ABSTRACT

This thesis sets out to examine a medium-sized Co. Wicklow improving estate before , during and immediately after the great famine. The basic primary source used is the journal kept by the wife of the landlord throughout the 1840s ; using it and corroborative material , the lives led by Colonel Henry and Mrs. Elizabeth Smith on their estate of Baltiboys near Blessington, some twenty miles south of Dublin, are described and the condition of all living on the estate investigated.

There are four parts. In the first I establish the improving character of the Smiths and set their estate into the context of their neighbourhood. A number of points from their backgrounds are emphasised and the upbringing of the family and organisation of servants is examined to establish the principles on which the household was run at Baltiboys.

In the second part I analyse the organisation and administration of the estate , paying particular attention to the improvements that were inaugurated. I then examine in as minute detail as is possible with a basic source like a daily journal the lives led by the tenantry, craftsmen and labourers living on Baltiboys ; two test cases are looked at in detail to establish the quality of life led and the effectiveness of landlord control , marriage patterns and emigration.

The third part is a detailed examination ofthe two subjects that feature prominently in Mrs. Smith's journals , religion and education. I show what her own views were in general and as far as the main developments of her times are concerned. In particular ,

I chart the deterioration of relations with the local priests and the connected problems she had with the estate schools.

The first three parts are an attempt to illustrate and analyse the condition of this estate about which so much is known on the eve of the greatest challenge the Smiths' could have met. The last part examines how Baltiboys managed to survive , the parts played in this survival by Government help and those by all that had been achieved on Baltiboys in the previous fifteen years. The conclusion suggests ways in which what can be established as happening on Baltiboys has an importance beyond the estate.

THE SMITHS OF BAITIBOYS:
A CO. WICKLOW FAMILY AND THEIR ESTATE IN THE 1840s.

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Ph.D.

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1978

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PART I

The Smith Family, Baltiboys and Blessington.

Introduction

Two miles outside Blessington, the Co. Wicklow market town fifteen miles south of Dublin, a peninsula juts out into the reservoir that was formed forty years ago with the flooding of the confluence of the King's and Liffey Rivers. In shape it slightly resembles a capped and belled Punch-like figure gazing east towards Ballyknockan and the Wicklow Mountains. There is a modern bridge linking the northern tip with the road leading into Blessington; from it there is a prospect of an elegant two-storey early nineteenth century dwelling house clearly once the centre of the estate that supported it. This is Baltiboys House and the peninsula follows the outline of the original estate of Baltiboys which, rising to a height of nearly 1,000 feet above sea level, forms the bulk of the townland of Lower Baltiboys in the barony of Lower Talbotstown.

This house and estate in the eighteenth and nineteenth century were the property of the Smiths of Baltiboys and the purpose of this thesis is to examine them in the 1840s in an attempt to discover the lines on which they were organised, the various roles played by the Smith family, the condition of the estate on the eve of the Famine and how it managed to survive the greatest test imaginable to the Smiths' management.

The first Smith of whom anything is known is John Smith who died, according to the records in Blessington Church,[1] on the 23rd March

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1. I am grateful to Canon R.K.W. Lowe for so kindly allowing me to examine this most interesting record.

1790 "of a long, tedious illness, leprosie". It is possible that his presumably miserable end was to some degree compensated by the life of an eighteenth century squire that may be deduced from the story told in Ninette de Valois' autobiography[1] about her great-great-grandfather's "leap into the river on his favourite hunter - just a challenge to his horsemanship after a hunt supper", that was recorded on the old five-arched bridge. The eldest of his two sons was also called John and appears to have inherited his father's most rakish characteristics. He abandoned Baltiboys and spent much of his adult life in Paris where he acquired a wife and perhaps a new religion, which is unlikely fully to explain the lack of concern he felt about the impact of the 1798 rebellion on the area around Blessington. Where the incumbent of the parish carefully penned into the register that

> From May 23 1798 No Registry kept in this Time, the county being in a state of horrid, unnatural, unprovoked Rebellion, in which the PAPISTS murdered many Persons in cold Blood who had not carried Arms against the REBELS, but merely because they were PROTESTANTS,

the likely indifference of the landed proprietor of Baltiboys may be deduced from the fact that his only recorded reaction was to sell the lead from the roof of his house which had been partially destroyed. He eventually died in 1829 whereupon his younger brother Henry succeeded; he was with the help of his wife to restore the fortunes of the estate so that they were enabled to meet the challenges of the 1840s head on.[2]

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1. Ninette de Valois "Come Dance with Me" (London, 1957), p. 22[illegible].

2. She referred to the magnitude of this task in 1847: "We found a nice mess when we came home from India - rags, ruins, quarrels and six thousand pounds of arrears."

Henry Smith despite intermittently poor health had forged a career for himself in the 5th Bombay Cavalry[1], a regiment of the East India Company from which he resigned on succeeding to Baltiboys. His wife, Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, he met in India where her father was in the process of retrieving family fortunes hitherto set on a downward spiral by his unsuccessful political aspirations.[2] It is due to Colonel Smith's asthma, without which he probably would not have had to resign his commission, and his wife's organising abilities as she learned to play the major role in the running of the estate, that Baltiboys became transformed in the 1830s. That we know so much to be able confidently to refer to a transformation is due to the wealth of material contained in the unpublished source that is the basis of this thesis. Mrs. Elizabeth Smith of Baltiboys was an inveterate journaliser and from the first day of 1840 kept a diary from which their lives and those of the upper and humble classes around them can vividly be pieced together.

The Smiths' first task was to set about rebuilding Baltiboys House. We are fortunate to know a little of how they set about this, thanks to a different journal, this time kept in 1831 by Mrs. Smith's elder sister Jane[3] whose first marriage was to a Colonel Pennington. They visited Blessington in October 1831, and on Monday 10th they were driven to view the old house ("a mere ruin now") and the possibilities

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1. The Army List for December 1831, p. 17.

2. See infra. Part IV, ch. 3, p. 489.

3. A typescript is in the possession of Mrs. Smith's great-grand-daughter, ,rs. Moyra Fuller. The Grant sisters were inveterate scribblers and Elizabeth and Mary's literary earnings (no less than £100 one year) were a great help to their father when he fell on bad times. "I shall never forget my mother reading from the Literary Gazette a criticism in a new periodical "The Inspector" in which our contributions appeared and were named as the best (28. 2,1844).

it presented:

> It is now in a very curious state of abandonment. The house, I believe, was dismantled for the sake of selling the materials when the old proprietor determined to live abroad. But a great proportion of the walls are left standing and cover a very considerable area and with offices and hall there are more than twice the quantities of stones it would take to build a convenient mansion.

A difference of opinion emerged as to the site of the new house ("we spent a good long while in walking about, cogitating and arguing") but there was no doubt that their basic essentials lay to hand, as indeed did the skills of tradesmen[1] and craftsmen able to convert these raw materials into the classical facade of the late "Classic Irish House of the Middle Size"[2] that finally emerged. Ninette de Valois wrote of it:

> The original house was burnt in the rising of 1798; the house was now a long two-storied building with a spacious network of basement rooms. It was a typical Irish county house of about 1820-30, late Georgian in part, consisting of one main wing and two smaller ones. 3

This was to be the home of Colonel and Mrs. Smith and their family, as well as the centre of all that went on in the estate, through the 1830s and 1840s.

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1. For a detailed consideration of the tradesmen working on the estate in the 1840s see Part II, Ch. 3.

2. Maurice Craig Classic Irish Houses of the Middle Size (London 1976): although this elegant survey notes the "relative poverty" of the distribution of such houses in Wicklow down to the South East, its comment that one in Kilkenny three hundred feet above sea level is "mildly surprising" reinforces the opinion that the area around Blessington, similarly situated, was unusually well endowed, p.37.

3. Ninette de Valois, p. 4.

Anyone crossing the new bridge onto what is now the Baltiboys peninsula and catching sight of the old house situated in its demesne and surrounded by tastefully sited plantations would naturally assume that it had formed part of the patchwork quilt that was in this part of Leinster, as elsewhere in nineteenth century Ireland, the history of the relationship between landlord and tenant. In fact, and this is the justification of all that I have attempted in this thesis, because so much of the life of the family, the tenantry and the landless labourers on the estate can be pieced together from Mrs. Smith's journals and corroborated from other printed sources, this is an example where even in the absence of estate papers proper, in a very real sense it is possible to attempt the recreation of the lives led by most sections of society on the estate and even in the neighbourhood in the 1840s.

Chapter One

Baltiboys: A Co. Wicklow Improving Estate before 1840.

On 7th January 1840, a week after she had started the Journal[1] which was to be part of her life for the next forty-five years, Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys set out her intentions:

> It is for you, dear children, I am keeping this journal. I have often during my life done so before by starts for my mother or my sisters when we were separated, and I have often regretted that I had not continued to do it for myself feeling it might have been both an interesting and a useful record. Reading Mr. Wilberforce[2] determined me to begin even at this eleventh hour, and because it is the eleventh hour. My experience of life, my love for you, my anxiety about you, all make me anxious to devote myself to your welfare, and if it should be God's will to take your parents from you, my children, the voice of your mother from the grave may be a guide and a protection. I am not young - and I am not strong. I shall be 43 next May, your father will be 60 in March and he has been more than 25 years in India. Happiness, comfort, and care may lead us on yet many years - but we go sooner - before your principles are secured. An uninterupted course of prosperity you are not to expect nor would I ask it for you. God chastens whom he loves. But I long to see your tempers so controlled, your habits of industry and activity and kindness so fixed, your hearts so truly given to God that you may be enabled to bear the sorrows and disappointments of life with patience, as sent for your good by Him - that you may avoid the temptations of prosperity, diligently examining your hearts which will direct you right if you prove them faithfully remembering for God's sake to do your duty in that state of life into which it shall please Him to call you.

This extract from 7th January 1840 contains many of the characteristics of her writing which will need to be examined later - her concern for her family, their upbringing, their place in society,[3] her

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1. The hard-backed notebooks into which Mrs. Smith wrote her Journal entries are in the possession of her great-grand-daughter, Mrs. Moyra Fuller. It was copied and typed forty years ago; this is the version I have worked from.

2. Life of William Wilberforce by Samuel Wilberforce, 5 Vols. & 2 Vols. Correspondence (1838). This was bought by the local Book Club Mrs. Smith organised and at the auction taking place after all the members had read it, she retained the whole set at less than half price.

3. See Part I, Ch. 2 and 3.

religion[1] - and which hint at their value as a source, but for the moment its interest lies in the emphasis she places from the start on her Journal as a "guide and protection" for her family.

Colonel Henry Smith had married Elizabeth Grant in 1829 in India one week after he had received the news of his brother's death which left him the decayed estate of Baltiboys. By 1840 they had been a decade on the estate and had raised a family of three; her Journals are both a commentry on all that they achieved and how the rising generation might aspire to carry on their good work.

These Journals are the basis of my attempt to examine this family and this estate before, during and after the Famine years. Although they were to continue right down to the month before she died, they are fullest during this decade and conveniently, they can be considered as a unity with the family moving to lodgings in Dublin in August 1851.[2]

These Journals come firmly into that category described by Robert A. Fothergill as "the journal of conscience",[3] a sort of daily self-examination, but over the years she herself gives a number of different descriptions of what she was trying to achieve, from which a clearer idea of her motives emerges.

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1. See Part III, ch. 1.

2. The family's first move was to Kingstown, in fact, to lodgings at no. 1 Haddington Terrace; after a month they moved to a more central house at 14, Nassau Street.

3. Robert A. Fothergill, Private Chronicles: A Study of English Diaries (Oxford 1975) p. 83.

These range from providing "a safety valve at the time for my own great griefs", writing a "chronicle of my times" and "acting Bishop[1] Burnet to posterity", to the most immediate of practical purposes: "it educated myself in the way of my duties". Her most eloquent description was written after reading the letters between Charlotte and Humboldt[2] on 4th July 1853.

> What Charlotte was to Humboldt this odd journal is to me. There are natures not all sufficient to themselves, they must have a confidante, contemplative natures too, unsocial rather, yet they must speak their thoughts. Lord Jeffrey[3] used to utter his to Jane and me, the trees on Corstorphine Hill might perhaps have done for him, he had his Review too. We poets must utter, publish is another affair, but write we must if we have none to speak to. It is not in a spirit of arrogance that I say we, all are poets who think and feel and compare and remember; there are degrees in all ranks, the rank itself is an honour, a blessing, those on the lower lines have still a place and they rise, rise by their own improvement, and they feel it and it rewards them; and if they are more easily offended by contact with less intellectual natures, they have higher pleasure in an intercourse with superiours, whether in books, or by letter, or in conversation, or reflexion. Dear little journal, what a blessing you have been

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1. Gilbert Burnet (1643-1714) Bishop of Salisbury (DNB); Macaulay's History of England, ch. 7 contains an appropriate description which would have appealed to Mrs. Smith - "Alone among the many Scotchmen who have raised themselves to distinction and prosperity in England, he had that character which satirists, novelists and dramatists have agreed to ascribe to Irish adventurers."

2. William von Humboldt (1769-1836), brother to the celebrated naturalist, throughout a long public life in Prussia, corresponded between 1814 and 1835 with Charlotte, a girl who had deeply impressed him during a holiday at Pyrmont: the letters were edited and published in the 1840s - Mrs. Smith may have read Catharine M.A. Couper's Letters of William von Humboldt to a Female Friend (London 1849) and must have noticed, in order to write about the correspondence as she does, that after the initial meeting they never saw one another until "they were in the decline of life, and then only casually for a few hours". (Letters to a Lady by the Baron William von Humboldt (1849) with an Introduction by Dr. Stebbing, p. v).

3. Francis, Lord Jeffrey (1793-1850) the celebrated Scottish judge and founder of the Edinburgh Review, whose society Mrs. Smith and her family much enjoyed during her early days in Edinburgh: however one should not read too much into the DNB's comment that he was "chivalrous to women with whom he liked to cultivate little flirtations".

> to me, mine would have been a dreary life but for the companionship of pen, ink and paper; to sit and think is not sufficient, we must express our thoughts. There is just one disadvantage attending this indulgence, - I have to watch lest it become too engrossing, almost selfish and hinder the necessary activity in the discharge of duties.

This extract has a lot to say about her background, her views of how people can improve themselves, her relationship with her husband and her duties, but here they are blended to produce her apologia, and in the end she regarded her Journals above all else as a communion without which her life would have been the more humdrum.

There was also to be a practical use for them, which she foresaw in 1842: "Here ends October and if I intend this queer sort of Journal of mine to be at all interesting to us in our semidotage, when the fireside will be the better of the enlivening recollections of more active days, I had better write a little more regularly in it than I have done of late." It is perfectly clear from the Journals that Colonel Smith, after an active life as a soldier, was forced by illness even in the 1840s to leave a considerable part of the management of the estate to his wife. Much of the details of this she recorded in the Journals, and later he was to get great pleasure from her reading to him from them in his "semidotage". In the summer of 1856, by which time the Smiths had moved to Dublin, for example, he would come home early from his Club for her readings. Indeed she became conscious of their short-comings:

> ... at one time I kept them very carelessly, not entering half the events that occured to us and then glancing at them as if anyone but myself could possible understand these allusions to matters unchronicled. Still with all its imperfections, and they are many, it is excessively amusing to us who are interested in the details.

She does herself less than justice on this score. So few are the

"matters unchronicled" that there is little difficulty in using her writings to recreate not just the life and times of Baltiboys, but that of a whole neighbourhood.

One snag, however, she was aware of and described in July 1842:

> I have been thinking whether it has been quite right in me to set down for evil as well as for good in this written exposure of feelings which I intend to be read by my children all my private opinions of people and people's actions, some of them very near and very very dear to me. My tongue I know often goes too fast, my pen too, I suppose, for it runs on over the words just as the tongue does. However, dear children, you may just remember this that whether what I feel be wrong or right it is my honest impression at the time; though I may 'nothing extenuate' I certainly do not 'set aught down in malice'. 1

Similar doubts occurred for example in July 1856, when she describes the pleasure she too gets from reading to her husband. "Precious legacy it will be to Jack, only parts ought to be blotted out, I was in the habit of setting down my impressions too freely compromising people by too honest strictures - not fair - might offend or even hurt feelings, never right to do .... I am sure, however, that by and bye there is much set down that had better been omitted". In the end, however, there was enough of the successful writer in her to see that her Journals might be of profit to her son:

> Well weeded, corrected and names witheld it might bring him a good penny should the present love of family disclosures remain with the idle publick.

Occasionally these doubts prompted her to stop writing, but in the end the pleasure and sense of usefulness she derived from her Journals kept her going and in the process prevent us from adding her to those

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1. Othello, Act V, scene ii, lines 339-40.

"Victorian journals" which were "worthy but indistinguishable".[1]

She wrote in January 1855:

> I thought for this week back that I would give up this journal. It grows dull on my hands; age and troubles have cast a gloom over a once cheerful spirit, and the sameness of the life we lead is little calculated to revive it. But it was as the loss of a friend to me; for so many years it has been my only intimate companion, the repositary of most of my thoughts, my feelings, my cares, and such pleasures as have crossed a chequered path, that the want of some such safety valve seemed an evil. So here I am at the old egotistick[2] work again ...

And twelve years later in 1868, with another seventeen years of occasional writing in front of her, she confessed:

> I am just doubting whether it be worth while ever to set down any incidents in my quiet life here; the life is so quiet; the incidents so few, the effect of them on an old failing mind so uninteresting even to myself, to others useless. Who will wade through all these sheets when I am gone? What would be found in them to repay the trouble. I sometimes think of burning the whole set of papers to save my heir from the pain of doing it. When I was younger and busier and more alive, and when my General[3] had real pleasure in having "the journal" read to him weekly, then it was equal pleasure to me to write. It brought things to his mind which otherwise he might not have thought of. It educated myself in the way of my duties. Now my work is done, my other half is gone; the young with their different aims are of a different era; I am all alone,[4] and I

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1. Rosemary Dinnage thus dubbed all Victorian Journals with the exception of Kilvert (TLS Review of Fothergill op. cit. 24 January 1975); but she could hardly have come across Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys.

2. Elizabeth Grant although born right at the end of the eighteenth century preserved a number of spelling usages characteristic of that century cf. Barbara M.H. Strang, A History of English (1970) Pt. II, ch. 1.

3. This news took place when the nation was gripped by the Crimean War. On 2nd February 1856 she wrote: "We've got our promotion gazetted today. We finished a bottle of champagne at dinner in honour of our Brevet rank."

4. Both daughters were married; husband and son were dead by 1868.

> really think the less I have to say to myself, the better. The indifference of old age has most certainly crept upon me; nothing is so acutely felt as it used to be, nothing makes the same impression. "The tablet has hardened"; time for it after seventy years. It bore many a deep cut in its softer day.

And many of these cuts are to be followed through in her earlier journals; the last two entries here hint very strongly that when there were important events taking place about which she felt strongly, then it was to the Journals that she committed her opinions.

These Journals, then, are the basic evidence for any recreation of the life led at Baltiboys and its neighbourhood in the 1840s. She wrote, of course, when the impulse was strong, and she often wrote a great deal; each year of this decade contains some 75,000 words. Sometimes she writes of the past; usually about the present; and she is throughout concerned about her family's future. She is often as concerned about politics or religion as she is with the management of Baltiboys or some matter concerning her tenantry. She writes about Blessington and Dublin, Edinburgh and France, so that this is by no means a parish pump diary. From her writings, therefore, the condition of this estate in Co. Wicklow before, during and after the Famine can be gauged, together with the fortunes of all who lived or depended on it.

Much of the credibility of what is written in this thesis must depend on the value attached to the evidence in this prime source. Checks of a kind do exist that do a great deal more than merely confirm what is stated as a matter of fact by Mrs. Smith. The wealth of material about Baltiboys and all who worked there that was pain-

stakingly collected by the Griffith valuators[1] and then distilled down for the summary that was published are only the most impressive of the materials I have quarried among to build up as complete a picture as possible without relying solely upon the Journals. The Parish Register of Births is remarkably valuable[2] and the Public Records Office in Dublin, as well as wills and records of land transfer, also contains Board of Education Reports,[3] within which an equally impressive body of evidence can be studied that complements my one primary source. Moreover, it is not just that there are records here and in the Registry of Deeds or Valuation Office where the estate of Baltiboys or its proprietor bob to the surface whenever any official transaction took place. Between them they contain much that is vital in this attempt to examine the lives led by everyone mentioned in the Journals in the 1840s. There are two other respects in which what Mrs. Smith wrote need not be allowed to remain isolated and unverifiable. The wide range of Parliamentary Papers, the volumes of the Devon Commission report[4] in particular, and the mound of material in the State Paper Office pertaining to "Outrages",[5] are

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1. See Part II, Ch. 1, p. 115-6.
2. This proved of greatest value in establishing the relationships between the much-interconnected tenantry and labourers on the estate; see in particular Pt. II, Chs. 2, 3 and 4.
3. See Part III, Ch. 2.
4. As with every estate in Ireland in the 1840s, any examination of its fortunes during the Famine years starts with Devon; see Part IV.
5. See Part I, Ch.3, p.83-5.

examples of how the broad currents of the 1840s can be related to what was actually being recorded as happening in this one well-charted part of Co. Wicklow. Secondly, thanks to the Downshire Papers[1] and the assistance of small collections such as the Pidgeon Papers,[2] a real number of additional insights take place that illuminate conclusions emerging from the main body of the evidence in the Journals. The authenticity and accuracy, then, of this picture I have constructed does depend on one main source, but this can be checked and its degree of conviction tested.

There are also two important sources which Mrs. Smith herself wrote. The first was her autobiography of her early years in Rothiemurchus, Edinburgh and India before she married Colonel Smith in 1829 and prepared to return with him to start their renovation of Baltiboys. She wrote about these in June 1845:

> After breakfast and my little walk I write the recollections of my life which I began to do on my birthday to please the girls who eagerly listen to the story of their mother's youth, now as a pleasant tale, by and bye it will be out of a wish to feel acquainted with people and places I shall not be at hand to introduce them to. This effort of memory amuses me extremely. I live again my early years, among those who made the first impressions on my mind, many of them gone where I am perhaps slowly but very surely following, and I recall places very dear to my imagination ...

It is worth noting that as with so many aspects of her journalising, she writes both for the instruction of her family and for her own

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1. See Part I, Ch. 2. I refer to the Downshire Papers in the Belfast P.R.O. hereafter as D.P.

2. See Part III, Ch. 1, p. 285-6.

enjoyment. The completed manuscript was printed privately after her death, and then edited by John Strachey's mother and published by John Murray in 1898.[1] These often supply further detail about people she writes about and explain otherwise misleading points about her family.

The other source is the series of articles which she wrote for Chambers' Edinburgh Magazine[2] in the years from 1846 and less regularly, for such magazines as Howitt's.[3] In all she wrote forty-three articles for Chambers' between April 1846 and September 1853, of which a dozen were on Irish matters, the remainder dealing with topics from her childhood days in India or France. They were all written for money, and in all earned her nearly £120; the old account books at William and Robert Chambers' offices make it clear that some of this was to be sent direct to Baltiboys' agent, John Robinson, and it is reasonable to assume that the £20 earned in 1846 and sent to his Corn Merchant's offices at 20 and 21 Great Strand Street was to be spent on the estate.

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1. Memoirs of a Highland Lady: the Autobiography of Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, afterwards Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys. 1797-1830

2. William (1800-1883) and Robert (1802-1871) Chambers founded their influential magazine in 1832; Mrs. Smith met both brothers in 1847 (infra Pt. IV, Ch. 3) and was most impressed.

3. William Howitt's short-lived journal (three volumes were produced in 1847 but it was not, according to the DNB "a promising success") published a number of her articles; that his business methods were open to criticism is clear from Mrs. Smith's comment in July 1847 "what was my surprise on looking thro' the packet of Howitt's Journal last sent, reading on, article after article, to stumble upon my 'Thoughts on Irish Charities'".

One of these articles entitled "An Irish Sketch", published on the 19th September 1846 in the Second Series of Chambers', Number 142, is extremely important in that it suggests a great deal about what the Smiths did to Baltiboys in the eleven years before the Journals open. It deals with the experiences of a Northern Irish gentleman, Thomas Grey, who in the 1820s bought a Leinster estate which he proceeded to put on its feet again.[1] According to the article, much of the impetus came from his wife, which as far as the Smiths were concerned we know to be true, even if the motivation was different from that affecting Mrs. Grey ... she was in mourning for the successive deaths of all her children,[2] and found herself overcome by the poverty of a cabin she visited:

> But Mrs. Grey was not suffering from regret alone; she was enduring for the first time the feeling of self-reproach - awakening to the selfishness of her unavailing sorrow. It came upon her in this melancholy cabin - the spirit of life flashing on her prostrate soul - that she was mourning against her God's inflictions; wasting her existence on her own griefs, while a world of misery lay open before her, some of the bitterness of which she might exert herself to relieve. In a moment her nature seemed changed; new energies arose within her; her life seemed to begin again.

In the context of the article this may not sound convincing, but there is no reason to suppose that it may not accurately sum up the feelings

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1. The problems facing such an incoming purchaser in Ireland at this time were well known. Gustave de Beaumont for example wrote: "How can a new purchasor recognise the rights he aquires in the midst of this crowd of occupants, middlemen, and tenants, secured by anterior rights and often mutually pledged to each other." Ireland: Social, Political and Religious (London 1839), Vol. I p. 236.

2. Such a response must have been dictated by Mrs. Smith's own experience: a daughter Elizabeth died, a week old, in January 1834, of whooping cough (Blessington Church Records).

with which the Smiths approached their task in 1829.

Her account of the actual measures adopted by Mr. Grey to get the estate and tenantry back on their feet again, by way of contrast, has much more of a ring of authenticity about it. She described his first twelve months on his new estate:

> He was quietly acquainting himself thoroughly with the characters of his people, the capabilities of his land, and the condition of his neighbours; and he was arranging in his well-ordered mind the plan of operations which, almost imperceptively, changed this scene of desolation into a living reality of humble comfort.

His first task was to improve the lot of the labourers and ensure that where there was once hovels, there was now decent cottages:

> He argued that to do lasting good we must imitate Nature, who seldom employs violence to effect her changes, but working unceasingly, by hardly perceptible means, she never loses that which she has once gained. And as the desire for increased comforts began to display itself when the certainty of employment, and the regularity of their pay, and the comparitive independence of their condition, had produced the effect of stimulating their industry, and of developing a better order of feelings among them, then he gave full permission to his wife and niece to encourage the deserving by such little presents as were gratifying to their rising tastes.

The Journals show that this was the situation she saw at Baltiboys in the 1840s and she does not report any unrest amongst their labourers then, but does describe the conditions in which they lived and worked; the part played by the women may sound fanciful but the idea of regular visits in the later style of Octavia Hill[1] was central

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1. The really central point of comparison is more that Octavia Hill was responsible, albeit in an urban setting, for the same concerned sort of supervision and management that Elizabeth Smith took upon herself at Baltiboys: see W.T. Hill's biography (London 1956) and more especially her niece's compilation, Octavia Hill's Letters on Housing edited by Elinor Southwood Ouvry.

to Mrs. Smith's means of keeping control on the estate.

It was the smaller farmers, those on holdings under six-acres, that Mr. Grey was to have the greatest trouble with (this may have been the case with the Smiths as they wrought the hotch-potch the Colonel inherited into a manageable and more efficient concern, but throughout the 1840s such small farmers were not their main worry)[1]; they produced the same tired excuses to explain why each June and November they were not able to pay their rents.

> He used no harsh measures; there were no ejectments, there was no distraining and there was help. But there was a system laid down from which there was to be no departure - a proper course for cropping insisted on; under-letting for the future prohibited, no more cabins being permitted on a farm hereafter than were required for the accomodation of the labourers employed to cultivate it.

This was very much the methodical approach which had commended itself to the Smiths and they were also to leave the tenant-farmers with over 100 acres to improve themselves;[2] the result, she wrote at her most lyrical, was a paradise, "a little nest of honey-bees in the wilderness."

The conclusion to this article shows Mrs. Smith at her most severe, and her defence of her class is one of the clearest themes of the Journals, particularly as she had many trenchant criticisms to make as well: "Reader, this is not wholly an ideal picture. Many Irish land proprietors - a class which circumstances have brought into

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1. See Part II, Ch. 2 for details of the size of holding on Baltiboys in the 1840s and the problems each size presented.

2. See Part II, Ch. 1 and Appendix II, tables 1 and 2.

much unjust odium - are in a greater or lesser degree Mr. Greys. If our little sketch helps to do these men justice, it will serve a good end ..."

The benefits described by this revealing article were not only for the estate and family; they extended to the entire neighbourhood and they indicate that the author was well aware that progress on one estate must have some impact on the area.

> He had materially assisted in changing the character of the county. The landlords thus awakened, the tenantry, with the intelligence natural[1] to them, soon saw the advantages of larger farms, and of capital judiciously expended upon them. The district soon came to require more roads, and a market of its own, and such other conveniences within reach as their improving habits made the population sensible of the want of. The little untidy village bustled up into a half tidy town, with its weekly market and its market house, bringing to it strangers in want of another inn, and customers in want of a variety of shops, which multiplied as business grew. Planting, building, draining were going forward on all sides. The whole face of the country was changing; and more, the whole feeling of the country was changed. 2

Such was the effect she thought an improving landlord might have on his neighbourhood. Whether or not such an impact can be ascribed to Baltiboys' on the Blessington area is more doubtful, but there is a wealth of published and unpublished guides and descriptions relating to this area of Co. Wicklow and Co. Kildare which show clearly that

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1. Mrs. Smith never wavered in her belief that there were vast latent reserves of intelligence to be tapped as she directed those in need of help; it was only when this ability was turned into anti-social acts that it became "cuteness".

2. This is of course an ideal picture but there are many similar comments throughout the Journals stating her belief that yet another small improvement, such as any one listed in this article, marked another stage towards the radical improvement of their society.

these authors were in no doubt about the amount that needed to be done.

The Rev. G.N. Wright quoted an earlier opinion that the county resembled "a frize coat with a lace border"[1] and when he himself came to write about the inland areas around Blessington, he described them as "a country of a different character, and which probably will not afford ... much gratification".[2] He wrote about the road from Dublin through Blessington to Baltinglass which "has not yet been spoken of, because the country it passes through is not of that picturesque nature which alone could justify any lengthened detail of the objects occurring on it, in a work professing to be a picturesque tour."[3] Two years later "Gregory Greendrake"[4] made it clear that there was little sport or pleasure to be had here.

Much of this feeling of course derived from the memory of the impression made in Co. Wicklow by the '98, and the romantic age found more to admire in the sterner, more desolate areas where ecclesiastical remains prompted suitable thoughts. It must also have owed something to the natural reluctance of the guide to recommend wild and unimproved landscapes to their readers. By the 1830s, for example, the

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1. 1790? - 1877: the DNB describes him as "a miscellaneous writer of ... guide books and other works of little value". This quotation is in the Introduction to his Guide to the County of Wicklow, published in London in 1822. This earlier opinion (somewhat similar to James IV's view of Fife three hundred years earlier) he attributed to a Mr. Fraser, author of the General View of the Agriculture, Minerology, present State and Circumstances of the Co. Wicklow, published in Dublin in 1801.

2. Fraser, p. 115.

3. Ibid., p. 116.

4. Angling Excursions of Gregory Greendrake Esq. (Dublin 18?).

Post-Chaise Companion is able to approve of Blessington as "a pleasant but small place" marked by a "neat" church with "a good ring of bells", adding that it is a centre of notable dwellings, including Russborough and Baltiboys, "the seat of Mr. Smith".[1] H.D. Inglis in his Ireland in 1834 found Wicklow to be "a county ornée, full of villas and gentlemen's seats".[2]

However, perhaps by the time that Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Hall came to visit the area for material for their celebrated guide, opinion had gone back to the ideas of the 1820s. They wrote:

> Leaving un-noticed nearly the whole of the western district (of County Wicklow) through which there is but one road, a wild and cheerless one bordering on the counties of Kildare and Carlow - a district comparatively barren of interest, except to those who admire nature in a form that has scarcely altered since the creation. 3

In spite of this unflattering reference to her part of the county, Mrs. Smith after reading the book wrote in November 1841 that it was "admirably illustrative of low Irish, character in which there is so much good even great combined with serious evil and a perversity there is no overcoming in this generation at least".

A more factual description of the parish of Boystown or Baltiboys comes from the Topographical Dictionary of Ireland compiled by Samual Lewis (in 1837)[4]. It describes it as a parish of some 20,000 statute

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1. The Post-Chaise Companion or Traveller's Directory through Ireland (Dublin 1786) p. 263.

2. Ireland in 1834: a Journey Throughout Ireland during the Spring, Summer and Autumn of 1834, H.D. Inglis, p. 29.

3. Ireland: its Scenery, Character, etc. (Three vols., London 1841-3) Vol. 1, p. 195.

4. First Edition, London 1837, Vol. 1, p. 220.

acres in the Barony of Lower Talbotstown; two thirds of this are mountain and the remainder chiefly pasture land with only a small area under tillage. Over-all the system of agriculture is thought to be improving, and the number of gentlemen's seats mentioned is not only an indication that they had pledged themselves to purchasing the Dictionary beforehand, but also that where earlier travellers had seen desolation, Lewis described a prosperous part of Ireland's richest province. The houses of Russborough, Tulfarris, Humphreystown, Willmount, Stormount and Baltiboys ("the seat ... of Lieut. Col. Smith who has recently erected a handsome mansion in the demesne, which commands some fine and extensive views") as the Journals are to make clear, all in this one parish, were the centres of an inter-related neighbourhood whose landlowners were in no doubt about the improvements of the last generation.[1]

The Parliamentary Gazeteer of Ireland is more factual still and describes it as ...

> ... a parish in the Barony of Lower Talbotstown, 2 1/4 miles S. by W. of Blessington, Co. Wicklow. Leinster. Length 6½ miles; breadth 5 3/4; area 25,134 acres 2 roods 3 perches - of which 38 acres 25 perches are water. Population in 1831 3,235, in 1841 3644. Houses 556. The surface is prevailingly mountainous, bold and granitic; yet includes the greater part of the beautiful vale of the King's river and is traversed south south-westward along the course of that stream by the road from Dublin to Baltinglass. 2

It is therefore a reminder of the basic geographical difficulties which faced improvers of this part of Co. Wicklow.

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1. See Part I, Ch. 2.

2. Dublin 1844, p. 275.

Baltiboys, moreover, in common with the rest of this area had suffered much in 1798. Robert Fraser's General View of 1801 described how

> Almost every house in this neighbourhood has been destroyed except Russborough, which is formed into a garrison. Captain Hornige [sic], opposite to Russborough, has a very improved farm, and is beginning to rebuild, and carry on his improvements. In this neighbourhood cultivation appears to have been fast advancing towards the mountains; in some of which particularly Baltiboys, the limestone gravel is found at a considerable height up the elevated sides. [1]

Such advantages bore no weight with John, Colonel Smith's brother, for whom family tradition relates that the '98 was such a disillusionment that he spent his leaves from the 4th Dragoon Guards in Paris, his mother's home, and not Ireland. The estate went to rack and ruin and middle-men took over. Ambrose Leet's Directory[2] of 1814 lists the occupier as a "Mr. Dorker", who was probably the father of the later Darkers who farmed and acted as Colonel Smith's Bailiff and Steward.[3]

There are few references to these thirty years of neglect in the Journals, so to get some idea of the sort of impression similar estates in similar condition made on observers and thus obtain an impression of what the Smiths inherited in 1829, it is necessary to remind oneself of how appalling many outsiders thought they were.

Gustave de Beaumont's book on Ireland was published in 1839 and although much of what he wrote was coloured by his solution for

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1. p. 97.

2. A Directory to the Market Towns, Villages, Gentlemen's Seats and other noted Places in Ireland (Dublin) 1814.

3. See Part II, ch. 2 for the role of the Baltiboys Steward.

Ireland's problems ("It may be fairly presumed that whenever Ireland shall have small proprietors, the greater part of the miseries of the country will cease")[1], his general descriptions of neglected, unimproved estates must have applied to Baltiboys during its abandoned years. "Every estate in Ireland, great or small, is infected with a kind of incurable leprosy. It is covered with an immense population of small tenants, whose burden must be borne by the person who becomes proprietor."

Anthony Trollope of course knew the Ireland before the Famine years very well[2] and his Castle Richmond contains one of the best descriptions of the sort of hopeless complications which afflicted estates left to rack and ruin. "It was one of those tracts of land which had been divided and sub-divided among the cottiers till the fields had dwindled down to parts of acres, each surrounded by rude low banks, which of themselves seemed to occupy a quarter of the land ... these had been bisected and crossected and intersected by family arrangements, in which brothers had been jealous of brothers and fathers of their children, till each little lot contained but a rood or two of available surface."[3]

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1. Vol. 2, ch. 4 contains his observations on the state of landed property in Ireland.

2. He was employed by the Post Office for ten years from 1841 on what he described as "inspecting tours ... chiefly into Connaught" (An Autobiography, 2 vols. (Edinburgh 1883) Vol. 1 p. 82) but in the process claimed to have got to know the country as well as any man.

3. Castle Richmond (London 1860). It is perhaps worth noting that Mrs. Smith by August 1842 was familar enough with his writings to describe a conversation as being "à la trollope".

This drastic state may not have been reached at Baltiboys, for we do know what Mrs. Smith's sister, Jane Pennington,[1] wrote about what she saw in 1831 by which time very few of the projected improvements can have taken root. She describes how Colonel and Mrs. Smith with their family were resident on the estate in a cottage at Burgagemoyle and much of her October visit was spent in planning the new house. Most of her Diary describes the various options, but, even remembering that she was not looking at the estate with the eyes of a de Beaumont or Trollope, she does notice some other aspects of Baltiboys.

> It is all a hill divided into four farms that run from one base to the other right over the top so that each tenant has each exposure. There is a very good road quite round the hill. It is not cultivated all the way to the top where a good deal of grey rock appears. We passed two of the farm houses which looked very respectable and having accomplished our tour proceeded to drive in the direction away from Burgage to shew me a little of the country.

The next day Tuesday 11th October she wrote: "At Baltiboys we were met by a young man of highly respectable manners and appearance. He was neatly dressed and put me in mind of one of our better sort of highlanders. This man has his farm in good order and is ever a day behind with his rent."

It is impossible to say whether this shows that the estate was not in so parlous a condition in 1829, or that a great deal of work had been done in the Smiths' first two years there. It is more than likely that the Smiths' feelings were similar to those expressed by

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1. Supra. p. 3.

the hero of Trollope's novel The Macdermots of Ballycloran[1] (written in 1847 and described in his Autobiography[2] as "... a good novel and worth reading by any one who wishes to understand what Irish life was like before the potato disease, the famine and the Encumbered Estates Bill) as he gazed at the ruins of Bally cloran: "the usual story, thought I, of Connaght gentlemen; an extravagant landlord, reckless tenants, debt, embarassment, despair and ruin." Fifteen years later, Mrs. Smith recalled a reply she received from one of the tenants in 1830, which underlined how much work there was to be done to restore the estate's fortunes:

> When I look back on the condition in which we found our pretty little property, I can hardly believe that fifteen years should, or could, have worked out so improved a state of things. Land neglected, mud hovels ruined, farm offices wanted, proper fences unknown, meat seldom tasted, rags for clothing, all in debt, in dirt, in utter ignorance of everything; this was what we met the memorable day that Pat Lalor answered my inquiry as to who were all that mob of beggars with 'Thim's the tinints.' 3

That this was the family tradition too is clear from the short preface to the Memoirs of a Highland Lady, which Lady Strachey wrote based on what she learned from Mrs. Smith's daughters. She describes how Baltiboys in 1829 was "an estate in a condition of utter neglect, the tenants poverty-stricken and ignorant - poor ragged creatures with small holdings, no knowledge of farming, and hopelessly in arrear with

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1. 3 Vols (London 1847) Vol. 1, p. 4/5.
2. Supra. p. 94.
3. 28 October 1845.

their rent.[1] The decision to rebuild the house provided that basis of employment which was to help start the process of restoring the fortunes of all depending on the estate. Other measures followed in the 1830s. "By degrees, year after year, small holders were bought out; they were helped to emigrate, and their holdings thrown into the larger farms, and this delicate business was managed without causing a murmur; opportunities were watched for, and those departing were always furnished with the means of setting up elsewhere."[2]

Certainly the area produced a very favourable impression on Christopher Barrett who surveyed Lower and Upper Baltiboys for the projected Ordinance Survey six inch map between the 3rd and 10th August 1838.[3] In accordance with the Director, Thomas Colby's instructions, information not of a strictly cartographical nature was collected ("the surveyors' memoirs are an endlessly absorbing social reflection"[4]) which, although not all of equal value (Thomas O'Connor's letter, for example, written from Blessington in January 1839 speculated on the origins of Baltiboys: "It is difficult to conjecture with any degree of probability what the Irish name is, in as much as it is

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1. Highland Lady, ob. cit. pvi.
2. Ibid.
3. See the Field Books for Talbotstown Lower ("plotted and examined in 41 days by Pr. Wm. Crocker") in the Irish Ordinance Office in Phoenix Park.
4. Dr. Roy Foster's review of J.H. Andrews' "A Paper Landscape: The Ordinance Survey in Nineteenth Century Ireland" in TLS 6 February 1976.

also written Boystown. Which indeed would induce me to think it is called after a family name"[1]) nevertheless provided a valuable description of the area on the very eve of Mrs. Smith starting her Journals:

> Colonel Smith holds a part in his own possession. There is a fine dwelling house and other buildings ... ornamental ground and garden. There are no principal roads through it.
>
> The Parish (of Boystown) lies in a good situation for grazing ... being watered by the rivers Liffey and King's river, the land in general is in a good state of cultivation and improvement, the manure for the most part is dung. The houses in general are well built, chiefly of stones.

The emphasis on grazing, the abundance of dung for fertilizer and the lack of mud cabins will be set later against the detailed survey made under the Griffith Valuation three years later;[2] in very general terms these Ordinance Survey Field Books show how much improvement must have been made in the decade since the Smiths returned to Baltiboys.

At any rate the over-all pattern of what happened to the estates in the Blessington area is clear. The catastrophe of 1798 was followed by years of neglect, slow improvement and consolidation, so that one traveller's tale that does ring true is that of Thackery who in 1843 published his recollections in The Irish Sketch-Book. The road from Dublin to Kilcullen through Blessington impressed him.

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1. "Letters Containing Information relative to the Antiquities of the Co. Wicklow collected during the progress of the Ordinance Survey in 1838". Royal Irish Academy.

2. See Part II, Ch. I and Appendix II.

> One has glimpses all along the road of numerous gentlemen's seats, looking extensive and prosperous; and the road passes more than one long, low village, looking bare and poor, but neat and whitewashed. It seems as if the inhabitants were determined to put a decent look upon their poverty. [1]

Between Naas and Kilcullen he was pleased with the way that the reclaimed land was covered with the peasantry's whitewashed cottages, each with its garden full of potatoes and cabbages; he was moved indeed to write of "this pretty, rustic republic".[2]

He stayed for some days with Mr. P..... of H.....town (who from the evidence would seem to be the same Mr. Purnell of Halverstown that Carlyle stayed with in 1849[3]) where he was much impressed with the organisation of the estate and the contentment of the tenantry.

These long descriptions of a part of rural Ireland where the tensions were not self-evident and every traveller had his own panacea were written, of course, by an aspiring author who was perfectly capable of dipping his own pen in vitriol. They were read by Mrs. Smith ("little gossipping book") and she wrote on 9th July 1843:

> The children drank tea with us and Mr. Titmarsh occupies us till bedtime. He is delightful - Ireland to perfection - there is no use in singling out an expression or an anecdote or a page. Every line is truth itself - would that every Irish man and woman would read it and reflect on it, the book I mean which Mr. Thackery, under the name of Titmarsh, has written.

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1. Collected Works of William Makepeace Thackery (London 1911): p. 292, "Paris Sketchbook" and "The Irish Sketchbook".

2. op. cit. p. 293.

3. Reminiscences of my Irish Journey in 1849, Thomas Carlyle, ed. J.A. Froude (London 1882) p. 71 and 79.

It was natural for her to agree with his description of the peace and growing prosperity of their part of Co. Wicklow, but as she knew how it had in their own case been the result of all those years of hard work since their return and she was in later entries to refer to the contrast between the results and the starting point, the path traced by Mr. Grey in Chambers' through to Thackery looks an accurate if impressionistic picture of what happened in the years before Mrs. Smith's Journals open in January 1840.

Chapter Two

Ancestry and Family

All the available sources indicate that between 1798 and the Famine this distinctive corner of Co. Wicklow changed greatly and for the better. A close reading of Mrs. Smith's Journal and other sources from which this conclusion is derived suggests that the spirit of improvement had bitten fairly deeply by the 1830s, so that the changes demanded by altered agricultural prices[1] in the post-war era had to a large extent taken place.

The Journals themselves contain a tremendous amount of information which help to explain these changes and enable us to assess their effect; it is doubly valuable as a chronological account of life at Baltiboys through the landlord's wife's eyes and how it compared with what was happening on neighbouring estates. In the same way that the changes affecting the organisation of the estate are highlighted by the very detailed information in the Griffith Valuation surveys, so the Journals enable us to speculate about matters which are not revealed by bare statistics and which illuminate this whole process of successful change.

In the first place we learn a lot about the background, character and relationship of the Landlord and his wife, which goes far to explain their belief that their whole family was necessarily involved in what happened on the estate and in the household, and as a result the style and form of their upbringing was determined. Family,

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1. R.D. Crotty, Irish agricultural production: its volume and structure (Cork 1966), Ch. 2 'The Years of Crisis', pp. 35-65.

household, estate and neighbourhood were inextricably inter-involved very much in the way suggested by her article on the experiences of the fictionary Mr. Grey.[1]

Mrs. Smith was born Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus. She retained to the end of her days an intense pride in her Highland ancestry which markedly affected her view of her position in Ireland. This comes over very clearly when she writes of her reactions to the memoirs of Sir James Mackintosh,[2] whom she had earlier known in Edinburgh; she is sympathetic towards his account of the tedium of social life in Bombay,[3] a city she also knew, because ...

> here I feel this too a little, the people are not sufficiently educated to be to me what my earlier friends were, but there is much worth and much talent and much kindness among them. And I have sobered myself down to be quite happy with "good home brewed ale" and to think of Highland ... days as of a glass of champaign not often attainable.

The wife of the proprietor of Baltiboys, therefore, was not overwhelmed by her social position and both her ancestral home and her days growing up in the "Athens of the North", the Edinburgh of Lords Cockburn and Jeffrey, provided her with memories and points of comparison which enabled her to hold her head high in Co. Wicklow society.

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1. 'Supra. p. 16-19.

2. Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh, 2 Vols. London (1835).

3. Op. cit. Vol. 1, p. 207-219.

Rothiemurchus[1] was so remote then that even the Laird's household had to practise self-sufficiency of a sort which was to prepare her well for the problems of making ends meet during her married life. Anyone who had been brought up to the sort of independence practised by the Grant household, as described in the Memoirs of a Highland Lady, had a reservoir of knowledge to cope with most emergencies:

> At this time[2] in the Highlands we were so remote from markets we had to depend very much on our own produce for most of the necessaries of life. Our flocks and herds supplied us not only with the chief part of our food, but with fleeces to be wove onto clothing, blanketing, and carpets, horn for spoons, leather to be dressed at home for various purposes, hair for the masons. Lint-seed was sown to grow into sheeting, shirting, sacking, etc. 3

Her Highland background affected her in other ways which were to have some influence over her in Ireland. Her pride in these origins was to stand her in good stead in the circles she moved in, enabling her for example to deal firmly with the pretensions of her neighbour,

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1. Her roots in Spey-side were one of the influences she most returned to in her Journals ("I must write you some Highland tales, dear children, or you will not know your mother well" March 1840); the other was her childhood days in Edinburgh when she counted herself fortunate to come within the circle of that radical Whig set dominated by Francis Jeffrey (supra. p. 8, footnote 3) and Henry Cockburn (whose Memorials of His Own Time is the same sort of historical source as Elizabeth Smith's writings).

2. Mrs. Smith's early days were divided between Rothiemurchus, Edinburgh and London, depending upon the vicissitudes of her father's political and legal career; however she spend all of 1812 to 1814 in the north.

3. Highland Lady, p. 179-180.

Lady Milltown at her most disagreeable in 1847 ("all airs, talking grand, undervaluing everybody"[1]): "she had a taste of highland pride to digest her folly with." And the following year when the neighbourhood was much impressed with the connections of her future son-in-law[2] with the Earl of Erne, she noted: "What are all their pedigrees to a Highlander? Something like Baillie Jarvie's weavers and spinners to Rob Roy."[3]

It also acted as a sort of romantic back-drop to her life; thus in October 1845 when there is a chance of a visit to Rothiemurchus she describes her excitement ...

> I shall think it a dream, nor can I think even now of the plan with calmness. I who fancied every feeling of enthusiasm dead; but we mountain children never lose the love of fatherhood; true as the needle to the pole our hearts turn ever to our heathery hills, the pine forests, the wild burn, the lonely loch and the deep feudal love of our people.

This was another important point, for what she remembered of the relationships between landlord and tenant at Rothiemurchus coloured what she expected of equivalent relationships in Co. Wicklow. She was

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1. See Part I, Ch. 2, p. 59-62.
2. James King, son of a Dublin merchant.
3. She quotes a number of stories in the Highland Lady which show that she was perfectly familiar with the strong connection folklore established between Rob Roy and her ancestral lands (p. 186 and 482-3); this combined with her personal knowledge of Scott (although she did not know him as well as sister Jane about whose visit to Abbotsford Mrs. Smith wrote in the Highland Lady "They rode together on two rough ponies with the Ettrick Shepherd and all the dogs, and Sir Walter gave her all the Border legends and she corrected his mistakes about the Highlanders". p. 388) to make geneology a subject on which she was expert.

used to a landed society where the proprietors were active and improving and resident, and where she believed their virtues were recognized by an appreciative tenantry; this comes out for example from her comments after meeting Highland friends in Edinburgh in October 1846.

> The people though changed in many respects for the worse yet still retain their love for the family though such affectations are not yet extinct among them, they could easily be revived and will be when the lairds come, their characters will rise again when their best feelings are in exercise.

Her Highland days, then, were a source of inspiration to her as she attempted to recreate similar conditions at Baltiboys; they were also a yardstick as to the dégree of success she was enjoying.

Her father, Sir John Peter Grant, Chief of the Clan Grant, influenced her as strongly as her background. She wrote about both in August 1849, when she took off formal mourning for him after the customary full year:

> I wish it were more my disposition to dwell on the present and the future instead for ever living on the past .... Then there was something in the highland position, the Chieftainly state and the wild scenary and the feudal feelings, all so high-wrought that existence elsewhere is tame in comparison - a dream indeed, it all went with my father.

In point of fact what did depart with her father was the comfortable landed base on which the family's economic fortunes depended. He was possessed by an ambition which was to ruin him. He neglected his estates and clan for the law, and in turn neglected his career as an advocate for politics. By 1817 he was member of Parliament for Grimsby but the family had had to move from number 7 Charlotte Square (their original Edinburgh town house designed by Robert Adam) to humbler Picardy Place. The following year he lost this seat ("a

richer competitor carried all the votes"[1]) and it was a few months before his Whig friends found him a seat at Tavistock, until that is the sons of the Duke of Bedford should be ready for it.[2] In her "Memoirs" Mrs. Smith wrote:

> How much better it would have been for him had he remained out, stuck to the Bar, at which he really might have done well had he not left ever so many cases in the lurch when attending the House, at which he made no figure. He spoke seldom, said little when he did speak, and never in any way made himself of consequence. 3

No matter how great his talent, there was little opportunity in those rigourously divided days for a Whig of promise. A radical M.P. at the time, Samual Rommilly, whose Autobiography[4] Mrs. Smith read in January 1841, mentioned her father as "among the clever men at the Scotch Bar whose politicks were in the way of their advancement".[5] By 1827 his last chance and his protection against his creditors (his son William had taken upon himself £60,000 of his father's debts) went with the Duke of Bedford's decision that the time was now ripe

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1. Highland Lady, p. 301.

2. Ibid., p. 399: "The Borough of Tavistock, for which my father had sat in the last two Parliaments, was now wanted by the Duke of Bedford for his wonderful son, little Lord John Russell." The DNB's summary of this part of Lord John's career reads: "He sat in the Parliament of 1812 for Great Grimsby, Lincolnshire, and in the two subsequent Parliaments for Tavistock."

3. Ibid., p. 301.

4. Memoirs of Sir Samuel Rommilly written by himself with a selection from his Correspondence, 3 Vols., London 1840; at their Book Club auction in August 1841 Mrs. Smith obtained this for six shillings.

5. I have not succeeded in tracing this reference in his Memoirs.

for his son Lord John Russell to set out on his career. That same year a solution was found when Lord Glenelg, a kinsman, secured a judgeship in India for him and the family departed to the first security they had known for some time.[1]

Her father's dismal career was an ever-present warning and it affected her views on politics, her family's ambitions and how ruling classes should be brought up. It must have given her some of the resilience with which she mastered the crises in her own life and some of the solutions she adopted to help her parents were to be of use later; it was during the low-point of the winter of 1827 that she began to write for Blackwoods', Fraser's Magazine and the Inspector. It also meant that when she read Lockhart's Life of Sir Walter Scott immediate parallels came to mind as she compared their two careers, and she concluded "we are none of us where we should have been as the heirs of such parents." Even so, although she was well aware of the disastrous effect her father had had on his family and how sharply many of her beliefs were defined as a result, she always was grateful

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1. Mrs. Smith told the Story (Highland Lady, p. 373) of how this appointment originated at the time of George III's celebrated visit to Edinburgh in the autumn of 1820. "Lord Conyngham, the Chamberlain, was looking everywhere for pure Glenlivet whisky; the king drank nothing else. It was not to be had out of the Highlands. My father sent word to me - I was the cellarer - to empty my pet bin, where was whisky long in wood, long in uncorked bottles, mild as milk, and the true contraband gout in it. Much as I grudged this treasure it made our fortunes afterwards, showing on what trifles great events depend." The DNB, more prosaically, notes that "In 1827 he went to India as a puisne judge ..."

for the care and attention with which he had supervised her upbringing and used it as a model for her own children. Indeed soon after starting her Journal she wrote that it was his efforts which had brought success to his children and as far as she was concerned, "every hour since I was separated from him, I have felt that value of early constant intercourse with such a mind as his."

On occasion she compared her days in Rothiemurchus with their situation in Wicklow, although not always in the tone of a lament she used in December 1850 before the wedding of her daughter Annie to the James King[1] whose links with the Earl of Erne had earlier aroused her scorn:

> Oh, the days when I was young - the merry days when I was young - the brilliant highland days, dogs, ponies, guns, gamekeepers, in fact the grouse shootings - all the glens alive - all the houses full - a regular bustle of pleasure. My poor girls have no fun; their life is really dull; nothing can exceed the utter stupidity of this neighbourhood, besides the Colonel and I are exceedingly stupid ourselves; he never cared for anything but hunting, rather indeed avoided society and I was too well pleased to be quiet to attempt to counteract his indolent shyness; then our income is small and two thirds being spent outside the house, very little was left for within, so Annie has married early.

There must have been times when such contrasts came easily to her pen, but her unflattering portrait of Colonel Smith is far from fair, and it is only at moments of stress like this that she picks on his weaknesses.

Henry Smith's father came from a similar landed background to his wife's[2], but there was a real contrast between the distaff sides of

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1. Supra. p. 34.

2. Although he was always aware of the liklihood of his succeeding; Mrs. Smith's father only succeeded on the death of an uncle. (DNB).

their familes. Mrs. Smith traced her mother's origins to that family of Ironsides who came over with the Conqueror and settled in Houghton-le-Spring. Colonel Smith's grandmother had been one of a famous quartet of sisters who came from a mud-floored farmhouse in the townland of Elverstown Great,[1] close by Baltiboys but in Co. Kildare, and each married exceedingly well. On 28th July 1841 the Smiths visited this house and that evening she wrote down her reflections which owed as much to her own family's history as to her husband's:

> Of all these people so grand in their day few now remain and they have most of them fallen into a very inferiour station from what they should have occupied had they followed up the fortunes of their birth by good conduct and industry, but the idleness in which most of the sons were reared and the very reprehensible plan of dividing the property however small among all the children of the family just kept them from starvation without exertion.

There was one obvious conclusion which was to influence her in the methods she used to educate and bring up her family, but it all depended upon their being a "head to keep them together to gain respect for them and to have influence in pushing forward." It would be, as the eldest son, his task to "keep up the consequence of the race" and in particular he would have to educate the younger members of the family "teaching them that to their own industry and the interest of the elder they can alone look for success in life". The results, especially for a Grant of Rothiemurchus, were wholly desirable: "It gives them a pride in their name, a love for it that prompts them full

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1. Somewhat ironically, this same farmhouse was to be occupied throughout the 1840s by one of the most troublesome of the 100 acre farmers on the estate, William Rutherford. See Part II, ch. 3, p. 174 and ch. 5, pp. 250-8.

as much as any individual benefit to exert themselves for its owner."

Such involvement however depended on the health of the pater-familias and Colonel Smith had been so wracked with asthma in 1829 that he had had to be invalided out of the East India Company's service on a pension and was to be in poor shape for the rest of his life. Nevertheless, Mrs. Smith concluded on the sort of note that emphasises her membership of the landed class at a time, despite misfortune, when they were at their most self-confident and optimistic.

> How rarely do we see such a race decay, no, but rise every succeeding century till the humble possessor of a few acres has swelled into the Lord of a wide domain, his name honoured in the Annals of his country[1] from those younger branches who have upheld it among Warriors, Statesmen etc. All this grand train of reflection passed through my mind on our road home round the hill while little Annie laughed at my silence.

It was entirely logical with such a set of beliefs behind them for the Smiths to concentrate on attempting to increase the size of Baltiboys whenever the chance occurred.

Henry Smith, of course, was destined to follow, as a younger son, the path of the "warrior" and thus it was that he went to the 5th Bombay Cavalry until 1829 when he married, inherited Baltiboys and was advised to abandon a career in India. His wife did not believe, whatever his admirable characteristics, that he had it in him to make a real career for himself there, as she wrote about a con-

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1. This suggests that the future enlargement of Baltiboys was far from unpremeditated; however it was to take place under Mrs. Smith's management rather than that of her son. See Conclusion, and p. 156, footnote 2.

versation with their great friend the local Doctor, George Robinson[1] in March 1842:

> he gossiped a good half hour - all sorts of subjects but the last was the Colonel whom he pronounced to be the perfection of manly character, a conclusion arrived at by himself and Richard Hornidge[2] in a late conversation. My own private opinion very nearly squares with theirs - nature meant him to be a very improved edition of his remarkable father but he is idle, very idle, and while quite a boy he was thrown away upon a regiment of cavalry in India which happened unluckily never to have anything to do or he would have made a name in arms for he loved his profession.

She neatly rounds off this comment by noting that the Doctor's brother, their Agent John Robinson, had recently sent them a copy of Emma, "which delights me more than ever. Mr. Knightly is more charming than I even used to think him for he is exactly Hal, and I was alas! always reckoned like Emma."[3]

For the most part what she has to say about her husband is not so complimentary because the comments seem to suggest her superiority; this of course is how such remarks are bound to appear today, because the missing link is that with an invalid husband much of the decision-making on the estate and the organisation of family and household had

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1. He was the great confidant of the Smiths and the source of many of Mrs. Smith's tales about their neighbours, great and small. In addition to his practice, he was responsible for the Blessington Dispensary that was to be so important during the famine. See p. 407.

2. Part I, ch. 3, p.65.

3. Too much ought not to be read into Jane Austen's opening descriptions about Mr. Knightly ("one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them") and her statement that Emma had a "disposition to think a little too well of herself (chapter 1)!

to be taken by the mistress of the house and not the master or landlord.

Thus in the summer of 1842 when her husband was surveying Jersey as a possible place in which to retrench for several years, she made a comparison of their characters.

> Dear Hal, what a dream about your unworthiness and my superiority. That I have quick talents I know, I could not fail to inherit them, but they are as nothing compared with your strict integrity, your honest upright morally courageous character, few neglected as you were could have become what you are, I am little more than dross spangled.

Remembering that these remarks were written in the knowledge that they would be read to the Colonel in the near future, it is probable that they were designed to reassure him about his role as the head of the family and a landlord; for it is clear from these Journals that much of the organisation and work of both family and estate fell on the landlord's wife.

Even so, she does allow her occasional frustration with him to leak into the pages of her Journals. A difference of opinion about the redecoration of the house in 1840, led her to write: "Taste like every other talent requiring more cultivation than his active soldier's life has given him opportunity for, but I almost got myself into regular disgrace for hinting this. Men you are very vain." There were quarrels over his not sticking to the routine which best suited his constitution, neglecting advice over food and drink, and not avoiding the summer sun. "I never knew any man who had the least sense in his conduct with regard to himself, their knowledge that certain things are harmful to them does not seem to make the least differ-

ence - they appear to have no power of controul over themselves." Such irritants reinforce the point that Colonel Smith was not fit to undertake all his responsibilities as a landed proprietor, and that under such circumstances he would be bound to react in this way.

This change in role however was not one which Mrs. Smith was using her Journal to flaunt or even emphasise. This is clear from her account of a dispute in April 1842 before he left for Edinburgh to collect their daughters.

> My dear husband and I have hardly parted friends - he was for some cause unknown to me out of temper and therefore unreasonable and unjust and I, instead of soothing, made remarks which aggravated him. My nerves are irritable just now, but a little thought could have kept better order in my bodily economy.

Her irritability is easily explained by her belief that she was pregnant. The previous month she had written: "This last week has been a bad week with me. I have been very ill and have come through another struggle much exhausted. I feel rather better this evening and I resolutely hope the best though certainly prepared for a tedious labour and a still-born child."[1] Nevertheless, she commented, "it is not in my power to ensure the life of my child or even my own safety, but I am doing my duty." Even at a moment of what she and the Doctor (who had done part of his training at the Lying-In Hospital in Dublin[2]) recognized was bound to be one of approaching crisis, she

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1. It has already been noted that this was what she had experienced eight years before, supra. p.16.

2. Thom's Irish Almanac and Official Directory (1846): see entry under Blessington.

emphasised to herself that she must remember where her duty as a wife lies:

> There is no excuse for a woman not excercizing forebearance; it is very unwise too, for the reflexions of a good heart soon set temper to rights. I am therefore much dissatisfied with myself for my own want of temper and don't try to excuse it though I account for it.

In other words, no matter how great her part in taking decisions normally reserved for the head of the household and the landlord, she, even at this time of crisis, insists on the wifely submission without which the Colonel's life would have been intolerable.

This is seen at its most obvious when the Colonel made his will.[1] He had made his first will when he was married in 1829 and he remade it in 1840 before setting out to reconoitre St. Servans in Jersey as a possible place for the family to stay and allow their finances to improve.

> Hal drew up the minutes for his will which he wishes to make before leaving home. Neither he nor I having any foolish superstitions about these things but both of us liking to have all our affairs so arranged that in case of accident all may be found in good order, properly settled that there may be neither trouble nor perplexity left behind us. He read the rough draft over to me and it appears to me to be extremely just, very proper in every respect, and very very kind to me, proving that he really has confidence both in my affection and in my prudence. Still woman is but woman and in matters of business even where the good of her own children is concerned she requires the counsel of a sterner mind, so we agreed that

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1. Two subsequent will were drawn up by Colonel Smith after the weddings of his two daughters (PRO Dublin).

> he should ask Richard Hornidge[1] to undertake a joint charge. If it be my lot to survive you, my dear, kind Hal, I will endeavour to the utmost to fulfill every wish of yours, to do as I think you would like to have done, and you may depend upon my paying to the few relations you value the same respect and the same attention I believe you have always seen me to shew to them. And I sometimes wish that it may be my lot, for you would be very wretched without me, encumbered with business and frightened about the children and lonely, and if you were ill how wretched you would be without her who for so many years has been your anxious attendant.

This is the clearest statement of how, taking into account her demure withdrawal behind her husband, Mrs. Smith from the very start of the years covered by the Journals was depended on for much of the family and estate work. And it was in recognition of these services that when his will had to be altered after Annie's marriage in 1851, Colonel Smith spelt out the rights he expected his wife to retain. "I give and bequeath unto my said dear wife Elizabeth during her natural life or so long as she shall think proper to reside in my dwelling house at Baltiboys aforesaid such two rooms in said house as she shall select for her own private use exclusively, tog.r with the free use and employment in common with the other occupants of said house of the several other apartments therein and of the garden

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1. It is interesting to note that Richard Hornidge's will has survived in the PRO; in it he bequeathed "to my natural son off the body of MARGARET PERRY who ... follows the trade of Blacksmith" the sum of thirty pounds - interestingly, this was the blacksmith whose competence Colonel Smith was to defend against the prejudices of his tenantry (4.XII.1847).

belonging thereto."[1] Baltiboys moreover was not to be let "without her express consent."

In between the making of these two wills in which so much of the character of their relationship can be seen, of course, occurred the Famine years. Mrs. Smith and the Agent or Steward very often had to deal with most of the multitude of administrative problems that arose at Baltiboys, sometimes finding themselves having to correct what the Colonel had done. In October 1847 he wanted to dispossess a tenant Tom Kelly[2], she wrote "I wish that the Colonel may hear reason in this respect" and he stayed. In May 1848 her use of the words "we could not tease the Colonel with such vexations" indicate that there was much which he was not directly connected with ... particularly when this one was concerned with the very important business of what to do about the truculant refusals of one of the most troublesome tenants Bryan Dempsey[2] to co-operate over the draining schemes being introduced to alleviate the famine's impact. Yet the Colonel was very active in all that was being done in the neighbourhood, so that in June 1849 his health was drunk by his neighbours as "the proprietor who had done most good in the district during this season of distress."

Moreover because Mrs. Smith thus found herself fulfilling an

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1. At first sight this might seem rather a feeble provision, but it is likely that Colonel Smith was well aware of the business capabilities of his wife and the weakness of his son's character; Mrs. Smith's presence would of course enable her to continue a discreet management of the estate.

2. See Part II, ch. 1, for further details of these two tenant farmers.

unfamiliar role outdoors when she had to assume responsibility for much of the administration of the estate, it did not by any means allow her to abandon the more traditional role of a Mistress of a household or a mother supervising her children growing up. Indeed, she would have hated it if such a choice had arisen; the household was a central part of their lives and their children, the hope for the future that was being constructed around a revivified Baltiboys.

The eldest girl Jane was born in 1830 and was to marry the Alexander George Richey[1] whose legal and historical books and Chair of Feudal and English Law at the University of Dublin were to distinguish him as a suitable husband for Mrs. Smith's most bookish daughter. Anne, the second daughter, was born in 1832 and her marriage to James King, who was plagued by financial troubles through-out his life (which nevertheless do not sour his grand-daughter's recollections of his "kind humerous eyes, gentle grumblings and genteel carriage drives")[2], forms a natural end to the years surveyed in this thesis. A third daughter only lived for a few days: Mrs. Smith wrote in 1840 six years later ... "I seldom look upon the little enclosure in our wild churchyard ... without almost thanking God our Father that ..." she was "spared the many bitter trials of human life." Finally, the son and heir, John Graydon Smith, upon whom so many of the hopes of

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1. 1830-1883: his historical works were more celebrated than his legal ones although The Irish Land Laws (Dublin 1880) were "quoted as an authority by Mr. Gladstone in the debates on his Land Bill of 1881." (DNB)

2. Ninette de Valois, op. cit. p. 15.

the elder generation were to be placed, was born in 1838. They were to prove three very different children and their upbringing, aimed at avoiding the excesses only too common in Smith and Grant family, as in their neighbourhood, was a constant absorption; ironically in the end only the eldest came up to expectation ... estate, household and family therefore may have been too burdensome an obligation.

Chapter Three

Neighbours and Neighbourhood

Blessington was very much a demesne town and the area around it had all the characteristics at this time it had possessed since the land settlements of the seventeenth century had converted what T. Jones Hughes has called "primitive joint-farming arrangements on a kin basis"[1] into commercial farming based on the large estate. Unfortunately there was no contemporary account of the extent of land ownership, and it is only in 1876 that Returns were made to the House of Commons,[2] which can be used to recreate the situation a generation earlier.

(A) County Wicklow:

Estate	Owner	Statute acres	Income
Baltyboys	Mrs. Elizabeth Smith	1558.2.II	£460 : 15 : 0
Baltyboys	John Graydon Smith	1518.1.8	£1090 : 10 : 0
Russborough	Earl of Milltown	427	£452
Blessington	Marquis of Downshire	15,766	£5000
Ballyward	Samual Finnemore	153	£35
In Chancery	Rep.s of John Finnemore	972	£528
Tulfarris	Edward Hornidge	796	£518
Russelstown	John James Hornidge	702	£496
Humphreystown	William Cotton	201	£196
Kilbride Manor	Joseph Scott Moore	8,730	£1595

1. 'Society and Settlement in Nineteenth Century Ireland', Irish Geography, Vol. 5, no. 2 (1965)

2. Summary of the returns of owners of land in Ireland etc. (HC 1876 LXXX, p. 176-170).

(B) County Kildare:

Estate	Owner	Statute acres	Income [1]
Baltiboys	John Graydon Smith	276.3.10	£171 : 15 : 0

The grandest of course was the Marquis of Downshire, whose Blessington estates were only part of the 115,000 acres in Ireland producing an income of £70,000 each year.[2] Clearly his Blessington estates were poor compared to the northern acres in County Down and their historian is correct in describing this as an "unproductive area"[3] in comparison, especially when the backwardness even of Downshire's lands at the start of the century is remembered, for middlemen predominated, squatting was rife, absenteeism was the rule, and the structure of agricultural society on the estates was rudimentary. The Journals of Mrs. Smith show how progress was made in the 1830s at Baltiboys, and the Downshire Papers[4] reveal the part played by, for example the Blessington Farming Society, about which the Marquis wrote to John Hornidge in 1819:

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1. The figures for the Smiths include the land purchases made in the 1860s which brought the old Baltiboys estate of around 1200 acres (see Pt. II, ch. 1) up to the 3076:3:19 mentioned in 1876.

2. W.A. Maguire, The Downshire Estates in Ireland: 1801-1845, Oxford (1972) p. 32.

3. Ibid., ch. 7, "North and South: the Problem of the Southern Estates".

4. D.P. 671/C217.

> I am much pleased to learn from Mr. Murray[1] (the Blessington agent) that the Blessington Farming Society is proceeding so steadily and I beg to express my approbation of the nature of the Premiums offered by the Society and my satisfaction in observing from the amount of them that the funds are so good.

John Murray, for his part, summarised his aims in a letter to Lord Downshire in 1836:

> The land is the Permanent source of wealth and its Improvement should never be lost sight of, indeed I hope to see every part of the Lordship Improve and the Tenants happy and able to pay Punctually, and be an Example to the adjoining estates. 2

The adjoining estates had shared in the general improvements before the Famine, and the Journals refer frequently to the Hornidges, Milltowns, Finnemores and Moores of the 1840s and the way they ran their estates and their lives, so that a reasonably coherent outline of the neighbourhood emerges, against which the fortunes of Baltiboys can be compared.

Mrs. Smith was not over-impressed by the third Marquis of Downshire:[3]

> Lord Downshire is a character intolerable to me, so weak, so vain, so pompous, so self-important, Not a bad landlord if he would be quiet about it, though a hard one, nor an unkind master but so full of himself, he considers no one else and requiring a degree of subserviency in all his dependants that I only wonder he can find anyone so mean as to show him. The Doctor's story of him was enough for me, he had given £10 to clothe the poor of his estate here which brings him in £7,000[4] a year. "Mr. Murray" said he "how is this, I gave £10 to the

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1. He was Agent to the Marquis of Downshire in respect of his Blessington estate from 1819 to 1841. Maguire op. cit. p. 187-8.

2. DP D671/C198.

3. (1788 - 12 September 1845) Complete Peerage (London 1890); the September date is wrong - see p. 52.

4. In fact it produced £5000 (supra. p. 49); such a tolerable guess is a reasonable indicator of the reliability of most of Elizabeth Smith's sources.

> poor here a week ago and no mention of it whatever in the papers, how was that?" To fancy a man a rational being dictating those fine puffs we every now and then laugh at in the newspapers about his trees, his charities and his liberality, one can hardly suppose such a lamentable degree of silliness. 1

He died in an accident in April 1845 after visiting some of his mountain farms on the Blessington estate (Slater's Directory[2] says he fell "lifeless from his horse", where the Journals on 19th April quote the Agent Mr. Owen looking back and seeing him on the ground "the mare he had fallen from trampling on him; he was quite insensible, sighed once heavily and expired"). This indicates that although he was not of course resident all the year round, he both visited and was involved in the running of this property. Indeed the mass of papers in the Belfast Public Record Office showing the concern which both the Marquis and his organisation at Hillsborough had for the administration and improvement of this poorest of his possessions witness his involvement even in the day-to-day details.

His son, the fourth Marquis, emerges from the Journals as continuing his father's work but with a more sympathetic character. Mrs. Smith wrote about her husband's first meeting with him: "Wednesday Colonel Smith dined with Mr. Owen to meet Lord Downshire who without any appearance of talent he found frank in manner, cheerful, disposed to be pleased and to shew that he was so, a great improvement on the

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1. 18.4. 1841.

2. 1846 p. 18.

particularly stiff reserve of his father."[1] She found him "very good-natured to everybody, charitable to the poor, admirable to his tenants, affable to all" and was impressed by his summer visits when a variety of entertainments were laid on, from ploughing matches for the tenantry[2] to rounds of dinner parties for the gentry and visits to shoot at Powerscourt or sightsee at Avoca which Mrs. Smith thoroughly enjoyed ("Lord Downshire was my beau during the rambling and for most of the hilly road home and very pleasant he is.")[3]

The grandest of all was the Ball in August 1849 when all sections of the community shared in the entertainment.

> one thousand five hundred tenantry and peasantry dined at the old hotel, the five rooms upstairs each contained two tables laid for thirty or forty four, the elite of the company, three rooms on the ground floor similarly arranged for the second rank.

There was dancing in each of these rooms after supper and the school house "was used as a ballroom by the labourers and outside every public house was dancing besides and immense crowd at the bonfire at the marketplace, which mob owing to the rain got very unmannerly and tried to force their way into the hotel." Indeed thereafter matters got out of hand and the Smiths made an undignified exit as hands of "regular ruffians" rushed the doors; the priest[4] and John Hornidge

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1. 19.X.1845.
2. 5.III.1846.
3. 27.VIII 1849.
4. In view of the tense relationship between the Smiths and Father Germaine from Blackditches (see Part III, ch. 1) it is unfortunately more likely to have been Father James Hamilton from Blessington.

cleared the way and they slipped out, "shouldering off the crowd in great style." It all ended in Donnybrook style, but the idea gives some indication of Lord Downshire living up to a reputation as a munificent aristocrat, the one of the district.

His influence was felt in many ways. His wife organised a committee for a new bridge over the Liffey at Kippure[1] and provided premiums to encourage tenant gardens.[2] He provided a lead in marshalling the local opposition to the government's rate-in-aid scheme of March 1849 and earned Mrs. Smith's commendation as "our Hampden!". She was also very impressed by the way in which he at once made up himself the money stolen from the Loan Fund by the treasurer, Mr. Alley; the Downshire Papers contain a report by one of his lawyers confirming that Mr. Alley had started a fire in the schoolhouse where records were kept, that "the Loan Club Books had been previously soaked in spirits of turpentine" and that the Marquis paid the deficit of £83 : 7 : 0.[3]

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1. Although this took place on 30th September 1848, Mrs. Smith's account makes it plain that it was quite an occasion, "forty people besides mob assembled at the ford." Speeches, musical accompaniment from four horns (whose repertoire ranged through "See the Conquering Hero" to "the March from Figaro and Away to the Mountain Brown",) all played at moments appropriate to Lord Downshire's dignity, so that Mrs. Smith fully expected to read about the opening in the Dublin papers.

2. 6 VIII 1850.

3. DP D671/62/5 ("A brief account of the Facts with respect to the Blessington Loan Fund Society"). A clue to the scale of the temptation Mr. Alley was exposed to is given in the Parliamentary Gazeteer of Ireland (op. cit. Vol. I, p. 263) which states that the total capital subscribed was £215 and that there "circulated £174 in 32 loans" which "cleared £2 : 8 : 6 of nett profit."

The Smiths evidently approved of the way that the fourth Marquis organised his estates as well as his father and provided a real focus for local society. They were "good natured people" who were "anxious in every way to do good." She concluded in the summer of 1849 that "In truth this good landlord is much beloved and well worthy of every mark of affection from his people and indeed from his neighbours."[1]

This was never their opinion of the other aristocratic member of their society, the Earl of Milltown, a Deputy Lieutenant for Dublin.[2] She may not have cared for every aspect of the Marquis' character, but there was little she admired in either the Earl or his wife; the Milltowns were more often resident on their property, but the Downshires did more good; she was full of praise for all that William Owen[3] was doing as Agent to improve the Downshire estate, whereas because the Smiths and Milltowns shared the services of the same Agent, John Robinson,[4] she was only too aware of the ramshackle nature of his estate and finances.

Mrs. Smith wrote a character sketch of milord in May 1840:

In our drive this evening met Lord Milltown[5] looking miserable -

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1. His historian concludes: "responsible and high-minded, at the same time he had an imperious manner and was impatient of opposition." Maguire op. cit. p. 7.

2. HC 1831 - 32 XLV p. 196.

3. However the Downshire Papers show that he needed constant pressurising from Hillsborough to produce his accounts on time; see below p.170.

4. Part II, ch. 2.

5. Joseph Leeson, Fourth Earl of Milltown (1799-1866) died of bronchitis (Complete Peerage op. cit.).

> he said nothing of winnings, and as his horses certainly lost I fear he has made a bad business of it. 1 What a life, feverish excitement or despair leading to everything that is bad, by slow but sure degrees eradicating all that is good. I never see him without amixed feeling of sorrow and pity, and shame that is really painful, for nature though she inflicted one very dreadful personal infirmity on him,[2] gifted him with many admirable qualities, fine talents, good understanding, amiable temper, very handsome countenance, and rank and wealth and zealous friends. A bad education and disreputable society and an ill-assorted marriage have altogether made him to be shunned instead of courted and he is himself most unhappy.

It was for her very much a rake's progress. From the accounts in the Journals of conversations with that inveterate gossip Dr. Robinson, hotfoot from Russborough or with Lady Milltown herself, it is clear that the Earl was a professional gambler who had by the 1840s staked all on future winnings. The consequences of this for his family fortune were made clear by what the Doctor reported in September 1840:

> He tells me Lord Milltown could not come home now, that he can live at Leamington while the £200 he has just won will last, and what he will do after that nobody can tell; he is unable to raise the money to pay the renewal fines of some farms on his wife's property,[3] the leases of which have fallen in, so that her income will be lessoned for the future; and he knows the authour of Harry Lorrequer,[4] a class fellow on his own, a wild, very clever, hare-brained creature, who himself

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1. It is interesting that Lord Milltown's losses should have been a matter of interest, in the opinion of his Blessington Agents throughout the 1830s and 1840s, for Lord Downshire himself; thus John Murray wrote in May 1835 "... I hear that the Lord Lieu.nt and his Lady are to be at Lord Milltown's on Monday week to go from it to the Curragh. Lord M. lost two thousand pounds the last meeting. A gambler is a Weak Man and can never be rich." D.P. (D671 C/198).

2. This is never specified but it was severe enough to confine him to a wheel-chair on occasion. cf. his wife's sneer about Mr. Quilp, p. 63.

3. infra. p. 58, footnote 1.

4. Charles Lever: it was first published in the Dublin University Magazine (which Mrs. Smith knew well) between 1837 and 1840; in its complete form as The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer in 1839.

> played off many of the tricks he describes, now living in Brussells, I fear not very creditably, since his present employment is fleecing Hugh Henry[1] at Ecartez.

He at any rate could afford his losses and did not possess the same family responsibilities. Even colossal winnings, such as the £4,800 mentioned in May 1841, did not appear to affect the gravity of their situation. Two months later she describes meeting him: "My Lord wheeled in and kept me another half hour, such a wreck! Who would be a gambler. So noble looking as he was, younger than me and broke down completely ... ". In September reports reached Blessington that he had engaged in maniacal bets with Lord Howth: "five hundred pounds and large bets besides, such infatuation." Meantime, their entertainment expenses must have been astronomical for this very year they were holding grand parties to which, for example, Prince George of Denmark, was invited. The scale of his losses was rarely mentioned as being as great as those of 1842, but there is a ring of truth in Mrs. Smith's description of how they compelled him to live:

> Lord Milltown has lost £4,000, gained in odd hundreds near one, so he has better than three to make out one way or another, and I fancy I am about as well able to make it out conveniently as he is; he has had within more than a chance of brain fever; lived for six weeks while calculating the odds on the Derby on seidlitz draughts and salad; looks dreadful, in the lowest spirits - promises to give up this madness; but so he has done before, often and often.

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1. Lever lived in Brussels 1840-1 and returned to Templelogue House near Dublin in 1842; one of his favourite pastimes was riding through the Wicklow Hills so it is possible he met one of his victims again. See Lionel Stevenson, Mr. Quicksilver: the life of Charles Lever (London 1939), p. 72-80.

She gives a number of examples of how his downward path affected his life in Ireland. The first to note is his treatment of their mutual, long-suffering Agent, who acted both for Russborough and the Milltowns' property in King's County.[1] It all came to a head when John Robinson asked Mrs. Smith in December 1842 to approach Lady Milltown (earlier noted as describing her Agent as "a man of business and talent and ... a gentleman") to stop her husband interfering in his work. Mrs. Smith agreed. "In Lord Milltown's case to grant releases to persons whom he had put under the controul of another who was responsible was quite an impertinent interference." A little later she regretted helping, when she saw copies of what Lord Milltown had written to his Agent:

> I would never have obliged Lady Milltown so far as to ask any friend of my husband's to subject himself to a renewal of such impertinence. I could hardly have supposed it possible for a gentleman so to display an arrogance of temper that must make it impossible for any respectable person to serve him. 2

It was exactly these qualities which these Journals frequently noted as being the bane of the upper classes in Ireland and confirmed her in her belief that unless things changed quickly for the better, then violent change was inevitable.

A second example shows that the Earl treated his Doctor (that great confidant of the Smiths) no better than his brother the Agent. In June 1842 one of the Milltown children was very ill and a servant

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1. 1876 Returns ob. cit. HC 1876 LXXX, p. 116. Lord Milltown was the proprietor of 594 acres and Lady Milltown 1255.

2. 15 XII 1842.

was ordered to Dr. Robinson, where he was told that if he hurried then he would catch him before he left Baltiboys.

> "D---l a bit" would the man go - "he had done his message - what should he go scouring the country for etc." Why should he indeed. Do his Lord or Lady ever consider him? Sick or well, was he ever considered but as a bit of furniture belonging to their establishment? Would he have been permitted to take the slightest interest in their noble children? Wrapped up in themselves without a thought for others how can they expect others should care one jot for them?

The Doctor for his part paid one hurried visit then realised that he had a serious case on his hands and with great reluctance remembered his vocation. Mrs. Smith had great sympathy for him:

> With great ill-humour he heard of this additional fatigue - for not only does Lord Milltown owe him for five years medical attendance, never having given him a fee since Henry was born[1] when Lady Milltown was so alarmingly ill with inflamation, nor even then but his manner has been occasionally so haughty, her airs so numerous, at times all condescension, at others so absurdly grand, that the Doctor who has no particular reason for enduring their absurdities has latterly withdrawn himself from any exposure to them.

Of all the families in this neighbourhood, of course, he had the least to boast about from every consideration except background, for Russborough descended pari passu with its owner, and even here Mrs. Smith had few illusions as she made clear when describing an indident in December 1847:

> My Lady asked me for one and I gave her a dozen, for she began

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1. Joseph Henry (who more frequently makes his unflattering appearances in the Journals as Russborough or Russy) was born on 10 May 1829; the Countess of Milltown chose in 1861 to write on page 52 of the Blessington Register of Births the names and dates of birth of her six children. According to the Complete Peerage (op. cit.) he died of 'congestion of the lungs'.

> all airs, talking grand, undervaluing everybody and I told her she was wrong and made her confess it. Such nonsense, a brewer for their ancestor, a blanket for one connection, a silk spinner for another and then to look down on the son of a silversmith. 'He can never be noticed by the aristocracy.' 'I can't see any aristocracy hereabouts' said I 'they all appear to be ... sprung from the people and none the worse of it' etc etc. 1

For the most part, however, Mrs. Smith recognized the dreadful predicament Lady Milltown was in and realised that this explained why their neighbourhood benefitted hardly at all from them; she had good reason for this because of the number of visits which Lady Milltown made to Baltiboys especially when times were bad, and much of the time she seemed to be overwhelmed by her husband's misadventures. She was for example "incapable of assisting in (her daughter's) education" and her pride prevented her from doing anything useful: "Besides this want of occupation, poor Lady Milltown has had the misfortune to yield to a vile, irritable, jealous, malicious temper which has alienated every friend, and of what avail to her is all her wit and her talent and her rank of which she is so vain now that she is getting old?"

Lady Milltown did come to Mrs. Smith's sympathetic ear. In May 1843 she came to discuss what should be done with her husband's three illegitimate children, for whom he had manufactured the "ridiculous" name of Fitzleeson. Mrs. Smith wrote, more sympathetically than

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1. She had more to say about such matters when she wrote about friends they'd come across in Pau, the Smith Bouveries: "I don't know why Bouverie should sound so fine and Smith so humble. The armourer though an artisan was at least better worth descending from than the keeper of a cowhouse. Mr. and Mrs. Cowhouse would sound anything but aristocratick." It can only be coincidence that the full name of the man who gave his name to a canon of belief repugnant to Elizabeth Smith should be Edward Bouverie Pusey (see Part III, ch. 1, p. 271.

usual, that "She had always wished those children to have been taken from a worthless mother and out of a profligate country and brought up and provided for in respectable professions or trades in England. Now with heads full of nonsense, with faulty education and morals not to be certain of, what is to be done with them?" Two years later Colonel Smith wrote to his contacts in the East India Company to see what prospects there were for one of them advancing there; the replies were unhelpful but Mrs. Smith managed to persuade her brother William Grant to find him a position.[1]

For the most part, Mrs. Smith's accounts of her visits reveal the follies of a sort of caricature of one of the titled families for whom the disastrous 1840s were to end with the judgement of the Encumbered Estates Act. The more grievous her husband's state, the more extravagant her behaviour at times when the remainder of the neighbourhood were struggling to organise the survival of a more representative way of life.

Thus in May 1846 she writes of her being "in one of her affected moods, ringing her r.s., talking grand and in such a fright of a bonnet as would have deformed Venus. I have long since ceased all delicacy with her". She added that "The Doctor's rudeness during this visit was abominable. He read a book in the corner without ever opening his lips and when she asked after his brother's family, he told

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1. William Grant through having had more than his fair share of the world's misfortunes was better placed than most to know where a place could be found in India; on 6 August 1845 the Journal noted that he had managed to help "our Italian boy".

her that Mrs. Smith knew more about them than he did", thus perhaps getting some revenge for those unpaid bills.

It is clear that she was living a part:

> ... such a mass of affection as to be almost intolerable, beyond merely ridiculous. Half her words French - lolling on the sofa - dressed for a ball - grand to the sublime! and to crown all quite youthful - somewhere about five-and-thirty, this to me who have often compared ages with her in our early days and know it to the hour from old Mrs, Wall[1] who was present at her birth; fib after fib about Paris as formerly about London. She must think me a fool, or else, poor thing, maybe she is only trying to cheat herself - neglected as she must sorely feel she is by everyone: her own fault for she has outraged everyone.

The oddest occasion must have been that July when Mrs. Smith at last forced herself to return all visits and found herself dragooned into viewing the massive collection of clothes Lady Milltown had accumulated in Paris: "It was quite a bridal array, and for what purpose? For the poor woman visits nowhere, none of these things will ever be on hardly, as she herself acknowledges, it is a curious passion under the circumstances", especially as "she must weigh twelve or fourteen stone, as became the size of the house". Clothes were then one of her ways of forgetting her sorrows and at Christmas 1846 she and her daughters arrived"in red clokes and black beaver gypsy hats and feathers cocked up behind like the cobwebs to catch flies. Lunaticks from Bedlam."

The pressures behind the antics did occasionally appear, as in May 1847 when "my Lady was in the worst of humours" and with "griefs

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1. A Henry Wall with a wife Mary ("too fond of tea" 14 September 1840) certainly lived up Burgage Lane; they clearly were part of the Baltiboys estate connections for their daughter was recommended as a maidservant for the neighbouring Cotton family.

enough to mortify her" treated Mrs. Smith to a confidential, scandel-mongering session: "She has begun to hate her husband and dislike her son - tells that the one swindles and the other drinks - which she should have the decency to avoid exposing." It was hardly surprising that there should have been some attempt at retrenching at Russborough that summer.

> Milltowns done up. He has been lucky enough to sell some racers well and this enables them to go off - where, we don't know, perhaps near at hand, just to get rid of all superfluous hands at Russboro', and then return to look their altered circumstances boldly in the face, for they will live cheaper on their farm here with no house debt to pay, than they could ever do on the Continent with their encumbering title. 1

And two years later as all their problems threatened to come to a head, the last entry for 1849 showed the level the Milltowns had reached:

> Poor Lady Milltown came to me to talk over her troubles which have become a heavy load, how heavy she knows not luckily, but what she does know has much disturbed her and her Lord's ill-humour and selfishness and unkindness are increasing with his difficulties; she minds less than she did, still he has the power and the will to use her very cruelly and her's is not the nature to soften his. She likened him to Mr. Quilp[2] which was a cut indeed, I should have thought such a lapse unpardonable but she says it brought him to his senses. We had a long talk about her affairs which she hopes to see improved by Russy's management when he comes of age in May but while that wretched father of his lives nothing will go right.

Under the father's management, according to the Registry of Deeds, there had been no less than twenty six separate land sales in Dublin and Co.s Wicklow and Kildare during the 1840s. In November 1847 he

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1. 7 July 1847.

2. Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop first serialised in 1840/1841 ch. 3, Daniel Quilp - "an elderly man of remarkably hard features and forbidding aspect and so low in stature as to be quite a dwarf."

spoke about Tenant Right to the Irish Council, the "Great Aggregate Meeting of Peers, Members of the House of Commons and Landed Society"; it is tempting to imagine him having his own situation in mind:

> For one I can say that many of the Irish Landlords are anxious to dispose of part of their possessions, in order that they may really possess the remainder; and I believe there are numerous who would wish to dispose of the whole; but is this the time to press them to do so when the best of property in Ireland would not bring ten years' purchase (hear).[1]

Indeed in the end matters went from bad to worse so that Mrs. Smith must have felt justified in all the unfortunate conclusions she derived from Lord Milltown's compulsion to gamble. The records of the Encumbered Estates Court reveal that his solicitor a Mr. C. Macartney, had presented his petition on 9th July 1852 for properties whose total rental were stated to be £6,287: 14 : 0. The bald entry carries on by stating that the encumbrances amounted to £106,131 : 1 : 5, and that there was "no date of sale yet".[2]

Lord and Lady Milltown, therefore, are a real contrast to the Downshires and the Smiths; they toiled not and neither did they spin, whereas each of the other two, very different landowning families, were directly concerned with the management and improvement of their properties. Indeed so great is the contrast that they are a valuable case-study both in what they chose to do to Russborough and in how they reacted to the famine. It is a very important feature of this neighbourhood that there should have been one of those Irish landlords about

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1. 14 November 1847 and see Freeman's Journal, 5.11.1847.
2. HC 1854-5 XIX p. 111 (Appendix to "Incumbered Estates Inquiries Commission").

whom the House of Commons was to become so aroused and whom ministers were deliberately to try and remove so that a stable solution to Ireland's ills could be found. The area around Blessington, therefore, is brought much more into a more typical "Irish" context by the presence of the Milltowns and its claims to be considered as a microcosm (as for example Cork[1]) of some of the problems which affected the country, is accordingly strengthened.

The other landed families around Blessington flit in and out of the pages of the Journals, but no such clear picture of them is to be discerned. Colonel Smith had a high regard for old John Hornidge of Tulfarris, with whom he had served in the Yeomanry in 1798, and he made the Hornidge sons, John of Tulfarris and Richard who had the neighbouring estate of Russelstown, Trustees under the terms of his will.[2] Mrs. Smith was not so impressed, although she recognised the family's business abilities (their estates were the first in the area to move decisively away from the old tillage system which had served so well in the war days of high prices towards animal husbandry which

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1. The Land and People of Nineteenth Century Cork, James S. Donnelly (London 1975) p. 2.

2. Supra. p. 45.

employed fewer labourers).[1] Mrs. John Hornidge was referred to as "the grazier's wife" and she wrote of Richard Hornidge "what a man of business" in a context that was not complimentary although she was clearly impressed by the forty head of cattle regularly sent up to the Dublin market. She did not care either for the Hornidges borrowing their Steward, Tom Darker, to help them buy and sell at Fairs; the litigation involving them and the Earl of Milltown she found very distasteful.[2]

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1. This quality is what Mrs. Smith emphasised when in the obituary written on the day of his funeral in June 1847 she pictured "the old man ... driving along to the Sessions where he had reigned as Chairman so many years, glancing a proud eye as he passed in his high phaeton over the Russelstown woods and meadows covered with the cattle he had such pleasure in calculating the profits on." She was well aware it was only achieved at a cost: in January 1842 she had described "that regular magazine of artillary ... which since the threats of a dispossessed tenant has been kept ready for action at a moment's notice." He may just however have had a panicky disposition or never have got over 1798. The Downshire Papers, D671 . C249, show him imploring the Marquis in March 1821 to ask the Castle for military assistance to be sent to Blessington "to prevent that System of Terror which I mentioned to your Lordship had lately been practised for the practice obliging some of the peacable inhabitants of this neighbourhood to take unlawful oaths." The reply merely stated that noble lord encouraged his agent John Murray, now a JP, to follow "your excellent example as a magistrate."

2. Echoes of this appear in the Downshire Papers (D 671 C199) ... and on 23 January 1843 Mrs. Smith described how "Lord Milltown and Richard Hornidge have ended this their second lawsuit amicably in the same way they ended the first"; she added no details only her opinion that the Tulfarris acres allowed "Richard ... to pay a few hundreds for quiet and certain possession of his rights" whilst on the other hand "poor Lord Milltown will have a short respite granted him by this means on his road to ruin."

It was a Hugh Henry related to the Hornidges and a frequent visitor to Tulfarris who made the most disgraceful impact on her. He had inherited a fortune which he squandered with his hounds in Leicestershire in winter and abroad in summer. "There is no character to my mind so despicable as that of an idle man, useless, selfish, every day increasing these vices and destroying the traces of the opposite manly virtues." The interest alone he received from "his handsome landed property" she wrote on his return in 1840 from Brussells "laid out on his estate would employ many of its starving poor, improve his property, usefully engage his time, bring into action every good feeling and even excercize his abilities in the most profitable and most creditable manner." That was what needed to be encouraged in their neighbourhood, especially when the gentry's education had been so deficient.

> And were this his object, was the charge devolved on him by the Almighty who has placed him in the station of a landowner properly considered by him as the condition of life to which he is called, the duties of which he is bound to fulfill, was the welfare of his people and the good of his country in his heart, there would be no harm in his going to Brussells.

The other prominent local figures earned unfavourable mentions although neither seem to have started with the advantages of Hugh Henry. A Mr. Wynne from adjoining Burgage appears to have got into increasing difficulties throughout the 1840s. There is no hint of what had caused his misfortunes, only a catalogue of entries referring to his repeated intention to sell his porperty. On 5th April 1842 he granted Colonel Smith a 999 lease on the Burgage banks and in August the whole estate was sold to his cousin; his wife's interesting reaction when there was a rumour that it was to come back on the

market again four months later was "what a romance it would be should it fall into the hands of the lawful owner again." In July 1847 she noted that Burgage had actually been offered to them but, as she observed: "these are bad times for land speculation ...". The saga was no nearer resolution in September 1848: "Mr. Wynne must dispose of Burgage in November, his necessities compel him to sell it and for money down it will go very low." This whole matter might well have been so close to the Smiths' hearts, and yet aggravatingly so unlikely to be resolved in their favour, that she could not bear to write more about Mr. Wynne or the estate.[1] Certainly no such reserve characterised what she wrote about Mr. Cotton from nearby Humphreystown whose "peculiar temper" she wrote about in the spring of 1841:

> An unfortunate dispostion to fancy slights and insults offered to him as if he were all made of quick and could not be touched without smarting, vanity producing shyness and very much proceeding from disordered stomach is at the root of this unfortunate failing. 2

There was also another side to his sensitivity that needed to be noted in the Journals so that it might act as a timely reminder to her family should they, like the Milltowns and the Cottons, fall into the grave errors flowing from obsessive interest in ancestors:

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1. Note that according to the Griffith valuators' Field Book in the Valuation Office, Burgage consisted of 670 acres of which Colonel Henry Smith occupied slightly over three acres, and 1 acre 3 roods 6 perches of this, valued at £1 : 5 : 0 was leased to Richard Hyland (see Part II, ch. 4): it was described as "good pasture, rather steep" and was therefore valued at 17/6 per statute acre.

2. 25 IV 1841. On a later occasion Dr. Robinson turned his back on him to look at the setting sun: "this produced an harangue of ten minutes' length about unpremeditated insults etc."

> And the folly of not being content with his station, the trade the father followed always seems to over-shadow the comfort of the son, he dreads not being considered a gentleman, when if he would think nothing at all about it, he would be twenty times more respectable and more happy, trusting to his character for his rank. 1

Four years later[2] although there is no reference to his carrying his social position more naturally, Mrs. Smith does see change in a different but equally important direction: "Mr. Cotton quite reformed, talking of the policy of the Maynooth Bill[3], the good to be expected from the new colleges, the propriety of hereafter paying the priests; I hardly thought he was in earnest".

The position of all these local families something of whose lives can be read about in the Journals did not alter in the pecking order of this locality. One last needs to be mentioned because they were in the Smiths' opinion very much on the way up and also because they committed on the way almost every social solecism in the book. This was the Finnemores[4], who at the time of the earliest Griffith Valuation survey possessed a mere 1600 statute acres in the parish of Kilbride.

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1. 12 VI 1842.
2. 28 VII 1845.
3. See Part III, ch. 1.
4. However the Downshire Papers (D671 C230) show that he had leased his land and house at Ballyward for £140 per annum for three lives or thirty one years as early as April 1834: by 1839 (D671/R2/59) John Finnemor [sic] is named as leasing 2252 acres of the Blessington estate. Moreover he or his father lent the third Marquis £3000 for the ten years after 1815. Maguire op. cit. p. 104.

It was not that John Finnemore did not go through the motions of conforming to the patterns of concerned behaviour expected of a landed proprietor. He was as involved as any of his neighbours in the plans in the summer of 1841 to construct a new Dispensary with room for a fever Hospital overhead, that September he contributed his fair share, £25, to a newly established Loan Fund and his exertions during the famine years were recognised to the extent that he was one of a local Poor Law Deputation that lobbied in Dublin in November 1848. In part Mrs. Smith's criticisms resolved themselves to the question of his style; she observed in January 1846

> Well would it be for him if he could by parting with a few of his toil-gained thousands, receive in exchange a little refinement, a little refinement of mind, a little of the gentlemanly habits and feelings which would more advance his family and add more to their happiness and respectability than all his funded property.

It was not just the traditional courseness of the parvenu, for in two extended passages of her Journals, Mrs. Smith was to illustrate how the Finnemores' lack of sensitivity and courtesy besmirched their local reputation.

The first was in February 1847 when Finnemore's daughter was about to become betrothed to a Mr. Wills ("good nature is his one redeeming quality; ignorance, low feelings, low habits, a love of low company and from what we hear a love of the whisky bottle too will make tears no strangers to poor Bessie's pretty soft eyes") and Mrs. Smith noted "the two money loving fathers have now only to meet to clinch the bargain for 'tis a regular sale - so much for so much, none of the four principals having an idea of concluding the business without an arrangement of pounds, shillings and pence satisfactory to

each." Such bargaining was of course by no means unknown in the best regulated and most discreet of upper class families[1] but details of the negotiations rarely escaped as publicly as this. Such tight-fistedness in different circumstances earned nothing but praise. In the spring of 1841 when the Smiths were ruefully concluding that there was no chance of their taking advantage of Mr. Wynne's Bargage property coming onto the market, Mr. Finnemore purchased all of a Colonel Allen's property between the Cross and Tallaght.[2] Mrs. Smith wrote that this was worth between eight and nine hundred pounds a year and he was reputed to have paid £20,000: "his family will one day be of more consequence in this country than any other in it."

That very year there is a story in the Journals that encapsulates all the breadth of the gap between what Mrs. Smith at any rate expected of leading families in her social circle and the Finnemore's behaviour. They very much prided themselves on possessing a carriage and on 16th September Mrs. Finnemore had run over a child:

> After the accident Mrs. Finnemore drove on to pay her visit as if nothing had happened, nor waiting to see the Doctor nor calling on him nor on the child on her return. She left four shillings with the mother who watched her movements well and said to the Doctor it was very little like a lady to not to have taken a little more trouble about the creature her own car had all but killed. She sent some rags and a loaf of bread and a message to the Doctor "to have her mind relieved"

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1. Curiously, however, such bargaining does not seem to have disfigured Lady Celia Milltown's nuptials: "Ceely is a strange girl;- talking to Annie she said just in her straitforward manner that she was quite surprised at his (Captain Turton's) offer, never expected it; there were others she had often fancied did like her, but he had never entered her head". 13.7.1856.

2. This was probably the 972 acres valued at £528 mentioned in the 1876 Return (HC 1876 LXXX p. 168).

> but she has carefully avoided employing him to look after it, as carefully alluded to his Dispensary duties[1] and though she earnestly asked of him what the family wanted, to which he gravely replied "everything from a roof over their heads to food, fire and rainment", there have been no results; these may come however, it is not the amount of recompense for an accident that can't be repaired that I am thinking of, it is the feeling of pounds, shillings and pence that runs through her character that is utterly despicable and the want of common humanity, a good heart unselfish and benevolant, Christian in short, prompts to kind looks, kind words, kind actions. These are as essential to the comfort and the happiness, yeas, and the improvement of the poor as all the money the rich can assist them with. If we show them no sympathy how can we expect from themattachment.

The Downshires and Milltowns, although each open to personal criticism, rarely were attacked as savagely as this, perhaps because they were only resident for part of the year; thus the sins of ommission and commission perpetrated by Mrs. Finnemore tended to be on everybody's lips until they were overtaken by even more heinous breaks in what her neighbours at Baltiboys at any rate regarded as an acceptable code of conduct. Indeed on this occasion she generalised for the benefit of her family:

> Dear Janey and Annie, if such a misfortune had happened to us should we not have been daily by the bedside of that suffering child, seeing ourselves that its wants were supplied and seizing the opportunity to develop some ideas of good in the parents. What is it makes every one here so intent on self more than anywhere else I ever was, the best and the worst it is all alike, from the elegent and agreeable home of the Ogle Moores down through wealthy John Hornidge to the meanest cabin.
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> Finally the personal note that crept into this extract is a

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1. His renown had been clear to John Murray who wrote (DP D 671 C230) in September about the Doctor's reliability as a prospective renter of a house in Blessington: "Dr. Robinson is the Dispensary Attendant who is a Useful Man and will pay the Rent punctually."

timely reminder that it was not only by the high standards developed in her Journals that Mrs. Smith tested her neighbours and found them wanting; as far as the wives of these two landowners who ought to have been doing so much to improve the lives of all around them were concerned, it is evident that no love was lost between them and Mrs. Smith.

She was appalled to come across them dressed in the height of fashion for the summer of 1840: "the two poor old women were dressed up like two characters in a Comedy[1], ringlets and flowers and feathers ... and the ghastly looking false teeth and cadaverous countenances making them truly melancholy spectacles." A little later Mrs. Finnemore arrived on her own with a "cub" for lunch at Baltiboys ..."she really was more wild than usual, giving herself the appearance of a tipsy woman, and dressed like a girl of fifteen." Joined by Mrs. Hornidge if anything the effect was worse: "most beautifully dressed had they been six and thirty and going to a public breakfast; painted and made up and falsified in every way, they would have looked very well on the stage by lamplight."[2]

Lying behind these unflattering descriptions, of course is not mere dislike, there is also the knowledge that in each case the imperfect carrying out of their obligations to their tenantry and the

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1. From the lists of her reading around this time, it is likely that Mrs. Smith had characters from Restoration Comedy in mind - Lady Brute and Lady Fanciful from Sir John Vanbrough's The Provoked Wife, perhaps.

2. Not only was Mrs. Smith interested in theatre; her brother William had married Sally Siddons, daughter of the famous actress. (HL p. 476.)

neighbourhood in general was being flaunted in behaviour that went against every precept Elizabeth Smith believed in. Thus in June 1842 she reported that inveterate gossip Dr. Robinson's account of a meeting with Mrs. Finnemore dressed up to the nines and accompanied by a party of beaus en route for the Curragh. '"Mrs. Finnemore! Have you taken leave of your senses? - are you mad?" "That's what John Finnemor says" screamed she, in an extacy of happiness, and then ensued a scene of the usual half-flirting, half-romping, half impudent description that she and the Doctor so frequently enact for the edification of society.... The woman is cracky, there is no doubt of it."' That same month, after a visit from her "dressed like the Hop Queen or the Queen of the May - every colour - satin - cashmere - silk - fur - feathers and every kind of finery - long black ringlets - a regular object," Mrs. Smith underlined her distaste for an exhibition that brought such ill-fame to the whole neighbourhood when she added "there she stood ... within a year or two of sixty as if she had been sent out of the world of fashion." Finally, insult was added to injury when she was worried one stormy February in 1842 because the Colonel was very late returning from a visit to Blessington, a search was organised and he was discovered "driving in a jaunting car all round the country with Mrs. Finnemore - he had volunteered to walk in for the post and the horrid flirting woman had beguiled him into folly." There is a good deal more than mere prurient criticism here; it is the depth of feeling aroused in Mrs. Smith by the behaviour of neighbouring gentry who ought to be at the least lending moral support to all that the better landlords were

attempting to achieve in their little society but whose irresponsibilities are the natural complement to the malpractices of their husbands on their estates.

Yet the priest from Balckditches and Dr. Robinson could dine together, every one would gather in Blessington in August 1843 to catch a glimpse of O'Connell as he changed horses en route for Baltinglass, and visits and social gatherings abounded. There were exceptions but far too much of the time those in the greatest position to influence suffered, as Mrs. Smith put it, from "the prejudice which living entirely in one place among one set of people must strengthen into a kind of bigotry". What she meant by "bigotry" was that most of the landed families did not show that example she regarded as essential for any improvement to take place, and indeed were by their blinkered behaviour worthy of the title of bigots. Comments such as that of March 1842 when she wrote of the "ranks of the rollicking, pleasure-seeking, sporting, half-idle, half-gentlemen we are infested with " show only too clearly her true feelings about the upper classes who had neglected their responsibilites in their area.

There were signs of change. The new Poor Law for example required no less than 40 Guardians for the Union of Naas, and the first elections took place in March 1840 in circumstances which were to disturb the locality.[1] Colonel Smith allowed his name to go for-

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1. This was to amount to a cause célèbre in the neighbourhood and is of great importance in illustrating the deterioration in relations between landlord and priest. (See Part II, ch. 1; Part III, ch. 1).

ward for election (but he was not prepared to canvass ... "I think myself" Mrs. Smith wrote "my little hub is acting Coriolanus a little bit, however he says he won't move; if the blackguards elect him he will do his best for them, but he won't sollicit one of their most sweet voices.") but although all but two of the Baltiboys tenantry turned out for him, he was defeated. Their verdict was that a new more astringent note had arrived: "Hal and I bore the success of the priests and Mr. Riley in the poor law business with equanimity." The lessons however were clear and it all depended on the replacement of the old attitudes to be found throughout the natural leaders of the neighbourhood:

> I think, nay I feel sure, that if we protestants did our duty, if we acted up to our principles, if the landlords visited and assisted and became aquainted with their tenantry and our clergy laboured with zeal in their vocation, there would be few papists in this country in twenty years.

Her own religious views need to be examined later, and there is little doubt that the strength of her conviction that the priests were at the heart of all the local problems in the 1840s, is as blanket a condemnation as her criticism of the landed gentry whose indolence enabled the church to exercise their pernicious influence.

Some of them were capable of acting together for the common good. Mrs. Smith credits the Vicar, the Rev. Ogle Moore, the Doctor and her husband with the initiative for setting in motion the scheme whereby a Market House was established in Blessington, despite the opposition

of John Hornidge and Lord Downshire's Agent of the day, John Murray:[1]

> Nothing more was required. Each week increased its business, by the end of the second year we were all repaid our advances. Ballymore[2] market was knocked up, poultry raised in price. All the people round better dressed, all busier, upward of twenty new houses in Blessington, most of them shops,[3] each year the description of shopkeepers and the style of goods improves. These idle old men would keep a country back a generation.

This was in 1840, and it and the Poor Law elections may have spurred people on, for the Journals describe a deputation of the Colonel, Mr. Moore and the new Downshire agent Mr. Gore[4] travelling as a deputation to Dublin to try and persuade the Under-Secretary to re-establish quarter sessions at Blessington. Further, in September 1841 a meeting was held to start a Loan Fund;[5] Lord Downshire and his agent each gave £50, Colonel Smith also gave £50 and the Journal mentions George Moore and John Finnemore as contributing £25. This was precisely the sort of enterprise that Mrs. Smith calculated helped to rejuvenate an area in need of help such as theirs.

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1. In fact Mrs. Smith's recollection may be somewhat partial for the Downshire Papers contain a list of local gentry and clergy, drawn up by John Murray, who were to be invited to a meeting at the Downshire Arms on Sunday 23rd September 1837 "to consider the best way the Market can be forwarded as to its prosperity." It stated that "The Marquis of Downshire has decided on building a Market House for the accomodation of the public" and added uncompromisingly "you will be so good as to attend the Meeting on the above day".... amongst those so instructed was John Hornidge. (D671/C/198).

2. Parliamentary Gazeteer for Ireland mentions two fair days on 26 August and 29 September but no market as such.

3. P. 78-9.

4. Agent on the Downshire Blessington estates from 1841-1843.

5. Supra. p. 54.

Meantime, as her description of the effect of the market in Blessington makes clear, the shopkeepers were flourishing; where it had been a mere village in 1830, reminiscent of the row of dilapidated cottages which William Carleton uses to introduce his story "The Hedge School"[1], it had changed until Thom in 1846[2] could describe its post office, fairs and petty sessions and Slater in 1856[3] elevate it into a "small market town". Its status in the eyes of the landed families of the neighbourhood can be gauged from the descriptions Mrs. Smith's Journals give of the shops and the use that the Smiths made of them as compared to Dublin some seventeen miles away.

These show that the town had a number of shops providing a wide range of goods. There was Mr. Dallen's "new shop" (27th May 1842) where the Colonel bought presents for the maids, clothes for the girls' dolls, and trousers for himself; there was also Mr. Gilholy the haberdasher (whose tippling was later to ruin him), Miss Merrey the dressmaker (whose father according to Pigot's Directory[4] had run a needle factory for Lord Downshire by the mill) and Mr. Neale, described as "the best" tailor in town, to whom the Colonel was to apprentice one of the indigent children from the estate ("bound him

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1. Stories from Carleton with an Introduction by W.B. Yeats (London 1889); 'The Hedge School' (p. 240-302) see p. 247-9.

2. Thom op. cit. See entry under Blessington. Appendix B No. 15 of Thomas Drummond's Railways Commissioners Second Report (HC 1837-8 XXXV) states that business transacted in the 'Sub Post Office' rose from £89.14.8½ in 1830 to £119.18.3 six years later.

3. p. 18.

4. Pigot and Co.'s City of Dublin and Hibernian Provincial Directory.

for seven years for £9"). Mr. Kilbee kept the Inn and organised the staging posts and was obviously a man of some independence of spirit, undaunted by his landlord as the mid-night exchange between them then reported by Mrs. Smith makes clear: "Hah, Mr. Kilbee - in bed, hah, you go to bed early here, Mr. Kilbee." "People who pay so high for their land, my Lord, had need to be early in bed and early up," said Mr. Kilbee. At any rate the Colonel sold him one of his hunters in 1843 for £30. There were also the usual tradesmen, such as Mr. Rogers the baker (of whom she wrote in 1840: "Wrote to Mr. Rogers for his account and to bid him send no more bread as he is too careless to be dealt with."), Mr. Handsworth the grocer, and Mr. Grace's butcher shop (he too received a caustic mention after she had calculated that his profit on a beast sold to him for £11 must be at least £5). These are the shops she dealt with; the directories make it clear that by the 1840s there was a clear choice as well.

One of the main reasons for the change in fortunes of Blessington, she thought, was the great success of Father Mathew[1]. He was to preach at Blackditches on November 8th 1840 and early that morning she noted "Such crowds already on the road, the hill and the bridge swarming. All the country will be there; and no one before him ever did so much good to it, already rags are disappearing, the people are looking fat, clear, clean and more cheerful." The town had been

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1. Father Theodore Mathew's campaign for total abstinence from all intoxicating liquors was one of the most remarkable of a decade notable for its mass movements; Mrs. Smith thoroughly approved.

similarly changed for the better.

> In Blessington where I know every second house once sold whiskey, there are not above three in the whole town now where it is to be had. Coffee, tea and bread to be had in the teetotal shops instead, and on a market day quantities of meat bought.

Another reason was the way the local gentry patronised the shops in the town, instead of invariably dealing with the Dublin suppliers. Mr. Gilholy's was a good example for here many of the necessities for house and school and family were bought, as Mrs. Smith wrote in July 1842:

> Bought quantities of things from Mr. Gilholy's at prices absurdly low; it is certainly a great comfort having so useful a shop quite close to us; whether it be a cheap comfort I can't say; one often went without things before when they had to be sent to Dublin for.

Later she describes how the Smiths were not the only family to appreciate this shop and on such occasions Blessington must have seemed the natural commercial centre for the world around.

> The evening being very fine we took a drive and found all the fashionable world in Blessington - the village street quite crowded with carriages, Mr. Gilholy's door and shop quite Grafton Street ... Mrs. John Hornidge, Mrs. Finnemore ... Mrs. Cotton, Mrs. Fraser[1] and children - indeed they were at the milleners for the monthly fashions had arrived, the Miss Smiths' muslin dresses had been finished according to the latest improvements and were there exhibited to the publick. We bought some calico and then drove to the school with our bundle to be made into coarse shirts and shifts.

Fashions may be a convenient yardstick for the economic growth of the town, but there were still necessary shopping exhibitions to the metropolis. Stores mentioned in these years are Todd and Burns

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1. Her husband was brother-in-law to Mr. Cotton.

(carpet, bed tick and threads), Nowlans (pen stick), Donnelly's for children's stockings, Forrests for the governess' silk gown, and Higgens' for shoes. Other items bought were a bath for the children, a syringe for the wall fruit trees, and wallpaper. As far as the Smiths were concerned an extract from 25th August 1842 best shows the use they made of Dublin.

> Carter arrived with the crate from Mr. Kerr - a perfect mountain. Well filled and nothing broken, no grandeur, breakages supplied, and a few jars, crocks, flower pots and other comforts; a new kind of saucepan, just invented promises to be a very excellent substitute for copper, black metal lined with china enamel, so clean. So many little neat things we can get in these days for almost nothing. All manufactures are so improved ... it was not the most splendid articles ... that attracted us most ... but it was all the numerous class of useful household wants, as fit for the cabin as for the gentleman's house, all neat, well made, cheap.

The range available in Blessington and the proximity of Dublin, then, places this area firmly within the first and most prosperous of L.M. Cullen's[1] three areas of Ireland at this time. The outlying fringes may have bordered on that dependence on the single crop which characterised the "subsistence" areas, but the bulk of the area had for long been right in the middle of that part of Leinster which was truly landlord-dominated and where there were many more market forces active.

The last factor which needs to be taken into account in any attempt at recreating the life of Baltiboys and its neighbourhood in

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1. L.M. Cullen, An Economic History of Ireland Since 1660 (London 1972) p. 11-2.

the 1840s is how stable it seemed when measured against the degree of rural disturbance which characterised other parts of Ireland. Mrs. Smith nowhere mentions anything other than the sort of quarrelling between tenants which she regarded as part of their duty to resolve and contain, although, perhaps not unexpectedly on the estate of the landowner who seems to have moved most pasture, she does refer to John Hornidge receiving intimidating letters after an ejectment. In 1856, however, she describes how twenty years afterwards, the story of the murder of "the boy Flood at Pat Farrell's gate at Baltiboys" was resolved:

> What a noise the matter made at the time, immense rewards offered to an approver,[1] arrests made of all but the right man. And now after this interval an angry woman betrays the well kept secret. Lame George Quin fired the shot, every tenant in Baltiboys[2] consenting, with two or three honourable exceptions. Phil Tyrrell was not in the conspiracy nor Tom nor John Kelly.[3] Whether they knew of it before or after we cannot say, but they were no movers in this foul murder. Pat Ryan was not mentioned either by name. The woman said 'twas no hidden mystery, all on the land knew of it and why 'twas done, but Jack Byrne and his father, Tom Keogh, lame James Quin, red Pat Quin and Dempsey were art and part in it. Jack Byrne slept in the bed with George Quin the murderer the night of the murder and asked him how in the world he could mistake the boy Flood.

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1. This was the ascendancy word for an informer: "One who proves or offers to prove (another) guilty; hence an informer or accuser". O.E.D.

2. All the tenantry named here are fully examined in Part II, ch.s 2-4.

3. The Tymells were renowned as a cantankerous family that kept their own ways and the Kellys, hundred acre tenant farmers, may have been remote from whatever land dispute lay behind the murder.

> for Pat Farrell. So says Jack Byrne's sister, then a girl of twelve years of age, who slept in the same room with these wretches. She gave her testimony very quietly to John Hornidge ... no appearance of incorrectness in her plain tale nor any concealment of her motive for accusing them, which was her brother's most unjust treatment of herself. If we can follow up her evidence we shall rid the country of a set of villains. 1

It is nowhere made clear why Pat Farrell,[2] the estate carpenter who was later to stand up against a pugilistic curate[3] and whose prosperity was such that he possessed in 1847 "by far the neatest furnished house in the country", should have been a target for assassination. In 1856, Mrs. Smith was not optimistic about the outcome: "we have heard no more of our little business, I much fear it being followed up properly. I will remember the ill names at any rate, so will John Hornidge, and we can seize on fit occasions to get rid of the crew quietly." All of these names recurr in the course of later examinations of different aspects of the organisation and administration of Baltiboys and it is likely of course that land was at the heart of the dispute.

For the 1840s it is to the so-called Outrage Papers that one must turn.[4] There are many reports from the local constables about in-

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1. II IV 1856. Unfortunately several examinations of the material in the State Paper Office have failed to uncover any official documentation that might help to cast light on this mysterious but important episode; even the General Indices for the years 1835-1837 are silent.

2. See Part II, ch. 3.

3. Father James Rickard, see Part II, ch. 2, p. 138-141.

4. State Paper Office, Dublin Castle.

cidents in the Barony of Lower Talbotstown, but only occasional mention of ones in the townland of Baltiboys. These are of the order of the loss of a cow belonging to Mathew Hoffman and stolen from Pat Quin's well-fenced farm in 1840, or James Darker's loss of cattle from Burgagemore in 1841. Mr. Tynte, who had 2,500 acres near Dumlavin[1], received a threatening letter; he offered £40 public reward for information leading to its sender's identification.

There are similar incidents throughout these years, but the most significant piece of evidence before the famine that a more serious problem was developing which individual proprietors might not be able to be dealt with is contained in a copy of a Memorandum in the Outrage Papers for 1845 which is signed by a dozen of the Blessington gentry. They were moved to this by the "threatening letters" received by Mr. W.J. Armstrong of Kippure Park, which were "purporting to dictate and interfere with the management and disposal of land in this neighbourhood". They assert that they believe that only "a few mischievous individuals" are behind them, and they establish a fund to bring them to justice, a fund of no less than £130. Lord Downshire gave £20, Mr. Armstrong himself £50, the Earl of Milltown and George Moore £10, and various Hornidges and Finnemores £5.[2] They emphasise that their's was a district

> hitherto free from all disturbances in which so much improvement is in progress and where so much effort is made by the

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1. Griffith, Field Books, for Co. Wicklow.

2. Outrage Papers (State Paper Office, under Co. Wicklow, Talbotstown Lower). The Smiths were not involved because they were still in France.

proprieters to ameliorate the condition of the land. In other words, even if Mrs. Smith was never overwhelmed by the abilities and qualities of the leading gentlemen of her part of Wicklow, they here proved themselves able to take swift action when they thought their interests were at stake. This impression of a basically law-abiding district receives confirmation from the Diary kept by the Stipendiary Magistrate at Baltinglass, George M. Drought, between January 1839 and August 1843[1]. During this time he visited Blessington on average twice a month (except for July when he was posted north to Co. Monaghan for the 'Twelfth'). He and his fellow magistrates who attended most regularly, the Downshire agent, John Hemidge and John Finnemore, dealt with around 40 cases, three quarters of them civil. A number concerned property (in itself an indicator of comparative prosperity) and there was a burning in April 1840 ("but no circumstnaces appeared worthy of observation"); most days in Blessington concluded by recording the number of cases and the comment ... 'but none of them of any further importance'.

This comparative tranquility however was not enough to raise the Blessington gentry's reputation in her eyes. They were far from being as disreputable as those she read about and heard gossip about elsewhere, but equally they were far from measuring up to those qualities which it is clear she regarded as essential for the land-owning classes to possess if they were successfully to overcome the crises

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1. State Paper Office, Dublin Castle; see also R.F. Foster p. XVI & XVII.

and challenges that faced them. The mean nature of the Marquis of Downshire in her eyes held up progress in the same way as the profligacy of the Earl of Milltown. She wrote with some exaggeration soon after starting her Journals that "At present with the exception of Tulfarris I know of neither Ladies nor Gentlemen in Ireland" and even there she disapproved strongly of the too swift change of emphasis John Hornidge had adopted with his move from arable to pasture. And, what most strongly suggested to her that there was something rotten in the state of Blessington society, two of Mrs. Smith's worthy neighbours even managed to get embroiled in an open quarrel over valuations at the meeting of the Poor Law Commission in August 1840.

> Lord Milltown and John Hornidge unfortunately came to very high words yesterday at the meeting which is a pity, Lord Milltown was quite wrong in an observation he made regarding some valuation he was inconsiderate enough to call unfair and John Hornidge retorted in a passion instead of gravely.

Her subsequent comments, which were written for the benefit of her son Jack in the years to come when he would occupy a similar place in society, show the tremendous importance she attached to men of influence exercising self-control:

> How invaluable in every relation of life, private and publick, is a perfect command of temper, how impossible to be great or happy or useful without having controul over this irritable part of our dispositions, and how extremely difficult it is to do this late, it must be early subdued, early controuled, early fought with and against, and then it is easily conquered, remember this, my own dear boy, in case I do not live to help you for you have a temper like other human creatures and it might increase to violence or subside into sulk, which is worse if you are ill managed, even though your disposition is naturally sweet and your heart so affectionate. A country gentleman which we look forward to your making yourself ought more particularly to be very guarded on this count, so many little irritating accidents are apt to happen to him both in the management of his own affairs and in his intercourse with his neighbours, they are a class very apt to fall out without care

> about their roads and their assessments and their different jobs, and to do good a man must have influence, and to have influence he must have temper.

This was the key to his upbringing and her Journals were to have their role too. She herself was to stress how "self-inspection and self-controul" were the methods she wanted to encourage in her son, but, as she wrote soon after starting her Journals, if she died then he would still be guided by the passages she had marked in such books as Mason on Self-knowledge[1] or Wilberforce's Autobiography[2], as well as her specific instructions in her writings.

> If I could but live long enough to form your tastes as well as your principles. To raise you beyond the Irish gentleman - I would have my boy add to all his dear father's integrity and uprightness and activity some of the accomplishments of his uncles and grandfather[3] - for without the elegencies of more refined employments there is a great loss of enjoyment and of usefulness; leisure becomes dull and for want of knowing how to occupy it well, men are often led into vicious pursuits - for human nature won't be idle.

There was plenty of evidence at Russborough where such pursuits led, and it was small consolation if she thought, as she wrote in 1842, that "the unworthy pursuits that have ruined Lord Milltown in fortune

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1. John Mason, Self-knowledge: A Treatise, shewing the nature and benefit of that important science, and the way to attain it, intermixed with various relections and assertations on human nature. This was in print according to the catalogue of the National Library in Edinburgh at least from the 1760s to the 1820s; the title explains its attractions for Mrs. Smith.

2. Op. cit. p. 6.

3. Mrs. Smith tells us enough about her family for us to know that the reader was expected to be selective in his choice of uncles. Henry Smith's elder brother John and her brother William were clearly unsuitable; her younger brother, Sir John Peter Grant (1807-1893) to the DNB whose career reached a peak in his governorship of Jamaica in 1866, was an altogether more desirable choice.

and in character are little followed by the rising generation" (even to the extent that "Newmarket is forsaken by the rising generatinn of gentlemen - it is frequented only by the old stagers unfit for better things and the tradesmen of London"), because there was always the example of her brothers and family friends whose school and university debts and debaucheries had taken years to settle..

Mrs. Smith's main concern was not with the temptations which beset her class at every turn, but with the neglect of duty which so frequently accompanied them. It was only from the "higher orders" that the "example of acting on high principles" could come which would both improve society and act as an encouragement to the lower orders. If Jack Smith was to be numbered among the improvers, then he would have to appreciate, in part through her journalising, precisely how great these distractions were and how it was only by following the path of duty that all would be well with him and his family and the estate.

It was not just a question of moral education. "The profligates of the upper orders" as she called them in November 1842 and the wealthier employers needed to mend their ways, and it would do them no harm to take a leaf out of the book of the "staid old country family nobility, who residing for centuries on the same property among the same tenantry, spend their lives in doing good." In society in general "too much property seems to have got into too few hands, too many mouths have too little to fill them, there is a want of energy, a want of principle, a want of knowledge."

There was little excuse for these three deficiencies still hold-

ing back the present generation although there was much evidence for their presence around Blessington. "Gentlemen must turn to the profession of farming, now that Law and War are out of favour with the times, treat the earth they till scientifically, employing and paying well the thews and sinews of those used to labour." There was even no reason why sons who were not in Jack's favoured position should not now make ends meet if they remembered the principles she tried to instil into her son:

> A thoroughly educated man of sense with his younger son's portion cd. make as much of acres as this same sort of man now makes of lb. weights, the produce of these acres, and thorough integrity will be found to be the basis of good fortune in both, in all.

By the end of this year, 1842, she had read a Mr. Stephens[1] on draining and its importance; that such admirable views were achieving circulation she thought was a sign of the times.

> It is doing now, even here, a little late, but the Irish gentleman is at last waking from his dream of idle pleasure, which never satisfied, which deteriorated his character, impoverished his resources, spread distress around him, and left him to drown reflexion in his bottle.

Such a "melancholy picture of human nature" is contrasted with the one she anticipates seeing once her son has been "raised by high principle" to "a correct estimate of the duties incumbent upon each in his particular situation": this should amount to his being "the intelligent, well-informed, well-educated father and friend of all belong-

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1. Henry Stephens FRSE wrote a lot of articles during the 1830s and 1840s but his most influential work, A Manual of Practical Draining (Edinburgh 1846) was at the time yet to be published. See p. 157.

ing to him, able to instruct and assist and to act himself as a model to others."

Her thoughts at the end of 1842 finally emphasise the great difficulties facing any one organising the preparation of the future generation of landowners:

> How careful should his own education be to fit him for so responsible a condition, a moral philosopher, a well-read historian, in the comprehensive view of the term, a good lawyer thoroughly acquainted with the laws and customs, the religion of his country. Master of the sciences for he will have to apply them all, his information cannot be too general, he will want it all, nor his accomplishments wither for they will materially add to his usefullness, his moral character too must be above reproach, for upon it must he depend for his influence.

An ambitious scheme, but she stuck to it and believed that if she and her generation persisted with it, all would be well: "Mothers, you have the destiny of the world in your hands, indubitably."

Chapter Four

Children, Servants, Household

There is no doubt that Mrs. Smith's dire warnings, fully intended to be read by her family, owed a great deal of their origin to her criticisms of the conduct of those who ought to have been the leaders of society around them. They were intensified by her awareness of the number of traps her own generation in Scotland as well as Co. Wicklow had fallen into with such consequences. This was made even more forcefully in her writings after their return from the two years the Smith family spent retrenching in France from 1843 to 1845[1] and the problems which appeared in 1845 made it all the more essential that Jack, seven by then and well into the learning process, was brought up to avoid the pitfalls which threatened particularly their class of society. Her comments at the end of December were almost deliberately made as if to conclude a chapter of the Journals, but they raise many points of great interest for a number of the lines of inquiry suggested by a study of the Smiths and their family:

> Dear little boy, if I could but ensure the same pure feelings to you through life. Save you from the misnamed amusements of your class in youth - low sensual dissipations, hurtful to the health of body and of mind, self-indulgance in the lowest instincts of our nature, instead of the manly occupations, the fruits of moral vigour of character. Fox-hunting, steeple chasing, racing, these are hardly worse than waste of time, follies pursued by the idle, harmless maybe in themselves, but what do they lead to? vice, despicable vices, at the best unfitting their determined follower from all the nobler powers

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1. The first year from July 1843 to July 1844 was spent at Pau in the Bas-Pyrenees and the second at Avranches in Normandy; in each place letters from Agent, Steward, the Baltiboys teacher and of course Dr. Robinson, kept them in touch with developments in Blessington.

of his mind and heart, more pleasurable as they undoubtedly are too.[1] When I think of my brothers I tremble for my son.[2] I would not have him wade through the mud which nearly choked both, even should he cast it off as they did. There is something so very wrong in the education of our young men, a wrong bent given to their minds, really, I believe, from the impure ideas suggested by those classical authours so much boasted of as their best teachers. Nature is powerful enough without any aid from these exciting sources, and were she rightly directed could she debase all the warm feelings of youth as is done systematically. Eton, Harrow, and other celebrated publick schools nurse the vices which are matured at Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh. Diseased in body, vitiated in feeling, crippled in every energy of mind, the husbands and fathers of Britain prepare to transmit to posterity the consequences of their hardly censured crop of "wild oats". Let us give things their right names and call them sins, breaches of every law given to us by our Maker.

It was not only her fear of hereditary weakness in the face of temptation which was behind such a denunciation. Throughout her writings she maintains that although her childhood memories convince her that relationships based on land can be made to work well, by the 1840s so much damage has been done and the revolutionary possibilities of steam and the railways are so great that the writing must

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1. Colonel Smith, to whom the Journals were often read aloud, can have taken small pleasure from these remarks; it is unlikely that he came across some remarkably similar thoughts expressed in letter from Fredreich Engels to Karl Marx in May 1856 ... "(Irish landowners) ought to be shot. Of mixed blood, mostly tall, strong, handsome, chaps, they all wear enormous moustaches under colossal Roman noses, give themselves the sham military airs of retired Colonels, travel around the country after all sorts of pleasures, and if one makes an enquiry, they haven't a penny." (Quoted in Nicholas Mansergh, Ireland in the Age of Reform and Revolution (1940) p. 68.

2. Mrs. Smith was clearly selective about different phases of her brothers' careers. Their early years at Eton she considered a model of what young men ought not to have been forced into; their subsequent careers as bankers and administrators in India were earlier emphasised as a target (Part I, ch. 3, p. 87).

be on the wall, certainly for the old nobility. In 1844 she wrote of the simple choice: "either the nobles must let themselves down gracefully to meet the uprising of their then equalised surrounders, or they will be set aside, removed perhaps, as unnecessary memorials of feudal times, unsuited to the improved condition of the world."

The ideas on which she was nurturing Jack needed a vehicle if society at large was to be influenced and she was pleased with the foundation of Howitt's "new journal"[1] in 1847, which was "to be the mouthpiece of the new movement". True to form she wrote a few articles for it, and although she felt that most of its authors were "a little visionary: they are unacquainted with the great; they are miscalculating for the humble who will require at least three generations to educate out of their present low feelings; the leaven remains longer than they reckon on," there was no doubting the inevitability of a far-reaching social revolution. The famine, the 1848 revolutions and the Encumbered Estates Court were all to confirm her opinion, and give greater incentive to her attempt to prepare her son for an increasingly difficult life ahead.

Mrs. Smith's ideas on the upbringing, education and future of her two daughters fell into line with those which governed Jack. There was a lesson to be learned from the ladies of the neighbourhood as much as the gentry, and she was consistent in that she did not believe there was any automatic reason why without preparation they should slot into a particular rank of the upper class. This was best

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1. Supra. Part I, ch. 1, p. 15.

summed up in November 1842:

> I am no wordly mother, dear children, I wish for no splendour for any of you. If my two dear girls marry men of worth with a profession which their talents and industry will enable them to live comfortably by and to leave their children in the same station they hold themselves, it is all that I desire. A small establishment, some years of strict economy, would be no objections with me, but I think we owe it to our parents and to our children not to sink them below their birth, which we most certainly do when we cannot educate them for and in that rank of society in society they have a right to join. 1

To educate them for this task of doing their duty "in the state into which it shall please God to call them" was one of Mrs. Smith's main preoccupations. The time when she most thought about this was during the two year period they spent in France. Before they left she wrote: "I like to educate my children myself, considering myself much better fitted to form their characters and to judge of the proper period to cultivate their different faculties." There was only a very small role for a governess: "I merely require a cheerful, good-tempered assistant to take the fag of daily instruction off me, with lady-like manners and a judicious method of playing the part of companion to us all."[2]

She organised a vigorous routine for her children, as for example

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1. Janey's marriage to a Trinity College Don (supra. p. 47) and Annie's somewhat more typical to a member of the upper echelons of the Dublin bourgeoisie (supra. p. 34) both clearly conformed to this canon.

2. There was a governess throughout the early years back at Baltiboys, but it was one of the luxuries to be dispensed with during the Famine (see Part IV, ch.); coincidentally Jane Eyre was published that year.

that she wrote about in September 1844, when they were supposed to be on holiday; Jane was fourteen, Annie just twelve and Jack six.

> Breakfast at half past eight, read two chapters of the Bible afterwards; then the girls write ... then they cipher; then they do translation of French or Italian as may be parsing a sentance accurately; then they run out into the garden after a light lunch of fruit and bread. If it rains they work and read. We have neither musick nor drawing with us. Johnny reads a paragraph from the 'Rudiments of Knowledge'[1] over several times until he has any new words perfect and the sense quite in his head; spells a line, does a sum and writes a little. In the afternoon he reads a page of something amusing and we have a little talk about geography or metals or animals or something; the girls read a little French or Italian.

She adds a few details of their routine for the rest of the day and reading material:

> We dine at three; walk out till dark; crack our walnuts round the fire; drink tea at half after six, read and work until bedtime; this is our life. We have the Notte Romani, Silvio Pellico, Madame de Sevigné, L'Esprit des Lois, Shakespeare, the Edinburgh Review and the Club periodicals.[2] Tonight they each read a tale out of Bentley's Miscellany and very well. I finished two acts of Twelfth Night[3] which was greatly admired.

This was a taxing day for both teacher and taught, but every part of the day had to be catered for, whereas at home more active, out-of-doors routines were possible. As she noted in her last entry for 1843, "their's was a "stupid life" in Pau "without occupation" and this was especially true "for those who have been used to the activity

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1. It is possible that this was part of a series then running in Chambers' Magazine.

2. Clearly this list on its own testifies to Mrs. Smith's belief that wide reading formed a vital part of her children's upbringing.

3. Clearly a favourite play for there are a number of telling quotations from it in the Journals; the Colonel on one occasion was likened to Malvolio in not particularly flattering circumstances. (see p. 158.)

of a country life on their own property."

This involved much more than croquet[1] or strolls along the Liffey. The children were involved for example in all that Mrs. Smith did on the estate from the keeping of accounts to visiting the tenantry. On 26th August 1842 Annie accompanied her mother on a search for children not attending the infant class. "A series of miserable scenes ... everywhere almost we found people merely struggling for existence, some a little better off in consequence of better management, but badly at best and no seeming hope anywhere of better days, no prospect for the children beyond toil, toil for the bit to eat." There was plenty of scope for Mrs. Smith here, but it is more likely that she chose to emphasise the conclusions she herself came to about perhaps the worst-off person they came across that day, Betty Kiogh:[2]

> Is there no remedy for such utter wretchedness? Education alone won't do, the body must be fed at any rate before the mind can act. We can help Betty Kiogh, lead her to help herself as I have done by making her buy fowl for her knitting, and then buying the eggs from her, and making that money again clothe the children etc. but we could not do even this little to many, and who is to do it to all. My head turns when I think of it.

They also visited to distribute small presents on birthdays, or useful items such as patterns or needles, or keep in touch with those who had served in Baltiboys or performed some special task for the family.

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1. Tradition has it that this country house pursuit originated in the Irish big house of this time; the O.E.D. states its first literary mention was in 1858.

2. See Part II, ch. 4, p. 203 - 204 .

At any rate, the school-room and what they learned outside were all part of the same process, and that, as she wrote in February 1847, was geared to her long-term plans for them:

> The children are my assistants in everything, one or all invariably helping ... . They get a deal of practical wisdom in this way; have their minds turned to those better things the pursuit of which is attended by that satisfactory happiness that never leaves one sting behind. Who would exchange for this rational furthering of the improvement of our race the life of the town fine lady? Or will any young woman brought up in this higher style of emplpyment ever sink into the party-giving idler? I am sure I hope not. To learn early the wide difference between society and company will raise the most joyous female mind above great crowds, fine clothes, and silver dishes; they may be found agreeable accomplishments but they will not be considered essentials. And those who have been accustomed to the interchange of cultivated minds while living with a few chosen friends will hardly stoop to be satisfied with frivolous talk for we can only converse with the enlightened.

There were not likely to be many such conversations in the Blessington described by Mrs. Smith's Journals. They make it clear that her views on educating the next generation so that they take their place in the higher ranks of society by merit and not just birth werenot likely to be appreciated by the Milltowns who struggled to retain their place or the Cottons from Humphreystown, a family which had moved in one generation from the shop-counter to gentility. Least of all was this likely to appeal to the Rector's wife, Mrs. Ogle William Moore, whose genteel poverty and overweening attitudes led her to behave in ways characteristic of all that Mrs. Smith was trying to warn her girls against.

The story, whose moral Mrs. Smith was to emphasise for her girls, began in January 1840 when Mrs. Moore asked her to take back a servant recently hired from Baltiboys after various accusations which

were thought to originate in a nurse's malicious gossip. "I write all this here, my little girls, to let you see the evil consequences of want of propriety in the conduct of a mistress towards her servants" and she cannot resist adding that "you will be I hope too well brought up to find like poor Mrs. Moore any pleasure in the gossip of a servant". This is a classic case, she believes, for it is typical of the sort of situation that arises in the management of a household and Polonius-like she mentions some related problems (unjust estimates of them, non-involvement in their quarrels, leniency) and rubs home just why it is unrealistic to expect behaviour from them which corresponds to their own:

> Do not expect from uncontrolled tempers the same patience strict discipline has, I hope, produced in yourselves, nor imagine that uninstructed people can perform their duties as conscientiously as you would do. But endeavour by strictness and kindness to induce them to serve you well - teach them to improve themselves by your example and by your advice and by your assistance. Good books[1], a kind though serious reproof, and above all family prayer properly followed up will effect this in all who are worthy of remaining with you.

Education therefore, if her daughters were expected to deal with situations like this, amounted to more than mere learning and the contrast between what she expected from them and what she saw around her in Co. Wicklow clearly lies behind the tirade she now launches against the way those depending on landed society are treated:

> I do not know any part of an Irishwoman's character that so ill becomes to be scrutinised as her conduct towards her

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1. Cf. p. 95.

> dependants generally - her servants in particular. She is capricious with her tradespeople, and exacting and bargain-making, almost unknown to her husband's tenants, of very little use to the poor, very fine in her own person, very niggardly in her own house, treating her servants as in other countries people do not treat dogs, and governesses as no other lady would treat a servant.

This comprehensive indictment contains many echoes of other descriptions of the conduct of the ladies from the Hornidge, Finnemore, Milltown and Moore families, and there is no doubt that, remembering what she did of the old Highland system at its best and the precepts she was in the process of setting her daughters, this was another element in the blanket disapproval she had, by the highest standards, of much that passed for management by the lady of the household.

The treatment of their servants was for Mrs. Smith a real indication of these ladies' worth and Lady Milltown, Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Hornidge fall far short of the standards expected. The lady who was by far the worst was Mrs. Finnemore; the Journal's condemnation of September 1841 is one of the whole neighbourhood.

> Tried to get a kitchen maid for Mrs. Finnemore but fancy I shall fail, the progress of civilisation indisposing any girl who has a hope of doing better to take a situation where the women servants sleep on a shakedown in the kitchen, three together, bring all the water from the river, wash all the potatoes for man and beast, have low wages, meat but twice a week cut into rations in the parlour and sent out in portions, they would bear this well in a farmer's house but when with this low degree in kitchen there is the utmost profusion in hall with great finery at times and grandeur of position always, they who practise such contradictions must be content with the refuse of the serving class,who will besides never enter their shabby genteel precincts till squire

of rank and honest yeoman[1] have filled their households.

This is a great contrast with what Mrs. Smith writes about her own household soon after beginning her Journals; she planned it so that there would be little chance of arguments about status, jobs, responsibility or any of the hundreds of other irritations which mistresses perpetually complained of at this time.

> We have thus arranged the household, a cook, a housemaid who will wait on me, a nursery maid, Helen to come to do the washing and to be apart in her laundry as a day labourer, to finish it in four days, her wages 10/- a month, finding her own tea, I feeding her, and every second Saturday to scrub the nursaries for which she will get her dinner. A butler and a coachman completes our establishment indoors which a very little exertion on my part will keep in good order as they are a well disposed set of people, and all likely to remain with us.

Helen's wages compare favourably with the customary rates for day labour outside the household[2] and with Mrs. Smith concerned with continuity and with feeding the servants, there is a real contrast already. This was also a household where the head controlled many aspects of life within it. Mrs. Smith organised and even with-held their wages, so that, for example Mary Byrne who had been discovered with lice could afford new clothes ("I must pay out her money in linen if she is to stay here"); presents were brought back from visits

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1. One of Mrs. Smith's illusions (and indeed one example of her refusal even in the 1840s to accept Co. Wicklow as she found it without making false comparisons with Rothiemurchus or rural England) was that it was possible to create and interspose this intermediate class between landlord and peasant.

2. See Part II, ch. 4, p. 209 and 222.

to Dublin; when it was clear that no-one else was going to support a concert by some blind harpers, then it was the Baltiboys servants who had an evening out, even if they had to sit at the back of the hall; there were more presents on the occasion of the children's birthdays and celebrations below stairs on for example her sister Jane's marriage in November 1841 taking the form of "below a grand entertainment ... tea, coffee, round of cold beef, slim cakes, bread and butter and a glass of sherry each to those who were not teetotallers." On this last occasion the Colonel and his wife tried to work out how many people on the estate "we with our small means entirely supported":

> ... it surprised us how many we helped and there we stopt. Well spent money, better employed than in dress or fine furniture or feasting for I am not yet a convert to the axiom that the spender no matter on what is always a benefactor, I can't help thinking there should be method in distribution.

Self-congratulation, however, was not the usual comment prompted by mention of the servants; there are many more outraged illustrations of their carelessness and inefficiency. She tended to write of "the very improper habits of these lawless Irish replacing what they have wantonly destroyed by the very first available article they can lay their hands on." They gossiped in front of the children ("a cowardly habit"), fibbed and stole. They were obsessed by fashion and neglected their duties particularly when their lives were complicated by their boy-friends: she wrote in December 1842

> Plagued to death with the servants, their loves and their hates and their delicate health but take care not to appear totally indifferent. We have gone on so well so long that I am spoiled and fancied we were to swim on for ever but I fear there must be grand break up. Cupid has been my foe.

All of which she could take in her stride, if reluctantly, but she

could not bear idleness. By the beginning of 1843 she was at the end of her tether:

> I am sure I wish they would work - the servants at least - we should all be a great deal more comfortable; their frightful idle habits are intolerable. I at any rate will not put up with their dirt and their gossiping for another month and their utter indifference to our interests. The very moment I am better I'll put an end to our discomfort. There is no enjoyment of life while one has to act slave to one's own servants.

Eventhis did not outrage Mrs. Smith as much as the biting of the hand that feeds which she considered to be a fair description of the behaviour of those girls who she had presented with a real chance at Baltiboys and who adopted those airs and graces that infuriated her; "the old Irish story" she called it in September 1840 when she described how Mary Nowlan behaved:

> For the first six weeks no one could behave better, but as soon as the good feeding had given her spirits and she had got some clothes and a little money, her senses seem to have deserted her. First she wanted five meals a day, she never having had but two in her cabin, and they only potatoes, with very seldom milk to them; then beer, which in her life before she never could have tasted; then angry at getting no presents; then sulky at the English nurse insisting that the baby should be kept cleaner etc. How can one help these creatures?

Another example occured at the end of 1842, with Catherine Redmond behaving similarly, going through the stages of sulkiness, becoming dirty, disobedience, and then running off for home:

> Being one of my pupils has given me a great hold over her. After she was caught again I spoke to her as she could understand of her mother's poverty, her own duties etc., and she is behaving beautifully again. The bottom of the whole was the wish for tea for her breakfast like the other maids! She who has often and often had but one meal a day and that dry potatoes.

It was the ingratitude as she saw it in the face of her attempts at improvement which particularly irked; Mrs. Smith's efforts with the

servants nevertheless show a totally different set of ideas to those she ascribes to Mrs. Finnemore.

It obviously needed a consistently hard-working approach to keep all the servants in line, especially when her aims were linked with her attempt to "improve". This needed in turn a clear lead from the head of the household, and during the years 1843-1847 when this was not present, control and management became more difficult. For the first two years the Smiths were in France, and this gap was to tell although they were pleased to see all "our old servants outside in their old places", and even more the butler George Garland[1] back again with three school girls as maids" under the housekeeper Mrs. Fyffe: "we shall have an admirably appointed household". Unfortunately, she and the Colonel were both ill for much of the ensuing two years with ill-effects for the smooth-running of Baltiboys. "I am fit for nothing. I must not even go down below, I can bear neither trouble nor vexation, on the contrary I require a great deal of care, constant nursing. The Colonel is often quite unable to help himself or anyone else when the fit of asthma is on him." Their incapacity was to be seen in the household and it was to have consequences throughout the estate, where underlying trends which tended to allow the tenantry a fair independence even in the teeth of landlord opposition were to be reinforced.[2]

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1. Less desirable features of his regime were to erupt later (see p. 106).

2. The consequences of this are clearly to be seen during the Famine, see Part IV.

In the summer of 1846, for example, the impudent boy who managed the yard, Andy Hyland,[1] who was in the habit of slipping into the kitchens to help himself to whatever was going and a chat with the maids, caused a great deal of bother. This led to a court-room scene in May when Tom Darker and Mrs. Smith tried to sort out the situation: she reckoned the two main elements were the Steward's favouring of the Hyland family and Andy's leading Mary Dodson up the garden path:

> Mr. Darker and I then had the two disturbers of our peace before us, a tragi-comick scene out of which we could make nothing, though Mr. Dickens[2] might have filled a good long chapter with the queer speeches, odd words, and violent language exhibited on both sides, the ladies shewing to least advantage decidedly. I will be worried with them and their likes no more, they are both to go and so shall all the others who embroil the family and don't chose to put up with Mr. Darker. He has brought his troubles upon himself by too much favouring a particular set of people. Andy deserves punishment for his bragging folly, his impudent style of manner, ... Mary for her unneighbourly conduct encouraging a man for the fun of laughing at him and then telling falsehoods to clear herself. And I have been wrong ever to allow such low squabbles to occupy me at all.

What is particularly interesting about this indident is that it is evidently a standard procedure for such courts of inquiry to take place, and that Mary displayed sufficient independence of spirit to look for a position in Dublin, rather than accept the sentence meted out by Mrs. Smith of agreeing to "remain out of place for a fortnight." However she only found one as "servant of all work at five

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1. This family is examined in Part II, ch. 4.

2. Many of his novels had appeared by the summer of 1846; a feature of them all, of course, is his masterly descriptions of such imbroglios.

pounds a year ... the girl who found herself over-tasked here and considered her eight pounds and many presents quite beneath her deserts. She lasted until September when Mrs. Smith wrote that she had contacted her for her old job: "there is no lady she would rather serve, if I want a maid she would return to me with the greatest of pleasure etc." But the treatment had to take its full course: "she shall see a little more of the world first."

Meantime the housekeeper, Margaret Fyfe, for whom Mrs. Smith had a soft spot because she came from Scotland and had accompanied the family to France, got involved because she felt that the mistress was not supporting her maids; the whole matter was getting out of hand and there is no sign that Mrs. Smith was able to put a stop to it.

> More of this horrid quarrel and Mrs. Fyfe has given up her place because I won't take part with Mary. I have not fancied her contented for some time back, indeed no one could wonder at her taking an opportunity of getting out of such a nation of evil-speaking lunaticks. It would require great sense, great command of temper and a deaf ear to all gossipping to pass quietly through life among these uncontrolled and vindictive people. She has put herself in the wrong too, by becoming such a partisan, allowing herself to be so prejudiced as to become unreasonably violent in the wrong cause. I am getting strong enough to do without her, and her headaches, her temper, her high notions and her meddling detract a little from her many admirable qualities. Still she will be a great loss to the family.

In part because of her circumstances and her husband's illness, what began as servant intransigence and housekeeper foible has ended by underlying the inability of Mrs. Smith fully to take charge of the situation. Servants were apparently perfectly capable of causing trouble in this household without being in danger of losing their job.

It was the lack of cooperation between the "heads" Margaret Fyfe and George Garland which provided the most spectacular incident. It had been noted during the winter of 1848 how they were "jealous of each other, quick-tempered, he is idle and she is officious, excellent servants but not suited as companions." Having written about their lack of sympathy, Mrs. Smith added "My girls tell me I am becoming as great a gossip as the Doctor. I wonder children, whether you will smile over our family history when you come to this record of bygone days."

This was unlikely in view of the ways that these servants' relationship got out of hand and revealed a number of other ways in which even the Colonel and Mrs. Smith had great difficulties in keeping control of their upper servants. As the hour of dinner drew near, it became clear that George must have been drinking hard all day:

> Next event was George quite drunk, could not lay the supper, could not understand what was said to him, would not go out of the way either. I tried to get him to his room, not a bit of him. Sent the Colonel to him and then the Doctor and between them they took him off and got him a little quieter.

Dinner was muddled through without him, but afterwards he made a dramatic entrance:

> George had got a pistol, had pointed it at Jack in the passage on his way to the kitchen to shoot Mrs. Fyfe, which he most assuredly would have done had the pistol not been locked most providentially. "Life for life" said he as he held it to her ear. He looked they say like a demon. Not being able to cock either barrel, she had time to fly into her store-room where she cowered down behind a sack and was found after a search more dead than alive, quite cold and weak, and shrunk into half her size. The Doctor said it was the Bride of Lammermuir precisely."

The only consolation they derived from his dismissal was that they

could manage without him and so save £40 of the £150 which the Agent had recommended needed to be pruned from their expenditure that most difficult of years.

The Journals make it plain that it was not lack of trying or interest which was at the root of these servant problems because they are full of increasingly irksome comments about a situation which was bad enough in 1848 for her to write of her becoming reconciled to living at Baltiboys more as a visiter than a mistress.

Meantime, the outdoor servants were similarly an affliction. In October 1848 there had been a cub hunt in the covert above the hill and all had joined it "on young horses, leaving the yard at a good trot, cracking their whips and laughing." This was a typical example of the "idleness, artifice, chicanery of one sort or another going on in all departments" that was so noticeable:

> I have so very often and for so long a time found any alteration in these respects impossible that I have entirely given up all interference ... but I should think when it comes to hunting with young horses some notice must be taken of such proceedings. We may not get better servants by parting with these ones but we could hardly get much worse and the punishment in these miserable times may frighten the rest into more propriety for a time.

There is however no mention of any dismissals and to cap it all Mrs. Fyfe ran out of coal in the spring of 1849 three months earlier than was normal. This was the last straw. "I shall in future keep the key, give out what is proper and if she don't like the plan she can leave us." It had taken so much to survive these hard years that where economies could be made as she determined to resume a much more active and managing role herself, then she determined to make them:

"less than her wages would give us a good manservant and the saving in coals, candles, sugar would quite make up for other economies." After the housekeeper departed in June, Mrs. Smith wrote about the way in which the wheel had come full circle and she was now as active again in the running of Baltiboys household as she had been ten years before.

> The house is actually done out of everything, nothing but iron that would not break left in any department. Our china and our linen and our cutlery were therefore resorted to at a ruinous cost. I could not have believed such destruction possible in the time. It will take some time and some money before I get things into order again and never will resign my office more except to the girls ... servants are too disorderly in all senses to be entrusted with the care of property or the controul of a household. Bygones shall be bygones. We must only look better after our business in future for besides the comfort of regularity, every penny is of consequence now.

Thus throughout the 1840s the Smiths both inside and outside the house had maintained a small staff of servants, who, despite their idiosyncracies and inefficiencies, were capable of being trained and improved. They lived, she believed, in better conditions than could be found in Dublin or locally, and a place in the household was a natural extension for those girls who had done well at school on the estate. And from the beginning there had been a system:

> I have resolved on resuming my regular daily business as the only possible way of keeping things in order. Method makes all easy - without it here is no end of trouble and nothing is done well. Monday - the washing to be given out. Clothes mended. Stores for the week given to the servants. Tuesday - work for the week cut out and arranged, my own room tidied. Wednesday - accounts, letters, papers all put by. Thursday - housekeeping, closets, storeroom etc. arranged, bottles put by, pastry made - in short every necessary job done for the week. Friday - gardening and poor people's wants. Saturday - put by clean clothes and school.

Yet it is equally evident that for much of the 1840s a well thought-out system like this was not functioning efficiently. The Smiths'

absence and ill-health did lead to less active supervision of the household at crucial points and the pre-occupation with the problems attending the famine meant less time for servants and a natural inclination not to dismiss at such a time. They themselves were doubtless up to many tricks of the trade and in any case Mrs. Smith often gave the benefit of the doubt. Over-all there lies the sense of a well-thought-out plan that failed because the servants themselves were able to work as they chose without fear of dismissal; in any case there was simply too much for any mistress to control.

The inside and outside servants were, in Mrs. Smith's opinion, capable of being put in the same category; certainly she complained equally about each, only rarely taking what in the circumstances of an all-powerful, insensitive employer would have been the obvious step of dismissal. Outside on the estate a similar closely worked-out system of organisation and administration operated, and it is necessary to compare the efficiency with which the household and estate were run.

Part II

All Sorts and Conditions: the Working of Baltiboys

Introduction

Colonel Henry Smith's property was evidently one of the half dozen estates within a few miles of the "estate village"[1] of Blessington whose existence proves that this comparatively elevated area in the more neglected western area of Co. Wicklow had come on a great deal in the forty years since the devastation of '98. Indeed, most of these proprietors come firmly into that category of "middling gentry"[2], resident on "model estates"[3], a recent historian has found characteristics of this county as a whole in the 1840s. Enough has been seen already to make it clear that there were exceptions but overall there is no doubt that Blessington was the centre of a significant number of improving estates, whose resident landlords in differing ways accepted the obligations, as well as the fruits of land ownership.

Thackery, who in the summer of 1842 was in this part of the country gathering material for what was to be published in April 1843 as The Irish Sketch-Book[4], wrote a telling description of how impressed he had been by a visit to one of these estates, that of the Purnells of Halverstown. The journey from Dublin to Naas and then to Kilcullen had been noticeable for the number of "gentlemen's

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1. T. Jones Hughes, East Leinster in the mid nineteenth century, Irish Geography Vol. III, No. 5 (1958) p. 233-4.

2. R.F. Foster, Charles Stewart Parnell: the Man and his Family (1976) p. xiv.

3. Ibid., p. xix.

4. See supra. p. 29 , footnotes 1 and 2.

places, looking extensive and prosperous"[1]. It was also true that there was ample evidence of that distress that normally accompanied the "hungry months".[2] However the journalist in Thackery was satisfied by his noting it and the novelist in him produced the description of the poorer inhabitants of some of the towns around Naas seeming "to put a decent look upon their poverty"[3] and made him conclude his description of the distribution of free meal to the destitute with the observation that "A company of English lawyers, now, look more cadaverous than these starving creatures."[4] This combination of the light touch and the seriously-made point of detail also attends his account of his arrival at his host's impressive mansion and tour round what was clearly an admirably organised and prosperous estate. He was guided round fields and stock-yards in the 400 acres Mr. Purnell retained on the demesne farm and examined the dwelling houses of a few of the 110 labourers employed on the estate; everything was to his satisfaction even, as he concluded, if he lacked the knowledge fully to appreciate all he saw.

> A more practical man would have seen, no doubt, and understood much more than a mere citizen could, whose pursuits have been

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1. Ibid. p. 28.

2. That is the three, or sometimes four, months lasting from the end of the old crop of potatoes in June to the arrival of the new one in October. See.E.R.R. Green, 'Agriculture', in R.D. Edwards and T.D. Williams, eds., The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History (1956) p. 96.

3. p. 28.

4. p. 30.

> very different from those noble and useful ones here spoken of. But a man has no call to be a judge of turnips or livestock, in order to admire such an establishment as this, and heartily to appreciate the excellence of it. 1

There are plenty of examples in Mrs. Smith's Journals detailing how equally impressed visitors to Baltiboys were during the 1840s by its appearance as a well-organised, prosperous and improving estate. Some were eminent friends from the Smiths' days in India like General Robertson[2]; others were to be as celebrated later, like her cousin Bartle Frere[3], or play a significant part in important developments affecting Ireland, like her brother-in-law Sir William Craig Gibson[4]. Their eulogies were duly written down by their hostess in the same sort of way that any number of travellers through Ireland of the 1840s noted their opinions as they journeyed.

What sets Baltiboys apart from most other estates in Ireland at this time is that these encomiums can be tested. The picture that is built up in this work from all that Mrs. Smith wrote is necessarily

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1. P. 37

2. Major-General Archibald Robertson, Director of the East India Company from 1840 until his death in 1847 (D.N.B.).

3. Sir Bartle Frere (1815-1884), the "statesman", as the DNB starts its 17 column-long entry, had a distinguished career in India and South Africa; after his marriage in October 1844 he returned from India on an 18 month leave, when he visited Baltiboys several times.

4. Sir William Craig Gibson (1797-1878) MP, one of the leading Scottish public figures of his time; for his involvement in Irish famine relief measures see Pt. IV, ch.1, p.419. Pierce Mahoney, a Dublin lawyer and Wicklow landowner much disapproved of by Mrs. Smith, had led a lengthy correspondence with his father, Sir James, on a comparison between Irish and Scottish conditions in 1835 (Devol vol. XX p. 19-23, witness no. 291 qu. 3). Sir William had been an early admirer of Elizabeth Grant's charms (Highland Lady p. 362-3).

more complete than one that has to be formed from official or state papers alonge. This second part to my thesis attempts to use such sources to consider both the estate as an economic unit in its own right and individual holdings worked by tenants or labourers, whose character and degree of success can be gauged from these very different records.

Chapter One

The Estate of Baltiboys

The twenty years during which Colonel and Mrs. Smith were resident on their estate in the 1830s and 1840s coinicded with a number of government-organised attempts scientifically to examine the land and people of Ireland. To appreciate their significance for Baltiboys and all who lived there, it is necessary to emphasise a number of their features.

The Tithe Composition Applotment Books[1], a detailed account of the occupiers of the land with the extent and value of each individual farm, in Baltiboys' case on 25 February 1834, are a very valuable statistical starting point. They provide a reliable indication of the degree of progress made by this incoming landlord in the first five years, and as the first complete register of all who worked the land there, provide a unique glimpse against which subsequent changes can be measured.

During the early 1840s there were two distinct statistical collections that can be used to show both how the area around Blessington fitted into the general Wicklow context and also the degree to which Baltiboys conformed to the local pattern. First, the tables produced

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1. See R.C. Simington, The Tithe Composition Applotment Books in Analecta Hibernica no. 10 (July 1941) and in Journal of the Department of Agriculture, No. XXXVIII (1941); also, T. Jones Hughes, Society and Settlement in Nineteenth Century Ireland, in Irish Geography V No. 2 and James H. Johnson, The Irish Tithe Composition Applotment Books as a Geographical Source in Irish Geography Vol. III No. 5.

by the 1841 Census Commissioners[1] in their efforts to produce a "social survey" rather than a "bare enumeration"[2], are an extremely important source. Most valuable of all, however, is the mound of material indefatiguably collected by all connected with the production of the Griffith valuation of land. Richard Griffith, in his attempt to produce a uniform valuation of lands and tenements throughout Ireland, first sent his surveyors (none of whose lots were to consist of more than thirty statute acres), who recorded in their Field Books every scribble needed to calculate the quantity and quality of land farmed by each occupier of all holdings over one acre on Baltiboys.[3] The subsequent check eleven years later by a different surveyor took into account any changes; the definitive information was marked on the Ordinance Survey Maps that were later so to impress Thomas Carlyle.[4] These Field Books were then used to make out a fair copy

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1. Report of the Commissioners appointed to take the census of Ireland for the year 1841, H.C. 1843, XXIV pp. 252-5; see also the warning in P.M.A. Bourke, The agricultural statistics of the 1841 census of Ireland: a critical review in Economic History Review, ser. 2, xviii, no. 2 (Aug. 1965).

2. See T. Jones Hughes op. cit. Irish Geography III no. 5, p. 227.

3. See Richard Griffith's 'outline' of the Valuation System used under his instructions of 6 and 7 W IV cap. 84 included as Appendix No. 1 to the Report from her majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland (hereafter Devon) H.C. 1845, XIX, extracts 1-4, p. 1073-6; Devon XIX, XX, XXI and XXII - I refer to in footnotes as Devon 1, 2, 3 and 4.

4. See Thomas Carlyle, Reminiscences of My Irish Journey in 1849 ed. J.A. Froude (1882) p. 63 where Larcom's "new survey of Irish lands" is described in his journal as "very ingenious; coloured map, with dots, figures referring you to tables, where is a complete account of all estates, with their pauperisms, liabilities, rents, resources: for behoof of the Poor Law Commr.s." See also explanatory note alongside Map , Appendix 1.

and this in turn was the basis for the Griffith Valuation that was later to be published.[1] Thus, so complete is the material, that each tenant's holding can be identified on the estate map[2] and the quality of every acre ascertained. The value put on each plot by the surveyors can be compared with the rent actually paid and because the whole operation took place over a twelve year period, a comparison between the original Field Books and the printed final statement indicates changes in the holding of land that would otherwise go unrecorded.

An equally particular picture of each tenant and many of the labourers can also be built up from Mrs. Smith's Journals. At one point in particular, in January 1847, she produced an extensive "Catalogue Raisoné" which she described as "my present careful survey of our people as a good mem: to have beside us"[3] at a time when the Smiths were straining every limb to alleviate the onslaught of famine conditions. This is a necessarily subjective, but nevertheless factual, statement of the physical conditions she found on a number of visits round the same tenants who feature more anonymously in the earlier official surveys.[4]

The last two sources provide broader backgrounds against which

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1. I refer, then, to three Griffith valuations: the 1841 Field Books, the 1852 "rough draft" that incorporated much new material and this final printed version, published in 1863.

2. See Appendix 1.

3. 13 January 1847.

4. I consider a number of examples in detail in Part II, Ch.s 3 and 4.

all that happened at Baltiboys during the 1840s can be noted and analysed. From 1847 dates the annual Returns of Agricultural Produce in Ireland[1] and the figures for both stock and crop, as well as being of immense value in ascertaining the degree of impact of the Famine, are also a check helping to charter the general progress of the immediate area in which Baltiboys was situated. Finally, the ten year census of 1851[2] provides a fitting back-cloth to this twenty year period, which is so fortunate to be closely detailed in official accounts and to be equally minutely observed in the perceptive Journals of Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys.

1. See the Returns of agricultural produce in Ireland: 1847 Crops H.C. 1847-8 lvii; 1847 Stock H.C. 1847-8 lvii; 1848 H.C. 1849 xlix; 1849 H.C. 1850 li; 1850 H.C. 1851 l; 1851 H.C. 1852-3 xciii (The census of Ireland for the year 1851, pt. ii: Returns of agricultural produce in 1851.)

2. The census of Ireland for the year 1851, H.C. 1856 xxix and xxx.

In her writings, Mrs. Smith was accustomed to think of Baltiboys as a manageable estate of around 1200 acres. The surveyors for the Tithe Composition Applotment Books in 1834 estimated that it was slightly over 1126 statute acres, together with just under 36 1/4 acres of waste or untitheable land. The compilers of the Griffith Field Books, found in December 1841 that the area was 1142 acres, 2 roods and 23 perches, of which nearly 32 were waste, mostly river. Colonel Smith's other property in the nearby, but not adjoining, parish of Tipperkevin in Co. Kildare, the farm of Elverstown Great, which was 115½ acres, brings the total number of acres owned by the Colonel to a little over the figure mentioned by his wife.

The large amount of river waste is a reminder of how the property was bounded on three sides by the Liffey and King's rivers, which gave it much of its character as a compact unit. The fields rose on three sides towards the 1000 foot hill in the centre of the estate, which thus formed its backbone.

From these acres both landlord and tenantry had to gain a living. Before describing the organisation of the estate and examining how successfully it was run before the Famine, it is worth stressing the ways in which the Journal and the various official surveys and valuations are detailed enough to enable a remarkably complete picture of the tenantry to be built up.

For example, a comparison between the 1834 Tithe Applotment lists and those made out for the final Griffith Valuation, Table I, shows that there must have been a settled pattern of land occupation here, for, as the Journals confirm, son clearly succeeded father on the

majority of farms.[1] There are still signs of the problems that the Smiths inherited with the estate, a few tiny holdings, some land held in common and one middle-man with some ten percent of all occupied land, but by the time of the later valuation there is only one holding under five acres, and no land is held jointly, although John Williams has not given up his intermediary rights to Colonel Smith. He however in accordance with the policy his wife wrote about in November 1840 ... "if we could but get more land into our own hands we should really make a fortune. By taking advantage of every windfall, I hope in time we may manage this." ... had managed to take over the lands which the later Valuation[2] shows amounted to 182 acres of house, offices and land. The principal parts were the holdings of Pat Quin and the Commons brothers, and the Journals show how with considerable difficulty the Colonel regained possession; smaller tenants such as Richard Grey (described as "the poorest man in Baltiboys" in November 1842) and James Cullen (who however did not give up his land until the winter of 1847) also eventually agreed to move.[3]

With these exceptions, it is interesting to note that every other occupier in 1834 has a farm or holding which is either identical to the one mentioned by Griffith, or has only changed in area marginally; and even the greatest difference, the 94 acres farmed by the

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1. See Part II, ch. 3 pp.185-7 for details of disputed successions.
2. It names his son-in-law James King as the resident "immediate lessor"; Colonel and Mrs. Smith had moved to Dublin the previous year.
3. Part II, ch.s 3 and 4 describe how tenants and labourers fared when Colonel Smith's consolidating policies were put into practice: see pp. 121, 172-3 and 224-5.

Darker brothers in 1834 which has dropped to the 85 farmed by Tom the Steward[1] alone in 1851, can be explained perhaps by the 8 3/4 acres of waste included in the figure for tithes. This suggests not only continuity but that the main changes in land holding envisaged by Colonel Smith on his return from India in 1830 had been achieved within four years.

These few points also are important at the outset in emphasising how what was happening at Baltiboys between Colonel Smith's arriving on his property, and the Famine breaking out some sixteen years later, places this estate firmly into the context of what was happening throughout Ireland.

The Colonel's forebears had obviously chosen the middleman system because it had relieved them of "the always troublesome collection of rent from a horde of seemingly rude and often poverty-stricken tenants".[2] All over Ireland in these years, landlords of Colonel Smith's generation were refusing to renew middlemen's leases and the John Williams who alone survived at Baltiboys must have had a long lease or a long life. During the 1830s and 1840s throughout the country there was clearly visible a "much more vigourous management"[3] of estates which, once the middlemen had been eliminated, tended to take precisely the two main stages attempted by the Smiths.

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1. See Part II, ch. 2 p. 141-159.
2. James S. Donnelly Jr., The Land and the People of Nineteenth Century Cork (1975) p. II; hereafter Donnelly.
3. Donnelly, p. 52.

First, landowners tried to consolidate more of the tiny holdings into much more economic units. Some cottiers and small holders must have been forced, just as some were bribed, but outright antagonism to the whole concept, in for example the pages of the Devon Commission's evidence, is rare; few opposed it as vehemently as the Waterford auctioneer Piers Quarry Barron who claimed that "the consolidation of farms has become as a gospel law among the landlords, with the object of removing from their estates a population pauperised by their own neglect."[1] Much of this had clearly been achieved before 1834 at Baltiboys; James Cullen was undisturbed in his tiny holding until 1847. Secondly, as the official statistics emphasise, Baltiboys like many other estates, whose proprietors or agents gave evidence to the Devon Commissioners, witnessed, even in the "seriously neglected"[2] years before 1845 efforts being made to further, through investment in long term agricultural improvements, the future prosperity of landlord and tenant.

One pointer to the degree such changes had occurred on Baltiboys emerges from considering the size of the tenant holdings; it is revealing to contrast the figures in Table 2, which are a comparison between

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1. Devon, vol. 3, p. 446, witness no. 912, para. 19. Far more common to most landlord and agent witnessess was the approach of Denis Kelly (Devon vol. 2, p. 350, witness no. 431, qu. 54): "I am getting the tenants whenever I can to buy adjoining land when it is vacant ...; where there is a beggarman and he is inclined to go away, or one man is inclined to buy of another, I have made both into one holding, and have always assisted the party by lending him money, and in every way I could."

2. Donnelly, p. 62.

the 1834, the 1841 and the more haphazard 1847 evidence, with those in the following Table 3, which gives the corresponding sizes taken from the Returns of Agricultural Produce in Ireland between 1847 and 1851. They all emphasise the fortunate position of any townland in Leinster compared to most other parts of Ireland but the very small number of tiny holdings at Baltiboys and the correspondingly larger than average number of tenants on farms over the 50 acre mark, singled out as significant by P.M. Austin Burke[1], indicates that this tenantry were more farmers than smallholders or peasants.

If this is the statistical background to much that happened to the tenantry in these years, it is worth noting at this stage that the difference between the valuation of 1834 and that suggested by Griffith indicates the sort of problem faced by Colonel Smith. However, overall, there is no doubt that the figures confirm that Baltiboys comes into what T. Jones Hughes has singled out as a category of estate in southern and eastern Ireland where "landlordism triumphed absolutely",[2] as shown by the high ratio of resident proprietors and the number of substantial privileged tenants.

It is equally important to remember this statistical background, when trying to assess the many examples of how the tenantry were affected by the reorganisation of Baltiboys. Tables 4a and 4b, for

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1. P.M.A. Burke, The extent of the potato crop in Ireland at the time of the famine in the Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland XX (1959) p. 25.

2. T. Jones Hughes, Irish Geography Vol. V No. 2 (1965) p. 87.

example, which quote from the rough draft in the Dublin Valuation Office used to calculate the final published Griffith Valuation and compare the actual rent paid per statute acre with that suggested by Griffith, give a lot of valuable information on the tenantry's condition. Assuming that the figure of 41 shillings per Irish acre for Pat Farrell is either an error or includes especially valuable offices or workshops which he as estate carpenter might have owned, then the range of rents is from 9/5 in the case of Pat Quinn to the 15/8 and 16/3 of the larger farmers Kelly and Tyrrell.[1] As was usual, Griffith's valuation was less than the actual rent paid[2]: of the eighteen occupiers only three were valued by him at a higher rate and the changes range from Tom Keogh's 14/5 to 14/- (2 3/4%) to the 50% of Pat. Fitzpatrick's valuation changing to 7/6. There were therefore a wide range of rent values.[3] Just as important, each tenant who features in the Journals can be identified with a definite rent and through the Field Books with identifiable land.[4]

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1. See Part II, ch.s 3 and 4.

2. Richard Griffith made an interesting comment on such a comparison: "In regard to the difference between the valuations of land adopted by me under the act, and the actual letting value, I have to observe, that our valuation is about 25 per cent under the full rent value, but very near that of many of the principal landed proprietors of the country." See his outline (supra., Introduction Part II, footnote 4) extract no. 5.

3. For an alternative statistical approach, see the histogram and cummulative frequency curve in Appendix 8.

4. See map, Appendix 1.

These figures also help to form conclusions about the terms on which the tenantry existed, for this "rough draft" also provides information about leases and the taxes paid which is not to be found in the Journals. Thus, all but three of the tenant farmers and small-holders were "at will", the majority dating from 1812; only Tom Darker, John Darker and Tom Kelly possessed long leases and only the favoured Steward had the recent one of seven years dating from 1851. The burden that Cess and Poor Rate taxes must have been needs to be remembered; combined they meant that James Ryan was paying 1/4 of his rent, Philip Tyrrell 1/8, Tom Keogh 1/5 and Mary Kelly 1/6.[1]

Although much of the interest of these bare statistics lies in the way they can be set against later incidents described in Mrs. Smith's Journals so that more confident conclusions can be drawn from them, it is possible at this stage to assert that Baltiboys consisted of manageable units, for the most part paying rents which, although naturally above Griffith, were still below the more outlandish levels described in the Devon Report.[2]

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1. These four were in very different financial circumstances; James Ryan the carpenter, for example, had been reduced to thieving from his landlord by 1847 ... see Part II, ch. 3 p. 194-6.

2. Unfortunately, none of the Commissioners took evidence much nearer than Naas and no landed proprietor, agent or tenant from around Blessington chose to give evidence (however this is not without value: see Part IV, ch. 1, p.390-5); most authorities agree with R.D. Crotty (Irish Agricultural Production p. 51) that "There is no doubt that land rents in Ireland were high by almost any standard."

Another aspect of the tenantry's lives which is much described in the Journals is their housing,[1] and set alongside Mrs. Smith's accounts more fully to bring them out, some figures from Griffith again prove the importance of this source. Table 5 combines some detail from her Catalogue and the information in the Perambulation Books[2] kept by the Griffith valuators, so that some clearer idea of how they were housed emerges. Richard Griffith's instructions[3] had been very clear. Class A houses were slated and constructed of stone or brick, and lime mortar had been used in their construction. Class B consisted of superior thatched houses and Class C of thatched cabins with mud or dry stone walls. The fact that six of the tenant farmers on Baltiboys occupied houses so superior to these descriptions that they had, together of course with Baltiboys House itself, to be measured on their own is a revealing pointer to their status, and to their apparent prosperity in the aftermath of the Famine. Overall, the condition and size of the houses and the offices are a valuable indication of how far the Smiths' improvements on their estate had progressed.

Finally, any account of the background to the lives of tenant and landlord at Baltiboys in the 1840s must refer to what can be deduced

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1. Her Catalogue Raisoné makes a point of detailing the conditions in which all on the estate lived.
2. These are in the Public Records Office, Dublin.
3. See for the fullest account, his Instructions to the Valuators and Surv[illegible] appointed under the 15th and 16th Vict. c. 63 for the Uniform Valuation of Lands and Tenements in Ireland, H.C. 1882 lv.

from the Returns of Agricultural Produce in Ireland after 1847.

Although the Crops details in Table 6a do not lend themselves to accurate comparison because the electoral division in which Baltiboys was situated changed in 1849 from Boystown to Burgage, there is much of value. Even in 1847 and 1848[1] holdings under five acres were far from growing only potatoes; in both years holdings under one acre devoted more land to oats. Overall, interestingly, the total percentage of oats in Boystown fell from 80 to 70 to 60 in the three years from 1847 to 1849, while it was constant at something under 80 on Burgage Electoral Division. At any rate, this is clearly one of those plateau parishes well within P.M.A. Bourke's "oatmeal zone"[2] and these figures are the statistical explanation of the many references in the Journals to visits to the Dublin market to sell oats.

These figures also show that farmers and smallholders in this area grew root-crops as a significant percentage of the total area under crops; it was never less than 40% in Boystown and in the smaller electoral division of Burgage it rose to over 90 in 1850, whilst in the following year for every acre of potatoes there was 1 1/4 of turnips. This picture helps to put into perspective all that Mrs. Smith writes about the extent and kind of agricultural improvement in the area.

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1. These figures are examined later in Part IV for the light they cast on the way Lower Talbotstown emerged from the famine years.

2. See P.M.A. Bourke, The use of the potato crop in pre-famine Ireland in the Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, XXI (1968), p. 80.

Although it is unfortunate that these figures only start in 1847, they do show a general indication of this year as the low-point as far as the number of acres under potatoes and turnips are concerned, with perhaps less noticeable fluctuations in the acreage of oats, for the most part a cash crop, and of course the general recovery is reflected in the later figures. It is however hard to detect from these figures where the 20% fall in the population of East Leinster in general might have taken place; the only uncertain rates of increase are in the 15-30 acre group, rather than in the smallholder class below, which in itself is a comment on the comparatively viable agricultural structure of Boystown and Burgage.

This was however mainly pastoral and grazing land, situated so close to the higher ground on the Wicklow Hills and the market towns beyond. However, the returns of Stock, although showing a high cattle density of over 130 per thousand acres in the Barony of Lower Talbotstown (which may in fact approach the figure of 250 per thousand acres of <u>improved</u> land singled out as significant by Jones Hughes[1]), also contain large numbers of sheep and pigs both over and under one year old. Thus taken in conjunction with the Crop figures, a pattern exists of an area with a strong pastoral bent, but where other stock and crops existed in numbers sufficient to justify the description of modest mixed farming.

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1. See T. Jones Hughes, Irish Geography Vol. III, No. 5 (1958) p. 234.

Chapter Two

Organisation: Landlord, Steward and Agent

The management of large landed estates in England and Scotland in the first half of the nineteenth century had become a highly specialised and professional occupation. Most estates, indeed, had long since come to be treated by their proprietors as "units of management" rather than "units of consumption"[1] whose purpose had been to provide for the needs of the landlord and his dependents. Very small estates of a few hundred acres, it is true, possessed a more "rudimentary organisation"[2] but the great majority were administered according to a system whereby what David Spring has called the "close day-to-day supervision of a farming tenantry"[3] was delegated to a resident Land-Agent.

This was also the system whereby the largest Irish estates were organised by the first half of the century. The 90,000 acres of the Fitzwilliam estate, the largest in Co. Wicklow, and the 41,000 acres at Powerscourt could only have been administered efficiently under such a professional system.[4] The Downshire Papers[5], equally, paint a picture of an efficient, central organisation at Hillsborough con-

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1. F.M.L. Thompson, English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century (1963) p. 153.
2. David Spring, The English Landed Estate in the Nineteenth Century: its Administration (1963) p. 6.
3. Ibid., p. 97.
4. M. Wingfield, Viscount Powerscourt A description and History of Powerscourt (1903).
5. See Maguire, op. cit., ch. 5 'Administrative Structure and Practice'.

trolling the separate estates that formed the 115,000 acres belonging to the Marquis of Downshire, 15,000 of them at Blessington.[1]

There were six main functions customarily exercised as part of this supervision.[2] Receiving rents on the traditional two gales each year, selecting tenants and negotiating agreements and leases were the three most important. Introducing improvements, spurring the tenantry on to greater enterprise and playing an active role in local government were probably more time-consuming. Wherever the Agent was resident these would be amongst his most important duties, as is confirmed by the memoirs of Samuel Hussey, who spent most of a professional life that began in 1843 working on Kerry estates:

> The duties of an Irish land agent comprise a great deal of office work, drawing up agreements with tenants, receiving rent, superintending agricultural and all landlords' improvements, sitting as magistrate and representing the landlord when the latter is absent at poor-law meetings, road sessions, and on grand juries. 3

However there was a very different pattern on estates such as Baltiboys. Precisely the same functions of estate management had to be carried out but because the scale was so much smaller, then frequently there was no need for a resident Agent and where the landlord was resident and improving, perhaps assisted by a Steward, then he could be dispensed with altogether. Anthony Trollope, one of the most

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1. Maguire, pp. 1 and 5.
2. Spring, ch. IV, especially pp. 97-8.
3. S.M. Hussey, The Reminiscences of an Irish Land Agent, being those of S.M. Hussey, compiled by Home Gordon (1904) p. 39.

astute observers of Ireland in the 1840s[1], drew a comparison between Ireland and England that brings out the position at Baltiboys:

> The duties towards an estate which an agent performs are, I believe, generally shared in England between three or four different persons. The family lawyer performs part, the estate steward performs part, and the landlord himself performs part; - as to small estates, by far the greater part. 2

In contrast to the larger Irish estates he had in mind, the Smiths fitted this model for smaller English estates perfectly. It will be shown in this chapter how the direction of the estate lay firmly in the hands of the proprietor. It is highly probable that Colonel Smith's initial reaction on returning to Baltiboys in 1829 was the same as William Bence Jones' when he inherited Lisselan's two thousand comparable acres in 1838: "an agent was altogether dispensed with."[3] There was clearly no need for a resident agent like Samuel Hussey where the landlord, ready to assume the direction of the estate's fortunes, had no intention ever to become an absentee.[4] However, each of the three agencies mentioned by Trollope had a role to play, albeit a subsidiary one, in the organisation and administration of Baltiboys.

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1. See Part I, ch. I, p. 24.
2. Anthony Trollope, Castle Richmond (3 vols. 1860), Vol. I, ch. 12 p. 252.
3. W. Bence Jones, The Life's work in Ireland of a Landlord who tried to do his duty (1880), p. 3.
4. The Smiths' two years in France July 1843 to July 1845 was not felt by them to imply any abandoning of their active supervision of the estate's fortunes; there was regular correspondence with the Agent and Steward, who had each been clearly instructed as to how the estate was to be administered during their absence.

Tom Darker the Steward, as a resident tenant farmer, was in an excellent position to carry out many of the duties listed above as traditionally associated on larger estates with a resident Agent[1]; it is clear from the Journals that he carried out the day-to-day duties under the direction of Colonel and Mrs. Smith. The Agent proper, John Robinson, rarely visited Baltiboys apart from the two gale days when he was evidently in complete command.[2] Behind this pattern of landlord, Agent and Steward were the shadowy figures of the Dublin lawyers, Cathcart and Hemphill[3], who were necessarily brought into the conduct of estate business from time to time but had little, if any, say in any aspect of the running of Baltiboys outside the straightforwardly legal.

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1. See Part II, ch. 2, pp. 141-159.

2. See Part II, ch. 2, pp.

3. There is no reference in the Journals to this firm, but a number to each partner separately, and as such a firm is listed in Thom and all the Dublin professional Directories, it seemed fair to assume that it was with them that the Smiths did business. I discovered that a Mr. Salmon in Dublin was the successor to what business of the original firm still required attention in recent years; I am indebted to him for searching through his papers because although there was nothing linking them with the Smith family, there was ample evidence that Cathcart and Hemphill had been the family lawyers of the Richey family ... and Jane Smith had married Alexander Richey.

The estate and tenantry of Baltiboys, then, were supervised and organised by the triumvirate of Landlord, Steward and Agent, and before describing and evaluating the system's organisation and efficiency, it is best to begin by showing from the Journals that the Smiths had very definite ideas about the landlord's role.

Mrs. Smith, in particular, was in no doubt about the need for the landlords to be resident and actively involved in carrying out their duties.[1] In November 1840 she wrote that on well-regulated estates "the means of the people were for the most part fully adequate to their comfort "whereas the opposite was true on absentee estates; this remark had been prompted by the discovery of lice on a servant, Mary Byrne, and she concluded "Absentees, you ought to be at home instructing these poor savages." In part this stricture originated in the differences she noticed between the parts played by the Irish landlord and the Highland chiefs she remembered from Rothiemurchus, as she wrote on 19 January 1840 soon after starting her Journal:

> There was nothing struck me so remarkably when I first came here as the tenants marrying their children, setting them up in different trades etc. without ever saying one word about it to their landlords. It went through their whole conduct - we were to them only the receivers of a much begrudged ...

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1. This was the majority opinion amongst those giving evidence to the Devon Commission, most memorably voiced, perhaps, by that Wicklow absentee, or occasionally resident, landlord regarded with considerable suspicion by Mrs. SmitH (another interesting but unflattering reference is in Trollope's Kellys and the O'Kellys, Oxford World Classics p. 15) Pierce Mahoney: "The moral advantage of a good resident landlord is above all desirable. No money to the community with which he is connected can be a compensation for his non-residence. His moral example is not to be valued in money." Devon, Vol. 3, p. 759, witness 1037 qu. 43.

rent.[1] It has been my endeavour, faithfully pursued through many discouragements, to establish a more affectionate intercourse between us. I have certainly succeeded in a great degree - time is acting for me - and I hope you, my dear children, will assist in accomplishing the good work which will provide you with humble but true friends, and give my little Jemmy an improving tenantry.

This was impossible where the tenantry were ill-disposed to their landlord. A Tipperary murder in November 1843 she thought was caused by "some ill-feeling about land" and the following March she guessed that some of their neighbour Mr. Tynte's problems arose because "he has probably exercised some of the 'rights'[2] of property in a way unpleasant to some ill-disposed character." In November 1842 she wrote at length on this theme. She thought that "the profligates of the upper orders" would have to mend their ways, preferably by taking a leaf out of the books of the "staid old country

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1. Anthony Trollope (The Macdermots of Ballycloran op.cit. Vol. I, p. 16) wrote about just this sort of relationship when describing how Thady "acted as his father's agent over the property which meant harrowing the tenantry for money which they had no means of paying; he was occasionally head driver and ejector and considered, as Irish landlords are apt to do, that he had an absolute right over the tenants, as feudal vassals. ... would they but coin their bones into pounds, shillings and pence, he would have been as tender to them as a man so nurtured could be."

2. Mrs. Smith was undoubtedly here referring to Thomas Drummond's famous reminder to the landlords in Co. Tipperary that "property had its duties as well as its rights": R.B. O'Brien, Thomas Drummond ... life and letters (1889), pp. 273-87, quoted R.B. McDowell in The Great Famine, p. 75. The Griffith Field Books (Valuation Office) show Joseph A. Tynte owned just under 2500 acres in and around the town of Dunlavin; there is an interesting, but unfortunately undated, inclusion to the Lower & Upper Talbotstown Outrage Papers for 1842 quoting from a threatening letter Mr. Tynte received - he offered £40 "public reward" for information.

family nobility who, residing for centuries on the same property among the same tenantry, spend their lives in doing good". The trouble was that "too much property seems to have got into too few hands, too many mouths have too little to fill them, there is a want of energy, a want of principle, a want of knowledge" and there was no doubt as to the best ways resident landlords could supply each of these three deficiencies:

> A better system of agriculture by which a greater supply of nourishment may be extracted from the ground seems indispensable. And to this end gentlemen must turn to the profession of farming, now that Law and War are out of favour with the times, treat the earth they till scientifically 1, employing and paying well the thews and sinews of those used to labour. A thoroughly well-educated man of sense with his younger son's portion cd. make as much of acres as this same sort of man now makes of lb. weights, the produce of these acres, and thorough integrity will be found to be the basis of good fortune in both, in all. 2

And in this profession, it was essential for him to play an active part. As she wrote in April 1841 at the time of an involved dispute[3] between landlord, tenants and clergy, "the landlord interfering to protect his people never can be injudicious. What we want to lead them to is to consider him as their friend, the natural guardian of

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1. This was a very important point for her. She emphasised its necessity in the education of her own son as a preparation for fulfilling his role of an improving landlord. As an attitude it was far from uncommon (see, for example, John Vandaleur Stewart from Letterkenny's evidence to the Devon Commissioners: amongst the most imperative "wants of the agricultural population" he included "science to apply capital and labour without profit", Devon Vol. 1, no. 186, p. 812, answer to question 47.)

2. 20.11.1842.

3. See Part II, ch. 1, p. 136-8.

their rights and their comforts."

There are many illustrations of this policy in action. In the 1840s at any rate, Colonel Smith did not adopt a policy of laissez faire when tenants were in trouble. He went himself to the police station in Blessington[1] when Judy and Ellen Ryan[2] quarrelled violently and publicly after a night's drinking in April 1840 and later the same month he took to the courts, in order to insist on his rights as a landed proprietor:

> Hal's Sessions[3] business was a grand affair. Kearns and Dempsey and James Ryan[4] and all their assistants and all their witnesses, furious with one another, Dempsey[5] most impudent to the Colonel, who made him make a most ample apology in open Court. How low is morality among these people. Kearns let his grazing to James Ryan and knew that Ryan was to pay the money for it to the Colonel to whom Kearns owed that much and much more for rent. Two days after he let the same ground to Dempsey and accompanied him to John Robinson's office in Dublin and saw him there pay the hire of it. Dempsey knowing of the former transaction as many persons say, though he has sworn a solemn oath on the Testament that he did not. It is all very shocking.[6]

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1. Sergeant Craddock, according both the scattered references in the Journals and Thom, throughout the 1840s was officer in charge.

2. Judy Ryan features so regularly in Mrs. Smith's writings that I have considered her as a test case in Part II, ch. 5, pp. 234-9.

3. Petty Sessions met regularly at Blessington and the stipendiary Magistrate held court 2 or 3 times a month.

4. See Part II, ch. 3 for further details about all three.

5. See Part II, ch. 3, p180-3for further examples of how soured relations between the Smiths and this tenant became. Interestingly enough, the oldest man staying around Baltiboys I was able to talk to in 1975, Jimmy Byrne, assured me without any prompting that this Dempsey's grandson was always regarded as "contrary".

6. However Mrs. Smith need not have been surprised, for it is evident that most problems on the estate tended to involve the same trouble-makers: see 23/28.4.1840.

For Mrs. Smith this was an example of the landlord interfering when earlier, less concerned landlords of Baltiboys would have turned a blind eye.

The best documented example occurred at the time when the Colonel had at last agreed to his name going forward for the April 1841 elections for Guardians for the recently established Poor House in Naas.[1] He was not prepared to canvass and relied on his reputation to get himself elected, whereas the priest, Father Arthur Germaine,[2] had adopted less passive tactics to ensure the election of his candidate by denouncing the Colonel in Blackditches Chapel and any who voted for him, as well as threatening the Baltiboys tenants. Bryan Dempsey was, according to Mrs. Smith, one of these and her account of the incident shows the importance she attached to her husband performing his duty:

> Dempsey stoutly insisted that he would [vote for the Colonel], he did not care, he would vote for the man who gave him his land, and he let the priest understand that it would be as well to give over abusing him, for he was not the man to bear it; the Curate[3] struck him, when Dempsey turning to the Priest advised him to look after that young man of his for so sure as

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1. The buildings were to be completed by December 1840 and the first rate to be declared on 26 May 1841. For full details see Poor Law Commissioners' Report for 1842 under Union of Naas, PP HC 1842 xix. 23.11.1842.

2. He was the priest in the adjoining parish of Blackditches throughout the 1840s; relations were invariably as strained as they appear from this incident ... see Part II, ch. 1.

3. According to the Parochial Records for Ballymore Eustace (National Library of Ireland, P 6481) this was Father James Rickard; see footnote no. 14 and Part III, ch. 1.

> he ever laid hands upon him again, so sure would he knock him down. They told Farrell the carpenter that if he did not vote for their candidate they would not let him enter their chapel. 1

Only two Baltiboys tenants voted against the Colonel but it was his opponent Riley[2] who won, so the priests' interference in matters which were exclusively the concern of the landlord was no longer to be tolerated:

> Hal off on a crusade against the impertinent interference of the Roman Catholic priests with his tenantry, party work, political scheming beginning here where till now we never had any of it. Tenants who voted with and for their Landlord denounced from the altar, harassed in every way. So on the priest and on the tenants the Colonel means to call, to request of the first not to trouble themselves with what ought not to concern them[3], to tell the second to mind[4] what they are about, to inform all that such as are not thoroughly for him he shall henceforth consider as against him and treat accordingly; he never till now interfered with them one way or another, but war having been proclaimed he will not blink the fight. If there were more like him we should not have the country priest-ridden the way it is.[5] The poor people are well inclined and would be happy and prosperous if those vile priests would leave them alone. Well, he found Father Ricard the Curate at home, Father Germaine was not at home, and he told him quite plainly all he had heard and all he thought of what he had heard and all he certainly should do in consequence, and he does not think they will continue their agitation hereabouts. At first the little priest tried to

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1. 27.4.1841.

2. I have been able to find no local trace of this man, but if he ran true to form then he might have been an up and coming member of the rural Catholic middle class who had financial security from a farm or pub.

3. See Part III, ch. 1, p. 299 for more about this long-running battle over the fit and proper matters for landlord and priest.

4. "to remember": a reminder that Mrs. Smith's vocabulary included a number of words from her childhood in Scotland.

5. This constant theme of the Journals is considered further in Part III, ch. 1

> shuffle off the accusation but at last he was obliged to admit its truth though he excused it as an incidental flourish in an admonitary harangue concerning dues, which I am delighted to find they are beginning to find some difficulty in collecting.[1]

This incident was undoubtedly a landmark in the relationship between tenant and landlord at Baltiboys because it is the first occasion on which the latter saw it as his duty to react against what he thought of as an unwarranted clerical intrusion into his tenants' lives.

A second well-documented incident occurring a year later illustrates the new lengths to which Colonel Smith felt that the prickly relationship with the priest justified his going. It was precipitated by another clash between the new Curate,[2] Father Rickard, and the estate carpenter Pat Farrell, which ended in violence. Mrs.

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1. 28.4.1841. Behind this splendid excuse, there probably was a genuine problem in persuading the better-off tenants and tradesmen, such as those already mentioned, to contribute a reasonable percentage of their income to a crusading church and a zealous priest. Although the amount and frequency of payment was supposed to take into account different local circumstances, by the 1840s there was general dissatisfaction; this was brought to the attention of Paul Cullen in Rome by his uncle, the Carlow priest James Maher: "the demands of the Priests on the People have greatly multiplied and the laity are beginning to complain. Dues, dues is the perpetual cry, the constant Sunday's theme of some." Quoted in Emmet Larkin, Economic Growth, Capital Investment and the Roman Catholic Church in Nineteenth Century Ireland, American History Review LXXII, No. 3, April 1967, p. 859.

2. Father Rickard's aggressive character was to embroil him five years later in the neighbouring parish (see p. 140, footnote 1) of Ballymore Eustace with his Curate, the Rev. Patrick Black, over their respective glebes. The Archiepiscopal archives in Dublin (filed under Priests Secular, 1846 and 1847) contains a characteristically testy letter from Rickard dated 19 January 1847 ("But I have land. Yes, I have land, which I had violently to take possession of, for which an action at law is now impending ...".) Father Black's heavy sarcasm ("I am determined that in future Mr. Rickard must have an opportunity of enjoying uninterrupted repose.") was unlikely to prove a match for his pugilistic rival.

Smith wrote on 26th April 1842: "Heard of Pat Farrell being nearly thumped to pieces by the Priest, the little Roman Catholic Curate Mr. Rickard, a perfect little fury." The Colonel went to see for himself that night and concluded that it was his duty "to put an end to these proceedings of this reverend firebrand who not content with beating almost everyone he has anything to do with, maligns those he is offended with from the altar and has kept the parish in perpetual disquiet ever since he entered." So the Colonel decided to back to the hilt the decision of some other tenants who had been similarly ill-used to organise a petition for the Bishop in Dublin, Dr. Murray[1]. Mrs. Smith was doubtful about their persistence ("Several of the people who have been themselves ill-used have determined they say to sign a petition ...")[2] and their confidant Dr. Robinson thought it best not to interfere at all ("The more tyrannical the priests become the sooner he says the people will tire of them, the more the priests beat and abuse and extort, the sooner will the William Tell arise who is to prove to the poor ignorant, terrified multitude that these furies are but men and may be resisted with impunity."). Neverthe-

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1. Daniel Murray (1768-1852), Archbishop of Dublin from 1823, was widely regarded as a moderating influence on the Irish Church ("was held in high respect by the British Government" as the DNB put it); he was a member of the celebrated Commission that reported in 1836 on the "Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland". Unfortunately an exhaustive search through the Archiepiscopal records, even with the kind of assistance of the Archivist, Father Kennedy, failed to reveal a trace of the petition, any accompanying letter or reply.

2. Mrs. Smith's scepticism was perhaps founded on her experiences in trying to improve the quality of life led by her tenants over the previous thirteen years.

less the Colonel wrote a letter on 28 April to accompany the petition and Mrs. Smith at any rate had no doubts that this led to the departure of the offending Curate:

> The removal of Mr. Rickard[1] will certainly do good, he was a vile political agitator, ignorant and violent and bigotted; two years ago the people would never have complained of their priest had he half murdered them, they are grown bolder now and I am glad they see their landlord will stand by them and that they find he can get a priest removed.

This extension of Colonel Smith's involvement with the lives of his tenantry had a sequel one month later when from Mrs. Smith's account it appears that the Parish Priest himself was in danger of following his Curate. Whether or not this was possible, she obviously saw these skirmishes as part of a war, which could only be won by the landlord getting involved in more and more parts of his tenants' lives:

> I think that we shall conquer the priest and I hear Mr. Germaine is to be sent off after his Curate as his conduct has by no means pleased his Bishop. He has been threatening Pat Farrell and talking indiscreetly about denouncing him from the Altar etc. Farrell answered him very stiffly and at last told him he had better be quiet for very little would rouse him to take the same course with him he had done with the Curate. And on telling the business to Tom Darker he declared that if Father Germaine ever attempted to strike him he really will summon him for the assault before the Magistrates. Would any one of them have said this[2] or half of this, or made

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1. Mr. Rickard certainly disappears from the Journals and also from the Blackditches Parochial Records (National Library of Ireland, 1826-1862, P6483); he only reappears in the Parochial Records for neighbouring Ballymore Eustace (NLI, 1820-60, P6461) the day he was inducted as Parish Priest, 12 December 1845.

2. Mrs. Smith does not mention her source of information here, but, at the least, there is enough information about Pat Farrell (see Part II, ch. 3, p. 198) to suggest that he was perfectly capable of saying one thing to his priest and quite another to his landlord.

any sort of complaint of their priest, two years ago, indeed no; there is a wonderful change coming over them. 1

During the 1840s, therefore, Colonel Smith's natural desire to direct all that concerned his estate or tenantry was reinforced by the consequences of the deterioration of his hitherto tolerable relationship with the local priest. In these as in all other important matters, the landlord clearly took the initiative and left to his Steward the tasks of supervision or execution that attended decisions taken from on high.

Tom Darker and his brother John between them farmed nearly 225 acres[2] on the estate so the Steward in his duties must have been well placed to deal with the everyday details connected with the running of the estate as they arose. Indeed he was the intermediary between landlord and tenant, being set apart from the latter by the extent of his farm, as well as by religion, for both brothers belonged to the established church.[3] As such he was the instrument through whom change was introduced, and when difficulties arose over this or rents, he was the medium through him Colonel Smith took appropriate action.

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1. 1.6.1841.

2. The Ordinance Survey Field Books for the Parish of Baltiboys, completed in August 1838, believed that "Mr. Darcar [sic] has the largest farm at about 16s. an acre"; see Appendix 2, Table 4a.

3. Blessington Church records mention his death on 29 September 1856 "ae 70".

He was appointed Steward[1] by Colonel Smith from his return to the estate in 1829, and it is clear that he was employed as an obvious repository of lore and experience to whom the Colonel could turn for advice.

There are many small illustrations of their relationship. The Steward excercised his employer's new hunters[2], sat close to him at functions in Blessington, substituted for him at Poor Law Meetings[3] and whenever there were local auctions in which the Smiths were interested, he was often sent to bid[4]; after the death of Lord Downshire's agent Mr. Murray he obtained two tables and six "old-fashioned" chairs and was rewarded by a celebration dinner at Baltiboys.[5] When Mrs. Smith left for a month in Edinburgh in September 1840, Tom was entrusted with a sum of money to be handed out "occasionly" to some of the scatter-brained tenant wives.[6] And he was able to put his foot down as when, after the sudden death of Lord Downshire's next Agent, Henry Gore, he insisted that the money Mrs. Smith planned to bid with at the customary auction would be

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1. The earlier mention of a mamber of the Darker family by Ambrose Leet (see Part I, ch. 1, p. 23) suggests that they had a connection with the Smith family and Baltiboys for some time.
2. 11.12.1841.
3. 18.8.1840.
4. For example, 12.2.1840.
5. 27/8. 4. 1841.
6. 14.9.1840.

better spent on manure.[1] He was therefore a trusted "factotum"[2] as she described him in an entirely complimentary context.

This trust is also seen in the way he carried out his responsibilities on the farm and estate. He helped make up the accounts, bought and sold pigs, cattle and lambs in the Fairs at Naas, Blessington and Ballymore Eustace so successfully that John Hornidge, the crusty landlord and magistrate from Tulfarris, often managed to persuade the Colonel to lend him for Fairs in which Baltiboys did not have an interest.[3] On the estate he advised on the siting of tenants' new houses[4] and the construction of new turf roads[5]; he helped to settle difficulties involving a tenant who was also tenant to another landlord[6]; he was sent to Dublin to act as a second opinion over horse purchases.[7] When the house was being prepared for letting in 1843 on the eve of the Smiths' departure to France, he arranged all the alterations and redecoration necessary.[8]

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1. 9.3.1843.
2. 13.11.1842.
3. Four occasions are mentioned that span the decade: 6.4.1840, 20.5.1846, 29.11.1847, and 10.5.1850.
4. 25.5.1840.
5. 5.11.1841.
6. 30.10.1841.
7. 29.12.1840.
8. 26.4.1843.

Moreover, from the brief accounts Mrs. Smith gave of the two-monthly letters he wrote when they were in Pau, the estate was being run as capably as they expected. This was no surprise, especially as one of the factors which had earlier led them to contemplate a retrenching stay at St. Servans on Jersey in 1840 was that Tom Darker would remain managing "so faithfully that the utmost will be made of the ground"[1], adding as a final tribute to his worth that this would also be a good time to rid them of some insolvent tenants. He had estimated that while they were away any expense arising out of the estate would be able to be met out of farm profits thus making the trip really worth-while by allowing the rent from Baltiboys itself to accumulate. In his letters[2] he wrote about the estate's progress, crop prospects and how the rents were being paid. Mrs. Smith commented in March 1844[3] that "he is doing well in all ways, hedging, thinning, draining, selling cattle, managing admirably", and she backed this up after they had been away for a year by quoting a few facts and figures to show how he had made "a little fortune" out of the farm: he had paid all its expenses, kept up her pensions and brought £120 worth of stock to feed on the turnips he had grown, all out of the profits of the farm, without applying to the Agent for

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1. 28.7.1840.

2. 12.10.1843, 30.3.1844, 17.6.1844, 7.8.1844, 30.11.1844, and 14.6.1845. Mrs. Smith's sister Mary was with her in Avranches when the August 1844 letter arrived and was much impressed with it: "so intelligent; so much to the purpose."

3. 30.3.1844.

money, or touching the rent which the two families who were in Baltiboys these two years had paid into the bank. Moreover, as a final accolade and tribute to his worth and success, he still had £70 "to meet the winter with".[1]

Efficient and hard-working though he was, the course of the Steward's relationship with his employers did not always run smoothly. A whole series of points of friction are reported between Tom Darker and his employers, which seem to have had their origin in their questioning his independence of action and also in basic disagreement about improvements on the estate.

Thus in January 1840 Mrs. Smith, in an obvious attempt to broaden the Steward's horizons, read an article on the Corn Laws to him ("Tom Darker much edified"). Somewhat crudely, this was used as a means of introducing a conversation about agricultural improvement. When she listed those which she believed were needed, (lighter fences, gates to fields, drains, and rotation of crops), his testy reply was that these were precisely the respects in which he and his brother were improving.

General homilies were not her only means of keeping the Steward up to the mark. At the end of 1842, angry at the condition of the yards at Baltiboys and the neglect of the poultry, both the responsi-

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1. 30.11.1844.

bility of Andy Hyland,[1] who maintained that Tom Darker loaded him with so many tasks that he was not able to carry them all out, Mrs. Smith sent for the Steward and gave him a good lecture on such an inefficient system ("this regular Irish method of anybody doing anything"), pointing out that at least thirty shillings had been needlessly thrown away. This led her on to a full-scale inspection of the whole stables' area and she was appalled to find filth everywhere; with no doubt Tom Darker in mind she concluded ... "telling is no use, one must stand and see every order executed or 'tis a farce to give it."[2]

The Steward then was not a totally free agent acting on his own after discussion with his landlord; he was supervised and checked over comparatively small parts of his duties. It is not surprising that these were clearly listed for him when the Smiths left for France and that he was expected to abide by them.[3]

By then, however, their slightly testy relationship had got over the worst, for all the tensions came to a head in what must have been a first-rate quarrel in June 1842.[4] This is fully described in the

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1. He featured earlier in the trial Mrs. Smith found it necessary to conduct into some of the servant girls' behaviour (Part I, ch. 4, p. 104). He bears more than a passing resemblance to the servant in Charles Lever's Charles O'Malley, a Micky Free who "had the peculiar free-and-easy, devil -may-care kind of off-hand Irish way, that never deserted him in the midst of his wiliest and most subtle moments, giving to a very deep and very cunning fellow the apparent frankness and openness of a country lad": see 1876 edition p. 79.

2. 19.11.1842.

3. 15.8.1843, a day described as "devoted to Tom Darker".

4. 22/23.6.1842.

Journals and is a most interesting account of the very involved, uneasy ways Landlord and Steward worked together.

Mrs. Smith, never one to miss a good opening, starts with the observation that the material for a novel abounds around her[1] and that the "crowning dish" in any such work would be Tom Darker. He had become increasingly unhappy about many of the Smith's improvements, particularly drill ploughing[2] for potatoes (Ogle Moore, Rector of Blessington,[3] had commended this in a sermon in April which cannot have pleased Tom) and the sowing of turnips. "He don't approve at all of any change in husbandry", and therefore, she wrote, it is hardly surprising that the tenants could not pay decent rents; this direct link between his obtuseness and the tenantry's inefficiency explains much of the strain between them which was to come to a head in the quarrel of June 21st.

Tom Darker, of course, "has by no means seen with satisfaction the few roods of turnips the Colonel has insisted on sowing"[4] but

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1. She had recently been reading Jane Austen's Emma (see Part I, ch. 2, p. 41.)

2. According to E.R.R. Green, The Great Famine p. 102-3, the advantages of drilling potatoes had been obvious for a long time ("far more economical in labour, gave a better yield, and ... the obvious method once the farmers were provided with improved ploughs") and he claims that drill cultivation was "already universal" in Co. Wicklow by 1812. Tom Darker however was clearly no innovator and seems to have required a lead; perhaps therefore he comes into that category noted by the earl of Bandon in 1854 (Donnelly, p. 31) who "still wedded to their prejudices, seemed to prefer the doctrines of the old school."

3. See Part III, ch. 1, pp. 279-287.

4. See Part II, ch. 1, p. 126.

nevertheless work was taking place but not to the Smiths' satisfaction. For they noticed that the women in the field were weeding them with their fingers, "taking carefully up each individual plant not wanted and leaving a row about an inch apart to stand for the crop". She at once began to show them the less time-consuming method; "on to the drill I jumped and began very vigourously to do as I had seen done all my life."[1] It was this which provoked an uncontrollable outburst from Tom Darker.

> I had never thought about Tom Darker, was little indeed prepared for the hurricane that burst from him; he gave up his place - he was thought unfit for it - he could do nothing his own way - he would interfere no more - he saw he was not wanted etc., in a fury of passion that really surprised me .... Unhappy Ireland, how much have your wild children yet to learn? With such untamed passions how are they ever to be raised into that pre-eminence their talents and their energy seem to have destined them to occupy?

There are here obviously two irreconcilable views on the role of the Steward. He saw himself as the agency whereby his landlord's orders were carried out but with the right to chose the means; any meddling by Mrs. Smith was the grossest interference with his attempt to carry out his duties. She, however, felt it part of her rights to keep a general eye on the improving of the estate and if this led to her criticizing her husband's Steward, then it was unfortunate but necessary. Indeed such interventions were necessary if the "pre-eminence"

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1. For example, the Grant family spent the summer of 1807 in Hertfordshire at Twyford House, her mother's property, where Sir John Peter was pleased with his successful agricultural improvements. "I remember above all a field of turnips, that all, far and wide, came to look and wonder at - turnips in drills, and two feet apart in the rows, each turnip the size of a man's head." Highland Lady, p. 55.

she saw as the birthright of the Irish were ever to be attained. And she still felt that he was just the sort to contribute to such progress: "And this is a superiour man - honest - firm - just - clever - attached to the Colonel and to the place, beyond, I thought till now, the petty jealousy that keeps back the progress of his country."

The next day a post-mortem was held and she concluded that her interference was "really neither unnecessary nor unwarrantable" because in spite of all of his assets Tom was "still ignorant of many of the most important parts of his profession." The Colonel for his part met his Steward in a heart-to-heart talk:

> Hal who truly values him, talked to him most kindly - told him how much we both prized him - gave him his due need of praise but, to say truth, nothing but his due for he deserves implicit confidence; but he added the unpalatable truth that we did not consider him a first-class farmer.

The Colonel had been honest with his Steward, and in the "friendly discussion" that followed, Tom was equally open in a way that is revealing about his relationship with him. For it transpired that Tom had not in fact managed to rid himself of that "petty jealousy" mentioned earlier:

> it came out that Scotch methods, Scotch tools, Scotch books and, alas, the Scotch mistress were the aggravating causes of all this absurdity, producing the Irish jealous fear that I wanted to get rid of him to give his place to a Scotchman.

This may have been an absurd fear to her ears, but it is more than likely that Tom, travelling round Co. Wicklow and a regular visitor to Dublin, would have known of the numbers of Scottish agents and stewards who found employment improving Irish estates, to an extent

testified by the pages of the Devon Commission.[1] Samuel Hussey, who had as a young man been sent to "learn my profession" in the South of Scotland, maintained that "Scotland is the best farmed country in Europe, and Ireland about the worst".[2]

In Mrs. Smith's case old habits died hard and although she must have remembered that Tom Darker did not chose to be lectured on how advanced Scottish agricultural practices were,[3] she could not resist bringing to his attention the remarkable rise to fame of a Lowland tenant farmer called Mr. Oliver,[4] about whom her sister Jane wrote in a letter in March 1843: "he rents large farms, makes £5 an acre of tillage, £40 an acre of grass, all which history we read to Tom

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1. Some typical examples are: George Robertson (witness 294, Devon Vol. 2, p. 30) who was able to draw on his extensive experience in both Scotland and Ireland; Andrew Mair and William Milne, "agriculturalists" to the earl of Erne (witnesses 330, Devon Vol. 2, p. 42) whose answer to question 98 as to whether Scotch labourers cheaper at 1/- a day than Irish at 6d was the former, "because they would not have them all in Scotland if they did not do it better than they do here"; James Clapperton from Berwickshire (Devon witness no. 514 Vol. 2, p. 514) who provided detailed information about midlands estates; and, most tellingly as Tom Darker's fears were concerned, John Bagot, rector in Athy some 20 miles from Blessington, had a moral tale to tell about two Scotsmen with unimproved farms of 100 and 200 acres upon which wonders had been worked in five years (Devon witness Vol. 3, no. 970, p. 579). Moreover, W. Bence Jones p. 4, describing his early improvements, wrote: "The growth of small quantities of clover and turnips was made compulsory and a Scotchman set to work to teach how to do it."

2. Hussey op. cit., p. 32.

3. See p. 147.

4. It is interesting that his nephew William was to spend 1847-8 on a farm in East Lothian and reported back (according to the Journals for 8.8.1848) that Ireland was undoubtedly behind Scotland in agriculture.

Darker."

However she had come to a more sensible resolution after that memorable outburst the previous year:

> It is a very good lesson in more ways than one. I had fancied myself grown very cautious in my manner of hinting, avoiding all collision with prejudice - or any hasty stride towards better ways - probably I may have been teazing poor Tom and others with my farming books and cottage economy and value of time. 'Gently, gently' is the motto for the old; countries however well 'go ahead' may answer for the new.

In spite of such memorable differences of opinion, there was over-all agreement about the improvements which should take place at Baltiboys. By the 1840s a great deal had been achieved already. In the previous decade good use had been made of the £3000 which according to Mrs. Smith, her husband had hitherto left fallow in Cockburn's Bank in London, and, as has been seen, every official indicator supports the Journal's claim that steady progress had taken place. They were visited in June 1842 by a Mr. Fraser, the "capability man", which gives some idea of how far their work of over-all improvement had gone, and she wrote: "My whole heart is in Baltiboys - our own dear happy family - the pretty place - the people - the last the least improvable. Still progress is making even amongst them." There were then several sorts of improvement, one resting on her efforts to teach the tenantry "the principles and practice of the employment by which the greater part of them have to make their living", as she wrote in July 1841. She continued, laying down principles which she was not later to keep herself:

> I should like to get some practical system of husbandry as a guide to all I would wish to do in the way of <u>hinting</u> at better plans, which is all one dare to do with our dear countrymen in

the present state of their intelligence and their tempers. If successful, such efforts would certainly improve the lives of what, anticipating a bad winter in 1841, she called the "improvident" poor, and it was the duty of landlord, Steward and tenantry to try and give them an alternative to the poor house which would, she estimated, barely contain a quarter of the needy.[1] In the spring of 1842, she noted that the rents were not likely to be well paid next gale-day; one reason was the ignorance of the smaller tenants occupying holdings which were far too small. The high number, incidentally, of farms above 20 acres even in 1834 (18 out of the 30 listed in the Tithe Composition Applotment Books) indicates that she had standards here which owed more to lowland Scotland or England than Ireland.

Most of their efforts had to be based on improving the farms and the system of agriculture rather than the people; too many different variable factors ranging from the effectiveness of the school, market prices, the priests' attitude, or the frequency of Mrs. Smiths' visits[2] had to be taken into account.

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1. The Poor House at Naas was planned to provide for 550 paupers and to be ready to receive them on 15th June 1841 (Poor Law Commissioners' Annual Report for 1844 (H.C. 1844 xix, p. 332-3) states that 472 were in fact admitted).

2. It has already been noted how Mrs. Smith insisted on regular visits to all sorts and conditions on Baltiboys as an important part of the education of her daughters (Part I, ch. 4, p.96-7). That this was far from common was believed by H.D. Inglis whose Journey (1846) maintained "so small ... is the intercourse between the aristocracy of Ireland and the lower orders that the visit of a lady to a cabin is regarded as a peculiar condescension." It is interesting that such visiting was to be one of the most vivid childhood memories of Mrs. Smith's great-grand-daughters (see Ninette de Valois, p. 13-14).

Most of the evidence suggests that the changes at Baltiboys were not designed to move the estate away from the arable farming, which had produced such high prices until the end of the French Wars towards the more profitable concentration on animal farming.[1] Indeed it seems as if the only accurate phrase to describe the system is "mixed farming" because there was a determination by the Smiths to prevent either from dominating. Thus the improvements whose importance was pointed out to Tom Darker at the start of 1840 (lighter fences, gates to fields, drains and rotation of crops[2]) would benefit both forms of farming.

However, from the points where the Steward is mentioned buying or selling in the Markets, it appears that sheep and cattle were more his concern than oats; the former were sold every Fair Day[3] at Blessington, Naas and Ballymore Eustace, whilst oats were sent up to the Dublin market.[4] Good weather is normally written about because it will lead to a massive hay harvest as in 1840 which Mrs. Smith calculated could be saved in quantities large enough to guarantee animal feed in the following winters; bad weather such as the storms

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1. E.R.R. Green in Great Famine, p. 98-101; R.D. Crotty, p. 42-6.
2. 30.1.1840.
3. According to Thom (1846) Fairs were held every month in Naas, but only on 12 May, 5 July and 12 November in Blessington.
4. See R.D. Crotty, Table 68c p. 284: it was only in the years 1836-40 that the prolonged post-war slump in prices showed signs of lifting.

of February 1841 which led to a great loss of animals, also deserved to be noted.

Improvement was possible within either branch of their farming and in April 1843, for example, Mrs. Smith refers to the killing of their first stall-fed beef.[1] This was evidently cheaper to produce, which meant that there would be the prospect of joining in the profits to be made in the British market. Four beasts were fed on one acre of turnips and one of hay" so that style of farming wd. pay well." She calculates in her methodical way that the costs were fourpence a pound giving a profit a five pounds on each beast. Later she was to speculate on the un-natural level of butchers' profits when she worked out that each of their beasts had cost £11 to produce for the market and would have been sold by the Blessington butcher for £16.

Another smaller sign that they were perhaps depending more, if not exclusively, on improving the cattle rather than arable side of their farming during 1843 comes with her wondering in July whether with "proper management" good use could be made of the differences between sown and meadow grass; that month being invariably rainy, perhaps they would be best to see that sown grass was stacked in June leaving the meadow grass to stand until the drier weather later.

There were good reasons for this amounting only to a partial conversion. On 20th February 1842 she writes that she would welcome an increased number of imported foreign cattle, which she would not

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1. It is curious that she had not pressed for this improvement earlier, for she was certainly aware of its advantages. See Highland Lady, p. 55.

be likely to do if they had become over-dependent on cattle themselves. She explains that any reversal of the trend towards grazing farms would be an excellent thing, because it had led to higher prices and less employment than under the old system where most farms concentrated on tillage. Tom Darker's stewardship of Baltiboys, therefore, meant an increasing involvement with cattle, but not to the extent that the tenantry's traditional interests were threatened.

A similar concern can be seen behind one form of improvement which, as Landlords, who had inherited an estate in the worst of order, was much approved of by the Smiths, the consolidating of tiny patches and the bringing of more land into their own hands. The Griffith Valuation shows that by the time of its compilation in 1852 "Henry Smyth" had 182 acres 1 rood and 32 perches let to his son-in-law James King. This constituted the demesne and home farm of Baltiboys, and it is possible by looking carefully at the 1834 and 1852 figures[1] to see how this was built up. Colonel Smith had only 37 acres in his own hands by 1834, while the Field Books show the missing tenants whose land must have formed the basis of his later holding. These range from the 74 acres of Joseph and Michael Commons, who are revealed as a thorn in their landlord's flesh from the Journals, to the one acre 2 roods and nineteen perches of James Cullen who by 1847 was unable to manage so gave up his land in return for Mrs. Smith setting him up as a turf seller to his neighbourhood.

Consolidation on this small scale was possible with the limited

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1. See Appendix 2, Table 1.

funds available; the doubling of the size of the estate to the 3,076 acres of the 1876 "Landowners in Ireland"[1] quoted in Co. Wicklow was to take place as a result of a legacy[2] in the 1860s. The Smiths then were well aware of the advantages of enlarging Baltiboys at a time when sheep and cattle prices were rising; but this was hard before the Famine; impossible during and after, so it was only this legacy that made their early dreams possible.

The improvement which Mrs. Smith believed would most benefit the tenantry was drainage. At the end of 1842, as seasonal charity was doled out to counter hardship, her mind ran on the great differences such a scheme would make. Although she noted at one point that there were few "with any claim upon us in distress", even so ...

> Had to give audience to half the world, some humbly begging for a little help, some merely asking for a loan, some with bright faces coming for their earning left till now in my hands for fear that it should be spent in theirs, some merely wanting 'a couple of heads of cabbage.'

This lamentable state could only be changed with advances in the system of farming:

> Still life is a struggle with poverty too generally, and unless better farming prevail and some occupation arise for the employment of the surplus hands, this must remain a miserable country for another half century.

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1. Summary of the returns of owners of land in Ireland etc. H.C. 1876 lxxx, p. 169.

2. Mrs. Smith's "Aunt Bourne" lived with her in Dublin during the years after the move from Baltiboys in 1851 to her death in 1866; Mrs. Smith wrote on 21 January 1866 - "... she died worth forty-six thousand pounds. Legacies and expenses will absorb near fifteen thousand, the rest is mine as residuary legatee. It is like the last page of a novel; the heroine through the three novels having struggled with unnumbered adversities, closes her career in comfort. Money will not restore the dead but it will revive the living ..."

The role of drainage was paramount in any such plan, and an idea of how she approached it comes from what she wrote on Christmas Day 1842. "Sunday and Xmas Day, dark and rainy and mild; old Irish weather which we are to have till we drain our land properly." She had been consulting one of the experts on the whole subject to prepare herself:

> I have been reading Mr. Stephens[1] on the subject attentively for the purpose of fitting myself to help the willing, but it is still difficult to me and will require more reading and some conversation with persons capable of explaining much that I don't comprehend before I shall be able to explain it to others.

Newspaper articles were a help too and she quoted approvingly from the talk given by the celebrated Mr. Smith of Deanston[2] on 'Drainage' to the Belfast Agricultural Meeting on the last day of 1842; "This new mode of draining perfected by himself, an honest practical farmer, has quite enlightened me upon the subject, taught me as much as will be necessary to set others agoing." Finally, there is no doubt where the initiative over this originated:

> They say resolve to do anything, no matter what and it will be done. I mean to drain and to improve the property of Baltiboys, if I live a few years we shall see whether I do it. Hal laughs, and so he always does, if he win too all will be well. Just fancy getting from eight to ten per cent on your outlay immediately and for ever. Little Jack, if you become a rich man you will owe it to your mother.

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1. See Part I, ch. 3, p. 89.

2. She was perfectly correct for the methods devised by this Stirlingshire innovator (see his Remarks on Thorough-Draining and Deep Ploughing, extracted from the third report of Drummond's Agricultural Museum, Stirling 1833, 6th edition 1840) were entirely suitable for heavier Irish soils, so much so, that the Board of Works seriously considered employing him full-time "in organising the details of the system of thorough drainage in Ireland" (see Copy of Correspondence, PP 1847 LVI p. 185-7). Indeed it is arguable that no long-term improvement could have taken place in Irish agriculture until such a system of thorough draining had been generally accepted. See Economic Growth in Scotland and Ireland by Louis Cullen and Christopher Smout, in Comparative Aspects of Scottish and Irish Economic and Social History, 1600-1900 (edited by L.M. Cullen and T.C. Smout) p. 110.

This is made even clearer when she commented on a letter from Tom Darker to them in Pau[1] in which he describes his hedging, thinning, draining and selling of cattle: she remarks ... "the draining of my two experimental farms has answered beyond hope, my dear Colonel with your Malvolio smiles."[2] Ironically, much of the point of their two years in France was to save the funds to enable more improvements to take place; even more so, when the Colonel was persuaded of the virtues of draining on a large scale, it was to be undertaken according to the regulations of the Board of Works under the shadow of the Famine ... the Registry of Deeds contains a record of the £1200 loan under 10 Vic. cap. 32 on 18th October 1847[3] for thorough draining.

Landlord-inspired improvements, then, did start at Baltiboys in the years before the famine and it is clear that Tom Darker as Steward had a crucial role in implementing them. It is interesting that after his smouldering resentments had burst into the open in the quarrel of June 1842, his doubts about tampering with the traditional methods were assuaged: indeed, within the year Mrs. Smith reported that he was taking all the credit himself for drilling potatoes[4] and he was to be an enthusiastic advocate of the Smiths'

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1. 30.3.1844.

2. It is not altogether clear what she means here, for, on the celebrated occasion in Twelfth Night where, according to the stage directions, Malvolio, cross-gartered, "smiles fantastically", Olivia's reaction ("I sent for thee upon a sad occasion") must have been different from Mrs. Smith's on this occasion. (Act III, Scene iv). See also p. 95, footnote 3.

3. See Part IV, ch.3, pp. 503-7.

4. 24.3.43.

drainage schemes in 1847. However, consolidation and improvement all depended in the last resort on how well the tenantry paid their rents twice a year.

The third element in the organisation of Baltiboys, the agency of John Robinson, had, of course, a vital role to play in the collection of these rents. He was a miller who carried on business from Strand Street in Dublin[1] and managed to be agent to Colonel Smith and the Earl of Milltown as well. Although his professional relationship with the latter was as stormy as his brother's, Dr. George Robinson, (he resigned the agency for a time in 1842[2] and the following year Mrs. Smith describes him witholding half Lady Milltown's "portion" to her husband's annoyance[3]), both landowners were agreed on his merits. Mrs. Smith described him on 30 May 1842, admittedly at a time when they both felt that estate and tenantry were in good shape, as possessing a character that was "intelligent, liberal, manly, active, industrious" and added:

> One of the means of improvement is the having superiour persons in all departments; they can't be lowered by their occupations and all depending on them may be raised by

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1. Thom (1844 to 1851) and the Post Office Directory agree that he carried on his business as a "corn and flour merchant" from 20/21 Great Strand Street; the latter adds his home address, 3, Bloomfield Avenue, on the South Circular Road (see footnote no. 1, p. 161.

2. 9.12.1842.

3. 18.7.1843.

their influence towards their own high standard.
A year later she was to write: "John Robinson is a gentleman tradesman in the true meaning of that dubious word."[1]

He came therefore from a very different background to the Steward, whose social and economic status was that of one of the larger tenant farmers. Herein lay part of his effectiveness. Where Tom Darker was constantly among the tenants acting as intermediary for the landlord, in every variety of daily business, John Robinson normally paid two visits to Baltiboys when the rents were due. In the complicated pantomime which such occasions often turned into, it needed an outside authority, sympathetic to both landlord and tenant positions, to collect and, if need be, follow up those in arrears. In point of fact, he was much more than a mere rent-collector. The Smiths relied much on his opinion on a variety of matters so that he may be seen as a general man of business, and he for his part was interested in every aspect of life at Baltiboys. He subscribed £1 for the school on at least one occasion, and attended the public examination of its scholars; he gave another £1 to the Lending Library she started and bought books for it, Smollet, for example, and the collected works of Maria Edgeworth for two guineas.[2] Further, where the Steward was an employee, the Agent was a friend.

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1. 16.7.1843.
2. 12.1.1843.

They stayed in each other's houses[1], did each other favours (he sending down salmon and she arranging for a pig to be fattened) and clearest example that this was no mere business partnership, Mrs. Smith describes ordinary conversations they had and quotes his opinions on matters from Repeal to Scotch social mobility.

His prime duty was the bi-annual collection of the rents, upon which the Smiths' dependence was very nearly absolute and which was also the basis for all they tried to achieve at Baltiboys. In July 1841 Mrs. Smith indignantly wrote that 1200 English acres 20 miles from Dublin should produce more than £770 ... that is the £607 mentioned by Griffith as the total rental at Baltiboys, plus the Elverstown and Burgage rents nearby; these contained in Rutherford and Commons two of the largest farmers whose rents would make up the difference. She then outlined how it was spent. Various "necessary expenses" had to come from this total for head rents, cess, pensions and wages which, allowing for bad debts, left John Robinson with £530 to "lay up" annually, with the farm profits of at least £100. Their disposable income before tax from the estate, therefore, she estimated at something over £600. To this had to be added the East India Company pension of £80 a quarter; two of these months coincided with the gale months of May and November, which therefore were the most significant ones for starting projects or even taking stock.

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1. However on 20 January 1850 Mrs. Smith had cause to complain about their being no "indispensable convenience within the house": to her distaste "out to the garden through the snow, or rain as might be, lay the disagreeable way to the most abominable hole ever entered."

This was the background, then, to the Agent's responsibilities and his effectiveness can be best described through the Journals' account of the situation each rent day in the first half of the 1840s, when (despite the Smiths' two years abroad) normal conditions prevailed and the appropriate action he took. These also show the way in which all that was initiated by the Landlord, supervised by the Steward and approved of by the Agent, came to a head each 31st of May and November.

In May 1840 the tenantry "in general" paid well. Exceptions were Pat Quin, George Kearns and the widows Farrell and Doyle; where some of the rest did not pay at all, they tended to pay nothing. In consequence, John Robinson in September put into operation the first stage of the legal remedy:

> John had no difficulty with the poor creatures whose crops he seized. He left them with all that they would require for the support of their families, merely took what they would otherwise have improperly have disposed of, and before May when they will be dispossessed, we must see to get something done for them.

This was clearly intended as a sharp reminder[1] which would not however cause destitution; she had no great hopes of any improvements for "farm they never will - Quin from Vice, and Kearns from folly, and Doyle from something between the two."

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1. W.E. Vaughan, Landlord and Tenant Relations in Ireland between the Famine and the Land War, 1850-1878, in Comparative Aspects (ed. L.M. Cullen and T.C. Smout) p. 219 described the notice to quit as "the estate-agent's maid-of-all work, being used to collect arrears, to force the tenants to pay increases of rent, to settle quarrels between tenants and to discourage bad farming." On Baltiboys as elsewhere, there is no evidence to suggest that such notices were effective or were even meant to be.

Six months later, however, Doyle had paid up all his arrears, a change of heart which she attributes to "his flight having made him industrious - that and the Temperance pledge"[1]; Quin was a villain ("who never will be made anything of") and Kearns was still paying poorly compared with the rest.

One other tenant is mentioned with "as usual a mere nothing to give", Commons, against whom accordingly John Robinson began to act. He arrived early one morning and started to make a valuation of all his stock and crop which eventually amounted to several hundred pounds, at which point, according to Mrs. Smith, he relented and allowed the Agent to take whatever amounted, in the opinion of an independent valuer, John Darker[2], to the rent outstanding. He was nine months in arrears so had to forfeit two good milch cows, a yearling and some oats. This case especially amazed Mrs. Smith who could not understand why a farmer who self-evidently had the means to pay his rent did not do so; he may not have had ready cash but his stock and crops were valuable and easily sellable in the well-organised local markets. John Robinson's reaction was different:[3]

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1. Father Theobald Mathew, the great apostle of total abstinence, preached twice in nearby Naas in 1840, on July 7th and August 14th. See Rev. Father Augustine O.F.M. Cap. Footprints of Father Mathew (Dublin 1947).

2. Exactly how the Steward's brother could be seen as an 'independent' valuer was never explained by Mrs. Smith.

3. However such scenes were common in the Castle Cumber Gale Day, described by William Carleton in Valentine McLutchy the Irish Agent or Chronicles of the Castle Cumber property (1845) ch. xxiii, (Vol. iii p. 67), where a footnote indicates that the description is, in the author's opinion, "verbatim et liberatim from life".

> John says that in the King's County when he is receiving Lady Milltown's rents the tenants will pay a small proportion, fall on their knees, declare they cannot pay another penny, a thousand excuses from different pieces of ill-fortune, when he calls in the Driver, orders him to proceed immediately to distrain their goods, and then from out of some secret pocket comes the whole rent to a fraction. 1

If Commons illustrates the general refusal to pay until the last minute, Michael Delaney, (who in 1834 farmed nearly 4½ acres, 1½ of which were waste), owing twelve years rent amounting to £15 or £16 pounds, is an example of that other bane of the Agent's work, the tenant who clung onto the source of a bare living until starvation or inducement prised him off it. Once these arrears were forgiven him, then he gave up his land.

Mrs. Smith emphasised several reasons for what she regarded as this dishonest conduct ... misgovernment, want of education and the priesthood ... but in essence the problem was that "here they are neither honest nor truthful nor industrious and full of wild fearfull passions won't be rooted out for many generations."[2] Even so, John Robinson collected over £220, with £100 still due from William Rutherford in the neighbouring Parish of Tipperkevin and Williams the middleman, which indicates that the bulk of the rents were paid in 1840.

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1. The Marquis of Bath's agent made just this point to the Devon Commissioners (Vol. 1, p. 928, witness 265 qu. 7: "it is a most puzzling thing to know who is a poor man in Ireland".)

2. 30.11.1840. Michael Delany, however, kept possession of his house and proceeded to live off the labour of his son, see Part II ch. 4 p. 204.

However Agent and Landlord were to have their work cut out to feel as satisfied in 1841. This was not immediately apparent for John Robinson reported in May 1841 that he had received over £200 and he doubted that there was £100 of arrears on the whole estate; she felt this to be an appropriate comment on the amount achieved by them since 1830. By July a different picture was being painted in a letter from Dublin in which he estimated that in fact over £300 of arrears had accumulated down to the previous May. This for her was "quite unpardonable" in tenants who were known to have the ready cash; in particular she named Commons, Rutherford and Michael Tyrrell, who had earlier in November 1840 been thought of as one of the most improving farmers there, to the extent that Colonel Smith had encouraged him to consolidate his holding. The course of action for John Robinson was therefore straightforward: "he will come and distrain upon all those farms whose holders do not produce cash immediately." In fact some of the cards were in the hands of these better-off tenant farmers, who were well practised in every delaying procedure, which might help to explain Mrs. Smith's final indignant comment that the perpetrators of these dishonesties were "not fit to manage ground and should descent into the class of labourers at once."

By the following November John Robinson had a different story to tell, so presumably the previous threats had been effective. He reported to the Smiths that despite bad weather and cattle disease all the farmers had paid well. All indeed were what she called "forwarder" than they had been a year before, with the result that, whereas then his Agency accounts showed that he was owed £100 by

Baltiboys, now the estate was £100 in the black. Indeed she herself was not surprised, for the tenants were "decently dressed" now when they came to pay their rent, many with "good cloth-body coats and all good frieze coats", which was hardly likely to be the case if they wanted to back up a claim for poverty. As she typically concluded, all their work was being rewarded:

> It makes one feel very happy to see such improvement year by year among old and young, it is worth some personal sacrifice, if indeed it can be called sacrifice, to substitute the substantial pleasures resulting from properly fulfilled duties for mere selfish gratification. 1

And in spite of a bad harvest in 1841 and a "very scarce" spring in 1842 it was made even more worthwhile for them as the tenantry more than kept their heads above water. John Robinson is quoted in May 1842 as arguing that they had paid "wonderfully well considering the scarce times" and after the way in which his prophesy of exactly a year before had turned sour, he was likely now to temper optimism with caution:

> He also says that they are the most improving tenantry he sees - the most improved also in the time - they are indeed superiour in every respect to the ragged crew of ten years ago.

With so much achieved on a part-time basis, no wonder Mrs. Smith added "I grudge him to the flour factory business".

The November gale day in 1842 was as satisfactory, for the Agent's report stressed how well rents had been paid. For her, just as pleasing was the fact that the tenants were "well-dressed, looked

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1. 28.11.1841.

clean, fat, happy", which she and John Robinson had the chance of confirming for on 27th November they walked round the estate visiting those who had paid the previous day. Their conclusion, a reflection on their management of Baltiboys, was that most of the tenantry were "bit with the spirit of improvement" and she gives as instances of this their "wish to improve their land, wish to improve their houses, wish to improve their children".

The first three years covered by the Journals, then, describes a situation satisfactory to both Landlord and Agent; the next three years were less so (Mrs. Smith wrote that the tenants "kept their own during this very trying period") but the Smiths' absence in France for two of them must have had an unsettling effect on an estate which had not known an absentee landlord for fourteen years. However, it was a tribute to their regard for John Robinson that he and the Steward were left in charge, although in the middle of their problems in 1844 she noted rather shortly: "Of course much progress won't be made during our absence but it is to be hoped that between Mr. Robinson and Tom Darker they will not fall back much."

The Agent's rent collection in May 1843 was a slower process than usual although he was able eventually to report that the tenants were overall no more in arrears than they had been upon closing accounts the previous year; indeed Mrs. Smith thought "a pound or two less, and they are most of them in more comfortable circumstances than I ever remember them." One predictable exception was Pat Quin, whose presence on the estate shows that the Colonel and John Robinson cannot have fully used the processes of law threatened those years before. His land is described as nearly ruined, his cabin a wreck

and he is quoted[1] as promising the Agent that he would leave peacably in November, with at that point over a year's rent due. However, a year after that gale day John Robinson wrote to the Colonel at Avranches with the latest news on how what Mrs. Smith described as that "contumacious tenant" had dug his heels in even further: he now owed nearly £80 and there seemed little hope of any being repaid. John Robinson had by then accumulated nearly £300 so this "poor ignorant ill-conducted ruffian" could be bought out: ever optimistic, Mrs. Smith concluded that "he is however becoming more tractable and will now consent if well bribed to give up his almost ruined farm to another, even to the Colonel."[2]

The years before the Famine, therefore, show a well-tried partnership between Landlord and Agent, which showed its worth during the Smiths' stay in France; the recalcitrant tenants whose names recur each gale day, who managed to retain possession despite mounting arrears, were not so much an indication of inefficient management but of the delaying powers they had over a Landlord who was not ruthless enough to harry with the full force of the law.

It has to be stressed that this picture contrasts with the one described by the majority of witnesses to the Devon Commission, for whom the office of land agent was synonomous with that of a grasping collector of rents. Charles King O'Hara from Co. Sligo was more

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1. He may, therefore, be classified amongst the "small knot of rural recidivists" mentioned by W.E. Vaughan, op. cit. p. 219.

2. 22.12.1844.

restrained than most: "Relations, creditors, ignorant, inexperienced young men have too often been instructed with the very important office of land-agent to the great injury of landlord and tenant and of the peace and prosperity of the country."[1] Contemporary novels, in particular those of William Carleton,[2] give precisely the same impression of ambitious, domineering officials feathering their own nests.

Where the landlord was resident and deeply involved in improvement, as at Baltiboys, it was clearly in his interests that there should be a fair and efficient system. Everything written by Mrs. Smith in her Journals would lead one to expect that this would have been the case on the Downshire estates; she wrote a eulogy about William Owen, agent from 1845, in which she considered his effect was "morally to revolutionise the district."[3]

However, everything was not as it appeared. Owen's predecessor was John Murray; his brother was agent for the fourth Marquis at Edenderry and had sequestered a substantial part of the rents.[4] Owen himself managed to avoid conforming to the meticulous system

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1. Devon, Vol. 2, p. 1945, witness 356, qu. 26).

2. See, for example, Valentine McLutchey, published in 1845, the year of the Smith's return from France.

3. 21.1.1847.

4. See John Murray's apprehensive letter of 18.2.1838 (D.P. D 671/C/233): "It is injurious to me for him to be a Defaulter as it leads your Lordship to suppose that I am in the same situation."

laid down in Hillsborough[1] in ways that suggest that, no matter the amount of benefits he brought to Blessington, they may not have been reflected in his administration of the estate. The tone of the letters sent out by William Reilly became distinctly ominous by 1847: "I find there are some [questions] I cannot answer from the want of your two last rentals ... I am sure you will excuse my dragging your memory on these things - but you know you said you would not allow your Books to get again into arrears. There is a large sum, about £160, in your last furnished Rental, not accounted for ... if this be as I suppose for ... Estate improvements I do not see how you can account for this ... (and even here that would be inadequate ...) otherwise than by getting an order from Lord Downshire to make such expenditure."[2] Matters were no better in 1848. Owen was reminded that no accounts had been submitted since 31 December 1845[3] and that the whole situation was unprecedented.[4] There is no suggestion that he was taking the part of a tenantry unable to pay in those taxing times, only that it took him until January 1850[5] to get the estate accounts up to date.

The Baltiboys situation, therefore, where the agent played a

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1. See Maguire op. cit. ch. 5.
2. The next four footnotes come from the D.P. Outward Letter Book for 1846/7, D671/CB1: letter 576, 3.3.1847.
3. Letter 455, 1.6.1848.
4. Letter 396, 28.3.1848.
5. Letter 119, 30.1.1850.

limited but very important role under the direction of the landlord, was completely different from the system in operation on both the Russborough and Downshire estates. The suggestion is that where the old Irish middleman/agent operations took place, it was only on the largest and best organised estates such as the Duke of Devonshire's[1] that abuses were kept to a minimum and progress took place. The much more limited administrative organisation of Baltiboys suited such smaller estates better and might even be more efficient than any of the operations on a larger scale such as those centralised on Hillsborough.

At any rate this trio who had been responsible for the fortunes of Baltiboys during this decade and whose good management was to be responsible for its emerging in such tolerable shape from the famine years were to split up in 1851. The Smiths' departure for Dublin was perhaps the most important separation, but it is worth noting that John Robinson resigned the agency that year too, and Tom Darker decided to get married and concentrate upon his farm.[2] It was very much the end of an era of efficient management for the estate of Baltiboys.

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1. There are many testimonials to the efficient, humane, administration that characterised this estate in the 1840s; one of the most eloquent was that of Michael Doheny, Chairman of the Cashel Board of Guardians ... "I know of no class of tenantry so comfortable as those of the greatest absentee, the Duke of Devonshire; he is only here for a day or two." (Devon Vol. 3, p. 301, witness 855, qu.99).

2. 12.8.1851.

Chapter Three

Tenants and Tradesmen at Baltiboys

Tithe returns of the 1830s and the Griffith Valuation of the 1840s enable Baltiboys to be described as early as 1834 as an estate where most of the tenurial units were large enough to provide a basis for the tenants to be able to organise a reasonable return from their land. There were two who held directly from Colonel Smith and had very small patches, James Cullen with 1 acre 2 roods and 19 perches, and the Hylands with 1 acre 3 roods 29 perches, but all the others were substantially larger.[1] Indeed a majority of the fifteen tenants held farms larger than seventy acres.

There were four with holdings over 100 acres, John Darker, the Steward's brother (they were both highly regarded by the Smiths: "Northerns, protestants, well-educated, industrious, they are a credit to the country"[2]), William Rutherford from neighbouring Elverstown, Tom Kelly, and, no relation, Widow Mary Kelly. Mrs. Smith's Catalogue Raisoné of January 1847 is a great source of information about all of the tenantry, and she makes it clear that Mary Kelly's 125 acres formed the only large holding still let through a middleman, John Williams.

> We have still a few of those miserable little patches of farms of 7 or 8 acres not having been able to get rid of all of them, so many subdivisions having been permitted during the negligent days of my brother-in-law and his careless agent[3]; but this is

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1. See Appendix II, Table 1.
2. 20.1.1847.
3. See Part I, ch. 1, p. 2.

> the only farm we have, not our own, which we can do nothing with for it is let on a lease of lives to a middleman, who sublets it[1] to the Widow Kelly. She is a managing woman struggling on with twelve children ... very decently; but she is not improving her ground or her style of farming, or if she did we should not benefit, and she is letting the offices go to ruin.

Another four had farms between 70 and 100 acres, Tom Darker himself, Michael Commons, John Byrne and Philip Tyrrell; Bryan Dempsey and Garret Doyle both had between fifty and seventy acres; Pat Quin, Judy Ryan and Tom Keogh were those between 20 and 50; and Pat Fitzpatrick with 15 and Bartle (Bartholomew) Murphy, who sub-let from Mary Kelly, with 9 acres, completed the list.

Where the last chapter set out to analyse the structure of the estate and how the tenantry in general fared, it is now necessary to examine them in detail, together with the three tradesmen who lived and worked at Baltiboys. In this way it is possible to take a significant step towards recreating the conditions which determined life on this estate in the 1840s.

These, then, were the tenantry whose fortunes were Colonel and Mrs. Smith's fortunes and whose individual histories can be put together from the pages of her journals. At the outset it is necessary to stress that although Mrs. Smith herself was accustomed to praise or rail against the tenantry in general, there were very great differ-

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1. Griffith's rough draft makes it clear that this subdivision was let at will during the reorganisation of leases that must have taken place in 1812; the mere fact that this happened at a time when most land-owners were only too aware that middlemen prevented them from enjoying the windfall profits occuring during the French wars, is another commentary upon Colonel Smith's brother and his ramshackle administration. See Donnelly, p. 51.

ences between living off over 100 acres[1] and off ten. This is clear from the description of Rutherford's house and farm at Elverstown in the parish of Tipperkevin across the Liffey in Co. Kildare:

> We went all over the garden, the offices and the house, all having a wealthy air for Ireland but bare looking to my foreign eyes. Mahogany tables in the parlour, beaufit with plenty of glass and china and an eight day clock, but a mud floor, no carpet, no curtains, bare walls. In the kitchen, two fiddles, no bacon, nor does he feed pigs, nor has he a dairy, he veals his calves and buys his milk, meat and butter. The back kitchen which in England would shew such comfort was here filled with turf, the oven a ruin, the way to the cellar blocked up, neither jug nor basin in any of the bedrooms but they were clean and airy and beds seemed well furnished. A man that had such a farm in England would work just as hard as Rutherford but he would be fat and happy and there would be an air of plenty and neatness about him that we must wait many a day before we see in this country. 2

In spite of his difficulties with the rent, he was obviously a far cry from the self-sufficient small farmer remote from a money economy[3] and later the Smiths were to contemplate letting his house to a gentleman, which is an indicator of its potential style. If this was one extreme, the other can be seen in the person of Bartholomew Murphy, who was making much less of his nine acres than some of the

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1. Cf. Dennis Kelly of Castle Kelly's opinion (Devon Vol. 2, p. 349, witness no. 431, question 55) that "when you come to a farm of 100 acres, you get a creature between a hawk and a hound, and it is difficult to know how to deal with him; he is not a gentleman and he is not a farmer." This was illustrated by Rutherford's subsequent career (Part II, ch. 5, pp. 250-8.)

2. 28.7.1841: it is interesting that a year before the celebrated quarrel with the Steward (see supra p. 146) Mrs. Smith should have written about her "foreign eyes".

3. See P. Lynch and J. Vaisey, Guinness's Brewery in the Irish Economy, 1759-1876 (1960) p. 17.

cottiers with their plots. He and his family were barely coping by January 1847:

> Five acres of this leased ground are let (by Widow Kelly)to Bartle Murphy up at the top of the hill close by the moat which once defended one of Cromwell's watch towers. The Colonel has planted all these furzy fields and Murphy has the charge of them at a small salary without which he told me he must have been begging, the five acres having ruined him: his potatoes gone, his two cows dead of the murrain, nothing left of all his labours but a cwt. and a half of oatmeal. 1

The precise ways in which the Smiths helped their tenantry before and after it was clear that a famine had struck will be examined later,[2] but here it is obvious that even in more normal conditions this tenant's survival would have been in doubt.

Within this range, from substantial tenant farmer to one virtually indistinguishable from any labourer, moreover, there were different degrees of efficiency as can clearly be seen from a comparison between George Kearns who failed to cope, and the ill-organised efficiency of Judy Ryan or the clear-cut efficiency of Pat. Fitzpatrick.

As before, the Catalogue at the beginning of 1847 is a good guide, both for the information it contains and the moment it was written after the hard previous year. Kearns' problems were obvious enough: his lands were to be taken from him although he was allowed to retain possession of the house until such time, according to Mrs. Smith's plans, as he could find a job in his trade of a sawyer.

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1. 20.1.1847.

2. See Part IV.

> He has let his house of three rooms go to ruin, ditto the crazy offices, bad at the best and few of them; he has not a hoof on the land, not a hen even; the hay is in small cocks on the meadow just fit for manure; fences all broken, no gates, no furniture, but decent clothing, a good bed, fuel and corn enough to feed wife and six children to May. 1

Such hopelessness was not mirrored in the similarly sized holding of Judy Ryan because although it was equally filthy in appearance, it was well farmed:

> In more wet and dirt and filth and misery than we had yet seen we found the next little farmer Michael Doyle, a fine looking and very hard working, though low feeling man, who for his sins and for her fifteen pounds married the widow Ryan[2], my Annie's nurse. Her three children, two she has had since this marriage, a nurse child of course, all seem to squat on the floor of a very small kitchen, for we saw no stools, chairs, tables, nor any furniture but a crazy dresser with very little indeed upon its shelves. She stood to receive us in her cloke having but one gown which was washing; all the children nearly naked, the husband very bare; no way of getting up to the house but over a broken wall, or up to the door but over the dung hill. She would not let me into the bedroom and then she told me they had turned it into a cowhouse and the reason the floor was so bad was that the cows passed and repassed through the kitchen. Twice I have succeeded in improving this most slatternly Judy, and twice she has fallen back when my watchful eye was removed. I will try her again - her and the husband together - rouse them if possible for they want but method to be comfortable.

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1. 13.1.1847.

2. See register of Blackditches marriages (National Library of Ireland, P6483), 21.6.1842: "Michael Doyle to Judith Quinn" (her maiden name before her first marriage to Christy Ryan). Mrs. Smith's eventual disapproval of this marriage would have been appreciated by Robert Chaloner, the well-known agent for the Fitzwilliam estate, the largest in Co. Wicklow; in his evidence to the Devon Commission (Vol. 3, p. 542, wtiness 953, qu. 72) he maintained "there has generally been a struggle to prevent the widows of tenants marrying again, because with the hereditary right to farms, the first family have always been looked upon as the family to succeed to it, and the second family have always interfered with them." Robert Chaloner, incidently, may well have been John Robinson's predecessor as agent to the Earl of Milltown (D.P. D 671 C 230: this contains a reference to "his agant Mr. Challoner [sic]" - the Evening Packet, John Murray claims, has published a letter to him from his employer.)

> They have near eight acres of land[1], two milch cows giving her <u>now</u> four pounds of butter a week which she sells in the market for eleven pence a pound; a pound she keeps and all the buttermilk; they have two young heifers coming on, and he has promised this year to sow an acre of turnips. They have still eight barrels of oats; he will plant three for seed; he promises to change this at the market, to sell three of the remaining barrels, oats are very high now, twenty-four shillings a barrel, and to purchase with their price, rice and Indian meal to mix with the oatmeal his two left barrels will give. 2

Dirty conditions Mrs. Smith abhored, either on a farm the size of Rutherford's or this one, but behind the filth was obviously an efficiently run farm where the use of modern improved methods was bound to present the farmer with the sort of choices he could never have had in the old unimproved days. It was obviously a mixed farm with sensible use of stock and different crops enabling him to get the best prices without requiring any sacrifice from the rest of the family.

Those tenants, even such small farmers, who made use of these improved techniques put forward by their landlord and sowed root crops, drained their land and concentrated on producing better stock, are described, whether surrounded by filth or order, as managing even in this winter of 1847. Pat Fitzpatrick's fifteen acres was a

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1. Griffith calculated what he still referred to as "Judith Ryan"'s land as amounting to 24½ acres. The 1841 Field Books make it clear that lot numbers 16 and 21 belong to "Widow Ryan", the latter of which amounted to 7½ acres, so it is possible that Mrs. Smith had this field alone in mind.

2. 13.1.1847. This is a clear example of a farmer making far from the best use of his resources, typical of what Mrs. Smith was later to call the old days of "pigs and potatoes". Equally, if it was "method" they lacked in order to acquire an easier prosperity, there is no doubting the probing encouragement of the landlord.

smaller farm than the neighbouring one of Judy and Michael Doyle, but its efficiency was as great:

> Close at hand was another small farm about the same size with a low[1] bad house, very dark having no window in the kitchen, but it was a real pleasure to enter so decent an abode. Manure at one end banked up, cowhouse with four cows in it, never let out, feeding on turnips, large turf stack, clean, very clean kitchen, bright fire, dresser well filled, wall hung with polished pots and covers, meal chest, table and two neat chairs brought from the bedroom and wiped with a clean cloth before being offered to us by a young pretty woman in appearance like a tidy housemaid who was churning when we came in ... a real scene of humble comfort. 2

An improving tenantry, of course, was what the Smiths had aimed for from the very start of their management of Baltiboys and it must have looked to them in 1847 as if all small and large farming tenants would cope confidently with all the difficulties of that year. It has already been seen how they stressed the long-term advantages of draining to their tenants and that there were what Mrs. Smith proudly described as "my two experimental farms" where draining improvements had been organised in December 1842.[3] These were on the lands of Pat Ryan (although he had come close to excluding himself after the Colonel had discovered he had attended O'Connell's 'monster meeting at the Curragh in May[4]; "I am inclined to hope it was mere curiousity took him there, but it was a very foolish proceeding and will prevent the Colonel adding to his farm as he intended, as he

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1. In fact his house was seen as "B quality" in the Perambulation Book, although its height is given as only 6 feet.

2. 13.1.1847.

3. See 19/25/31.12.1842.

4. See Lawrence J. McAffrey, Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal Year (Kentucky 1965), p. 51-7.

could not, for the sake of example, select for such a mark of approbation the only agitator on his property"[1]) where work began in the end in August "on the new principles"[2], and Jack Byrne whose arrears were forgiven on condition that he agreed to drainage work on his land:

> Jack Byrne came about his draining - slow but quite intelligent; he agrees to the terms willingly. The Colonel does not laugh at me now, he only smiles. What expression will his face wear when our labours have added a third to his rental!! He gave Byrne up his Bond, and lightened the man's heart of a load - how happy he looked.[3] Kitty Ryan said to me yesterday ... "Faix! were they all such landlords as the Colonel, Mr. O'Connell might go whistle for repalers."[4]

This extract from the 7th August 1843 has a lot to say about the confidence with which the Smiths set off for France, knowing that these two farms, if efficiently drained, should suggest the answer to the rest of the tenantry. The benefit would not only be to the advantage of both tenant and landlord finances; Mrs. Smith obviously saw it as part of the answer to the separate problems she associated with Repeal.

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1. 14.5.1843.
2. 5.8.1843.
3. Charles Horatio Kennedy's evidence to the Devon Commissioners (vol. 1, p. 1041, witness 278/9, qu. 18) contains a good description of the benefits of such a course of action: "where relieved from the pressure of his embarrassments, his spirit resumes its elasticity, evidenced by his increasing industry, his time is economised, and its judicious application gradually raises him to a state of independence."
4. She was the wife of James Ryan the carpenter, otherwise there would have been added pignancy in this comment by the wife of a tenant who defied his landlord's instructions and attended Repeal meetings.

However there were to be problems enough connected with drainage. In 1847 Colonel Smith had obtained his grant of £1200 from the Board of Works and among those tenants who were to benefit from this second bout of draining was Bryan Dempsey; he had already been involved in the earlier scheme and so the Smiths (although the Catalogue makes it clear that she for her part did not like him at all: "a reckless, ruthless, vapouring, 'cute', model of the bad style of Irish man whom I can't feel interested in for his want of principles"[1] which must have helped explain his involvement in earlier underhand exchanges of land)[2] were therefore unprepared for what was to turn into a cause célèbre at Baltiboys:

> ... we had a fine business today[3] with one of the lower orders. Mr. Bryan Dempsey refuses to let his farm be drained; refuses to let our gangs of drainers set foot upon his fields; refuses to let the Colonel's carts cross his ground with stones from the quarry to the field on what was Cairns' land, which we are now draining. I don't know the law myself, though I do know there is a clause in the Act of Parliament especially inserted for such contumacious cases. 4
>
> Tom Darker has acted very sensibly, he suspected evil last week when on telling Dempsey he should soon be with him, this half-ruffian answered he should like to see when.

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1. 13.1.1847: it is curious that Dempsey's admittedly somewhat sycophantic support at the time of the 1841 Poor Law elections for his landlord against the Priest had earned him no praise. See Part II, ch. 2, p. 136.

2. See Part II, ch. 2, p. 135.

3. 15.5.1848.

4. The law generally called after Labouchere's Letter (5.10.1847) whereby such drainage schemes was authorised has been described as "so complicated that the effect was negligible in starting reproductive works". Thomas P. O'Neill, The Great Famine, p. 230.

On being told the probable day he replied with an oath that he would dare any man to cut up his ground, or words to that effect. On Saturday Mr. Darker went to tell him the operations would begin today, when he got outrageous, I don't know all he said, threatened violence, spoke most impudently "like a drunken blackguard", vowed he did not care, no one should touch his land, nor attempt it, nor should it stop there; he might as well die for one thing as another and he would die for that. He laid a sovereign no man should dig a sod on his ground but himself. Tom Darker called two witnesses to prove the threatening and then told him, he says, calmly, that he had done his duty in informing him of his landlord's plans and that he had better take care he did not go beyond his in his way of taking this, that he meant to have no altercation with him, and so he walked away.

Today he sent his nephew with the workmen, directing them not to resist this madman, but to proceed to Cairns' ground if they were prevented beginning on Dempsey's, which of course they were, and he was quite prepared to proceed to violence had they not retired so prudently. The carts too, our carts, made no attempt to brave him; they will draw stones from the old quarry till we have consulted a magistrate. Whatever may be advised for the present, my own opinion is that the Colonel will take the opportunity of serving a notice to quit on this most troublesome man, now that the feeling will be universal against him. He would be a good riddance too for his character is detestable and I believe detested. But he is dangerous, for though too great a coward to commit murder himself, he would hire an assassin as soon as he would a labourer. [1] He has no lease so that his ill-got land can be got from him easily. Honesty is the best policy even in a wordly view. The seed of the righteous are indeed rarely seen begging their bread. I can't make out what Dempsey wants or means. He would be benefitted by this draining like the rest of the Tenants, his land improved, himself and son and servants and horses employed, and any little mischief caused by cart tracks etc., would be paid for; it seems like a fit of frenzy.

This whole piece is permeated by Mrs. Smith's disbelief that even such a recalcitrant person as Bryan Dempsey could act as if unable to see the great benefits he was deliberately flouting. These were

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1. Such an assassination had in fact taken place on Baltiboys estate in 1836; most of the tenantry, including Dempsey, had been involved. See Part I, ch. 3, pp. 82-3.

obviously great for a number of different people on the estate, especially labourers and those with carts or horses to hire. However, he chose to act otherwise and, although he hinted at the lengths he was prepared to go to, Dempsey in fact was obviously able to hold up the whole operation and stop his landlord's plan for some time and without difficulty. This was doubtless easier where Mrs. Smith committed herself to a policy of "honesty" and there were no such landlords as John Hornidge, who was altogether rougher and readier in his approach to such local difficulties,[1] but it is still remarkable that a policy of such restraint was offered to what was considered a flagrant violation of landlord rights. This is particularly so when the tenant had no lease; Griffith Valuation details indeed confirm that under the 1812 agreement his family were tenants at will. One factor which adds to the explanation is the evident sophistication of Dempsey's legal knowledge. He had already been noted by Mrs. Smith in 1840 as getting what she called "Counsel's opinion" on the land dispute he had got involved in that year, and was clearly as familiar as his landlord with exactly what the legal procedures were in such cases.[2] In the last resort it was unlikely to be antipathy to draining as such, particularly when it had been in operation on the estate for five years. Nor is Mrs. Smith's explanation of a "fit

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1. It has already been noted that his harsher approach had got John Hornidge into difficulties with some of his tenantry (Part I, ch. 3, p. 66 (footnote 1).

2. See R.B. McDowell, The Great Famine p. 7; C. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-1849 (1962) p. 130.

of frenzy" particularly convincing either, although Dempsey's crusty personality must have been a factor. It is most likely to have been in essence another manifestation of the dislike of change, particularly landlord-led, which probably emanated from that clinging to the land (and there was obviously a difference of opinion as to the extent to which the payment of rent conferred even the slenderest of titles) from which literally flowed both all wealth and the means of existence.

As such, the occupation of land presented many problems in the Ireland of the 1840s and Baltiboys was no exception. One particularly vexed question in 1840 had involved George Kearns letting grazing land to both James Ryan and Bryan Dempsey in a deal which eventually had to be resolved by Colonel Smith, in the unpleasant scene in the Petty Sessions already described.[1] Pat Quin has already featured as a regular defaulter in his rent payments for what was apparently a ruined farm,[2] and by 1845 he seemed in Mrs. Smith's opinion ready to give it up, even apparently to the Colonel. The Journal's account on February 7th tells how Pat had found another bidder in Tom Kelly, earlier in 1842 thought to be a model of the "comfortable small Irish farmer, rich with [his] eighty acres of tolerably managed land",[3] but by 1847[4] thought to be unfit to manage

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1. See Part II, ch. 2, p. 135-6.
2. See Part II, ch. 2, p. 162. 167-8.
3. 26.6.1842.
4. 13.1.1847.

such a large farm. If Tom Kelly could cope with his present number of acres and was to find himself in difficulties later, it can only be land hunger or some related malady that explained his intervention. At any rate it is a very revealing description of the roles played by certain tenants and their landlord when an out-of-the-ordinary case like this arose:

> John Robinson not quite settled yet with those nice tenants of the Colonel's. When the time came for Pat Quin to give him up the land he had ruined, according to previous agreement, forty pounds in hand and arrears forgiven, not a bit would he move, he had been offered more by another man, - Tom Kelly, and there went the respectable set, Quin and a crew, to give over the possession, all in the grey of the morning, and Kelly puts his excellent brother-in-law, Healey, into the remains of the wretched cabin to keep possession, the man we had so much trouble to bribe off the property some years ago. The Colonel is furious, he won't sanction any of these arrangements, he wants the land himself, he wishes to get rid of his worthless tenants at every opportunity, so he has refused to agree to all this under scheming, though Kelly saved Mr. Robinson much trouble with Quin who has a spite against the Colonel and therefore hated yielding his land to him. I wish he and all belonging to him would take themselves off out of the country. I shall never feel quite safe while any of the name stay in it, they are such a wicked race, full of revenge and fury, and idle and reckless. How we tried to improve this man, how much kindness was thrown away on him and his, they are bad people. 1

Pat Quin's mere hanging on as long as he did poses questions about the security of tenure enjoyed by even the most unprepossessing tenant and about the ability or desire of this particular landlord to translate his threats into action, but the main point here is that it is a fine illustration of the absolutely central importance of land so that it was well worth going against Colonel Smith's known

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1. 13.1.1847.

intentions to try and secure a better bargain. If necessary, such transactions evidently took place behind his back and what is most surprising is not the Colonel's predictable wrath or his wife's opinion that this was an example of them being bitten by the hand they had fed, but that one of the more substantial tenant farmers, indeed the only one according to Griffith apart from the Darker brothers with any kind of a lease,[1] should believe for one moment that he had the chance of getting away with what his landlord, at the least, was bound to regard as sharp practice.

A second grave problem common to all parts of Ireland in the 1840s which indicates the overwhelming importance of land was disputed successions. There were a number of these which made their way into Mrs. Smith's journals and in each case there is a hint of the strength of feeling which lay behind these disputes. Hugh Kelly's sons were deprived of "their inheritance" after his widow married Red Pat Quin ("a bad set, the whole race") in 1842; Mrs. Smith thought this amounted to "giving possession in fact of her son's patrimony to a stranger".[2] One other equally unjust action was for a widow to favour one of her sons at the expense of the others; Harry Kiogh in 1845 was "rather unjustly deprived of his farm by his mother in favour of her younger son"[3] and in 1848 a similar mix-up involved most of the

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1. His "rough draft" states that it was 3 lives or 21 years.
2. 22.12.1842.
3. 28.10.1845.

family of Pat Ryan who had died the previous year thinking that with the elder son Mat working in Scotland then it was only fair for the younger, Jem, to inherit ... "the mother is quite content, Jem is much like herself, good-natured and thoughtless, the grandmother, a managing body, wants Mat to be master."[1]

The death of Michael Tyrrell in 1849[2] ought not to have been followed by any of these problems as the Catalogue had made clear two years before:[3] "the daughters of this house are all well married,[4] the sons in trades, except the youngest Philip, who will worthily succeed his father." But he died intestate and as Mrs. Smith explained:

> Old Tyrrell has died without a will so all the chattel property[5] can be claimed by all the children notwithstanding his having given each their portion. He luckily owes a year's rent or more so the Colonel can seize the whole, and as they will steal it if they force a sale very little will remain over, they will probably agree to be equitable and leave the stock with the man intended to get it particularly as they are decent people. 6

However further problems appeared:

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1. 31.5.1848.
2. 30.4.1849.
3. 13.1.1847.
4. The Blackditches marriages register (supra) makes it clear that three daughters had got married long before 1849: Mary and Ann Tyril [sic] in 1833 and Olive Tyrel [sic] in 1836.
5. "A moveable possession; any possession or piece of property other than real estate or a freehold." (O.E.D.)
6. 4.5.1849.

> Such a mess about poor old Tyrrell's affairs, part of his farm, nearly half of it is held on a lease of lives, one yet unexpired, his eldest son Mick's who can of course claim it, indeed whose it now is. The remaining portion has lapsed to the Colonel. Thus Philip to whom it was promised, who has lived there managing it in the face of inheriting, all his brothers and sisters having received their portions, finds himself nearly penniless entitled to nothing beyond his share of the personal property after a third has first been deducted from it for his mother. All this for want of a will. 1

In fact with the aid of the Agent all was settled, and Griffith confirms that young Philip was in occupation of his father's full eighty acre farm.[2]

There was one other factor which might help to explain such fierce competition for land, even when there was a clear moral obligation on the rest of the family to abide by the wish of the father and not exploit the lack of a will. This was the tremendous amount of intermarrying between so many of the long-established families living on Baltiboys. The Tyrrells themselves, for example, were related to the Byrnes,[3] Miles Byrne to the Hylands;[4] the Quinns had

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1. 19.5.1849.
2. The "rough draft" shows Philip Tyrrell in sole occupation under the old 'at will' agreement of 1812.
3. Most of the evidence for the next eight footnotes comes from the Blackditches parochial records. Ann Tyrrell, for example, married John Byrne in 1835, and Philip Tyrrell and various Byrne girls from the Baltiboys family were witnesses or sponsors to a series of weddings and baptisms.
4. According to the Catalogue Raisoné, 13.1.1847, Miles, a widower, was helped out by his children's "aunts", Mary and Betty Hyland.

married into the Healeys[1] and the Doyles,[2] and the Doyles[3] into the Ryans. Further, there are references in the Journals to links between the Darkers and the Youngs,[4] the Delaneys and the Shannons,[5] and the Fitzpatricks and Dempseys.[6] No wonder, then, that at the end of 1847 Mrs. Smith summarised the situation in a way that emphasised the difficulties all these links presented for the landlord:

> The Baltiboys people are so inter-connected, inter-married, that in offending one we offend all, and up they all start, as if no-one had a right to act to any of them but just as the whole junta please. 7

These difficulties were compounded by the evident fact that these interconnections were between tenant and labouring families[8] as well as between just the tenantry, which must have helped to produce those tensions which were capable of exploding on occasions such as those generated by the death of a head of a family. A last ingredient in

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1. Michael Healey married Eliza Quinn in 1840.
2. They were amongst the most intimately connected tenant families. Garrett Doyle, a fifty acre farmer, married Esther Quinn in 1839.
3. Judy Ryan (née Quinn) married Michael Doyle (supra. p. 176 footnote 2) in 1842.
4. 5.8.1842.
5. Although there were seven children in this labouring family (10.9.1840), there are no traces of them in the parochial records; Mrs. Delaney however was grandmother to the Shannons (29.5.1846).
6. Pat Fitzpatrick was married to Mary Dempsey (6.8.1845) and their two families often acted as witnesses and sponsors.
7. 9.12.1847.
8. Most of the latter feature in the next chapter.

this inflamable mixture was the outer-most layer of connections between some of the tenantry and labourers and landlords other than the Smiths; the two most closely involved were Mr. Wynne and John Hornidge and the differences in approach between these three added another note of uncertainty.[1]

It must be stressed that for the most part before the Famine, Mrs. Smith was pleased with their achievements and the way the estate had changed beyond all recognition in the previous fifteen years, and the tenantry with it. In the last resort it was not so much Pat Ryan's attending one of O'Connell's meetings or the reputation of Bryan Dempsey as a troublemaker which fairly indicates her overall estimate of their tenantry's worth. It is much more the pride she took when there were signs that all that she and her husband had been attempting in the end succeed. For example in the winter of 1842 it looked as if two of her pet schemes, the school[2] and the lending library, were about to become real successes. After the tenants had paid well in the November gale, Mrs. Smith reported that so great was their desire for improvement, that, in addition to bettering the condition of their land and houses, they wanted to have a "boys' school on the National system" as well as the one already there for girls and infants. Most significant of all, it was Pat Ryan the potential rebel who was the collect subscriptions; this in particular she thought was a break-through.

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1. There were clear differences in personality, too: see Part I, ch. 3, p. 65-8.
2. See Part II, ch. 2.

> Can this be true, after years of struggling with their prejudices, true enough, it is the fruits of patience, kindness, forebearance and the real wish to benefit them, the sincerity of which they are now convinced of. I am so happy, the seed is sown, and even were my days to be cut short, some hand will be found to cherish them. 1

And just in case this spark was to be threatened by her death, she added words of warning for her children which were intended to guide them, when they in turn had to take responsibility for the Baltiboys tenantry:

> Just remember this caution, dear children. Improvement to be permanent must be gradual. Let the people themselves discover their deficiencies, then help them to remedy them, bear patiently with their ignorance, make allowance for their prejudices, don't expect too much too soon, don't be disheartened by many failures. 'Weary not in well doing.'[2] Time and patience will conquer all difficulties.

These were qualities much needed in her dealings with the Baltiboys tradesmen who occupied a social and economic status similar to many of the tenant farmers.

Alongside the tenantry, but different from them, were the three tradesmen resident on the estate. Pat Farrell is mentioned in the 1834 Tithe Composition Plotment books, so he may be the carpenter referred to in Lady Strachey's preface to the Highland Lady when she describes how work was begun on rebuilding Baltiboys in 1830: "To begin with work was found for the tenants in building a new house;

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1. 27.II. 1842.

2. In fact "Let us not be weary in well-doing" (Galations, VI 9), see Everyman's Dictionary of Quotations and Proverbs (1951) p. 428.

mason, carpenter and labourers were all on the spot: those who had horses and carts drew the materials; all took an interest in the work and a pride in what they ever afterwards called 'the Building', while mason and carpenter became thriving men."[1] By the 1840s the mason was James Kearney, and the second carpenter a James Ryan, who had definitely worked on the rebuilding. They all had flourishing businesses, supplemented by small farms, as the Catalogue Raisoné of January 1847 made clear:

> James Carney[2] the mason ...is doing well on his farm of twenty three acres; has it well stocked, lives in a good three-roomed slated house with a pretty wife and four children, two of them at school; his trade has hitherto kept him easy, but no-one is building this year, so he has had to part with his men, his wife with her maid, to leave enough food behind.
>
> James Ryan the carpenter, a good two-storey, slated house with four rooms, a closet, and dairy, workshop, shed, yard, three acres of land, one apprentice, one journeyman, a boy, a maid, wife and five children, one boy and two girls at school, two little girls mere babies. All comfortable here, neater than the general.
>
> Pat Farrell, our other carpenter, plenty to do in his good shop; three acres of land helping to employ his sons at leisure hours; a managing wife with by far the neatest furnished house in the country. 3

Griffith in fact states that their holdings were larger: Kearney with 37, Ryan with 6½ and Farrell with 5 acres, but these figures agree well enough if Mrs. Smith's are accepted as Irish acres. At any

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1. p. vi.

2. Where Irish officialdom spelt the mason's name Kearney, Mrs. Smith tended (misled perhaps by her Scottish ear) to write Carney (and may well have pronounced the poor man's surname Cairnie).

3. 13/20.11.1847.

rate they emphasise the comparatively secure position of a tradesman, with workshops, apprentices and land. However the mason had had to dismiss his men by 1847[1] and that there were fluctuations was noted by Mrs. Smith four years before: "Unluckily the carpenter line is over-stocked, and the batches work for so little that the clever men find it difficult to get on; times however are mending."[2]

By the 1840s it is James Ryan who is mentioned most. In October 1842 Mrs. Smith writes about his use of the lending library she established at Baltiboys which suggests that he and his brother Pat, an improving small tenant farmer, each were at that level of economic security where they could think of their family's upbringing:

> The Doctor brought a cargo of Penny Magazines[3] for our lending Library. By the bye I have twelve subscribers no less, and Pat Ryan buys candles and has a reading every evening, Nowlan the reformed schoolmaster[4] reads, Pat, his sons, his younger brothers and James' apprentices forming the audience, the women knitting. What will Ireland be by and bye, are there not hopes ... 5

Mrs. Smith's didactic approach went beyond the Penny Magazine and she evidently made sure that improving material came the way of her carpenter: "James Ryan came last night to change his book, he asked for

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1. See above; 13.1.1847.
2. 8.3.1843.
3. The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge was published between 1832 and 1844 in 13 volumes and was much favoured by Mrs. Smith as a medium for improvement.
4. It is likely that he earned this adjective's implied promise by turning his back on a hedge-school.
5. 30.10.1842.

one with drawings of the new agricultural implements in it. I hope he is going to make some, he did make one for the Colonel, a horse hoe and very correctly and this looks as if it had been approved of."[1] Indeed, on the eve of the famine, so impressed are the Smiths with the new two-storied, slated house he has built that for her it almost symbolises what they thought of Baltiboys after two years away ... "the new house will soon be very comfortable, it is conveniently arranged in a neat elevation greatly improving the appearance of a rapidly thriving little property."[2]

James Ryan evidently did most of the joinery work for the Smiths. He bought wood for jobs on his own authority and seems to have had great trust reposed in him, for he also, in addition to looking after

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1. 18.11.1842. Although the book is not named, it might well have been one of the works of the famous 'Martin Doyle' the Rev. Mr. Hickey, she had met in Pau (6.7.1844); Hints originally intended for the Small Farmers of the County of Wexford but Suited to the Circumstances of most parts of Ireland (1832) is a possibility but it is more likely to have been A Cyclopaedia of Practical Husbandry and Rural Affairs in General (1844) which was discussed by the two authors in its manuscript form in France. Unfortunately Mrs. Smith does not indicate whether either traveller took Thomas Davis' advice and carried "a purpose for Ireland in the hearts." (See Robert Kee, The Green Flag (1972) Vol. 2, p. 198.) It is interesting that Martin Doyle had approached Lord Downshire (5.8. 1837) offering his professional services; the fourth marquis commented alongside "I believe Mr. Hickey is a sanguine theoretical fellow " who would have been of some use on the Blessington estate "But Murray and the tenants don't like the intrusion". (D.P. D671 c/190)

2. 28.7.1845.

the maintenance of property on the estate, had the task of renovating Mrs. Smith's school and of adding a room to it when she decided to cater for older boys as well as girls and infants. She wrote interestingly in May 1842 ...

> James Ryan and I have had a settlement of accounts; altogether the schoolhouse has cost above £80 which he gave me three years to pay. Both have fulfilled our contract; he did the work well and expeditiously and I have denied myself every other indulgence to keep my word with him. 1

Such trust on each side was not to survive the pressures of the years of distress and difficulty which accompanied the famine.

In April 1848 Mrs. Smith discovered that an attempt had been made to break into an old travelling chest of her husband's where money was kept. It was not successful because the Bramah lock[2] defied the thief's efforts. Tom Darker and the Colonel suspected James Ryan: "He is in the habit of going all over the house repairing everything, no one would be surprised to see him in any room or coming out of any place, he might remain any length of time in any place without exciting the least surprise in any of us." Serjeant Craddock from Blessington increased their suspicions by examining the damaged box and declaring that "a tradesman's hand had done the deed, a hand practised in the use of tools, and that the tools used were good ones." A poignant but inconclusive scene took place when James Ryan sawed out the damaged lock and remarked to the sergeant "'it was

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1. 28.5.1842.

2. This was not an Indian lock, but one patented by Joseph Bramah (1749-1814) - O.E.D.

a bad job whoever done it'".[1]

Nothing definite was ever established but these points of detail help to show the privileged position of a tradesman at Baltiboys and the constant supply of work which there was in the house alone. Mrs. Smith's conclusion also adds to this picture and is very revealing on the relationship between master and tradesman which had broken down in part due to the unnatural times:

> All suspect James Ryan. Mr. Darker suspects him, nay is sure from a knowledge of his character and his difficulties and his opportunity, and his acquaintance with the cash drawer that it can be no one else. His changed manner almost satisfied me, the Colonel also, and those who have seen him since the discovery say he is an object of pity, gone to nothing, hardly able to stand, and inattentive to anything said to him. Unfortunate man, why not ask a loan, many a time he has had one given from that very drawer. To try such a thing with us who made his fortune, he helped to build this house, he has worked for us ever since, we trusted him I am afraid, too much, for a man don't begin a career of thieving by means of a false key, it is only after many successful smaller peculations that this sort of serious felony enters his vitiated mind. It has shocked us so much, it is such a disappointment, it is such a loosening of our trustfulness in our dependents. These are wretched times, the hardship of them induces people to resort to plans they would have abhorred in better days, tradesmen especially are so unemployed they are in danger of starving; then why not ask his indulgent landlord for help, was it ever refused him. Mr. Darker knows the poor creature to be in serious difficulties. The other day I went to see his sick child when he told me two strange things, one that he would be right glad to make its coffin, that he would be glad to make all their coffins, at their ages they would die in a state of grace, and what was he rearing them for, sorrow and hardship, which was all they were like to meet with, and that if he could compass the few pounds he would emigrate to a certainty for he was starving here.! [2]

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1. 16.4.1848.

2. 18.4.1846. These were precisely the thoughts of the poem "Song of the Famine" published nine months before in the Dublin University Magazine (Vol. XXX No. CLXXV, July 1847, p. 103) -- "Thank God there's one the less to feed! , I thank God it is my son!"

By 1848, then, despite his farm, this tradesman was starving and clearly is in the same state of desperation common by then to the labourers and cottiers, whose earnings at the start of the 1840s would have been a fraction of a man with a trade; Tom Kiogh, who had been trained as a sawyer, was thought by Mrs. Smith in 1842 to be capable of earning a pound a week which was around eight times the poorest labourer's wage.[1]

This long description of how the Smiths came to believe in the circumstantial evidence suggesting his guilt, and the slap in the face she believed his theft to be, has much to suggest about how the Smiths saw themselves as landlords, so that it is doubly interesting that her final conclusion was that "James Ryan must be employed as usual, there is no proof against him." In the longer term, she had evidently taken his hint about emigration seriously: "As he is not happy we hope that by and bye he will emigrate to America from whence such cheering accounts have arrived that many are preparing to follow the prosperous example this very season."[2] Thus, so bleak was the future that both the aristocracy of labour on Baltiboys and the labourers far beneath saw emigration as a solution to their problems.[3]

Two final characteristics of the tradesmen need to be examined. Mrs. Smith suggested that in the years before the famine they were

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1. 26.8.1842.
2. 2.7.1848.
3. See Part II, ch. 5, pp. 242-261.

both unpopular on the estate and at the same time possessed an independence of mind and action that tended to set them apart from even the tenantry. The example concerning James Ryan involved land. He had been one of the parties in the 1840 dispute between the Colonel, Kearns and Dempsey, which led to the latter attacking him with "stones and broomsticks and pitch forks, because they were displeased at his having hired a certain field",[1] it later transpired that Kearns was trying to settle a debt to the Colonel and let the field to Dempsey at the same time, and it is suggested that it was his being a tradesman which made Ryan's protestations invalid ... he already possessed a source of income. By far the most extreme example, however, concerned Pat Farrell, who had been the intended victim in the 1836 assassination attempt which Mrs. Smith wrote had had the consent of every tenant on Baltiboys, apart from the Tyrrells and the Kellys.[2]

Whether it is coincidence or not that it should be two of the tradesmen who were so involved, it is understandable that it is Farrell and Ryan and Kearney, who are most mentioned as taking independent lines of action against those two sources of authority, the priest and the Steward.

Two of them had been involved in incidents with Fathers Germaine and Rickard at the time of the Poor Law Guardian elections in April 1840, when Colonel Smith stood for the first time.[3] It is likely

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1. 17.4.1840.
2. See Part I, ch. 3, p. 82-3
3. See Part II, ch. 2, p. 136-8

that it was the traditional independence of the tradesman with his more secure economic position that made these two stand out against their priest; however it takes two to make a quarrel and the vigour of the clerical support for the Repeal campaign evidently had its local counterpart in Father Rickard of Blackditches. When a year later the Colonel made his second attempt at getting elected, both Farrell and Rickard were involved in another argument; so incensed was Colonel Smith that a petition was organised for the Archbishop in Dublin; and it was Pat Farrell who was to deliver it.[1] This stepping out of line itself is a significant illustration of one way in which the differences between tenant and tradesman could come out.

One last point helps to emphasise how these resident tradesmen were a little apart from the tenantry in general on another issue. The closely-knit community, often inter-marrying, of the tenantry showed one of its true colours over the conspiracy of silence accompanying that mysterious assassination attempt on Pat Farrell in 1836; it was to reveal another in October 1845 in the malicious web of gossip surrounding the Steward which met the Smiths when they returned from France.

> We have had a delicate investigation ... upon poor Tom Darker's character, his morals and his probity both attacked by the evil-minded gossips abounding here as in other idle places, poverty, ignorance and the accompanying jealousy of the prosperous having really distracted the whole of Baltiboys. Poor Tom has been trying for long to bring matters to the point and at last he has found a courageous man, James Carney the mason, honest enough to come forward and state what he had heard uttered and attested, so there

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1. See Part II, ch. 2, p. 138-141.

> was a confronting and denying and a bringing forward of books by which every insinuation against his conniving at dishonesty was disproved. It was quite a triumphant refutation after which there was a shaking of hands and we hope at last an end to the propagation of as malicious an act, of as malicious a set of calumnies, as ever were invented. 1

To come forward under these circumstances when the landlord's wife put such importance on the affair demanded both a conviction and an independence which set this particular mason apart from the tenantry of Baltiboys.

An examination of the relationship between landlord and tenantry on Baltiboys in the 1840s, therefore, reveals a complicated, interacting pattern. Many of the tensions and problems associated with the management of land at this time were clearly present; the tenantry for their part are recognisably subject to the social and economic pressures present all over Ireland during this decade. In the end, much of the credit for the viability of this estate must go to the Smiths' improving management; and part of the rest to the readiness with which most of the Baltiboys tenantry seized the chances of improvement they had been offered.

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1. See Part II, ch. 2, p. 104 - 159 .

Chapter Four

Labourers

Below the more prosperous tenantry, the small farmers, and tradesmen working on the estate lay that landless, labouring class ("that great and respectable class the men of no property")[1] in whom so many of the perennial problems of rural Ireland were concentrated. They were the uncertain base of the pyramid, below that 'peasant' class defined by K.H. Connell[2] as owning or occupying small plots of land and working it normally with little or no labour beyond the family. Their preponderance in the most depressed parts of Ireland of the 1840s has been well documented[3] and it is clear that this factor went a long way to explaining how vulnerable such areas were to prove when the potato failed.

By then, however, Baltiboys had had some fifteen years of improving management which has been traced from the impressions of the Tithe Composition Applotment Books of 1834 through the Griffith Field Books to 1851.[4] Landlord vigilance and concern for improvement meant that the conditions where the labouring class multiplied did not exist. Most tenants, then, employed the labourers they needed and with farms for the most part geared to the requirements and capacity of each

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1. Wolfe Tone, quoted in F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine (1971) p. 42.
2. Marriage in Ireland after the Famine: the diffusion of the match in Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, XIX 1955-6, p. 94-5.
3. See R.B. McDowell, Ireland on the Eve of the Famine, p. 5-6 and E.R.R. Green pp. 92-7 in Great Famine; Donnelly pp. 23-6.
4. See Part II, ch. 1, 2 & 3.

farmer,[1] there was little reason for an expanding cottier or labouring class to take root. The "Catalogue Raisonné" at the start of 1847[2] lists five tenants as having resident labourers, though the mason James Kearney had got rid of his, as with less business he could look after his 37 acres himself. One, Garrett Doyle, with no family needed three; Red Paddy Quin and Jack Byrne had two; Michael Tyrell used his old brother-in-law Cullen; and only Tom Kelly with "two old half useless men and a little boy, all of whom he gets at half wages",[3] too few for the 125 acres he farmed so inefficiently, is criticised for the use he makes of them.

In addition to labour legitimately needed,[4] it is fair to assume that there were unemployed labourers squatting with relatives, certainly more than the two examples Mrs. Smith writes about in January

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1. See Part II, ch. 3.
2. See the extensive use made of this in Part II, ch.s 2 and 3.
3. 13.1.1847.
4. This is best appreciated in table-form:

Tenant	St. Acres(Griffith)	Labourers	Children
Tom Kelly	125	3	7, all at school: 4 boys & 3 girls
Garret Doyle	53	3	None
Red Paddy Quin	36	2	2 boys at school, one aged 7
Jack Byrne	80	2	4 boys, 3 at school
Michael Tyrrel	80	1	1 adult youth

No matter the size of holding, labourers were only employed where family connections or children could not cope; Tyrrel's help in any case was his brother-in-law.

1847. Dick Gray's[1] youngest son, Ned, had taken advantage of his father's and elder brother's illness to get married and squat in the parental home: "I found the wife pinned up behind a blanket in the wide kitchen chimney and recommended her and Ned who was thrashing in the kitchen to provide themselves with a more permanent home as soon as convenient." That it was landlord neglect which made such 'squatting possible she makes clear from her description of how the youngest daughter of the Widow Quin[2] sneaked back with her family, seven children and a "sickly labouring lad" of a husband:

> They live in the mother's cowhouse where she had no right to put them and thus settle a whole family of beggars upon us but we did not look after things then as we have learned to do now. It is the most wretched abode imaginable, without window or fireplace; mud for the floor, neither water nor weather-tight, nor scarce a door, all black with smoke, no furniture scarcely .... They have no business where they are, the man not belonging to Baltiboys[3], but there they are

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1. He had earlier been described by Mrs. Smith as "the poorest man in Baltiboys", 16.11.1842.

2. Widow of the William Quin named in the Tithe Plotment Composition books; her son Pat was cousin to Red Paddy Quin, see Catalogue Raisoné.

3. From all she wrote about the "floating" population of Baltiboys, it is clear that Mrs. Smith makes a distinction between those born on the estate or educated in her schools, who thereby had some claim on her attention, and those attached to Baltiboys families, but without the hope of doing anything but living off their relations. That is one reason why marriage in this lowest class did conform to the harsh analysis of Edward Golding (Devon Vol. I, p. 951, witness 245, qu.22) that "from the time the labourer becomes a married man and takes a cabin, his life is little better than one continual struggle". Contrast the more optimistic interpretations of most landlords giving evidence in 1844 (see Donnelly, p. 23), although few went as far as William Fetherston (Devon I p. 315, witness 416 qu.s 60-2) who gave as proof "a family right well supported upon three acres of land" - the labourer in questinn in one year sold £24 worth off the land, reared six children, kept a horse, cow & pigs ... despite the handicap of a wooden leg!

> through our negligence so we must take care of them for the present.

The husband coming from outside the estate compounded the mistake, which emphasises how there had to be a limit to the extent to which the estate looked after its own, and that this family was beyond that limit.

From amongst those Mrs. Smith regarded as legitimate residents, there are around a dozen families depending upon the outside labour of the principal male for starvation to be kept at bay. Five of these are described in sufficient detail for the sort of wretched existence they eked out to be obvious. One summer's day in 1840 Mrs. Smith and her daughters went "to hunt out children for the infant class" and was appalled at what this search uncovered: "everywhere almost we found people merely struggling for existence, some a little better off than others in consequence of better management, but badly at best and no seeming hope anywhere of better days, no prospect for the children beyond toil, toil for the bit to eat".[1] Appalling though this was, her visit to the labouring family of Harry and Betty Kiogh emphasised the desperate condition likely to attend those who lived by being employed in the most menial way by others.

> But all the wretchedness we found during our walk in the morning was nothing compared to the scene at Harry Kiogh's dwelling where I went after dinner, to see his poor wife Betty, who is near dying after a miscarriage caused by overweighting herself with the turf she brought home on her back through the river, their fuel for the winter. It is an old cowhouse, part of a ruined building quite apart

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1. 26.8.1840.

> from all neighbourhood, has never been dashed inside or out, no window, no chimney, a sort of door that don't fit and some thatch by way of - the husband has built a rough stone wall elbow high to protect the bed from the wind of the door. I saw no bed-clothes, straw below, some sort of old dark cloth above; there was a pot and a plate or two and a basin and a spoon, the remains of an old dresser, four starved looking children, very clean, and the poor fainting woman hardly able to speak and not able to raise herself. 1

Mrs. Smith remembered this scene in the autumn of 1845 when she visited the hovel of James Craig, a labourer on Jack Byrne's eighty acre farm:

> Such a scene of misery my eyes have not witnessed since I once found as poor a woman, Betty Kiogh, dying. An old dresser containing two tin cans, a broken spoon, a small crock, and a pot on the floor in which a baby just able to walk was dabbling, was all the furniture I could see. "Where is the bed", said I. "There mee lady" - "Where." - A wad of straw in a corner, a little pile of chaff near it on which lay folded a ragged single blanket - all, father, mother, and the three babies slept there." 2

There are clues to the sort of lives led by three other similar families. The Delaneys[3] were utterly dependent on the earnings of one labouring son and were described in May 1846 in words that underlined their total dependence: "The two old people objects, neither of them able to move. She swelled and breathless on one side of the fire, he worn to a skeleton, crippled and deformed by rheumatick gout upon the other."[4] Jem Doyle, his wife and family lived in great misery in a

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1. 26.8.1840.
2. 10.10.1845.
3. See Part II, ch. 3, p. 188f. : the land given up (4 acres 1 rood 28 perches valued at £2:3:6 in 1834) was thus reasonably good land at 14/- per acre. See 30.11.1840.
4. 4.5.1846.

cow-shed on the highest part of the hill[1]; at the end of 1848 Mrs. Smith described how "Mrs. Doyle came here on Saturday last with her tale of destitution, which I can well believe is entire seeing that she has five children at home and a cripple for a husband, an incurable; she is blind herself and her only grown up daughter hopelessly lazy."[2] And in January 1840 she had been appalled by the condition of Edward Shannon's family: "How miserable was Shannon's cabin ... the asthmatick old man and his epeleptick daughter, poor Biddy with five ragged girls, the three youngest infants - one at the breast, another hardly walking, - God help them."[3]

In three of these instances Mrs. Smith supplies some financial detail which helps us to work out how they managed to survive in such wretched conditions. Betty Kiogh was delighted her husband had found a job which would bring in thirty shillings, and the optimism of this sick woman evidently startled her visitor; once the rent had been paid ("20/-!! for that place!!") this would "leave a trifle to thatch over the bed!" Moreover they were far from destitute for she went on to explain about the fowl, her four ducks, and the pig; further, there was "plenty of turf which she would soon be able to bring home and a fine crop of potatoes when they could release them, and please God harvest work would help them to do that, if she were but once able

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1. The distinction was made later (21.1.1849) that "they are on our own hill, although not our own people"; it is possible that they had leased the byre from Bartle Murphey who had troubles of his own by this time, (see Part II, ch. 3, p. 174-5).

2. 8.12.1848.

3. 3.1.1840.

to leave her bed."[1] Mrs. Smith does not reveal to whom this exorbitant rent had to be paid, but with only ten shillings left from the pay for this particular job, it is clear how much depended upon harvest work and a secure potato crop for jobbing labourers of this sort. Some additional help was forthcoming from Harry's younger brother Tom (there is a suggestion that the mother had unjustly turned the elder brother out of the family's twenty acres)[2] but this tragic situation occuring on their estate made it part of the Smith's overall responsibility, although she herself could see no real solution:

> Is there no remedy for such utter wretchedness? Education alone won't do, the body must be fed at any rate before the mind can act. We can help Betty Kiogh, lead her to help herself as I have done by making her buy fowl for her knitting and then buying the eggs from her and making that money again clothe the children etc. but we could not do even this little to many, and who is to do it to all. My head turns when I think of it. 3

Three years later in 1845 James Craig's condition is described. He rented the "outer-most mierable room" of Mrs. Tyrrell's house[4] which he paid for out of his wages of fivepence a day in summer and four in winter, though he had dinner on his employer Jack Byrne's farm.

> The winter half year having begun, the young wife receives two shillings a week for the maintenance of herself and three wretched looking babies, out of which pittance she pays sixpence

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1. 16.8.1840.
2. See Part II, ch. 3, p. 185, footnote 3.
3. 26.8.1840.
4. 10/28.10.1845.

> a week to Mrs. Tyrrell and threepence must go for the husband's tobacco, leaving 1/3 for food, clothes and fire.

Mrs. Smith's account tells how she criticized the threepence spent on tobacco: "'and your husband smokes, spends 15/- or 16/- a year on tobacco.' 'Sure mee lady only threepence a week! And he don't drink mee lady, sorra drop, the Lord be praised, a'n't it a mercy?' I burst out crying for my nerves a'n't as strong as they once were.'"

Like Betty Kiogh, she was grasping at straws and this was apparently such an archetypal case that Mrs. Smith launched out at the end of her account at what she saw as the evils of the system:

> This is a wrong system though it cannot be changed yet. A man should not marry on fourpence a day.[1] A married man should not diet at the farmer's, a farmer should keep no married man whom he cannot give a house to, a girl should marry no man till they have between them saved enough money to buy their furniture. When shall we see these prudent rules in practice. Mrs. Tyrrell too has no right to let part of her house being in it herself on sufferance; she is a very hard Landlord[2] too as all of her class mostly are.

By May 1846 the predicament of many labourers was desperate and an insight into their condition comes from what she writes about the

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1. Although Father Germaine in his evidence to the 1836 Commissioners (PP HC XXXI p. 214-5) maintained that casual labour could earn 6d a day (see footnote2 p.214), Mrs. Smith's is the more realistic figure. Burton Bindon, admittedly from Co. Clare, carried out a most revealing experiment as he told the Devon Commissioners (Vol. 2 p. 493, witness 505, qu. 22): "forty or fifty women agreed with my steward the other day that they would work for 3d. a day. I drove as hard a bargain as I could with them, to see what they would do; but I gave them 4d."

2. This point was emphasised time and again in Devon, as for example by William O'Reilly (Vol. 1 p. 446, witness 62, qu.24): "Every class in this country oppresses the class below it until you come to the most wretched class. The men who themselves are all but paupers yet lend to a class who are not trusted with any holding beyond from week to week or from month to month. There is no exaction practised by their superiors that they do not practise upon those below them."

Shannons. John Hornidge was their landlord but the children went to the Baltiboys school and the family was visited regularly by Mrs. Smith.

> The Doctor had got a note from old John Hornidge to go and visit Edward Shannon in the lane. My mind misgave me that the man was dying like his children of starvation so ... the Colonel, Janey and I drove over to see; the one room was very clean, almost tidy, except for a stack of furze at the foot of the bed - the fuel. The man was lying down ill enough, the wife burst into tears when I entered. "Now God be praised," she said, "we are saved." "Oh Lady Smith my jewel"etc. He had worked on when quite unfit for labour because his wages are stopt in sickness; he gets ninepence a day, but having two acres of ground and this miserable cabin so much is stopt for rent as leaves him but two shillings a week in money. He sublet his land to pay for firing, he sold his cow to pay his debts, and there he is with six children, five of them girls, and one an idiot. Their potatoes being done for a fortnight they have had in the family but one meal a day; no wonder the children had no spirit at their lessons. Yesterday morning they had nothing till the old grandmother Mrs. Delaney sent them two quarts of meal from her scanty store. Biddy Shannon made two halves of this - one half gave them all a cup of thick gruel yesterday; today it was thin as she had to keep enough for a drink in the evening for her husband; the little girls wept bitterly. Oh how they bounded off for milk and meal when the means to get both were given them. 1

Outside help, then, whether from relations or landlord, was essential in these three cases to enable them to survive both before

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1. Every such piece of evidence from the Journals affirms how close to destitution the labouring class without secure employment was. The Devon evidence of James Carey (Vol. II p. 308, witness 414 qu. 32) that labourers ate three times a day potatoes with milk but no butter and meat only at Christmas, or that of Michael Sullivan (Vol. II, p. 970, witness 720 from ill-fated Skibbereen qu. 17) that "in general I do not use 5s of kitchen [sic] from one end of the year to the other, except what I may get at Christmas", is here confirmed as ringing truer than, for example, the famous William Blacker's analysis for Devon of the "articles usually consumed by a labourer" (Vol. I p. 268, witness 49, qu. 34) amounting to 7/7½ on which 5/3 tax was paid ... the articles he listed were 2 oz. tea, 2 oz. coffee, 8 oz. sugar, 3½ lbs. meat, 7 lbs. flour, 7 pints ale, 1/4 pint brandy and 1 oz. tobacco. (See E.R.R. Green, Great Famine, p. 118-9.)

and in the early years of the famine. The acceptance and optimism is noticeable; so also of course is the long list of all that could go wrong in the labourer's precarious efforts to wrest a living. The colossal percentage of earnings which was swallowed by rent (25, 56 and 67 in these examples) represented an impossible burden; individual acts of charity counted for little as a result, even where it is apparent that they originated in no sense of legal obligation.

How did labourers employed directly on the farm and estate of Baltiboys fare? Mrs. Smith mantions them in the middle of the catalogue of January 1847. "We have eight bachelour labourers who all know they leave us if they marry. As they are, they are rich on their 6/- a week getting their soup or milk daily. Twelve out of doors servants, four at 7/-, eight at 6/- makes a hole in our small means, but this year we must keep them. Ten is our ordinary number. They are a truly decent set, grateful in earnest for their good places."[1] This must be taken on trust for all but the four who were paid the seven shillings; from internal evidence in the Journals a little can be gleaned about them and it makes an important comparison with the lives and conditions of their fellow labourers further away from the more sheltered conditions of the home farm.

These four were John Fitzpatrick the stableman, Miles Byrne the ploughman, John Grace the herd and Paddy White the gardener. The first two stayed with their families near the farm buildings; they

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1. 30.1.1847: note that their wages therefore amounted to no less than £197.12.0 per annum.

had by 1845 "their joint tenement, very decent, each has a bit of garden, a yard, a bedroom and kitchen, and Miles has a turf house which John must also have."[1] The stableman was promoted in 1848: "John Fitzpatrick makes a good under Steward, all is as neat as it used to be untidy and I think the difference between his wages and a boy's will be fully made up by the care he will take of all property."[2] The herd and gardener shared a "cabin" nearby; one room each (both had wives and John Grace had two small children) and no garden with the same wage of seven shillings a week meant that they were not as well off, but by 1847 they were receiving soup or milk daily from Mrs. Smith and were described as being "very comfortable".[3]

Not only were these four more secure than any labourer around, to judge from the gardener's equivocal relationship with his employer, every consideration was taken into account even when the most basic regulations were flagrantly broken. In April 1840, for example, Mrs. Smith noted: "Paddy the gardener who had been absent without leave (whiskey drinking of course) at his work again[4]" and three days later he is quarrelling at midnight "on Monday" in Blessington and involved in an affray which ended in the "breaking of people's windows keeping half the town up."[5] At the end of May trouble looms again: "A holi-

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1. 28.7.1845.
2. 2.7.1848.
3. See Catalogue Raisoné, 17.1.1847.
4. 14.4.1840.
5. 17.4.1840.

day, nobody working, Paddy asked leave to go to Naas to purchase clothing, I will try him this once."[1] The result was noted next day: "No Paddy, nor sign of him. It really is a sad failing this detestable punch drinking, well, he shall pay half a crown for his headache and never will I give him leave to a fair again."[2] And more ominously when he did return: "Paddy and I a very serious conference, he is in a fright."[3] However, predictably, in the middle of June he is in trouble again. "Paddy absent again, what must we do with the unfortunate man."[4] As usual, he reappears next day: "Paddy very penitent, I very serious with him, his fine of 2/6 seems to have but little effect, if he does not reform we really must look about for another gardener, as valuable things might be destroyed by a day and night's neglect."[5] Everything apparently went well until the end of July, when even Paddy realised that matters had come to a head: "Paddy the gardener absent all yesterday, having had some money given him to buy meal, he has sent in the keys this morning knowing he has dismissed himself. Unfortunate creature, after so many warnings, but go he must, he is unfit to be trusted with any plants of value and it would be wrong to others to forgive him." He was there-

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1. 29.5.1840.
2. 30.5.1840.
3. 2.6.1840.
4. 19.6.1840.
5. 20.6.1840.

fore paid all that he was owed (which taking both wages and his savings 'book into account came to the considerable sum of £13); her final thought was "he who came here ragged and starving, there will be little remaining this day week."[1]

And yet within three months he was back ... "reformed - his temperance medal[2] and the entreaties of himself and friends having softened my hard heart after some weeks of obduracy, for I was very angry with him."[3] There is no clue suggesting whether it really was her softheartedness or another example of that inability already discussed of this meticulously organised household to keep control over its servants.[4] At any rate it took one final incident before Paddy was restored to whatever position of trust he had occupied before his dismissal. He was long overdue from Dublin one February night in 1841, and all the old suspicions returned to Mrs. Smith as she filled in her Journal for the day:

> No Paddy, what can the old man be about? ... Made ourselves miserable all the evening because Paddy had not returned. Hal began to think he had absconded altogether with cart, mare and goods for America, and as he dropt from the clouds here, whether he were a rogue or an honest man was problematical, and this might have been a temptation beyond his withstanding. I absolved the poor man of all trickery but I feared he might himself have been tricked. Like other

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1. 28.7.1840.

2. The third of the three examples at Baltiboys of the power of the temperance movement; Father Mathew (see Part II, ch. 2, p. 163, f. 1) had preached at Naas in both July and August 1840.

3. 17/22.10.1840.

4. See Part I, ch. 4, p.108-9.

> great men, he has a failing - a woman can do anything with him, and as in the course of these excursions he don't always meet with the best of the sex, I feared his being enveigled into some den while his cart was pillaged.

He returned safe and sober if late, with the mare so, somewhat inappropriately, "we drank a glass of beer to their health."[1]

As a single man down to 1845, the gardener obviously could manage to spend part of his disposable income on whiskey, whereas even for those earning the government shilling a day in the mid-1840s it was a constant struggle to make any sort of ends meet. That this was so for the labouring class at Baltiboys is seen from the figures Mrs. Smith gives for James or Jemmy Craig. In 1845 he laboured for Jack Byrne; next year he is employed at Baltiboys, but at less than the customary six shillings a week which was a disastrous situation as his wife is reported to have said to Mrs. Smith's cook:

> This spring will be one of deep distress, potatoes are now 5d. a stone and that unhappy creature Jemmy Craig's wife told Mrs. Fyfe today (24th February 1846) that she cannot do with less than ten stone in the week. Fivepence a week for her lodgings, three pence halfpenny for the husband's tobacco - where is the firing, the clothing, and what they call the kitchen to come from for these five miserable creatures, even though he is in the Colonel's work, for he is so weakly he cannot earn as another man. The idea of such a pair of incapables marrying without a home, without employment; it is really a moral sin, though they none of them comprehend its enormity. 2

Although this was a better situation than the previous year when Mrs. Smith had calculated that this wretched family had only 1/3 a week

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1. 17/18.2.1841.

2. 24.2.1846.

left for "food, clothes and fire"[1], it still shows very clearly the parlous condition of the labouring class, even where wages were above the average suggested by official reports.[2] Creels of turf, for example, for those who were accustomed to buy rather than cut their own, had been between 2/- and 2/6 the previous summer but by the spring of 1846 had risen to 3/6. Few labourers would have bought in any case, obviously exploiting to the full the one asset they possessed, their labour, but this is an indication how prices had risen. Indeed, landlord and steward at Baltiboys were having what she called "long consultations about the best method of relieving the poor" and of course much of their time was spent in working out the effect of levels of wages and prices:

> With potatoes at their present price it would take 9/- a week to buy sufficient of them for the labourer's family; he can earn at best but 6/- and there are all his other necessaries, house rent, clothes, fuel, milk.

In the end, even though much was done on the estate to relieve the extent of the suffering, the Journals show that she had to fall back on conjecture to make bearable her knowledge of the labourers' privations: "Could not sleep last night for thinking of the miseries of that wretched James Craig's wife and fifty others, who I daresay were sound on their straw under their scanty coverings and half open

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1. 18.10.1845.

2. Father Germaine in his evidence to the 1836 Commissioners maintained "Labourers in constant employment get 1/- per day and diet themselves", while others got 6d a day together with milk or butter 3 days in the week; he estimated the total average annual earnings of a labourer as £14. HC 1836 XXXI p. 269.

roofs."[1]

By September 1846 and the approach of another winter, there seems to be only one solution. The estate cannot possibly undertake to support even the limited and hitherto controllable number of labourers and so they would have to be supported by the government: "James Craig and his dirty, idle wife must take their wretched children to the poor house."[2] This was only apparently proposed for one other labouring family, the Doyles, who by December 1848 had all their hopes pinned on receiving help from a son who had emigrated to America:[3]

> Mrs. Doyle came here ... with her tale of destitution which I can well believe is entire ... I told her we could not help her nor the farmers either; she must go to the poor house towards which this little estate pays ninety six pounds a year[4] and sends hitherto no paupers to it. One old asthmatick woman receives a shilling a week outdoor relief and that is all we get for the large sum we give. She told me they would take no more into the poor house, it was full. The Colonel rode into Blessington, got her an order, hired a cart to convey them, and they set on the carter to beat him and would not hear of the poor house. As they can't

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1. 24.2.1846. P.M.A. Bourke has suggested that with all occupiers under 20 statute acres living off an exclusive potato diet and a likely male consumption of between 12 and 14 lbs. a day, then the cottier and labouring classes "were the most vulnerable and insecure section of the people, living their desperate lives under a constantly poised sword of Damocles." Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry of Ireland Vol. XXI, 1967-8, p. 81, The Use of the Potato Crop in Pre-Famine Ireland.

2. 28.9.1846.

3. See Part II, ch. 5, p. 250.

4. See Abstract of the Several Electoral Divisions of Unions in Ireland, Showing the Expenditure etc. under Act 10 Vic. C7 (HC 1847-48 XXIX p. 190) where the Parish of Boystown in the Union of Naas was rated at 0.83/4 d. (eight pence three farthings).

> earn and won't starve they will steal waiting an answer they have a hope of from the son in America, whose industry they are willing to tax for the support of their own idleness and meanness, for their low feelings and unprincipled selfishness prevent their seeing how utterly depraved is such conduct. I will not sanction such want of principles and have forbidden her applying here again. At the same time I hate the poor house. A sink of vice: idleness finishing to corrupt the miserable inmates; but when people have brought themselves down to it, they must put up with it. I begin to think a pestilence in this darkened land would be a mercy to it. 1

This helps to illuminate the attitudes on both sides, but in particular it shows how even a family as destitute as this would clutch at any straw rather than end up in the poor house.[2] They were in fact fortunate in that Jem Doyle's brother had gone out to America first, prospered and offered to set up one of his nephews; when young Jim went out in 1847, his uncle "met him on the quay and had two suits of clothes ready for him as people must be well dressed in that country and has put him into a factory where his wages are 20/- a week."[3]

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1. 8.12.1848. Mrs. Smith was invariably at a loss to explain why people of every estate with whose condition she was well acquainted, should not accept the inevitable if they and all connected with them would be better off as a result. Perhaps, in the end the answer lay in the explanation put forward to Devon by the Rev. Michael Fitzgerald who described eighty percent of his parishioners as "insolvents, that is to say, if their liabilities were to be satisfied on the spot, with all their effects above ground, they would go forth into the world as naked as they came into it." (Vol. 2, p. 794, witness 641, qu. 2).

2. See Part IV for further consideration of these points.

3. 24.1.1848: for emigration from Baltiboys in 1840s, see Part II, ch. 5, pp.242-61. It might have been one of this far-flung clan who indirectly contributed to the authenticity of the folk memories Malachi Horan Remembers edited by G.A. Little (Dublin 1943); the editor pays tribute to all he learned from his old nurse, Margaret Doyle, from Baltyboys, who was well-known to Malachi Horan p. vii.

How then did the remainder who were not, like old James Cullen, employed by a relation, manage to continue to exist? Only one of these labouring or cottier families is mentioned as quitting, the Redmonds, whom Mrs. Smith earlier praised as a well-organised household,[1] but who had been able to obtain nothing other than a few days' work at a time. Even so it was not until May 1849 that they left, getting £2 for their cabin's fixtures and fittings.[2] Two others were utterly dependent upon the labour of one son and it is a remarkable tribute to the strength of the family bond that in such times customary obligations prevailed. John Byrne, for example, "with a wife, rather more feeble than himself, an idiot daughter and an orphen grand-daughter all inhabiting a single room hovel dependant solely on the labour of one son, our workman Luke." He is described as giving them £15 a year, which means that of his six shillings a week wages, only twelve shillings a year is left, the sort of money James Craig was paying each year for his tobacco.[3] The Delaneys paid John Hornidge two guineas a year for their hovel and "four pounds for the summering and two pounds for the wintering of their cow, not in money, but in their son's labour, who thus, at two and twenty, earns sixpence a day."[4]

Younger men certainly cast around in a way which Mrs. Smith did

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1. 5.12.1842.
2. 11.5.1849.
3. 30.12.1847.
4. 3.5.1846.

not remember occurring before, desperately trying to find alternative sources of employment which would offer more than the uncertain government work on the roads: she wrote at the beginning of May 1847:

> Large families, which in the days of potatoes would lounge on in listless poverty all together, neither sons nor daughters ever keeping places that were for them by some exertion, now have separated voluntarily. All are dispersed trying their luck, as they call it - putting up with work, wages, hardships they would not formerly have brooked for half a day. The young men too are beginning to look for situations in the police. 1

She mentions three in particular, Pat and Andy Hyland who laboured at Baltiboys, and William Scarfe and Lawrence Mulligan who were no responsibility of the Smiths but had attended her school. She may have felt that, as the ability to read and write was essential, these former pupils' attempts might influence parents and "shew them the necessity of school for their children."

Of the three, Mulligan sounds the most likely to succeed. "He don't belong to us yet we have taken a sort of care of him from his having been steadily at school for many years and belonging to very decent parents"; his sisters had been in service at Baltiboys. "We have lent the poor lad the needful which he can repay by instalments and made him a small present besides."[2] This was generous because the Smiths had helped William Scarfe first of all and had been disappointed in him:

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1. 6.5.1847.
2. 18.5.1847: earlier his mother had been rebuked by Mrs. Smith for not encouraging her son in his ambitions.

> A son of Scarfe's, a protestant, was appointed, required only his equipment; amongst us we contributed the money; he has spent it otherwise and is now writing begging letters to a brother to entreat his assistance which, if granted, may avail so unprincipled a lad as little .... [he] is therefore what he was before his appointment, a beggar. 1

After such trouble on behalf of two who were not from Baltiboys, Mrs. Smith had obviously to take at least equal concern for the Hyland brothers, especially when she and her husband agreed with their Steward's estimate of their worth as a family; she had described them very favourably in July 1845 after the return from France ... "it must be allowed that these Hylands are more actively industrious than the general run of the labourers hereabouts."[2] The Catalogue in February 1847 described how all the family were in work and so they were comfortably placed compared to most of the other labouring families.[3] However having lent money to Lawrence Mulligan, Mrs. Smith felt she ought to do the same for Pat Hyland, and a long and revealing entry says much about her approach:

> Pat Hyland we must do the same to, though he ought to have saved out his wages; but this improvident habit of depending on one another prevented him from doing what was right to himself or conscientious to his master. He made no gathering for his entrance into the police though he has had it in his head these three months; he has been going about in rags which is very disrespectful to us who pay him more than sufficient to keep him in decent clothing, that every penny not required for food may go to the family of beggars he belongs to, two or three might earn if they were so enclined. As far as we are concerned this system shall be put a stop to;

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1. 2.5.1847/8.6.1847.
2. 27.7.1845.
3. 1.2.1847.

it is bad in every way for everybody. 1

This is still the voice of the improving landlord of pre-famine times, one that was to change in the next two years, but which by 1847 still had not fully cottoned onto the extent or nature of the struggle, which even labourers who had proved themselves well able to cope before 1845, were now undergoing.

And yet one final feature which explains why, although many were ravaged few failed to survive, was precisely this enquiring, concerned management of the estate which had been at the core of its organisation in the previous fifteen years. There are plenty of examples of Colonel and Mrs. Smith burrowing deep to find out where there was the greatest distress and then attempting to remedy it.

Sometimes, as early as October 1845, the effort depressed them: "... sick poor, destitute poor and ignorant, idle, prejudiced poor oppress me. Relieve them I can't, instruct them I can't, but I can try, every little helps, and many littles makes a muckle.... How absurd in me to feel angry with creatures so deficient, yet their folly is so lamentable it is very hard to bear patiently all the evils it produces."[2] And by January 1849, though she still believes in an element of personal responsibility for each example of distress, she has come to recognise the gulf between theory and practice:

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1. 2.5.1847: for the background to the re-organised system they were joining see G. Broeker Rural Disorder and Police Reform in Ireland, 1812-1836 (1970).

2. 28.10.1845.

> I was shocked indeed at our own school[1], no rosy cheeks, no merry laugh, little skeletons in rags with white faces and large staring eyes crouching against one another half dead. How can we remedy it? No way; how feed sixty children? if we were to coin ourselves into halfpence we could not give a meal a day to one hundredth part of our teeming neighbourbood. The poor little Doyles so clean, so thin, so sad, so naked, softened my heart to the foolish parents. They are on our own hill, though not our own people, they must not die of hunger. If I could manage to give a bit of bread daily to each pauper child, but we have no money, much more than we can afford is spent on labour,[2] the best kind of charity, leaving little for ought else, people not being quixotick enough to deny themselves the decencies they have been accustomed to for the support of those who have no claim upon them, who little deserve help and who would not be really benefitted by it, only a temporary assistance, it would be resulting in no good. These philosophick views are right doubtless, yet when I see hungry children I long to give them food. One meal a day is the general rule among this wretched population. While they can get that they will not hear of the poor house. Yet there are 1300 in it, and crowds turned away for want of room. 3

Thus in between her strongly held views on individual fates and the part she thought that the work houses should play was the wretchedness she saw in the neighbourhood and on Baltiboys; this meant that "temporary assistance" was offered to more than just the starving children she saw at school.

It is clear that this extended to families for whom the Smiths had no legal obligation, the Mulligans, Doyles and Scarfes (the last two are names which occur under middle-men in the neighbouring estate

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1. The special role played by the school both before and during the famine is dealt with in Part III, ch. 2.

2. See footnote ·, p. 209.

3. 21.1.1849.

of Richard Hornidge in Baltiboys Upper).[1] The most interesting example of this is the Delaneys, whose "miserable cabin" Colonel Smith had had thatched in the winter of 1845/6, and who were utterly dependent on their son's labour. Mrs. Smith quoted their landlord John Hornidge's comments on the fact that this son, by receiving payment in kind, was effectively at the age of 22 being paid 6d a day:

> On the other hand John Hornidge, the Landlord, says: 'I don't want the fellow; I keep the idle blackguard out of charity, sometimes I have work for him, more times I have none.' Idle! - who could be busy, underfed, under-clothed, under-housed, crushed body and soul by the extreme of poverty. 2

She added practical assistance to this condemnation; Mrs. Fyfe, she wrote next day, "has taken charge of the poor old Delaneys" which meant that regular food would be send and "Hal sent them a quantity of old clothes and a straw easy chair to which I have added a cushion."

For the others help took different forms. The Shannons[3] received food before this became a regular part of the Smiths' plan to combat the ravages of the famine, the two batchelor labourers, Andy Hyland and John Kearns, had their quarters made more comfortable in what had earlier just been a shed in the year,[4] and when the Redmonds were in great difficulties in May 1847, (rumour had it that they "had been refused relief by some mistake and so were starving; it was not so, they were only near it"), Mrs. Smith arranged for a son Mick to

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1. See Griffith Field Books for townland of Baltiboys Upper in barony of Talbotstown Lower (Valuation Office, Dublin).
2. 3.5.1846; see p. 204.
3. 3.1.1840.
4. 31.7.1845.

work with James Ryan and "I have hired Fanny to weed the flower beds and then I expect to have other work both for brother and sister."[1] In October 1845 Betty Kiogh's son had typhus fever, and to help her, received meal, milk and flannel.[2]

However it was the Byrnes and Doyles who most troubled Mrs. Smith as her entry for December 1847 makes clear:

> ... the poor people particularly depending upon our own selves have come through these troubled times so far without much suffering.... In all Baltiboys we have no destitute family; a very few distressed ... the old Byrnes are poor enough; they went on the old system and having spent in their youth, have nothing in their age, but the labour of their son Luke; he has four mouths besides his own to provide for. Clothes must be out of his power .... (the Doyles) had no right to marry, no right to squat themselves down in that cow house, but there they are and God help them. I have not forgot them this Christmas.

This represented real suffering, but when the concern of the landlords and the comparative situation elsewhere is recalled, in the absence of records from the local work house at Naas which might have helped to provide corroboration, the Smiths appear, in conditions of the greatest difficulty to have managed to remain in control of the situation.

In fact, the position and condition of the labourers on Baltiboys before 1845 and the arrival of a natural disaster which was so to test the system, appears to have been bearable, if unenviable. The absence of death, enforced ejectment or emigration is part of the explanation; the comparatively small numbers, many of them with close

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1. 28.5.1847.

2. 30.10.1845.

ties with other neighbouring, better-off families, is another. But a third is that much of the concern of the landlords on Baltiboys since 1830 had been directed at precisely this class which over-all was to face extinction over the famine years.

Two families which show this are the Redmonds, who were eventually to quit in 1849, and the Cullens. Widow Redmond had nine children, and her arranging of them illustrated their orderly lives. The eldest girl paid her mother for looking after her child for "though receiving neither money nor kindness from her husband, [she is] able to maintain herself perfectly without him"; the second married a woolen draper's shopman and looked after another sister; Biddy was with a laundress so only the "two least girls" were at home. Two of the elder boys are described as "dutiful to their mother", the third son "little help to her but able to support himself" and the last shaping as well as his elder brothers. Mrs. Smith wrote this analysis in 1840[1] and concluded: "The house is in good repair, clean and decent, and she is so industrious there is no fear but that the worst days of the family are over." The second important description is of the Cullens in the Catalogue Raisonée of January 1847, the family which had proved perfectly able to cope before 1845, but was to be in ever greater difficulties thereafter:

> Down the lane towards the King's river on the right hand, a small cabin of three rooms, warm and very clean with tidy furniture, good bedding, a neat small yard enclosed, cowhouse and pigstye. Here with one acre of ground a

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1. 10.9. 1840.

> decent labouring man has struggled through his laborious life and reared a large family in the days of pigs and potatoes. But times are changed. James Cullen and his dear old wife are past seventy years of age; neither can work as they used to. and the acre of ground for which they have paid no rent the last three half years is an encumbrance to them. Still I doubt their giving it up but by and bye I shall try though once can't be hard on the old couple. 1

In the end Mrs. Smith established him as a small turf merchant to his immediate area,[2] and just as his life before the famine had showed that on estates in the east of Ireland such as Baltiboys, it had been possible for a labourer with the smallest possible amount of land to wrest some sort of reasonable existence, so in the years afterwards, his leaving his land and accepting the chance of paid employment is a pointer to the very changed economic conditions which made his earlier life impossible.

The great advantage possessed by the tradesmen on Baltiboys, of course, was that their skill earned an income whilst their farms supplied food and perhaps cash; none of the tenant farmers or labourers were in such a favourable position. Some however did have the means of supplementing their income, although it was a pittance compared to the sort of wages earned by a skill. Sometimes they were involved in one of Mrs. Smith's schemes: Betty Kiogh was encouraged to keep hens,[3] Judy Ryan organised the household's washing[4] and John

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1. 13.1.1847.
2. 7.3.1847.
3. 26.8.1842; see p. 206.
4. 19.10.1840.

Byrne collected its coal.[1] Otherwise there was only the letting of an unused room, which James Ryan,[2] Commons[3] and Judy Ryan[4] all did when possible.

Those who were too old to work, had no source of regular income and could not rely on family help, were in the worst predicament but, where the landlord and his family visited regularly, such cases stood out so much that it was obvious when they needed help. There were two old ladies at Baltiboys, Mrs. Tyrrell and Peggy Dodson, who from their being involved in Mrs. Smith's schemes and from their own initiative, illustrate the variety of work which could be undertaken.

Old Mrs. Tyrrell gave up her piece of land in September 1840 in circumstances clearly described by Mrs. Smith:

> She has made some arrangement with Mick Tyrrell, which the Colonel seems to approve of, and which I hope may be agreed on, as the poor old woman would have her cabin and garden for life, and a little turf, and be rid of her ill-tilled field which keeps her in poverty and pays us no rent, and thus another patch would be got rid of, which fits in very well to little Tyrrell's farm. 5

Michael Tyrrell was no close relative so there was no question of her

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1. 14.6.1842.
2. 29.3.1847.
3. 19.8.1845.
4. 3.2.1840.
5. 7.9.1840. Such a gradual approach was by no means uncommon in the 1840s; see, for example, the convincing evidence of Dennis Kelly to Devon (vol. II, p. 349, witness 431, qu. 54): "I am getting the tenants wherever I can to buy adjoining land when it is vacant, but if you refer to consolidation by the ejectment of whole villages in order to make large farms there is nothing of the sort."

expecting to be looked after. In fact, she had a variety of small sources of income which in themselves are another commentry on life at Baltiboys.

She had work throughout 1841 as a dressmaker,[1] both for weddings and for Mrs. Smith, who although she relied on the more genteel services of Miss Merrey in Blessington, had gowns and servant clothes made. At the same time she took in foundling children, both from Baltiboys and Mrs. Gore, the wife of Lord Downshire's agent. In August 1841 Mrs. Smith was evidently perfectly satisfied: "she has quite altered the look of my poor little foundling in this short time, the child has a happy bright air quite unlike her former stupidity, and is clean and fat; she will get a few thumps I daresay for that is cabin fashion, but she will be kept clean and be well fed and be brought up in habits of active industry."[2]

By the winter however there was an ominous mention of the Smiths having to intervene to help her as she was having difficulties with her landlord, evidently John Hornidge: "I have had a great deal of plague these few days with old Mrs. Tyrrell and her landlord who is not behaving well to her, but with the help of Tom Darker we have got all settled."[3] Exactly what effect this had is not stated, but later

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1. e.g. 25.4.1841.
2. 31.8.1841.
3. 30.10.1841.

in the same winter, in February 1842, she was evidently not managing to cope, despite having these two sources of income to fall back on:

> I have had to take my little orphen from Mrs. Tyrrell - she was too poor to do it justice. She would hear nothing against the character of a very ill-behaved young woman whom she had brought up and who quite imposed on her a second time - for some years ago this creature robbed her and left her. Miss Henry[1] took her orphan away ... which left Mrs. Tyrell's menage still more bare. All the money she had earned during the summer by her uphólstery work seems to have been squandered by herself and this Mary and an object of a lame lover that the girl first disgraced herself with and then got to marry her. Miss Cooper [the governess] found matters very bad when she went there - the lovers off with all they could lay their hands on - the only food in the house potatoes, the old woman in bed dying of starvation, so the child was brought away and given to Peggy where she had indeed fallen on her feet and we send broth and bread to Mrs. Tyrrell till she is stronger and then she must manage for herself having brought herself to this miserable condition by her own folly. The child has made a good exchange, for she is the pet of the house at Peggy's who, having two lodgers, Paddy and John Grace, has always plenty of food and fire. 2

Peggy was the Peggy Dodson, who is the second example to be looked at later, of an old body with no income from land but who managed to cope. With her 'menage' thus emptied, Mrs. Tyrrell apparently fell back on her skills as a seamstress, for when next year in May 1843 the Smiths made their preparations to arrange to let Baltiboys before they set off for France, Mrs. Tyrrell was the obvious person to come "to patch and wash and make up and repair" ... but her skills were greatly in demand, she had "engagements for all the summer", and

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1. A sister to the Hugh Henry of whose life Mrs. Smith so much disapproved (see Part I, ch. 3, p. 67); Miss Henry, however, thought like Mrs. Smith on most matters and they appear regularly to have discussed topics like the relief of poverty and the progress of their respective schools.

2. 6.2.1842.

evidently was making enough to live on.[1] This Mrs. Smith approved of, but when two years later she discovered that the "outer most miserable room" of Mrs. Tyrrell's house was let to James Craig the labourer and his family for sixpence a week, she gave her a scolding, emphasising that she herself was only there "on sufferance" but without apparently ordering her to stop.[2]

Peggy Dodson and her husband Paddy were fortunate in that they never had to fend for themselves like Mrs. Tyrrell, with obligations to another landlord, and no regular help from the Smiths. Their privileged position and the three sources of income they had in January 1847 was clearly described in the Catalogue Raisonée:

> Walk the 1st: To old Paddy and Peggy Dodson, pensioners in a good cabin near our gate which we built for them; two rooms well furnished; a good garden; their two children off their hands; Anthony a carpenter, Mary housemaid at Russboro';[3] pension eight pounds a year. Peggy keeps the Repository and gets a penny out of every shilling's worth she sells; also keeps the cheap provision store, gets a penny for every stone weight she sells. An orphan girl is boarded with her for whose keep she gets four pounds a year; I provide clothing. We give this family soup one day, milk the next, dripping every Sunday. [4]

She had been a family retainer since the days of Colonel Smith's

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1. 14/20.5.1843.

2. 10.10.1845: supra. p. 204.

3. A reminder that servant exchanges must have been one of the most regular topics of conversations during those "lengthy Victorian visits" (R.F. Foster p. xviii) that seem to have characterised the Blessington part of Co. Wicklow as much as any other (see Part I, ch. 4, pp. 97-109); Russborough was the Milltown's residence.

4. 14.1.1847: the measures for containing hardship that winter on Baltiboys are discussed in PartIV, ch. 2.

father and ended up as Cook, so she was entitled to favoured treatment. However to put this into perspective, one needs to remember that her pension from the Smiths was more than the money wage of Mrs. Tyrell's lodger's wage. The house which was built for them in 1840 cost £6 (the same, Mrs. Smith noted, as dressing herself in a new tabbinet gown[1]) and in addition "Hal promised her 15/- extra to give her the comfort of a chimney in the middle thus heating both rooms instead of at the end as is the economical usage". As well as regular income before the famine from orphens and lodgers[2], and after from what she made on the sale of provisions, Peggy also fattened a pig and kept poultry and turkeys for Mrs. Smith.[3] This not only represented a real increase to their income; it also made them a worthwhile target for thieves ... the turkeys were stolen in November 1841 and when times were getting really hard in September 1846 she was "robbed of all her best clothes - her new cloke, two good gowns, blankets, sheets and some money, a few shillings in a little bag the produce of my repository.[4] These possessions alone set her apart from the earlier wretched descriptions of struggling families, and emphasise the importance of regular money payments from any source, whether from relatives who had prospered in America or as a pension from the landlord. In fact Peggy was taken back as cook for a time

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1. 1.10.1841.
2. e.g. 6.2.1842: Paddy White the gardener and Johnny Grace the herd lodged there.
3. November 1841 and November 1842.
4. 28.9.1846.

in 1843, and although once criticised for being next to useless after smoking a "pipe extraordinary", she kept the post and this was another addition to her funds.

Both these two then, Mrs. Tyrrell who had to use her skills to survive, and Peggy Dodson, who was in the enviable position of both being a respected pensioner and being able to earn over and above that, managed to survive these tremendously difficult years in the 1840s. It was a time when any earning capcity was exploited to the full; this was set them apart from the small tenants or labourers who got into such difficulties, and enabled them to survive the buffettings of these years.

It is perfectly clear, then, that the lives of quiet desperation that were undoubtedly the lot of the Irish cottier and labouring class throughout the 1840s were all that could be expected by the far from negligible numbers falling into this group on Baltiboys. Colonel and Mrs. Smith undoubtedly felt that their concern for these unfortunates and the many practical measures adopted to better their condition all contributed to the problem being under control. However, that a well-managed estate like Baltiboys at this time needed to spend so much time and money on alleviating the endemic distress of its labourers in times of comparatively favourable economic conditions is a far from reassuring comment on even such a well-organised Leinster estate being able to ride the storms ahead.

Chapter Five

Test Cases: Marriage Patterns and Emigration

The Journals of Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys contain enough descriptions of the conditions of tenants, tradesmen and labourers to make it certain that this was no estate where the landlord was ignorant of how the others lived. Indeed, from the variety of detail and the regularity with which problem families are described as much as from the nature of the solutions Mrs. Smith recommended, it would be fair to see Baltiboys throughout the 1840s as a closely-knit society being cajoled into change, or sheltered from misfortune, by the attentions of a paternalistic landlord. Much of this attention was no different from that which any concerned, improving proprietor adopted at this time; some of it was so detailed that it implies a microscopic concern with the lengths to which landlordly duties needed to be taken.

Close and detailed though these attentions might have been, it has been seen that they did not guarantee that everything happened in accordance with the Smiths' wishes or even to their satisfaction. They clearly did not possess, or choose to possess, that all-mighty power over their tenantry which enabled their policies for the estate to be instantly and effectively obeyed. The realities of actual power, then, were both far from the common caricature of William Carleton[1] and far from what the Smiths themselves were from time to

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1. He made his attitude clear in his introduction to the 1872 edition of the Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry (p.13): "... the lower Irish, until a comparatively recent period, were treated with apathy and gross neglect by the only class to whom they could or ought to look up for sympathy or probation."

time pleased with. There was an obvious direction from above and on occasion a resistance from below; there were issues on which co-operation took place from the start and others where a surly opposition could be detected. Two matters of great concern to the Smiths help to determine what the limits on both sides to this question were.

The first of these was Mrs. Smith's conviction that nothing but trouble resulted from the sort of thoughtless and unprovided for marriages so frequently, she thought, undertaken almost casually by by those least fitted. There were certain basic "prudent rules" which she elaborated on when considering the wretched state of the feckless labourer James Craig in 1845.[1] It was preposterous for a man to consider marriage on a very low wage; in his case he was earning four pence a week from Jack Byrne. This low money wage itself was unsatisfactory, not only because it was less than the sixpence a day plus diet which the Rev. Arthur Germaine, the local priest, calculated in his written evidence to the 1835 Commission on the Condition of the Poor in Ireland was normal in his parish[2], but also because as a system it ensured that the breadwinner ate only at the expence of the rest of the family. If a farmer needed labourers and they are married, he ought to be able to supply accomodation. Above all, "a girl should marry no man until they have between them saved enough money to buy their furniture." These were the fundamental rules which should govern marriages and it was of course up to

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1. 28.10.1845; supra. p.206-7.

2. Supra. Part II, ch. 4, p.207, footnote 1.

the landlord to ensure that they were obeyed. Many Irish landlords had been very lax and this was one of their characteristics which most surprised her, she wrote in January 1840 at the start of her Journals, when she arrived in Ireland ten years earlier:

> There was nothing struck me so remarkably when I first came here as the tenants marrying their children - setting them up in different trades etc., without ever saying one word about it to their landlord. It went through their whole conduct - we were to them only the receiver of a much begrudged rent. [1]

She saw it as part of her task to try and persuade them to marry later and only when there was reasonable security.

During the early 1840s it has already been noted that Mrs. Smith waxed indignant about the Mary that used to lodge with Mrs. Tyrrell disgracing herself with "an object of a lame lover" and then, although tocherless, getting married,[2] and she was not pleased when Judy Ryan, for whom as her daughter's old nurse she always retained an interest, got married again to John Doyle, "an ill-tempered, queer-looking skel-

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1. 19.1.1840. It is only fair to add that in the more secure pre-famine days, which Mrs. Smith characterised as those of "pigs and potatoes", undoubtedly many more "spontaneous" and "youthful" marriages occurred (K.H. Connell, Past and Present, 12, 1957, p. 76, Peasant Marriage in Ireland after the Great Famine); for an anthropologist's view of the traditional forms taken by marriages in Ireland see Conrad Arensberg, The Irish Countryman (1957), p. 72-7.

2. Part II, ch. 4, p.228.

eton".[1] In Judy's case she thought "it is strange to me that she would not rather remain independent." In fact Judy Ryan's predicament by the time of her second marriage was very different from that of unthinking young labourering lads who drifted into marriage and it is clear that Mrs. Smith did not appreciate the distinction.

Judy's case is written about a lot in August 1841 for matters had obviously come to a head. Mrs. Smith was highly indignant when she called and found that all that the children had to eat was one plate between them of the old, small potatoes of the sort that their herdsman had recently objected to giving to the pigs. This was unforgiveable when she had started off her married life so favourably:

> Judy went from me fully clothed, clothes for her children, seven pounds in money, two pigs, two turkeys, crockery and hardware quite beyond any supply ever hoped for in her situation and all which she really deserved from her care of little Annie and her general good conduct while with us.

Her husband Christy died some time before 1840 and she inherited the house and 25 acres, as attested by Griffith. However, as Mrs. Smith made clear in an inventory, he also left her "a horse, a dray, a cow, and a pig and no debt, her spare room was let constantly to some of the tradesmen employed in the building of this house ... besides this, an Aunt died and left her a great deal of furniture and clothing and it is said money." If this is accurate it indicates a comfortable situation for any widow but by 12th August 1841, this widow's situation was desperate:

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1. 16.6.1842: most uncharacteristically, Mrs. Smith got confused about his christian name - on 11th June 1842 he was John, ten days later Jem and it was only when subsequently mentioning his name around the time of the Catalogue Raisonné (13.1.1847) that she got it correct with Michael (the Blackditches Parochial Records - see footnote no. 2, p. 176.

> Of all this there remains nothing, even her crops are sold off the ground, her grazing paid for in advance, there is nothing outside nor inside but poverty, a bare house, starved ragged children, unstocked land. What has become of it all is more than any one can tell, really eat and drunk I believe by herself, her great big sister,[1] her two lazy brothers, her old wicked mother and a whole crew of beggar nephews and nieces, her debts are many too.

What Mrs. Smith is listing but not appreciating is an example of how there was no solution to the problems presented by longlived elderly or large unemployed numbers of one's family. It was certainly up to the landlord to try and control the situation, but once it had happened there was little alternative for the unrapacious landlord but to grin and bear it and try not to let any similar situations happen again. Indeed the possibility of the workhouse hardly existed, for the Annual reports of the Poor Law Commissioners make it clear that although the building in Naas was contracted for in July 1839, the first inmates were to be admitted in June 1841, so the system could not be seen by then as a regular alternative.[2]

Under the circumstances there was only one course of action open to them:

> The Colonel and Mr. Robinson will probably eject her very properly for non payment of rent, her dishonest management proving her quite incapable of holding land, but I feel very sorry for Christy Ryan's children, impoverished to actual destitution to keep for a few years that detestable clan of Quinns in idle plenty.

In fact she was not ejected in 1841 and of course the next year saw

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1. Her fondness for drink had been noted by Mrs. Smith earlier (see footnote no. 2, Part II, ch. 2, p. 135).

2. See Part II, ch. 4, pp. 215-6 and 221.

her in deeper trouble. A complicated series of negotiations evidently were carried on and Mrs. Smith was confident in June that after "a little coquetting" Judy was to give up her land for "Her present struggle is one of unmitigated misery; had she not been let to feel it so we could never have done anything with her. Self - very blind self - too, is the one feeling with the poor."[1] She still managed to drive a hard bargain, which was what lay behind all her landlord's wife wrote after the visit of a Mr. Fraser, "the capability man"; he had been most impressed by the spirit of improvement he saw at Baltiboys and it was only Judy evidently who qualified Mrs. Smith's enthusiasm.

> My whole heart is in Baltiboys - our own dear happy family - the pretty place - the people - the last the least improvable. Still progress is making even amongst them, although Judy Ryan is not among the improving as her melancholy exhibition this afternoon too plainly proved. Such want of principle in a mind not naturally depraved is a curious fact in economical philosophy. 2

The bargaining was completed soon after and Judy gave up her land on June 10th 1842, in return for £10 which the Colonel gave her "to go off peaceably" and £5 for the one child she was to take with her; one of the others, Jane, was to be "added to my family" she wrote, while Lachlan[3] was to be apprenticed to Mr. Neale the tailor in Blessington who was to be paid three instalments of three pounds.

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1. 10/11.6.1842.
2. 6.6.1842.
3. Mrs. Smith's spelling is the Highland way; common Irish spelling is Lochlan.

With fifteen pounds in hand and her children under the landlord's wing, Judy has managed to ensure that she landed on her feet. On the land she had no future: there is nothing to disagree with in Mrs. Smith's final assessment.

> What a mother the poor things have; just at this moment they and she are starving - no money - no stores - nor crops sown, not even potatoes, the land let for grazing until November paid for in advance, gone and nothing for rent left. Even the May rent which James Ryan[1] put into her hand as she was coming off to pay it, she subtracted £1 from; that however she is ashamed of and will pay. 2

However as a widow with capital amounting to something like a labourer's annual income and with her children already looked after, she was in with a chance of making a fresh start. Within the week she was married to Michael Doyle whose land could now be stocked; her dowry purchased two cows as well as blankets, sheets and clothing.

This account of how the Smiths managed to get Judy Ryan from her land whilst making sure that she and her children could cope, therefore, shows that in this case Mrs. Smith had misjudged in using the same standards for Judy as for the others of whose marriages she disapproved. A final sourer note was introduced into the relationship when some six months later Judy produced a child; for Mrs. Smith she was now only "an old widow without excuse of any sort for her irregularities."[3]

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1. Her brother-in-law by her first marriage, see 10.6.1842.
2. 10.6.1842.
3. 4.2.1843.

The close relationship between Judy and her mistress made this a special case, but it does show how the landlord's wife felt herself obliged to try and regulate the lives of her dependents even to the extent of disapproving of marriage. With many others before 1845 she was on much surer grounds.

In February 1841 she describes how Anne Fitzpatrick ("whom I used to admire as much for her cleanliness and industry as for her beauty") had allowed "a shabby looking labouring lad without house or home to dangle after her" and eventually run off with him, returning after a few days to announce that he would not now have her. The next stage in what Mrs. Smith evidently regarded as a well-worn device for persuading initially disapproving parents to accept an unprepossessing son-in-law, was, now that Anne had compromised herself, for her lover to agree to marry her on condition that her mother supplied a dowry, in this case the sum of twenty pounds: "this is the common way of proceeding where the young people know the old people won't approve of the match they are making."[1] Colonel Smith himself was so outraged by one case in November 1842 (coincidentally around the time that Judy Ryan was producing her baby) involving a wretched girl, deaf and dumb, who had a baby she indicated was the responsibility of one James Butler: "Hal was indignant at the shocking story, he has tried all means to make [those responsible] pay for their unchristian

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1. 8.2.1841: for a discussion about dowries (often, even for labourers, more than the year and a half's wages represented by this £20) see K.H. Connell, Peasant Marriage in Ireland: its structure and development since the Famine, Economic History Review, ser.2, xiv (1962) p. 504-5.

action but alas! the law can't help him."[1]

When the Smiths returned from France in 1845 they found that the two children of Peggy Dodson, whom they had admired earlier as an example of how a widow could use all her skills to make a living, had both made unwise unions. Anthony had entered "a foolish marriage to a young girl without either money or sense"[2] but it was his sister Mary who provides the best illustration of the unthinking and unprepared marriage which she as the mother's landlord and the girl's employer had a duty to prevent:

> I have heard of a marriage this morning which accounts for the untidyness of the house and all the other failings in Mary's department under which we have been suffering. The happy bridegroom is Barny Quin, a very respectable and good-looking young man in every way worthy of a good industrious girl like Mary and were they content to wait a few years it would be a desirable connexion for both. As it is they have saved nothing, they are both in good places which on their marriage they will lose and with the prosepct of scarcity before them from going together trusting in the Lord! 3

Under more normal circumstances, perhaps, there would have been scope within the Baltiboys organisation for both Mary and her husband to be employed, but even by the early winter of the first year of the famine, the Smiths were conscious that their ability to employ the destitute was one of their most important weapons and not to be wasted. Even

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1. 16.11.1842.

2. 28.7.1845.

3. 18.11.1845. It is worth noting M. Drake's finding from the 1836 Poor Inquiry (PP 1836 XXXIV p. 669-70) that the usual age of a labourer's marriage in Co. Wicklow was between 23 and 28: Marriage and Population Growth in Ireland, 1750-1845 in Economic History Review, ser. 2, XIV (1963) p. 303.

so, it seems that Mary must have presumed on her favoured status for she had planned how they were both to be supported. After noting that they had put their trust in the Lord, Mrs. Smith went on to observe: "They need not trust in the Lady, for I can't help them neither do I feel inclined, indeed they have settled matters so nicely themselves there is no need. Mary is to take her husband to her mother's, I am to give her washing, the Colonel is to employ Barny, at our work first, by and bye in the stables, and they are all to be as happy as possible!"

The famine years were obviously years when there were pressing reasons for both tenants and labourers to comply with what they may have regarded earlier as Mrs. Smith's interference with their right to marry when they chose. Even so, the butler George Garland managed to get secretly married to Marianne Dizest from Blessington and it was only after a year with a baby on the way that the Smiths learned of it: "When the Colonel [in September 1846] faced him with his folly, he confessed. She is to go into service again, and they are not to live together for some years till they have saved a little money - perhaps."[1] This is a dramatic indication of how the master of a household as well as the landlord of an estate could rule the lives of those under him. For those in a much humbler situation than the butler, such as the labouring Jemmy Craig, there was a harsher judgement: "The idea of such a pair of incapables marrying without a home,

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1. 12.9.1846.

without employment; it really is a moral sin, though they none of them comprehend its enormity."[1]

This decade however was to end with what Mrs. Smith thought, the reluctance of the groom notwithstanding, to be a well-set up marriage.

> Our matrimonial affairs have all gone on swimmingly. The Bride has bought with her savings bed-clothes and linen - a little crockery, and she has an excellent wardrobe. Besides this she has her month's wages in her pocket and a present of a pound note from me. Janey and Annie are dressing her up very smartly for the ceremony. She has ordered her cake, a barn brack, and is going to Naas to buy tea, sugar and a cap. Pat [Hyland][2] is brought rather unwillingly up to the whipping post; he had thought to be allowed to amuse himself tenderly till he was tired of it and rather winces at being pounced on by "the mistress" and made to marry the girl whom he had compromised - his relations too who have been living upon him are all opposed to the loss of his ready shilling and he being a gutta percha sort of man vacillates between pretty little Catherine and the trammels of matrimony - he however is in for it, so he does the thing handsome, he has near a month's wages to get. One pound I gave him as a wedding present, plenty of clothes, two jugs, a mug and a kettle, and he goes to Naas tomorrow to buy the ring of real gold to the delight of the Bride. His father, a piper by trade, has shown himself much more reasonable than the rest of the respectable family and is to play at the wedding for nothing. Also as he lives on the bog he has whispered the probability of presenting some turf - so September ends happily to one couple at any rate. 3

Such eminently justifiable unions had Mrs. Smith's complete approval; it was the ill-considered, doomed ones that she used all her landlord's authority to discourage.

The second area of great concern to the Smiths which helps to delineate the boundary between landlord initiative and tenant obstruc-

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1. 28.10.1845.
2. See Part II, ch. 4, p. 219-20: Pat ought by 1850 to have been able to offer his bride all the security associated with his job in the R.I.C.
3. 31.9.1850.

tion, or landlord determination not to tolerate a certain situation and tenant attempts to resist all change, was emigration. Throughout the early nineteenth century this had been mooted by successive Commissions as one vital aspect of any attempt at introducing a panacea for the ills of Ireland[1] and by the 1840s every landlord must have been aware that there were many different ways of bringing about the wholly desirable aim of encouraging or cajoling significant sections of that proportion of their tenants who could not cope with conditions to try their luck across the seas.[2] What is particularly interesting about the record of emigration from Baltiboys, in the latter 1840s especially[3], is the light it throws on landlord motivation and the close connection between economic expectations at home and the desire to emigrate.

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1. See Oliver MacDonagh, Irish Emigration to the United States of America and the British Colonies during the Famine in Edwards and Williams, the Great Famine, pp. 319-368. One of the most authoritative pleas came from the Report of the Committee on Emigration, 1826-7. For the 1845 Commissioners "a well organised system of emigration may be of very great service, as one amongst the measures which the situation of the occupiers of land in Ireland at present calls for"; few commentators during or after the famine were to be as lukewarm (Devon Vol. I p. 28).

2. See MacDonagh on landlord-assisted emigration, pp. 332-340.

3. It needs to be remembered that emigration from the Eastern Counties during the famine was a small percentage of the 1841 population (less than 7.5% in Co. Wicklow's case) and that in these counties less than one fifth of their population were paupers for at least a year between 1846 and 1850. (S.H. Cousens, The Regional Pattern of Emigration during the Great Irish Famine, Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 1960, p. 121-3.

It seems likely that as far as Baltiboys was concerned the attractions of emigration became evident quite early in 1847.[1] It was in March that George Kearns' problems for the first time seemed likely to be solved by emigration and it was for this reason that he was sent up to the Agent John Robinson in Dublin; the Journal entry suggests that he was the first head of a family for whom this was the only solution.

> The poor man has gone up to Dublin to make his enquiries carrying up a letter to John Robinson who will direct him and gather for our benefit all the information possible upon the subject as probably others will follow this wise example. 2

In fact there was one other group thinking of America at this time, the sons of James Cullen, so it seemed that there was here the germ of the suggestion that assisted emigration might be the answer for certain sections who were finding it difficult to manage.

There had in fact been earlier examples of individuals helped to try and make a new life elsewhere. The Smiths had apparently helped "the little Post girl"[3] on her way to Australia in 1840 and a "little Henry Sharpe" was settled in London.[4] It has already been noted

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1. As elsewhere in Ireland, this was clearly a conseuqence of the second, universal blight in 1846 (MacDonagh, p. 319).

2. 7.3.1847.

3. 25.1.1840: this is especially intriguing because costs (a steerage passage to Australia cost £20 or over, three times as much as one to North America) meant pre-Famine emigration to the southern colonies was tiny. See Woodham-Smith, p. 206.

4. 24.10.1840.

that the Smiths' first reaction, when the bibulous gardener Paddy White was late in returning from Dublin, was that an explanation might lie in the fact that he had "absconded altogether with cart, mare and goods for America."[1]

The idea of moving to better oneself, then, was quite close to the surface and in the spring of 1847 the Smiths helped two of the young men on the estate to find employment in Scotland. Mat Ryan, eldest son of Pat who had earned praise for his co-operation in the early draining, was sent to Riccarton estate[2] outside Edinburgh, and one of Tom Darker's nephews, William, to a large farm in East Lothian. They were both well settled in by April 1847 and the following month Mrs. Smith wrote of her plans:

> There has been another letter from William Darker - an excellent one; he is very happy, quite reconciled to his lonely room, the people where he lodges are so kind to him, and to his situation where he is evidently learning a great deal. He is astonished at the size of the fields - the cleanly husbandry, weeding so carefully persevered in; the tidyness, the regularity, the extent of the business; he describes all in a sensible manner like a young man who will profit by all he sees. Mat Ryan in his more humble way may make equal use of his opportunities. I do indeed hope that these two young men have been so judiciously selected that they may return to be the means of greatly advancing their generation. If they could but rouse their countrymen out of their slovenly habits, cure their indolence in a degree even. While this change is depending we are like to have a hard struggle for existence. 3

The plan therefore was that these two hand-picked promising young men,

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1. See Part II, ch. 4, p. 212.

2. This was the estate of Sir James Gibson Craig, Mrs. Smith's brother-in-law; see footnotes, Part II, ch. 1, p.112, footnote 4.

3. 17.5.1847.

both products of her estate school[1] whose qualities she well knew, would be sent to the openings on estates of people she knew in Scotland in the hope that they would there learn about the techniques which had become accepted there after the agricultural changes of the previous century. This knowledge would be one of the keys to the advancement of Baltiboys itself.

This plan might have worked well with William Darker but within two years it had come adrift with Mat Ryan, as Mrs. Smith indignantly wrote in April 1848:

> Mat Ryan has behaved so ridiculously he has lost his place. There is no helping these half cracky people, I had really thought him a sensible lad. He wrote to Baxter to say he could not return unless his wages were raised; he an apprentice, nineteen, served <u>one</u> year, learning such a trade without any premium paid. An Irishman here is glad of five shillings a week without one extra, six shillings is good wages, seven shillings great wages, a wife and family are supported on these fees, rent paid out of them. This impudent boy had six shillings, lodging, bed, fuel, milk and vegetables! 2

Here was grist to the mill of that favourite argument she used about the need of Irish people in general to improve their characters and standards before they would be reliable vessels for the improvements which were to revolutionise their lives.

In the meantime, however, the Smiths recognised that emigration was a solution and it was of course in 1847 that over Ireland in general dawned the realisation that in emigration lay one answer to the

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1. See Part III, ch.2.

2. 9.4.1848.

horrors of the previous two years which seemed likely to engulf yet more hitherto secure members of the non-labouring classes.[1] What is particularly interesting about the account of emigration from Baltiboys in Mrs. Smith's Journals is that the numbers she writes about are comparatively small (she knew the overall picture for in 1850 she despaired: "The numbers gone are quite countless, and the countless numbers going are beyond all calculation, yet the wretchedness left is dreadful.")[2] and that almost every different social and economic and religious grouping on the estate was represented. These ranged from the 100 acre farmer Rutherford and his family through the feckless 30 acre farmer Kearns (who was out of the ordinary in having a trade as sawyer) to, as already examined,[3] the very destitute family of labouring Doyles, and the two children of Judy Ryan. There are also scanty references to emigration by a brother of the Widow Quin, who sent £10 at Christmas 1848 and suggested that, like the Doyles, his nephew should follow in his footsteps; the brother of John Byrne the Blessington blacksmith who came from the estate planned to set off in 1848;[4] and in 1850 Nancy Fox's two sons were sending money back from

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1. Father Mathew had believed that the small farmer had formed the backbone of the mass exodus of 1847 (MacDonagh, p. 320-2).

2. 2.10.1850.

3. See Part II, ch. 4, p. 215-6.

4. 2.7.1848. Few of those in regular employment at Baltiboys would have found it utterly impossible to raise, especially with the Smiths' help, the sum needed to emigrate; husband, wife and four young children could sail to Quebec for £6 in 1842 - but in 1847 the single adult fare to New York had risen to £7 (Woodham-Smith pp. 212 amd 215.)

Cincinnati.

In some respects George Kearns was the most typical emigrant. It has been shown earlier how Mrs. Smith saw him as one of the least capable of the middle-sized farming tenants totally unable to keep up with his rent payments;[1] through 1845 and 1846 there are signs that the Smiths were putting pressure on him and his wife to emigrate; when she came for the second time in May 1846 "to ask charity", it was spelt out to her ... "I told her the conditions on which she would be relieved but she did not seem to like them."[2] However, the Catalogue emphasised their wretchedness and hopelessness with "two years' rent owing now, and the ground destroyed."[3] In March and April, therefore, plans were drawn up to assist him and his family to emigrate. On 7th March he gave up possession of house and land to Colonel Smith who then restored the house to him until everything had been settled. The plan was that he was to be helped with at least £20, and as he was the first to be systematically helped in this way, he was sent to obtain information on all the different schemes from John Robinson. By 6th April everything was well on the way to being settled:

> Today we have Cairns with us; he decides on sailing on Saturday from Dublin, the Colonel pays his passage. The poor man is unable to sell his furniture among the neighbours, little as he has of it, nobody has a penny to spare from food. The Colonel buys it, and some old iron, and the manure heap; this will make a clothing and provision fund for him and he is to have five

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1. See Part II, ch. 2, pp. 135 and 162.
2. 19.5.1846.
3. 17.1.1847.

pounds as a present that he may have something in hand on landing.

Her final series of comments are equally revealing about the means adopted to encourage this grossly inefficient, thirty-acre farmer to emigrate:

> Cairns is off today, begging to the last. Cousin Charles goes with them - unable to part from the children, particularly from one boy by some strange accident the perfect image of himself. George half-asked me to lend money for the cousin's passage, but I declined, refused also to ask the Colonel or Mr. Robinson; so a friend has come forward for the purpose, namely George Cairns himself: seven pounds he produced from the secret drawer in his chest, and I have no doubt there is another seven pounds or more remaining, for he has paid no rent these two years, and in September he had forty pounds worth of hay, in January thirty six barrels of oats and as six with the cow would abundantly keep the family, most likely he won't land in America with only the Colonel's five pounds. Such a set, 'tis worth all they have cost to be rid of them . 1

As a tradesman, it obviously made sense for him to cross to America to find work rather than struggle on in these unpromising, poverty-ridden circumstances at Baltiboys, but it was not until 1847 that the move was made, and it was the combination of his worsening condition and landlord prodding rather than his own initiative that brought it about. The extent of the Smiths' financial help, taking into account that fact that although Kearns' stock and crops and been

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1. 8.4.1847. As seems to have been general, famine emigration involved not individuals but complete families so that "a whole section of society was swept away"; as with so many generalisations, they do not apply to Baltiboys or Blessington, but as a trend the basic unit would seem to have been the family. (MacDonagh, p. 328).

distrained in 1840 there was no such actkn in 1847, was considerable. Kearns indeed had to be bribed off the land and at every stage is portrayed as being able to dig his heels in to obstruct his landlord's plans for him.

When George Kearns went to the Agent to acquire information about America, the reason was the the Smiths expected that "probably others will follow this wise example." She mentions the married sons of the one-acre tenant, James Cullen, talking about emigration and it was at this time that she used all her powers of persuasion to get the wretched labouring Doyle family to follow the successful example of young Jim who had been set up by an uncle by then well established.[1] However there had been earlier talk of emigration by William Rutherford's sons the previous year; indeed the saga of the whole family's eventual emigration is one which illustrates many of the basic essentials of the relationship between landlord and tenant on this estate.

The Elverstown farm occupied by Rutherford was 115 statute acres and was valued at £80 per annum by Griffith. The key to this family's eventual emigration was their chronic inability to avoid falling into arrears. As far as the Smiths were concerned it was "bad management" which had brought this about and not excessive rents; this was confirmed for them at the end of 1847[2] when a neighbour Mr. West, searching for a suitable residence for the clergyman of his parish, reckoned

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1. See Part II, ch. 4, p. 215-6.

2. 28.12.1847.

that Elverstown was worth 45 shillings an acre where Rutherford was only paying 25 shillings.[1] Mrs. Smith had an explanation for this inefficiency:

> It would seem as if they were not yet capable of managing a hundred acres - not sufficiently skilful; they seem to be richer on thirty; fifteen to thirty they manage to be very comfortable on, but when they have to employ labour for which they pay, workmen beyond their own families, they don't get on - too penny-wise for large dealings.

Bad use of his labourers might have been a contributory factor, but earlier in 1847 Mrs. Smith made it clear that he was not able to manage his own family efficiently:

> His two sons William and Joe are very anxious to go to America; they see they are but losing time working for their father, but they find him as unmanageable as ever, unwilling to part with them, no money to give them, not even paying them wages now and with no prospects before them at his death but of working as day labourers. 2

From the beginning, then, emigration was seen as the answer for the sons, but it took over five years before William Rutherford himself emigrated from his problems.

At the start of the 1840s he had been the largest defaulter on the estate and John Robinson had had to distrain in lieu of rent in 1840.[3] This pattern was to continue through the rest of the 1840s and in 1846 Mrs. Smith suggested an explanation:

> there's Mr. Rutherfurd with that fine farm and these high prices owing a year and a half's rent. We sent to him for

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1. This Mr. West may be assumed to have known Baltiboys tolerably well; he had leased it for one of the two years the Smiths were in France.
2. 21.3.1847.
3. 30.11 1840 : see p. 164-5.

> money and got £20, and we desired to have £30 more in a week or two. By and bye I shall apply again for this sort of thing won't do with sons flying about in jaunting cars, riding races and Keeping hunters. There never was a worse manager than that poor man, of farms and family, working himself to death ... 1

In November there was £160 owing on the estate and Rutherford alone owed more than a year; in March 1847 he owed £120 and paid £35; by July 1848 there was "owing on the property" about £250 of which he now owed half. At this stage of the Famine there was no question of using anything other than persuasion to extract the rent, but by October/November 1849 matters came to a head with the discovery that it was not just mismanagement that was responsible for Rutherford's failure to keep up with his rent, he had been using what should have been rent money to equip his family for America:

> He will have eighteen pounds more than a year's rent by the first of November, he acknowledges to having kept a daughter and her six children for eight months and to have equipped a son with goods and money for America. He had just started with his daughter, whose husband is still flourishing, so that the whole family is bit with the wish to follow and the best thing that would profit all parties would profit all parties would be that they should go. But not as a thief in the night.

To add to the Smiths' displeasure, not only was he breaking the likely conditions of his lease and holding onto rent to prepare for clan-

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1. 26.12.1846. Although the "protestant work-ethic" hardly seems to have worked with this family, all the internal evidence in the Journals suggests they belonged to the established church. It is interesting, therefore, to note that Lord Downshire's agent should have written as early as 1833 commenting on protestant readiness to consider emigration: "It is very strange that Protestant Tenants sh$^{d.}$ be so fond of Transporting themselves; some do it through fear and others I think from want of industrious habits in their native country; when fixed in a strange land he must work." (John Murray 19.8.1833, D.P. 671/C230).

destine emigration, but the very sons who were to lead the otherwise welcome departure of this family had been themselves involved in several local sharp practices:

> Now Tom Darker has positive information from an eye-witness that old Rutherfurd's cart was employed in the nefarious corn-dealing of the sons William, and one of the rates collectors told him that he had seen the Colonel's name as a defaulter in young Rutherfurd's books, although he had undertaken to pay the Elverstown rates to himself as collecter. Luckily Mr. Robinson made him give a receipt for the sum and we have the receipt which will bear us harmless.

Whether or not this additional information helped to act as a lever, John Rutherford came within the week to say that although payment was "out of the question" there was a solution:

> his stock and crop were there and a proportion of their values should be the Colonel's after settlement about the lease which he will with pleasure give up to him. He resolves to go to America and the sooner the better. The father would stay but the son seeing in that case nothing before the old people but the poor house means to take them with him. 1

Brother William was to depart first (with, she noted rather tartly, "in my idea a good sum of our money") and the plan was for the rest to follow in February 1850.

At first everything went according to plan. John Robinson came down on 9th November to supervise and Mrs. Smith wrote confidently about the operation next day:

> Our affairs with those swindling Rutherfurds came off well. They assited the seizure, well pleased to prefer their land-

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1. 28.10.1849. The Rutherfords, constant defaulters, after the second complete failure of the potato crop in 1848 and its impact on everyone including the 100 acre farmers, were in even less of a position to pay their rents.

> lord to the poor house guardians and after our claim is satisfied, he will make over the remainder of his property to the other bail who is well nigh ruined by the roguery of the sons.

And this ought to leave old Rutherford with little choice except to follow "the missing money to America" and leave them to let Elverstown to "some-one who whill pay the rent to us". After all, Mrs. Smith reassured herself in her Journal, "We shall easily get Elverstown let to a gentleman, it is a pleasant size, land in good order, very pretty and very well situated, and the house needs very little to put it into a very comfortable condition, quite large enough for these times, so that we shall in a year of two, I hope, come well out of our troubles."[1]

She was however too optimistic, for a week later fresh details of the full extent of John Rutherford's double-dealing came to light. He confessed to having given his brother Joe both the rent money owed to the Smiths and the collections he had made for the Union, trusting that he could later make up both these sums from the dowry he expected to accompany his marriage. Once his difficulties became well known, the match was off and "as he touchingly said, 'I done myself both ways.'" However, as always, Mrs. Smith saw a solution which seems to have put a lot in faith in the honesty of one of the families that had consistently proved troublesome through the decade: "Even if we gave him time he could never meet his engagements, his best plan would be to give up Elverstown, pay the Guardians a first instalment and from America where he would be sure to thrive remit the rest." The hope-

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1. 10.11.1849.

lessness of the family situation is underlined by the details she added:

> The Colonel advises going directly up to John Robinson to lay the whole truth before him and he let me write to say he had no objection to stop the sale, and take as much stock as would pay up the rent at valuation. The poor young man names John and Tom Darker as the valuators, we prefer only Tom, only John Darker has some friend from his own neighbourhood. There will be little left, even after the high valuation of some fifty pounds odd must be scraped up before six months of the Guardians. The brother William also owing sixty pounds. He and his wife are not ready yet for America. They are turned out of their farm though still owing rent although much of the crop was recovered by the landlord.

The following day, the 17th November, the "best part of the day was taken up with Rutherfurd's affairs ... they appear enclined to deal fairly at last. Whether frightened into or no we can't say, but so as they can avoid the scandal of a seizure, they will put both stock and crop at a valuation ..., and they have had some bad debts paid them sufficient to clear off the arrears. We need help ourselves to the half year's rent."

Incredibly, it seems that this first part of the operation funded the departure of the older children to America, leaving the old man and the younger children struggling in precisely the same sort of difficulties as before and without the landlord being one penny better off.

In June 1850 William Rutherfurd is described as still "the principal defaulter and did not pay one penny of his rent",[1] and he and he alone of the tenantry owed over a year's rent, in his case eighteen

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1. The Naas minutes in fact state that on 13 July he owed them £147. 18.9 and had so far managed to pay £30.

months, and it was Mrs. Smith's opinion that there was "no chance of a farthing in it, but the certainty of another half-year's loss after ejecting him before a successor can be settled in his good farm."[1]

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1. 1.6.1850. This in fact is confirmed early in the following year by the Naas Poor Law Guardians' Minute Book (now kept in the Library of nearby Newbridge, Co. Kildare). William Rutherfurd is first mentioned as an Elected Guardian on 28 March 1846 and attended all meetings regularly; his son John had been proposed as collector by no less than the Clerk, a James Betteridge on 29 March 1843. At any rate, they were sufficiently regular attenders for it not to be until 23 March 1850 (three weeks after William Rutherford's last attendance) that the Minute contained a summary of the situation. "Mr. William Rutherford having come before the Board and offered to give himself and his son Wm. Rutherford Jnr. as security in all their property for the account of £139.15.1, arrears of Poor Rates due by his son John Rutherford as Collector for Boystown and Ballymore divisions, the amount to be repaid in 2 years by half yearly instalments. The Board have agreed to accept the above proposal and that our Soliciters to be instructed to carry this resolution into effect at once." In fact, the Minute for 27 April makes it clear that Messr.s Mooney were doubtful and it took a statement by the Clerk that the Board were satisfied with Rutherford's security "in the manner aforementioned" to get them to agree.

By September, after a special visit to the Agent to work out their plan of campaign, prompted by his still owing a year, and a half's rent even after half a year was taken in kind (and that was not thought worth the money value), the Smiths' only option was to eject him as soon as possible even "at the loss of the winter's rent, for no one will come in on a farm at that season here though it is the proper time to enter on husbandry." She calculated they had lost over £200 in the most "struggling" of times. The best scheme by far was for him to do what was by now more of a proposition for him, "go to America to join his sons whose roguery seems to be prospering with them." In return the Colonel was prepared to leave him what little property still remained to him, recognizing that there was a risk that there was still a hundred pounds here which might join the rest of the money which had wrongfully crossed the Atlantic.[1]

Next month, however, they were prepared to see the back of this last remaining chance of recouping some of their losses; they put into operation the next stage of legal proceedings appreciating that this hardening of their attitude increased the liklihood of getting rid of this most recalcitrant of tenants but at the risk of losing the last chance of getting something back:

> We have had to send poor Rutherfurd cold comfort ... in the shape of an Attorney's letter. He will stick by his poor ruined farm, keeping himself a beggar and seriously inconveniencing us when he might carry £100 in his pocket to America and end his days in comfort among his prospering grandchildren there. 2

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1. 6.9.1850.

Even so, it was not until May 1851 that he was to sever his connections with Baltiboys, in characteristic fashion, and Mrs. Smith was able to write the final comments on the most truculant of the larger tenant farmers on the estate:

> Mr. Rutherfurd off - bolted before daylight with wife and bairns, having quietly disposed of his small remnant of stock. An old woman is left in the house to keep possession. Tom Darker was going up to Dublin at any rate today to transact various pieces of business, so he will enquire what we can do in this case, which I have long prepared for but had no means of averting. Writs were out against the poor weak old man for the debts owed by his worthless sons to the poor law guardians. Everybody knew that his paying rents or other debts was impossible - he had nothing to pay with. I had hoped, however, that he would have courageously said so and taken advantage of the Colonel's liberal offer to be forgiven all arrears on giving up the land. 1

Whatever Mrs. Smith's views on his moral deficiencies, it was his poor farming of a basically prosperous and large holding and his consequent inability to pay his debts that brought about the emigration of Rutherford and his family. And yet, within this classical situation where especially on Baltiboys few of their contemporary landlords would have doubted that the Smiths had behaved with the utmost restraint, when they did involve the due processes of the law, events were slow-moving and unsatisfactory for them. Rutherford persistently refused to take advantage of their offers to leave the land and managed to spin out the whole proceedings to his own advantage; after over a decade of unsatisfactory management and ever-rising debts, the terms on which he left were his own ... his sons established in America, he

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1. 23.5.1851.

leaving with the proceeds of the sale of the last of his possessions without his debts settled, and secure in his belief that even so he retained ultimate possession in law. All of this when his sons had managed to avoid the consequences of their involvement in the defrauding of the poor law guardians ought to have facilitated Colonel Smith's efforts at a speedy solution; but in the end it was a protracted and unsatisfactory business. America, indeed, was not the only way out of this family's problems; it evidently presented opportunities for individual and family advancement which just did not exist attached to an inefficiently run parental farm in Co. Wicklow.

Emigration from the tenant and labouring classes, therefore, on this estate was on a small scale. The numbers involved were not great although there is clear evidence that emigration had taken place with the Smiths' encouragement before 1840: it was in 1847 that the first systematic search for information about ways and means took place and even as late as 1850 when Judy Ryan's children were being assisted to America Mrs. Smith could see them as the forerunners of a number emigrating from Baltiboys ... "the few small tenants we have may be induced to emigrate if assisted."[1] In fact most emigrants had the common characteristic of belonging to the least fortunate groups amongst the tenantry or labourers, and certainly to those least able to cope with the desperate conditions of the later 1840s. Sometimes it was the lawbreakers who are being directed towards America: this was the

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1. 6.2.1850.

solution Mrs. Smith thought best for the carpenter James Ryan after his thieving,[1] and Mrs. Tyrrell's "very ill calculated" grandson who had been jailed in Baltinglas for stealing a coat in 1845 should go too ... "if we could get the lad sent to a penitentiary and so after a while to the colonies it would be the best thing could happen to him."[2]

If they were not destitute, they were likely to be young, those whose example would encourage others on the estate to think of improving their fortunes. This was made most clear in the case of Lachlan and Mary Ryan who left in February 1850 for New Orleans "with a large party of friends". The whole operation was supervised by Annie Smith, the younger daughter, then aged 16, and her mother was in no doubt that it was most successful: "even in a business point of view this is a £10 profitably paid out. These orphens who have much plagued us will cost us no more and they may act as pioneers for their numerous relations."[3] By October they were well settled:

> we have had good news from Mary and Lachlan Ryan. These two batches are both in service, and have been since their arrival. Lachlan has his board and a pound a week, Mary her board and lodging and a pound a month. The letter was from Mary to Annie saying how happy she is; both she and her brother had had the seasoning fever[4] but were quite recovered and only anxious for their friends to follow them which I really think they most wisely seem inclined to do.

Emigration was not always the last resort of the utterly feckless

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1. 2.7.1848 and see Part II, ch. 3, p. 196.
2. 2.11.1845.
3. 6.2.1850.
4. "An attack more or less severe, of ague, or some kindred disease, suffered by those who take up their abode for the first time in a tropical district." (O.E.D.)

or the very young. The Journals do mention tradesmen and small tenants considering the possibility and it is important to appreciate that Mrs. Smith herself, comparing the condition of all the inhabitants of Baltiboys even during the famine years with that in which she and her husband had found them in 1830, often saw emigration for such people as a chance to better themselves rather than the last and only alternative to a ghastly fate if left in Ireland. For example John Fitzpatrick the outside labourer in charge of the stables who was promoted to Under-Steward in 1848,[1] was contemplating emigrating in March 1851 when he was very ill ("not dying as reported, he only wants a little of my care"):

> Recollecting what cabins we found here it is pleasant to find this poor man reared in such a hovel, lying now in a good bed with fit bedding in a bedstead, blankets, sheets, frilled pillow-cases, good white shirt, clean cotton cap, table beside him with his drink and medicine, footboard by the bed, large window curtained, chairs, pictures on the walls, chest for clothes, and his kitchen well furnished, his turf stack large, and sacks of meal standing near the dresser. Yet is he discontented, and thought of America because life is such a struggle here. 2

So it is evident that the few who went were both a cross-section of the different sorts and conditions on the estate and provide important evidence about the ways Baltiboys was run and the relationships between landlord and tenant. In particular, they show that there cannot have been a massive drive on this estate to use all means to clear Baltiboys of the smallest and most wretched tenants; Mrs. Smith

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1. 2.7.1848.

2. 20.3.1851.

certainly saw it as a solution for some but the very smallness of the numbers involved is a comment on what had been achieved by this date. Further, the spirited, continuing and successful resistance of those the Smiths were trying to cajole into departing is eloquent commentary on the strength of the opposition to landlord-organised schemes of improvement. It may have been an unequal tug-of-war on paper, but it was not always the landlord who came off best.

The Journals of Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys, therefore, are a mine of detailed information about the lives led on the estate by every social and economic group from the hundred acre tenant farmer to the humblest squatter. In a very real sense their economic condition can be appreciated and their standards of living examined, so that convincing reasons emerge for the at first sight startingly coherent ways in which Baltiboys managed to survive the rigours of the famine years.

This survival has yet to be looked at in detail, but from the recreation of the lives of the tenantry and labourers and the mass of detail about their houses, rents, crops and stock it is clear that the various schemes put into practice by the Smiths since 1830 had converted what they regarded as an apology for an estate into an efficiently organised series of units able to cope with the pressures of the 1840s. Sometimes this involved consolidation, sometimes the use of every pressure at the landlord's disposal, but the end product was a viable estate. The level of rent payments shows that there is no divide between the pre-famine and famine years; those who failed to cope before continued to monopolise the attention of landlord and

agent afterwards. Those coming into this latter category, whether tenant or cottier, whether strictly speaking their own concern or not, were treated in exactly the same way. When it had become clear that they were not managing, and there was no chance of any alternative employment such as the police for any able-bodied and qualified member of the family, then it had to be either America or the Poor House. In point of fact, the great majority from each group, protestant or catholic, preferred the risks of the New World to the institutional charity of the Old.

This treatment may have been part of an over-all scheme, clearly laid-down by the Smiths and carried out by Agent and Steward, but the Journals show convincingly that both tenant and labourer families were able to put up extremely dogged resistance to their landlord's plans, whether it involved emigration from their dearly held plots for America, or departure from hopeless arrears to the Poor House. Indeed the well-documented determination of Bryan Dempsey to refuse to co-operate in plans of improvement involving the drainage of the land he rented is only one of many examples of the successful delaying operations in many matters which all parts of the Baltiboys community were apparently able to impose on Colonel Smith in the teeth of his disapproval.

Perhaps the classic illustration of this involved one of the four largest tenant farmers, who is not much mentioned in the Journals (except as a rent defaulter), Michael Commons, perhaps because, for Mrs. Smith, he was "such an oddity that there is no making more of him than suits his own whim of the moment." As early as July 1841 when

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I. See pp. 180 - 183 .

after much procrastination part of his stock and crop was distrained she noted that in his case "it merely proves they are not fit to manage ground and should descend into the class of labourers at once." However it was not until his brother's death in 1849 that the Smiths were able to take any action, and then it was only because this brother's life was the last mentioned on the lease of 1812. Commons was to be given the ten months to the end of the year to make alternative arrangements, but when this time was up, like so many others in similar circumstances after they had been given generous terms by Colonel Smith, he dug his heels in:

> Commons has been very troublesome and there he is up in the old cabin himself and the niece and nephew all keen to go to law about his claim for the value of those buildings, where he won't believe that he is mistaken on this subject. Neither will he let our herd Johnny Grace come to live on the farm but all the stock and crop we took at a valuation for rent he has allowed us to remove. The Colonel has been very good to him, and all this property over-valued, and has promised to buy the remainder to give the old man their value in money, also to make the nephew a present of twenty pounds to set himself up in the world. [1]

In fact Michael Commons only consented to give up house and land when in addition to this the Colonel agreed to give him £20 a year "as long as he lives"; these terms were not too generous for him to try one final manoevre ..."the old oddity actually asked for four pounds more a year for the niece."[2]

Commons, then, illustrates both the tenacity with which those threatened with removal were able to delay the inevitable and the

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1. 28.2.1849.

2. 10.11.1849.

remarkably generous terms they were able to hold out for; moreover, like so many from Baltiboys, he was clearly familiar with the processes of law and perfectly prepared to use them to help his case. This independence of action and readiness to stand up to what have elsewhere been seen as unopposable sources of authority has been particularly associated with the tradesmen, but the tenantry too did not take lying down injunctions from the local representatives of either church or state with which they were not in full agreement. In short, the picture is far from that of a subservient tenantry at the beck and call of any whim of an uninvolved landlord.

Colonel and Mrs. Smith were precisely the opposite type. Even if the Journals do occasionally give the impression of landlord, agent and steward beavering away to little effect, for the most part the work done during the fifteen years that began with their being regarded as "the receiver of a much-begrudged rent" ensured that on this improving estate landlord, tenant and labourer at the least harboured mutual suspicions which were so slight as not to be reflected in landlord desire to improve and tenant willingness to pay rent, and at the best lived together in something approaching harmony.

PART III

Landlord, Churches and Schools

Introduction

It is hard to think of two subjects more closely associated with mid-nineteenth century Ireland than religion and education. Donald H. Akenson is the latest and most comprehensive writer[1] to show how Ireland from the 1830s developed a system of education whose aims and achievements deserve close study. This system has been seen as everything from the most ambitious of schemes to improve the condition of all the people of Ireland to merely the most all-embracing attempt yet to use the resources of the nineteenth century to continue the policies of penal times. Parliamentary papers confirm that every well-meaning committee discussing the condition of Ireland made substantial reference to these most important of subjects.[2] In fact the only discordant note is provided by most of the well-known landlord or agent writers describing from later points in the century what they recalled of life in Ireland of mid-century; few of them have anything to say about education[3] and religion is dismissed in a few terse comments,

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1. The Irish Education Experiment - the National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century (1970), hereafter - Akenson, Education.

2. R.B. McDowell, The Great Famine, p. 57.

3. William Bence-Jones, W.S. Trench and Samuel Hussey, three of the most justly interesting commentators from the landlord point of view, have nothing to say about education and precious little about religion; they were obsessed by the land question.

more often than not on some obvious target like Maynooth.[1]

All that has been gleaned from the Journals of Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys undoubtedly shows that these commentators' emphasis on the land and its problems had alighted on the main economic and social problem of the day. The previous chapters clearly show that this was true for Baltiboys: there was nothing so pressing for landlord, tenant or labourer than the return from land and labour, and the difficulties ensuing when problems arose.

However, it is more than likely that an improving estate twenty miles from Dublin, managed by landlords with the interests and concern of Colonel and Mrs. Smith, would tend to be a more faithful reflection of these developments in religion and education than the memoirs of fellow-members of the landed class written at a time when everything was embittered by the Land War. In fact, Baltiboys' closeness to the market town of Blessington and one of the main coach roads south, as well as the coincidence that two of the sites of Daniel O'Connell's "monster meetings", at Baltinglass and the Curragh were near enough for them to have a real local impact, all meant that it would have been difficult for it to have remained immune from the great movements in the worlds of religion and education in the 1840s.

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1. For example Hussey p.116: "The greatest curse to the Irish nation has been Maynooth because it has fostered the ordination of peasants' sons. These are uneducated men who have never been out of Ireland, whose sympathies are wholly with the class from which they have sprung, and who are given no training calculated to afford them a broader view than that of the narrowed class prejudice."

In the absence of any local papers[1] at this time, her Journals in fact turn out to be a valuable substitute helping to determine how the estate and locality were affected.

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1. According to the newspaper and periodical records of the National Library of Ireland, the Wicklow Newsletter started publication in 1857 and the more famous Leinster Leader in 1881.

Chapter One

Religion

Because the Journals are such a central piece of evidence, and written by some-one who has already been shown to be possessed of strong and eloquently argued feelings on many topics, it is important at the outset of any attempt to evaluate what these writings reveal about all things pertaining to religion in the area, to establish what Mrs. Smith herself believed in. This will help to put her comments and criticisms into perspective; it should temper her excesses and explain her likes and dislikes.

She had been brought up as a child in the Church of Scotland[1] but it is clear that even if there had been a presbyterian church in Blessington, she would not have chosen to worship there. The Smiths of Baltiboys had their own pew in the select gallery of the Church of Ireland church in Blessington,[2] and it took a stormy Sunday to prevent the whole family worshipping there. There was a third segment to her religious experience consisting of the ways she had been influenced by her three years in India before her marriage. From all of these, she appears to have developed a very broad outlook that verged on the eucumenical:

> I really can see very little difference between the Popish priest with his beads, his bells and his vain repetitions, the Anglican Bishop with his purple and his palace and his retinue of humble expectants, and the arrogant presbyter with his unyielding severity assuming authority over Laws and property

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1. Highland Lady, pp. 187-9.

2. Ninette de Valois (p.10) remembered that the church contained three family pews "suspended at the back over the heads of the ordinary church pews."

> and praying with closed eyes against the sin of walking out in the fields on a Sunday. They may just take their places beside the hypocritical Brahmin or the Tarter Lama to my mind, but I suppose I must keep this in mind to myself and my husband - the world must be a century or two wiser before it would be able to bear the truth as taught by our divine master. 1

This truth for her apparently was firmly based on what she learnt from seventeenth century writers on the Church in England. Three years later she was to write about her admiration for a "range of authors quite unknown to me"whom she had discovered in Chambers' summaries[2] of earlier generations of English writers: in particular she was deeply impressed with "the divines ... Tillotson, Barrow, Stillingfleet, South, Baxter, all so much more purely Christian in their feelings than are those of our present time. We should go back to these purer doctrines, learn their charity at least."[3]

Where most of her generation found inspiration in the contemporary developments of the churches, Mrs. Smith went back to the written words and deeds of the century that followed the Reformation. That succeeding trends had been utterly retrograde in her opinion is clear from what she wrote in July 1847, recording her impressions of a

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1. 19.3.1842.

2. Mrs. Smith and her Book Club were regular readers of many of Chambers' publications: she may well have read about these divines in the Edinburgh Journal (that published so many of her own writings) but it is more likely that such articles would have been published in the Information for the People or the Miscellany of Instructive and Entertaining Tracts series.

3. 7.12.1845. John Tillotson (1630-94) became Archbishop of Canterbury and Edmund Stillingfleet (1635-99) Bishop of Worcester; Isaac Barrow (1630-77) and Robert South (1634-1716) were two of the most distinguished anglican divines of their day; Richard Baxter (1615-91) was the celebrated presbyterian.

favourite author's latest work:

> The Doctor lent us Carleton's "Black Prophet",[1] very fine, very truthful, very wretched, showing the miseries that cannot be remedied under several generations, - never - while the Roman Catholick superstitions prevent the spread of true religion. Presbyterian bigotry keeps back the Scotch in the same way. Methodistical cant the English, while the careless everywhere intimidate the feeble-minded, whose aim becomes only to act in direct opposition to what they think impiety, and so it is, though not intended for such and it leads to as bad consequences as the devoted mistake. The true way seems so plain it is really no small ingenuity that can help to bewilder people in it. 2

There were two particular developments, two ways in which the world had gone wrong since the opportunities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had been so badly missed, that need to be borne in mind when reading what Mrs. Smith had to write about religion. She distrusted the over-organisation and pretensions of the churches, and assigned to them a role as inferior as that meted out by Napoleon. Her thoughts of March 1842 continued:

> There is no church by itself church. It is only wanted as an appendage to the State - a convenience for the better regulation of the morals of a country and when a set of priests set up to oppose the State or to affect independence of it, they render the Establishment they belong to worse than useless. They make it a positive nuisance. The hot-bed of strife and every ill passion instead of a nursary of virtue. How odious is priestcraft, how utterly opposed to the tenets of Him whom we pretend to consider as the authour and the finisher of our faith.

She is, then, very suspicious of the church as an institution. The

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1. The Black Prophet: a tale of Irish famine (1847): in view of the highly critical attitude towards Irish landlords that permeates all William Carleton's works, it is remarkable that it should earn such praise from Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys, even indirectly as a catalyst.

2. 20.7.1847.

second development she abhorred was the way that "priestcraft" contributed to the discord all over the globe she saw as a natural consequence of the departure from the simpler beliefs of earlier years:

> Is not priestcraft the same in all climes, in all ages, in all forms of worship? Are there not divisions too among all the priest ridden. Two furious sets of Parsees - two equally desperate among the Mussulmans, and the followers of Brahma. God knows in the Christian Church our divisions are endless ... and among we protesters against the errours of our Roman faith we have as many sects as there are regiments in our army, and all so full of hatred of each other, and all so absurd, so full of folly, disputing about things as nonsensical as are to be found in fairy tales and far, distant ages distant from that religion which is pure and undefiled. 1

As far as the protestantism she came across was concerned, there were three excesses in particular against which she railed in her Journals, three especially insidious paths followed by some "protesters against the errours of our Roman faith".

One extreme of religious enthusiasm for her was Puseyism,[2] whose observance had once had some justification, but not in the nineteenth century. In earlier times

> the pomp and the terrours and the minute observances of the Romish church was necessary to keep alive that spark which in wiser times our Reformers freed from many of the errours which obscured its brightness, leaving much still which in a few years must be swept away like the rubbish already got quit of.

She had in fact the opportunity of making her abhorrence of these practices clear in the autumn of 1841, when she suspected that her

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1. 19.3.1842.

2. Edward Pusey (1800-82) was the dominant force behind the Oxford or tractarian movement that during the 1830s and 1840s seemed such a threat to the established church both for evangelicals and those whose position was less clearly defined, like Elizabeth Smith.

local Rector, William Ogle Moore, was becoming too attracted by the beliefs of the Oxford Movement.[1]

Equally, that other wing of protestant worship, which she categorised as Calvinistic, was just as repellent. Every mention she makes of ministers of this persuasion illustrates how strongly she felt. The brother-in-law of Lord Downshire's agent[2] came to preach in December 1842 and his sermon was not approved of:

> The theatrical exhibition of Mr. Alcock was by no means to my taste; the sermon was extempore, wonderfully fluently poured out with an immensity of gesticulation, jumps and thumps, and striking together of hands and a voice ranting or whispering, a sort of bad imitation of Kean I said; young Kean,[3] Richard Hornidge said, which I dare say is more near the truth. [4]

He was dismissed as one of "those sort of Congreve rocket preachers."[5] Likewise Mr. Kerr betrayed similar annoying characteristics in Pau. "There is a want of true religion in all the penance style of that narrow school" she observed, and her report of one of his sermons' in the protestant church especially aroused her wrath:

> Mr. Kerr who has been ill must have had his head affected I think, for he gave us such a John Knox sermon upon Sabbath breaking for which we are all to be judged at the last day

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1. 11/26.9.1841. This in itself is note-worthy, for the Church of Ireland as a whole was untouched by these developments, remaining firmly under Evangelical control throughout the 1840s. (Akenson, p. 212): see p. 279-80.

2. Henry Gore, another miller, from Kilkenny, was agent from April 1841 to his sudden death in January 1843; his wife was described as "methodistical" (18.1.1842).

3. There is no indication in the Journals or the Highland Lady that she had seen Kean, although she was related by marriage to the Siddons and had much appreciated the Kemble family (Highland Lady p. 152).

4. 4.12.1842.

5. This refers to "a kind of rocket for use in war, invented in 1808 by Col. Sir William Congreve (1772-1828)", according to O.E.D.

> and most unmercifully punished by eternal damnation if we either read the newspapers, or a magazine, or any other profane book, or speak of worldy things, or visit a friend, or acknowledge a friend on leaving church, or miss a service, or take a walk etc. His text of course was from the Old Testament, his studies must also have been confined to Jewish history, for of the Christian tenets he is in profound ignorance, the message has yet to come to him. 1

In fact her views on the keeping of Sunday are the best test of her beliefs. Despite her strictures against Mr. Kerr, she had a few months before written to make it plain that she condemned the idea of walking to the Palace Royale of a Sunday to hear the band: ("We a'n't quite Puseyite enough for that way of spending Sunday evening.")[2] There are two obvious extremes and, as with dogma, she evidently felt that the happy medium reached by an earlier generation was the correct one; she had spelt this out soon after starting her Journal, when she wrote down her early thoughts on Sabbatarianism for her family.

> May you ever keep it thus, dear children, not as a day of gloom, as a day of austerity, as a day of privations ... The Roman Catholick Sunday is in many respects infinitely nearer the proper method of spending the day to my mind than the Calvinistick. The old Church of England nearest of all, not the methodistical section of it, but the real, cheerful, old English reformed Church. 3

The church she admired most, then, was to be free from extreme enthusiasms, from those she later in 1848 was to describe as "honest dreamers or Jesuits in disguise" on the one hand, or "arrogant bigots who fancy

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1. 19.11.1843.
2. 4.9.1843.
3. 16.2.1840.

themselves alone to understand the way to heaven" on the other.[1]

It is therefore interesting to note her views on what by the 1840s was one of the most extreme and certainly the most enthusiastic of organisations having any connection with organised religion, the Orange Order.[2]

Their first mention in her Journals was in September 1845 when she records her dismay as they "awake after their long slumber". Much of what they stood for was already condemned in her eyes by its close association with Calvinism. For the rest, she interestingly chose to compare them with the Repeal movement: "the display of talent certainly fell very far short of the Conciliation Hall theatricals" and there was no source of satisfaction in their frightening numbers... but overall she rather supposed that their influence balanced one another for "neither party being exactly satisfied with what is being done, it is more than probable that perfect justice is meted out to both."[3] A different problem presented itself when the Smiths found themselves in company in Dublin, especially relations, who were susceptible to the Orange card:

> As regards themselves personally, their prejudicial intolerance places their characters very low in the scale of intellect. Really to read their arguments ... fatigues the mind almost to

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1. 11.11.1848.

2. Founded in 1795, the Orange Order was the most militant protestant faction set against Catholicism in general and 'ritualism' in particular (see G. Broeker op. cit. p. 12-15); its influence was opposed by the Whigs in the 1830s but by the time Mrs. Smith was writing her Journals, the movement was stirring again in response to the success of the Repeal movement.

3. 7.9.1845.

> sickness. I never take part in these exploded vaguaries now, merely listening and then turning the discourse. Women at any rate are much better employed in attending to the duties more properly belonging to their sex, so that when we were in Dublin the other day I made it a rule to "motion away" the Tresham Gregg[1] subjects and endeavour to keep our very clever tho' very prejudiced cousin to the more agreeable discourse on the furnishings of Mrs. Haughton's house. 2

Although three years' later she was to write to her husband from Edinburgh that subsequent developments were to make her more sympathetic to their position, ("I am just thinking how right you have always been about the Orange men. At last they have to be turned to and in spite of ill-usage they respond.")[3], over-all they represented a blend of politics and religion she found unpalatable.

The importance of spending time on her personal beliefs is that it is the only way of attempting an explanation of what policies were laid down at Baltiboys. It was not possible with her at the helm for

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1. The Rev. Tresham D. Gregg, chaplain of St. Nicholas Within, Dublin, was the most notoriously extreme evangelical of his generation. His sermons, historical dramas (Mary Tudor, King Edward I etc) and, above all, his writings reached a wide audience. Of the last, perhaps Free Thoughts on Protestant Matters in One Volume (somewhat curiously dedicated to Benjamin Disraeli "for his triumphant exposure of the apostate minister"!) was the most popular and characteristic; he explained in the preface to the second edition (Dublin 1847) that "The evils of society spring from the prevalence of unsound moral and social principles. At the head of all false religions stands Popery. I show how to eradicate it." He was equally repugnant to The Nation which invariably referred to him as "the Rev. Trash Gregg" (see leading article 12.11.1842).

2. 7.9.1845: these were cousins of Colonel Smith's.

3. 19.7.1848.

this to be one of the estates such as the Earl of Roden's[1] where every evangelical device was used to turn Catholic tenantry from their beliefs; nor, despite her own personal beliefs, was it one where separate schools for different faiths was contemplated.[2] It suggests a reason for her insistence that it was part of every householders' duty to arrange Bible readings for the servants, but equally that it was no part of her remit as the manager of a National School to move away from their non-denominational texts. Above all, when so much, especially as far as the smooth-running of the school was concerned depended on harmonious relations with the local priest, it was inevitable that priest and established clergyman would come into conflict with the determined carrying out of her duty by the mistress of Balitboys.

Any impression give of organised religion at a local level in Ireland in the 1840s must be prefaced by a glance at the background.

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1. I am indebted to Professor Hugh Kearney for this information. The earl of Roden's agent, Captain William Hill, however, protested in his evidence to the Devon Commission (Vol. I p. 574, witness 113, qu. 25) that "there is no instance of a man being dispossessed of his farm in consequence of being a Roman Catholic." However, his reputation as a militant protestant landlord seems secure.

2. The Co. Wicklow cause célèbre took place on the Fitzwilliam estates, where two of the Protestant clergymen attempted, against the wishes of the landlord and his agent Robert Chaloner, to establish separate schools (see Foster p. xvii). Mrs. Smith fully supported the clergymen and the Law's decision that they were in the right: earl Fitzwilliam "gets it as he deserves from our papist Master of the Rolls who decides against him with costs and animadverts in 'good set terms' on the illiberal spirit he has shewn, totally at variance with the feelings of a good landlord whose duty it is to provide the means of education for every individual on his property without attempting any violence to their conscience." To compare how the Smiths performed this duty, see Part III, ch. 2, p. 324-6.

The most important point is that the Catholic Church in Ireland had survived the catacomb years[1] of the penal times and by this decade had established itself as a self-confident, effective agent for the religious and lay hopes of its people. Its prestige and power was to be seen in the rash of new and imposing churches that had arisen by 1840 and in the new authority possessed by the parish priest: this has been related to his new-found interest in politics ... "at the local level the Roman Catholic priest became a political figure to rival the previously unchallenged Protestant landlord."[2] Meantime, the strength of his authority was often equalled by his display of a way of life that reflected the changes in his position. The often-quoted comments of Cardinal Cullen's nephew, the priest James Maher from nearby Carlow, in the 1840s emphasise this change: "In travelling thru the country, I have observed with pain that the relative position of the people and clergy has been greatly changed. The people have become very much poorer. And the clergy have adopted a more expensive style of living. The best Catholic house in each Parish and the best style of living appears to be the Priest's. Time was when both parties were more upon an equality."[3] Indeed, D.H. Akenson estimates that by 1850 the position of the Roman Catholic clergy in

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1. R.B. McDowell, The Great Famine, p. 71.

2. D.H. Akenson, The Church of Ireland, Ecclesiastical Reformation and Revolution, 1800-1885 (1971) p. 214: hereafter Akenson, C of I.

3. Emmet Larkin, Economic Growth, Captial Investment and the Roman Catholic Church in Nineteenth Century Ireland, American History Review LXII No. 3 April 1967, p. 859.

society was "close to that of the small gentry."[1] Whatever social tensions there were as a result of any part of this trend occuring around Baltiboys could not avoid being compounded by the local manifestation of the involvement of the local priest in national politics. As Seán Ó Faoláin put it: "by 1850, then, that terrible bogey of the nineteenth century all over Europe, 'the priest in politics' has arrived in Ireland."[2]

What kind of a challenge was recognised in this resurgant Catholic Church at the time by the representatives of the established Church of Ireland? It was mounted by successful Evanglicals,[3] who by the 1830s had made themselves the strongest voice in the Church of Ireland. As the "extreme theological opposition to the Catholic Church",[4] they undoubtedly spurred the Church on to getting its house more in order, to meet the challenge to its established position from outside.

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1. P. 142.

2. See The Irish (1947) p. 110-111: such a modern judgement needs, of course, to be set alongside contemporary ones a century earlier, like that claiming "the patriot priest is certain to have one invaluable reward of his labours, the esteem of those whose judgements are beyond his and the affections of those whose hearts are pure" (The Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser, 23. 10.1847, from its Tribute of Respect to the Very Rev. James MacHale, who, as Archbishop of Tuam, was cordially loathed by Mrs. Smith. See infra. p. 296).

3. For their influence, see History of the Church of Ireland from the earliest times to the present day, 3 Vols., edited by Walter Alison Phillips (1933), Vol. III p. 332 f.

4. Akenson, C. of I., p. 206.

However, although Blessington and Baltiboys was to have more than its fair share of incidents that reflected the wider Catholic: Protestant tensions in Ireland of the 1840s, it is clear from Mrs. Smith's Journals that the Established Church's incumbant, the Rev. William Ogle Moore[1] was far from a typical representative of a Church moved by evangelical fire to rise to the Catholic church's challenge. Indeed, it seems that he was very tempted by September 1841 by those very Puseyite practices so abhorred by Mrs. Smith, recommending "fasting and other ceremonies certainly enjoined by the Rubrick but so long disused that a return would look very Popish and be very absurd." She made her own feelings very plain: "my presbyterian education disinclines me to these observations".[2] Two Sundays after these comments were written was to provide lurid confirmation of her fears:

> Mr. Moore preached, I did not like the sermon, it might have been given at the Chapel at the cross by the Priest, too minute an account of the Crucification, painfully so, orthodox I suppose but not in unison with my interpretation of the mission of Jesus the man and the sufferings of his body, not the divine doctrine he was inspired to teach. 3

Not only did he continue in his new-found enthusiasms, he also the following year sent Mrs. Smith Oxford Movement pamphlets in the hope that she would be more responsive herself. The results cannot have encouraged him to persevere, as her comment, a somewhat bewildering one,

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1. A somewhat eighteenth century figure, he came, despite his financial problems, from a prosperous landed family (see Part I, ch. 3, p. 49.)

2. 11.9.1841.

3. 26.9.1841.

makes plain:

> As for the "Tracts"[1] I am a bad subject to try high church principles on, the whole question with me being one of expediency. Depending in all its forms quite on the progress of the people requiring, as the national intelligence advances, to be stripped by degrees of all its externals, viz: absurdities, for fear of its becoming a jest. 2

And to make her own position clear to Mr. Moore, she sent him in turn a cutting from her paper, an article by the Bishop of Oxford[3] condemning Puseyism ... "my answer to his tracts." Even so, it is likely that he persisted in his beliefs, for when in June 1846 the plans for a local Ball were cancelled, Mrs. Smith used a revealing phrase to show her disapproval of this decision: "in addition to the political economy being out of date, part of the note is very arrogantly written as if he [Ogle Moore] had been violently offended and thought it necessary to castigate his flock whom he wished to rule 'alla Roma'."

It was not so much his authoritarianism that rankled Mrs. Smith. She was very critical of the way he carried out his parish duties. She preserved a stony silence about all of his sermons, which when she wrote above every visiting preacher's, shows her disapproval; one of the few to be favourably commented upon was one he delivered which she recognised as being based on the Archbishop of Dublin's "little

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1. Presumably one of the Tracts for the Times started by Newman in 1833 with the object of "contributing something towards the practical revival of doctrines which, although held by the great divines of our church, have become practically obsolete with the Majority of her members." (DNB)

2. 10.4.1842.

3. 12.6.1842: unfortunately the bishop was not Samuel Wilberforce (1805-73) the son of William Wilberforce who had been such a great influence on Elizabeth Smith starting her Journals: he was consecrated on 13.12.1845. (DNB)

essay" on "The Reason of the Hope that is in us."[1] Above all, he was criminally careless about matters that needed the utmost concern. In 1840 for example, after observing that "our's is a sadly used parish", she gives as an example the thirteen year old protestant orphen girl who was thoughtlessly boarded out with a Catholic family... "allowed to live among papists, unacquainted with the nature of an oath, remembered two years to have said some prayers etc." This was "a most shocking piece of negligence - worse - neglect of positive duty in our Vicar and Curate." It was neglect like this which was having a dreadful effect on the position of the Church throughout Ireland.

> I could rake up fifty such cases or such like, where the total inattention of our clergy is every day increasing evils that a generation of better care will not eradicate. And people wonder that the reformed religion does not spread here. I wonder it is tolerated - it seems to fail to produce even in gentlemen an idea of their duty. What effect can it have on the poor. Mr. Moore is greatly more culpable than Mr. Foster [the curate] - he knows his duty, which this other poor creature really does not - poor Ireland. 2

The Rev. Mr. Moore, then, may have sprung from the landowning classes but he had no idea in her opinion of the way to carry out his duties. There could have been little opposition in this parish to the self-confident return of the Catholic Church to its former position.

Matters indeed were so bad that Mrs. Smith, in characteristic

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1. Richard Whateley (1787-1863) was Archbishop of Dublin (1831-1863), during which time he led an active life, in public as well as church life, that earned consistent praise from Mrs. Smith for whom he was a much revered leader.

2. 24.10.1840.

fashion, went straight to the source of all the trouble and confronted him with his dereliction of duty, as if he had been the Steward at Baltiboys or an unimproving tenant farmer behind with the rent. She took advantage of a visit by him in December 1840 to have a heart-to-heart talk which would set him back on the straight and narrow:

> A visit from Mr. Moore and chatting on from subject to subject he and I got quite confidential; he lamented his dereliction of duty, said he was firmly resolved to "turn over a new leaf". "But you have said so often." "Never to you." etc. 1

Mr. Moore went on to offer some "very painful family details" which she thought partially excused "his neglect of his parish duties" and she held out some hopes that her intervention would lead to future improvement:

> His heart is kind, his temper gentle, his judgement good, his piety sincere and his manner delightful, yet I fear to trust him, he is indolent and facile, and unless his wife be impressed with the feeling of duty belonging to their station, I doubt his keeping his resolution. 1

And two days later she is pleased to note that he intends to start a Loan Fund[2] and a Temperance Society in the town ("in which we will all gladly help.")[3]

However, despite his evident weakness of character and resolution and the difficulties his wife presented him with, the main problems this Rector had were financial. It appears that his pastoral duties

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1. 26.12.1840: see Part I, ch. 4, p. 97-9.
2. Whether or not the original suggestion came from the Rector, by the following September such a fund had started with £175 to lend out (14.9.41).
3. This is perhaps another manifestation of the powerful influence of Father Mathew's movement (see supra. p. 163 and p.212)

were in part neglected because of the time needed to deal with the work connected with his position as a landed proprietor; what ought to have been a strength, providing additional income to enable him to retain his position amongst the gentry and so increase his influence in a part of Co. Wicklow which was well populated with resident landlords, turned out to be a serious weakness. In the early 1840s he chose (to Mrs. Smith's disapproval, for he was "neglecting the quest for preferment")[1] to stay on himself as Agent to a small nearby estate he inherited from an uncle but it was after his father, George Moore's death in June 1847 that matters got out of control. The next month he is described as ruined, "without one penny but what he has borrowed".[2] In November he was forced into auctioning whatever could be sold off from the family home, Kilbride Manor, and although Dr. Robinson, Richard Hornidge and the Smiths did their bit to make it a success, it was apparently the "large crowd of the farmer class buying as fast as the articles were out up, and paying for old things the full price of new" who saved the day.[3]

This was only a brief respite. Although Mrs. Smith during these Famine years gives him credit for the way he carried out his public duties, by January 1849 it seemed clear to the whole neighbourhood that, if the Milltowns were the family most in trouble,[4] the Ogle Moore's

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1. 25.9.1841.
2. 7.7.1847.
3. 14.7.1841.
4. See Part I, ch. 3, pp. 63-4.

were not far behind. Before spelling out in her authoritative way precisely how wretched their financial position was, Mrs. Smith prefaced her thoughts with the no doubt heart-felt comment that in comparison "I feel that we are mercifully dealt with."

> The Ogle Moore's have two hundred and forty pounds for their income, all else being swallowed up by the interest of his personal debts. The property will not pay its own liabilities so it will give him nothing. His living he has encumbered most improperly by insuring his life for a sum borrowed to relieve pressing difficulties. He had bonded debts besides for he is acting like a madman. On his two hundred and forty pounds and eleven children they are keeping seven woman servants and four outside servants, and permit themselves every luxury and indulge in lives of utter indolance and neglect every duty and say in tears, "what can we do". 1

This parish therefore may reasonably be described in Mrs. Smith's opinion as being thoroughly neglected throughout the 1840s, and the handicap of these later difficulties, all self-inflicted, merely exacerbated their already untenable position. Worse, the miserable cleric's philandering in no way improved his situation, so that the outlook for Rector and parish was bleak.

> The Ogle Moores have no hope of better times that I can see and far from sufficient for present subsistence. Nothing beyond her two hundred and forty pounds, at least honestly.[2] The property is really insolvent and he has completely encumbered his glebe by his own most reprehensible debts incurred to keep up false pretences. She has been absurdly blind, as a pencil and a bit of paper could have shown her any time since they married that they were living beyond their income, and for the last half dozen years double what they had to spend.

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1. 10.11.1849.

2. This must be a reference to his "improper" life-insurance and "bonded debts", footnote 1, p. 284.

The only conceivable answer was the Encumbered Estates Court. When Mrs. Smith saw that its first few sales were bringing in something round twenty years' purchase, her first thought was that "Kilbride will surely get a year or two more, and the head rents go still higher."[1]

It is possible to get another view of this increasingly desperate man's efforts in 1848/1849 to escape from his predicament. The Pidgeon Papers[2] preserve some of the correspondence between the eponymous William Pidgeon, who was secretary of the Incorporated Society in Dublin for promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland,[3] and the Rev. William Ogle Moore, who had entered an agreement whereby the Incorporated Society leased some of his land. In October 1848 the Secretary wrote: "I am inclined should you have no objection not to take the lease, but to pay you for the grazing up to the 25th March next." The loss of this much-needed income certainly did not suit Ogle Moore, and he testily replied on the 21st pointing out that "on the faith of my agreement with you, in co-operation with you, guided by your views and your wishes, I made application for and obtained a

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1. 10.11.1849. His lack of organisation and basic business acumen were also seen in his attempts to organise schools locally (see Part III, ch. 2, p. 371).

2. These are in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. William Pidgeon gave evidence about the Incorporated Society's properties to Devon (Vol. I, witness 54, p. 337-340).

3. R.B. McDowell memorably summed up this Society's schools as displaying "many of the worst features associated with eighteenth century jobbery and nineteenth century institutionalised charity (op. cit. p. 55-6); see Akenson, C. of I., p. 137-9 and Alison Phillips, p. 211.

(Land Improvement) Grant"; the ensuing heavy expenditure would not have otherwise been undertaken. Six days later he added "I perceive I have been mistaken in my belief that there was a mutual understanding between us in respect to the works under the Land Improvement Act" and the rest of the letter consists of the reverend gentleman haggling over precisely what compensation he is due for the use of the Dower house and the forty creels of turf, for which he understands the current price is three shillings per creel. By the new year no progress has been made, and it seems that he changed his tactics, writing to Pidgeon on the 15th January:

> I do not see anything in your enclosed memorandum which at all alters my views; I knew that you must be a loser from the plan - or rather want of a plan - you adopted. But why should I be a loser? Surely not because I made a large concession to you in the first instance?

At any rate within the week he had accepted £150 and released the Incorporated Society from their agreement.

He evidently spent a great deal of time of this particular transaction and even if it has little to add to Mrs. Smith's evidence about his business acumen, it does emphasise that at this time, his was the condition of an increasingly desperate man who could not afford to let any possible source of income lapse.

Mrs. Smith's final description of the family in May 1851 shows that matters had still not improved:

> Kilbride Lodge ... where is such a look of misery - furniture so shabby - Ogle away - Ned lounging about idle - Nelly dressed up very fine - none of the younger children visible. Mrs. Moore very neat but in old clothes, just going to lie in of her twelfth child, no nurse as yet to be had, and only two servants in the house, a girl of all work in the kitchen and a protestant orphen in the nursary. I never saw anything more wretched and with their peculiar oddities there is no way that

> I know of to help them. There is no chance of preferment for that imprudent man. 1

And there was no hope of any change. This parish was clearly sadly neglected throughout these years and it is hard to see clergy such as William Ogle Moore, discredited in the eyes of the gentry by his peculations as much as his flirting with new and dangerous doctrines, offering much of a challenge to the reinvigorated Catholic Church.

The parish of Blessington, then, needs to be seen at this time as one of the exceptions to the general pattern between 1830 and 1867 in the Church of Ireland, which has been described as one of qualitative improvement.[2] The personal and pastoral inadequacies of the incumbant were too great and the other members of the clergy of the Established Church who flit through the pages of Mrs. Smith's Journals were hardly able to compensate.

Ogle Moore's Curate, Mr. Foster, can only have been a beast of burden expected to undertake much of the day-to-day work of the parish. It was he, for example, who in the winter of 1840 had the job of organising, in co-operation with Mrs. Smith, relief work for the poor of the parish:

> Finished six shifts and six nightcaps and sent them to Mr. Foster for the six old women on the Church list and have determined on endeavouring to alter the arrangements concerning the charity money. At present it is given in single shillings to any of them who beg hard, or on the first Sunday in the month they each get three or four. They are all in rags, all starving, lodge where they can, and spend the money

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1. 9.5.1851.

2. Akenson, C. of I., p. 145.

> on the people who let them in and in tea, snuff etc. I will myself give no money to be so misapplied, and as our Vicar here takes no sort of trouble with his parish, nor any one else, as I have the Curate's ear, I try and do what good I can and for a beginning give them all linen instead of putting a sum of money in the Box on Christmas Day. 1

Not only was he expected to undertake much of the ordinary organisation of the parish, a second characteristic he shared with many of the Curates in Ireland was poverty. He clearly was in no way related to gentry and where the Catholic priest's income may have put him on the same economic level, Mr. Foster's left him very badly off. Mrs. Smith did not like him ("I have no respect for him, I have no idea that he is improveable, be he may be made more comfortable, consequently less irritable")[2] and was infuriated by the way he wasted a legacy amounting to his annual stipend in 1841:

> We are furious with Mr. Foster who upon receiving the back interest due on his Aunt's[3] legacy - £120 - bought a gold watch and chain for himself, twenty seven guineas, and nothing for his wife and children or house, neither has he made any preparation for improving their lodging, neither inclining to change it nor to repair it and there are his wife, himself, and four children and now her sister sleeping in one room and a closet, one parlour in which he teaches three pupils and one tumble-down kitchen in which their single maid sleeps and in which all the work of the house is done, he bought expensive handkerchiefs too and neckclothes, she buys nothing, orders nothing, arranges nothing, and much merit she has in keeping all so tidy and rubbing on so amicably with such an oddity. 4

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1. 16.12.1840.

2. 8.3.1840.

3. Presumably the legacy itself, rather than the interest, amounted to £120: otherwise, if interest is calculated at the modest rate of 3%, the legacy must have been of the order of no less than £4000.

4. 25.10.1841.

By 1846 his family has grown to six and he occupies a new house, details of which help to illustrate the precariousness of a curate's life. It had four rooms, the grates had been gifted by Mr. Owen, Lord Downshire's Agent,[1] while Mrs. Smith had supplied the wall-paper. The rent was £16 a year and this was for house, flower garden, kitchen garden, a field for potatoes and the keep of a cow all year. In Mrs. Smith's opinion this was perfectly manageable on a stipend of £136 per annum. However, the Downshire papers show that an extra piece of land he rented at a half-yearly rent of ten shillings for six years was invariably in arrears; in fact for the six years Mr. Foster rented it there were only two when there were not arrears ranging from ten to thirty shillings.[2]

The only way for a curate to better his condition was to find another parish and there is no doubt that the competition must have been fierce. What is particularly interesting about this Blessington curate is that in 1846 he managed to secure a preferment to the parish of Clogheen on such advantageous terms that Mrs. Smith recorded them in her Journals.

> His [is] one of the best houses in [Clogheen] with good garden, lock-up yard, kitchen court, and eleven rooms, all to be newly papered and painted for twenty five pounds a year; few Irish livings have a glebe house for the clergyman free, and this low-rented good one is a marvel. Then the income is so fine! A Hundred and ninety-seven pounds from the parish and fifty pounds more for extra duties with his own sixty pounds he will have better than three hundred a year! riches! hardly to be got through! 3

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1. 4.7.1846.
2. D.P. D671/R2/59.
3. 4.7.1846.

This evident delight for Mr. Foster's change of fortune (in fact only an increase of around 40%) in such difficult conditions needs to be seen against the great increases in income currently enjoyed by the Catholic church to remind us that, where there was such financial insecurity, it was difficult to expect hard-worked curates wholeheartedly to carry out their manifold duites. Interestingly enough, Mrs. Smith's final thoughts dwell on the Rector not the Curate of Blessington: "After fully entering into Mr. Foster's delight at being raised to better than three hundred pounds a year, I thought of the Moores, who we pity so extremely at being reduced to little less than four hundred - so expensive are our fancied wants, so much do we pay for what is quite unnecessary."[1]

One final mention of the established church clergyman of whom she did not approve might help to produce more of a balance. The Honourable the Archdeacon Agar, is the only one mentioned in the 1840s who was not criticised in the same breath for extreme dereliction of duty, some personal shortcoming or doctrinal inadequacy. At any rate he alone possessed that relaxed, confident approach to life in general of which Mrs. Smith so approved; there was never any danger of Puseyite temptation or Calvinist traps with him. Indeed, from Mrs. Smith's Journals he resembles nothing so much as one of the comfortably well-off from Sommerville and Ross, which is a real indication that what

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1. 4.7.1846.

she herself most admired in clergymen was attention to duty as well as an absence of those noxious passions which for her disfigured true religion.

She wrote of them in June 1842, as if to welcome them back to Ireland (for, perhaps typically, they had been in the south of France trying to accumulate enough evidence to reverse his sister's will, by which she left everything to one of her men-servants): "I was quite glad to see them - the country has not been like itself without them. Their strange old gigs and chaises and phaetons, the nondescript harness and elderly, leisurely horses were quite missed on the roads; and the pair themselves, I missed them too - her comely, sonsy face and figure, his clever, odd, amusing conversation and perfectly gentlemanly manner."[1] Soon afterwards, they entertained some friends to dinner and the account which duly appeared in the Journals is worth repeating in full for what it illustrates about the life-style of a clergyman she admired, as much as for her gifts of description.

> The dinner was roast beef, two ducks, three roast chickens, herrings, trout, soles, fricasséed rabbit, ham and eggs, pudding - pancakes and gooseberry fool, which last the Archdeacon ate together out of a soup-plate; the wines were few rather - port, sherry, Madeira, claret, champaign. The dinner is the grand business of the day, of life, with both Mr. and Mrs. Agar - half-cooked by him, wholly served, for they have none but a bare-footed maid of all work. When the guests, always bachelours, at least always at the time without wives, arrive, they find only Mrs. Agar in the little parlour; the table already laid, - five or six knives and forks to each cover - three or four wine glasses - one dumb waiter covered with bottles - another with plates.

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1. 4.6.1842: the Scottish adjective (sonsie - happy, pleasant, placid, Chambers Scots Dialect Dictionary) is used very naturally.

> If anyone should cross the narrow passage, a glimpse of a shirt sleeve may be seen belonging to a thin white hand in charge of some sauce boat or covered dish passed through the staircase railing to the floor. The Master and the maid then bring in some of the meats and the guests begin. Every now and then a knock at the door betokens a hot dish which Mr. Agar receives in exchange for any one done with; he also holds out clean plates for dirty ones and piles the dirty ones by his side underneath his chair, his table, his dumb waiters, conversing all the while in the most delightful manner; sometimes he is humorous, sometimes grave, always clever; his appetite is very large, he pours down wine in quantities that would affect anyone else considerably. After this he sleeps none - two hours is his longest stretch; often he walks out all night instead of sleeping, decidedly cracky. 1

Granted that much of this information must have come from her husband, nevertheless it is still not the portrait of the sort of committed clergyman likely to add much to his church's efforts at resisting its greatest challenge; and yet he obviously possessed the characteristics that might be associated with pastors from "the real, cheerful, old English reformed church".[2]

The Church of Ireland and its clergymen, then, were a great disappointment to Mrs. Smith. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, she saw as the source of every sort of local or national trouble. Dishonesty and carelessness amongst the indoor and outdoor servants at Baltiboys, for example, had little chance of being rectified for "truth is not in the people nor will it ever be in them under the

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1. 23.6.1842.

2. See footnote 3, p. 273.

Roman Catholic priesthood."[1] Her school was an example of an institution catering for some beyond the bounds of the estate, but suffering from the hostile attitude of the local priest at Blackditches. Within the neighbourhood in general every local election confirmed the national pattern she saw developed by the 1840s of priestly interference, reaching a peak with their involvement in the Repeal movement,[2] acting in an evil way against everybody's true interests.

By 1840 the undoubted source of many of the tensions at both local and national level was the clash looming up between the vigorous, self-confident church released from the bondage of penal times, and the establishment which it felt had been responsible for the persecution. This is the background against which the earlier part of this chapter has been written.

For Mrs. Smith, however, like Samuel Hussey later in the century, the true source of this friction was Maynooth.[3] Her feelings best

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1. 10.2.1840.

2. "It was the rank and file of the ordinary clergy who helped to give coherence to the movement in many rural areas": Kevin Nowlan The Catholic Clergy and Irish Politics in the Eighteen Thirties and Forties, Historical Studies IX (1974) p. 124. This was graphically described by William Owen in a letter of 26 November 1843 to Lord Downshire: "I am most happy to be able to inform you ... that your Lordship's R.C. tenants at my suggestion had the good sense to decline the honor of acting as the Collectors of the O'Connell fund last Sunday, so their Reverences were driven to another estate to look for Collectors ..." D.P. D671/C153.

3. See supra., footnote 1, p. 266.

emerged in her account of the debate in the House of Commons in March 1841, on a motion introduced by Mr. Colquhoun.[1] She described how O'Connell lost his temper and harangued the House in "the Billingsgate style" and Lord Morpeth for the Ministry made "a very childish speech praising the chastity of the Irish women and the sobriety of the men, in short a little more than truckling to the party they fear." For her, it all went back to that institution which for nearly fifty years had been responsible for training Irish priests:

> As to Maynooth, it is a perfect pest to the country, a plague spot whose contamination is daily spreading. If there is to be a papist college it should be upon a more liberal scale, greater funds, lay professors, men of science competent to instruct the pupils and it should be freed from the absolute control of the priesthood. At present it is a nursary for bigots, they learn nothing there but a spirit of persectution and intolerance and political fury, the fools became enthusiasts in bigotry, the wiser become frantick for temporal power, there is no attempt made to cultivate the mind, improve the intellect, controul the temper and they have so managed that there is no-one with authority to rectify this abuse of the nation's money. 2

The severity of her view is in part explained by the fact that each of the three Roman Catholic clergymen she crossed swords with was a

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1. See Hansard's Parliamentary Debates Third Series, Vol. 5 1841 p.1222-1236 (Mr.Colquhoun), 1236-1242 (Viscount Morpeth: the passage so offensive to Mrs. Smith reads:- "But, he must say, that the male portion of that people exhibited at the present time more of sobriety - the female portion of that people exhibited more of chastity - and both portions exhibited more of patience and endurance under sufferings and clamities the most trying and aggravated, than could be said of the people of either of the sister islands."), p.1254-1262 (O'Connell).

2. 5.3.1841.

product of Maynooth. The Parish Priest of Blackditches throughout these years was Father Arthur Germaine who matriculated into the Humanity Class in 1817 and was ordained in 1823. His curate, who was to be most mentioned in Mrs. Smith's Journals in the earlier years of the decade, was James Rickard who matriculated into the Humanity Class in 1819 and was ordained in 1826; a younger man was to feature most in the later years, Richard Galvin who matriculated into the Physics class in 1840 and was only ordained on the 1st June 1844.[1]

Local tensions were important in confirming her views but such celebrated public debates as that inaugurated at the end of 1847 by the published correspondence of the prominent English Catholics, Lords Arundel, Surrey and Shrewbury, undoubtedly prompted her to reiterate her own opinions in her Journals. She believed that they had found themselves "unable to tolerate longer the shameless conduct of the Irish priesthood" and had so decided to publish their denounciation:

> Lord Shrewsbury's letter is really fine, utterly fearless, he tells them all ther misdeed, accuses those that merit it of falsehood, equivocation, tergiversation, agitation, want of Christian charity, of pastoral duty etc. They never got such a castigation from a heritick as from this true son of their church. It will open the eyes of the few Roman Catholick gentry at any rate, whether they will see the better after, who can say. 2

John MacHale, Bishop of Tuam, wrote his reply early next year and her

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1. I am indebted for this information to the late President of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Mgr. Tomás O Fiaich; he wrote "unfortunately the register giving fuller information such as date of birth, parents' names etc. was destroyed in a fire here in 1940", otherwise a fuller picture might have been built up to supplement those in the Journals.

2. 15/16.1.1848.

response at the end of January shows that her estimate of the products of Maynooth had not been tempered by time or the problems it had brought:

> John Tuam has at length answered Lord Shrewsbury, a perfect volume, I can't tell how many columns of rubbish, unreadable, no argument, no reply, coarse abuse from an ignorant, vulgar, low born, lowbred, bigotted, despot, of an accomplished nobleman. These poor creatures, the Irish priests, are living three or four hundred years behind the age, and no gentleman ever entering the profession, they are such a set of "surpliced ruffians" as really disgrace the country. 1

A gleam of hope was to be seen when Rome got involved in the whole affair; Pius IX she had approved of at first but by October 1847 her opinion had changed and she wrote that "our reforming Pope has turned out a black sheep ... he opposes the new Irish Colleges in toto and don't approve of our National Education. I suppose we shan't take much notice of his folly."[2] The following February however she thoroughly agreed with his efforts to, as she saw it, regain control of the situation and get the Irish clergy to toe the line:

> The Pope has sent orders to the Bishops to put an end to these scandals among their clergy, to forbid politicks from the Altar. A meeting of dignatories was held in Dublin, kept very quiet though, to consider of an answer. That good old man Archbishop Murray in the chair, who spoke his mind plainly,backed by the propoganda. Till Lord Minto went to Rome his good sense had not been appreciated there, indeed the misrepresentations of the "surpliced ruffians" had almost deprived him of authority. Now all will go well. 3

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1. 31.1.1848.
2. 31.10.1847.
3. 16.2.1848.

This favourite repeated phrase summarises her attitude towards the rank and file clergy, alumni of Maynooth, whose activities in her area or in the country at large were, in her opinion, so much responsible for local and national discontent. By 1850 their malign influence, she thought, might now be controlled from within as well as outwith Ireland, for it looked as if the Catholic landed proprietors would now take a hand:

> I wonder whether the Roman Catholick gentry will patiently submit to the rules laid down at Thurles, no national Colleges, nor schools, if they can be cushioned, an exclusive system to be immediately adopted, at their own cost, and there is our hope - they have little cash and less will. 1

It may have been her considered opinion at the end of the decade that external and internal pressures might regulate the clergy better, but there is no sign of such optimism being justified from what she had written over the previous ten years. The perpetual skirmishing which may not have been started by, but was certainly recognised by, the Poor Law elections of April 1841 was to be present throughout the decade. The importance of this incident has already been emphasised[2] in that it led Colonel Smith to assert for him an extended definition of what he considered the rights he could exercise at Baltiboys; there were of course equally momentous consequences for the relationship between landowner and priest. "Hal off on a crusade against the

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1. 2.10.1850: Mrs. Smith was clearly wrong on both counts ... she could hardly have known much about the finances of the Roman Catholic Church, but she knew enough of the parochial efforts of the clergy to have been able to appreciate their "will".

2. Supra. Part II, ch. 2, p. 136-8.

impertinent interference of the Roman Catholic priests with his tenantry, party work, political scheming beginning here where till now we never had any of it." The echoes from this encounter were to be heard throughout the years ahead: "war having been proclaimed, he will not blink the fight."

It is important to emphasise how the Smiths saw this incident as a real turning-point in their relationship with the priest and the organisation of Baltiboys in general. For whereas before this contentious election Colonel Smith had not deigned to consider canvassing, even in the more distant parts of the parish like Lacken away from his own property, so much so that his wife considered that he resembled Coriolanus awaiting the call,[1] thereafter his total involvement justified the use of "crusade" to describe it. He visited Father Germaine to stress that there were secular parts of his tenants' lives in which he considered the priest had no right to direct. He made the tenantry for their part aware that he would not stand aside from matters which he had up to then left to their consciences to direct them: the object of his visits was "to tell [them] to mind what they are about, to inform all that such as are not thoroughly for him he shall henceforth consider as against him and treat accordingly, he never till now interfered with them one way or another."[2]

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1. 27.3.1842: however she can hardly have believed that this was a deliberate tactic so that Colonel Smith would have been able to claim "I shall be lov'd where I am lack'd" (Coriolanus, Act IV, scene 1, l. 14).

2. Supra. Part II, ch. 2, p. 137.

Mrs. Smith, of course, clearly believed that the priesthood had no part whatever to play in local political issues; this could for her by no stretch of the imagination be interpreted as part of that pastoral function she reserved for the priesthood of any religion. Both she and her husband were evidently startled by the ferocity of the means they saw adopted to sway the tenant voters away from what they regarded as their natural loyalty to their landlord. It was bad enough that the priests should call on them and canvass; it was altogether different when they heard of Father Germaine denouncing Colonel Smith at the altar as well as anyone voting for their landlord instead of the candidate of the true faith. Out of the Chapel, too, the Journals report Dempsey, a difficult man at the best of times, and the independently minded carpenter Pat Farrell, being threatened with physical violence and the refusal to have children baptised respectively.[1]

Father Rickard may have excused his denounciation of the Colonel in his sermon as "an incidental flourish in an admonitary harangue concerning dues" but there is clear evidence here that the months before the election of 1841 were embittered by this clash between the landlord (whose loss of the Poor Law Guardian election showed that he was not able to rely on the subservience of the voter) and the priests (who in this area had obviously emancipated themselves totally from earlier temptations to play ecclesiastical instead of secular politics).[2]

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1. Supra. Part II, ch. 2, p. 239-40.

2. Akenson, C. of I., p. 215.

Whoever won this skirmish, it was to be expected that the priests would take up arms again when the Repeal Campaign rolled forward in 1843. In fact, these Journals, which had been so explicit in their description of every development of the 1841 struggle between Colonel Smith and Father Germaine, have no mention of the local priests acting in any of the manifestations of the Repeal movement. There are plenty of references to Daniel O'Connell and his visits to Blessington. In August 1843, for example, Mrs. Smith wrote about why she had not been able to find any of the tenantry at home: "coming up Fetherbed Lane we encountered at least 150 people who had all been to see O'Connell pass; he had changed horses at Mr. Kilbee's on the way to Baltinglass where he performs tomorrow. Blessington was filled with a mob of the unwashed, but there was no enthusiasm among them we heard - mre curiosity for the most part."[1] It is possible, though surprising, there was local apathy. She writes a few days later, for example, after his return from Baltinglass's "monster" meeting: "Dan's entry into Blessington was quite a failure. He sent horses from Dublin to some publick house - would not change at Mr. Kilbee's because he is no repealer - drew up the blinds and drove quick through the Town, no one raising a hat to him. There was no crowd anywhere today awaiting his return."[2] Such lack of involvement hardly squares with the earlier political views of Father Germaine and the "reverend

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1. 5.8.1843.
2. 7.8.1843.

firebrand", so it is possible that there was no lead from the clergy, either because they had been cowed by the vigorous response of Colonel Smith two years earlier, or because they had heeded the signs that Archbishop Murray would not support them; after all the petition from Baltiboys accompanied by a letter from the Colonel had been instrumental in the dismissal of the Reverend Rickard.[1]

One other reason is that if there was comparative indifference to the Repeal Campaign locally, then it made no sense for the priests vociferously to support it, especially when there was another much more important bone of contention to hand in which they had a great interest and where the tenantry might not be so indifferent, that is the fate of the schools at Baltiboys.

The school for infants and girls had been started by Mrs. Smith in the 1834s and she had taken advantage of Lord Stanley's legislation to have it associated with the National School system.[2] From all she writes in her Journals about Father Germaine and her school, it is obvious that there was no co-operation; what for her was another agency for improvement at Baltiboys for him was an insidious attempt to obstruct him in his duty and enveigle his flock away from him. From time to time this distrust broke into the open and something approaching open conflict between landlord and priest is to be seen. One such

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1. Supra. Part II, ch. 2, p. 140.

2. The Chief Secretary, Lord Stanley, had laid the foundations of the National School system in October 1831: see R.B. McDowell (op. cit. p. 57-8, and Akenson Education, ch. IV.

occasion took place at the end of 1840 and in 1841, at the same time, that is, as the struggle over the Poor Law elections which had so exacerbated relations between them; it is therefore likely that Father Germaine had decided that this was an appropriate time to play this particular card in his efforts to assert his control and discredit Colonel Smith's authority.

His chance came after a bout of measles among the children at the school. Miss Gardiner the teacher[1] noted that very few were returning and when Mrs. Smith heard of her inquiries she suspected that it was the priest's machinations that lay behind the poor attendance:

> On going to enquire for her various scholars, she was told they should not return, for that I had burned all their Roman Catholic catechisms, that their priest was informed of it, that he was exceedingly angry and determined to make a great noise about it. She wanted to know whether she should call upon him to refute their folly, but, after considering a minute, I told her not. I bid her take no notice of the story whatever, and if the priest called on her to make enquiries, to take him extremely cooly, merely to say the tale was not true, and there were no catechisms in the school, none being allowed to be taught there by the rules.

Although these regulations were prominantly displayed in the school, Mrs. Smith's suspicions were well and truly aroused:

> I think it not unlikely that the tale may have originated with the priests themselves. They do not like my school, they do not like the knowledge the children gain there, nor the attachment they feel for me. They are beginning to find their power shaking, and they are trying desperate plans to retain it. How difficult it is to do good here. Much can't be done in this generation.

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1. See infra. p. 338 et seq.

2. 27.1.1841.

Whether it was in fact "attachment" to the landlord which led to this attempt to wean the children away from the school, or whether it was another sign that Father Germaine in common with many other Maynooth-educated priests was not prepared to tolerate any other agency, especially one derived from the landed proprietor, rivalling his authority in the parish, it is definite that the Balitboys school was a competitor to his own Hedge School.[1] Mrs. Smith pointedly noted at the start of what should have been a new term that these were "overflowing" entirely due to the parish priest's baneful influence.[2] By March she found thirteen children in her own school with "more coming, so the folly of the catechism story is wearing away."[3] Even so by the 6th April, when the half-yearly return was sent to the Board of Education, she commented "a bad account it gives of our success" with only eighteen pupils the average daily attendance; but there was still hope for "patience, the priest will tire them out by and bye, and I will tire him."[4] She seems to have been correct for the total has risen to 26 a month later ("all very orderly and the children doing very well") and it cannot be coincidence that this was the time Father Germaine chose for his first visit to the school for a year.[5] However he did not choose to attend

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1. For an account in general see P.J. Dowling, The Hedge School of Ireland (Cork 1968).
2. 27.1.1841.
3. 1.3.1842.
4. 6.4.1841.
5. 10.5.1841.

the Inspectors' public examination of the scholars at the end of May 1841, at which there were thirty two pupils, so presumably he had decided not to offer even tacit encouragement. Mrs. Smith concluded after a most satisfactory visit in June that the tide had turned.[1]

What is especially interesting about this conclusion, is that as well as marking the end of an unsuccessful campaign, she saw it as having important repercussions on all the efforts the priests were making to counter Colonel Smith's influence over his tenantry. Mrs. Smith had won the battle over the school by the middle of 1841 (Miss Gardiner came for thread, in such spirits about our school, three more pupils, twenty nine in attendance yesterday. I think we shall conquer the priest) and Father Germaine must have seen this as being more than countered by his candidate's victory in the Poor Law election. Mrs. Smith clearly reckoned that the "removal" of Father Rickard through the intervention of the Archbishop himself was a watershed and she believed that it would have tremendous consequences.

Despite this confidence, the two years the Smiths were to spend away in France from the summer of 1843 were testing ones for the school. The Rector had been left in charge as Trustee and his news in September 1844 made depressing reading, especially that concerning the recently established boys school:

> I have been writing to Ogle Moore about my boys' school which has failed under a Protestant teacher. Mr. Germaine is opposed to all education, the people are so difficult to satisfy with a

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1. 1.6.1841. See Appendix No.3 for analysis of this school's attendance figures.

> good one, there are so many conflicting interests and such a variety of prejudices to counter that I doubt much being done in our absence. Still we must try and keep it on. Every little helps and if they won't learn from a Protestant, we must give them a Roman Catholick trained by the Board and of course in a degree enlightened. We can only work with the tools we can procure but a skilful hand can do much even with bad instruments. As to the <u>real</u> religion of either sect, I look upon them both to be much on a par - the one as far out as the other, but the political bias is a different thing - priest-worship more dangerous; then to cure these evils we must enlighten the people, raise them into having opinions of their own, into judging for themselves, into reflecting, comparing etc. A boy five or six years in a national school under a papist teacher will be several degrees nearer a rational being than his father was, ay or his Protestant neighbour of the Orange cast. Storm if you please, my dear husband, passion and prejudice are the children of ignorance, says an old fable I learned in my youth. 1

There is a lot here which will be set more fully into its context later when the progress of the Baltiboys schools is examined, and this important extract confirms the use she makes of her Journal, her relationship with her husband and her views on religion in general; at this point, however, it is also an indication that, while they were away, Father Germaine was able to return to his persistent campaign to weaken Colonel Smith's control over his estate by attacking his wife's schools.

Despite the unpromising news reported by the Rector, Mrs. Smith's comments on religion during their two year exile show that she looked beyond Father Germaine's machinations to a broader and altogether more hopeful future. She read about the riots that attended the funeral of Lord Limerick ("a liberal landlord and kind to the poor") in January 1845 and commented:

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1. 17.9.1843: I have not managed to trace this 'fable', but to John Wesley is attributed the belief that "passion and prejudice govern the world."

> Some priestly jugglery will have been at the bottom of it. The ignorant priesthood of the old school are beginning to feel their old employed power totter, and they think to confirm it by terrifying and exciting their dupes, the better-informed priests are protesting against the absurdities of their church and preparing their flocks for the great change steadily approaching, not only in Ireland, but everywhere where education is spreading. 1

Later in the year she reported a conversation with the celebrated author on Irish agriculture, who wrote under the nomme de plume of "Mr. Hickey",[2] whom she met in Avranches. They agreed in condemning that "set of the very ignorant and of course very bigoted pastors and people" who had opposed the National Schools and she makes it clear that included in this category are the clergy from the Established Church who had declined to support them: "Many of our clergy have come from their stilts and are now willing to accept the plan of education they never had any valid reason for refusing, it was an insane principle of intolerance, a feeling of tyranous bigotry, a love of power, an uncharitable aversion to all different from themselves; however it is nearly over as to be almost innocuous, the Tresham Gregg set[3] is becoming so laughable as to bid fair soon to be forgotten."[4]

She too had to become more realistic, when they returned that summer to Baltiboys to find much evidence that the Blackditches priests had persisted in their attempt to undermine the school:

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1. 15.1.1845.
2. Supra. Part II, ch.3 , p. 193, footnote 1.
3. Supra p. 275, footnote 1.
4. 12.4.1845.

> Unluckily the priest has thought fit to meddle not only with our servants but with the school. Not Mr. Germaine but a young Curate sent to assist him. He has gained little by his interference ... and will probably retire from the agitation now that the landlord is at hand. I am glad of the squabble, he has exasperated a strong faction among his parishioners, thus rather hastening the hour of freedom to all. No greater change has taken place than in the feelings of the people towards their priests. 1

The new Curate was Father Galvin,[2] and although at first Mrs. Smith clearly suspected that he was typical of the more aggressive generation of priests issuing from Maynooth, determined to assert their freedom from all except clerical control,[3] by September she wrote that he had much good in him. "Our Coadjutor met me ... by appointment to talk over the ways and means of encreasing attendance. He is an enlightened young man, quite unlike any priest we have hitherto had in these parts and he and I are likely to agree perfectly well which of itself will much advantage the school."[4]

The Curate's interest was one thing; however it was more than

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1. 31.7.1845.
2. Blackditches Parochial Records states: "Rev R. GALVIN commenced as C.C. April 20 1845" (National Library, Dublin P6483).
3. The contrast between the older generation of priests educated on the continent and the more aggressive one issuing from Maynooth became a stock situation in many Irish novels at this time. Trollope's The Macdermots of Ballycloran encapsulates this most vividly in the persons of Father McGrath and his pugalistic curate Father Cullen.... Terence McGrath's Father Hallovan (Pictures from Ireland, 1881) illustrates the great divide between his fellow priests and the gentry, as they had "not one idea in common in the entire range of metaphysical and material subjects." See footnote no.1 p. 268.
4. 23.9.1845.

balanced by the tenacious determination of the Parish Priest actively to disencourage what for him was still the pernicious influence one of the landlords in his parish was trying to exert over his parishioners. For Father Germaine the Smiths' return was the signal for another outbreak of that conflict which had simmered away in 1841 and 1842 and, so serious did the situation seem that, when the Inspector visited Baltiboys to observe how the Managers were taking up control and responsibility of the school again, the whole problem of the priest's defiant and unco-operative attitude was discussed:

> We had our Inspector here yesterday with whom we seriously consulted about the ill-success of our Schools, for though there are a good many children and their progress is good, and their parents satisfied, the number is so infinitely too small for the population that it is very disheartening to see these fine school rooms so empty, such competent teachers so discouraged. There is no disguising the fact that our Parish Priest, Mr. Germaine, does not aid the National School. He visits it twice a year, writes formally in the Report Book that all is correct and then he thinks his duty done. He never examines a class, never takes trouble of any kind and close to his house and near the Weavers' Square also are hedge schools containing about seventy scholars each squeezed up into a little room the size of a pantry and taught by a succession of incompetant masters against whose malpractices he never finds one word to say. His present Curate seems anxious to help me in every possible way, but his last was quite an open opposer of our system and this has so unsettled the people that all this more enlightened man's efforts have helped us little as yet. The schoolmaster[1] suggested my writing to Dr. Murray, their Bishop, on the subject and as the Inspector highly approves of this idea, I shall put it into practise. 2

Father Rickard, of course, was the new Curate's predecessor and Mrs. Smith was convinced that his flamboyant opposition to all they were

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1. Arthur McConnell, see PartIII, ch. 2, p. 338 et. seq.

2. 4.10.1845.

trying to achieve on the estate had led to Archbishop Murray dispatching him elsewhere. Father Germaine's efforts on the other hand were more devious and of course more than made up for the interest and help of Father Glavin. Mrs. Smith described in a long entry of October 19th how events unfolded in this first and most important dispute between these old antagonists after the Smiths' return from France.

> The warfare has been about the schools. Father Germaine did not dare openly to condemn them but he has never publicly shown any interest in them and he must privately have discouraged them or more children would have attended, fewer hedge-schools would have been permitted and they would not have been filled to crowding, seventy to eighty pupils while we had under forty. His former curates never concealed their aversion to National Schools, this Mr. Glavin professes to assist us yet after his friendly consultation with me went and set up a hedge school within a mile, selecting a master for it with the utmost care. Our Inspector said this was all nonsense, this struggling for years past against this secret enmity, so by his advice I wrote to Dr. Murray, who had given it them in earnest, and sent me Mr. Germaine's letter excusing his conduct by a most unfair statement distorting facts. The Archbishop accompanied this precious document with a second courteous note to which I made as courteous a reply. Then comes an inquiry from the Secretaries regarding the unsatisfactory amount of pupils. I answered so as to let them comprehend I have the priest against me and then I write to Mr. Germaine himself as civilly as possible to assure him I have no wish to do anything inconsistent with the regulations or conceal from him that, if his charges against the master be correct, we should after investigation dismiss him, that I complained of the near neighbourhood of the new school but a meeting may set all matters to right by giving us the opportunity of talking over everything and I venture to expect either himself or his curate will agree to come and agree to this. So rests the matter at present, whether good will come of it I know not, certainly no harm, he may be angry for a while but he dare not say so and as his superiour will now look after him he must behave himself less radically. The Inspector says we never shall have a good attendance while Mr. Germaine remains our parish priest, but it may be better and every little helps. 1

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1. 8.10.1845: unfortunately two searches of the Archiepiscal Archives in Dublin failed to reveal any trace of these letters or their replies.

The local priest was indeed the key to the matter. His word, which earlier might have been supposed to carry as much weight as Colonel Smith's on secular matters, by now was evidently the more listened to. Her point about declining attendances, which even at their greatest have to be set against the total population of the area,[1] is borne out by the figures she quotes from her own visits to the school and those extrapolated from the Register for the Board and contained in their records.[2] Curates came and went but Arthur Germaine remained Parish Priest; moreover, despite the close proximity of Dublin and the comparative ease with which disciplinary checks could have been administered from the centre, he was able to pay lip-service to the Archbishop's instructions, without deviating one inch from earlier practices. Thus ten days after Mrs. Smith records the gracious interchange of courteous civilities between Dr. Murray and herself and her doubtless terser complaints to the Board, she makes it clear that completely unsubdued, Father Germaine had inaugurated another offensive:

> Our next topic of interest has been my war with the priest which looked very serious at one time. He took no notice of my civil letter to him, talked very impertinently of my interferences in my own business! and thundered away at the Chapel worse than ever. 3

This however led to his being summoned to Dublin so that a relieved

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1. The total population of the Parish of Boystown, according to the 1841 Census, was 3644 falling ten years later to 3200.

2. See Appendix 3 for school attendance figures.

3. 19.10.1845.

Mrs. Smith noted what she hopes is the end of the matter: "But the week has much changed him, he has been in Dublin, was sent for! returned quite amiable, wrote me the kindest possible note, and we are to walk through the parish hereafter hand in hand doing good and peace ensuing! If he will but be quiet I shall be quite content."[1]

Her optimism was misplaced because in the same way that Colonel Smith was unable to exercise what he regarded as the fair rights of property over tenants who dug their heels in, so even the archiepiscopal rebuke Mrs. Smith presumed was delivered did not deter a determined Father Germaine from taking up the cudgels again as soon as he returned to Blackditches. For on the 3rd November a doubtless weary Mrs. Smith recorded:

> The priests have been again abusing my Schools, this proves that they are becoming popular, otherwise these reverend gentlemen would have no need to interfere. I don't much mind them. I'll go even on my own way, "quiet and easy" as John Hornidge says, and we'll soon see the end of it. The people are tired of being so priest-rid, and they are beginning to shew it, resenting their interference, treating them with little respect and often flatly disobeying them. All working for good. 2

This disenchantment of the people for their priesthood was of course a standard fond hope for her, and it is clear through these exchanges that if this was the argument she was falling back on, then there was little to back it up. The parish and the estate were overwhelmingly Roman Catholic (in the list of tenants drawn up in 1834 for tithes and published for Griffith in 1852 only the Darker brothers are indisputedly Protestant) and the available evidence from Parochial Records suggests on the contrary that there was some slight return for the massive

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1. 26.10.1845.

2. 3.11.1845.

amounts of energy generated by the church in this decade. The Blackditches parochial records show at least two converts from protestantism, Thomas Johnson (who unfortunately after the baptism of his son Michael in 1840, a marginal note informs us, "dedit 0.0.0. !") and the appropriately named Thomas Orange "a convert from protestantism, baptized on 2 March 1846".[1] Thus although when resident at Baltiboys Mrs. Smith took a much more realistic view of the power of the Church and priesthood, she still retained a starry-eyed optimism that the people would in time appreciate her argument that it was this power in which was to be found the source of all that was wrong with Ireland.

It will be evident later just what impact the Famine years had on some of Mrs. Smith's most cherished ideas, but on the priesthood, surprisingly in view of her detestation of Father Germaine, she vacillated a great deal.

To begin with, for example in the first half of the blackest year 1847, she contrasts the energetic measures of the Protestant clergymen ("coming forward actively giving time and money with zeal in the charitable endeavour to lighten this appalling calamity") with ("at least not by any means so generally") the priesthood, and of course Father Germaine, at this time continued to be singled out for just that sort of action she saw as leading inevitably to the eventual triumph of reason and sanity in the form of her own ideas.

> Mr. Germaine not only refused to superintend the stores at Blackditches himself but prevented his two curates from undertaking the care of them. All of which is telling among the

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1. Blackditches Parochial Records, see National Library of Ireland, P 6483.

> people. A Roman Catholic mother took her baby to the Protestant clergyman at Tallaght to have it baptised by him and on his remonstrating, remarking that its father also was a papist, she said that she meant to rear her son up in the reformed faith - that times were changing - and that by the time her son were a man it would be more advisable for him to be a protestant.[1]

Tales of this ilk were of course irresistible to Mrs. Smith but her conclusion was not to repeat a scornful denounciation of Father Germaine, or exult that at least one papist had apparently seen the light, but to discern an element of hope in the midst of all the tragedy and muddle. "It really seems if our common distresses were drawing us all closer together, producing kinder feelings among us, soothing sectarian asperities, renewing the old attachment between the upper and lower ranks. God grant it because if so the blessing will be unspeakable."[2]

There was hardly much evidence for this in her February Journal, but by April 1847 the work of Father Glavin is being singled out for real praise; after condemning the people round about for their "utter want of probity" as they scrambled for relief, she relieved him from any responsibility.

> Mr. Glavin is a real blessing; her preaches upon the moral virtues, tries to instil good principles, praises England the help it has given, the good it is aiming at; he encourages a spirit of industry, and checks the idle love of wakes and patterns and gossipping. But the people are pretty near sick of their priesthood; it is wonderful how rapidly they have been rising of late years towards more enlightened religious feeling. And this famine helps; the heavy dues are now intolerable their Protestant brethern paying none; relief all comes from the Protestant gentry, the Roman Catholics have

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1. 11.2.1847.

2. 9.12.1847.

> been very deficient in tendering aid, generally. The two parties have however been brought very much more together by the affairs of the poor whom they have to relieve and the result will most certainly be of use to our social position. 1

Whatever vision she had of a better future, there were just not enough Father Glavins to play their part in bringing it about. This was clear to her after the murder of Major Mahon[2] at the end of the year, that event which undoubtedly hardened much landlord opinion which earlier might, like Mrs. Smith, have been more ready in the midst of calamity to co-operate with what before the Famine could only have been regarded as irreconcilable enemies,

> The Roman Catholick clergy could without a doubt check these atrocities were they so minded, in many instances at least, perhaps not altogether for they can but follow the people in some respects, but except in this diocese[3] they rather urge them onto crime, turning everything into a religious aspect, effecting to believe and of course teaching that the exertions, the charities, the assistance of protestants during the late times of suffering were for proselytising purposes; and their ignorant flocks relieved for the present from the pressure of want, forget their obligations once so fully realised and forget the apathy of their own priesthood, last year so indignantly reprobated. 4

This is really her opinion of Father Germaine in the early 1840s writ large, but the equally cataclysmic events of 1848 persuaded her that the people themselves, hitherto seen as slowly freeing themselves from the trammels of the priesthood, fully deserved something approaching

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1. 23.4.1847.

2. The murder of this Roscommon landlord had a tremendous impact, doubtless because of his well-known scheme for assisted emigration, see Oliver MacDonagh, Irish Emigration, in Great Famine, p. 336-7.

3. An oblique commendation for Archbishop Murray's sensible attitudes.

4. 9.12.1847.

the full rigours of the old Penal Laws: there could be no doubt to "all reflecting persons" that

> the Roman Catholick Irish are inferiour in morals, in principles, in conduct, in intelligence, and I trust that henceforward they will be left in the low estate suited to their character, for it really endangers the country to put them on a par with their fellow subjects. The wretched will rise out of the mire and be very easily distinguished. But that wretched priesthood should be silently kept down or silenced.[1]

This coloured her comments for the rest of the year: she would have had the priests involved in the Carrick-on-Suir riots shot;[2] Smith O'Brien's fiasco in October she dismissed with the comment ... "To trust to a Roman Catholick people and their priests, wretches who backed out at a time when ever they began to be frightened";[3] and she quoted Michael Doheny writing to the newspapers blaming the "defection of the priests for the ruin of their cause."[4]

Mrs. Smith's writings, then, are a good guide to the ways in which during the 1840s attitudes on all religious matters hardened and the earlier less strained relationships between Catholic and Protestant in this parish, and certainly between priest and landowner, disappeared. She had her own elevated ideas on what ideally was best and she was as scathing about the neglect of the Rector of Blessington

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1. 19.7.1848.
2. 22.7.1848.
3. 19.10.1848.
4. One of the most radical of the active Young Ireland supporters involved in 1848.

as she was about the scandalous interference of the Priest from Blackditches. This was at one level: at the other of day-to-day events, she and her family regularly met the Moores as pastor, landowner and friend, whilst Father Germaine at the best merely crossed their path. In the end, amidst the wealth of small detail about curate difficulties, the influence of Pusey, the new generation of Maynooth-trained priests, or the impact of the Famine on the churches, the difficult relationship between landlord and priest spelt out in the Journals epitomises many of the tensions in mid-century Ireland. The determination of the Smiths to administer Baltiboys for the good of all without outside interference was matched by the vigour with which Father Germaine and most of his curates extended the Church's influence from the purely religious (where for the Smiths it properly belonged) into the undeniably secular. There was no room for compromise even when the Famine struck and in this parish, as in the bulk of the country it was the Landlords who were worn down, and the church whose persistence made inroads into what had before 1840 been regarded without question as the prerogative of the landlord.

Chapter Two

Education

Of all the issues coming between priest and landed proprietor, the school was the most contentious. It was the source of constant bickering and occasional enmity, resented by the one as an intolerable attempt to wean his parishioners away from their faith and seen by the other as the only possible way ofcountering the ignorance and bigotry devolving from their spiritual leader. The Smiths were ready to mobilise sympathetic opinion amongst the tenantry to take the struggle to Dublin; the Priest on his part was ready to go against his Archbishop's will.[1] No attempt to analyse the estate of Baltiboys in the 1840s would be complete without detailed consideration of what the Journals and other evidence reveal about this topic, evidently seen by both sides as one of the keys to their conflict.

Just as one has to recall Elizabeth Grant's presbyterian childhood fully to understand her adult beliefs, so it was her early experiences at Rothiemurchus that helped to mould her views on education. The spartan pursuit of utterly useless accomplishments, such as those the intense cold of New Year's Day 1841 reminded her of,[2] had no place in her schemes:

> We girls occupied the barrack room in the roof of the house, without a fire, without warm water, when we groped for our clothes a little after six, washed in ice and descended to the comforts of Cramer's exercizes on the piano-forte, or worse, Boscha's on the harp till daylight allowed of our using our eyes; really children were cruelly used in those days and

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1. See Part II, ch.2, p. 139.

2. Highland Lady, p. 8, 168-9.

for what purpose. [1]

Equally, her memories of the experiences of her brothers at Eton[2] evidently coloured her plans for her son; where they had automatically by virtue of being sent away been exposed to every undesirable influence, she planned that a combination of home and school would educate him in just those principles necessary for the responsibility of running an estate in manhood.

> It is time for a better system of education. Keeping boys by their mother's apron strings, if the mother be a fool, may probably be as bad as sending them to these dens of vice. But such homes as educated people now have to shelter their children in, combined with the public instructions of Cheltenham or Edinburgh, have a better chance of rearing upright, actively industrious and well-informed pupils, than the old Latin Grammar, birch rod, fighting, drinking and squandering system, and people with small means half ruined themselves, to whole ruin their sons, by means of it. The world is getting a little wiser, slowly. [3]

It has been seen earlier[4] how, what she described to her son as "the misnamed amusements of your class in youth" were in her opinion the cancer that affected so many of their landed neighbours and made their contributions to the improvement of the neighbourhood so feeble, and undoubtedly this coloured her views on how sons should be prepared for their roles ahead. Concerned, improving landlords were the result as

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1. 1.1.1841. The firm of Cramer, Beale & Co. were well-established music publishers.
2. For example, Highland Lady, p. 66: "We were proud of having a brother at Eton then, now I look back in horror on that school of corruption, where weak characters made shipwreck of all worth."
3. 11.1.1844.
4. Part I, ch. 4, p. 92.

much as anything of years of learning; the daughters of the house too had to be schooled and as early as February 1840 Mrs. Smith took the opportunity of showing that she added a touch of realism to the more fanciful educational theories of the day.

> Alas! How many in this educating age fall victims to the overwork of a modern schoolroom, and what can a girl learn after all, or if she did what knowledge or accomplishments will make up for want of health. Dear Janey and Annie, you shall run about these fields and ride and walk and garden combining with exercise as much of what is useful as will assist in rendering you good daughters, good wives, and good mothers, with any accomplishments you have a turn for, and that we can manage, in moderation, because pursuits of this kind increase both your usefulness and your happiness, but we will have no pale faces and no anxious brows, and no listless spirits. [1]

Not that this meant a solitary communing with Nature, for many of their afternoons in the open air were spent in their mother's company visiting tenantry or the poor;[2] in any case for Mrs. Smith the learning process was inseparable from hard work. As far as the formal early education of her family was concerned, she relied on the Chambers' Educational Courses[3] to which she had been introduced by the Rector. So useful were they that on one occasion she maintained that with the help of them and the collected works of Maria Edgeworth it was possible for a family to be educated independently of the parents.[4] The

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1. 1.2.1840.

2. Part I, ch. 4, p. 96.

3. These, produced by the well-known Edinburgh publishers William and Robert Chambers, both of whom were known to Mrs. Smith, were in print, according to the Catalogue of the National Library of Scotland, between 1838 and 1886.

4. 3.1.1843.

Journal entry for 11th September 1841 provides an illustration of the many uses to which Chambers was put and how both the Governess, Miss Cooper, and the schoolteacher, Miss Gardiner, (from whose tangled relationship with Mrs. Smith a fascinating insight into the running of a National School in the 1840s emerges)[1] were involved too:

> Read Chambers on Infant Management, a most truly judicious wrk, with the little volumes of Chambers' course. Miss Cooper took the "Management of Infants", Annie the drawing books, Janey the "Moral Class Book" and the "History of Greece". I have my head just now full of "infant education" and having studied it all the morning I gave the book in the afternoon to Miss Gardiner whom I sent for on purpose and held a long discourse with her on the necessity of educating herself by degrees as she is educating her pupils, which with the books I give her and my assistance she can easily do. 2

The subservient role of the schoolteacher and the almost over-bearing supervision of the mistress are features of the running of the school that will be examined later. At this point it is the conscientious preparation and the evident belief that an estate school was an important part of a landlord's responsibilities that need to be stressed. Exactly what this meant to her she explained to her journal after her description of the uses Chambers was put to.

> How much real practical knowledge, judgement, temper, spirits is necessary in the instruction even of the lower orders. What a serious charge then is such a family as ours, how much good or evil to themselves and the large circle over which even individual influence must extend depends on the habits they are brought up in. Such a deep consciousness as this together with

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1. See pp. 338-347.

2. 11.9.1841: Miss Cooper was to be remembered in Colonel Smith's will (13.1.1851) by which she was to be left £50"as a mark of my esteem for her and my gratitude for the conscientious and affectionate manner in which she discharged her duty towards us" (P.R.O. Dublin T13814 A).

> the persuasion of inability to perform all we anxiously wish might of itself prove the existence of a supreme power on which everything human must depend, which we are told will give help if we ask it, a prayer which the sincere must feel is fully answered. 1

The school at Baltiboys, established in response to the Smiths' view of their duty as landlords, is one of the best examples from all they did for those living on the estate, because its progress can be charted from the Board of Education's records[2] as well as the Journals ... and from these it can be seen that the intervention of the "supreme power" must have been fervently prayed for to support their efforts.

The skeleton of the National School system had been set up in 1831[3] and the Board of Education's salary payments record that Baltiboys Girls' School was "taken into connexion by the Board" on 28th August 1834 so it was amongst the first generation of National Schools; it was probably one of the earliest in Co. Wicklow for in the chronological lists of applications for aid it is numbered 17. The original application (Queries to be answered by Applicants for Aid towards the Fitting-up of Schools, the Paying of Teachers and the Obtaining of School Requisites)[4] is a very valuable source of information about the Girls' and Infants' school which was the first to be established at Baltiboys. It is written in Mrs. Smith's neat hand and signed by

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1. 11.9.1841.
2. These very valuable sources are to be found in the Public Record Office, Dublin; they are indexed county by county.
3. R.B. McDowell, Great Famine, p. 57-8; Akenson, Education, ch.s IV, V and VI.
4. P.R.O., indexed like all the schools, under county and parish.

H. Smith of Baltiboys, which neatly summarises what has earlier been deduced from the Journals about the actual organisation of the estate. The building was not constructed as a school but Colonel Smith had spent £10 repairing and adding to it so that it was a solid stone and lime house with a slated roof, over forty feet long, seventeen feet wide and fifteen feet high inside. There were two schoolrooms both the breadth of the house, one thirty feet long and the other fourteen, and it was estimated that this would be suitable for eighty children.

Mrs. Smith added her explanation of their reasons for seeking to found a school associated with the National System:

> Colonel Smith built the school house principally for his own tenants but also with the intention of benefiting a large tract of wild country towards the hills, densely populated, and without a resident landlord." 1

This is confirmed by the landless labourers, some from outwith the estate, whose children attended the school in the 1840s. Even so, it can only have been regarded as a start for, as their application emphasised, the population was "immense" (the Parliamentary Gazeteer quoted[2] the 1841 Census figures of 3,644 for the Parish of Boystown alone and it is clear that it was towards Lacken that this "large tract of wild country towards the hills" extended.

There was one other, for Mrs. Smith, reputable school in their neighbourhood, that run for the Marquis of Downshire 2½ miles away in

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1. This is clearly Lacken, the area that was to be added to the estate thirty years later (see map , appendix I).

2. Op.cit. p. 22.

Blessington by the Kildare Place Society,[1] but there were "one or two low hedge schools" in the area and the Journals make it clear that her school was to be an attempt to counter what she regarded as their poisonous influence. The presence of what D.H. Akenson has described as "a quiet but widespread conspiracy"[2] in the shape of these hedge schools was a constant annoyance to Mrs. Smith, particularly when the Priest did all in his power to encourage them at the expence of her National School. This indeed was the issue over which Father Germaine and Mrs. Smith fell out within months of her return from France. She estimated that there were seventy scholars crammed into "a little room the size of a pantry" in one of them, and that they were taught by "a succession of incompetent masters"; the Curate too, who had in conversation seemed sympathetic to what she was attempting in her school, annoyed her by setting up another hedge school "within a mile" and by "selecting a master for it with the utmost care."[3] Mrs. Smith would have little respect for the opinion of D.H. Akenson that "it is clear that a lively underground intellectual life did exist in portions of peasant Ireland";[4] she believed that in their neighbourhood they were merely paying lip-service to educating the children and that their

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1. This Society is the most praised by commentators on the early nineteenth century, but its government grant ceased in 1831; presumably the third Marquis' generosity secured its contrived existence and efficiency.

2. Education, p. 45.

3. 8.10.1845.

4. Education, p. 49.

main function was to attract pupils away from the National School. Thus on 27th January 1841 there were only three pupils at Baltiboys whilst the hedge schools were "over-flowing" because the Priest, she believed, had taken advantage of a recent outbreak of measles to divert her children to his schools. Father Germaine and his Curates regularly in her view abused their pulpit to thunder away against her school; she was therefore clearly delighted to note in the summer of 1847 that, although many of the children obeyed such calls, it did not make them any more regular in their attendance at the hedge school near the Blackditches Chapel ... "they cheat him as they cheat me, for half of them who discontinued school on account of the preaching never came near chapel at all."[1] At the very least, then, National Schools, efficiently organised and run on strictly non-sectarian principles, should be able to educate the children and counter the ignorance and bigotry she saw actively encouraged by the priests.

At the heart of the disagreement between priest and landowner was their fundamental differences of opinion about whether the National Schools were in fact non-sectarian institutions attempting the impartial education of the people. This controversy had raged at the highest level between Archbishop Murray, one of the Commissioners, and Archbishop MacHale between 1838 and 1841 and it was evidently still simmering at this more lowly level throughout the 1840s. So fierce was the disagreement that it makes a mockery of the phrases which have been used to describe the attitude of the Roman Cathloic clergy in general

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1. 27.1.1841.

to the system, "benignly neutral" in the 1830s and "cautiously bewildered" in the 1840s;[1] in no sense can these be stretched to cover the intransigent opposition of Father Germaine and the Blackditches curates to all that Mrs. Smith attempted in her National School.

And yet the priest had signed the other application necessary for aid to be received from the Board, the one applying for a grant towards the building of the schoolhouse; the Colonel, Ogle Moore and John Foster had signed representing the Protestant applicants and Father Germaine for the Roman Cathloic. All asserted that the queries were "fully and truly answered" and that "the School shall be conducted according to the Regulations set forth in our answers."

Mrs. Smith described in her written answers the "arrangements ... respecting the imparting of Religious Instruction to the Children"; they reveal a system completely in harmony with the spirit the Board expected but equally one unacceptable to priests who took Archbishop MacHale's side. "The religious instruction of the children" she wrote "is left entirely to their parents and Pastors of whatever creed. Part of Saturday is appropriated for their instruction by their respective clergy." And in a footnote she added further detail:

> The children on assembling every morning join in a short prayer read by the Mistress - and just before breaking up some of the older girls read a chapter aloud in the Scripture lesson published by the Society and all the children are questioned on it. No one need attend at either the prayer or the reading whose parents do not wish it - on Saturday they are instructed by their clergy. 2

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1. Akenson, C. of I., p. 202.

2. This conformed with Lord Stanley's original intention that the schools should be non-denominational: his criterion were that children of all faiths should attend and there should be no denominational teaching (Akenson, p. 1).

What appeared to the Board and Mrs. Smith the fairest imaginable system, where the only religious instruction was composed of uncontentious readings acceptable to all Christians, was seen by Father Germaine as a common denominator so low as to be positively harmful to his parishioners' children. For almost all the tenant and all the labouring families on Baltiboys or in the surrounding area were Roman Catholic,[1] and he saw what Mrs. Smith believed to be an impartial system as the thin end of a long wedge designed to wean the children away from their faith. This may not have been her expressed aim in the school; but her writings show that it nevertheless was for her a situation devoutly to be wished for, and one which would at a stroke cure many of the ills of Ireland.[2] These she probably did not hide from Father Germaine so there is every reason to suppose that as all their various arguments dragged on during the 1840s so their mutual misunderstandings and consequent antipathy over the school and what it was trying to achieve increased from year to year. The main occasions when this burst out into the open and Mrs. Smith wrote about them in her Journal have already been mentioned ... the quarrel in December 1841 that began when Mrs. Smith believed that the priest had started the rumour about her burning the children's catechisms that had led to a falling of numbers; the clash of wills in 1845 which eventually got to the ears of Archbishop Murray and led the Inspector to confide in Mrs.

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1. This is clear from the Register of Births of the Church of Ireland in Blessington, and the Register of Marriages and Births from Blackditches (see Part II, ch. 3 & 4). It is confirmed by the Survey Field Books that "The inhabitants [of Boystown parish] go to Blackditches Chapel and to Ballymore and Blessington Churches." (Lt. Rimington RE, 22.5.1838).

2. See, for example p. 314-15.

Smith that he could not envisage a large attendance in the school so long as Father Germaine remained the priest at Blackditches.[1] It was during this last squabble that Mrs. Smith spelt out just how he managed to keep within the letter of his obligations to the school but without offering any encouragement at all: two superficial visits each year and a satisfactory comment in the Report Book were the rule, whilst he did all in his power to encourage the hedge-schools.[2] He only modified this attitude when pressure was put upon him from above as in 1841 over the Poor Law elections[3] and 1846 over the school.[4] The third occasion when Archbishop Murray leant upon Father Germaine was in September 1849, after the arrival of a new teacher, a Mr. McDarby, who, as a Catholic, might have been thought more susceptible to the priest's influence. This time, when more of his "underhand practices" continued, Mrs. Smith tried another tactic.[5] She persuaded one of their neighbours, a James Lynch of Whitelays[6] to report what had happened to his uncle, no less than the long-suffering Archbishop Murray. Mrs.

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1. 4.10.1845.
2. See Part III, ch. 1, p. 308.
3. See Part II, ch. 2, p. 139.
4. See p. 309.
5. 1.9.1849.
6. He had been one of the original Patrons of the school founded nearby at Ballymore Eustace in 1835 and it is interesting that, when invited on the application form to name anyone in Dublin "acquainted with the Manager, or with the circumstances of the school" he answered ... "His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Murray visited the school."

Smith was optimistic this time about the likely outcome for "I am in hopes of this new attempt succeeding. A great change is coming over the people and I do think that if we have efficient teachers we shall not want scholars." Moreover, as well as promising teachers, she saw Mr. Lynch's intervention working:

> The priests have evidently heard from their Bishop, both of them came and visited the schools and they surprised the Master by praising him, tone in fact quite altered, yet very sore in thus being obliged to yield. Of course the spread of knowledge must frighten them, human nature requires objects of interest and the astute Roman Catholic Church has deprived their ministers of all save the aggrandisement of their order collectively, for as individuals each has little power, merely the wretched ambition of keeping ignorance and fear. They must give it up however, follow their flocks or they will not much longer follow them. 1

One factor which may have helped make the priests more determined to pursue their opposition to Mrs. Smith's school was the opening of a second school on the estate for the boys in 1844. It must have looked an ominous expansion as far as the priests were concerned, for with what all reports agree was a dense populatin there was presumably no reason for preventing further expansion of such "godless" institutions.

According to the Journals, the initiative for starting a second school came from those parents with children at school who "bit with the spirit of improvement" as Mrs. Smith wrote in November 1842, "are most desirous to have a boys' school on the National system".[2] She herself of course fully supported them particularly when their initia-

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1. 4.10.1849.

2. 27.11.1842.

tive went as far as offering practical assistance:

> They see the old method was no good, the girls are doing so mighty well entirely under Miss Gardiner, and the little boys, that they all wish for equal advantages for their big boys, they are willing to help to build an addition to my Schoolhouse.

One of the estate carpenters, Pat Ryan, was to collect the subscriptions and organise the building; his costs were to come to £80 and Mrs. Smith notes with gratitude that he was prepared to spread it over three years. So impressed was she that she saw it as a breakthrough:

> can this be true after years of struggling with their prejudices, true enough, it is the fruits of patience, kindness, forebearance and the real wish to benefit them, the sincerity of which they are now convinced of. I am so happy, the seed is sown, and even were my days to be cut short, some hand will be found to cherish them. 1

Pat Ryan had his subscriptin list completed by January 1843. It totalled £16 and she commented: "there is no doubt we shall have funds enough."[2] By mid-July materials were ready for the roof so that when the Smiths set off for France everything was on target.[3]

Tom Darker had been left in charge of the first school (a note in the Board's Salary Payments' Book explains that "Mrs. Smith notified her intention of leaving home and requests that Colonel Smith's Steward may be the acting Manager and Correspondant during her absence"; it is dated August 14th 1843) but the task of getting the Boys School under way had been deputed to the Vicar of Blessington. As Ogle Moore wrote in his application (actually his second, for a marginal note reveals that "an appl.n for this school was rejected B.O. 22.8.44.

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1. 27.11.1842.
2. 31.1.1843.
3. 16.7.1843.

No proof of average attendance. No account book." Which suggests that he was being less than diligent in his duties) in January 1845:

> Management of the School by Lt. Col. and Mrs. Smith, of Baltiboys, who are at present on the continent and for whom the undersigned now acts in this matter.

The Inspector's Report, received by the Board on March 17th, however, was favourable this time. The new school was situated 1/4 mile from the girls' and infants' school, and, like it, was strongly constructed of stone and lime and slated. It had one school room taking up most of the house, being 34 feet long, 14 feet broad and 14 feet high. This was planned to accomodate 60 pupils. As far as the vexed problem of religion was concerned, the Inspector had obviously received reassuring replies from the Smiths. They confirmed that the school would be "bona fide open for Children of all religious denominations" and the religious instruction of pupils would take place on Saturday in the schoolhouse: this last arrangement, his report confirmed, was "satisfactory to the Parents of the Children and publicly notified." Finally, his answers to the questions show that he had "communicated with the Clergymen of the different denominations in the neighbourhood with respect to this application" and no objections were raised; indeed, these interviews are described as "satisfactory".

This Report at first sight confirms the opinion that during the early days of the National Schools most clergymen from the Roman Catholic Church did not disapprove immediately of the system.[1] And

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1. Akenson, C. of I., p. 202.

yet a few laconic replies to the rushed questions of an over-worked inspectorate have to be set against the determined and consistent opposition of the Blackditches clergy. This suggests, particularly in view of the fact that this opposition was later to be pursued in the teeth of the disapproval of their Archbishop, that the official returns do not present an accurate picture. The regime of Colonel and Mrs. Smith at Baltiboys may in their opinion have been enlightened and improving and in the best interest of everyone on the estate, but when they chose to exercise one of the rights of being a property-owner, and this obviously included the establishment of two schools on their own property, particularly when this was done in accordance with the dictates of an Act of Parliament, there was little even the local priest could do to prevent their establishment. However, the balance of power in this parish was equally obviously such that clerical disapproval was one of the main determinants of the success or failure of the school.

One common standard of which this could be measured was the level of attendances.[1] This was accepted by Mrs. Smith, who from her Journals was much concerned to keep numbers as high as possible, the Board, for whom such figures were the key to their continued support, and also of course Father Germaine, to whom attendance figures represented the most important indicator of how this local struggle between landlord and spiritual guardian was progressing.

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1. See Appendix III.

These attendance figures emphasise the importance of 1841/1842 as the years when the struggle between landlord and priest over the school came to a peak. Before, the average level of attendance in the girls' school was a respectable 30 and although it was not to drop dramatically either in these difficult times or when the Smiths were in France, the point is that it did not rise as Mrs. Smith had every expectation of it doing, considering the amount of energy she was expending on the school's behalf. The boys' attendances followed a rather different pattern. Before the trough of 1841/1842 they had averaged 23 but in the worst of these two years, when the total was officially noted as 29, only three of these were boys. And yet the desire for education for the boys at Baltiboys, witnessed by Mrs. Smith's account of their school's origins, is borne out by the figures. The official returns only start in 1847 but the Journal's optimistic note is echoed here; by 1850 attendances average 54. However the decline that followed the Smith's departure to Dublin was very swift and can be followed in the Board's Reports. On 29th August 1850, for example, they strike a bad note: "Inspector reports school closed since the 8th March last, at which time the teacher ... took ill of fever;[1] he resigned afterwards." In May next year it is noted that the school reopened on 1st April "under she believes a comp.t teacher." However a year later the grants from the Board were cancelled "as the average would not at all warrant continuance of grants. Refer to small average since 1849 and the several letters on the subject." The Commissioners' Report

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1. John McDarby: see p. 354-6.

on the school for 1851 may have said "school temporarily closed" but in fact this was the end of the Male School at Baltiboys.

The Girls' school after surviving the difficulties of the early 1840s proceeded positively to triumph over the unimaginable problems of the rest of the decade. 1845 and 1846 were clearly difficult years but numbers rose from 45 to average 60 pupils between 1847 and 1851. With reason may Mrs. Smith have written in January 1851 "if things go on as they have begun we shall have a full school soon" and it is clear she contemplated 100 girls. Even such a disturbing situation as the four month closure of the school later in 1849 before a suitable teacher could be found and when the girls squeezed into the Boys' school had no lessening effect on numbers.

In the end, therefore, both sides in this protracted dog-fight over one of the most important areas of conflict between landlord and priest for the loyalty of the tenantry or the souls of parishioners, depending on one's view-point, were entitled to claim some sort of victory. Mrs. Smith could during her visits to Baltiboys in the 1850s, as before, see a flourishing Girls' school amply repaying all the hard work of two decades which had led it to develop such strong roots. Father Germaine could take satisfaction from the effectiveness of the power he had wielded in the early 1840s which was to be one of the reasons for the difficulties leading to the struggle of the separate Boys' school to survive and its eventual disappearance.

So far the schools at Baltiboys have been viewed for the importance they cast on the tangled relationship between landlord and priest at this important time when both the rights of landed property and the

powers wielded by the church were changing. A second importance lies in the fact that the Journals contain considerable mentions of the sort of relationship Mrs. Smith, as Manager of the schools, struck up at one level with the Board of Education and its Inspectors, and at another with her teachers. Each of these, important for the light they cast on what would otherwise be merely a bare educational statistic tucked away in composite total for Co. Wicklow, needs to be examined, but following D.H. Akenson (who was concerned first to concentrate on "the outlines of beaurocracy of national education" and only afterwards "will it be appropriate to turn to filling in the gaps with material gathered from individual school class-rooms")[1]., it is best first to examine the light in which the Board appear. The teachers who were often the subject of Mrs. Smith's communications with the Board need to be named. Elizabeth Gardiner was the Girls' school teacher from 26th June 1835 to the 14th April 1847 and Arthur McConnell, a Roman Cathloic, ran the Boys' school from 20th March 1845 to the end of 1846. He was succeeded in April 1847 by a Patrick O'Keefe whose daughters Anna and Maria, at different times taught in the Girls' school. They were dismissed in June 1849 and from August Frances MacDonald ran the Girls' and John McDarby the Boys' schools; for the last fourteen months of its existence the Blessington teacher William Grindon presided over its final decline.

The broad background to Mrs. Smith's management of her schools of course is her relationship with the Board of Education. This has

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1. Education, p. 2.

been described generally as "a singularly fuzzy one, despite the clarity of the printed rules" and it will be seen that Mrs. Smith, as 'patron' and 'manager', in her dealings with the central administration and their Inspectors experienced a great deal of frustration.[1] They had supplied the grants originally by means of which the first school had been established and they continued to contribute towards the various teachers' salaries, the schools meantime remaining firmly in the category of those not vested in the Board's control. Although the Report of the Commissioners of National Education in 1835 make it clear that Colonel Smith alone paid for the original building, they supplied £6:13:0 towards "Fitting Up" as well as fifteen shillings and a half-penny for "Requisites". At the same time it was noted that the original contribution towards these made locally was £4:2:0½.[2] And yet it appears from the Journals that Mrs. Smith's feelings towards her national partner were governed less by gratitude for their help than grudging resentment at the inefficient and bureaucratically unfeeling way she thought they worked.

One recurring irritant was delay in paying Miss Gardiner's salary. It was little enough for she was, as a second class teacher only paid £8 a year (twice yearly at the end of March and November), whereas her trained predecessor Ann Maria Balleiger (who is nowhere mentioned in the Journals because she was only employed in 1834 and 1835) received £24 per annum, according to the Board's records of salary payments.

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1. Akenson, Education, p. 149.
2. PP HC 1835 XXV see under Leinster, Co. Wicklow, parish of Boystown.

This had not been paid in 1840 by May, so there was nothing for it but to complain:

> Wrote to the Secretaries of the National Board to know what is become of Miss Gardiner's salary, that certainly does seem to be a strangely mismanaged concern. What they do with the immense sum of money voted yearly to them by parliament it really is difficult to make out, they shamefully underpay the teachers and even the pittance they give them is generally due for months; there is no getting any assistance towards improvements or repairs, nor is there any training school as yet for instructing female teachers, and the Institution being going on these six years, and such a farce as the Inspectorate is. One merit they have and it is a great one, they are most liberal in their supply of school requisites. All their books[1] are admirable and very cheap and they give every four years a complete set to be used in the School, gratis. 2

Her criticisms do not seem to have stopped her from completing all the forms demanded by the Board (even that of June 1843 wanting to know how she organised "the reading of the Scriptures and the Scripture extracts in the National School", which after the trials and tribulations this very topic had raised between her and the priest must have taken some self-control to complete) or co-operating with the Inspectors, Graeme and Ness, at the customary intervals. Co-operation was one thing but dictation was another as she made plain:

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1. One of the conditions of receiving a grant was that the Board's books would be used in the school (McDowell, Great Famine, p. 58). They were supplied at half-price (not that Mrs. Smith would necessarily have approved of one of their aims which was to induce uniformity throughout their schools) and from 1833 each school was supposed to receive free stock every four years. Many of the books used (there is a list in Akenson, Education, p. 231 but unfortunately Mrs. Smith nowhere refers to any by name) were admirably practical e.g. Agricultural Class Book: or how best to cultivate a small farm and garden; together with hints on domestic economy (1848).

2. 25.5.1846.

> Miss Gardiner down with an order from the Inspector to attend at Naas tomorrow to furnish accounts and receive directions for the future of our school. I took the reply on myself and made it like my father of old in the "brimstone and butter" style, sending them every account they could want but not sending the poor woman, thinking their Inspector may come here himself if he has anything particular to say to us. 1

The inability of the Board's minions to prove themselves as efficient in the running of their organisation as Mrs. Smith expected was to prove a constant source of annoyance; towards the end of their twenty year spell at Baltiboys she wrote:

> A most curious letter from the Secretaries of the Education Board calling attention to the want of requisites in our schools, after all the correspondance on the subject closed about a month ago, when at last I received the supplies I demanded in mid-September and which I could have called for several times in vain. Didn't I give them a pinch of pepper in reply. Some clerks must get into the sort of routine in these offices and the well-paid Secretaries trouble themselves very little about the business, otherwise they would not have so foolishly committed themselves. 2

This, then, was very much the tone of her mentions of the Board, its servants and inspectors. She was quick to note individual words of praise or criticism, but for the most part the clear insinuation is that the Dublin bureaucracy's built-in desire to keep control of general standards within the system was breaking down because there was not enough man-power to keep the mechanism of the system working smoothly. This of course was to be seen in contrast to what she believed to be the smooth-running, efficient schools organised by the managers locally.

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1. 8.1.1841: for an example when the young Elizabeth Grant was at the receiving end of her father's ill-humour, see Highland Lady, p. 166-7.

2. 23.12.1848.

The best way of checking her claim is to trace the progress of the school through the account in the Journals of how the various teachers fared after Mrs. Smith undertook the management of the schools again in July 1845; before they went to France the landlord's overseeing the work of the teacher had apparently enabled both to pull the school through the crisis of 1841/1842 even if through-out these years the numbers, even at a time of an Inspection, were disappointing ... thus on the summer visit they paraded 32 children before the Inspector and his comment was reported:

> The children answered well, they looked clean, bonny, happy and up to their business, the Inspector was much pleased and said "this is a nice school, it is a pity it is so small." I really do think now it will get larger, these publick examinations must have a good effect. 1

There had not, however, been many signs of progress to meet the Smiths four years later and the next two were to be years when the tension between landowner and priest virtually excluded there being any possibility of real advance. Another reason was probably tension between the teachers. Elizabeth Gardiner was the elder, aged thirty at the time of her dismissal in April 1847; Arthur McConnell, the first Roman Catholic teacher of the Boys' School (his predecessor, a Protestant, had evidently not been a success and Mrs. Smith had to persuade her husband that the children would be better off under him)[2] was only twenty two when he was sent onto pastures new at the end of the previous year. A more important difference was that Miss Gardiner

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1. 27.5.1841.

2. 18.8.1845.

was not trained until she attended a course at the Model School in Dublin in 1842,[1] where Mr. McConnell was recommended by the Inspector's Report in March 1845 to be placed in the second class of the salary scale; indeed his testimonials were from his previous manager in Tipperary and the "Secretaries and Professors" of the Model School in Marlborough Street. This meant that where her salary from the Board crept up to £12 from May 1843, his was constant at £15.

Whatever tensions there were between them, it was evidently not a successful partnership and the Journals provide a most unusual insight into the way that their work impressed Mrs. Smith, their employer: for it is important to remember that all teachers in the National System could be hired and fired at the whim of the managers and in consequence, as D.H. Akenson puts it, "they were not civil servants and were treated as day labourers rather than as educated men."[2] They were, then, dismissed around the same time and their running of their schools, as seen through the comments recorded in their Manager's Journals, can therefore be sensed from a source more rich, tantalising and rewarding than the bare statistics produced so faithfully by those hacks in the employment of the Board, so despised by Mrs. Smith.

Ogle Moore wrote to France in April 1845 with the news that a new master had been found for the Boys' School and her comments on the

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1. See pp. 360-3.
2. Education, p. 156.

implications of this for the other school are very interesting:

> Miss Gardiner has hardly any pupils at all and of course has lost heart, having set out with but little. She is sadly indolent, always required looking after, and latterly got into the Protestant cant of the ignorant people round her from which moment her usefulness began to diminish. I shall, I think, dismiss her, content myself with a sewing mistress and put all the children under the master. 1

This, if true, puts the subsequent campaign of Father Germaine into a wholly different light, for if the teacher of the National School was possessed by an Evangelical fervour more in keeping with the religious feelings of the Reverend Tresham Gregg[2] than the Board permitted, then it was his duty as one of the original appellants to have her removed. And it may explain why after their return she was not more sympathetic towards Miss Gardiner when she contacted fever: "the school had just begun to thrive" she wrote somewhat testily "numbers having poured in upon the news of our speedy return" and the original plan was not to be changed.

> When the fever broke out amongst some of the children, Miss Gardiner caught it and has been at death's door. She is now recovering, and when a little better must be sent away for a while till the infection is banished when we can reopen the school under the master. It will require a little attention this same school.3

However by August 1845 she felt that it was more desirable to retain her services although it meant more work for her ... "I must devote a few days to setting them both to rights and putting all in order. I

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1. 20.4.1845.

2. See p. 275, especially footnote 1.

3. 31.7.1845.

think the school will thrive." Mr. McConnell himself was not above criticism ("A fine intelligent young man; requires a rein") and in any case he was fully occupied with the Boys' School and establishing a night class which by October already had 18 pupils.[1]

By September it was the turn of Miss Gardiner's fortunes to rise.

> Spent two hours this morning in the schools. Miss Gardiner is getting on, she has twenty nine pupils gathering with every prospect of her number increasing, all looking bright and clean and happy. Only sixteen boys, somehow Mr. McConnell don't get them to look as cheerful as the girls. He is not popular among the people I hear. It is indeed hard to content them but there are generally some foundations for mob fancies. I must enquire further concerning him. I have no particular admiration of him myself. 2

By the end of 1845 complete disenchantment had set in:

> I walked to school... found Miss Gardiner thriving, twenty nine clean, happy looking little girls. Mr. McConnell shut up having closed a few minutes after eleven, his pupils averaging from nine to thirteen. So he must go. I much dislike him. I have found him jealous, greedy, inattentive though a clever, well-informed young man. The priest was so unjust to him that I thought it right to give him time to retrieve his popularity. In this he has failed and being disinclined to him myself, I was afraid a prejudiced mind might misjudge him. Therefore I have agreed with him to remain till Christmas that he might have a fair chance. He is not fit for the situation owing to his selfish character and shall therefore be dismissed. Poor Miss Gardiner is still very weak, quite nervous. 3

However, as perhaps the dispute with Father Germaine faded, and part of this might have been his disapproval of a Roman Catholic teaching in a school associated with the National System, so Arthur

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1. 19.8.1845.
2. 23.9.1845.
3. 14.12.1848.

McConnell came back into favour. Mrs. Smith wrote in January to describe how the situation had changed. "The master now having begun to behave himself, the mistress takes her turn to be troublesome; not by neglecting her duties but by rendering herself unfit to perform them thoroughly, giving way to low spirits almost hysterically - the consequences of typhus fever, her tormenting mother and little tender anxieties not be further alluded to at present."[1] This last reference was to her expectations of the teacher at neighbouring Kilbride, Edward Nixon who had recently been promoted and had departed without "making 'his offer'"[2], thus thoroughly distracting poor Miss Gardiner. It all reached crisis point in March:

> At school there was no Miss Gardiner, she had gone off to Dublin in the early car without asking leave or leaving a reason, hoping to be back on Monday. The little girls, such of them as had not returned home, sitting in a row in the boys' room. She is really unsettled in her wits and when she returns I must have a serious conversation with her, it's either bring her back to her senses or get quit of her. 3

In the meantime Mr. McConnell had buckled to and this was reflected, she felt, in the rise of numbers of both the Boys' and night schools:

> Mr. McConnell with an average attendance of thirty six .... The poor young man really exerting himself, and so anxious to stay, that if his pupils continue to go as they now seem likely to, I see no reason to change him. His night school gives great satisfaction and is very full. 4

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1. 18.1.1846.
2. 1.3.1846.
3. 28.3.1846.
4. 4.4.1846.

Miss Gardiner on the other hand was given a month to mend her ways but her mistress' analysis of her chances was not an optimistic one:

> Poor Miss Gardiner, she is really out of her mind, deprived of the little sense she ever had, so discontented, so disinclined to exert herself, so indifferent to my business and so overcome by her own folly that although I have given her a month to recollect herself, I have no idea that she will ever settle herself to be where Mr. Nixon is not, and he a clever, handsome and very ambitious young man, seven years her junior as I understand, no thoughts of her, poor thing. [1]

The application for aid made by Ogle Moore for his Kilbride school in 1843, and the subsequent report on his school, confirm what Mrs. Smith writes about Mr. Nixon. He was born in 1822 and was therefore seven years younger than Miss Gardiner, who at this time had reached the dividing line between spinsterhood and early matronhood of thirty. He had passed successfully through Marlborough Street, as the Rector wrote being "late a pupil in the Commissioners' training school", and his competence is shown by the Inspector's Report on his "literary acquirements", his "character" and his "method of conducting the school", all three unusually receiving the accolade "good". That he was anxious to better his situation might be guessed from his earning a further ten pounds a year as Clerk of the Church.[2]

It was not to be Miss Gardiner's personal problems but her professional incompetence that finally decided Mrs. Smith to search for another teacher; indeed the Inspector's report in the Spring of 1846 was so bad that she resolved, in spite of the great difficulty she had

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1. 27.4.1846.
2. 30.4.1846.

had earlier in finding any teacher for the Boys' School, to make a clean break with the pair of them.

> If one could but give people common sense. There is Miss Gardiner quite beside herself. So she will (have to go) and Mr. McConnell not giving the Inspector satisfaction, I shall dismiss them both and endeavour to get a married pair of superiour condition, reduced if possible. Our moving at this time is really inconvenient and so troublesome, just as the school was succeeding to have all our hard work with it begin again. 1

The attendance figures support her claim that the school now rested on a surer foundation; she herself found ninety pupils at both schools this month. It was the duty of the Board to supply new teachers and This Mrs. Smith obviously wanted done as soon as possible. However it turned into another instance of the authorities failing to keep their side of the contract. By the end of September, when she had been repeatedly in touch with the Inspector Mr. Sullivan, she wrote of his behaving "unaccountably ill, forgotten our conversation, his promises, notes and advice; got me no master and declined recommending one".[2] As unsatisfactory a reply came from Mr. Cross, the Secretary to the Board, who told her that no new teachers were likely to be ready in the training school before Christmas.[3]

This left her with no choice but to soldier on with her present two teachers although they were manifestly, in the Board's eyes as well as her own, unsuited for their duties. Moreover, the schools

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1. 30.4.1846.
2. 25.9.1846.
3. 25.9.1846.

themselves were bound to suffer and what was left of the professional relationship between manager and teacher must have looked particularly patchy. However in her hour of need Mr. McConnell, but not Miss Gardiner, rose a little in her estimation:

> Mr. McConnell luckily consents to stay until Christmas, my distressed condition moving his pity. I shall mind the people and the priest, and the inspector and the board no more, this young man is as good or better than most we could get and perfection not being in human nature, we must just make the best of him, keep a tight rein. Mr. Sullivan at any rate can't help me after all his promises. The fact is that these well educated young men being underpaid as teachers are bribed to give up their schools for better situations so there is a dearth of masters, and a surmise of the salaries being to be raised. Miss Gardiner I must try to keep too; manage the best we can at least till Christmas. 1

The Board's salary records show that he departed on the last day of the year; the Journals confirm Mrs. Smith's various suspicions about the balance of the girls' teacher. "Miss Gardiner went very nearly out of her mind when she found she was really dispensed with, and actually thinks she has been very harshly treated, turned out of doors in fact because after the fifth resignation she was taken at her word. She has by no means given me satisfaction for some time past. We can't fail to change for the better in parting from her."[2]

This triangular relationship between Board, Manager and Teachers, which on paper has so much to commend it, is seen in these years at Baltiboys between 1845 and 1847 to be creaking at the seams. The quality of the teachers leaves a great deal to be desired; the Inspec-

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1. 28.9.1846

2. 28.9.1846.

tor is not satisfied but is unable to offer any replacements; the teachers themselves can only have been frustrated in such unpromising dircumstances. The whole system has an impressive and well-organised facade only as far as these two schools were concerned and it is worth stressing that the first school was amongst the earliest in the county, two and a half miles from a post town and only eighteen miles south of the metropolis. Even so the Board takes almost a year to provide replacement teachers and co-operation between landlord and Inspector is invariably at a low ebb. The Journals are also very informative about another side of the establishment of a National School system which does not shine through the official statistics, what sort of a working relationship there was between the manager and the teacher. At Baltiboys it was governed, given the somewhat unstable nature of Miss Gardiner, by the extreme insecurity of tenure enjoyed by the teacher and the almost vocational interest taken by Mrs. Smith. In practice this meant that although her involvement in the schools could not have been greater (it was obviously, in view of what she thought of the role of an improving landlord, part of her duty to be so involved in the organisation and day-to-day running of the schools), in fact her freedom of action was much more circumscribed than suggested by this insecurity of the teacher. The teachers at Baltiboys proved to be as difficult to replace as those truculant servants[1] or recalcitrant tenants.[2] Law and established practise was on the side

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1. See Part I, ch. 4, pp. 108-9.

2. See Part II, ch. 3, pp. 184-5 and ch. 5, p. 262.

of the landlord but the actual situation suggested by the journals is very different; it is of a Board that cannot live up to its ideals and a landlord who is not able, or in the end unwilling, to assert his undoubted rights over those employed at Baltiboys.

The next distinct phase in the history of the Baltiboys schools was the two year period when Patrick O'Keefe and his daughters Anna and Kate taught there. Their spell, though shorter, showed the same characteristics as the previous regime: Mrs. Smith began with fulsome praise and ended by dismissing them, whilst another aspect of the Board's control of the situation is shown to have broken down in practice.

It was not that she began with misplaced optimism after her experiences in running her school since the return from France; in fact from the beginning Mrs. Smith showed admirable realism as her contrast between her various teachers shows.

> I called in on Miss Gardiner who seems at last to have found her senses, or rather being employed packing her goods has no leisure for folly. She was neither tragick nor comick nor unreasonable, but busy, so perfectly rational. I shall have a deal of plague with her successors of course; however she was herself but a burden to me for some years and a good deal of useless trouble. I took with her, for she by no means rewarded my care, her character being of the weakest sort. Still she was a much better teacher than I have any hope of meeting with again. Dr. Tigue Gregory[1] sends us a very good account of Mr. O'Keefe, but I require so much that other people don't think about that I am preparing myself for some months of strict management. [2]

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1. He must either have been head of the Dublin Model School or a Board of Education mandarin able to report on qualified teachers' progress.

2. 5.1.1847.

The Inspectors made no less than four visits to Baltiboys in the next ten months to determine how the O'Keefe's were faring and from the accounts which Mrs. Smith penned into her Journal it appears that they were well pleased. Mr. Graham was the first to inspect and his April visit showed him delighted with the new teachers: "He has long had a great regard for the Teacher and his family, the best qualified people for the sort of place that could have been found."[1] On his next visit in May his praise is echoed by Mrs. Smith:

> Mr. Graham passed here on Monday last to make his observations upon Lacken where a National School is wished for; he is delighted with the O'Keefe's; no wonder, they are models for their class, so contented, so humble, so industrious; he without and she within leaving nothing to be wished for in these departments. Their schools clean, orderly, well-regulated; all that is useful well-taught; in fact their requirements are exactly suited to the condition of the people. The girls are made to do the housework in turns; the boys to labour in the garden; the old man has made already quite a well-ordered domain of the wilderness, while Mrs. O'Keefe's plain furniture, well kept, and her clean windows, and her bright fire give an air of cheerfulness to her rooms they never wore in former days. We have made a bit certainly; just the people one would paint in a novel for the village schoolmaster's family. The average attendance of boys is still small - twenty six; girls - forty six. 2

Two months later a new Inspector was just as complementary as Mr. Graham.

> A new Inspector appointed to our district who of course gave up near five hours to his business. Will this continue? He payed us such compliments that both Teachers and Managers must feel quite gratified. He told me he had as yet no school like this of ours, so clean, airy, cheerful, good rooms, tidy children, so judicious a system of management it is a

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1. 14.4.1847.

2. 5.5.1845.

pattern. Miss O'Keefe wants further education but he prefers her as she is to the conceited things brought up in Marlborough Street, and the father's beyond perfection, with his pedantry and his attitudes and his whole soul in his profession. 1

Pedantry does not of course make or break a school teacher but it is interesting to compare this impression with the results of the written and oral examination carried out on Patrick O'Keefe; they are extracted from the 1849 Report of the Commissioners of National Education for Ireland.[2]

"Examination in Writing"

Number of Answers, Satisfactory or Imperfect, in:-

Grammer	Geography	Lessons on Money Matters	Arithmetic and Algebra	Geometry and Mensuration	Natural Philosophy	Lessons on Reasoning
0	0-3	0	3-1	-	1-0	0

"Oral Examination"

Reading	Grammer Parsing	Etymology	Lesson Books	Geography	History	Arithmetic
C	D	-	-	0	0	C

Algebra	Geometry	Lessons on Reasoning	Natural Philosophy	Spelling and Outline
D	C	D	0	0

The inspection was carried out by Arthur Davitt, the Inspector for District 34 which was mainly Co. Wicklow; he is not likely to have

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1. 16.7.1847.

2. PP HC 1849 XXIII, Appendix p. 280-1.

come across O'Keefe before. The printed report also gives the teacher's age as 54 and describes him as a second class teacher who had worked with the Board for 15 1/4 years, that is, virtually since the foundation of the system. His very ordinary qualifications might, therefore, be excused on the grounds that he had not had the opportunity (as some of the teachers at Baltiboys, including his daughters, were to have) of attending training courses run by the Board; however the Inspector did offer him a grade 'B' in "Penmanship" and also in "Dictation or Composition."

He may not have been Mrs. Smith's intellectual equal, but the qualities the whole family displayed in the last of the four inspections of the Baltiboys school at the end of the year obviously continued to impress Inspector and Manager:

> I was near forgetting that our School Inspector called yesterday - so pleased - he says they are a model. How pleasant it is to see that our management fills the Board with the most perfect confidence in us and in daily improving these poor people. He can't get Miss O'Keefe into the training class for this course; there are others who want it more; but he promises her admittance yet, and in the meantime Anna may go up and attend in the Model Infant School for a week. Kate I have permitted to go to Blackditches to teach sewing to a class there. Our flower plot he highly approves of and the rule of no children touching anything. We had a hit when we got these people. The attendance in both schools is now large, the night school only middling. 1

This picture of improving teachers, regularly attending pupils (the average was by now around the 100 mark for both schools) and a neighbourhood where teachers co-operated to help out in different

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1. 3.12.1847.

schools, however, was not to last. It is impossible to trace the original reasons, but during 1848 there is a distinct breakdown in this relationship between Mrs. Smith and her teachers which had begun so richly. In April it is noted: "I went to school yesterday and must resume an active superintendance for it is not as I would wish it to be, particularly as regards the infant class; all neat and clean and orderly."[1] In August, Kate's presence at Marlborough Street did not help and by the following month matters had definitely deteriorated:

> Annie and I are busy with that tiresome school. Kate O'Keefe is in every way inferiour to her elder sister, keeping no order, being neither tidy nor cleanly, in the children's appearance I mean, for she is very neat herself. And she has very meagre literary aquirements. We must watch her well till Miss Maria has finished her studies, and send her up to be taught too, for with so many infants we must have two teachers. It is next to impossible to manage the Irish. They so soon get their heads out, they have no honest principles and they are idle, very idle. These girls have taken to dress and try to borrow money to buy lace veils. We must put a summary stop to these proceedings. 2

And yet the foundations for successful schools had obviously been laid and these two girls, if trained, ought to have been able to have satisfied Mrs. Smith. As with Miss Gardiner, Mrs. Smith appears to have been very dogmatic in her rigid distinction between what behaviour was acceptable and what needed to be censured; she never seems to have been able to resist interfering whenever the private lives of her employees obtruded in any way on their duties.

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1. 18.4.1848.

2. 28.8.1848.

As with Miss Gardiner and Mr. Nixon, it was apparently this rather than professional incompetence which caused the breach: the indefatiguable Inspector reported again in March 1849, this time unfavourably, and this coincided with her own impressions.

> I am perfectly tormented with that school again. Flighty old man, mad to marry his daughters, flying all over the country with them to fairs and dances, and wrote to us one evening to give a ball in the school room. The attendance of scholars has of course fallen off very much. The few times that I have been able to get there the rooms were nearly empty, the business going on in a most slovenly fashion. They have got too comfortable and grown careless, they must go. Luckily I can get rid of them very readily for the Inspector has a second time reported unfavourably of them, which has half deranged the remaining wit of this crazy body. They are like other Roman Catholicks of their class, neither honest nor upright. [1]

She therefore dismissed all three at the beginning of May, despite an intercession on their behalf by no less than Tom Darker ("Tom Darker wanted to persuade me the school master was improved, he had had a supplicatory letter from him about starving and so on which had touched him. I went unexpectedly and found nothing altered, none of my orders attended to, and everyone I met complained both of father and daughter, so I did not regret having dismissed them. (Maria from Dublin far from being improved by the Model School"). [2] However two months later they are using every possible stratagem to try and persuade Mrs. Smith to re-employ them.

> Teased out of all patience by the O'Keefes. The old man had written me letter after letter, always the same three quarter pages filled with these long senseless words, none of which I have answered. He then tried Mr. Darker and the Colonel with

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1. 21.3.1849.

2. 4.5.1849.

> equal ill-success, this morning comes a ring at the bell and on the door being opened there is a row of little school children, six or seven of them, no more, to present a petition written by Miss O'Keefe herself, quite in her father's style, representing that these seven little girls would break their hearts if their excellent and talented teacher were to leave them and entreating me to keep her for their sakes, if even for six months! And their seven names, poor little bodies, signed to this rubbish, much against their wills, as I well know. I asked them who bid them sign, "the mistress". "Do your parents know of this?" "No." Pretty sort of people to improve the characters of the rising generation. 1

Not surprisingly this charade only confirmed Mrs. Smith in her determination to be rid of the O'Keefes. The tenacity with which they managed to hold onto their posts and attempted to force her to change her mind must have reminded her of how the tenantry and servants were able to bargain before the final stage of distraint or dismissal; such a comparison is in fact very apt, for although Patrick managed to find another post, this did not stop the female members of the family from trying one last effort to extract extra cash from Mrs. Smith:

> Such work as we have had this day with those O'Keefes, not the old man, he has I am very glad to say got a house at Clane with a better house than he had here he says, and an acre and a half of ground attached which he well knows how to make the best of; he was a little annoyed at my displeasure about the books, not one of which remains entire, a shelf full of disjointed leaves is all that remains of the free stock, and he tried to hold himself irresponsible for the destruction of them but I would not let him. But when the consideration of all that he has had done to his garden and told he was to be made a present of his cow's grass, he got into good humour. But the wife and daughters were mad, sorry poor creatures to leave their pleasant home and to lose so much income for they have nothing in prospect and so to ensure a little cash Miss O'Keefe made a demand for four pounds ten shillings, her school last year not having been so lucrative as the first year by so much and she considered me

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1. 29.6.1849.

> bound to make up the deficiency. Talked of the rules, the Commission's law even and her belief that she had a lady to deal with. Very saucy indeed, her mother was worse, so I turned her out of the room and soon with quiet explanation brought the daughter to reason, the old father quite ashamed of them. We all parted friends, the women were merely excited. A la Irlandaise. [1]

And so eventually they were prised out.

The light that this whole episode casts on Mrs. Smith as a manager and indeed her whole treatment of those employed at Baltiboys needs to be examined further, but for the present it is sufficient to stress how, during years when the local impact of the famine was at its greatest, the O'Keefes could postpone their effective dismissal by four months and even at the end bargain for the cash value of what they themselves had put into the school garden, a sort of educational Ulster custom. However, if Mrs. Smith was unable fully to have her wishes carried out immediately, equally the Inspectorate must have descended another few notches in her valuation, for once again their professional judgement had been found in her eyes wating.

The interval before the third re-organisation of the schools in four years could be effected was not so long this time. Mrs. Smith offered the Boys' School to a John McDarby who had come through the National System himself and trained at Marlborough Street. He had taught for two years in a school of Lord Stanley's at Doune ("and brings a high character with him from the agent of that estate") and then for the last two years at Stratford "under a priest, which though

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1. 30.6.1849.

a Roman Catholic don't suit him".[1] He settled down swiftly from August 1849 and made a good impression on his new employer: "All the morning in the schools with the new schoolmaster, a funny coxcombical concern, very well pleased with himself and very well able to teach too."[2] She was later to observe a possible source of trouble ("all right so far, but Irish and a Roman Catholic, our new master has his little aims and ends and his own little ways of bridging these") and the reappearance of her perrenial problem with Father Germaine: "The priest will not favour the school, he said as much to Mr. McDarby so must apply to the Archbishop."[3] The result was very much as before and the priests were required to put in an appearance:

> The priests have evidently heard from their Bishop, both of them came and visited the schools and they surprised the Master by praising him, tone in fact quite altered, yet very sore in being obliged to yield. [4]

This built up her hopes for "a full school soon and a well taught school" but, just when she must have seen in the changed attitude, however grudging, of the priests real hope for the future, the master contacted what seems like tuberculosis and had to be taken to the hospital in March 1850:

> Our schoolmaster, poor man, continues in the Hospital - better, but very weakly; his lungs are, we fear, permanently affected. Should he be obliged to give up his charge, I shall really not undertake the search for a successor but give up the Boys'

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1. 23.7.1849.
2. 1.8.1849.
3. 30.9.1849.
4. 4.10.1849.

> school, only twelve to fifteen having been in attendance latterly. If they will not come to such a master as this, they would not come to a worse, and a better would not easily be found. 1

In fact he came out in April but was back within the week, which Mrs. Smith gloomily interpreted as the writing on the wall: "he is totally unfit to resume the school which I shall therefore give up as a bad job and save my money thereby. There are very few boys left on our side of the country; there will be few men soon as they are pouring on in shoals to America."[2] An entry in the County Wicklow Salary Payments book for 29th August provides confirmation: "Inspector reports school closed since the 8th March last, at which time teacher J. McDarby took ill of fever; he resigned afterwards." She made a last effort in fact with the Blessington teacher, William Grindon, but the grant was finally withdrawn and the school closed the following year.

It was October after the departure of the procastinating O'Keefes before Mrs. Smith managed to secure a successor for the girls' school, and, as with Mr. McDarby, she felt that it would have been hard to improve on Fanny MacDonald:

> The female teacher to be Fanny McDonald, a protestant, brought up in the orphen assylum where she was placed by the Moores after the death of both her parents from fever in one week, an event which took place when we were in France. She is well educated in all respects but her needlework is first rate, quite

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1. 28.3.1850: it is unlikely that he would have stayed in Blessington's Fever Hospital and more likely that he would have been moved to Dublin.

2. 13.4.1850: there is no doubt that she was most aware of emigration as a solution for some in difficulties, see Part II, ch. 5, pp. 242-261.

> an extraordinary talent she has for it. I mean to give her the junior school entirely, all the little boys of the first class, and girls of the first and second, the girls of the third and fourth classes should be taught by the master, only coming to her for their sewing, and as I am to receive the fees of the pupils myself and give the teachers fixed salaries, the money part will be easily managed. 1

The attendance figures show that this confidence was well placed for the school continued to flourish in the early 1850s, even after the Smiths moved to Dublin. There is only one mention of her getting up to the underhand practices which so characterised her predecessors; in March 1851 Mrs. Smith made an unexpected visit and found her teacher making too good use of her talent for needlework.

> Miss Macdonnell [sic] has been exceedingly neglectful of her business at school. She is busy doing needleworks, some for Mrs. Moore, some for sale ... the school is therefore hurried over, no lessons prepared, no work settled the children sitting listless, lolling about, no life, no business, no tidiness. In short all most discreditable. I have been there twice and I shall go there at every opportunity, and make short work of it with this young lady unless she mind what she is doing. There is no principle in the country I believe, and I can't be ever watching neither do I like to be for ever changing. How hard it is to meet with a really conscientious character in the lower classes in this country at any rate. 2

However this was apparently the one lapse and otherwise, after the Boys' School was closed she successfully kept the larger school going.

However much Mrs. Smith fulminated against the weaknesses of her teachers or the inefficiency of the Board, she took full advantage of all that the latter did to try and so train the teachers that their shortcomings were ironed out. The male teachers were all trained,

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1. 4.10.1849.

2. 29.3.1851.

but only the Miss Balleiger who was the first teacher at the Girls' School had been through the Board's Model School at Marlborough Street. Miss Gardiner, both Miss O'Keefes and Miss MacDonald were all dispatched for short spells which gives some idea of the value attached to this aspect of the Board's work. In the last teacher's case, Mrs. Smith spelt out what it was in particular that she valued from these courses: "she will ... require a month in the Infant Model School for she has no experience of Mr. Wilderspin's class and gallery teaching." Samuel Wilderspin's writings had introduced Mrs. Smith to what she considered the best methods of teaching the very young. His Early Discipline Illustrated (Or the Infant System Progressing and Successful) of 1836 described the basis of his system.

> I had in fact found the clew. It was now evident that the senses of the children must be engaged; that the great secret of training them was to descend to their level, and become a child; - and that the error had been to expect in infancy what is only the product of after years.

This might hardly seem a startling insight,[1] but the gallery method of teaching, and the many practical pieces of advice he had to offer in his books based on his experiences at his infant school in Spittalfields,[2] were very valuable. This method derived its name from the way the pupils were put in seried ranks around the room so that it was possible for one teacher (with iron discipline) to take a class of

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1. For the history of adult misinterpretation of how children develop see Philippe Ariès, Centuries of Childhood (1962).

2. See his On the Importance of educating the Infant Poor from the age of eighteen months to seven years, (second edition, 1824).

perhaps a hundred children.[1] From Chapter IX of his vade mecum The Infant System for Developing the Intellectual and Moral Powers of all Children from one to seven years of age (which had gone into eight editions by 1852), it seems that his method of "engaging the senses" was based on the question and answer technique. "Almost every object" he writes about an example which would have seemed most apposite to Mrs. Smith "however simple it may be, will form an instructive gallery lesson; thus for example you may take a piece of bog turf and after submitting it to the inspection of the infants, you may inquire etc etc".[2] This was the heart of the methods the Baltiboys female teachers were dispatched to Dublin to absorb.

It was Miss Gardiner whose spell at Marlborough Street was to be the best documented in the Journals; they describe a great deal that illuminates further this relationship between Board and Manager, and Manager and Teacher, on which in the end the National System succeeded or failed.

Ogle Moore had been in touch in January 1842 with the authorities at the school where Miss Gardiner was to follow what sounds like the course organised by Dr. MacArthur, which has been described as "a three month stop-gap system of teacher training" for practising teachers

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1. Supra. p. 83 where there is an illustration of a room 50' by 50' by 14' entitled "Dimensions of a school-room capable of containing 300 infant children": there are four forms with 32 or 33 at each and 170 round the sides of the room.

2. Eighth edition, (1852), p. 338.

"most of whom were brought up to Dublin from the country."[1] Certainly Mrs. Smith at the beginning was prepared to release her from her duties for this length of time: "I shall keep her there as long as I can afford it, as she very much wants to acquire a better method in managing her pupils as well as general instruction."[2] This smacks of Mr. Wilderspin and unfortunately her first letter from the school indicated that it was the practical side that was not taught: Miss Gardiner is reported as writing "to say she hopes to benefit by all she sees in Marlborough Street. There is no training especially for the teachers. Surely in eight years this most necessary part of a national school system might have been accomplished."[3] In fact this was indeed one of the targets towards which the Board was heading; by 1845 the Commissioners were planning for thirty two model schools like the Central Model School in Marlborough Street.[4] None of this was apparent to Mrs. Smith, who has after all to organise the school, and by March when her teacher would have been two thirds through her course she had doubts about the wisdom of allowing Miss Gardiner to complete it.

> Day of business quite. First Miss Gardiner in the highest spirits - her whole heart in the business - so anxious to be allowed to return now that the Board makes her an allowance of 8/- a week that I can't help thinking some of her class friends of the other sex must have a share in her anxiety. She is kept very busy - a great deal of attention is paid

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1. Akenson, Education, p. 146.
2. 10.1.1842.
3. 13.2.1842.
4. Akenson, Education, p. 148.

> to these teachers: Lectures and masters for them with instructions in the method of teaching. I must consider; if some one could be sent in her place to conduct the school here she might continue improving herself a while longer. I do not like all the poor children running wild for another quarter and yet I much doubt any good being done when I can't be there myself. 1

In the end, despite the better opinion they had of the School and its benefit to their teacher, the Smiths were determined that the proper place for her was Baltiboys.

> The Colonel and I talked over our school and its teacher and we agree that it is unnecessary for her to return to Dublin. It was not to accomplish her that we made the sacrifice of sending here there - her accomplishments with my help are quite sufficient for the condition of the country round us. We wanted her to gain a little practical knowledge for which she has had time sufficient. She is thinking too much of herself, too little of the school on account of which all this pains is taken with her. 2

After this clear statement of the Manager's position, it ought to have been a formality to have brought the teacher back, or, if she preferred to stay, dismiss her and find another. In fact, the personal position of the teacher and the personality of the manager clashed, the Journals record what was evidently a blazing row and in the end Miss Gardiner returned to Marlborough Street.

Miss Gardiner was informed of her employer's decision on the 28th, took the news badly and "really was crazed for a couple of days." Mrs. Smith took the line that quiet reason would eventually prevail: "I could make nothing of her face to face so I wrote her a very quiet letter saying all that was proper and a great deal that was kind yet

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1. 24.3.1842.

2. 26.3.1842.

firm in keeping her to her bargain, insisting upon the opening of the school now at the time pre-arranged, explaining that this was a matter of duty with both her and me, not choice. She came down in torrents of tears on Monday and gave up the school. She was quite wild. I begged her to consult someone wiser than herself - Mr. Moore, her kind friend - no - nothing would keep her from Dublin." The next move was to get the governess Miss Cooper to try and make her see reason ("I did not feel well enough to bear this frantick scene") but she had no more success: she "made just as little hand of this 'wild Irish girl' of twenty five by the way" and Miss Gardiner announced that she would leave for Dublin the very next day.[1]

Extraordinarily, it was only at this point that Colonel and Mrs. Smith put a stop to a dispute where all the running had been made by the teacher; her unilateral threats could no longer be tolerated and she must either return to Baltiboys or face dismissal:

> Colonel Smith ... made me write as if she had no longer the school nor claim on me or on the Board, therefore requesting her to come down and deliver up her books before I wrote to announce my loss of a teacher. I fancy this opened up her mind to her impropriety, for she walked down to Kilbride Tuesday to consult Mr. Moore and came to me yesterday so humbled I really felt for her. She will do all I wish - collect the children, class them, set the business going - only think of returning to Dublin should the authorities there consider it necessary - allow them to chose her substitute - remain here till the substitute understands matters - will give up her salary to her for the time - in short nobody could be more reasonable - quite unlike the hoity-toity lady who intent only on her own advantage thought nothing of breaking her engagements, neglecting her duty and leaving me to whom she owed obedience as her constant friend to close my school for

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1. 28.3.1842.

> three months longer at the very season it is most attended or to look to the moon for another Teacher in my present helpless condition. She is a fine creature by nature too, but a perfect speciman of her countrymen. Oppose them in any one thing and the world won't hold them - they don't understand duty - principle - self-interest or rather self will guides them. 1

Meantime the Rector was helping to consolidate this complete surrender. A few days later Mrs. Smith wrote that "he had a hard task with poor Miss Gardiner and, having when in Dublin spoken to the Directors of the Model School and ascertained that her return is unnecessary, he was this day to complete her discomfiture by going to tell her so."[2]

The struggle then had ended with the surrender, and indeed the humiliation, of the teacher; a point of principle had arisen which Miss Gardiner had disputed and in the end she had given way before the combined assault of Board, landlord and Rector. Two days later everything is turned upsidedown with the news from Dublin that a replacement will be found: "Miss Gardiner was with me ever so long preparing needlework - in great spirits for Mrs. Campbell will procure a competent person to take charge of our school while Miss Gardiner returns to finish off her course of instruction in Dublin."[3] This was to be a Miss Philips ("a very pretty looking girl not at all equal to Miss Gardiner in manners or abilities") who in point of fact was only to stay to May, when Father Germaine, arguably trying to

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1. 28.3.1842.
2. 4.4.1842.
3. 6.4.1842.

compound Mrs. Smith's problems, successfully recommended her for another post in the school at Eadestown.[1] Baltiboys school, therefore, was to lack a teacher for most of the summer, which was precisely the prospect that had led Mrs. Smith to oppose Miss Gardiner's plans; in addition, she was to change her tune over the conditions under which her teacher completed the course, for in June, although she had been in Dublin since April, Miss Gardiner received her salary.[2]

Moreover, Mrs. Smith altered her opinion of the usefulness of the Marlborough Street courses as is clear from her description of how she found her teacher when she returned in July: "Miss Gardiner was with me yesterday afternoon, really spirited up to a degree of zeal in her calling that should produce good effects; her increased knowledge too has made her humble not vain, proving that it has been well imparted. I am in great hopes the school will thrive." The evidence for this could be seen in the class room: "Went to school yesterday and was thoroughly satisfied, all going on there to a wish. Children happy, animated, eager in their business; Miss Gardiner a second Wilderspin among them. It was well spent money and well spent time that she passed in the training school. I feel sure of success with the young through her means now."[3] No greater compliment, of course could have been found than to compare her to the great Wilderspin, and practical

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1. 21.4.1842.
2. 27.6.1842.
3. 13.2.1842.

support came after Mr. Graeme's inspection at the end of July: "He is much pleased with Teacher and scholars and is to recommend Miss Gardiner to be raised to the Second Class which will give her £2 a year more salary."[1]

The caricature of the untrained but conscientious National School-teacher to be found in William Carleton[2] or later character studies such as Terence McGrath's Pictures from Ireland,[3] therefore, hardly applies to the five female and three male teachers at Baltiboys in the 1830s and 1840s. Either they were trained and experienced when they arrived, or steps were taken to have them trained at Marlborough Street. Further, both the Board and its Inspectorate, who had in most other aspects of their duties been wholeheartedly criticised by Mrs. Smith, appear more efficient and helpful in the ways they co-operated with the Manager in trying to arrange the further training of her teachers. As far as the freedom possessed by the teacher to manoeuvre against the will of the landlord and manager is concerned, it is clear that the best documented case, Miss Gardiner's, emphasises again the difficulty Colonel and Mrs. Smith had in asserting their undoubtedly legal will when this was resisted. And the fact that the Smiths did not impose, or try to impose, their will as a diktat either, is a

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1. 29.7.1842.

2. Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry (op. cit.) see The Hedge School ("these worthy and eccentric persons").

3. Ch. XVI A National Schoolmaster: Sir Henry Arthur Blake, GCME (psuedonym of Terence McGrath) concluded his chapter ... "unfortunately his honest attachment to Ireland is fed by theories as unsubstantiated as soap bubbles ...."

comment on their position being less absolute than it appeared or their management of the estate in the last resort being unwilling to insist on the rights pertaining to them as property-owners.

Overall, however, the Smiths' management of their schools as traced through the Journals and relevant Board material can only be seen as partially successful. Handicapped perhaps by their contests with Father Germaine, they themselves saw the attendance figures as a commentary on their limited success; the Boys' School which had begun with such optimism was only to last six years. Their working relationship with the Board and its Inspectors was occasionally uneasy and often unsatisfactory to both parties; the Smiths deplored the lack of co-operation and interminable delays, while the Board considered the small numbers of pupils hardly justified their investment ... indeed after numbers were slow to pick up following Arthur McConnell's appointment in 1845, Mrs. Smith was forced to accept responsibility (as her Journal rather sourly noted: "I have had another communication from the Board accepting my apology and inciting to future exertion").[1] Equally Mrs. Smith as Manager enjoyed chequered relationships in turn with all of her teachers; a yardstick might be the number of occasions that personalities evidently contributed to the worsening of problems which were already difficult enough.

The parents of the pupils attending the school are very rarely mentioned in the Journals. The wife of Hugh Kelly complained in April 1841 that her children were sent by Miss Gardiner into

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1. 29.10.1845.

Blessington to collect her messages and that higher fees were being charged than Mrs. Smith had "settled on".[1] Only one other complaint is mentioned and that was voiced by Mrs. John Young (related to the Darkers) who had four children at the school:

> She is not satisfied quite with Miss Gardiner's mode of teaching. She understands she never thumps the pupils and they never will learn unless the master be severe on them. She now and then sends her directions what they are to be taught and how to have them kept well to their tasks, no play - what does she pay for and slave for etc? What a mine of patience it requires to deal with the ignorant. 2

Eight years later she was just as opposed to the use of corporal punishment in her schools. Admittedly it was a t a time, November 1849, when she was at her most critical of John McDarby ("a flighty fool, very soft on women") but she also held against him that "he has been beating the boys and has written such rubbish on being desired to give this practice up."[3]

The payments referred to by Mrs. Young were, or course, one of the means of financing the school. Mrs. Smith wrote on her original application for assistance in 1834: "The scholars pay a small quarterly fee according to their ages". What this meant in practice can be estimated from the figures quoted in the report made of the Boys' School in March 1845 which mentioned £15 as the "annual amount of local Funds towards payment of the Teacher's salary and repair of the Schoolhouse"; it added that the rate of payment, regulated by the Manager,

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1. 28.4.1841.
2. 5.8.1842.
3. 10.11.1849.

was 1/1, 1/6 or 2/- per quarter. We can guess at how effective the financial management of the school was for Mrs. Smith estimated that £32 was spent on the school in 1839; the average attendance was 58 pupils and if they were each paying 1/6 a quarter (certainly too high, for there were pauper pupils and children of Baltiboys families in difficulties who payed nothing) then fees would bring in £17:10:0 that year. The next two years, difficult years, it rose on average to £40 and with attendances of 56 and 41 a similar calculation shows that income from pupils fell to around £16 and £12, both figures certainly too high. Meantime the figures extracted from the Reports of the Commissioners of National Education[1] show that after the setting up of the school, apart from a few shillings worth of books and between one and two pounds worth of "free stock" every other year, they only paid aid towards the teacher's salary. (Mrs. Smith saw this as parsimony and in October 1840 she commented "a note from our Inspector to say the 'Board' gives no aid towards keeping the National Schools in repair. Excellent institution!")[2] This was £10 in 1839 and only £8 in the next two years so that here too there was a considerable leighway to be made up; after all a day labourer's sixpence a day meant with full employment six and a half pounds a year. The better qualified teachers did mean that aid rose to over £28, but either Mrs. Smith had to dip into her pocket or use the resources of the estate

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1. For the setting up of the school, see under Parish of Boystown, Co. Wicklow, in PP HC 1835 XXXV and 1836 XXXVI.

2. 27.10.1840.

to meet the difference. How this could be done can be seen from what she wrote in 1849.

> It is a bad year for my purse which should all be better. Still with the help of the Reppsitary the girls' school has not cost me a pound note this half year, fuel and all, I am but some twelve shillings out of pocket. The boys' cost four pounds ten shillings for the poor teacher would have starved had we not advanced his year's salary of one pound a quarter for the pauper pupils. 1

The astuteness which characterised Mrs. Smith's management of her husband's estate in general, therefore, was brought to bear on the financing of the schools and provide another example of their business acumen.

Finally, she made good use of what was to hand as far as teaching aids were concerned. Mr. Wilderspin's "gallery" teaching obviously made for economy as this description of Miss Gardiner at work in September 1846 implies:

> In the morning I had been at school, Miss Gardiner very satisfactory, thirty eight girls, all clean, happy and alive at their lessons, the gallery a great improvement. It pleases the children while the Teacher has them more under here eye and can instruct almost any number at once. 2

Mrs. Smith herself assisted with the needlework and her description in June 1843 of the work done in the classroom neatly summarises the combination of individual and Board expenditure, which was necessary satisfactorily to equip this National School. The monthly fashions had arrived at Mr. Gilholy's shop in Blessington but she bought some

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1. 23.7.1849.

2. 11.9.1846.

calico "then drove to the school with our bundle to be made into coarse shirts and shifts and to enjoy the new map of the world just sent up and giving such delight to all those poor little creatures, many of whom pointed out the various parts very correctly."[1] It was moments like this, rather than the haggling with the Board or disputing with the Teacher, which convinced her that the schools at Baltiboys were not established and maintained in vain.

Before attempting to draw any conclusions about the Baltiboys schools, it is important to stress that although this part of Counties Wicklow and Kildare was situated five hundred feet above sea level and off the beaten track, it cannot be thought of, only eighteen miles from Dublin, as remote from metropolitan influence. Thus there were four other centres for schools within the three miles range invariably asked about by Inspectors to determine if a school was necessary.[2] Ballymore Eustace across the county boundary in Kildare had its school completed in 1835 (forty of the sixty pounds to establish the school was put up by the Earl of Milltown, and Archbishop Murray's nephew, James Lynch)[3] so that Baltiboys was not a lonely advertisement for the National System. The Rev. Ogle Moore applied for aid for his school at Kilbride in July 1843 (at the same time as he was undertaking responsibility for the Smiths' school while they were in France):

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1. 12.6.1843.

2. Applications for aid and the Inspectors' reports are in the Public Records Office, Dublin, filed under the name of the school, Co. Wicklow.

3. See p. 327, footnote 6.

he thought the prospects were very good as "85 names have been returned to me by parents of children ready to attend the school and I have reason to believe that double the number would come to it if there were accomodation for them." The Inspector's report comments on his plans:

> It seems to be the intention to erect at his own expence a first rate male and female school, and also an agricultural establishment as soon as possible, and he expressed his determination of carrying out the system in all its branches to the fullest extent.

At the time of the inspection, 104 out of the 121 pupils on the school register were present so this seemed a realisable ambition. In September 1848 he applied this time for aid towards a Model Agricultural school for 150 pupils to be situated "in the glenn of the Liffey between Kilbride and Kippure." He was successful here too and a grant was paid from 30th December until June 1850 when it was cancelled "as Manager will not avail himself thereof on terms proposed." Meantime the attendances at his Kilbride school, according to the Board's records, were declining (for example only 26 on the last day of 1846, described as "too small") and in February 1851 a complaint was received from a Father Duffy about the Board's scripture lessons being read in class:

> The pupils are compelled to read the Scripture lessons notwithstanding the repeated remonstrances of the PP and the parents of the children.

Ogle Moore replied that there had been no complaints but "it is possible there may be hereafter some objection made at the command of Mr. D. but he should probably disregard any that he could trace to such a source." Both Rector and Priest were reminded of the Board's

policy and the former was sent a letter by the Archbishop. The other two schools were the Boys and Girls' in Blessington, built by the Marquis of Downshire and formerly"in connection with the 'Kildare Place' Society"; the ubiquitous Rector of Blessington was the Manager and he estimated in his application for aid in 1850 that the average attendance had gone down to 35 and 40 in each. John B. Lane's inspection unhelpfully maintained that likely pupils would be children of "farmers, labourers, shop-keepers and trades people" and commented on the degree of local clerical support ... "I could not succeed in seeing any of the clergymen."

The other schools, then, in and around the three mile barrier show that the area was certainly not ill-provided for, although all the applicants refer to the densely populated area they were trying to cover. Equally, this bare record shows that the Kilbride and Blessington school were hardly as successful as the Baltboys ones and that Ogle Moore as a Manager left much to be desired in the eyes of the Board; he has already been seen elsewhere oeverwhelmed with financial problems so it was unlikely in any case that his management would have been a successful one.

The one other school close at hand within the National system was not to be founded until 1863 and only asked to be taken into connection three years later. This was at Blackditches, Father Germaine's old parish where, to Mrs. Smith's horror, so many hedge schools had been

set up with the priests's approval.[1] The applicant, the curate Father James Keon, maintained he was to be "the manager of the school under the parish priest who does not interfere." The inspector's report described the school as "adjacent to the Chapelground of 'Blackditches' but not immediately connected with that edifice itself" and some 1½ miles from "Ballyknockan 'hedge' school"; the teacher James Corcoran was untrained, but competent enough to earn £3 from tutoring and £2:10:0 from surveying each year. This school, then, was as closely associated with the priest as that at Baltiboys was with the landlord.

The particular interest of this application lies in the general descriptions it contains on the area within whih Mrs. Smith's schools had been exerting some sort of influence for thirty years. The District Inspector's Report, for example, mentions "the large population in the neighbourhood the members of which have not as yet attended any National School"; he adds later that "the population is almost exclusively Roman Catholic and I have not had time to communicate with any other clergymen except the Roman Catholic clergymen of the parish (who are interested in [the school's] success)". This suggests that in his opinion there was still much to do (and by implication that the National School at Baltiboys, which his sketch map shows some three miles away, had made, despite the aims of its founders, little impression). On one point however he could have been in agree-

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1. See Part III, ch. 1, p. 303 and 309.

ment with Mrs. Smith: his report recommending that Blackditches school be taken into connection began ... "The children of the Parish are ignorant though possess of much natural intelligence" ... and continued by emphasising that "the one National School (under a female teacher) for this very extensive parish" was not enough and "two or three additional schools are much needed." In the end therefore, Mrs. Smith's aims and ambitions at her Schools should perhaps be restricted to the estate and its immediate neighbourhood, for clearly any outside influence it might have had was to evaporate quickly.

And yet it still needs to be remembered that Co. Wicklow in general was the exact opposite of those western counties selected to illustrate the economic and educational desert that was Ireland, normally by those with bones to pick. This is clear for example from the 1841 Census figures[1] where they refer to literacy levels in the county.

	Percentage able to ...		
	Read and write	Read only	Neither read nor write
Males			
5 - 10	10	14	74
10 - 15	38	22	40
Females			
5 - 10	8	14	78
10 - 15	31	29	40

1. PP HC 1843 (504) XXIV.

The general background in Co. Wicklow, therefore, is that these figures show how in a very few years the National Schools, helped by other agencies including the traditional interest shown by many of the peasantry in education,[1] had produced very respectable figures for boys and girls between 10 and 15 and made a start with the infants. Mrs. Smith's work at Baltiboys is an example of one of these improving schools which bursts into life and importance from her Journals and obliquely helps to put some flesh and blood onto the educational statistics. A second glance at these figures to compare literacy rates in the parish of Boystown, the townland of Lower Talbotstown and the county both in 1841 and 1851 confirms this picture as well as reminding us of Baltiboys' position viz-viz the rest of the county.

Percentage able to ...

	Read and write		Read only		Neither read nor write	
	1841	1851	1841	1851	1841	1851
Boystown	25	32	25	25	50	43
Lower T'town	31		23		46	
Co. Wicklow	36		23		41	

These show the overall pattern to be one of improvement in standards; it is this that is brought to life by what emerges from the pages of Mrs. Smith's Journals. Also the poorer record in the parish is a reminder that it was very much in the hinterland, even if in the hin-

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1. Akenson, Education, p. 4

terland of a prosperous Leinster county.

In the last resort the schools at Baltiboys have to be treated separately from the statistics, on their own as evidence contributing towards a judgement on how the estate deserves to be judged, rather than as speculative support for trends deduced from figures whose authenticity may not be beyond doubt. Thus it is clear that these schools were, within the meaning of the original intentions of Lord Stanley and the various Commissioners of National Education, non-denominational, attempting to provide an education which would train and provide opportunities for those otherwise hopelessly disadvantaged. Equally, it is obvious that they were seen as proselytising agencies by Father Germaine for whom far from being the agents of improvement they were an attempt to maintain landlord influence and extend it into the governance of his parishioners' consciences. The subsequent disputes, notable for each side's perseverence, have to be viewed as but segments of the conflict between a freshly aggressive priesthood and landlords who interpreted defence of the flock's interests as unwarrantable interference with their legitimate organisation of what was best for the tanantry.

In this context it is also worth reminding ourselves that Mrs. Smith had the clearest possible notion of what ills in the world at large were to be cured by the cummulative action of work like hers at Baltiboys. Chartist agitation, for example, such as that she noted in May 1842, could only be remedied by "an improved education" even though in the long run this "is too far off not to make one anxious to alleviate as far as possible the evils of a very miserable con-

dition." The social revolution, which excessive abuse of upper class privileges invariably reminded her was a real possibility, could only be averted by education:

> We are opening the minds of the lower orders and we can't expect that intelligent human beings will be content to live on like the brutes, merely protected from the weather and coarsely fed. They will civilise like the upper classes and God grant it may be soon. Education too is coming before the eyes of publick opinion. Woolwich and Dartford, and Eton and Heriot's Hospital with many more have had their iniquities dragged to light with a determined hand and the consequence must be reform. If each of us would but do our duty in our little sphere, what a happy world it would be. 1

This undoubtedly required much supervision and it must have been the constant activities of schools like Baltiboys that led to the notable improvement in literacy rates in Co. Wicklow. It was however hard work and the schools demanded a great deal of hard work from the manager. Mrs. Smith's realistic recognition of this came out in a comment she made in March 1847, at a time when she was disgusted by labourers preferring to accept the government shilling to working for fifteen pence a day for local farmers:

> What a people. Another generation at least must pass away before we can hope for much moral improvement. At present in plain words they are all mere beasts; they have none but animal propensities. And do what we can with the children of such mere brutes we can very little advance their feelings; the scenes at home counteract the discipline of school. Patience! 2

It was slow work but it was nevertheless essential. Her best general declaration of how the school (even if as she wrote in November

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1. 6.5.1842.

2. 29.3.1847.

1845 "my school affairs have taught me how near impossible it is to manage the ignorant except by force, gentle force if practicable, but it must be force, there is no other way of even doing them good.")[1] had to be seen as one of the main reasons for optimism about the future occured the previous month. "It requires constant watching to keep them all up to order - up to industry - in heart, and out of all the long catalogue poverty is heir to. The school is the foundation of all hope for their future. To waken up their faculties is the only dependance we can have for another generation of a happier kind."

Finally, the sort of impact the Famine years made on the estate will emerge from Part IV, but one reason from the point of view of parents and pupils might have been that the schools were throughout treated as having an important role to play in alleviating its worst effects at Baltiboys. It was for example the listlessness of Edward Shannon's children in school that first drew Mrs. Smith's children to the whole family's plight.[2] The education received prepared several candidates for the R.I.C. literacy tests.[3] In June 1847 the school children were used as the best means of disseminating vital information round the estate; they copied two government posters, one a recipe mixing rice and Indian meal to produce a changed diet ("it is intended" she wrote "to change the food - give half rice and half

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1. 4.11.1845.
2. 30.5.1846.
3. Part II, ch. 4, p.218 and 6.5.1847.

Indian meal - 1 pound of eahh furnishing when properly made 10 pounds of nutricious stirabout, exceedingly good and sufficient for a meal for four working men."), and the other a whitewashing order, copies of which were to be placed in "conspicuous places" to alert the people to the dangers of fever.[1] These years may have been the most difficult for her schools; but they were also a time of constantly satisfactory attendances when what was done in the class-room, despite resentment at landlordly paternalism or priestly machinations, seemed practical and realistic. It is now opportune to examine whether the rest of the Smiths' administration of their estates during the appalling conditions of the second half of the 1840s stands up to close scrutiny as well as their schools do.

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1. 8.6.1847.

PART IV

The Famine Years

Chapter One

July 1845 to September 1846

The analysis of the Journals of Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys contained in the first three parts of this thesis traces the roles, fortunes and fates of the various tiers of society contained on this estate, the Smiths and their family, the tenantry and the labourer/cottier class beneath. It sets out the principles that guided the organisation of the estate and the part played in this by landlord, agent and steward: a measure of their success, and a hint at the attitudes this evoked among the tenants, can be gauged from the Journals, supported by a number of secondary sources. Indeed, this paternalistically organised estate mirrored the bustle and efficiency of what all commentators saw as an improving neighbourhood. Many of the estates around Blessington were obvious examples of that "much more vigourous management of Irish estates .... in the 1830s and early 1840s" noted by J.S. Donnelly.[1]

This improvement may not have been as dramatic as Mrs. Smith's article about the fictitious Thomas Grey who bought a derilict Leinster estate and so successfully worked on it that the whole area was changed,[2] although there are signs that only modesty prevented her from stating outright that the heart of improvement in the Blessington

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1. Donnelly, p. 52.
2. See Part I, ch. 1, p. 16-19.

district began at Baltiboys. Certainly in her articles for Chambers' Magazine she was not prepared to accept any excuse for even the most spendthrift landowner immediately inaugurating schemes beneficial to all on the estate. One published in 1850, for example, entitled "Retrenchment", one of a series called "Mrs. Wright's Conversations with her Irish Acquaintance"[1], contains the stern rebuke this lady uttered to her nephew; unconvinced by his protestations ("Just as if a man had nothing else to do but to wander about among mud-cabins. When I was here, I came for the hunting: three times out with the hounds left little leisure for other things"), Mrs. Wright declared ...

> From not making time, you see, my dear nephew, what you have brought yourself to - not only yourself but all your neighbours, for we can't separate our individual interest from that of the community. One careless landlord affects the welfare of all. Many careless landlords cause ruin. The poor rates have only carried out into action the law which binds us all, rich and poor together; and it only presses so hard on us now because we have hitherto neglected to recognize the principle. You pay 5/9 out of your pound, dear George, only to relieve the misery you have assisted to create, and you are not quite ruined by this new tax, although it is at present excessive. You have 14/3 left. 2

This duty most of the local landlords who feature in the Journals carried out; it was of course in their interests as even John Murray the feckless agent to Lord Downshire's Blessington estate in the 1830s realised ..he once sanctimoniously assured his employer that "The Land is the Permanent source of wealth and its improvement should

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1. These were published in Volumes 13 and 14 of Chambers' Edinburgh Journal between August and October 1850, Numbers 355, 356, 360 and 364.

2. Ibid., No. 360, 23 November 1850.

never be lost sight of."[1]

There were local exceptions, one of the most prominent being Pierce Mahoney. In spite of the prestige he must have gained from being called as a witness before the Devon Commission[2] and his gaining a mention in Trollope, he was clearly regarded in his own barony as one of the unscrupulous, unimproving landlords whose only concern for example in January 1848 was to have special constables sworn in so that their property would be safeguarded. Mrs. Smith added her own piece of gossip: "Piers Mahoney has taken dreadfully to the bottle, early and late, he is quite sent to Coventry for that and lying."[3]

However, for the most part, the evidence suggests that there was a reasonable number of that type of landowner praised by John Power and Francis Sadleir in their Talbotstown report to the 1836 Commissioners.

> In the neighbourhood of a rich resident proprietor or wealthy farmer, the labourers are nearly all constantly employed; whereas in poor or thickly inhabited neighbourhoods, there is little or no employment, and as a natural consequence, dreadful distress. 4

Interestingly, the written evidence of the Rev. Arthur Germaine confirms that as early as the 1830s with half the labourers employed all

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1. Supra. p. 51.
2. This must have helped secure his appointment as Clerk of the Crown of the Queen's Bench: Times, 19.1.1849.
3. 9.1.1848 : see also p. 132, footnote 1.
4. Third Report of the Commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland; (Appendix D) HC XXXI, p. 47.

the time and all the remainder at spring and harvest, conditions here were consistent with what was expected of an improving neighbourhood.[1]

Even in the the early 1840s there was obviously still a long way to go before Baltiboys had been so improved that subsequent changes would be self-generating. Many of the problems that held back progress in the eyes of Mrs. Smith are conspicuously written about in the Journals and analysed in the foregoing chapters; in order to provide a more secure financial base for tackling them, the Smiths by May 1843 had determined on going abroad for two years to retrench and so accumulate sufficient capital to enable them to launch a successful assault on the remaining problems and in the process acquire more land:

> Having determined on going abroad for two years we have offered to let this house for that term, furnished, with the garden, orchard and good stabling and for a good tenant might throw a cow's grass into the bargain, asking £150 a year and the gardener's wages.
>
> We shall sell the Jaunting car, all the harness and saddlery, all the riding horses. We hope that the sale of all these will pay our journey to Pau, and that the rent of the house with the Colonel's pay will be sufficient to keep us there. Then we can leave the rents of the Irish property to accumulate, as Tom Darker thinks the profits of the farm should nearly pay all the unavoidable expences attending the estate. 2

It was a hard decision to come to (after all "twelve busy years have we lived here in the enjoyment of all that could make rational beings comfortable") but this entry emphasises a fact which was to be of the

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1. Ibid. p. 269.

2. 14.5.1843.

greatest importance both in influencing their departure, and more generally throughout the 1840s, ... Colonel Smith of course was an invalid, but his wife's health, upon which much of the active management of family and estate affairs depended, was poor too.

> The last three winters have, however, made a sad change in me, the first passed as accidental derangement, the second staggered me, the third frightened Hal, and I am sure not causelessly. ... it would be worse than folly to try a fourth; so no sentimental nonsense shall overset me, feeling our removal right, I will make it agreeable, so couleur de rose must brighten all. 1

In fact, the two years away were to be a real financial success and may have helped partially to restore Mrs. Smith's health and characteristic energy. Moreover, travelling very much in the spirit urged by the Young Irelanders,[2] she always kept her eyes open for information which might be useful later. Thus soon after their arrival in Pau, she made a very telling comparision between Irish and Bearnais peasants:

> The peasants here should be no richer than with us, yet how much more comfortable they look. Too placid to take the least interest in anything beyond their immediate business, instead of flying about half mad in rags to make mischief, they spend their quiet lives in habits of the strictest industry - the painter might prefer the wild, bright-eye and rugged countenance, the thin active figure, the rags and the tatters and the picturesque misery of the Irish cotter, but the philanthropist must dwell with far higher feeling on the comely features of the Bearnais, plump, well-contented, well-dressed, well-fed, occupied. I have not seen a rag or tatter since I came, no men out at knees and elbows, no curious collection of bits hung together by some miracle as a covering....

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1. 14.5.1843.

2. See Part II, ch. 3, p.193 f. 1.

> The Morning Herald[1] is perfectly right, what is most wanted in Ireland among all classes is the habit of industry - idleness is the mother of mischief indeed. 2

They were also years when the Smiths met people who had grappled with similar problems, like for example the Reverend Hickey in Avranches who transpired to be the same as the pamphleteer Martin Doyle ("What has brought him here we know not. I remember hearing in Ireland that his agricultural experiments had much impoverished him and he has a large family.")[3] In April 1845 for example she noted "he brought a pamphlet he is writing on the state of the Irish poor, clever and kind and very judicious, he encourages comments, being in search of facts, so that we had a long conversation upon subjects to which we have both paid great attention"[4] and apparently he found her criticisms of some value for the next day she wrote:

> Mr. Hickey came again to read the alterations he had made in his Essay. We talked over the National Schools now so flourishing that 'tis loss of time to deplore the folly which nevertheless has much crippled their usefulness: a set of the very ignorant and of course very bigotted pastors, people will struggle against liberal sentiments, their number is happily decreasing as knowledge is spreading. 5

Such were the thoughts, consistent with her own most deeply held views on religion, aroused by her conversations with "Martin Doyle".

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1. Colonel and Mrs. Smith, it is clear from the Journals, took both a Dublin and a London morning paper: see Part IV, ch.3 pp.460 et. seq.
2. 18.10.1843.
3. 10.4.1845.
4. See Part II, ch. 3, p. 193.
5. 11.4.1845.

And yet after the busy challenges of Baltiboys life was pretty tame. Only a few months after arriving in France, she wrote: "It is a stupid life to those who have been used to the activity of a country life on their own property, for there is nothing to see here but the face of nature, nothing to do but such work as people can cut for themselves, not resources of any kind for the indolent or the idle."[1] This sounds as if she is getting at her husband and fifteen months later her description of the Colonel's routine makes it clear that tedium alone was likely to bring about a return to Baltiboys.

> He walks with the little girls, goes to the reading room, plays his game at Billiards, changes our books and reads them all, and by the help of a protracted toilette in the morning, a long dinner and good sleep after it he gets merrily through the day, although I cannot but think a man of his country tastes and active habits must find life in Avranches sadly tedious. 2

There was another side to the question. They received regular letters from Tom Darker, John Robinson and Doctor George Robinson from which it was evident that matters were well under control and that their strategy was succeeding; however what Mrs. Smith, prompted by another reassuring letter from the agent in December 1844, described as "the want of our moral influence among our people"[3] was definitely a factor for concerned landlords like the Smiths to take into account.

One other consideration was to prove decisive and it is worth

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1. 31.12.1843.
2. 2.3.1845.
3. 22.12.1844.

emphasising because of its importance in the rigourous years which were to follow the Smiths' return to Baltiboys; Dr. Robinson's examination of Mrs. Smith at Avranches in April 1845 was to convince her that she would be better off in Ireland.

> He examined me very particularly and finds the complaint to be in the womb and the best surgical advice necessary, the lower bowels are apathetick, something wrong with the duodenum, the liver torpid in a degree, considerable irritation everywhere, the nervous system deranged, the heart affected by sympathy, no organick disease anywhere. It is a state of a very miserable ill health without any hope of speedy recovery ... for three or four years I must make up my mind to be a regular invalid, living by rule, a most disagreeable rule, for between medicines and lotions and frictions and bathings and minutes of exercise and hours of repose these years are to pass away, in the hope of what, comfortable old age. [1]

His diagnosis for the next three or four years of course were to coincide with the greatest test faced by the Smiths in their administration of Baltiboys.

This lay in the future. All that mattered in the early summer of 1845 was that the decision to return had been taken, and that the two years away had been successful so that they had no doubts that enough had been saved fully to realise their remaining ambitions for Baltiboys; as Mrs. Smith wrote "we have saved money enough to make a thousand little improvements."[2]

The return itself could hardly have been more painless.

> We came home in a comfortable open carriage hired for the occasion. It being market day in Blessington, several familiar faces peered through the crowd, and Mr. Dizest[3]

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1. 13.4.1845.

2. 16.7.1845.

3. His daughter's marriage to the Baltiboys' butler was frowned upon by Mrs. Smith: see Part II, ch. 5, p. 241.

> set the joy bells a ringing. The day was fine, the drive very pleasant, the more so as the same indications of encreasing comfort which we had remarked throughout Dublin were fully more apparent in the country. 1

And the house and policies were clearly in good order: "Baltiboys looks beautiful, quite sheltered, flourishing trees, clean fields, good fences - it is quite pleasant to return to a place in such good order."[2] Of course there were problems to be sorted out amongst their dependents ("most unpleasant quarrelling has been going on, jealousies, envyings and every sort of evil speaking" but ... "all will come right now we are back.").[3] Over-all the Journals show Colonel and Mrs. Smith returning to what they thought an unchanged neighbourhood. The Moores, Fosters, Hornidges and Henrys showed no change; the Milltowns were no nearer escape from their predicament; but at least one of their neighbours had changed very much for the better she thought in the intervening two years:

> Mr. Cotton quite reformed, talking of the policy of the Maynooth Bill, the good to be expected from the new Colleges, the propriety of hereafter paying the priests; I hardly thought he was in earnest.

Moreover, her first impression was the "our humbler neighbours so far as we have yet seen are all thriving, a great change for the better since last I went my rounds among them." Even, that is, if they were plagued by the meddling of the priests with what patently did not concern them; but Mrs. Smith's considered judgement was that

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1. 17.7.1845.
2. Ibid.
3. 27.7.1845.

Father Rickard "will probably retire from the Agitation now that the landlord is at hand" ..... and her own view was

> I am glad of the squabble, he has exasperated a strong feeling among his parishioners, thus rather hastening the hour of freedom to all. No greater change has taken place than in the feelings of the people towards their priests. 1

Plus ça change .... but it is clear that her health notwithstanding, Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys had returned in July 1845 to the fray.

The Ireland which the Smiths returned to had in fact been encapsulated in the multifarious evidence contained in the volumes of the Report produced by Lord Devon for Sir Robert Peel's government, "in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland."[2]

The only mention, unfortunately, in the Journals is her observation in Pau that "our Irish paper" showed that the "new Commission" was "very busy".[3] It is also a great pity that there was never any chance of the four thick volumes of evidence coming her way, for there would obviously have been much to absorb the Smiths. Pierce Mahoney's assertion that "the moral advantage of a good resident landlord is above all desirable. No money to the community with which he is connected can be a compensation for his non-residence. His moral value is not to be valued in money." should have elicited more than a military splutter from the Colonel.[4] He might have appreciated the well-re-

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1. 28.7.1845.
2. I have referred extensively to this (Devon 1,2,3 or 4) in Parts II and III.
3. 11.1.1844.
4. Devon 3 p. 766, witness 1037 qu. 49.

hearsed rhetoric of the Roman Catholic Archdeacon of Newcastle, the Rev. Michael Fitzgerald, whose peroration illustrates one of the weaknesses of this uncritically assembled mass of evidence:

> Landlords in these islands are generally speaking the élite of society; they are highly educated: they bask from infancy in the sunshine of wordly prosperity; of them at least it cannot be said
>
> > But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
> > Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
> > Chill poverty repressed their noble rage
> > And froze the genial current of the soul. 1
>
> They are in many instances the inheritors of noble names, of names associated with historical recollections of a lofty and ennobling character; and if unselfish, generous and high-minded principle is anywhere to be found on earth, it ought to be in this class. 2

He would have sympathised with the classic account of what the good landlord's duties consisted which was delivered by Alexander Hamilton, agent to Colonel Connolly's Donegal estates;[3] and he would have agreed with the account of Dennis Kelly of Kelly Castle Co. Galway about how caring landlords went about consolidation using precisely the methods used at Baltiboys.[4]

General statements by the score, and criticisms too, are the standard fare of this Report; these confirm original impressions but have little light to cast on the Smiths' administration of Baltiboys.

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1. See Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard, Thomas Gray, stanza 13.
2. Devon 2 p. 790, witness 641, qu. 22.
3. Devon 2 p. 178, witness 351, qu. 17.
4. Devon 2 p. 343, witness 431, qu. 54.

In part this is undoubtedly the result of the contemporary obsession with tenant right and the benefits of its extension from Ulster to the rest of Ireland; and it also in part originates in the Commission's members' other obsession with the west of Ireland. The evidence for the eastern counties therefore is much less than for the north and west. However there is a little to be gleaned, but it is mostly general assertions about the County as a whole, or particularisms about the situation in areas fully twenty miles away.

Most of the Wicklow witnesses giving evidence either came from the Fitzwilliam estates at Powerscourt, or from Baltinglass or Naas, three areas which ringed Blessington and Baltiboys[1] so that the bulk of what they dealt with is only of indirect significance. The conditions at Powerscourt, and even the lines on which the estate was administered, put it immediately into a different category from Baltiboys; it is clear that around Baltinglass the 30 acre tillage farm predominated, although Robert Saunders of Saunders' Grove believed they still used the same methods of agriculture as in the previous century;[2] and conditions around Naas differed from those near Blessington by their comparative neglect, typified in the answer made by the 150 acre farmer Peter Lyon to the question "What does the agent generally perform in the district?" ... his reply was "I have never known the agent to come to the tenants or to be of any service to

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1. See map , Appendix I.
2. Devon 3 p. 552, witness 960, qu. 5.

them."[1] The three main groups of evidence therefore deal with three differing situations from which unfortunately no useful comparisons can be made.

However there are a number of interesting minor reminders of Baltiboys. For example the Rev. John Bagot, Rector from Athy some twenty miles from Blessington, touched on a recurring theme of Mrs. Smith's Journals in his evidence dealing with the local impact made by two incomers whose farms were a model of improvement ...

> Does the improved system which they have introduced upon their own farms appear to have excited much attention among their neighbours?
>
> I do not think it has; I do not think they have a spirit for it.
>
> To what do you attribute the want of spirit?
>
> The want of education. They go in the same track their fathers did before them. I attribute it to the want of education and the want of knowledge. They save money but they do not lay it out on their farms. 2

Mrs. Smith would have seen this evidence as a clear justification for the sort of positive lead she believed the landowner had to provide if the amorphous desire of disorganised tenantry for improvement was to become reality.

It is also useful to be reminded that it was rare for local opinion to be unanimously agreed, even over a question such as the stimulus provided by leases. Simon Moran, a professional valuator who claimed in his evidence to be familiar with the whole of Co. Wicklow,

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1. Devon 3 p. 680, witness 1012, qu. 42.
2. Devon 3 p. 581, witness 970, qu.s 37/8.

uncompromisingly maintained:

> I could state instances to my own knowledge, showing that the majority of the Tory landlords in the county of Wicklow, from some sort of party feeling, will give no leases except to a few of their own set, and the consequence is, that some of the best farmers in the county of Wicklow have no lease, nor any security. 1

Robert Saunders, however, who owned five thousand acres near Baltinglass, adding to his original statement that "I never knew a man who had his land too cheap who was a good tenant", believed that it was sensible not to issue leases because the various covenants (and copies were to be found in every "stamp distributing shop")[2] were unenforceable and in any case "the tenant-at-will is decidedly the most improving and most comfortable in my own district."[3]

Saunders was the brother-in-law of one of the Smiths' near neighbours Mr. Tynte and it is interesting that his evidence to the commission praised him. He stated that "he expends more money in labour than any other man in the county" and added more ambiguously that "he has never turned out a tenant, nor done any thing to annoy them", but "the farm was on fire in four different places at the same time."[4] Even so this suggests that these three surrounding areas

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1. Devon 3 p. 705-6, witness 1023, qu. 43: Colonel Smith of course, only gave leases to three of his tenants, but the continuity on the rest of the estate 1830-50 hardly suggests insecurity.
2. Blessington in fact contained a post office throughout the 1840s.
3. Supra., qu. 15.
4. Ibid., qu. 23: See Part I, ch. 3, p. 84.

about which evidence was given in October 1844 were as far at least as landlord involvement was concerned not comparable to the district round Blessington.

Although some landed proprietors chose to ignore the Commission[1] and others like the Smiths, there being that one slight mention in the Journals, did not rate its deliberations very highly, it is important to remember that certainly the majority of the small farmer class who predominated for example at Baltiboys were expectantly awaiting the Report. Daniel O'Connell's remarks to the Commissioners in January 1845 included the statement that "very bad effects will follow if this Commission proves totally abortive"; he added "there is a kind of a pause in many districts, in the expectation that something will be done through this Commission and I would like to impress, as strongly as I can, upon the minds of gentlemen, the vital importance of doing something. You cannot make matters worse; the people are very unhappily circumstanced."[2] This is one important element it is reasonable to suppose, although not mentioned by Mrs. Smith, existed as much around Blessington as elsewhere; so that when the Smiths returned in July 1845 there is a double-edged note of irony present .... not only had they retrenched and were ready to start their improvements precisely when rural Ireland was to face the worst crisis of the century, but the farming and tenant classes had had their level of expectation

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1. It was Lord Leitrim who protested "against the inquisitorial principle upon which the institution of the Land Commissioners appears to have been founded".

2. Devon 3 p. 940, witness 1119, qu. 44.

raised by the reports of the activity of the Devon Commission so that they too had to make a real adjustment when the fact that disaster had struck was apparent to all.

The three months after the Smiths' return from their successful two years in France naturally contain no sense of foreboding. Indeed it is all the encouraging signs they noted which provide the characteristic tone of the Journals for these months. She comments on the spirit of improvement amongst the tenantry, how agreeable the neighbourhood appears after their exile, the visible progress in the schools and the total lack of impact locally of O'Connell's "monster meetings". Similarly, the topics she thoroughly disapproved of are no different to the ones so regularly dispatched in the earlier Journals ... quarrelling tenantry, meddling priests and the seemingly incurable propensity for early marriages.[1] And of course she felt that she was still recovering both her health and her customary vigour; under the stimulus of getting involved again in the administration of Baltiboys she who, as she commented at the start of October, earlier had "fancied every feeling of enthusiasm dead", now had resumed her managing role and refound her characteristic energy.[2]

It was fortunate that this was so, because Colonel Smith was no more fit to cope with the demands of the house, demesne and estate of Baltiboys that before and the brunt of the day-to-day work continued to be done by his wife. However, they were both naturally greatly

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1. July to October 1845.
2. 6.10.1845.

concerned with what started in September as distant reports from Wexford and Waterford[1] about an outbreak of a potato disease and by October had spread sufficiently quickly to be a threat to their area.

> The Colonel has been very much occupied with plans for the prevention of such extreme distress as the failure of the potato crop threatens the poor with. Just in Baltiboys there seems as yet to be no damage done but very near at hand this widespread distress has already attacked some large fields whee the poor man's supply for the next nine months may without active measures speedily fail him entirely. 2

She was well aware that although the early impact of the disease was very destructive, part of the potato could be salvaged according to her newspapers; this suggests that she had been reading the accounts of the work done by the Lindley, Playfair and Kane commission[3] entrusted with producing a scientific solution:

> The potato once attacked is quite unfit for food, it rots away, affecting all its companions, but the farina, the nourishing part of the root, is uninjured even in the worst cases so that by scraping down the patote at once and making it into what they call starch, nothing fit for food is lost. This starch or flour mixed with a half of wheaten flour makes delicious bread, some of which we tasted today for Mr. Sheehan amongst others has been trying this experiment and he sent us by young John Hornidge a sample. 4

It was later to become clear that this diagnosis was wrong; their other ground for optimism (that there had been good crops of corn in 1845 and, although the price was rising as a result of the panic gen-

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1. Woodham-Smith, p. 44.
2. 26.10.1845.
3. T.P. O'Neill, The Organisation and Administration of Relief, 1845-52 in Great Famine (edited by R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams) p. 210; Woodham-Smith, p. 44-6.
4. 26.10.1845.

erated by the appearance of the blight, "it is expected shortly to fall, particularly if they open the ports to foreign corn free of duty, which we hear the Government will do if necessary.") was hardly based on practical grounds. Even so for Colonel Smith in these early days as they face the possibility of blight, it was the"want of energy of the lower orders, their idleness, and their ignorance" that he singled out as the main reason stopping "their setting to work to supply themselves with this change of food."[1]

This change of diet, presupposing ready money and markets, was never a practical proposition. It was shown earlier[2] that the figures for 1834, 1841 and 1847 for the size of the holdings and farms on Baltiboys produce on each occasion over half above fifteen acres,[3] and therefore coming close to that twenty statute acres which P.M.A. Bourke suggested divided those farmers who lived exclusively off a potato diet from those for whom it was only an important part;[4] it was really, even on Baltiboys, the eight or nine tenants with farms over fifty acres who would have been in a position over a number of seasons to follow their landlord's advice.[5] And again, below these

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1. 26.10.1845.
2. See Part II, ch. 1, pp. 121-2.
3. See Table 3, Appendix 2.
4. P.M.A. Bourke, The Use of the Potato Crop in Pre-Famine Ireland, Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland Vol. XXI, Part VI 1967-8 p. 83.
5. Ibid.

levels of smallholder was that most vulnerable and insecure class, the landless labourers whose numbers seem to have included the members of at least twelve families in the early 1840s. Of those whose predicament was examined earlier,[1] Mrs. Smith calculated that in October there were only two from Baltiboys proper who were "in distress", George Kearns ("who will soon by his own activity be out of it", a reference to her hope of seeing him established in his trade of a sawyer) and John Byrne ("an old ailing man with a wife more feeble than himself, an idiot daughter and an orphen grandaughter, all inhabiting a single room hovel dependent solely on the labour of one son, our workman Luke"). There were, she was careful to note, also three others who although "not strictly belonging to us we occasionally help", the Harry Kiogh, James Kelly and James Craig whose plight has already been seen to be one of well-nigh complete dependence on others. There was only one way to deal with them: "We must try and get rid of them to the railways or the poor house for they will never learn to help themselves." Otherwise, apart from two deserted children, in her opinion the tenantry and labourers of their estate were able to cope with whatever the troubles looming ahead might involve. Even so, her final comment shows her emphasising the vigilance necessary: "It requires constant watching to keep them all in order - up to industry - in heart - and out of all the long catalogue of miseries poverty is heir

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1. See Part II, ch.s 3 and 4 where the predicament of all these tenants and labourers is examined.

to."[1]

It would have been uncharacteristic if Colonel and Mrs. Smith had met this suspected crisis with self-congratulation that their share of the problems would be slight and reiteration of the moral deficiencies which made the people susceptible to them. In fact, this October, before there were any affected potatoes around them, he had joined Lord Downshire's agent in planning how best to meet the crisis; the fourth Lord himself who had only succeeded to the title in April of that year[2] seemed equally determined that the poor should not suffer in the approaching troubles.

> ... [The Colonel] went to see Mr. Owen on the subject of establishing a scraping manufactory and perhaps a bakery, and he found him quite ready to do everything to lessen this calamity. Lord Downshire is equally desirous to assist the neighbourhood as he has shewn by insisting on taking to himself the debts of the Loan Fund,[3] unfortunate Mr. Alley[4] having helped himself to the savings deposited and to much more, for the money originally lent by Colonel Smith and others to establish the fund was gone too. This fraudulent conduct had so much inconvenienced the poor who had trusted their hard earnings to the Bank that the gentlemen had decided to subscribe the necessary sum to pay up these debts, but Lord Downshire won't allow them, which we all think very handsome conduct. 5

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1. 28.10.1845: there was no work to be had on railways close at hand; the nearest the Dublin line came was Sallins, and despite Lord George Bentinck's lobbying, there was no chance of fresh schemes starting. Kevin B. Nowlan, the Political Background, in Great Famine, p. 159-60.

2. See Part I, ch. 3, p. 52-5.

3. See p. 54.

4. Ibid.

5. 26.10.1845.

There was then in the opening month of the first famine winter a flurry of activity aimed at preparing the neighbourhood and in particular the poorest inhabitants, whose food supply would have consisted almost entirely of what was harvested from a potato crop "made up primarily of inferior varieties, bred to exhaustion point for yield, ... a vast potato slum, wide open to epedemic plant diseace."[1] Thus Mrs. Smith noted one day that "Janey and her Papa have just come in from their ride, they are going everywhere to teach the management of diseased potatoes."[2] She herself, it is important to remember, was still an invalid, and a most revealing entry at the end of the month describes her frame of mind:

> Another day of bad weather yet all get out but me, sick poor, destitute poor, and ignorant, idle prejudiced poor oppress me. Relieve them I can't, instruct them I can't, but I can try, every little helps, and many mickles make a muckle. Energy is so wanting among these Celtick races there is no inspiring them to help themselves, and there is no other help really availing. Mental force seems to be wanting, it will require a generation or two to reproduce any in beings so degraded. How absurd in me to feel angry with creatures so deficient yet their folly is so lamentable it is very hard to bear patiently all the evils it produces. 3

As always she was encouraged by thinking back on the wretched conditions they had found at Baltiboys in 1830 and the many changes they had managed to introduce even their thrawn tenantry to:

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1. P.M.A. Bourke, The Extent of the Potato Crop at the time of the Famine, Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland 1959-60, Vol. XX Pt. III, p. 11-12.

2. 27.10.1845.

3. 28.10.1845.

> Now we have larger farms, larger fields, some good fences, much finer cattle, a few sheep, even some turnips, five new slated houses, three of them two stories high, good clothing, meal and bread and bacon and a "bit of beef by times". Draining a rage, planting, clearing, good schools, a night school, lending library, and much approach towards cleanliness. Fifteen years more and what may we not hope for. 1

This was the root of their optimism that whatever problems scarcity of potatoes brought that winter the estate and its inhabitants were in excellent shape to meet them.

The long-expected arrival of the blight took place early in November, the Journal noting "Hal has just brought in two damaged potatoes, the first we have seen of our own, for on our hill few have been found as yet."[2] The weather continued very foggy and cold for the rest of the month, ideal climatic conditions for the fungus phytophthora infestans to flourish;[3] "Mr. Darker much afraid of this second potato field. The first had hardly a bad potato so that he was unprepared for this."[4] On the 13th came more bad news: "half the potatoes in the new field are tainted, some very badly." One of the main characteristics of this fungus was its unpredictable advance (Sir Randolph Routh,[5] chairman of the Relief Commission established

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1. All the features Mrs. Smith is here boasting about are part of the pre-famine improvements at Baltiboys described in Part II.

2. 5.11.1845.

3. Sir William P. MacArthur, Medical History of the Famine, Great Famine, p. 264; Woodham-Smith, ch. 5, pp. 94-102.

4. 6.11.1845.

5. Sir Randolph Routh (1785?-1858), commissary-general in the army, came out of retirement to superintend the distribution of relief Nov. 1845-Oct. 1848 (D.N.B.).

by Peel in November, showed that he was well aware of this in a letter to Charles Trevelyan[1] on 31 July 1846: "there was a marked capriciousness in the diseace, leaving particular fields untouched and healthy, whilst others in their immediate vicinity were almost a mass of corruption.")[2] and obviously although all at Baltiboys were ready for it to arrive, they were baffled by its progress. The only cause for relief lay in their realisation that the higher parts of the county, (and the lowest point in the estate, the surface of the Liffey below Baltiboys House, is 558 feet above sea level), were not as badly affected as the eastern seaboard. Father J. Grant, parish priest in

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1. Sir Charles E. Trevelyan (1807-1886), whose early career had been spent in India, became assistant secretary to the Treasury during the 1840s, and was responsible for administering relief works during the famine. (D.N.B.)

2. There are five extremely valuable collections of documents published by the Government to explain and perhaps justify what they did: (i) Correspondance explanatory of the measures adopted by Her Majesty's Government for the relief of distress arising from the failure of the potato crop in Ireland, HC 1846 XXXVII (hereafter Correspondance/explanatory) (ii) Correspondance from July 1846 to January 1847, relating to the measures adopted for the relief of the distress in Ireland, Board of Works series, HC 1847 L (hereafter Correspondance 1846/7 B of W) (iii) Correspondance from July 1846 to January 1847, relating to the measures adopted for the relief of distress in Ireland and Scotland, commisariat series, HC 1847 LI (hereafter Correspondance 1846/7 Comm.) (iv) Correspondance from January to March 1847, relating to the measures adopted for the relief of the distress in Ireland, Board of Works series, HC 1847 LII (hereafter Correspondance 1847 B. of W.) (v) Correspondance from January to March 1847, relating to the measures adopted for the relief of the distress in Ireland, commisariat series HC 1847 LII (hereafter Correspondance 1847 Comm.) Correspondance explanatory, p. 217.

Wicklow town, in a letter to Archbishop Murray dated 30th November 1845, estimated that half the potato crop within three miles of the coast had been lost, "and the same can safely said [sic] to be the case from Bray to Arklow". His general account of the state in the rest of the county continued:

> The more inland districts towards the mountains, I am happy to be able to say, are not so severely affected. There is no garden however but has some share of the diseace; and on the whole in those favoured districts from all I can learn, one fourth may be fairly said to be the loss on the average. [1]

John Pitt Kennedy, secretary to the Relief Commission, produced his calculations in February 1846 to show the proportion of the potato crop lost in all the electoral divisions in each county of Ireland. In Co. Wicklow they range from under ten to between sixty and seventy percent:[2]

under 1/10	1/10 to 2/10	2/10 to 3/10	3/10 to 4/10	4/10 to 5/10	5/10 to 6/10	6/10 to 7/10
1	6	10	17	6	0	2

They are a useful reminder of the contrasting conditions within this county, and of the fact that the eastern portions of Ireland, even if they were not amongst the worst affected areas, as early as the winter of 1845 were widely, if not universally, affected by what can only here be termed a natural disaster.

By a curious coincidence the first act of the famine years at

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1. Archives of the Archbishop of Dublin, filed under Priests Secular, 1845.
2. Correspondance explanatory, p. 36.

Baltiboys was clearly to end ten months after the first appearance of the blight, that is in August 1846, the month that Lord John Russell discontinued the measures introduced to combat the results of the blight by his predecessor Sir Robert Peel.[1] During this period the Journals show what the Smiths did to alleviate the worst of what they regarded as a temporary misfortune which their estate was perfectly able to withstand; by August, however, with the prospect of a second more desperate winter ahead, their attitude had changed, though not their belief that Baltiboys was strong enough to survive.

In particular, it is possible to get a glimpse of how this estate combatted the initial effects of the potato blight in a way that was fully in accordance with the "rules under which relief is to be afforded" laid down most succinctly in a letter from Trevelyan to Routh on 26th January 1846.

> In the first place I am desired to remark that the landowners and other rate-payers are the parties who are both legally and morally answerable for affording due relief to the destitute poor; and that the same parties are, from their local influence, and their knowledge of the situation and wants of the people, in their neighbourhood, best able to furnish such relief without waste or misdirection of the means employed.
>
> The measures to be adopted by you, and the officers employed under you, are, therefore, to be considered merely as auxiliary to those which it is the duty of the persons possessed of property in each neighbourhood to adopt. The efforts of those persons are to be stimulated, directed and supported; but are not, if it can possibly be avoided, to be superseded [sic] by the direct agency of the officers of the government. 2

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1. T.P. O'Neill, p. 227-8; Woodham-Smith, p. 105-7.

2. Correspondance explanatory, p. 16.

As was to be expected, the Smiths accepted that in common with the other landowners around them they did indeed possess a legal and moral responsibility for ensuring that those most affected by the consequences of the blight were helped. However, in this earliest stage of the famine years. Mrs. Smith was not impressed by the urgency with which the local gentry approached the problems of co-ordinating their efforts:

> Hal went to the meeting at Mr. Owen's house to consult about fit measures for the relief of impending evils on account of the potato disease and it was settled that another meeting should be held this day fortnight further to consider this publick calamity! Would this not do for Boz. 1

This is the only early mention of local committees, or anything like them, meeting so it is to be presumed that nothing much came of this early initiative. However, the Instructions drawn up by the Secretary for the Committees of Relief Districts makes it plain that "the measures to be adopted by the officers of the Government are to be considered merely as auxiliary to those which it is the duty of the persons possessed of property in each neighbourhood to adopt."[2] It is therefore unlikely that any additional support was desirable or necessary.

As far as Baltiboys was concerned, as early as 8th November the Colonel is described as "busy arranging employment for the poor" and she adds "a hope expressed in many places on tolerable good grounds

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1. 4.11.45: however when Charles Dickens collected all the "Sketches by Boz", he added a sub-title "Illustrative of Every-day Life and Every-day People".

2. Quoted Trevelyan to Routh, 26.1.1846

that the distress will be but partial." The Smiths therefore after initial anxiety as they read about the blight elsewhere, were in no doubt once it reached them that their measures would protect the poorest on the estate from its worst effects. 'Indeed her Journals end the year, as she reflects on how the next generation is creeping up on them, which was just as well in view of their poor health, with a valedictory comment on 1845 clearly showing that they felt themselves to be on top of all the possible problems:

> If ever anyone had reason to look back on such a period of time with satisfaction it should be me for our little circle in this wide universe has had but blessings to commemorate. All we love that are left to us well, our home thriving, place progressing, people improving, neighbours agreeable. 1

However it could be uphill work as her frustration with the attitude of some of the old folk she was trying to help the previous month showed:

> Some of the dull old people hereabouts decline making starch of their bad potatoes; it can't be wholesome, if the potato be tainted the starch must be tainted and so unfit for food. We have explained to many the structure of the root and how the farina escapes when the fibrous part suffers, and wonderfully well some of them understand, by the help of the illustrations of the honeycomb; others are quite obtuse and mean to sit down with folded hands to bear the will of God, in other words relief from the benevolent without any exertion on their part. 2

Apart from such irritations, however, everything went smoothly and the extra measures of help cushioned the needy. Thus when the agent John Robinson came as usual at the end of November to collect the

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1. 31.12.1845.
2. 4.11.1845.

rents, he reported that the tenantry paid well and that there had been no complaints about the potatoes. He confided later that "the potato failure has been much exaggerated, the disease is by no means so far spread as was supposed and the crop so over abundant that the partial failure will be the less felt, particularly as the corn harvest was excellent."[1]

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Journals for 1846 are not dominated by famine and relief matters. February and March are full of the preparations for the first Ball they had held at Baltiboys and for example Doctor Robinson, who had of course been involved in running the Blessington Dispensary[2] and therefore must have known at first hand about the extent of distress, is only mentioned at this time in connection with the Ball and his absorbtion with dancing ... somewhat critically too.

> The doctor utterly crazed with this polka mania, indeed dancing mania, everything of the kind is much the same to him. All night he passed on the floor, treading on the ladies' toes, tearing the dresses, setting the figures wrong, misdirecting all, and so furious at time with us all in the moulinette being disobeyed that he quitted the quadrille in disgust leaving his partner standing there all forlorn. It is the most incredible delusion this idea that he dances well and his unwearied exercize of an art he knows nothing of, and which in his youth he never cared for, being then of a composed character fond of sensible conversation with people older than himself and enjoying a grave game of whist as his recreations. (now he dances) with the youngest girls he can get and there he whirls, stout and heavy and

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1. 30.11.1845.

2. This had certainly been established by May 1837 when John Murray wrote informing Lord Downshire that the local committee had decided to defer taking any decision about new premises until the new Poor Law had passed. DP D671/ C/199.

> ungraceful and grey-headed, out of time and altogether so astonishing a spectacle that I begin to feel with Ogle Moore that it will end seriously. 1

There is no suggestion that this relaxation is to be explained as a reaction to his heavy Dispensary duties. However that very month the Returns from the Medical Officers presented by John Pitt Kennedy[2] contained, in Dr. Robinson's report, one of the few pessimistic prophesies made about the Blessington area: "Apprehends that amongst small farmers there will be much destitution, and consequently disease. They generally inhabit a district at foot of the mountains where there is no employment. Suggests that in parishes of Blackditches and Hollywood a committee be formed to give relief by employment or gratuitously."[3] Distress, even so, in the doctor's opinion would be in isolated and mountainous areas on the fringe of the area, controllable within the current system.

It was Doctor Robinson, too, who introudced the Smiths at the end of March to the "Memorandum on Indian Food"[4] distributed by the Government to help landowners and relief committees replace an exclusively potato diet.

> The Doctor brought us yesterday a printed paper, published by the government to teach the people how to use the Indian corn

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1. 14.3.1846.
2. Secretary to the Devon Commission, and the Relief Commissioners in the opening years of the Famine: see Green, Great Famine p. 117.
3. Correspondance 1846/7 B. of W., 7.3.1846, p. 486.
4. Enclosure 3, accompanying a letter from Routh to Trevelyan 31.7.1846, Correspondance explanatory, p. 226-230.

> flower. It will be very useful, although the Dutch oven part might have been left out, even a griddle few of the poor possess, and to talk of yeast and butter and eggs and new milk to perfect paupers is a sort of mockery. 1

Her criticism was very just. As a document it has all the hallmarks of being written by "a well-meaning but officious civil servant with whig leanings"[2] and as such it fully deserves Mrs. Smith's strictures if it were meant for the suffering poor of Ireland. Brown bread is to be baked "in an iron stand in the oven all night" and the recipe "To make excellent Bread without Yeast" from Indian meal concludes ... "It suits best to bake it in a Dutch oven, as it should be put into the oven as soon as it is light." It recommended that Griddle Cakes be made with milk altogether and no water, that two eggs should be allowed for each pint of corn meal, and, a final instruction whose imagery betrays the writer's total lack of conception of what would be understood by those the whole exercise was designed to help, there should be enough milk to make the concoction liquid as it is poured onto the girddle together with "one spoonful of wheat flour and lard (butter is better) the size of a walnut." Mrs. Smith was right to single out yeast as a commodity not likely to be encountered in the average cabin, but she might equally have mentioned the "little stewed pumpkin" that so improved the Indian Cake or Bannock, or the "table-spoonful of powdered ginger or sifted cinnamon" which added to "a tea-cupful of molasses or treacle" made the baked Maize Pudding so

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1. 23.3.1846.

2. T.P. O'Neill, p. 214.

delicious. Butter is taken for granted: the Bannock "split and dipped in butter makes very nice toast" and the Green Indian Corn needs to be served with melted butter. Eggs accompany most dishes, four in the case of Boiled Indian pudding and Mrs. Smith is perfectly correct in that it is the new milk and not butter-milk which the Memorandum suggests should be used.

However, a closer reading of the document makes it clear that this can never have been intended for the mass of the people who were even then emerging from that first famine winter. The Relief Commission and the Treasury should have been in no doubt from, for example, the extracts that were later published in the Correspondance Explanatory, just what section of the population was being affected by the shortage. For example the Inspecting Officer at Banagher, Captain Pole, wrote to Charles Trevelyan on 29th April 1846: "There is a tide of fixed distress in this country which never ebbs; a stranger cannot well discern its level, but an inhabitant understands every wrinkle on its surface."[1] Five weeks later this "intelligent, zealous officer" (as Sir Randolph Routh described him) whose written style verged on the quixotic even so wrote to Trevelyan in unmistakable terms about the level of destitution:

> To an ordinary apprehension there are doubtless proofs already of painful scarcity of such food as the poor look to; the Irish resident says "It is always so at this time of the year"; but this philosopher, beyond the reach of want himself, is unable to estimate the wide ruin which the loss of a portion of a sole maintaining crop inflicts upon a people who have no variety of

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1. Correspondance explanatory, 29.4.1846, p. 126.

crops and no reinforcement of supply. [1]

The whole of Peel's strategy depended upon those landowners whose moral and legal responsibility it was to provide relief; this memorandum was for their eyes.

Further, Mrs. Smith's condemnation is based on a selective reading. It contains a number of quite graphic illustrations from North American life designed to show how sustaining food can be prepared in in the most primitive of conditions with Indian meal exactly similar to that being supplied to the various depots established around the country (that at Dublin which, amongst other areas provided for Co. Wicklow, sold Indian corn meal and a little .... one fourteenth of the total .... oatmeal, but no Indian corn or biscuit between the 8th May and the 15th August 1846.)[2] "In the midst of a wilderness, with a flint and a steel, and a bag of corn meal, an American sets hunger at defiance"; "The (Mexican) muleteers, who are always on the road, are considered to prepare these cakes (tortillas) better than other people, and they make them of the thickness of a London crumpet."

So, to "perfect paupers" this memorandum might have seemed "a sort of mockery" but so to describe it is unfair to the government. Indeed the very response which Mrs. Smith wrote of in her Journals illustrates precisely what Peel and Trevelyan wanted the landowning class to undertake.

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1. Correspondance explanatory, 8.6.1846, p. 160.
2. Correspondance 1846/7 Comm. p. 2.

> Margaret (Fyfe) and I can teach the porridge, the hasty pudding and the common cakes from seeing them made at Pau where the maize flour is much used. Unfortunately any trouble is so disagreeable to the habits of our indolent population, I doubt their taking it till actually dying from want, any food they are unaccustomed to they dislike equally, but the famine is coming, has begun in the plains and must reach the hills, and though those immediately belonging to our small knot of good landlords may feel little of it, all around are already in misery, the poor broom man among them who while walking up from the gate with me, his load upon his back, told me he had no work, no food, and was reduced to one meal a day himself, his wife and five children. Why will they marry on nothing? 1

This was probably not the sort of example Sir Randolph Routh had in mind when he wrote to Charles Trevelyan at the end of July 1846 describing the advantages of thé new source of food: "The Indian meal is so nutricious that one meal in the morning supports the labourer throughout the day; and it has been remarked by the peasantry that where it has been used, fever has been less prevalent or has entirely disappeared."[2]

By the end of this month of March, when "the miseries of our poor" were beginning to take up a considerable amount of time, the Smiths had worked out their plan of campaign. "We have brought home some of the maize flour which we all think delicious, and very luckily, so do all those who have tasted wither about us".[3] In this their opinion coincided with that of Father Mathew who wrote from Cork to Trevelyan on June 18th:

> 'Our people are becoming fond of maize flour, and I am confident that it will ever continue to be used in Ireland as a

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1. 23.3.1846: see Part II, ch. 5, pp. 233 et. seq.
2. Correspondance explanatory p. 219.
3. 20.4.1846.

> necessary of life .... It is excellent, substantial and nutricious food. The rich would find it a delicious addition to the morning or evening tea table. 1

In particular their plan meant to use maize flour as the means to see their tenantry and dependents through the hungry months ahead noted by Captain Pole:

> A little of this with Hal's potatoes and meal sold at low prices will keep our own people in comfort through these always scarce months; he is also going to bring home some coals for sale on the same terms, as fuel is not to be had in the country. All this care will prevent much distress at home, but beyond there will be much, more even than usual, for there is a less supply of turf and potatoes than ordinary, and fuel and food that have to be bought however cheap their price, are unattainable by those who have not the money to buy them with. 2

In fact the prices produced by the local constabulary for Colonel Duncan McGregor,[3] who had been seconded from the RIC to the Relief Commission, showing the highest price per stone in the years since 1840 in Blessington, confirm that there had been a fifty percent increase by 4th March 1846:[4]

1840	1841	1842	1843	1844	1845	1846	
3	3½	2 3/4	2½	3	3	4½	pennies/stone

It is interesting that three days earlier Mrs. Smith had written about this very point in connection with the masterplan being worked out by

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1. Correspondance explanatory, p. 167.
2. 20.4.1846.
3. Colonel Duncan McGregor, Inspector-General of the RIC, served in Peel's relief commission and was appointed to the later commission, headed by Mrs. Smith's kinsman Sir John Burgoyne, set up to supervise Russell's new departure in 1847. (O'Neill p 213 & 237).
4. Correspondance explanatory, p. 496.

landlord and steward to ward off the distress they anticipated even on Baltiboys:

> Hal and I, and I and Mr. Darker, have had long consultations about the best method of relieving the poor. Hal and Mr. Darker will have a finishing conference to settle the plan to be pursued which I will then note down as a guide for future times should any such melancholy seasons occur under the improving management of these more prudent days. With potatoes at their present price it would take 9/- a week to buy sufficient of them for the labourer's family; he can earn at best but 6/- and there are all his other necessaries, house rent, clothes, fuel, milk. [1]

At Colonel McGregor's price, this represents only 24 lbs. of potatoes per week for such a labouring family. P.M.A. Bourke assumed that within what he called the oatmeal zone, where an exclusively potato diet would be rare, in pre-famine Ireland a labourer would require eight pounds a day, women and children over eleven would need nearly 6½ lbs. and those below eleven 2 3/4 lbs.[2] This labourer in fact would only be able to purchase 16 lbs. with his real weekly wage, and although he might well be dieted himself, it clearly would not go far towards feeding even an untypically small family.

Further, those who were not fortunate enough, even in this area, to be the concern of their landlords, had the further hazard that whatever money was there to purchase food went no way at all once the hucksters and gombeen men tightened the screws:

> The Managers who buy up the flour and meal and sell it out in the very small quantities the labourers can only buy, nearly double the cost price on the poor purchaser, and if they give credit, charge usorious interest besides - a system that ruins

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1. 1.3.1846.
2. J.S.S.I.I. op. cit. 1967/8, p. 83.

> hundreds - a system that every landlord or master is bound to check as far as in him lies. 1

However, by carrying out their obligations in the spirit sought by the government, the Smiths managed to prevent much hardship; their confidence that their management and the instrinsic strength of the estate would enable them and all depending on them to survive can clearly be seen from the fact that, although this masterplan was to be set down in the Journals as a guide should any famine strike again in the future, later she never considered this necessary.

There were however a number of occasions in the spring and early summer of 1846 when the easy optimism of 1845 was replaced by a growing sense of unease. It was not too surprising that George Kearns should be in difficulties. On 4th April Mrs. Smith described his wife "bringing instead of their rent the most earnest supplication for food for the support of her family, she has one day's provision in the house." On the 19th she came again and "I told her conditions on which she would be relieved, but she did not seem to like them!" However next day, "George Kearns himself came and was very reasonable. If he don't show us at Hollantide[2] that he is thriving, he will at once give up his ground and turn with our help to something that will answer better. In the meantime he is to get meal, at the lowrate." Such help was never intended for the thirty acre farmers, no matter how inefficient, and this is a clear sign that the weakest in the

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1. 1.3.1846.

2. Hollantide = All-hallowtide (1 November).

classes above the labouring poor were beginning to be affected after this first famine winter.[1] In May, moreover, Mrs. Smith noted that even the Blacksmiths who earned fifteen shillings a week ("nearly three times a labourer's wages") outwardly seemed to possess no more security with which the withstand the troubles of the day. She described them living in hovels with mud floors, no ceilings, little furniture and existing solely off potatoes and butter: "they squander their money they hardly know how - for they do not save it."[2] Finally, a picnic at the end of the month on Blackamore Hill ended with "our attendants - men who never taste meat twice in a year - truly enjoying what we had left of our luxuries"; but the sad part was what happened to the crumbs left by them in their turn.

> A little ragged frightened boy, the herd of some cattle grazing on these uplands ... had collected on a stone the shakings out of the table cloth, and ... was piling up crusts of bread with one hand and holding bare bones to his mouth with the other - the impersonation of famine. Need I set out that we added more substantial morsels to his store, enough for the morrow, and the Doctor slipt sixpence into the poor thin hand for milk hereafter. 3

It was this wretched summer also that the Smiths helped the Dalaneys[4] and Shannons,[5] neither in any sense their responsibility, but each of whom were by May in dire straights.

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1. See Part II, ch.s 3 and 4 for detailed examples.
2. 21.5.1846.
3. 27.5.1846.
4. 4.5.1846.
5. 29/30. 5. 1846

These were particular promptings of their consciences or occasional indicators that there were exceptions to the overall pattern of a well-organised estate on top of its problems. For them a much surer test was how well rents were paid to John Robinson at the beginning of June. Mrs. Smith described the tenantry paying well and without complaint:

> The scarcity of potatoes is little felt by the farmers, it being caused principally by the stocks having been kept back from the markets in the expectation of prices rising continually, which system pressed heavily on the labouring purchasers in which class the failure of the crop had been the commonest owing to inferiour management. 1

In the wider world, also, the public works organised locally were well under way, clearly within the guidelines laid down by Trevelyan in January: " ... the works on which destitute persons are to be employed should be in prosecution of some public improvement within the distressed locality, and should be such as will be capable of being brought at once to a close when the circumstances of the people are improved."[2] The barony of Talbotstown Lower applied for £351 on June 4th and the Board of Works recommended that £290 should be alotted them from 17th July for a total of six road improvements.[3] The scale on which such road works were carried on in Co. Wicklow is seen from the 508 labourers so employed on the 18th July, rising by 85

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1. 4.6.1846.
2. Correspondance explanatory, 26.1.1846, p. 16.
3. Correspondance explanatory, p. 340.

only in the next week.[1] Mrs. Smith was not happy about the way it was organised around them, believing (surely erroneously) that the pay was two shillings a day ("to men never used at the highest to more than a shilling"):

> The people are not ready for higher wages, higher tastes must first be produced, otherwise their habits are only lowered by encreasing their means before they are qualified properly to employ.

This was to be seen even more obviously she believed in that other over-paid source of employment the railways, because "they have collected all the disorderly women and other profligates for company and run headlong into a career of debauchery which will end in the miserable death of thousands. The Doctor made me shudder over the slight allusions he made to what has already come under his medical experience."[2]

In spite of occasional reservations, Mrs. Smith felt she was able in good confidence to spend much of from July to mid-September back in Edinburgh with her mother and family; this prolonged absence is as good a touchstone as any to the extent to which the widely reported disasters elsewhere had reached Baltiboys. She and Annie visited the poorest of their dependents before leaving and although Annie was appalled at what she saw, "in general the circumstances of these poor creatures have improved so much since I first went about amongst them

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1. Correspondance explanatory, p. 392.
2. 5.5.1846.

that to my practised eye in misery they appear to be almost comfortable."[1]

This confidence was probably strengthened by two meetings she had in Edinburgh with people whose public lives were bound up with events in Ireland. One was her sister Jane's brother-in-law Sir William Gibson-Craig,[2] Member of Parliament for Edinburgh between 1841 and 1852 and a Lord of the Treasury for the last six of these years. He had served on the commission inquiring into Church Property in Ireland in 1834 (as his obituary in the "Scotsman out it, "he rendered gratuitous service"), knew Pierce Mahoney well enough to be prepared to send written answers to questions the Smith's Wicklow acquaintance submitted to him, and in 1846, in Mrs. Smith's words, he was "busily occupied with Irish affairs, devising means to feed the poor, potatoless people". It is unlikely that she refrained from enlarging on her own views of what needed to be done. The other public figure was Robert Chambers,[3] for whose magazine she had written mostly on Irish matters, and of whom she saw a great deal (so that it was necessary to leave a card at his house, "he has written me such a quantity of notes and called so often that this civility was quite necessary"). She wrote after their first "interview":

> It was an appointment so I staid at home for him. He is ... a plain-looking and plain mannered man, particularly unob-

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1. 3.7.1846.
2. See Part II, ch. 1, p. 112, footnote 4.
3. See Part I, ch. 1, p. 15.

> trusive, almost humble indeed, though quite at ease and pleasant to converse with. We talked over the "Irish Sketch" which is in type and will appear in a conspicuous part of an early number. He calls it a beautiful paper. 1

Meetings like these, where no doubt she expounded her ideas on the Irish situation, might well have confirmed the impression she had left Baltiboys with, namely that although reports from other parts of Ireland were extremely disquieting, everything was well under control around them. It has already been noted that during their two years in France, Mrs. Smith's views naturally shifted towards the optimistic and so it is appropriate to envisage her in conversation with these two involved men of affairs and arguing that the rigours of the previous winter had been for the most part as well controlled as those of any previous partial famine.

Thus this first stage of the famine years down to late summer of 1846 is a time of successful local initiative to contain the worst of the evils attendant upon the spread of the potato blight. Mrs. Smith believed that enough of the Blessington landlords had taken swift action for its effects to be minimised and although clearly one of the most severe of the partial failures of the potato crop that had taken place since 1830, it still remained a limited disaster and one which the customary good management of estates like Baltiboys would soon counteract.

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1. 23/30.8.1846: this refers to the An Irish Sketch (see Part I, ch. 1) published in Chamber's Edinburgh Journal (Second Series), No. 142 on 19.9.1846.

Such a claim can be substantiated. By no stretch of the imagination did Baltiboys come into that category of estate so condemned by Trevelyan's Treasury minute of March 1846:

> It has therefore turned out, as was anticipated, that means so inviting and advantageous to that class of society which is charged with providing for the subsistence of the people at this crisis, have been at once converted by them into an end; and a machinary which has been set up by the Government for the special object of the relief of the poor from famine, is being to a great extent worked by the proprietors with a view to the execution of works of local interest of various kinds. 1

No such charge could be levied against the landed proprietors around Baltiboys. Mrs. Smith was aware of the public works and railway schemes and commented on their degree of effectiveness but in this favoured area of resident or involved landlords, these were in addition to the particular efforts made on particular estates. The Smiths continued with precisely the same methods they had always used to relieve distress, and to safeguard the food and fuel position, from the beginning purchased meal and maize flour to supplement stocks of potatoes designed for the needy, and got in enough coal to make up for the impossibility of their people affording the high price of turf that winter.

It became clear to Mrs. Smith that these measures were putting a considerable strain on her purse and so in November 1845 she determined to try and supplement them, "spinning out my brains with the idea of some time turning them to profit."[2] By February she had

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1. Correspondance explanatory, p. 498.
2. 30.11.1845.

written in a number of articles, submitted them to Messr.s Chambers and was planning that whatever they paid should be used "to cheer the humble hearths and rouse the dormant energies of the miserably wretched around us. Clothe some of the naked children at any rate; and this spring will be one of deep distress, potatoes are now 5d a stone ...".[1] Her optimism was not unfounded for at the start of March good news came from Edinburgh "accepting the papers for consideration; vanity whispers that after reading they will not disapprove. What a pleasure this occupation then will be ... interesting in high degree and useful where a large heart has put a scanty purse to back its inclination."[2] A fortnight later she was so encouraged that she noted: "I must now set to work again to keep the press going. I may make quite a little fortune if I am industrious, brains paying a little than prayers though a little of both is good."[3] At the end of April she learned that her articles on "My Father the Laird" and "My Brother the Laird" according to a letter from the Chambers brothers "most flatteringly expressed" were worth thirteen pounds, which was gratifying enough, but there was a further surprise in store when she glanced at the magazine: "I like my Lairds in print very well -- to my amazement 'My Father' heads the paper, ushered before the world too with a flourish of trumpets."[4]

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1. 24.2.1846.
2. 5.3.1846.
3. 21.3.1846.
4. 30.4.1846.

Money like this undoubtedly helped a very great deal, particularly when the articles were composed during the frequent period of rest her ill-health required, but this is the only indication that any measures beyond those customarily adopted in times of difficulty were likely to steer Baltiboys through this difficult winter. For the most part, however, it looks more as if the Smiths had been blinded by the steady improvements over fifteen years and the ease with which their plan of retrenching abroad for two years had worked to the most threatening aspects of the situation; certainly at the end of summer 1846 when Mrs. Smith returned from Edinburgh and a different government was already adopting a very different approach to the problem, it is evidence that a new situation was in existence.

Chapter Two

September 1846 to January 1847

When Mrs. Smith returned after hertwo months in Edinburgh in the middle of September 1846, her first reactions show that, her conversations with a Lord of the Treasury about Ireland notwithstanding,[1] she had not appreciated how the situation had altered:

> I can't hear of much change among our people ... The whooping cough has been very prevalent, in some cases where fever was superadded, fatal. The potato crop gone, here and everywhere, the root I suppose extinct. 2

The incidence of fever was ominous because, in the words of Sir William MacArthur, "The advent and extension of famine and the consequent deterioration in the sanitary standards of the afflicted people provided a fertile soil to receive the seeds of fever."[3] A Dispensary in Blessington doubtless minimised the danger for her. It is much more astonishing that the devastation of the potato crop does not come in for more comment. After all, Lord John Russell himself as early as the 18th August had informed the House of Commons: "I am sorry to be obliged to state ... that the prospect of the potato crop this year is even more distressing than last year ... that the diseace has appeared earlier and its ravages are far more extensive."[4] On

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1. Supra. p. 419.
2. 11.9.1846.
3. Great Famine, p. 271.
4. This statement was made in the middle of his introducing the Public Works (Ireland) bill that was to be the central feature of his administration's initial response to the famine after he came to power. See O'Neill, Relief by Public Works, 1846-7, Great Famine, p. 223-234.

the 1st September Colonel Jones of the Board of Works[1] had written to Trevelyan in utterly unambiguous terms of the general situation: "The prospects for the coming season are melancholy to reflect upon; the potato crop may be fairly considered as past; either from diseace or from the circumstances of the produce being small, it has been consumed; many families are now living upon food scarcely fit for hogs."[2] And the Times itself next day described the situation in terms which must have been acceptable to Mrs. Smith: "The diseace having attacked the plant at a much earlier period this year than it did in 1845, the root has been arrested in its growth and prevented from arriving at maturity. Thus what was last year but a partial destruction is now a total annihilation."[3]

It is true that her comments were written in the context of a hope that a securer economic foundation for the lives of the people might be found now that the possibility of basing existence itself on such an insecure crop had disappeared:

> ... were we once over this first year maybe 'tis best, for the cheapness of this low description of food encouraged idleness, pauper marriages and dirty habits, and neither mind nor body could be fully developed upon such nourishment. 4

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1. A member of the 1847 Relief Commission, appointed through his experience as Chairman of the Board of Works, Woodham-Smith, p. 57.
2. Correspondance 1846/7 B. of W., p. 74.
3. 2.9.1846; it is noticeable that as early as this the leader poured scorn on Peel's 1845 measures ... mere "patchwork policy".
4. 11.9.1846.

Moreover she is obviously not envisaging the crisis as anything but short-term, one to be resolved within twelve months when a more successful pattern of crops returned. Perhaps her stay in Edinburgh and conversations with either the uninterested or those believing in allowing the market to provide the ultimate solution had affected her judgement. For it is very clear that the situation had deteriorated during her absence.

Within a fortnight she had realised how different the whole situation was from the limited, seemingly controllable crisis of early summer:

> Here comes the famine, the rain has spoiled the few miserable potatoes left, the markets are higher than they were ever known to be since the war, harvest work is over, the Irish landlords generally are bankrupt, three fourths of the land mortgaged to full value, with, therefore, nominal large rent rolls they have not a penny to spend in labour. 1

Her first reactions had included the thought that this would not necessarily have spelt disaster for the labouring classes, so successfully had the government organised its relief measures:

> Government is exerting itself nobly[2] to provide useful work with good pay, therefore, like last year the Irish labourer will fare well. All summer hands have been so scarce from the number required by the railroads and the new buildings that the farmers have been paying from 1/6 to 2/6 a day with diet, good bread, greens, milk, bacon, pork etc yet no one is satisfied -- all miss the potatoes. 3

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1. 25.9.1846.
2. This was also the opinion of Archbishop Murray who she so admired: "We have heard of old of a seven years' famine - hitherto poor Sir Robert has been our Joseph." Letter 15.8.46 in Archiepiscopal Archives, Dublin.
3. 11.9.1846.

Here too she is probably recalling the success with which Peel, a particular hero of her's,[1] ahd coped with the partial failure of the potato crop, rather than the consequences of Lord John Russell's change of course about which she would have been unlikely to hear in Edinburgh. At any rate this later entry of 25th September concluded: "From some hitch between the Government and the Board of Works, no publick works are going forward, the Ministry don't chose to interfere with the provision trade; so here we are, the peasantry starving."

Russell's new policy obviously had taken effect quickly. It was only onthe 18th August that he had introduced his Public Works (Ireland) bill which was to be its cornerstone. Its intention, so he was reported in the Times, was to remedy "some very serious concurrent evils", one of the worst being that "in many instances great numbers of persons were sent to the works by gentlemen who distributed tickets without proper inquiry, and ... persons were employed who ought never to have had employment from the Board of Works." Public works were now to be repaid by the Baronies and there were no grants; repayments were to be within ten years and the rate of interest was

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1. Before he took office in 1841 she though him "so very fine, honest, open, manly, straitforward, constitutional English"; her reaction to his 1842 Budget indicates her eulogistic opinion ... "The speech itself, the more one considers it the more wonderful it is - the indefatigable industry of the man - the clearness of his head - the depth of his calculation - the general soundness and liberality of his views - his honesty - his sincerity - his boldness - his calmness - all are unrivalled and stamp him the greatest statesman this country has produced since she glorified in Lord Chatham." (15.3.1842).

to be 3½%.[1] A Treasury minute on the last day of the month spelt out how the public works were to be less of a magnetic attraction for the labouring classes who had set out "in the hope of getting regularly paid money wages in return for a smaller quantity of work than they have been accustomed to give." In future no one was to be employed on any Relief Works who can "obtain employment on other public works, or in farming, or other operations in the neighbourhood"; wages were to be "in every case ... at least 2d a day less than the average rate of wages in the district"; and, the ultimate dissuasion for a debilitated population, "the persons employed on Relief Works should, to the utmost extent, be paid on proportion to the work actually done by them."[2]

This was clearly more than a mere "hitch between the government and the Board of Works", it was a radically different policy. Blessington in fact is a good illustration of how this new departure operated. With no public works and the last sale of provisions from the Dublin depot on the 15th August,[3] it was now up to each locality to accept responsibility for its own distress, hopefully by each landlord looking after his own dependents, but if necessary by the lord lieutenant sanctioning the meeting of a barony sessions to authorise works, to be paid for by the barony, for the relief of the poor.

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1. O'Neill, Great Famine, p. 223; Woodham-Smith, p. 106.
2. Correspondance 1846/7, B. of W., p. 68.
3. Correspondance 1846/7, Comm. p. 2.

And in the background, loomed the Poor Houses[1] for, of course, those entitled to be there.

The barony sessions were allowed a free hand by Lord John, as he explained introducing the bill on the 18th August: "When those sessions shall have been assembled, they will be empowered and required to order such public works as may be necessary for the employment of the people and for their relief."[2] One proviso was that the work should be intrinsically unproductive, which excluded schemes such as extensive thorough-draining by which the Smiths, for example, would have undoubtedly been attracted.

Such a meeting was held in Blessington and a full second-hand entry was written into her Journals by Mrs. Smith; this is a significant version of the scheme starting and it is an unambiguous account of how she saw the area being affected by the actions of neighbouring landlords.

> This was the day for a meeting of the gentry, etc., in Blessington to consider the state of the starving poor, two or three hundred of whom collected in the rain to learn the result which appeared to be simply that they would be looked after; at least I could make very little out of the rambling account the Doctor gave us of the proceedings. The act of Parliament is so imperfect it don't at all meet the emergency, and it is supposed the collective wisdom of the nation must assemble without delay to amend it, for as it stands those landlords who have already done, are now doing and intent to continue to do their duty, will be assessed for the support of those of the lower classes who have been neglected by bad landlords, who again having never done anything for their people will get them all supported now as a recompense for

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1. See Part II, ch.s 3 and 4.

2. Times, 18.8.1846.

> their improper carelessness, the willing horse in fact, having to bear the burden even till his back be broke. It seems however that there is some way of exempting oneself from this overweight by the landlord giving his own pledge to employ all able-bodied persons on his property, or to see them employed, and to send the incapables to the poorhouse. Mr. Moore, Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Owen have thus exempted themselves, and as we have not only all our own people occupied but three or four strangers in addition we must get some "voice" to speak for Lower Baltiboys as poor Hal is at present too unwell to attend any of the meetings. It seems very unwise in the Government to refuse to interfere with the provision trade for the capitalists are buying up all the grain to retail really at an exorbitant price - two and eightpence a stone for meal. I have known it a shilling, two and three for wheat meal. What labourer's wages can support his family at these rates, and how can wages rise when there are double the workmen that are wanted. Something must be done for between the poverty of the masters and the destitution and the idleness and the recklessness of the people, mischief will most certainly ensue if matters are left to take their own course. 1

This important running commentary confirms the degree to which her initial impressions have changed; where at the start of September the emphasis is on continuity and control, three weeks later once the impact of the change in Government has become apparent her description of what sounds like the preliminary meeting of the presentment sessions concentrates on the "starving poor" gathered outside to hear how "the gentry etc." intended to deal with "the emergency". There is no

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1. 26.9.1846. Although surprisingly there is no mention of it in the Journals, this must have been the meeting that proposed the government established a food depot in Talbotstown barony. Routh replied: "Answered - stating that it was not the intention of the Gov. to open Comm. Depots where the markets could be supplied by the trade .... That from the deficiencies of foreign grain in the markets, it would be desirable that gentlemen of local influence should unite in exertions for having the home harvest produce brought extensively into use." Correspondance 1847, Comm. p. 132.

doubting the genuineness of her reproach to those neighbouring gentry who were taking advantage of what they saw as loop-holes in the legislation to safeguard their own interests; equally from her descriptions it is doubtful if those who sought to secure exemption were doing so on realistic grounds for there is nothing in the measures passed by Lord John Russell's government to suggest that they would so be excused the rates that came to be levied. As far as the Smiths are concerned, and her own remarks show that she felt that Baltiboys was as well qualified as any to claim exemption, the events of September 1846 mark what later events were to prove a clear division as far as their opinion of their neighbouring landowners were concerned ... there are criticisms by the score in the Journals for the early 1840s, but what was to prove a consistent attempt at cutting corners or, less charitably, exploiting loopholes, or suspected loopholes, in legislation passed however misguidedly in the interests of all, was unpalatable and for the rest of the famine years she never refrained from accusing close neighbours of unfairness and perhaps underhand attempts at breaking the law.

Her first swiftly written reaction was correct as far as the liklihood of subsequent government amendment was concerned, but for the wrong reason. She had thought that landlords who on their past record had managed their estates and tenants well would be treated differently from those who had allowed all to go to rack and ruin. In fact, the amendment was to come in the form of a letter from the Chief Secretary, Henry Labouchere[1] (who naturally had previously

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1. Henry Labouchere, Baron Taunton (1798-1869) was chief secretary to Bessborough as the lord-lieutenant of Ireland 1846-7.

stressed, as in his letter to all Lieutenants of Counties on 7th September, that "As these Public Works are undertaken only with a view of relieving the temporary distress occasioned by the failure of the potato crop, it is desirable that no encouragement should be given to labourers to leave their ordinary employment and congregate on the Relief Works - thus seriously interfering with the private operations of the farmer, and such works of improvement as may be undertaken by proprietors on their respective estates")[1]; this letter of the 5th October 1846 sanctioned proprietors using productive labour (drains) as well if they chose as unproductive (roads) within the framework of the Public Works (Ireland) Act.[2]

Before the new departure was announced, Mrs. Smith and her daughters had decided to set out on another extended visit, this time to Oxford (her uncle had been Master of University College)[3] and London (where a niece who had been close to them all during the years in France was to be married)[4]; she was therefore away from Ireland for a second time in 1846 for nearly two months in October and November. This time however there was a genuine sense of reluctance, despite family loyalty and committments, to leave when times were so bad:

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1. Correspondance 1846/7, B. of W., p. 86-7.
2. O'Neill, Great Famine, p. 230-1; Woodham-Smith, p. 130.
3. Dr. James Griffith, see Highland Lady, p. 120-5.
4. 30.9.1846.

> I never left home so much against the grain, I think. I am afraid the poor people will miss us. Lord Bessborough and Lord John really seem enclined to help us but they have been over-ruled. Lord Grey has a large majority supporting his view of matters. The ministry it seems a'n't to stand, Lord John can't manage any of his subs, and is already sick of office. Lord Palmerstone playing the very mischief, and our wretched peasantry are actually starving while these wiseheads are battling how to relieve them. We have but a gloomy winter before us. 1

While away, naturally, she wrote a number of times about Ireland, normally either to record the good news from Tom Darker that there was no starvation or shortage of work around them yet, or in the form of a comment about how impressed she had been by the yeomen's cottages on Lord Southampton's estate:

> The little villages at his gate a model. The paint and the bright colours struck the girls most and the happy air of the people, the children in groups at play, the good clothing, the air of comfort ; it is very delightful to see such a peasantry after France and Ireland. 2

Her most enthusiastic comment was reserved for the news of Labouchere's letter and the immediate steps they planned to take.

> The Colonel thinks of borrowing some few hundreds from the Government and draining the whole of his property; the terms are very advantageous for the borrower, 3½ per cent, repaid by instalments in twenty years, while the profit on the labour will certainly not be under twenty, often more. It is an excellent idea, likely to produce present quiet and future wealth, for in fact the landlords of Ireland as a body are

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1. Fourth Earl of Bessborough (1781-1847), Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1846-7 (the first resident Irish landlord who had held that office for a generation DNB) and Sir George Grey (1799-1882), home secretary from 1846, represented different bodies of opinion on Ireland; neither was helped by the Foreign Minister's advocating "vigourous measures" for the proposed Coercion Bill. See Kevin B. Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal (1965) p. 165-7.

2. 4.10.1846.

> paupers with income barely sufficient for their maintenance and the payment of the mortgages with which their estates have descended to them heavily encumbered, so that funds for improvement there are hardly any in the island. This visitation of providence will thus be the means of prosperity to our nation by bringing forward the help so much wanted without which we must have grovelled on for ages through turmoil and poverty and misery, and with which we may hope all of this generation to see plenty and comfort in that dear land "where all but the spirit of man" is lovely. 1

The Act under which such loans were authorised, 9 and 10 Vic. cap. 101, was very clear about the aim of the operation: "The object of the act is to provide funds to be lent for the drainage of the lands of individual owners, within which lands the necessary outfall for the drainage exists, or is permanently obtainable, by consent or without any compulsary powers".[2] This limited aim Mrs. Smith is correct to praise, for there could never have been a more appropriate time to employ some of the poor and establish a foundation for later prosperity, although the Times had earlier expressed strong criticism ("the peasant is starving and we subsidize the landowner").[3] What was more debatable was the overall strategy into which this fitted. It was explained by Russell in a letter to the Duke of Leinster dated 17th October:

> It had been our hope and expectation that landed proprietors would have commenced works of drainage and other improvements

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1. 18.10.1846. Uncharacteristically, the quotation in the final sentence is not quite accurate: "and save the spirit of man is divine" comes from Canto 1, St. 1 of Byron's The Bryde of Abydos (1813) (see John Bartlett, Familiar Quotations p. 558).

2. Correspondance 1846/7, B. of W. p. 128.

3. Times, 27.8.1846.

> on their own account thus employing the people on their own estates, and rendering the land more productive for the future. In that case it would have been only the surplus labour which would have been employed on roads and other works not immediately profitable. 1

The first part of this extract certainly covers the Smiths, but it was an improving estate untrammelled with a mortgage and not dependent solely on rent payments for income. She claimed that irresponsible landlords were setting their by no means "surplus" labour onto the roads and railways, so it is doubtful if this plan applied even to a relatively self-contained neighbourhood consisting for the most part of well-managed, almost demesne estates, and unlikely that it had any chance of success outwith the north and east of Ireland.

When the Smiths returned to Baltiboys in late summer 1846, it was clear to them that a radical change had occurred; this was not likely to be a short-term, manageable crisis. This opinion was reinforced by what they found after their second visit away. As before, whilst absent from the responsibilities of day-to-day management, Mrs. Smith grew remoter from the realities of the situation. Thus shortly before they returned she commented on some Irish news in terms which would not have looked out of place on one of Sir Charles Trevelyan's Treasury minutes:

> Provisions continuing to pour into England from Ireland and yet the famine said to be pressing there. I can't believe it for besides what both food and work seem to be plenty, it could hardly be that if people were really hungry they

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1. Correspondance 1846/7, B. of W., p. 144.

> would refuse task work which from the Lord Lieutenant's proclamations they must in many places have done, claiming for daily wages in other words leave to idle. They have got it into their heads that being in distress they are to do nothing to get out of it, but are to sit comfortably down and open their mouths to be fed. Like cousin Bartle,[1] I can't but despise a people so mean-spirited, so low-minded, so totally without energy, only I attribute it to the want of animal food; there can be no vigour of mind or body without it. 2

Bartle, later after a distinguished career Sir Bartle, Frere had visited Baltiboys and had some acquaintance with Ireland, and it is possible that his comparatively well-informed and certainly extreme criticism swayed his cousin. The Times which during September and October was obsessed with Ireland, no doubt reinforced this viewpoint, as this by no means untypical example shows:

> A sort of St. Vitus's dance has seized the whole population ... the people are everywhere deserting profitable labour.
>
> The golden vision of 500 men employed on as many yards of useless road, under the supervision of one little clerk armed with a note-book and a pen, and making their own engagements, possesses overpowering charms to the Celtic imagination.3

Her cousin and the leader-writers must have had the west and south of Ireland in mind when they generalised, and Mrs. Smith must have forgotten that the bulk of the foodstuffs exported did not form part of most Irishmen's regular diet but did form the bulk of his income. Moreover no-one was employed on the roads in either Co. Kildare or

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1. See Part II, ch. 1, p. 112, footnote 3.
2. 26.10.1846.
3. Leading article of 2.11.1846.

Co. Wicklow between August (when even unfinished schemes were stopped) and the end of October 1846 when 90 men were working in Wicklow; and on the 17th October for example there were only 103 "able-bodied labourers" employed on other "Public works".[1] In other words, it is clear that Mrs. Smith once again, the further she got from Baltiboys, and the less well-informed she became, was seriously underestimating the gravity of a worsening situation.

This is important to emphasise because once they returned at the end of October, the journals adopt such a different tone that the start of the severest part of the winter of 1846/1847 marks the division between those months when it was still possible for Mrs. Smith to minimise the extent of the disaster, and those seemingly never ending months when they had a full scale disaster on their hands.

In the first place she is utterly disenchanted with Lord John Russell's government: "the ministry are a set of incapables, there is no manner of doubt about it, but who is to be had in their stead. Nothing can be more deplorable than their Irish measures, they are positively demoralising the people still further than their own bad feelings had already accomplished."[2] No longer is the government given the benefit of the doubt; all their measures are treated with suspicion until any worth can be discerned in them.

In exactly the same way all their neighbours now need to be

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1. Correspondance 1846/7, B. of W., p. 119: none at all were employed in Talbotstown, Lower or Upper.

2. 28.11.1846.

watched very carefully because from the moment of their return her occasionally expressed fears that they were being tempted to act unfairly by the exigencies of the times are changed into a persistent scepticism; she believed that self-interest and greed had replaced whatever neighbourly feeling once motivated them.

> John Hornidge shifting almost his whole band of labourers on the publick, some of his smaller tenants among them even though their holdings are so much above the value below which relief is limited to. So others are following this laudable example, saying "Why should we keep extra hands and pay for our neighbours too." Richard Hornidge therefore sends eight men, Mr. Cotton four, Mr. West four to be provided for by the Barony. We keep our large band for the present but we will try and diminish it by getting permanent situations by degrees for those we dismiss. 1

It is important to stress that she obviously believed that there was as little need for their neighbours to dismiss their labourers as there was for them; it is impossible to believe that this previously prosperous and improving area had changed under the impact of to date only one famine winter so that the landlords had no alternative except to compel others to share the burden of looking after their own labourers and cottiers. Certainly from the figures Mrs. Smith prdduced at the end of November after their agent had collected the rents it cannot be maintained that Baltiboys did not have the capacity to support all its indigent; even the three cases she mentions, familiar examples, could be accomodated.

> John Robinson has been down receiving rents. The tenants have paid very nearly as well as usual. Some require a fortnight

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1. 28.11.1846 : the Smiths employed twenty labourers, whose annual wages, it has been noted, amounted to nearly £200 (Part II, ch. 4, p. 209).

> to pay up, others will persist to owe the hanging half year. A few who should do better owe a year. One or two owe more, we therefore in earnest proceed with them. About £160 is due. All will be in time recovered little by little, except poor George Kearn's encreasing arrears, he must go and at once, for his own sake, it would have been better had he gone years ago.[1] Redmond has paid no rent these three gales; nor Cullen, the old man and woman have gone off to England to a prosperous son, the youngest boy has settled himself and a wife down in the cabin with its acre without leave from any one and thinks it extremely hard he is not to be allowed to remain. 2

These were the exceptions, however irritating no more than at any other time in the past six years, and her conclusion was therefore optimistic: "Upon the whole we have no reason to be dissatisfeid with the conduct of our people these pinching times, and thus proceeding I think we shall get over the season better than most of us." She added her calculation that out of the net £400 each half year £140 went back to the tenants in allowances and there were about £100 of defaulting rents, so that "but little remains for the family and labourers". Even so, it will be shown that there was enough slack to provide for all the distressed this winter at Baltiboys, without, moreover having to make any demands from the government schemes of relief.

Many nineteenth century travellers wrote how the misery and poverty of the Irish labouring classes was only bearable because of the comparative mildness of the Irish winter. One exception, tragically, was the winter of 1846/1847[3] and the plight of the starving, for whom

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1. In fact he was to emigrate in decidedly favourable circumstances in 1847 ; see Part II, ch. 5, p. 248-50.
2. 28.11.1846: for further detail see Part II, ch.s 4 and 5.
3. Woodham-Smith, p. 143.

the government intended work to be supplied so that they could then purchase foodstuffs from the usual commercial outlets, was undoubtedly worsened by the severity of the winter. Their resistance was lessened, their earning capacity for landlord and Public Works alike was threatened, and they were more prone to disease. This was as important a reason for the appalling local impact of the famine around Blessington as anywhere else in Ireland.

The hard winter set in unusually early. At the end of November the Journals describe the conditions and spell out how hazardous existence now was for the very wretched.

> The grounds covered with snow, a hard frost all yesterday, a storm at night of thunder and lightening, and regular winter today. Fine healthy weather, but the starving! those who have bad shelter, scanty fires, little food. God help them for man can't. Were we to divided our all with all we could not ensure their comfort for they have ruined dwellings, they have laid in no fuel, their clothing is but rags and provisions are at triple price. [1]

Reports by two of the Government officers involved with the administration of relief show that the severe weather continued throughout December. James Boyle, the Engineer in charge of Co.Wicklow, wrote on the 5th December: "I beg to submit for the consideration of the Commissioners of Public Works the necessity of providing shelter for the labourers employed on the Relief Works in the wild and thinly inhabited districts of this county". He suggested that sails could be purchased and used as a form of windproof shelter: "with a view to this I had a sum of £100 (to be placed at my disposal for this purchase) presented for yesterday at the sessions for Lower Talbotstown."[2]

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1. 29.11.1846.

2. Correspondance 1846/7 B. of W., p. 319.

His superior, the Inspecting Officer for the County wrote to Colonel Jones on Christmas Eve: "I have the honour to inform you that a considerable amount of snow has fallen this day in the county; so much so, that at Blessington, where I ordered a horse to cross the mountains, the hotel-keeper refused to give me one as he stated that he considered the roads would be impassable."[1] This persistently arctic winter compounded the difficulties of both landlord and government agency in their efforts.

What measures were taken by the Smiths after their first realisation that there was the makings of a crisis somewhat out of the ordinary? In September they started believing that although there were problems these were controllable:

> Politicks quiet and people quiet too, though without a potato. Till Christmas it is supposed we shall get on pretty well, work is plenty, wages high, but the corn harvest is slight. 2

The full extent of the blight could only be seen later in the year when figures were produced from all the returns made to the Constabulary Office in Dublin; they showed that the recent change in the average produce per acre and that of 1846 was noticeable with corn crops, and dramatic with potatoes:

	Wheat	Barley	Oats	Potatoes
"of late years"	21 0	21 41	17 89	156 89
1846	19 67	16 56	13 11	6 100

(Co. Wicklow; figures in cwt.s and pounds)[3]

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1. Ibid., p. 433: presumably the hotel-keeper was the Mr. Kilbee who was so antagonised by Lord Downshire (see Part I, ch. 3, p. 79).

2. 20.9.1846.

3. Correspondance 1846/7 Comm. p. 57.

On the 28th September Mrs. Smith and Tom Darker spent the morning "settling our affairs" and two old men were dismissed who had work elsewhere which would shield them from distress and enable what there was to be shared more effectively. Some undoubtedly would end up at some stage in the poor house, and some had to be given money, but by far the best form of aid was in kind:

> Instead of raising wages, a bad precedent, the Colonel with pleasure consents to give them meal at a low price instead of selling his oats in the market, and to ensure his supply lasting, the horses will get none unless the two working mares one feed each. Then we shall buy another cow, and so have milk all winter to divide amongst them. Thus we hope to get through this famine year, and being able to pledge ourselves to the good work, Tom will go to Mr. Owen and get us exempted from all care of our neighbours. 1

A few alterations in the distribution of the oats produced on the home farm and the purchase of another cow, therefore, was the limit of what ought to be required; the benefit, however, expected to flow from this self-sufficiency has already been noted as an error.

As with every aspect of bringing Baltiboys through what now appeared an altogether different form of crisis, by November the anecdotes told in the Journals to illustrate her views have changed too.

> Such a miserable creature as besought Janey and me yesterday to buy a straw basket that she might carry home a supper to four children and a husband who had fasted with herself since the night before. He has got upon the roads but will not be paid till the pay day nor then in full as the overseers are obliged to keep this bridle over these wretched idlers, and how to subsist these two days the half distracted creature knew not. "Oh Lady Smith, my jewel" said she, "Sound may ye sleep on your feather pillow for all belonging to you is in comfort. Long life to his honour, for it is he that's father

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1. 28.11.1846.

to his people. If others were like him and looked to their own, there would not be this famine in the country." 1

Public Works were well under way by this time. Lieutenant John Brandling, the Inspecting Officer for Co. Kildare wrote in his official Journal in the week ending 28th November "The works in this county are all going on well, and it is the general opinion, that they will be executed better and at less expence than when carried out under the general jury system"; witholding wages might have been one of the advantages.[2] He was more specific on 6th December:[3] "On Monday last the 30th November I went over the new road from Eadestown to Blessington, where there are 87 men, 11 horses and 2 asses employed. The work is going on well and will be a credit to the overseer and engineer in charge". With public works supplementing what could not be undertaken by private landlords, and wages therefore being paid, the government's strategy was in fair shape around Blessington. However it obviously did not for Mrs. Smith stop some landlords reneging on their responsibilities, or many of the worst off from remaining in the utmost distress.

This must have contributed to their decision, just when the period of appalling weather started at the end of November, to do everything in their power to alleviate distress and in the process make up for the government's error in not continuing Peel's policy of acting to supply cheaper food:

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1. 29.11.1846.
2. Correspondance 1846/7 B. of W., p. 282.
3. Ibid., p. 226.

> I have made up my mind that the distress of the poor demands a large sacrifice on the part of the richer, and it must be our business to prepare for this and to give up luxuries to meet this. "To feed the hungry" is a duty that cannot be shirked and Hal is not inclined to shirk it. He will find his whole family anxious to second his right intentions, willing to bear their share of the difficulties, and as Almight God never fails to fit the back to the burden, by His blessing we may hope to get through this season of trial using the means we are but the stewards of to the best of our abilities in alleviating this great distress. The young, the aged, the weakly must suffer, let us do our utmost, for the able-bodied though employed can't earn sufficient for their support while provisions are so unnaturally high and this brings on the question whether the Government have acted right in declining to interfere with the markets. Extraordinary cases require extraordinary treatment. Abstract principles are probably correct and in future years may work for good, but having never acted on them hitherto we are not prepared to receive them, and one shudders at stepping over mounds of graves in the experiment at this time. At the present prices it would require 21/-s a week to support a labourer and his family, he earns 6/-, 7/-, or 8/-, at the highest. What must be the result? 1

Within a year, therefore, of the first signs of blight at Baltiboys Colonel and Mrs. Smith have become extremely critical of the government's measures. It is a sign of the extent of the crisis around them that her criticisms were not couched in vituperative terms; so great was it, she believed, that there was no point in aimless if sincere criticism when such a concerted effort was required to save so many from extreme distress. In her opinion, it follows, the government's whole strategy could not succeed in Wicklow let alone elsewhere in Ireland. She underlines how where there was employment, wages, even those earned by the fit, were woefully inadequate; and however convincing Lord John Russell's plan of campaign was on paper, even by a market town like Blessington under twenty miles from Dublin,

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1. 29.11.1846.

the provisions trade was unable to cope. Lieutenant Anderson's report at the end of December 1846 underlined how serious was the situation in Blessington.

> I am able to inform you that it was reported to me by the Rev. Joseph [sic] Moore, the Secretary of the Relief Committee, that there was certainly not five days' provisions in town and neighbourhood. He further stated that the flour and oatmeal were both bad and high priced; the former yesterday was up to 3s4d and the latter to 3s 2d. I sent out to enquire what the prices were today, and found that wheat flour was offered at 2s 11d, and was "unwholesome". 1

Faced with the elements of a true tragedy on their hands, it is worth emphasising that Mrs. Smith resolved in her Journal that the only possible course of action now was to line up behind Colonel Smith and support whatever "extraordinary treatment" was needed.

Sir Randolph Routh had written to all his Inspecting Officers on 16th November emphasising the perils they faced: "We are in the same state as a vessel at sea, or an army on short allowance. The crops are failed and however well-grounded our expectations may be of foreign arrivals, they are always subject to uncertainty, both as to the time and quantity, and the risk of naviagation."[2] Six weeks later, even within twenty miles of where he was writing, a rural crisis, of which the non-arrival of any foreign sources of food was only one part, was an established fact. One of Mrs. Smith's final comments for the year was ..."our household comfortable; our people

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1. Correspondance 1846/7, B. of W. 24.12.1846, p. 433.
2. Ibid., p. 360-2.

the same although starvation is very near us."[1] A few days previously she had reported George Robinson's news: "the famine has come, is in every house on Bishop Hill, Pinmaker's hill, Holywood and the Radcliffe mountains".[2] Her details of the measures to be introduced onto Baltiboys underline the extent of their commitment to meet the emergency:

> Every neglected property is short, the poor house[3] is full, 1100 where there never was 200, and sheds erecting for hundreds more; the price of provisions is so enormous, three times the wages would not give sufficient food to a family. After Christmas soup kitchens must be set up. We have been trying rice and find it liked so have sent for a further supply although we cannot get it so cheap in a small quantity in Dublin as it could be got in Liverpool or as we hope shortly to get it from John Robinson, who has been written to by a London house on the subject, they offer it as from 13/6 to 16/- the cwt., we are paying 24/- and even at that price it is the cheapest food to be had. Old Peggy[4] sells it at 3d. a lb. and sold a stone a day the first two days when few knew she had it, so we have ordered 2 cwt. and we will order a ton if necessary, and buy coarse beef which Peggy can make into a soup to sell at cost price or below it where needful. We must all do our utmost, share our all. 5

Although as will be seen later her figures for the numbers in the poor house were uncharacteristically wrong (in 1843/1844 they had averaged over 450 each month), otherwise this sombre entry is important both by anticipating the next move the government was to be compelled to intro-

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1. 31.12.1846.
2. 20.12.1846.
3. The Naas Poor Law Guardian Minute Books are now located in nearby Newbridge Public Library; I am grateful to the Librarian for his kind permission to use this interesting material.
4. Peggy Dodson, see Part II, ch. 4, p. 228-231.
5. 20.12.1846.

duce and through the details it provides of exactly how one landowner intended to feed his estate. The only prices quoted in the Commisariat Correspondance relating to prices in Liverpool, where Indian corn rose between 26th August and 3rd January from 35/- per quarter to 70/-,[1] are a rough guide to the competition any landowner from across the Irish Sea had to face in the provisions market. However, it shows how a determined solvent landowner could use the normal market mechanism to purchase bulk food supplies. It also illustrates the advantages as far as retailing the new food is concerned of having a "cheap provision store" already in existence acting as the sort of base on which a more ambitious shop could be founded. Above all is the determination to weather the storm.

After an unexciting start to 1847 ("We had a dull New Year's Day for having given money to all our people as better for their families this very pinching season, we had no kitchen parties")[2], Mrs. Smith, now apparently free of her nagging ill-health, "fully occupied" and "useful once more", supplies more details about exactly how Baltiboys is to be fed over the winter ahead:

> The Colonel and I propose dabbling a little in the provision line having it in serious contemplation to establish a store for the purpose of supplying the poor at a reasonable price. We have begun with rice which old Peggy retails for us at 3d a lb. getting a ready sale hitherto. By and bye we shall have it for them cheaper as John Robinson has contracted with a London house for a supply to arrive in April at a much lower rate than we can get it now. We are also thinking of adding a little Indian meal to our stock; unfortunately in all our range of offices there is no storeroom for grain etc. but I think we could manage to make one. The repository continues

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1. Correspondance 1846/7, Comm. p. 506: as far as market conditions in Ireland are concerned, prices published in the West Meath Guardian (meal 28/- per cwt. and oats 27/- per barrel) suggest how secure landlord finances needed to be if regular purchases were to be made (quoted in Times 25.1.1847).

2. 4.1.1847.

to thrive quietly. Whenever the poor women have a sixpence to lay out on themselves or their children they go there for their clothing, but of course this hard year they have less to spend in this way than usual.

It is delightful to feel useful once more. Unfortunately I can't go about much out of doors, but I manage to know what is doing. New Year's Day being fine the girls and I paid many visits and all the houses we entered showed much humble comfort. Would that all round us were the same. However charity must begin at home, quite certain of not ending there. Example does much and as we can't assist all we must only continue to look after our own and be content to distribute elsewhere the crumbs left by those who have a right to the bread. We are giving milk and soup to all our workmen and soup to all our sick or aged, Margaret has a large pot[1] of soup ready every day at one o'clock and a list of persons to whom she has to give it. Each gets a quart every second day. At present we have to give twelve quarts daily. The workmen have milk on the day they don't get soup, and we must buy another cow for we are running short both of milk and butter. Upon consultation with Mr. Darker, the Colonel adopted this plan in preference to that of raising the wages. The poor are such bad managers, they spend their money very foolishly and in the matter of food which supplies the strength on which the breadwinner works, the women are so ignorant, so indolent, that they are utterly incapable of preparing a comfortable meal. They have not food indeed to cook one, nor pot, nor pan, nor griddle, nor crock to prepare one in, most of them at least.[2] Patience! Better days will come. I have always to look back to encourage myself to look forward. Thinking of what we found gives me spirits to hope for what we, or at any rate our children, may see. 3

This confidence that their measures would succeed must have been based in part on the easy way the management of the estate, veterans of many a crisis in the previous sixteen years, set out to cope.

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1. It is interesting that the Times of 20 February 1847 should have contained an advertisement for a 60 gallon vat which took, it was claimed, 3/4 hour to bring water to the boil in the open air; the cost was £5.

2. Supra. p408-12 for the importance of this lack as far as Peel's government's advice to the destitute was concerned.

3. 5.1.1847.

Clearly the Colonel, his wife, the Agent and the Steward had had their consultations and the resulting plan, based on previous experiences and their assessment of the current difficulties, aimed at offering aid in kind rather than cash. This matter-of-fact, realistic attitude, in such contrast to one based on criticising the government or lamenting the lack of public let alone local spirit showed by neighbours (though both these were opinions to feature in Mrs. Smith's Journals), spelt out the problems, down to the lack of storage facilities for the grain that was to feed their people. It also hinted at their strengths. Again it is clear that the Repositary had played a very useful role on the estate, and the fact that the "poor women" singled out for mention had even on occasion 6d. to spend there (after all, this until recently had been a substantial proportion of a labouring man's weekly wage) emphasises the fact that there was from time to time surplus money income to be spent, even if this came from the New Year's present from the landlord. Above all, this long unemotional extract reminds us once again that all that the Smiths did on Baltiboys was part of a consistent philosophy of action; in this instance they strained every nerve to ensure that the most vulnerable were looked after (and what she lightly passes off as "our workmen" in fact amounted to never less than eight "batchelour labourers" and twelve "out-of-doors servants")[1] and then in the same way that nothing was wasted after the picnic on Blackamoor Hill[2], the

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1. See Part II, ch. 4, p. 209.

2. See p. 416.

remnants were shared out amongst those whose welfare was not the Smiths' legal or moral concern.

The nearest poor house was in Naas and five months later the Poor Law Guardians (amongst whom Colonel Smith had been numbered before leaving for France) received from Doctor Robinson a suggested daily meal chart which provides a most interesting comparison with the relief offered earlier at Baltiboys. The Minute Book records that on 29th May "The Medical Officer of Health handed to the Board the following scale of dieting approved of by him, and wishing for its adoption by the Board and the Poor Law Commissioners."[1]

Class	Breakfast	Dinner	Supper
1st (adults)	3 oz. rice	8 oz. bread	none
	3 oz. Indian meal	1 pint of soup made from 3 oz. meat on Sundays and Thursdays each week;	
	2 naggins butter-milk & 1 naggin new milk mixed.	3 oz. Indian meal & 3 oz. of oatmeal, 1 naggin new milk & 2 naggins butter-milk mixed on the remaining five days.	

The 2nd class (boys and girls between 9 and 15) were to have around two thirds the adult rations; the 3rd class (children between 2 and 9) had half rations; and infants under two were to be given half a pound of bread and a pint of new milk for the day.

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1. The two meals a day recommended by the Poor Law Commission were to consist of breakfast (seven ounces of oatmeal) and dinner (three and a half pounds of potatoes); a pint of buttermilk was to accompany each meal. (MacDowell, Great Famine p. 52-3). Clearly Dr. Robinson's suggested scheme was fuller and better balanced.

This somewhat sparse benefit reflects the orthodox opinion about the beneficial effects of Indian meal (Lord John Russell himself had asserted a few months previously that this was "a kind of food which, after a short experience, and some prejudice having been got over, has proved a most nutricious food"; he added that in his opinion "a pound of Indian corn is quite sufficient to provide sustenance for a strong-bodied labourer for a day")[1] but this potato-less, virtually meat-less diet alone must have gone a long way to explaining the difficulties the Smiths had in persuading any from Baltiboys to make the journey to Naas. This must especially have been so when the landlowner was supplementing the diet of all labourers and all in need on his estate. Peggy Dodson was a formidable character and it is not likely that many would have jumped the queue. Further, many of the needy were already receiving subsidised potatoes from what remained of Colonel Smith's own crop, there were few who were not in receipt of a wage or, as has already been shown, possessed even in the most unlikely of circumstances something tangible, at least at this early stage of the famine, to fall back on, and many cases of individual suffering must have come to Mrs. Smith's notice from her regular tours of inspections around all parts of the estate. In short, the comparison with the poor house diet helps to bring out the sensible and adequate supplementary relief provided on Baltiboys.

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1. Unfortunately I have not managed to locate in Greville's diaries any mention of the menus served at Lord John's table at this time; it is not likely that Indian corn or meal featured prominently.

No matter how effective the measures devised by individual estates to meet the crisis, none were excepted from the expences of the more general attempts put into motion by the Barony. An informal first meeting was called in Lower Talbotstown at the end of November. This with the accounts in the Journals of what occurred at the Presentment Sessions next month provides a full version of what the reactions of the local landlords were to the decisions taken by the Barony. Accordingly, this allows us to examine the government's attitudes and measures with a view to establishing how effective they were in this locality, remembering that local reaction to government directives would have been expressed at these meetings in the very presence of the Inspecting Officer; their instructions issued in September 1846 had been very clear ... "It will be your duty to attend all meetings of the Extraordinary Presentment Sessions under the 9th and 10th Vic., cap. 107, and to assist with your advice in regard to works which shall be undertaken in any barony for the relief of the destitute."[1] Indeed Mrs. Smith's account of this first meeting makes it clear that there were so many points needing to be clarified that a lawyer's services would be required:

> The Colonel was rather satisfied with the meeting yesterday, preparatory to the Presentment Sessions called for the 4th of next month. They settled the amount of Cess to be levied for the next three months, a twelfth of the income of the quarter, I suppose, our proportion will therefore be about £20, and they will try and have it profitably expended if possible on reproductive works such as thorough draining, but before entering on such a responsibility as a Government Loan for this purpose, Hal thinks he must have fuller information on a matter which appears

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1. Correspondance 1846/7 B. of W., p. 112.

to be a good deal complicated. The Labour act, the drainage act and the Secretary's letter all[1] having to be rightly understood and reconciled if possible with the orders of the Board of Works, none of them seeming to our plain capacities to run well together. My impression is that we must each pay our proportion to the whole, that unless reproductive works be engaged in we may consider the money thrown into the sea, that the more we rescue from this engulphment, the better for us in the end, and that if we borrow at $3\frac{1}{2}$, and must get $7\frac{1}{2}$, and may get 15 per cent, in the long run the borrower must be the gainer. Supposing the Colonel borrowed £100, and hired a gang of labourers and commenced thorough draining, his own fields we know would repay him, his tenants merely paying him as they paid me,[2] $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent added to their rent forever; the gain is certain, and they will gladly pay ten per cent now that they have proved the advantages of the system. The hitch is, that the "form" a'n't sufficiently explicit about the liabilities of the Electoral division either as a whole or as to the precise liability of the different individuals owning the lands in it, but Mr. Owen will probably be able to explain this. At any rate a lawyer will and Hal is going to town in a day or two. 3

This very interesting account of the preliminary meeting gives us one landlord's reaction to the first Presentment Sessions called by the Lord Lieutenant for this area. It is worth stressing the complications which were anticipated because like all commentators, Mrs. Smith siezed upon this as one of the main factors which held up relief passing to those most in need. Her "impression" was that they would be

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1. This is a timely reminder that if cannot have been easy for landlords, bombarded with official documents and receiving notification of changes in government policy often only from anxious perusals of the press; it is all too easy to assume that they saw at once where their interests lay and acted accordingly.

2. This refers to the earlier drainage schemes inaugurated in the first instance by Mrs. Smith herself which had proved so successful before 1845: see Part II, ch. 2, p. 156-8.

3. 29.11.1846: Messrs. Cathcart and Hemphill were the family lawyers, see Part II, ch. 2, p. 131.

best advised to get what they could out of arrangements which were based on the assumption that it was the neglect of the Irish landlord that was responsible for the problem, therefore it was right that they should shoulder the bulk of the costs. This was clearly right in their case. The alternative would have been to have paid their £20, not chosen to remember that there were other landlords, who were paying similar amounts and getting the majority of their tenantry looked after in return. This sum is put into closer perspective when it is remembered that Mrs. Smith had stressed when rents were paid the previous month that £140 had gone back to the tenants in allowances; there were few who ploughed back 35% of net income into their property.[1]

There is one other reason why her reactions are so interesting. The Smiths had been involved throughout the immediate pre-famine years in many forms of improvement of which drainage was one of the most successful. She therefore knew what she was writing about; the two farms on Pat Ryan's property which had been drained as an experiment are regularly referred to as <u>her</u> farms, and the return as <u>her</u> 7½%.[2] This of all the public works was the one most beneficial to everybody, even if at first sight it only helped the labourers in the short term and the landlord in the long term. Finally, it is unlikely that Lord Downshire's agent or Messr.s Cathcart and Hemphill would have

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1. Donnelly (p. 109) quotes the Duke of Devonshire spending £87,000 between 1845 and 1852 on improvement and charity; he adds that this amounted to two years rental income and was "highly exceptional" - however this amounts to around 30% over the seven years, markedly <u>less</u> than the Baltiboys figure.

2. e.g. 31.12.1842.

been able to cast any light on the "hitch" she refers to, because the main "hitch" had yet to appear:

> The presentment Sessions were held on Friday. Mr. Fraser[1] called here afterwards and made me understand the proceedings better than I should otherwise have done. The money already voted has been very carefully expended even with all the jobbing, and as this will be particularly watched there are funds available to meet all charges till March. We therefore are called on to do nothing more for the present. With the usual hanging on spirit of their country, the whole people of the district were crowding to seize their share of what they regarded as fair plunder and fancied was Government money, regardless of the fact that their rulers and landlords were coming forward only to relieve the destitute by employing labourers whose work was not wanted and whose wages it was a serious tax to have to pay, every man with a pair of arms rushed to the roads where they scrape away in herds, lazily, carelessly, and almost unselessly.[2] Men with several acres of ground up to twenty or thirty even, managers with their stores full, families with a good sum saved, sons of parents in comfortable circumstances, all represented themselves as starving, and leaving their proper employments came craving for the bread belonging to the poor. Hal has a list of men who sent asses to draw gravel, all of them able to give relief instead of requiring it, some of these asses bought, or hired cheap from those whom it was intended should have had the benefit of them. Many of these cases having been reported and the farmers beginning to comprehend that wherever the money come from now, they will in the end have to pay their share of it, and that the fewer at work the less to pay, we hope the ferment will subside and things by and bye resume their ordinary level. If provisions fall, which looks likely, the distress will be much relieved. Still the sick, the weakly and the aged must be assisted, not more than usual however. 3

It sounds as if this Sessions was confident that their available resources would see the locality through this appalling winter. A

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1. Brother-in-law to Mr. Cotton from neighbouring Humphreystown.

2. Co. Wicklow had long possessed a respectable road system, if Sir John Carr is to be believed (Stranger in Ireland, 1806: "wherever we moved in the course of our Wicklow tour, we were surprised to find such excellent roads, and no turnpikes.")

3. 6.12.1846.

considerable sum was recommended and later approved on the 10th December: Lower Talbotstown was authorised to spend up to £1085 and, under Mr. Labouchere's letter of 5th October 1846 a further £770. The Board of Works categorised these improvements:[1]

Paper Number	Amount	To be spent on New Roads	Improved Roads
891	£720[sic]	4	1
998	£520	3	1
806	£565	1	8

It was all therefore to be spent on improvements, despite the more flexible government policy introduced in the previous August, and Mrs. Smith's impression was correct; no permission for thorough-draining was to be granted for the time being. By and large, however, she is clearly prepared to give Lord John Russell, and the mandarins she believed were responsible for drawing up government policy, the benefit of the doubt; over the course of the winter farmers as well as landowners must come to see the folly of following only their interests. In the end, therefore, it all came back to the development of character on which she set so much importance; once the "usual hanging on spirit" of the people and the "cuteness" of the farmers became subordinated to a greater sense of responsibility, then real improvement was possible.

Whatever the deficiencies of character exposed this winter, the Journals nowhere mention any examples that suggest that the people were

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1. Correspondance 1847, B. of W., p. 62.

taking the law into their own hands. The area has been shown to have been law-abiding before the famine, and even after the near collapse of the rural economy in the winter of 1846/1847 no examples are given of food-riots or even theft. The Board of Works only reported two examples nearby, and they did not amount to much. John Yeates, the Engineer in charge of operations in Co. Kildare reported trouble near Ballymore Eustace on the 9th October: "Works suspended but resumed on quiet being restored through Lord Miltown's interference."[1] The other example begs many a story too. Lieutenant Anderson forwarded on 22nd November a statement from Mr. Tynte,[2] who was Chairman of the local Relief Committee at Dunlavin: "Suspected and rumoured that emissaries from Tipperary are trying to introduce the system of opposition on works similar to that adopted in Tipperary."[3] In spite of the place occupied in the minds of landowners by the bogeymen from Tipperary, this too never amounted to much. Possible explanations range from police tolerance to the calming influence of the priests, from it being a comment on the restraint common to the Irish character or one on the degree of help and encouragement offered by the landowners; as far as Baltiboys is concerned, the absence of any polemic against the priesthood or Irish character in general reinforces the impression that the Smiths really were determined in what by the end of 1846 they saw as the greatest crisis they had faced since returning to

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1. Correspondance 1847, B. of W., p. 61.
2. Ibid., p. 62: he has already been noted as acting in a public spirited manner by offering £40 reward after he had received a threatening letter see Part I, ch. 3, p. 84.
3. Ibid., p. 62.

Ireland to concentrate on the basic essentials of the survival of the poorest and most wretched as well of the estate as a whole.

Only occasionally did she allow herself the thought that after the worst was over the effects of the famine might not turn to have been wholly disasterous. Tom Darker had to sell some of Quin's cattle in lieu of rent in September 1846 which prompted the comment: "I wish there were not a tenant in Baltiboys, there will not be many by and bye, no small holders at any rate. When potatoes are gone a few acres won't be worth a man's time to manage. What a revolution for good will this failure of cheap food cause."[1] Next month, too, when she received news in Oxford from the Steward that some other neighbours planned to drain and that the barony was rumoured to be about to cess itself for no less than £4000 to provide employment for the peasantry, she saw light as the end of the tunnel:

> Perhaps it will be a better year for the poor than they have ever yet known, of essential use in many ways; they must starve or work, no bare existing on roots with idleness, their food will be of a better kind, invigorating to mind and body, they must learn decenter habits. Their small holdings will become valueless to them, their children can't be suffered to hang on at home when every mouthful has its price well felt. Oh! it may be the dawn of happy days - God grant it. 2

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1. 24.9.1846.

2. 18.10.1846.

Chapter Three

January to August 1847

There is no doubt that January 1847, the month of the Catalogue Raisonée, Mrs. Smith's compendium of the state of all living on the estate, is one of the points during the 1840s when most is known about the Smith family and the functioning of Baltiboys. There are several reasons why this high tide of information is important, but one special reason for its significance is that it coincides with a change in Lord John Russell's policies towards Ireland and its problems. He had discontinued both main props of Peel's approach when he came to office[1] (although it is true as Inspecting Officer Brandling's reports make clear that public works were less easy to close down even in Co. Wicklow and Co. Kildare than sales of provisions from the depots)[2] and consequently there had been five months when the crisis was returned to the landlords for a solution. However at the very time when Mrs. Smith was compiling her register that would record how Baltiboys was surviving, Parliament was debating Lord John's Soup Kitchens as a means of keeping famine at bay. Victoria's speech from the throne might indicate that "It is satisfactory to me to observe that in many of the most distressed districts, the patience and resignation of the

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1. O'Neill, p. 223-4; Woodham-Smith, p. 106-7.

2. The depot in Dublin from which supplies were drawn for the distressed parts of Co. Wicklow closed on 15 August 1846; the numbers employed on the roads in the barony of Lower Talbotstown increased from 324 on 29 August 1845 to 1044 on 30 January 1846 (Correspondance 1847, Bo. of W., p. 52).

people has been most exemplary"[1]; her Prime Minister however believed that more positive methods were needed half way through the second winter of distress.

If this second winter had persuaded the government that fresh measures were needed, these were far removed from the advice offered by the leader columns of the Times, presumably as regularly read by members of the government as it was by Colonel and Mrs. Smith. It is worth tracing how at this crucial period the views of the Times hardened and what had been in December 1846 disillusionment with the continuing failure to solve the problems in Ireland had by the new year developed into an indignation directed against all Irish classes.[2] After all, this change in editorial opinion both was the response to government initiatives and a factor which in turn influenced what the gentry of Co. Wicklow felt.

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1. Lord Hatherton read the speech and it was reported in the Times for 19 January 1847.

2. The tone of the Times comments was singled out for attention by the magazine read regularly by Mrs. Smith which the agent John Robinson had promised would look sympathetically upon any writings refused by any of the journals she approached first. In an article in the April 1849 Dublin University Magazine, headed The Times, Lord Brougham and the Irish Law Courts what might well have been the pen of Isaac Butt wrote: "It may seem singular that, whilst Irish Journalists have been prosecuted with exemplary rigour, for seditious and felonious publications, the Attorney General for England has never proceeded against the Times, for these mischevious libels in which the Queen's English and Irish subjects have been daily, for several years back, excited to mutual hostility in the columns of that journal." p. 428.

Early in December it was still possible for the Times to declare that "For the last few months Ireland has attracted the attention of Europe and monopolised that of England" and to follow this introductory sentence with what can only be seen as a ribald third leader.[1] Later, after curious comparisons with Caesar's dyke against the Helvetians and Napoleon's Moscow campaign, the conclusion was more serious:

> ... we think the task thrown upon the Government in Ireland may safely challenge comparison with any human achievement. Here was an act of charity, a social reform, a thousand local improvements, and engineering undertakings to be done out of hand, while the people declared themselves dying for hunger. 2

Next morning's paper included the first of a series of progressively more indignant editorials which, with the recall of Parliament a week away, and a major shift in policy planning, cannot have been viewed by the Ministry as providing the best influence on public opinion:

> The state of Ireland has become truly alarming. A moral has supervened on a physical calamity. Destitution and the necessity for alms have been followed by pretended want and clamourous beggery. The relief of the helpless, the indigent, the cripple is intercepted by the sturdy idler and unclaimed vagabond. There is a grand national embezzlement in the course of perpetuation. 3

Moreover, the use of the adjective "national" was deliberate because, in a series of splenetic utterances which must have made no sense to the Smiths, the Times now specifically concentrated its criticism on the two extremes of Irish society.

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1. Monday, 7.12.1846.
2. Wednesday, 9.12.1846.
3. Thursday, 10.12.1846.

In mid-December the newspaper contented itself with repeating what was by and large government policy towards the landlords: " ... the property of Ireland must be made legally responsible for the employment of feeding of the people."[1] Three weeks later, conceivably in an attempt to influence the new departure in policy due to be announced when parliament reconvened within the week, the Saturday leader was couched in altogether more forthright tones:

> There is the routine. Nine years lumpers, the tenth year the begging box. Why, who are the real parties who send the begging box around? The Irish proprietors. Every half-guinea contributed by every tax-eaten shopkeeper, and every half-crown squeezed out of the head-aching, heart-aching governess, is in fact given to the most noble the Marquis, the right honourable the Earls, Viscounts, and Barons, and that very comfortable, free and easy, life-enjoying, eating and drinking, hunting, shooting, castle-building, world-wandering class, the squires of Ireland. 2

There are no references to this leader in the Journals, despite the caricature, and a malicious one at that, it contains of the Smiths' situation; it is likely Mrs. Smith was too busy collecting the information for her Catalogue.

Equally, the venomous view which the Times increasingly took of the Irish peasantry was probably so far removed from the reality of the situation in Wicklow, it is doubtful that if she read it, she thought it worth stooping to notice. At the time the leader writers were fulminating against landlords, it was noted: "The peasants have turned famine into a gain and from its proceeds purchase fire-arms."[3] Three

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1. Thursday, 10. 12.1846.
2. Saturday, 9.1.1847.
3. Thursday, 10. 12. 1846.

weeks later a letter was published, signed only "T", railing against "that unprincipled mass, the Irish peasantry ... the million human weeds, which are perpetually springing out of the soil, only to be uprooted from it, and rejected by their own landlords as the merest refuse, the vermin of the land."[1] Incidentally this was too much for Pierce Mahoney (or at least the description of the part played by the landlords was) for he wrote in to protest that this letter's "unjust calumnies ... would be answered fully by their conduct there that day."[2] This referred to the "Important Meeting of the Nobility, Gentry and Landowners of Ireland" taking place at the Rotunda in Dublin on 14th January; one of the most important resolutions concerning relief measures was proposed by Lord Miltoun [sic].[3]

The Times leaders therefore were clearly having a critical reception in Wicklow. Throughout these critical months, however, the Journals are concerned almost exclusively with the problems famine brought to Baltiboys. The Times opinions cannot have gone unnoticed and part of their importance lies in their being the broad background of metropolitan public opinion that reached the Smiths; it is not unlikely that they contributed towards the dramatic shift in Mrs. Smith's political opinions that was to occur over the next two years.

Precisely during this month of January 1847 when the outraged

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1. Monday, 11.1.1847.
2. Thursday, 14.1.1847.
3. See Part I, ch. 3, p. 63-4.

leader-writers of Printing House Square were voicing their opinions, one of the most important of the policy-formers in the Treasury was making known his views on how Co. Wicklow in general had been affected so far; this constitutes another valuable piece of evidence about conditions in general at the time when the most complete picture can be built up of how Baltiboys had fared under the catastrophe.

Charles Trevelyan wrote to Samual Jones Lloyd of the "British Association for the Relief of the Extreme Distress in Ireland and Scotland"[1] on the 26th January 1847 showing that he was well aware of conditions in the county. He prefaced his comments with an explanation why relief measures could not be started unilaterally there by his Boards:

> The state of the county of Wicklow, has, for some time past, given us great uneasiness, but as our utmost efforts are insufficient to provide food for the western districts of Ireland, which is still more helpless and removed from succour, it was impossible for us to undertake a single operation on the eastern side of Ireland, which we should have been immediately called upon to extend throughout the whole country.[2]

Moreover, he added, commenting on an enclosed report by the Engineer in charge of operations throughout Co. Wicklow[3] which spelt out just how bad conditions were and how unpromising the immediate future, it was sometimes necessary to remind people on his side of the Irish Sea (and it is not impossible that he may have had editorial writers of the Times newspaper in mind) that famine conditions had not been

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1. See Woodham-Smith, p. 169-70.
2. Correspondance 1847, Comm., p. 19.
3. That is the Mr. Boyle who has already been extensively quoted, see Part IV, ch. 2.

restricted to the far west.

> Some members of your Committee may, perhaps, be surprised at the romantic Wicklow being the first of the eastern counties of Ireland in which the signs of approaching famine have appeared, but they must remember that the barren mountains, which make it so attractive to the tourist,[1] have allowed of the existence of a state of society, and a dependance upon the potato, approaching to what prevails in the wildest districts of the west, and it is only within the present century that this district has lost its former reputation for lawlessness. 2

These reflections of the armchair mandarin in Whitehall, of course, come close to the mark if they are taken to describe the wilderness beyond the demesne estates around for example Blessington; they are of more interest as disclosing that whatever might be felt by the gentry of the county there was no necessary correlation between the ideas appearing in print in the Times and those that governed the actions of those responsible for directing the government's relief operations.

A third source of detailed information about conditions around Blessington in January 1847 comes from the reports of the very Inspecting Officers upon whom Trevelyan clearly relied for his information; these supply the day-to-day background against which the value of the Journals and the picture they portray of conditions on Baltiboys can be tested.

The most detailed account was written by the Engineer, Mr. Boyle, and his report to the Commissioners of Public Works on 17 January was

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1. The main tourist guides, however, were at pains to direct travellers away from the remoter areas, especially the popular Halls (see Part I, ch. 1, p. 21).

2. Supra. p. 19/20.

based on a recent tour of 190 miles through, he estimated, half the county including both the Talbotstown baronies. He was in no doubt about the accuracy of his observations:

> No one can have the same opportunities of observing ... as the engineer. Daily have I observed the appearance of the same individuals. None have so forcibly struck me as the young men, who with comparatively stout appearance when first joining me, have in a few weeks been seen to faint ... on what should be the hour of meal-time.Many of those whom I knew I could scarcely now recognize. 1

His main conclusion was that "Destitution is everywhere increasing far beyond what any had anticipated." One of his reasons was food prices, even oatmeal which had reached 3/4d a stone and Indian meal which had rocketed to 2/9d; Mrs. Smith was to observe eleven days later that "Provisions are rising every market"[2] and both commented on what the Engineer saw as the inevitable consequence ... "How far will 1 s. per day go in supporting the strength of eight individuals at these rates." There were even more serious distortions in the food markets:

> ... turnips are now a principle article of food; six weeks since they were sold at 15/-; now they are 35/- per ton. Cattle consequently are becoming unprofitable; the Dublin meat market has become glutted, this has however been partly attributable to the fears of the farmers for the safety of their stock. 3

Mrs. Smith has no similar comment at the time but three months later she writes in the same vein:

> Backward spring, either cold rains or frosty nights equally against the progress of vegetation; the corn is not growing; the kitchen garden is three weeks behind; the cows get no

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1. Supra. p. 19.
2. 28.1.1847.
3. Supra. p. 20.

> grass so give little milk; the last fair little business was done; meat is up to a price hitherto unknown - eight pence and ten pence a pound; poultry not to be had; bread stuffs are falling. So scarce a time I never knew. We can get nothing. 1

Poor weather and poorer markets were undoubtedly factors contributing greatly to the unexpectedly high levels of destitution the Inspector discovered on his tour. Three days later he recommended that three depots should be set up at Arklow, Tinahely and Baltinglass; the situation was getting worse because "demand for provisions more and more concentrated in the towns and villages" away from "little way-side shops".[2] All of these factors, therefore, contributed to this level of distress commented on by local Inspectors, the landlord's wife keeping her record, and the permanent head of the Treasury. It is now necessary to analyse more fully precisely how the situation around Blessington looked to Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys through 1847.

The main change introduced by Lord John Russell in January 1847 had momentous consequences for Ireland but did not apparently have a similar impact around Blessington. The Temporary Relief Destitute Persons' (Ireland)[3] Act established soup kitchens which were intended to be the means of bridging the hungry months[4] down to the harvest.

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1. 13.4.1847.

2. 22.1.1847: letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Jones of the Board of Works, quoted in Correspondance 1847, Comm., p. 11.

3. O'Neill, p. 235-8; Woodham-Smith, p. 171-4.

4. See Part II, **Introduction** p. 111: this was most eloquently commented upon by The Nation, 29.10.1842, in its series, Philosophy for the Nation, when it quoted Thomas Carlyle's opinion that the fact that 1/3 of the population of Ireland lacked "as many third-rate potatoes as will suffice" for 40% of the year was "a fact, perhaps the most eloquent that ever was written down in any language, at any date of the world's history."

The appalling seriousness of the problems in Ireland were what led to this volte-face, although there were attempts to divert attention from this aspect of the government initiative; Lord Hatherton in moving the Queen's speech when Parliament met declared "It has pleased the Almighty in his inscrutable wisdom to inflict upon Ireland a widely spread and desolate famine",[1] and Russell introduced his proposals a week later to the Commons with these words ...

> I do not think therefore that either the fertility of the land or either the strength or industry of the inhabitants are at fault; but there have been faults, there have been defects and happy will it be for us if we can lay a foundation of the means of curing those defects. 2

The Times commented that "The noble lord concluded amid loud and prolonged cheering from both sides of the house" but its leader comment was as scathing as expected. "It may perhaps be our fault but certainly the measures for Ireland as sketched by Lord John Russell last night fill our whole souls with dismay." It lightly outlined how each year brought "a perpetually increasing vista of misery, trouble, animosity, expence, mismanagement and ingratitude" and concluded on its usual rhetorical note: "What is an Englishman made for but to work? What is an Irishman made for but to sit at his cabin-door, read O'Connell's speeches and abuse the English?"[3]

And yet as far as the Blessington part of Co. Wicklow is concerned, such a gloomy analysis of the situation hardly applied. The

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1. Times, 19.1.1847.
2. Ibid., 26.1.1847.
3. Ibid., first leader.

Smiths and other landowners had organised, on a non-sectarian basis, soup-kitchens for at least three months before the government decided to introduce a similar scheme; local relief committees were clearly as active on this and other business as they had been throughout the opening years of the famine. However, as before, the contrast between what they read and what they observed must have made an impact on the Smiths.

The most important contrast noted by Mrs. Smith during the last three months of this winter of 1847 was that between the success of the measures adopted on Baltiboys and by the local relief committee as opposed to the slow-moving and convoluted efforts to get the government schemes moving. The foundations of what the Smiths attempted will be seen to have been the main reason for Baltiboys' survival. It is also perfectly clear from her Journals that, as she wrote in February, "our relief committee has been very active."[1] She calculated that, not taking into account absentee landlords, over eighty pounds had been subscribed; in fact the Lord Lieutenant authorised on 5th February a grant of £85 to the Blessington committee thus doubling the amount they had themselves raised.[2] She described how this money was to be used. "I heard today they (the joint secretaries, Ogle Moore and Mr. Owen) were distributing at cost price or less where tickets were purchased for the purpose of thus assisting those in most need."[3] A few days later she summarised what she had heard.

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1. 11.2.1847.
2. Correspondance 1847, Comm., p. 113.
3. 11.2.1847.

> We are a great deal more comfortable hereabouts since our Relief Committee began to act; their sale of provisions at cost price keeps starvation from every door though it may not give plenty to every house. Clothing however must be looked after for they are all naked or much the same, in rags, and scanty ones. 1

Meantime as energetic relief measures were put into practice around Blessington, the change in Government course was being plotted. Lord George Grey[2] had written to the Lord Lieutenant on 28th January explaining how the replacement of public works by direct relief through soup-kitchens was to be effected. As ever, the aims were couched in terms taken from the higher reaches of political philosophy:

> Our main object of the proposed alteration of the system of relief, under the present circumstances of the country, is to restore the ordinary relations between owners and occupiers of land and the labouring class, and to remove the alleged obstacles to the employment of labour in the cultivation of the land. 3

He concluded with a warning. "The discharge of the large number of men now employed on Public Works must be effected with caution and by degrees; and in no cases ought such works to be stopped until the new machinery is constituted by which relief in the new form can be afforded."

That may have been the instruction, but the Journals by March make it clear that this part of Co. Wicklow, singled out six weeks before by Trevelyan as the first of the parts of the eastern seaboard exhi-

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1. 27.2.1847.
2. Home Secretary for most of the years 1846-1866.
3. Correspondance 1847, Comm., p. 55.

biting the same destitution as the west,[1] was soon to lose its public works. "People are quite dispirited by the wretchedness around them. The relief works are to cease as soon as the roads now in progress of amendment are completed. What is to be done with that immense army of disbanded workmen is not known."[2] Their termination cannot have been far off if there were no new roads being made. Even so there were a sizable number of workmen employed in this "army". The Returns to the Board of Works showing the number employed on the roads in the week ending 30th January, for example, listed in Lower Talbotstown 984 able-bodied labourers (and 7 infirm), helped by 6 women, 47 boys and 4 horses and asses.[3] It was not surprising therefore that Mrs. Smith's conclusion a few days later in the middle of March was very dispiriting: "Relief committees continue. But the various funds contribute to our locality nothing; the people are very patient, satisfied with having food and very little labour for it, they are content with little fire and no clothes and are "trusting to God" for the future."[4]

It is worth emphasising how the Times had come to a different conclusion about the work of the relief committees. At the beginning of February it had commented on "those thoroughly Irish juntas ... the members of which have shown themselves as prodigal of the public means

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1. Supra. p. 464-5.
2. 7.3.1847.
3. Correspondance 1847, B. of W., p. 52.
4. 18.3.1847.

as they are chary of their own."[1] It is perfectly clear that such strictures hardly apply around Blessington; money was being raised, added to from Government funds and spent as wisely as the equivalent measures adopted by individual landlords. Even less applicable, however, are the leader comments made as the Times campaign of outraged indignation against all sections of Irish society reached a peak in the middle of February 1847. Typical was the caricature of the supposed beneficiaries of English charity which clearly must have surprised any potential victims from this part of Co. Wicklow:

> ... the tiny figures of a pale little operative snatched from her cradle to the factory, and from the factory to the grave, will maintain Irish Lords in the saloons and halls of Paris, and Cork peasants at the cabin door. 2

Moreover it is hardly unlikely that national or even racial tensions between Ireland and England were heightened by what was printed on 22nd February:

> They are Asiatics in a European latitude and on a European soil. Urged by the exigencies of a position which they could not prevent, to desultory exertions which they cannot continue, they relapse, after a brief excitement of tumultous activity, into their natural slough of acquiescent poverty. 3

Such an analysis of one of the reasons for discontinuing of public works is laughable; its effect on the political feelings of at least one member of the Wicklow gentry will be speculated on later.

The most valuable evidence about how the public works progressed

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1. Monday, 1.2.1847.
2. Thursday, 11.2.1847.
3. Monday, 22,2,1847.

in this area during the last few months of the winter is contained in Journals kept by a Mr. Wright, the Inspector of Drainage for Co. Wicklow, and Inspector John Brandling, whose responsibilities were for neighbouring C. Kildare.[1] They confirm that the appalling weather continued to handicap relief operations. Their journals for the week ending 13 th February, for example, described what they found. Wright wrote how "The progress of agriculture which has been carried on with a good deal of animation, has of course been stopped for a period by the fall of snow" and added "The weather has been so severe that the men could not get on with the work". Brandling for his part wrote how "Some of the labourers that could not pursue their usual occupations were employed in clearing snow from the roads and footpaths." March according to Mrs. Smith was no better:

> Well how is this fierce month beginning? Very like a lion. Cold north-easterly winds, not much bright sun, sometimes sleet, fine dry roads for walking, fine dry fields for ploughing, fine dry air for turnips keeping. 2

The end of March was milder with "a good deal of rain which is excellent for the newly sown corn";[3] and April began with "very stormy weather, not doing any harm however."[4] It was Wright who spelt out what this meant: "Owing to the severity of the weather I have but

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1. Extensive quotations from their weekly reports appear in the Government's explanatory correspondence; these are a very valuable supplement to the Journals of Mrs. Smith.
2. 7.3.1847.
3. 21.3.1847.
4. 1.4.1847.

little to report upon except the great destitution which exists amongst the labouring and poorer classes in the district."[1]

They both agree that the organisation of relief was now much more stringent. Mr. Wright described how the previous week the men working on drainage schemes "were under the impression that they would be paid at the rate of 1s. per day (as on the roads), work or play. However I feel satisfied they think otherwise now, and I hope I shall be able to report favourably hereafter." In fact the "rate of earning by task" in neighbouring Upper Talbotstown in the week ending 27th February ranged from 8d. to 1s.[2] Further, the advice he pressed upon each local committee stressed that it was up to them to ensure that everything was done to check that relief was only provided where no other source of employment existed:

> I have urged upon the different Committees the necessity of revising again and again their lists, and have further impressed upon them the propriety of inducing the labourers to seek the farmers, instead of the farmers having to seek labourers, as <u>now</u> the farmers <u>must</u> employ men. 3

Brandling confirmed this in his Report for the week ending the 20th February: "I have the honour to report that the Public Works in the Co. of Kildare are going on well, but the farmers are not showing the slightest disposition to relieve us from any of the destitute poor."[4]

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1. Correspondance 1847, B. of W. p. 253.
2. Ibid., p. 226.
3. Ibid., p. 254.
4. Ibid., p. 262.

Apart from the natural reasons explaining their difficulty, and the reluctance of the farmers who were themselves under considerable pressure to pay out wages when there was the remains of a government agency which would still employ their labourers for them, there was another; throughout February and March the Government plans for a changed Irish Poor Law which would replace outdoor relief were under discussion.[1]

Mrs. Smith discussed two aspects of these in her Journals. In March she noted that the proposed changes would include making "each proprietor responsible only for the destitute on his own estate, as we who have been for years doing our duty think only just."[2] This of course was a most unlikely development, and she pointed out one good reason; it would ruin the South and West so that, despite the virtues of such a scheme, any government in danger of losing votes would not implement it. The undoubted result would be that "we must make up our minds to expect nothing for some years from our Irish acres. If we can keep them together we may think ourselves fortunate." And to emphasise what this involved she added: "No one thinks of aught but the poor, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the sick." The second point she was concerned about was outdoor relief, which, she noted, had reached the Lords by the end of March and was engendering a "lively discussion"; she gave it an importance way beyond the present crisis.

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1. O'Neill, p. 219; Woodham-Smith, p. 171-4.

2. 21.3.1847.

> It appears to me that with the peculiar disposition of the Irish this measure will ruin peasantry and landlords, but others seem to believe that taken as part of a series of measures to be enacted almost simultaneously it will work in the most effectual manner to improve the country by rousing the indolent of all classes to pursue actively the only means by which their own interests can be eventually benefitted. If this prove a true prophesy we shall none of us regret the difficulties of a few years. Matters can hardly be worse than they are. 1

However by April there were much more practical matters to consider. This interim period between different methods of government relief at the end of a winter of the greatest difficulties was testing everybody's ability to survive: "Some of the poor are beginning to feel almost approaches to famine; the relief works are contracting the old measures closing, the new not yet arranged so there will be a few weeks of difficulty."[2] In fact all the landowners around Blessington were anxiously awaiting the news about how the new districts were to be formed and her main concern now is not with the wider aspects of the proposed act but with how managable theirs would be.

> The first news at the beginning of April was not encouraging.
>
> The new poor law bill is in course of operation, that is preparations have begun. We are separated from Blessington; Lord Milltown, John Hornidge, Richard, Mrs. Cotton, the Colonel, Weavers' Square and its neighbourhood, Black Ditches and the Ratcliffe Mountains with all their miseries - quite enough for we have three or four absentee landlords and one or two middlemen with swarms of paupers crowding the deserted properties. 3

When she wrote about the clauses added to the bill by William Gregory

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1. 30.3.1847.
2. 1.4.1847.
3. 1.4.1847.

("one of which precludes the holder of more than a rood of land from being in any way assisted"),[1] her only concern was the difference this would make to their responsibilities:

> This has set my mind at ease about the Ratcliffe Mountains; the hordes of beggars there are all small farmers so we need not dread their numbers.

In any case the wider strategy of the bill was much approved of:

> I am anxious to see the bill for I feel pretty sure its provisions are in the main good and that the Colonel's anxiety is causeless. Townland divisions would have been more just than Electoral but there are clauses, I understand, to protect the conscientious. It will bear very hard on us who do our duty but we must make the best of it. Some will be ruined; we shall rise again, it is to be hoped in a year or two. 2

Her husband, however, felt very strongly about the wrong choice of divisions and went as far as writing a letter to the Prime Minister explaining the error:

> The Colonel has been writing Lord John Russell about the injustice of rating the proprietors by Electoral Divisions, six or eight or ten of them together, all to pay in equal proportions towards the support of all the paupers in the Division, instead of by townlands, each landlord burdened separately with his own, by which arrangement the good would reap the benefit of their care and the bad would be deservedly charged with the maintenance of the beggery their neglect had fostered. It is a very temperate statement of his own case as applicable to many others, resulting really in the ruin of the good landlord for the moment and the merely temporary relief of the bad. 3

Mrs. Smith added a coda which as usual sets the preceding comment into context, this time reinforcing the impression she wants to give of a

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1. O'Neill, p. 240.
2. 8.4.1847.
3. 9.4.1847.

concerned landowner doing his duty and making a good case to replace what the government had mysteriously preferred. "I want him to consult someone before sending it but he is so confident of the justice of his plan that he don't seem to consider further reflexion necessary, as if they don't notice it, there is no harm done, and a plain country gentleman setting the truth before an honest man may lead him to reconsider the government plan."[1]

In the event there was no need, for a few days later she wrote that they had heard "great good news":

> Our district is relieved from the Ratcliffe mountains; our Townland is rated by itself, and bad as one or two of the landlords are, so many of us are good that we can very well manage all the poor now left with us. 2

Just as encouraging was the announcement that, as she put it, "in regard to the outdoor relief to the ablebodied it is to be given in such a shape as will certainly ensure us from much mischief resulting": she added details and a comment.

> a pint of soup and a biscuit to be consumed on the spot by the recipient <u>once</u> in the day - just to prevent starvation; none can be carried away except on medical certificate and as Tom Darker so justly says there is much trouble in this and less profit than in work and there are besides few pauper <u>labourers</u>: the really distressed are the small holders and they are exempted from all relief. 3

It is evident, therefore, that the Smiths' over-riding concern during the first four months of 1847 when the changes in government policy were being decided was whether or not they would be better or worse

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1. 9.4.1847.

2. 10.4.1847.

off as a result. In the end they were optimistic but the length of time taken to reach a decision made their optimism at the best guarded.

One good reason for this was that it must have been very clear just how essential the efforts of the local land-owners had been to enable their district to survive this winter of 1846/1847 which had witnessed so many tergiversations of government policy. It may have been thought of as a moral duty by some, but there is no doubt that what enabled the Blessington area to survive this interim period between shifts in government policy was the effective relief organised locally. Doubtless some was prompted by the sort of advice the Times allowed the Reform Club Chef Soyer[1] to offer: any family taking his potato soup once a week "would worship the day of the week when such a luxury should be displayed on their humble table."[2] Much more practical steps were taken locally, as Inspector Wright noticed in mid-February, almost certainly at the instigation of the Rector Ogle Moore: "Only a soup kitchen has been got up within the last ten days at Kilbride, in this electoral division, those classes (the labouring and poorest classes) would have been much worse off. It has been the means of great relief, particularly to those in the immediate neighbourhood of it."[3]

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1. Alexis Soyer (1809-1858), chef to the Reform Club from 1837, ten years later was appointed by the government to organise and publicise economy kitchens (see his pamphlet, Soyer's Charitable Cooking or The Poor Man's Regenerator).

2. Woodham-Smith, p. 178-9; Times, 18, 24, 25.2.1847.

3. Correspondance 1847, B. of W., p. 253.

What are only hints about other landowners are, of course, fully spelt out in the Journals as far as Baltiboys is concerned. Her feelings were most fully described at the beginning of April:

> It is impossible to see people half naked and to know they are half starved too, without supplying their necessities be they well or ill-conducted; poor ignorant creatures they are acquainted with nothing but misery: that they know well in every form of wretchedness. I shall catalogue our necessities and relieve them by rule for I dare not trust to feelings. My daily levée is a scene truly painful though they are on the whole patient and on the whole not encroaching, but they are destitute, dispirited, helpless, without the power of rising into better circumstances. Mind and body alike without energy for the most part. Some few shew more spirit but they are exceptions. 1

At this "levée" food but not money was supplied to all who asked; she later wrote "we have provided ourselves with bread which we deny to no applicant."[2]

As far as Baltiboys was concerned food was not the main problem at this time; it was the lack of clothing and the lack of opportunity of acquiring them in this hard winter that caused most hardship. She had written the previous month: "there is food sufficient for the greater part of them, they are worst off at present for clothing." That was one lack she could strive to provide:

> We have nothing left in the old linen way, and I have bought and <u>made</u> quantities of coarse clothing, the women waste the stuff so when they get it unmade; they have no scissors either most of them - a pair upon an average to every half dozen houses; the girls who are working so neatly for us have none either; they bite off their threads. As making presents to people so gluttonous that to gorge themselves with food they deny themselves every decency is hurtful, I shall deduct the price of a pair from the next payment - presenting scissors and balance together. 3

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1. 1.4.1847.
2. 2.5.1847.
3. 21.3.1847.

The second main problem she isolates helps to explain why in the cases of those earning government wages there may not have been enough left to provide necessities like scissors.

> Discovered another feature in the overwhelming distress of the times - the relief don't reach down to the very lower class it was intended principally to succour. Most of the labourers are in debt to the hucksters as deep as those hucksters would let them go - a week's provisions is the ordinary extent. When they get their pay therefore the little shopman at whose counter the change is given pockets it in payment for the last score while the poor victim contracts a new one to keep his family alive, his money going but a little way either for all provisions are from 6d. to 10d. a stone dearer in these places than at our relief stores. The thing don't appear to have struck anybody, nor is the remedy easy; the only one that appears to me likely to succeed is to oblige the pay clerk to provide himself with change, then to put into each man's hand his few shillings which he can spend where he pleases. To the one or two in whom we are interested we have advanced to them the price of the supplies for which we gave them tickets; next pay day they will be out of the huckster's debt; they will owe us instead and they are to pay us by one shilling weekly, still leaving them an odd seven shillings in hands. Hal must represent this matter at the next meeting and now I shall turn my attention and my essay money to the clothing of those connected with us. 1

The implication is that this was not a problem that concerned Baltiboys as much as the townland; however in the middle of April a case came to light of one of the less reliable persons on the estate quarrelling with one of the most destitute over just this question of the seller exploiting the buyer ... and Mrs. Smith's solution was to leave them to fight it amongst themselves.

> I am almost sick of the dishonesty of these poor miserable creatures. In every way in all classes, lying, cheating, defrauding, concealing - every sort of under hand meanness is practised among them. Here has come to light such a tissue

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1. 2.5.1847.

> of evil as really disgusts me - how can it be otherwise - bought up in sin and sloth for the purpose of struggling through misery we are absurd to expect correct principles from so low a state of morals; patience - one had need indeed to be made of it, to endure life with such surroundings. Mrs. Farrell the provision dealer and Mary Craig the starving purchaser tell the same story very different ways. All I can make out between them is that the merchant selling on credit with little hope of speedy repayment charged about double the value of the goods she sold, while the buyer, catching at present relief troubled herself very little about the acquitting of her debts in one place or another being just as ready to go on borrowing as to go on eating, and both ladies trusted to me to bring them out of their difficulties. My intention is to leave them in them; they are both shrewd enough and if there is any loss anywhere it is well merited. 1

In view of Mrs. Smith's high regard for the sympathetic and efficient ways in which Baltiboys was run, this account of a case involving the wife of one of the most indigent of the labouring families on the estate[2] has a harsh and uncaring ring to it. The problem of course was the length of time such inquiries took; her previous experience of resolving differences between quarrelling tenants before the famine had been very time-consuming. In any case there were so many other schemes to be set in motion requiring constant supervision, as she made clear at the end of February:

> I am going to look after our own people in this particular - to take charge of their gardens having sent for seeds, and to get the dungheaps removed from the doorways, have the manure dug into the gardens where there are any and buy it and carry it away where there are none. I shall try and undertake an anti-tobacco mission though with little hope of success; however a beginning should be made; the poor are very extravagant, no better than the rich; human nature, full of frail-

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1. 15.4.1847.

2. See Part II, ch. 4, pp. 204, 206-7.

> ties. Self is the Devil, figuratively and really - the drop of evil we have to war against. That's better gospel than we hear from the pulpit. 1

One other factor which considerably increased the problems of looking after the inhabitants of Baltiboys who could not cope was disease. Mr. Boyle's report on the 17th January had emphasised the prevalence of dysentry and dropsy amongst the debilitated wretches he had to supervise on the Wicklow engineering projects: "I find that the blood of those who have fallen victims is becoming more and more watery and weak, and that the complaint itself is on the increase."[2] Two months later Mrs. Smith noted that even at their height above sea level "Sickness has now begun among the poor, inflammatory attacks, dysentry, influenza, fever."[3]

Intermittent Government relief, then, supplemented the more energetic measures adopted by the local Blessington relief committee, although neither appear to have had much of a direct contribution to the Smiths' efforts to minimise this second winter of great hardship's effects at Baltiboys. How effective was it all? Which classes were able to survive and which were in desperate straits? It is interesting that the Journals and official reports agree in their conclusions.

Mrs. Smith wrote a long and detailed analysis of how the different classes around Blessington had survived by the end of February:

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1. 27.2.1847.
2. Correspondance 1847, Comm., p. 19.
3. 21.3.1847.

> Provisions rising every market. Thus the large farmer is doing well, his produce selling for three times the prices of an ordinary year, his consumption though most costly still very fairly proportioned to his profits. The small farmer is ruined, he must eat his corn, sell his stock at an unseasonable time because he has no fodder and therefore leaves himself penniless for the coming year. The tradesmen have no custom whatever, people buying nothing but food; he must live on his capital if he has any; if he has none, he is bankrupt. The labourer can just keep four individuals alive on his earnings - two scanty meals a day, no fuel, clothing, house rent, and near a fast on Sunday. Where his family is larger and no son big enough to help with the work they must be very near starving. 1

This gloomy picture is confirmed by the official descriptions. Mr. Boyle had written in January that "The "small" farmer cannot now work, nor has he seed, therefore he has become apathetic; the more extensive farmer has but too frequently sold his seed and is almost a dependent, partly from a desire to avail himself of the rise in prices, and partly from fear of pillage."[2] Mr. Wright was even more specific in his report for the week ending 13th February: "During the past week the large farmers have been busy ploughing and sowing oats, while the so-called farmers having from 3 to 10 acres are doing nothing, the generality of them having nothing to sow."[3] A fortnight later Inspector Brandling described the position in his neighbourhood: "From the information I have received from some of the leading gentlemen in the county of Kildare, there is reason to suppose that the small farmers, holding under six acres of land, are not preparing for sowing their ground. These men all say that they have not money to buy the

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1. 28.2.1847.
2. Correspondance 1847, Comm., p. 19.
3. Correspondance 1847, B. of W., p. 253.

seed and that if the landlords or the Government will not come forward to assist them, they must either fall back on the Public Works or starve."[1] The most pessimistic note however had been struck by the Engineer Mr. Boyle. He found during his January journey of 190 miles one stretch of 27 miles where only four fields contained evidence of "work in progress", by which he meant ploughing. His inquiries discovered that "of 34 farmers of the better class, 18 have not seed beyond a supply of food for two months, the majority could not hold out beyond April." The consequences were clearly disastrous. "How can they sow seed or till, is the common reply; potatoes they have not, nor have they grain to grind sufficient to feed their labourers and themselves. I much fear that ploughing will soon be disregarded, for of course the horses participate in the calamity that has visited the country."[2]

There is general agreement, then, that the smallest farmers have been most affected in these parts of Counties Kildare and Wicklow. Mrs. Smith fully agreed; it was obvious to her by the middle of March that this was the class she expected to suffer the most.

> we fear starvation cases must become frequent here as elsewhere, all the small holders of land having been turned off the publick works - the most destitute class of any; their ground not being sufficient either to fully feed or to fully employ them so that they get indolent, reckless, discontented and miserable. 3

It was at this time that old James Cullen was persuaded to give up his one acre and accept the position Mrs. Smith had organised for him

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1. Ibid., p. 262.
2. Correspondance 1847, Comm., p. 19.
3. 21.3.1847.

as a turf supplier;[1] young James Doyle and his uncle Barny Quin were tempted by emigration ... her harsh comment on the prospects before the other uncles showed that although they were "mere day labourers" with "no ambition as yet to better themselves" they could still survive "until time, example, cold and hunger may teach them wisdom."[2]

Moreover, Mrs. Smith at the start of April when commenting on what she thought the effects of the proposed Gregory Amendment[3] would be, emphasised that it was still not the obvious who were suffering the most:

> In fact the name of relief to the extent proposed is all that there is to fear; the paupers of Ireland are not the labourers; they struggle on in their own miserable way as well as their low state of habits admit of, there are hardly more of them than are required even now, under this idle system of husbandry; there would not be enough were the land properly cultivated. The beggers are the small holders, entitled to no relief, and so we shall gradually get rid of them; they must give up their patches and take to labour. 4

This of course was a consistently-held belief. The incompetent smallholders needed to be demoted to become landless labourers; these too needed pressure of the kind described by Mrs. Smith the previous month to stimulate them into improvement.

> The farmers can't get a labourer to work for them even at fifteen pence a day; they prefer the road scraping at a shilling; on this they can just live and the delight of idleness overbalances the odd 3d. though neither they nor their

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1. See Part II, ch. 4, p. 224-5.
2. See Part II, ch. 5, p. 247.
3. This stated that occupiers of more than 1/4 acre were to be precluded from relief out of the poor rates: O'Neill, p. 253.
4. 8.4.1847.

> families have a stitch of clothes left almost. What a people. Another generation at least must pass away before we can hope for much moral improvement. At present in plain words they are all mere beasts; they have none but animal propensities. And do what we can with the children of such mere brutes we can very little advance their feelings; the scenes at home counteract the discipline of school. Patience! [1]

Character deficiencies apart, she believed also there was no motivation for a labourer to work for the farmers at this time; in other words trouble was being laid up for next year because labour and seed were both in short supply.

A last feature of Mrs. Smith's analysis of how Irish society had so far responded to the crisis needs to be examined. She had always maintained that the upper classes were living on borrowed time and that a massive change was needed if there was to be a return to a society based on a landed class effectively carrying out its duties and responsibilities.

It was the activities of their local Relief Committee which had done most to contribute towards that solidarity Mrs. Smith had always maintained was needed to inspire the creation of a better society. "It really seems" she wrote in February 1847 "as if our common distresses were drawing us all closer together, producing kinder feelings among us, soothing sectarian asperities, renewing the old attachment between the upper and lower ranks."[2] Such may have been her impressions of what was happening around Blessington but in Ireland as

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1. 12.3.1847.
2. 11.2.1847.

a whole, she was very clear, what was urgently required was the most fundamental social changes:

> This is a revolution as complete, very nearly as awful, as the French one.[1] Produced by much the same first causes though ascribed to the secondary which has been but the agent - this failure of food. Pleasure seeking, wrapped in self, unfeeling for others, the higher ranks by their neglect of the lower stifled every kind sensation in the ruder breast, engendered evil passions, contributed to the recklessness and the idleness they now deplore and encouraged the bigotry they now see the worst effects from. 2

Looking ahead, moreover, prospects for many of this class were gloomy.

> The lesson is hard on all - it is not all learned yet, and great must be the sufferings, entire must be the changes ere we settle to better things. The newspapers are beginning to point the moral of the tale; sales of horses, hunters, hounds, jewels, plate, houses to let; there must soon be lands to sell; then we may look for the brightening. The columns of servants out of place are widening, the appeals from shops for custom encreasing. The Government talks of lending money for seed and for improvements but it has yet to come and will it avail with bankrupt landlords. Lord Mountcashel rates the income from property in Ireland at thirteen million, the charges on it at ten and a half. Sales must be forced on us. 3

She developed her thoughts further in that long analysis at the end of February of how each class was affected by the crisis:

> The large proprietors must be content with half their usual income and it must be spent share and share upon their people, very little on themselves; the lesser proprietors will suffer

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1. It is interesting that the economic causes of the 1789 French revolution should be singled out for mention a year before similar influences were to help cause another upheaval in France a year later.

2. 11.2.1847.

3. See Woodham-Smith, p. 23 for a eulogy of him as an example of a good landlord in Ireland; the speech she refers to was reported in Hansard (and the Times) 8.2.1847, Vol. 89, p. 938.

> more as they have fewer luxuries to dispense with. Where there is debt there must be ruin, that is land sold to redeem the mortgages, whole or in part according to circumstances; the world to begin again with age, disappointments, children, clogging exertion in the lower station to which they will be reduced: where there is no debt there will still be years of difficulty, no rents from the little farmers, the rents from the larger ones fully required for the cess, the taxes, the head rents, the rent charges, the government advances to be repaid, the government drainage loan to be repaid, the sickly and the aged to be assisted, the able-bodied to be employed, the poor rates, the relief fund, and the regular labourers, leaving little indeed for the support of the proprietor's family or for the purchase from the poor ruined small tenantry of the patches they will have to give up and who must be assisted in their emigration, or trade, or whatever new line of life they turn to. After a few years we of this class may hope to be comfortable again - more comfortable than before - for our tenants will be few and those will be thriving; the land in our own hands will be great and that is a sure fortune; and we shall be more skilful in our management of it, and it will produce us maybe tenfold its value now; but in the meantime we must suffer privation. Were it not for the half-pay earned as Jane[1] wittily says by the sweat of the Colonel's brow (under his helmet in India) we should really be totally ruined; this will keep us up till better times, only that the new poor law frightens us. 2

It is perfectly clear from these thoughtful speculations that Mrs. Smith was able to rise above the day-to-day administration of Baltiboys to attempt an analysis of what was happening in Ireland at large. For her, then, the sufferings of all classes ought to be seen as part of what ought not to be described as less than a revolution. Property changes were at the root of this change. There was for those landowners with the means the chance of consolidation thus producing estates with a much sounder base; for those without or those who had proved themselves incompetent, there was only remaining the

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1. Her younger sister, see Part I, ch. 1, p. 3-4.

2. 28.2.1847.

sale of their property. This assessment of what had happened so far during these two crisis-ridden years is entirely consistent with what she had argued before the famine.

Her list of the various changes which a small estate like Baltiboys had to provide for, in itself, a rejoinder to the Times strictures, emphasises how very fortunate the Smiths were to have the Colonel's half-pay from the EIC and occasional windfalls like his share in the Deccan prize money.[1] Even an estate which had been in the throes of improvement for fifteen years would never have survived in such good shape without them; their privileged position of course was more secure than that of the great proprietors who could dispense with their luxuries, but it needs to be stressed how its financial security depended upon the quarterly injection of outside aid.

The capacity of the tenantry to cope in the twenty difficult months following the Smiths' return from France, the way in which part of the estate rental was earmarked for labourers in distress, and the dependence upon the quarterly pension ... all three are illustrated by what Mrs. Smith wrote in the three half-yearly gales before the Spring of 1847.

At the end of November 1845 she wrote "the Tenants paid well, were in good spirits, made no complaints not even of their potatoes, were all dressed so that altogether it was a most comforting gale day."[2] In June 1846 she commented:

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1. 30.11.1845: Colonel Smith was evidently more fortunate than some of his former colleagues - over a year later, Sir D.L. Evans indignantly stated in the Commons "it was now 30 years since operations had taken place in the Deccan and, though hardly any of the officers and soldiers engaged in that enterprise were surviving, yet the widows and children of many of them were". (Times, Thursday 18.III.1847).

2. Ibid.

> John Robinson arrived to collect the rents, having given the people three weeks law on account of some fairs which were postponed. The tenants paid well generally, no complaints except from the sickness among the cattle some time ago which was a serious misfortune. The scarcity of potatoes is little felt by the farmers it being caused principally by the stocks having been kept back from the markets in the expectation of prices rising continually which system pressed heavily on the labouring purchasers in which class the failure of the crop had been the commonest owing to inferiour management. 1

This analysis probably owed as much to her conversations with her agent as to her own observations. Nevertheless, by the last gale of the year she felt that "the tenants have paid very nearly as well as usual" although there were problems: "Some require a fortnight to pay up, others will persist to owe the hanging half year. A few who should do better owe a year. One or two owe more, we therefore in earnest proceed with them. About £160 is due. All will in time be recovered little by little." She concluded:

> Upon the whole we have no reason to be dissatisfied with the conduct of our people these pinching times, they will require a steady rein, kind words, encouragement, in many ways, and thus proceeding I think we shall get over the season better than most of us.

The rents even if all arrears were paid would not cover expenditure. "Money will be scarce enough, by the time the Christmas bills are paid there will be no great stock remaining, but in February comes the pay again,[2] we will save in every other way." It is worth emphasising that at this time she received gifts from her family and friends sent

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1. 4.6.1846.
2. This reinforces the crucial importance of Colonel Smith's East India Company pension: £80 paid regularly four times a year. See also p. 492.

to feed the hungry, so that charitable donations as well as the pension made their position easier. A very interesting final section shows her pondering over different ways of improving the situation.

> I often wonder how with so small an income we manage to make the two ends meet, for our expences are not household, latterly not stable, but masons, carpenters, plumbers for ever and for ever, improving the property certainly, but unproductive labours certainly none of them repaying the outlay. Now this half year £140 went back to the tenants in allowances, a hole in a bare £400, then deduct the defaulting rents another £100 at least, and but little remains for the family and labourers. Were it not for the E.I.C. we should be hard run indeed. [1]

It was perhaps this relief that they had got over the worst of the 1847 winter that explains the local fury to the suggestion made in the House of Commons by a Colonel Rawdon, Member for Armagh City, that amongst the worst-off areas in the whole of Ireland was Lower Talbotstown.[2] Mrs. Smith wrote about hearing the news from Lord Downshire whom she described as "greatly disturbed by a report in the newspapers of [this] assertion made in the House of Commons by a Colonel Rawdon on the authority he said, of a resident Irish nobleman."[3] He clearly felt that the finger of suspicion pointed in his direction; they both resented what they regarded as a totally unjust calumny on the administration of relief in the district.

Neither Hansard nor the Times reports refer to any such accusation in the month of March 1847. Colonel Rawdon is revealed as a

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1. 28.11.1846.
2. John Dawson Rawdon (1806-1866), represented Armagh City in the Whig interest from 1840-1852. See Who's Who of British Members of Parliament, Vol. 1 (1976), Michael Stentoz.
3. 2.4.1847.

peppery and persistent questioner, rather surprisingly a supporter of Smith O'Brien's efforts[1] to levy fines on absentee landowners, but the newspaper did not have a high opinion of his interventions: "A discussion of a very desultory character then took place in which Col. Rawdon etc. joined" was one of its comments.[2] However, a week later he did speak on one of his favourite topics, the public works, this time in Wicklow not Armagh.

> He had representations from the county of Wicklow in which fears were expressed that the public peace would not be maintained unless great caution were exercized in discharging the men now employed on the public works. 3

In answer to a question from the Chancellor of the Exchequer he replied: "... the letter, which was from a noble lord connected with the county, was at the service of the right Hon. Gentleman, to whom he was ready to show it." From earlier circumstantial evidence this might have been the Earl of Wicklow;[4] at any rate it is a fairly harm-

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1. William Smith O'Brien, one of the leaders of Young Ireland and a persistent Repealer, led the abortive rising in 1848; this particular criticism of absentees, regularly put forward by Mrs. Smith too, continued to receive publicity in journals with a wider circulation than the Nation or the United Irishman - a review of Trevelyan's The Irish Crisis in the Dublin University Magazine (April 1848 Vol. XXXI p. 537) stressed how the vast majority of indoor and outdoor relief in one poor law union examined was distributed to paupers from the properties of absentees.

2. Times, 19.3.1847.

3. Ibid., 25.3.1847.

4. He had introduced a petition from Co. Wicklow Grand Juries against the principle of giving outdoor relief on 19th March. The fourth Earl (1788-1869) was an Irish Representative Peer between 1821 and 1869 (Complete Peerage).

less point to be making about Co. Wicklow and it certainly does not cast doubts on Blessington let alone Lord Downshire.

Lord Downshire however was clearly annoyed when Mrs. Smith met him on 1st April. In fact the previous day he had written a letter to Lord George Bentinck, enclosing a statement from Ogle Moore (as secretary of the Relief Committee in Blessington) with the request that it be read to the House. He added his own comments:

> A more unfounded or more unjust statement never was made than this and as proprietor of the town of Blessington and of a considerable District around it I call upon Col. Rawdon to give up the name of the noble Lord who gave him his information in as public a manner as he made his statement on his authority. 1

That disposed of the innuendi against his own name and he added the sort of final remark which indicates that the gallant Colonel's charges were totally out of place in or around Blessington.

> It is very hard when the Country Gentlemen in all parts of Ireland are straining every nerve to give employment and food in every form and <u>are actually receiving the sincere thanks and blessings</u> of the poor, to be held up in this manner <u>to the English people</u> as totally indifferent and callous to the sufferings around them. 2

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1. DP D671/C 118.

2. In point of fact, Colonel Rawdon was a much more percipient critic than may appear from this incident. He regularly pointed out the benefits of resident landowners. Mrs. Smith would obviously have approved of his accolade for the "wives and daughters of the landed gentry" who "conferred a benefit upon the neighbourhood in which they resided by visiting the poor and promoting their comforts." <u>Hansard</u> (Vol. XCII, 18 March 1847) adds his conclusion: "Great praise was certainly due to the ladies of Ireland for the benevolent exertions which they had made on behalf of the suffering people of that country during the present crisis."

It may all have been a storm in a teacup, but there is clear indignation both in this letter (which unfortunately the active member of Parliament for Armagh did not refer to in any of his subsequent speeches) and in the Journals suggesting how misplaced this criticism was.

There is a sort of hiatus in the Journals for those months in 1847 between spring and autumn, the time covered by Russell's new departure aimed at coping with famine conditions until the new poor laws could be put into operation,[1] a gap in her record excused with the words: "A long pausé in the journal of remarkable events. Little worth noting has occured."[2] However this was the opportunity for her in two long discursive entries on 23rd April and 2nd May to take stock of their situation as Baltiboys emerged from its second winter of distress.

She is in the first place scathing in her criticisms of the ways in which the government relief has been organised.

> All going on pretty comfortably notwithstanding a serious mistake about the employment of the people. They idled so shamelessly upon the roads that the funds which were ample failed before the works were completed; this was talked of (the Irish live upon talk) but not otherwise attended to; consequently the bands were dismissed suddenly; the men went in mobs to seek redress, got shillings here and food there and after <u>five or six</u> days the Committee met, struck a new rate, presented for the completion of the works, sent their minutes up to Dublin where the Board will forward them to the Treasury which will consider them, pass them, return them; then an advance of money will be asked for, granted, and the labour will begin again;

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1. O'Neill, p. 228.
2. 23.4.1847.

This unwieldy system of checks and balances might have had its comic side; but she was in no doubt about the result ..."no day however is yet fixed and twelve have already passed since all means of earning a subsistence have been denied to our paupers."

This did not surprise her for she had been far from impressed with the Kildare Inspector whose sanctimonious reports have already been quoted:

> Our Director General, a fine good-humoured, gentlemanly boy, a subaltern in the Artillery who has the office of Government Inspector[1] for this district has rather mismanaged his business. He arranged his committee in the pretty little cottage he has brought his girl wife to where they are living so comfortably on the £1200[2] a year we have to raise for them and not taking the trouble to ride over here and being quite a stranger he has misnamed John Darker calling him George so that he can't act; left out Colonel Smith who next to John Hornidge is the largest proprietor of our small union; and put on Mr. Fraser who does not belong to the county at all but is merely on a visit to his sister-in-law Mrs. Cotton. 3

She was as critical of the administration at the very top and did not spare her kinsman who had been chosen four months before to be chairman of the commission responsible for this temporary relief system when she wrote how another slighted local proprietor planned to protest to him in person:

> Lord Milltown is going up to Dublin in a fury about it in the teeth of a dignified epistle from that old twaddle my cousin

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1. Lieutenant Brandling.

2. Application No. 29 from Co. Wicklow, dated 28.2.1847 and applying only to Lower Talbotstown, 'presented' for £1515 to be raised, a sum in fact restricted to £1455.

3. 23.4.1847. According to the Return from the Office of Public Works (7.II. 1846) his services as an Inspecting Officer "during existence of present distress" would be remunerated at "twenty shillings per diem." See Correspondance 1846/7 B of W , p. 39.

> Sir John Burgoyne[1] who wearied out by the same sort of absurdities elsewhere has announced that he will positively not interfere in the change of any appointed members of relief committees. He has had to do it though and he will have to do it again so he need not bluster. 2

However there is no indication from the Journal that either the Earl or the Colonel were invited to fill the positions their rank and property entitled them to.

With such incompetence at the national and local level so evident to her, it was no surprise that the works that were in fact undertaken by this slow-moving system of relief should prove to have been so unsatisfactory. "As the two hills they were cutting, one at the schoolhouse, the other in Featherbed Lane are unfinished there is to be an application made to have them set on again which will employ the idle hands here for a week or two."[3] However in view of what she knew about the cumbersome procedures insisted upon, she cannot have been optimistic.

Meantime she had no doubts that Baltiboys' tenants and labourers were managing either to cope or to come within the net of relief she organised.

We provided ourselves with bread which we deny to no applicants;

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1. 'Sir John Fox Burgoyne (1782-1871), after a dashing career in the Peninsular War, continued to play as active part in public affairs; he knew a great deal about Ireland for he was Chairman of the Board of Public Works (1831-1846) and an obvious choice as Relief Commissioner in 1847, even if his conduct did not please his kinswoman.

2. 23.4.1847.

3. 23.4.1847.

> the few who have asked for it have convinced me that there is not the extreme destitution here that is talked about; the people are such inveterate beggers that there is nothing they want they won't ask for - even those in decent circumstances; it is therefore plain to me that there is not the scarcity of food pretended. Mrs. George West[1] found the same. While she gave money her door was besieged; when she changed to bread the numbers dwindled to a very few really hungry. 2

Indeed, overall, "our own people" she thought "are patient, thankful, diligent by comparison, and much much more decent in their homes than any others I am acquainted with."

However, Mrs. Smith was never slow to draw conclusions about public morality from what she saw around her and by the spring of 1847 she had seen enough to convince her that her own experiences illustrated the depths to which the people had descended:

> The worst feature in the condition (of this miserable country) is the utter want of probity in the mass of the people which the necesäity of shifting individual cases has brought us more thoroughly acquainted with. It surpasses belief. How can permanent good be done with a population so demoralised. One don't know where to begin, how to arrange any system that that can work by any possibility so as to improve rogues, liars, ungrateful, insolent, idle sensualists. I could not have imagined there existed in these days so low in their feelings, so gross in their habits. Nothing will arouse them but the pain of hunger, they are incapable of comprehending any other sort of suffering and that they have here hitherto been saved from experiencing. 3

However, this marvellous description of a feckless population, she realised, did not do justice to the few signs of hope. The condition

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1. She was the wife of the only other member of the Blessington relief committee consistently praised for his efforts this winter; see p. 502-3.
2. 2.5.1847.
3. 23.4.1847.

of their own dependents and the co-operation between men of good sense of each religion (Father Galvin she thought a "real blessing"[1] thus confirming the belief of Sir Randolph Routh in January that the majority of the priesthood were not "guilty of malversation" but were behaving "most liberally ... and most meritoriously, and in close conjunction with the Protestant rectors")[2] were very promising signs. Even the fact that the very poor had now been forced away from their exclusive dependence upon the potato and into considering looking for paid employment elsewhere would in the long run help cure the perennial problems of rural Ireland.

However, there were still the immediate problems to hand and the next four months before Lord John Russell's new schemes of poor relief came into effect were a time of continued uneasy co-operation between local guardians and government officers so that there was every reason for Mrs. Smith to comment on how she saw the new legislation taking shape.

When the new bill was discussed in the Lords at the beginning of May, she wrote approvingly about the likely consequences.

> Nothing can be fairer; it is an experiment only and worth trying, guarded as are now all the objectionable parts by the various clauses passed in the Commons' Committee; the Lords will still further revise the measure and I have little dobt now of its working well; the onus will fall on the land certainly but on the occupier; the farmers will thus be driven to employ more hands; as they must feed their number they will find it best to get labour from them in return; thus their

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1. 23.4.1847.

2. Correspondance 1847, Comm., p. 46.

> system of husbandry will improve. Truth to say at present they know nothing of agriculture, very little about stock except just how to choose the best description of cattle for summer grazing on their fine pastures. 1

A rigourous system of Poor Relief based on the English model, then, would be a spur to improvement particularly if it was to be paid for by the more securely-based class of larger farmers.

In the meantime, however, "that temporary relief is going forward" she wrote "keeping the people alive certainly in idleness, therefore in discontent."[2] This, all observers agreed, was unsatisfactory, so that few of the necessary preparations which might have led to later employment had been undertaken. Hopefully she believed that the new scheme when implemented would prevent this: "the reason given for this new experiment is to force the occupiers of land on whom these rations are to be levied, to employ the proper quantity of labourers - one to ten acres - three times the present aggregate."

The summer months therefore witnessed a continued dependence upon the activities of the local relief committees working in uneasy harness with Lieutenant Brandling. Her description at the end of May illustrates the local tensions and those between guardians and government representatives which made the operation of relief schemes so difficult:

> A meeting yesterday which did not end well. The relief now afforded at a great expence is but a mockery - one pound of

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1. 3.5.1847; see O'Neill, p. 246-7.
2. 9.5.1847.

dry meal a day to adults, half a pound to children without any sort of kitchen; it may keep them alive a few weeks, but in the end a pestilence must ensue; the quantity is not sufficient and the quality is defective. The recipients do nothing for it; it is a present we make to the idle.[1] At present a ton and a half of Indian meal is the consumption, £24 per week. Mr. West and Mr. Fraser were here on their way to Blessington and they and the Colonel were to stand by one another to insist on soup, or a nutritive slop of some kind being added; but they could not carry it; perhaps they will by persevering. Their proposition however to get the Union out of the Government's hands as Lord Downshire effected in his district would have been listened better but for John Hornidge. The Relief Committee undertaking that there shall be no unemployed able-bodied men in their locality the Board of Works would interefere no further; young Mr. Brandling would write no more impertinent orders and all those reams of paper and the time consumed in filling them with the great expence thus incurred would be saved to the ratepayers; to effect this each landlord must honestly take his share of labourers; it would be a much cheaper plan, and we should get something for what we give; but Mr. Hornidge who employees very few servants would not hear of it. The people are in a deplorable condition; the willing horses must help them, and "fear not but trust in providence". 2

This is a very unflattering portrait of local society at work to alleviate the crisis. Quarrelling committee members, one side open to the accusation of acting solely through self-interest and the other

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1. Government figures show how great the numbers in Naas involved were: (up to 15.8.47 when it was stopped).

	Rations issued free per day	Paid for
5.6.1847	10,449	525
3.7.1847	9,514	551
31.7.1847	6,830	-

(Statment Showing the Number of Rations being Daily Issued gratuitously, and sold, on 28 August 1847, HC 1847-8 XXIX, p. 9)

2. 23.5.1847.

feeling that it is bearing an unfair proportion of the burden, a badly organised scheme where inadequate rations were supervised by an incompetent Government Inspector ... these were not the ingredients for a successful partnership. Admittedly the standard rations, which do not compare favourably with those issued by the Poor House at Naas,[1] those intended to supplement labourer's victuals at Baltiboys or those recommended by Samual Fox of the Dublin Friends' Relief Association in his communications to Sir Charles Trevelyan,[2] were to be changed if not greatly improved in June. The Journals note that "it is intended to change the food - give half rice and half Indian meal, cooked - 1 pound of each furnishing when properly made 10 pounds of nutricious stirabout, exceedingly good and sufficient for a meal for four working men."[3] Mrs. Smith apparently made and tried some herself and it was this recipe which was to demonstrate one of the values of her school as her pupils distributed the copies of the recipes they had written around the estate.[4]

By June it looked very much as if one of the hardest working members of the committee had had more than enough. At the end of May Mr. West and his wife are described partaking of a "bread and butter luncheon" and talking for hours about relief work: "poor law business

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1. See Part IV, ch. 2, p.450 for Dr. Robinson's recommended rations.
2. Correspondance 1847, Comm. p. 92: for the very active role this organisation played throughout the famine years, see Woodham-Smith p. 157-9.
3. 8.6.1847.
4. See Part III, ch. 2, p. 378-9.

almost entirely occupied us." Both families clearly now believed that they were getting scanty support from other able to help.

> We the willing horses must draw the weight; it must be moved as much of it as possible and neither farmers nor graziers will share the trouble - the expence they must share and their conduct will encrease the amount without their getting anything in exchange for it. Mr. West has advanced a hundred pounds for provisions already; no one has proposed to help him and he and Colonel Smith have bought up most of the cabin manure. What a mean set are the rest - short-sighted too, even for their own interests. 1

By the end of June there is still no sign of the 100 acre farmers or grazing landlords like the Hornidges offering to provide any support and Mr. West was obviously no longer able to afford his commitments.

> We fear Mr. West will throw up the Relief business. He is already a hundred pounds out of pocket by it, nearly the whole of his time consumed and he has had considerable annoyances besides from the interference of Monsieur à mustâches.[2] No one else will undertake the trouble so they must pay for its being given to the Government Commissioners. Colonel Smith, Mr. West and Mr. Fraser, and one of the Darkers, have alone attended the meetings for some weeks. What people. What melancholy prospects for another generation. 3

The only alternative if ordinary landlords failed in their duty was government loans administered by an unsympathetic corps of Lieutenant Brandlings.

One other good reason for the Smiths' lack of confidence in the government methods of helping landlords in their position in 1847 was the slowness and inefficiency with which the drainage schemes author-

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1. 28.5.1847.
2. Lieutenant Brandling R.A.
3. 30.6.1847.

ised by "Mr. Labouchere's Letter"[1] were started. They had been very enthusiastic when the schemes were announced because they followed on so naturally from their own strategy of improving Baltiboys. Colonel Smith in October 1846 thought of borrowing a few hundred pounds which he estimated would be sufficient to drain "the whole of his property", but by March he was no further forward because what his wife described as "the Loan to proprietors for Improvement" had still not been worked out in sufficient detail. All that was known was that the principal and interest were to be paid up in twenty two years "at the rate of £6:10:0 per annum for every hundred pounds borrowed" and she understood that "estates [were] to be liable for the debt as a first claim on them."[2] However a visit by the Steward to Dublin next month reassured them.

> Tom Darker went to Dublin yesterday ... to call at the Board of Works and acquaint himself properly with drainage proceedings. He is in high spirits with the result of his consultations. We think it will cost about a thousand pounds to drain that side of the hill alone, but as we have twenty two years to pay it in, by yearly instalments of six and a half per cent, and as after the second year there must be a profit upon the work of ten per cent and there may be one of twenty or upwards, the speculation is good. It will give a deal of employment and lighten the rates. 3

While the Smiths were still at the stage of calculating future profit, it is to be presumed that the Board of Works had managed to get similar applications started quite nearby, for both the Inspectors

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1. Supra. p. 43I - 2.
2. 7.3.1847.
3. 9.4.1847.

for Wicklow and Kildare reported favourably in the middle of February. Mr. Wright noted that the week ending the 13th February was "the first week that the drainage has been put on, with the exception of a few men the latter part of last week."[1] This could have been drainage associated with the Board's roads, but Inspector Brandling's report the following week is unequivocable: "The Drainage Works, under Mr. Labouchere's letter, are giving great satisfaction to the proprietors; and the overseer informs me that they will be completed at very reasonable cost."[2]

Another setback occurred at the end of May, when the Colonel and Tom set off for Dublin armed with "maps, plans, calculations, surveys, all ready for the Board of Works".[3] To their chagrin it turned out a wasted journey:

> Mr. Mahoney out of town so the papers regarding the property which he has charge of could not be got, and the Board of Works can grant no money without seeing them. So they all came home today little the better of their journey. [4]

Still, the whole business had assumed such an importance that it was one of the reasons specified next month which prevented them contemplating leaving Ireland for a couple of years to allow conditions to settle: "we cannot conveniently quit home; with the draining, the condition of the people, various matters of business, no money to spare,

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1. Correspondance 1847, B. of W., p. 253.
2. Ibid., p. 262.
3. 28.5.1847.
4. 29.5.1847.

and all of us so happy here, we can only be driven away by pestilence." However it was only at the end of June 1847, a year after the legislation had been passed, that the Baltiboys scheme seemed to be about to start: "a Mr. Sullivan has come to verify our survey of the lands to be drained, so we shall soon have a band of poor men at work. £1200 Hal has asked for."[1] Not only did he apply for this sum, it was also sanctioned by the Board and the amount issued in five instalments over the next two years, whereas many of the similar applications made by his neighbours in Wicklow and Kildare were not so fortunate. Pierce Mahoney applied for two sums of nearly £2,200 and £2,800 and in the end only was issued with £900, whilst nearer home Ogle Moore [sic] wanted £3295, the Board allowed £1000, cancelled £600, and only issued £400, and the Earl of Miltown,[2] looking for no less than £5143 was in the end only issued with £500.[3] The Board had no intention of bolstering up unsound landlord finances and neither the Rector nor the Earl inspired much confidence in view of their equally shaky estate and personal financial record. Apparently the investigation into Colonel Smith's finances and estate proved satsifactory but it was not until the end of October that the first of his instalments arrived: "The Colonel received yesterday the first order on the Treasurer of

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1. 26.6.1847.
2. For the earl's parlous financial situation at this time, see Part I, ch. 3, p. 62-4.
3. See Appendix to 24th Report of the Commission of Public Works (HC 1856 XIX p. 43).

the Board of Works for his drainage money, so he will set on thirty men at once; such a gleam of comfort."[1]

Such optimism as was read into the progress of the drainage plans was much needed as most other sources of relief failed to live up to expectations. In addition, earlier fears about disease spreading amongst the debilitated peasantry were being realised by May. Mrs. Smith noted that dysentry had secured a foothold amongst the Doyles and Quins, two of the most wretched labouring families on the estate, in spite of the fact that the poor and the invalid were receiving attention ... "we are to buy another cow and give milk instead of broth in future, except to the sick whom we must nourish with a share of what we have." The situation was sufficiently worrying for the Smiths to be concerned about their family: "If an epedimick break out the Colonel says he will pack us all off out of the country in a moment."[2]

By the end of the month, in fact, the first victim died, one of the tenant children, Andy Ryan. The "bread and butter luncheon" over which the Smiths and Wests discussed relief problems considered the implications. "Poor law business almost entirely occupied us; he desired me to have poor little Andy Ryan buried at once, the house fumigated etc., and begged me to take charge of a general lime washing throughout Baltiboys." Mrs. Smith immediately walked over to John Darker's house and received from him, as a Poor Law Guardian,

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1. 17.10.1847.
2. 24.5.1847.

appropriate instructions: "he wrote up to forbid any wake, to order the funeral this morning and then a general cleansing - all of which was attended to by these unfortunate parents."[1] A week later she was able to write showing how whatever danger of infection there was had been controlled:

> The principal dread latterly has been of fever, following the dysentry consequent on ill-cooked food and restriction to one only kind of nourishment, and induced also by the dirty habits of the whole country, the dung heaps at every door, the stagnant pools, the damp floors, the inability to buy soap this year, and the disinclination to make use of any if they had it - all require the imperative order of the relief committee enforced by the power of exacting a heavy fine or in default a month's imprisonment, in case of non-compliance with it. I certainly got a great fright, not only with Andy Ryan's death, but on the way to Blackditches at the Carroll's publick house and at the filthy Scarfes' every inmate was seized; however they are all off to hospital, such lime washings are going on and other purifications that the pestilence seems checked. 2

Mrs. Smith added her own characteristic response to the crisis; the children in her schools copied nutricious recipes to take home and "We made in like manner copies of the white-washing order and pasted them up in several conspicuous places."[3]

Any attempt at summarising what Mrs. Smith herself felt about the ways in which both the upper classes and the most wretched classes had come through the first two years of famine conditions, down that is to

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1. 28.5.1847.
2. 8.6.1847.
3. See Part III, ch. 2, p. 379.

the implementation of Lord John Russell's change of course by August 1847, has to take into account that in each case her opinions ranged from the sympathetic to the highly critical.

She has already been seen on a number of occasions describing the plight of the "demoralised" poor, whom the same Journals were to castigate as "mere beasts" whose basic appetites precluded them from sympathy. Much of course depended on whether she was using a particular family as a lever with which to beat government proposals; or whether she thought that the virtues of self-help were illustrated by another very poor family apparently managing to cope. All her opinions were based on a deep factual knowledge of what conditions were like, and an awareness of how these had changed over the fifteen years she had been mistress of Baltiboys. In the middle of April, for example, she describes a walk to the Wests at Rathbally. Widow Mulligan was visited on the way (she "had to be scolded for her selfish folly in refusing her son to the police")[1], there was much to discuss at the Wests' and they took in the outskirts of Blessington on the way back:

> In the Weavers' Square we had pleasure in visiting John and Dan Byrne, the Smiths, in their tidily kept cabins; both have got good managing wives; their little sister Nancy Doyle all of whose children are a good deal bigger than herself, seems to be very poor; her husband is discharged from the roads, only working odd days with the farmers; her son is still employed and on his wages the family is subsisting. Hal left some substantial comfort behind him and I have promised the

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1. See Part II, ch. 4, p. 218.

> poor little ailing wify soup she can drink, for the relief mixture her stomach is too delicate to bear. 1

Particular cases, then, she writes about with sympathy but more often than not when she is generalising about the state of the neighbourhood or of Ireland she stresses the endemic idleness of the worst-off sections of the population suffering in "listless poverty" rather than racking their brains to discover ways of ameliorating their condition. Thus, exceptionally curiously, even a sympathetic entry illustrating how their regular visits to those depending on them helped to prevent personal tragedies, concluded with a bombastic aside which must have been based on a half-remembered memory from earlier in the 1840s:

> We walked on through much appearance of wretchedness, dirt, ruin, rags, but I must say I never saw the people look so well, so fat, so clear, so lively. They always complain let them be ever so well off, and they eat such enormous quantities it is not easy to supply their appetites; a two lb. loaf many of the men finish at a meal. German stomachs!2

One possible tendency which might help to explain this is that her long and eloquent denunciations of malpractices and dishonesties sound as if they were her generalisations based on hearsay whereas the more sympathetic and understanding descriptions come from Baltiboys or Blessington where the situation was much less out of control than in much of Ireland. In May, for example, describing how the temporary relief was the main factor keeping large sections of the population alive, she forcibly mingled the generalisations with local gossip to reinforce her argument that the bulk of the population was discontent-

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1. 16.4.1847.
2. 16.4.1847.

ed and ungrateful.

> In the meanwhile we have mob riots in all the less civilised districts, general grumbling everywhere, the people now insisting on a right to be supported; they are to marry, smoke, amuse themselves, beg, borrow or steal and insist upon a maintenance. Charming people, high-minded, active, honest. There are crowds of them who have been receiving relief as destitute all winter now coming into the market with cartloads of sound potatoes for which they are receiving extravagant prices and the "greatest of praises" from their equals: "think of that now! There's cuteness." The want of probity strikes none of them. It requires unremiting watchfulness to keep farmers and tradesmen in decent circumstances from appropriating a share of the relief stores; they apply unblushingly for everything going, anything. Margaret tells me that when refused both bread, tea, soup and a long list of petitions they will descend to beg "a little taste of salt" with the smell of tobacco so rank upon them that even in the open air their near affinity is unendurable. Some of the most respectable of our very limited class of yeomanry are selected as members of the committees. While they imagined that the landlords only were to be taxed for these relief funds, they took very little trouble to scrutinise the lists of applicants; now that they find the rate is to be levied on the occupiers of land indiscriminately they are scrutinising every claim, most jealously, full half of the names given in have been already cancelled and every meeting the pen is drawn through more. 1

The all-pervading self-interest is the poison which threatens both recovery from present disasters and the chances of any decent foundations for the futre being laid.

Throughout the 1840s Mrs. Smith's Journals warn that unless the landed classes change their ways there will be a social revolution; it has already been noted that 1847 contains many such fears. She was often as critical about the members of her own class as she could be about the labourers or cottiers. A near neighbour in Upper Blessington Parish, Mr. Hanks the miller, for example was severely criticised

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1. 9.5.1847.

("hard in all his dealings: not the worst of landlords yet far from good - neither kind nor liberal - and rich")[1] in May because of the way he treated the Mulligan family (who because the children had attended Baltiboys School were always kept an eye on by Mrs. Smith). "Anne Mulligan told me that her mother is turned out of her house, allowed a month for her removal and there is the poor ailing woman after serving Mr. Hanks for twenty years, set adrift in her old age without one human being taking an interest in her." Suitable help was provided and after detailing this Mrs. Smith added her conclusion: "These middle rank landlords are very hard; their conduct it is which gives the bad name to the whole class."[2]

There were of course other landlords singled out for praise. She much admired Lord Stanley's speech in the Lords that same month ("he undoubtedly knows more of Irish affairs than any one of the publick men who meddle with them; his own property is admirably managed; his opinion of the country generally is accurate as far as I can judge")[3]; this prompted her into a long comparison between the qualities of the different classes in Ireland which in turn is an interesting commentary on how her views had been confirmed by the crisis threatening each by 1847.

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1. 18.5.1847.

2. This may well have been one factor, but Mrs. Smith also made it plain that the sins of some of the greater landlords had just as great an impact: see Part I, ch. 3.

3. He had been Irish Secretary (1830-1833) during which time he appointed Sir John Burgoyne to the Board of Works (a decision Mrs. Smith would not have approved of) and been instrumental in setting up a National School system (with whose principles she whole-heartedly agreed).

> I admire him for standing up for his class - the Irish landlord is in no essential different from the Irish peasant - his superior position has raised him in many points above his labouring countrymen but the character of their race is common to both. The same carelessness or recklessness, call it what you will, the same indolance, the same love of pleasure, the same undue appreciation of self, all more disagreeably prominent in the lower nature because further debased by the more degrading consequences attending extreme poverty, and unredeemed by the brilliant qualities which refined habits set off to advantage. It is the greatest mistake possible to argue upon a presumed difference of disposition, the difference is in condition. And to array the one class against the other, to insist that the Landlords are always crushing the peasantry, and the peasantry always rising against the landlords, is mere prejudice: there is no opposition at all between them, they agree remarkably well The upper ranks pursue their amusements without reference to any other human being, merely giving a volley of curses to anyone that comes inconveniently into their way, the lower ranks admire the style of these diversions, imitate them as far as they have the means without the slightest idea of being oppressed or even neglected. The Landlords that are not popular are what we should call the good ones, who look after their affairs, insist upon value received for value given, who will neither be cheated of time nor property, and look well after the habits of their unruly dependents. Patience, all are educating together. Starvation is helping and by and bye matters must mend for as a race they are wonderfully clever people. Poor creatures, in this their grub state they are very disheartening to deal with; just now they are all ill. I sit here with castor oil and laudanaum beside me and generally have to give two or three doses away of a morning; no deaths hitherto from this diseace alone though it has carried off a few ailing people. 1

Clearly two years of crisis conditions have not altered Mrs.Smith's basic views on the quality and character of Irish landlordism in general. The good, unpopular ones, who despite her criticisms dominated their neighbourhood around Blessington, were those managing to survive. It was the fecklessness of the lower classes, who despite all their natural promise were still in their "grub state" and so needed just the sort of care and attention conscientious landlords

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1. 4.5.1847.

would provide in those trying times. In Baltiboys the proof that all was well is contained in Mrs. Smith's account of the June gale. "Now the other day at the gale here the rents were almost paid as well as usual; they are never as well paid in May as in November when old scores are generally paid off, and at this time there is a delay asked of six weeks in a few cases for even the lesser sum paid now, and what is strange is that two of the larger farmers are the defaulters, little Tyrrell and Rutherfurd."[1] The fortunes of these two have already been examined and there were other factors affecting the readiness to pay on time; it is more noticeable that the remainder of the smaller farmers were able to avoid unseasonal arrears.

However she reported a conversation at this time with the Agent which shows an underlying unease:

> John Robinson and I had a long private conversation on the state of our affairs - on the whole not unsatisfactory.... Many that won't be able to pay much now will probably manage to clear themselves by harvest; others must be dealt summarily with, pensioned or otherwise disposed of. We certainly shall have a struggle to get on during the next four months for it is impossible to dismiss any of the labourers or under servants as long as we can by an possibility feed them; neither can we diminish our relief. On ourselves we never spend much; nevertheless we must contrive to spend less. And in earnest will I set about it. 2

Undoubtedly the source of this disquiet was her knowledge of just how finely their finances were balanced. Their predicament was most obvious to her at the beginning of July:

> I have the comfort of possessing one single pound note towards the family expences, the remains of ten pounds of borrowed money

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1. 8.6.1847: see Part II, ch. 2 and Part V.

2. 30.5.1847.

> which must be repaid when some of the rents promised to be paid up during this month come in. A good deal is owing but we can't expect all. There are lambs to sell, but there are weekly wages to a large amount and the butcher, besides the Dublin bills for flour, groceries etc, and I am sure I don't know how to meet any of them, for those horrid Howitts have sent me no answer yet. I must spirit up and try my friend Mr. Chambers again. 1

This last is a reference to the two journals to whom she sent her articles; both were concerned with the propagation of useful knowledge, both were conscious of the need for the upper classes to work to make any social revolution unnecessary and she praised them fulsomely in July ... "These journals of Chambers and Howitt are very delightful. They fill the mind, exercize it, occupy it. One wants no other society - what will these people make of their readers, the least attentive of them. Never was such an amount of good seed scattered, and surely some of it will fall where it can take root."[2] She had had a number of her writings published already in Chambers and although she was mortified when he failed to approve of one in March (and worse, the "Committee of Learning in Edinburgh" whom Robert Chambers passed it onto rejected it as well: "they sent them back to me as extremely interesting but unsuited to the journal." As she sadly noted ... "A sad descent for my vanity d'autour"; she added reasons which show that the tone of earlier Times editorials may have reflected quite an important section of public opinion ... "The subjects were Irish and they are angry with Ireland on account of our necessities

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1. 4.7.1847.
2. 26.7.1847.

having interfered with the government's intention of remitting the tax on paper.")[1] There was better news in July shortly after her despair at having so little ready cash. "What was my surprise on looking thro' the packet of Howitt's Journals last sent, reading on, article after article, to stumble upon my "Thoughts on Irish Charities". It reads very well and is very good."[2]

And most importantly, at a time when they were providing outdoor relief at Baltiboys and contributing time and money for the local Relief Committee, the Smiths relied heavily on her small income from her writings. This and the donations made by friends and family undoubtedly made a tremendous difference but in the end, like Lord John Russell, the Smiths put most of the hopes on a good harvest[3]... and hopes were high in July.

> We have good prospects fortunately - good crops. The hay is all cut, at least the sown grass, and will be all made tomorrow - about three tons per acre, thirteen acres, at a cost of about nine shillings per acres, value four pounds a ton; there is a great deal of meadow hay besides, a little here, some on Kearns' land which won't be ready for a month. We now begin to weed the turnips and the mangol worzel, hay made in four days, when did such a thing happen in Ireland! [4]

A week later however another point of detail is slipped into the Journals which shows again just how difficult it was to balance the books when there were so many exceptional demands being made on inelastic

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1. 12.3.1847.
2. 26.7.1847.
3. O'Neill, p. 256.
4. 4.7.1847.

resources. "Got some money, thank heaven! A small balance from two of the tenants, and sold wool and lambs. This little fund will keep us going for a month, when the pay comes."[1] An income, in other words of between seven and eight hundred pounds a year from Baltiboys supplemented by an EIC pension of three hundred and twenty needed regular small additions from whatever source if the Smiths were successfully to carry out their obligations as landlords.

By the end of the summer of 1847, however, when the Government's new measures came into operation and all their temporary expedients to contain distress were ended, there is no doubting Mrs. Smith's pessimism. Although Baltiboys had proved itself able to survive and their management had coped with every challenge, although the harvests had been well up to expectation and rent payments were not falling behind, she was depressed by the little that could be achieved in the short term and the hopeless prospects ahead:

> What will become of us by and bye, who can say? This out-door relief has put the finishing stroke to the resources of the upper classes, and the immorality of the lower - none care to work now - they are fed while idle. Crowds apply for meal who are in no need of it. We are quiet which is a comfort but the storm is but delayed. It will come in earnest when the money fails. In the West and in the South it is proved that the land can't support the population - to deal with the explanation shortly - it would require one thousand pounds to furnish rations for a locality - the rents of it are seven hundred pounds; the mortgages on them six hundred pounds, - so of all. Then who will buy property thus encumbered with debts and paupers, and what will the bankrupt do with his family. It is lamentable altogether. 2

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1. 12.7.1847.

2. 14.7.1847.

Finally, when the news came that the outdoor relief of which she had been so critical was to be ended, the consequences she foresaw in this entry for 15th August increased her despondency, especially when she considered the jobbery of those elected locally to help make the new policies work; even if their area was to emerge unscathed from the reorganisation.

> The publick relief is over. It was never contemplated to carry it on beyond harvest, indeed few have been receiving assistance of late, comparatively, there being plenty of work for those who choose to go and look for it. The class who can't earn is no larger than it ever was; it is now thrown upon the Poor Law Guardians who at their meeting of Friday last, instead of electing relieving officers to take charge of the several districts, as they were called together to do, fell in disputing, about a set of jobs they had a mind to perpetuate. They wanted to join large districts and lump the pay, thus making a good income for a son or a nephew, who would have been physically incapable of getting through such an extent of duties. Mr. Owen and others battled the point and gained. The seventeen divisions of our Union are to be paired together, two and two, the three smallest only going at the end together and Mr. Owen had the address to join Blessington and Baltiboys, so we shall get on comfortably, for with our many ordinary works and our extraordinary draining and our better description of landlords, we are by no means swamped with paupers, even though part of the mountains, Shannon Harbour and Weavers Square are included. 1

August 1847, then does mark a distinct stage for this neighbourhood during the famine years, even if the new draining schemes still had not been started ("Colonel Smith is in the list for the draining loans gazetted yesterday, still we can't begin, so for this next month till the next Poor Law meeting we shall have to give a great deal of help." And her last word for these months which began with the Times vituper-

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1. 15.8.1847.

ations against all classes of Irish society and closed with Russell's new departure, in a year in which the Permanent Head of the Treasury as well as local landowners described how Co. Wicklow was the first of the Eastern counties to feel the ravages of the Famine, was that ... "we think the times are mending" and looking back she concluded "The whole people, so to speak, have been existing on credit, make believe, there was nothing real about far more than half of them."[1]

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1. 15.8.1847.

Chapter Four

The Continuing Crisis, 1847-1850

By the summer of the Black Year 1847, after three winters had presented new problems that had provided the supreme test of all that had been achieved at Baltiboys, Colonel and Mrs. Smith were in no doubt about the strengths and weaknesses of their position. They had supervised measures which had ensured the survival of the estate; they had fulfilled their obligations to tenant and labourer alike; the Colonel had played his part in all the local measures taken to minimise the extent of the disaster around Blessington. Baltiboys clearly was as unlikely to perish as Lord Downshire's estate and equally was in much better shape than Lord Milltown's or Ogle Moore's; it was not expected that any new problems would appear to alter this state of affairs, nor that anything other than gradual improvement would take place in the months ahead especially with the Government draining schemes now fully operational. It is therefore appropriate to begin with the analysis of the last part of the Famine at the point where the new system of Poor Relief was brought in by Lord John Russell's Government.

This ended the temporary measures, presided over by Sir John Burgoyne, in operation since the beginning of the year.[1] The main aim was to replace this by a permanent system which would be fully able to cope with altogether exceptional periods of poverty such as the famine years. The act, 10 Vic. 31 which passed in June 1847,[2]

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1. O'Neill, p. 235-9.
2. O'Neill, p. 246.

was believed by Prime Minister, Sir John Burgoyne and Charles Trevelyan to live up to their description of it as the New Poor Law.

The new chief commissioner, Edward Twistleton, presided over the new separate Irish organisation whose administration and finances had been streamlined so that it could contain Irish distress.[1] Moreover a new principle had been stated. Where the original statute of 1838 allowed the locally elected guardians to support the poor in their area, the 1847 amendment laid it down that "the guardians of the poor of every union in Ireland shall make provision for the due relief of all ... destitute persons."[2]

Very few were sent, according to Mrs. Smith, from Baltiboys to the workhouse in Naas. She wrote at the end of 1847 about one of the Ryan family with whom she had evidently lost patience:

> Mary Ryan having left the poor house I am done with her. She is sharing the misery of the grandmother - another month for the lame uncle to fill, and so be it; they must make their own way, reason is lost on them. 3

A year later she tried to persuade that most wretched of the labouring families, the Doyles, ("she has five children at home and a cripple for a husband, an incurable; she is blind herself and her only grown-up daughter incurably lazy") to move to the poor house. One of her arguments was the Baltiboys paid £96 each year towards its upkeep "and sends hitherto no paupers to it" (presumably Mary Ryan, the only

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1. O'Neill, p. 246-9; Woodham-Smith, p. 307. Edward Twisleton (1809-1874), former Fellow of Balliol, later put his talents at the disposal of the government; he was in fact Chief Commissioner of the Poor Laws in Ireland, 1845-9.

2. Fifth Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, p. 4, quoted in O'Neill p. 249.

3. 30.12.1847.

other person mentioned was not included because she was not directly connected with the estate). Moreover that December the only conceivable return which Baltiboys was then receiving was the shilling a week "one old asthmatick woman " got as outdoor relief.[1]

In fact, contrary to the intention of the new act, outdoor relief was not generally offered. In one of her gloomiest moments, describing her impressions after a month spent with her mother in Edinburgh in February 1850, she wrote:

> We must do something for the present aspect of things is frightful. The draining being over the same distress exists as before it began. We have kept the people in our immediate neighbourhood alive these two years and now they must die, or beg, or steal, or anything rather than the poor house which however must be full for we give no outdoor relief in this Union and our rates though lighter on us than they were last year are still heavy. 2

During these two years the policy was, as before, for each estate either to look after its own or to attempt to siphon off as many as possible to Naas. Baltiboys attempted the former and others the latter: in November 1848 she described how "Driving about, the many unroofed cabins give additional desolation to the wet and dirty lanes. The moment the poor house receives the inmates the wretched dwelling is destroyed so that a return is impossible."[3]

By and large, here as elsewhere, the poor house was literally the last refuge of even the most distressed cottier; an important entry at

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1. 8.12.1848.
2. 6.2.1850.
3. 12.11.1848.

the start of 1848 describes how they attempted to bend every rule to avoid ending up there.

> Six inches of snow lying evenly over the country. Except that it stops the outwork we ought to be glad to see it to keep the ground warm, purify the air and drive fever away. Spite of the worthless ness of our fine peasantry, one can't help grieving for their sufferings. We in this district never would give any out door relief while there were vacancies in the poor house at any rate; at Ballymore they gave it and it was abused beyond idea. The Government Commissioners have put a stop to it, taken another house in Naas and refused all aid except under what the people consider imprisonment.[1] A report got about that only the able bodied would be forced into the poor house, that the aged, sickly etc., would be relieved in their own homes; crowds therefore presented themselves to the Doctor to beg certificates of decrepitude, hale and hearty men and women assuring him they were suffering under every ill that the flesh is heir to. This description of consciences last year when only the able bodied were accepted for certain relief works were equally anxious to make themselves out in the rudest health whatever informities they had. They are all again beginning to beg, of course, because some are so foolish as to give. We are little teased, we never refuse a bit of bread, we never give anything else, and they leave us quiet, for it is money they want, pennies for tobacco and snuff and tea and whisky. 2

The Naas Union, therefore, must have been one of those which, contrary to the intention of the recent act, refused outdoor relief to the ablebodied; it was up to estates like Baltiboys to cope with their own problem cases, and even with ones which were not their responsibility, and only when utterly unable to look after themselves were the indigent admitted. The Minute Books of the Poor Law Guardians, which will be

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1. The Poor Law Guardians' Minute Book shows that extra accomodation was in operation in and around the Naas Poor House in June and December 1847 (thus doubling the number of inmates to 1100), so this might have been temporary use of property nearby.

2. 31.1.1847.

examined in more detail later, show that great efforts were made to increase the accomodation available so that increased numbers could be catered for. The original work house was designed for 550; as the minutes put it, this was the "number of inmates that the Workhouse is designed to contain." From June 1847, when there were over a hundred more, they could look after 710; forty were accomodated in the new Fever Hospital,[1] a hundred were housed in the town, and another forty in converted stables. By June 1848, when even this was topped by at least fifty, fresh plans were drawn up as a result of which the "number of inmates for which accomodation is provided" rose to 1100: 600 in an enlarged original building, 400 in a newly built addtional work house, 60 in temporary buildings, and forty in what was called the "permanent Fever Hospital".

Mrs. Smith makes it clear that there were other reasons beyond the intelligent anticipation of the Poor Law Guardians helping to explain why this particular Work House was not overwhelmed with numbers even if the grand total was always an awe-inspiring figuring.

She was well aware of the fear and dread with which these institutions were regarded, illustrated by the example quoted earlier of the extreme lengths to which even the Doyle family would go to avoid incarceration.[2] What gave them even the vestige of a hope was that one tenuous link with a kinsman in America to whose prosperity they had attached their own future. Others depended upon the wage of

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1. See Minute Book, June 10, 1848.
2. See Part II, ch. 4, p. 215-6, and infra. p. 526.

perhaps one labouring member of the family to go far enough to keep the rest of the family from that complete destitution which alone would persuade them to take the road to the Naas Work House. Mrs. Smith, of course, like most landowners, could not understand this extreme reluctance; when it came to a choice between starvation and the institutional care meted out at Naas, she found it hard to believe why so many struggled on. For example she wrote at the start of 1849: "I don't see that the misery of the country is at all encreasing, it is only spreading. None of the lower orders need suffer for an hour, the poor house is open. They bear a good deal before they will go there, hunger alone drives them into it, so that those who are out, however wretched they may look, are not as yet in want of food."[1] She had earlier maintained that amongst the influx into the Work House the previous autumn were many who had managed to pay their rates, so there is a sign here that she was aware of what can be confirmed from the Guardians' Minute Books that 1849 and 1850 were the years when the greatest pressure was placed on the new system of poor relief operated in this district from Naas. In January she commented: "One meal a day I hear is the general rule among this wretched population. While they can get that they will not hear of the poor house. Yet there are 1300 in it, and crowds turned away for want of room."[2] In fact there were 1210 inmates in December 1848, rising to 1277 the following June. It is particularly interesting that these totals were

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1. 8.1.1849.
2. 21.1.1849.

well within the capacity of this Poor House. The Minute Book shows that the Guardians estimated that they could accomodate more than another hundred, to a total of 1386. This was made up of 774 in the old work house and the new temporary buildings, 560 in the additional work house, 40 in the Fever Hospital, and, ominously, 12 in what were described as the "Fever Sheds". In other words, there may well have been "crowds" milling around the Naas Work House demanding admission but the records show that the Guardians and Warden had, by their own lights, room at this time. Even in the fourth famine winter, it seems that only the extremest destitution or the most relentless of landlord pressures could force people with even the most slender of choices into this institution.

Mrs. Smith may not have regarded this as rational behaviour by that most wretched section of the population who would have been better off at the tender mercies of the Poor House staff than starving in their hovels, but she certainly appreciated their reasons. The Doyle family, for example, whom she tried her utmost to persuade in December 1848, and who attacked the carter the Colonel had paid to transport them all to Naas, earned a stern rebuke:

> As they can't earn and won't starve they will steal waiting an answer they have a hope of from the son in America, whose industry they are willing to tax for the support of their own idleness and meanness, for their low feelings and unprincipled selfishness prevent their seeing how utterly depraved is such conduct. I will not sanction such want of principles and have forbidden her applying again here. 1

In the very next breath, she wrote about how conditions in the Poor

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1. 8.12.1848.

House could only have been seen by her as marginally better than complete poverty with one tiny hope of eventual salvation outside: "At the same time I hate the poor house. A sink of vice; idleness finishing to corrupt the miserable inmates; but when people have brought themselves down to it, they must put up with it."[1] Another more understanding and charitable comment came the following summer, in August 1849 when she described a conversation with ....

> .... a woman with starvation on every line of her haggard countenance, encountering with her husband and five children this lingering death rather than the pestilence of the poor house. "Sure" said one of these decent objects to me once, "if our children die in the ditch with us, God will take them as Angels to heaven; they can only go to hell after the wickedness of the poor house," too true I fear. 1

She was clearly aware of the justice of the criticisms against the standards of morality in the Poor House, but what concerned her as much was the idle, pointless existence led by the inmates. It is therefore interesting that in the only favourable mention these institutions earn, prompted by her good news of another reorganisation of the Union which will benefit Baltiboys, it is planned to start what was known as "industrial" work:

> Great news I had to tell my journal was about the alterations in our arrangements for the poor. We have got it all our own way, are separated from Ballymore and Naas. Blessington, Baltiboys, and part of Hollywood put together, our rates will be nothing. Our poor house industrial, it will quite transform the district which the present abominable plan is ruining completely. Which of these creatures would work if they could get one meal a day in idleness. 3

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1. 8.12.1848.
2. 9.8.1849.
3. 15.9.1849.

Thus Mrs. Smith's views on the Naas Poor House provide another gleam of light into the condition of those of the poorest class to be found around Baltiboys who were for the most part beyond or immune to landlord philanthropy. These famine years were not just a struggle for survival (and on Baltiboys the Journals indicate that it was a successful struggle), they were also a struggle to avoid the fate of the Poor House. Relations who had prospered elsewhere, casual labour producing perhaps one meal a day, and theft were all reasons for postponing the inevitable. By February 1850 it was clearly the last which was keeping many out of the Poor House:

> The Magistrates have been sending people to jail for sheep-stealing - the two McKayes for our sheep and a man of the name of Pearson who stole three or four, and three wretched girls who took two from Dizest; plundering is going on round us; fifteen hundred in the poor house yet we are infested with beggars. 1

Another reference the same month reported new losses: "Sam Darker lost five sheep, Mr. West two, one of them a prize for which he gave a high price" and "We have lost one which considering all we have done to lessen the distress is a bad sign."[2] In spite of her indignation that good landlords were being robbed as well as those whose record could not stand comparison, the most interesting point of detail is her accurate reference to the numbers in the Poor House. The Minute Book shows that on 9th February it contained 1518 rising to 1553 on the 16th. This was to prove the maximum number it was called upon to

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1. 15.9.1849.
2. 6.2.1850.

contain and the coincidence of Mrs. Smith quoting an accurate assessment of the numbers in the very month that the overall peak was reached suggests that although her husband had not been a Guardian since before the two years in France, she was in touch with his successors; this in turn is an oblique suggestion that although her figures often cannot be corroborated, nevertheless they equally often convince as reliable.

The operations of the New Poor Law in the district centred on Naas, therefore, provide a good example of how the new scheme introduced in the summer of 1847 could work. Although not typical of Ireland, this area was, perhaps, a fair microcosm of many of the problems faced throughout the 1840s in the eastern half of the country.[1] In spite of the appalling distress (some of it at any rate, in Mrs. Smith's opinion, imported from the west) and the full Poor House, over-all the scheme worked in accordance with the government's wishes. The property of Ireland was responsible, under the benign supervision of Chief Commissioner Twisleton, for the poverty of the country.[2] This

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1. C.E. Trevelyan in his Edinburgh Review article The Irish Crisis (published by Longman's in 1848) wrote a good description of this: "On all the Eastern side of Ireland, from north to south, the proximity of the English markets induced a greater cultivation of produce for barter, and there are more farmers, graziers etc independent of such an article as the potato, although there is mixed up with them a large number of cottiers; but even these latter have in some degree more resources in available means for the application of their labour."

2. The Dublin Evening Mail dubbed him "little Mr. Twisleton, the cockney Poor Law King" (quoted in Woodham-Smith p. 307); by October 1848, for Mrs. Smith he was "that little wretch ... plunging deeper into follies which have such cruel results."

was spelt out in the Journals on 17th October 1847 in the course of a pessimistic look forward to the winter ahead.

> We have been as quiet as possible, indeed the country generally is very dull; people are oppressed by this frightful amount of bankruptcies, almost everyone either themselves or their friends affected by some of these numerous failures. Then the winter prospects look very gloomy. The destitution expected to be wider spread than last year for the very poor will be very nearly as ill-off as last year while the classes above which then relieved them are all this year in serious difficulties. No money anywhere; the little hoards of cash and goods all spent and nothing to replace either. The ministry says the land must support the people on it. Half of the country having been left untilled for want of means to crop it while a million of money was squandered in destroying the roads, much of it finding its way into pockets full enough before. [1]

The problem was that property in much of the South West and elsewhere was unable to support its population. Mrs. Smith of course had been well aware of this and she received a timely reminder from her relation Bartle Frere[2] who reported on his October 1848 visit to Ireland: "Bartle Frere told us that in his late journey in the South of Ireland the beauty of the country generally, and the perfection of a few isolated spots where good landlords had created a little paradise contrasted painfully with the desolation of the scenes en masse."[3]

There was a further problem in that even the area around Blessington also contained estates palpably unable to bear their share and consequently a real burden on the others in their district. In this too Mrs. Smith saw eye to eye with Lord John Russell's government;

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1. 17.10.1847.
2. See Part II, Introduction, p. 112.
3. 30.10.1848.

this is most clearly explained in her thoughts on the possibility of there being a change in the composition of their own Union, the change which was eventually to come about in August 1849.

A year before she recorded that at the beginning of September "there was a meeting of the proprietors yesterday in Blessington to consult about alterations in the poor law which will render it less oppressive." She herself is in no doubt about what the best solution would be:

> We wish to have the Unions smaller that we may better know what is doing in them, the workhouse encreased so as to be within reach, which now they really are not; some industrial or reproductive labourers carried on in them, and Townland rating if possible, that land properly managed may receive its due reward and land neglected bear its punishment. Sales will be forced by this means and justly. [1]

Within the year the capacity of the Naas Workhouse was to rise to 1386, but the main criticism is that unwieldy Unions ensure that good landlords subsidies the bad. There was a rumour that autumn about changes which were in fact to take place and Mrs. Smith takes the chance to enlarge on her views:

> The Doctor brought us very good news from Mr. Lynch[2] who was told by one of the Poor Law Commissioners that it was decided to separate us from Naas to separate him from Baltinglass, and to join him to us: a charming union. All interconnected, all lying along together, no part too distant to be superintended, and no great amount of pauperism in the district. I only hope it may be true. It would greatly relieve us. We deserve to be allowed to remain as we have made ourselves, independent and comfortable. We have spent much time and much money and much energy in faithfully doing our duty among our own people, all of us, and it is certainly only fair to let us benefit by

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1. 2.9.1848.

2. See Part III, ch. 2, p. 327.

> it; it was very unfair to swamp us with the neglected districts of our neighbourhoods. We can have our own poor house and superintend it; make our own wise rules and so support none in idleness. It really takes a weight off the mind. 1

There was no prospect of their being allowed by the Commissioners to organise their own work house with even the latitude extended by the Education Board to Baltiboys school; that apart, this is an accurate description of a sensible reorganisation. In order to support this rumour, some of the landowners most concerned went to Dublin to lobby the Commissioners. Mrs. Smith's account shows that she was well aware that if it went too far unchecked then government policy might drag them all down.

> Ogle Moore called on Thursday to consult about our poor law memorial. A deputation went up yesterday by appointment to have an interview with the Commissiners. Ogle Moore, Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Finnemor, Mr. Owen, Richard Hornidge. I am sure I hope some good will come of this for we may all be ruined if things go on as they are doing. It is the intention of the Government to root out the present proprietors of the soil en masse. They wish to finish them; perhaps they are not wrong, for as a class they have failed altogether to do their duty, but why crush the few righteous with the many erring. The English capitalists are waiting till the glut in the market still further reduces the value of land; it can now be had for fifteen or sixteen years' purchase; they expect it to fall to twelve. This will annihilate our present aristocracy. Those of us who can struggle through will in time rise from the ashes fresh and vigourous, but how few there will be and how much must we first suffer. 2

The belief that the government blamed the Irish landlords for the famine was widespread and Mrs. Smith is here articulating the equally common understanding that government legislation was intended to

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1. 20.11.1848.

2. 8.11.1848.

bring matters to a head so that the badly organised estates would have to be sold to those with capital while those on surer foundations would have earned the right to survive.

Although she is apprehensive here, Baltiboys was obviously not likely to join the ranks of the encumbered estates. The Earl of Milltown's estates, however, must have been amongst the shakiest of the county and he can be seen at this time expressing an even more pessimistic point of view. Freeman's Journal quoted extensively from the long and repetitive speech he made to the Irish Council's deliberations in November 1847 urging the adoption throughout Ireland of the practice of "tenant right". It reported on 8th November that (doubtless drawing on his own experiences) the noble Earl's calculations for the price of landed property fell far below Mrs. Smith's figure:

> For one I can say that many of the Irish landlords are anxious to dispose of part of their possessions, in order that they may really possess the remainder; and I believe there are numbers who would wish to dispose of the whole; but is this the time to press them to do so, when the best of property in Ireland would not bring ten years' purchase [here]. 1

By 1849 whatever reservations Mrs. Smith had about the need for a drastic solution had gone; by then she would have answered her neighbour the Earl of Milltown that it was indeed time for the bankrupt estates to be sold off to the highest bidder no matter what consequences ensued or how pitiful the price. She had been warning in her Journals that social revolution in Ireland was inevitable unless the landed classes awoke to their responsibilities. Now that day had

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1. 8.11.1848.

dawned.

What seems to have convinced her was Russell's decision that the richer Unions in Ireland should be subject to a special rate to be distributed to the poorer ones mostly in the South and West. In May 1849 an act was passed authorising the Poor Law Commission to levy a rate of sixpence in the pound for this purpose. Mrs. Smith's comments as the measure was discussed in Parliament make clear her anger and hostility.

> Lord John is only patching up his poor laws, a clout here and a darn there; the principle from which we suppose we all suffer so much remaining intact. There is to be a rate in aid, but only of sixpence, as thus - an electoral division, when rated beyond five shillings can apply for aid to the Union, when the Union is taxed beyond seven and six it applies to something else, when that reaches nine and six, the country at large is taxed the sixpence. Beyond this ten shillings compulsory aid will not go, but it certainly will soon reach it. And the remaining ten shillings had to pay rent, tithes, cess, dispensaries, charities and support the family. It is as if lunaticks were legislating. Whether the proposal will pass remains to be seen, there is little outcry as yet about it. 1

This was written in January and it was not long before the Journals are noting the intense opposition aroused by these proposals. Tom Darker had heard that the farmers in Leinster at large were as determined as those in Ulster not to pay this rate-in-aid. Lord Downshire, with estates in both provinces, was the obvious man to organise resistance. Mrs. Smith noted "he has run over on an agitating mission to try and get up petitions against this odious rate in aid. He won't have much trouble, there is quite a fury against it, such determined resolution as makes one tremble for the consequences." He came and

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1. 21.2.1849.

dined at Baltiboys ("extremely agreeable, made fun of the want of a servant, handed round the dishes himself") where there was general agreement on the unjustness of Lord John's proposals.

> Such an unjust proposal. When a property can't pay its rates and other burdens why not sell it. Why keep its pauper possessors and all depending on him hanging in a state of misery and then insist on industrious neighbours supporting all those beggars. The rate itself is so small it is hardly worth noticing as a grievance if it were fair to levy it, or if it would do permanent good, or even prevent present misery; but nothing of the kind, the principle is faulty, tends to level all property, destroy all energy and finally involve us all in ruin. Lord John wishes to carry it out at once before hearing evidence but was outvoted and his opinions afterwards much modified by the examination of two of the poor law commissioners. This is our Prime Minister, this is legislation. God help the country, man won't seemingly. 1

It was not therefore the amount of the proposed rate-in-aid that explains their dogged resistance. It seemed totally unjust and unprincipled that areas such as their own around Blessington which had weathered every storm of the previous four years should be now called upon to bail out those Unions that had got into difficulties. It clearly seemed to Mrs. Smith that they were being singled out precisely because they had survived. If more neglected estates in the South and West needed support in exceptional times, then it was surely not up to others situated in more prosperous or improving areas to provide assistance; the conclusions Mrs. Smith drew from the government's intentions were to have, as will be stressed later, great influence on how she felt about politics in general.

The government's refusal to contemplate authorising that extra-Irish sources should be tapped to control the problems presented by the famine years undoubtedly contributed to the local strength of feeling around Blessington. It is evident from the Journals that there was

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1. 9.3.1849.

well-organised and deeply-felt indignation. The Downshire Papers illustrate the close involvement of the fourth Lord in the administration of his Blessington property. The year 1847 alone showed him exploiting close links with fellow peers like Lord Desart or persistent critics of the government like Lord George Bentinck to correct what he regarded as erroneous if authorative opinions about areas of Ireland where he owned property.[1] Deputations from the local Poor Law Guardinas and public speeches from Lord Milltown are other signs of the strength of landed public opinion. Mrs. Smith for her part followed the progress of all Lord John Russell's proposals through Parliament (there is even a suggestion that like her husband two years before she had felt strongly enough to write about what she saw as important details: "Some of my appeals on behalf of our agricultural school have been responded to, not very significantly, but every little helps.")[2] and as ever it was only the Prime Minister's predecessor who made a deep impression on her:

> Sir Robert Peel makes the most statesmanlike speech even he ever uttered. The effect has been proportionate, he votes for the rate under the circumstances but as a mere expedient to gain time, then opens out upon the whole subject in such a masterly manner. They little know the truth in England,

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1. See Part IV, ch. 3, p.492-5. The third Earl of Desart (1818-65) was a Representative Peer for Ireland from 1846 to his death (Complete Peerage); Lord George Bentinck (1802-48), Peel's arch-opponent in 1845-6, and the most persistent advocate of massive investment in railways in Ireland, was clearly a good choice as a confidant. It is worth noting that one of Lord Downshire's Blessington neighbours agreed with Lord George: "... if his sensible railways had been adopted instead of that million wasted on idleness, these sad mistakes one after the other, we might already have emerged from our troubles" (12.4.1849).

2. 10.3.1849.

> so ill-used a people as the Irish don't exist, and these Poor Laws have completed the ruin of us. "Sell the bankrupt estates" says Sir Robert and every other honest man. 1

For the Smiths too this was the only practical solution. It is as if their winning the earlier struggle for survival in a spirit of mute acceptance entitled them now that Baltiboys was able to weather the storm to speak their mind. They were at any rate disinclined to tolerate government folly ("That House of Commons is infatuated") and therefore felt that what had only earlier been hinted at in the Journals as a possibility was now the only answer; all estates which were encumbered to the extent of not being able to stand on their own feet should be forced onto the market place.

There seemed little prospect of such a realistic solution being adopted by a ministry whose most noticeable characteristic for Mrs. Smith even after three years absorption in Ireland was its complete lack of understanding of the basic conditions in any part of the country. It was therefore unexpected but good news she reported and commented on in April 1849:

> What will next month do for Ireland. The rate in aid little amended has passed to the Commons. A bill is brought in by the Soliciter General which may save the country. In plain words he gives up the encumbered estates bill of last year as impracticable, besides being useless, and adopting Sir Robert Peel's plan of a Commission, to avoid the Court of Chancery. Bankrupt properties will be sold without delay and a parliamentary title given to the purchasers will perfectly secure them. This will relieve everybody, the ruined proprieter amongst the rest. If we can but get men of principles and

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1. 4.4.1849.

> education and business habits into the country, happy days are yet in store.

This was both a victory for common sense at last, and a real achievement for those who had agitated and pestered Dublin Castle earlier in 1848: "And no matter whom we are to thank for the boon. Lord Downshire and Ulster I verily believe Our Hampden! for he certainly frightened them into serious consideration of our case."[1]

Although this latest move by the ministry fitted in with Mrs. Smith's own long-held views on the type of gentry it ought to be the responsibility of all governments to see established as the backbone of the county, those who would faithfully carry out the equitable obligations deriving from their position in society whilst remaining, as she put it, "independent and comfortable", it did not win them much favour in her sight. Indeed, it is a singular feature of these famine years that all that different governments attempted and encouraged sowed the seed of disquiet in Mrs. Smith's mind so that by 1849 she was committing ideas to her Journals which would have horrified her earlier.

It was noted earlier that the numbing and growing effects of the disaster seemed to have stifled Mrs. Smith's natural interest in politics and politicians; there was simply just too much to be done and the Journals had to be a repositary of detailed information about their relief work on Baltiboys in case any similar disaster struck again.

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1. 30.4.1849.

Until, that is, the autumn of 1847. After describing how wretched the prospects were for another winter of the most despairing discontent, Mrs. Smith noted with incredulity that "the Queen has ordered the begging box to go round all the English Churches for us!" Even more insulting was the involvement of two of the officials whose prime task she had supposed to be the containment of the famine:

> Sir J. Burgoyne, head of the Poor Law Commission, writes to the Times newspaper! to entreat charitable subscriptions for the starving districts. Mr. Trevelyan, the Secretary to the Treasury, sends this precious emanation forth to the publick with some little addenda of his own to the same tune. 1

In fact her cousin's letter to the Times, dated 6th October but enclosed with Trevelyan's six days later, was a fairly innocuous plea, beginning for example, in a way that suggests that Mrs. Smith's anger may have originated in his being more concerned with British than Irish public opinion: "Notwithstanding the impatience expressed at the demands for Ireland, we must still, in common charity, afford her considerable assistance." Similarly, Trevelyan's "addenda" were hardly offensive, consisting of the statement that it was proposed to have a general collection in churches on October 17th ("the day of the Thanksgiving") and the information that "the accompanying statement has been prepared by Sir John Burgoyne for the purpose of explanation why another effort of this sort is necessary."[2] Mrs. Smith would incidentally have been considerably more offended by much of the

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1. 17.10.1847.

2. Times, 12 October 1847.

tone Trevelyan used to introduce his thoughts on the crisis down to 1847 ("The Irish smallholder lives in a state of isolation, the type of which is to be sought for in the islands of the South Sea, rather than in the great civilised communities of the ancient world.")[1]

At any rate this proposal infuriated her and must have helped dramatically to undermine some of her hitherto unassailable beliefs. This can be confirmed by what she wrote after recording her reaction to Sir John's proposal:

> One would suppose stones were scarce in Ireland and her rivers dry when no one hoots such drivellers out of the country. We want no charity. We want a paternal government to look a little after our interests, to legislate for us fairly, to spend what we should have properly among us without jobbing, to teach us and to keep a tight rein over idleness, recklessness, apathy. It is plain these people can't do it. We must all begin and call again for Sir Robert Peel as we did some years ago, for the state of the Empire is unpromising. 2

Her mentioning Peel shows how remote she in fact is from the realities of what could be gauged of the world of politics even from the newspapers, but otherwise this extract illustrates the disillusion that was beginning to creep into her journals.

It was soon to be confirmed, by for example conversations like the one she gave a full account of with a Mr. Dennis from Baltinglass, a Surveyor with the Board of Works who attended the Castle Levée in February 1848:

> 1300 people, Drawingroom 1600, Ball 1200, no jewels, they are gone but handsome dresses and apparently hearts as light as if the owners were not encreasing their debts, and were surrounded

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1. Edinburgh Review, January 1848, p. 4.

2. 17.10.1847.

> by a prosperous instead of by a pauper peasantry, a dying peasantry I may say, for the sufferings of the last eighteen months are telling daily upon the miserable crowd who have been for so long struggling with privations. Begging is becoming general again. The markets are falling, corn 8/6 and will be lower. Rents, indeed, shall we live, my God what a spring is before us. I hope I am in gloomy mood and see terrours where there are only difficulties. "Yet everyone who thinks wears a long face." 1

By May she thought that her fears were increasingly shared by the merchant classes.

> One rather grave incident in these thickening times is a meeting of Protestant repealers in Dublin, tradesmen and professional men of the middle classes, calm, clear, steady men of business, thoroughly in earnest and not in the least excited. Men who six months ago treated repeal as the wildest of all crazy chimeras. There really seems to be nothing else left for us. This centralising of all things in the City of London quite at variance with the domesticity of all our institutions, making a sort of Paris of it, must have a Parisian result, sooner perhaps than all these addlepates look for. 2

Next month she followed a general censure on the ministry ("odious to all, extravagant, reckless, jobbing, timid, insincere, everything disrespectable") with the opinion that great change was at hand in Ireland: "some measures they are carrying through about Ireland will make repealers of everyone for they are ruinous in every sense."[3]

There was, however, a great difference between projecting forward into an indefinite future prophesies based on government insensitivity to Ireland and support for the preparations for armed rebellion which reached their ears in Co. Wicklow by 20th July. "We

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1. 1.2.1848.
2. 31.5.1848.
3. 16.6.1848.

have unpleasant reports here of some men of consequence, nobles and others, having been discovered to be in league with the repealers, determined indeed on proceeding at a fitting time to a disunion of the Empire."[1] She herself dismissed all scaremongering rumours: "I can't believe in the insurrection idea at all, think it all talk, on which our countrymen live." Three days later, however, when the Smith O'Brien fiasco trundled its way towards Widow McCormack's cabbage garden,[2] the Smith family were in Edinburgh and she was able to confide her first impressions to her Journal:

> Everybody here is talking of Ireland, everybody delighted at the energy of the government; though roused rather late, their measures will be effectual, for I can't help clinging to my notion that the agitation is mostly all talk, that is that they meet and roar and shout but I do not myself dread their acting beyond a stray mob or two doing mischief. It is however, wisdom to crush all this wickedness in the bud. That must be the first step, but to "preserve the integrity of the Empire" they afterwards treat us more justly. "Give us our ain fish guts to our ain sea maw" and relieve the encumbered properties. Then when money can buy labour, we shall do. Transport a few priests, also, that is essential to break the charm their reverences fancy invincible. 3

As on previous visits to Edinburgh, Mrs. Smith seems to have taken upon herself the mantle of received opinion amongst her friends there; at the start of August she wrote in that section of her Journal she planned to send to her husband in lieu of a letter ...

> Poor Smith O'Brien must be mad. I see Wicklow is proclaimed. If there is likely to be any disturbance near our hills, you

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1. 20.7.1848.
2. See Woodham-Smith, p. 357-60.
3. 23.7.1848: a maw is a gull.

had really better come away.[1] I don't fear it myself, still I am sure Redmond, Dempsey and some others are up to any mischief, though perhaps too cowardly to aid a fallen cause. The manner in which the government have pounced on their prey just in the very nick of time is worthy of all praise. I was inclined till this morning to think they were making too much of the matter, but they seemed to know well what they were doing.

Once back home, a sense of realism returned too. Discontented tenants were not seen as rebels; the skirmishes were seen, quoting Lord Downshire's agent, Mr. Owen, "who has just returned from the scenes of the delirium", as "a sort of guerilla thing."[2]

And yet once the shock of having to take into account the actions of men who took her own occasionally expressed discontents to such lengths had been absorbed, the Journals return in the autumn of 1848 and 1849 to this note of disillusion with the Union which would never have received any sort of airing before the famine and indicates the extent to which this hitherto unassailably unionist had reconsidered her most basic beliefs.

In October she was incensed by the government's latest proposals: "they talk of equalising the poor rates, making all Ireland pay for all Ireland." This she considered preposterous and it aroused all her doubts. "Why not England too? If they won't help us let them leave us alone, let us manage ourselves. It will have to come to that. I think so - I that used to laugh to scorn the word repeal. They use us so abominably. They now do this - they strike a rate -

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1. 3.8.1848: despite sporadic disturbances in Co. Wicklow, there was no need for any thoughts of evacuation to enter their heads.

2. 17.9.1848.

so many can't pay, so they strike another and so on again and again, retaxing for ever the few who have money or honesty, 'till ruin overtakes all."[1] A few weeks later there was only one conclusion to be drawn from her cousin Bartle Frere's melancholy account of the devastation in the south and west of Ireland:

> What then can we say of English rule which has been over us for so many centuries and still leaves us so very far behind in the race of civilisation. 2

Moreover, as the trials of the Young Irelanders got under way, her earlier horror was replaced by a much more sympathetic attitude which fully took account of the miniscule threat they had presented:

> Was there ever (she wrote about the government) such a set of nincompoops. As there was no rebellion but of the government's own hatching no one can find fault with their using the giants they have themselves made as it best pleases them. But to keep us all for months in such a worry, and saddle us with such thousands of troops and encreased constabulary, for these kind of Brentford doings and Prince Prettyman is really utterly abominable. As we bear our burthen why not load us? But will there be an end of Discontent? 3

Certainly not in 1849, the first part of which was concerned with their struggle against the rate in aid scheme; indeed June was seen by Mrs. Smith as she faced their worst rent payments of the famine years, bleakly pessimistic.

> Times look bad enough, they may become worse here, if the support of the more wretched parts of the island reach us as expected, not only by the rate in aid, but by raising our own rates to the maximum ten per cent, as must happen when the destitution spreads.

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1. 11.10.1848.

2. 30.10.1848.

3. 11.10.1848. Prince Prettyman has been described as "A whimsical character The Rehearsal by the 2nd Duke of Buckingham; his embarassments are amusing and numerous." The New English Handbook of English Literature, edited by Clarence L. Barnhart (New York, 1956).

Well, we have had warning. But will the Union last?[1]

It is clear, then, that Mrs. Smith's political views had been much influenced by the famine years and by the government's proposed measures. Indeed they move from one extreme position to another. She began as a convinced Unionist for whom all Daniel O'Connell's utterances were treason; as the rigours of the famine years bit deep her journals betray none of the more characteristic abiding interests in all political matters so typical down to 1845; and the last two years of the decade witness a distinct disillusion with the state of the union. It was no naive flirting with dangerous doctrines when there was a fashionable desertion of more established orthodoxies. What she wrote about the Young Ireland's newspaper as late as May 1848 makes this clear: "John Hornidge brought us the United Irishman[2] yesterday, all alive again. Last week no printer would work for these madmen, they have found someone it seems to spread their treason this week." And the final shift was an equally characteristic move towards disinterest:

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1. 3.6.1849.

2. 15.5.1848: this was the paper started by John Mitchel after he left the Young Ireland party and plotted actively for armed rebellion. Woodham-Smith, 334-6. What is fascinating, and the best illustration of how the critical times from 1845-8 have led Mrs. Smith to question some of her oldest beliefs, is the amount she found to praise in this copy of the United Irishman. "A letter to the Ulster men is full of sense, however, so are the strictures upon the reports of the Agricultural instructors, full of point, of wit, of reason, sometimes false conclusions, and all done to suit his purpose, yet it would be well for our Statesmen to reflect on these articles, and on Mr. Cobden's honest prognosticks, otherwise there will be a struggle in earnest before long." 15.5.1848.

> I have lost all interest in politicks. We must go back to the primitive arrangements of the days of the judges in Israel. Every man must do that which is right in his own eyes for nothing of any sort is done for us. Such an imbicile ministry, such an absurd set of little oppositions, no man rising anywhere above the common herd. All the time lost in talking the merest nonsense and the money of the nation voted away as usual without mercy. 1

The distress that lay behind the reasons for this sea-change in Mrs. Smith's political opinions during the two and a half years from the ministerial change of course in the summer of 1847 continued to be regularly described in the Journals.

Indeed there was little to justify the view that it was evidently abating rapidly in these years as the intrinsically strong Eastern conditions proved themselves equal to the challenges from the subsidiary years of hardship that followed the disaster of the winter of 1847. Baltiboys as will be seen survived in good order but tenants and labourers were still subject to the same fearful pressures as had tormented them for over two years. Indeed in one respect it might have been that their condition was harder, for throughout the winter of 1847/8 Mrs. Smith referred constantly to the threat from fever.[2]

At the end of the year a most interesting entry supplies details about the Fever Hospital it had been necessary to establish in Blessington under the supervision of Dr. Robinson.

The Doctor tells us that influenza and fever are so general as

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1. 15.5.1848.
2. The appalling conditions of the two previous winters were ideal for the spread both of typhus and the hitherto less common relapsing fever, MacArthur, p. 274.

> to produce much distress. The fever hospital[1] is a great blessing, already there are nineteen patients glad to be received there, not as in former times preferring to die at home and infect their whole family. The expence will come off the county at large and what an amount of good results. First the patients are surrounded with comforts, and get hourly visits from the doctors, next infection is prevented from spreading, then fuel must be bought, provisions must be bought, washerwomen hired, nurse tenders paid. Poor Mr. Payne the apothecary gets a guinea a week for his double duties and the Doctor gets £90 a year. They are all so satisfied with the results hitherto that they are thinking of branch wings for wounds etc., a general hospital in fact. Time and patience. 2

Despite the streamlined organisation, there was still room for Mrs. Smith's energies for a few weeks before she had noted: "Fever still filling the hospital. ' We are getting up a subscription for body linen for the patients who have generally but a rag in place of shift, the women being worse off for clothing than the men."[3] On 6th February she recorded that there were now 31 in the fever Hospital and "they won't allow that they are getting well that they may not be turned out to misery so soon"; she added "We have a dismal spring before us, I fear."[4] However, by the 21st numbers were down to 22

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1. Temporary Fever Hospitals could be set up under 11 and 12 Vic. c. 131 (see MacArthur, p. 297-8) and that established at Blessington under the one Medical Officer contained 30 beds (HC 1850 LI, p. 571).

2. Footnote 9, MacArthur p. 298 describes conditions in detail; the bare statistical details (HC 1850 LI supra) differ slightly from Mrs. Smith's account ... Dr. Robinson's salary is given as only £40 for example. 16.1.1848.

3. 23.1.1848: according to Mrs. Smith her husband and Mr. West each gave £10 immediately, but "Richard Hornidge and others don't see the necessity of any such measure." (9.12.1847)

4. HC 1850 LI p. 571 states that the number of patients that were to be admitted through 1849 was 296, of whom 266 were discharged and 21 died, so considerable numbers were involved from this humble start.

though these were more virulent cases.

By November she was noting that despite the prevalence of conditions likely to favour the spread of disease, in fact no further inroads were being made.

> The weather continues unpropitious; very cold winds, quite preventing the Colonel from stirring out and the ground is too wet for the plough, yet there is hardly any sickness in the country even amongst the poor, a singular thing at this season with little food and no fire. 1

It was the appalling weather that winter in particular that led her to anticipate that fever would be the greatest hardship the poor would have to bear.

> Sickness has laid a heavy hand on Great Britain and the Doctor fears it is beginning here. We wanted but this to complete our wretchedness. The poor houses are chokefull and there never were more poor abroad; the rates are becoming heavier without lessening the destitution of the lower orders while they reduce to the verge of want every class above. A pestilence must overtake us. 2

In fact they were to be spared this catastrophe although distress continued all around them. It is now time to examine her claim that all classes were reduced to a state close to this destitution she had charted amongst the very worst off.

As far as Baltiboys itself was concerned Colonel and Mrs. Smith persevered with the measures they had introduced earlier to contain distress and provide for the worst off members of their tenantry and labourers. A lengthy entry at the end of 1847, the year that had

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1. 12.11.1848.

2. 30.11.1848.

started with the Catalogue Raisonée, summarised the situation.

> The last day of the year - the happy year 1847, I may call it so for no serious affliction has occured in this family. Many arrangements for good have been made amongst us, and the poor people particularly depending on our ownselves have come through these troubled times so far without much suffering. Better hopes seem rising for future years - the famine having roused the energies of this clever race. Nothing else I believe would have spirited them up to exertion indispensible to their decent comfort. 1

However as far as the present was concerned, she continued, "In all Baltiboys we have no destitute family; a very few distressed." The eight people specified were all examined earlier and it is worth quoting from what Mrs. Smith writes about each, for it both is another illustration of how Baltiboys coped with the problem of distress and how these few distressed persons' predicament had changed.

Dick Gray was the most distressed ("from drinking, gambling, company-keeping and children reared amid these vices")[2] but as before there was little sympathy wasted on him: "we will not help him for he will not give up his land nor till it properly nor live reputably." Mrs. Smith had expended a lot of energy over Mick and Judy Doyle in the past but she considered they were "more uncomfortable looking than really in want." Indeed first impressions apart they were clearly surviving without difficulty: "they owe nothing and as they have by hard labour made a good deal of money their dirty sloppy ways

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1. 31.12.1847.

2. He has consistently featured as one of the poorest and least improving (e.g. 16.11.1842) inhabitants of Baltiboys: see Part II, ch. 4, p. 202.

are their own choice."[1] The elderly Byrnes were no more able to cope than earlier in the year and were still utterly dependent on their labourer son; they and that blind sister of Pat Quin who married lame Jem Doyle ("they had no business to marry, no right to squat themselves down in that cow house, but there they are and God help them.") are the only ones listed as being in an utterly hopeless position were it not for the help of Colonel and Mrs. Smith.[2] The eighth was Mary Ryan who by leaving the Poor House at Naas had automatically lost her mistress's sympathy.[3]

These of course were the worst-off amongst those for whom the Smiths considered they had a direct responsibility, and for whom special help was needed. Generally, Colonel Smith believed that the most expeditious form of help bringing the greatest short and long term benefits was draining. He had heard in the late summer of 1847 that his earlier application to the Board of Works for a government loan had been successful and his wife noted that by the end of the year Baltiboys was employing thirty labourers now that the first instalment had been paid, and this was shortly to rise to fifty. As ever she felt that official incompetence had prevented the scheme from being as successful as it might have been: "It is a pity they delayed so long in that tiresome office for two months, the best

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1. See Part II, ch. 3, p. 234-9.
2. Their plight was examined earlier, see Part II, ch. 4, p. 202.
3. See supra. p. 521.

suited to the purpose have thus been lost, and all these poor people struggling all the while with misery." Even so, she added almost immediately that such schemes were really the answer and offered the best hope for the future: "If the landlords would take advantage of the government loan and begin to improve their properties by employing the labour of now idle hands, there would be no need of much charity."[1] This conviction persisted throughout 1848, at the end of which Mrs. Smith was gratified to observe that Baltiboys had managed to obtain its third drainage loan without it being thought necessary for the Surveyor to come down and submit the estate to the customary inspection.[2] It was clearly shared by other proprietors for Richard Hornidge followed suit in January 1848 and was soon employing "another good hand of men".[3]

This was fortunate for although the agricultural statistics show that a general recovery was under way,[4] this was far from obvious to Mrs. Smith. On her return from Edinburgh for example in August 1848, in addition to political uncertainty there was the prospect of further gloom and destitution as she took stock of the effects of six weeks of almost uninterrupted rainfall:

The potatoes are gone as a crop, the corn much of it is mildewed

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1. 3.8.1847.
2. 12.12.1848.
3. 16.1.1848.
4. See the Returns of Agricultural Produce for 1848, 1849 and 1850 (Part II, ch. 1, p. 117) and Appendix 2, Table 6.

> and the hay partly uncut and partly lying in the swathe under all these heavy showers. The cattle are not thriving up in these mountains generally. Prospects for the winter are therefore gloomy enough, still there is time for improvement if matters don't get worse. 1

In fact as far as the home farm was concerned, this dreadful spell did not affect output as badly as feared. She wrote in October: "We have our haggard so full - an enormous hayrick and there will be a second. Eleven large stacks of oats. Our fat kerries are well sold so I hope we shall make do for the winter, gloomy as it threatens to be."[2]

Certainly that autumn it was impossible to disguise the fact that another, their fourth, winter would present enormous problems for their people.

> Apparently we are to have a hard winter and no fuel in the country; so much rain during the summer prevented any turf being dried or much being cut. The people are also beginning to look very ragged, they have bought no new clothes since the potatoes failed, all their scanty earnings being required for food; the children are half naked. We must do something for those who come to school - it is pitiable to see them. 3

Although this was to be the winter when she charted the filling up of the Poor House and local disgust at the unfairness of the ministry's pitiful efforts to provide help, it was necessary to keep a sense of proportion:

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1. 22.8.1848.

2. 11.10.1848: however, it was not won without fresh evidence that the Steward was as slow as ever to change his ways; Mrs. Smith wrote after the hay and corn had been cut a month before "I wish I could say the hay was in the haggard, but good Tom Darker progresses very slowly, he has wasted two precious days and £2 notes in these hard times piling it all up into tramp cocks in the fields ... such old-fashioned extravagances." (17.9.1848).

3. 19.10.1848.

> Many parts of the country are quite deserted - inhabitants all emigrated or in the poor houses, none left to till the ground and the landlords totally ruined are without capital to manage it themselves; without skill either maybe, or energy or will or all together. Certainly nothing of all this is to be seen here. I cannot help thinking there is much exaggeration in these reports. 1

As evidence she slipped in the reaction of their agent John Robinson to the unexpectedly well paid rents that November: "... who is so well off these times; he feels sure there is not such another well to do property in Ireland; it is very small and we live on it."[2]

But the survival of Baltiboys in these last years of the famine was a matter not to be confused with the generally only slowly improving conditions that prevailed round about. Market prices and the ability of small, well-organised estates to ride out the storm are amongst the factors that suggest that 1848 witnessed a gradual recovery that accelerated into 1849. However, Mrs. Smith herself never lost sight of the really basic conditions that regulated both their efforts at relief and the lives of most of the tenantry and labourers on the estate.

For example, the blight that had precipitated the whole disaster had a knack of recurring each year albeit in less virile forms. On 12th August 1849 she observed: "The corn is laid, the blight has appeared on the potatoes, partially, and the trampers are stealing them night after night, seldom now calling for bread. What is there before us." A month later she was more optimistic: "the potatoes

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1. 12.11.1848.
2. 3.12.1848.

show the blight partially, nothing to signify if it don't spread, but it is there too plainly."[1] Indeed after another harsh winter, although some encouraging signs were mentioned (stock and grain were both selling well, and "the servants in and out all behaving well, and all content")[2] there were at least three factors that needed mentioning to bring one back to reality: "the outdoor [servants] barely living; the draining done; no work anywhere except for picked workmen". As the Smiths prepared for their move to Dublin, in other words, it must have seemed that no matter how much praise the condition of Baltiboys earned from outsiders the underlying condition of many who relied on them approached the desperate straits of the bulk of the tenantry in the 1830s. And further to suggest that another wheel had come full circle, on 1st August 1850 came irrefutable evidence that the blight had struck again: "The potatoe disease has begun again partially. A whole field touched here and there but generally only in patches as if the blight had swept across particular portions and hitherto only the leaves and stalks are affected; it has not yet descended to the tumors."[3]

As in the opening years of the famine, the Journals are a repository of detailed information about how the finances of both family and estate had been altered by the events of 1848, 1849 and 1850.

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1. 12.9.1849.
2. 24.2.1850.
3. 1.8.1850.

This, as before, provides an illuminating insight into the methods used at Baltiboys to combat destitution, as well as illustrating the basic strength of the estate finances and the real sacrifices made by Colonel and Mrs. Smith.

This last point comes out of her retrospective entry in May 1848, when she hints at how much they relied on outside help to supplement their own resources:

> The year of the famine on our return from Scotland to all the difficulties here, having unfortunately spent our ready money, quite unsuspicious of the need we should have of it, the Colonel determined to borrow enough to lay in provisions, keep up a band of labourers and aid every charitable purpose set agoing. 1

He therefore got in touch with an old Indian friend, Colonel Litchfield, a batchelor who had accompanied the Smiths to France and clearly a very old and trusted friend. He obliged with two hundred pounds which the Smiths intended to pay back over two years.

> But 1846 was no worse than 1847, hardly as bad. We had no power to save a penny. This year looks better, still the prospect of fifty pounds to spare is distant, so we, or rather he, thought of another plan, - borrowing from Peter, the Doctor, to pay Paul, the Colonel, Peter having money these times he can't put to use; so said so done. But the Colonel won't receive it, sent it back to the girls if we are too proud to take it, and in such a way that we cannot refuse him without inflicting pain. 2

In her methodical way she put it into "the fund for the trousseaus" and summed up her feelings: "We shall repay the good Doctor by small instalments which we can manage without difficulty. He is delighted

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1. 13.5.1848.

2. Ibid.

to be able to help us. What true friends we have got, kind and generous and attached to us sincerely."

This was the largest single loan they obtained and it obviously came at a critical time, but others were obtained from her sister Jane (normally in units of £25 which were intended as gifts), her mother and especially that Aunt Bourne whose financial fortunes were in the end to be very much bound up with Baltiboys.

Irregular injections into the estate's current account, however, were not as important as the regular receipt from the East India Company. This was every bit as essential to their efforts after the black winter of 1847 as before. Mrs. Smith wrote in November 1848: "We have no debt to speak of. We have a fair stock and horses sufficient to cultivate more land than we now have in our own hands, and three hundred a year good from the E.I. Company, so that I cannot see want before us."[1] In January 1849 she was even more explicit.

> That we have so far escaped [ruin] is owing entirely to H.E.I.'s pay, small thought it be, for the little property having but a debt of £1000 upon it would yield but a bare £100 a year for the support of its owner after all the charges on it were paid, unless we were to dismiss all the servants and labourers. We are tight enough as it is and must try and lessen our expenditure still. 2

If this then was one of the keys to the rapid improvement of Baltiboys in the 1830s and early 1840s, it is equally one to its ultimate survival in good shape after the trauma of the rest of the decade.

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1. 8.11.1848.
2. 11.1.1849.

Yet to set this survival fully into its context, it is necessary to stress that as before this involved considerable changes in the Smith family's life-style and that there were several desperate entries in the Journals for these later years when even the supplements to regular income do not seem enough. One of her last comments in January 1848 stresses the pattern of makeshift balancing of the books that had not been present before:

> I am vexed about our affairs. There were so many heavy Dublin bills to pay during this struggling year we had to borrow to discharge them. We have so many idle hordes that we had no oats to sell. The markets were so gone that no stock sold at all. Tom Darker has therefore had to come upon the half pay for the current expences of the farm. Labour, smith, carrier etc. This has left me penniless. I have not one pound towards the ordinary demands of the family and the first of the month approaching. The Quarter's pay will come in a fortnight but I am afraid so much of it is forestalled that very little balance will remain and we have the biting spring months before us and not a shilling to the rescue until May. Well! the stout heart is the more wanted, the brae is stiff enough, God knows. [1]

A week later the immediate response to the news that Lord John proposed to raise income tax to five percent and extend it to Ireland suggests that there were limits to the resilience of their financial resources. "I don't see how we in Ireland can meet it. We in Baltiboys must descend a few more pegs. Governess, carriage, hunters are gone already. Butler and housekeeper must follow."[2] However the loss of such obvious indicators of their status in the community was something that had to be lived with; a few days later she produced a more

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1. 30.1.1848.
2. 8.2.1848.

balanced conclusion that both puts these sacrifices into perspective and underlines the attitudes with which she imbued the whole family and which goes far to explaining Baltiboys' survival:

> Being prudent we have felt the money difficulties of these two bankrupt years much less than most others. We have been able to help our poorer neighbours to a greater extent in consequence, no small comfort, and if times don't mend we can cheerfully bring our habits down to meet them, conscious that no one suffers loss by or through us. [1]

It would have been galling for the Smiths of Baltiboys to have joined the ranks of those profligates who, she had maintained consistently through the 1840s, deserved only to descend a rank or two so disgraceful was their record; nevertheless, as she remarked in November 1848, "A reduced style of living may be requisite, and what the worse shall we be of that?"[2]

Mrs. Smith was obviously aware that there <u>were</u> other landed proprietors who even in 1848 were not managing to survive as well as Baltiboys. The parlous condition of the Moores and Miltowns in their own neighbourhood acted, as had already been discussed, as a permanent reminder both of their own fortunate position and the unfailingly adverse effects of human folly. In November she named three notorious examples of members of the old aristocracy now in deepest difficulties.

> ... poor Lord Sligo is ruined. His £20,000 a year has turned out £6,000 this last year, and no hope of encreasing yet awhile. The incumbrances on the property amount to £10,000 a year,

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1. 26.2.1848.
2. 24.11.1848.

> £4,000 a year more than he receives; he is subsisting on his wife's pin-money, her own tocher. Sir Richard O'Donoghoe has applied to be master of the poor house in his district in Mayo; Lady O'Donoghoe to be a matron. Can this be Irish temper or foolish wit, or indeed necessity? Lord Courtney, Lord Devon's son, has applied to be one of the Overseer Commissioners, three or four hundred a year. 1

Two months later she claimed further: "Every day we hear of the ruin of additional families, of course among those who had been improvident, either themselves, or their ancestors, yet who managed to live and let live till these unjust poor laws came to overwhelm them." Although this represents a considerable dilution of her previous strongly held views of landlord responsibility for the deplorably unimproved state of much of pre-Famine Ireland, it is also interesting because it prompted her to a general description of conditions around the Devon and Sligo properties in the south and west of Ireland:

> Many parts of the country are quite deserted - inhabitants all emigrated or in the poor houses, none left to till the ground and the landlords totally ruined are without capital to manage it themselves; without skill maybe, or energy or will, or all together.

Even more interesting, she adds as her opinion ... "I cannot help thinking there is much exaggeration in these reports"; and, of more immediate interest, "Certainly nothing of all this is to be seen here."[2]

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1. 12.11.1848; the predicament of the third marquis of Sligo (1820-1896) is described in Woodham-Smith p. 364; William Courtenay [sic] (1807-88) was Fellow of Balliol (1828-31) and an M.P. (1841-9), neither of which eminently qualified him for the post he was to occupy from 1851-9 of "Sec. to the Poor Law Board" (Complete Peerage): an explanation might lie in the fact that he was an exact contemporary of another ex-Fellow of Balliol, the Edward Twisleton, who was Chief Commissioner of the Poor Laws in Ireland, 1845-9.

2. 8.1.1849.

Finally, as with the earlier years of the decade, John Robinson's biannual rent days were still seen as moments when a general stock-taking of their position could be taken.

The first collection due proved so disappointing that all that Mrs. Smith wrote was the barest statement that they had not by any means been paid in full; how she drew satisfaction from the skills of their agent, "this practised man of business." 1848 is often seen as the year when the foundations for the eventual recovery from the worst depredations of the famine were made. However, to the extent that this depended on landlord recovery so that a start could be made to investing in the estate again, this was certainly not the case at Baltiboys for the second results in December, a month later than usual, were even gloomier.

> John Robinson has arrived, having given the tenants extra time more on his own account than theirs for I hear they are to pay well. I hope so for by a statement the Colonel and I made out we get of profit from our landed property but one hundred and twenty pounds; last year owing to backward rents but forty eight. This however clears all outlay even to workmen's and outside servants' wages, leaving us our farm of one hundred and twenty acres to support the household, the stable and the stock, and then we have three hundred and twenty clear, of pay, besides the occasional sale of a horse and my scribblings. As John Robinson says who is so well off in these times; he feels sure there is not such another well to do property in Ireland; it is very small and we live on it. 1

This may well have been true, but it was still a very small return for Colonel and Mrs. Smith and in any case in May 1849 she refers back to the disappointing level of payment the previous year: "We had a very bad rent day, little money going. Some of those who should have paid

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1. 3.12.1848.

did not pay, others were hard enough pushed, brought what they could, more is promised shortly but it is chance whether the poor creatures will be able to avoid considerably increasing their November arrears."[1] A little later she returned to the subject. "We have had a bad rent day, and though more will be paid at nows and thens, before harvest we need reckon a little more from the land than will pay the charges upon it."[2] As ever the EIC pay would come to the rescue, and this year there was the bonus to come from her share of some land her mother sold at Kinloss: "at Martinmas my mite comes in to help us."[3] However, although no details unfortunately are given, there is no doubt that the main element in the finances of this estate, the rents, were not being paid well enough to provide any sort of a basis for that consistent improvement which had been both one of the main characteristics of Baltiboys under the Smiths' management and which alone could be depended upon for the future.

It was at this time that the threat hung over all landed estates in the more prosperous sections of Ireland of being called upon to pay higher rates so that the most wretched parts of Ireland could be supported; it is little wonder that it was also the time that Mrs. Smith's hitherto instinctive unionism was under the greatest strain.

Another, and as it turned out, the last body-blow came with bad news in October, the very month that she expected the undred pounds

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1. 31.5.1849.
2. 3.6.1849.
3. Ibid.

windfall. Her journal for the 17th begins ... "I asked Mr. R. for his account so he brought it." The appalling news it contained was that "He did not get from the tenants this half year sufficient rent to pay the burdens on the land" which was bad enough but in addition he had to delve into his own pocket to the extent of seventy pounds in order to settle various accounts.

> Am I never to get out of debt? This has been quite a thunder-clap. It will be repaid in November, but then the next half-year brings its liabilities again. What can those proprietors do who have no income but from their land? We have the blessed pay, £320, quarterly to the day we get the fourth part of it and we shall have my hundred pounds after next month. Upon this we must manage to live and never touch the rents until times improve. Probably the farmers will be degrees throw up their farms and then under our own management we will make the land pay something more than the regular charges upon it. 1

All of which was of course for the future. In the meantime there is no doubt that even landlords like the Smiths in their atypical area were by no means even on the verge of recovery. Agricultural prices were improving but little benefit from this symptom of recovery was percolating through to these landlords; until payment of rents took place on as regular and full a basis as in the early years of the 1840s there can be no talk of even a partial recovery.

The final years of the Famine, therefore, are no less important than the earlier years of the 1840s in helping to build up a picture of how this estate worked and explaining why it survived in at least as good shape as any other in their immediate neighbourhood.

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1. 17.10.1849.

It is clear that there was intense local activity around Blessington. The Smith Journals and the Downshire Papers bear witness to the plethora of activity as successive government policies are implemented at the most local level and individual estates strive to nullify the worst effects of what must be seen as a continuing disaster. Blight persisted right down to 1850 and relief measures organised by Colonel and Mrs. Smith soaked up the bulk of the estate's rents. At the end of the day, however, it is important to emphasise equally that this manageable, improved estate some twenty miles from Dublin survived and that it was only by the most tremendous efforts that it did not sink to join the others in their vicinity as well as in the South and West which fell by the wayside. All of this of course was only achieved at considerable cost. In spite of the fact that a sizable proportion of Colonel Smith's total income came from outside the estate, it took occasional windfalls, his wife's writings and the sale of prized possessions (such as his last hunter, Soubahdar, in December 1848 for £30, around half of what his wife felt was the true value)[1] to balance the books. In fact despite the sustained level of improvement and investment in the estate before the famine, it is clear that one basic reason for its survival was these outside sources of ready cash at moments of some desperation.

Similarly, the family had to learn to adapt to a totally different life-style as expensive extras were dispensed with and every penny devoted to more urgent matters. This may have contributed to the

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1. 15.12.1848.

survival in turn of the tenantry and those living on the estate for whom the Smiths felt some sort of obligation. However, here too the fact of the matter is that those living from this estate, whose basically secure livlihood was detailed earlier, by no stretch of the imagination can be said to have taken the appalling problems of these years in their stride. The difficulties and indeed the sort of mutual struggle that they implied were nicely touched on in one of Mrs. Smith's concluding thoughts for the decade, written on 24th November 1849 after she had got used to the implications that they were still seventy five pounds in debt to their Agent:

> A fine day at last to cheer us, a bright sun, it really was too depressing to be groping about under that dark sky while the gloom of encreasing poverty was paralysing all mental energy. Wretched land, what sufferings the most meritorious of its inhabitants are undergoing, all more or less stricken and no prudence on the part of the wives are able to secure them against the pressure of the evils resulting from the want of principle or of the improvident. All share alike in the general bankruptcy. I often pray that my senses may be preserved to me and that my health of mind and body may stand the struggle and aid me to preserve an invalid, elderly husband and our dear children from much of the real poverty round them. They miss their luxuries, necessaries they still have and will have, our British money will ever supply us a sufficient supply of them, but the want of enough to relieve the wants of others is a painful part of these unhappy times. To keep our own people from starvation absorbs all there is to spare, God help us all, it makes me very sad to see no human way out of these difficulties, the fear is they may become worse, must indeed, the back had need to be supernaturally strengthened for such a weighty burden. 1

At any rate, for whatever reasons, Mrs. Smith was able to end the year 1849 with her first optimistic comment on rent payments since 1845: "We had the pleasantest rent day yesterday that we have had since the

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1. 24.11.1849.

Famine year, not only did the tenants pay well, they looked happy, no complaintes, no demands, no shuffling ... to be even with the world again is comfort unspeakable."[1]

This much delayed recovery undoubtedly was held back by fever and recurrent blight in the same way that it had been encouraged by the combination of government exhortation and local initiative. Even so, as the 1850s open, the points of detail in the Journal emphasise not the ease with which this neighbourhood overcame the challenge but the extreme difficulties it had to face, before there was any question of a recovery even in the sixth winter after the blight first struck. In February, for example, although stock and grain were selling well and "the servants in and out all behaving well and all content, yet the outdoor ones barely living; the draining done; no work anywhere except for picked workmen." And if the situation was serious enough in and around Baltiboys, further afield it was truly desperate: "God help the people; the roads are beset with tattered skeletons that give one a shudder to look at; how can we feed so many. Eighteen children have their breakfast at school ... it is all most wretched."[2]

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1. 2.12.1849.
2. 3.2.1850.

CONCLUSION

The Journals of Mrs. Elizabeth Smith of Baltiboys , therefore , afford a marvellous opportunity to reconstruct the vanished society of an interesting part of Co. Wicklow in the I840s. Her regular and meticulous keeping of this journal has left an enormous amount of fascinating material that is hugely informative about a whole cross-section of society on the estate and around Blessington. Much of this can be corroborated from other primary and printed sources ; even Patrick Kavanagh would have had no objections to her being added to his select list of accurate and literate "recorders" of what happened in this decade. [I]

Her writings clearly have a literary importance[2] (allowing for what Maria Edgeworth called " all manner of affectation " creeping in , " one eye squinting to the public and celebrity " [3]) which this study of their historical importance has not examined. I have confined it to an examination of the lives led by landlord , neighbours , tenants and labourers on and near Baltiboys , before , during and after the famine years .

I. See his Preface to the I966 reissue of W. Steuart Trench's Realities of Irish Life (I868) , p. II.

2. See Mrs. Andrew Lang's essay Miss Grant of Rothiemurchus , published in her curiously entitled collection , Men , Women and Minxes , (I9I2) pp. 279 - 299 .

3. Quoted by the anonymous reviewer of her Letters from England , I8I3-I844, edited by Christine Colvin , T.L.S. , I4.I. I972 , p. 39.

From this it is abundantly clear that the Smiths deserve to be added to the list of Irish landlords before the famine who strove to improve " a tenaciously tradional society " [1] for the benefit of all on the estate. All such landlords struggling to improve their estates and tenantry with only limited resources were undertaking a gigantic task. Barbara Lewis Solow wrote : " It is clear from a study of examples that improving Irish landlords needed patience , persistence , determination and a robust indifference to public popularity if they were to succeed." [2] Colonel and Mrs. Smith with their " improving management of these more prudent times " [3] are a detailed illustration of how all the obstacles in their path were overcome by precisely these qualities. Over and above the fact that Baltiboys had been changed into a manageable and profitable estate by I845 is an indication of the frame of mind in which they approached this task , very much according to the assumptions made by the I836 Poor Commissioners who expected that the effectiveness of their recommendations depended upon their being put into practice by the influential classes , for " those who are uncivilised cannot civilise themselves , it requires external aid to enable them to improve." [4]

Even if the confidence with which they approached the task did appear patronising or overweening , the important point is that it is abundantly clear from the Journals that Baltiboys is another estate to

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I. Joseph Lee , The Modernisation of Irish Society, I848 - I914 , (Dublin I973) , p. I63 .
2. The Land Question and the Irish Economy , I870 - I903, (Harvard I97I), p. 82 .
3. I.3. I846 , see p. 4I4 .
4. Third Report of the Commissioners for inquiring into the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland , H.C. I836 , XXX , section 37 , p. 32 .

set against the old , formerly almost unchallenged opinion best expressed by Trollope :

> And thus a state of things was engendered in Ireland which discouraged labour , which discouraged improvements in farming , which discouraged any produce from the land except the potato crop ; which maintained one class of men in what they considered to be the quality of idleness , and another class , the people of the country , in the abjectness of poverty. [1]

As the young Cavour noted in I843 , it was perfectly possible to excercise a " moral influence " and so revolutionise a neighbourhood that the "social hierarchy" would be rebuilt on sounder principles.[2] This was exactly Mrs. Smith's grand design. Once a majority of the landed proprietors acted in concert to improve their properties , and despite her frequently voiced criticisms of their neighbours round Ellessington , this was in her opinion the underlying trend , then their society would be based upon much sounder principles. It might not amount to what Charles Lever in the preface to one of his best novels called " the old relation of love and affection to the owner of the soil " brought on by " reciprocal acts of good-will and benevolence " [3], but it would certainly lay surer foundations on which an effective partnership between all who owned and worked the land might be based.

This might well have been wishful thinking, but it is well to remember that if hindsight suggests that some form of "partnership" between willing parties might have averted the otherwise inevitable

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I. Castle Richmond (three volumes , I860) , Vol. I, ch. 7 , p. I24 .
2. From an article in the Biblioteque Universelle de Geneve , September I843 ; see Nicholas Mansergh , The Irish Question (I840 - I92I) , (I940) , p. 52 .
3. Martins of Cro' Martin (I878 edition) p. vii .

deterioration in landlord/tenant relations throughout Ireland , Mrs. Smith's journals emphasise how unacceptable any such diluting of " the rights of property "[1] would have been at Baltiboys.

Caricatures about Irish landlords need , therefore , to be set aside when considering this part of Co. Wicklow. Moreover , so complete a picture can be constructed of pre-famine society here that a number of other conceptions about Ireland in the 1840s can be examined more critically.

In the first place , there is no indication that universal impoverishment and destitution was the norm.[2] Improved estates like Baltiboys were worked by a stable tenantry and were not disfigured by hordes of indigent cottiers. The rural community as a whole in this area , landless labourers included , managed albeit with a struggle to cope ; they had many more resources even in the very worst years than has often been assumed to be the case.[3] There are examples on Baltiboys of the very poorest occupiers of land making good use of unlikely skills or being encouraged by their landlord to find and develop them.[4] Further , in spite of Mrs. Smith's energetic management of the household and supervision of much of the work of the estate , it is obvious that even on Baltiboys the economic , and perhaps even the social , position of the landlord was visibly weakening in these pre-famine days. Rents that compared well with Griffith valuation figures[5] and were regularly paid did not amount now

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1. see supra , p. 133 , footnote 2 .
2. As an example of over-emphasis see J.F.C. Harrison , The Early Victorians, (1973) : "Old men who later looked back on their childhood in the 1830s and 1840s recorded that they felt hungry amost all the time. That this was the condition of the Irish peasantry is well-known." p. 67 .
3. Woodham-Smith , p. 34-5 .
4. See Part II , ch. 4 , pp. 226 - 231 .
5. See Appendix 2 , Tables 4a and 4b .

to the secure financial base any improving landlord needed. The pension from the East India Company was absolutely essential both for their improvements and the ordinary expences of family and household. Formerly palatable relationships with the local priests were replaced by an icy hostility that broke out into running feuds over elections and education. Moreover the mistress is not able fully to implement her will on the servants and recalcitrant or defrauding tenants seem able to defy their landlord's will and even select the most advantageous moment to leave , as often as not bribed by Colonel Smith to give up their holdings.

Baltiboys , therefore , helps to show up the flaw in some earlier generalisations about the operation of the land system in Ireland. The terms in which Pomfret , for example , described it as leading directly to unrelievable poverty must clearly be modified when the weight of the evidence such as that emerging from Baltiboys is taken into consideration: " Three inter-related factors made it all but impossible for the average tenant to cultivate his holding properly. These were rents , improvements and leases. "[1] Indeed , in each case the practice at Baltiboys suggests that on similarly organised estates the opposite was likely.

It is beyond dispute , therefore , that Baltiboys must join that list of Irish estates immediately before the famine that contradict earlier blanket condemnations of landlordism in action. All the features of its administration , organisation and improvement I have described and analysed[2], well equip this estate to support the reappraisal of the traditional view of the Irish landlord which is

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1. John E. Pomfret The Struggle for Land in Ireland , 1880 - 1923 , (Princeton , 1930) , p. 19 .

2. See Part II , chapters 2 , 3 and 4 .

particularly associated with the works of Barbara Solow , L.M. Cullen , James Donnelly Jnr. and W.A. Vaughan.[1] The bulk of their work has been concerned with the quarter century after the famine. The special importance of Baltiboys , perhaps , is that it is a clear example of an estate whose progress and transformation can be observed in the fifteen years before the famine. Mrs. Smith herself came to believe that famine and the Encumbered Estates Act bore a close resemblance to the essential conditions that had to be present before there was any chance of national progress.[2] All that the Smiths achieved on their property through vigourous and concerned management without limitless financial resources shows that such pessimism was not necessary. Baltiboys in the I830s and I840s may have been an isolated example by virtue of the sheer amount that is known about its functioning , but it is most unlikely to have been the only one in their area , suggesting that the more respectable reputation of the Irish landlord might originate as far back as the improvements of the post-war era.[3]

R.D. Crotty believed that " The Great Famine was not a true watershed in Irish social and economic history."[4] This was certainly not Mrs. Smith's belief. She had begun by being certain that what she had called " the improving management of these more prudent days "[5] would be able to contain distress , she grew increasingly sceptical about the effectiveness of government measures and relief ("it is as if lunaticks were legislating "[6]) and by I850 she was in no doubt that what they had survived amounted to a terrible ordeal , certain to

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I. I have referred to all four ; see bibliography.
2. For example , see p. 488 - 489 .
3. Donnelly , p. 386-387 , for example , in the course of a cri-de-coeur about the small quantity of estate records that have survived nevertheless lists over five pages of papers in public and private collections that he has unearthed.
4. p. 453 .
5. I.3. I846 ; see p. 414 .
6. See p. 534 .

act as a real dividing line between the years of steady improvement before the famine and the unsure times ahead.

One reason was the lateness of the recovery. It was not until the very end of 1849 that the Smiths felt that despite the continued presence of blight the worst was over. The Boystown crop figures and the Lower Talbotstown stock figures confirm that it was as late as this fourth year of famine that real improvement began. In all five categories of holdings there are signs of steady recovery in oats and potatoes , and the stock returns also emphasise 1849 as the year when the most marked improvement took place.[1]

This in turn emphasises the point that above all needs to be stressed from the famine experiences of Baltiboys. Although this was a prosperous , improved estate whose progress can be measured alongside other well-run estates in a county recently claimed to differ so much from the accepted image that it should be seen as a "special case"[2], it was only by a really determined effort that it survived. Famine was a reality in the eastern counties every bit as much as it was in the more publicised south and west. The margin between success and failure was narrow ; there is no doubting the reality of the distress or the crisis that faced everyone around Blessington.

In the final analysis there is no difficulty in pinpointing the reason for Baltiboys' survival. Mrs. Smith may have seen in the "slatterniness"[3] of her tenantry clear signs that their moral improvement and physical well-being would take long to accomplish ,

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1. See Returns of Agricultural Produce in Ireland , 1847 - 1851, which I use in Appendix 2 , Table 6 .
2. R.F. Foster Charles Stewart Parnell , the Man and his Family, (1976) p. xiii - xx .
3. This was the word used by Daniel Corkery, The Hidden Ireland (1924), to indicate the quality in the Irish singled out by writers like Maria Edgeworth that he found most offensive.

and Colonel Smith's unwillingness to use the ultimate sanctions permitted by the law against uncooperative or neglectful tenants behind with their rent might be a clear sign that the traditional controls exercised by the landed proprietor were now more difficult to enforce , but over-all it was the range of effective improvement carried out by the Smiths with the willing agreement of the majority of their tenants that transformed Baltiboys and enabled it to overcome the dangers of the famine years.

One factor that holds back any attempt to come to a definite conclusion about the work done by Colonel and Mrs. Smith is the difficulty encountered in trying to get away from the uniqueness of the journals as source material. The estate cannot be compared with any other around Blessington and there is no extant written record that provides the same measure of insight into the working of an estate and the lives led on it. The same applies to the character and personality of the strong-willed individual at the helm throughout these years. She has very little in common with Bence Jones , Hussey or Steuart Trench or any of the compilers of landlord memoirs.[I] Some insight into how Mrs. Smith's mind worked can be obtained from a comparison with Maria Edgeworth from the previous generation.[2] They both possessed the same zeal for justifiable change , stamina for improvement and certainty of purpose , while Elizabeth Smith's

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I. These memoirs are often most instructive for what they fail to discuss ; see pp. 265 - 266 . Barbara Solow (p. 203) neatly summarises Sam Hussey's character in a way that draws out the contrast with considerate agents and landlords ..." the arrogance and condescension that illuminate nearly every page of (his) reminiscences are reason enough why he was the most shot-at agent in Ireland."

2. Her collected works were in the Baltiboys Lending Library (p. 160). The Smiths certainly knew Michael Pakenham Edgeworth (1812-1881) perhaps because he had served in the East India Company (D.N.B.); he ("a pleasant good little man") brought a manuscript from her brother-in-law Sir James Craig down to Baltiboys (19..11. 1842).

literary accomplishments followed at a humbler level the examples set by Maria. As far as her own times are concerned , only John Hamilton of St. Ernan's in Donegal provides the sort of useful comparison from which Elizabeth Smith's accomplishments can be better appreciated.[I]

They both spent the better part of their lives working for the improvement of their property and each was concerned that moral improvement should accompany economic progress. Where she communicated such thoughts to her journals , he wrote regular letters to his tenantry in which he urged them forward to greater progress. One such letter in I84I , for example , (entitled "Summary of Course Pursued during Twenty Years , I82I - I84I , - New Departure in order to Stimulate Tenants to benefit themselves ") listed all that he had done for his tenantry and concluded :

> What do I then look for in return for all I spend and have spent among you ?
> I look for an improvement in you. I expect to see an improvement in respectability and independence in yourselves , your houses , and your families.
> Now I ask you is it too much to seek this ?
> There is but one side from which I have reason to expect anything to prevent the improvement which I look for , and that is from your own selves.[2]

This was precisely the spirit in which Mrs. Smith approached the similar tasks she tacked at Baltiboys. Both naturally expected that the rents would be regularly paid too , but in contrast to the stereotype of pre-famine Irish landlord that was not where their expectations ended. The welfare of all on their estates for whom they were responsible , and often others for whom they had no legal or moral responsibility at all , was a prime consideration and

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I. This estate was situated on low-lying ground outside Donegal town and so is more open to comparison with Baltiboys than mostestates in that county.

2. J. Hamilton Sixty Years' Experience as an Irish Landlord : Memoirs of John Hamilton D.L. , of St. Ernan's , Donegal , ed. H.C. White (I894) , p. I97 .

inseperable from the removal from want. What Mrs. Smith called "my practised eye in misery"[I] was adept at picking out corners of Baltiboys where help was most needed and where virtue could be encouraged. John Hamilton had necessarily to be more circumspect in his homilies ; the journals undoubtedly acted as a safety-valve [2] in which irritation at the more unimprovable inhabitants on the estate ("mere beasts ; none but animal propensities "[3]) could be expressed as much as disgust at the "low sensual dissipations"[4] of the upper classes supposed to take the lead in that over-all improvement of morals and manners indissolubly linked to progress.

A very important part of the Smiths' work at Baltiboys , therefore , was their efforts to bring about the mental and moral improvement of their people. The values of hard work and self-reliance were constantly urged upon them , there was a deliberate effort made to use the schools as media of improvement , and the very considerable periodical literature that existed in the I840s to encourage progress was added to the Lending Library. It is hard to assess how effective such an emphasis was. The tenantry were probably more receptive than the labourers who were likely to be as culturally resistant to such pressures as the urban poor. In any event , the trials and tribulations of the famine years (even if in Mrs. Smith's view they would have been easier borne if her strictures had been heeded) when the relief of distress was the one obvious priority , put an end to any ambitions to produce some sort of common culture. Upper and lower classes might still

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I. 3.7. I846 ; see p. 419 .
2. supra , p. 8 .
3. supra , p. 377 .
4. supra , p. 9I .

be in their "grub state"[1], but until the crisis they both faced was over , the slow progress that had characterised Baltiboys before the potato blight would have to take second place to the struggle to keep destitution at bay.

That struggle was won by I850, the year when almost symbolically after the marriage of their second daughter , Annie , the Smiths withdrew to Dublin leaving the next generation to carry on the work. Agent and Steward retired and Baltiboys' renewed progress was left in the hands of James and Annie King. Unfortunately , the schemes they inaugurated were not successful , and as he was forced into seeking regular employment elsewhere , Mrs. Smith was brought back into the active management of the estate. General Smith died in I862[2] and she devoted herself to managing Baltiboys for her son Jack , who was a subaltern in the Royal Artillary. He contracted severe sunstroke on manoevres and died in I873 , leaving a young wife and baby daughter, for whom her grandmother determined to maintain the estate ... " I made up my mind to become a tenant where I had been so long , near fifty years , as mistress." [3] The enlarged estate[4] of over 3000 acres must have presented as many problems as in the old days (Lady Strachey wrote that " To the very end of her busy life she was occupied about the welfare of others ..." [5]) but the last words of her journals written shortly before she died after an accident , provide a final moving extract from the source that has been at the

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I. supra , p. 513 .
2. See Freeman's Journal , "December 27th at Lower Leeson Street, Major-General Henry Smith of Baltiboys , Co. Wicklow , late of the Indian Army."
3. 4.I. I884
4. For the enlargement of Baltiboys thanks to the legacy received received from her Aunt , see supra p.40 and p.I56 .
5. Highland Lady , p. vii .

heart of this attempt to recreate life on this estate in the I840s[I]:

> Here I am again in the dear old room on the ground floor the first I inhabited in the new house we were only building.
> I found all the things I ever used waiting for me - boxes , books , pictures , work-table , writing-table , chests of drawers , little ornaments etc. , etc. , all before me .
> It was a little sad at first - old recollections would come back ; I had been so happy here , and God be thanked, I am happy still , remembering the past fondly and looking cheerfully forward for a space that won't be long.[2]

An epitaph upon the life and work of Elizabeth Smith might be the final reported words of her compatriot Thomas Drummond ... " Bury me in Ireland , the land of my adoption. I have loved her well and served her faithfully."[3] However , she is much more suitably commemorated by the journals from which her own life and that led by all sorts and conditions around her in the I840s come so vividly and accurately to life.

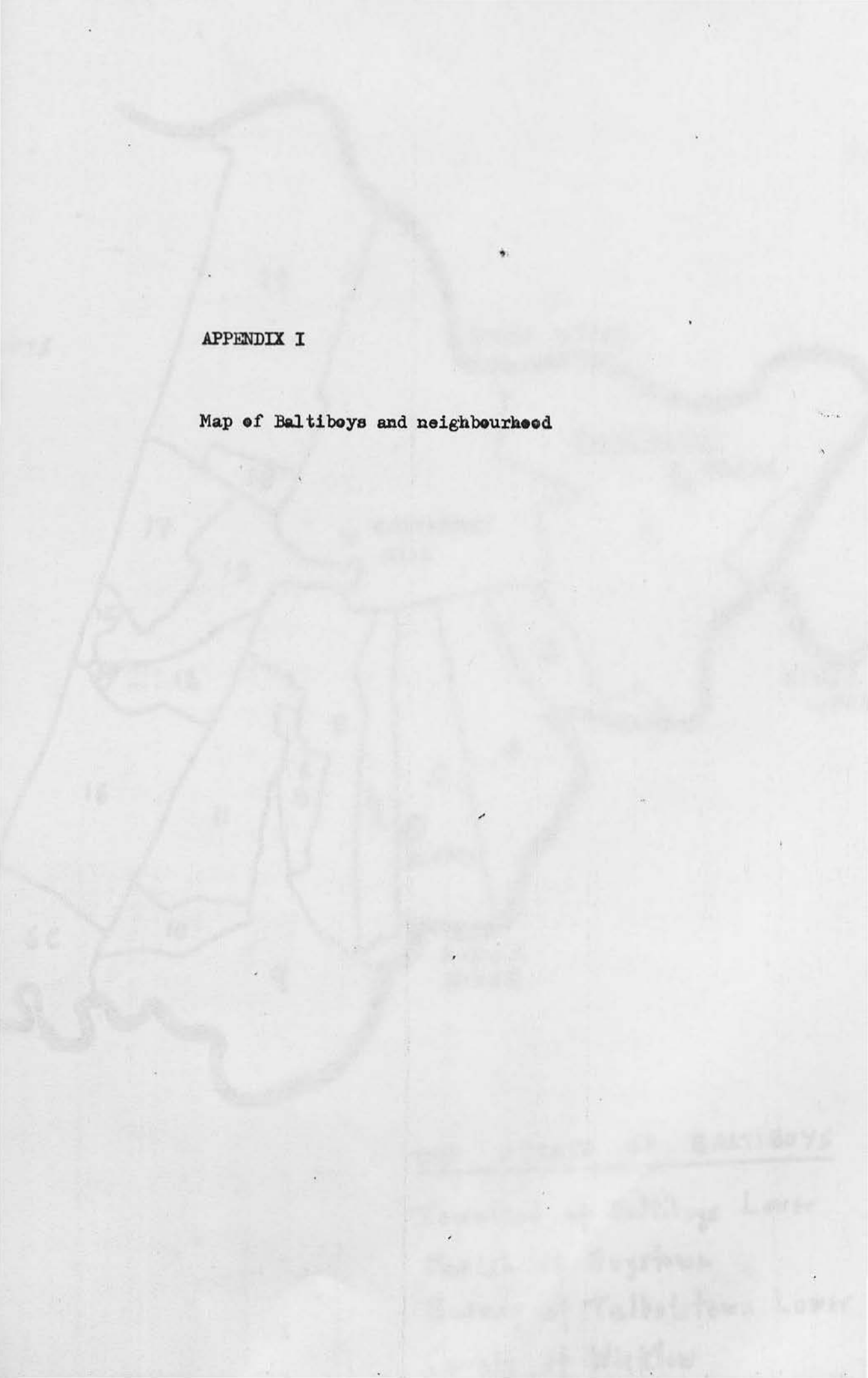
I. Although Mrs. Smith continued writing her journals during the I850s and I860s, they do not contain the full accounts of life and work at Ba ltiboys that are so evident during the I840s when she was responsible for so much of the day-to-day administration of estate and household. The I860s and I870s when many of the closest members of her family died saw much more spasmodic attempts to keep her journals up to date ; however , there is nevertheless a measure of continuity.

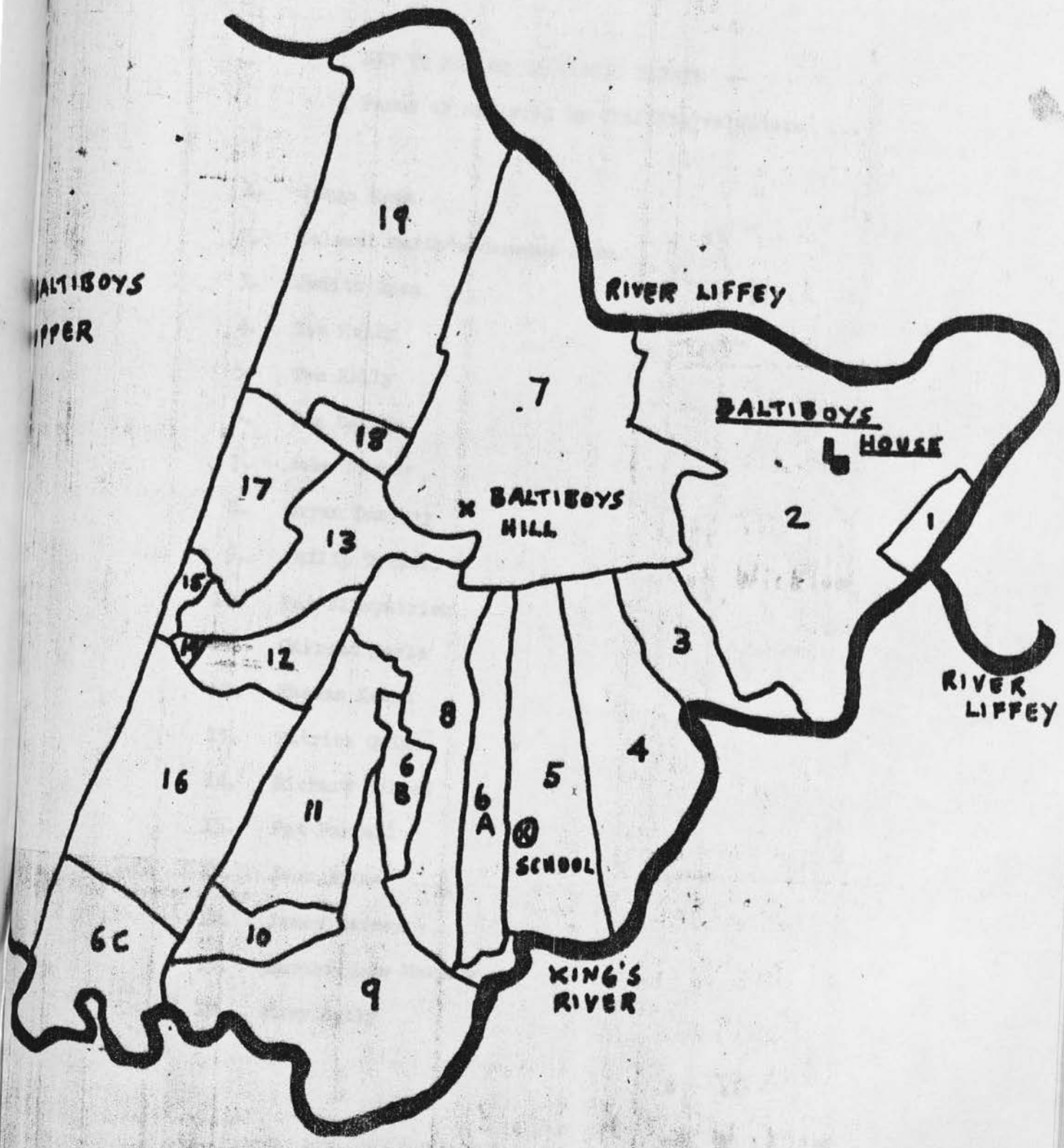
2. I5.6. I885

3. R. Barry O'Brien Thomas Drummond , Under-Secretary in Ireland , I835 - 40 (I889) , p. 387-8 .

APPENDIX I

Map of Baltiboys and neighbourhood





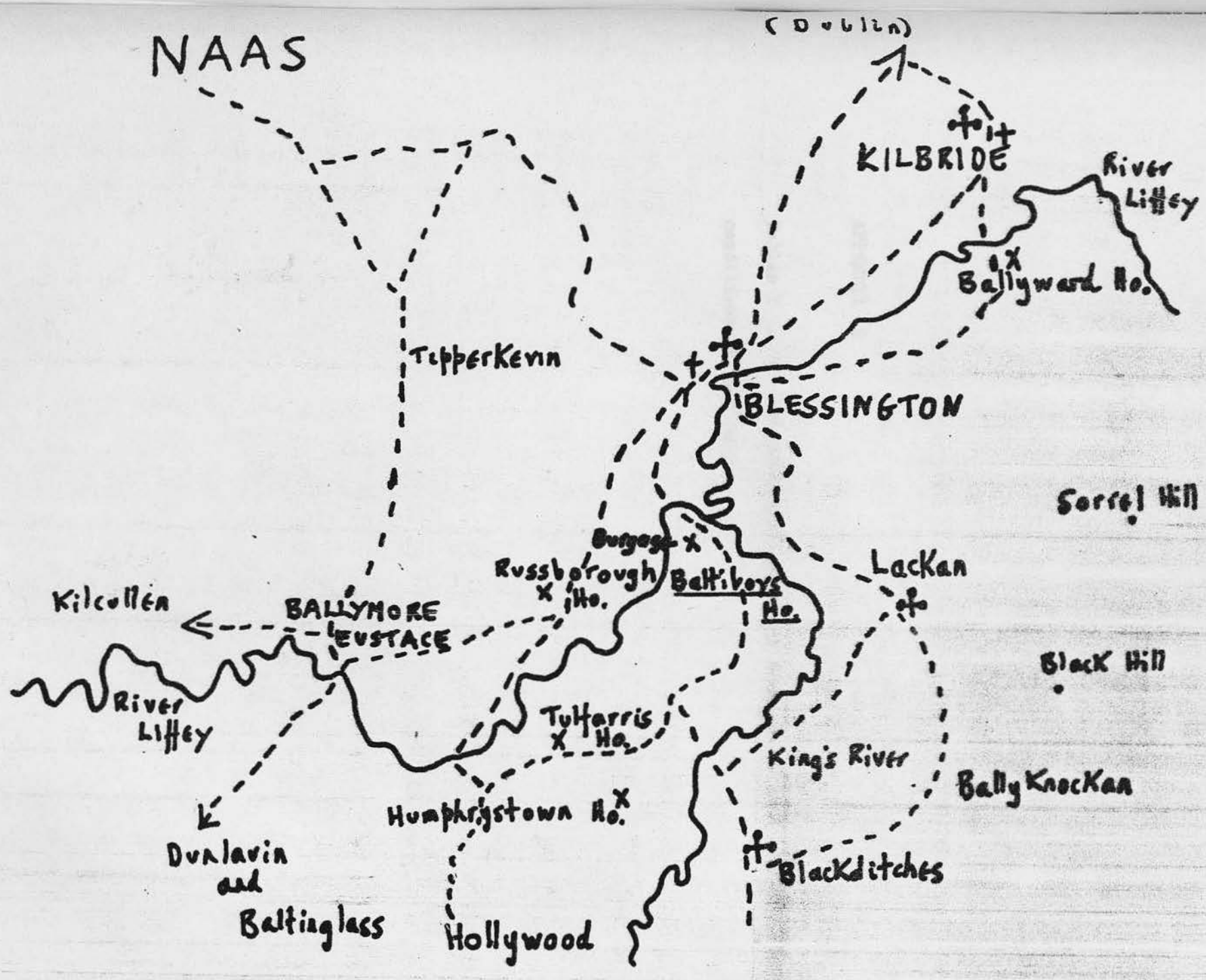
THE ESTATE OF BALTIBOYS

Townland of Baltiboys Lower
Parish of Boystown
Barony of Talbotstown Lower
County of Wicklow

KEY TO MAP OF BALTIBOYS ESTATE :-

Farms as numbered by Griffith valuators ...

1. James Ryan
2. Colonel Smith's demesne farm
3. Judith Ryan
4. Tom Kelly
5. Tom Kelly
6. Tom Darker
7. John Darker
8. Bryan Dempsey
9. Philip Tyrrell
10. Pat Fitzpatrick
11. Garrett Doyle
12. Thomas Keogh
13. Patrick Quinn
14. Richard Hyland
15. Pat Farrell
16. John Byrne
17. James Carney
18. Bartholomew Murphey
19. Mary Kelly


NAAS
(Dublin)
KILBRIDE
River Liffey
Ballyward Ho.
TipperKevin
BLESSINGTON
Sorrel Hill
Burgage
Russborough Ho.
Baltiboys Ho.
LacKan
Kilcullen
BALLYMORE EUSTACE
Black Hill
River Liffey
Tulfarris Ho.
King's River
BallyKnocKan
Humphrystown Ho.
Dunlavin and Baltinglass
Blackditches
Hollywood

APPENDIX 2

Tables I - 6 , illustrating tenant and cottier conditions on Baltiboys .

TABLE 1

TITHE COMPOSITION APPLOTMENTS BOOKS (1834): EXTRACTS FROM PARISH OF BALTIBOYS

Occupier	Gross Quantity of Land (including waste) in st. acres	Annual Value
Michael Delaney	4.1.28	2. 3.6
Widow Darker	2.3.37	1. 2.5
- to P. Nowland -	1.0.2	9.2
John and Thomas Darker	94.1.2	85.11.6
Joseph and Michael Commons	74.1.3	40. 5.8
Christ. Ryan	21.3.4	11. 3.9
Patrick Ryan	22.1.28	11.10.4
Thomas Kelly	58.3.15	37.19.7
- ditto late Kearns	62.2.11	41.16.3
John & Thomas Darker	121.0.0	85. 4.0
ditto	43.3.20	13.14.2
William Quin	38.2.5	18. 6.0
Widow Kiogh	20.2.26	15. 2.0
James Cullen	1.2.19	1. 3.4

GRIFFITH VALUATION (1852): TOWNLAND OF BALTIBOYS LOWER

Occupier	Area: (st. acres)	Rateable Annual Valuation
Thomas Darker	85.1.22	45. 5.0
Judith Ryan	24.2.27	13.15.0
James Ryan	6.2.36	4. 0.0
Thomas Kelly	57.2.26	31.0.0
Thomas Kelly	62.3.0	30.10.6
John Darker)	168.3.14	84.10.0
John Darker)		
Patrick Quin	36.3.11	18.15.0
Thomas Keogh	20.0.2	13.10.0

Occupier (1834)	Area	Value	Occupier (1852)	Area	Value
Widow Doyle	40.2.15	18.15.6	Garret) Doyle)	53.1.9	27. 0.0
John Doyle	11.3.17	7.17.1	Garret) Doyle)		
Widow Fitz-patrick	14.0.20	9. 7.2	Patrick Fitz-patrick	15.1.0	7. 0.0
Michael Tyrrell	5.0.22	3.19.8			
Richard Grey	11.1.34	8.13.9			
Bryan Dempsey & George Kearns & late widow	32.2.7	15. 7.9			
Bryan Dempsey & George Kearns & late widow	66.2.22	44. 6.11	Bryan Dempsey	59.2.0	27.10.0
Michael Tyrrell	75.3.29	53. 2.10	Philip Tyrrell	79.2.14	40. 0.0
Patrick Quin	40.0.23	29.17.9			
Michael Byrne	77.1.38	59.13.0	John Byrne	80.0.6	43.10.6
Margaret Hyland	1.3.11	1.13.9	Richard Hyland	1.3.29	1. 5.0
Patrick Farrell	5.0.31	5.2.3	Patrick Farrell	5.0.11	3.10.0
Lt. Col. Smith, late Patrick Quin	37.3.20	23.4.0	James Carney	37.0.35	20.10.0

Occupier (1834)	Area	Value	Occupier (1852)	Area	Value
John Williams to William Morgan	17.0.21	7. 4.7	Bartle Murphy from John Williams	9.0.12	2.15.0
John Williams to Catherine Doyle	1.0.9	11.7			
John Williams to Hugh Kelly	118.2.14	90.16.9	Mary Kelly from John Williams	125.0.33	76.0.0

TABLE 2

A. SIZE OF FARMS/HOLDINGS ON BALTIBOYS ACCORDING TO THE TITHE COMPOSITION PLOTMENT BOOKS (1834), THE GRIFFITH VALUATION FIELD BOOKS (1841) AND MRS. SMITH'S "CATALOGUE RAISONÉ" (1847):

	1834	1841	1847
under 1 acre	-	-	-
1 - 5	6	1	5
5 - 15	5	3	4
15 - 30	4	3	3
over 30	14	11	6

B. SIZE OF FARMS OVER THIRTY ACRES:

	1834	1841	1847
30 - 50	6	2	1
50 - 70	2	2	2
70 - 90	3	3	1
over 90	3	4	2

TABLE 3

RETURNS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE IN IRELAND:

a) NUMBERS OF DIFFERENT SIZES OF 'FARMS' (source: Crops)

	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851
Under 1 acre	-	15	25	7	14
1 - 5	-	36	41	22	21
5 - 15	-	30	43	12	12
15 - 30	-	56	44	14	17
Over 30	-	129	134	47	44

b) NUMBERS OF DIFFERENT SIZES OF 'HOLDINGS' (source: Stock)

BARONY OF LOWER TALBOTSTOWN

	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851
Under 1 acre	149	96	73	104	117
1 - 5	177	154	153	151	142
5 - 15	239	196	201	216	177
15 - 30	270	263	259	262	261
Over 30	700	694	672	612	617

TABLE 4A

OBSERVATIONS ON THE "ROUGH DRAFT" IN THE VALUATION OFFICE USED FOR THE "GRIFFITH VALUATION":-

County of Wicklow, Barony of Lower Talbotstown, Parish of Boystown, Townland of Boystown or Baltiboys Lower:

Occupier	Estimated Annual Value per st. acre	Rent per Irish acre	Tenure, date of lease, etc.	Amount of Taxes Co. Cess	Poor Rate
James RYAN	10.0	Bulk Rent £4	at will	11.0	9.6
Judith RYAN	14.0	£15.11.4	at will 1812	17.0	18.4
Tom KELLY	12.0/12.6	22.9/25.0	3 lives or 21 years, 1803/ at will	£14	£15.16.8
Tom DARKER	11.6/13.6/15.0	24.0	7 years, 1851	£ 5	£ 4.16.0
James CULLEN	---	£ 1	at will	-	-
Luke BYRNE	---	£ 1	at will	-	-
John DARKER	9.6/15.6	17.4	3 lives or 31 years, 1806	£ 8	£ 6.16.6
Bryan DEMPSEY	11.6	£ 1	at will, 1812	£ 2. 6.0	£ 2.10.0
Philip TYRRELL	12.6	£65	at will, 1812	£ 3. 8.0	£ 4.14.8
Patrick FITZPATRICK	7.6	24.0	at will, 1812	12.6	12.8
Garrett DOYLE	9.6	25.0	at will, 1812	£ 3. 2.0	£ 2. 9.2
Thomas KEOGH	14.0	£14. 8.0	at will, 1812	£ 1.10.0	£ 1. 3.0

TABLE 4A (cont'd)

Occupier	Estimated Annual Value per st. acre	Rent per Irish acre	Tenure, date of lease, etc.	Amount of Taxes Co. Cess	Poor Rate
Patrick QUINN	11.6	15.0	at will, 1812	£ 1.19.0	£ 1. 5.0
Mary QUINN	---	10.0	at will, 1812	-	-
Richard HYLAND	13.0	£ 1.10.0	at will, 1812	12.0	-
Patrick FARRELL	15.6	41.0	at will, 1822	8.0	10.0
John BYRNE	12.0	25.0	at will, 1812	£ 3. 0.0	£ 3.15.0
James CARNEY	11.6	£24.0.0	at will, 1822	£ 1.16.0	£ 2. 0.0
Bartle MURPHY	5.6	£ 5.0.0	at will	6.0	5.6
Mary KELLY	15.6	£80.0.0	at will, 1812	£ 5. 9.2	£ 6.19.0

TABLE 4B

COMPARISON BETWEEN "GRIFFITH VALUATION" AND ACTUAL RENT PAID:

	Rent per Irish acre	Thus rent per statute acre	Griffith "Estimated Annual Value per st. acre"
James RYAN	£ 4 for 6 3/4 acres	11/11	10/-
Judith RYAN	£15.11.4 for 24 3/4	12/ 6	14/-
Tom KELLY	a) £ 1.2.9 b) £ 1.5.0	14/3 15/8	12/- 12/6
Tom DARKER	£ 1.4.0	15/-	11/6 13/6 15/-
John DARKER	17/4	10/10	9/6 15/6
Bryan DEMPSEY	£ 1.0.0	12/6	11/6
Philip TYRRELL	£65 for 80 acres	16/3	12/6
Pat. FITZPATRICK	24/-	15/-	7/6
Garrett DOYLE	25/-	15/8	9/6
Thomas KEOGH	£14.8.0 for 20 acres	14/5	14/-
Pat QUINN	15/-	9/5	11/6
Richard HYLAND	30/-	18/7	13/-
Patrick FARRELL	41/-	25/6	15/6
John BYRNE	25/-	15/6	12/-
James CARNEY	£24 for 27 acres	13/-	11/6
Bartle MURPHY	£ 5 for 9 acres	11/10	5/6
Mary KELLY	£80 for 125 acres	12/10	15/6

TABLE 5

INFORMATION ON BALTIBOYS TENANT HOUSES, FROM MRS. SMITH'S CATALOGUE RAISONÉ, THE "PERAMBULATION BOOKS" FOR THE GRIFFITH VALUATION (1852) AND THE GRIFFITH VALUATION (1853):

	designation	no. of stories	Griffith Quality Letter	kind of roof	no. of rooms	offices	length, breadth and height (house)	valuation (all buildings)
James RYAN	house	2	A-	slate	4	'dairy, workshop, shed & yard'	35,17½,13	£2.15.0
Judith RYAN			B				62,16,6½	1.10.0
Tom KELLY			*		3 ('large')	'large yard, new, good offices'	*	4. 5.0
J & T DARKER	'excellent house'		*				*	5. 5.0
Bryan DEMPSEY	'good new house'		*	slate	3	'decent offices'	*	1.15.0
Philip TYRRELL		2	*	slate		'steading'	*	3.15.0
Pat. FITZPATRICK	'low bad house'		B		2	'banked manure heap, cow-house'	42,15,6	10.0
Garrett DOYLE	house		C+			'offices mere ruins'	42,16,6	1. 0.0
Thomas KEOGH	house		B			'yard'	40,16,6	1.0. 0
Pat QUINN			B				45,16,6	1. 5.0

TABLE 5 (cont'd)

	designation	no. of stories	Griffith Quality Letter	kind of roof	no. of rooms	offices	length, breadth and height (house)	valuation (all buildings)
Mary QUINN	'comfortable cabin'		B		3		40,15,6	15.0
Richard HYLAND	'neat cabin'		C+				42.16,6	10.0
Patrick FARRELL	house		B+				44,16½,6½	1. 5.0
John BYRNE	'nice house'	2	A-		3+		40,18,14	3.15.0
James CARNEY	'good house'		*	slate			*	2. 0.0
Bartle MURPHY			B-				30,16,6	15.0
Mary KELLY			*				*	3.15.0
George KEARNS	house					'crazy offices'	---	---
James CULLEN	'small cabin'		C+			'neat small yard cow-house and pigstye'	22,16,6	5.0
Dick GREY	'better cabin'					'neat yard full of manure, cowhouse'	---	---

TABLE 6

RETURNS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE IN IRELAND, 1847-1851:

(A) CROPS

a) Boystown Electoral Division 1847-1849:

	Number of Acres planted in 1847	1848	1849
oats	1125	1088	1370
potatoes	156	297	495
wheat	6	7	28
turnips	109	128	359

b) Boystown Electoral Division 1848-1849 by holdings:

	1848					1849				
	-1 acre	1-5	5-15	15-30	30	-1	1-15	5-15	15-30	30
oats	5	28	46	221	788	8	40	102	193	1027
potatoes	3	12	16	61	205	6	22	42	75	350
wheat	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	28
turnips	0	2	6	20	100	0	3	6	30	320

c) Burgage Electoral Division 1850-1851:

	1850						1851					
	-1	1-5	5-15	15-30	30	Total	-1	1-5	5-15	15-30	30	Total
oats	3	25	34	46	542	650	5	26	37	85	50	646
potatoes	2	6	9	12	67	96	2	10	7	10	55	84
wheat	0	0	0	0	12	12	0	0	0	0	1	1
turnips	0	2	1	2	72	77	0	2	2	7	95	106

TABLE 6

(B) RETURNS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE IN IRELAND, 1847-1851:

Barony of Lower Talbotstown:

	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851
Horses) Mules) Asses)	1654	1813	1953	1790	1763
Cattle:					
over one year	8177	8788	10,195	9470	8755
under one year	2791	2312	2623	2637	2480
Sheep:					
over one year	9485	11145	13903	9040	8695
under one year	2767	4305	4362	3714	4075
Pigs:					
over one year	596	395	697	746	570
under one year	877	910	1129	1758	1857
Goats	309	274	256	342	440
Poultry	15162	17920	18800	19631	18303
Deer	0	0	0	0	1

APPENDIX 3

School attendance figures.

ATTENDANCES AT BALTIBOYS' GIRLS AND INFANTS SCHOOL, 1834-1840

Taken from an incomplete list of the "No. of Scholars" contained in the Board of Education's "Salary Payments Book" (marked with an asterix) and the figures extracted from the Reports of the Commissioners of National Education for Ireland, 1835 - 1840.

Year and Volume of Parliamentary Paper or date given in Salary Payments Book		Number of Children Male	Female	Total	
28.8.34	*	80		80	
XXXV 1835		67	26	93	
11.11.35	*	8	10	18	
XXXVI 1836		18	23	41	
29.4.36	*	27	36	63	
10.11.36	*	22	34	56	
IX 1837		(5 Prot.s and 9 RCs)		14	- (source: House of Commons Select Committee on a Plan of Education for Ireland.)
14.4.1837	*	20	27	47	
30.9.1837	*	22	28	50	
31.3.1838	*	21	33	54	
1837. 8 XXVIII 1838		21	31	52	
XVI 1839		22	31	53	
9.5.1839	*	35	31	66	
5.9.1839	*	25	30	55	

School Attendances referred to in Mrs. Smith's Journals and her comments:

I) 1840-1844

1840	28.1	27 children	
	1.2	30	
	6.3	32	"All as I could wish."
	4.4	35	This peak coincides with her deciding to award a prize in each Division to the quarterly best attender.
	23.10	6	Measles epedemic.
	29.10	3	
1841	27.1	3	She attributes the small roll to the priest's campaigning to take advantage of the epedemic to boost the numbers of the hedge schools.
	6.4	18	
	10.5	26	Father Germaine's first visit to the school for a year so she believes his campaign has failed.
	27.5	32	The return to the previous year's level coincides with an Inspector's visit.
	1.6	29	"I think we shall conquer the priest."
	3.7	36	Quarterly prize day: "thirty six clean little creatures watching for their prizes."
	17.7	0	The result of the parents being frightened off by another epedemic - unspecified.
	12.8	17	"looking, poor things, very much cut up after this epedemick."
	18.9	18	
1842	5.4	12	The height of the problems caused by the teacher Miss Gardener being away at Marlborough St.
	21.4	13	Miss Phillips has arrived as a replacement, but ..."few owing to the potatoes."
	30.9	-30	"70 on the roll, but she rarely has 30 attending"
	13.11		"they attended very irregularly."
1843	16.7		Few pupils because of the bog: "there is always something at every season put forward as an excuse for the irregular habits of these poor people."
1844	17.6		22 in new boys' school
	7.8		60 children attending both schools.

II. School Attendances in both Baltiboys Schools 1844-1851 taken from Mrs. Smith's Journals

Date	Boys' school	Girls' School	Mrs. Smith's detail
17.6.1844	22		
7.8	60 in both		
8.10.1845	10	15	
19.10			14 attending night class
14.12	average 9-13	29	
18.1 .1846	26	32	
24.1	29	34	
14.2	average 36	average 36	"his night school gives great satisfaction as it is very full"
1.3	90 in both		"wonders at school" Mrs. Smith boasts to Dr. Robinson about "my full school".
16.3	32	a few only: "all at work"	
5.4	42 (average of late 21)	52 (ditto 27)	Good attendance coinciding with "Reports' day".
3.7	36	47	
11.11	21	38	
29.3 .1847			"A large attendance of the pupils, bad as the times are."
1.4		45 the average total	
5.5	average 26	average 46	"the average attendance of boys is still small."
3.12			night school attendance "only middling" but "the attendance in both schools is now large."
14.11.1848			"bad attendance at school"
14.9			evidently lots of infants
21.1. 1849		60 the average total	
4.10		"	"if things go on as they have begun we shall have a full school soon."

.../...

II. (cont'd)

Date	Boys' School	Girls' School	Mrs. Smith's detail
24.2. 1850			18 children breakfasting at school
28.3		12-15 the recent average total	Mrs. Smith comments that if this is all that will attend with a good teacher, then little point in perservering.
13.4	Very few boys recently (emigration)	average 40	Mrs. Smith anticipates that the girls will be down to 20 by autumn.
25.12	"We really are to get the boys' school up again. I promised to reopen it if they would promise me twenty five boys and I understand they have already twenty seven, so I begin and with a Protestant Master."		cf. Mrs. Smith's comment on 7.11 ... "those odious priests; but for them I should have little short of 100 pupils."
9. 5. 1851	Total 'in attendance' 58		"my school is flourishing"
August	The Smiths departed for Dublin.		

ATTENDANCES AT BALTIBOYS' GIRLS AND INFANTS SCHOOL, 1840-1851

Taken from the Reports of the Commissioners of National Education for Ireland, 1840-1851.

Year and Volume of Parliamentary Paper				Number of Children		Total
				Male	Female	
	XXVIII	1840		25	30	55
1842	XXIII	1841	31.3	34	22	56
			30.9	14	27	41
1842	XXIII	1842	31.3	14	27	41
			30.9	3	26	29
	XXVIII	1843	31.3	4	26	30
			30.9	11	39	50
	XXX	1844	31.3	11	37	48
			30.9	12	30	42
	XXVI	1845	31.3	14	21	35
			30.9	3	34	37
	XXII	1846	31.3	1	28	29
			30.9	4	32	36
	XVII	1847	31.3	6	46	52
			30.9	5	47	52
1847.8	XXIX	1848	31.3	8	62	70
			30.9	15	67	82
	XXIII	1849	31.3	9	49	58
			30.9	11	57	68
	XXV	1850	31.3	12	53	65
			30.9	7	44	51
	XXIV	1851	31.3	13	35	48
			30.9	15	32	47

ATTENDANCES AT BALTIBOYS' BOYS SCHOOL, 1847-1851

Taken from the Reports of the Commissioners of National Education for Ireland.

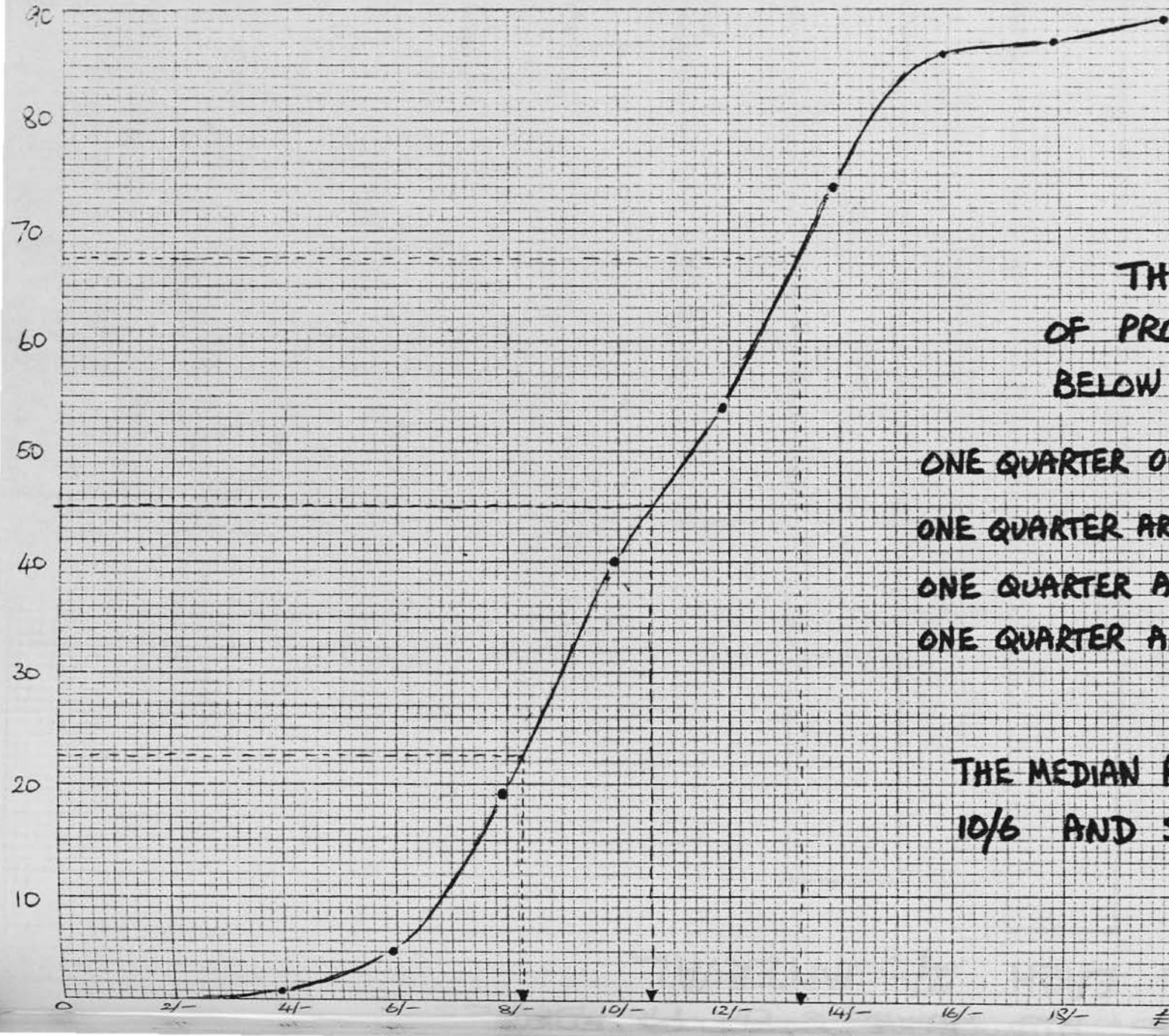
Year and Volume of Parliamentary Paper		Number of Boys
XVII	31.3.1847	42
	30.9	55
1847.8 XXIX	31.3.1848	50
	30.9	51
XXIII	31.3.1849	57
	30.9	61
XXV	31.3.1850	58
	30.9	40
XXIV	31.3.1851	25
	30.9	0

"school temporarily closed"

APPENDIX 4

Rents

CUMULATNE FREQUENCY CURVE



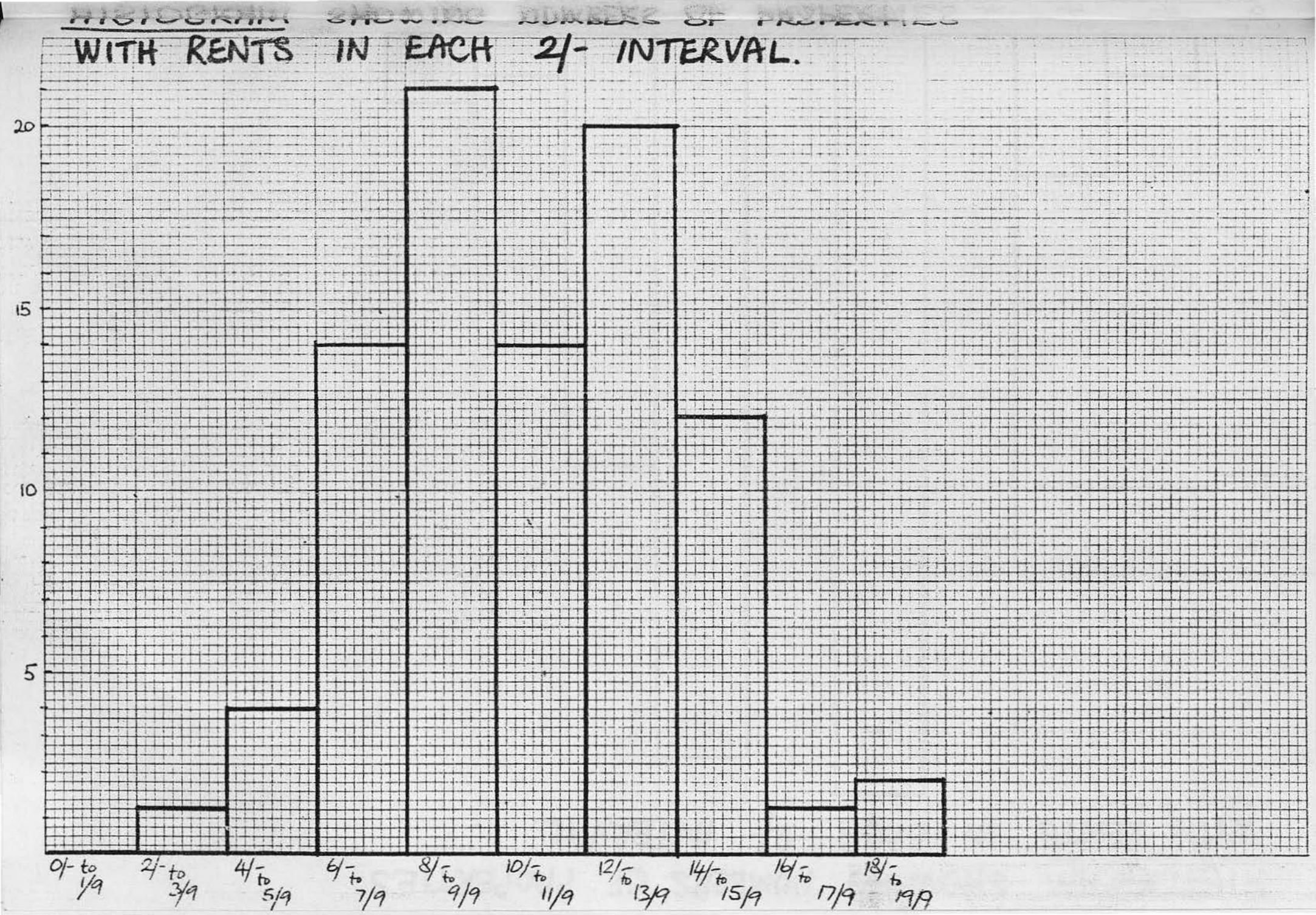
THIS SHOWS THE NUMBER OF PROPERTIES WITH A RENT BELOW ANY PARTICULAR FIGURE.

ONE QUARTER OF ALL THE RENTS ARE BELOW 8/
ONE QUARTER ARE BETWEEN 8/3 AND 10/6
ONE QUARTER ARE BETWEEN 10/6 AND 13/3
ONE QUARTER ARE ABOVE 13/3.

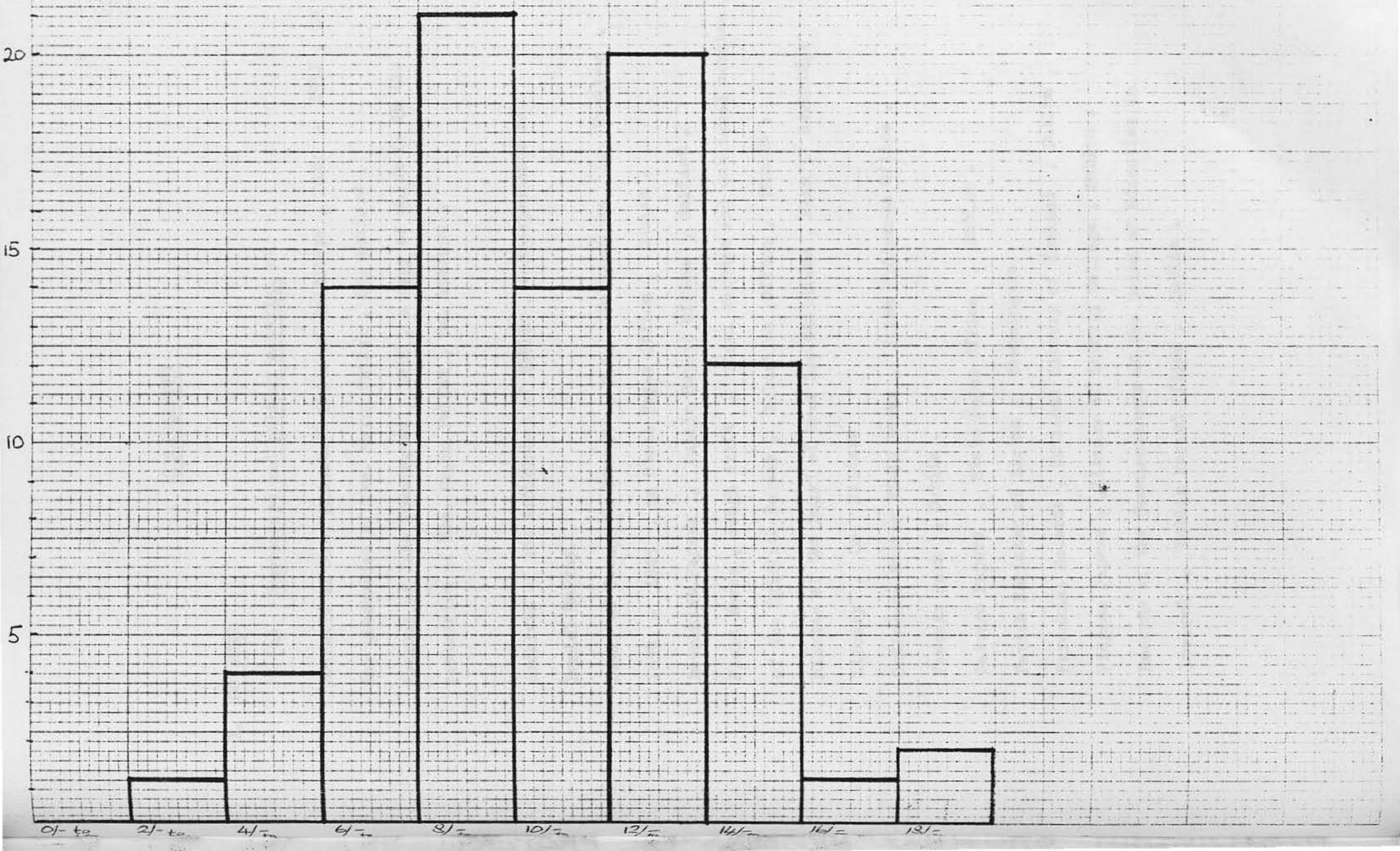
THE MEDIAN RENT IS FRACTIONALLY AB
10/6 AND SO IS THE AVERAGE RENT

HISTOGRAM SHOWING NUMBERS OF PROPERTIES

WITH RENTS IN EACH 2/- INTERVAL.



HISTOGRAM SHOWING NUMBERS OF PROPERTIES WITH RENTS IN EACH 2/- INTERVAL.



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