1 128

In my larger Pamphlet, the Idea I
state fully the several objections of
the best authorities to out-door pauper
employment and demonstrate that
none of them applies to the mode of
such employment recommended in this
little brochure -

To the reclaiming and colonizing
the waste lands by the State there
are many and serious objections, which
do not apply to such Groups being
undertaken and carried on by the
Poor Law Agencies as I have suggested.

Without some such facilities as
these have supplied of turning the Pau-
-pers labour to account for the Paupers
maintenance it is utterly out of
the question to think of establishing
an effective Poor Law in this Country,
one that will relieve its whole de-
-stitution and wholly suppress Mendicancy

The collateral advantages of the na
-tional plan of management here sug-
-gested recommend it strongly - Steady
supply unlimited facilities for classifi-
-cation, the want of which is now very
much complained of. Its rural work
-houses will be, without a penny of =

The Rt. Hon. Henry Labouchere with Mr Smith's best respects.

A

WORD OR TWO

ON

THE IRISH POOR RELIEF BILL,

AND

MR. NICHOLLS' REPORT;

OR,

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE

REV. MR. O'MALLEY'S

"IDEA OF A POOR LAW FOR IRELAND."

(The only copy I have of this pamphlet is hardly presentable)

Privately circulated.

"LONDON:
H. HOOPER, PALL-MALL, EAST."

M,DCCC,XXXVII.

turn over

additional expence, model farms
for the districts — what has been so
often recommended by Government Com-
missions and the necessity of which is
so obvious — where besides the lessons
of good husbandry given practically
to the farmers, the pauper would be
taught to earn an honest livelihood
by agriculture and be confirmed in such
habits as will secure their future
independence. And within the walls
of this workhouse a normal
and town, will be a school of Indus-
trial training for the young in-
mates. Or some other may with
great ease be devised specially to
that most valuable purpose, a purpose
which is duly appreciated and labour-
ed for by the Poor Law Commissioners in Eng-
land, they have not been able to car-
ry into effect from want of the help
of a special enactment on the subject.
And lastly it is apparent what
facilities are afforded by this plan
for an effective emigration upon
sure and safe principles. and as a
subsidiary aid, from the present grievous disease of the
country emigration should be one
of its remedial measures.

This appeared originally in the form of leading articles in the Freeman's Journal, since the irresponsible R.C. - D.M.

THE

IRISH POOR RELIEF BILL.

We do not hesitate to avow with respect to this bill that, taken as a whole, we hail it with pleasure, and receive it with gratitude. After this candid avowal we cannot be suspected of being actuated by any unfriendly feeling in its regard, in whatever observations we may be prompted by a sense of duty to make upon it. The bill has been fairly thrown upon the country, and it becomes the duty of every man who has maturely reflected upon the subject to contribute what he may towards a just appropriation of it.

Dividing the machinery of the bill into two heads—the *personal* and the *material*—we shall confine ourselves to a few remarks on the first. Taking the clauses of the bill to which we feel disposed to demur in their numerical order, we find in clause 20 this proviso:—"Provided always that no person being in holy orders, or being a regular minister of any religious denomination, shall be eligible as a guardian." We are inclined to doubt the expediency of this provision. We have always looked upon the clergy as the natural guardians of the poor. There can be no question but that they are more intimately acquainted than any other persons in the educated classes with the real condition of the poor, and with the true causes of their poverty, and with the persons and characters too of those who are really in distress, and of those who only pretend to be destitute, or are made so by their own vices—very important items, we should think, of that sort of knowledge that would be useful for a guardian. Besides, clergymen are precisely the persons who would be farthest removed from any suspicion or temptation of jobbing or malversation, and they would be on that account the surest checks upon any such practices on the part of others. And as ministers of

mercy, their mild influence might serve these two salutary purposes—namely, to temper a severity that may possibly be too harsh in the measures of the board, and to give an assurance, by their sanction, that the severity applied, however strict, is wise.—We do not see any force in the reasons that have been alleged for excluding the clergy of both creeds from the boards of guardians. We think it is a libel upon them, taken as a body, and highly offensive we deem it to put that libel in an act of parliament, to declare them incapable of working amicably together for the weal of their poorer brethren. People may talk of the high fever temperature of our politics and polemics; but what has that to do with the business of a board of guardians? Are there to be no laymen—no magistrates of opposite extremes of opinion upon those boards? Then why not clergymen also? We really think it highly indecorous to let it go abroad that Protestant and Catholic clergymen are incapable of acting amicably together for the benefit of their common flocks. We will venture to say we know it is not true. But is it wise to treat whatever there may be of a spirit of alienation between these two bodies after the fashion of this bill? Whatever unfriendliness of feeling there may be between the Protestant and Catholic clergy is not surely to be cured or abated by thus industriously sundering them, and upon the very occasion too upon which they might most appropriately be brought together. We certainly would deem it far more statesmanlike to seize this opportunity of accustoming all classes of our clergy to meet together in the presence of the gentry of their neighbourhood in friendly co-operation on behalf of the poor of both communions indifferently. We believe firmly that it would have a most beneficial effect upon all parties, and we would therefore be the more unwilling that this *repulsive* clause should remain to deprive us of it.

But when we come to look more narrowly at the proposed constitution of the boards of guardians, we feel still more strongly disposed to object to the

exclusion of the clergy. By the 25th clause, all the magistrates of the union are to be members *ex officio* of the board, if they do not exceed a third of the whole number of the guardians, and if they do so exceed, they are to select from among themselves those who are to form that third of the board. And by the 74th clause, the other members of the board are to be chosen by a highly aristocratic method of election, in which the rate payers are entitled to a number of votes—to be given too on paper and by proxy—in proportion to the amount of their rate—that number of votes varying from one to ten. (And here by the way we must observe, that this seems to us carrying the principle of elective equity rather too far.) Now in such a constitution of the boards we should like to see some admixture of the popular element, and we think that element might be poured into it in the safest and best way in the persons of a few of the clergy. We can see no reason why the clergy of the union should not be allowed, like the magistrates, to select from amongst themselves a certain number to serve as guardians. Nay, we can see sufficient reason why that privilege should be allowed to them, and *withheld* from the magistrates.

The magistrates of this country, taken as a body, are not precisely of that character that we would willingly see them put in this wholesale manner upon the boards of guardians. We certainly do not look upon this part of the machinery of the bill before us as that which is most likely to inspire the public with confidence. There is no analogy whatever between the duties of the magistrates of *this country* and the duties of guardians of the poor to warrant this inundating of the boards with them. By the 38th clause of the amendment act the *English* justices of the peace residing within the district are made, for good and obvious reasons, *ex officio* guardians. Under the old law there was a right of appeal from the parish authorities to those justices, and one of the worst abuses of that law was the constant and ruinous conflict of jurisdictions between

them consequent thereupon. By the above clause this abuse is obviated; for now the appeal lies to the union board, which, comprising as it does both the parish authority and the justices', exercises singly the powers hitherto divided between them. But there has been no such abuse amongst us, and therefore no necessity to meet it. And again, we repeat, there is nothing in the character of our magistrates—nothing in the nature of their duties—nothing in their relation to the working of our Irish act—to justify this wholesale interference with the rights of election of the rate payers.

We have here, we think, a fair opening to observe, that the looking at Irish subjects with English eyes—of which the bill before us is in this respect an instance—is not, perhaps, the best way to understand them; and by a parity of reasoning, in all probability to manage an Irish affair well, it may not be absolutely necessary to entrust it to English hands: and this leads us to the remaining clauses that we are disposed to object to under this first head—namely, the clauses 110, 111, and 112, by which the whole management of our Irish poor is handed over to the English commissioners. We doubt greatly, upon the broad ground of state policy, whether there is not much danger in this encroaching spirit of universal centralization that is so strongly evincing itself every day at the seat of government. Every step this encroaching spirit makes we look upon as, to a certain extent, an approach to despotism. But apart from this view of it, what solid reason is there, we ask, for placing the management of our Irish poor in the hands of a few Englishmen residing in London? We are told they are familiar with the working of a poor law. Are they familiar with the working of such a law as ours?—is not the English act complexity itself as contrasted with the perfect simplicity of the Irish measure?—and how far can a knowledge of the working of the one help towards the proper working of the other? Our Irish relief bill is quite a new experiment, and we incline to think would have a better chance of a

fair trial in quite new hands. If you place them both in the same hands you are likely enough to have a jumble of two systems reciprocally confusing each other. Upon a new field of war, and acting upon a grand scheme of operations, upon which would you rely most—the stunted Martinet, proud of his little knowledge of square-shouldered, out-toed drillings, manual exercises, and parade manœuvres, or the long-sighted general who looks more intently to his geographical positions, and still more to the *morale* of his army? We believe that an intimate and familiar acquaintance with the temper and genius of the people to whom this Irish poor law is to be administered is of infinitely more importance than a special acquaintance with workhouse dietaries and workhouse discipline, and the science of compound averages and summary balancings and audits—all very good things to know, but which we may very easily learn ourselves, whilst that sort of knowledge we hold to be far more necessary is not quite so easily acquired, and most assuredly not by a six weeks gallop through the country.

Having thus disposed of the *personel*, let us now take up the *materiel* of the machinery by which the framers of this bill propose to carry their intentions into effect. But in order to understand more fully what those intentions are—what the ends and aims, in a word, the spirit of the bill, our readers should study it with Mr. Nicholls's report in their hands, for it is based avowedly on that report, and when it does not speak clearly itself, that report speaks for it. Looking at it in this light, we object to it on these three distinct grounds:—First, that the main wheels of its machinery are too unwieldy for a free and unencumbered action. Secondly, that purporting to keep the scope and field of that action totally unembarrassed by settlements, it needlessly clogs its operations, by halting in that purpose, and not carrying it out fully. And thirdly, that its machinery, thus imperfect in its mechanism and scope of action, is still more objectionable upon the

ground of the very scanty pabulum supplied to it to work upon.

By the main wheels we mean the *unions*. These we consider to be too large, if, as is contemplated, there are to be but one hundred for all Ireland.—That would be in round numbers no less than twenty-six parishes for each union. Now surely to throw the whole business of all these upon one board is rather a clumsy contrivance: it would be equally burdensome to the guardians of the poor and hardshipful to the poor themselves. The loudest outcry against the amendment act in England is raised upon this very point—the too great extent of the unions. Would it not then be very absurd needlessly to incur the same inconvenience? We would avoid that inconvenience in two ways—we would have two hundred instead of one hundred unions, and we would further lighten the action of this, the main machinery, by a subordinate and more local machinery. Mr. Nicholls himself suggests, and for very good reasons, the expediency of appointing "one or more wardens, or officers for every parish, or for such districts of the union as may be deemed most convenient"—61st paragraph. These he proposes should be paid officers; and the 32d clause of the bill empowers the union boards to appoint such. Now, would it not be very easy to improve upon this suggestion, by having a parish or district board, or committee, subordinate to the union board? The only expensive part of the machinery—the paid officer—is already contemplated. That paid officer may be the secretary or man of business of the district committee; and that committee, by dividing the labour of the union board, could save them a great deal of useless trouble, and save the poor claimants of the district a great deal of useless hardship. The members of the district committee should be elected of course like the union guardians, and by apportioning the district amongst them, every spot of it would be thus brought under an immediate and most wholesome surveillance.

Now, as to our second objection, that the bill still

clogs its operations by halting in its purpose with regard to settlements, we find Mr. Nicholls, in the 95th paragraph of his report, thus peremptory on this point:—"I have arrived at an entire conviction that it will be better to dispense with settlements altogether." This is the grand leading principle of the bill, but Mr. Nicholls, and the other framers of it, seem not to have been quite aware of the full value of it, or to how much better account it may be turned by carrying it boldly out; and we are inclined to attribute their being so merely to the accident we have already alluded to, of looking at an Irish question with English eyes. Having made up his mind that there should not be even an *union settlement*, he ought to have been prepared for the correlative, *no union rate*; † and coupling both, he would not have anticipated any of the inconveniences he refers to in that and the subsequent paragraphs, nor have thrown the embarrassments of the 16th clause of his bill in the way of a free remodelling of the unions. If our poor law, by rejecting all settlements, leaves our independent poor to distribute themselves freely over the country, offering them its relief when in distress wherever they may happen to be, does it not establish for itself a right, by a most just reciprocity, of freely distributing them in its turn, when they have recourse to its relief, according to its convenience? By fairly following up this principle none of those things that Mr. Nicholls fears could happen—there could be no "undue pressure for relief by persons not fairly forming a part of the union population"—there could be no "vagrants and mendicants from other districts congregating in particular unions from accident or inclination"—for the pressure would be every where equal, inasmuch as it would be every where under controul, and there could be no gatherings of vagrants in favourite places, since the beggars should *not* be choosers as to where they were to get relief, but should be disposed of as the poor law authorities may direct. But not only does Mr. Nicholls make a mistake in not taking full advantage of his own principles, but he aggravates his

† See my evidence before the Lords' Committee last Session.

mistake, as it appears to us by the use he would make of the inconvenience directly resulting from it. "If such a preference (he says, pagragraph 96,) was in any instance shown by them (the vagrants and mendicants), it might be taken as a proof of inefficient management or lax discipline on the part of the favoured union, and would be a signal for the central authority to interfere. Thus, if there should be no law of settlement the numbers of inmates in the several workhouses would serve as a kind of index of the efficient management of each, and the local authorities would be compelled in self-defence to keep these unions in good order, to prevent them being overrun with paupers. Such a competion, if well-regulated, would go far to ensure the permanent efficiency of all the unions."—That is, in other words—these vagrants are to be allowed to roam at large through the country to make choice of the workhouse that may best suit their tastes, upon the plea that their preference of any one will serve as a signal of bad management, and the *competition* amongst the workhouses as to which of them shall have the fewest inmates is to serve as a security for good management! Could anything be more preposterous? Would not the poor law loose half its value that would suffer a vagrant at all?× And is it not the chief use of the "central authority" of the bill before us, to secure a *uniformity* of management in all the workhouses? Nor is this the only inconvenience resulting from Mr. Nicholls's inconsequent non-application of his own principles. In the 63d par., talking of the facilities that should be given the commissioners to remodel the unions at pleasure, he complains of "local interests having frequently compelled the English commissioners (under the amendment act) to abandon the arrangement which, with reference to the general interest, they deemed the best;" and he adds—"in Ireland, full powers in this respect are, I think, indispensable;" and yet he so frames the clause of his bill relating to those powers as unnecessarily to embarrass the exercise of them, and to give an opening

+ See Evidence Vc

for the creeping in of those very "local interests," of which we have just heard him complain. The clause of the bill (the 16th) giving power to the commissioners to dissolve or alter unions gives it them encumbered with the most useless embarrassments. Thus they are "to ascertain, to the best of their judgment, the proportionate value to any place or district affected by such dissolution or alteration of any property held or taken for or relinquished by the union in its altered state, and also the proportionate amount chargeable on every place or district, in repect of all the liabilities of such union existing at the time of such dissolution or alteration; and they shall therefore fix the amount to be received or paid, or secured to be paid, by such union, or by any place or district affected by such dissolution or alteration, as the justice of the case appears to them to require. And all sums to be received shall be paid, or secured to be paid, to such person, and in such manner, and shall be applied for the benefit of such union, place, or district, as the commissioners shall direct; and all the sums to be so paid shall be raised by special rates on the property liable to be rated under this act, under the direction of the commissioners, or charged on the poor rates, or such special rates of such union, place, or district respectively, as the commissioners may see fit." Now, how easily might all this trouble be avoided, if the framers of this act were only to carry out their own principle with a strict logical sequence? If our poor law rejects even union settlements, it ought, we repeat, to reject also union rates; and as we are to have no other than a national settlement, so neither should we have any other than a national rate. But with a national rate everywhere equally applotted, what necessity should there be for this nice and laborious balancing of accounts between union and union? None whatever. There should be no "local interests," and, therefore, no need of computing "proportionate values," or "respective liabilities;" but all the unions would co-operate harmoniously together for the common benefit, however they may be clipped or pared.—

They would be only separate estates of the same landlord, having no accounts to settle but with him. How strange that so clever a man as Mr, Nicholls should be so far deceived by his English analogies as to lose sight of these advantages.

But, let us hasten to our third objection, namely—"the scanty *pabulum* supplied to the machinery of this bill to work upon," or, to speak without metaphor, the little employment provided by it for the paupers it relieves. Mr. Nicholls, in his report (paragraph 22), speaking of the Dublin Mendicity Institution, says, disparagingly, that "of the 2,047 inmates, the far larger portion *were seated in idleness;*" and of the "stonebreaking," the chief source of employment there he says, contemptuously, "this last seemed a *favourite occupation;*" and, again, in the next paragraph, speaking of the houses of industry throughout the country, he says, "but they are certainly not entitled to the designation of *houses of industry*, there being *little work* done in any of them, and in some none at all." Would not these passages lead one to expect that he was himself prepared to suggest some plan of employment upon a large scale? But he does no such thing. His only sources of employment, (which, like every thing else, must "be as nearly as possible assimilated to the practice of England,") are "hand corn-mills and *stone-breaking*"! (paragraph forty-five) As if it would not be better to set the inmates of our workhouses to raise the corn first, and grind it afterwards.—'Tis true, indeed, he does here venture to depart a little—but, alas! how little—from his sacred model, for he adds, "looking at the circumstances of Ireland, however, and the possible influx of inmates at certain seasons, especially at the commencement of the system, I am disposed to think that a plot of land, varying from six to twelve acres, should be attached to each workhouse." From six to twelve acres to a workhouse, having eight hundred inmates! What purpose could they serve other than that sapient one so familiar to Mr. Nicholls, experienced as he is in the curiosities of the unamended system in England—

namely, to dig holes and fill them up again? True as the echo to the *report*, our bill, in the 36th clause, empowers the commissioners "also to purchase or hire any land not exceeding *twelve* acres, imperial measure, to be occupied with any such workhouse."—Now, is it not quite notorious that the great bulk of the inmates of those workhouses must be agricultural or unskilled labourers? Ought it not then naturally suggest itself, that in a country like this, where a sufficient quantity of land is so easily and so cheaply to be had, the best way to employ those labourers would be to set them to work on it, to raise food for themselves, their wives, and children, and other dependants? A subsequent provision in this same clause enjoins the guardians "to furnish and fit up any workhouse, and to provide any utensils, instruments, or machinery, for setting the poor to work therein." Such workhouses would be very well adapted to the cities and large towns, where there are many destitute poor of the different trades; but you cannot set them to work in any way that would interfere with the free market without, and therefore your only resource is to set them also to work for themselves, their wives, children, and dependants. But how is this to be managed? Why by simply combining the operations of these two distinct classes of workhouses—the rural workhouses with lands to raise food and raw produce for manufactures; and the town workhouses, with all the appliances of the above clause, to work up that raw produce into manufactured articles. Thus, whilst the inmates of the rural workhouses would not only raise corn, and butter, and cheese, and pork, and potatoes, &c., but also flax, and wool, and timber, and hides, and skins, the inmates of the town workhouses would be well employed in converting these latter into shirting, and clothing, and bedding, into hats and shoes, and implements of trade or husbandry, or articles of furniture, &c.; and thus making the whole poor but one family, and by a very simple process, they might easily be made to maintain themselves and provide themselves *with everything*. They could even make their own soap and candles, and their own paper and stationery, or, further still,

even their own printing could they do—for sometimes there are paupers amongst printers as well as other trades—and they could make their own slates, and bricks, and tiles, and raise stones from their own quarries, and build their own houses; and, ten to one, they will be able to warm them too with their own fuel—not merely with the turf of those bogs they may have to reclaim, but with coals from some mine in the midst of the mountains whose naked sides they shall have to cover with plantations. All this they may be made to do at the lowest possible outlay, and with a manifest setting aside of every cover for jobbing, besides many other and very valuable collateral advantages. And all this may actually be done even under the operation of this bill before us, by only changing one word *(twelve)* in that provision of the ~~16th~~ clause referred to above; for the last provision of that very same clause really gives the commissioners quite sufficient powers to carry all this into effect. Thus runs the provision:—"And all lands and buildings so purchased or hired shall be conveyed or taken to the commissioners for the time being, and shall vest in the succeeding commissioners in perpetual succession." The commissioners then would be not only the head landlords but the sole landlords, of all the lands and houses of the poor throughout the country; and having the supreme controul, what is to prevent them from reaping all the advantages of that really national management which we have just indicated? We repeat there is nothing but that *twelve*, which therefore we trust will be cancalled—indeed it is as yet but in the dubious category of the Italics—and that Mr. Smith O'Brien's amendment will be thus virtually adopted.

The expediency of the alteration we have here suggested is a question that comes home directly to the pockets of the whole body of the rate-payers of this country, for it is pretty clear that it offers the best means of a good economy and a cheap management. If we were to employ our agricultural paupers in that productive industry we have called for, the result would be, that in a few years the unreclaimed lands which our commissioners may rent for a shilling an acre, would be made worth thirty shillings;

and in a few years further the result of a continuation of the same process would be to save the country the infliction of one penny of poor-rate at all! And the ulterior results of this constantly progressing process would be gradually to break up those masses of population now superabundant, to the general discomfort, in certain localities, and settle them comfortably in the midst of desolate wastes that hitherto could scarce keep life in any living thing—to improve thus indefinitely the whole face of the country, draining the bog, and planting the mountain, and not only thus improving the face of the country, but even the very temperature of our climate—for it is now well ascertained how much the state of the climate depends upon the state of the cultivation of a country. And that there is nothing utopian or at all extravagant in this prospect must be apparent to every man that knows any thing of what is passing around him—it would be only doing upon a larger scale with larger means what many individuals with smaller means have already done upon a smaller scale. Every one knows what has been done in the way of reclaiming waste lands by Lord Headly, Lord Palmerston, Lord Dillon, Mr. Fetherstone, and several others; and the reasons why much more has not been done by other individuals are obvious enough. How few of our landowners are *willing* to incur a present loss for sake of a future profit! Still worse, how few of them are *able* to make the necessary outlay! How very few of them would have the courage, like Mr. Charles O'Connell, of Bahoss, to build a splendid mansion in the very heart of a bog, as a sort of *gage d'honneur*, that it *should* be reclaimed, in something of the same spirit that prompted the gallant Condè to fling his marshal's baton into the lines of Fribourgh! But apart from any such unwillingness or inability on the part of landowners, there is the further reason, that with regard to a large portion of the waste lands of this country, no clear title can be made out, and that, of itself, would of course be a bar to any heavy outlay in reclaiming them. Now there is a provision in the 37th clause of the bill before us which seems to

remove this bar from before the comissioners at least, for in giving powers to incapacitated persons to convey it adds further "and for all other persons whatsoever, seized, or possessed of, or interested in any lands, tenements, or hereditaments which may be required by the commissioners for the purposes of this act (it shall be lawful), to contract for, sell, and convey the same, or any part thereof, to the commissioners; and all such conveyances as aforesaid shall be valid and effectual in the law to all intents and purposes." Now, we submit whether it would not be expedient for our poor law commissioners to avail themselves of this and the other facilities given them in working out such an enlarged scheme of operations as that we have hinted at. But, still further, we put it to the government whether they ought not take advantage of every clear *default* of title, on the part of individuals, with respect to any tracts of waste lands throughout the country, and vest all such in the commissioners for the benefit of the poor and of the whole community, and in all cases where there was neither clear title nor clear default of title to cause such equitable adjustment to be come to as would be, according to the circumstances, at once just towards the individual and just towards the public.—

By the 40th clause of the bill power is given to "the principal officers of his Majesty's Ordnance, by and with the consent and authority of the Lords of the Treasury, or any two of them," to grant to the commissioners for workhouses, "either with or without consideration," such *barracks* throughout the country as may be well spared for such purpose—a clause by the way for which we are not the less grateful that we ourselves suggested some such thing now four years ago. Would it not be expedient to insert a similar clause with respect to the *waste lands* belonging to the church and to the crown, and give the same powers to the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, and the commissioners under the church temporalities bill? Such a *rider* would be as serviceable to our poor bill in helping it over its difficulties, as Mr. Osbaldiston or my Lord Howth to a horse of doubtful mettle. It would harmonise, too,

completely with its whole scope and frame. But what is more to the purpose to dwell upon just now, such a clause as this we have ventured to suggest seems to us almost absolutely necessary to make the *burden* of our poor law for the first few years at all tolerable. For we entirely dissent from Mr. Nicholls in his estimate of that burden, not so much indeed as to his calculations, as based upon the data given, but as to the data themselves; that is, mainly, as to the numbers of the poor the bill will have to relieve.—This is the very last topic in Mr. Nicholls's report, and we too shall close with it.

"The population of Ireland being eight millions (says Mr. Nicholls, in the *Memorandum* at the close of his report), I assume that workhouse accommodation may be occasionally required for one per cent., or 80,000 persons." And, as the basis of this assumption, he tells us that "in Kent, Sussex, Oxford, and Berks, the amount of in-door pauperism, as returned on the 29th of September last, was just one per cent. on the population." He had previously established, in paragraph 43, that "relief should be there (in Ireland) *restricted* to the workhouse;" so that his one per cent. on our population has reference to the *sum total* of our pauperism, whilst his one per cent. on the population of those four English counties has reference only, as we have just seen, to their *in-door* paupers. Now, if the ratio of the in-door paupers to the out-door paupers receiving relief in those very counties be as only one to six, it clearly follows that, according to the elements of the calculation supplied by Mr. Nicholls himself, we should have, not one per cent. on our population to relieve, but six per cent., and that would give us, instead of 80,000, 480,000 persons. But such is actually the proportion, as appears from the following abstract, which forms a part of the last annual report of the English commissioners, amongst the signatures to which we find that of George Nicholls himself:—

Abstract of the number of paupers relieved during the quarter ended 25th March, 1836.

Counties.	Total of all classes.	
	In-door.	Out-door.
Kent	3,338	21,836
Sussex	2,884	10,181
Oxford	325	5,633
Berks	1,501	9,384
Total of four counties...	8,048	47,034

But is it fair to take the same per centage of paupers on the population for Ireland as for England? Notoriously not. Suppose, then, we only add two per cent. more for Ireland, which is surely within bounds, and that will give us, instead of 80,000, 640,000 persons to claim relief. Now, only assuming that he would have but 80,000 persons to administer relief to, Mr. Nicholls calculates—and even "taking credit for good economical management"—that the total charge of maintenance of those would be per annum 312,000*l.* If, therefore, it should turn out that instead of that number there should be found a number eight times larger to be provided for, then—and setting aside for the while whatever drawback may be to be allowed on the score of the larger management—which by the way in his strict union administration could not be much—the total charge of maintenance would be, not 312,000*l.*, but 2,496,000*l.* per annum. And this, considering all the circumstances, would bear a pretty fair proportion to the poor law expenditure of England and Wales, which we find to have been last year, 4,717,629*l.*—for our population is considerably more than half, and the ratio of our paupers upon that population considerably higher. And really should this bill before us pass into a law, as it is now framed, we do not see upon what grounds we can flatter ourselves that our expenditure will fall far short of what we have just indicated. It does not take, we again venture to say, that statesmanlike view, that it might of the fact that this country presents, with reference to this subject, a real *tabula rasa*, upon which it may trace, unhindered by any obstacle, and upon

which it ought to trace, unbiassed by any prejudice, whatever plan it may find absolutely and relatively the best. Even our most obvious advantages are overlooked—or, if not overlooked, are turned to no account. Mr. Nicholls himself says in his report, paragraph 30, "it is, I think, a circumstance favourable to the establishment of poor laws that there is so much land lying waste and uncultivated in Ireland. A large portion of this land appears to be susceptible of profitable cultivation. If capital were to be so applied, considerable tracts would be brought under culture, and thus afford immediate occupation to the now unemployed labourers." Then why not, we ask again and again, apply some of the capital raised by the poor rate to that purpose? Would it not be prudent to ease the burden of that rate, which, as we have just seen, is likely to be so heavy, by thus making our paupers contribute towards their own maintenance? Would there not be a little more common sense in this than in keeping hundreds of hardy and ready hands shut up between four walls, doing nothing? Have we so much money to spare as needlessly to superadd to our other burdens such a *dead weight* as this?

In the next paragraph but one, talking of the kind of drainage that would be necessary for the better cultivation of those wastes, Mr. Nicholls says, "such drainage, however, will generally require the co-operation of all the landowers of a district, to facilitate which the two bills introduced in the last session by Mr. Lynch, if passed into law, would, I think, be highly useful. In addition to these measures, however, it would probably be found necessary to give large powers for the purpose of enforcing drainage and charging the adjoining property with a fair portion of the expense in certain cases." Now, would it not be very easy to make our poor law machinery subserve these purposes? And why should not our poor law commissioners be charged with these powers?—at least wherever, in reclaiming their own, it would be necessary to carry their main drains through others' lands, would it not be very easy to insert a clause empowering them to do so? We'll be bound for it Mr. Lynch

will frame such a clause. Mr. Nicholls is for appointing a separate board of commissioners for this purpose of drainage, although one of his reasons for merging our Irish poor law business in the English commissioners is, "the saving the expense of a new commission!" Here, again, we differ with him. We are clearly of opinion that our Irish poor law commissioners (with one Englishman amongst them, if you will) would be quite competent, and the most competent to such a task. Unembarrassed, as they will be, with that perplexed and litigious intricacy of affairs in which the English commissioners are plunged over head and ears—the machinery they will have to guide being so simple, they will have abundant leisure; and supposing that really *national* management of our poor that we have hinted at above to be entrusted to them, this very business of drainage is one that would then most naturally devolve upon them. The better or more improved drainage of lands already under culture may safely be left to the voluntary impulses of private interests enlightened by experience and good examples. It is only with that of waste lands we should trouble ourselves just now; and as the reclamation of large tracts of those wastes would fall, in our supposition, to our Irish commissioners, so should all the necessary facilities for their more perfect drainage be freely granted them. Now reflect but for one moment on the immense advantages that the machinery of this bill before us holds out, or might be so easily made to hold out, for the more ready and more complete reclamation of waste lands. You have a supreme controul, (the commissioners) having an undivided authority to issue orders and directions as to any plan of operation that may be necessary, however extended. You have a flying corps of aids-du-camp, (the assistant commissioners,) to carry those orders, and see those directions executed; and you have in every spot an elected college of enlightened superintendents (the boards of guardians), watching the progress of every single movement. In reclaiming large tracts of waste lands, in order to ensure success, you will

often have to form your plan of operations upon an almost gigantic scale—upon a scale, not only beyond the power of any individual, but of any company that is likely to be formed. You will have probably to carry your main drains a continuous length of many miles, and, perhaps, not without the help of immense aquaducts and reservoirs; or else, on the other hand you will have a vast amount of labour to bring to bear upon a given spot at a given moment—in changing for instance the bed of a river, a process whereby thousands of acres of the finest land may be gained, and the river itself greatly improved; or in sinking trenches and raising embankments against the influx of the sea, and in the short intervals of favourable tides. Now, for such operations as these, how could you be better prepared than by that combined agency of the several workhouses we have suggested above. Our commissioners, like a commander-in-chief, whenever any such operation was to be carried on, could order off from all the surrounding workhouses, as from so many garrisons, a strong detachment of their hardiest labourers, who, marching out well armed with the peaceful weapons of their triumphant toils, and provided with rations for the given time, and with camp equipage too, would meet cheerfully on the spot appointed, and at the appointed time, and achieve, almost in sportiveness, the task assigned them. If then, we resume, we are to be deprived of whatever advantage there may be in the system of settlements, let us, *en revanche*, reap the fullest extent of the advantage of no settlements. Let us boldly carry out to the utmost the principle of a national management—*national*, we need hardly add, not in contradistinction to *a union* management, but in contradistinction to an *isolated* union management. Let us have this, and even if we are reduced to support our paupers in idleness, by contracts for maintenance at so much a head, we shall still make the burden more tolerable to our feeble resources; for the principle of the retail trade, the more numerous the customers the less the amount of profit levied on each, applies fully to the contract system. The more heads you contract for, the

cheaper will be the terms of your contract, and if you can contract for all, you will of course make the best bargain. But we cannot believe we shall be compelled to have recourse to the contract maintenance, except, of course, for the first year or two. It behoves, however, the rate payers to look well to it. We believe that unless this bill be altered in some such way as that we have pointed out, we shall be hard pressed indeed to bear the burden of that number of poor that is likely to be thrown upon us. We believe that with the few alterations we have ventured to suggest, and which are so easy to be engrafted on the bill, we may be quite fearless upon the score of the numbers of our poor, however great, and that we may even look upon them not as a burden too oppressive for our feeble resources, but rather as a means of wealth to strengthen those resources. We call, therefore, upon the Irish members to consider maturely how far they may protect their constituents and themselves, and lighten the threatened burden to both, by some such methods as those we have glanced at, and we call upon the English members to aid them to do so; and we do so call upon them confidently, upon these two grounds—first, that as they are promoting their own interests by the introduction of a poor law into Ireland, they are bound in justice and in honour to render it as little injurious as possible to our interests, and the more especially as the doing so will not cost themselves one penny; and, secondly, that an admirable opportunity is hereby given them of subjecting to the test of experiment, upon Irish ground, that most interesting problem—as interesting to them as to us—namely, whether it is not possible to attain all the advantages of a poor law without any of the burden of a poor rate.

But one word more as to the rating clauses and we have done. With the proposition of half and half of the poor-rate, as between owner and occupier, we are not quite satisfied. 'Tis the occupier gives value to the property by his labour and industry, and on him, therefore, the share of the burden should be lightest. We incline to think, with Mr. Smith O'Brien,

and with the Irish Poor Inquiry Commissioners, that two-thirds on the owners and one-third on the occupiers would be a fairer adjustment. The reason Mr. Nicholls gives (parag. 87) why "each should be called upon to pay half the rate" seems to us not only a bad one, but one that ought naturally to lead to the very opposite conclusion. Mr. Nicholls thinks that because at present "nearly the whole support of the destitute falls upon the tenantry," they ought not complain to have a full half of it legally imposed on them. Now, our conclusion would be, that as up to the present the landlords have had no share of the support of the destitute, in common equity the larger share of it should be imposed on them now. We would wish, too, to put that larger share on them, with the view of giving them a stronger stimulus to make up the deficit of their rentals by a better management of their property. One of the purposes most directly aimed at by a poor law is, to adjust the burden of the poor to the capacity of the shoulders that are to bear it. But this purpose Mr. Nicholls's reasoning tends to defeat. With the exception of this proportion of *one-half*, which, by the way, is also as yet in the class of the doubtfuls, we do not object to these two rating clauses (70, 71), as far as they go, inasmuch as thus far they are framed upon the equitable ratio of beneficial interests. But they do not go far enough. The first provision of clause 70 disposes very fairly of the case where the rent paid is *equal* to the net annual value; and the second as fairly of the case where the rent is *less* than the net value. But there is wanting a provision for the case—not rare in this country—where the rent paid is *more* than the net annual value. The second provision protects the owner against the tenant—why then should there not be a like one to protect the tenant against the middleman, or against the owner? We would subjoin a third provision to that clause, and in the same form of words as thus:—"And when such occupier shall pay a rent more than the net annual value, he shall deduct from such rent a sum which shall be as much *more* than the one-half (two-thirds) of the rate paid by him, as the rent paid by him shall

useful and remunerating work and
duly paid back with interest.

be more than the net annual value." This would be approaching very near to Mr. Sharman Crawford's view, as expressed in his notice of motion, and would also embody pretty accurately the generous sentiment expressed by Lord Stanley in reference to this subject at the first reading of the bill. But as to that part of the clause exempting altogether those whose rent "shall not exceed *five* pounds," we incline to think that, upon the whole, it may be as well to leave it out. The great mass of those persons are mere tenants at will, and if this part of the clause were to become the law, either of these inconveniences must result—they will be either turned out of their holdings forthwith, or else a nominal addition will be made to their rents, in order to make it exceed the specified amount. But if it be—as most probably it is—the intention of the framers of this bill to put an end to these miserable holdings altogether, we can assure them that we sympathise fully with them, but are far from thinking any such violent method as this at all necessary for such a purpose. They may depend upon it that things will soon find their natural level in this respect, and that their own bill, without this provision, will help them to do so rapidly enough.

Such, then, are the objections we feel disposed to make to the bill before us, in its present shape, and such is the manner in which we would obviate those objections; and we conclude by repeating that what we are most dissatisfied with, and what we are most anxious to see amended, is the neglect of these economical considerations which, in the impoverished state of the country, ought to be the first and strongest to suggest themselves. The relief that it gives is given for nothing, and produces nothing, whilst it could so easily adopt a system of relief in which there should be nothing for nothing, but in which what is given should be productive, and perpetually re-productive—the relief in the one case being like the stream that buries itself in barren sands, but being in the other like that stream kept smiling in the face of day, subserving the purposes of man's industry, and fertilizing the soil that is to supply his wants.

Dublin, 24th March.