

IRISH POOR.

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A WORD

FOR

MR. NICHOLLS.

BY

A LOOKER ON.

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SECOND EDITION.

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TO  
GEORGE NICHOLLS, Esq.,  
&c., &c., &c.

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SIR,

London, May 29, 1837.

I SHOULD not have presumed to write even "a word" for you without your previous knowledge, had not the appearance of a pamphlet professing to contain an examination of the Poor Law Bill for Ireland, and to contrast its provisions and your Report with the facts proved by the "Poor Inquiry Commission," but in truth mystifying the whole subject with party feeling, induced me to address you. I had previously read the Report of the Poor Inquiry Commission, and a very large portion of the evidence and other contents of their voluminous appendices, and am familiar with that written by yourself. The pamphlets of Colonel Torrens and Mr. Scrope, the remarks of Philo-Hibernus, and the 'Strictures' of an anonymous writer, I had also read, and compared with both Reports and the Bill, and with each other; and finally, by way of completing my studies to the present time, I applied the same process of perusal and comparison to the pamphlet just alluded to of "Isaac Butt, LL.B., M.R.I.A., Professor of Political Economy in the University of Dublin." This fatiguing task I imposed upon myself in the hope of arriving at a just conclusion upon the great questions, "Shall there be a Poor Law for Ireland?" and if so, "What shall be the extent and provisions of that law?" And as I believe that the arguments on either side are exhausted, and that the Government in adopting your views, or—which for this purpose

is the same thing,—that you in adopting and confirming the views of the Government, have arrived at a conclusion which I verily believe is just, I venture to intrude upon you for a few minutes whilst I briefly notice some points which the eagerness of the opponents of the Government measure has caused them to overlook.

I will only add to this preface why I prefer addressing you anonymously. If my name possessed the weight attached to those of Colonel Torrens or Mr. Scrope, you would be entitled to the benefit of that weight ; but as such is not the case, I must not weaken you by adding what is neither an argument nor a substitute for one. So if I were or had been a “ professor of political œconomy ” I would name myself, in order that you and the world should know whether I belonged to the class of a Senior or a Whately, or were an offset, good or bad, of either school. Or if the wheel of Fortune had rolled me into Parliament, undoubtedly I would have swelled the list of the so-called amendments to the proposed Bill, which have been and are threatened to be engrafted on it by all sorts of politicians, from every side and party, from the giant of Irish politics, to the member who declares that he knows the “ Isle of Man only by reputation.” I cannot boast of any of those high and distinguishing characteristics, I must therefore remain anonymous ; I have only adverted to the fact as an apology for my being so. I now return to the task I have imposed upon myself.

A very few words will dispose of so much of the pamphlets above enumerated as distinguishes them from each other. Colonel Torrens confines the

strength of his reasoning to an advocacy of colonization ; he is a supporter of the Government Bill to a certain extent. He does not, however, approve of your workhouse system and calculations, because he says that they “cannot by possibility have a perceptible effect in removing the deeply-seated causes of Ireland’s social disease\*.”

But it should be mentioned that one of the stages by which he arrives at this conclusion is a calculation showing that the “total number of persons for whom workhouse accommodation will be required will amount to 5,014,400, at an annual expense of 19,556,160*l.*! And he calculates that 6268 workhouses would be required for the purpose at a cost of 43,876,000*l.*†”

As Colonel Torrens adds‡, “it must be confessed that this is a startling conclusion”!! I fear that he must not flatter himself that he will escape one of Mr. Revans’s division processes, so as to reduce his numbers to what may not be deemed “a very great exaggeration”!!

Mr. Scrope’s pamphlet, though pregnant with poor-law doctrine and theories,—some good, some crude, some sound, some fanciful, and all expressed in easy language and a popular style,—is still to be taken as a demand for a compulsory Poor Law ; that is, as calling for an enactment giving a right to relief to all who seek it, and conferring what is called, or rather *miscalled*, a right to a settlement, but for which the proper term is a liability to removal on the part of the poor, and a right to remove on the part of the rate-payer.

\* Letter to Lord John Russell, p. 75.

† *Ibid.* p. 73.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 74.

Mr. Scrope does not define destitution, but he says\* that the Legislature must give a legal, available, and effectual resource against it, or the present efficient poor law of Captain Rock cannot be done away with. But surely a right to demand relief, unaccompanied by a right to refuse it on the part of the relief-distributors, is nothing short of Captain Rock in a legal dress. We must wait for Mr. Scrope's definition of destitution before his project can become an act of the British Legislature.

Mr. Scrope, at page 10, suggests that if one really *deserving* person be refused relief, the refusal will give a pretext for mendicancy in a hundredfold degree. Are we to understand that *desert* is to be one of the tests of destitution or a condition for granting relief? If so, Mr. Scrope's Act must contain an interpretation clause for the morals of the Irish poor.

But he also advocates out-relief for the deaf, dumb, blind, crippled, sick, and casualties, who are at present objects for infirmaries, dispensaries, and hospitals, which are not touched by the present Bill. Orphans and deserted children he would send to a workhouse: he would not give out-relief to able-bodied poor; for them he would have public works and emigration. Hence, on his own showing, if there be no public works or emigration, they must go to a workhouse. To this extent, therefore, Mr. Scrope may be claimed as an advocate for the present Bill, and his point of difference may be reduced to the single doctrine of a right to relief.

Philo-Hibernus and the author of the *Strictures* require but a short notice, as Mr. Butt's

\* Letter to Lord John Russell, p. 4.

pamphlet follows them, and he is entitled by the avowal of his name to any remarks which may be common to him and his predecessors in the assaults on the Government and yourself.

The three pamphlets coincide with singular fidelity in three particulars, viz.

First, In the attack upon yourself; Secondly, In the attack upon the Government; Thirdly, in putting in strong contrast the Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry and yours, with the manifest intention of exalting the former and depreciating the latter.

There is a fourth particular in which these three champions have also a quasi-negative community; they either have not read your Report, or they have not read the Report of the Commissioners, or they have not read the Government Bill, or they understand neither one nor the other.

As to the first three points they have fallen into the common error of injudicious friends who suffer zeal to outstrip judgement, and they have thus thrown into the shade whatever weight they could have brought to bear (if any) against the Bill, the Government, and you! They have overlooked the fact that the Bill emanates from the Government, and that the Government is alone responsible for it. Professor Butt has been more direct in attacking the Government than the others, but even he says in his first page "the merit or demerit of the measure belongs to Mr. Nicholls," adding, however, "except as far as Your Lordship (i. e. Viscount Morpeth) may be involved in having permitted yourself to be the medium of its introduction." Does not Mr. Butt know that the adopting a measure makes those

who adopt it answerable for its effect? If not, there is an end of the responsibility of any Government, as they can always reply, "It is not our measure, it is the measure of one of our Commissioners; blame him"! Such a reply would be puerile in the extreme; so is such an attack. But the latter is not only puerile, it indicates a bad spirit, because it is directed against one who acts under the authority of Government, and who cannot enter the lists to defend himself, simply because the measure is out of his hands, and he is no longer at liberty to deal with it on his own responsibility; which is, in fact, an attack on a man after it is well ascertained that his hands are tied. And, moreover, such an attack can only be conceived in a spirit of mischief, seeking to divert the ignorant and unwary from the real strength of the measure in question, and by directing them against one of the parties employed in its preparation, to draw them off from the fact that it has been produced to the House of Commons as being a measure well and maturely considered by the Government, not only after the reception and adoption of your Report, but after having weighed well the previous Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry, the evidence and documents collected by them, and even the discrepancies of recommendation and opinion in which they have been so fertile, and which, in fact, led to your being employed at all in the consideration of the question.

But let us go a little further into particulars. Two editions of the "Remarks" have been published. The main object in both is the attack, not on the Government or its Bill, but on a Mr. Nicholls, whose Report seems to have given offence, because it ap-

parently coincides with the Government Bill more minutely than the Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry. With Mr. Nicholls it identifies Mr. Senior, Mr. Chadwick, and Mr. Revans, as art and part in framing the measure. What share Mr. Senior has had in it may be gathered from his Report lately presented to both Houses of Parliament in pursuance of the motion for its production. As to Mr. Chadwick, I can only suppose that Philo-Hibernus is desirous of being in the fashion, and so thought it right to run a tilt at him, simply because the whole pack of Poor Law jobbers and twaddlers are in full cry against him in return for his services in the English Commission. Probably there were sound—and hence to Philo-Hibernus unanswerable—points of poor-law œconomy in your Report; and because there are many such in the Reports of the English Commission, and because these are attributed to Mr. Chadwick, therefore he is set down as guilty of the good doctrine your Report contains. It is not necessary to pursue the inquiry, as Mr. Chadwick has not himself published anything on the subject, and when he does he is well able to cope with Philo-Hibernus. And as to Mr. Revans, it is not a little singular that he should be brought forward as your coadjutor both by Philo-Hibernus and the author of the “*Strictures*,” for both of them employ his figures and arguments as being at variance altogether with your Report.

It is not necessary to pursue the fallacies of these pamphlets further, as after all they have started nothing new. Their attempts at raillery and satire are all spent upon the estimate appended as a postscript to your note; but they have overlooked the fact of

its being *but* an estimate, and that be it right or wrong there is no mention of it or allusion to it in the Bill. They attack the suggestion of Unions of twenty miles in diameter, in ignorance of the fact that this extent is found in the Gilbert Unions of England, and that your Report quotes these Unions as the source of your suggestion, adding, however, that in Ireland “some may be larger and some less,” and that “in aid of the number” of workhouses to be built, and which you say may be one hundred\*, are to be added the “houses of industry and mendicity, and other establishments,” and also “barracks, factories, or other buildings suitable for conversion into workhouses;” and they also omit to state—probably because they have not read—the provisions of the Bill, which are in this respect without limit.

There is an amusing anecdote in the “*Strictures*,” which only wants applicability to make it tell according to the intention of the writer. I say his intention, because he professes to apply it; but a reference to your Report, or a little consideration of the part which he quotes, would have shown him he was wrong. Thus after saying that you recommend the same remedy for the destitution in Ireland as you do for that in England, which he asserts are “totally different in every feature,”—an assertion easier to make than to prove, and accordingly the proof is omitted,—he quotes your Report as follows:

“An abuse of a good law caused the evil in the *one* case, and a removal of that abuse is now rapidly effecting a remedy. In the *other* case the evil ap-

\* Nicholls’s Report, p. 15.

pears to have arisen rather from the want than the abuse of a law ; but the correction for both will, I believe, be found essentially the same\*.”

Now to ordinary minds the proposition here laid down would resolve itself into a simple assertion that the want of a poor law, and a bad poor law, or, in other words, the absence or abuse of a poor law, is alike to be avoided. To supply the want in one case, and guard against the abuse in the other, the workhouse system is recommended. But see how this candid and able reasoner twists his deductions in order to introduce his anecdote, or perhaps I should say an anecdote, of which, whether his own or his friends', he seems too enamoured to part with, unless it be first pressed into the strange service of writing down a provision for the Irish poor.

Thus he adds to the quotation above cited the following explanation :

“The meaning of this happily turned antithesis is, that the English disease, having originated in the abuse of a law, and therefore being judiciously treated by a removal of that abuse, the Irish disease originating in the want of a law is to be cured by the removal of the abuse of the English law.”

This may be intended for reasoning, but surely it is very like trash ; and if it did not help to enliven the pamphlet as being the groundwork of the facetious episode of the Britannia and Hibernia, would appear to be most impertinently out of place in the discussion of a subject involving the happiness or misery, the existence or destitution, of millions of our fellow-countrymen in Ireland.

\* Nicholls's Report, pp. 36. 44.

The contrast between your estimates and those of Mr. Revans is equally out of place ; and so are the attacks on the Irish clergy and the classes from whom the Guardians are to be selected. When this gentleman reads the Irish Bill he will find these points provided for ; and if he wishes for the reasons in support of the provisions in question, he must trouble himself to read your Report as it is written, instead of confining himself to his own perverted views and deductions from it.

One other proof of determination to misstate and mislead must not be passed over. Adverting to your recommendation that the present Poor Law Commissioners should superintend the Poor Law of Ireland,—a recommendation based on sound reasons for ensuring uniformity and equal laws for the whole kingdom,—his comments are as follows :

“ A more arrogant piece of self-confidence and presumption we will venture to say never was exhibited\*.”

And again :

“ The persons *holding the supreme authority* must be persons well practised in the English system of Poor Laws, because it is the English system that is to be introduced ; and this qualification he ranks so high as to found upon it the *audacious proposal of excluding all Irishmen from the management of the poor of Ireland.*†”

It is enough to say in reply to this “angry” paragraph that you have made no such proposal ; and hence the audacity is confined to the author of such a deliberate misrepresentation. The reasons given by you for your recommendations are put so simply

\* Nicholls's Report, p. 15.

† Ibid. p. 18.

that it would weaken their force to comment on them. I will merely extract them as condensed in paragraph 131, page 35, of the Report, where, having previously shown that the qualification of being well acquainted with English Poor Law might tend to the exclusion of Irishmen,—not from the management of the poor, but merely from the principal Board, or as this author himself calls it (and by so calling it shows his misstatement to be wilful), the “supreme authority,”—you add:

“The reasons in favour of placing the Poor Law administration in the two countries under the same Commission appear to be weighty: the equable action, if so combined; the total freedom from all local, partial, or party influences; the impossibility of jobbing; the certainty of the same application of the same law, and the consequent equality of England and Ireland in this respect; and, lastly, the saving the expense of a new Commission, which ought not perhaps to be altogether overlooked, although this last consideration should not have the slightest weight as opposed to the establishment of a separate Commission for Ireland, if such was in any way necessary\*.”

The Commissioners of Inquiry must be sadly at a loss for friends if such be the aid they need!

But last in this “train of night, if better he belong not to the dawn,” comes the Professor of Political Economy in the University of Dublin.

When I first took up this pamphlet I concluded—rather too hastily I find—that there would be in it some landmark by which the true and safe road would be pointed out amidst the many shoals and

\* Nicholls's Report, par. 131, p. 35.

quicksands which beset the political œconomy of a Poor Law. But as I am not a Professor of Political Œconomy, I bethought me of seeking better authorities than my own poor unsophisticated reasoning to guide me.

I recollected that this gentleman was not only Professor, but *Whateleian* Professor of Political Œconomy in Dublin, and I thought that I would turn to the doctrine of his founder as the surest mode of judging of his own; and above all, under the belief that I should arrive at truth "clear as crystal," I turned to Whately's latest lecture on Political Œconomy for my text. There, somewhat like Miss Edgeworth's story of Basil, who put off its conclusion till "tomorrow," I read the concluding note upon "*the next lecture*," which the Most Reverend author states was to contain the practical principles of the study; it is as follows:

"It may be proper here to remark, that in the lecture alluded to (i. e. the *next* lecture, left to His Grace's mantle-bearers to *publish*,) I endeavoured to evince the paramount *importance of precise language* in this study, and to lay down some cautions with a view to the attainment of the object\*."

It struck me, then, that this must be a good test for the Whateleian Professor; and I concluded that, whether I agreed in his reasoning or not, at any rate it would not admit of misapprehension. I turned to the pamphlet, and in the paragraph which of all others seems most fully to embrace and condense the writer's opinion of Mr. Nicholls's Report and the Irish Bill, and also an enunciation

\* Note to conclusion of Whately's Lectures on Political Œconomy.

of his own views, I found the following paragraph, embracing both. I divide it into two parts, as showing how it comprehends the two branches of the subject above adverted to.

1. "Mr. Nicholls's grand and fatal mistake is this; he started on the assumption that he must deal with destitution in Ireland as if it were the accident of individuals, instead of considering it as the essential and general condition of a class. It is this which has led him to propose as a remedial measure workhouses, where one out of every one hundred of the population might occasionally be relieved, instead of"——

2. "Suggesting some measure by which we might endeavour to find *sufficient food for one third* of the population, who *have not enough to eat*.\*"

Now in the name of Dr. Whately, let me ask his Professor what is the meaning in *precise language* of the second part of this paragraph, which in fact embodies the Professor's own views? In other words, what is "*sufficient food*"? what is "*enough to eat*"?

Again, p. 10, the Professor says, "What all parties are agreed on is, that the *destitution* in Ireland is such as to demand the special interference of the Legislature."

Again I ask for that precision of language so prized by political economists which shall tell us what destitution is. I pray the Professor to let us know, and perhaps we shall arrive at even Mr. Scrope's meaning on this point.

Shortly after† the Professor seems to give us something to grapple with, when he describes a

\* Letter to Lord Morpeth, p. 8.

† Ibid. p. 11.

workhouse, which, he says, in true Milesian,—as if he were of the crew of the Hibernia under the command of its captain, the author of the “*Strictures*,” —“which we Irish will soon learn, as well as the English, to call a bastille . . . . We want, in a word, not relief for occasional want, but a remedy for *general and permanent* destitution.”

What! is it to be *permanent*? and are the Irish to be *relieved* from it? And what is *it*? *Destitution*. What is destitution? See the precise language of Professor Butt; and if he does not give a definition, ask Mr. Poulett Scrope, or Philo-Hibernus, or the facetious author of the “*Strictures*.”

A little after he adds, p. 13, “Now, my Lord, again I ask you, is this intended to offer relief to those who may occasionally be brought to want, or as a remedy for general and permanent destitution?” I think His Lordship before he answers the question might fairly ask another. Can a professor of political œconomy expect an answer to a question expressed so vaguely?

But the Professor says “it is very easy to talk and write upon such matters, and speculate on the conduct of the starving poor.” Before we assent to this we must ask what is meant by “the starving poor”? and whether it is not easier to talk and write, than to talk and write clearly and intelligibly on this or any other given subject?

Another instance occurs in the next page. “Beware, my Lord, how you trifle with the feelings of desperation, and send back the peasant to believe himself abandoned both of God and man\*.” How

\* Letter to Lord Morpeth, p. 14.

do you send "peasants back to belief"? How do you abandon *of* a thing or person?

At page 21 is a joke about Windsor Forest, very much in the style of the Hibernia and Britannia; and at page 24 another, about a gardener and some onions. And throughout the pamphlet is a tolerable sprinkling of attack upon yourself; in one place\* calling your conduct "careless and criminal;" in another "flippant;" in a third comparing you to a "quack†:" in every page trying to fix on you a species of party odium and ridicule wholly unworthy such a cause, and I may add, such a writer!

But at page 14 he says you expect the erection of your workhouses to tranquillize Ireland. True, you do so. He adds, that you suggest "they should be built as near as possible to the police barracks." Where do you suggest this? It would save trouble if Mr. Butt would refer us to the page where he found such a suggestion. It is wonderful to see to what lengths party spirit will lead a man. Campbell, in his 'Rhetoric,' observes, "Of all the prepossessions in the minds of the hearers which tend to impede or counteract the design of the speaker, party spirit, where it happens to prevail, is the most pernicious, being at once the most inflexible and the most unjust." The Professor has hoped to rouse or foment this spirit in his hearers; but he has forgotten how it may apply to himself, and blind him even to his own meaning and intentions. As Touchstone says in *As You Like It*, "Nay, I shall ne'er beware of mine own wit till I break my shins against it!" But I forget that I am speaking of a Professor of Political Œconomy. The professors

\* Letter to Lord Morpeth, p. 21.

† Ibid. p. 23.

of this science are professedly in advance of the world around them ; and happily for them they can always make a world of their own by laying down a new code of laws or principles, and giving new definitions or new explanations of the old terms, and by this species of "catalactics" they create a currency passing for sterling money in their own orbit, but turning to bits of waste paper, like the money in the Arabian fable, when it is brought forward for common use\*.

But there is another point on which these pamphleteers (except Colonel Torrens) agree, and on which they are alike wrong. They attack you as having "entirely disregarded the Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry." "It is not," Mr. Butt says†, "it is not merely that he has directly opposed the recommendations, and set at defiance the opinions of the Commissioners, but he has singularly thrown overboard the evidence they have adduced as to facts."

So the author of the 'Strictures' says of you, "that scorning all former Reports of Commissioners and Committees of Parliament, he has boldly come forward, in contradiction of all who went before him, to recommend his own English workhouse test as the only remedy for the evils of

\* Perhaps too much credit is here attached to this species of paper currency. Thus, Professor Butt, in his published lecture on Political Economy, questions the accuracy of all his predecessors in their definitions of "wealth;" and insists on the great importance of precision, so emphatically pointed out by the Archbishop. The precept of the Professor is more sound than his practice; and to do him justice, his notions of political economy are far superior to his ideas of a Poor Law.

† Letter to Lord Morpeth, p. 6.

Ireland\*.” And Philo-Hibernus, and even Mr. Scrope, speak in the same tone.

Let us turn to facts as the best answer to their rash assertions. Passing over your instructions, which in their outset refer you to the Report of the Commissioners, I find the following passages in your Report :

“ I have not failed to attend likewise to the other points adverted to in Your Lordship’s instructions ; and I have carefully considered the several Reports of Committees of Parliament on the state of Ireland, as well as the Reports of the late Commissioners of Irish Poor Inquiry, and the evidence collected by them. This evidence establishes so conclusively the existence of a state of poverty throughout Ireland, amounting in numerous cases to actual destitution, that I feel it unnecessary to exhibit any additional proof of the fact\*.”

“ A general, and a tolerably correct notion of the state of the country, may be gained by the examination of Reports and evidence ; and deductions, pretty accurate in the main, may be drawn therefrom †.”

“ In farms of small extent there is not room for the division of labour, alternation of crops, and scientific and œconomical management, which are necessary for the profitable employment of capital in agriculture ; and hence the striking fact, stated in the Report of the Irish Poor Inquiry Commissioners, that the average produce of the soil in Ireland is not much above one half the average produce in England, whilst the number of labourers em-

\* *Strictures*, p. 3.

† Page 3, par. 3.

‡ Page 4, par. 5.

ployed in agriculture is, in proportion to the quantity of land under cultivation, more than double, namely, as five to two ; thus ten labourers in Ireland raise only the same quantity of produce that two labourers raise in England ; and this produce, too, is generally of an inferior quality\*.”

“ I do not give, indeed I did not collect, detailed evidence on these, and the other questions referred to me, a sufficiency of such evidence being already accessible in the Appendices to the Report of the late Commission of Irish Poor Inquiry†.”

Not to multiply quotations, surely these are sufficient to show that the accusation against you of having disregarded the Report and evidence of the Commissioners, is a barefaced assertion of what is literally untrue.

But having seen that your Report is based on the evidence collected by the Commissioners, let us see how far you agree in their recommendations.

Their Report, p. 25, sect. 16, recommends a legal provision for “ lunatics, and other poor who labour under permanent bodily infirmities, such relief to be afforded within the walls of public institutions ; also for sick poor in hospitals, infirmaries, and convalescent establishments, with extern relief in cases where the poor cannot be removed from home ; also for the purpose of emigration ; for the support of penitentiaries, to which vagrants may be sent, and for the maintenance of deserted children ; also towards the relief of aged and infirm persons ; of orphans ; of helpless widows with young children ; of the families of sick persons, and of casual destitution.”

\* Page 11, par. 31.

† Page 12, par. 34.

Now can there be a more complete poor law? and excepting the raising of rates for the purpose of emigration, is it not the workhouse system of your Report and the Government Bill? The only condition your Report or the Bill requires is "destitution." If it be not found in the above classes, where is it to be looked for?

Sect. 17. proposes a Board of Poor Law Commissioners, but certainly it contemplates one in Ireland. Yours recommends the English Board, "*Hinc illæ lacrymæ.*" Also relief districts; why not call them Unions? Also a valuation; and a local Board of Guardians elected by the rate-payers, who are to be proprietors, lessees, and occupiers. Their Report also recommends a partial change each year; the Bill makes the change annual, a variation not to be deemed a difference in principle. The Bill also recommends that existing institutions be placed under these Boards; and if the elected Guardians will not act, that the Commissioners should appoint paid Assistant-Commissioners in their stead.

Sect. 19. and 20. leave to the Commissioners the fixing of the number of the institutions, as in the Bill it is left to the Commissioners to fix the number of workhouses, and the sole difference between this part of the Report and Bill turns on the question of a national rate.

At Sect. 27., as in Appendix H, the Report states that the Commissioners are divided whether relief to the aged and infirm, the orphan and widow, shall be left to law, or to voluntary associations, or in other words, to chance; and in subsequent parts of the Report the Commissioners mix up their poor law with charitable institutions, boards of work,

loan societies, emigration, ejectments, tithes, mortgages, and annuities !

What then is, after all, the real difference between you? Simply this, that you propose, and the Government by its Bill proposes, to confine a poor law to its purest and least mischievous form. Throughout your Report you look to other sources for the amelioration of Ireland. To the diffusion, for "instance, of education, religious culture, and the increase of intelligence, industry, and wealth\*." But with reference to these points, and to migration and emigration, you say, and say truly, that to bring about such improvements by "forced and direct interposition would, in every view, be difficult if not impossible†." "Something," you add, may be done indirectly in this respect, in the way of legislation: "it is from spontaneous or natural employment alone that the labourers of a community can look for permanent occupation, and the means of support."

Again you say, "Unless the great mass of the Irish people are protected from the effects of destitution, no great or lasting improvement in their social condition can be expected. The establishment of a Poor Law is, I conceive, the first step necessary towards this end, followed, as it must be, by other ameliorations, to the introduction of which it is a necessary preliminary‡."

How does this show that you have made what Professor Butt calls the "grand and fatal mistake" of dealing with destitution "as if it were the accident of individuals, instead of considering it as the essential and general condition of a class"? Based,

\* Page 29.

† Page 30.

‡ Page 33.

as your Report is, on the evidence collected by the Commissioners, having before you their plans (shall I not call them mistakes?) for treating destitution as an essential condition of a class, and of attempting a remedy—as if a remedy were feasible in the way they suggest—the mistake I apprehend rests with the Professor, who either has not read, or has disregarded all the reasoning with which your Report and suggestions are supported. The Bill only proposes to relieve those who shall be deemed destitute by the Guardians. They will of necessity be the *most* destitute if every poor man is to be ranked under the category of destitution. You have, in short, dealt with a Poor Law, whilst the Commissioners have added to it suggestions for a law upon every other subject.

As to the Government, the head and front of their offending is this, they interfere to prevent extreme destitution, but instead of interfering to force improvements and schemes of the like kind upon the Irish and taxing them for the purpose against their will, they have adopted the policy of giving their sanction to such measures as may facilitate views originating with the Irish people, or their representatives, a fact easily proved by a reference to the votes of the two Houses of Parliament. There are many who believe this to be sound policy. Whether it be so or not you have done your part, and what you have done is before the world, and the world will not feel the less grateful because you have not recommended impracticabilities. That the Commissioners of Inquiry have discharged their duty zealously who can doubt? That Ireland is indebted to them for a true, and appalling

because true, picture of the state of her poor in the evidence they have collected, who will deny? Surely their friends need not grudge you the simple merit of having selected a few of their recommendations, and adapted them to that state of Ireland which their own evidence and Report disclose, leaving to the Government in its wisdom to select or reject other parts of their extensive recommendations. Let us hope their next advocates may write with better judgement and better temper, for this they must do if we are to profit by their advice. Individually, I thank them and you, believing the Report of both to be of infinite value; and it is because I entertain this feeling towards both, that I have intruded on you at such length in order to brush away some of the mist with which the pamphlets I have cited endeavour to blind us.

Excuse the intrusion by giving me credit for the motive, and believe me to remain,

Your unknown, but faithful Servant,

A LOOKER ON.

## POSTSCRIPT.

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SINCE the foregoing remarks were written, the communications of Mr. Senior and Mr. Cornwall Lewis to the Government, upon the Report of the Irish Poor Inquiry Commissioners, have been presented to Parliament and printed. They are documents of great interest, and supply any link which may be thought wanting in the chain of arguments which support the Government bill for the relief of the Irish Poor. And a very brief notice of their general purport will shew that, amongst the multitude of counsellors, as much wisdom has been found as could under all circumstances have safely been made available.

The Poor Inquiry Commissioners made so many and such various, if not contradictory, recommendations, that it was next to impossible that the Government could adopt all. Mr. Senior and Mr. Lewis were consulted, and even those gentlemen, though they agreed in the impracticability of many of the Commissioners' views, and the inconsistency of others, differed in what appeared to them to be the best course to adopt. Thus Mr. Senior, on the assumption that an inferior diet is the sole criterion of the workhouse test, approves of the rejection by the Poor Inquiry Commissioners of the workhouse system, or indeed any system of compulsory relief; but he thinks a system of voluntary emigration and charity under the superintendence of Poor Law Commissioners desirable.

But Mr. Lewis, taking the restraint of the workhouse to be its real strength as a test, strongly advocates the introduction of that system, in conjunction with, or rather as a condition precedent to, a well regulated system of emigration. And he adds two able letters from Dr. Kay and Mr. Tuffnell, two of the English Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, which fully support his views as to the workhouse test.

Taking then the evidence accumulated by the Poor Inquiry Commissioners, and the reasoning of Mr. Senior and Mr. Lewis, as the grounds for rejecting the recommendations of the Irish Report, and for justifying, as far as reasoning could go, the adoption of a workhouse system, Mr. Nicholls seems to have been asked, as a practical man, whether there was any impediment to that system being introduced in Ireland. Hence, his report shewing that no such impediment existed, and read in conjunction with those of Mr. Senior and Mr. Lewis, forms the groundwork of the Government bill. And whilst on the one hand emigration is left, according to Mr. Senior's recommendation, "as a remedy and not a regimen," that is, to be adopted by individuals as their prudence may suggest; on the other, the workhouse plan is taken in conformity with the views of Mr. Lewis, strengthened as those views are by the valuable report of Mr. Nicholls.

Mr. Lewis recommends a settlement by residence, Mr. Nicholls thinks that a birth-settlement is the best, if any be adopted, but arrives at "the entire conviction that it will be better to dispense with settlement altogether."

The Government bill adopts this view, and the

House of Commons, after a debate of seven hours, rejected a motion, that the question of a settlement should form a subject of instruction to the Committee on the bill. In short, the Government has chosen the purest form of a Poor Law, after having taken every possible precaution to ascertain whether it would suit the exigency of the case. To those who advocate a Poor Law, here is one of the simplest and least exceptionable kind: to those who do not, it offers the least chance of mischief. If the public would come to a fair decision, they have only to read the Reports of the Poor Inquiry Commissioners, of Mr. Senior, Mr. C. Lewis, and Mr. Nicholls; and should they not arrive at the conviction that the Bill introduced by the Government is based on solid reasoning, they will at least see in the pamphleteering attacks on Mr. Nicholls more of spleen than wisdom, and as regards the subject of a Poor Law, more lack of understanding than of spleen.

THE END.

