

rebellions which menaced the very existence of the Protestant dynasty in England.

The economical and moral effects of the penal laws were profoundly disastrous. The productive energies of the nation were fatally diminished. Almost all Catholics of energy and talent who refused to abandon their faith emigrated to foreign lands. The relation of classes was permanently vitiated, for almost all of the land-holders of the country belonged to one religion, while the great majority of their tenants were of another. The Catholics, excluded from almost every possibility of eminence, and consigned by the Legislature to utter ignorance, soon sank into the condition of broken and dispirited helots. A total absence of industrial virtues, a cowering and abject deference to authority, a recklessness about the future, a love of secret illegal combinations, became general among them. Above all, they learned to regard law as merely the expression of force, and its moral weight was utterly destroyed. For the greater part of a century the main object of the Legislature was to extirpate a religion by the encouragement of some of the worst and the punishment of some of the best qualities of our nature. Its rewards were reserved for the informer, for the hypocrite, for the undutiful son, or for the faithless wife. Its penalties were directed against religious constancy and the honest discharge of ecclesiastical duty. It would, indeed, be scarcely possible to conceive a more infamous system of legal tyranny than that which in the middle of the eighteenth century crushed every class and almost every interest in Ireland.

The history of the penal laws should furnish a lasting warning to persecutors of all religions. Arthur Young asserts that the numerical proportion of the Roman Catholics in Ireland was not even diminished, if any thing, the reverse; and that it was admitted, by those who asserted the contrary, that it would take four thousand years, according to the then rate of progress, to convert them. It was stated in Parliament that

only four thousand and fifty-five had conformed in seventy-one years under the system; and what little the religion may have lost in number it gained in intensity. The poorer classes in Ireland emerged from their long ordeal, penetrated with an attachment to their religion almost unparalleled in Europe. With the exception of the inhabitants of Bavaria and the Tyrol, there is, perhaps, no nation in Europe whose character has been so completely molded and permeated by it, or in which skeptical doubts are more completely unknown.

The code perished at last by its own atrocity. It became, after a time, so out of harmony with the prevailing tone of Irish opinion that it ceased to be enforced, and the Irish Protestants took the initiative in obtaining its mitigation.

LVI.

IMPEACHMENT OF HASTINGS.—MACAULAY.

[Ireland was still in a state of agitation when the attention of the English Parliament became absorbed in one of the most remarkable of modern criminal trials. In 1773 Warren Hastings was made the first governor-general of India. During the twelve years of his administration he rendered inestimable service in extending and consolidating England's power in the East, but his glory was sullied by many crimes. Soon after his retirement from office he was impeached (1788) by the House of Commons, before the bar of the Lords, on charges of misgovernment in India. The trial dragged on for eight years, and, in the end, Hastings was acquitted; but the object for which the impeachment had been begun was attained. The crimes of Hastings have never been repeated, even by the worst of his successors.]

In the mean time the preparations for the trial had proceeded rapidly, and, on the 13th of February, 1788, the sittings of the court commenced. There have been spectacles more dazzling to the eye, more gorgeous with jewelry and