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Cromwellian Ireland: English Government and Reform in Ireland 1649 - 1660

By Toby C. Barnard

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Apart from Laurence de Geer's connection with Limerick through Abraham van Hoegarden, the most hopeful event in the midst of vain talk of attracting English or continental traders was the interest Martin Noel acquired in Ireland. Noel, who has been called Oliver Cromwell's right-hand financier, was involved in many of the commercial enterprises of the period. A debt of £3,697 owing to Noel was discharged by the grant of two hundred houses in Wexford.⁴⁵ Wexford was the centre of the Irish herring fisheries, and Noel soon interested himself in the trade, greatly improving it. In April 1658 Noel said he had 'transplanted much of my interest, and affaires, and relations into Ireland'.⁴⁶ Exploitation of the Irish fisheries fitted in well with Noel's other interests. Salt, essential to the herrings' preservation, could come from his Cheshire salt-pans.⁴⁷ Noel was also indirectly involved in the Irish customs farm of 1658: its treasurer was a kinsman of his, advised by Noel to participate. He retained these Irish interests after 1660, being returned to the Irish parliament in 1661 as member for the borough of Wexford and advising the government on Irish fiscal measures.⁴⁸