

England seems to have great confidence in this, her favorite panacea, for all our ills even yet; so she is very fond of repeating the dose.

Local committees were appointed throughout the country for the management and distribution of public money—grants, rates, and the like. Useless public works were fast settling in. Of course Lord Clearall was the manager of one of these committees. Mr. Ellis had a grist-mill near the village. There was a small private house adjoining; in this the committee held their deliberations. Lord Clearall was in the chair. Several of the neighboring gentry and respectable rate payers were also present.

"I have," said his lordship, "got about a thousand pounds, which we are to spend on some public work, such as levelling a hill, or filling up a hollow, or the like; now, this will give a great deal of employment, and I hope it's only the forerunner of more. We have now to select what work we will commence at—our selections, of course, to be approved of by the Board of Works; but this is a mere matter of form, as one of the commissioners is my particular friend."

"I think, my lord, there is no work more necessary than to level Knockcorrig hill; it is almost impassable it is so steep, and it is a regular thoroughfare to the village."

"I think so, too, Mr. Ellis," said his lordship; "but, then, we must take the opinion of these gentlemen—what do you say, gentlemen?"

Now, as all the gentlemen present were more or less dependent on his lordship for favors, patronage, and the like, it was not reasonable to expect that they would oppose him, though they well knew that the levelling of Knockcorrig was of no earthly benefit to any one save to his lordship and Mr. Ellis, for it was on the road to his lordship's residence and to Mr. Ellis's mills, so they all bowed their assent.

"Will ye agree to that, gentlemen?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Now, we have to nominate a pay-master, overseer, and clerk; as there must be a great deal of money intrusted to the pay-master, he must be a person well secured; I think Mr. Ellis would be a very fit person; I will be his security."

They all, of course, nodded assent.

"What's the salary, my lord?" asked a brokendown gentleman, that expected it for himself.

"Why, I can't exactly say; perhaps ten pounds a week."

"Oh! my lord," groaned the other.

"I think we should also nominate Mr. Pembert and Mr. Burkem as overseer and clerk; their wages are low; one has but thirty shillings a week, the other a pound."

There was a nod of assent, followed by

a stifled groan of disappointment from the members.

"There will be several other clerks and gaugers wanted; I shall be happy to get appointed any worthy person you should recommend, gentlemen."

There was a general vote of thanks to his lordship.

"Now we have to see about a house for our meetings, and for giving out-door relief; I think this a very suitable one, indeed," and his lordship looked about the comfortable room, with its blazing fire."

The others thought so too.

"Now, Mr. Ellis, what might be the rent of this?"

"Oh! whatever your lordship choose."

"No! no! I haven't the selection; name your rent, for these gentlemen to consider?"

"Would ten shillings a week be too much, my lord?" said Mr. Ellis, with the air of one making a great sacrifice for the cause of humanity.

"Really I think not, considering its appearance and usefulness," said his lordship.

"Would not a cheaper house do?" timidly suggested one of the committee.

"I merely ask it for information's sake, my lord," said he, correcting himself.

"Well, perhaps so," said his lordship; "but then, where is the great saving in a few shillings a week; besides, look at the comfort of this house, and the safety of having it so near the mills, within a call of the police; you know such houses have been attacked already."

"We agree with you, my lord," said the others.

A vast crowd of half-starved, half-naked wretches were collected outside the door, waiting the issue of the meeting. Some were living skeletons, tottering with disease and weakness. Some looked like scarecrows, dressed up in rags, and moved by some inward machinery.

"Arrah! shure it would be dacent for ye to kill us intirely," said a wretched-looking woman, crouched beside a wall, with a child at her breast.

"Thruce for you, Peg," said another: "sorra a morsel I ate these two days but turnip-tops and cabbage, and there is Jack dying with me at home."

"Lord help us," said another; "they are the terrible times intirely."

"I haven't a bit nor a sup, nor a spark to warm myself and my four children," said another poor wretch.

"Will we bear to be starved this way?" said the men: "shure it's better for us to be kilt at wanst, boys, and our poor wives, and the childers."

"Let us throw down the house over them: there's male inside," shouted another.

"Arrah! don't ye," said another with a scornful laugh; "ye'll get a great deal