireland is condemned by her climate to provide not Irishmen with bread but Englishmen with meat and butter, and that the destiny of the Irish people is, therefore, to be brought over the ocean to make room in Ireland for cows and sheep! 113

It can be seen that to establish the facts on the Irish climate is to unravel a topical political question. And indeed the climate only concerns us here insofar as it is important for agriculture. Rain measurements, at their present incomplete stage of observations, are only of secondary importance for our purpose; *how much* rain falls is not so important as *how* and *when* it falls. Here agronomical judgements are most important.

Arthur Young considers that Ireland is considerably damper than England; this is the cause of the amazing grass-bearing qualities of the soil. He speaks of cases when turnip- and stubble-land, left unploughed, produced a rich harvest of hay in the next summer, a thing of which there is no example in England. He further mentions that the Irish wheat is much lighter than that grown in drier lands; weeds and grass spring up in abundance under even the best management, and the harvests are so wet and so troublesome to bring in that revenue suffers greatly. (*Young's Tour*, Vol. 2, p. 100.)

At the same time, however, he points out that the soil in Ireland counteracts this dampness of the climate. It is generally stony, and for this reason lets the water through more easily.

"Harsh, tenacious, stoney, strong loams, difficult to work, are not uncommon [in Ireland]; but they are quite different from English clays. If as much rain fell upon the clays of England (a soil very rarely met with in Ireland, and never without much stone) as falls upon the rocks of her sister-island, those lands could not be cultivated. But the rocks here are cloathed with verdure;—those of limestone with only a thin covering of mold, have the softest and most beautiful turf imaginable." (Vol. 2, Part II, pp. 3-4.)

The limestone is known to be full of cracks and fissures which let the excess water through quickly.

Wakefield devotes to the climate a very comprehensive chapter in which he summarises all the earlier observations up to his own time. Dr. Boate (*Natural History of Ireland*, 1645)¹⁸⁵ describes the winters as mild, with three or four periods of frost every year, each of which usually lasts for only two or three days; the Liffey in Dublin freezes over scarcely once in 10 to 12 years. March is usually dry and fine, but then the weather becomes rainy; there are seldom more than two or three consecutive dry days in summer; and in the late autumn it is fine again. Very dry summers are rare, and dearth never occurs because of drought, but mostly because of too much rain. It seldom snows on the plains, so cattle remain in the open all the year round. Yet years of heavy snow do occur, as in 1635, when the people had difficulty in providing shelter for the cattle. (Wakefield, Vol. 1, p. 216 and following.)

In the beginning of the last century, Dr. Rutty (*Natural History of the County of Dublin*) made accurate meteorological observations which stretched over 50 years, from 1716 to 1765. During this whole period the proportion of south and west winds to north and east winds was 73:37 (10,878 south and west against 6,329 north and east). Prevailing winds were west and south-west, then came north-west and south-east, and most rarely north-east and east. In summer, autumn and winter west and south-west prevail. East is most frequent in spring and summer, when it occurs twice as frequently as in autumn and winter; north-east is most frequent in spring when, likewise, it is twice as frequent as in autumn and winter. As a result of this, the temperatures are more even, the winters milder and the summers cooler than in London, while on the other hand the air is damper. Even in summer, salt, sugar, flour, etc., soak dampness out of the air, and corn must be kiln-dried, a practice unknown in some parts of England. (Wakefield, Vol. 1, pp. 172-81.)

Rutty could at that time only compare Irish climate with that in London, which, as in all Eastern England, is drier, to be sure. If material on Western and especially North-Western England had been at his disposal, he would have found that his description of the Irish climate—distribution of winds over the year, wet summers, in which sugar, salt,

etc., are ruined in unheated rooms—fits this area completely, except that Western England is colder in winter.

Rutty also kept data on the meteorological aspect of the seasons. In the fifty years referred to, there were 16 cold, late or too dry springs: a little more than in London; further, 22 hot and dry, 24 wet, and 4 changeable summers: a little damper than in London, where the number of dry and wet summers is equal; further, 16 fine, 12 wet, 22 changeable autumns: again a little damper and more changeable than in London; and 13 frosty, 14 wet and 23 mild winters: which is considerably damper and milder than in London.

According to measurements made in the Botanical Gardens in Dublin, the following total amount of rain fell each month in the ten years between 1802 and 1811 (in inches): December: 27.31; July: 24.15; November: 23.49; August: 22.47; September: 22.27; January: 21.67; October: 20.12; May: 19.50; March: 14.69; April: 13.54; February: 12.32; June: 12.07. Average for the year: 23.36 (Wakefield, Vol. 1, p. 191). These ten years were unusually dry. Kane (*Industrial Resources*, p. 73) gives an average of 30.87 inches for 6 years in Dublin and Symons (*English Rainfall*) puts it at 29.79 inches for 1860-62. Because of the fleeting nature of local showers in Ireland, such measurements mean very little unless they extend over many years and are undertaken at many stations. This is proved among other things by the fact that, of the three stations measuring rainfall in Dublin in 1862, the first recorded 24.63, the second 28.04, and the third 30.18 inches as the average. The average amount of rainfall recorded by 12 stations in different parts of Ireland in the years 1860-62, was not quite 39 inches according to Symons (individual averages varied from 25.45 to 51.44 inches).

In his book about Ireland's climate, Dr. Patterson says:

"The frequency of our showers, and not the amount of rainfall itself, has caused the popular notion about the wetness of our climate.... Sometimes the spring sowing is a little delayed because of wet weather, but our springs are so frequently cold and late that early sowing is not always advisable. If frequent summer and autumn showers make our hay and corn harvests risky, then vigilance and diligence would be just as successful in such exigencies as they are

for the English in their 'catching' harvests, and improved cultivation would ensure that the seed-corn would aid the peasants' efforts."^{*}

In Londonderry the number of rain-free days each year between 1791 and 1802 varied from 113 to 148—the average for the period was over 126. In Belfast the same average emerged. In Dublin it varied from 168 to 205, average 179 (Patterson, *ibid.*).

According to Wakefield, Irish harvests fall as follows: wheat mostly in September, more rarely in August, occasionally in October; barley usually a little later than wheat; and oats approximately a week after barley, therefore usually in October. After considerable research, Wakefield concluded that not nearly enough material existed for a *scientific* description of the Irish climate, but *nowhere* does he state that it provides a serious obstacle to the cultivation of corn. In fact he finds, as we shall see, that the losses incurred during wet harvest times are due to entirely different causes, and states so quite explicitly:

"The soil of Ireland is so fertile, and the *climate so favourable*, that under a proper system of agriculture, it will produce not only a *sufficiency* of corn for its own use, but a *superabundance* which may be ready at all times to relieve England when she may stand in need of assistance." (Vol. 2, p. 61.)

At that time, of course—1812—England was at war with the whole of Europe and America,¹⁸⁶ and it was much more difficult to import corn—corn was the primary need. Now America, Rumania, Russia and Germany deliver sufficient corn, and the question now is rather one of cheap *meat*. And because of this Ireland's climate is no longer suited to tillage.

Ireland has grown corn since ancient times. In her oldest laws, recorded long before the arrival of Englishmen, the "sack of wheat" is already a definite measurement of value. Fixed quantities of wheat, malt-barley and oatmeal are quite regularly mentioned in the tributes of inferiors to tribal and other chiefs.^{**} After the English invasion, the cultiva-

^{*} Dr. W. Patterson, *An Essay on the Climate of Ireland*, Dublin, 1804, p. 164.

^{**} *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Ireland—Senchus Mor*. Two volumes. Dublin, printed for Her Majesty's Stationary Office, and

tion of corn diminished because of the continual battles, without ever ceasing completely; it increased between 1660 and 1725 and decreased again from 1725 to about 1780; more corn as well as a greater quantity of potatoes was again sown between 1780 and 1846, and since then they have both given way to the steadily advancing cattle pastures. If Ireland were not suited to the cultivation of corn, would it have been grown for over a thousand years?

Of course there are regions, in which because of the proximity of mountains the rainfall is always greater, and which are less suited to wheat-growing—notably in the south and west. Besides the good years, a series of wet summers will often occur there, as between 1860-62, which do great harm to the wheat. Wheat, however, is not Ireland's principal grain, and Wakefield even complains that too little of it is grown for lack of a market—the only one being the nearest mill. For the most part, barley is grown only for the secret distilleries (secret because of taxation). Ireland's principal grain was and still is oats. In 1810 no less than 10 times as much oats was grown as of all the other sorts of corn put together. As oats are harvested after wheat and barley, the harvest is usually in late September or October when the weather is usually fine, especially in the south. And in any case, oats can take a considerable amount of rain.

We have already seen that Ireland's climate, as far as the amount and distribution of rain throughout the year is concerned, corresponds almost entirely with that of the North-West of England. The rainfall is much greater in the mountains of Cumberland, Westmorland, and North Lancashire (in Coniston 96.03, in Windermere 75.02 inches, average in the years 1860-62), than in certain stations in Ireland known to me, and yet hay is made and oats are grown there. In the same years the rainfall varied in South Lancashire from 25.11 in Liverpool to 59.13 in Bolton, the average being about 40 inches; in Cheshire it varied from 33.02 to 43.40 inches, the average being approximately 37 inches. In Ireland, as we

published by Alexander Thom (London, Longmans) in 1865 and 1869.¹⁸⁷ See Vol. 2, pp. 239-51. The value of one sack of wheat was 1 screpall (denarius) or 20-24 grains of silver. The value of the screpall is fixed by Dr. Petrie in *Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland, anterior to the Anglo-Norman Invasion*, Dublin, 1845, 4^o. pp. 212-19.

saw, it was not quite 39 inches in the same years. (All figures from Symons.) In both counties corn of all kinds, and in particular wheat, is cultivated; Cheshire carried on mainly cattle-rearing and dairy farming until the last epidemic of cattle-plague, but since most of the cattle perished the climate suddenly became quite admirably suited for wheat-growing. ~~If there had been an epidemic of cattle-plague in Ireland causing devastation similar to that in Cheshire, instead of preaching that Ireland's natural occupation is cattle-raising, they would point to the place in Wakefield which says that Ireland is destined to be England's granary.~~

If one looks at the matter impartially and without being misled by the cries of the interested parties, the Irish landowners and the English bourgeois, one finds that Ireland, like all other places, has some parts which because of soil and climate are more suited to cattle-rearing, and others to tillage, and still others—the vast majority—which are suited to both. Compared with England, Ireland is more suited to cattle-rearing on the whole; but if England is compared with France, she too is more suited to cattle-rearing. Are we to conclude that the whole of England should be transformed into cattle pastures, and the whole agricultural population be sent into the factory towns or to America—except for a few herdsmen—to make room for cattle, which are to be exported to France in exchange for silk and wine? But that is exactly what the Irish landowners who want to put up their rents and the English bourgeoisie who want to decrease wages demand for Ireland: Goldwin Smith has said so plainly enough. And yet the social revolution inherent in this transformation from tillage to cattle-rearing would be far greater in Ireland than in England. In England, where large-scale agriculture prevails and where agricultural labourers have already been replaced by machinery to a large extent, it would mean the transplantation of at most one million; in Ireland, where small and even cottage-farming prevails, it would mean the transplantation of four million: the extermination of the Irish people.

It can be seen that even the facts of nature become points of national controversy between England and Ireland. It can also be seen, however, how the public opinion of the ruling class in England—and it is only this that is generally known

on the Continent—changes with the fashion and in its own interests. Today England needs grain quickly and dependably—Ireland is just perfect for wheat-growing. Tomorrow England needs meat—Ireland is only fit for cattle pastures. The existence of five million Irish is in itself a smack in the eye to all the laws of political economy, they have to get out but whereto is their worry!

ANCIENT IRELAND

The writers of ancient Greece and Rome, and also the fathers of the Church, give very little information about Ireland.

Instead there still exists an abundant native literature, in spite of the many Irish manuscripts lost in the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It includes poems, grammars, glossaries, annals and other historical writings and law-books. With very few exceptions, however, this whole literature, which embraces the period at least from the eighth to the seventeenth centuries, exists only *in manuscript*. For the Irish language printing has existed only for a few years, only from the time when the language began to die out. Of this rich material, therefore, only a small part is available.

Amongst the most important of these annals are those of Abbot *Tigernach* (died 1088), those of *Ulster*, and above all, those of the *Four Masters*. These last were collected in 1632-36 in a monastery in Donegal under the direction of Michael O'Clery, a Franciscan monk, who was helped by three other Seanchaidhes (antiquarians), from materials which now are almost all lost. They were published in 1856 from the original Donegal manuscript which still exists, having been edited and provided with an English translation by O'Donovan.* The earlier editions by Dr. Charles O'Connor (the first part of the *Four Masters*, and the *Annals of Ulster*) are untrustworthy in text and translation.¹⁸⁸

The beginning of most of these annals presents the mythical prehistory of Ireland. Its base was formed by old folk-

* *Annala Rioghachta Eireann. Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*. Edited, with an English Translation, by Dr. John O'Donovan. Second edition. Dublin, 1856. 7 volumes in 4°

Workers of All Countries, Unite!

**Karl Marx
and
Frederick Engels**

**Ireland
and the Irish Question**



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К. МАРКС и Ф. ЭНГЕЛЬС

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