



Nassau William Senior

RELIEF OF IRISH DISTRESS IN
1847 AND 1848.

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‘I DO not hesitate to say that, in my opinion, there ought to be established between England and Ireland a complete equality in all civil, municipal, and political rights. When I say complete equality, I do not mean, because I know it is impossible, to have a literal equality in every particular. Here, as in matters of more sacred import, it may be that “The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life;” I speak of the spirit, and not of the letter, in which our legislation should be conducted. I mean that there should be a real substantial equality, in political and civil rights; so that no person, viewing Ireland with perfectly disinterested eyes, should be enabled to say, “A different law is enacted for Ireland, and, on account of some jealousy or suspicion, Ireland has curtailed and mutilated rights.” That is what I mean by equality. Let no one think I am making a reserve. I speak of the spirit in which we should legislate. I think it ought to be impossible to say that there is a different rule, substantially, with regard to the civil or municipal franchise in Ireland from that which prevails in England.’

Such was one of the most remarkable passages in the memorable speech with which Sir Robert Peel closed

his almost monarchical administration. It was one of the few passages which received cheers from the right as well as from the left of the chair. In those cheers we felt no wish to join.

We were not sure, when we heard these words, that we clearly understood them—we are not sure that we understand them now. The words Rights and Franchises, when applied to the mutual relations of a people and its rulers, imply theories which have long been abandoned. They belong to times when the Crown and the subject were supposed to have adverse claims;—when prerogative was the property of the one, and franchise the defence of the other;—when it was supposed to be the duty of the servants of the Crown to preserve, if not to augment, its power, and the duty of the representatives of the people to restrain, and, if possible, to diminish it. These times have long passed away. It is now admitted that prerogative and franchises, the duty of ministers and the duty of knights and burgesses, have one single and common purpose—good government; that is to say, the government which will best promote the prosperity of the whole community. This is the right of the people against its government. It is the right of a union against its guardians, the right of a company against its directors, the right of a parish against its constable, the right of a client against his attorney. It is a right to have its affairs managed in the way most conducive to its welfare. In this right all other rights are merged; against this right no claim of the Crown, or of any portion of the people, can prevail, or can be seriously urged. If Sir Robert Peel, then, when he claimed for Ireland equality of rights with Great Britain,

meant merely to say that Ireland is entitled equally with England to good government—that she is entitled to be governed by the Imperial Parliament as she would be by a wise Parliament sitting in College Green—he announced a principle perfectly true indeed, but, we trust, perfectly trite. We trust that no one doubts that she is so entitled, and we saw little reason for cheering a self-evident proposition.

We are ready to admit that the example of England must materially affect all Irish questions. There exists throughout the civilised world a principle, somewhat resembling that of gravitation, which enables the institutions, the customs, and even the conduct of every separate country, to influence the conduct, the customs and the institutions of every other. Of course this mutual influence is greater between countries both members of the same empire. And it is probably greatest when exerted over the remainder of an empire, by that portion of it which is the seat of the imperial government. The laws of the metropolis may not be imitated by her provinces, but they certainly will not be disregarded. The administration of these laws, the spirit in which they are carried out, will certainly be imitated. If Ceylon had continued subject to Dutch dominion, it is probable that the text of her laws would not have been what it is now. It is certain that her laws, whatever might have been their text, would have been turned to very different purposes. If the government of the dominant member of the empire be despotic, it will be difficult for those of the other members to be free. If it be constitutional, the others can scarcely remain despotic. The example of England made it impossible for Scotland to continue

an aristocracy, with heritable jurisdictions and a nominal representation.

Even if there were good reasons for believing that Ireland would be better administered by a government framed on the late Prussian model, under laws enacted by the Crown, judges uncontrolled by juries, and with a press restrained by a censorship, no one would seriously propose to subject her to such a regimen. If she were a distinct state, it is possible that she might profit by following the example of Denmark—by surrendering her liberties to the Crown, and exchanging turbulence, almost amounting to lawlessness, for the tranquillity of an enlightened despotism. But it is obvious that, while the democratic and aristocratic elements prevail in the rest of the empire, a pure monarchy could not work well in a single portion of it. That a government must depend on affection or on terror, and that if it govern by terror it must govern ill, are propositions so trite that they have become elementary. But, with Great Britain by her side, Ireland could not acquiesce in the loss of her liberties, however unfit for her social state some of them may appear. Her monarch could rule her only by fear, and therefore would rule her ill.

But it is so frequently overlooked that we are bound frequently to repeat, that the people of England and of Ireland—meaning here, by Ireland, the provinces of Munster, Connaught, some parts of Leinster, and the whole county of Donegal—are among the most dissimilar nations in Europe. One is chiefly Protestant, the other is chiefly Roman Catholic; one is principally manufacturing and commercial, the other almost wholly agricultural; one lives chiefly in towns, the

other in the country. The population of the one is laborious, but prodigal; no fatigue repels them—no amusement diverts them from the business of providing the means of subsistence and of enjoyment; but they consume almost as quickly as they acquire. That of the other is indolent and idle, but parsimonious. They can lay up a provision for the current year, and consume it, not according to their wishes, but their necessities. They can earn the comparatively high wages of a richer country, save them in the midst of temptations to expenditure, and beg their way home without touching their store. But they leave their potato-grounds foul, merely to save the labour of weeding them; their cottages let in the rain, because they will not take the trouble to thatch them; a wake, or a fair, or a funeral, attracts from its occupations the inhabitants of a whole village. They can work for a master, and while his eye is upon them, but are negligent taskmasters to themselves.

The one country possesses a large middle-class, the other is divided between landlords and peasants: in the one the proprietors of the soil are connected by origin, by interest, and by feeling, with those who occupy it; in the other, they are, in many cases, strangers, and, in almost as many, enemies. In the one, public sympathy is with the law; in the other, it is with those that break it. In England crime is infamous; in Ireland it is popular.

The parties which divide England have one common object, widely as they differ on the means by which it is to be obtained. All desire the welfare of the Empire; all desire to see it tranquil and prosperous at home, and respected abroad. They believe, often of course

erroneously, that the measures which they support will do good, and that those which they oppose will do harm; and it is on that account that they oppose or support them. The most numerous of the Irish parties desires that the existing institutions of the Empire may work ill. It is delighted by the prospect of war, and gloats over the probabilities of defeat. It opposes whatever is likely to be useful, because it is likely to be useful, and rejects with loathing whatever is tendered to it as a favour or a grace. Colleges for secular instruction it denounces as godless; schools in which Protestant and Catholic may meet, are seminaries of infidelity, and a provision for its clergy is a bribe. It agitates for the sake of agitation; and selects for its avowed object an unattainable end, because it is unattainable—because its mischief cannot be tested by experience, or its stimulus deadened by possession.

To give similar treatment to countries not merely different, but contrasted, is prescribing the same regimen to the weak and to the strong, to the excitable and to the apathetic, to the sound and to the diseased. Yet this is the treatment which we have applied to Ireland. Our law of real property, with its subtleties and its primogeniture—our equity, with its expense and its delays—our penal law, with its loopholes—our common law, with its puerilities—our habeas corpus, our trial by jury, our local magistracy, our free press, our popular elections, our freedom of association, our Established Church, and our Protestant creed—institutions which, by long practice, by constantly twisting and bending and hammering them, we have gradually moulded to our use—we have thrown into Ireland, as if whatever suits us must suit her. Except her con-

stabulary, her national education, her paid guardians, and her Encumbered Estates Court, she has not a single native institution. Our creed she has rejected—our Church she bears only because the Protestant landlord would gain by shaking it off. The rest she has accepted—some, because she had no existing system for such purposes; and others, because, whether conducive or not to the welfare of the people, they pleased at least their vanity—or because she could not help it. Scotland has not been so managed. Though her Union long preceded that of Ireland—though she has been governed for nearly a century and a half by an Imperial Parliament—her institutions are mainly her own. She has her own land tenures, her own Church, her own civil law, and her own criminal law. They may be better or may be worse than those of England, but they are not mere copies. Of course we do not affirm that this difference in the treatment of Ireland and Scotland will account for the difference in their civilisation; but we have no doubt that it has been one of its principal causes.

We accept, therefore, Sir Robert Peel's doctrine of equality of rights in England and in Ireland, merely to this extent—that in legislating for Ireland, we must legislate for her, not as if she were a distinct State, but as a member of the Empire. We must take into account the influence of the examples of England and Scotland on the feelings of her people; we must allow the democratic element to prevail to an extent which would be inadvisable if we looked merely to its immediate results; we must allow the people an amount of free action, which we know they will abuse, because worse evils even than that abuse will be produced if

we restrain it. The elective franchise must not be left to wear out, though we may know that it will be used in returning Repealers; the press must not be silenced, though it be employed in provoking civil war; juries must be retained, though their verdicts may be liable to be warped by faction or by bigotry, or extorted by intimidation; the resident gentry must not be deprived of their magisterial jurisdiction, or the grand juries of their fiscal power, though we know that the one sometimes produces injustice, and the other peculation. But we refuse to call these necessities rights—we refuse to call our obedience to them concession or justice. When a physician called in to prescribe for a man whose constitution has been injured by a long course of intemperance, allows him still to use stimulants, apparently injurious to his case, because he would be miserable, and perhaps would sink altogether, without them, he does not call that permission a grant or a concession—it is simply a measure of expediency. He allows it merely because worse evils would follow its refusal. A people stands towards its government in the same relation as a patient to his physician—each has a right to the best possible treatment—neither can have more, and neither ought to be satisfied with less. Unfortunately, to a certain degree for ourselves, and to a much greater degree for the other portions of the Empire, the people of England are prone, more perhaps than any other equally intelligent nation, to transfer to other countries their own notions; to suppose that they have the same wants and the same powers; to believe, in short, that their social system resembles ours even in its details. There is no subject on which we have done this more blindly or more mischievously than as

respects the mutual relations of the owners, the occupiers, and the cultivators of land.

In England agriculture is generally managed by three classes of producers, known as landlords, farmers, and labourers. The landlord, with us, is absolute master of the land, subject to the qualified and limited interest which he may choose to concede or (to use the technical word) to *let* to his tenant; and he generally erects the necessary buildings, and makes the more expensive and permanent improvements. The farmer, in his turn, is master for the period of his tenancy, but is generally bound to treat the land in a predetermined manner, and he gives up the possession, without remonstrance, the instant that his term has expired. It is his duty to provide all the moveable live and dead stock, the wages of the labourers, and the rates and taxes, and to pay periodically to the landlord, for the use of the land and buildings, a net fixed sum as rent. The labourer is hired by the year, the week, the day, or the job, provides nothing but his own person and clothes, and has no claim on any individual landlord or tenant, except for his wages. He has, however, a general claim, on the occupiers of the land constituting the parish in which he is settled, for full support for himself and his family, if he cannot earn sufficient wages, or is out of employ.

These are the rights which *we* associate with the words landlords, farmers, and labourers. And when we find, in other countries, persons who appear to stand towards the land, and towards one another, in analogous relations, we call them by the same names, and fancy that these names imply similar rights and liabilities.

‘The first English conquerors of Bengal,’ says Mr. Mill, ‘carried with them the phrase *landed proprietor*,

or landlord, into a country where the rights of individuals over the soil were extremely different in degree, and even in nature, from those recognised in England. Applying the term with all its English associations, in such a state of things, to one who had only a limited right, they gave an absolute right; from another, because he had not an absolute right, they took away all right; drove all classes of men to ruin and despair; filled the country with banditti; created a feeling that nothing was secure; and produced, with the best intentions, a disorganisation of society, which had not been produced in that country by the most ruthless of its barbarian invaders.*

With equal impropriety we have transferred our English notions into Ireland. There are *there* also persons *called* landlords, farmers, and labourers, but they resemble their English types in little but name. In Ireland the landlord has been accustomed to erect no buildings, and make no improvements whatever. He is, in general, a mere receiver of rent; his only relation to his tenant is that of a creditor. They look to him for no help, and, on the other hand, he can exercise over them little control. It is very seldom that he prescribes to them any system of husbandry, or, if he do so, that he can safely enforce it. He cannot remove them, if dissatisfied with their treatment of the land; still less can he do so for the purpose of throwing farms together, and introducing the processes which require large capitals and large holdings. Even at the expiration of a lease, the landlord who displaces the existing occupier is bold; the tenant who takes his place is rash. With the labourers the landlord has scarcely

* Mill's 'Logic,' vol. ii. p. 269.

any relation whatever. If he have any demesne land in his own occupation, he may, of course, employ them in cultivating it. But this is seldom the case, or, to speak more correctly, seldom was the case, until the famine, by making the cultivation of land unprofitable, threw it in masses, waste and valueless, into the owner's hands. Farming by a gentleman is a trade still more unprofitable in Ireland than in England; and as the landlord does nothing for his tenants, of course he cannot employ labourers on *their* lands.

Again, the Irish farmer is not, like the Englishman, a capitalist, employing, on a tract of perhaps three hundred acres, a capital of 3,000*l.*, maintaining thirteen or fourteen labouring families, and paying 9*l.* or 10*l.* a week in wages. The Irish farmer occupies from six to twenty acres, the average extent of a substantial farm being perhaps twelve acres. The farm-buildings consist of hovels for the family, the horse, the cow, and the pigs—hovels built by the farmer or by his predecessor with stones and bog-timber, and roofed with turf. The value of these hovels, as a foundation for tenant-right, with that of the live-stock and seed, and a few instruments of agriculture, form the capital, which, on a farm of a dozen acres, may amount (exclusively of tenant-right) to 20*l.* or 30*l.* ‘If I were on my oath,’ said one of the witnesses in the Irish Poor Law Inquiry, ‘I don't think there is any man with 10*l.* in my townland. The loss of a cow or two, or of 10*l.*, would either ruin a man, or make a man rich that got it; it would make a gentleman of him in a manner.’* The greater part of the labour required by his farm, so far as it is performed at all (for much that we should think requisite is

* 1 Binns, p. 57.

neglected) is performed by the farmer himself, or by his family ; for he seldom ventures to take a farm, or indeed can obtain one, which cannot be cultivated principally by the united labour of the father and mother, sons and daughters. If the family be small, so is the holding.

The labourer, again, is not, like the English labourer, a mere cottager working on another man's land and for another man's benefit, and dependent for subsistence on his wages when in employment, and on his parish when unemployed. He is, in general, the occupier of a patch of land, from one to four roods in extent, manured for him by the farmer, on which he raises the potatoes that are to feed his family. For this, and for the site of his cabin, which he has probably built himself, he pays a rent worked out in labour. Thus, if the rent for the rood of potato-ground be 2*l.* a year, and that of the cabin 1*l.*, and his labour be estimated at 6*d.* a day, he works for the farmer 120 days. The rest of his time he gives to his own potato-ground, or to fairs or wakes, or to cowering over the fire ; or, if he is active and enterprising, he comes over to assist in getting in the English harvest, leaving his wife and children to beg during his absence. And, if these resources are insufficient, he turns beggar himself.

Now, the classes known by the names of landlords, farmers, and labourers, in England and in Ireland respectively, must of course have some common attributes, or they would not have received a common name. But we have seen that they are separated by most important distinctions ; and among these distinctions are many of their relations to one another, particularly those of the landlord to the labourer. In the agricultural districts of England, that relation nearly approaches that of feudal lord and serf. The labourer is entitled to be

maintained in the parish to which, under the settlement laws, he is said to belong. From that parish, therefore, he seldom ventures to move, and to that parish, if he do remove and require relief, he is generally sent back. He is, therefore, *adscriptus glebæ*. He necessarily acquires or inherits some of the qualities of a serf; he is improvident, and he is helpless. But he is neither idle nor indolent. He is not idle, because he has never been accustomed to seek his pleasures in amusement: *il se divertit moult tristement* in the beer-house. He is not indolent, because he has been always accustomed to associate labour with wages—to look at employment as the source of comfort, and want of employment as subjecting him to the insolence of the parochial authorities, and to the *ennui* of the workhouse. To which it must be added, that working under the eye of a master, or at piece-work, produces habits of unremitted industry, which cannot easily be acquired by the man who is his own taskmaster.

On the other hand, the responsibility of his support really falls on the landlord; for though the poor-rates are paid, in the first instance, by the occupier, they are, of course, eventually deducted from the landlord's rent: the landlord, therefore, has a strong interest in preventing the population of his parish from exceeding the number for whom there is profitable employment: and this interest is so obvious, that when there are more proprietors in a parish than one, they combine to effect it. The number of cottages is carefully kept down; persons not entitled to settlement in the parish, or (as they are usually termed) strangers, are kept out of it, or, if sometimes admitted when single, are sent away as soon as they marry. The necessity

of supporting all the settled labourers is a strong motive for employing them ; and, in fact, they perform the whole agricultural work. To a considerable extent they are employed in the execution of the improvements which are effected in England by the landlords ; but their principal employers are the farmers, whose time is spent in superintending their farms, and disposing of the produce, not in following the plough or using the spade themselves.

Such were landlords, farmers, and labourers, in England and Ireland respectively, when the potato-crop failed in both countries. The consequence in England was distress ; but as the English, like every civilised nation, use many different kinds of food, and employ a large portion of their incomes for purposes other than the purchase of food, the difficulty was met by an increased consumption of other articles, which would otherwise have been given to domestic animals—by a large expenditure in the importation of food from abroad—and by a diminished expenditure in clothes and other commodities not absolutely indispensable.

In Ireland the consequence was Famine—a calamity which cannot befall a civilised nation ; for a civilised nation, as we remarked before, never confines itself to a single sort of food, and is therefore insured from great scarcity by the variety of its sources of supply. When such a calamity does befall an uncivilised community, things take their course ; it produces great misery, great mortality, and in a year or two the wound is closed, and scarcely a scar remains.

This, however, was a conduct which it was impossible to adopt in 1847. The course which an uncivilised

country must have taken—which must have been taken by Ireland if it had not formed part of the United Kingdom—was not open to a country with the power and the responsibility of England. The English resolved that the Irish should not starve. We resolved that, for one year at least, we would feed them. But we came to a third resolution, inconsistent with the first, that we would not feed them for *more* than a year. How then were they to be fed in 1848, supposing their previous support, the potato, to fail again, either by disease or for want of cultivation?

The answer, according to English notions, seemed obvious: ‘Of course they must be supported by poor-rates. Property has its duties as well as its rights. The first duty of the landlords is to employ and support the poor. Bring in a Bill extending the Irish Poor Law; commanding the appointment of relieving-officers throughout Ireland; commanding them to relieve all the destitute; commanding the guardians of every union to raise the necessary funds; and, if they fail to do so, commanding the Poor Law Commissioners to appoint paid officers in their stead, with unlimited powers of taxation.’

The opposers of such a measure argued that the landlords of Ireland have not, like the English landlords, succeeded to their estates subject to the burden of supporting or employing their poor; that this is no more their peculiar duty than it is that of the tailors of Ireland, or of the druggists of Ireland; that they are not, like the English landlords, assisted in the performance of that duty by a strict law of settlement, by a firm administration of justice, and by the habits of five centuries; that as to employing the poor, it was out

of their power, since they had scarcely any land in their own occupation, and could not interfere with that held by the farmers; that the rental of England subject to poor-rates is between eighty and ninety millions, and that of Ireland about fifteen millions; and that the burden which one country bears with difficulty, would crush the other within a very few years after it was imposed. And they asked, whether an Irish lodging-house-keeper is bound to maintain all those who have established themselves in his apartments; or an Irish innkeeper all who have forced their way into his tap-room? And whether occupying a hovel on a hill-side gives to the occupier and his family any better right to require the owner of the soil to support them for ever, than would be acquired against the owner of a house by a family who had hired one of its garrets? The usual answer of the English vulgar, both in Parliament and out of it, was, 'The English landlords support their poor—therefore the Irish landlords must do so too;' forgetting, or perhaps not choosing to know, that the class which we call landlords in Ireland differs from that which we call landlords in England, and differs precisely in the points in which, to enable a Poor Law after the English fashion to act safely, it ought to coincide.

The Act of 1838 had instituted a system of legal charity under strict limitations. Under its provisions Ireland was divided into 130 unions, and subdivided into 2,050 electoral divisions,—the average population of a union being 62,884 persons, and its average area 160,000 statute acres; the average population of an electoral division being 4,000 persons, and its average area 9,200 acres. The unions are provided with 130

workhouses, erected at the cost of about a million sterling, lent by the imperial treasury. With one exception, that of Newtownards, the Irish unions have repudiated this liability, and, while making use of the workhouses, are allowed to refuse or to neglect to repay the principal, or even any interest. Each electoral division in a union contributes its share to the general expense of the establishment; and is charged separately, in account with the union, for the expenses of the paupers who were resident in it when claimants for relief. So far it resembles an English parish. But, instead of rating itself for those purposes, as is done by an English parish, it is rated by the union, and the rates, instead of being collected by its own officers, are collected by the officers of the union. A more important difference respects its area and population. Those of an English parish are, respectively, about 2,500 acres and 1,050 persons. Those of an Irish electoral division are, as we have seen, respectively 9,200 acres and 4,000 persons. Another important difference is the incidence of the rate. In England the whole is primarily paid by the occupier. It is only circuitously, and when a new bargain is to be made, that it falls on the landlord, and then only as a deduction from his rent. In Ireland the landlord, called there the immediate lessor, pays the whole rate where the tenement is rated at less than 4*l.* a year, and *half* of it—and practically, in many cases, more than *half*—when the rent is higher.

We have said that it was a system of legal charity carefully restricted. No right to relief was conferred, no obligation to afford it was imposed. The guardians were merely *authorised* to relieve such destitute persons as they, in their discretion, should think fit, and to

relieve them only in the workhouse. The check on the abuse of their discretion was a power in the Poor Law Commissioners, in case a board should neglect to perform its duties, to dissolve it, and order a new election ; and in case of a repetition of the neglect, to dissolve the new board, and appoint paid officers to exercise its powers.

During the whole of 1846, and the greater part of 1847, the question as to the maintenance or the extension of the Irish Poor Law was debated vehemently, but certainly not more vehemently than its importance required :

*Neque enim levia aut ludicra petebant
Præmia.*

Those who demanded for the Irish people a right to relief, unlimited in extent and unrestricted in form, believed that they were asking for something possible, and useful, and just. Those who resisted that demand believed that they were resisting a measure, incapable indeed of complete execution, but quite capable, even in the imperfect degree in which it might be carried out, of destroying what property remained to the landlords, what capital was possessed by the farmers, and what industry, and providence, and domestic affection belonged to the people of Ireland—that they were resisting, in short, a gigantic engine of confiscation and demoralisation.

A Select Committee was appointed, by the House of Lords, to enquire into the laws relating to the destitute poor in Ireland. It sat from February till June, examined about fifty different witnesses, almost all of whom had been long and actively engaged in the admi-

nistration of the Irish Poor-law, and concluded its labours in a manner now unusual in Parliamentary Committees, by agreeing on a Report.

As the result of their enquiry, they state that they 'do not hesitate in expressing their decided opinion, that the introduction of *any* system of outdoor relief would be dangerous to the general interests of the community, and more particularly to the interests of the very class for whose well-being such relief was intended.'

The Government adopted a middle course. It did not venture to withstand directly the English clamour, which required that the property of Ireland should support the poverty of Ireland. It did not venture to stand by the existing law, which, restricting relief to the workhouse, gave to the guardians a discretionary power to grant or deny it.

But it refused to confer on the ablebodied any *right* to relief; or to authorise the guardians to give to them outdoor relief except in food, and under the sanction of the Commissioners, and only when the workhouse, from being full or infected, might be unfit for their reception. The Government further proposed to provide workhouse-room for the ablebodied, by authorising outdoor relief to the impotent, and to make the relief of the latter, either in or out of the workhouse, a duty incumbent on the guardians.

The Poor Law Extension Act was passed on June 8, 1847, but cannot be said to have taken full effect until October 1, 1847. It has now been tried, therefore, for only about fifteen months—a time certainly not sufficient to enable us to ascertain from experience what will be its ultimate effects if it remain unaltered, but enough to show what is the direction in which the vessel

is steering or drifting, and what is the course to which the helmsman is endeavouring to keep her.

Of these fifteen months, we have detailed information respecting the first eleven, the last monthly return which we have seen ending August 31, 1848. It is, perhaps, not unfavourable to a fair estimate of the working of the law, that our information should terminate where it does. In September rumours of another potato failure were spread, and that alarm must have interfered with all social arrangements during the remainder of the year. But the preceding eleven months were disturbed by no peculiar physical calamity. They were not, certainly, a period of prosperity. But they were not a period of famine. There was distress; but it was the result of insecurity, or idleness, or despondency—not of the seasons. It was the act of man—not of God. The Poor Law Commissioners thus characterise the earlier portion of it, in their First Annual Report, dated May 1, 1848:—

‘The general harvest (of 1847) was for the most part prosperous; and, contrary to much prediction on the subject, the potato-crop showed itself almost universally free from blight, and the produce has since remained generally sound, as is proved by the state of the seed brought into market in this and the last month. The characteristic of the present season has been, the very small breadth of land planted with potatoes, causing the great price to which they rose in the market so early as the months of October and November.

‘On the other hand, the large importation of Indian meal into the country has so far reduced the price of that and other descriptions of meal, that the money-cost of human subsistence is not much greater now

than in seasons when the potato was in greatest abundance.

‘Under these circumstances, it was to be expected that the pressure of distress would not show itself so uniformly over the face of the country as in the preceding year. In districts where capital flowed freely, and employment was presented to the people, even at moderate wages, they would fare better with the present kinds of food at the present prices than in former seasons. On the other hand, where, from want of enterprise or capital, employment did not present itself, the peasantry, being without the usual resource of potatoes, would necessarily fall into severe privation.’*

We are not sure that the last paragraph is not an example of the besetting sin which we have already remarked as misleading those who speculate on Irish matters—the transferring English notions to that most un-English society.

It seems to assume that the bulk of the Irish, like the bulk of the English, depend on wages—that they are maintained, like the English, by the flow of capital, and by employment being presented to them. The bulk of the Irish peasantry are their own employers; the capital on which they depend is not something flowing from without, but the result of their own labour, and of their own frugality. And nothing is more striking, in the long and intricate history of Irish distress, than the intimate connection of much of that distress with the carelessness, the inactivity, and the improvidence of the sufferers. We will illustrate this by a few extracts, taken almost at hazard from the vast pile of blue-books which form the Relief literature of 1847 and 1848.

* Report, p. 8.

Extract from the evidence of the Rev. H. Montgomery, taken by the Lords' Committee on Colonisation from Ireland, June 18, 1847:—

‘I have travelled through a considerable portion of Ireland in the course of the last two years. From Roscommon to Clare on both sides, but especially on the Connaught side of the river, I saw an immense population, apparently almost entirely unemployed, even in the early part of the harvest. In Roscommon, in Galway, and in Clare, there were tens of thousands of people who appeared to be entirely idle, their fields overgrown with weeds, their houses in a state of ruin, their persons foul and wretched, and altogether in a state of destitution which I did not believe existed in any portion of the world. The idleness appeared to be universal; I saw scarcely any man working. The fields were overgrown with weeds. You might know a potato-garden by seeing a green leaf occasionally appearing amidst luxuriant weeds, whilst men and women were standing about, or lying in the ditches in perfect idleness.’*

Messrs. Lecky, Thomas, and Carey, the vice-guardians of the Ballinrobe, Castlebar, and Westport Unions, to the Poor Law Commissioners, August 21, 1847:—

‘Every holder of a small tenement cultivates his own land, and requires no assistance beyond his own family; and when his crops are sown, there is no one to give him a day's work: his neighbour is in the same predicament with himself, and the domains of the gentry are few and far between. The very low price of labour here is the natural result; for, even in the busy time of

* Minutes of Evidence, p. 112.

harvest, the reaper receives, in general, no more than 8*d.* or 10*d.* per day, without food.

‘As to the disposition of the labouring classes to find employment for themselves, an observer must arrive at rather an anomalous conclusion. Experience proves that large numbers of both men and women yearly migrate to other lands to seek employment, and endure much hardship and privation in order to accumulate a small hoard, with which they return to their families; and yet, at home, the same individuals do not exhibit the same energy of character, neglecting many advantageous employments on their own gardens, in cleaning, weeding, and cultivating the land—and this at a time when the Government has been generously and lavishly supplying all their wants as to food. On Thursday morning last, on a journey of twenty miles from Westport to Ballinrobe, between the hours of 7 and 11, we did not remark a single individual in the fields, and only a few drawing turf from the bogs. And yesterday, between Ballinrobe and Castlebar, except in one or two meadow-fields, we made the same observation. If they had the disposition to work, even for themselves, supplied as they are and have been, there is abundant opportunity; but we fear the disposition of the peasantry for honest labour and employment has been deeply and injuriously affected. We are often asked if there will be any public works, and to those we are convinced the people would fly with avidity, as there they would receive as much as their usual rate of wages, and be able to loiter away the time in pretended labour.’*

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland (Fourth Series, 1847), p. 41.

Captain Kennedy, Inspector of the Kilrush Union, to the Commissioners, Feb. 24 and March 16, 1848:—

‘All who received relief last year (45,000 out of a population of 82,353) expected its continuance, and still continue to importune and besiege the relieving-officer. The great difficulty and danger here is in relieving a people who are not disposed to help themselves; and the landlord and tenant class set them the example of doing nothing. They all alike seem ignorant of the use of land, labour, or capital. The farmers who have money job in meal, instead of growing it. I have no doubt that a large portion of the union will remain uncultivated, the land wasted by a succession of corn-crops, and the occupiers without means or manure to put in any other.’*

‘They (the occupiers) seem determined,’ says Mr. Hamilton, the Inspector of the Ballina Union, ‘to hold on by their spots of land, in the vain hope that Government will both feed them and crop their farms. I was told by a most respectable person, that there are many farmers in this barony (Belmullet) who had plenty of seed last year, but did not sow a single field, in the hope that some person would do it for them; and the same want of energy appears to exist among all classes at this moment.’†

We have somewhat detailed statistics of the electoral division of Belmullet, from which Mr. Hamilton writes; and of the adjoining division of Binghamstown, both in the union of Ballina; and of the union of Kilrush, in the county of Clare. They contain, together, 182,376

* Sixth Series, 1848, pp. 796, 797—804.

† Fourth Series, p. 87, November, 1847.

acres; the population, according to the census of 1841, is 22,775; and the net rental, according to the Poor-law valuation, 10,922*l.* The number of persons rated as occupiers of land, according to the last return, was 392.

By the agricultural returns of 1847, which were made up in October and November in that year, it appears that, of these 182,376 acres, inhabited by 22,775 persons, only 2,775 acres were then in cultivation, and that they were cropped as follows:—

	Acres.
Barley	451
Wheat	2
Oats	1,057
Bere	5
Rye	20
Beans	3
Potatoes	298
Turnips	500
Mangel-wurzel	25
Flax	8
Other green crops	14
Meadow and clover	392
	<hr style="width: 10%; margin: 0 auto;"/> 2,775

or, deducting the 400 acres of flax, meadow, and clover, 2,375 acres producing food consumable by man—about one acre to ten persons.

Such was the state, in 1847, of a district containing a larger area than the county of Middlesex, and a larger population than the county of Rutland.

The following returns show the progress of outdoor relief in numbers, beginning from the earliest period for which we have seen a return, the week ending the 5th February, 1847:—

Week ending	Persons.	Week ending	Persons.
5th Feb.	445,476	11th March	613,563
12th Feb.	464,002	18th March	568,834
19th Feb.	538,078	25th March	639,713
26th Feb.	537,987	1st April	643,999
4th March	654,712	8th April	638,141*

From this period up to the end of August, we have monthly returns. In April the average number of persons receiving outdoor relief was 722,729; in May it was 749,837; in June, 805,653; in July, 829,352.

The monthly returns contain an important table, stating the proportion per cent. of persons relieved to the population of 1841. Omitting decimals, it stands thus:—

1848.		1848.	
May.	Ulster . . . 3 per cent.	June.	Leinster . . 7 per cent.
	Munster . . 14 „		Connaught . 25 „
	Leinster . . 7 „	July.	Ulster . . . 3 „
	Connaught . 22 „		Munster . . 15 „
June.	Ulster . . . 3 „		Leinster . . 6 „
	Munster . . 14 „		Connaught . 26 „

So that, at the end of July 1848, more than a quarter of the population of Connaught were supported either by poor-rates or by England. In many unions, of course, the number thus supported far exceeded this average. Thus, in Castlebar the proportion in July was 44 per cent., in Ballinrobe 58 per cent., and in Clifden 63 per cent.—the number supported by alms being about double that of those who maintained themselves.

Such have been the results of the Poor Law Extension Act, so far as they are expressed merely by figures. We now come to its moral effects.

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland, Sixth Series, p. 1037.

Under the Act of 1838, confining relief to the workhouse, a test—and, as experience showed, a sufficient test—of the applicants' destitution was afforded by the terms on which relief was given. Though the food, the lodging, and the clothing of the workhouse are, and indeed must be, far superior to those of the cabin, or even of the cottage; yet, such is the dislike among the Irish peasantry of cleanliness, of order, of confinement, and of regular work, however moderate,—such their love, to use Captain Wynne's expression, 'of a combination of dirt, smoke, and warmth,'*—that all but the really destitute avoided it, and none were willing to become destitute in order to be entitled to enter it. And as the inhabitant of the workhouse was powerless,—as he had no means of paying rent or giving labour,—relief in the workhouse was not likely to be made a matter of jobbing or abuse. But, of course, as soon as outdoor relief became lawful, there was a general rush, on the part of the peasantry, to turn it into a means of support, and on the part of the smaller landlords and farmers to make it a source of rent or of underpaid labour.

The 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th volumes of correspondence, 'On the Relief of Distress and State of the Unions in Ireland,' show these feelings in action.

One of the most instructive and earliest exhibitions took place in the Newcastle Union, in the county of Limerick. It contains 171,862 acres, 60,000 persons, and the Poor-law valuation is 109,499*l*. The total extent of land under crops in 1847, exclusive of flax,

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland, Fifth Series, p. 164.

meadow, and clover, was 24,298 acres; including them, it was 38,722 acres. The horses and mules were 3,569, and the cattle 25,308. Among its thirteen electoral divisions is Ballingarry, containing 8,679 persons, and 17,735 acres, of which 5,094 were under crops, exclusively of flax, meadow, and clover.

On the 3rd of October, 1847, a memorial from ‘the starving poor of the parish of Ballingarry’ was presented to the guardians, of which we extract the conclusion:—

‘There is a God above all, and to His righteous judgment we appeal against your cruel and unnatural neglect of our interests and vested rights!

‘We call upon you at once to relieve the class you are legally qualified to relieve, and to obtain, without a day’s delay, the powers necessary to save from death those among the ablebodied who are in danger of dying of hunger. It may appear to you, gentlemen, that the ablebodied poor cannot be reduced to such dreadful extremity; but we appeal to our neighbours of the ratepaying classes—we appeal to our clergymen, we appeal to circumstanees, to verify our assertions. There is no employment, no harvest-work, no drainage, not a single acre in this parish—there are no potatoes; whence, then, are we to procure means to buy meal at 19*d.* the stone? Our circumstanees, we solemnly tell you, are intolerable and desperate; but, even if it were otherwise, it would not justify you in the least. There are certain classes entitled at all times to outdoor relief, because they are presumed, and truly presumed, by the law to be destitute; and have you given a single pound of meal to the hundreds in the union included in that unfortunate and peculiarly squalid and

miserable class? We ask for right—we ask for justice—we ask for the law. We appeal to God, we appeal to public opinion, we appeal to the Government, to secure for us at your hands that which you justly owe us, and which, up to this hour, you have illegally and culpably, and at the expense of a frightful amount of human suffering, withheld from us!’*

The result was, that the Commissioners issued an order, under the Poor Law Extension Act, dated the 1st November 1847, authorising outdoor relief to the ablebodied in the Newcastle Union—the first order of the kind which was made.

The following extract from the minutes of the guardians, of the 23rd November 1847, shows the effect of the order, and the degree of trust to which the Ballingarry manifesto was entitled:—

‘Over 1000 ablebodied persons from Ballingarry, and other electoral divisions, appeared in front of the workhouse, requiring outdoor relief; 49 *of whom only came into the workhouse, though there are still 60 vacancies.*

‘The army and police were in attendance, information having been given to Sub Inspector Coppinger, by the master, of the intended gathering of these persons.

‘Several ablebodied labourers came before the board, requiring outdoor relief. Captain Maxwell, the Poor-law Inspector, informed them that it was contrary to law to relieve them outside while there was room in the workhouse, and stated that they would be received

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland, Fourth Series, p. 176.

at the present moment should they wish to come in ; but they declined.’*

A few more extracts will show the progress of outdoor relief:—

In November 1847, Captain Maxwell informs the Commissioners, that in the village of Ballingarry alone there are 1690 inhabitants, and no less than 1519 are on the relief lists ; of these, 126 are tradesmen.†

On November 22, the Commissioners require Captain Maxwell to call upon each relieving-officer to explain the course which he had pursued, and, if necessary, to take the evidence on oath, on the same subject, of intelligent individuals who have witnessed the relieving-officer’s proceedings. On the 24th he answers:—

‘ In obedience to your instruction, I examined each relieving-officer, and I find that *none* of them have acted up to their instructions. They have but in very few instances visited the dwellings of the applicants for outdoor relief. They have not made themselves personally acquainted with the circumstances of each case in their district. At first they contented themselves with admitting on their lists every person recommended to them by the ratepayers, but latterly considerable reductions have been made. They plead “ *that their lives are not safe, if they strike off or refuse applicants for outdoor relief.*” ‡

On December 24 he says that a witness ‘accused the relieving-officer of partiality, but he refused to give me any information on that head, or clue to get at the truth ; and said he dare not do so—that his life would

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland, Fourth Series, p. 187.

† Fifth Series, p. 219.

‡ Ibid. p. 209.

not be safe if he did. I regret to state that, in my opinion, this feeling is universal. The feeding of 40,000 persons, out of a population of 60,000, during the last year, has been the cause of incredible mischief in this district.*

There is something remarkable in the early period at which outdoor relief was endeavoured to be enforced by intimidation:—

‘There are few gentlemen,’ says Captain Gilbert, the Inspector of the Sligo Union (writing December 8, 1847), ‘throughout this hitherto peaceable union who have not received threatening notices; and those who have distinguished themselves most by benevolence and attention to the wants of the poor during the last distress have been particularly marked out.’ †

‘There is a feeling,’ says Mr. D’Arcy, Inspector of the Ballyshannon Union (writing in November, 1847), ‘of general insecurity abroad: some of the *ex-officio* guardians left the board-room early, not wishing to be out after dark. Captain Johnston mentioned that a report that he was shot had been very general in Sligo; and that it was ominous, as there were frequent instances, where murders have been committed, of such rumours preceding them. Mr. Dickson stated to me, that as he drove into the town, one man remarked to another, alluding to him, “That is the man who is not afraid to drive alone,” which showed that the minds of the people were occupied with such subjects.’ ‡

The Kilrush Union is a sample—and, we are inclined

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland, Fifth Series, p. 210.

† Fourth Series, p. 95.

‡ Ibid. p. 103.

to think, a fair sample—of the general state of the county of Clare. The Poor-law valuation is 59,459*l.*; the population in 1841 was 82,353; the area is 168,021 aeres, of which, in October 1847, 42,627 were under crops. Flax, meadow, and clover took up 7,870 of these, leaving 34,757 for food capable of human use—a proportion more favourable than the average of Connaught. The horses and mules in 1847 were 5,545, the cattle 23,327.

We shall give its history for a few weeks at some length:—

Captain Kennedy to the Commissioners, November 25, 1847.—‘I attended the weekly meeting of the Kilrush Board of Guardians yesterday.

‘There was a serious press of applicants (many of them removed from want), owing to some popular misapprehension about outdoor relief. An offer of the workhouse dispersed them. There were several notoriously bad and turbulent characters among the crowd, whom I observed counselling and inciting the others to clamour for outdoor relief and public works.

‘The north and west of the union, including the divisions of Kilmurry, Kilmaeduan, Killard, Kilkee, and a part of Moyarta, are in a most lamentable state. The parts on the coast are most densely populated, with a turf-digging, seaweed-gathering, fish-eating, amphibious population—as bad fishermen as they are agriculturists. They have no regular mode of gaining a livelihood. They are inert, improvident, and utterly without foresight. Lavish and constant expenditure may keep them from starvation, but it will require years of good management and well-devised measures to make them independent or self-supporting. A few

acres of reclaimed bog planted with potatoes has heretofore supplied their wants, and rendered them content on the lowest possible scale of existence.

‘The district seems swept of food. The small farmers are realising their produce, which they are afraid to keep. In the district I have remarked upon, I believe one-third of the population will be utterly without food at Christmas, two-thirds starving before February, and the whole devoid of food or money before May.

‘I cannot doubt that all holding over ten acres (though a small class), are much better off than they appear or are willing to admit. I have no fears for them. In many cases they have withheld both rent and produce from the landlord, living in a state of unwholesome expectancy of some great social or political change.

‘Intimidation paralyses all, from high to low.’*

‘Many of the habitations are no better than a fox-earth, and the inmates, in their appearance, clothing, and mode of living, hardly human. This class are comparatively content and uncomplaining.

‘Their mode of scratching the land does not deserve the name of cultivation. Their attempts are inferior to what I have seen among North-American Indians.

‘This division [Moyarta] contains upwards of 10,000 inhabitants upon 13,000 acres, and the net annual value is under 5,000*l.* Without potatoes, it is a permanent pauper colony; the swarms of children incredible.’†

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland, Fifth Series, p. 383.

† Ibid. p. 385.—According to the agricultural returns,

Captain Kennedy to the Commissioners, December 2, 1847.—‘ I have the honour to submit a report of the following occurrences, for the information of the Commissioners. On my arrival at the workhouse, at eleven o’clock a.m., yesterday, I found about 1,000 persons assembled in the neighbourhood, and evidently bent upon some general move. I was not long kept in suspense. A few minutes only elapsed, when a general cry for outdoor relief was set up, accompanied by unmistakable symptoms of turbulence and riot—a plentiful crop of blackthorn sticks appearing above the heads of all.

‘ At this time a continuous stream of people was observed approaching from the Kilkee district. Colonel Vandeleur, the chairman of the guardians, and the sub-inspector of police, had gone to Kilkee on magisterial business; but meeting such crowds heading to Kiltrush, and learning their object, he prudently returned with the sub-inspector. Seeing the complexion of matters at the workhouse, where the mob had increased to about 3,000, he ordered up the police, and subsequently the detachment of troops quartered here.

‘ The leaders of the mob, seeing that measures were taken to repress any attempt at violence, left the miserable and really destitute to gain admission, after being nearly trampled to death. The sufferings of the aged and infirm, women and infants, trampled upon and trodden down, were really heartrending. About 300 were subsequently admitted.

‘ The fact that only about 300 out of 3,000 applied

Moyarta contains 8,597 persons and 15,642 acres, of which 4,086 are under crops. It appears, therefore, to have been in a better state than the average of Connaught.

to come into the house, denotes the object of the demonstration.’*

‘*December 16, 1847.*—There is an utter absence of employment of any kind, and the idea seems to be abandoned by the poor themselves. A few days since, a large number of spades were required for the paupers trenching the workhouse ground, and, on enquiry, I ascertained that any number, up to some hundreds, could be obtained secondhand (but good as new), from pawnbrokers and others in the town, for 7*d.* each, sold or pawned by their indolent or despairing owners.

‘A great breadth of the land is in stubble, and this they have no capital or manure to erop, and, worse still, no energy.’†

On December 23, Captain Kennedy again writes to the Commissioners:—

‘On the 20th instant, when I visited the workhouse, I found about 200 men congregated in the day-room with a blazing fire. I enquired why they were not at work, and was answered by a universal clamour, that they were unable. I sent for the medical officer, and had them individually inspected: about thirteen only of the whole number were passed by him as infirm. The remainder I ordered to be put to work in the yard, breaking stones, under gangsmen, remaining till I saw it in operation—at the same time explaining that their rations would be stopped if a fair amount of work were not done. The result was, that these men and their families, to the number of 100, demanded their discharge that evening, and 121 more on the following day.

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland, Fifth Series, p. 386.

† Ibid. p. 387.

‘ I fully ascertained that these persons came into the house without any necessity or intention of staying, but in the expectation of being discharged on “ outdoor relief.” When the house became crowded, many of them candidly avowed it.

‘ I have no doubt that an organised plan to swamp the house in this manner has been suggested to the people, and was for the first time attempted on the 5th instant (*vide* my report of that date), and was only defeated by the energetic measures adopted.

‘ Many come into the house, who, on being searched, possess sums of money varying from 1s. to 8s. and 10s.; and one inmate of the workhouse, not many days ago, laid a complaint of having been robbed of 25s. in the house.’ *

And again, on December 30 :—

‘ About twenty able-bodied paupers, with their families, have claimed their discharge this day, which will reduce the number about eighty.

‘ These persons came in for the purpose of qualifying for outdoor relief, and, finding no immediate probability of succeeding in their object, left the house, voluntarily, without it. A large number have quitted during the week, from the same causes and on the same conditions. The being put to work, and obliged to observe personal cleanliness, are conditions they will not submit to, unless they are absolutely destitute.

‘ Every day’s experience convinces me of the danger of giving outdoor relief to any of this class, and the necessity of resisting to the utmost limit which prudence or humanity will justify.

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland, Fifth Series, p. 391.

‘ I had difficulty in inducing the guardians to adopt this system : trouble to the officers, irregularity, danger of infection, &c., were urged against it.

‘ They receive relief in food only, and are quite content with their allowance of meal. Their habitually wretched scale of existence renders them content with anything, and fuel costs them nothing.’*

Verbatim copy of a notice posted on Colonel Vandeleur’s gate on the evening of December 31, 1847 :—

‘ Take Notice Crofton Vandeleure if you dont change your mind and give Relive to the Young as well as the Old, and not to put a stop to the Publicke Worke as you are, and also Captin Kenidy if ye dont be said by this Notice believe me I will do with you as I did with Piree Carrige, so have your Wills made in time.’

Captain Kennedy writes again to the Commissioners, January 4, 1848 :—

‘ Four persons were this day committed to Ennis Gaol, to take their trial for posting a threatening notice, and conspiring to shoot C. M. Vandeleur, Esq., and myself. The evidence against them is a man named Curtin.

‘ They communicated to him their intention of shooting Mr. Vandeleur, if public work were not immediately given, as they believed he had stopped it ; and also to shoot me if I did not give relief to young (*i. e.* ablebodied) as well as old.

‘ I went into the Bridewell this morning, and immediately recognised all four as persons who had applied for outdoor relief ; two of whom made themselves remarkable by being unusually importunate, and one, if

* Fifth Series, p. 393.

not two, had left the workhouse voluntarily. They were all of the ablebodied class.

‘The fact of some neighbouring unions giving outdoor relief to the ablebodied makes our position here more difficult. One sturdy vagabond applied to me the other day. I explained the law, and offered him the workhouse; he replied, “They all get the Government relief at Ennis, and if we had Father Sheehan (Roman Catholic curate, Ennis), we would all soon have it here.”

‘I may remark that no proper object has been refused relief, either in or out of the workhouse.’*

We now come to the Scariff Union, partly in Clare and partly in Galway. The population is 53,563, the valuation 44,609*l.*, the acreage 168,048. Only 23,461 acres were, in October 1847, under crops, of which 6,699 were in flax, meadow, and clover, leaving 16,762 for food consumable by man. The horses and mules, in 1847, were 3,146; the cattle, 15,833.

Captain Hart to the Commissioners, December 11, 1847.—‘The state of things here is difficult to be dealt with, owing to a large admixture of turbulent, ablebodied, single men, and others not in distressed circumstances, who evidently entertain the notion that it needs but a due exhibition of physical force to induce an indiscriminate issue of outdoor relief, seeing that the workhouse, which was constructed for 600, now contains nearly 800 inmates.

‘On Tuesday last, I had to seize a turbulent fellow (a single man), who had forced his way with others into the house; and on my having his name registered,

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland, Fifth Series, p. 395.

as a warning to others, and ordering that no relief should ever be given to him except inside the house, he insolently replied, that he would “*rob and steal sooner than come into the workhouse,*” and that “*all the people had a right to get the outdoor relief.*”

‘I should not have deemed such matters as these worthy of mention, were it not that they abundantly exemplify what must inevitably be the demoralising effects of outdoor relief to ablebodied men, should such an expedient, unhappily, ever have to be resorted to—a crisis which I can view in no other light than as an unmixed and dire calamity, which will speedily extinguish, in the breasts of its recipients, every principle of self-reliance, and swallow up the property of the country; for, judging from past experience, it is utterly futile to expect that any adequate check can be interposed, especially at this early stage of the administration of the new laws for the relief of the poor, to prevent an almost indiscriminate issue of relief; as, when once it is believed that the destitution has extended beyond the power of being met by local taxation, every barrier to abuse will, I fear, be at once levelled, and the same general rush made for the “Government relief” as took place under the system of relief by public works, and subsequently by the issue of rations, when the detection of the most shameless imposition was usually met by the reply, that “one man had as good a right as another to get a share of the Government relief.”’*

Mohill Union.—Major Halliday to the Commissioners, January 21, 1848:—

‘The number of names now on the outdoor relief list

* Fifth Series, p. 417.

exceeds 3,000, and must be expected largely to increase for several weeks ; but the relieving-officers have been able hitherto to avoid taking on it any able-bodied males, by offering to applicants of this class admission to the workhouse, *which is almost invariably declined.*

‘ They all concur in stating, that if any of these shall be relieved out-of-doors, *they will universally throw themselves on the list, and abandon such employment as they at present can at times obtain from the farmers or otherwise.*’*

The opinion reported by Major Halliday, in the last sentence, is remarkably confirmed by a circumstance which has come to our knowledge while these pages are passing through the press. A great proprietor in Kerry has directed a considerable sum to be employed there in drainage. He finds, however, the pauperism undiminished, and the explanation is, that those who have once received relief are spoiled for work. They are absolutely valueless as day-labourers, and if employed on task-work, throw up their little contracts, candidly confessing that they prefer their chance of union support. A friend of ours near Limerick, a few days ago, ordered four pairs of shoes. His shoemaker refused the order, as it might interfere with his relief.

Of course we could extend almost indefinitely these pictures of sloth, fraud, violence, and misery ; for, long as these extracts are, they form a very minute portion of the vast Relief library before us. Enough, however—perhaps more than enough—has been produced to show the wisdom of Mr. Twistleton’s prophecy,

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland, Fifth Series, p. 195.

‘that it would be a fatal step to introduce any system of outdoor relief for the unemployed population of Ireland.’* Those who believe that a population in the state which now appears to be that of the southern and western Irish can safely be told that the fundamental law of human society has been repealed in their favour, and that, though they do not work, they yet shall eat; who believe that a people, such as the evidence now shows those of Munster and Connaught to be, will fight the anxious battle which man has to wage for subsistence, though they are told that it is the duty of the ratepayers, and, in default of them, of that being of inexhaustible resources, the British Government, to assist them when they make inadequate efforts, and supply their place when they make none;—those who can believe all this, are beyond the reach of any arguments drawn from theory, or even from experience.

We may be asked, however (for it is a question which we have often heard put), what else would you have done?—what do you propose to substitute? We are not sure that this is a question which an objector to outdoor relief for such a population is bound to answer. If we saw a man with a wound in his leg, busily employed in tearing it wider and deeper, we might be allowed to advise him to desist, without being required to direct his further proceedings. If he asked us what else he should do, we might be permitted to answer, ‘All that we know is, that what you are doing is wrong—that every time you tear that wound you inflame it. What you ought to do, or whether you

* House of Lords : Evidence on Destitute Poor in Ireland (1846), p. 780.

ought to do anything, we will not venture to say ; but, for Heaven's sake, stop your hands in what you are about !'

Some answers, however, we will endeavour to give to this question ; some measures we will venture to suggest.

It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader that any remedies for the social diseases of Ireland must, like those diseases themselves, be divided into two classes, the moral and the physical. The most striking and the most important moral disease of Ireland is insecurity. The remedies against insecurity are supplied partly by law and partly by education. Of these, perhaps, education is the more important. It is not, indeed, independent of law. However excellent the instruction, however wide its diffusion, still in every large society there are some persons whom it does not affect. Their intellects are not strong enough to understand it, or the violence of their passions prevents their heeding it, or they have not sufficient self-control to obey it. Such persons must be restrained by fear, and, where fear is insufficient, by force ; and force and fear are the weapons only of law.

But law, though it represses violence and fraud, does not even attempt to diminish the rapacity and ferocity which occasion them. This it leaves to education ; and where education has not, at least to some extent, performed its duty—where it has not trained up a considerable portion of the community to be the enemies of crime—where it has not created a public opinion to aid the law, both legislator and administrator become feeble.

No employment of fear or of force can permanently

prevent the prevalence of outrage and robbery in an uneducated community. Nowhere are these instruments more powerful, nowhere is their use more unscrupulous, than in slave-countries, and nowhere is there less security of person or of property. In the first place, punishment is a comparatively remote evil, and depends on detection; but neither distant nor contingent motives much affect an uneducated man. To obey, or even to appreciate them, requires much cultivation. And, in the second place, no law can be vigorously executed unless the mass of the people assist in its execution; and they never will assist in repressing crime unless they are sufficiently educated to perceive its mischief.

The principal educators of every Christian country must be its clergy. The amount of their influence, and the direction in which it is exercised, of course depend much on the purity of their doctrine, and their own intellectual and moral cultivation. They depend, perhaps, still more on the relation in which the priest stands to his flock. If he belong to the mass of the people by birth, by connections, and by early education,—if his only experience in life has been the cabin, the village-school, the ecclesiastical seminary, and the parochial cure,—if he be dependent on his flock for society, for sympathy, and for income, how can we expect him to teach any opinions except those which that flock approves?

This, as we have often said before, is an important part of the long explanation of the insecurity of Ireland. The legal instruments for the suppression of outrage are actually more powerful in Ireland than in England. The law is more stringent; there is a much larger

army, and a much stronger police. But in England everything tends to attach the great body of the instructors of the people to the side of order and law. By birth, by manners, and by education, they belong to the class which is supposed to have most to lose by disorder, and which certainly is most conscious of the advantages of tranquillity. With that class alone can they associate familiarly, and that class contributes the small portion of their incomes which is not derived from a national fund. The whole influence, therefore, of the Church of England is conservative.

The same train of reasoning would lead us to expect the whole influence of the Irish Roman Catholic priests to be destructive. This, however, it certainly is not. The Irish Roman Catholic clergy, whatever be their other deficiencies, are sincere in their faith. They cannot believe in the Gospel, and preach assassination or rebellion. The events of the last six months show that their influence, so far as it was exerted at all, was exerted against the insurrection. But, though they have very seldom been the active enemies of authority, they have very seldom been more than its lukewarm friends. In many cases, perhaps in most, they have not ventured to be more than neutral. Those who have been prominent in the repression of sedition have encountered dangers, and indeed sufferings, to confront which required the self-devotion of a martyr. We know one case, in which a priest was murdered for having denounced outrage and rebellion. Others have had their chapel-doors nailed up; and almost all the rest have found their incomes cease. They have had to choose between rebellion and starvation.

On other social questions, where they were less tied

down by the express words of Scripture, their dependence on their flocks has forced them to take the dangerous side. They have been the great supporters of Repeal,—the most mischievous delusion that ever infected the Irish nation. They have always encouraged early marriages, and their consequence, the subdivision of the land into occupancies incapable of affording rent or even decent subsistence. They are the natural enemies of good Poor-law administration. If relief be given in the workhouse the priest gets nothing, and accordingly he always exerts himself in favour of outdoor relief. We know one case, and believe that there are hundreds, in which a priest cursed from the altar all who should enter the workhouse. ‘Rather,’ he said, ‘die in your cabins, or by the roadside. Your deaths will be upon the heads of those who refused you outdoor relief.’³ But in proportion as outdoor relief is profuse, or is given to those who have other means of support, something will overflow in dues. Again, the priest—as he is scarcely ever an owner, and often is not an occupier, of land—is seldom, and then very lightly, rated to the poor. While outdoor relief is swallowing up the landlords’ rents and the tenants’ profits, the priest can indulge his sympathy for his neighbour, or for his relation, without making any real sacrifice himself.

It is true that these evils are not completely remediable. The bulk of a Roman Catholic clergy cannot be gentlemen; for men who belong, by birth or by habits, to the higher classes will rarely submit to the perpetual celibacy and to the laborious duties of a Roman Catholic parochial clergyman. The education which is given by society, which is gained from equals

and rivals in the public school, the university, and the world, is denied to them. But we can give to them what, though far inferior, is next best—a good literary education: though we cannot make them independent of their flocks for sympathy and for society, we can relieve them from pecuniary dependence. And the more exposed they are to bad influences, which are inevitable, the more important it is that we should extricate them from those which are removable.

The least expensive—and, supposing it once carried, the easiest in application—of the remedies required by Ireland, is the endowment of the Catholic clergy; and we earnestly recommend that the salaries of the priests of every electoral division be rated, just as the tithe-rent of the Protestant clergyman is, to the relief of the poor of that district, and the poundage paid over to the guardians.

To talk of the expense as a real objection is puerile. It would not cost half what we spend on the African squadron, with no ascertainable results except the loss of officers and men, the interruption of the commerce of the world, the suspicion or hatred excited against us among all foreign nations, and the aggravation of the horrors of the slave-trade.

It would not cost half the expense of the armed force that it would enable us to reduce in Ireland. It would not cost one-tenth of the additional revenue which Ireland in a merely tolerable state of security, would pour into our Exchequer; and, above all, it would not, like a Kaffir war or a Canadian fortification, be a new expenditure.

It would only be shifting an existing load from the shoulders of the poorest to those of the richest popula-

tion in the world. It would be only relieving the Irish poor from a tax which must be paid either by them or by us, and which is now paid by them only because we have taken from them, and appropriated—and continue to appropriate—to purposes of our own, the fund which originally supplied it.

Some additional provisions for security—such as the increase of the number of stipendiary magistrates, and the abolition of that monstrous relic of barbarism, the requiring unanimity from juries—are advisable, but less urgent.

But moral remedies must here again be supported by physical ones. No country can be tranquil or industrious, in which the proportion of people to the land and capital which employ and support it is so excessive as to leave them unemployed and destitute, or even unemployed without being destitute, during a considerable portion of every year. This is well illustrated in the excellent evidence given by Mr. Aubrey de Vere, before the Committee of the House of Lords on Colonisation, on July 19, 1847 (p. 513, and *post*):—

‘It must be remembered,’ says Mr. de Vere, ‘that the immediate effect of over-population, when excessive, is to interfere with the ordinary relations of society, and still more with the processes of agriculture, in such a manner as to make it almost impossible that money can be laid out productively. The farmer builds his sheds for his cattle; in the spring he has one or two calves; four or five armed men come up to him, and make him swear that he will kill his calves because his poorer neighbours require the milk. The effect of such outrages on improved cultivation is obvious.

‘4729. Have not there been many instances during the present year in which a species of tariff has been established by the disturbers of the peace, under which a large farmer is allowed to rear not exceeding two calves, another is allowed to rear one, and a third is prohibited from rearing any?—Yes; that is perhaps a more dangerous symptom than those occasional outbreaks of lawlessness which occur at other times. It illustrates the tendency of a very great amount of over-population to abolish the very idea of property; making the people believe that the produce of the land belongs virtually to all on the land, and that they have a right to legislate as they think best as to the mode of its distribution.

‘4731. Do the same interferences take place with respect to the sale and price of potatoes?—Yes. A farmer receives notice that his potatoes are required to be sold at such a price, or that he must be prepared to undergo whatever penalty the people choose to inflict upon him. This has frequently occurred.

‘Then, supposing the labourer to be perfectly desirous to give honest labour in return for the wages he receives, he is almost as unable to do this, as the farmer is unable to cultivate the crops which he prefers. He is one of a certain number of people, all of whom require employment. If the employment is only sufficient for fifty men, and a hundred require employment, the remaining fifty will of course induce or compel the fifty who have received the employment to give such inefficient work as to render the employment of the hundred men necessary. If the hundred men should be all employed, but if the work be calculated to last only for six months, whereas the hundred labourers require

subsistence for the whole year, they will naturally make the work last for the year; and any particular individual amongst them who wishes to make himself what is called better than his neighbour, is a man very injurious, as they think, to the community, and gets a hint to that effect. All the relations of society are thus embittered, and the impatience of the disease resists the measures necessary for the cure. Every part is sore, and shrinks from the touch; every part is armed, and stings the hand that would heal it.

‘The failure of the recent attempt to support the people of Ireland by means of work on the public roads, is but an illustration on a large scale of a difficulty which besets all attempts to give employment where the pressure of population is such as to paralyse that employment which a less excessive pressure would have stimulated. The labour required was met by a combination. That is a fact that speaks for itself; everybody knows it; no person ought to have been surprised at seeing it occur. Those who were well acquainted with Ireland knew that the circumstance was certain to occur, because the same principle of combination has long since prevailed amongst our labourers, although in an occult shape, and has, in an indirect manner, produced the same results; that is to say, by a kind of understood convention amongst the labourers, work has been done badly, and done slowly. While in England you have paid 1*s.* 6*d.* for labour and have got 1*s.* 6*d.* worth of work, in Ireland we have paid 8*d.* for labour and got 6*d.* worth of work; combination supplanting competition, and making labour expensive where the labourers were numerous.

‘4743. Does this pressure of a population in excess act dangerously upon the peace of the country?—It renders it impossible to maintain the peace in many of those districts in which the pressure is very much felt, because it reduces us to a state in which you may say that everyone is in everyone else’s way. In England, everyone is socially dependent upon his neighbour; the intertexture of society is so finely wrought, that every man is the better for his neighbour, and so far has a sort of vested interest in his life; but in Ireland the people are competitors and rivals, and angry feelings are thus necessarily engendered. For this reason it has been found hitherto very difficult to preserve the peace in Ireland, even in times of comparative abundance. We have now met with a calamity which has very much the same effect as if some two millions of people had been added in one year to our population, a proportionate amount of food having been withdrawn. Under these circumstances, the insecurity of property and the difficulty of maintaining the peace must proportionately increase.

‘4759. With respect to the general interests of your electoral division, how do you find that the state of the neighbouring less-improved electoral divisions acts upon you?—Very injuriously. That is one of our great difficulties. In a neighbouring electoral division, a large proportion of the holdings consist of about three acres each. If each of those farms supports the person who possesses it, even supposing that no rent is paid, it is probably the very most that we can expect. A rate, certainly, cannot be levied upon such farms.

‘ There are a very considerable number of acres in that electoral division which have remained altogether

unsown and waste. Adjoining us is the electoral division of Kildimo; in it no considerable proprietor resides, and there is no chance of employment on a large scale. Supposing that in the two adjoining electoral divisions the people are destitute, and that a very inconsiderable rate is the utmost that can be raised for their support, we shall be in the difficult position of supporting our own people in the midst of a starving multitude on each side of us; and the question is, whether that multitude will be content to starve and see their neighbours provided for. As soon as we set 200 men at work, 200 more men will probably, if not otherwise provided for, march down, with their spades on their shoulders, and demand a share in that work.'

The degree in which Ireland is over-populous may, perhaps, be best understood by comparing her to England.

Unfortunately, the agricultural statistics of England are very defective. We are not acquainted with any estimate later than that furnished by Mr. Couling to the Emigration Committee in 1827, and published (p. 361) in the Appendix to the Third Report, ordered to be printed on June 29, 1827. It has been adopted, however, by Mr. Porter, and, with a slight variation, by Mr. M'Culloch, and so far as it differs from the truth, must obviously err in leading us to underestimate the *present* amount of agricultural improvement.

According to that estimate, the 32,342,400 acres of England comprised 25,632,000 in cultivation, of which 10,252,600 acres were arable and garden, and 15,379,400 meadows and pastures. The number of agricultural families appears, by the census of 1831, to have been then 761,348.

The surface of Ireland, according to the census of 1841 (p. 453), contains 20,808,271 statute acres, of which only 13,464,300 were then cultivated. Of these, in 1847, only 5,238,575 were under crops, thus subdivided:—cereal, 3,313,579; green crops, 727,738; flax, 58,312; and hay, 1,138,946.* The agricultural families were returned by that census as 974,188. So that more than one-fourth more families were employed in cultivating about half the extent of cultivated land.

The disproportion is still more striking when we look at the details. The arable and garden ground in England consisted, as we have seen, of 10,252,000 acres. In Ireland, in 1847, only 5,238,575 acres were under crops, of which 1,138,946 produced hay; so that only 4,099,629 acres remain for arable and green crops, or less four-and-a-half acres to an agricultural family. In England, the proportion of arable and garden ground is rather more than thirteen-and-a-half acres to an agricultural family—just three times as much. Of course, when we come to the distressed provinces, the disproportion increases. In Leinster and Ulster the agricultural families were 483,845; in Munster and Connaught they were 492,343. The cultivated land in Leinster and Ulster was 7,368,727 acres; in Munster and Connaught, 6,095,573 acres. The land under crop in Leinster and Ulster was 3,284,259 acres, or, deducting 714,488 of meadow and clover, 2,469,771 acres. That in Munster and Connaught was 1,950,316 acres, or, deducting meadow and clover, 1,526,658 acres—not three acres and a rood to an agricultural family, or more than four times as many agricultural

* Agricultural Return, pp. 6, 8.

families to a hundred acres under crop as in England.

Now, in 1831, the agricultural population of England, in proportion to the land under cultivation, and to the capital employed on it, was in excess. It was the time when agricultural labourers were driven from farm to farm as roundsmen, were sold by auction at 2*d.* per head per day, were harnessed on the roads to gravel-carts, were sent ten miles to carry a barley-straw and bring back a wheat-straw, were imprisoned in the gravel-pit, or kept standing morning after morning in the parish pound. It was the time when farmers could not safely use machinery, when labour-rates were sanctioned by law, when Wilnot Horton lectured on redundant population, and emigration was as vehemently demanded for England as it now is for Ireland. What then is to be done with an agricultural population more than four times as excessive, in proportion to the demand for its labour, as one which itself was excessive? How are we to remedy a disproportion between cultivators and cultivated land, the greatest that has ever pervaded a civilised country?

It may be said, however, that Ireland is inadequately cultivated, and that it affords a field on which the agricultural population, now excessive, might be profitably employed. Let us then consider what are the obstacles to extensive agricultural improvement. If we suppose a man to be the sole proprietor of an electoral division, that is to say, of an estate equal in extent to more than three average English parishes; that his tenants hold at will, or for short terms; that the proportion of population to the land is so moderate, that freedom of action is not circumscribed by the tyranny described

by Mr. de Vere, but the landlord is allowed to improve, the farmer to manage, and the labourer to work, without being under the orders and the terrors of a secret tribunal; that the surrounding electoral divisions are also so favourably circumstanced, that their inhabitants will not invade any new oasis of prosperity, derange the proportions of population and employment, and prescribe the amount of industry that is to be exerted, and the manner of its application:—if we suppose all these favourable accidents to coincide, such a proprietor would do wisely, if out of his own resources, or by the assistance of the Land Improvement Act, he expended on his lands perhaps half, perhaps the whole value of their fee-simple, in their present state. But where shall we find such a coincidence?—in 200 cases?—in 100?—in 50? If all these conditions can rarely coexist, which of them can be dispensed with? Can the proprietor of a portion of an electoral division prudently improve? If he do so, what is he doing but providing a fund to be eaten away by the spreading sore of his neighbour's pauperism? Can he do so when his land is in the hands of middlemen, or tenants for terms, who for years must reap the whole profit of his expenditure? Can he do so when pressed on by an excessive, and therefore idle, and therefore demoralised population in his own electoral division, or in those around him which impedes, or forbids or dictates his own operations, and those of his farmers and of his labourers?

This is not mere theory; we will illustrate it by an example.

We have given some details as to the state of the Belmullet and Binghamstown electoral divisions, part

of the barony of Erris, in the Ballina Union. On the 15th of February, 1848, Mr. Hamilton, the Inspector, writes to say that one of the principal landlords, Mr. Carter, has applied for, and obtained, 5,000*l.* under the Improvement Act.*

On March 30, Mr. Carter writes thus to the Commissioners :—

‘I have the honour to enclose you a copy of a letter I this morning received from Mr. Crampton, the agent of my estate in Erris, county Mayo. I am most anxious to lay out the money applied for and granted, but the contents of this letter certainly cause me to pause before I take up 5,000*l.*, to be expended in increasing the burdens of the land in Erris, without a prospect of redemption.’

ENCLOSURE.—*Mr. Crampton to Mr. Carter, March 28, 1848.*—‘I learn at the Custom House that your application, under the Land Improvement Act, for the drainage of your Erris estates, has been approved of to the extent of 5,000*l.*, and that you will very shortly be placed in possession of an instalment of this sum.

‘Previous to your embarking in this expenditure, I wish to lay before you, as clearly as I can, the present state and prospects of Erris generally, that you may judge for yourself whether by this expenditure you would improve your estate there, or whether, on the contrary, by adding so much to its ineumbrances, you will only be accelerating its ruin.

‘The valuation of the two electoral divisions, Belmullet and Binghamstown, in which your estate

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland, Sixth Series, p 221.

lies, under the Poor Law, is under 12,000*l.* a-year; this sum is not very much less than the amount of rent which was paid (before 1846) by the occupying tenants to their immediate landlords; at present small holders (who occupy more than nine-tenths of the country) are able to pay no rent whatever.

‘The population of these two electoral divisions—which, before 1846, was considerably over 20,000—is now (as well as an estimate can be made) under 20,000; about one-sixth of this population are resident on those parts of your estate which are not leased against you in perpetuity, and about another sixth on those townlands which are.

‘Out of this population upwards of 10,000 are now receiving relief daily under the Poor Law, at the expense of upwards of 250*l.* a week; that is, at the rate of upwards of 13,000*l.* a year—more than the entire rental of the two divisions, even in flourishing times. This relief is administered with the utmost vigilance and the utmost care taken that none except those actually starving shall be relieved, so that there is no hope that the expense will be diminished; on the contrary, it is certain that it will considerably increase; destitution among the population yet off the lists increasing more rapidly than deaths occur among the paupers who are on—deaths among the paupers being the only circumstance by which the numbers receiving relief are or can be diminished.

‘As might be imagined, the proceeds of the poor-rate are by no means equal to this enormous expenditure; the British Association are supplying the funds, and will probably do so till next harvest; however, they cannot and will not continue to do so; and as the

people are supported in what is as bad as idleness, and the arable land is suffered to lie waste, *there is no hope that the country can support itself when the British Association shall cease to give assistance.*

‘It is for you to consider whether, under these circumstances, the 5,000*l.* granted to your application under the Land Improvement Act, will not (if laid out in Erris) be utterly lost, while you will remain personally liable to 650*l.* a year for interest.

‘If the Government will do nothing, and at the same time insist that proprietors must support the destitute on their estates (that is, on your paying 2,000*l.* a year for poor-rate for your Erris estate, which would be about your proportion, while you at the same time get nothing out of it), I would say the sooner you got rid of that property the better, and that your laying out money on it, with these facts clearly before you, would be an act of deliberate folly.’

The Commissioners refer Mr. Crampton’s statement to their Inspector. He answers:—

‘April 4, 1848.—I think Mr. Crampton’s letter is not by any means an exaggerated statement.

‘The present expenditure is about 250*l.* a week, and a considerable portion of the persons now receiving relief are permanently pauperised, unless some unexpected demand for labour should arise.’

The correspondence closes by a letter from the Commissioners to Mr. Carter, in which they state their opinion that—‘it is only by the adoption of means to encourage agricultural undertakings, independently of the poor-rates, that any progress can be made in ameliorating the condition of the labouring population, and lessening the pressure on the resources of the rate-

payers. The Commissioners would be gratified to know that such means were applied by the owners of the lands heretofore cultivated, but now waste; and were all to adopt your proposition of giving the land rent-free, at first, there would, it is presumed, be found persons, of the requisite skill and capital, to migrate to that district.*

We are not informed as to the result. We presume that Mr. Carter declined the proposed loan. The reader will judge whether it is equally probable that the plan alluded to by the Commissioners, 'that the landlords should give their lands rent-free, and that persons of skill and capital should migrate to Erris in order to cultivate them,' has been adopted.

What is impossible, however, to private enterprise may, it has been supposed, be effected by the Government; and several proposals have lately been made for the reclamation of the waste lands of Ireland at the expense of the State. In support of these views, the high authority of the Irish Commissioners of Poor-law Inquiry has often been cited, but it appears to us erroneously. What the Commissioners proposed as respects Irish wastes was merely a General Enclosure Act.

This was a simple plan, well adapted to the wants of the year 1836, when the obstacle to the cultivation of the waste arose merely from intricacy of title; but does not attempt to meet the present difficulty, which indeed did not then exist; when the obstacle is that, in the face of the poor-rate, it is not worth cultivating.

Then came Mr. Thornton, writing in 1845, before

* Papers relating to the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland, Sixth Series, p. 232.

the potato had failed, and believing (p. 430) that two or three acres furnish plentiful subsistence to a family. He proposes that the poor should have free access to the waste lands,* or at least to 600,000 acres of them; the distribution of which, among 200,000 pauper families, would, he thinks, remedy the pauperism of Ireland.† The proprietors, of course, must be compensated; but he says, with truth, that the value of the fee-simple of an acre of Irish waste is generally small.

Mr. Mill adopted Mr. Thornton's views, but, writing in 1848, estimated more adequately the evil and the necessary extent of the remedy.

Instead of 600,000 acres of waste, he proposes to take all that are arable, which he supposes to be 1,500,000; and instead of 200,000, he proposes to place on them 300,000 families, or five acres to a family. 'Suppose,' he says, 'such a number drafted off to independence and comfort, together with a very moderate additional relief by emigration, the introduction of English farming over the remainder of Ireland would at once cease to be chimerical.'‡

Lastly, we have a further and amended proposal of Mr. Thornton's, contained in his 'Plea for Peasant Proprietors,' published in 1848. He now supposes the available waste lands to be 1,600,000 acres; and he proposes to colonise them with 200,000 pauper families, allotting eight acres to a family. He estimates the expense at 24,000,000*l.*, or 120*l.* per family, a sum considerably exceeding the cost of the most expensive

* 'Over-Population,' p. 432.

† Ibid. p. 430.

‡ Vol. i. p. 393.

emigrations ever made—more than three times the cost at which the Crown, not the best of managers, removed to America the surplus population of its estate at Ballykiline.*

To meet the obvious objection that, with Irish habits, the 200,000 families would soon swell into 400,000, and the farms from eight acres diminish to four, he adopts a suggestion of Mr. Mill's, that the colonists should receive their farms not as tenants, but as owners; the ownership of land being, in his opinion and in that of Mr. Mill, the best preservative against the undue multiplication of a peasantry. And, as a further precaution, he proposes that subdivision be prohibited by law.

Now, we admit most fully the beneficial moral influence of property, especially of landed property. We bitterly regret that our execrable system of tenures, by making the legal forms attending the sale and purchase of a small piece of ground cost more than the value of the thing which they convey, and our execrable law of settlement, by denying employment to a man who is supposed to be able to exist without it, have destroyed the small properties of England. We believe that, if we could recall into existence the English yeoman, we should add to our social system a most valuable member. We believe that the remnants of that race, the Cumberland and Westmoreland statesmen, are the best agricultural population in Great Britain.

But when we are told that such a peasantry will not

* This was 1,550*l.* 7*s.* 3*d.* for 236 persons, or about 6*l.* 11*s.* a head.—*Evidence to First Report of the House of Lords on Colonisation* (1848), *Question* 2959.

multiply and subdivide, we must consider what are the means by which these results are to be prevented. They seem to be only three:—1st, limiting the number of children to a marriage; 2ndly, deferring marriage; and 3rdly, sending out the younger children to get their bread by some other means than cultivating the father's land.

The first of these means is that adopted in France and Switzerland. The number of children to a marriage is much smaller among the peasantry of those countries than in any other part of Europe. It scarcely amounts to three births to a marriage, whereas the number in England is four-and-a-half.

The second is that adopted in Germany, Denmark, Norway, and generally in the Protestant portions of the Continent. The Government almost universally interferes, and prohibits the marriage of those who cannot show that they possess considerable property, or a residence, or that they have performed their military services.

The third is the resource of the English farmer. If he is rich and careful, he saves enough to portion his daughters, and to enable his sons to hire and stock farms of their own. If he cannot afford this, his children go out to service, or are apprenticed to trades.

Now, which of these lines of conduct is likely to be adopted by the colonist on the Irish wastes? He will be a pauper, taken from the worst part of the worst provinces of Ireland—from a population, to use Captain Kennedy's words, 'ignorant of the use of land, labour, or capital; in their appearance, clothing, and mode of living hardly human, and'—what is perhaps the worst symptom—'uncomplaining; quite content with their allowance of meal.' Will such a people, having by

their side the priest living on marriage-dues and christenings, defer marriage, or restrict the number of children in their families? Will they save, to set up their children in other farms or in other businesses? Remove them to a better social atmosphere—let them see all around them instances of thrift and success—put a new continent at their disposal, where they may multiply their numbers and yet extend their possessions, and they will participate in the general prosperity. Keep them in Ireland, and in a generation or two, probably much sooner, they will be in the state in which they are now, only doubled in numbers.

As for the legal prohibition of subdivision, it would be an absolute nullity. Even in the case of a leaseholder or a tenant at will, where there is a landlord who knows that the security of his rent and the value of his reversion depend on his preventing subdivision, we see that it goes on, in spite of a repression which is often complained of as too severe. How is a *proprietor* to be checked? By whom is the law to be enforced? By public officers, we suppose. And will men performing a mere public duty exercise a vigilance and severity, and incur a degree of odium and of danger (for in Ireland unpopularity is often death), which his own interest and that of his descendants will not tempt the reversioner to exert and to undergo?

The decisive objections to this scheme, however, have not yet been mentioned.

Unhappily, as the able compiler of the Digest of the Evidence taken under Lord Devon's Commission has remarked, 'all the evidence on the subject of reclaiming waste lands has reference to the times and circumstances prior to the failure of the potato-crop.' That failure

has destroyed much of what was best established in Irish rural economy ; and, above all, it has destroyed three-acre, or five-acre, or even eight-acre farms.

Among the witnesses examined by the House of Lords' Committee on Colonisation, in 1847, were Colonel Robinson, the well-known Managing Director of the Irish Waste Lands Improvement Company, and, as we have seen, Mr. Blacker.

'2122. I think,' says Mr. Blacker,* 'that with five or six acres the farmer cannot now support himself upon his land. It is a physical impossibility to grow so much grain upon a five or six-acre farm as will support a family consisting of six to seven persons. It would be necessary to sow part of the land with a grain-crop twice in succession, which cannot be carried on ; it could not be continued for any course of seasons.

'2125. Do you not conceive that you possess in Armagh much greater facilities for meeting the state of things, as altered by the potato failure, by your knowledge of agriculture, and by your power of substituting other means of culture?—Certainly ; and not only that, but likewise by having a portion of manufactures going on.

'2126. Even with those advantages, do you conceive that if the potato failure proves permanent, you will have the means of supporting your present extent of population?—I do not think that we shall. If we lose the potato-crop, all the five and six-acre men, who depend entirely upon their small holdings, must go.

'2156. Were not your opinions strongly expressed upon the question of emigration?—Yes. I have written

* Minutes of Evidence, p. 219, and *post*.

two essays upon the management of property in Ireland; in both those I expressed my doubts of the propriety of emigration, and, under the same circumstances, I should be still of the same opinion; but I look upon it that the destruction of the food of a great proportion of the people alters the circumstances altogether. A five or six-acre farmer, with potato diet, could pay his rent, and keep his one or two cows, and his pigs, and live in comparative comfort; but I do not think that he can do so if the potato failure continues—therefore there must, in that case, be a change in the measures adopted.

‘2157. Supposing in any particular district the five-acre-farm system to continue subject to the failure of the potato-crop, what do you conceive would be the consequences upon rents?—There is just this consequence: rent can only be paid by the sale of the produce. *If a man sells the produce to pay his rent, he must starve or become a mendicant; and if he lives upon the produce, and does not pay his rent, then the landlord must starve or become a mendicant.*

‘There are numbers of farms not exceeding five and six acres; I look upon it that in all those farms the produce of the land would be insufficient. To give an instance, take a farm of six acres; if it requires three acres of oats to supply the place of one acre of potatoes, and a family require an acre and a half of potatoes, it would require four or five acres of oats to supply that; how can you grow four or five acres of oats out of six acres?

‘There are many people whom I have heard dilating upon the advantage to Ireland of the failure of the potato-crop, and the blessing it would be to the people

to have cereal food substituted. It seems to me, however, that those who thus express themselves are not aware that it is absolutely impossible all at once to increase the growth of cereal crops to the extent required to feed the present population upon that diet. Before this can be done, there must be an increased quantity of land in a state fit to yield corn crops; this can only be done by an increased growth of green crops; and this, again, requires an increased stock of manure; so that, if it can be accomplished at all, it must be a work of time. And what is in the meanwhile to become of the hundreds of thousands who have hitherto depended on the Conacre potatoes? It is fearful to contemplate the misery that must take place before any good can arise from the failure of the potato.'

Colonel Robinson states that the average holdings of the peasantry on the estates reclaimed by the society are fourteen plantation acres, or about twenty statute acres each.*

He is asked what amount of capital is required for a tenant to become a settler on a waste-land holding, according to the system of the society. He answers—

'It would depend on the size of the farm, the nature of the locality, and the resumption or not of the potato culture; but, as a fair general average, I should deem that an industrious man with a family, entering upon a moderate-sized holding, in proportion to the amount of his capital, and the physical strength of his family, at the rate of from 1*l.* 10*s.* to 2*l.* per plantation acre of arable land would do well. Thus, if a farmer of peaceable habits, inured to difficulties, of strong constitution, and

* Minutes of Evidence, p. 500.

with a healthy large family, possessed of 20*l.* or 30*l.* capital, being the description of persons who *generally emigrate to the American colonies, took a holding of from ten to fifteen plantation acres, which is equal to from sixteen to twenty-three and a half statute acres, he would, by a fair amount of exertion and perseverance, be able to permanently provide for that family, without any extraneous aid from public works or workhouses, or other parties, excepting occasional employment for the first two years, and the stipulated allowances from the improving landlord.*'*

This evidence decisively shows how inadequate is the immediate resource afforded by the waste lands. Supposing their extent ample, and all difficulties of title and expense removed, from two to three years must elapse before they would give any assistance at all. Colonel Robinson often repeats that, for the first two years, the settlers must be fed from other sources. And, secondly, supposing them now ready for use, their extent, great as it seems positively, is comparatively small. 1,400,000 acres divided into ten-acre farms—and that seems to be the minimum—will remove only 140,000 agricultural families out of 974,188, leaving still 824,188 families to cultivate the existing 13,464,300 acres, being about double the English proportion in 1831. Nor is it true that the whole of the 1,425,000 acres of cultivable waste is really available for the purposes in question. 269,000 belong to Ulster, exclusively of Donegal. They belong to a well-administered prosperous province, which supports its own poor without English assistance—indeed, with rare exceptions, without outdoor relief. What more

* Minutes of Evidence, p. 507.

right have we to require an Antrim landlord, whose union and whose electoral division are perfectly solvent—who has so well preserved the proper proportion of population to capital, that instead of one person in five as in Connaught, or one person in twenty as in England, only one person in a hundred is an applicant for relief;—what more right have we to require him to give up his waste lands as a colony for Southern and Western paupers, than we have to require the proprietors of Dartmoor or Salisbury Plain? What right have we to transport the hordes of Clare and Mayo into the heart of Down and Armagh? What more right have we to inoculate with them the laborious, orderly, Protestant population of Ulster, than that of Yorkshire or Kent? What we have said of Ulster applies to many portions of Leinster; it applies even to many parts of the South and the West. Even in Donegal there are unions, such as Dunfanaghy and Letterkenny—in Cork, such as Bandon, Kinsale, and Mallow—where the pauperism is less than in even the well-administered English districts. To grind them down to the common level of Munster and Connaught, by forcibly introducing into their waste lands a surplus population of strangers, would be a strong instance of the injustice and cruelty of which those who most loudly proclaim their humanity are not the least frequently guilty.

The same remark applies not merely between province and province, but between county and county, between union and union, between electoral division and electoral division, even between townland and townland. It is bad enough—we should think it intolerable—to inflict on one parish the support of the paupers of another. To bring those paupers bodily into its bounds, to force its inhabitants to dwell among such associates, and to

become responsible for such inmates, would be absolutely Mezentian :—

*Mortua quin etiam jungebat corpora vivis
Complexu in misero, et longâ sic morte necabat.*

From these premisses a practical conclusion seems to follow more certainly than is usually the case in political reasoning. If the agricultural population of the greater part of Ireland is three times as large as can be profitably employed in cultivating, with the existing amount of capital, the quantity of land now in cultivation,—if, in the districts where that surplus population is found, no one, except under circumstances so peculiar and so rare that they may be said to be nonexistent, can profitably or even safely reclaim land now waste, or apply fresh capital to the land already in cultivation,—if the reclamation of the waste lands by the Government would afford only a slow and very partial relief, and, by rendering possible a still further increase of population, might in its ultimate results act as a poison instead of a medicine,—if under the pressure of poor-rates every month more and more tenancies are abandoned, and more and more fields lie waste, leaving the burden more and more concentrated on the occupiers and the landlords who still stand their ground,—if under the double operation of increased pauperism and diminished employment, the population which last year was only three times, may next year be four times, and the year after be five times, as great as is wanted—what possible resource can there be except to diminish the number of people, since, while that number continues to increase, the demand for their labour is impossible?

If to do this to the requisite extent be really impracticable; if the whole resources of the British Empire—European, American, Asiatic, and African—do not enable us to remove from Ireland every year, for four or five years to come, 250,000 persons; * let

* Much more than this has been done, as will be seen from the following Table:—

Statement showing the Irish as distinguished from the Total Emigration from the United Kingdom, during each Year from 1845 to 1867, both inclusive.

Year	Total Emigration	Irish Emigration	Year	Total Emigration	Irish Emigration
1845	93,501	52,189	1857	212,875	94,787
1846	129,851	72,478	1858	113,972	49,513
1847	258,270	144,157	1859	120,432	62,841
1848	248,089	138,474	1860	128,469	77,746
1849	299,498	167,169	1861	91,770	48,437
1850	280,849	156,760	1862	121,214	59,579
1851	335,966	187,524	1863	223,758	129,765
1852	368,764	205,831	1864	208,900	118,187
1853	329,937	205,269	1865	209,801	103,788
1854	323,429	159,415	1866	204,882	102,980
1855	176,807	86,824	1867	195,953	92,285
1856	176,554	80,269			

NOTE.—Previous to 1853, the records in the Emigration Office did not show the native origin of the emigrants. The numbers for the years 1845 to 1852 have been estimated on the average proportions of the years 1853 and 1854.

In the Returns for the years 1853 to 1867, made up from the Nominal Lists of Passengers, are a certain number of emigrants whose native origin is not distinguished. These have been divided proportionally amongst the English, Scotch, Irish, and Foreigners.

The Irish proportion is included in the above Table for the years subsequent to 1852.

[Through the kindness of Mr. Walcott, this Table has been brought down to the present time.—Ed.]

all those who have the means prepare against the evil that is coming. Let them sell their properties while they retain value; let them invest their savings in securities beyond the grasp of the collector; let them seek out some country which does not support a standing army of 600,000 paupers. And let us all, to use Mr. Mill's words, extract from the world, with epicurean indifference, the pleasures which it may afford, without making useless struggles for its improvement. For we may be sure that, if we allow the cancer of pauperism to complete the destruction of Ireland, and then to throw fresh venom into the already pre-disposed body of England, the ruin of all that makes England worth living in is a question only of time.