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'The Evils Which Have Arisen in My Country': Mary Power Lalor and Active Female Landlordism during the Land Agitation[1*]

Andrew G. Newby

The British journalist and author, Frederic Whyte, reminisced fondly about his childhood trips to County Tipperary, presenting an idealistic image of Mary Frances Power Lalor, one of the most active of Irish landowners during the later Victorian period.[2]

> Almost all my Irish holidays included visits to the homes of cousins in Co. Tipperary: to the Ryans of Inch, near Thurles, and to the Power Lalors of Long Orchard, near Templemore. Tall, handsome Mary Power Lalor … looked like an exceptionally distinguished duchess and was a most notable personage in the troubled Ireland of the 'eighties and the 'nineties. I doubt whether anyone on the landlord side can have won more esteem and admiration from the Nationalists.[3]

Through a biographical overview of Mary Power Lalor, this article highlights various interlinked themes in the economic, social and political life of late Victorian Ireland. First, it demonstrates the active role played by some proprietors in pursuing what they presented as a progressive agenda for the development of Ireland and the Irish people. At the same time, the interplay of philanthropy and self-help advocated by some members of the gentry served a conservative function in maintaining the established social order. This 'cultural philanthropy' doubled as a prophylactic against agrarian radicalism and by extension, in the Irish case, political separatism.[4] The kind

[1] This paper was originally presented at the 'Landlords, Tenants and their Estates in Ireland' conference, NUI Galway, September 2013. I am grateful to colleagues for their feedback on that occasion, subsequent anonymous reviewers, and particularly to Ciara Breathnach and Brian Casey for valuable comments.

[2] For a brief biography of Whyte, see his obituary in *Times* (London), 15 May 1941.

[3] Frederic Whyte, *A Bachelor's London: Memoirs of the Day before Yesterday, 1889–1914* (London, 1931), 109–10.

[4] Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth–Century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995), 61; Seán Beattie refers to the phenomenon of 'cultural philanthropy'. See Seán

of active landlordism demonstrated by Mary Power Lalor promoted a happy accommodation between the classes and sought to limit the type of social dislocation that could aid radical anti-landlord organisations.

Second, Mary Power Lalor represented a particular type of Victorian landowner, from the ranks below the aristocracy, who engaged with the developing bourgeois civic sphere. In addition to her charitable work, particularly with the Irish Distressed Ladies Fund, Mary Power Lalor was a highly visible presence in the attempt to develop industrial and technical education in Ireland in the 1880s and 1890s.[5] Women might not have been welcome in the 'unsuitable' sphere of party politics, but their increased participation in other social initiatives can be framed as 'political' acts in a broader sense.[6]

Third, Power Lalor's public pronouncements and private acts illustrate the complexities of national identity in Victorian Ireland. Despite the 'esteem and admiration' which Power Lalor may have received from some Nationalists, there were various points of turmoil during her life, underlining the impact of national politics on local landlord-tenant relations. As a proud, Catholic, Irishwoman, whose life was nevertheless securely anchored within the British imperial system, Power Lalor demonstrates that national identity in nineteenth-century Ireland was not always as polarised between 'unionist' and 'nationalist' as might be assumed. Her work in the civic sphere arguably marks her as a 'unionist nationalist', to adapt Graeme Morton's phrase describing nineteenth-century Scotland.[7] She sought to harness a sense of national identity among the Irish people, which she hoped in turn would create enthusiastic supporters of, and contributors to, the British state and British Empire.

Beattie, 'Female Cultural Philanthropy: Alice Hart and the Donegal Industrial Fund, 1883–1900' in Virginia Crossman and Peter Gray (eds), *Poverty and Welfare in Ireland 1838–1948* (Dublin, 2011), 163-74. Cf. Philip McEvansoyena, 'Cultural Philanthropy in mid-Nineteenth-Century Ireland' in Laurence M. Geary and Oonagh Walsh (eds), *Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2014), 210–24.

[5] Mary Pierse, 'From Lace-Making to Activism: The Resourcefulness of Campaigning Women Philanthropists' in Laurence M. Geary and Oonagh Walsh (eds), *Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2014), 198–209.

[6] D. A. J. MacPherson, *Women and the Irish Nation: Gender, Culture and Irish Identity, 1890–1914* (London, 2012), 9-17. See also *Freeman's Journal*, 2 June 1862, 28 April 1863, 22 June 1872.

[7] Graeme Morton, *Unionist Nationalism: Governing Urban Scotland 1830–1860* (East Linton, 1999). Alvin Jackson has argued that 'treated with appropriate caution, the phenomenon of "unionist nationalism" is meaningful for the Irish, and perhaps more meaningful than has generally been understood within Irish historiography'. Alvin Jackson, *The Two Unions: Ireland, Scotland and the United Kingdom, 1707–2007* (Oxford, 2012), 137.

Mary Power Lalor's Background & Early Life

Mary Ryan was born in 1840 at Inch, County Tipperary, into a 'Milesian Roman Catholic' landowning family.[8] Her father, George Ryan, held several prominent positions in the locality at various times, including High Sheriff of Tipperary and Chair of the Board of Guardians for Thurles.[9] Ryan was also mooted as a potential candidate for the representation of Tipperary in 1844, when he was described as a 'Repealer, no doubt', but one who was 'no mob orator … and, notwithstanding his religion … no great favourite with their reverences of the agitating school'.[10] He faced 'invective and abuse' in 1851 for his refusal to ally himself to the Catholic agitation against the Ecclesiastical Tithes Bill, an early example to the young Mary of the tension that could arise between tenants and a Catholic landowner.[11] Her mother, Catherine (née Whyte), came originally from Loughbrickland in County Down.[12] She was a patron of local charities, and seems to have had a considerable influence on Mary's later perspectives on self-help, education and philanthropy.[13] Folk memory later presented these two ladies as having 'practically saved a whole district in the north of Ireland from starvation during the terrible famine of 1847', and the same source notes that they had also instigated 'various industrial schemes in the south of Ireland'.[14] The Ryans' contribution in 1847 had been to establish a lace and crochet school, which in turn had provided an income for the workers, allowing them to offset, at least partially, the effects of famine.[15]

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[8] Edward Walford, *The County Families of the United Kingdom* (London, 1860), 560.

[9] *Waterford News*, 17 November 1848, 1 April 1864. A Roman Catholic fulfilling this role in nineteenth-century Ireland is significant. For the Poor Law's history and implementation, see Virginia Crossman, *Local Government in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Belfast, 1994); Virginia Crossman, *Poverty and the Poor Law in Ireland, 1850–1914* (Liverpool, 2013).

[10] *Dublin Evening Packet & Correspondent*, 17 December 1844.

[11] *Times* (London), 2 June, 9 June 1851.

[12] Draft Marriage Settlement between George Ryan, Inch, and Catherine Whyte, eldest daughter of the late commander Edmund Whyte, RN, Dublin 23 May 1839. Boole Library, University College Cork (hereafter UCC), Ryan of Inch Papers, IE BL/EP/R/56.

[13] *Waterford News*, 24 April 1857.

[14] *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 24 January 1892; *Logansport Journal,* 14 February 1892. This type of activity was reflective of the period, and for example 1847 had seen the establishment of the Ladies' Industrial Society for Ireland for the Encouragement of Remunerative Labour among the Peasantry. See Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 189; Bernadette Whelan, *Women and Paid Work in Ireland, 1500–1930* (Dublin, 2000), 75.

[15] *Logansport Journal*, 14 February 1892.

In 1858 Mary was presented to the Viceregal Court of the 7th earl of Carlisle, and in October 1858, at the age of eighteen, she married Captain Edmund Power Lalor, scion of the Long Orchard estate in Templetuohy, a short distance from Inch.[16] Nevertheless, despite family matters taking some precedence, it was noted that 'after her marriage [she took] an increasing interest in the industrial questions affecting her native land'.[17] Mary was presented to the Papal Court in 1859, and during her time in Rome she was greatly admired for 'her unusual beauty and a singular fascination of manner'.[18] At the Viceregal Court in Dublin, too, she seems to have been appreciated as a 'beautiful lady of rank, wealth and fashion'.[19] In common with many of her peers, she combined rural and urban lifestyles, and moved effortlessly between her family seat at Long Orchard, and the gentrified metropolitan circles of both Dublin and London.[20]

The 1860s signalled a shift in landlord-tenant relations in Tipperary, a local manifestation of increasing lower-class political participation throughout Ireland.[21] As a prominent county magistrate and Catholic landlord, Edmund Power Lalor was accused of exacerbating tensions after the Fenian Rising of 1867, with the local priest of Templetuohy, Father Foley, claiming that Power Lalor had diverted all the local police resources to guarding Long Orchard, creating a climate of suspicion and fear and leaving the rest of the locality unprotected.[22] Power Lalor, with patrician confidence belying his elaborate and extensive security arrangements, claimed that that Fenianism was 'wholly without support from the farming class'. This contention was seriously

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[16] Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland* (4th ed.; 2 Vols; London, 1863), II, 828. It might be suggested that any Repealist sympathies Mary may have inherited from her father were strengthened further through her marriage. Edmund Power Lalor was the stepson of Richard Lalor Sheil, the erstwhile ally of Daniel O'Connell, MP and co-founder of the Catholic Association.

[17] *Logansport Journal*, 14 February 1892.

[18] Fonsie Mealy Auctioneers, *The Chatsworth Fine Art Sale – October 8th 2013* (Castlecomer, 2013), 60. A portrait of Mary Power Lalor, painted during her time in Rome, was sold at auction for €2,900 in September 2013.

[19] *Freeman's Journal*, 8 July 1869.

[20] *Irish Times*, 27 February 1865, 2 June 1866, *Irish Times*, 7 April 1886; *Belfast Newsletter*, 4 February 1881.

[21] For an overview of the situation in Tipperary, see James O'Shea, *Priests, Politics and Society in Post-Famine Ireland: A Study of County Tipperary 1850–1891* (Dublin, 1983), 136–75.

[22] *Times* (London), 28 March 1867.

challenged in the following years.[23] The Power Lalors witnessed at first-hand the growing tension in the county during the Clonmel elections of 1869 and 1870, which resulted first in an invalid return of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, and subsequently an exceptionally close contest between the former Fenian prisoner, Tipperaryman Charles Kickham, and a Liberal Catholic candidate, Denis Caulfield Heron.[24] After the count, which Heron won by four votes, Power Lalor was surrounded by a crowd – enraged by his support for Heron – and knocked from his horse, before an intervention from the cavalry allowed him to escape. Perhaps over-confident in the security of landlord-tenant relations, it was reported that, as a 'popular magistrate' he had 'considered himself safe among the people who knew him so well'.[25] The stubborn belief that any deterioration in landlord-tenant relations was a temporary aberration, and that the best means of progress for the Irish peasantry was to work under the guidance of benevolent landowners rather than be seduced by the promises of extremist agitators, would also a constant theme in Mary Power Lalor's work.[26]

Various personal tragedies afflicted Long Orchard in the 1860s and 1870s. The Power Lalors' first child died as an infant in 1860, and three daughters died during the 1870s. A male heir, George, was born in August 1864,[27] but Mary Power Lalor was left a widow after Edmund's death in 1873.[28] These family traumas can be read as another factor behind her devotion to charitable work, and particularly her focus on children's welfare.[29] As was increasingly the fashion among women of her class, Mary Power Lalor engaged with various charitable

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[23] *Times* (London), 20 March 1867. More generally in Tipperary, see William E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994), 178, 185,

[24] Gerard Moran, 'The Fenians and Tipperary Politics, 1868-1880', *Tipperary Historical Journal*, 8 (1994), 73-90. See also 'The Twins of Tipperary', *Punch*, 12 March 1870.

[25] *Times* (London), 2 March 1870.

[26] Again, this reflected a much broader mindset among some gentry / aristocrats. Patrick Maume has alluded to Lady Aberdeen's 'nostalgic image of paternal chieftains ruling over faithful retainers'. Patrick Maume, 'Lady Microbe and the Kailyard Viceroy: The Aberdeen Viceroyalty, Welfare Monarchy, and the Politics of Philanthropy' in Peter Gray and Olwen Purdue (eds), *The Irish Lord Lieutenancy c. 1541–1922* (Dublin, 2012), 201.

[27] Francis C. Burnand, *Catholic Who's Who and Yearbook* (London, 1908), 331.

[28] Noted on Darryl Lundy's website *The Peerage: A Genealogical Survey of the Peerage in Britain as well as the Royal Families of Europe,* http://www.thepeerage.com/p38082.htm#c380811.2 [accessed 14 June 2013].

[29] The marriage of her eldest daughter, Mary, in September 1879, at a ceremony presided over by Archbishop Croke, also coincided with Mary Power Lalor's emergence into public life. *Waterford News*, 5 September 1879.

societies.[30] She also took the role of benevolent patrician over her tenants in Templeorchard, not least in organising fund-raising for the construction of a parish church in Templetuohy.[31] Although – in the context of her noted philanthropic endeavours – she frequently claimed in later life to be strictly apolitical, party politics was a part of her family life. Her father's short-lived idea to run as a Repeal candidate for Tipperary in 1844 was not realised, but her son-in-law, William Gervase de la Poer, unsuccessfully contested Waterford East as a Conservative in 1885.[32] Her brother (and land agent) George E. Ryan[33] of Inch fought the 1885 election in Mid-Tipperary election in 1885, where as a Unionist he suffered a heavy defeat to the Parnellite candidate.[34]

New York Herald Relief Fund

In the midst of the Land War (1879–82), Mary Power Lalor collaborated in what was, at the time, her largest-scale philanthropic project. It is perhaps too harsh a judgement to claim that she was a local embodiment of London's 'coercion and conciliation' policies, but coupled with her strong desire to assist among the Irish poor, develop local industry and promote Ireland on a national (sub-imperial) scale came a steadfast refusal to surrender to the social and political revolution planned by the Land League. In an interview given a decade later, her philosophy seems symptomatic of the period: 'I am entirely against giving help to the Irish peasant, except in the shape of work. I believe in helping people to help themselves, and except to the very old or and very young any other help is a degradation.'[35]

In the case of the early 1880s crisis – a renewed threat of famine caused by bad harvests and high prices – it was the very young to whom Power Lalor paid the most attention, organising the Dublin Committee of the *New York Herald*'s 'Relief Fund'.[36] Although it was reported that Mary Power Lalor spent

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30 *Irish Times*, 18 July 1878, 13 October 1880, 20 January 1882.

31 *Freeman's Journal*, 5 June 1871, 30 November 1872.

32 *Waterford News*, 4 December 1885.

33 Trustees Accounts & Rental Ledgers of Longorchard Estate, including 'disbursements by Mrs Power Lalor and George Ryan'. UCC, Ryan of Inch Papers, IE BL/EP/R/3/8 763, 764, 766.

34 December 1885: T. Mayne (H.R.) 3,805; G. E. Ryan (C), 255. G. F. R. Barker, *Historical and Political Handbook* (London, 1886), 270. Mark Tierney, *Croke of Cashel: The Life of Archbishop Thomas William Croke*, 1823–1902 (Dublin, 1976), 183.

35 Sarah A. Tooley, 'Ladies of Dublin' in *The Woman at Home: Annie S. Swan's Magazine*, 5 (1896), 837; Crossman, *Poverty and the Poor Law*, 61.

36 *Freeman's Journal*, 8 July 1880; *Irish Times*, 29 July 1880. Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History 1780–1939* (Oxford, 1995), 252.

some of her 'private fortune'[37] during the *New York Herald*'s relief programme, her primary role was in utilising the varied networks with which she had become involved in the previous decades, raising funds but also managing the distribution of the American money among the needy.[38] This included close liaison with the two other large-scale relief schemes that had been established: the Lord Mayor of Dublin's 'Mansion House Committee', and the Viceregal fund under the patronage of the duchess of Marlborough.[39] Even at this point, Power Lalor was described as 'one of the most philanthropic of Irish ladies, a woman whose benevolent enterprises are well-known both here and in America', and her work was supported by leading members of the Catholic hierarchy such as John MacHale, archbishop of Tuam.[40] There were also opponents of the scheme, notably Denis Kearney, the Cork-born San Francisco labour organiser, who claimed it represented 'English interests' seeking 'to detract from the credit of Parnell's relief movement'.[41] The fact that Parnell had reacted to the Mansion House and Marlborough funds by instigating a Land League-operated 'Irish Famine Relief Fund', and that there were stark tensions between these groups, underlines that philanthropy could be used as part of the battle for Irish national identity.[42]

The philosophy of helping people to help themselves was by this stage a well-worn mantra of the ruling classes, and extended well beyond Ireland into Europe and European Empires.[43] Power Lalor put these ideas into practice, and insisted repeatedly that with long-term planning, and improvements to national infrastructure, Ireland's economy could be strengthened to avoid the

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[37] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 24 March 1880.

[38] *Appendices to the Forty-Seventh Report of Commissioners of National Education in Ireland For the Year 1880* (Dublin, 1881), C. 2925. Appendix B, 85.

[39] Susan Hayes Ward, *George H. Hepworth – Preacher, Journalist, Friend of the People: The Story of His Life* (New York, 1903), 197; *Graphic*, 27 March 1880.

[40] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 24 March 1880.

[41] *Sacramento Daily Union*, 9 February 1880.

[42] Merle Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad* (new ed.) (New Brunswick, 1988), 86–8. Parnell also claimed to William O'Brien that 'the government is going to fight the famine – or is it the League? – from behind the duchess' (Marlborough) petticoats'. Roy F. Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life* (Oxford, 1981), 51. Arthur Griffith later complained that 'Lady Aberdeen's interest in our health … and Lady Londonderry's interest in our industries, are part of the game … when Irish people are asked to regard as a philanthropist a foreign lady for whose board and lodging they are compelled to pay, we presume they may shrug their shoulders'. *Sinn Féin*, 25 January 1908. Quoted in Maume, 'Lady Microbe and the Kailyard Viceroy', 200.

[43] Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 2008), 144.

recurrent threat of famine, without recourse to emigration or intervention from London. In the distribution of the *New York Herald* funds, Power Lalor instigated a system of school meals, which ensured that children received 'a wholesome breakfast' of a 'large slice of bread and a pint of milk'.[44] Not only would this reverse what was seen as a disastrous fall in national school attendance, it would prevent a repeat of the long-term harm done to the physical condition of those born in the 1840s.[45] After 'six months of unremitting work', the fund was dissolved at the end of July 1880, and alongside a detailed account of its income and expenditure, the committee placed on record its admiration for 'the zeal, tact and capability which Mrs Power Lalor had displayed during the continuance of her arduous labours'.[46]

Land War and Boycotting

Irrespective of the high regard in which 'Miss Mary' may have been held by the tenantry on her familial estate at Inch, the Land War period saw several points of conflict with her tenants in Long Orchard, as well as interventions in neighbouring estates.[47] These incidents demonstrate a proprietrix with a firm determination to uphold the established social order, a determination that was seen later in her work with the Irish Distressed Ladies' Fund (established in 1886, and discussed in greater detail below).

In early 1881 Mary Power Lalor had been publicly thanked by a group of her tenants for maintaining low rents and not following up on arrears.[48] This was not a universal policy on the part of the estate, however, and in August that year, Power Lalor evicted a tenant, Edmund Burke of Barnalisheen, on the grounds of continued non-payment of rent.[49] The role of her own retainers in destroying the roof of the Burke cottage also added to the symbolism

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[44] Ward, *George H. Hepworth*, 203–4. Mary Power Lalor's final report (*New York Herald*, 13 September 1880), claims that the breakfast scheme was employed in twenty-four counties, most notably in Galway (9,700 children assisted), Cork (8,438), Kerry (8,187), and Mayo (5,875).

[45] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 24 March 1880; Ward, *George H. Hepworth*, 203-4; *Appendices to the Forty-Seventh Report of Commissioners of National Education in Ireland for the Year 1880* (Dublin, 1881), C. 2925. Appendix B, 85.

[46] *New York Herald*, 13 September 1880.

[47] Tooley, 'Ladies of Dublin', 837–8.

[48] *Freeman's Journal*, 9 February 1881.

[49] *Irish Times*, 18 August 1881; William J. Hayes, 'Land, Church and Politics at the End of the Nineteenth Century' in William J. Hayes, *Moyne–Templetuohy A Life Of Its Own: The Story of a Tipperary Parish* (3 Vols, Tipperary, 2001), II, 209–10.

of the event, and created resentment among other tenants.[50] The following Sunday, members of the local Land League branches occupied Power Lalor's pew in the church at Templetuohy. The priest, Father Power, and his curate, Father Graham, apparently sided with the tenants rather than the landowners – warning Power Lalor that 'bloodshed' would ensue if she attempted to take her regular seat in the church. Instead, Power Lalor and her household were provided with 'safe' seats within the altar rails.[51] Power Lalor's daughter was also removed from her usual role of church harmonium player, until the tension subsided. The priests took the Land League's side not only within the church but also in the League's efforts to build a new house for Burke and his family, leading the *Tipperary Advocate* to proclaim that 'the chapel bell was tolled as the death-knell of slavery and landlord oppression'.[52] The long-term effects of the church boycott are also unclear, but in the short-term there were attempts to supplant her from the board of the local National School, and she established an oratory in her own house, requesting a personal chaplain to be provided by Archbishop Croke.[53] Other inconveniences included Long Orchard staff being unable to have their horses shod, or being able to obtain general supplies in Templetuohy.[54]

Power Lalor retaliated, however.[55] She established a small shop in her yard, using supplies from the Dublin Co-Operative Store, which had the effect of undercutting other local shopkeepers.[56] In Spring 1882, the Land League sought to prevent work on the neighbouring estate at Lisheen Castle, and it was Mary Power Lalor who provided the workforce from Templeorchard to ensure that basic husbandry tasks were undertaken.[57] This implies that although her relations with tenants on her estate had become strained, her own workers (or her 'plucky men', as she called them) remained loyal. She attempted to undermine the work of the Land League in a much more direct

[50] Hayes, 'Land, Church and Politics', 209.

[51] *Irish Times*, 18 August 1881.

[52] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 19 August 1881. Marcus Tanner, *Ireland's Holy Wars: The Struggle for a Nation's Soul, 1500-2000* (New Haven, 2001), 254.

[53] Mark Tierney, 'A Short-Title Calendar of the Papers of Archbishop Thomas William Croke in Archbishop's House, Thurles: Part 1, 1841–1885', *Collectanea Hibernica*, 13 (1970), 127.

[54] Hayes, 'Land, Church and Politics', 210.

[55] The report of a specially convened meeting of the Irish National League in 1890 reinforces the impression that Power Lalor was a proprietor who would reduce rents to a particular, general level, but would not then engage with particular cases, leading to evictions. *Nationalist* (Clonmel), 5, 12 March 1890.

[56] Hayes, 'Land, Church and Politics', 210.

[57] Ibid., 209.

way than anything she might have been hoping to achieve with the *New York Herald* Relief Fund. She also presaged her work with the Irish Distressed Ladies Fund, affirming her opinion that progress in Ireland could be achieved only by an active and caring landowning class nurturing the tenantry. She had no time for those who sought to break the union between Britain and Ireland, nor any element of class conflict.

Distress in Donegal

The next cause to which Mary Power Lalor devoted her energies demonstrated again her concern that children should be protected as much as possible from the worst of economic crises. On foot of her experience with the *New York Herald* Relief Fund in 1880, Power Lalor was approached to organise a philanthropic response to localised famine in the western part of County Donegal. She responded quickly to the call, and urged others to act likewise, arguing that 'the distress at this moment, though limited to certain localities, calls for *immediate* exertion, if the children there are to be saved from a lingering death, or, worse still, lifelong diseases'.[58] Perhaps sensitive to allegations that someone perceived as living a comfortable urban life in Molesworth Street, Dublin, might not be attuned to the realities of life in western Donegal – indeed this implication was made in parliament by George Trevelyan, Chief Secretary for Ireland[59] – Power Lalor undertook a tour of the affected areas in March 1883.[60]

Using the pre-existing model from 1879–80, she proposed giving 'one plentiful meal daily at the schools, to the really hungry children, irrespective of creed', and noted that three pounds per week would provide such a meal for 100 children.[61] In February 1883, she began a programme that fed over 2,000 children in Kilcar, Gweedore, Glencolumbkille and Killybegs. While she did not argue against the prevailing wisdom that assisted emigration should be promoted, she also highlighted the idea that 'political economy cannot stand against the cry of a hungry child'.[62] Enlisting the support of the bishop of Raphoe, Michael Logue (a Donegal man and, after 1887, Primate of All

[58] *Tablet*, 3 March 1883; 'A Six Day Trip in the Donegal Highlands', *Irish Monthly*, 11 (May, 1883), 264–77.

[59] *Hansard*, HC Deb 13 March 1883 vol. 277, cc. 369–70

[60] *Inter alia*, *Irish Times*, 25 May 1883; *Freeman's Journal*, 10 February, 28 February 1883. While staying in Dublin, Power Lalor appears to have favoured Buswell's Hotel. *Irish Times*, 20 October 1887.

[61] *Tablet*, 3 March 1883; *Hansard*, HC Deb 5 July 1883 vol. 281, cc. 555–6.

[62] *Tablet*, 3 March 1883.

Ireland), and the noted physician and Liberal MP for Dublin, Robert Lyons, Power Lalor called for generous donations from the English public.

Two interesting elements appear in the appeal: first, Power Lalor claimed she knew 'too well that acts and words, that all true Irish most deeply deplore, have steeled the hearts of many against appeals for relief', fearing that the Land War might have alienated the British public against the people of Ireland. This demonstrates her long-held belief that she, and members of her class, knew better than the Land League or its successors what would benefit the people of Ireland. Second, Lyons' supporting letter emphasised that although he had met 'hundreds' of starving children in Donegal, subsisting on nothing but seaweed, yet 'in not a single instance did boy or girl beg, or imply by look or gesture expectation of money'. Constructing the Irish peasantry in a way palatable to the British public was of great importance in the fund-raising drive.[63] A similar message was presented to an American audience – that the people were 'industrious and too proud to beg', although here it was stressed additionally that 'no help is being received from the Englishmen'.[64] The ongoing Fenian bombing campaign in Britain was given as the main factor for this reluctance.[65] As was standard practice, those who felt inclined to make a charitable donation were assured that 'statements of the numbers relieved, and subscriptions received, will be published fortnightly'.[66] There are also signs that the Donegal intervention was appropriated as part of the political battle. Lady Florence Dixie, the prominent journalist and advocate of women's rights, was known as a Gladstonian Home Ruler but had been fiercely critical of the Land League.[67] Dixie had allegedly been subject of a bungled Fenian kidnapping attempt in March 1883, and criticised the people of Louth for raising a subscription for Parnell, referring to the scheme as 'a farce, a sin, a cowardly shame … while famine is stalking throughout a portion of the country … if Louth men have money to spare, let them send it to Mrs Power Lalor'.[68]

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[63] *Tablet*, 3 March 1883; *Morning News* (Belfast), 12 March 1883; Una Taylor and Georgina Fullerton, 'The Starving Children of Donegal', *Irish Monthly*, 11 (1883), 213–14.

[64] *Buffalo Evening News*, 30 March 1883.

[65] *Salt Lake City Herald*, 31 March 1883.

[66] Taylor and Fullerton, 'Starving Children of Donegal', 213–14.

[67] Sian Reynolds, 'Dixie, Florence Caroline (Florrie), Lady n. Douglas' in Elizabeth Ewen, Sue Innes, Sian Reynolds and Rose Pipes (eds), *The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women* (Edinburgh, 2006), 96.

[68] *Dundalk Examiner and Louth Advertiser*, 28 April 1883. Her claim to have been the subject of a Fenian kidnap/assassination attempt were largely discredited, even ridiculed.

Alice Hart, another renowned social reformer, arrived to investigate conditions in Donegal a few weeks after Mary Power Lalor, and the two women would later become close associates.[69] In establishing the 'Donegal Industrial Fund' Hart was unstinting in her criticism of the Gweedore landowner, Arthur Hill.[70] She claimed that 'while Captain Hill is pressing for his rents, hundreds of wretched tenantry are being kept from starvation by doles of a pennyworth of meal per day, and all the paupers are kept by two biscuits a-day. The poverty seen is enough to make the most stony-hearted weep'.[71]

Although primarily concerned with ameliorating the condition of the lower classes in Donegal, Power Lalor's intervention in 1883 was consistent with her activity elsewhere in that she sought to preserve a socio-economic equilibrium in Ireland. She had been keen to face down the Land League in her own neighbourhood, but equally she recognised that the misdeeds of some of her own class were feeding nationalist propaganda. She was a fierce defender of the rights of private property, but she also hoped to offset the effects of 'bad landlords' who pursued rents in times of scarcity and failed to provide outdoor relief works.

The Irish Distressed Ladies Fund[72]

The work for which Power Lalor was best known during her lifetime was the establishment and maintenance of the Irish Distressed Ladies Fund [IDLF], which was officially inaugurated in 1886, and continued long past her death in 1913.[73] Indeed, the main strands of Mary Power Lalor's activity coalesced in the IDLF: the active engagement of middle- and upper-class women in voluntarism; the promotion of self-help through philanthropy; the ongoing relevance of the landed classes; and, despite the organisation's ostensibly apolitical nature, the defence of the union of Great Britain and Ireland. Having

[69] Beattie, 'Female Cultural Philanthropy', 163.

[70] Janice Helland, 'Benevolence, Revival and Free Trade: An Historical Perspective' in Janice Helland, Beverley Lemire and Alena Buis (eds), *Craft, Community and the Material Culture of Place and Politics, 19th – 20th Century* (Farnham, 2014), 127–37.

[71] *Hansard*, HC Deb 5 July 1883 vol. 281, cc. 551–78. For lace schools see Beattie, 'Female Cultural Philanthropy', 168–70.

[72] The Irish Distressed Ladies' Fund was the official name of the organisation, and I therefore use the acronym IDLF. This acronym was shared with the contemporary Irish Democratic Labour Federation, an organisation with very different aims and membership.

[73] *Irish Times*, 1 March 1949. Indeed, the house she established in Rutland Square for elderly and disadvantaged members of the female gentry became known colloquially as the 'Power Lalor Home'. *Belfast Gazette*, 25 August 1933.

become known particularly for her philanthropic work among the very young, the IDLF signalled a shift in focus to older members of her own class. The IDLF was established with the stated intention of aiding female members of the gentry who, because of the withholding of rent by large swathes of the tenantry, had become incapable of living in the manner to which they had been accustomed. Although male landowners were also affected by this reduction in income, it was believed that they were better trained to find alternative sources of income, and that they had ready-made networks of support in order to ease their situations. Although some of the larger landowners were able to absorb the loss of rents without a great deal of impact on their everyday lives, it became clear that the tactic was having an effect on some members of the landed classes.[74]

The IDLF's antecedents comprised a variety of philanthropic and political organisations. The Irish Ladies' Work Society (ILWS) had been established in 1880 'in order to give ladies with an insufficient income, a means of helping themselves'.[75] A year later, the Association for the Relief of Ladies in Distress Through Non-Payment of Rent in Ireland (ARLD) was established to assist 'widows or unmarried ladies whose incomes have failed altogether or in part'.[76] Both the ILWS and the ARLD were professedly non-sectarian and non-political, and applications were considered on the basis of need by a committee in Dublin.[77] Money was raised for these causes from subscriptions, as well as from public events such as balls, fêtes and bazaars.[78] The Irish Property Defence Association (IPDA), another professedly non-political body, had also been formed in late 1880, in direct opposition to the Land League. Much IPDA's rhetoric presented its cause as a sensible and patriotic response to the threat posed to British society by the machinations of the Land League, and many of the members of the association were husbands, brothers or fathers of the women who would, five years later, help to form

[74] *Illustrated London News*, 31 December 1881.

[75] *Englishwoman's Review*, 15 May 1880, 15 November 1881. A body with the same name had also existed during the famine period. See Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 189–90.

[76] *Freeman's Journal*, 27 October 1881; *Glasgow Herald*, 29 October 1881; *Englishwoman's Review*, 15 November 1881. The ARLD merged formally with the IDLF in 1888. *Irish Times*, 7 January 1888.

[77] *Englishwoman's Review*, 14 January 1881; *Times* (London), 29 October 1881, notes the inauguration of 'an association for the relief of ladies in distress through the non-payment of rent'. In voting 200 guineas for the fund in late 1881, the London Court of Common Council stressed that there was 'nothing political in the movement.' *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 9 December 1881.

[78] *Englishwoman's Review*, 15 August 1882.

and maintain the IDLF: the marquess of Headfort, Earl Fitzwilliam, Lord Inchquin, Lord Talbot of Malahide, the earl of Meath, and the Fermanagh landowner and Conservative MP, Arthur Loftus Tottenham, amongst others.[79] While the IPDA did not align with a particular political party, its 'impartiality' began after accepting its basic *raison d'être*, which was to 'protect' those who it considered had been 'aggravated or molested' by the Land League.[80] Indeed, one of the IPDA's principles was to oppose the 'irresponsible power' of the Land League, and to protect 'gentlemen and families reduced from affluence to poverty, and ladies left destitute who lately enjoyed comfortable incomes'.[81] It was a bulwark for the socio-economic status quo, and sought to protect the 'framework of society', and the rights of property and landowners.[82]

The end of the Land War and supplanting of the Land League by the Irish National League in 1882 signalled a lull in the IPDA's activity. The landed interest in Britain and Ireland felt under continuous attack, however, especially after the reform acts of 1884-5 almost trebled the Irish male franchise, greatly strengthening the political power of the Irish nationalists.[83] The Plan of Campaign, launched in 1886, revived the spirit of the Land War in its mass mobilisation of the tenantry and its call for rent reductions or rent strikes.[84] As a result of these threats to the landed classes, the IPDA's public profile was reinvigorated, and it is this environment that Mary Power Lalor founded the IDLF.[85] She was particularly struck by the state in which many of her fellow female gentry had found themselves, professing herself 'appalled at the misery existing among ladies a short time ago accustomed to every luxury, chiefly proceeding from the non-payment of rent'.[86]

The composition of the IDLF committee reflected that of the viceregal court. Upper-class aristocratic ladies mixed with members of the gentry who, like Power Lalor, might in an Irish context be best characterised as upper-middle class. Dublin and London provided ready audiences with disposable incomes, but vitally there was also a group of upper-class women who wanted

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[79] *Funny Folks*, 7 January 1882.

[80] *Times* (London), 3 December 1881.

[81] *Country Gentleman*, 10 December 1881.

[82] *Morning Post*, 9 December 1881.

[83] Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800–2000* (Oxford, 2003), 55.

[84] Laurence M. Geary, *The Plan of Campaign, 1886–1891* (Cork, 1986), 12–13.

[85] *Morning Post*, 29 November 1886. See also, Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland: A Study of Irish Landed Families, 1860-1960* (Dublin, 2001), 96–8, 215–6.

[86] *Guardian*, 2 June 1886.

to prove their value to society by their social interaction, as well as a group – slightly inferior in class terms – who saw this kind of work as essential in promoting their own social advancement.[87] Although such women were generally absent from the 'unsuitable' sphere of party politics, the IDLF's claim to be apolitical was rather obfuscated by strong familial and ideological connections to organisations that sought to preserve the privileges of the Irish landed classes, particularly the IPDA.[88] Similar links existed with the Irish Defence Union, which was founded using money from the Mansion House Committee in late 1885 to 'assert and defend all who are suffering in Ireland from illegal coercion, more especially boycotting and similar interference with the liberty of the subject'.[89] Prominent among the IDU's founders were the duke of Westminster, who provided accommodation in London for the IDLF, the duke of Waterford, who served as chair of the IDLF's London Committee, and Lord Belmore, who chaired the IDLF's Dublin Committee.[90] In the space of a few months, Power Lalor mobilised her close friends and acquaintances within the viceregal circle, and drafted a prospectus for the IDLF, which would operate under the patronage of the marchioness of Londonderry, whose husband had been appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in August 1886, but who was in her own right a staunch unionist, and promoter of Irish industry.[91] Also providing strong and consistent support for the IDLF was the countess of Aberdeen (a Gladstonian Home Ruler, whose husband had preceded Londonderry, briefly, as Lord Lieutenant).

In Ireland, confusion arose from the fund's rather ambiguous name, and at one fundraising event it was noted that 'the exact meaning of the phrase "distressed ladies" made the occasion one of some little difficulty for some people, who had in their minds women who with their helpless children have

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87 Andrew G. Newby, '"On Their Behalf No Agitator Raises His Voice": The Irish Distressed Ladies Fund – Gender, Politics and Philanthropy in Victorian Ireland' in Åsa Karlsson Sjögren, Nina Javette Koefoed and Krista Cowman (eds), *Gender in Urban Europe: Sites of Political Activity and Citizenship, 1750–1900* (London, 2014), 243–67. Queen Victoria herself later acted as patroness of the IDLF, perhaps the ultimate example of successful networking, and bringing local / national work to the imperial level, allowing a member of local gentry to move in the same circles as the highest aristocrats. *Charity*, 15 March 1891.

88 *Freeman's Journal*, 18 November 1880; Newby, 'On Their Behalf', 179.

89 *Times* (London), 19 December 1885.

90 *Times* (London), 3 November 1885; *Morning Post*. 8 June 1887; *Women's Penny Paper*, 20 December 1890; *John Bull*, 14 November 1891; *Belfast Newsletter*, 20 January 1899.

91 *Morning Post*, 29 November 1886; Diane Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry: Women and Political Patronage* (London, 2007), 1–8.

been turned out on the roadside to starve or beg.'[92] Although now dealing with the upper classes, there were however obvious philosophical continuities with Power Lalor's earlier work among the children of western Donegal. The aims of the IDLF combined charity and self-help. It is also clear that the local activities of the IDLF were intended to have national benefits. Power Lalor believed that the development of female self-sufficiency, through the promotion of cottage industries, could stimulate the Irish economy, which in turn would make Ireland a more valuable partner in the United Kingdom and the British Empire. Therefore, in its rhetoric that it was pursuing a 'national work' the work of the IDLF demonstrates the existence among a section of Ireland's population, of concentric Irish, British, and British Imperial identities.

An important element of their programme was to provide an outlet for the industry of ladies in distress, ensuring that their skills would be utilised, rather than simply receiving charity.[93] For those female landowners, especially the old or infirm, who were 'unable to work for themselves', small monthly grants were made, and the funds were also used for 'the payment of school fees, of railway fares to situations vacant, of passage money to enable them to join their friends in America and in the colonies, and by grants of clothing'.[94] Subscriptions were canvassed at an early stage, with the newspaper-reading public of Great Britain and Ireland being presented with sad cases of distress.[95] As had been the case in her work in Donegal in 1883, Power Lalor sought help from the 'English people, through whose non-government of my country the innocents are suffering' in order to 'help [the distressed ladies] help themselves'.[96] Again, her implication was that the Land War had developed as a result of London's weak government, particularly its *laissez-faire* approach towards predatory or absentee landlords. This, in turn, upset what she saw as the natural social order in Ireland, leading to the non-payment of rent and subsequently the impoverishment of the gentry. This enfeebled upper class would be unable to look after the interests of their tenants – Power Lalor's idealised model – meaning the degradation of society and indeed Ireland's

[92] *Freeman's Journal*, 11 March 1887.

[93] Ibid.

[94] *Report of the London Executive Committee from November 1887 to June 1889* (London, 1889); Irish Distressed Ladies, *Cash Account November 21st, 1887, to June 30th, 1889* (London, 1889). London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA), Irish Distressed Ladies' Fund papers, A/FWA/C/D/167/00.

[95] See, for example, *Star*, 3 February 1887.

[96] *Times* (London), 29 May 1886.

national vitality.

Mary Power Lalor continued to promote a twin-pronged approach of fund-raising and self-help, emphasising to the British that the IDLF produced 'most beautiful work … which seeks a market, and which promised independence to the workers if once such a market can be found'.[97] A key tenet of the fund was that every effort had to be made to make the younger applicants 'self-supporting'.[98] Power Lalor elided philanthropy with the economic regeneration of Ireland, and believed that women could be the drivers of this regeneration. During the planning stages of the IDLF, Power Lalor and Alice Hart hosted a large and diverse exhibition of 'the products of Irish industry' at the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, which was patronised by the countess of Aberdeen.[99] It was announced in 1887 that £400 per month was required to keep the fund in operation, a sum that increased as the years went by.[100]

A home was established for 'sixteen to twenty' distressed ladies, at 34 Rutland Square, Dublin, in order to prevent entry to the workhouse.[101] To be eligible for a place in this house, candidates had to be certifiably 'homeless and destitute from the effects of the land agitation'.[102] Therefore, despite the IDLF's eschewal of party politics, Mary Power Lalor and other patrons can be said to have been engaging in consciously political acts. Moreover, the distressed Irish ladies were used for party political purposes by some individual politicians and newspapers. At the fund's instigation, for example, the *Belfast Telegraph* highlighted the plight of Irish ladies who 'through no fault of their own, have been reduced to absolute penury this winter'. Its tone then became more strident:

> The chief sufferers from any political or social agitation such as that which began in Ireland seven years ago are those of the population whose complaints reach fewest ears. Not many persons can have any idea of how widespread and terrible have been the results of the 'no rent' system adopted with an eagerness that can easily be accounted for in many districts in Ireland ... In the course of a year or two it is to be

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97 *Morning Post*, 25 July 1887.

98 *Report of the Irish Executive Committee for the year 1888* (London, 1889), LMA, IDLF papers, A/FWA/C/D/167/00.

99 *Irish Times*, 7 April 1886.

100 *Nenagh Guardian*, 10 December 1887.

101 *Report of the Distressed Ladies' Home, 1893* (Dublin, 1894), LMA, IDLF papers, A/FWA/C/D/167/00; *Irish Times*, 10 October 1887.

102 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 10 October 1887.

> hoped that the country may be so settled that there shall be no need to press upon our readers the claims of innocent sufferers from the agitation.[103]

Although nationalists constructed the Land War as a reaction against predatory landlordism, conservatives and unionists used the IDLF to present an alternative view of Irish society. The *Western Mail*, a conservative Welsh newspaper, complained that 'it might be imagined from the teachings of separatists that only the friends of the National League in Ireland are oppressed by misery and poverty', before highlighting the IDLF's work in supporting 600 ladies 'who, owing to the failure of rents, must otherwise starve … A few facts like these might be advantageously introduced into the Separatist wailings over the wrongs of an oppressed peasantry, if the wailers could persuade themselves to entertain human as well as party feelings'.[104] In supporting the work of the IDLF, unionists such as Colonel Edward Saunderson and Robert Uniacke Penrose-Fitzgerald made an explicit link with countering the Plan of Campaign, and maintaining the integrity of the Union by bolstering the rights of the landed classes. At a fundraising event in London, Saunderson argued that 'in assisting these ladies to tide over their distress and suffering they would be striking a blow at the organisation to which he had referred, and which had condemned to ruin these ladies and the class from which they derived their support'. This was supported by Penrose-Fitzgerald's assertion that 'they did not ask for assistance for foreigners, but for Irishwomen, who were part and parcel of the United Kingdom, and intended to remain so'.[105] The fear, expounded in *Blackwood's Magazine*, was that the condition of the female gentry demonstrated that 'the landlord class in Ireland has been overthrown, ruined, or at best is slowly bleeding to death'.[106] In a letter of support from Australia, Power Lalor's cousin bemoaned the fact that Nationalists had taken control of Poor Law Boards, and systematically denied claims of assistance from the landed classes, and Power Lalor's history of facing down land agitators was presented as a further reason to support the IDLF.[107] In her philanthropy and in her promotion of industry, Mary Power Lalor was certainly demonstrating her personal contribution to Irish society, but she was also attempting to

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[103] *Belfast Newsletter*, 30 November 1886.
[104] *Western Mail*, 20 December 1887.
[105] *Belfast Newsletter*, 23 March 1888.
[106] Lexophilus, 'What I Learned in Ireland', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 167 (1890), 276.
[107] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 August 1886.

promote the relevance of the entire landowning class.

Ireland's Industrial and Technical Development

> 'For a clever nation, as we undoubtedly are', said Mrs Power Lalor with a laugh, 'the Irish are greatly behind in technical education, and the country is too poor to organise the work successfully, but we are hoping that the Government will shortly give us a grant. The education in our schools is too literary, and it would be much better for our girls to have sound technical training in domestic arts than to be able to tell how many miles distant we are from the sun at a given moment. If we get practical domestic knowledge carried into the homes of the people it will do more to raise the standard of civilisation in Ireland than any other reform'.[108]

In this assessment of Ireland's 'technical development', made in 1896, Mary Power Lalor quite deliberately employed a first-person narrative to present 'raising the standard of civilisation' as a shared responsibility among all Irish people. Downplaying class and religious divisions, she believed, would focus Irish minds on confronting more pressing social and economic matters. By the mid-1880s, Power Lalor was intimately connected with what Patrick Maume has characterised – adopting the term from Frank Prochaska – as the 'welfare monarchy' of Lady Aberdeen, a notion which implies that the British royalty tried to 'retain its importance, and role as embodier of national identity, via the patronage of charities'.[109] The concept also applied to the aristocracy and gentry, and underpinned Power Lalor's persistent struggle to preserve the relevance of the landed classes in Ireland. From her belief in the interconnectedness of philanthropy and self-help, however, she also instigated and participated in schemes that were as much targeted economic development projects as they were charities.[110]

A variety of organisations aimed at personal, regional and national self-

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[108] Tooley, 'Ladies of Dublin', 837–8.

[109] Maume, 'Lady Microbe and the Kailyard Viceroy', 199.

[110] For the transition between charity / philanthropy and more sustainable economic planning for the west of Ireland, see Ciara Breathnach, 'The Role of Women in the Economy of the West of Ireland, 1891–1923', *New Hibernia Review*, 8 (2004), 80–92; Carla King, '"Our Destitute Countrymen on the Western Coast": Relief and Development Strategies in Congested Districts in the 1880s and '90s' in Carla King and Conor McNamara (eds), *The West of Ireland: New Perspectives on the Nineteenth Century* (Dublin, 2011), 161-83.

improvement flourished in Ireland, with Mary Power Lalor and her upper- and upper-middle class collaborators at the hub of many of them.[111] The Irish Home Industries Association was founded under the patronage of Lady Aberdeen in 1886, with Power Lalor heading a sub-committee on 'Industrial Instruction'.[112] Adding to her 'already overwhelming duties', Power Lalor was appointed Government Inspector of Lace-making in Ireland, on the recommendation of the Marquis of Londonderry, in early 1887.[113] Her remit was to improve the native Irish lace industry, which she believed could stimulate micro- and macroeconomic growth in the country.

From her earliest days helping her mother among the famine victims of eastern Tipperary, Power Lalor seemed to believe that economic diversity, and the promotion of small-scale industry such as lace-making, could ease reliance on agriculture or, indeed, on the beneficence of landlords.[114] Although it has been argued that, other than in north-eastern Ulster, such an enterprise was unlikely to succeed, Power Lalor promoted the benefits of lacemaking with an evangelical zeal. Arguing that the industry employed 'three thousand' females in Ireland, she hoped to popularise the varieties of Irish lace among 'English brides', in direct competition to markets in Brussels and Paris.[115] The charitable element in purchasing such Irish goods was also stressed to the British public, in a way which underlined the bilocated (or, perhaps, 'transnational'[116]) nature of the Anglo-Irish gentry: 'If any fresh justifications for an appeal to English charity in such a cause were needed, it might be pointed out that a large number of the ladies who have been reduced to want by recent events in Ireland are resident in this country'.[117] Furthermore, Lady Aberdeen hoped to underline

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111 Janice Helland, *British and Irish Home Arts and Industries, 1880–1914: Marketing Craft, Making Fashion* (Dublin, 2007), 70.

112 J. C. G. Aberdeen and Temair and I. G. Aberdeen and Temair, *More Cracks With "We Twa"* (London, 1929), 225; Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 189-90; *Times* (London), 24 October 1888. See also Neillie Ó Cléirigh, 'Lady Aberdeen and the Irish Connection', *Dublin Historical Record*, 29 (1985), 28–32; Neille Ó Cléirigh, *Hardship and High Living: Irish Women's Lives 1808–1923* (Dublin, 2003), 147–67.

113 *Irish Times,* 31 January 1887; *Logansport Journal*, 14 February 1892; Helland, *British and Irish Home Arts and Industries, 1880–1914*, 70.

114 *Horse and Hound*, 5 February 1887.

115 Mary Power Lalor, 'Irish Lace', *Englishwoman's Review*, 15 August 1889; *Irish Times*, 30 April 1887, 5 August 1887; *Times* (London), 24 October 1888, 25 May 1889, 23 May 1891, 25 March 1892; *Report of the Irish Executive Committee for the half-year ending 30th June, 1891* (London, 1891), LMA, IDLF papers, A/FWA/C/D/167/00.

116 As emphasised in Ciaran O'Neill, *Catholics of Consequence: Transnational Education, Social Mobility and the Irish Catholic Elite, 1850–1900* (Oxford, 2014), 3, 13.

117 *Morning Post*, 2 March 1888.

class solidarity in aiding Ireland's economic revival, telling potential buyers in Bradford that 'there seemed to be a comical idea prevalent that those who were working on behalf of the distressed ladies of Ireland, and those who were seeking to turn into money the work of the peasants in Ireland, were somehow antagonistic to each other.'[118]

Londonderry and Power Lalor also managed to secure a prominent position for the IDLF and its work at Olympia's 'Irish Exhibition in London' in 1888,[119], which was partly developed as a model for the even more ambitious 'Irish Village' presented at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893.[120] Although the construction of Ireland in Olympia was in many respects romanticised, it nevertheless tried to demonstrate that the Irish were a vigorous and industrial people, 'ready to take on the practical side of the Union and exploit their talents'.[121]

By the late 1880s, public funding for the IDLF seems to have declined[122], perhaps as a result of the temporary lull in the national and land agitations and the general 'political vacuum' that followed Parnell's death.[123] Attendances for the fund's entertainments declined, and it was beset by rumours of financial mismanagement[124] and accusations that the women were being effectively institutionalised in 'sweatshop' conditions.[125]

The 1890s signalled a change in emphasis from the original emergency,

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118 'Lady Aberdeen on Irish Women's Industries', *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 5 March 1889.

119 Mary Power Lalor, 'Preface' in Helen Blackburn (ed.), *A Handy Book of Reference for Irishwomen* (London, 1888), iii–v.

120 *Irish Exhibition in London, 1888, Olympia, Kensington: Official Daily Programme* (London, 1888); *Times* (London), 25 May 1889, 22 June 1892, 30 September 1893; Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, 189.

121 Roy F. Foster and Fintan Cullen (eds) *'Conquering England': Ireland in Victorian London* (London, 2005), 56; Catherine Morris, 'Alice Milligan: Republican Tableaux and the Revival', *Field Day Review*, 6 (2010), 139–40. Likewise, Aberdeen's 'Blarneyfied' presentation of Ireland at the Chicago exhibition caused some tension between herself and Hart. Donald J. MacDougall, *Scots and Scots Descendants in America* (New York, 1917), 146; *Times* (London), 22 June 1892, 30 September 1893. See also Stephanie Rains, 'The Ideal Home (Rule) Exhibition: Ballymaclinton and the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition', *Field Day Review*, 7 (2011), 5–21.

122 *Freeman's Journal*, 15 May 1890.

123 Francis S. L. Lyons, 'The Aftermath of Parnell, 1891–1903' in William E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland, Vol. VI: Ireland Under the Union II 1870–1921* (Oxford, 1996), 81.

124 Mrs Buckton to unnamed recipient, n.d., LMA, IDLF papers, A/FWA/C/D/167/00.

125 *Truth*, 14 December 1893, LMA, IDLF papers, A/FWA/C/D/167/00.

reactive philanthropy to a more sustainable economic plan for the employment of Irish ladies, and the attendant stimulation of the Irish economy through cottage industries.[126] The lobbying of these groups resulted in Arthur Balfour's personal visit to the west of Ireland in 1890, and the development of a 'Constructive Unionism' programme which aligned very closely with Power Lalor's personal approach to Irish socio-economic problems.[127] Close links were developed in Dublin with the Irish Ladies' Industrial Committee and the Irish Association for the Training and Employment of Women, and indeed Mary Power Lalor served on the committee of both of these organisations.[128] Through their urban networks Power Lalor and her associates participated in the 'acceptable' practice of Victorian philanthropy, and continued to develop female education and industry in the period up to World War One. In addition to her ongoing work with the IDLF, Mary Power Lalor served, *inter alia*, on: the council of the 'Queen's Jubilee Nurses';[129] the Dublin Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association (where she instigated a scheme for boarding urban children with rural families in Munster);[130] and Vice-President of the Catholic International Association for the Protection of Girls.[131]

Conclusion

Throughout her life, Mary Power Lalor demonstrated an utterly irreversible faith in the prevailing social order and believed that social progress through benevolent landlordism was the answer to Ireland's problems. She hoped to ensure that the women of Ireland, of all classes, would become economically active, avoid dependence on charity and make a contribution to Ireland's industrial revival.[132] In Power Lalor's promotion of domestic industries and the production of lace in particular, the idea of Irish native ingenuity and qualities was paramount in her rhetoric. She claimed to eschew party politics, and made no public pronouncements on high constitutional matters.

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126 *Report of the Irish Executive Committee for the half-year ending June 30th 1891* (London, 1891), LMA, IDLF papers, A/FWA/C/D/167/00.

127 Breathnach, 'Role of Women', 81.

128 *Report of the Working of the Fund for Year 1890* (London, 1891), LMA, IDLF papers A/FWA/C/D/167/00; *Irish Times*, 27 February 1887, 20 October 1887, 14 February 1889.

129 *Times* (London), 4 July 1896.

130 *Freeman's Journal*, 20 November 1899.

131 *Tablet*, 12 April 1913.

132 Ciara Breathnach, *Framing the West: Images of Rural Ireland 1891–1920* (Dublin, 2007), 219.

> 'It is the great object of my life', said Mrs. Power Lalor in conclusion, 'to lessen the evils which have arisen in my country from allowing politics and religion to come into the schemes for social reform. I know no differences of politics and religion in matters of philanthropy, and want to have everything put upon a charitable basis'.[133]

While it is quite true that politics and religion played no part in her distribution of alms, it can be argued that all of her philanthropic work had the conscious side-effect of maintaining the social equilibrium in Ireland, and was therefore a political or politicised act. It was to her unthinkable that the removal or even dilution of the landed influence in Ireland could benefit the tenantry.

While her Roman Catholicism may have contributed something to her sense of Irish identity – and she seems to have embraced some 'native' cultural movements such as the Gaelic Union[134] – it also underpinned her social conservativism. She was no more sympathetic than her father or her husband had been to any radical ideas that might have emerged either from the tenantry or local priests.

It is not possible from the public sources to ascertain whether Power Lalor might have been a moderate Gladstonian Home Ruler, similar for example to Lady Aberdeen, or closer to the unionist position of Lady Londonderry. Patrick Maume's assessment of the Aberdeens' 'kailyard' outlook on Irish society does, however, reflect much of Power Lalor's basic credo: 'Inequality and social hierarchy were acceptable if the upper classes remained in contact with their subordinates and thus open to human feelings prompting them to acknowledge obligations towards the less fortunate'.[135] Although she accepted that the Westminster government was the main potential source of infrastructural funding in Ireland, she wanted to stimulate the Irish economy through small-scale enterprise and technical training, and some of her thinking reflects what has been framed as 'unionist nationalism' in a Scottish context. What seems quite clear is that, as a 'noble, true-hearted Irishwoman'[136] who was praised for 'good and patriotic work',[137] she was personally convinced of the coherence of the United Kingdom, and that as a distinctive nation within that framework, Ireland had to opportunity to develop its industry within

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133 Tooley, 'Ladies of Dublin', 837.

134 *Freeman's Journal*, 5 October 1882.

135 Maume, 'Lady Microbe and the Kailyard Viceroy', 202.

136 *Logansport Journal*, 14 February 1892.

137 *Englishwoman's Review*, 15 May 1890; *Milwaukee Journal*, 4 February 1892.

a ready-made market, and also to make a significant contribution to British global domination.

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