

REMARKS

ON THE

GOVERNMENT MEASURE

FOR ESTABLISHING

POOR LAWS IN IRELAND:

CHIEFLY WITH REFERENCE TO

THE EXISTING AMOUNT OF PAUPERISM,

AS STATED IN

The Report of the Irish Poor Inquiry Commissioners:

AND THE

NECESSARY EXTENT AND CHARACTER OF THE
MEANS FOR ITS RELIEF.

By WILLIAM STANLEY,

LATE COMMISSIONER OF INQUIRY INTO THE STATE OF
THE IRISH FISHERIES.

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By WILLIAM STANLEY,

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THE IRISH POOR-LAW.

THE opponents of the measure proposed by Government for relieving and abating pauperism in Ireland are indignant at the superseding of the Reports made by the late Commissioners of the Irish Poor Inquiry, as these materially strengthen their opposition, by appearing to demonstrate the impracticability of applying in Ireland any measure founded on the principle of the English Poor-Law, as is the measure of government now before the Legislature.

The Inquiry Commissioners had the poverty of Ireland exhibited to them through a medium of so extraordinary a magnifying power, that dismayed by its multiplication of pauperism, they became incapable of devising any practicable measure of relief; nor could they comprehend the possibility of applying in Ireland any system of pauper relief existing elsewhere, more particularly the English system.

Neither the Old nor New Poor-Law of England escaped their fullest condemnation. The former is described in their Third Report as a great social *poison* which nothing could resist but the extraordi-

nary growth of English wealth, although growth commenced in the reign during which poor-laws were first introduced ; and the latter, with its workhouse machinery, is rejected as incompetent to mitigate the pauper-sufferings of a country where (according to the Commissioners' magnifiers), 2,385,000 persons should be housed and maintained by the public for thirty weeks in every year.

The Commissioners were not however thus hostile to existing systems from any predilection for suggestions of their own. The several devices of their own ingenuity are given in their Report as individual suggestions, which even a majority of the Commissioners could not agree in recommending for adoption. They propose, nevertheless, certain measures for enlarging the arable territory of the country, and diminishing at the same time the labouring population. In the sound policy of these *incompatible remedies* they fully concur ; and they prognosticate that Ireland would be prosperous if these measures were adapted. Now let us briefly examine these remedies, and the statements on which they are based. It is postulated in the Third Report that—

“There are in Ireland about *five* agricultural labourers for every *two* that there are for the same quantity of land in Great Britain.

“It further appears that the agricultural produce of Great Britain is more than four times that of Ireland.” (*Page 1.*)

We shall first deal with the latter postulate. The cultivated land in Great Britain (all England, Wales, and Scotland) is estimated to include 34,250,000 statute acres, and that of Ireland is stated to extend to 14,603,473 acres of similar measurement. Therefore, if every British and Irish acre were made equally productive, the geographical extent of Great Britain would cause its agricultural produce to be nearly $2\frac{1}{2}$ times more than the produce of Ireland. The deficiency of $1\frac{1}{2}$, then, is only to be accounted for; and this may be ascribable to bad husbandry, arising from ignorance or want of capital, or want of good tenures for encouraging improvements; but is not, in any event, a proof that less labour is required in Ireland than is employed in it or in Great Britain at present.

If the Commissioners desired by their proposition to show that rent of land in Great Britain ought to exceed the rate of rent in Ireland (owing to greater production), by so much that if £1 an acre be a fair rent in Ireland, £2 10s. should be paid in Great Britain; or to show that British wages ought to be so much higher than Irish wages, that if 4s. a-week be paid in Ireland, 10s. should be given in Great Britain;—for either object the statement would be available; but it is wholly irrelevant when used to prove that there must be less employment for Irish than for British labourers.

In the first postulate it is affirmed that there are

five agricultural labourers in Ireland for every *two* on the same quantity of land in Great Britain. We shall readily show this to be a miscalculation.

Taking the cultivated Irish acres at the estimated number of	14,603,473
And the number of occupiers <i>not employing labourers</i> having been in 1831, 564,274, these must have held, at the reasonable average of 5 acres each,	2,821,370
	<hr/>
Leaving for the actual labourers dependent on hire	11,782,103
	<hr/>
The number of cultivated acres in Great Britain being	34,250,000
And the number of occupiers <i>not employing labourers</i> having been in 1831 (throughout England, Wales, and Scotland) only 168,815, these, at an average of 5 acres to each, would have occupied	844,075
	<hr/>
Leaving for the actual labourers dependent on hire	33,405,925

Now, what number of agricultural labourers, dependent on hire, were in Great Britain and Ireland in 1831? The Census enumeration makes the total of British labourers 887,167, and the Irish 567,441; *but it is most important to observe that all enumerated as labourers are not dependent on hire.*

There were in Ireland in 1831, 884,339 agricultural families; of these 659,613 were male landholders, upwards of half a million of whom (as already stated) being cultivators of their own small farms,

and the remainder being employers of labourers, and all being heads of families, either as fathers, or as sons or brothers, there remained only 224,726 families of labourers.

Now, supposing these families to consist, on average, of five members, they would comprise 1,123,630 persons; and as of the whole population in 1831 one-fourth were males, twenty years of age, these families, in the same ratio, comprised 280,907 full-grown labourers, *the number dependent on hire in Ireland*. Consequently, one-half of the 567,441 full-grown labourers enumerated in 1831 must have been members of landholders' families, labouring on their own lands, and not dependent on hire for subsistence, although no doubt working elsewhere during harvest.

This is a most important fact, that the full-grown labourers of Ireland, not occupying land, or forming part of landholders' families, amount only to 280,907. For this number there are, as we have shown, 11,782,103 acres; being $41\frac{3}{4}$ acres for each labourer.

Let us now return to Great Britain.

The agricultural families of England, Wales, and Scotland, enumerated in 1831, amount to 961,134. Of these, 187,075 were male occupiers of land *employing labourers*, and 168,815 were male occupiers cultivating for themselves; both classes of landholders forming a total of 355,890.

Assuming, as we may, that the landholders are heads of families, either as fathers or brothers, and

deducting their number from the total of agricultural families in Great Britain, we ascertain that the agricultural labourers' families amount to 605,244, which, at *five* to a family, would comprise 3,026,220 persons; and taking the male labourers, aged twenty years or more, as amounting to one-fourth of this total, (the males, aged twenty years or more, in Great Britain, being about one-fourth of the whole population,) we thus ascertain that there were in England, Wales, and Scotland, in 1831, 756,555 agricultural labourers dependent on hire, and therefore that a considerable portion of the 887,167 males aged twenty years or more, set down in the Census Tables of Great Britain for 1831, as agricultural labourers, must (like a large portion of the same class in Ireland) be members of landholders' families, working on the small farms or in the other avocations of their fathers or brothers, and not heads of families.

There having been then, in 1831, 756,555 agricultural labourers in Great Britain dependent on hire, and 33,405,925 acres of cultivated land, exclusive of the quantity held by labouring occupiers, it follows, that there are *forty-four* acres for each labourer, *or about two acres more than there are in Ireland for each Irish labourer of the same class existing in 1831.*

Thus the proportion of *actual* labourers to territory is nearly equal in the two countries. Nevertheless, there is in the Third Report of the Irish Poor Inquiry Commissioners this broad assertion—" *There are in*

Ireland about five agricultural labourers for every two that there are for the same quantity of land in Great Britain."

For this assertion the Commissioners had no authority whatever but the Census Tables. It is on these they found all their computations; and not being familiar with statistical details, they have committed the most extraordinary mistakes.

The great number of landholders in Ireland, who do not employ labourers, but cultivate the soil themselves, would indeed cause persons unacquainted with the social condition of the country to suppose that nearly the whole of such occupiers may be agricultural labourers, having small allotments of land, but still mainly dependent for subsistence on employment as hired labourers.

These occupiers, however, comprise persons engaged in all the avocations of active industry. A very large portion of them are weavers; another large portion are market dealers in corn, butter, and pigs, forming a most extensive and useful class in society; a great number form an inferior class of dealers, who travel with carts of salt, flax-seed, turf, coals, and fish; great numbers are carriers, employed in conveying merchandise from the ports to the country shopkeepers: country butchers, masons, carpenters, and the majority of the fishermen, are landholders; a portion of the agricultural labourers working on hire in Ireland are also holders of land, but their number is small, except in harvest time, for this

reason—the majority of farmers' labourers must take, as an equivalent for wages, a certain quantity of potato ground, and this, while it secures the labourers' families against want, and so far prevents an improvident use of earnings, enables the farmers to get more work performed than if the wages were all to be paid weekly in cash, and therefore induces the employment of labourers who are not landholders. The only landholders employed as hired labourers in considerable numbers are those who migrate annually to England and Scotland to assist in harvest work, by which they earn the means of paying their rents, and then have all the produce of the land for their subsistence, and to exchange for clothing.

One of the leading errors of the Poor Inquiry Commissioners was occasioned by their supposing that all the landholders, not employing hired labourers, are entirely dependent on agriculture for subsistence. Another was caused by their supposing that the 567,441 persons set down in the Irish Census Tables as agricultural labourers are dependent on hire for subsistence, and are also heads of families, while at least one-half of them must be without families, being the sons or brothers of landholders, as we have shown, employed partially in agriculture and other avocations.

Assuming, however, that all were labourers dependent on hire, the comparison made by the Commissioners of the numbers in the respective Census Tables of Ireland and Great Britain, cannot be ad-

mitted as any proof of a redundancy of agricultural labour in the former, without its being first proved that there is a sufficiency in the latter. This the Commissioners have not done: on the contrary, they assert that there is in Great Britain *a deficiency of labour for its agricultural operations.*

Compare their statement, referred to, with the following extract from the same Report, in which they assert that the labour in Great Britain is deficient—

“Then as to the labourers who go to Great Britain at the time of the harvest, it is notorious that the crops in many places could not be saved without their aid: the complaints therefore made of their incursions, as they are called, are equally unfounded and unjust.” (*Page 24.*)

The measures which the Commissioners propose for altering the condition of Ireland are as incompatible as their statistical views.

They recommend the compulsory reclamation of waste lands, while asserting that the arable territory is at present so insufficiently cultivated “that the agricultural produce of Great Britain is more than four times that of Ireland.” (*Page 1.*)

Again, they recommend a large emigration at the public expense, and the establishment of emigrant depôts, to be co-operative with the compulsory reclamation of waste lands, notwithstanding the insufficient cultivation of the soil in use.

By such operations the Commissioners would have the country deprived of capital, to maintain candidates for emigration in the depôts; the number of labourers

would be reduced at the moment of an increased demand for them, occasioned by a compulsory reclamation of waste lands; and an improved cultivation of the lands already reclaimed would be completely obstructed by the consequent scarcity of labour, and the natural increase in the rate of wages.

This complete derangement of the ordinary progress of rural affairs in Ireland was proposed to be effected by no less than nine distinct bodies of public Commissioners.

Could the Government venture to act on such recommendations?

In the whole of the Report there is nothing which appeared practicable, except such of the recommendations for facilitating and encouraging improvements, and for promoting public works, as had been previously proposed to Parliament by a Committee of the House of Commons on Irish Public Works and the Improvement of Waste Lands, appointed in 1835; Mr. Lynch, of Galway, chairman.*

The Reports of this Committee (of which all the leading Irish representatives were members, including Mr. O'Connell) not only contain all the practicable recommendations made subsequently by the Poor Inquiry Commissioners, but emphatically condemn emigration at the public charge, and deny that it is necessary or would be effectual.

* But the recommendations of the Commissioners proceed much further, and are much more compulsory than can in justice or sound policy be admitted. They should have been satisfied with those of the Committee. Their machinery is too complicated and expensive, and some of their propositions are sufficient to cause alarm to all.

On which was the Government to rely?—the Reports of a Committee of the House of Commons, on which the leading Irish members were most actively employed, and which are based on the evidence of Irish landowners and other practical witnesses—or a Report from the Poor Inquiry Commissioners, containing their own theories, not founded upon evidence they had taken, but on their deductions from the Census Tables of 1831?

Besides, the Report of the Commissioners proposed nothing definite or tangible, for the relief of the actual pauperism of the country; and no general enumeration of the paupers had been made; nor was any estimate given, to show the probable extent of pauper destitution, and the cost of relieving it.

The Commissioners have given an estimate to show that *every agricultural labourer in Ireland is out of work and in distress, on average, for thirty weeks in the year*; but such a suspension of labour, as would be necessary to make this estimate true, cannot occur out of the Arctic regions.

Their Report states—“According to the third Table annexed*, we cannot *estimate* the number of persons *out of work and in distress*, during thirty

* A statement of the number of days on which labourers are employed in each county. This is obviously inaccurate, for, according to it, not one labourer is employed through the year, although every landholder in Ireland (not himself a working man) must have some work going forward on every day in the year, except Sundays and the principal holidays—and even on these the cattle must be attended to. The Commissioners would appear to believe that farmers have nothing to do but sow and reap,—no barn-work, no carting of hay and corn to market, no winter ploughing, no tending of cattle, no driving to fairs.

weeks of the year, at less than 585,000, nor the number of persons dependent upon them at less than 1,800,000, making in the whole 2,385,000."

The 585,000 are stated to be the agricultural labourers calculated to exist in 1836, allowing for the growth of boys to manhood from 1831, when the number enumerated was 567,441.

We have, however, shown that of the agricultural labourers existing in 1831, only 280,907 could have been dependent on hire for their subsistence: if this number had increased by ten thousand in 1836, it would then amount to the *half* of the Commissioners' total.

We have also shown that in 1831 there could have been only 224,726 labourers' families, and these at the high average of five would comprise 1,123,630 persons.

It is useless to attempt an estimate of the number of labourers constantly employed, which is very considerable; but we assert, that whatever may be the number *not constantly employed*, these labourers and their families are not in a state of pauperism, as is assumed by the Commissioners, during the period in which agricultural operations are usually curtailed.

These families have all previously secured their annual store of their potatoes, from hired ground paid for in labour; and unless this store be diminished by a failure of the crop, it is never exhausted before the season arrives in which labour is again in active demand, and it commonly lasts until another crop ripens.

Let us not be supposed to contend that the condition of the Irish agricultural labourers does not require improvement; it is a very lowly one, and incompatible with the prosperity of Ireland: we are only desirous of proving that the Commissioners are completely in error where they report that these labourers are in a state of pauperism, annually, when the ordinary course of husbandry terminates, and would therefore become claimants for the pauper provision.

Having thus disposed of the 2,385,000 imaginary paupers whom the Commissioners supposed to be annually subsisting on the bounty of their neighbours for thirty weeks, we shall now attempt to estimate the number of actual paupers in the country, subsisting constantly on the means of the working classes, farmers, shopkeepers, and benevolent persons in the higher grades of society.

One of the first measures of the Commissioners of Poor Inquiry should have been, an enumeration or enrolment of the actual paupers in every parish; this has been omitted, and, to supply the deficiency, it is necessary to resort to an estimate, taking the pauperism and population of Dublin for a basis.

DUBLIN POOR.—The House of Industry, in Dublin, contained, in October, 1836, hospital patients	909
Do., Paupers—men, women, and children	991
The Mendicity Asylum contained, in December, 1836, 2250—a total exceeding the average number of inmates; but owing to the depressed state of trade, the present number is much greater—it is	2800

- The Sick and Indigent Roomkeepers' Society relieved in Dublin, during one year, to November, 1836, 34,443 persons, which gives a weekly average of 662. The distribution of relief amounted to 2459*l.*, being on average 47*l.* 5*s.* weekly, which is 2½*d.* per day to each of 648 persons, and proves that the dividend of 662 must be about the average number receiving weekly relief* . 662
- The Strangers' Friend Society relieved, in 1836, 7993 persons, with a distribution of 660*l.* 7*s.* 3*d.*, being 2½*d.* per day to each of 174 persons; and the weekly average of the total number relieved is 193, which, therefore, may be assumed to be the continuing number . . . 193
- The Charitable Association relieved its annual average number of 2000—being weekly about . . . 40
- The mendicants of the city are to be found in the streets and squares containing private residences, and in the principal thoroughfares, forming in all 120 *lines* of street. Before dinner-hour the mendicants are only numerous in the principal thoroughfares. In the evenings they are most seen in streets containing the residences of affluent persons. On counting the number, (*including children,*) in several streets at both periods of the day, eight have been found to be an average; therefore, the total may be 960
- The hospital poor are not included, because the institutions for the sick have a provision already;—but the persons reduced to pauperism by the sickness of parents, husbands, &c., are comprised in the foregoing totals—there being no other resources for them than begging, or the funds of the societies named.

* The report of the Sick and Indigent Roomkeepers' Society for 1836, presents three curious items in the detail of receipts. The proceeds of *two charity sermons* appear to have been only 28*l.* 14*s.* 10*d.*; one having yielded 88*l.* 11*s.*, and the other 193*l.* 3*s.* 10*d.*: while *one ball* yielded 476*l.* 18*s.* 11*d.* We trust the proper inference will be obvious to those who are so absurd or selfish as to contend for the sufficiency of spontaneous benevolence.

There are several asylums for children, and for the blind, dumb, aged, &c., supported by endowments, subscriptions, and charity sermons; but the inmates may be also excluded from this estimate, as such private charities will always be maintained by benevolent members of the community, as are similar institutions in London and other large towns in England, notwithstanding the existence of a public compulsory provision for the poor.

Total number of the poor in Dublin, from day to day throughout the year, according to the foregoing data . 5646

It is stated in the advertisements of the Committee, recently appointed to distribute relief to families of Dublin tradesmen, reduced to indigence by the temporary depression of trade, that 3500 persons are now in distress, but that the Committee's funds would only relieve 500. However, if these persons belong to the families of tradesmen, as stated, it is not probable that many of them would apply for admission to workhouses were such asylums established,—and as the object of a poor-law is not to provide for every emergency which may happen, it is not necessary to include them in an estimate of the numbers likely to apply for the public relief now proposed to be given.

COUNTRY POOR.—The population of *Ireland* in 1831 amounted to 7,767,401,—say that it is now . 8,000,000
 The population of *Dublin*, and its suburb streets, was, in 1831, 265,316. If it have increased 7 per cent. since, (the increase in all Ireland, from 1821 to 1831, having been $13\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.), the present number would be 284,000

Population exclusive of Dublin 7,716,000

If the permanent pauperism in Dublin (exclusive of that relieved in small asylums) extend to 5646 persons, it would amount to 1-50th of the population, or 2 per cent. In the same ratio, the pauperism in all Ireland would comprise 160,000 paupers; but actual pauperism, out of Dublin, does not extend to half the number of persons, comparatively to population, as does the pauperism within Dublin. Paupers from all parts of Ireland are to be found in the city, in addition to those of its own population; and it is a common opinion, that, taking Ireland generally, pauperism in Dublin, comparatively with population, more than doubles the ratio in which it exists in the rest of Ireland.

Take, then, the actual paupers of Dublin as being	5,646
And the paupers in the rest of Ireland, as amounting to 1 per cent. of the population out of Dublin,—those within the city amounting to 2 per cent.,—	
in number	77,160
	<hr/>
The total of Ireland would be	82,806

This result appears to verify the calculations of Mr. Nicholls; but 82,806 is certainly much under the number of persons that would become applicants for succour, if it were to be given in money, or food, fuel and clothing, as out-door relief.

It is also much under the number of persons in distressed circumstances, and requiring additional employment to improve their condition; but, for this extensive class, other measures are necessary than a mere Poor Law.

To these measures we shall come immediately: we have yet to expose one more of the extraordinary

statements made by the Irish Poor Inquiry Commissioners, which has attracted public attention from having been quoted by Mr. O'Connell (as containing matters of fact), in his speech on the second reading of the Irish Poor Relief Bill.—*See Morning Chronicle, 29th April.*

The statement is in the first Report of the Commissioners, page 376, and relates to the parish of Burrishoole, co. Mayo. Here it is:—

“ Excepting *weaving*, the agricultural employment of spring and harvest is the only employment in this parish.

“ Deducting then 2500 *for the probable number of children* too young to labour,—486 being the number of weavers and their attendants;—439 the actual number, as ascertained, of persons who do not work, from age and infirmity;—about 10 smiths, 20 tailors, and 20 shoemakers generally employed; the remainder being 7078 persons *capable of labour*, have no other employment than agriculture; this, even in spring and harvest, cannot afford employment to all that seek it; *and, it is presumed, in this country, all its operations might be dispatched in five months.*

“ Thus, without making any allowance for persons unemployed in spring or harvest, it appears that 7078 persons, of ages capable of labour, are without employment seven months in the year.”

The deductions here are obviously erroneous; but let us first test them by the evidence which the

Commissioners had before them, and which has been given by the Rev. W. Hughes, Roman Catholic clergyman.

“ There are about 70 labourers, comprised in about 50 families, who have no holding of land whatever.

“ The cultivated land of the parish is occupied in divisions varying from half an acre to ten acres, above which there are few holdings, *three or four acres being very common.*

“ The total number of acres in the parish, Mr. Hughes concludes to be at least 46,000: *sixteen thousand acres may be pasture and arable; fifteen thousand may be considered irreclaimable; the remaining fifteen thousand acres are all reclaimable. Mountain and bog having, almost throughout it, within from two to four feet of the surface, limestone and other gravel found useful in reclaiming such lands; and affording in all parts a great facility of draining.*

“ On the estate of Lord Sligo, Mr. Hughes has seen the *eighth successive crop of oats* on a spot of reclaimed mountain; he never saw better. On the estate of Sir Richard O'Donnell, in this parish, there is a mountain-farm of eighty acres, taken twenty-five years ago, at the rent of one shilling an acre, which has for several years been let to under-tenants, at from 1*l.* to 1*l.* 5*s.* an acre. *Most of the waste lands of the parish are of equal capabilities.*

“ Mr. Hughes has ascertained the total rental, as

paid by the *occupying tenants* of the parish, to be 6972*l.*; the amount, leaving the parish, paid either to absentee landlords or *mortgagees*, 4796*l.*; the amount to residents, 2176*l.*

“ The total population in 1834, was 10,553.

“ The number of families is 2041. They may be said to be all small landholders.

“ *There are 917 families who have no cow.*”
(Pages 375 and 376.)

These minute and clear statements, made to the Commissioners, do not justify them in stating “ that 7078 persons, of ages *capable of labour*, are without employment seven months in the year.” There could not have been so many persons capable of labour in the parish.

The Commissioners have deducted only 2500 for children “ too young to labour;” although giving, with reference to education, the Rev. Mr. Hughes’s enumeration of children in the district, between the ages of 5 and 15, amounting to 3011. For these and younger children more than 4000 should have been deducted; and adding to this number the other deductions they suggest, a total would be formed equal to half the population.

Of the other half, how many are liable to be unemployed? Seventy labourers: the number stated by the Rev. Mr. Hughes, who are not landholders, but are dependent on hire for their subsistence, and who are comprised in fifty families. Here is, indeed, an astounding defalcation—from 7078 to 70.

In the Census Tables of 1831, the agricultural labourers of Burrishoole, aged twenty years, or more, are stated to have then been 41 ;—all the other persons engaged in agriculture are stated to be landholders, (which is corroborated by the Rev. Mr. Hughes,) and of these only eleven were in 1831 employers of labourers.

The great body of persons engaged in agriculture must in this parish be only employed on their own lands, or occasionally working in some other part of Ireland, or in England. The Commissioners state that they are employed only for five months. Does this mean at extra labour, or on their own lands? If it be meant for both, the time is too short. If it be meant only for labour at home, why limit the employment to five months? Why should these landholders resolve to work only for five months? Would their labour be useless for any longer period; or are they so indolent as to leave their land untouched for seven months; or are they so well repaid by the land's produce, in return for five months' labour, that they can afford to enjoy seven months of ease?

The parish of Burrishoole is on the north shore of Clew Bay, having the town of Newport within it, and Westport near it:—the landholders have therefore a good market to stimulate their industry. Surely, then, it is not possible that they pass seven months of the year in idleness.

One thing at least is certain,—whatever may be the number of months in which any of these land-

holders abstain from work, and whatever may be the number of the unemployed, short of 7078, which is, that, except in years of dearth, none of these landholders can be in a pauper condition. On the contrary, so far from 7078 persons capable of labour, being in distress, during any portion of ordinary years, *that there are only 917 families in the parish* (according to the Rev. Mr. Hughes's evidence) *who have not a cow.*

The parish, too, appears to bear the charge of its own pauperism, whatever that may be. This appears by the following passage from the Report:—"When their stock of potatoes fails them, the general rule is, that the wives and families beg in a remote part of the country;—*strangers, similarly circumstanced, coming into this parish,—so that at certain seasons of the year, there is nearly an exchange of paupers between parishes.* The men generally remain at home, and never beg, at least publicly." It is thus clear that the landholders cannot be pauperized, as the Report implies: if they were, how could the "strangers, similarly circumstanced, coming into this parish," be supplied with food?

Great poverty, we are well aware, has in some years existed in Burrishoole, caused by the failure of crops, and of the fisheries; but this knowledge only leads to the opinion that the landholders are too much crowded, and that local measures are necessary to supply a portion of them with other sources of employment.

There are in the parish, according to the Rev. Mr. Hughes's evidence, *sixteen* thousand acres of arable land, and fifteen thousand acres, which may be rendered arable with little labour,—in all, thirty-one thousand acres, or nearly three for every member of the population.

There are also the coast fisheries, in which a portion of the inhabitants are already engaged occasionally, although the Commissioners state, that, “excepting weaving, the agricultural employment of spring and harvest is the only employment in this parish.”

Turning, now, from the Reports of the Poor Inquiry Commissioners, to the first Report on Irish Fisheries, presented to Parliament in the present Session, we find the fisheries of the coast of Burren, and the shores of Mayo, described in the evidence commencing on page 80, from which the following extracts have been made:—

“At Achil, twenty-eight years ago, the herring fishery was very great, and it continued so, yearly, for eight years. During the fishery, generally sixty vessels were loaded in about ten days.

“The quantity of herrings taken in each year was less until 1829, when they entirely left the coast. There were not any seen from 1829 until this year (1836).

“There is now every appearance of a productive fishery; but there are very little means of fishing in Achil, as the inhabitants are considerably reduced, from the frequent distress they have suffered.

“ There may be about one hundred boats in the parish, but half of them are not fishing, for want of nets.

“ During a fishery, formerly, each boat made from 50*l.* to 60*l.*

“ I never recollect a year that shad and mackerel did not come on the coast. They are here taken with fishing lines, and when they come near the shore, with gaffs. A net has never been used here for taking them.

“ Lobsters are not taken here, except in the holes of the rocks. They are very fine, and in great abundance.”—*Evid. of Fergus Gallaher, chief boatman, Coastguard.*

“ When the herrings leave the coast, cod and ling are on the banks, but are seldom taken except by the Skerries boats, (*Co. Dublin,*) which generally stop near Elly Bay.

“ We know little of the harvest herring fishery. Herrings are not looked for. They were lately a month in the bay before any one could be induced to go to fish.

“ Glassen are in great abundance.

“ In Ballycroy Bay, and the Sound of Bullsmouth, three thousand oysters may be taken in a day with a dredge. They are often sold for 3*d.* per hundred.

“ Scallops may be taken in large quantities.

“ In Duega Bay, turbot are in such plenty, that by walking on the sand, in two or three feet water

they are killed with pikes. They are not taken with lines.'—*Evid. of John M'Cue.*

“Three or four hundred barrels of Scotch-cured fish are annually imported into Westport.”—*Evid. of Mr. Mahon, collector of Customs.*

Nature has been bountiful to Ireland in gifting her with great resources,—the majority of which have been neglected, and all others abused; but it is not too late to render all available to the community: on the contrary, the abundance of cheap, willing, and hardy labour which now exists in the country, tended to facilitate the great operations necessary for developing the capabilities of her territory.

We have already the first requisite of social improvement in a populous country, an efficient system of police, to preserve order.

We shall soon have, from a good government, the second requisite, a public provision for the relief of want, with powers for effectually suppressing mendicancy and vagrancy.

The order and quietude which would then pervade the country, could not fail to induce the application of capital in augmenting employment. The value of every estate would be enhanced, and embarrassed landowners could then either lessen incumbrances, or accomplish improvements.

The old objection to improvements would be removed by the Poor Law, while a partial stimulant would be substituted. Improvements could no

longer induce a swarming of paupers; and they would be requisite for raising up the condition of the local population, and averting an increase of pauperism.

Legislation to facilitate improvements would then probably be sufficient, without any direct interference, if accompanied by an enlargement of the powers and funds of the Board of Public Works, and a transfer of the fiscal functions of grand juries to elective local Commissioners of Works, controlled by the Government Board.

Some of the most important facilities for effecting improvements are embodied in the Bills of Mr. Lynch. One for enabling a majority of landowners to co-operate in having waste lands drained and partitioned, under the direction of select local Commissioners;—another for enabling tenants for life to grant long leases, and also to make improvements on their estates, and charge the outlay, to a limited amount, on the inheritances;—a third, to facilitate the exchange of lands, and so enable landowners to combine their properties, which must also promote improvement;—the fourth, to transfer the fiscal functions of grand juries to elective local Commissioners, qualified by property.

With such measures, and the active co-operation of Government through its Board of Public Works, in forming roads through the wild tracts of the west, in Ulster, Connaught, and Munster, and improving, or

forming small harbours there for local trade and the fisheries, as also in aiding with funds the means of local contributors for works of public utility, roads, inland navigations, harbours, drainages, and embankments,—Ireland may be advanced rapidly to a state of great prosperity.

The issue of emigration, as a measure of relief for the agricultural population of Ireland, is not truly indicated by the success of any voluntary emigration, however copious, which has yet occurred—where families have embarked in the adventure at their own expense, having none to blame but themselves if they failed to realize their expectations, consequently no resource to fall back upon, and therefore bound to work forward in their enterprise, no matter how impeded by adverse circumstances. Nor is the issue discernible in the result of some isolated cases in which landowners, like Lord Stanley, have enabled families to emigrate for the purpose of reducing population to a scale sufficient for estates appropriated chiefly in dairy farms. Far different from either would be emigration as a State measure, where the agricultural population should have a free colonial settlement presented as the only attainable relief, with a continuance of their existing condition for the alternative, as proposed by the Poor Inquiry Commissioners. Every peasant family in the country, not possessing a sufficiency of land, under favourable circumstances, would at once seek this relief, so great is the desire to emigrate which prevails in Ireland;

and it would be impossible to dispose of the claims in any way likely to give satisfaction—unless, indeed, an emigrant's lottery were established, in which the prizes should be a free passage to a colony, and a satisfactory settlement there. Whatever device might be resorted to, nothing would prevent the whole country from being thrown into commotion. The moment in which it would be announced to the people that the free passage to a colony (not disgraced by convicts, too) and a settlement there would be given by the State, thousands after thousands would flock to the places of embarkation, to try their fortune, and the impotent would be left to enjoy the other public provision which the Commissioners recommend. Why should this not occur? What wages that the farmers could offer would induce the labourers to remain? That it would occur, if Government adopted the measure recommended, cannot be reasonably doubted, when an eager desire for emigration is known to pervade the whole country. It is true the Commissioners propose at the same time the compulsory reclamation of waste lands, but no moderate rate of wages would induce the peasantry to prefer employment on these lands to a free trip to a colony and the guarantee of a settlement. Therefore, emigration from Ireland, at the expense of the State, and as a measure for the relief of its agricultural population, is utterly impracticable.

If it were even practicable, it should still be considered impolitic, until proved to be necessary; and no

proof of its necessity has been given by the Commissioners of Inquiry. Government, instead of having any evidence of its necessity, was assured, in the second Report of the House of Commons Committee on Irish Public Works, that not only was it unnecessary, but that it would be detrimental to the best interests of the empire.

“ Your Committee cannot concur in the opinion that the social disease of Ireland is produced by a real excess of population. It may be doubted whether the country does contain a sufficient quantity of labour to develop its resources ; and while the empire is loaded with taxation to defray the charges of its wars, it appears most politic to use its internal resources for improving the condition of the population, by which the revenue of the Exchequer must be increased, rather than encourage emigration, by which the revenue would suffer a diminution, or than leave the labouring classes in their present state, by which poverty, crime, and the charges of Government must be inevitably extended.”

If, in opposition to this opinion of the leading Irish members of the House of Commons, Government had adopted the recommendation of the Poor Inquiry Commissioners, and had found it possible to remove to a colony some thousands of Irish families without putting the whole country in commotion, and unsettling the entire labouring population ; still nothing could be done with them abroad that may not be effected at home, with less difficulty, risk, and

expense. They should be set to work at the land to raise food. Ireland has abundance of land requiring only labour to render it productive ; and there is in England a demand for food far beyond the quantity which Ireland can now supply. Why then send away capital and labour to develop colonial resources, when, by applying both to our own, the wealth of the country may be increased, and the number of its tax-payers so augmented, that the individual pressure must be greatly diminished.

In fine, there are available resources *to be profitably worked* beyond the power of the available labour.

But there is not capital it is said ; and yet those who talk of want of capital propose in the same breath that the labourers be sent to Canada, as if this could be done without capital, as if it is not more easy to provide means of improving the condition of the labourers beside us, than beyond the Atlantic.

Give employment at home with the capital requisite for setting the labourers to work abroad—you enlarge the home supply of food,* instead of having to import it from *untaxed colonies, or the stores of foreigners* ; you *ensure* an increased demand for our manufactures where no foreign rivalry can interfere

* The acreable produce of the reclaimed soil of Ireland is said to be only half the quantity obtained from the soil of England, possessing less natural fertility ; yet there are public men who venture to propose emigration as a remedy for Ireland, whilst its fine lands are insufficiently cultivated.

with us ; and you also must obtain a greatly *enlarged* revenue.

By the twentieth Report of the Commissioners of Excise Inquiry, presented 10th July 1835, it appears (*Appendix 44*) that there are only 12,203 dealers in tea *in Ireland* for a population of *eight* millions, while *in Scotland* there are 13,596 dealers in tea for a population of *two millions and a half* ; and in England and Wales 79,181 dealers in tea.

If the population of Ireland were only in equal condition with that in the south of Scotland, and the dealers in tea to bear the same proportion to population in each country, *the Irish dealers* in tea would exceed *forty thousand*, so that the consumption of one taxed commodity used at the ordinary meals *is now less than a third* (looking to the number of dealers) than it would be under more favourable social circumstances.

Let it not be assumed that there is a countervailing excess in Irish dealers in whiskey or spirits, as compared with the Scotch. There are in Ireland, of these dealers, 18,957 ; in Scotland, 16,340 ; in England and Wales, 47,384. So that, instead of an excess in Ireland, there are *thirty thousand* less than would be requisite to equalize the proportions of the two countries.

Now, look again to Account 44, and also turn to Appendix 60 of the Report, to see the comparative account of revenue arising in the two countries, from

the duties of the *Excise*, which are all paid in the country wherein the commodities are consumed.

	Ireland.	Scotland.
1829.....	£2,016,242.....	£2,770,110
1830.....	1,973,856.....	2,960,306*
1831.....	2,193,079.....	2,576,965*
1832.....	2,198,759.....	2,280,728*
1833.....	1,951,314.....	2,419,234
1834.....	1,975,331.....	2,477,734

In 1834 the same rates of *Excise* were payable in the two countries, excepting the duties on soap and bricks (*all in Ireland*), which yielded in Scotland 100,348*l.* Deducting these from the revenue of *Excise* in Scotland for 1834, the Irish receipt would be still less than the Scotch by 400,000*l.* Yet, did each member of the Irish population consume as much of exciseable commodities as the Scotch, the *Excise* revenue of Ireland would be *eight millions*, instead of being under two millions. Thus, in *Excise* alone, and without increased rates of new taxation, Ireland, if improved, must yield to the empire an additional revenue of *six millions per annum*; which would enable Government to release England from some of the most onerous taxes to which she is liable.

* The beer tax, and printed cotton duties, *neither paid in Ireland*, were abolished in Scotland—the one in 1830, the other in 1831; also the candle-duty in 1832, and the starch-duty in 1834, from both of which Ireland was exempt.

POSTSCRIPT.

OBJECTIONS to the principle and details of the measure now before Parliament being still made by some leading public men, we shall state and answer the most feasible and forcible of them consecutively.

1st Objection.—The relief proposed is merely a power of levying a tax for the poor, on men little better off than paupers.

Answer.—The tax is not a new charge on society in Ireland. The mendicants now levy a tax for themselves, each getting as much as possible, some too much, others not enough; and no contributor knowing how much is thus levied, or when to give, and when to withhold, nothing is certain but that impostors get most, and that a large part of the whole is profligately expended. Under the proposed law, the cost of pauperism must be diminished; for, even were the same number of persons to obtain relief as are now subsisting on the community,—money can only be levied for the necessaries of life,—nothing for whiskey; and then, whatever the total charge may be, the occupiers of lands and houses (not being owners) will be liable but to *half* of it; while now, the benevolent portion of these classes must bear the entire of whatever charge mendicancy may create. The other half of the tax will attach to rents, a large

amount of which do not now contribute one farthing for the poor.

2nd Objection.—The Reports of the late Commissioners of Poor Inquiry show that the Irish paupers at present receive between a million and a million and half of pounds annually by begging. Much of this is given in provisions, in potatoes, meal, and milk,—*which is easy to the landholders*, while a tax would be burdensome, as it should be paid in money.

Answer.—Potatoes and other agricultural produce are equal to ready money in Ireland at all times. The goods of manufacturers may not be easily turned into cash; but the goods of farmers are convertible with as much facility as we get change for a sixpence. It is absurd to assert that farmers would prefer giving away *sixpence* worth of potatoes, to paying away *threepence* in money. Besides, a very large portion of the contributions obtained by mendicants is in money: all they receive in towns (excepting broken food and old clothes) are money contributions.

3rd Objection.—Ireland has not capital to bear a tax for paupers. Look at the paltry amount on which legacy duty is annually paid in Ireland, as compared with British capital paying the same tax.

Answer.—The paupers at present are subsisting on the capital of Ireland, and not on air or water. They are already, *as stated in the previous objection*, consuming the public wealth to an amount exceeding

one million a-year, *which is not drawn out of the longest purses.* A very erroneous notion would be formed of the capability of Irish incomes to bear taxation, if the amount of capital on which legacy duty is paid, be taken for a guide. The Irish, who possess means of accumulating, are not accumulators to the same extent as the English: but, nevertheless, each Irishman with 100*l.* or 1000*l.* a-year, is just as capable of bearing a tax for the poor, as an Englishman of similar means; indeed, more capable, because less taxed for other purposes. It is true, unfortunately, that more persons in England have means of accumulating than exist in Ireland, (with reference to relative population,) but this cause of the greater amount of English capital does not bear with the objection against taxing Ireland for the support of her poor, unless it could be shown that they occasion no charge at present. *The growth of English capital did not commence until after the English Poor Law was established.*

4th Objection.—The poor-rates would take away part of the funds for payment of labour, which are already too small. Every shilling for rates is a shilling from the means of paying wages.

Answer.—For every shilling which the law will take from farmers, the present system of mendicancy must take two shillings; because, as under the present system, all who choose to beg are maintained, we must suppose subsistence to be given now to as great a number as would, at present, under any circum-

stances, be relieved from poor-rates ; and the law will levy from the occupiers of land only *half* the cost of the pauper charge in country districts ; while now, the whole is levied from these occupiers by the paupers themselves. Therefore, the means of paying wages must be increased by the law.

5th Objection.—Pauperism has increased in all countries in which a compulsory provision for the poor has been instituted.

Answer.—There is nothing in the compulsory provision proposed which can tend to make the working classes indolent and improvident. Out-door relief (except by extending the ordinary sources of labour at particular seasons, to provide increased employment) must indeed tend to encourage a pernicious dependence on the public provision. Even the out-door relief of alms-giving now encourages many to beg in Ireland who could live by labour. But in workhouse relief, which *only* is proposed for Ireland, there is nothing to tempt even a lazy man from labour, and still less to tempt a profligate man to rely on it as a resource : each loves freedom too much to submit to the restraints imposed in workhouses.

To prove that a compulsory provision necessarily increases pauperism, there must be evidence of the non-existence of any other cause of pauperism—the lands of the country must be under a good system of husbandry, and fully provided with labour—and taxation must be so moderate as not to raise the necessaries of life too high in cost for the means of the

great body of consumers, so as to render it impracticable to make savings for sickness and old age. No evidence of this kind has ever been given by the opponents of poor-laws.

6th Objection.—In Scotland, pauperism has increased wherever the compulsory assessments have been resorted to.

Answer.—Resorting to assessments in Scotland was not the *cause* of increased pauperism, but the consequence. The out-door distribution of church collections, and other voluntary contributions, having occasioned demands on the poor-fund beyond its capacity of affording relief, assessments were necessarily resorted to; and then the previous contributors to the fund felt the advantage of continuing the assessments, as they transferred a large share of the pauper charge to the landowners, who had previously given but a small share of the voluntary contributions.

The Scotch system requires to be assimilated to the English, and placed under similar management.

7th Objection.—If out-door relief be the evil to be removed, it is mendicity-houses that are required for Ireland, in which voluntary contributions may be safely administered.

Answer.—The paupers could not obtain a sufficiency for subsistence, if all, now actually in want, were to enter mendicity-houses. Therefore, they must be allowed to beg, or the law must guarantee a maintenance in public asylums. The law could not prohibit begging, without at the same time providing a

certain resource from want, and that resource can only exist in institutions established and maintained by the law itself.

If mendicity-houses could be rendered efficient in providing relief and suppressing mendicancy, which they cannot be except in very limited and isolated localities, still there would be strong public reasons for preferring asylums supported by compulsory rates.

The interests of a whole country are so affected by its pauperism, that the State ought to exercise a superintending control over every institution for the relief of the poor in large numbers ; and this control cannot be effectively interposed where the voluntary contributors of alms assemble the poor and the improvident, to subsist on them : upon the other hand, the poor, the really poverty-stricken members of society, should not be left to the hazard of voluntary bounty ; nor is it just or politic that the benevolent portion of the community should bear the whole burden of its pauperism.

8th Objection.—A public provision for the poor is Act of Parliament charity, and must fail like Act of Parliament charity.

Answer.—The poor-law proposed is not intended to enforce charity, but to suppress beggary, as one of the main causes of social demoralization—to promote industry, and stimulate owners and occupiers of land to use beneficially for the public all the natural sources of employment under their control.

Charity ceases where it is not spontaneous ; it cannot derive anything from law but protection, and this the proposed law will give in lessening the charge for pauperism on the charitable part of the community, by compelling all possessors of rateable property to support pauperism in proportion to their means—thus leaving larger funds for the many valuable private institutions established for helpless youth or old age, which are maintained through spontaneous charity.

A poor-law is at once a salutary measure of police, and a wise device for compelling the opulent classes to feel interested in the condition of the poor, through the operation of a tax which must increase as poverty extends*.

* To render a poor-law completely re-active, it is contended that the settlement-restraints of England should be annexed to it, on the principle that it is not just to tax property on which pauperism does not exist ; but this principle could not be carried into operation by the settlement-system, as the example of England demonstrates, for in every union good employers are taxed for pauperism created by their neighbours. It could only operate effectively by the laws giving a right of exemption from rates ; and then, two rates would be requisite—a general rate, for the helpless poor—and a public-work rate, for the able-bodied poor. From the latter, lands should be exempt, if liable to the overflow of rivers, and unfit for tillage ; also, lands on which an adequate number of labourers would appear to be employed, with reference to their capacity of affording profitable employment, and to the population of the district. Towns, too, should be exempt (or rather the administrators could not assess), where increased employment at the ordinary public works of the locality would not be necessary. This mode of taxing for the able-bodied poor would not be necessary. This mode of taxing for the able-bodied poor would indicate a real redundancy of labourers wherever it might exist, and protect rate-payers from the cost of maintaining it. It would protect the peasant landholders tilling their own lands,

9th Objection.—It is employment that is wanting ;
not rates for paupers.

Answer.—The law must act as a stimulus in extending employment, and facilities for its extension are proposed in the bills prepared for Parliament by Mr. Lynch. These, if adopted, would enable proprietors of waste lands to reclaim and partition them. They would promote a further extension of employment, by encouraging undertakings for connecting the great lakes and rivers, to form inland navigations. They would also promote it, by enabling tenants for life to grant long leases, and to effect improvements by charging the outlay on the inheritance.

Irish landlords are often blamed for evils which they have not power to remove. Mr. Lynch's bills would enable them to change appearances around them ; and if, in a few, a disposition to change should not already exist, the influence of the poor-rates must speedily produce it.

from the expense of able-bodied pauperism. It would also protect the holders of larger farms, who adopt a good system of husbandry, and landowners whose estates are well managed. If once a good system of farming obtain a general operation in Ireland, the labourers would have ample employment everywhere,

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