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IRISH POOR LAW:

PAST,

PRESENT AND FUTURE.

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This pamphlet was  
written by me at the  
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A. P.

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## IRISH POOR-LAW.

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The Irish Poor-law dates its enactment from the year 1838. Much as its introduction was denounced and deprecated, there was nothing very alarming in the provisions of the original Act, nor was its operation up to the beginning of the year 1846 productive of any serious consequences to Ireland, in the way of taxation. The promised limit of one shilling in the pound had at that date scarcely any where been exceeded; the average yearly poundage throughout Ireland was less than 6*d.*; in the entire year of 1845, one hundred and twenty-three of the 130 Workhouses being then in operation, the total expenditure was 316,026*l.*; the total number of paupers admitted to the Workhouse during the same year was 114,205; and the number of inmates remaining on the 1st January, 1846, was only 42,068.

The progress made in individual Unions where the law had been for some years in operation, was equally satisfactory, and free from causes for alarm.

In the large cities of Dublin, Cork, Belfast, and Limerick, the Workhouses in which were all open in 1840 or 1841, the pressure on the accommodation provided was greatest; but in none of these



had much inconvenience been felt, nor had it been found necessary to provide a single additional Workhouse in any part of the country.

In those country Unions in which the experiment was of equal duration, the inmates were seldom more than one-third of the number the Workhouse was estimated to contain ; and the highest aggregate number at any one time in all the Workhouses was less than one-half the amount of their actual capacity.

In Connaught, the reluctance of the rate-payers to provide, and of the poor to receive, relief, had given way in some measure to a better understanding of the matter on both sides. In the Galway Union workhouse, which was opened for 1000 inmates, in March, 1842, there were on the 1st January, 1846, 356 paupers ; in Gort, opened for 500 inmates in December, 1841, there were in January, 1846, 173 ; and the year's expenditure in the former of these Unions, had been 2346*l.*, and in the latter 1369*l.*

Influenced in some degree, perhaps, by these examples, Tuam, the stronghold of resistance to poor-rates in the West, was preparing to yield to the peremptory mandate of the Court of Queen's Bench ; Westport had already opened its gates, and already registered sixty recipients of relief ; and even Clifden, the metropolis of Connemera, had given unequivocal signs of submission to the Queen's writ.

In fact the alarm first felt at this great experi-



ment was fast subsiding into acquiescence, and the new law was considered to be working well, and justifying its enactment.

Extreme destitution had found in the Workhouse an accessible and suitable asylum; and many homeless wanderers who sank by the wayside, and who (on failure of admission to some cabin, to the great peril of its inmates), must have died in the open air, were brought to the asylum provided by law, and found there, in their extremity, lodging, food, clothing, medical aid, and spiritual consolation. On the other hand, poverty was not tempted to forego industrial pursuits, in reliance on the relief funds; and even the indigent turned with repugnance from the sufficient fare, but strict discipline, of the Workhouse. Mendicancy had received a severe blow even without a Vagrant Act; not by the disappearance of beggars, although in many parts of Ireland, this symptom had already been attested; but by the commencement of sounder notions on the subject of almsgiving, which, under an universal system of compulsory relief, were rapidly growing on the rate-payers, and furnishing them with substantial and satisfactory reasons for no longer encouraging the professional mendicant.

The provision made in the Workhouses for the education and training of young children without natural protectors able to provide for them, was in the main efficient and satisfactory, although conducted at first in a spirit of perhaps too great



economy. The fruits are now being gathered ; and 1300 orphan girls, of certified good conduct, more than average physical growth, and fairly endowed with the rudiments of education, have, in the last few months, been sent to Australia under the auspices of the Government, and mainly at the expense of the Colonial funds.

The Boards of Guardians of the Irish Unions were found for the most part equal to their work, wherever they undertook it in a right spirit ; and thus a municipal institution, founded on liberal elective and representative principles, was extended through the length and breadth of the island, affording a common point of union to the land-owner and the farmer, the Protestant and the Catholic ; and these various sects of religious and political dissentients were brought to assemble in the Board-room of the Union, prepared for the most part to lay aside all differences of this nature, and to unite in the common object of conducting the public business with the greatest combined advantage to the rate-payers and the poor.

Upon the whole it may fairly be said, that in the commencement of the year 1846, the Irish Poor-law, an off-shoot as it was from the improved English system, was beginning to exhibit an example to the parent institution, of the operation of sound principles of relief, well conducted Work-houses, a close collection of the poor-rates, and an effective and vigilant supervision.



It would have required, however, a few years longer working of the original Act through a series of ordinary harvests to shew, whether sufficient provision had been made, more particularly in the South and West, to relieve throughout the year all cases of actual destitution, supposing mendicancy to cease from the land; and thus to correct still more completely and satisfactorily that popular fallacy, which confounding poverty and a low standard of physical wants with destitution, had gone the length of asserting that more than one-fourth of the population of Ireland were for a large part of every year in want of the necessaries of life.

A longer experiment would probably have shewn that the Workhouses first built were too few and far between, in some parts of the country, to relieve the actual destitution arising in ordinary years, if mendicancy were put down by law; but the provisions of the original Act contained ample means to remedy that defect by enabling the Commissioners to increase the number of Unions, and to provide additional Workhouses.

In the Act of 1838, however, no margin had been left for a potato failure. Even a partial failure, limited to a district comprising a few Unions; an event which was previously of no rare occurrence, was not provided for in that Act. The question may, however, still be asked now, as no doubt it was then, would it have been prudent to create powers to meet such a contingency until the frame-



work necessary for Workhouse Relief had been first established?

There can be little doubt, that a power like that now given to the Poor Law Commissioners, of authorising food to be given to all classes of the destitute would have worked, if not so disastrously as the relief-in-wages system of the Presentment Act, at least not very differently from the indiscriminating system of the Rations Act, had it been introduced in the first instance, without the check of an adequate Workhouse system.

The first potato failure then of 1845-6 (in using these figures, it is meant to designate the year ending 29th September, 1846), found the Irish Poor-law unprepared to cope with the calamity; and measures of extraordinary relief were accordingly commenced in that year by the Government. The general harvest of this year was most abundant; and judging from the slight increase of pressure on the Workhouses, and the limited character of the Government measures, this season was not one of great distress, except in a few localities, where the extent of the rot, and the prevalence of the system of conacre, combined to place the population in want of a food-market. This defect was well supplied by the operations of the Commissariat, and the introduction of the Indian corn meal. The local subscriptions and the bounty of the Government, were at the same time applied to such localities, so as to alleviate most materially the distress;



and the burthen of this charity was not yet so great, as to cause dissatisfaction in either country ; the whole expenditure not exceeding 700,000*l.*, of which about one-half was a free grant from the Government.

It has been already stated, that on the 1st of January, 1846, the total number of inmates in the 123 Workhouses then open was 42,068. The returns for the last week in March, 1846, shew only 50,717. At this point the number remained almost stationary until the beginning of July ; it then gradually declined until the end of August, when the number was 43,655.

It is apparent, from these returns, that whatever local distress existed in 1845-6 it was no more than the measures taken by Government were adequate to relieve.

The year 1846-7, that is to say, the year commencing 30th September, 1846, was the year of the fatal famine ; and as an almost universal blight had been announced early in August, the character of the approaching period was fully anticipated by Parliament before it broke up. Extraordinary measures of relief were again resorted to, and the Irish Poor-law left intact. It is not proposed to dwell on the famine of 1846-7, further than is necessary to shew the part which the Irish Poor-law bore in the events of this unparalleled period. Acting as a detached and separate system of relief, the value of its agency, when applied in connection



with out-door relief, was wholly lost to the country. That loss, as after events have shewn, told very heavily both on England and Ireland in a financial point of view. The attempt to force private employment by the alternative of public taxation, resulted in a system of relief by public labour on a large scale. The number of public workmen increased to more than 700,000; the cost, in little more than four months, amounted to about four millions and a half.

The weaker classes, meanwhile, for whom this system of relief made no direct provision, fell into famine and famine diseases; the Poor Law Unions, unable legally to combine Workhouse relief with a discriminating out-door system, were soon swamped by applicants; the Workhouses became hospitals, some of them pest-houses; and very many, from their over-crowded state, soon lost their usefulness in every sense.

The following short table will shew the general state of these institutions at several periods during the year 1846-7.

Week ended	Total Number of Inmates.	Total Number of Sick.	Number of Fever Patients.	Number of Deaths.	Rate of Mortality per 1000 Weekly.
3 Oct. 1846	51,543	6,943	886	163	3.2
26 Dec. „	96,248	14,471	2,198	1,054	11
27 Feb. 1847	116,321	23,311	6,475	2,267	19.5
3 April „	106,888	26,239	8,931	2,706	25
1 May „	101,566	25,601	10,226	2,224	22
3 July „	101,439	21,476	9,046	1,239	12.2
4 Sept. „	75,376	14,892	5,501	589	7.8
25 Sept. „	81,377	13,625	4,945	596	7.3



The aggregate capacity of the Workhouses during the season of 1846-7, but little exceeded 100,000. The rate of mortality at the commencement (3rd October, 1846), was three per 1000 inmates weekly, which is about the ordinary rate in Irish Workhouses. In the beginning of January, 1847, the full complement of inmates appears to have been received; it was afterwards much exceeded, but allowing for the excess, the total number of deaths at the ordinary rate of mortality in Workhouses for the twenty-six weeks terminating at the end of June, ought not to have been more than about 8,300. Now the actual number of deaths in the Workhouses during that period was very nearly 50,000; and the difference, viz. 41,700 deaths in six months, must be ascribed to the effects of disease induced by famine, and the great number of famished applicants who resorted to the Workhouse in a dying state to die there. There is, perhaps, no more certain measure than this of the intensity of that part of the distress in Ireland, which failed to be efficiently relieved in the year 1846-7. The gradual effect of the Rations Act upon the condition of the Workhouses, will be seen by a glance at the last Table. The operations under that Act commenced in May, and it was doubtless to the extent of food thenceforth distributed to the population, that the mortality in the Workhouses declined from twenty-five to seven per 1,000 weekly; and the number of fever patients from 10,226 to 4,945.



Notwithstanding, then, the limited character of the Poor-Law existing in Ireland in 1846, the entire expenditure from the poor-rates in that year amounted to 435,001*l*.

The following Table exhibits a complete series of years from the first introduction of the law, shewing the annual expenditure and the numbers relieved.

The Year ended December 31.	No. of Unions in operation.	Expenditure during the Year.	Number of Persons relieved during the Year.
		£.	
1840	4	37,057	10,910
1841	37	110,278	31,108
1842	92	281,233	87,604
1843	106	244,374	87,898
1844	113	271,334	105,358
1845	123	316,025	114,205
1846	129	435,001	245,933

The year ended 31st December, 1846, was the last year throughout which the Workhouse system prevailed exclusively. Looking to the extraordinary circumstances of the latter part of that year; making allowance, on the other side, for the necessity which probably would have arisen to increase the number of Unions and Workhouses, if the original Act had remained unaltered, it is perhaps a fair estimate to say, that the Poor-law, as first established, would have resulted in an annual expenditure not exceeding 500,000*l*.; or about tenpence in the pound on the aggregate net annual value of the rateable property in Ireland.



## THE PRESENT POOR LAW.

EARLY in the Session of 1847 it was determined by the Government to engraft a system of out-door relief upon the Irish Poor-law previously established.

The chief considerations which then influenced the public mind in favour of such a measure, were derived from events which had recently occurred, or which were still in progress. The Labour-Employment or Presentments Act was then in operation at an enormous cost, directly taken from the Imperial Treasury; and, notwithstanding the profuse expenditure of these funds in relief, a vast immigration of destitute Irish into Great Britain was taking place on the western coasts of both England and Scotland.

The limited taxation under the Irish Poor Relief Acts, in comparison with that of England, raised a strong sense of injustice in the minds of English tax-payers, and a determination that, until the resources of landed property in Ireland had been brought more fully into play, England should not be called upon to support the poor of Ireland as well as her own.

So strongly was this feeling manifested in Parliament as well as in the country, that it could with difficulty have been resisted, had it not been recommended by other considerations of sound policy.



The abuses incidental to a mere system of out-relief defrayed by Treasury grants, were proved to be such as no administrative agency, however able or well-constituted, could control; and all further attempt to check them, by requiring labour in return for relief, was abandoned, in the Temporary Relief Act, which succeeded the Labour-Employment Act. The latter Act, although more effective as a measure of relief than the preceding one, still involved an indiscriminate and profuse expenditure, with no check upon abuse beyond a system of inspection, which was expensive to maintain, and which proved unequal to the task.

It was a sound policy, therefore, to provide not only against the present calamity, but against future calamities of a like nature, whether partial or general, by creating powers of out-relief to be exercised, if necessary, in connection with a work-house system, the machinery of which, capable of prompt extension, was already existing throughout Ireland. The effect of this check upon expenditure in England is well known; although the work-house-relief in that country is very limited in extent, being little more than twenty per cent. of the whole relief in point of cost, and fifteen per cent. of the whole in point of numbers relieved. It might fairly be expected, therefore, that the large work-house establishments in Ireland, would, if judiciously used as a check upon improper applications for relief, enable the local administrators of relief



to keep expenditure within due bounds ; and it was not to be feared that when the funds were raised by a local and immediate tax, there would exist any popular disinclination in Ireland to apply the workhouse test to a proper extent as a check upon abuse.

It was likewise apparent, that in providing against extraordinary occasions and contingencies the Act might be framed so as not to necessitate any material departure from the existing practice of workhouse relief in those parts of Ireland or in those seasons, in which accommodation could be provided sufficient to meet the claims for relief.

The Poor-law Extension Act, 10 Vic. c. 31, was introduced therefore early in the Session of 1847, and pending the interval necessary for its discussion in Parliament, the Temporary Relief Act was put into force, and continued its operations until the middle of August, and in a few parts of Ireland until the close of September.

The Extension Act passed on the 8th June, 1847. The material and prominent part of the change introduced, is the power entrusted to the Poor-law Commissioners in Ireland, to provide against such a contingency as wide-spread distress from the failure of crops or any other cause, whether operating locally or generally through the country. This power is not, as in England, a power vested by the law in the local authorities, but one lying dormant until a sufficient occasion arises for the Commissioners



to call it into action, which they may do only when the workhouse is no longer available, and then only for a space not exceeding two months. The occasional power thus given of affording relief to *all* classes of the destitute poor out of the workhouse extends only to the giving of food to the able-bodied class of recipients. Such are the provisions of the second section of the Irish Poor-law Extension Act, involving the most material part of the change introduced by the 10th Vic. c. 31. The provisions of the first section are very important, and may in future practice become still more so, either for good or for evil; but so far as the present practice has gone, that section must be regarded as little more than auxiliary to the use of the workhouse system, as the most eligible mode of relief for the able-bodied classes.

The first section authorizes the Guardians, by direct enactment, to relieve out of the workhouse persons permanently disabled; widows with two or more legitimate children; and persons disabled by sickness or accident, and thereby rendered unable to support by their labour themselves and families dependent on them. The classes specified may, at all times, be relieved by the Guardians out of the workhouse; and in Unions where the pressure for relief has been extreme, the Guardians have, with the entire concurrence, and indeed at the instance of the Commissioners, relieved these classes out of the workhouse, principally with the view of



obtaining accommodation for those other classes, whose necessities were of a more uncertain duration, if not pretended and unreal altogether. In Unions on the other hand, where the pressure of distress has not been so great, the Guardians have felt it unnecessary to exercise the power of out-door relief given them by the first section. Of the whole number (131) twenty-five Unions have never yet had occasion to give any relief out of the work-house; and at the present date thirty-four Unions are not affording any such relief either under the first or the second sections.

The out-door relief system, therefore, which has been engrafted on the former Irish Poor-Law, must be looked at as combining two distinct characters; one shewn in its ordinary and permanent operation as defined by the first section of the Extension Act, and admitting, but not necessarily involving, any difference in practice from that of the former law; and the other as shewn in its occasional and extraordinary operation, when the dormant powers of the second section are called into action to meet an emergency either local or general.

It so happens, that at the time of discussing the operation of the Irish Poor-law in these respects, the two seasons which have arrived since its enactment have both been, although in different ways, seasons involving very wide-spread distress in the population of Ireland. In reference to its pressure as a tax, therefore it may fairly be said, that in all



probability we already know the worst of the present law ; and that many alarms, apparently well founded at present, belong to causes which could not but produce them independently of all legislation on the subject of relief.

Although the Extension Act was passed in June, 1847, the first year of its actual operation may be said to have been completed on the 29th of September, 1848. It has been suggested that the year 1847-8 was not a year of famine, that is to say, of absolute scarcity of food, and that, therefore, it was comparatively not one of severe suffering and widespread distress. This is not, however, a correct view of the case. The potato crop of 1847-8, although comparatively free from blight, was yet so limited in breadth as to supply in all probability a less amount of produce than that which, notwithstanding the rot, became available for food in 1846-7. Extensive means of safe comparison do not exist ; but supposing three-fourths of the whole ordinary crop to have suffered by the blight in 1846-7, this would scarcely produce more general distress than the deficient planting of the subsequent year. Such was the panic produced by the two successive blights of 1845-6, and 1846-7, and such the paralysing influence of the relief measures of the latter year, that a great part of the population had, without doubt, abstained from planting their usual food. In Captain Larcom's Tables of Agricultural Produce, compiled in the summer of 1847, the whole



estimated quantity of potatoes grown in the year was 2,048,195 tons, upon 284,116 acres of land.

No general account having been taken of the produce before 1847, a full comparison cannot be made. There are, however, authentic cases in which the means of comparison exist. In Sir J. Young's Report on the Bailieborough Union, in the County of Cavan, it is stated, that in 1844 the breadth of land planted with potatoes was 11,491 acres; whereas in 1847, Captain Larcom's table shews only 1071 acres to have been so planted; that is to say, less than one-tenth of the former planting. Another instance is supplied in Captain Larcom's Report prefixed to the Produce Tables of 1847. In the year 1847 there were only 800 acres planted with potatoes in Castlebar Union, where, "under ordinary circumstances, there would not have been less than 6000 acres of potatoes." Assuming the breadth planted throughout Ireland to have been one-sixth of the ordinary breadth, there would at the same rate of yield be a falling off of 10,000,000 tons; if one-fifth, 8,000,000; and if one-fourth, 6,000,000 tons. It is true that to supply this enormous defect of human food other produce was grown to some extent in lieu of potatoes, and that Indian corn-meal was imported in sufficient quantity; and that these circumstances prevented an absolute scarcity of food in 1847-8; but they did not, and could not, place food within the reach of that large portion of the cottier population of Ire-



land, who had been accustomed to labour for wages only for a small part of the year, and to receive those wages in potatoes, at once the food and the currency of the country.

It is not, therefore, a fair impression which a recent article in the *Edinburgh Review* has given of the year 1847-8, in representing it to be one of almost ordinary character, not affected by the visitation of Providence; and in proceeding from these premises to discuss the present progress of the extended Poor-law, as if it were a fair sample of what its ordinary operation may be expected to be. The general effect conveyed by that article is, that in the short space of eighteen months, from the passing of the Extension Act, something very like the English system of out-door relief has been introduced into, and taken firm possession of, the country of Ireland; that according to the well-known tendency of pauperism to advance, the number of out-door poor had gradually increased from September 1847 to July 1848, resulting in a "standing army of 900,000 paupers;" that the vessel was "steering or drifting" in the direction of danger; and that some grand exertion, totally different in kind, and to be made with the help of Imperial resources, is necessary to repair the mischief done.

Now all this appears to be rather hard on the Irish Poor-law Extension Act. It ought not to be so soon forgotten, that in March, 1847, not less than 700,000 able-bodied Irish poor, with their de-



pendents, were fed on the public bounty at a cost of four millions sterling, in as many months; that in other four months (May, June, July and August,) of the same year, more than a million and a half were expended, feeding on the 4th of July about 3,000,000 poor; and that in the face of this army, say rather, nation, of expectants, the out-door relief portion of the present Irish Poor-law was introduced.

It is manifest, therefore, that under such circumstances the Extended Poor-law had to commence its existence with a desperate struggle against the very evils which it is charged with introducing. The first battle came off in the city of Dublin on the 15th of August, the day when the rations were to cease. In one single Electoral Division of the North Union, the Relief Committee left on that day more than 20,000 expectants of out-door relief. The Poor-law Commissioners were requested, but refused, to authorize relief in food to these persons under the second section of the Act, and the Guardians of the Poor were thus left with no other legal means of relieving the bulk of them, than in the Workhouse. Vacancies for 400 inmates were prepared; admission was refused to none; between 200 and 300 accepted the offer, and the rest retired without a murmur. There is no mistaking the part which the Extended Poor-law played in this encounter; here, at all events, the Poor-law was not the monster, but the nascent power which strangled it.



It was not, however, to be hoped that similar results would at once follow in every part of the country. In the Dublin case the apparent pauperism was almost all unreal; in other places much actual destitution was mixed up with much pretended distress; the numbers of both these classes of applicants was overwhelming; the Workhouse accommodation insufficient; and in such Unions as Newcastle, Kilrush, Scariff and Cahirciveen, it is not to be wondered that reports of Temporary Inspectors, dated November and December, 1847, should give a frightful picture of demoralization and want, and a hopeless prospect for the future. When such descriptions, however, are advanced as shewing the progress of evil under the Extended Irish Poor-law, the impression produced, if it be correct, is not derived from satisfactory premises; and it may fairly be said, that in January, 1849, facts of a later date than December, 1847, should be used in demonstrating the effects of a law which received the Royal Assent in June, 1847.

As an example of the unsatisfactory character of these deductions, let the case of Cahirciveen Union, one of those selected by the Reviewer as a hopeless case, be examined in reference to a later period of its history. The following is Colonel Clarke, the Inspector's Report, as quoted in the *Review*, dated 10th December, 1847: —

“ There is no possibility of finding accommodation sufficient to give the Workhouse test a full and fair operation. It is com-



puted that there are 10,500 destitute individuals in the Union being able-bodied labourers, not possessing land, and their families. How these persons existed in former years, is one of those Irish problems most difficult of solution ; but I believe that to relieve one of them, and not another, would be a positive injustice ; all being equally destitute. I am perfectly convinced that, even supposing the Guardians were in possession of sufficient funds, they are totally incapable of carrying out any measures of relief to any such extent ; and though I might lecture on the subject daily and hourly, and every word be most fully acquiesced in, there would be no practical result.

“ Unfortunately, in this country, charitable or local funds are looked upon as common property, of which every man is entitled to a share, without reference to his circumstances. Parents, however well off, will have their adult children placed on the poor lists, and use every deception as to the ages of the younger children, which is now daily practised at the Workhouse, in order to obtain a higher scale of diet. I am, therefore, induced to believe that there will be at least 6000 persons on the out-door relief lists ; the cost of these for twenty-five weeks, at the most moderate calculation, will be 8000*l.* ; to raise this sum from the Union, would require a rate of nearly seven shillings in the pound. I have before had the honour of submitting to you my opinion that the levy of any rate, in addition to that now in course of collection, would be hopeless. If the Guardians can carry on the Workhouse, with the auxiliary building, it will be the extent of their powers.”

Now the Cahirciveen Union is one of the poorest Unions in the County of Kerry, and Kerry is one of the poorer Counties in the Province of Munster. The population of the Union in 1841, was 30,888 ; the net annual value 24,194*l.* ; the total acreage 191,012 ; of which 11,442 acres only were under crops of every description in 1847. On the 4th July,



1847, the number receiving rations was 18,984, or nearly two-thirds of the whole population.

The debts of the Union at 29th September, 1847, amounted to 1,715*l.*; and on the 16th January, 1848, the Vice-Guardians, shortly after their appointment, reported that an execution was in the house for 458*l.*, with costs. These officers, under the superintendence of Colonel Clarke, first addressed themselves to a vigorous collection of the rate, which had been made but not yet collected, by the late Board of Guardians, and to an increase of the Workhouse accommodation. Five additional houses were procured, making room for 1240 persons in the whole, the original Workhouse having been built for only four hundred.

On the 29th January, Colonel Clarke reports the progress as satisfactory. "There is," he says, "a great mass of destitution, yet I hope out-door relief to the able-bodied may be deferred for a few weeks longer."

On the 5th and 10th February, he makes further and still satisfactory reports, shewing, that although the Workhouses are fully occupied, there is yet no necessity for relief to the able-bodied. "There is," he says, "much importunity for relief by those who will not go into the Workhouse; but there is no turbulence or disorder, and I believe that the determined attitude assumed by the Guardians has been mainly instrumental in producing that effect."

On the 4th March, Colonel Clarke reports, that



2400*l.* of the rate had been collected, leaving about 1400*l.* of the current rate and arrears still unpaid. The difficulties of collecting are thus described :—

“The first and most prominent (cause of difficulty) is the general impoverishment of the people by the failure of the potato, it being the only produce of the county, corn of any description being almost unknown. Grazing for one or two cows, with a potato garden, is the usual holding. \* \* \*

“The extreme poverty of the tenantry naturally affects the proprietors. I believe the rents are generally two years in arrear, and in many instances much more. I have knowledge of gentlemen who would make any sacrifice rather than have their names brought forward as defaulters, and yet are unable to meet their present amount of rates. \* \* \*

“In consequence of the people not having tilled their land but to a very limited extent for want of seed, potatoes are now as scarce and dear as at the corresponding period of last year. \* \* \*

“I considered my appointment to this Union to embrace a two-fold duty ; in the first place to see the laws for the relief of the poor carried out in their fullest integrity ; and in the second to produce a moral revolution in the minds of the people, by convincing them that their well-being depended on their own industry and exertions, and not in becoming craving recipients of food, wrung from the means of those scarcely better off than themselves. Had I arrived here in ordinary times and found the Union clear of incumbrances, I could have pledged myself to success in both those objects, and even now I perceive signs of a more healthy feeling than has prevailed.”

On the 6th March, Colonel Clarke reports, that out-door relief had not been found necessary yet. “Every day’s observation,” he says, “the more strongly convinces me that the greatest imposition was practised under the Temporary Relief Act ;



and three hundred persons of that (the able-bodied) class, having discharged themselves from the Workhouses during the last three weeks, induces me to hope it may be done without." He further reports, on the same date, that he has now 3600 children fed at the schools; 4000 widows, orphans, and impotent persons on the out-relief lists, and 1200 in the Workhouse; making a total of nearly 9000 persons.

The last Report on this Union in the published series, is dated 19th April, 1848. In this Colonel Clarke states:—

"The various reports I have had the honour to make to you put you in full possession of every particular as to the state in which I found affairs on my arrival, and the measures adopted to meet the pecuniary embarrassments and pressure of distress existing in the Union. These measures have been attended with more success than I could have anticipated; a great proportion of the outstanding debts have been discharged; clothing in abundance provided for the Workhouse; the dietary of the paupers improved: out-door relief to the able-bodied not required; and not a single authenticated death from destitution.

\* \* \* \* \*

"There never could have been a more unpropitious time for trying a gigantic experiment in political economy, than that when the present law for the relief of the poor came into operation; with the mass of the people demoralized by being gratuitously and almost indiscriminately fed during the preceding two years, the effects of which will naturally clog the working of the law for years to come. Could this Union be brought back to its nominal state before the failure of the potatoes, the expenditure under the Poor-law, at a fair moderate calculation, would be about £3,200 per annum, or a uniform rate of three shillings in



the pound; this, though heavy on so poor a district, would not be insupportable. \* \* \* \*

“In your letter of the 5th instant, you did me the honour of expressing your conviction that I would not request aid prematurely or unreasonably. I am highly gratified by that assurance, and it emboldens me in reiterating my conviction that every possible exertion has been made by the Vice-Guardians and the people, and that the moment has now arrived when the promised aid may be legitimately demanded.”

In its further progress, this Union, so far from “drifting” onward in the current of out-door relief, appears to have been “steered” in an opposite direction, as will appear from the following figures:—

Month.	Inmates in work- houses.	No. on out-relief.	Total.	Rate remaining uncollected.	Expenses of the month.
March, 1848	1003	2919	3922	1331	849
April „	1077	3169	4246	1123	752
May „	1042	2971	4013	731	859
June „	1015	2670	3685	588	699
July „	763	2295	3058	512	791
August „	459	1214	1673	458	466
September	410	89	499	3820	259

Cahirciveen Union, then, ought not to have been classed among the examples of the evil working of the Extended Poor-law in Ireland. On the contrary, the purposes of that Law appear to have been well fulfilled in this Union; destitution was effectually relieved; able-bodied male persons were relieved wholly in the Workhouse; an amount of rate, not excessive, but bearing heavily on the Union in its present circumstances, was levied; and the whole expenditure of the year was 6982*l.* on a population



of 30,000, to meet which 3832*l.* was collected and lodged with the Treasurer, being 3*s* 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ *d* in the pound on the valuation. The deficit was supplied from the funds of the British Association to the extent of 3191*l.*

The year 1848-9 commences, it will be seen, with a rate of 3820*l.* The planting of potatoes in this Union in 1848, as compared with that of 1847, was extensive; and had another blight not taken place, it seems probable that out-door relief would not have gained ground, and that this Union would have effectually relieved its destitute poor without further assistance from any quarter. As it is, and under another visitation similar to that of 1846-7, the progress of out-door relief is at present very gradual. On the 4th of November the whole weekly cost of out-relief was 3*l.* 6*s* 2*d*; on the 11th, 3*l.* 9*s* 9*d*; on the 18th, 3*l.* 14*s* 7*d*; on the 25th, 3*l.* 7*s* 10*d*; on the 2nd December, 3*l.* 19*s* 10*d*; on the 9th, 18*s* 5*d*; on the 16th, 5*l.* 16*s* 1*d*; on the 23rd, 3*l.* 14*s* 2*d*; on the 30th, 7*l.* 9*s* 4*d*; on the 6th January, 1849, 15*l.* 2*s* 3*d*.

The history of this Union has been dwelt on as shewing in detail the character of that struggle which has been carrying on under the Extended Poor-law Act throughout Ireland, with more or less success in each Union, according to the vigilance of administration and the circumstances of each locality.

Among the poorer counties in Ireland, the County of Donegal exhibits the present working of the law



in, perhaps, the most favourable point of view. Its circumstances, in comparison with the rest of Ireland will be seen by a glance at the following figures:—

	Population.	Net annual value.	Acres.	Acres under Crops	Proportion of net value to population.
		£			£. s. d.
Ireland	8,175,124	13,187,421	20,808,271	5,238,575	1 12 3 } to each
Donegal	296,448	276,884	1,193,443	202,888	0 18 8 } person.

The following table will serve to shew the progress which out-door relief has made in the County of Donegal to the present time. It is well to premise, that the eight Unions which are situate in this County, are each managed by a Board of Guardians, no Vice-Guardians having ever been appointed.

Unions.	No. relieved under Rations Act 4th July, 1847.	No. on out-relief on 8th July, 1848.	No. on out-relief on 28th Oct. 1848.	No. on out-door relief on 6th Jan. 1849.	Acres.	Net Annual Value.	Population.
Ballyshannon .	12,418	1,449	—	5	137,024	51,435	43,403
Donegal .	14,451	1,664	14	7	174,999	31,639	41,371
Dunfanahy .	6,738	—	—	—	128,220	10,543	18,571
Glenties .	12,781	6,528	28	240	294,503	16,330	43,571
Innishowen .	2,739	711	12	9	159,323	36,607	43,569
Letterkenny .	3,283	—	—	—	102,691	31,835	25,921
Milford .	14,805	1,340	—	—	112,748	31,377	38,108
Stranorlar .	4,740	—	—	—	121,556	29,402	25,786

The total number, then, who received rations in the County Donegal, under the Rations Act, in July, 1847, was 71,965 persons; the maximum number on the out-relief lists, under the Extended Poor-law, in 1848, was 12,691; the number on the same lists in October, 1848, was 54; and on



the 6th January, 1849, it had again increased to 261.

In the County of Donegal, then, one of the poorest in Ireland, if the proportion of annual value to population be taken as the criterion, out-door relief, under the Extension Act, has not yet shewn itself in a very formidable shape. It must not, however, be inferred from this, that the burthen of Poor-rates has not been very severe on some of the Unions in this County, especially on some Electoral Divisions, consequent not merely on the extent of out-relief, but likewise on the expensive nature of the struggle which has been made to oppose its progress, by the use of extended Workhouse accommodation.

The preceding observations have gone to shew, that the prospective dangers of out-door relief in Ireland under the Extension Act, have been greatly exaggerated; there are, however, other localities in which the immediate burthens and embarrassments attending the relief of the destitute poor must be presented without reserve.

On the 30th December, 1848, there were thirty-one Unions, in which the aggregate number of out-door poor was 301,529; or about three-fourths of the entire number receiving out-relief in Ireland at that date. In these Unions, embracing the worst portions of the Provinces of Connaught and Munster, all the various modes of disaster resulting from the three last deficient harvests, are at the



present time in the fullest force and development. It is sufficient to say, in few words, that the enormous loss of capital occurring in them during the last three seasons, has rendered untenable the relations before subsisting between different classes of society in these districts. The poorer tenants are driven forth; the better ones abandon their holdings; and agriculture, the sole business of the district, declines; the panic caused by past losses inducing a continued withdrawal of capital, and preventing the access of new.

In such circumstances the natural and ordinary operation of a local Poor-law is to aggravate the causes of evil, while it alleviates the distressing effects; and without dwelling on the abuses and demoralization inseparable from the administration of out-door relief, it must be avowed that to the extent above described the operation of the present Poor-law as a tax is most severe both as a direct burthen, and a cause of alarm, deterring the application of capital to the employment of labour; and in districts circumstanced like those last adverted to, it appears essential to a return of prosperity that exertions should be made differing in kind, and unconnected with the administration of relief.

Even in other parts of Ireland the immediate burthen of Poor-rates is most severe. The collection which is proceeding since September, 1848, at the rate of 200,000*l.* per month, is at present much



in excess of the expenditure ; however, as the season advances, these proportions must change, and out-door relief must be resumed in some Unions which do not now afford it.

It is now proposed to examine the circumstances of some of the worst circumstanced Unions in detail, and those Unions which are situate in the County of Clare are not only suitable but convenient examples, because their boundaries are for the most part identical with those of the County ; and because this County, differing as it does but little in many of its circumstances from the County of Donegal, presents a most startling contrast to it as regards the administration of relief.

The four Unions, then, of the County of Clare, present the following circumstances :—

Unions.	No. relieved under Rations Act, 4th July, 1847.	No. on out-relief on 8th July, 1848.	No. on out-relief on 28th Oct. 1848.	No. on out-relief on 6th January, 1849.	Acres.	Net annual value.	Population.
						£.	
Ennis	43,480	17,893	8753	19,139	201,959	101,222	77,840
Ennistymon	No return	No return	7550	12,724	165,074	67,486	49,935
Kilrush	51,206	20,801	5734	17,567	148,814	59,449	82,353
Scariff	27,487	17,473	3884	13,089	108,975	44,609	53,563

It has already been seen that in the whole of the *eight* Unions of the County of Donegal, the number on the out-door relief lists on the 6th of January, 1849, amounted to only 261 persons ; while at same date, the total number receiving out-relief in the County of Clare Unions, appears to be 62519.

This extraordinary difference of results under



the same law, must be due either to difference of practice in its administration, or to some great differences in the circumstances of the two Counties.

As regards administration, however, Clare has the advantage of being managed by paid Guardians (such it is supposed to be) in three of its Unions, while Donegal has none. On the other hand, the state of Clare is apparently not due to the working of the law by paid instead of unpaid Guardians; inasmuch as Ennis, the Union which is under a Board of Guardians, takes the lead in expenditure, and in the extent of numbers relieved out of the Workhouse.

The statistics of the two Counties, as ascertained in the census of 1841, and the Produce Tables of 1847, are as below :—

Counties.	Population.	Net annual value.	Acres.	Arable do.	* Proportion of 100 families in dwellings of		Proportion of 100 families dependent on	
					3rd class.	4th class.	The direction of labour.	Their own labour.
Donegal	296,448	276,884	1,193,443	393,191	39·9	46·7	22·2	74·8
Clare	286,394	301,309	827,994	455,009	31·7	56	24	71

#### Holdings of land.

Counties.	Under 1 statute acre.	Above 1 to 5 acres.	Above 5 to 15 acres.	Above 15 to 30 acres.	Above 30 acres.	Total.
Donegal	37,567	4,212	13,043	9,067	8,855	9,1540
Clare	32,902	4,713	11,018	8,035	6,048	7,1328

\* Third class of dwelling, "a cottage built of mud, varying from two to four rooms and windows;" fourth class, "all mud cabins having only one room."—*Irish Census Report*, 1841.



In some of the circumstances shewn in the above Table, Donegal has the advantage, in others Clare, the former preponderating somewhat perhaps upon the whole. Again, Donegal presents a greater lineal extent of sea-coast to its population than Clare, bringing a corresponding amount of advantage in fisheries and manure. Yet surely there is nothing in the physical elements which can account for the immense apparent difference of the extent of destitution in the two Counties. Under the Rations Act in Donegal 71,965 persons received rations on the 4th July; in Clare, with a population less by 10,000, rations were dispensed at the same date to more than 140,000 persons. In the year ended 29th September, 1848, the expenditure under the Poor-law was in the Unions of Donegal 30,726*l.*, in those of Clare 108,321*l.* On the 6th January, 1849, there were 261 persons receiving out-door relief in the County of Donegal, and 62,519 in the Unions of Clare.

A further difference of circumstances occurs in two respects. In the first place, the conacre system has never prevailed so extensively in Donegal as in Clare; and, secondly, the number of evictions in the latter County has within the last two years been excessive. It is probable, however, that much of the difference is due to moral causes, and to diversities in the structure of the social fabric.

It may be well at the same time to point out,



that there are twice as many Unions in Donegal as in Clare, affording without doubt greater facilities for Poor-law management in times of difficulty; and presenting, in the first instance, a far greater extent of Workhouse accommodation; the amount first provided in Donegal being for 3700, and in Clare for 2800 persons; the proportions, however, are now reversed, and to meet the pressure in Clare room for 7316 has been provided, while in Donegal the accommodation has been increased to 5550.

It is not permitted to dwell longer on this interesting comparison; but a hope may, perhaps, be ventured, that inasmuch as the causes of this great difference in the amount of pauperism are not directly traceable to differences in the more permanent physical elements of the two Counties, they may be found to be transitory, and to yield to a sounder structure of the agricultural relations and arrangements in Clare, and an improved administration of Poor-laws in that County.

The case of the County of Clare has been chosen in preference to that of any County in Connaught, for the sake of the comparison with Donegal. The present state, however, of the Unions in Mayo and Galway is most distressing.

A short Table, like the following, is the clearest and shortest way of shewing the past and present condition of these Unions:—



Unions.	Popula- tion.	Annual Value.	Acres.	Number receiv- ing ra- tions on 4 July, 1847.	Number on out- relief on 8 July, 1848.	Number on out- relief on 28 Oct. 1848.	Ex- pended in year 1847-8.	Number on out- relief, 6 Jan. 1849.	
		£.					£.		
Mayo {	Ballina .	120,787	95,774	504,115	66,232	41,828	12,472	52,282	17,540
	Castlebar .	61,063	50,981	160,687	46,704	23,631	8,886	27,008	8,535
	Ballinrobe	85,031	85,217	263,104	68,654	48,494	8,805	37,653	9,775
	Westport .	77,952	38,876	330,176	50,771	26,193	3,177	27,418	9,250
	Swineford	73,529	46,016	207,964	69,459	24,518	2,239	13,725	7,535
Galway. {	Galway .	88,971	100,777	302,859	57,428	31,718	5,893	33,810	5,540
	Gort . .	43,543	53,037	126,941	37,987	9,014	1,224	20,121	5,061
	Tuam . .	74,974	86,236	211,804	48,406	13,782	3,191	18,107	5,857
	Loughrea .	71,774	91,007	198,700	26,745	8,279	355	14,460	2,546
	Clifden .	33,465	22,426	189,504	29,300	No re- turn.	9,314	23,405	6,836

In the Counties of Limerick, Kerry, Cork, Tipperary, Roscommon, Longford, and Leitrim, there are Unions in which the out-door relief, having in autumn declined to a comparatively low scale, has again, either by the force of circumstances or some defects of management, risen to an alarming extent, as shewn by the return of the 6th January, 1849. Those Unions are Newcastle and Rathkeale, in the County of Limerick; Listowel, Killarney, Kenmare, and Dingle, in the County of Kerry; Kanturk, Bantry, and Skibbereen, in the County of Cork; Cashel, Callan, Thurles, Tipperary, and Roscrea, in the County of Tipperary; Roscommon and Boyle in the County of Roscommon; Longford and Granard in the County of Longford; and Carrick-on-Shannon and Mohill, in the County of Leitrim.

We have now enumerated thirty Unions situate in nine Counties of Connaught and Munster, which may be considered the worst situated in regard to



the extent of out-door relief at the most recent date assigned in these pages, viz. 6th January, 1849. Those thirty Unions, in fact, comprise at that date nearly three-fourths of the entire number of recipients, and a like proportion of the cost, of out-door relief in Ireland; the totals in Ireland at that date being 423,355 persons, at a cost of £11,170 weekly. Both numbers and cost, however, are rapidly increasing.

It is a fact here deserving notice, that in several of the nine Counties referred to, examples are at hand of Unions altogether free from out-relief, or very lightly burthened by it. In the County of Limerick, the Kilmallock Union, which on the 8th January, 1848, had 14,401 persons on the out-relief list, on the 6th January, 1849, returns none;\* this Union is under a Board of Guardians. In the County of Kerry, the Cahirciveen Union (under Vice-Guardians), has on the 6th January, 1848, only 477 persons on out-relief, at a cost of 15*l.* 2*s.* 3*d.* weekly. In the County of Cork, the Unions of Cork, Bandon, Mallow, Kinsale, Dunmanway, Middleton, and Fermoy (all under Boards of Guardians), have no out-relief; and in Dungarvan the number is only 52, and in Macroom 515, (both under Guardians). In the County of Tipperary, the Carrick-on-Suir Union (under Guardians) has only 653 on out-relief; and the Nenagh Union (likewise under

\* This Union has since yielded to the pressure of applications for relief. On the 13th January, there were more than 5000 persons on out-relief.



Guardians), which, at the corresponding period last year, had 7098, has now only 2567 recipients of out-relief. In the County of Leitrim, the Manorhamilton Union (under Guardians) has only 62 persons on the out-relief lists.

If the cases above-mentioned should produce an impression against the system of management by Vice-Guardians, it will be fallacious as a general proposition ; because the different results shewn in different Unions, even when situate in the same County, are sometimes directly traceable to a marked difference in circumstances ; and it must be borne in mind that with only two or three exceptions, the thirty-six instances in which Boards of Guardians have been dissolved, occurred where extreme difficulty and embarrassment had already been caused by their inability to grasp the details of the work before them. The County of Galway, which has been correctly cited as one of the worst conditioned Counties, is now wholly under management of Vice-Guardians ; and although the out-relief in each of the Galway Unions under the first section of the Act is considerable, relief under the second section has been hitherto avoided almost entirely since September last, except in Gort Union. It is, without doubt, due to the appointment of Vice-Guardians that the out-door relief in the County of Galway, considerable as it is, is at this time kept under due control. The same may be stated as to the extent of out-relief in many other Unions conducted by Vice-Guardians ; but everywhere the value



of this form of management has been most especially felt in the collection of the rates.

At the same time, it is impossible to assert, upon the facts as they stand, that the great difference of results exhibited in different Unions, is wholly due to difference in their respective circumstances; and it can scarcely be doubted that, in many Unions, whether under Guardians or Vice-Guardians, margin is left for an improved administration of the existing law.

It still remains, under this branch of the subject, to give an outline of the general operation of the Extension Act, as a measure of relief, from the time when it may be considered as effectually introduced. This will be best done by a short statistical Table, presenting at one glance the extent of the out-door and in-door relief, and the sanitary condition of the Workhouses, at different periods, during the year 1848.

Week ended	Number of persons on out-relief.	Weekly cost of out-relief.	Total number in Workhouses.	Fever cases.	Deaths.	Mortality per 1000 weekly.
		£				
8 January, 1848.	344,942	9,813	124,690	7,007	1,469	11·8
5 February .....	445,456	12,788	128,753	6,562	1,418	11·
4 March .....	654,712	17,564	123,282	5,805	1,268	10·
1 April.....	643,999	17,092	122,605	5,744	1,203	9·
6 May.....	751,794	18,786	125,355	5,171	999	8·
3 June.....	769,213	19,562	130,698	4,188	787	6·
1 July.....	833,889	21,800	139,397	3,944	620	4·5
5 August.....	764,035	20,266	123,394	3,161	460	3·8
2 September.....	376,090	10,335	108,618	2,605	375	3·5
30 September.....	207,632	5,910	113,996	2,847	302	2·6
7 October.....	199,603	5,925	119,571	2,838	403	3·4
4 November.....	215,091	6,438	137,309	3,059	557	4·1
2 December.....	277,984	8,099	172,980	3,798	787	4·5
30 December.....	393,421	10,582	185,825	4,465	1,219	6·5



If the rate of mortality in the Workhouses be taken as a true criterion of the sanitary state of the population, it will be seen from the above Table and the Table given at page (8), that since the commencement of the famine year 1846-7, the condition of the people was at no point of time better than in the autumn of 1848, the close of the first year of the operation of the Extended Poor-law Act; and that these favourable indications continued during the months of September, October, and part of November.

Another point deserving remark, in favour of the operation of the law, has been the greater proportion of those relieved out of the Workhouse, under the first section of the Act, as compared with those so relieved under the second section.

The proportions at different periods were as follows :—

Week ended	Relieved under Section 1.		Relieved under Section 2.		Total relieved out of the Workhouse.	
	No. of Cases.	No. of Persons.	No. of Cases.	No. of Persons.	No. of Cases.	No. of Persons.
8 July, 1848	213,700	484,314	136,648	332,468	350,348	816,782
28 Oct. „	95,445	204,135	3,465	6,597	98,910	210,732
6 Jan. 1849	140,955	327,733	29,384	95,622	170,339	423,355

It must further be remembered, that the cases of relief under section 2, embrace several classes besides the class of able-bodied males; that is to say,



orphans, deserted women and children, widows with fewer than two legitimate children, and able-bodied single women with or without children. In those Unions in which the Workhouse accommodation was not sufficient to receive all able-bodied male applicants with their dependents, this class were relieved out of the Workhouse in food only, on the condition of performing a task of work during eight or ten hours, according to the season of the year, the amount of food given bearing proportion, not to the extent of the task or the time of labour, but to the number of persons dependent on the worker. It has been ascertained that the maximum number of able-bodied males so employed and relieved out of the Workhouse in any one week did not exceed 65,000 during the year 1847-8.

The audited accounts of the expenditure and collection for the year 1847-8, are not yet forthcoming; but an estimate obtained from monthly returns represents the totals for all the Unions in Ireland to be 1,619,646*l.* collected and lodged, and 1,855,889*l.* expended,

These totals are thus distributed as regards the four Provinces :—



*Summary of Collection and Expenses during the twelve months, from 29th September, 1847, to the close of September, 1848.*

Provinces.	Rate Collected and lodged in the twelve months.	Expenses of the twelve months.	Excess of Collection over Expenses.	Excess of Expenses over Collection for the twelve months.	Average Amount per pound of Collection during the twelve months on the entire Valuation.	Average Amount per pound of Expenses during the twelve months on the entire Valuation.	Valuation of Rated Property at commencement of the Year.
	£.	£.	£.	£.	s. d.	s. d.	£.
Ulster . .	327,004	295,182	46,553	14,731	1 11 $\frac{3}{4}$	1 9 $\frac{1}{4}$	3,297,551
Munster . .	628,268	695,921	39,449	107,102	3 3 $\frac{1}{4}$	3 7 $\frac{1}{2}$	3,836,339
Leinster . .	481,615	465,578	35,528	19,491	2 0 $\frac{1}{4}$	1 11 $\frac{1}{2}$	4,745,828
Connaught .	182,759	399,208	4,061	220,510	2 7	5 7 $\frac{3}{4}$	1,414,585
Total, Sept.	1,619,646	1,855,889	125,591	361,834	2 5 $\frac{1}{4}$	2 9 $\frac{1}{2}$	13,294,303

The above general survey must not be looked to as affording any proper notion of the pressure on individual Unions, and still less so on particular Electoral Divisions. Thus, while the average expenditure of Ulster is only 1s. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the Pound, that of Glenties Union, in the County of Donegal, is 9s. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.

So, in Connaught, where the average expenditure is 5s. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. that of Clifden Union is 1l. 4s. 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.; and in the Clifden Electoral Division the amount was 2l. 3s. 1d. in the Pound. The latter case is cited as being the extreme case in Ireland.

The funds placed at the disposal of the Poor-law Commissioners by the British Association, amounting in the whole to less than 250,000l., enabled them to meet the necessities of the poorest districts, with-



out resorting to an excessive system of taxation. There were, therefore, few Unions in which the rates actually collected within the year exceeded 5s. in the pound. The exceptions to that line are Ennis, 5s. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.; Ennistymon, 5s. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; Scariff, 6s. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; Kanturk, 6s. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; Killarney, 5s. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; Tralee, 5s. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.; Newcastle, 5s. 10d. Inequalities, however, usually prevail between different Electoral Divisions of the same Unions; and there is no doubt that, in the Unions named, some Electoral Divisions have had expenses higher than the average, and that in other Unions, which are not among those named, there are Electoral Divisions more highly charged than at 5s. in the pound.

The good and evil results, then, of the Extended Poor-law, as evidenced in the first year of its operation, may perhaps be fairly balanced in few words, as follows :—

On the one hand, starvation has been for the most part effectually prevented at less expense and with less demoralization, especially of the working part of the population, than might have been expected under the circumstances which attended the introduction of the measure.

On the other hand, a severe taxation of agricultural capital has taken place, especially in districts where such burthens must operate most injuriously, at a time when the loss of agricultural capital has, through the disasters of three successive seasons, been of unparalleled extent; and



this taxation, together with the increase of other public burthens on land, has rendered the investment of further capital a most insecure speculation, in reference to the possible extent of such taxation hereafter.

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### THE FUTURE.

What the operation of the Irish Poor-law may be hereafter will depend, firstly, on such changes as may be made in the provisions of the present law; and, secondly, on the administration of the law in its present, or in its altered state, as the case may be.

Supposing the law to remain unaltered, the preceding pages will probably suggest correct views as to its future administration and operation in reference to a large majority of the Unions in Ireland. As to such Unions there is no reason to fear that in ordinary seasons the existing Workhouse accommodation will be insufficient to keep in check the out-door relief; on the contrary, it seems likely that, on the occurrence of a favourable season, out-door relief will cease in many Unions in which it is now given, and that it will be at the same time unnecessary to retain those numerous additional Workhouses which are now maintained at so much



expense to meet the necessities of the able-bodied poor. Good harvests, restored confidence, and the introduction of improved methods of cultivation, are all possible events; and under the influence of such events, there is nothing in the state of the present law, or in the tendency of its administration, to prevent a return to an exclusive Workhouse system, or, what is perhaps better, a Workhouse system combined with out-relief under the first section of the Extension Act, in eighty out of the hundred Unions which are now affording relief out of the Workhouses. Should the proposal of the Boundary Commissioners to make fifty new Unions be adopted, the necessary erection of fifty new Workhouses will further ensure, although at great cost, the result last-mentioned, and likewise render it probable in some districts, where without this accession of Workhouse-room such a result could not be expected.

There remain, however, the twenty and more Unions, chiefly on the Western Coast, which were assisted through their difficulties last season by the bounty of the British Association, and the aid of a grant from Government, amounting to about 130,000*l*.

That these Unions will again require assistance to help them through the present season, has been sufficiently demonstrated by official papers. Already has the advancing rate of mortality in the Workhouses of these districts shewn, with fatal certainty,



that the lives of thousands of Irish subjects are dependent on relief which cannot be afforded them from the resources of the Unions in which they reside, still less from those of the Electoral Divisions to which they belong. The average general rate of mortality in all the Workhouses, as already seen, has advanced from 2·6 per 1000 weekly in October last, to 6·5 per 1000 on the 6th January, 1849, an average which, nevertheless, compares most advantageously with the mortality at a corresponding period in 1847, when it was 12 per 1000, and in 1848, when it was 11 per 1000 weekly. But this general average conceals, as all general averages do, the worst part of the picture. On the 6th January last there were 37 Unions, in which the weekly rate of mortality exceeded 8 per 1000, and 22 in which it exceeded 11 per 1000; in seven it exceeded 15; in two it was 20; and in one (Ennistymon) it was 42 per 1000!

A classification of the deaths in some of these Unions shews, that in 649 cases, the cause of death was fever in 96, dysentery in 242, and other epidemic diseases in 125 cases; the high proportion of fever and dysentery shewing unequivocal signs of privation among the poor of many of the districts.

Again, the proportion of the 649 cases, in which death occurred within one month after admission to the Workhouse, was 212, and the proportion within two months was 364; leaving 285 as the



number of deaths of persons who had been in the Workhouse more than two months.

The Unions from which these facts are drawn are some of them not in the list of distressed Unions, but most of those in which the mortality is highest, are contained in that catalogue.

An important question now supervenes; is this necessity for external aid an affair of this season or any similar season, or is it one of which past disasters have now made the recurrence probable for a considerable time to come, and through a succession of ordinary years? If it were a question of Unions, and if the new Workhouses projected by the Boundary Commissioners were built and furnished, it seems to be within the reach of possibility that these Unions might, if their present debts were liquidated, become self-supporting as far as a Workhouse system of relief alone; but looking at the question as one of Electoral Divisions, there can be no hesitation in saying that these Divisions cannot all discharge their debts, and relieve their destitute poor from their own funds, for several years to come.

These Unions, then, and these Electoral Divisions, raise questions which will call for the most serious consideration on the part of the Legislature as to any change which can advantageously be made in the present law, and likewise as to the most effective way of administering the present, or any different law.



One most important consideration connected with the continuance of a system of Parliamentary Grants, is the degree in which that system contributes to the feeling of insecurity as to the future extent of Poor-law taxation in those districts in aid of which the grants are applied. The direct relief of the destitute, effected by means of these grants, in no way diminishes the causes of destitution, while it excites unlimited expectations on the part of the unreflecting poor ; at the same time all intelligent persons must feel that the continuance of relief from such a source is most precarious, and that it may be at any moment withdrawn, leaving upon those who may have invested capital in such districts burthens of unknown extent. In order to avoid this source of insecurity, a system of aid not dependant on the casual will of Parliament for continuance, is absolutely wanting.

If it be taken for granted hereafter that the poverty of Ireland must be supported by the property of Ireland, the difficulty arising as to the insolvent Unions, may have several modes of solution, all however proceeding upon one and the same assumption ; namely, that the property of certain districts cannot support the poverty of those districts, and must be assisted from some other source.

One mode of solution would be that which was originally proposed in the Extension Bill, and which passed the House of Commons ; that is, to limit the separate charge on Electoral Divisions to



a certain sum in the pound, and to charge the excess on the Union at large. This would be an effectual relief in a certain class of cases, where one or more of the Electoral Divisions of a Union formed exceptions to its general solvency; but it would not be effectual in reference to those Unions in the west of Ireland, which create the present difficulty; for in many, nay, in most of them, there is scarcely any Electoral Division which could render effectual assistance to its neighbours. For these Unions then a more extended provision of some kind is quite necessary, and the proposition most mooted has been a general tax on all Ireland, either by way of a general rate on property now rateable to the relief of the poor, or by a tax on other property in Ireland, or on both combined.

Supposing such a fund to be raised, much controversy may next arise as to the most advantageous way of applying it to the aid of the distressed districts.

The direct and immediate wants of those districts are the liquidation of their present debts, and the due relief of their destitute poor. The present method of accomplishing the latter object is to give relief to the workhouse, or, if out of it, in food chiefly, subject to the condition of work on the part of able-bodied male recipients; the description of work being selected, not with a view to profit so much as the prevention of any desire in labourers to resort to it, except from absolute necessity.



This method has many opponents, and the counter-proposition is to apply any fund which may be raised in aid of the distressed districts, to the employment of the able-bodied poor in profitable and productive works. The subject is surrounded by difficulties of a theoretic kind, but all practical experience has shewn that the larger the scale on which employment is afforded to labourers from a public fund for the purpose of remedying the absence of other employment, the greater are the evils resulting to industry and to property of every description.

Now, with all its theoretic faults, the unprofitable system has one decided advantage in practice, which is, that its tendency is continually to narrow rather than to extend the scale of operations, the unattractiveness of the system being, in point of fact, its sole principle of action. How far the other principle of realizing profit from the employment of destitute labourers can be combined with the principle of unattractiveness, without materially abridging the effect of the latter, and in the same degree extending the scale of operations, is a problem not yet determined by any large or safe experience. In the system pursued under the Presentments Act, neither principle was in much force; the employment was not very productive, even in a public sense, and the terms on which it was given were attractive to a large class of labourers. The result was a scale of operations



immensely extended beyond the views of the Legislature in passing that Act, more than 700,000 persons, a large proportion of the agricultural labour of the country, having been embraced at one time in the movement. Under the system of the Poor-law Commission, which proceeds on the mere principle of not attracting labourers, so far as the same is compatible with their due relief, no more than 65,000 were at any one time in 1847-8 employed on the relief-works throughout Ireland. In the absence of any direct experience, it is a momentous question whether it would be safe or prudent to undertake productive works with the labour of the unemployed poor, endeavouring to combine the two principles of profit and unattractiveness. In the First Report of the Poor-law Commissioners, the compatibility of the two principles is questioned; and the impression derivable from such experience as has already been had in Ireland is, that this attempt would involve the risk of a great expenditure, and of the necessity of raising much larger funds for carrying out the project, than they who have to devise the expedients for raising the fund are enabled to contemplate.

Even if funds were forthcoming in sufficient amount, the expediency of applying them to the profitable employment of labour, *as a measure of relief*, would remain open to objection on the ground that in this way the least profit is derivable from the investment, and the most mischief done to



the industrial energies of the labouring man. Some objectors on this ground would, nevertheless, be prepared to admit that, assuming public capital to be raised, and that a profitable investment for it could be found, by which employment would be created in the distressed districts, and conducted on the ordinary terms of work for wages, a most unexceptionable benefit in every sense would be conferred on those districts, and a most seasonable help provided in the hour of need to the administration of the Poor-law. It would be contended, however, that the essential point is to disconnect such employment altogether from the relief of the destitute, and to make its conductors responsible for the best and most productive application possible of the funds entrusted to them. For this purpose they must have ample discretion to employ whom they please, in what manner they please, and as long as they please, and no longer ; conditions which are denied to the conductors of employment at the charge of a relief-fund.

Another mode of applying a general fund (assuming it in some manner to be raised) is the encouragement, or rather, perhaps, the direct conduct of Emigration. It is beginning to be felt that there is somewhat too much emigration of the class able to provide the means for themselves ; whilst the class of eligible, but destitute persons, who it is most desirable for all interests should emigrate, are unable to move without assistance ;



or if they move at all, to do more than migrate to the nearest coast of Great Britain. As a help to the administration of the Poor-law in over-charged Electoral Divisions, the proposal to apply funds in aid of emigration, especially of able, but destitute and houseless poor, is one which will claim a large share of consideration. It is likewise deserving of attention from those whose desire and interest it is to protect the coasts and towns of England and Scotland from the immigration of Irish poor.

It is now necessary to advert to a subject which has received a large share of public attention in Ireland, and that is, the proposal to alter the boundaries of Electoral Divisions, that is to say, the areas of rating, with a view to diminish very considerably their extent, and to increase their number. This may be said to be an administrative, rather than a legislative question; inasmuch as the Poor-law Commissioners already have the power to alter these Divisions as they may think fit, subject only to the condition of not dividing any town-land.

The question of remodelling the Electoral Divisions of Ireland on a principle not contained in any of the Irish Poor-law acts, but suggested by the course of events, was disposed of by the Commissioners in a case brought before them in reference to the Devon estates, in which it was proposed to alter the Electoral Divisions of Newcastle Union, so as to make their boundaries coincide as far as



possible with the boundaries of separate estates, in order that proprietors who might be willing to incur outlay in the improvement of their estates, thereby collaterally reducing the necessity of relief, and the burthen of poor-rates, in reference to the population resident on those estates, might enjoy the full and exclusive benefit of this collateral advantage in addition to the benefits directly derivable from such improvements.

This proposal was perhaps a fair deduction from the avowed spirit in which the Presentments Act was framed, and likewise from the policy which may have led some parties to assent to the enactment of the Extended Poor-law, it being supposed that the owners and occupiers of property subject to a heavy tax for the relief of destitution, will be stimulated thereby to employ the population on their estates productively, in order to prevent the necessity of their being relieved from the Poor-rates. This principle, so apparently sound in theory, had not received much practical confirmation in Ireland at the time, when the question as to the Devon estates arose; and the Poor-law Commissioners not finding in the Poor-law Acts any distinct recognition of such a principle to guide them in the formation of Electoral Divisions, declined to commit themselves to a precedent which would have made it necessary for them to enter on the reconstruction of most of the Electoral Divisions in Ireland.



A separate Commission was subsequently appointed, to make inquiry and report to her Majesty's Government as to any changes which could be made with advantage, in the number and extent of Unions, and likewise in the number and extent of Electoral Divisions in Ireland, and that Commission has reported on both those points, recommending as to the first an increase of the number of Unions from 131 to 181: and on the second point, stating its general views upon the principle to be pursued in reconstructing such Electoral Divisions as it may be necessary to alter. The Report states:

“After every inquiry and consideration we do not find it necessary to recommend any departure from the original instructions of the Poor-law Commissioners in 1838, with regard to Electoral Divisions; but, at the time the present Divisions were formed, the topography and statistics of the south and west were less known than they now are by the subsequent publication of the Ordnance survey, and other official documents; and we have sedulously endeavoured to collect such information as may enable us to carry out the instructions of 1848, in the full and liberal spirit in which they are framed.”

From this result of the inquiries of the Boundary Commissioners there may be reason to expect in due course of time some general improvement in the construction of Electoral Divisions, but the Report by no means tends to encourage the hopes of those who expect great results from narrowing materially the area of rating, and who see in this plan a clear solution of existing difficulties, and the best prospect of amelioration for Ireland. Yet on no



subject is there a stronger feeling or a greater intensity of conviction, and this too on the part of many who have given the subject a long and anxious consideration, and have large interests at stake.

The object proposed, to use the recently adopted terms of the advocates of this plan, is "*to individualize responsibility.*" The meaning of this expression, as applied to the subject matter, must be, so to narrow the area of taxation, that wherever it may be practicable, one person only shall be the owner of property on which such a separate rate shall be placed, as is now placed on an Electoral Division for the relief of its poor; by which course the individual proprietor will become exclusively responsible either for the sufficient employment, or the sufficient relief, of the labouring persons resident on the property rated.

In favour of this proposition it may be urged, that for a labourer once located on the property, it is the most efficient provision which could be made for his security, and for his protection against the extremities of destitution, and even perhaps against distress and difficulty of a less urgent kind. The principle is in fact analogous to that on which are founded the social relations of guardian and ward; lord and serf; master and slave. In each of these relations "*responsibility is individualized,*" and the party requiring assistance and support knows with precision and certainty the individual person from whom he is entitled to receive it. So the labourer



located on a particular estate, which is separately taxed for his support, has a far more stringent security at the hands of the individual owner of that property, than he would have at the hands of a community of rate-payers taxed in common; inasmuch as he can at all times single out the particular person who must furnish him with sufficient employment, or sufficient relief.

On the other hand it is suggested that the labourer so circumstanced may take more than due advantage of his position, especially in Ireland, where constant employment of the agricultural workmen has not heretofore been a general practice, and where long periods of non-employment have been provided for by a very scanty subsistence out of the produce of small holdings of land. The creation of such a lien upon individual proprietors as that above-described, although it might have some compensating advantages in regard to taxation at the present time, is a large undertaking, being no more or less than an obligation in perpetuity on a particular estate to make provision at all times for the sufficient employment, or sufficient relief of the population resident upon it. The effect of this upon the labourer, it is urged, will be to impair his industrial energies far more directly than if he were dependent on a community of rate-payers; the increased security which he obtains from "individualized responsibility" being such as may lead him in a corresponding degree to rely more upon his



constant claim for employment or relief than upon the maintenance of his character as a good subject, and a good workman. This is one of those consequences which, if it be not an imaginary one, must be classed as an injury to the labourer, as well as to the proprietor. The latter, if not restrained by a law of settlement, will endeavour to right himself, by driving forth the bad subjects and unprofitable workmen from his estate, and so free himself from his "individual responsibility" to employ or relieve them. But a law of settlement, which would prevent his doing this, is the usual accompaniment of the small area project, in order to obviate the disposition to clearances.

So much as to the labourer already located on the estate. As to those not located, the separately taxed property becomes forbidden ground, and with or without any law of settlement it is urged that both the freedom of labour and the freedom of employment must be fettered in direct proportion to the narrowness of the area of rating, and the extent to which the principle of individualizing responsibility may be carried out.

The Boundary Commissioners have in their Report dwelt on objections of this kind to any undue contraction of the area for rating, and have there referred to the many modifications by which this plan has been accompanied by its supporters; of whom there may be said to be several sections, all, however, agreeing in the one material point,



viz. the necessity which they consider exists for "individualizing responsibility."

The advantages proposed to be realized by each of the two leading projects, the productive employment of the destitute poor, and the reduction of the area of rating, have been most ably set forth in every possible public shape by their respective advocates, and in reference more especially to the immediate exigencies of the case of Ireland, each deserves a careful attention. The objections, however, urged against these two projects imply, that considered barely as Poor-law questions, they do not go to the root of the evil, but are merely propositions, which if carried out, would ultimately present the evils of able-bodied pauperism in other, and perhaps more difficult, forms; and if this be so they should not, perhaps, be permitted at the present crisis to distract attention too much from the main points.

The main points, as it would appear from the foregoing remarks are, firstly, to devise a prompt system of aid to the distressed districts different from that now existing; and secondly, to administer the present, or the altered law, with a due reliance on the value of the workhouse system of relief, applying it where it is practicable, as the only mode of relief to able-bodied males; and where it may not be at present practicable to do so, using every endeavour to make it practicable at the earliest possible period.

A few words remain to be said on the compari-



son so frequently made between England and Ireland as to Poor-laws, to the effect, that the English system of Poor-law, which works so satisfactorily in England, is by reason of the difference of circumstances, wholly unsuited to Ireland, inasmuch as that country does not possess the same system of land-tenure and employment for wages, nor those vigilant proprietors and farmer capitalists, who in England are competent to manage a Poor-law, and likewise of sufficient substance to employ the poor.

Now the English system of Poor-law management cannot be said as yet to prevail in Ireland, and in all probability it never will prevail there. In Ireland, notwithstanding the Extension Act, the general rule, as yet, is relief in the Workhouse, while out-door relief is the exception, an exception tolerated only under circumstances which make it unavoidable. In England, on the contrary, out-door relief is the general rule, and workhouse relief the exception, and this is the case in ordinary times as well as in times of severe distress. The effect which the workhouse system now has in England, in checking out-door relief, is by no means commensurate to that disclosed by the recent operations in Ireland, and looking to the last returns of English Poor-rates it may well be doubted whether there is the same safety for England in respect of poor-laws as there is for Ireland. In the year ended 25th March, 1848, the expendi-



ture on direct relief of the poor in England is £6,180,764; a sum which gives an increase of £2,136,023, since 1837, and which is only less by £136,491, than the sum expended on the same purposes in the year 1834, when the English Poor-law Amendment Act was brought forward.

If Ireland should maintain the vantage ground which she now possesses over England in the comparatively large extent of her workhouse accommodation, and if, which is a matter perhaps of more importance, she remain free from those prejudices which, rooted as they are in an old system, prevent in England the due application of the workhouse as a check on out-relief, it is more than possible that the passing away of her present misfortunes will leave her in possession of far greater security as regards the inroads of pauperism and the grievance of Poor-laws than England with all her advantages will ever be enabled to boast.

THE END.



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gratification of her laws than she is at present with all her  
advantages will ever be enabled to boast. It is true  
that the English Government has not yet been able to  
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obtained in other countries, but it is not to be  
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THE END.



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