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Dublin Mansion House Committee for Relief of  
Distress in Ireland.

REPORTS  
ON THE  
CONDITION OF THE PEASANTRY  
OF THE  
COUNTY OF MAYO,  
DURING THE FAMINE CRISIS OF 1880.

BY  
J. A. FOX,  
MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE.



DUBLIN:  
BROWNE & NOLAN, PRINTERS, NASSAU-STREET.  
1880.

# Houses of the Oireachtas

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# Houses of the Oireachtas

## P R E F A C E .

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THE following Reports on the condition of the peasantry of the County of Mayo during the late famine crisis, have already been printed separately, in a more or less imperfect form, by various newspapers. Considerable attention has also been given to the subject in Parliament. They are now published together, for circulation in a more complete form, by direction of the Mansion House Committee.

It may be desirable to explain, that the primary object of the tour of inspection, which gave rise to these Reports, was to ascertain the consequences that might be expected to ensue in the West of Ireland, of which Mayo may be considered a typical part, should the subscriptions to the Relief Fund fail—as it seemed at one time probable they would—before the gathering of the harvest. In conducting this inquiry, various collateral questions of importance came to the surface for discussion, which the Committee had no objection to see embodied in the Reports. It would have been impossible, however, had it been even necessary, to go more deeply into so many subjects within the extremely limited time occupied by the inquiry. This will account for the fragmentary and, oftentimes, superficial manner in which some of them are discussed.

At the end of each Report will be found a short account of the discussion to which it gave rise, at the meeting of the Committee at which it was read ; while at page 37 there is given a condensed summary of the remarkable speech delivered in Parliament by the Chief Secretary (Mr. W. E. Forster), when accepting, on the part of the Government, Mr. O'Connor Power's important resolution of the 13th August, 1880, as regards the deplorable condition of the Western Counties generally—a speech replete with candour and good feeling.

The following extract from a Report of the Right Hon. Gentleman himself, dated “Galway, 25th of First Month, 1847,”—that is, rather more than three and thirty years ago,—and addressed to the Society of Friends in England, will be read with interest at the present time :—

“I trust I shall be excused,” writes Mr. William Edward Forster, “if I express my earnest desire that the members of our Society may not consider that their duty to Ireland is fulfilled, by their effort to meet its present necessity. Its general and permanent condition is a subject in itself almost too dreadful to contemplate. Famine is there no new cry ; it is a periodic disease ; every year there have been districts where has prevailed somewhat of that misery which now rules the land. For a large portion of its population, all the great purposes of existence are forgotten in a struggle with death.”—(*Transactions of the Society of Friends*, 1852, p. 160.)

An extract, from the pen of another English Friend, of the same honoured Society, written not three and thirty years ago, but rather in the present year of

grace, 1880, may well give rise to some melancholy reflections also ; inasmuch as it tends to show that the destitute and degraded condition of the population of certain Irish Counties has changed but very little, if at all, during this rather considerable interval :—

“This townland of Meenacladdy,” writes Mr. J. H. Tuke, “stretches over a wide extent of wet bog-land, bounded on the west by a wild rocky coast, against which the waves of the Atlantic were dashing half-way up the cliffs in huge masses of foam ; on the other side the bog-land extends towards the mountains of Donegal, whose slopes were covered with the snow recently fallen. Imagine, over this wild waste, little dwellings scattered at wide intervals, some of rough stone and some of mere peat sods, scarcely distinguishable from the surrounding surface. A few of the dwellings were, of course, on the road-side, but the access to many was over the wet bog where there is no road. Of the destitution and misery found in these bog-dwellings, I feel, after a lapse of twenty-four hours, that I can hardly bring myself to write. It is not merely the unusual distress of to-day, arising from the causes which I have enumerated, but the every-day life, the normal condition of hundreds, nay thousands, of families on the west coast of Donegal, and of many other parts of the west of Ireland, which oppresses me. But on this normal condition—this every-day contest with existence and hardships—I must not dwell here. The question involves considerations and issues too vast for any hasty notes.”—(*A Visit to Donegal and Connaught, in the Spring of 1880*, p. 25.)

J. A. F.

MANSION HOUSE, DUBLIN,  
*November, 1880.*

# Houses of the Oireachtas

# FIRST REPORT

OF

MR. J. A. FOX,

*On the Results of his Recent Inspection of Certain Districts in Mayo, submitted at the usual Meeting of the Committee held on the 3rd July, 1880.*

I HAVE the honour to report that, having arrived in Mayo on the 25th instant, in obedience to a resolution of the Mansion House Committee, I have since made such inquiry in and inspection of the northern district as has satisfied me that the funds entrusted to the various Sub-Committees in that part of the county have been well and properly distributed. Everywhere, throughout an area extending over some three hundred square miles, I have found the books produced for my inspection voluntarily, and kept with remarkable fidelity, recollecting the amount of unpaid labour which is involved in their keeping. Abuses in the distribution of relief there may have been at an earlier period in the year, but such abuses, if they occurred, were inevitable. And, on the whole, I have been astonished at witnessing the pains which have been taken to prevent them.

Such singular freedom from misapplication of the funds may be due, in some measure, perhaps, to the fact that the books containing lists of the destitute poor, and the accounts generally, are virtually under the control, if not always in the custody of the local clergy, who, as the destitution deepens in intensity, naturally become more and more alive to the necessity for a strict economy in the distribution of relief amongst the most deserving objects of charity only.

At Ballaghaderreen I found, to my regret, that the Catholic Bishop, who is Chairman of our Committee there, was absent, but his Administrator, the Rev. Mr. Stenson, gave me most valuable assistance in his place. Typhus fever had broken out, and had extended to some ten or twelve families altogether already. Here, as elsewhere, the people were stricken with terror at the proximity of a disease, accompanied by delirium in some of its stages, which might have the effect of depriving them of the consolations of religion at the hour of death; and had it not been for some Sisters of Charity in the neighbourhood, the dead might have been left without burial for an inconvenient period. Two of those ladies had undressed, washed, and coffined a destitute woman the day of my arrival, carrying her remains into the street after extraordinary labour. Theoretically, the Poor Law System is supposed to provide for such an emergency, but practically the poor fever patients who cannot be removed to the workhouse are barbarously allowed to die in their wretched hovels without either nursing or attendance.

In the same manner the Poor Law system provides in theory that no man shall die of starvation, while it will be my painful duty now to report, on unimpeachable authority, that many thousands of human beings would have died of starvation during the past few months except for the relief doled out by the various charitable committees throughout North Mayo during that period; and what the fate of this destitute population must be, should our funds fail before the gathering of the harvest, will be abundantly shown by my subsequent observations. Many thousands of persons—men, women and children—are wholly supported by the charity of these committees throughout the wide area, extending from Ballaghaderreen, in one direction, to Curry, on the borders of the adjoining County of Sligo, on the other; and by another route, as

far as Attymas, Ballyhaunis, Foxford and Kiltymagh, &c. The clearest and most convincing evidence has been laid before me that it is to this source alone so many persons are indebted for their existence to this date, and that if the supply be now suddenly cut off, they must inevitably perish during the next six weeks.

Acting in the spirit of the resolution of the Mansion House Committee, composed of gentlemen of various politics and parties, I have been careful not to confine my inquiries amongst any particular creed or class; while, at the same time, I have taken the precaution of seeing with my own eyes many of the recipients of relief in their miserable hovels, which, so far as I have yet observed, are a shocking reproach to the civilization of the 19th century. I have sometimes wished I were accompanied by the Lord Mayor, or Archbishop Trench in my travels, though I do not believe that tongue, or pen, however eloquent, could truly depict the awful destitution of some of those hovels. The children are often nearly naked. Bedding there is none, everything of that kind having long since gone to the pawn-office, as proved to me by numerous tickets placed in my hands for inspection in well-nigh every hovel. A layer of old straw covered by the dirty sacks which conveyed the seed potatoes and artificial manure in the spring is the sole provision of thousands—with this exception, that little babies in wooden boxes are occasionally indulged with a bit of thin, old flannel stitched on to the sacking. Sometimes even charity itself had failed, and the mother of the tender young family was found absent, begging for the loan of some Indian meal from other recipients of charitable relief—the father being in almost every instance away in England labouring to make out some provision for the coming winter.

Men, women, and children sleep under a roof and within

walls dripping with wet, while the floor is saturated with damp, not uncommonly oozing out of it in little pools. The construction and dimensions of their hovels are, as abodes of human beings, probably unique. On the uplands they are mostly built of common stone walls without plaster, and are often totally devoid of the ordinary means of exit for the smoke, as it may also be almost said they are devoid of anything in the shape of furniture. On the low-lying lands, on the other hand, they may be briefly described as bog holes, though by a merciful dispensation of the architect these are undoubtedly rendered somewhat warmer by their very construction out of the solidified peat and mud. Their dimensions are even more extraordinary still, varying from 12 feet by 15 feet down to one half that limited space. Yet all of them are inhabited by large families of children, numbers of whom sleep on a little straw spread on the bare ground, with nothing to cover them save the rags and tatters worn during the day. I invariably found them on the occasion of my visits crouching around the semblance of a fire, lighted on the open hearth. And this at midsummer, shewing how terribly low must be the vitality amongst them.

I refrain from describing more minutely the particular cases of want and destitution which came under my notice. I could not describe them, and any attempt of mine for the purpose would fall far short of the reality. It was only when I was accompanied by a Catholic priest I could get an insight into their appalling character. Alone, some of the most destitute tried to screen from me the poverty of their truckle beds, upon which the straw was often so thin that I could touch the bare boards with my hand. These received me with a dull, passive surprise, wondering what might be the object of my curiosity in so wretched a country. And even the priest himself had occasionally to use no little persuasion to overcome this

modest feeling, by assuring them that I was present in the capacity of a friend, only desirous of ascertaining the extent of their poverty. Everywhere the condition of the children was dreadful, having nothing but the Indian meal, badly cooked, to live upon, and the parents only too glad if the charitable funds provided the family with half enough even of that. Sometimes there was a miserable cow about the premises—for, in every case, I am referring to the class of small farmers, mostly residing on three to five acres of land, which in North Mayo is generally found to be reclaimed bog or mountain slope; and this cow was supplying milk, principally *gratis*, to a small number of children other than the owner's, to mix with the Indian meal. Occasionally people appealed privately to my companion on no account to cut off the charitable supplies from the possessor of the cow, seldom worth more than a few pounds, and just then unsaleable in any market, as the animal was the hope of so many little ones. At other times cooked cabbage, without a morsel of condiment save salt, was found where there was no meal, and in some instances one was found mixed with the other. But, in numerous cases, there was neither milk, meal, nor cabbage about the premises, and in those I gave some temporary relief, to fill up the interval till the next general distribution of the Local Committee; yet in the most destitute cases hardly a word of complaint was uttered on the subject, it being a habit with, if not the nature of, the Mayo peasant submissively to ascribe his lot in times of scarcity as well as plenty to the "will of Providence."

Everywhere the Mansion House Committee is spoken of with unvarying gratitude, which is all the more genuine now that people know its funds are nearly exhausted. But, without being invidious, it is only just to mention that the efforts of the *New York Herald* Committee in behalf of the destitute children are also warmly appreciated.

Mr. John Barrett, the District Inspector of National Schools, to whom I am indebted for much useful information, told me, amongst other things, that the bit of dry bread given from that fund brought so many children to school, that often in the course of his inspection he could only obtain a way through the crowd with difficulty.

Of course the correspondence addressed to the Mansion House daily for many months past reveals the opinions of the Catholic clergy throughout North Mayo as to the number of persons in their respective parishes who are in danger of death from starvation, should charitable sources of relief fail. All I can add is, with an intimate knowledge of the general tenor of that correspondence, that it is in nowise exaggerated, and not seldom falls short of the reality. But I made it my duty to call on the Protestant clergy in every district where I could find them. The Rev. Canon Little, who is rector of three parishes, has authorised me to say that, in his opinion, two thousand people in the neighbourhood of his rectory, which is on the borders of Kilmovee, are on the verge of starvation, and that any stoppage of charitable relief before the harvest must immediately produce what he described as "a catastrophe." The Rev. Mr. Constable, Rector of Swinford, has pledged himself to me in like manner as regards the still larger population in that district; while the Rev. Mr. Costello, Rector of Kilmactighe, assured me, after much deliberation, that at least one hundred families, numbering perhaps six or seven hundred souls, are slowly starving in his parish, as revealed by their physical appearance from day to day, and that any stoppage of charitable relief at this juncture would result in their almost immediate death.

Invariably the Catholic priests speak with cordiality and gratitude of the humane and disinterested co-operation of the Protestant clergy, who are themselves suffering from grievances of their own, in this time of trial; and I cannot

refrain from saying that when all the present misery and wretchedness have passed away, they will at least have left behind them many lasting friendships arising out of such co-operation.

The testimony of a number of medical men I have seen is substantially the same, amongst them Dr. Dillon, Ballaghaderreen; Dr. Philips, Carrycastle; Dr. Burke, Kiltymagh; and Dr. Conry, Swinford, a young medical officer of the Union, who has entirely too much to do, pending the recovery from fever of another medical gentleman in the district, considering the alarming spread of the disease in and about Swinford. The Catholic clergy, to whom I am indebted for so much valuable information, as well as for their indispensable company in visiting the hovels of the destitute, are the Rev. Mr. Stenson, Ballaghaderreen; the Rev. Mr. Durcan, Carrycastle; the Rev. Mr. Loftus, Charlestown; the Rev. Mr. Conlan, Swinford; and the Very Rev. Canon O'Donohoe, of Curry, on the borders of Sligo county, a highly accomplished ecclesiastic, whose testimony is very remarkable. Having observed that he constantly spoke of the destitution as being extreme in the Mayo parishes, and scarcely alluded to his own, in which I thought I saw as much misery as elsewhere, I put him the usual formula at parting, as to what might happen in certain eventualities. He took off his hat for a moment, and, speaking with great solemnity, declared "in the presence of Almighty God," that three hundred and fifty families in his parish would die of starvation.

Yet, notwithstanding this desperate condition of things, the police informed me that there was no crime, small or great, in the district referred to, and a retired sub-inspector of the force pointed out a large house in Bellaghy, filled from floor to ceiling with the pawned goods of the poor, which, he added, was not even protected by the presence of anyone on the premises at night—such is the unimpaired

honesty of this starving people. Everywhere they are clamouring for work, the women and children as well as the men, and force themselves on the baronial contractors in spite of them. In several instances I saw boys and girls of tender years engaged in breaking stones on the roadside—surely the least likely work at which one would expect to find such persons—and without even the wire gauze protection for the eyes, so commonly worn by adults employed on similar labour in England. But the baronial works are absurdly limited in their scope, and cannot furnish any substantial means of relief; while in many cases the contractors being unable or unwilling to pay the labourers at the end of a week, or even a fortnight, the condition of the latter is more pitiable still, inasmuch as their share of the charitable relief may have been, as it sometimes has been, cut off in the meanwhile, on the very natural supposition that they could be no longer in need.

I made it my business to see two or three contractors in person, to ascertain the truth or falsehood of such an incredible state of things. To secure perfect impartiality I selected a Protestant contractor and two Catholic contractors. The first, a Mr. Henry Stewart, near Ballaghadereen, told me that public report was only too true; but he had that day (Saturday), out of regard for the destitute condition of the people, gone to the bank, and paid the wages of his workmen out of his own pocket, though when he might be paid himself he did not know. The second contractor was a Mr. Donohoe, near Curry, also a highly respectable man, who said that when the men first came upon some sanitary works, in which he was engaged, seeing that they were not able to work through want of nourishment, he arranged to pay them in some cases daily in advance, and found that they revived in a wonderful manner with the food which they were able thus to obtain. The last was a contractor near Swinford, who could not

get his works "certified," and so could only pay some three out of twenty-two men employed upon them. He endeavoured to obtain a survey from me, but I had by this time convinced myself that as an attempt to provide a substantial means of temporarily relieving a destitute and starving people, the entire system of baronial works, like the system of outdoor relief, is an organised burlesque.\*

It is but right to say, however, that as far as Mr. Forster, the Chief Secretary, himself is concerned, he is vindicating his well-known character for personal and political sincerity. At Carrick-on-Shannon, before entering Mayo, and everywhere in Mayo itself, I found proofs abundant of his efforts to set the boards and public bodies in rapid motion. But he is dealing with a number of machines running on parallel lines, completely disjointed, which it is physically impossible to make use of for any practical purpose in an emergency like the present. Important officials and leading county personages, whom I am not permitted to name as I have named others, are distinctly of opinion that he should place a sufficient sum in the hands of our well-organised and respectable committees, to provide the destitute with immediate employment under the circumstances.

That some of the smaller landholders are meanwhile themselves very badly off, I had given me many touching proofs; while few of the larger landholders have availed themselves of the Government offer of a loan, even where they made a formal application for such, as published in the newspapers some months ago. The same thing happened in 1847, as anyone who is familiar with the history of the period must know; but it is no part of the duty of my report to dwell upon or investigate the reasons, and so I confine myself to stating the fact. Some

\* For a fuller report as to the insufficiency (and practical inutility) of the baronial works in a crisis like the present, see Appendix, page 43.

of the landowners are behaving nobly, as, for instance, Captain Armstrong, who, in his capacity of Chairman of the Tubbercurry Board of Guardians, is also Chairman of the Duchess of Marlborough's Committee. This gentleman will not allow any tenant on his extensive estate to accept charitable relief, having provided them all with abundant employment, without even troubling the Board of Works for the money. Others, perhaps, are not behaving so nobly, as, for instance, an absentee Irish peer, drawing thirty thousand a year out of the country, whose tenants are everywhere living upon the Indian meal which we have had so much labour in collecting from the four quarters of the globe. And it may not be without interest to remark here, that five of the largest Mayo landed proprietors are absentee gentlemen of rank, whose estates alone extend over an area of 369,000 acres. The Parliamentary returns prepared by the Local Government Board set forth the valuation of this vast acreage, for taxation purposes, as £71,000, which probably represents a rental of £100,000 a year; in other words, a sum largely in excess of the total amount distributed throughout the county by the various charitable organisations during the present crisis. It is no more than stating a fact, provocative of no controversy, to add, that the resident gentry of Mayo have now, as was the case in 1847-8, not only no sympathy with the absentee landlords, but that they would on the contrary, and for obvious reasons, gladly see the system of absenteeism discouraged by the heaviest penalties practicable.

Many of the shopkeepers, as well as the landowners, are behaving with generosity in the present crisis, and it would be very unjust to stigmatise either, as a class, with the want of practical sympathy displayed by some.

The whole country is sown with potatoes and corn to an extent never before remembered, and this is in some

measure due to the splendid gifts of seed and manure bestowed on the people by the Catholic Bishop of Achonry, Dr. M'Cormack, from the charitable funds placed in his hands. The potato crop looks most promising, though the corn has been a little shaken by the prevailing winds and rains. But it is apprehended by all classes of people that the claims upon the harvest are so numerous and heavy, the fruits of it will not be available to the farmers beyond a period of a few months, when the present condition of things must recur, as it would require several prosperous harvests to make up for the losses of the past three years. At Swinford Quarter Sessions, the other day, there were some two thousand processes entered, and it is said the number might have been increased tenfold, if the shopkeepers and landowners were as rapacious as they are often represented to be. But the Judge adjourned the Sessions till October on account of the fever, and has thus mercifully secured the fruits of the harvest, in that district at least, to many. Having taken occasion to inquire of some of the shopkeepers how came it that they had entrusted persons of such small means with so much credit, the answer was invariably the same; it was because they had and have still implicit confidence in the probity of their customers. The probity of the Mayo farmers is invariably acknowledged. It is stated, however, by the clergy, and generally believed, that too many of them have to pay heavily for the favour, which can scarcely be considered an advantageous accommodation under the circumstances.

As to the question of fever, in addition to the cases at Ballaghaderreen, there are some cases at Carrycastle, but it is more wide-spread at Charlestown and Swinford. It is undoubtedly typhus, yet, where the patients are able to survive removal in an ordinary open cart, without springs, to the workhouse, many miles off, they frequently recover under the humane and skilful treatment which, it is but just

to say, they receive in the hospital attached. But still, those who cannot be removed are barbarously left to die in their hovels without nursing or attendance, whether the Poor-law system be responsible or not. Again, at Charlestown, where, accompanied by Mr. J. Mulligan, a kindly member of the local Committee, I entered many of the houses for the purpose of personally inspecting them, I found that they had not been generally whitewashed either inside or out, though typhus prevails there to an extent sufficiently alarming. The medical officer at Swinford meanwhile informs me that he is watching two cases near Ballyhaunis which have all the symptoms of what is technically called relapsing fever—that is, real famine fever—those symptoms being vomiting, diarrhœa, extreme prostration, with that pinched, anxious look said to be so characteristic of the disease, and “a thready” pulse, but without any spots as in typhus. The number of cases of typhus itself in the workhouse hospital is forty-six.

The Board of Guardians has been dissolved, with much advantage to the poor, and even the baronial works are being placed under inspectors, the contractors having been abolished also in the neighbourhood of Swinford. Still, the amount of money to be expended is wholly inadequate as a means of substantial relief, and if gratuitous relief be now substituted, the number and *status*, as well as the pay, of the relieving officers should be at once increased and improved.

The Mayo farmers had to part with their pigs long ago, and they have lately sustained a severe loss only second to that of the potatoes, which I have nowhere seen noticed. They were accustomed to keep large numbers of hens, whose eggs, taken in exchange for other food by the shopkeepers, helped materially to support their families. During the past ten months, but particularly since January last, the hens have been seized with an epidemic like

cholera, and fully 90 per cent. of them have succumbed to the disease, which is fatal in a single night.

It is greatly feared that the people will, in their craving for a change, as well as a sufficiency of food, dig up the new potatoes before they have become fit for eating, and that the result will bring a terrible scourge upon themselves as well, which in their present exhausted state they would be quite unable to resist. I drove twenty-two miles to a large meeting of the Catholic clergy at Bohola, on Wednesday last, upon whom, in the course of conversation, I took the liberty of impressing this fact, with a view to warn their people against such a risk; but the general opinion appeared to be that the risk will be run in spite of all warning, and it was even suggested that the most destitute will ravenously feed upon the potatoes a month before the usual time.

I have only to observe, in conclusion, for the information of the Committee, that I returned to Dublin last night, after exactly a week's travelling through a part of Mayo, which is typical of a great portion of the county, as I believed my report to be of much too urgent and important a nature to be otherwise delivered; but I propose to return to the country after a day or two, for the purpose of inspecting and reporting upon other districts, in obedience to the resolution of the Mansion House Committee.

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The Lord Mayor (Alderman Hugh Tarpey, J.P.) said Mr. Fox's report was a most valuable one, and disclosed a very deplorable condition of the country. He suggested that a copy of it should be sent without an hour's delay to the Local Government Board, asking them to take immediate action in the matter. They had the promise of the Chief Secretary, that the Government would go to any expense to save life. Here it was not one life but several

lives that were in danger. Mr. Fox referred to the want of medical men. There were numbers of medical men in this city from among whom there could be no difficulty whatever in supplementing the medical staff to any extent required, and he thought they ought forthwith to put the Local Government Board in possession of the report, with a very strong suggestion that they should take immediate action upon it.

Sir John Barrington moved that copies of Mr. Fox's report be sent to the Chief Secretary and the Vice-President of the Local Government Board, directing their attention especially to the want of sufficient medical and nursing assistance.

Rev. Mr. Daniel suggested that they should add a recommendation that a temporary hospital should be established in the district, because they heard that most people brought to hospital recovered, and it was the absence of a place to bring country patients to that was most felt.

Mr. Fox said in Charlestown, for instance, there was no reason whatever why they should not have fitted up a temporary hospital.

Mr. Charles Kennedy seconded Sir J. Barrington's resolution, which was adopted.

Mr. Valentine Dillon asked why it was, seeing there was so great destitution, that landlords declined to borrow the money offered them by the Government for relief works?

Mr. Fox said he did not wish to make any reflection on the landlords, but what he had heard through the country was, that some of them who had applied for money to the Board of Works, on reflection (being really badly off themselves) thought that perhaps the people might be kept alive without the works, and they, the landlords, could not afford in many instances to impose another mortgage on their property.

Mr. David Drimmie asked how long would it be necessary

for the Committee to provide funds to keep the people alive in the district?

Mr. Fox said in some cases three or four weeks was mentioned, but he believed that the 15th of August was about the period when in that part of the country the potatoes would be thoroughly fit for food, so that they had fully six weeks before them.

Mr. Drimmie—And we have two weeks' provisions in hand!

Mr. Charles Bridgett said he understood Mr. Fox to say that the harvest when gathered would be all consumed in debts.

Mr. Fox said the general impression through the country was, that between the landlord and the shopkeeper the harvest would have to be divided to a great extent; and that it would take at least two good harvests more to raise the people out of the helpless condition in which they were at present.

On being further asked by a member present to name one of the absentee proprietors specially referred to in his Report, Mr. Fox observed that it would be invidious for him to do so, and he declined most emphatically to mention any landlord's name or to enter into any controversy whatever about landlords. He was opposed to it as a matter of duty and feeling alike.

Colonel Davoren said anything like a complaint with regard to one landlord in a district would look like an attack on landlords generally, and would very much weaken Mr. Fox's excellent report. It was quite certain that several of the landlords were themselves almost in a state of destitution. He had great pleasure in moving that the warm thanks of the Committee be tendered to Mr. Fox for his very valuable report, and that he be earnestly invited to continue his investigations in other parts of the county Mayo.

Sir George Owens cordially seconded the resolution, which was passed.

## SECOND REPORT

OF

MR. J. A. FOX,

*On the Results of his Recent Inspection of Certain Districts in Mayo, submitted at the usual Meeting of the Committee held on the 22nd of July, 1880.*

I HAVE the honour to report that, in obedience to a further resolution of the Mansion House Committee, at their meeting of the 3rd instant, I lately proceeded to Mayo a second time, selecting a different part of the county, for the purpose of inquiry and inspection, from that which occupied my attention on the occasion of my former visit. At Ballyhaunis I had the advantage of meeting the Catholic Bishop of Achonry, Dr. M'Cormack, to whose splendid gifts of seed I referred in my previous report, and also Mr. Henry Brett, formerly and for many years County Surveyor of Mayo, and still holding the same important office in Wicklow county. The Bishop, like every person of position whom I have yet met, expressed it as his firm conviction that, were it not for the merciful operations of the Relief Committees, many thousands of persons must have died of starvation in North Mayo alone during the past six months; and also that, perhaps, even now, we may not be beyond the contingency of a great calamity, arising out of various causes, such as the still possible failure of the potato crop, the general indebtedness of the small farmers to the landlords and the shopkeepers, even if the crop should prove to be a bountiful one, and the absence of useful or remunerative employment for the people during the winter months, to enable them to tide over their difficulties next year.

Mr. Brett is of opinion now, as in 1847, that public employment should take the form of the reclamation of waste lands, together with the encouragement of a better system of husbandry amongst the small farmers; and I understood it to be his intention to report to this effect to the Government, by whom he is employed on special service in Mayo at the present time. His facts and figures are of paramount importance just now, since even a Land Bill, fashioned upon the lines of the most pronounced reformers, could not bring any immediate accession of prosperity to a population wanting "elbow room," so to speak, and suffering from chronic starvation in consequence of such want. Speaking of the waste lands, he observed, that there are at least four baronies in the West which might afford scope for an early experiment in reclamation, not only without pecuniary loss, but with infinite economic gain, to the State, viz. :—

		Average value per Acre.	
		<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Erris (Mayo)	... 232,888 acres ..	1	1
Boylagh (Donegal)	... 158,517 ,, ...	1	3
Ballynahinch (Galway)	194,584 ,, ...	1	4
Ross (Galway)	... 98,000 ,, ...	1	5

Mr. Brett, whose long connection with Public Works in Ireland lends the weight of practical experience to his opinions, is clearly convinced that the whole of this enormous acreage, which includes neither deep bog nor mountain top, is capable of complete reclamation. And, moreover, he can point out, he says, "numerous instances in the Counties of Mayo and Sligo, as well as in Wicklow and Waterford, of reclamation effected at considerable expense, where the produce of the lands in two years defrayed the entire cost of outlay."

As an elaborate proposal of the same character was submitted to Parliament by Lord John Russell when Premier in 1847—(*vide* Hansard, 25th January in that year)—and was only defeated through the selfishness of Sir Robert Peel, a similar scheme, having for its primary object the introduction of the “idle hands” upon the “idle lands,” can scarcely be deemed a thing beyond the domain of practical politics in 1880, more especially since it involves neither “confiscation” nor “spoliation.”

There has been destitution and privation in the neighbourhood of Ballyhaunis, Knock, and Claremorris, as elsewhere, but the squalor and misery are not so widespread as in the Swinford district. At Claremorris I visited the Workhouse, accompanied by the Medical Officer, who showed me over the entire place, including the Fever Hospital, in which I was glad to find no more than two patients, one of whom was convalescent, and both technically described as “simple continued fever.” The Workhouse is well kept, and as the Guardians have supplied lime for white-washing purposes *gratis* throughout the Union, where required, it may be that this freedom from fever is due to such sanitary precautions. The Union is supplied with an ambulance, old-fashioned, but not uncomfortable, and the employment of nurses to attend the destitute fever patients in their own houses, where they are incapable of the fatigue of removal to the hospital, has been formally authorised when necessary.

The Clerk of the Union favored me with some statistics which will be of interest to the Committee. The number in the house is only 169, but the number on out-door relief has increased from 192, as it stood last year, to 588, as it stood on the 5th June last. The amount of relief given is, however, extremely small, varying from one and sixpence to three and sixpence weekly for each family. Again, in the single electoral division of Murneen, where our Local Com-

mittee is relieving 300 families, the guardians are only relieving four. Amongst the remaining statistics furnished me by the Clerk of the Union, I find what I anticipated in my previous Report, that there is the greatest disparity between the amounts applied for by way of public loan, and the amounts finally issued, whether as regards the landowners' private purposes, or as regards the baronial works. In Claremorris Union, for instance, of the £10,970 applied for by the landowners, only £2,780 was actually issued up to the 5th of June, an amount not likely to be increased, since the low rate of interest offered by Government is no longer available. And of the £2,409 applied for, for expenditure on baronial works, only £920 had been actually issued to the same date.

From Claremorris I drove to the residence of Mr. Arthur Crean, J.P., Chairman of the Board, and a landowner, who received me with the same courtesy, and even cordiality, which I have experienced at the hands of all classes in Mayo in the course of my inquiries. Mr. Crean was not in the least reticent in furnishing me with fresh proof as to the terrible nature of the crisis through which we are passing. This gentleman frankly acknowledged that, though his Board had been steadily increasing the quantity of out-door relief since February last, thousands of persons must have died of starvation throughout the Union but for the help afforded by the Relief Committees, the Poor Law machinery being, in his opinion, incapable of dealing with any such widespread and exceptional destitution. The full weight of this testimony can only be estimated relatively, as regards the county generally, by recollecting my previous observation as to the fact that the squalor and misery around Claremorris were not so apparent to me as in other districts. Like the Bishop of Achonry, and for the same reasons, Mr. Crean cannot altogether free himself from gloomy forebodings as regards the immediate future,

should nothing in the shape of public employment be found for the destitute population during the coming winter.

At Claremorris, as at Ballaghaderreen and Swinford, something like vitality is maintained amongst the convent school children, by the indefatigable exertions of the Nuns in supplying them with food and clothing, in contrast with the sad appearance of those in the ordinary roadside schools, often greatly and unhealthily overcrowded, whose wan and pinched countenances betoken their half-starved condition.

At Attymas I made a house-to-house inspection, through a very wretched, mountainous district, where the destitution was in several cases so urgent, I had to relieve them then and there with my own hands. The Parish Priest, the Rev. Mr. O'Grady, showered blessings on the heads of Miss Hort, of the Duchess of Marlborough's Committee, and Mr. Edmund Pery, a local landowner, and High Sheriff of the county, whose benevolence has passed into a proverb. This gentleman being a member of our local Committee, I felt it my duty to call upon him. His testimony was substantially that of others, with this gratifying addition, that having oftentimes investigated alleged abuses in the distribution of the Mansion House Fund, he could never find a single one verified. The condition of the people of Mayo, owing to a variety of causes, was always precarious, he said, and the first touch of misfortune placed them on the very verge of starvation. Last year, he went on to observe, they were visited by a series of misfortunes, namely, a continued failure of their crops, including that of flax, and depreciation in the price of stock, together with a falling off in the supplies usually furnished by employment in England; and, lastly, an entire stoppage of credit on the part of the banks and shopkeepers.

Of the misfortunes mentioned by Mr. Pery, it is

instructive to point out that the depreciation in money-value of crops in Ireland in 1879 alone, as compared with 1878, is shown by the Registrar-General to amount to £10,014,788; of which the loss on potatoes is reckoned at £4,238,484, the latter crop being estimated at 22,273,520 cwts., as against a ten years' average of 60,000,000 cwts. However widely diffused, such a loss must have fallen with exceptional severity on Mayo.

At Backs the destitution partakes of much the same extreme character, whole families trying to eke out an existence on a single acre of wretched land, lying in patches amongst boulders of various sizes, which often conceal the village hovels even at a short distance. Here, too, I found, on some of the smallest of small farms even for Mayo, unhappy cases requiring immediate relief, while the kind of sleeping accommodation available for young and innocent children, was too shocking to examine minutely. Everywhere around there is the loveliest scenery, and everywhere, also, alas! misery and wretchedness indescribable, and wholly out of sympathy with the beauties of a district singularly favoured by nature.

At Castlebar I called on the Very Rev. Canon M'Ghee, P.P., and the Rev. Mr. de Burghe Sidley, the Protestant clergyman, both of whom testified as to the fearful consequences which must have ensued but for the operations of the Relief Committees around that district. Mr. Sidley, like Mr. Brett, entertains strong convictions as to the advisability of reclaiming the waste lands, while Canon M'Ghee instanced the clamours of the people about him for employment, by relating how numbers of women even came with hammers to force themselves upon the baronial works. This gentleman, in conjunction with his fellow-members, had taken the precaution, as far back as February last, to call in the services of the Relieving Officers of the Union for the purpose of preparing a tabular statement shewing the

number of cattle, sheep, pigs, &c., held by each individual within the area covered by the operations of our local Committee, with a view to enable the latter to exercise the utmost possible discrimination in distributing relief. The authentic information thus obtained entirely surpassed their very worst anticipations. The small farmers around, it was shown, had been gradually compelled by their extreme poverty to part with everything in the shape of saleable stock with few exceptions.

Here, too, I was introduced to Sir Charles Knox-Gore, Foreman of the Grand Jury, and a large landowner, who spoke to me in the frankest manner as to the perilous time over which we have passed. He, like Mr. Edmund Pery, volunteered the statement that every alleged abuse in the distribution of the Relief Funds vanished into thin air on investigation. Sir Charles thinks a supreme effort should be made to keep the Funds going until the 15th of August, before which date the potatoes will be quite unfit for human food. At Castlebar, also, I called on Mr. James Daly, the proprietor of the *Telegraph*, an active member of our local Committee in that town, and much regretted not to have found him at home, as he is said to be in a position to supply valuable information as regards the condition of the people. Both Sir Charles Gore and Mr. Standish M'Dermott, ex-Chairman of the Swinford Board of Guardians, invited me to call upon them for further conversation should I be remaining longer in the country, but the time at my disposal was limited, and caused me to lose this opportunity of acquiring additional information from gentlemen of their station.

From Castlebar I proceeded to Crossmolina, where I again made a house-to-house inspection throughout a twenty-two miles' drive. Everywhere I saw evidence of great destitution, though not so extreme as I had witnessed in some other districts. And this makes the evidence of the Parish

Priest, the Rev. Dr. Costello, and that of Mr. Joseph Pratt, of Enniscoe, the heir to considerable estates in this and a neighbouring county, the more remarkable. I missed seeing the Protestant clergyman, upon whom I called, and who is working cordially with the Catholic priest, but, as Mr. Pratt is a Protestant gentleman, the evidence of two such independent witnesses may be considered sufficiently impartial and conclusive. It is to the effect that the scenes of 1847, well remembered by Dr. Costello, and often described to Mr. Pratt by his father, might have been repeated as early as February in the present year but for the Relief Committees, and primarily here, as elsewhere, but for the Mansion House Committee.

Sir Charles Gore, who, in his capacity of Chairman of the Board of Guardians, is also Chairman of the Duchess of Marlborough's Committee in Ballina, advised me, at parting, to trust implicitly to Mr. Pratt, who is himself a Grand Juror of the county, a Poor Law Guardian, and an active member of the same Committee. The Catholic Bishop of Killala, Dr. Conway (Chairman of our Local Committee), upon whom I called to pay my respects, also, like Sir Charles Gore, spoke in the most flattering terms of Mr. Pratt, on account of the representations made to him from time to time by his priests. The testimony of such a man is, then, as important as any country gentleman's testimony can well be, and the entire purport and substance of Mr. Pratt's lengthened conversations with me was as strong, if not stronger, than that of any Catholic priest or Protestant clergyman with whom I came in contact throughout my travels in Mayo. He is most fully in accord with the Rev. Dr. Costello as to the awful crisis through which the country has been passing, and he, with much feeling, expressed it as his firm conviction that deaths from starvation may have occurred, and probably did occur at Crossmolina, shortly after Christmas, in spite of all their precautions.

Of one such death at least he was "quite sure"—another proof that the operations of the Mansion House Committee did not commence a day too soon. Mr. Pratt is further of opinion that, however abundant the harvest may be, it will be necessary to provide the people with public employment during the winter months, to avoid a recurrence of the crisis next year; and he also suggested that we should not break up our Committee even when our funds fail, but that we should maintain our organisation in Dublin for the purpose of influencing the Government while any cause for anxiety continues, as at present, to exist.

The last district of which I have to speak is Foxford, where I received every possible assistance in my inquiries from the Protestant vicar, the Rev. Mr. Eames, as well as from Major Rutledge Fair, a local landowner, both of whom are acting in cordial co-operation with the Parish Priest, the Rev. Mr. O'Donnell, who was unfortunately absent during the period of my visit. In his absence, I was accompanied in my house-to-house inspection by another member of our Committee, Mr. Shiel, the local Registrar, for whose services I feel myself extremely indebted. We visited more than thirty hovels of the poor, principally in the townlands of Culmore and Cashel, in which I beheld scenes of wretchedness and misery wholly indescribable. In some of those hovels evicted families had lately taken refuge, so that the overcrowding added to the other horrors of the situation. In one hovel, in the townland of Cashel, we found a little child, three years old, one of a family of six, apparently very ill, with no person more competent to watch it than an idiot sister of eighteen; while the mother was absent begging committee relief, the father being in England. In another an aged mother, also very ill, lying alone, with nothing to eat save long-cooked Indian meal, which she was unable to swallow. In another, in the townland of Culmore, there were four

young children, one of whom was in a desperate condition for want of its natural food—milk—without which it was no longer capable of eating the Indian meal stirabout, or even retaining anything whatever on its stomach. I took off my glove to feel its emaciated little face, calm and livid as in death, which I found to be stone cold. My companion gently stirred its limbs, and after a while it opened its eyes, though only for a moment, again relapsing into a state of coma, apparently. It lay on a wallet of dirty straw, with shreds and tatters of sacking and other things covering it. The mother was in Foxford begging for relief, the father being in England in this case also. In no Christian country in the world probably would so barbarous a spectacle be tolerated, except in Ireland.

It is but right to add, that the mother of one of the evicted families, whose husband was in England, acknowledged with much gratitude some assistance which she had received from the funds of the Land League. And, speaking of evictions generally, they are everywhere frankly acknowledged to be the work, not of the old hereditary landowners, but more commonly of those newcomers who, having purchased land in the Encumbered Estates Court as an investment, are devoid of any sentiment save that of a desire for a profitable return for their money; though of course there are exceptions, and even notable ones, amongst both classes.

Meeting Captain Spaight, Poor Law Inspector, at Foxford, on my return, he begged it as a personal favour that I would report to him what I might see wrong in my travels through the country. I at once gave him the contents of my note book; but with the distinct intimation that I should here publicly charge the Poor Law System with culpable negligence, and a clear evasion of the Act of Parliament, in not making proper provision for the prolonged absence of the Dispensary Doctor at Foxford. I say "proper

provision," because the calling in of another medical man, from a remote Dispensary district ten miles off, alone probably too large and too populous to receive sufficient attention at his hands, does not constitute any such provision. Captain Spaight, who appears to be very earnest in the attempt to discharge his duties, offered to send milk to the village next morning; but as I had already secured those cases temporary relief at my own hands, I intimated further to him that medical attention, rather than milk, was now urgently required, though not to be had. The Registrar of Foxford informed me that the number of persons actually in, or recovering from fever in the neighbourhood, is at present thirty-five, yet not the slightest effort has been made, up to the present, to white-wash, or otherwise disinfect, the tainted houses.

Emigration is proceeding rapidly in Mayo, especially amongst the class of single young women. From the parish of Charlestown alone more than eighty had gone, up to the middle of June, while from Backs more than a hundred have left to the present date. Persons in America, who had not been heard of for many years, are now moved by reports of the famine to send money for their friends to enable them to emigrate. And here the question arises, is there no benevolent organisation in existence for the protection of this defenceless class of young people at Liverpool and elsewhere, on their journey to their new and distant home? Surely the good work done by Mrs. Caroline Chisholm in a past generation should now inspire some amongst her own sex, if not others, to emulate her fame as the "Emigrant's Friend."

Fortunately, the crops have not yet been seriously affected by the heavy rains, though the blight is apparent in many places sown by the old seed-potatoes. I had some dug for inspection at Crossmolina, and cutting through the root with my penknife, found the disease distinctly marked.

But there is much confidence that the Champions will escape, for even the stalks resist those strong winds to which those of the other seeds succumb. Elsewhere, as at Crossmolina, the affected potatoes were described as "Pink Eyes," but it is greatly feared that White Rocks, so called, have been imposed upon the peasantry as Champions in many cases.

Passing on to the subject of relief works, I have everywhere found them fitful, wholly insufficient, and otherwise unsatisfactory, as explained in my previous Report. Having a few hours to spare at Athlone on Sunday, I visited the Vice-Chairman of one of our Local Committees, St. Peter's and Drum, who told me that in his district the contractors could not get their works "certified," and so the unfortunate labourers employed upon them were without their wages, while the works were themselves stopped. Yet it is only just to the Government to say, that they are sending many additional officers through the country, to try and facilitate matters, but there is apparently no fixed plan in their operations; while the local bodies are everywhere confused and undecided, or unwilling, in voting additional funds for expenditure. Meanwhile there is unlimited scope for road-making in Mayo, for nowhere else, perhaps, are the public highways so dangerous to life and limb. Yet, at best, even this can scarcely be described as work of a reproductive character, or of permanent utility. Indeed, many of the baronial works which I saw in operation, in the shape of bog road fences, would scarcely withstand a sharp rain-storm, which would speedily reduce them to their original elements of peat and mud. On the other hand, what might be done in the way of reclaiming waste lands is often visible to the eye as well as to the imagination. In many districts through which I travelled I saw patches of meadow and smiling cornfields, where only a few years ago there was nothing but savage bog and moorland.

The great evil of the times in Mayo is not the question of rent, but rather the circumstance that the holdings of the small farmers are deficient in quantity as well as quality. This it is that necessitates the annual flight to England, an evil in itself, to enable them to eke out even a miserable existence on their return. If it could be remedied without injustice to "vested interests," you might have a prosperous and contented peasantry, instead of one whose present condition is a scandal to the Empire. To render that condition less degraded meanwhile, some modification of the existing Poor Law System is obviously necessary. The adoption of the principle of Union Rating, as in England, would have a most beneficial effect, inasmuch as it would tend to promote an extension of that out-door relief so sorely needed, yet so much more restricted in Ireland. And if a number of the local clergy were admitted to seats at the Board of Guardians, in virtue of their office, their presence could scarcely fail to diffuse amongst that important body somewhat more of kindly consideration for the sad misfortunes of the destitute and deserving poor.

The smallness of the amount of Poor Law relief distributed in Ireland as compared with England is not generally known. In 1878, 85,000 persons only were relieved in Ireland, at a cost of £990,000, while in England 748,000 persons were relieved, during the same period, at a cost of £7,688,000. Taking the population of Ireland at one-fourth of that of England, it will be seen that the Poor-Law relief distributed in Ireland, the poorer country, is not one-half what it is in England, the richer country.

In conclusion, I have to report that I have everywhere found the books of the local Committees kept with scrupulous exactness, and the utmost possible discrimination used in the distribution of relief. I was only once called on to investigate a complaint, which was made to me by a

shopkeeper at Swinford, to the effect that the Catholic and Protestant clergy had thought fit to employ a paid secretary, at wages of 15s. a week. Believing the complainant's intention to be one of pure benevolence, conceived in the interests of the poor, I proposed to call a meeting of the Committee at once, dismiss the paid official, and appoint the shopkeeper himself honorary secretary on the spot. The proposition alarmed him; he excused himself, and I was suffered to go in peace. I may say that the destitute population of Swinford is enormous; that the Catholic priests and the Protestant rector are rivals in one respect only, as to who shall excel the other in kindness to the poor; and that even the appointment of paid secretary, which was indispensable, was conferred upon the present holder of the laborious office as a matter of business in which charity had some part.

I am much indebted to the Rev. Mr. Conmey, P.P., of Backs, the Rev. Mr. O'Donohue, C.C., of Ballyhaunis, and, in an especial manner, to the Very Rev. Canon Bourke, P.P., of Claremorris, for assistance and useful information. On this occasion I have not found it necessary to trouble the police with my inquiries; but I have ascertained from the clergy and magistrates that the peace of North Mayo continues unbroken, while the honesty of the starving peasantry is the theme of every tongue. I now invite the members of the Committee to question me upon any point of interest in my Report, so as to afford me an opportunity of verifying my statements by referring to the authority upon which they are made.

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The Lord Mayor (Mr. Edmund Dwyer Gray, M.P.), said the Committee must feel very much indebted to Mr. Fox for his very able report. It showed a most lamentable state of things in the County Mayo, but it also showed

that the Local Committees were in excellent working order. He considered it a most valuable report, and it would be well, too, as in the case of the other reports, to forward copies to the Chief Secretary. As to the absence of a medical officer from Foxford, would it not be right to pass a resolution on the subject?

Mr. Lane Joynt asked how far had the present doctor to travel to visit Foxford, and what Union it was in?

Mr. Fox—Swinford; the doctor has to come over ten miles.

Mr. Joynt considered that ten miles was too far; the sick people might be dead before the doctor could arrive.

The Lord Mayor—Shall we pass a resolution about Foxford?

Mr. Adye Curran—We sent a grant the other day to Foxford.

Sir John Barrington—What can we do for Foxford?

Mr. Curran—Rather, what will the Government do for it?

The Lord Mayor moved a resolution, thanking Mr. Fox for his report, and directing copies of it to be sent to the Chief Secretary and the Vice-President of the Local Government Board, calling their particular attention to the lamentable state of affairs in Foxford.

The resolution was passed.

On the 13th of August, 1880, Mr. O'Connor Power, M.P. for Mayo, called the attention of Parliament to the state of that county, and other parts of the West of Ireland. In the course of his speech he dwelt upon the various reports lately presented to the Government and the Mansion House Committee respectively, by medical gentlemen specially deputed to make such reports, and also quoted at considerable length, as set forth in the

*Times*, from the reports of Mr. J. A. Fox, as regards the general condition of the people of Mayo, apart from the question of health and sanitation. Mr. Power's speech led to a lengthened debate, in which several other members took part.

The Chief Secretary for Ireland (Mr. W. E. Forster), speaking on behalf of the Government, is reported to have made the following observations in the course of his reply:— He admitted that this debate had been a very useful one, and felt that in the course of it many suggestions had been made to him from which he hoped to derive some advantage. The hon. member for Mayo made a most interesting and most moderate statement. He did not know that he could feel, as the hon. member went through that statement, that it was overcharged in any respect. What he felt as he heard the statement, and what he had felt in reading the documents which the hon. gentleman had not at all unfairly quoted, was some sort of melancholy satisfaction that out of the calamity of the distress of this year there might arise this good result—that a very strong light was thrown on the condition of the people in some parts of Ireland. He thought it was a very strong lesson to us all to learn what had been rightly called the normal condition of the labourers and of many of the small tenantry in many parts of Ireland. There appeared to be a universal agreement that what the doctors called the predisposing cause—and it was a very instructive and illustrative word—to its increase was, not really an absolute want of food, but it was probably a want of sufficient strengthening food, and the monotony of one particular kind of food. Then the sanitary arrangements were, no doubt, another very predisposing cause. In fact, it was very difficult to read these reports and not rise from their perusal with the greatest possible surprise, that if the fever once got into these districts it should not spread much more than it had

done. He could only account for its not having spread more, on the ground that the poor people had been acclimatised to this low style of living and these low conditions of household accommodation. What could be done? To a very considerable extent, the practical recommendations of the hon. member had already been carried out by the Local Government Board. A change of food had been given where there was any real danger of fever, and medical assistance had, as far as possible, been rendered where it was required. The causes of the evils which the House had to lament were, he was afraid, more deep-seated than anything connected with the constitution of the Boards of Guardians; and, although he disapproved the present mode of their election, he should be deceiving the House if he were to lead it to suppose he thought that an alteration in that respect would be productive of any great change in the sanitary condition of the country. A suggestion had, he might add, been made by the hon. member for Cork, which he should most carefully consider. He alluded to that which had reference to the question whether the area of rating in Ireland was not too small. There could be no doubt that one of the greatest reforms in England was the substitution of the union for the parish for rating purposes. Allusion had been made to the difference between the Poor-Law in England and in Ireland, and he might observe in connexion with the subject, that he feared he was considered a heretic by some of his friends, because he had never been one of those who in England had felt so thoroughly opposed as others to out-door relief. Great evils might be the result of a large amount of it; but he believed very much of the success with which England had got through great difficulties, and had avoided great social convulsions, was due to the circumstance, that from the time of Elizabeth up to the present day, every man in the country knew that

he had a right to live, and it was difficult to carry out that state of things without some species of outdoor relief. But it had been bought at a very dear price, and there were men of great eminence in Ireland, not at all confined to the supporters of Protestant ascendancy, who were opposed to the introduction of any Poor-Law. He thought that probably they would not have had the terribly low wages that were paid in Ireland in former times if there had then been a system of Poor-Law. There was one point in which the Irish labourer or small tenant compared favourably with the English labourer. If some of their actions were brought before us in a way that tried our patience and made us indignant, it was well to recollect the way in which Irish labourers helped their neighbours and the members of their own families. The enormous sums lately sent from America reflected great credit on the Irish character. As to the Irishmen who came to England to earn wages, he was afraid that it would be very difficult to contend that English labourers in the same circumstances would not leave the larger portion of their earnings in public houses. These facts should be taken into consideration when they were comparing the Irish Poor-Law with the English Poor-Law. There was another suggestion which had been made on which he could not give an opinion, because he should require to have it proved to him that it was desirable to keep out of the Boards of Guardians the ministers of the different denominations. If the hon. member would be content with a resolution stating that the present condition of the agricultural population in Mayo, Sligo, and other parts of Ireland demanded the immediate and serious attention of the Government, he should be glad to ask the House to agree to it.

Mr. O'Connor Power consented to the amendment suggested by the right hon. gentleman.

Mr. T. O'Connor suggested that the word "Galway"

should be inserted in the amendment after the words "Mayo, Sligo."

The amendment was then agreed to in this form:—  
"That, in the opinion of this House, the present condition of the agricultural population in Mayo, Sligo, Galway, and other parts of the West of Ireland, demands the serious and immediate attention of Her Majesty's Government."

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It was to this important result, satisfactory so far, the Lord Mayor (Mr. Edmund Dwyer Gray, M.P.) referred in the following observations which occur in the course of his speech at the Mansion House on the occasion of the final public meeting of the Committee on the 14th of August, 1880:—

"To Dr. Sigerson, Dr. Kenny, and Mr. J. A. Fox, our thanks are also due for their most valuable Reports; and to these gentlemen gratitude is, indeed, due, not only from the Committee, but from the country, for having, without reward, except the reward of their own consciences, given the services they did; who went and personally inspected the localities, and gave us those Reports, the value of which was recognised in the House of Commons and by the Government, who have acted on suggestions of these gentlemen. These Reports will be a lasting record of the work done by this Committee."

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## APPENDIX.

## REPORT

OF

MR. J. A. FOX,

*On the subject of the Baronial Relief Works, submitted at the usual Meeting of the Committee, held on the 12th of June, 1880.*

I AM desirous of bringing under the notice of the Committee some facts of an important character derived from information lately supplied by our Local Committees in Mayo and Galway as regards the public works either projected or in actual operation in those counties. On a recent occasion I took the opportunity to cite the County of Cavan as a typical illustration of what might be expected from those works in the way of relief throughout the kingdom. Instead, however, of confining myself to this, an isolated case, I have now gone through the returns from two of the largest, and at the same time the most impoverished counties in the West. Those returns exhibit the question as it stood on the 1st of the present month, just twelve days ago, and the result will show that no appreciable alteration has taken place since.

We have sixty-four Committees altogether in Mayo, of which all but a few have supplied us with the required information. The total amount of money voted for expenditure within the wide area covered by those Committees is £11,583, while the destitute population more or less dependent on the Mansion House Fund for subsistence within the same

area is represented to be 171,493. Assuming that this money was really expended, it would be equal to an allowance of about one and fourpence to each individual on the relief lists throughout the county. But as a matter of fact, in thirty-five—that is, rather more than one-half—of the districts relieved by our Committees, no such public works have been heard of at all; while in twenty-six districts where the money was voted to set them on foot, they had not, for one reason or another, even been commenced on the 1st of June, on which date they were really in operation in three districts in the county only, so far as the information supplied to the Mansion House enables us to judge. The sums being spent in a few favoured districts are comparatively insignificant, as for instance at Kilmaclasser, near Westport, where £64 is to be distributed amongst a destitute population of 1,445 souls. So much for Mayo.

Turning now to Galway, we have returns from seventy-five out of our ninety Committees spread over that county. The facts and figures are in a like manner equally disappointing. The total amount of money voted for expenditure within the area covered by those Committees is £13,360 9s., while the destitute population more or less dependent on the Mansion House Fund for subsistence within the same area is 132,732. If the money was really expended amongst this population, the share falling to each individual would be about two shillings, or some eight-pence more than the portion of the destitute individual in the adjoining county. But unhappily the story is just the same in Galway as in Mayo. In forty-one—that is, rather more than one half—of the districts relieved by our Committees, no public works have been projected at all, while in twenty-seven districts, where the money was actually voted for expenditure, the works in question had not been even commenced on the 1st of June. The sums to be expended in the few fortunate districts are often equally insignificant

in Galway as in Mayo, as for instance at Annaghdown, where £101 15s. is the portion of a destitute population of 2,000 souls.

But even those figures admit of a further qualification, inasmuch as the works in question, which mostly consist in making or repairing roads, are in many cases apparently entrusted to contractors, who are often represented to us as undertaking them at a price considerably below the sum voted. Again, with regard to the projected works in both counties which had not commenced on the 1st of June, the reply of the Local Committees is often eloquent in its hopelessness. In answer to the query, "When are the works to be commenced?" it is sometimes merely observed, "Cannot say—perhaps never." This was the case at Ballindine, in Mayo, where £200 had been voted for expenditure amongst a destitute population of 3,000. At Cumner, in Galway, the patience of the Committee being exhausted, the reply is, "The works won't commence till a number of people have died of starvation;" while at Belclare, in the same county, exasperated in a like manner by the delay, the Committee having informed us that the long-expected employment had not commenced, add, "And when it will be commenced is only known in Heaven and to the Board of Works."

It has often been cynically observed that a man may prove anything from statistics. I can only say, having gone carefully through them, that the individual who could evolve any degree of hope from these, would be, not a man, but a magician. Even if the public works were in full operation throughout the two Counties of Mayo and Galway—and the information supplied by our Local Committees, show that such is the case within the limited area of some nine parishes only—any hopes that may have been raised as to the probability of their proving a source of substantial relief in the present crisis, are wholly illusory

and without foundation. The returns from which I have been quoting are not without their use, however, inasmuch as they exhibit, in a very striking light, the wisdom of the Lord Mayor in refusing to adopt any course which might lead to a premature dissolution of the Mansion House Committee.

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The Lord Mayor said every credit was due to Mr. Fox for the pains he had taken in bringing these interesting facts before them. He feared they were only too true.

Sir George Owens said Mr. Fox was entitled to the cordial thanks of the Committee.

Mr. Lane Joynt said that while Mr. Fox's observations were entitled to very great respect, every one acquainted with the working of the Local Government of the country, and with the mode of presenting at baronial sessions, knew from the earliest part of the year that the expectation of public employment to any great extent was utterly out of the question; firstly, because of the paucity of the grants made at presentment sessions, and secondly, because they were only made in portions of the barony here and there, and could afford no relief except to people living in the immediate vicinity of the works. Mr. Fox's statement was an elaborate and ingenious exposition of the returns Mr. Valentine Dillon had obtained, but he confessed the result was a matter of no surprise to him.

Mr. Fox said the important thing for the Committee to bear in mind was, that public works were not in operation, and, moreover, there seemed to be no hope that they would be. Meanwhile the Poor-law Guardians were not doing their duty in the matter of out-door relief.