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ULSTER EMIGRATION TO AMERICA.

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THE reports of the Scotch-Irish Society of America, together with Mr. Hanna's lately-published work, have drawn considerable attention to the part played by emigrants from Ulster in building up the great Western Republic. These emigrants were almost all "Ulster-Scots," who were themselves a compound race, representing every people that had settled north of the Tweed. There were also many "Plantation" settlers who had come from England; and as these were akin to the Scots in language and religion, the two classes of immigrants soon began to intermarry. Some of the native Irish were absorbed by the settlers, and before long was formed a new race in whom the Scottish element predominated, and which has given to Ulster its language, its customs, and what is peculiar in its code of morality.

At first these Scottish settlers came slowly to Ulster. They did not begin to form a very large proportion of the population until about the end of the seventeenth century. The "Hearth-money Roll" of 1666 proves that there were then but few Scots in many of the northern districts where now they are about one-half of the population.

Here I may remark, in passing, that these Hearth-money Rolls contain much valuable information with regard to the geographical distribution of very many Irish families. It is a great pity that records so valuable have never been printed; but I hope that they will be given to the public, as well as the other official documents that are now in process of publication. We also find important information on these matters in the Session-Books of various Presbyterian congregations, and in the Minute-Books of Presbyteries. For example: the Minutes of the Laggan Presbytery prove that in 1673 the parish of Drumragh, which includes Omagh, contributed only about four pounds a-year as its share of ministerial support, and it was stated that the people could not pay the rent of their minister's farm until the country would be better "planted" with British. There are similar records with regard to other parishes.

After the government of William III. was established, a large emigration began from Scotland to Ireland. Many thousands of families came over to occupy farms that were lying waste as a result of the ravages of war; and for some years afterwards the Scots of Ulster rapidly increased in numbers and in influence. From a paper printed in the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* (1858, vol. vi.) it would seem that between 1690 and 1697 at least 50,000 immigrants came from Scotland

to Ireland. As these Scots were generally Presbyterians, we have proof of their increase in numbers and financial resources by the growth in numbers and in resources of Presbyterian congregations. Drumragh, which in 1673, as we have seen, could pay only £4 a-year (without land), was able to offer its minister £30 a-year in 1692, together with a house and land. It was the same in other congregations; and, besides this, many parishes were then able to secure the entire services of a clergyman, which previously were able to pay for only part of his services.

During the greater part of William's reign it is certain that the Ulster Scots increased with rapidity. Towards the end of that reign, as a result of English jealousy, a duty was placed on woollen goods exported from Ireland, so large as almost to destroy the trade. Many settlers now left the country, but they were generally English and not Scotch. On the other hand, the linen trade received special encouragement from William. A result was to increase the number of Scots by whom this industry was carried on, and also to bring a few French Huguenots into the country; but the Huguenot element was so very small that it failed to leave any racial results.

The tide of emigration from Scotland to Ireland flowed rapidly during the reign of King William. The first serious check that it received was in 1703, when an Act was passed with the object of preventing any further growth of Roman Catholicism. This Act contained clauses that were directed chiefly against the Ulster Presbyterians. With the approval of Queen Anne it was enacted that all public officers in Ireland should take the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the rites of the Episcopal Church. The result was to exclude Presbyterians from Parliament and from all public offices. A few who were less strict protected themselves by "occasional conformity," but the great body of Presbyterian officials resigned their offices, and consequently lost the emoluments attached to them.

The discontentment caused by these religious disabilities was soon increased by discontentment arising from increased rents and renewal "fines" imposed by Ulster landlords, which interfered with the already existing Tenant-Right Custom.

During the reign of King William Ireland had become prosperous, and we have seen that there was a continual stream of immigration from Scotland. The linen trade rapidly took the place of the woollen trade which the English Government had tried to extinguish, but which was still carried on by a system of smuggling.

As a result of this prosperity, landlords began to increase their rents, and the farmers of Ulster, no matter what may be their religious principles, have always objected to the increase of rents. The discontentment that sprung up among these Ulster Scots as a result of increased rents and religious disabilities produced emigration. During the previous century

religious disabilities had resulted in some emigration, but it was not sufficiently large to attract much notice. Now it began to be so great as to alarm the Government.

In 1718 the Lords Justices of Ireland wrote to the Lord Lieutenant:—
 “MY LORD—We have had accounts from most parts of the Kingdom, especially the North, of very great numbers of Protestants, with their families, shipping themselves off for New England, and other parts of the West Indias. A List has been laid before us of upwards of 1200 who have gone from two Ports in the North this Summer, and we understand that many others, since that list was given in, have transported themselves from those parts as well as from this Port.

“We thought this matter of such importance as to lay it before the Council, but not having been able to find any remedy, we conceived it proper to represent this affair to your Grace, in order to its being laid before the King, and at the same time to acquaint your Grace that those who thus leave the Kingdom are for the most part well affected to his Majesty’s person and Government.”

Although this emigration from Ulster to America was obnoxious to the authorities, it went on and increased. In 1729, it is said that out of 6308 emigrants who landed in Philadelphia no less than 5655 were Irish, and these Irish were almost all Presbyterians. Besides those who went to Philadelphia, there was a continual stream of emigration to other American ports.

So alarming did this emigration become to the Government that they made inquiry from Messrs. Iredell and Craghead, two Presbyterian clergymen, regarding the causes by which it had been produced. Mr. Iredell referred the matter to different presbyteries. The reasons assigned by the Presbytery of Tyrone were high rents, oppressive tithes, bad seasons, and the exclusion of Presbyterians from places of profit or power by the Test Act.

In 1727 Roman Catholics had been deprived of their power to vote at Parliamentary elections; but it does not seem that this exclusion caused emigration. Many years afterwards, Arthur Young said that they seemed tied to the parish in which their ancestors had lived, and that the emigrants from Ireland were almost all Nonconformists. But he consoled himself with the thought that the country was “left better by their absence.” Even in the first quarter of the last century very few Roman Catholics sought a home in America.

Dr. Thomas Reid, writing in 1823, says of the emigrants from Londonderry:—“It is quite certain that not one in a hundred is of the Catholic persuasion. These are, as it were, wedded to the soil, which they never voluntarily desert.” It is, therefore, certain that the Irish emigration, which assumed such great proportions about 1728, was almost altogether Presbyterian.

In November, 1728, a report was made to the Lord Lieutenant with

respect to the numbers that were shipped from Drogheda, Belfast, Coleraine, Londonderry, Killibegs, and Sligo. In March, 1729, a letter was written by the Lords Justices to the Lord Lieutenant, "advising that orders should be sent to the Plantations forbidding any grants of Crown lands there to be made to any persons who should leave Ireland without a licence."

In the entry books of King's and Queen's Letters of this date are many other documents relating to this subject, including the report of the Judges of Assize and a paper signed by the leading gentry of Ulster.

On the 11th February, 1729, the Lord Lieutenant wrote to the Lords Justices that the greatest part of the emigrants were Protestant Dissenters, who were well affected to his Majesty's Government—especially their ministers, who had a share of the Royal Bounty. He thought that if these ministers would put the people in mind of the fatal consequences to the Protestant interest in general, and to Ireland in particular, which must follow from this emigration, it would contribute to put a stop to the practice.

On the 8th of March, 1729, the Lords Justices wrote to the Lord Lieutenant as follows:—

"DUBLIN CASTLE, 8 *March*, 172⁹.

"MY LORD,

"Your Excellency having in your letter of the 11th past, signified to us that His Majesty had often expressed his Regal concern from the accounts which have been lately transmitted, that such great numbers of Protestants have left the North of Ireland with a view to settle themselves in America, and signified His Majesty's pleasure that we should inquire further into that matter, and transmit our opinions concerning the cause of it, as also, if any method can be found to prevent this growing evil. And having pointed out to us that the Dissenting Ministers, whose people are the greatest part of those that go away, and who must have a great influence on their hearers, might, if they would, on this conjunction more than ordinarily put the people in mind of the fatal consequences to the Protestant interest in general, and to Ireland in particular, which must necessarily attend this practice, and that such admonitions would very much contribute to put a stop to it.

"We did, for this purpose, send for the chief of those Dissenting Ministers who reside in this city, and required of them to give us in writing such accounts as they had received from their Brethren in the North of the causes of this infatuation, which we send enclosed to your Excellency. We objected against those paragraphs in their Representation which relate to the Sacramental Test, and on account of their Marriages and their Schoolmasters. That by the first they are not put under greater difficulties than their brethren in England; and as to the latter, they own that for some time past they have not had much reason to complain, and, therefore, that those instances seemed foreign to the

purpose. But they, insisting that they had received those reasons among the rest, for the present desertion of their people, we thought it proper to transmit their whole Memorial to your Excellency.

“We intend against the approaching Assizes to give directions to the next going Judges of each of the Northern Circuits to make inquiries further about the causes of this mischief, and when we get their informations we shall transmit them to your Excellency with our thoughts concerning this practice.

“We are, &c., Hu. Armagh, Thos. Wyndham, Wm. Connolly. To his Excellency, &c., Ld. Carteret, Ld. Lt., &c., of Ireland, at his house in London.”

The Lord Lieutenant replied to the effect that he had received their Lordships' two letters, together with a paper signed by Mr. Francis Iredell and Mr. Robert Craghead, which he had laid before His Majesty, and by His Majesty's command had transmitted to His Grace the Duke of Newcastle.

The Paper to which reference was made is as follows¹ :—

“To their Excellencies the Lords Justices & General Governours of Ireland.

“In obedience to your Excellencies' Command, We have perused and carefully considered the Information sent us in letters from Dissenting Ministers and others in the Province of Ulster, concerning the departure of many Protestants from that part of the Kingdom, In order to lay before your Excellencies a true and full account of what they contain, the substance of which is That many did transport themselves from thence last year to America, and a much greater number seem determined to go in the ensuing season, all of them being good subjects well affected to His Majesty, and most of them usefull in carrying on the Linen Manufacture. One great reason given by the people themselves for leaving the Kingdom, is the Poverty to which that part of the country is reduced, occasioned in a great measure, they say, by raising of rents in many places above the real value of lands, or what can be paid out of the produce of them, if any tolerable subsistence be allowed to the farmers using their utmost industry.

“That many who transported themselves last summer were extremely poor is evident, they say, from this consideration, that they were not able to pay for their passage, but in order to clear it had to hire themselves for some years to labour in the Plantations, and allowed the masters or owners of the ships the benefit of selling their services during the time agreed for.

“The Letters acknowledge, indeed, that among those who are gone or seem determined to go, there are some who were settled at easy rates, and that this in a few instances, perhaps, is to be accounted for by a

¹ Entry Books of Kings' and Queens' Letters and Reports, vol. 1 E. 2. 23 (Record Office, Dublin).

mere prospect of gain, or bettering their condition in some, in others by particular family incumbrances, but more generally by the shortness of their leases, and an Expectation that when they expire, they shall be laid under such an advance rent as, with other common burdens of the country, must quickly sink them into the same abject poverty to which they have seen others reduced from flourishing circumstances by the like methods. To prevent their being involved in such misfortunes they are inclined to leave the Kingdom while they have credit and some effects wherewithal to settle themselves abroad.

“In general the uncertain tenures of lands are represented as a very great discouragement, very few long or renewable leases have been granted for many years past, some have their farms only from year to year, others have leases for a very short term, whereby tenants are very much discouraged to improve, especially because the usual method of late when lands are out of lease, is to invite and encourage all persons to make proposals and set them to the highest bidder without regard to the tenants in possession, by which means considerable numbers of Papists have of late come into the room of Protestants, offering such high rents as Protestants cannot pay, and themselves either never intend to pay, or are enabled to pay by such means as honest Protestants cannot use.

“Our Letters further inform us that the severe methods used in recovering and collecting of Tythes and small dues, are very much complained of in the North, and insisted on by the people as one great cause of their being impoverished and laid under the unhappy necessity of leaving their country.

“That the tythes and other dues of the Clergy are generally set to Farmers, some of them Papists and others persons of bad character who, besides demands not formerly made such as tythes of potatoes, turf, &c., take advantage of the people’s omitting, through ignorance, to pay the small dues at the precise time when they are payable according to law, or to give legal intimation to draw the tythes in kind, and force them to agree on such terms as they please, which are often very exorbitant. Sometimes they are obliged to leave their corn in the field, waiting for an agreement with the Tythemasters, or their drawing the tenth, till it is damaged by the weather or by cattle, and these disadvantages the people must submit to that they may avoid suits against them in the Spiritual Courts, which are often tedious and chargeable, & in several instances have proved ruinous, the legal remedy in case of such severe proceedings not being to be obtained but at an expense they are not able to bear.

“They further complain of oppression by some Justices of the Peace, and by Manor and Sheriff’s Courts, of which they say the Judges of Assize have been so sensible in the Northern Circuits that they have often severely reprimanded Justices, Seneschals, and others for illegal and arbitrary Proceedings, yet the Grievance continues.

“The generality of the people who have transported themselves, or who seem determined to transport themselves, to America, being Protestant Dissenters, our Letters inform us that they give as a reason the peculiar discouragements which attend their Religious Profession, especially the legal incapacities they are under by the Sacramental Test, thereby they are put on a level with the Papists, the avowed and inveterate enemies of the Protestant interest. Their Gentlemen and more eminent Traders in Boroughs are incapable of being Justices of the Peace and Magistrates in Corporations, which they apprehend is a great disadvantage to the distribution of Justice in several places of Ulster. Themselves and their Posterity are disqualified for the lowest places of profit and trust under His Majesty, though their zeal for his service and for the Protestant succession cannot be doubted, having given undeniable proofs of it by risking even the penalties of the law when the exigencies of the Government called for the execution of the utmost power, in conjunction with their fellow-Protestants, for the public safety.

“The vexatious proceedings of Ecclesiastical Courts against them on account of their marriages, and against schoolmasters of their persuasion, are mentioned as hardships they labour under. For though they acknowledge such prosecutions have not been so frequent or so violent of late as formerly, yet still they have no legal defense against them. And they further complain of clauses in leases forbidding under the penalty of a very high additional rent, any meeting house to be built on lands demised by such leases, which they represent as a great discouragement, especially in some places, tending to defeat the design of the toleration granted them by law.

“On the other hand, they say there are many letters from their friends and acquaintance who have already settled themselves in the American Plantations, inviting and encouraging them to transport themselves thither, and promising them liberty and ease as the reward of their honest industry, with a prospect of transmitting their acquisitions and privileges safe to their posterity, without the imposition of growing rents and other heavy burdens, or a legal disability of exerting their zeal for the public good, and enjoying the proper rewards of it, in common with their fellow-subjects, which advantages they have not been able to obtain in Ireland, notwithstanding their earnest repeated applications under several successive reigns.

“These Reasons have a great weight added to them by the great scarcity of corn. For three years past the Harvests have been bad in that country, especially the last, insomuch that many farmers have not corn enough to sow their lands, and all the industry they can use otherwise is not sufficient to sustain their families, so that, being sunk in debt, to their landlords and others, they are in great distress groaning under a grievous calamity, and filled with dispiriting apprehensions of being reduced to utter beggary.

“The Dissenting Ministers in Ulster from whom we have received letters, do for themselves and their Brethren, as far as they know, utterly deny that they solicited, or any way encouraged, the people to depart out of the Kingdom. If there be any one instance to the contrary, they may hope it will not be imputed to the Body who disclaim it. They are perfectly sensible of the consequences prejudicial to His Majesty's Service and the Protestant Interest in Ireland, to both which they have been, and continue to be, zealously attached from principle and affection. If a great number of usefull Protestants shall depart, it is visible at the same time that their own interest must be diminished by their hearers leaving the country. We have heard but of two or three Dissenting Ministers, our Letters mention but one, who have entered into a Resolution of transporting themselves to America. What their particular inducements may be, we know not. But we are assured by those to whom we can give entire credit, that the generality of them incline to continue in their own country, and induce others to do so, and do all in their power for promoting the service of His Majesty and the Protestant and British interest in it, unless extreme necessity constrain them to go away. And indeed they seem to be not a little apprehensive of their being reduced to that necessity, though they can't think of it without the deepest concern; being at present reduced to a very low condition by the general poverty of their hearers, which affects them so much that the greatest part of them have not a tolerable support for their families.

“All this is most humbly submitted to your Excellencies's great wisdom by—FRANCIS IREDELL, ROBT. CRAGHEAD.”

Not dated, but enclosed in a letter of 8th March, 1728/9, which states it was made after 11th February, 1728/9.

These are the reasons assigned by Ulster Presbyterians in 1729 for their emigration to America. The means used by the Government to prevent this movement was without effect, as year by year the number of emigrants increased, and, before long, many farms were left without occupants. In 1764 the Rev. Thomas Clark of Cahans went to America with 300 of his people, and from other districts there was a similar exodus of the population. Worse than all, these hard-headed Presbyterians carried with them to their new home a bitter hatred of the nation that they had left, and of the Government by which they believed that they had been oppressed. When the thirteen colonies rose in rebellion, the Ulster exiles were the most terrible foes that Great Britain was fated to encounter. They first proposed a Declaration of Independence, and it was their dogged determination that prolonged the contest in the midst of defeat and disaster, and which at last secured a decisive victory for the great Western Republic.