

Parochial Inquiry Galway 1835

PROVINCE OF CONNAUGHT — COUNTY GALWAY.

Examinations taken by Francis Diggins, Esq. ; W. T. M'Callagh, Esq.

PARISH OF TUAM—TOWN OF TUAM—BARONY OF CLARE.

Impotent Through Age.

Evidence of his Grace the Archbishop of Tuam, written by himself.

THE collections made at the Protestant places of worship are distributed among the Protestant poor generally, at the selection of the minister. I know nothing of contribution and distribution of other places denominated places of worship. Landlords, according to their means in many instances, assist in the way of charity their poor or sickly tenantry, in the first instance ; and the indigent resident upon their estates, in the next ; but tenants holding direct from the landlord, *in capite*, are not often reduced to extreme poverty. Men are fully capable of working at 65, and even beyond that age, if in health.

The head of a family feels a right to be supported by those members of his family to whom he gives over his land, if he holds under a lease ; but if he is a tenant at will, it depends upon the person's feelings who stepped into his place, and becomes the tenant of the holding.

It is not the disposition of the Irish to cast off their aged and infirm parents, if they have the means of supporting them. The support of the aged falls, as a matter of duty, upon the nearest relatives. Children do not feel aggrieved by having the sole support of their parents. I have known the parent to go from one daughter to another for support ; but if there is a son, the parent usually resides with him. The relatives of the aged are often in a condition which would not enable them to afford sufficient subsistence to them ; but they always get from their children a part of what is going.

Very few are supported by going from one neighbour to another. There are no subscriptions for their support from the young men of the neighbourhood.

When the children are out of employment, and the store of provisions exhausted, begging must ensue. When children are in employment at a distance, they generally send money to their parents for their support. I have known money to be sent from America for that purpose. The country poor have a great dislike to begging, and of course would and do suffer many privations before they resort to this alternative for support

The gentry have no regular subscriptions raised among them for the support of the infirm. The landlords look to the poor resident upon their own estates. Absentees are not so liberal as resident landlords, although in general they are more wealthy ; but I think there is an improvement of late years.

Persons are put on the poor list, not from being too old to labour ; but by reason of their being unable to support themselves, whether young or old. The poorest are generally selected. It is considered less degrading to be supported by the congregational collections than by begging. I do not think that the infirm are able to obtain more than is barely sufficient for the necessaries of life, unless perhaps a little tobacco. They generally divide whatever money they get with the rest of the household.

There are no almshouses in this part of the country.

I am sure that, considering the wages a labourer obtains, it would be utterly impossible for him to make any provision for the wants of old age.

I think the feeling of the parish would be averse to anything in the way of regular support. The very upper classes might not be so, provided the redundant population was supplied with regular work.

Evidence of Dr. M'Hale, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Tuam, written by himself.

Amongst the agricultural population, the heads of families feel a right to their support, when aged, as proper possessors of the land occupied by the family. The support of the old usually devolves upon the younger branches of the family, or nearest relatives; their maintenance may frequently press heavily upon those whose means are far from adequate to their own wants; the pressure is lightened, however, by a sense of dutiful affection. A child, upon whom the burthen of a parent's support falls, feels sorely aggrieved, not at sharing what he has with his aged parent, but because the cursed laws that alienated the treasures of the poor, leave him nought wherewith to relieve his aged parents.

Those who have not relatives able to support them, go from one neighbour to another for food and lodging.

They sometimes receive money from friends who have emigrated to the colonies.

The comparative comfort of those who are maintained by their children, and those who maintain themselves by mendicancy, depends upon the means of the young relatives, who are themselves often more destitute than the vagrants, but are detained from a feeling of delicacy from going to beg.

The gentry scarcely ever subscribe regularly for their support; even in the seasons of appalling distress, (1832 and 1831,) there were individuals of large fortunes who did not subscribe one shilling.

There are, however, some splendid exceptions. From what has been already stated, the burthen it appears is thrown, in time of distress, by the affluent gentry on their poorer but more benevolent neighbours. Orders are often issued by the proprietors of large mansions, not to suffer such a nuisance at a beggar to approach their gates. I could name the persons, but it would be invidious to do so; such individuals should be forced by law to give what their inhumanity refuses.

There are no almshouses. They disappeared with the introduction of the establishment that has continued to devour all the pious resources that fed those charitable institutions. It is unnecessary, therefore, to notice the other interrogatories which relate to them.

The general opinion throughout the country is favourable to a provision for the poor, in case such burthen do not fall upon those classes that are already taxed with their support. Those who hesitate on the subject, do so from an apprehension, firsts that the morality of the poor might be injured, and, secondly, that such provision would aggravate the burthen of the middle classes, whilst the higher, as now, might be relieved from the onus of supporting the poor. With regard to the first objection, the circumstances of Ireland and England are different, and therefore it does not follow that the evils produced in the one should necessarily be the consequence of the introduction of a legal provision for the poor in the other. I allude (and

I do so without meaning offensive controversy) to the religious feelings of both nations regarding certain points of morality. Where the horror entertained for any vice will not be great, it is not to be supposed that it will be so scrupulously avoided as when it is looked upon as productive of the greatest imaginary misery. Now, it is a matter of notoriety that incontinence is regarded by the Catholic peasantry of Ireland with tenfold horror to what it is by the Protestant people of England ; and, therefore, though in one country the system of poor laws might tend to increase that crime, it does not follow that it would be productive of similar consequences in the other. As to the second objection, it is well founded, since it has been uniformly found that the pressure of the taxes in Ireland generally fell upon the middle classes.

It is in vain to make a provision for the poor, unless the property of the absentees and the church lands are almost exclusively taxed with the amount, otherwise such a provision would be no relief ; all that would be gained by taxing the industrious classes would be to make that compulsory which is now voluntary, to create unthankfulness in the minds of those in whom now there is gratitude, and to make those give with grudging hearts who now give with the grace of a free voluntary offering ; such an exchange would be a serious loss ; but if the properties of the absentees are taxed, and the church lands be re-appropriated to their original destination, the relief of the poor ; the feelings of gratitude on the one hand, and of kindness on the other, will be left unimpaired, whilst a large fund, now lying idle, will be applied to the support of the people.

Able-Bodies Out OF Work.

PROVINCE OF CONNAUGHT — COUNTY GALWAY.

Examinations taken by Francis Diggins, Esq. ; W. T. M'Cullagh, Esq.

PARISH OF KILCREEST — BARONIES OP DUNKELLIN AND LOUGHREA.

Persons who attended the Examination.—Mr. Andrew Barrett, farmer, Patrick Cassidy, schoolmaster ; John Coy, small farmer ; Robert D'Arcy, esq. ; Mr. Richard Gloster, shop-keeper ; Michael Grady, mason ; John Griffin, weaver ; Martin Kenny, labourer ; John Lally, nailer ; Peter Leonard, weaver ; James Mac Tighe, baker ; Michael Mahon, farmer ; Rev. Patrick Mullins, Catholic rector ; Terence O'Loughlin, beggar ; William Rogers, esq. Caramina ; John Sharpe, carpenter ; F. Shaughnessy esq. ; John Saughnessy, small farmer ; Michael Smyth, small farmer.

There is a general deficiency of work, for nearly three months of every year, in this parish, during which time very few of the labourers can get any employment ; there are many days of winter in which a man could not work, he would be prevented by the inclemency of the weather. “ I am a road contractor, and employ a great many ; in my own private work, I employ three men every day, both winter and summer ; I sometimes employ twelve ; on an average six men each day would not do me ; during the other nine months there is plenty of work, and no man need be idle ; I am often obliged to give 10*d.* or 1*s.* a day to induce them to work ; 8*d.* is the standard of wages,”—(*Richard Gloster.*)

I am half the year idle, sitting by the fire, and would not get 5*d.* a day ; I would be glad to work at 6*d.* a day, if I got it, but where is the man to give it ?”—(*John Coy.*) “ In the village there is much more work for labourers than in the country places, for in the country every man does his own work, except the gentlemen.”—(*M. Grady.*) “ I could get a regiment for you of able-bodied men, who do not get six months' work ; I pay my rent in labour, and get no work, except on odd days, from any one else.”—(*John Coy.*) “ Those who live near the

landlord's house generally work their rent."—(*P. Cassidy*.) "Work in my trade is very slack ; we could not grumble at the prices, if we got enough to do ; the weavers here are generally at work ; but each of us spend six days at two days' work, and I will tell you why : if I have a piece in the loom, and no other work in the house, I will not finish it off, because it would leave my loom empty, and I would be apparently without work ; it is thought a great disgrace for a tradesman to be unemployed, and it injures him in many ways, it would be the means of keeping more work from him. A tradesman would think it a disgrace to work at any thing except his own business ; he would not be asked to do any other work ; he would be thought insufficient ; a man in full work would earn from 1*s.* to 2*s.* a day, but the work is not in it ; and if any of us who are able to buy yarn, bought it, we might be long enough striving to sell it when woven. Half the weavers in the parish do not earn 1*s.* a day. Thirty years ago, there were as many weavers as houses in Kilcreest ; many houses had four looms ; there are now only 10 weavers. From March till August trade is middling ; many a man at that time will be glad to hire a journeyman to help to pay off the debts he contracted at other times ; some keep two looms for that purpose, and that they may rear their sons to the trade. Many a poor child is injured by it, and kept afterwards in poverty all his life. The father puts him to his own trade that he might assist in rearing the rest of the family. If the father was able to pay fees, and to put him to another trade, he would be well off, but might do nothing for the family."—*Griffith*.

"The labourers are supported, during the slack season, chiefly by con-acre ; they pay 10*l.* an acre for it ; there is some to be had for 8*l.*, but there are two chances to one that he will throw it up to the landlord, the crop may be so bad, and be content to lose his time, seed and labour."—(*John Sharpe*.)

"There is not general employment in this country during half the year ; there is no employment given to the labourers except by some few, by one or two gentlemen."—(*D'Arcy*.)

"They can see the cow come to their door, but they cannot get the comfort of a bit of butter for three months in the year." (*Cassidy*.)

"Many men, during last July, had to live on one scanty meal in the 24 hours."—(*Griffith*.)—"If they eat either the little pig or the butter, they must go naked."—(*Kenny*.)

"They must keep the pig to pay for the con-acre ; one-fourth of them do not pay their con-acre rent in labour, they must pay in ready money ; the farmers sometimes take work, but the landlords never do."—(*Michael Kane*.)

"In the scarce time they often work for 6*d.* a day, and many spend another day looking for their hire ; and when potatoes are 3*d.* or 4*d.* a stone, that will go a short way in supporting a family."—(*Griffin*.)

"Many were obliged to pledge their clothes in the pawn-office at Loughrea last July, and were not able to go to mass for want of them."—(*James M'Tighe*.)

"I wanted a labouring man for a day last year, and his wife had to come the night before for the price of his breakfast, or he could not work,"—(*Cassidy*.)—"I walked most part of Ireland, and I think they are prouder and higher spirited here, than in any part I have been in ; and more disinclined to beg."—(*Griffin*.) "I have known the wives and children of unemployed labourers to be obliged to beg for an entire month ; if they had not done so, they should steal or starve. The labourer himself did not beg, he would be ashamed." — (*M.Kenny*.)

“ There is no loan fund in this neighbourhood ; in the lower part of the county the arch-bishop has one established.”—(*Cassidy*.)—“ Before now the landlords used to give provisions on credit to their tenants, but now they do not.”—(*Griffin*.)—“ Every man here would rather half starve than go to gaol.”—(*Griffin*.)

“ When a man is out of provisions, if he can procure solvent security, he will get potatoes on credit, by promising to pay 4*d.*, when, if he had ready money, he would get them for 1½*d.* or 2*d.* a stone ; that is the way the poor of this place live.”—(*Griffin*.)

“ They would promise anything rather than starve.”—(*Shaughnessy*.)—“ They may say, when in want, that they will rob and steal, but they will not do it after.”—(*Kenny*.)

“ I am employed throughout the year at 9*d.* a day ; I am a ploughman ; only for that I would not get more than 6*d.* part of the year ; being a ploughman, I am often employed when there is no work for labourers ; I do not know any man in this place who is so constantly at work as I am. I have a wife and three children ; I support my mother-in-law ; I am not able to save anything.”—(*Kenny*.) “ Many men go to England from this place. This year about 40 went to Leinster ; they go for the purpose of earning something to bring to help them at home : the night they come home, there may be half-a-dozen watching them, each expecting to get part of what is due to him ; one for con-acre, another for house-rent, and another for provisions given on credit, and so on.”—(*Cassidy*.)—“ The greater portion of the people are always in debt ; there is not one in twenty, who, if he paid his debts, would have the price of his supper.”—(*Coy*.) “ Starvation does not cause disturbance or outrage ; when a man is turned out of his holding, and another put in instead of him, revenge and sickness of heart cause crime.”—(*Kenny*.) “ When everything a man has is canted from him, he is put out ; a hungry belly makes a man think of things he ought not, and do what otherwise he would not—”(*Griffin*.)

“ I knew of many potato-pits being opened, and a stone, or from that to three taken out of them,”—(*Shaughnessy*.)—“ I saw many that were opened, and never saw one from which more than two or three stones were taken.”—(*Mahon*.)—“ I believe the general quantity taken from the pit is from four to six stones ; I am sure that nothing but sheer want would cause them to do it They often dig them out of the earth in small quantities, perhaps not more than a stone and half, and that at night too, when I am convinced that nothing short of starvation could drive them to it.”—(*Mullens*.)—“ The fact is this, the creatures are ashamed to beg, and unless it is sent to them by their neighbours, they must do something for it ; if they were half starving they would scarcely beg.”—(*Cassidy*.)—“ Help is often sent from one neighbour’s house to another, where he knows there is want, without waiting to be asked for it ; last year I was paying 5*d.* a stone for potatoes, and I sent a basket of them to one whom I knew to be in distress ; and I thought it more charity to do that than to give them to a beggar who would not be ashamed to ask from any one.”—(*Griffin*.)—“ Numbers of this class would go to America, if they got any help : they would not say they would like to go because it would disoblige the gentlemen ; but they would almost all like to go, there is such a report here of the diet being so clever beyond.”—(*Griffin*.)—“ They would be industrious if it was in their power ; if you offered 10*d.* a day, you would get 300 men willing to take it ; 8*d.*, without diet, is the general wages given.”—(*D’Arcy*.)

“ I think Kilcreest, relatively speaking, is not worse off than any of the labouring parishes ; I know this county these thirty years.”—(*Gloster*.)

“ I think this parish is better off than the surrounding ; the appearance of the outside of the houses in the others may be somewhat better, but I think, if examined closely, that, on the whole, this parish is the best off.”—(*Griffin*.)

“ Tenants find it very difficult to make up the rents now ; my tenants are, comparatively, comfortable ; they hold from seven to twenty acres each, with the exception of four, three of whom hold only half an acre each, and the other about two acres and a half ; they do not pay their rent regularly or well ; they pay much worse than they used ; I think it is owing to the low price of produce.”—(*Rogers.*)

“ Of a market-day you would see 20 or 30 families passing through this village, going from one market to another collecting potatoes.”—(*Gloster.*)

“ If the markets get a sudden rise, instead of being a benefit to the poor, they are then worse off than ever. I do not call the man who has grain to sell poor ; by the poor man I mean the man who depends on a quarter or half an acre of con-acre potatoes for food for his family ; I call him poor when he must pay 10*l.* an acre for that, and be walking about idle when he should be labouring.”—(*Griffin.*)

“ Mechanics and tradesmen are much better off than the labourers ; but they too sometimes see want. The county of Mayo would give beggars to the whole nation.”—(*Barrett.*)—“ I have been often in the county of Mayo, and I know that many of its inhabitants go out to beg, and leave their land tilled after them, and sometimes their cows.”—(*Cassidy.*)—“ The Eoor of this county go to other counties, so that there is a regular exchange.”—(*D’Arcy.*)—“ There is a small farm (10 acres) in this neighbourhood, set at 4*l.* 10*s.* an acre ; there is a cottier on it who pays 6*l.* for a quarter of an acre, with a small house on it”—(*Kenny.*)—“ Must I not, to-morrow, if turned out of my holdings, go to beg, though I can live very middling as long as I am left in it.”—(*Mahon.*)—“ The general food of the peasant is dry potatoes ; he sometimes may have a herring or a drop of milk ; it is a melancholy truth that they can rear the pig, but they cannot eat the bacon.”—(*Cassidy.*)—“ Nothing would cause a man or his family to go out of his cabin but hunger. The time was, when, if a man wanted the making of a cart, he need but go to his landlord and ask it ; and now, if a man is known to cut a thorn he will be fined for it ; firing is very scarce here; we must go three miles for turf.”—(*Griffin.*)

Vagrancy.

PROVINCE OF CONNAUGHT COUNTY GALWAY.

Examinations taken by Francis Diggins, Esq. ; W. T. M’Cullagh, Esq.

PARISH OF HEADFORD BARONY OF CLARE.

Persons who attended the Examination—John Boronghes, labourer ; Joseph Botherill, steward to Mr. St. George ; John Burke, esq. ; Rev. J. Fitzgerald, P. P. ; Dr. Hartnett ; Dr. Kelly ; James Lynch, postmaster ; Rev. J. Mara, Protestant rector ; John O’Flaherty, esq. ; John Ryan labourer ; R. J. Manseragh St. George, esq. Headfort Castle ; Mr. Jamieson, merchant ; Lawrence Toole, carman ; Rev. P. Walsh, P. P.

The precise number of vagrants in this parish is not ascertainable ; I think, however, that it is rather on the decrease ; I attribute this to the comparatively few county of Mayo labourers who now go to England for work.—(*Mr. St. George.*) In the parish of Killersa there are not twenty regular beggars ; there are not half the number now that there was about ten years ago. Six or seven call at my house daily, on an average, to get potatoes.—(*Mr. Burke.*) Poverty has been decreasing these last twenty years ; last year, I think, it was stationary, owing to the great reduction in the prices of agricultural produce.—(*Mr. St. George.*) I think that the comforts of the people are increasing steadily, though slowly, for the last forty years.—

(Mr. *Burke*.) The price of labour is more equalized than it was, and there is not so great an induce-ment to emigrate for work as there was formerly ; the wives and children of those who left home in search of work, used invariably to leave their own part of the country and beg.—(Mr. *St. George*.) There is a greater quantity of agricultural employment, and a greater number of persons employed ; and, though the price of labour is less than it was seven or eight years ago, I think there is more general comfort.—(*Christopher Jamieson*.) There is more tillage, and the land being better tilled now than it used to be, produces more ; but the increase of the quantity is not sufficient to make amends for the fall in the prices ; and only that we have a good landlord, who gives an abatement in the rent, we would be worse off than we were before.—(*John Burke*.) There are not more than twenty public beggars in this town.—(*Rev. Mr. Walsh*.)

The greater part of the beggars, who are residents in the parish, come from the neighbourhood of the lake ; the landlord of that district is a non-resident ; they can obtain little or no employment, and their land pays a very high rent.—(*Mr. Walsh*.) In proportion as they increase the quantity of tillage, their poverty increases ; the land is very bad, and they are not able to procure manure to till it properly.—(*St. George*.) It is rough pasture land, and, when tilled, becomes exhausted immediately, but their poverty is so great that they cannot afford to consider the consequences of breaking it up.”—(*O’Flaherty*.) Many of the families who reside on it have not one whole blanket ; scarcely any of them have a second.”—(*Walsh*.) They half starve themselves, that they may have the means of paying their rent. If they did not pay it, the land would, of course, be taken from them, and then they must beg, rather than do which, many of them would submit to almost any privation.—(*Fitzgerald*.) There were more beggars here formerly, but many of them having got employment, are now tolerably comfortable—(*Chr. Jamieson*.) many who are snug enough in winter, must walk out with the bag on their back in summer.—(*Thornton*.) There are about fifty families (who are ashamed to beg) supported by their neighbours during the summer.—(*Rev. Mr. Walsh*.) Vagrants are more numerous after seed time, than at any other time of the year, because at that time the men leave home in search of work, and the wives and families go out to beg. There are some resident paupers, but the great majority come from a distance ; they are of all ages and sexes, but principally women and children, because the men generally go far from home to procure work. Very few from this parish go to beg after having planted their potatoes ; the wives or children of employed labourers are never known to beg, at least in this parish. Mechanics and unemployed servants are often reduced to beggary, but very few of the cottier tenants of this place are ; when they are, I am sure they would prefer going to a strange place, where they would not be known ; some few, who when old and infirm, have transferred their property to their children have been obliged to adopt a vagrant life ; all who leave this parish to go to England to work take what will bear their expenses with them ; very few go, and those who do, go more on speculation than from necessity.—(*Mr. St. George*.) “ There are some able-bodied resident beggars, but the greater number are strangers ; the residents are from that part of the parish near the lake.—(*Mr. Burke*.) The strangers are generally from the mountainous and country districts of Mayo.

The principal causes of vagrancy are the low prices of agricultural produce and the minute subdivision of land.—(*Mr. St. George*.) Those, along with the high rents.—(*Mr. Burke*) They are all ashamed of begging, and none would do it from choice.—(*Mr. St. George*.) None would beg at home from choice, but they would go to strange places to beg when they were really in no want.—(*Jas. Lynch*.) If the children of vagrants could get employment, they would accept of it ; they would hire at fifteen shillings a year, rather than continue begging, when others of the same size and strength would get from 30s. to 40s.

An able-bodied beggar would get from one to two stones of potatoes in the day, and are often able, by exerting themselves, to procure more than they can consume, indeed I may say

they always do this, for they are generally able to sell some, and often have gold and silver sewed up in their rags. Some receive relief from passengers, but they are generally town beggars, rather than country vagrants. Beggars get very little meal ; there is no rule as to the quantity, but generally those who have large families get more.—(Mr. *Burke*.)

They generally purchase clothes, tobacco and soap for the money they receive for the surplus of their collections.—(Mr. *O'Flaherty*.) They do not purchase good clothes, for that would destroy their trade and uniform. They do not often dissipate during their vagrancy, but generally reserve it till they return home ; I have no doubt but some few are induced to leave home and beg, hoping to return with large sums of money. I knew a woman from this country to go to the county of Kilkenny during a season in which potatoes were very dear there, and very cheap here ; on being asked why she did not stay at home, where potatoes were plenty, she answered, ‘ They are not worth gathering at home, they are so cheap.’ I have known many who have returned home comparatively rich. A man from the mountains of Joyce Country, a miserable object, for the last two summers has made a descent into this part of the country, frequenting Tuam, Headford, and Shruel markets ; he was not in much extreme want as to require the produce of his begging for his support, but laid out the amount of his first summer’s tour, nearly 3*l.* in the purchase of sheep, to stock his father’s holding ; though I have not ascertained the amount of this year’s produce, I believe it to be at least equal. I believe this is not uncommon ; it is not usual to beg under the plea of being in search of work. Dirty clothes and filthy appearances, are often assumed by promised beggars, especially in towns ; if they do not produce sores they certainly maintain them.—(Mr. *St George*.) Strangers, sometimes, use deceptions, but residents do not.—(Mr. *Burke*.) I knew many instances of persons pretending to be lame or otherwise disabled ; I saw one man at the fair of Tuam who had his hand tied up, and in a sling ; he kept it so the whole day, but in the evening had a verbal dispute with a countryman, who struck him with a stick ; on being struck, he immediately drew his arm from the sling, snatched the stick, and gave the countryman a most unmerciful beating.—(Dr. *Hartnet*.) Lying, forged recommendations, and many such expedients are resorted to by a particular species of beggars, generally called ‘ decayed gentlemen or women ;’ I never knew of persons having deaf or dumb children, having refused to allow them to be taken to an asylum for those so afflicted ; but I often knew them to take such children about in the wet and cold, without a sufficiency of clothing, in order to excite pity.—(Mr. *St George*.) I have frequently known vagrants to lead a dissolute life, but it is not by any means general ; they are very seldom concerned in outrage, and never (to my knowledge) in assassinations ; they often commit small thefts, or rather pilferings ; but never robberies to any extent. The agricultural vagrant who is in search of work would gladly emigrate ; but the professed beggar would not. In this parish vagrants never borrow or hire children ; but I have known instances of bastard children being placed by their fathers under the care of vagrant nurses.”—(Mr. *St George*.)

I never knew a case of death from starvation, nor do I believe that one ever took place in this parish, though many have contracted diseases, such as low typhus fevers, from the badness and scarcity of their food ; of which they eventually died.”

An able-bodied man could not collect as much by begging as he would earn by his labour, though a miserable wretched-looking object might collect much more.—(Mr. *St George*.) The vagrant is a great deal better fed than the labourer.—(William King.)

When giving potatoes, the character of the applicant is never inquired into ; but if giving money more caution would be used. I do not think the prevalence of private charity is prejudicial to the morals of the labouring classes ; there are many whom it would be impossible to bring to a steady mode of life ; but I think the great majority of able-bodied men would gladly adopt it ; very few become vagrants in preference to remaining labourers ; I should

almost say none ; I knew only one instance of a vagrant refusing work when offered him.—(Mr. *St George*.) An able-bodied man would work for his food rather than beg ; I have known many do so in scarce seasons.—(Rev. *Mr. Fitzgerald*.)

A vagrant is never refused lodging by the poor cottier or householder.—(Mr. *Burke*.) The relief given generally consists of potatoes at Christmas, or in case of sickness, a little meal is sometimes given ; and at fairs and markets small coin by those in better circumstances ; buttermilk is generally given to the beggars.—(Mr. *St George*.) I think it is highly prejudicial to the poor to give lodging to beggars ; it causes dirt, and brings on fever. They often circulate false reports, and excite rebellious feelings.—(Mr. *O'Flaherty*.) Farmers always prefer giving food, because there is no coin of so low a value as to represent a potato, and because they always have plenty of potatoes, and often have no money ; beggars always prefer money, for they take the raw potato only with the view of converting it into money.—(Mr. *St. George*.)

In giving alms they do not limit themselves to any certain quantity ; when potatoes are scarce, they give two or three, when plenty, ten or twelve.—(William *King*.) Persons of every class, from proprietors down to farmers, have a number of dependents, who are chiefly supported by them.—(Mr. *Burke*.) Four beggars make this their walk on market days, and receive assistance from shopkeepers. I would rather divide among a large number than take the entire support of a smaller number.—(James *Lynch*.)

The support of the vagrant falls principally on the small farmer and shopkeeper, though all classes contribute something ; the farmer and shopkeeper are more open to the vagrant than the richer classes are.—(Mr. *St. George*.) The beggar calls oftener at the poor man's house, than at the rich man's, and is oftener sent away empty by the rich.—(William *King*.) The rich give rather to certain known objects than to common vagrants.—(Dr. *Kelly*.) The poorer-classes give away more, in proportion to their means, than the rich do. The charity of the richer classes is exerted more in employing more workmen than they require than in giving alms.—(Mr. *St. George*.) The poor give ten times as much as the rich, in proportion to their means.—(Dr. *Kelly*.) Persons renting only one acre, and even day labourers, give relief to the beggar, if they have it.—(Mr. *St. George*.)

A beggar often collects more than he requires for his support ; but this never leads to a waste of provisions, as they always sell the surplus, generally to poor persons who have a little money, but are in want of provisions.—(Mr. *St. George*.) Persons have, I believe, often given away in the earlier part of the year so much as to leave themselves afterwards in want.—(Mr. *St. George*.)—I have known poor persons, who were buying provisions to give more away than the persons from whom they bought.” —(Mr. *James Lynch*.)

I consider that I would be in greater want if I gave none away than if I gave a great deal away, for I think that charity never shortens the quantity.—(William *King*.)—I believe the feeling of charity to cause a wasteful and irregular expenditure of what might otherwise go to add to the comforts of the labourer.—(Mr. *St. George*.)—If a meal was going on, and a beggar called, you would never miss what you would give away. I gave away, myself, part of the cake made of a quart of meal, to a beggarman, and at the time I had no more victuals in my house, nor the hope of getting it to earn the next day ; but I hoped that as God gave it to me that day he would give some more the next day.—(Wm. *King*.)—The shopkeepers and farmers would object to payment of a regular sum, even though small ; and say they did not feel the small outgoings of provisions, &c., which they now give towards the support of the poor.—(Mr. *St George*.)

Relief is sometimes given lest the person applying might be suffering from hunger ; it is often extorted by importunity, but is generally given because it is the custom of the country.

—(Mr. *St George*.) When I give I do so for the good of my soul, the honour of God, and for their benefit. When you say there is nothing for them they will go away, except the sturdy beggars.—(William King.) I think that religious feelings would induce many to relieve a beggar, even at the door of a poor-house ; I believe fear of violence from the applicant never causes any to give.—(Mr. *St George*.) I would not give to those who they say have the money, or to any one who was not in want.—(William King.) I am sure many give through fear of the beggar's curse.—(Mr. *St George*.)

Diseases often spread by giving lodging to vagrants, particularly typhus fevers and itch, and, I believe, scrofula, which is very prevalent here. In my opinion this system is very injurious to the morals and habits of the labouring classes. It is difficult, if not impossible, for a tenant of a cottage and garden, suppose on the side of the road, let his intentions be ever so good, to keep it in that state of neatness and order which he ought, if the beggar and his family, with his bag, and all the attendant vermin, are to be admitted, almost as of a right, to his meals ; if they can come, as they do, and almost demand a lodging for the night, and with all their habits of idleness and love of gossip, and what they call “ strange news,” mingle with his family circle, and curl themselves up in a corner to sleep. Independent of any vice that may be disseminated, there is an irregularity and want of decency that is calculated to injure the morals and habits of the labouring classes in the highest degree, and this is one of the worst features in the state of vagrancy.—(Mr. *St George*.) I knew many persons who were once obliged to beg, and are now industrious and doing well.—(William King.) I have known some instances, but not-many.—(Mr. *St George*.)

There is no punishment inflicted for vagrancy ; but if a vagrant is known to be guilty of stealing, he is drummed out of town, and scarcely ever known to return. Rigorous laws against vagrancy could never be enforced while a possibility of a person starving existed ; the donors never will have recourse to such measures unless there be some provision made for the destitute, then their repugnance to the forcible suppression of vagrancy will be entirely removed. Outrages cannot be accounted the immediate results of destitution ; I never knew an instance in which it could ; nor do I believe one instance ever was known in Ireland.

There is no mendicity or house of industry in this part of the country. In my opinion mendicants would not be willing to go into one, and from my knowledge of the country, nothing but absolute starvation would drive them into such an institutions—(Mr. *St. George*.)

AN APPEAL IN BEHALF OF THE ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED FOR DISCOURTENANCING VICE, &c.

The Association for Discountenancing Vice and Promoting the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion was founded in the year 1792, by a few private individuals in Dublin. Its usefulness having been fully proved, it was incorporated by Act of Parliament in the year 1800 ; and it now includes among its members all the prelates, and upwards of 1,400 clergymen, besides several of the laity most distinguished for moral worth and influence in the country.

The Association was the earliest, and has been one of the most efficient institutions employed in awakening attention to religion in Ireland, especially among the members of the Established Church. It suggested the plan and prepared the way for many of those religious societies which have since been established, and are now in operation in this country. And, without any feeling of rivalry or jealousy towards them, the Association, while it claims precedence as the oldest of them all, still occupies a post of peculiar advantage and importance, as the only Society intimately connected with the Established Church, sanctioned by her

prelates, regulating its proceedings in strict accordance with her discipline, and seeking especially the benefit of her members.

It would be impossible, in this brief account, to detail the various plans that have been adopted, at different times, by this Society, as opportunities offered. The principal objects to which its operations are at present directed are the following :—

I. The distribution of the Holy Scriptures, the Book of Common Prayer, and Religious Tracts.

II. The encouragement of Catechetical Instruction.

III The support of Schools.

1. This Society was the first in Ireland to put into the hands of the poor the inestimable treasure of *the Word of God*. It still continues to furnish its members with copies of the Holy Scriptures at very reduced prices for distribution : and has been the means of putting into circulation, since its commencement, 154,760 Bibles, and 284,422 Testaments.

The spiritual improvement of the poorer members of the Established Church being one of the chief objects which the Association has had in view, the distribution of *the Book of Common Prayer* at a very cheap rate has occupied a large share of its attention. Since the formation of the Society, 284,825 Prayer-books have been sold, or distributed gratuitously.

Another most useful means of diffusing Christian knowledge employed by the Association has been the circulation of *Religious Tracts*, adapted to the capacities of the unlearned. These publications have been principally of two kinds. The one consisting of short and plain treatises in defence of Christianity against the attacks and objections of Infidels :—a class of works particularly called for at the time the Society was formed, and still greatly needed. The other consisting of familiar explanations of the rites and formularies of the Established Church, calculated to make all its members intelligently acquainted with their meaning and use ; so that their devotions might be a reasonable service, and their attachment to its constitution the result of an enlightened perception of its superiority to all others—thereby fortifying their minds against the delusions of enthusiasm, and ignorant innovations in religion. The Association has likewise distributed several Tracts of a more lively and interesting character, conveying instruction in amusing narratives ; especially Mrs. Hannah More's Cheap Repository Tracts, which were communicated to the Association by their distinguished authoress on her first publishing them. From the time it was formed, up to the present, this Society has put in circulation 1,416,616 Tracts.

2. The next great object which has occupied the attention of the Society is the promotion of Catechetical Instruction. The Association was the means of reviving this mode of instruction in Ireland. It has laboured unremittingly in this cause, judging it to be of the very highest importance. And it is *the only Society which devotes attention to this subject*. Under the name of catechetical teaching is not meant merely hearing children repeat the answers in the church catechism, but examining them and exercising their minds on appointed portions of the Liturgy and of the Scriptures suited to their age. By this means those who are too young and inattentive to derive profit from a continuous discourse delivered from the pulpit, are made well acquainted with the first principles of the oracles of God ; their minds are accustomed to search and inquire into the truths set before them ; and the clergyman is brought personally in contact with each individual of his flock as his spiritual instructor, at a time of life when the heart is susceptible of lasting impressions. By frequently calling the attention of the clergy to the value of this method of communicating religious knowledge— by supplying hints for

practising it efficiently—and by distributing premiums of books to the young persons who have been most diligent in their attendance, and have made the greatest proficiency, the Association has extended and encouraged this good work, and has been an incalculable blessing to the country. Through the liberality of the venerable Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Association is enabled still to carry its system of Catechetical premium. And every parish minister in Ireland is enabled, if he pleases, to give rewards to the children under his instruction. Within the last year 11,586 children were publicly examined, and 2,234 premiums were bestowed.

3. Another most important object which has engaged the anxious care of the Association, is the improvement of education generally in the schools for the lower orders. Having ascertained by accurate inquiry at the close of the last century, the state of education in every diocese in Ireland, the Society determined on extending and assisting parochial day schools. The regulations laid down for these schools are as follows :—A substantial house must be built or procured, (towards the building of which the Association contributes one third) and at least an acre of land must be annexed for the use of the master : the property of both to be vested in the hands of the minister and churchwardens of the parish :—The clergyman is to superintend and have the entire control over the school :—The master and mistress must be members of the Established Church :—The Scriptures must be read by all who have made suitable proficiency :—The Church catechism must be taught to the members of the establishment :—None must be excluded on account of inability to pay :—And no books of a controversial kind, nor such as the Association disapproves of must be admitted.

In order to secure a compliance with these rules the Society calls for a Report every half year from the Clergyman of the parish, in which he is to state the number of visits he has paid to the School during the six preceding months,—the average number of children in daily attendance,—the names of all the books used by them,—and the receipts and expenditure of the income belonging to the school. He is to certify also as to the conduct of the teachers—the progress of the children, particularly the progress in religious knowledge of the children of the Established Church, and whether it is creditable to the master and mistress. If the Report be favourable in all these respects, a small salary is paid by the Association to the teachers.

Thus while the Society takes especial care of the children of the poorer members of the Established Church, its schools are open to children of every denomination, without their being required to receive any of the peculiar religious instruction which the managers of the Society feel it to be their duty to provide for the youthful members of their own Church.

This was the first plan of general education ever tried in Ireland. Having been submitted to Parliament in 1803, a grant of money was voted for the purpose of establishing schools on this system. The success which attended the efforts of the Association was most encouraging. No charge of tampering with the religion of the children of any sect has ever been made against this Society. It has always openly avowed its principles, and consistently acted on them ; and thus avoided all reproach of insincerity. Government aid was afforded in an increasing proportion every year, according as the schools were extended throughout the country, until the year 1830, when it was unexpectedly diminished : and in the commencement of 1832, it was altogether withdrawn. In consequence of this diminution of its funds, the Association was obliged to reduce the salaries allowed to the teachers, and to withdraw all pecuniary assistance wherever the local patrons were able to support their schools. The Society is now entirely dependent on voluntary contributions for its support. The schools which it aids are such as are unable to maintain themselves without its assistance. Of these there are 232, containing 8,953 Protestants and 4,003 Roman Catholics. And the Association

is reluctantly obliged, from want of funds, frequently to refuse applications from destitute parts of the country to aid in establishing new schools.

In the appropriation of the funds entrusted to the Society, the strictest economy is observed ; and all the office expenses have been placed on the lowest scale consistent with the efficient maintenance of the Society.

The proceedings of the Association have been always conducted in the most unostentatious manner. It has worked, as much as possible, silently and without seeking for popular applause ; but not on that account the less effectively. Now, however, that the Society is compelled either to abandon its labours or publicly to solicit aid, it makes its appeal to all who feel an interest in the spiritual improvement of Ireland, and especially to those who have at heart the welfare of the poorer members of the Established Church, and entreats them to come forward in its behalf.

The Society is already involved in debt ; and unless the friends of religion speedily and generously assist it, 232 schools, containing more than 12,000 children, will be deprived of their chief support—the great stimulus and encouragement given to catechetical instruction be withdrawn—and the Established Church, when it can least spare a friend, lose a faithful auxiliary, that for forty-three years has laboured to promote the spiritual interests of her members. *Hitherto the majority of the subscribers to the Association have been the Irish clergy* : from them, in their present harassed condition, increased contributions cannot be expected. The lay members of the Church, who have never yet been zealously applied to in a good cause in vain, are solicited now to contribute to a Society which has at heart the promotion of the religion in the country, and has attained to long experience in the best modes of effecting this desirable object,—which in doctrine studies to show “ uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,” and in practice to “ follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” The very existence of the Society depends on the success of this Appeal.

November, 1835.

Subscriptions will be received by the Reverend ALEXANDER IRWIN, Assistant-Secretary and Sub-Treasurer, 104, Grafton-street, Dublin ; and by Messrs. HOARE and Co., Bankers, London.

Selection of Parochial Examinations Relative to the Destitute Classes in Ireland : From the ... (1835)

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