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POLITICAL ESSAYS.



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BY

J. E. CAIRNES, M.A.,

Emeritus Professor of Political Economy in University College, London.

London :

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1873.

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LONDON :
R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS,
BREAD STREET HILL.

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PREFACE.

A FEW words of explanation and apology are needed for the following Essays. With the exception of that entitled "Fragments on Ireland," and the second of the Essays on Irish University education, all have been in print before. Some of them were suggested by occurrences of the day, and, the occasion of their publication being passed, there might seem to be no reason for their reappearance now. In reply to this objection, should it be urged, I can only express my belief that, though the subject may in some instances be occasional, the treatment will be found not to be so. For example, the Essay on Army Reform was suggested by the Franco-German war of 1870-71, and the first few pages are devoted to an examination of the state of our military defences as they stood at that time; but this is merely an introduction to a general discussion of

the relative advantages and disadvantages of national and standing armies—a subject, the interest in which, though it is not what it was two years ago, assuredly has not died out, and may at any moment recover its former intensity. Similarly, with regard to the first Essay on Irish University education. Though called forth by the educational crisis of 1865-6, the principles discussed are applicable to the general question of university reform, and have a direct bearing on the present position of the Irish University question.

The “Fragments on Ireland” have not, except in a few passages, appeared before in print, though written so far back as 1866. They were intended to form parts of a small volume on the industrial condition of Ireland, of which the practical aim was to lead up to a discussion of the Land question, then pressing for solution. The work was interrupted by ill-health, and meanwhile the Irish Land question was taken up by the Liberal party in the House of Commons, and received, by the passing of the Irish Land Act of 1870, at least a provisional settlement. The original purpose of the work was thus in a great measure accomplished; but the preliminary discussions comprised such subjects as the crisis of 1847, considered in connection with its

historical causes; the emigration, its character and significance; and an examination of the new forms into which industrial life in Ireland was shaping itself under the powerful influences developed by recent events. These subjects appear to me to possess an interest apart from the particular purpose for which their examination had been undertaken: indeed there are few questions which can arise in the course of legislation for Ireland—even if we could consider the Irish Land problem as definitively settled—which do not require for their intelligent discussion a constant referente to the crises through which the country has recently passed, as well as a correct apprehension of the nature and direction of the economical forces now shaping its industrial career. I have, therefore, thought it well, as a contribution towards the elucidation of these subjects, to include in the present volume such fragments of the work commenced in 1866 as I found suitable for this purpose.

I am here anxious to make my warm acknowledgments to my friend Professor Nesbitt, for the invaluable assistance he has given me in preparing both this and the preceding volume for the press. I have had the advantage, not only of his constant and vigilant criticism of my arguments, but also

of his ungrudging services in correcting the proofs throughout.

I have also to thank the proprietors of the several periodicals, in which the Essays now reprinted originally appeared, for their courtesy in permitting the republication.

J. E. CAIRNES.

KIDBROOK PARK ROAD,
BLACKHEATH, S.E.
March 1873.

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