

Destitute in Clare 1835

*Deserted and Orphan Children*

MUNSTER—COUNTY CLARE.

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Examinations taken by P. F. Johnston, Esq. ; E. B. Molloy, Esq.

PARISH OF KILMANAHEEN — BARONY OF CORCOMROE.

PERSONS WHO ATTENDED THE EXAMINATION.—Austin Carrig, one of the late enumerators under the Commission for the Public Instruction ; Thomas Curran, dyer and pawn-broker ; James Daly, apothecary and innkeeper ; Lawrence Doherty, labourer ; John Donoghue, a cottier, holding five acres ; Doctor Finucane, dispensary surgeon ; John Higgins, labourer ; James Keane, farmer of 13 acres ; Thomas Lysaght, labourer ; Austin McCarthy, a cottier holding two acres ; Rer. Mr. M’Nally, P. P. ; Patrick M’Namara, weaver ; Mr. Malone, farmer of nine acres, and tith collector ; John Malone, a cottier holding four acres ; John Morissy, weaver ; James Mulqueny, farmer of five acres ; John O’Reilly publican and farmer ; Patrick Quinn, baker ; Widow Rourke, widow of a carpenter, supporting four orphans ; Matthias Thynne, shopkeeper ; Rev. Archdeacon Whitty, protestant rector, and justice of the peace ; Mechanics, labourers and other besides the above, were examined by the Assistant Commissioners.

ACCORDING to Archdeacon Whitty, there had not been more than 12 deserted children found in that and the neighbouring parish within the last three years ; three of these were then supported by the parish, and they appeared to the Assistant Commissioners to be in very good health, and well taken care of by those to whose charge they had been entrusted by the church-wardens. As to whether the desertion of infants had increased or not, all the witnesses who were examined expressed themselves satisfied that the crime, owing to the activity of the late roman catholic clergyman of the parish, had of late years much diminished. A very great number also of those with whom the Assistant Commissioners conversed, attributed the reduced number of foundlings to the closing of the Foundling-hospital ; and it was stated that no instance had been known there of deserted children perishing before they had been discovered. As to whether it was possible for the labourer to make any provision for his children in the event of their becoming orphans, it is only necessary to refer to the rate of wages (*8d*, a day) in that district, to be convinced that no such attempt has ever been made. Several labourers were even anxious to know whether it was *funning*, the Assistant Commissioners were, in asking such in their opinion, an absurd question. There are no orphan children supported there by private contributions, nor by any religious orders, nor by subscription of a penny a week among the poorer classes. The reason why deserted children alone are provided by the parish is, that the law is silent as to the support of orphans, whose condition, in one or two instances Ennistymon, was wretched in the extreme, and could not be surpassed in the extent of misery and neglect by that of the generality of deserted children. As was before stated, those children when discovered are put out to nurse by the church-wardens, and are taken care of by some poor people in the parish, whose conduct deserves great praise for their kindness and attention to them. About *5l.* per annum is allowed for the expenditure of each child. An assessment was levied by the foundling officers (persons who are not remunerated for their trouble, and incur much odium) upon all the inhabitants of the parish. From a feeling that this tax, in consequence of being laid on by the vestry, is connected with church cess, which was universally believed to have been abolished, there has

been for some time a disinclination manifested towards its collection ; and latterly, from the impossibility of realizing the sum required for this purpose in the usual way, one or two benevolent persons have been obliged to advance the requisite sum until the ensuing assizes, when an application would be made to the grand jury to ascertain the course the parochial officers were to pursue with regard to levying the foundling charges. There is no hospital now to which foundlings can be sent from that district; but it was hoped that the children would turn out well, from the attention which has been paid by Archdeacon Whitty to their education ; and it was the reverend gentleman's own opinion that these children are altogether much better taken care of in the present manner than they would be immured within the walls of the Foundling-hospital, where he had every reason to believe they were most shamefully neglected. There were no children there supported by the Protestant Orphan Society, It was the general opinion that some alteration was absolutely necessary in the mode of collecting the money to defray the expense of supporting the foundlings ; and many intelligent persons in that part of the country saw no reason why this tax might not be levied easily together with the other baronial charges.

#### BASTARDY.

#### MUNSTER — COUNTY CLARE.

Examinations taken by P. F. Johnstone, Esq, E. B. Molloy, Esq.

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#### PARISH OF KILDYSART — BARONY OF CLONDERALAW.

PERSONS WHO ATTENDED THE EXAMINATION.—James Bourke, baker ; M. Cahill, a small farmer, with about nine acres ; \*John Carrig, labourer ; Anthony Curry, process-server ; Rev. Michael Dynon, roman catholic curate of Kildysart ; the Rev. Michael Fitzgerald, protestant rector of Kildysart ; Dr. Geary, dispensary physician ; Timothy Gorman, a small farmer, with about 12 acres ; Dennis Hurly, shopkeeper ; \*John Kinnahan, labourer ; Patrick M'Cabe, weaver ; Mark M'Mahon, grocer in the village of Kildysart ; Mr. M'Namara, postmaster, and extensive farmer ; Patrick M'Mahon, farmer, steward to Bindon Scott, esq. ; Michael Myers, a small publican and labourer ; \*Michael O'Brien, labourer ; James O'Dea, broker in the village ; Daniel O'Grady, esq., an extensive gentleman farmer ; Michael O'Shaughnessy, victualler ; Henry Ross Lewin, esq., J. P. ; Serjeant Scott, police Serjeant ; the Rev. P. Sheehy, roman catholic rector of Kildysart

[\*] These three men have no land attached to their cabins ; they take “ much ground”, (con acre) for which they pay from 5*l.* to 8*l.* per acre, according to the quality of the land.

M'Mahon computed the entire number of bastards in the parish to be 40 ; but Mr. Sheehy said that it would be very difficult to ascertain the number exactly. He stated the average amount of illegitimate births to be about four ; and that the crime, though still too frequent, is decidedly on the decrease. The number, however, does not afford a perfect clue to the morality of the parish, as those children only are considered illegitimate who are born out of wedlock. Many instances, however, occur when they are conceived before marriage, which is sometimes hurried on to save the character of the female. The mothers of bastards, in three cases out of four, are farmer's servants, who are particularly exposed to danger from the promiscuous manner in which such servants, both male and female, are obliged, from want , of other accommodation, to sleep together. Farmers' daughters, however, are rarely known to become pregnant from this cause. They are, from their possessing fortunes, more exposed to

another danger, that of abduction ; which has, however, become less common of late years. Bastards are never supported by the parish. Infanticide also is a crime almost unknown. About four years ago a child was found dead at Ballynacally, but it was proved on the inquest that it was still-born. Rev. Mr. Dinan observed, that if ever this crime be committed by a mother, he was convinced that it arose rather from a wish to hide her shame than from any unwillingness to support her own offspring. Several women came to him and asked him to assist them in getting their children out of the fathers' hands, and declared that they would rather beg for them than be deprived of them. Mr. Sheehy stated that there had not been a child deserted within the parish during the last nine years. When the father is in bad circumstances, he generally makes every exertion to elude the claim of the mother ; but of those whose means admit of it, the greater part privately agree with the mother about the maintenance of the child. A feeling of honour very often brings about a marriage ; and a union that takes place under these circumstances is considered to replace a woman very nearly, if not altogether, in her former position.

It is a common practice to apply for wages at the petty sessions, but it is found that no men but the poorest allow matters to go so far as the issuing of a summons against them. Sometimes the women apply privately to the magistrates, and they are advised rather to bring their case before the quarter sessions. This system has been in operation longer than any magistrate present remembered.

Wages are never granted before the birth of the child, because they are looked upon rather as a reimbursement for expenses incurred. When the woman makes her application, the magistrates award her about as much as she could have earned by her usual occupation in the period of time during which she represents herself as having been unable to continue such occupation. As to the amount given in the case of a farm servant, the most usual case of seduction, it was calculated from about 10s. to 15s. a quarter ; but this is subject to variation, in some measure depending on the power of the party to pay. The number of illegitimate children bears each year a decreasing proportion to the number of legitimate births, and as wages are rarely continued beyond the period of weaning, it can hardly be expected that any consideration of their value should have any influence on that ratio. Major Ross Lewin stated, that though cases can be adduced of women having children by different fathers, there were but two instances known where they had been successful in getting decrees for wages, partly because they are entitled to less credit, and partly because it is not probable that a man would enter into a contract involving the maintenance of a child with a woman whose character has been already injured.

No punishment is ever inflicted upon those applying. No difference is made in the amount awarded, on the ground that the woman has had more than one child ; but she finds more difficulty in substantiating her assertion, that a promise or contract had been entered into with her.

No instance was known of a young man evincing an anxiety to marry a young woman for the sake of the wages. These women find the utmost difficulty in procuring husbands, and there is a decided feeling against them, " so much so" added Hurly, " that she is always the last to get a partner at a dance, and nobody will step out with her as long as he can find another." Mr. Sheehy calculated that not more than three out of twelve such women get married to any others than the fathers of their children. There were a few instances, perhaps a dozen, where money given by the wealthy father has succeeded in getting husbands for such girls ; they have all been ill-conducted fellows, too, who have accepted such conditions, and though some of the marriages have, in other respects, turned out happily, yet the man is much looked down upon by his equals. Rev. Mr. Dinan said, he knew several instances, where

small farmers' sons have refused considerable sums held out as an inducement to marry a gentleman's illegitimate sister or daughter ; but still there were other instances where such offers were attended with success.

With regard to the necessary proof at the petty sessions, it is simply required that some contract has been made by the father to support the child, or that he has at any time made a promise to the mother to support it. The mother often swears the child before birth, and makes use of her affidavit afterwards when she brings forward her claim. Her testimony is also considerably enforced, if she can prove that the father has ever given her any money to meet the expenses which she has incurred. The man is always allowed to bring his witnesses to disprove the assertion of the woman, and for this purpose a summons is always served upon him to attend at the petty sessions on a given day. If the woman can prove the promise, the magistrates have no discretionary power to refuse her application ; they can only use additional strictness in examining the witnesses produced.

Should the reputed father be unable or unwilling to pay the amount ordered by the magistrates, they have not the power of inflicting any punishment on him ; they can issue a warrant for the distraint of his goods, but they cannot attach his person, such a jurisdiction belonging exclusively to the court of quarter sessions. The amount given is usually awarded in one sum, but time is often allowed to the father to pay it in instalments, either by the woman herself or at the discretion of the Magistrates. No case known of such a procedure having driven the reputed father to marry the woman.

The acknowledgment by the father is not considered necessary, but it is rarely ever wanted. The point upon which a man usually endeavours to avoid an order for wages is not that he is not the father of the child, but that he has not made any promise or contract. The parish is in no way concerned about the business. Major Ross Lewin said, that women have been frequently known to bring actions for nursing, and have recovered in them. That when they apply in private to the magistrates, they rather advise them to bring their case before the assistant barrister, because even when a contract or promise has not been made, that officer is empowered to adjudicate and to award damages where a loss of time has been incurred. A case which the petty sessions have ceased ever to entertain.

Applications to the quarter sessions are very generally successful, and the expense incurred is but 5s., which is always ordered to be paid by the individual against whom a decree is obtained.

“ When wages are not granted,” said the Rev. Mr. Sheehy, “ the woman with more than one bastard has hardly any other resource than begging ; while she has but one she endeavours, if possible, to support herself by occasional labor ; but she does not obtain it very readily. In certain months she may find work in the fields ; but people are unwilling to admit her into their houses. If she has more than one child, she is too much occupied in the charge of them to be able to earn her livelihood by industry, and she is sure to resort to begging, of which there are four or five instances known here, and sometimes, though rarely, to prostitution.”

The Rev. gentleman described the condition of the unfortunate creatures who are driven to this extremity as deplorable in the extreme. Unable to pay their rent, they are first driven from their cabins ; they then rear a wretched hovel of sods against some ditch, which, as soon as it is discovered by the farmer on whose ground it is, is immediately pulled down, in order to prevent the corruption of his children and of his servants. She then goes to another place, and finds the whole neighbourhood leagued against her ; she is thus compelled to lead a

wretched and vagabond life, and gradually rendered reckless by her suffering and by a consciousness of her degradation, she instructs her children in every kind of vice, and ultimately takes refuge in a town, where she soon terminates her miserable existence. Few of the children of these women outlive the period of infancy ; but if they do, they become the pest of society, and endeavour to make other children as bad as themselves. “ Last Sunday,” said Mr. Dinan, “ on going to a chapel that I have up towards the mountains, I found that such a woman as Mr. Sheehy has described, had erected a hut by the side of the road. I caught her son, a boy of seven years of age, in the act of teaching the most horrible imprecations and acts of the grossest obscenity to a child of only five years old. I chastised the elder boy, and thereby drew down on me the abuse of the mother, who said that her child had a right to do what he liked.”

WIDOWS HAVING FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

PROVINCE OF MUNSTER — COUNTY CLARE.

Examinations taken by P. F. Johnston, Esq.; E. B. Molloy, Esq.

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PARISH OF KILFABBOY, INCLUDING TOWN OF MILTOWN MALBAY,

BARONY OF IBRICKANE.

PERSONS WHO ATTENDED THE EXAMINATION—Andrew Clancy, farmer with 100 acres ; Dr. Costelloe, of the dispensary ; Rev. Andrew Davoran, Protestant rector ; Michael Hehir, innkeeper ; John Keane, a farmer of seven acres ; Mathias Kearney, an extensive farmer ; Rev. P. M’Guane, Roman Catholic curate ; John Maguire, blacksmith ; Daniel M’Knight, weaver ; Thomas Molony, blacksmith ; F. G. Morony, esq., J. P. ; Mr. Morony, postmaster ; Michael Murrough, farmer of 11 acres; Patrick Murrough, land surveyor, and a farmer holding 10 acres ; John Owens, grocer.

Both Kenny and Maguire estimated the number of widows having families of young children, and without any support but their own earnings, at about 30. Clancy said he thought the number is rather greater, for some women may be ranked among this class who have grown up children ; if those children leave their mothers to become farm servants at low wages, and are unable to send any assistance to their families. Murrough said that, speaking from those about him, he would say that they were by far the most wretched portion of the community ; there are none of them who have more than two meals a day, and their poverty in summer often reduces them to one.

The only permanent employment which a widow of this class can find is in spinning or knitting. Maguire, who sometimes purchases the produce of such occupations from them, said, that they never could make more than  $2\frac{1}{2}d.$  or  $3d.$  a day, and that, though willing to work, many of them cannot obtain this pittance from the want of funds to purchase either wool or the necessary implements to work with. “ A shilling,” said he, “ would enable them to begin with, but as for that matter, they may as well want a pound, for they can get neither.”

The Assistant Commissioners found the widow Halloran employed in making a quilt ; she worked eight hours a day, and it would take her a week to finish it, and all she had bargained for was 1s. She said she could do the job sooner if she could work after sunset, but she could not afford a candle. It may thus be estimated what the value of that industry is which could not afford the outlay of one halfpenny on candlelight to pursue it. This poor widow was con-

sidered a dexterous needle woman in her branch, and yet she allowed, herself, that she would be satisfied to work in a farmer's house at it both by daylight and candlelight for her food, and the comforts of a good fire to sit by, without any wages at all. They asked her what would become of her children while she thus laboured gratuitously, and she answered, that whatever the charity of the neighbours gave them would go farther amongst them when she would be absent herself. A man who happened to be standing by, said that he would not give a half-penny a day for what any widow in the parish would be able to earn by the labour of her hands. In fact, every person to whom the Assistant Commissioners spoke upon the subject, said that it was absolutely impossible for any woman to maintain herself and her children by her own exertions. Parochial assistance is unknown ; and the question whether the absentee proprietors, who hold nearly the entire parish, ever contribute to the relief of those who paid them rent, was answered with a laugh that expressed astonishment at the thought of such a thing being entertained. Morrogh, who was a tithe valuator, and knew the circumstances of every holding in the parish, declared that he never knew an instance where a widow was spared either in tithe or rent ; they were unable also to ascertain that a single widow had either ground, or a cabin rent-free ; and several whom they visited appeared, at least in proportion to the misery of their habitations, to pay a higher rent than others in their vicinity.

The shopkeepers do not relieve this class to any extent, beyond the gift of food occasionally, as their means would not afford it ; and Hehir observed that the same may also be said of the resident gentry, who do not amount to more than five or six in number. Keane remarked that the widow of a relative was not considered to have any claim for support ; she may be lightened of one or two children by her friends, but not until they were able to work for their diet.

In common with the rest of the agricultural population, a widow, who does not beg, seeks her only certain means of support in the acquisition of a small piece of con-acre ; but even this she finds difficulty in obtaining, as she cannot find sufficient manure for it, and though paying a high rent, she has no remunerating return. The young men of the neighbourhood will dig her potatoes for her in the autumn, sometimes on a Sunday morning before mass, but it is not usual with them to set them gratuitously. To compass that portion of her tillage, it is not uncommon for a widow who has young children to send two or three of them, day after day, to work for some one of her neigh\* hours in weeding ground or tending cattle ; and for a week's labour of her children in this manner, she considered herself amply repaid by the labour of an able-bodied man for a single day.—(*Molony.*)

Kenny observed, that let the endeavours of a woman of this class be what they may, he knew full well, that there are many days on which she cannot possibly procure sufficient food without appealing to the charity of those about her. Out of regard, however, to her relations, who do not acknowledge her claim upon them, she will do this privately at first ; she will next go to a remote part of the parish : and at length she will not hesitate to go where she thinks she will meet with most success. Mr. Maguire did not think that the demoralization of begging, coupled with necessity, ever led to such an extreme as prostitution ; at least he did not recollect an instance of a widow having an illegitimate child. The influence of mendicancy is often more perceptible on the children than on the mother, for as she considers it to be her interest to carry them about with her as a means of exciting commiseration, they become accustomed to habits of idleness, and from their youth are peculiarly liable to impressions of vice. As they grow up, they are generally able, both males and females, to obtain engagements as farm servants ; but it has been observed, that the latter are the most frequent victims of seduction amongst a class of domestics peculiarly exposed to that danger. Their... offspring, Mr. Maguire considered as likely to prove worse subjects than others, even

under favourable circumstances, and thus he has known the poverty of an individual entail the worst of consequences even on her descendants.

About six widows are to be found among the thirteen persons who participate in the money collected at the Protestant church ; they are all Roman Catholics, and it is not thought that any attempt has ever been made to withdraw them from their faith. It must, at the same time be allowed, that 2*s.* a year, the largest sum received from this fund, does not offer any great temptation to hypocrisy. As to relief given in this manner being a tax on one persuasion for the aid of the poor of another, Mr. Kenny observed, “ that though it might appear so, yet the people of that other persuasion were taxed to raise a church over the heads of the first.”

There was no other poor box besides that alluded to, nor was there any other contribution of any kind known.

Mr. Davoren observed, “ that if he compares the condition of a widow and her family with that of the mother of a bastard, they certainly would find no advantage on the side of the widow. The mother of an illegitimate child will certainly not be placed on the church list, but then that is so small ; and on the other hand, she will generally make out a case that will get her 2*l.* or 3*l.* annual wages ; she finds employment as readily as the widow, or if she thinks proper to beg, her greater assurance will procure her increased gain.”

The good character of the widow may not be taken into account, for, if reduced to mendicancy, she goes, as often happens, to distant places where she will not be known, and will probably be considered of the same stamp as the other. Granting wages to the one and not giving relief to the other, has not had the effect of producing incontinency.

#### IMPOTENT THROUGH AGE

#### MUNSTER — COUNTY CLARE.

Examinations taken by P. F. Johnston, esq. ; E. B. Molloy, esq.

PARISH OF TOMFINLOE, KILNASULLAOH, KILMALEERY AND DRUMLINE.

TOWN NEW-MARKET-ON-FERGUS. — BARONY OF BUNRATTY.

Persons who attended the Examination.—James Brazil, farmer, holding seven acres ; Thomas Carroll, labourer ; Rev. Mr. Coffey, roman catholic curate ; M. Collon, weaver ; Major Creagh, J. P. ; Mary Fitzgerald, a beggarwoman ; Dr. Prazer, dispensary surgeon ; widow Griffey, widow of a labourer ; Mr. Hackney, steward to Sir A. Fitzgerald ; Martin Halpin, labourer, occasionally employed ; Mary Halpin, his wife, always begging in Newmarket ; Michael Keogh and James Gearan, small farmers, holding about 12 acres each ; Rev. Mr. M’Cullagh, rector ; John M’Namara, labourer ; John Mollony, clerk of the petty sessions ; Richard Moloney, a decayed shoemaker ; Henry O’Brien, esq. ; Lucius O’Brien, esq. late M. P. for the county of Clare ; Rev. Mr. O’Brien, roman catholic curate ; Patrick Shields, carpenter.

CARROLL, the labourer, said upon this subject, “ there is many a man in this parish working well, with a hale heart, who is over 60 ; but I always think, and I remember well my old father saying, when he drew nigh his 60th year, that it went hard with him ; and he often thought the day long, and that the sun would never set.” And the Rev. Mr. O’Brien said, “ that he took it as a general rule, that very few will get much employed after 58 years of age.”

Individuals, however, look forward to being supported by their children long previous to that age at which support becomes necessary. Many allow that they have got married in the hope of having children to support them in their old age. The performance of this, a natural duty, is often rendered more obligatory when the parent resigns his land to any of his offspring, which he generally does in successive portions to each of them as they get married, and is at last left to reside with the youngest. The Rev. Mr. Coffey thought that this support is viewed by the children more as an act of duty than as a matter of right. It is cheerfully undertaken by all who are able to afford it ; and many paupers were pointed out to the Assistant Commissioners who were maintaining their parents. The parent generally remains with his youngest child, who inherits his cabin ; and he thus continues to enjoy “ his own bed and board,” to which it appears great attachment is felt. The other children bear their share of the burthen, by contributions of potatoes or other food ; they rarely give money, but sometimes clothes. No relationship beyond that of father or mother is conceived to give a claim, and few persons complain of the assertion of such a claim, however they may feel it ; it would be considered disgraceful to refuse to acknowledge it ; but some have privately confessed to Mr. Coffey that they could not satisfy it without the greatest difficulty.

The condition of many persons in Newmarket is such, that they can afford their own children and themselves a very scanty and uncertain maintenance ; in such cases of course the parents must participate in the common lot. Molony, the decayed shoemaker, has his mother-in-law residing with him. The old woman said that as long as he could work there was no better warrant for giving her all she wanted. He is now sick and unable to earn any thing ; and many a day neither he nor his family would have any thing to eat if she did not go out to beg for him.

Molony, who was present, allowed that this was the truth, and said, though he could not prevent his mother-in-law from begging, yet he never would permit the mother of his children to do so.

Upon this point, the Assistant Commissioners applied to the Rev. Mr. O’Brien, and he handed them a list, containing the names of a vast number of individuals, who he represented to be in a destitute condition ; but the precise number of aged who are without relatives able to support them, they were not successful in procuring. Nevertheless, from the aged persons whom they met begging in Newmarket and its vicinity, they can have no hesitation in saying that they were most numerous. “ Indeed,” observed Halpin, “ the people here have a pride which I perceive nowhere else ; they will sooner starve than allow those belonging to them to go out in search of alms.” The young labouring men do not subscribe to support the aged in general, because many of them are themselves supporting their own relatives. “ But I have no doubt,” said Carroll, “ that if such a thing was set a going, persons unmarried, like myself, would assist as much as we could ;” and Mr. Coffey observed that there was nothing in the world that the young men would not do for the old, if they could afford it. Whenever he knew any thing of a subscription to be made, the young men were always ready to come forward and assist. There are no persons more charitably inclined in the whole district. There does not appear to have ever been any great disposition to emigrate in this part of the country ; and it has recently been considerably checked from the bad news received concerning the ships which had left the port of Limerick. A poor man, however, of the name of John King, whose son emigrated to America about three years ago, received a remittance of 15*l.* from him, which he very judiciously applied in draining and reclaiming a small bog farm, which he held at a very low rent. His efforts were successful, for he is now a thriving, though a small farmer, and attributes his comfortable condition to the assistance which he received from his son ; but he often wishes that he was here to share his prosperity.



M’Namara observed that they do not see many old men begging belonging to this quarter of the country ; but he had no doubt that if they would do so, and if they met with but the average success of beggars in that neighbourhood, they would be better off than those who depend upon their sons, especially if those sons be but labouring men. As old men seldom beg at home, and as they do not give up labour until they have arrived at a time of life when they are badly able to travel to any distance, the unwillingness to beg is asserted on all hands to be very great indeed.

No regular and systematic relief is afforded by the gentry to the aged and infirm on their estates ; but at the same time, much desultory aid is given by the resident landlords and their families. Many poor persons bore testimony to the benevolent disposition of Lady O’Brien and Mrs. Studdart ; but still, except in seasons of scarcity, no general assistance has been offered to the great body of the poor, who are often in a state of destitution.

As to the point, whether persons refuse to contribute, Mr. Coffey stated, that some years ago there was a great dearth of provisions, and subscriptions were successfully entered into throughout the parish for procuring meal and other necessaries for the poor ; that he applied to a barrister who at that time drew upwards of 500*l.* a year out of the parish, and was that moment receiving his rents at the inn, and solicited his contribution, but that he met with a refusal ; he represented to the gentleman that on his property, which was leased to Major Creagh, many of the occupying tenants were in the most abject distress. “ That is nothing to me,” answered he ; “ tell Major Creagh to get rid of them ; I shall not give them any thing.” Mr. Coffey could not get any other answer.

There is no particular age for putting persons upon congregational lists. The collections are divided amongst those who are the greatest objects, and who are considered the most destitute. It is considered far more respectable to be thus supported than to be begging ; and it is regarded as a reward for those who are destitute, and who have led an industrious and respectable life. There are 30 individuals in all on the congregational list belonging to the church. In 1833, the sum of 29*l.* was collected, and distributed as follows :

Two protestants received 30*s.* each, and the remainder was equally divided among 28 roman catholics.

The Rev. Mr. M’Cullagh stated, that he relies principally upon Sir A. Fitzgerald, Lady O’Brien, Mrs. Studdart and Mrs. Creagh, for recommending objects worthy to be placed upon this list. Those who are at present thus assisted are all either widows or old men unable to work.

There are no almshouses in the neighbourhood. Mr. Coffey observed, that as to these poor persons thus relieved, the rent of their cabins absorbs all they get, and it is as much as they can do to procure the bare necessaries of life. It was the unanimous opinion of all the persons present, that it would be quite impossible, at the present low rate of wages, for any man with a moderate sized family, working as hard and as many days as he could, to save any part of his earnings. “ I know what it is,” said M’Namara, “ for a hard-working man to make both ends of the week meet. When I was first married, I endeavoured to lay by something, and though I was enabled to save some little trifle the first two years, I found it could not last long. I had, soon three children, and sickness overtook me one day, and kept me in bed three weeks, and all the little savings I had, soon went in supporting the wife and children during that time.” It was agreed on all hands, that there were few men who could make a little money go so far as M’Namara. He is considered one of the most independent labourers, and one of the most honest men in that part of the country. No person present could remember an

instance of any poor labourer having thus saved with effect. All agreed in saving that there should be some provision for the impotent poor ; and the majority agreed that no danger could arise out of any such provision. Many were of opinion that something like the Mendicity in Limerick and Ennis, or a workhouse for a district, such as a petty session district, would be a desirable and economical arrangement. Several opinions were delivered on this subject, which will be found in another part of the evidence.

#### SICK POOR

#### PROVINCE OF MUNSTER — COUNTY CLARE.

Examinations taken by P. F. Johnston, Esq. ; E. B. Molloy, Esq.

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#### PARISHES OF ABBEY AND OUGHTMANAGH — BARONY OF BURREN.

Persons who attended the Examination.—Patrick M'Dermott, farmer ; M. Grilloghy, weaver ; John Finn, tailor ; John Hehir, carpenter ; Connor Hogan, 9 retired shopkeeper ; John Hynes, corn dealer, and occupier of 200 acres ; John Hynes, junior, farmer ; Patrick Norton, serjeant of police ; Peter O'Loughlin, labourer ; Thaddeus Salmon, farmer ; Thomas Scanlan, farmer ; William Scanlan, schoolmaster.

The sick poor of these parishes are totally unprovided for. From their landlords they do not even obtain the questionable assistance of a dispensary to supply them with medicine.

Any other relief in that quarter is not even looked for, from the experience they have had of late years. Mr. Hynes said, that a collection of 30*s.* was made last harvest among the farmers for the relief of the sick, and those who had been the greatest sufferers by cholera ; these 30*s.* were the only sums spent upon the poor since the receipt of the subscriptions from England in the year 1822. When a case of particular distress occurs, the Roman Catholic clergyman makes it the subject of an appeal at the chapel, and in this manner he sometimes gets 4*s.*, but never more than 9*s.*, which he gives to the family at intervals. This, however, will not support a family which is deprived of the exertions of its head, and in many cases the members of it have no alternative but temporary mendicancy in order to avoid starvation. Hehir observed, that the neighbours may send as much milk and perhaps meal to these poor people as will make a drink for the sick man, but never enough for his family, who are obliged to shift for themselves. There is no loan fund of any kind in that parish. As to the feelings of the poor upon the subject of infection, it was stated, that though they are not devoid of fear with respect to contagious diseases, yet those who have relations are never left altogether without attendance ; strangers, however, such as farm servants, who are often the children of mendicants, when attacked with fever, have nothing to expect but to be placed in a hovel built of sods for the purpose with water within their reach, but with no friend to help them to it—(*Hynes.*)

The annual amount of wages which a man earns (6*d.* a day for five or six months in the year) would not, even if paid in money, which is rarely the case, enable him to save any thing to meet the chance of illness. The Assistant Commissioners entered, without selection, a house, in which a woman was lying sick ; she was alone in her cabin, and though evidently labouring under the effects of an unfavourable confinement, was endeavouring to nurse her child. She said that her husband, not being able to get any con-acre, could not provide more than food for the day ; and that when her labour approached, she had nothing but 5*s.*, which he had borrowed among her friends ; 2*s.* 6*d.* of that was gone to the priest for churching her,

and the remainder to the midwife who attended her. All the time that she was sick, she had nothing but potatoes to eat and water to drink, and her child has a rupture from its birth, and no doctor has ever seen either her or it. There was only a broken door without hinges to the hut in which this woman lay, and her husband had plaited a mat of rushes, which he had suspended from the roof by her bed-side, to intercept the keen blast. It was the opinion of Mr. Hynes, who was perfectly qualified to judge, from the success of his own judicious operations in agriculture, that no man under the system of tillage at present pursued by the poor, could save for sickness or any other contingency, if he had less than 10 acres of ground ; and that even such a man must be near the sea-shore for the advantage of sea-manure ; the holders of less than that are but a step above the labourers.

This parish is not only without a dispensary, but is not even included in the district of a dispensary. The nearest institution of the kind is at Kilfinora, 16 miles distant. The witnesses all thought that it would be most desirable that some relief in food and fuel should be extended to the sick poor ; but as there was no surgeon nor any person of leisure in the parish to superintend the distribution of such assistance, they were unable to suggest how it could be done, without danger of deceit and encouragement to idleness.

With regard to the effects of a short illness upon the comforts of the labourer, thereby rendering him reckless, it was observed by Mr. Hynes, that sickness at all times adds more or less permanently to the misery of the lower and labouring classes : but that here, where there is employment merely during part of the year, the season in which there is generally most disease, unfortunately coincides with that in which there is the greatest chance of finding work, viz. autumn, and until potato digging has terminated in November. The consequence was, that many see their only chance of earning a few shillings, pass by without being able to take advantage of it, and after having recovered slowly, they are rendered reckless and dispirited, finding their situation so much more destitute than it had been. Mr. Hynes remarked, that a very small outlay, as much in many cases as would render unnecessary the premature sale of the poor man's pig to provide for the pressing wants of illness, would prevent that worst of changes in a man depending on his labour ; namely, from cheerful industry to hopeless indifference, and that at the same time there would be no danger of encouraging improvidence, because here he has no means of saving whilst in health.

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