

Famine and Plague in Ireland.

Famine and plague have been raging in Ireland for months. The situation is now critical; but the Government remains indifferent. The people of England and the United States are coming to the relief. We append two letters written to The Freeman's Journal, Dublin, giving the latest accounts of the crisis in the hope that the facts set forth will appeal to the humanity of some Canadians also.

LETTER FROM MISS MAUDE GOVNE.
 DEAR SIR—I have been traveling in Mayo for the last month, where I have been distributing the little sums kindly contributed by the readers of The Catholic Register. I am powerless to describe the suffering I have witnessed. The famine as usual is accompanied by a terrible amount of sickness. In Belderrig, a village in Killa Union, composed of some twenty houses, eighteen people have died from measles; they are terrible, these famine measles, killing people in less than three days and leaving the corpses black and dreadful. In many other places I hear the influenza is proving as fatal. If we would look facts honestly in the face and call things by their right names we should say that these unfortunate peasants died not of measles or influenza, but of starvation. If they had proper food and nourishment they would, like the rest of us, have strength to resist these ailments. I saw mothers with nothing to give their dying children but Indian corn, strabout and no milk.

Few seem to fully realize the terrible extent or intensity of the famine, and how inadequate the methods adopted for its relief. Private charity is doing something, but unless the funds in the possession of the Mansion House and Manchester committees are very much larger than they are at present, they will not be able to stave off the dreadful catastrophe which is menacing the South and West of Ireland for next year.

For the most serious point of the situation is that, bad as things are this year, they will inevitably be worse next year unless the Government can be made to take immediate and more practical methods of supplying the people with seed.

I fear this is a vain hope. It is true the Government has granted a loan to the guardians to buy seed for the people, but the conditions of this loan are so unpractical that in many places where potato seed can be bought in the ordinary market for 3s. a hundred weight the guardians are charging the people actually as much as 9s. the hundred weight. They have two years in which to repay it.

Three years ago this same sort of relief was given, and I am told that in many places the potatoes thus supplied, at three times the market price, were so bruised and rotten that not one-third were available for seed, though the unfortunate people had to pay for them just the same. As if to emphasize the mockery of this so-called assistance, at the beginning of this winter, when the pinch of hunger was already keenly felt, the last instalment of this old seed rate was collected. People who had saved a few pounds of this money earned in England and Scotland to buy seed had to give it up to pay the old debt, while those who had no money save their last cow driven off, which meant no milk for the children, and in some cases even the flannel spun by the women to make clothes for the young ones was seized to repay the British Government's last charity. What wonder if this year the people, though entirely without seed, should refuse such onerous help?

The Mansion House and Manchester Committees are trying what they can do to remedy this. In many places they have sent seed potatoes; but their funds are very limited and the maximum amount of seed accorded to any individual is one hundred weight. In the majority of cases the recipient has absolutely none beside, and when we consider that, in the ordinary year, he puts down at least ten or fifteen hundred weight, the prospects for next year are simply appalling.

The good work of these charitable committees is hampered also by the idiotic system of Government relief works. By this system the head of the house is taken on the relief works, to work at some generally useless road from eight in the morning till five in the evening, at the miserable pittance of from 2s. 6d. to 6s. a week; and where his family are young the vitally necessary work of mauling, draining and digging his own holding is left undone; so when the hundred weight of potatoes does come the ground is ill prepared and the chances of a good crop for next year injured.

As Mr. Dillon said in his recent letter, no sufficient publicity is being given to all such facts, and his suggestion, that the Manchester and Mansion House Committees should add to the good work they are doing by the publication of reports of the distress, is a very practical one. I enclose £10 subscription to the Mansion House Fund, to show my ap-

preciation of the efforts they are making and the useful work they are doing in supplying seed (I only wish they were able to supply a great deal more), and in organizing relief work on the people's own holdings.

John Mitchell said in 1817 that England actually organizes famine in Ireland. One may really be pardoned, after studying the actual system of relief adopted, if one day he echoes his saying. A little aid judiciously given last year in the way of small seed loans, supplying the people in time with spray machines, and sending teachers to show how to use them, would have prevented the present famine at comparatively small cost. With the terrible experience of past famines and acquainted with the precarious conditions of existence of the people of the congested districts, a National Government having the country's welfare at heart would have undoubtedly given this aid—instead of which the English Government turned a deaf ear to all warnings of the approaching distress. No relief works were started until the unfortunate peasants had been reduced by starvation to eat up the last remnant of their seed, both oats and potatoes.

There is a suggestion I would like to make. Surely there are Irishmen and women, whom this cause of humanity would interest sufficiently, and whose position would permit them to volunteer their services in going round at their own expense and visiting the famine-stricken districts, making reports of the suffering of the people and of what is being done for them. The charitable funds are not large enough to permit of paid inspectors for this work. An immense amount of good might be done in this way. It would encourage the down-hearted people to feel that their fellow-countrymen are interesting themselves in them, and not leaving them to their fate. It also stimulates poor law guardians, relieving officers, and those who are apt to get slack to the keener sense of their duties to the people. Women of Ireland—will not some of you find time for this important work? The gratitude of the people, and the help you will be able to render them, will more than repay you for the trouble and hardships you may meet with. I remain, sincerely yours,
 MAUDE GOVNE.
 Dublin, 29th March.

LETTER FROM MR. DILLON.
 House of Commons, London, 26th March 1898

DEAR SIR—Will you kindly take charge of enclosed subscription of £5 for the Mansion House Committee for relief of distress in the West of Ireland. I would venture to suggest that, in view of the terrible state of things which exists in the distressed districts, it is very desirable that the Mansion House Committee should be increased in numbers, so as to be made more thoroughly representative of all classes, and that it should meet more frequently and publish fuller statements, giving details and particulars of distress selected from the communications which must reach it day by day. This could be most usefully done in the form of fuller reports of their meetings communicated to the Press. And I am convinced that the work will be well worth the while, in addition to this, to issue fortnightly statements carefully compiled from the information acquired by their agents, and the reports reaching them from clergymen and other responsible people, showing—

1. The extent and urgency of the distress.
 2. The immediate wants of the districts in which they are giving relief.
 3. Giving details of the manner in which they have distributed the money placed at their disposal.
- From the letters which reach me constantly from different parts of Great Britain, I am convinced that if reports such as I have indicated were sent every fortnight to the leading newspapers in Great Britain a great stimulus would be given the collection of funds. Not a week passes in which I myself do not receive several letters from persons anxious to organize meetings, concerts, etc., for the purpose of raising funds, who ask me for information as to the nature and extent of the distress, and wish to be referred to some authoritative publications from which they could lay before the people in their district a detailed statement of the situation in the distressed districts. To meet such demands I can only turn to the excellent articles and letters which have been published in the Freeman from time to time, private letters from priests and others in the distressed districts, and the publications of the Manchester Relief Committee. I think it will be evident that there is a great want which ought to be supplied by the Dublin Mansion House Committee in the way I have suggested.
- My attention was arrested by a letter in yesterday's Freeman from Sir Thomas F. Brady, in which he gives the following passage, extracted from a report of

one of their agents, read at the last meeting of the Dublin Mansion House Committee. Speaking of a parish which he had been deputed to visit, he says—

"I found when I went there upwards of sixteen families actually starving. Some of them did not get the union seed, and others who did use it as food, as they could get no credit. In all, I have the names of thirty-five, who are in a most forlorn condition, and if not helped will actually starve."

Sir Thomas Brady goes on to say that the Mansion House Committee sent at once all the aid in their power, but that their funds are fast being exhausted, and that aid falls short of the absolute wants of these poor people. This is an appalling condition of things. Why not bring it more prominently before the public? Why not give the name of the parish, and see that such facts, which, made public only as in Sir Thomas Brady's letter, catch the eye of every one—are brought under the notice of the public of the whole kingdom?

I feel convinced that if the course I have ventured respectfully to suggest is adopted, not only will the collection of funds receive a great stimulus, but that the Government will be compelled by public opinion to abandon their present attitude in the face of the distress, and adopt one more in accordance with the dictates of common humanity.—
 Yours sincerely,
 JOHN DILLON.

DISTRESS IN THE ISLANDS OF BOFIN AND SHARK, CO. GALWAY.

Rev. J. Molyte, Adm. has addressed the following letter to the Archbishop of Tuam:—

Bofin Island, Co. Galway, March 24th, 1898.

MY LORD ARCHBISHOP—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your Grace's kind letter of the 22nd instant, enclosing a cheque for £12 to be distributed amongst the suffering poor of the Islands of Bofin and Shark, and to express to your Grace my very grateful thanks for this generous gift.

Hitherto, notwithstanding the failure of the potato crop last year, there has not, happily, been much suffering in these islands. This, I consider, is owing to the following causes:—The large number of emigrants received from Scotland and America; the non-payment of rent by a large proportion of the islanders; the success of a few at fishing last year; and, finally, that Mr. Allies, as supervisor of the Government relief works open here for the last month, received permission to admit to these works any person he might consider in want.

Now, however, that this permission is withdrawn, that much of, if not all, the money received is spent, that there is scarcely a potato left either for food or seed; and that the weather, since spring set in, has been too rough for fishing, the state of things is most certainly becoming rather alarming.

In Aora Glen.

In your valley I had friends once,
 There I have friends no more,
 For lowly lies the rafters
 And the lintel of the door,
 The friends are all departed,
 The hearthstone's black and cold,
 And sturdy grows the nettle
 On the place I loved of old,
 The fires were scarce in ember,
 Or the window blank and dim,
 And the song was scarce concluded,
 Or the garden out of trim,
 When up came good Sir Nettle
 (True friend to me this day)
 And the sign of man's utility
 He hid them all away.

Oh! black might be that ruin
 'Twas my dear home, it sits so long,
 And nothing hides the shame of it,
 The ugliness and wrong;
 The cabar and the cornerstone
 Might bleach in winds and rains,
 But for the friendly nettles
 That took such a courteser's pains.

Here's one who has no quarrel
 With the nettle thick and tall,
 That wraps the cheerless hearthstone
 And screens the hunched wall,
 That clusters on the footpath
 Where the children used to play,
 And guards a household's supremacy
 From all who come the way.
 There's deer upon the mountain,
 There's sheep along the glen,
 The forest's hum with feather,
 But where are now the man?
 Here's but the lowly larch,
 Whose soft the footstep fall,
 My folks are quite forgotten
 And the nettle's over all.
 —NEIL MUNRO in The Sketch.

* Laroch (Gaelic): Site of a ruined house.

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 James A. Bell, Beaverston.

The Domain of Woman

There is nothing like persistent hammering if one wants to make any impression. If any result is to be achieved in the warfare against the senseless and cruel extermination of the birds in the interests of an idiotic fashion, it can only be done by the constant and unwearied protest of the women who write for women.

Our loveliest birds are being slowly, nay, rapidly and surely wiped out of existence. Soon we shall have to be taken ourselves to museums and exhibitions if we wish to behold the beauties of nature as manifested in the feathered tribe. What are you going to do, my Lady Fashion, when there are no more egrets, or terns or birds of paradise left for you to stick on your empty cranium? Do you suppose the Creator will condescend to make a few more species just for you to exterminate?

If there is any lore of birds left in the female heart, if we have any pity for the tiny creatures or any compassion for the thousands of young nestlings left annually to die of starvation and cold, for heaven's sake let every mother's daughter of us set her face against this abominable cruelty. It is popularity that assures the continuance of a fashion. It is not the few women who make, but the millions of women who wear a thing, who ensure its continuance and propagation. If every woman who feels any indignation at the wholesale massacre of the innocents will steadily refuse to wear any plumes but that of the ostrich or the useful barn door fowl, the humanitarians will soon see their dearest wish accomplished, and the beautiful feathered songsters will be left in peace.

A young Catholic writer who has caught all the freshness and fragrance and beauty in Catholic literature, and is breathing it out in sketches and stories that are living prose poems is Miss Margaret Kenna. This young girl, for she is little more, has already made a name that ensures the acceptance of her work by the best Catholic magazines, and she has endeared herself to the hearts of hundreds of Catholics who seek for, and appreciate all that is best and purest in literature.

There is an unworshipful sweetness in everything Miss Kenna writes, an undercurrent of deep religious feeling which finds vent in simple and heart-touching sketches of character. There is no attempt at fine writing, everything is simple, pure, and fresh as a spring violet.

This young writer has a future before her. The Register publishes a sketch by Miss Kenna from the "Easter" "Catholic World." Its insight into childish character, shows the writer to have retained the memories and aspirations of childhood amid the dawning knowledge of a woman's power.

"No, Mr. Coolhand," she said, kindly, "I assure I could never learn to love you."
 "Oh, perhaps you could," rejoined Coolhand, absently. "Never too old to learn, you know."

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