

特別寄稿

Queen Victoria and the Irish Industrial Exhibition of 1853

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Introduction

Queen Victoria's second visit to Ireland in 1853 was different in tone and purpose to her first visit in 1849 which was a grand state occasion with the queen showing solidarity with her Irish subjects in the aftermath of the Great Famine (*an Gorta Mór*) (1845-48). The 1853 visit took place from 29 August to 3 September and was essentially a low-key event with the queen and Prince Albert together with two of her sons, Princes Edward & Alfred, coming to Dublin to show public support for the Great Industrial Exhibition of 1853; the exhibition was organized by the entrepreneur and engineer William Dargan (1799-1867). It took place in series of specially designed pavilions in the lawns of Leinster House in central Dublin. The royals were visiting as patrons of education, the arts and industrial progress.

Coinciding with the second royal visit was the emergence of an understanding of the effects famine had on Irish demography. Those that perished through the effects of hunger and those that left for foreign shores featured for the first time in the census of 1851, making it a landmark post-famine survey. Mass emigration and the establishment of the Irish Diaspora, especially in the U.S. and Canada, began to raise international consciousness of the plight of the Irish under British rule. Permanent and irreversible change had begun and the early years of the 1850s bore critical witness to this.

The years immediately preceding the 1853 royal visit set its general and specific contexts, and a discussion of such issues as the famine death toll, emigration,

depopulation and ideologies for rebuilding a devastated nation provides the contextual reasons why Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were more than keen to see Ireland rise like a phoenix from the ashes of despair. The humanity and warmth of Queen Victoria was particularly evident on this occasion, as is exemplified in her greetings to William Dargan that included a personal visit to his home – the first by a British Monarch to an Irish commoner. This visit was not about lamenting over the catastrophe of the preceding years, it was about embracing and supporting technological progress as a means of improving the lives and livelihoods of the Irish. Ireland was in transition in 1853, and the hope was that indigenous industrialization would replace a backward and impoverished peasant culture. Did the visit achieve its goal? This paper critically evaluates this central issue.

Emigration

While the Great Famine (*an Gorta Mór*) was responsible for between 45% to 85% of Irish emigration depending on the year and the county, it did not actually initiate the trend of widespread emigration. The emigration can be traced back to the mid 18th century with thousands departing for the Americas, with some even being sold as white slaves. The western part of Ireland witnessed the greatest population decline with figures reaching as high as 250,000 per year during the famine period (1845-48).¹

Emigration was mainly to England, Scotland, the United States, Canada and Australia. Entire families generally did not move abroad, but several of the siblings did. It became a rite of passage for the young of both sexes, and unlike other waves of emigration in world history, women emigrated in the same numbers as men. By 1851, Irish emigrants began sending remittances back to their families in Ireland with part of it used to finance the travel of another brother, sister or cousin.

By the time Queen Victoria made her second royal visit in 1853, some 2 million Irish had departed from the island since the famine due to evictions, starvation and harsh living conditions. In America, they frequently settled in the cities in which

they first arrived like Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. Irish communities also grew up around the mining centres of western Pennsylvania. Canada witnessed a huge surge in Irish emigration; Toronto, for example, in 1851 had an Irish population of more than all the previous inhabitants of the city. It is interesting to note that the largest famine mass grave outside of Ireland is at Grosse-Île, Quebec – an island in the St. Lawrence River that was a designated quarantine station for the port of Quebec. While the numbers migrating to English cities was not as large as to the Americas, yet cities like Liverpool did have Irish populations of as high as 25% by the mid-nineteenth century.

The famine marked the beginning of the steep depopulation of Ireland. Population had increased by 13% – 14% in the first three decades from 1800 to 1830; but in the fourth decade, the population just grew by a mere 5%. Thomas Malthus's applied theory that population expands geometrically while resources increase arithmetically was a popularly accepted hypothesis in the early nineteenth century, but came to be eventually viewed as rather simplistic; Ireland's problems in the mid nineteenth were seen as less an excess of population and more as a lack of capital investment. In fact, it is interesting to note that the population of Ireland was contemporaneously increasing no faster than that of England, which endured no comparable cataclysmic fate.

The Estimated Death Toll

It cannot be accurately determined the exact number who died during the Great Famine, with more perishing from disease than from actual starvation. The registration of births, marriages or deaths as recorded by the Roman Catholic Church was not reliable, and state records were practically non-existent. One of the few reliable and valuable sources has been eyewitness accounts of what was taking place on the ground. William Bennett, an English Quaker, described the scene in Co. Mayo as 'three children huddled together, lying there because they were too weak to rise, pale and ghastly, their little limbs ... perfectly emaciated, eyes sunk, voice gone, and evidently in the last stages of actual starvation.'² Rev. Traill Hall, Protestant rector

of Scull in West Cork, which was one of the places most severely affected, observed that the aged and the young 'are almost without exception swollen and ripening for the grave.'³ The Quaker James Hack Tuke in the company of William Edward Forster vividly described the scene in Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Roscommon during his visit there in 1846: 'I visited a number of the poorest hovels. Their appearance, and the condition of the inmates, presented scenes of poverty and wretchedness almost beyond belief.'⁴ An even more graphic account of the same region was rendered by Joseph Crosfield, who writing a report in 1846 for the London Relief Committee of the Society of Friends recorded that 'children were worn to skeletons, their features sharpened with hunger, and their limbs wasted almost to the bone.'⁵

Is it possible to determine with any degree of accuracy the number of people who perished? One possible means is by comparing the projected population with the actual extant numbers in the mid 19th century. The projected Irish population for 1851 was to be around 9 million. The 1841 census calculated a population of slightly over 8 million; whereas the 1851 census, taken immediately after the Great Famine, presented a figure of 6,552,385, which represented a decline of almost 1.5 million in just ten years.⁶ Foster (1988) estimates that at least 750,000 died, mainly through diseases due to malnutrition such as dysentery and cholera; Lee (1973) cites a figure of at least 800,000.⁷ Recent computations conclude that excessive deaths from 1846 to 1851 were in the region of 1 million to 1.5 million; but the generally accepted figure is that 1 million directly perished. This does not include the millions of Irish who emigrated to Great Britain, United States, Canada, Australia and elsewhere; the emigration continued well into the early decades of the 20th century.

Lee (1973) provides a useful table documenting regional population decline in Ireland from 1841 to 1851:⁸

Decline in population 1841-51 (%)				
Leinster	Munster	Ulster	Connaught	Ireland
15.3	22.5	15.7	28.8	20

These figures are from the estimated county-by-county death toll compiled by Mokyr (1983); it approximated that between 1.1 million to 1.5 million deaths occurred in the years 1846–51.⁹ He produced two sets of data based on an upper and lower figure that did reveal not much variation in regional patterns. This anomaly led Ó Gráda (1993) to re-examine the work of Cousens (1960) as it over relied on the unreliable data in the 1851 census.¹⁰ The overall death figures in this census are much too low at 800,000. Two principal reasons account for this: (a) the census format underestimated the true extent of disease and mortality in the ten-year period from 1841; and (b) death and emigration had wiped out entire families, leaving no surviving members to complete and record the census details.

Another problematic area was the descriptions of the diseases given by individuals as the cause of the death of family members, with many knowing little or nothing about the particular disease they were recording.¹¹ The diseases that affected the population fell into two categories: famine-induced diseases and the effects of nutritional deficiency. The greatest mortality occurred from famine-induced ailments. These included cholera, dysentery, influenza, measles, smallpox, tuberculosis and whooping cough. The lesser number perished from pure nutritional deficiency such as starvation, emaciation and dropsy. Yet each exacerbated the other to create pandemics and mass deaths that were aggravated still further by social dislocation. An epidemic of Asiatic cholera dealt a final onslaught to a population already devastated by famine. This infectious disease spread rampantly across Asia and Europe to reach Britain and Ireland by 1849.¹²

The 1851 census collected information on the number who died in each family over a ten-year period from 1841, recording the cause, month and year of death. Its dis-

puted findings were 21,770 deaths from hunger and 400,720 deaths from disease. The commissioners, who conducted the census, acknowledged that the figures were incomplete and that the true number of deaths was certainly higher.¹³ The consensus among contemporary historians is that the Great Famine resulted in the death of approximately one million people through starvation and disease with at least a further million emigrating to foreign lands. This would indicate the population of Ireland experienced a 20% to 25% decline by the mid-nineteenth century.

Opinion had become sharply critical of the Russell government's response to and management of the crisis. There were accusations, from the outset, that the government failed to grasp the magnitude of the catastrophe. Sir James Graham, who had served as a Home Secretary in the earlier Peel government, wrote that 'the real extent and magnitude of the Irish difficulty are underestimated by the Government, and cannot be met by measures within the strict rule of economical science.'¹⁴ The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Clarendon, wrote a letter to Russell on 26 April 1849 urging that the government propose additional relief measures: 'I do not think there is another legislature in Europe that would disregard such suffering as now exists in the west of Ireland, or coldly persist in a policy of extermination.'¹⁵ Also in 1849, the Chief Poor Law Commissioner, Edward Twisleton, resigned in protest over the Rate-in-Aid Act, which provided additional funds for the Poor Law by imposing a 6% levy on all rateable properties in Ireland. Twisleton testified that 'comparatively trifling sums were required for Britain to spare itself the deep disgrace of permitting its miserable fellow subjects to die of starvation.'¹⁶ Gray (1995) points out the British government spent in the region of 7 million pounds for relief in Ireland between 1845 and 1850, which accounted for less than half of one percent of the British gross national product (GNP) over five years. This can be interestingly compared to the 20 million pounds that West Indian slave-owners received as compensation in the 1830s.¹⁷

Nationalist critics maintained that even after the government recognised the scope of the crisis, it failed to take adequate measures to deal with it. The political activist

John Mitchel (1815-1875), one of the leaders of the Young Ireland Movement, writing in 1861, offered the following critical opinion concerning the mid nineteenth-century Irish famine:

I have called it an artificial famine: that is to say, it was a famine which desolated a rich and fertile island that produced every year abundance and superabundance to sustain all her people and many more. The English, indeed, call the famine a dispensation of Providence; and ascribe it entirely to the blight on potatoes. But potatoes failed in like manner all over Europe; yet there was no famine except in Ireland. The British account of the matter, then, is first, a fraud; second, a blasphemy. The Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but the English created the famine.¹⁸

Other social commentators saw reflected the government's attitude to the 'Irish Question' through its response to the tragedy. The first professor of Political Economy at Oxford University, Nassau Senior (1790-1864), who visited Ireland several times (including three visits to the astronomical observatory at Birr, Co. Offaly) and was familiar with Irish problems, argued that no more than one million people would perish in the famine which would make very little difference to the betterment of the Irish population. This is a direct reference to Malthusian theory, popular at the time.¹⁹ Trevelyan (1848), the civil servant with most direct responsibility for the government's handling of the famine, described the catastrophe as 'a direct stroke of an all-wise and all-merciful Providence, which laid bare the deep and inveterate root of social evil.' The famine, he maintained, was the powerful but effectual means by which social amelioration may be possible.

Kinealy (1995) accurately reflects the general historical consensus when she states that 'the major tragedy of the Irish Famine of 1845-52 marked a watershed in modern Irish history. Its occurrence, however, was neither inevitable nor unavoidable.'²⁰ The underlying factors, which gave rise to the famine, were further exacerbated by the inadequacy of the governmental response. She goes on to state that 'the govern-

ment had to do something to help alleviate the suffering, the particular nature of the actual response, especially following 1846, suggesting a more covert agenda and motivation. As the Famine progressed, it became apparent that the government was using its information not merely to help it formulate its relief policies, but also as an opportunity to facilitate various long-desired changes within Ireland. These included population control and the consolidation of property through various means, including emigration... Despite the overwhelming evidence of prolonged distress caused by successive years of potato blight, the underlying philosophy of the relief efforts was that they should be kept to a minimalist level; in fact, they actually decreased as the Famine progressed.²¹

Several writers single out the decision of the government to permit the continued export of food from Ireland as suggestive of the policy-makers attitude. Uris & Uris (2003) maintains that there would have been ample food within Ireland and that the exports of grain and cattle to England continued during the famine.²² The dramatist George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) refers to the dichotomy in *Man and Superman: A Comedy and A Philosophy*:

MALONE: He will get over it all right enough. Men thrive better on disappointments in love than on disappointments in money. I daresay you think that sordid; but I know what I'm talking about. My father died of starvation in Ireland in the black 47. Maybe you've heard of it.

VIOLET: The Famine?

MALONE: [with smouldering passion] No, the starvation. When a country is full of food, and exporting it, there can be no famine. My father was starved dead; and I was starved out to America in my mother's arms. English rule drove me and mine out of Ireland. Well, you can keep Ireland. I and my like are coming back to buy England; and we'll buy the best of it. I want no middle class properties and no middle class women for Hector. That's straightforward isn't

it, like yourself?²³

Great Industrial Exhibitions

It was against this backdrop of decline and deprivation that the British government tried to promote industrialization in Ireland in the years immediately after the famine. It took the form of industrial exhibitions that were organized by individuals and groups anxious to promote the revival of Irish industry. They provided show-cases for new products and encouraged technological innovations. Inspired by the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, Cork hosted the first of these in 1852, which attracted 140,000 visitors making it a reasonable success.

Buoyed by this confidence, a further industrial exhibition took place in Dublin from 12 May – 31 October 1853, and was the largest international event ever held in Ireland. The Irish Industrial Exhibition Building housed the entire fair in the grounds of the Royal Dublin Society at Leinster House in the centre of Dublin. William Dargan (1799-1867) sponsored the entire event; he was a prominent engineer who constructed most of the Irish railways, including the Great Western and Great Southern Railways. He had planned to donate \$100,000 to the effort, but ended up giving four times that sum. The intent of the exhibition was to try and introduce an industrial revolution to Ireland, which was behind some other European countries, especially England.

The 1850s were the most tranquil years in nineteenth-century Ireland. There were initiatives in promoting domestic constitutional politics, but these were generally unsuccessful. It was not until the end of the decade that nationalism as a *tour-de-force* became reinvigorated through such political groups as the Phoenix Clubs, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Fenians.²⁴ It was, therefore, the ideal time for British efforts to shape Ireland to being more in line with Victorian values and goals. Daniel O’Connell’s repeal agitation had ended, the Great Famine had paved the way for agricultural reforms, and attempts at trying to form a Government of Ireland proved futile. Britain, however, was preoccupied throughout that decade

with the Crimean War (1853-55), the Indian Mutiny (1857) and the threat of a French invasion. Yet in spite of these increasingly worrying international concerns, some in Britain viewed the decade as an opportunity to establish a more progressive Ireland which would be freer from sectarianism and nationalism.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert wished for an Ireland that they and their fellow Victorians could comprehend, namely a country that would be dynamic and beautiful rather than backward and tyrannical. Their visit to Ireland in 1853 was in the context of their role as patrons of education, industry and the arts as well as to promote a new kind of vitalization of the rural as a resort from urban living. Ireland could be shaped, they believed, along progressive ideals. The visit of Victoria and Albert to William Dargan's 1853 Dublin Exhibition of Industry and Arts, which was inspired by Prince Albert's Crystal Palace Exhibition in London in 1851 was their way of promoting an Ireland whose interests were commercial and industrial rather than atavistic.

The common view of nineteenth-century Ireland in which the 1830s and 1840s were witness to a brief literary renaissance followed by a period of cultural wasteland until the Anglo-Irish literary revival of the 1890s needs reevaluation to take account of the cultural texture of Irish political life in the mid decades. The promotion of science and arts through exhibitions was a novel form of cultural activity; these became forums for struggles of political ideology. Processions, funerals and mass public rallies were all potent forums for political public theatre. Another even more potent force of the policies of symbol was public statuary. The streets of Dublin became an ideological battleground for the erection of statues to political figures. This contextualizes the controversy that erupted on proposals to erect a statue in Dublin to Prince Albert, who died in 1861.

Prince Albert desired to assist Ireland along lines in accord with his own comprehension of the country. He believed that Catholicism was a superstitious religion and that education might liberate Irish Catholics from their superstitious ways. In

October 1852 he wrote to Lord Derby in connection with Lord Eglington's views on 'national education' in Ireland, a system of education that had been established on multid denominational lines in 1831 by Lord Derby himself, when he was serving as Irish Chief Secretary, but which had eventually regressed into denominational control. Albert noted Eglington's view that national education had failed 'as a system of united education' but he believed that he had succeeded in giving a 'liberal and secular' education to the Roman Catholic population which is beginning to tell on 'their moral and religious state.'²⁵

The Context for the Royal Visit

The years leading up to the 1853 royal visit were a time when the British, without success, tried to reform their governance of Ireland. It was the period when the Catholic Church in Ireland became increasingly antagonistic towards British rule and it grew in poise throughout the 1850s. This was due in no small part to the so-called rights of authority, which were applicable throughout the British Isles. Prince Albert held the view that Ireland was not only in need of improvement, but was also ripe for it. It soon became clear to the prince that the man who should lead Ireland to that improvement was William Dargan, sponsor of the 1853 Dublin Industrial and Arts Exhibition. He seemed to conform to all the Victorian tenets of self-improvement for not long ago he was a common labourer himself, who has raised himself slowly by his own energy and industry ... making him an icon of national anticipation. Prince Albert states:

What he had done has been done in the field of Industry and not of politics or Religion, without the Priest or factitious conspiracy ; with the promise of distant extraordinary advantages, but with immense apparent benefit.²⁶

Dargan gained his prosperity from designing and building roads, canals and railways. He had come from humble beginnings and had acquired his skills from Thomas Telford in England. By 1853 he had built six hundred miles of railway and had specific proposals for several thousand more. He lent as much as UK£100,000

to the Dublin exhibition committee and though he recouped most of it back the project eventually left him UK£20,000 in arrears.²⁷ It was to be an exhibition that principally focused on the work of Irish artists and industrialists. These, unable to be as competitive as their English competitors, focused more on 'ornamentation rather than utility'.²⁸

The exhibition was a source of great pride in nationalist quarters, but it was not going to be as grand a scale as the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851:

... yet we feel confident that, comparing all things ... remembering that one was the work of one of the greatest Sovereigns of Europe, supported by the commercial wealth of a great commercial nation; and that the other will be the work of one man – a Celtic man – we believe that history will pronounce the Irish Exhibition of 1853 to be the more remarkable of the two – a more direct emanation from the genius of industry, and a more marked demonstration of the industrial progress of the age.²⁹

The Illustrated Dublin Exhibition Catalogue introduced the event in the following rather exuberant terms:

We consider the Great Exhibition held in Dublin in the year 1853, as even a larger contribution to the wealth of these kingdoms, than the Great Exhibition which took place in London in the year 1851; and we do not doubt that His Royal Highness Prince Albert, on visiting the Irish Capital, will earnestly rejoice that his indefatigable exertions and enlightened policy - which made that year memorable - have again borne rich fruitage, and again advanced the best interest of his country.

Visitors to the exhibition were impressed with the richness and splendour of the building more than by any of the objects that it exhibited. The critics enjoyed the magnificent building for 'the rapidity with which it was erected, the sufficiency of

its plans and the enormous mass of its carefully worked materials.' It was erected within a year, despite the fact that part of the roof blew off during a storm on Christmas Eve 1852. Exhibition Catalogue describes the architectural design as follows:

Presenting a front to Merrion-square of 300 feet, the main or centre feature of elevation consists of a semicircular projection, which forms the Eastern termination of the Central Hall. This is a noble apartment of 425 feet in length, and 100 feet in height, covered by a semicircular roof trellis ribs, in one span of 100 feet. On each side of the Centre upon trellis ribs, in one span of 100 feet. On each side of the Centre Hall, and running parallel to it for the same length, are two halls 50 feet wide, with domed roofs, similar to that which covers the main nave or hall of the building. The Height from the floor to the roof of each of these halls is 65 feet. They are approached through passages from the Centre Hall. In addition to these three halls are four compartments of 25 feet wide, running the whole length of the building; two are placed between the Centre Hall and the side halls, and two on each side of the latter; divided into sections of 25 feet square, forming convenient divisions for the purposes of classification. Over these compartments are spacious galleries, also running the length of the building, which not only afford increased space for exhibition, but form an agreeable promenade from whence the effect of the three halls may be seen to greater advantage. To the south of the Central Hall, left of the spectator, is a hall devoted to foreign contributions; adjacent to which is the Fine Arts Court, corresponding in position to the Machinery Court. The northern and southern courts have galleries running round them, from which the spectator also looks into the Central Court. The ceiling of the halls being divided into panels formed by the trellis ribs, and the other constructive parts of the building, has allowed ample opportunity for effective decoration. Light is admitted from above in one unbroken and equally distributed body. The construction of the building is strongly marked on the elevation, and forms in fact the ornamental character of the design. There are also external galleries which are attractive features. The mate-

rials of the building are iron, timber and glass.

Some limited Irish industry was exhibited, including the linen and lace industries which had a long tradition in Ireland. Bog wood carvings and Celtic art were showcased, but none of these inspired new commercial opportunities. There were a few exhibits from American companies, such as Colt and Singer. Colt sold 40 pistols to the Irish prison system; but Singer, famed for manufacturing sewing machines, had almost no sales. It was the first World Fair to exhibit fine art paintings. British exhibits were limited to those companies who were seeking markets in Ireland, but these too had little success. The dire poverty of the country determined this negative demise; in fact, it was only during the last month of the event that Dargan convinced the railway companies to offer very cheap combination fares that included an admission ticket that made it possible for some of general Irish populace to come and see the industrial crystal palace in Dublin.

Lord St Germans, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland opened the Dublin Exhibition 12 May 1853 with his address; he had garnered much acclaim in Ireland by expressing his personal opposition to the elimination of the Office of the Lord Lieutenancy.³⁰ Shortly after the opening of the exhibition, St Germans recommended that Dargan receive the honour of a baronetcy. He refused to accept the honour and was lauded by the nationalist press for his action on the grounds that it made his contribution selfless and thus more valued in public esteem.³¹ The refusal did not diminish the interest in him that was becoming evident in royal circles. The *Morning Chronicle* reported that Queen Victoria would visit the exhibition in the company of Prince William of Prussia, later to be the first German emperor and the king of the Belgians.³² On this occasion, the *Freeman's Journal* was warm in its welcome of her visit, whether or not it was a state visit:

No matter how brief the visit, we accept it as a token of her kindness and her reception will be just as cordial in her plain bonnet as if she came with a diamond crown and the aristocracy of England in her train.³³

A minor disagreement arose over whether the visit should be a grand, state occasion and how long it should last, with nationalists arguing that if it would not be a state occasion, it would be viewed as the powerful neighbour just briefly checking in on the 'poor relation'.³⁴ An official announcement was made in early July that the visit would take place between 12 and 16 July.³⁵ On 7 July, the liberal politician Dr. John Gray suggested to the members of Dublin Corporation that in their welcoming address they invite the queen to return for an official state visit on a future occasion.³⁶ He also advised that the content of the speech should not exaggerate Ireland's prosperity or commend the ending of Repeal (agitation) as a victory.³⁷

The Royal Visit

The visit was delayed until the end of August due to illness in the royal family. Prince Albert and Queen Victoria suffered a bout of the measles.³⁸ It was not until 8 AM on 29 August that the royal yacht *Victoria and Albert* sailed into Kingstown near Dublin from Holyhead in Wales to where the royals had travelled by train from central London. The queen was accompanied by Lord Grandville whose ministerial title was Lord President of the Council; but despite the splendour of his title, he was actually a rather junior minister to accompany the monarch on such an important occasion.³⁹ As the yacht sailed into port, the royal family stood on the bridge between the paddle boxes together with Grandville and Rear Admiral Lord Adolphus Fitzclarence, a son of William IV.

The *Nation* was not frosty in its welcome of the queen:

Dublin Flunkeydom is in tears this moment because this English queen will not appear on the streets in the fully glory of imperial state ... All of you who feel that this queen's reign has done much to consummate the conquest of your country by a system of silent, and crafty, and assassin statesmanship; whose houses have given martyrs to Irish freedom in the past; who can recognize in the wasted form of the captive nation the true queen of your hearts and allegiance; who have struggled with our banished patriots; – shun this ovation, and

progress, and procession.⁴⁰

In an apparent rebuke to this statement, the *Freeman's Journal* welcomed the queen's arrival for what it construed as being a non-party political visit:

It is not a political move – a part of state policy – a triumph over fallen men or in mockery of an afflicted people. It is the reverse of all of these. It is a visit of congratulations from a queen to her subjects on the achievement of a great work – a visit of sympathy to the sons of toil – a visit of honour to the progress of industry – and act of royal homage to the mind, the labours, and the recognized greatness of a Celtic man, who, born to no patrimony, made for himself a patrimony which nobles might envy, and earned for himself and his country a worldwide fame by deeds which monarchs might proudly emulate.⁴¹

Accounts of the visit tend to repeat a claim that one million people turned out at Kingstown to see the queen's arrival.⁴² Though the *Freeman's Journal* recorded that the queen was warmly received and the *London Times* that the welcome was 'in every way worthy of a loyal and warm-hearted people', there is no extant record of that number.⁴³ Nevertheless, the welcoming crowd seems to have been rather large.

On this occasion, the train journey took the queen into the city centre at Westland Row. She processed through the streets, once again in her own carriages and thence to the Vice Regal Lodge.⁴⁴ Bad weather prevented a visit to Dargan at Mount Anville, south of the city, on that day. Instead, the queen took a carriage drive through the adjacent Strawberry Beds area. In the evening, twenty-four guests had dinner at the Lodge. She wrote in her diary that 'it put me in mind of four years ago.' In her honour, the city was illuminated by gas light that evening.⁴⁵

The queen came to see and lend her personal support to the exhibition and visited it on each of the days from 30 August to 2 September. This has the immediate effect of boosting considerably the numbers attending the exhibition. These reached 15,207, for example, on 30 August.⁴⁶ On her first visit Victoria, Albert and their two

eldest sons, the Prince Edward (1841-1900), the Prince of Wales, and Prince Alfred (1844-1900), received addresses from the exhibition committee and the Dublin Corporation and viewed the fine arts and Irish antiquities courts. The queen remarked that the 'exhibition buildings [on Leinster Lawn] are ugly on the outside but very fine in the interior.'⁴⁷ She wore a white silk dress, the ribbon of the order of St Patrick, and Irish lace shawl and a pink bonnet. She thought that the best pictures were those loaned by 'Uncle Leopold'.⁴⁸

This first visit occasioned a rather public display of sibling rivalry among the queen's two sons. The exhibition committee had presented bound catalogues to the royal party but did not give one to Prince Alfred. He approached one of the organizers with this plea: 'Mr. Roe, my brother, the Prince of Wales, has been presented with a catalogue, and I can't see why I should not get one.'⁴⁹ One was swiftly ordered and presented to him.

On her second visit the queen saw ceramic work; on her third, machinery, linen, antiquities and Hogan's statue of Hibernia supporting a bust of Lord Cloncurry – who was to die on the day the exhibition closed (31 October 1853); and on her fourth and final visit fabrics and whiskey.⁵⁰ There was a variety of other engagements too during the visit. Prince Albert inspected public baths, workhouses and a lodging house.⁵¹ On 31 August, the two young princes visited Dublin Zoo and the queen attended a military review at the Phoenix Park at the fifteen acres, though during it one cavalryman dislocated his leg.⁵² Bad weather, however, prevented a royal visit to Powerscourt House the next day.

On 2 September, Prince Albert inspected the cavalry at the fifteen acres, the Prince of Wales presented new colours to the boys of the Royal Hibernian Military Academy, and the queen visited Howth Castle via Clontarf – 'famous', she recalled 'for O'Connell's monster meeting, which was dispersed.'⁵³ On 3 September, the final day of the visit, the queen let it be known that the royal visitors 'have spent a delightful week and a quite sorry to leave so soon.'⁵⁴

The visit had gone off rather successfully, apart from two minor incidents. The first was when a 'respectably dressed' man threw a note into the queen's carriage. It was nothing more than a plea to help him recuperate £50 that he had lent to a military officer. The man, a church organist, later confessed that he did not wish to upset or harm the queen in any way.⁵⁵

The second issue concerned the essential boycotting of the visit by the Catholic bishops. They were strongly criticized for their stance by the *Morning Post*, but were more sympathetically viewed by the *Freeman's Journal* which argued that they had spared the queen discomfiture because, under the Ecclesiastical Titles Act, she would have had to have declined to have an audience with them had they decided to use their territorial titles as local ordinaries of their dioceses.⁵⁶ Archbishop Paul Cullen, who had been newly appointed to the archdiocese of Dublin, supported the idea that the Catholic bishops deliver a supportive address to the queen; Archbishop John MacHale of the archdiocese of Tuam promptly rebuked him because he held the view that Irish Catholics should not interfere with their Protestant compatriots during the royal visit.⁵⁷

On the final day in Dublin, the royal family visited the Marlborough Street National Schools, the Glasnevin Model Farm, the Botanical Gardens and Dublin Castle before they left in the afternoon for Kingstown to return to London. 'The queen gazed with evident admiration at the scene, and, as cheer after cheer burst from the people, seemed to be deeply moved at this unmistakable manifestation of the affection of her Irish subjects.'⁵⁸ She stood watching on the deck of the royal yacht for over half an hour as it prepared to sail. 'It was gay fine evening,' she noted in her diary. Prince Albert, with complementary intention, felt the people looked like 'Italian beggars'. The queen reflected on the scene in a more grand milieu when she noted that the 'constant signing, cheering, etc. and the noise that the people made, make me quite imagine one was in a foreign port, in the south.'⁵⁹

The Irish people, according to the newspaper accounts of the day, were supportive

about the royal visit.⁶⁰ The queen herself had shown personal affection for William Dargan, to a degree unusual in the realm of royal etiquette. The *Freeman's Journal* recounted the almost affectionate reception, on her first visit to the exhibition, which the greatest Monarch gave to her greatest subject when he was yesterday presented by her minister. The queen had 'the impulse of a woman possessed of intellect to understand and of heart to appreciate what William Dargan had achieved.'⁶¹

The queen cut short her visit to the exhibition that day in order to pay a visit to Dargan's home that bad weather had prevented the day before. This visit was significant in that it was the first ever visit paid by the queen to a commoner.⁶² The queen found Dargan to be of a modest and simple demeanour. She wanted to bestow on him a royal honour, but he declined to accept any royal title.⁶³ She was so enthusiastic that she was almost forgetful of her royal title when in the presence of William Dargan. She sat in Mrs. Dargan's chair at the exhibition at the latter's request, and on her return to Kingstown she personally thanked Sir John Benson, the architect of the exhibition buildings that housed the fair.⁶⁴

For Victoria and Albert, William Dargan was the model of a new kind of Irishman and leader. 'Mr. Dargan is a man of the people. He is a simple unobtrusive, retiring man, a thorough Irishman.' Both of them recorded a story that the Duke of Leinster told them over dinner on 1 September. His cabman had told him that Dargan 'has put plenty of money in our pockets and never took any out of them.' This was as a reference to Daniel O'Connell and the 'repeal rent' that his supporters were obliged to pay.

Prince Albert was pleased that Daniel O'Connell was now somewhat forgotten about. A proof of this was when his library and furniture had been recently put up for auction, hardly a bidder could be found to take an interest in purchasing some relic of the great liberator. The Catholic clergy was also somewhat discredited. The fact that the potato disease and famine occurred without the Catholic priests being able to prevent it helped to break the popular spell of superstition that they were

entrusted with the power of God.⁶⁵

Queen Victoria had considered Ireland ‘wonderfully improved’ since her first visit:

There is a great inclination amongst the people to apply themselves to industry and to foster this, the Exhibition will be of great use. It had raised the feeling of enterprise amongst the people, showing them that if they try, they can succeed. Mr. Dargan’s own life story they are inclined to study and reflect upon.⁶⁶

The *Times* thought that the queen’s visit to the exhibition was destined to inaugurate the new era of prosperity that would open up the county. The *Morning Post* judged that the visit was a closing of the door on one sort of Irish past:

The jargon with which the few remaining traders in sedition seek to keep up a blind animosity against all things English has long lost its influence, and the trash and humbug of the agitator will vanish rapidly as the successful enterprise of such men as Dargan increases the intercourse and identifies the interests of Ireland with those of the rest of her Majesty’s dominions.

However, it went on to be savagely scathing about the people of rural Ireland:

To the great mass of the people, the very elements of civilization and progress still wanting. They have not made the first steps of an advancing race even in the manufacture of food. The lazy root is their bone. When that fails them their resource is flight. The loss of the potato should have taught them to grow wheat and to bake bread. It has only driven them to emigration.⁶⁷

The *Freeman’s Journal*, while not sharing any of the above rather simplistic and biased criticisms, warned that the future of economic progress in Ireland was not the easy course that it seemed to be in the light of the success of the exhibition:

We hope that those who have adopted the cry [for industrial progress] will not use it as a mere parrot cry ... but will set themselves to work in good sober earnest – ascertain what are the impediments to industrial progress and remove them with all convenient dispatch, in order that industry may flourish and bring happiness and comfort to the poor man's home while giving fame and wealth to the nation.⁶⁸

The overall estimated attendance figure was officially recorded as 1,156,232. This rather modest turnout by the public reduced the income from admission fees leading to a financial deficit of approximately 9,000 Pounds which contributed in no small part to the eventual bankruptcy of William Dargan. These rather modest attendance figures were attributed to the fact the ordinary Irish folk could not identify with much of the technology of the time; similar fairs in New York and London in the same year also overshadowed the Dublin event.

As events unfolded, industrial progress proved to be as false a future for most of the Irish economy as life without nationalism was for Irish politics. The failure of one version of Albertine Ireland, an Ireland of economic and industrial prosperity, was poignantly encapsulated in the fate of its icon, William Dargan. After the exhibition, he went on to invest his money in a flax-growing project that failed. He then established mills in and around Dublin and these too did not prosper. He finally returned to building railways and was seriously injured in a fall from a horse in 1866; he died of his injuries one year later. His impoverished widow was left to rely on a civil list pension of £100 per year that she was given in 1870.⁶⁹

After the visit to Ireland, the royal couple returned to a Britain troubled by the outbreak of war between Turkey and Russia. Britain was eventually to become involved on the side of Turkey in what became the Crimean War. Nothing was yet certain in the autumn of 1853, however, expect that there was a tense political atmosphere exacerbated by the resignation of the popular and pro-Turkish Palmerston from the cabinet in mid-December. Prince Albert, by contrast, labelled

pro-Russian saw his public popularity diminish.

On 30 December 1853, the *Freeman's Journal* published an open letter to Prince Albert from the distinguished and eminently popular Irish preacher Dr. D. W. Cahill.⁷⁰ It ranged over a large number of topics. 'Why should anyone dare to compare the drunken profligacy of Oxford and Cambridge with the spotless character of our [Irish] catholic colleges?' he asked at one point in the letter. Further on in the text he offered the view that 'I could love England, if she would only do justice to the administration of law in Ireland'. The main reason for the letter was political. Cahill thought that the Aberdeen government was good for Ireland and that Palmerston should stay out of government, especially the foreign office, because he hated Catholicism. Although Cahill referred to Albert as 'a spectator, not an actor, in British policy' – it was clear that he considered the prince adhered to his views on Palmerston and foreign policy. By the time of Queen Victoria's third visit to Ireland in 1862, Ireland was becoming an increasing nationalist place fuelled by land rights for the peasant class and the ever-increasing influence of the Catholic Church in that struggle.

Conclusions

The population of Ireland was demographically changed and changing in 1853. For the first time, there was emerging a sizable Irish Diaspora, especially in the U.S. and Canada, and this was raising an international consciousness with a nationalist bias on the consequences of British rule in Ireland. By the end of the 1850s, this had evolved into a significant tour de force that was gathering momentum. The true effects of depopulation caused by the Great Famine were emerging from the national census of 1851 and the social historians of the day were beginning to offer public commentary. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert would have been acutely aware that the effects of the famine were no longer a domestic matter but something that had shifted on to the world stage with empathy for those who were victims of this catastrophe. The British government had to be seen to be making some positive efforts to help the Irish, and the royal visit to the Great Industrial Exhibition of 1853 in

Dublin afforded an excellent opportunity to support the modernization of Ireland through technological progress.

Was the visit a success and what did it achieve? Similar to the 1849 visit, the visit per se was a success. The royals were graciously welcomed and received by the people of Dublin and the organizing officials of the exhibition. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert showed genuine interest in and support for what William Dargan was aiming to achieve, namely to develop a modernized, industrial Ireland. However, this was not to materialize. Staging the event practically bankrupted Dargan and his subsequent business enterprises in and around Dublin failed. He died in 1867 from injuries he received one year previously due to a fall from a horse. The language of the official brochures and catalogues, though adhering to the flowery English prose style of the day, was, despite this, still a little too exuberant, if not pure exaggeration; in other words, the expectations of the Great Industrial Exhibition of 1853 far outweighed its actuality; it was more about rhetoric than practical achievement.

There were other more general considerations too. A nationalism rooted in Catholicism was becoming an ever-burgeoning political force to contend with in the years following the visit. This had at its core a rural and peasant ideology that directly pitted itself against industrial and urban progressivism. The British Empire had expanded to cover approximately 25% of the landmass of the earth during the mid nineteenth century. With this spreading out came problems that were not just confined to Ireland; for example, the Crimean War put a major stretch on the resources of the British government. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had to focus their attention on multiple fronts, of which their nearest colony, Ireland, was just one piece in a much wider picture.

The 1853 royal visit to Ireland, though essentially private in structure and tone, was an unquestionable success as staged and organized. It passed off without any major security breach, the royal party received a warm welcome and the queen, in particular, displayed an exuberance and vitality that not only endeared her to William

Dargan and his organizing officials but also to the ordinary people who turned out to see and greet her. As to its overall and longer-term benefits, this is much more uncertain. Ireland did not industrialize along the intended lines of the Great Industrial Exhibition mainly because the burgeoning nationalism preferred to embrace a rural, peasant ideology. Economic progress, which would have benefited the greater good, became secondary to political movements that propagated independence from British rule. These movements regarded the industrialization of Ireland as increasing British influence in the affairs of Ireland and promoted a rural ideology as a counterbalance. Therefore, while the visit as a contemporaneous event was a success, the climate of political change that was enveloping rendered it no practical or lasting effectiveness. This historic royal visit did little to shape the direction of Irish history in the years that followed. If it did have a lasting effect, perhaps it was that it helped further energize the nationalist cause to oppose British rule in Ireland.

Endnotes

1. There are extensive publications on the Great Irish Famine (*an Gorta Mór*) (1845-48); the most significant of these are cited in the Bibliography. For a discussion on slavery, see Willians (1944; repr. 1994).
2. Bennett (1852), p. 26.
3. MacArthur (1951), p. 6.
4. Fry (1889), p. 46.
5. Kennedy, Ell, Crawford and Clarkson (1999), p. 106.
6. For a detailed discussion on the statistical analysis, see Killen (2003) and Vaughan & Fitzpatrick (1978).
7. Foster (1988), p. 324; Lee (1973), p. 1.
8. Lee (1973), p. 2.
9. Mokyř (1983), pp. 266-7.
10. See Ó Gráda (1993), pp. 138-44.
11. On the medical history of the famine, see Levi-Bacci (1991) and McArthur (1956).
12. See Kennedy, Ell, Crawford & Clarkson (1999), p. 104.
13. See Killen (1995), pp. 250-2; Kinealy (1994), pp. 167, 254-60. The 1851 Census of Ireland is extant only in fragment form at the National Archives of Ireland because of fire damage in 1922 during the Irish Civil War.
14. See Kinealy (1995), p. 80.
15. See Woodham-Smith (1991), p. 204.

16. See Kinealy (1995), pp. 254-60.
17. For a detailed analysis on famine relief, see Gray (1995).
18. Mitchell (1861), p. 219.
19. On the life and works of Nassau W. Senior, see S. Leon Levy (1943) and Leon Levy (1970). Malthusian theory was devised by Thomas Robert Malthus (1766 - 1834) was a British scholar, Influential in political economy and demography, see Petersen (1979; 2nd edn. 1999).
20. Kinealy (1995), p. xv.
21. *ibid.*, p. 353.
22. Uris & Uris (2003), p. 16.
23. Shaw (1904; repr. 1929), Act IV, p. 150.
24. The term 'Fenians' also refers to the American Fenian Movement.
25. 'Prince Albert to Lord Darby, 26 October 1852' in Martin (1875-1880) 2, pp. 476-7.
26. 'Prince Albert, Memorandum, 28 September 1853' in RA D /21 86.
27. Lee (1909) 5, p. 504.
28. See Goldstrom & Clarkson (1981), p. 258.
29. *FJ*, 21 October 1852.
30. *FJ*, 8, 18 February 1983. For an in-depth discussion on the Dublin Industrial Exhibition of 1853, see Litvack & Hooper (2000), esp. pp. 15-57, 66-86.
31. *FJ*, 21 May 1853.
32. *FJ*, 21 May 1853.
33. *FJ*, 25 May 1853.
34. *FJ*, 2 July 1853.
35. *FJ*, 6 July 1853.
36. John Gray was gaining in considerable stature in Ireland as a Liberal politician holding moderate nationalist views.
37. *FJ*, 8 July 1853.
38. *FJ*, 9 July 1853; RA QVJ, 3 July 1853. 'Prince Albert to Lord Aberdeen, July 1853' in Conacher (1968), p. 126.
39. This was a break with protocol, see Strachey & Fulford (1939) vo. 6, p. 441.
40. *Nation*, 27 August 1853.
41. *FJ*, 29 August 1853.
42. See Lee (1909), p. 235.
43. *FJ*, 30 August 1853; *Times*, 31 August 1853.
44. *FJ*, 27 August 1853.
45. RA QVJ, 29 August 1853.
46. *FJ*, 31 August 1853.
47. RA QVJ, 30 August 1853.
48. *ibid.*
49. *FJ*, 5 September 1853.
50. *FJ*, 1, 2, 3 September 1853.
51. *FJ*, 31 August 1853.
52. *FJ*, 1 September 1853.
53. RA QVJ, 2 September 1853.

54. *FJ*, 5 September 1853.
55. *FJ*, 5 September 1853.
56. *FJ*, 9 September 1853.
57. See Larkin (1980), p. 207.
58. *FJ*, 5 September 1853.
59. RA QVJ, 30 August, 3 September 1853.
60. *Times*, 1 September 1853.
61. *FJ*, 31 August 1853.
62. *ibid.*
63. RA QVJ, 30 August 1853.
64. *FJ*, 5 September 1853.
65. RA D/21 86, 'Prince Albert, memorandum, 28 September 1853'.
66. RA QVJ, 1 September 1853.
67. *Times*, 2 September 1853; *Morning Post*, 2 September 1853.
68. *FJ*, 5 September 1853.
69. Lee (1909) 5, p. 505.
70. *FJ*, 22 April 1853.

Abbreviations

ed./eds	editor/editors
edn.	edition
esp.	especially
<i>FJ</i>	<i>Freeman's Journal</i>
RA QVJ	Royal Archives Queen Victoria's Journal
RA D	Royal Archives Document
p/pp	page/pages
repr.	reprinted

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