

A PROPOSAL

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL GREY,

TO ESTABLISH A CHARGE UPON ESTATES,

AS IN

DRAINAGE, ETC.,

TO ENABLE LANDLORDS

TO PROMOTE EMIGRATION,

AS

THE ONLY MEANS OF PRESERVING THE LIVES OF

ONE MILLION

OF OUR FELLOW CREATURES.

BY

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL GREY,
SECRETARY OF STATE—COLONIAL AFFAIRS.

&c., &c., &c.

Merrion-square, March 15th, 1847.

MY LORD—In a letter which I took the liberty of addressing to Mr. Labouchere in September last, containing several suggestions as to sources of employment and other measures for the relief of our destitute poor, (a copy of which is enclosed,) I strongly pressed the utter hopelessness of preventing starvation in innumerable instances during the then approaching winter, and warmly urged *Emigration* as one of the most effectual means of relief.

The government, however, have since entirely declined giving assistance until the emigrant arrives in America, either through his own means or by aid from his landlord or others. The reasons assigned in your Lordship's letter to Lord Elgin, for non-interference, are strong and good, although I should have wished a helping hand had been stretched forth in this respect to our severely afflicted poor. I have seen, with infinite satisfaction, the papers on Emigration presented to both Houses of Parliament last month by order of her Majesty, containing the Report of

Mr. Buchanan, the Government Emigration Agent in Quebec, together with your Lordship's correspondence with the Earl of Elgin, and other interesting documents.

These statements are of VITAL importance and should *at once* be printed and distributed throughout every corner of Ireland ; as it is clearly demonstrated by Mr. Buchanan that *employment* may be had to *any extent* at very remunerative wages, varying from 3s. to 3s. 6d. per day for labourers, and from 6s. to 7s. 6d. for Masons, Stonecutters, &c. &c.

Can we wish more for our poor fellow-countrymen ? and yet it would seem they are to be left here until by the awful effects of prolonged starvation they are absolutely deprived of life, to the amount of many, very many thousands ; and it is shocking and lamentable to think that there is not the slightest hope of any mitigation of the ravages of death for six months to come, but decidedly the reverse, and even then it is only the height of deceit to flatter ourselves that more than a temporary supply of food can be had. With these appalling and incontrovertible facts staring us in the face, and with the earnest and heart-rending appeals of innumerable multitudes of already half dead human beings crying for food in every quarter of Ireland, should we not, after first seeking the Almighty's blessing on our efforts, arouse ourselves and make a vigorous struggle ere it be too late, to enable them to reach the inexhaustible sources of employment and food which the Officers of Government assure us abound in America ? In my humble judgment we shall be indescribably culpable if we neglect to take such steps to accomplish this life-preserving measure as Government may deem advisable ; and as all pecuniary aid from the National Funds is declared to be imprudent, I would earnestly appeal to the Government, the Landlords, and Land Agents of Ireland, to consider deeply the following truths, and if they agree in the utility of the suggestion

grounded on them, I would implore them to take the necessary steps to confirm its adoption as quickly as possible.

Any attempt to purchase *seed corn* for tenants holding less than six acres, must, I submit, be inevitably followed by the *total loss* of the money to the landlord, together with the rent of the ground. This is clear and obvious ; for supposing he seeds three acres of a five-acre holding, the entire crop, on an average of land, would not do more than feed an ordinary family for ten months ; thus, the tenant would again be in absolute destitution, and the recovery of the landlords money for seed and rent utterly hopeless.

The seed for three acres would cost fully £5 ; and the rent of five acres at £1 per acre would lead to the *irrevocable loss* of £10. With this £10 he could pay for the passage of *two* adults and *four* children under 14 years of age to Quebec ; 1 lb. of bread-stuff to each adult daily, and $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. to each child, being, as matter of course, included.

Thus, for £10 a family may be at once placed in independence, the tax of 5s. paid by each passenger to the government before he is permitted to land in Quebec, is, with a very trifling addition from the public funds, sufficient to defray the cost of conveying emigrants free of charge to themselves, to localities where employment is abundant. The £2 10s. paid for passage includes the 5s. tax, which is disbursed by the master of the ship.

It will not cost even so much as £2 10s. for each adult, when landlords unite and freight a ship from Liverpool, and agents in Dublin are ready to send them to Liverpool per steamer free of charge, on agreement with them for the freight of the ship. Is it possible, therefore, any landlord would for an instant hesitate as to the course he should pursue, or any tenant be found so insensible to the horrors of inevitable starvation, as to cling to a patch of land which hourly drags him to his grave, and into which the

truly mistaken kindness of an unthinking landlord might, as it were, entrap him, by supplying seed, the cost of which, if expended as suggested, would instantly translate him from squalid and abject privation, to what every right-thinking man looks forward to as the most enviable of earthly blessings—independence, derived from honest industry? And that such would be the effect of his transition from this country to America, the poor have amongst themselves innumerable and irrefragable proofs. They *know* how many of their friends who went hence without a farthing, are now in prosperous circumstances, not only supporting themselves and their families in comfort, but from their *surplus funds* sending over large sums for the relief of those less-fortunate relatives whom they had left behind, or paying for the passages of others they were anxious to bring to that not over-crowded land, where their own faint hearts have revived, and their best wishes been realized.

Can the wisdom of what is recommended meet with one dissentient voice from those who purpose to expend money on seed? Such, however, form a merely fractional part of the landlords of Ireland, as from the overwhelming demands made upon them this year, and in the great majority of instances the loss of rents, they are totally deprived of the means of so doing. To remove this at present insuperable barrier, it is hoped the government, on consideration, may consent to make an advance of money for emigration purposes, taking security upon the lands as in draining, subsoiling or other permanent improvements.

No similar amount of money could possibly be applied with such unquestionable benefit, or with equal success in promoting the happiness of our famishing poor, and the future prosperity of the nation.

The money advanced by government should be strictly

allocated to the emigration of tenants holding *under* six acres, as where the farm is larger, the tenant, by due industry, might grow food to support his family and pay his rent; or when he wished to emigrate he could seldom fail to get as much money for a holding of that extent as would enable him to do so.

Much might be done to supply a family with food, and to pay rent, with even less than six acres, but the slovenly cultivation almost universally found, prohibits even the idea.

I should hope the simple facts stated may contribute to excite the attention of government and the landlords of Ireland to what appears to my humble judgment of intense importance to the welfare of this kingdom, and to the very existence of at least *one million* of its inhabitants. The measure suggested may be instantly acted upon; the security to the government would be unquestionable; the intrinsic and universal good which would inevitably result to the nation, the landlords, *and above all* to our dying fellow creatures, is incalculable.

I have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your Lordship's truly obedient humble servant,

ROBERT COLLINS, M.D.

connected to the emigration of tenants holding under six acres as where the farm is larger, the tenant by doing his duty might grow food to support his family and pay his rent; or when he wished to emigrate he could seldom fail to get as much money for a holding of that extent as would enable him to do so.

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