

The Famine in Mayo

1845-1850

A Portrait from Contemporary Sources

Compiled and Edited by
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MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL
2004

give prompt payment to the labourers, instead of subjecting them, as at present, to the loss of many journeys and several days in seeking payment of their hard earned wages.

“Signed on behalf of the meeting, consisting of at least Twenty Thousand persons.”

Richard S. Bourke, *Chairman*;
James Conry, *Secretary*.

TREATMENT OF DISEASED POTATOES

Mayo Constitution (8-9-1846)

Mr. W. Herbert Saunders, in a letter to the editor of the Cork Constitution on this subject, notices the statement of a “Windsor farmer,” “that he left, last year field of distressed potatoes in the ground to rot as manure, but that in eighteen months after, when he dug up the ground, he found them all sound, to his great surprise.”

Mr. Saunders says he does not believe in this wholesale metamorphosis, but recommends that the branches of stalks of all blighted potato fields should be pulled up, and added to the dunghill, provided that the potatoes

are at the time in a state worth preserving. We take the following paragraph from the letter of Mr. Saunders:-

“In every case where the quantity of sound potatoes in a Blighted field is worth preserving, place both your feet at each side of the blighted stalk and pull them up, hardening the holes with the soles of your shoes as you proceed, and dig out your potatoes as you want them for daily use, separating the bad for the pigs. the rationale of this is as follows. When left in the ground the very decayed potatoes rot without infecting the sound, for they are not in “juxta position,” and you remove the communication of wet and taint, by removing the blighted stalks, which act as conductors to wet and infection; for when you pull up a blighted stalk, the decayed shoot leading to the decaying potato comes away with the stalk, leaving all the wholesome shoots in the ground. If you can spare the use of ground, there is no better way to “pit” your potatoes in order to preserve them than by leaving them in the ground as above recommended, and this fact has been proved in several instances.”

The Hungry Years

The damage done by the blight in 1845 was only partial and most people had enough to get through the winter. Government relief and local charity also helped. However the year 1846 brought disaster as the blight destroyed most of the crop. Overnight, fields of promising green stalks blackened and the tubers below turned to mush. In 1847, after two successive years of blight, many chose to eat whatever seed they had, rather than risk planting. There was no blight in that year, but there were no crops either. Black '47 saw the advent of fevers such as typhus, which rapidly spread through the weakened population.

WESTPORT

The Telegraph (26-8-1846)

On Saturday last the inhabitants of Westport witnessed a novel, and at the same time, a heart-rendering sight. About mid-day some thousands of the rural population marched into town to have an interview with the Most Noble the Marquis of Sligo: they approached the grand entrance of the Noble Lord's residence, and having, after some little delay, obtained admittance, they proceeded, with the most becoming order to the Castle, none attempting to even walk off the road, lest their doing so might injure the grass of the demesne. Having arrived before the hall door the Noble Marquis (as was custom of his deceased father) instantly came forward to meet them: he talked with them: deplored the

visitation with which God had afflicted the land: told them he would instantly state their condition to the Government, in order to obtain them relief, and that as to himself, he would go as far as any landlord in the country to redress the grievances of his tenantry. He also told them that his intention was not to harass them with regard to his rents: that then it was almost useless to talk on that subject, as the time for collecting the rent had not yet arrived. Finally, the Noble Marquis assured them that no exertions of his should be spared to obtain for them, from Her Majesty's Government immediate employment. The people expressed themselves satisfied with the declarations of their Noble Landlord and returned to the town in the same orderly manner which characterised their march to the castle.

MASSBROOK

Mayo Constitution (27-8-1846)

On last Tuesday night the dead body of a man named Anthony Donnelly, who lived near Massbrook, in the parish of Adrigoole, was found on the mountains about a mile distant from his residence. It appeared from the evidence of some members of his family, at the inquest, that their food for the previous week was nothing better than rotten potatoes, and that he went on the day before his body was found to Castlebar to purchase some trifling articles for a few pence, the only money in his possession. It is stated that Donnelly was employed for eight or

ten days on the public works, but was stopped a week before his death and had not since received any payment. The Coroner's jury found a verdict, that deceased came by his death in consequence of the want of a sufficient supply of food.

FOXFORD

The Telegraph (23-9-1846)

One misfortunate brings another. – We regret to state that fever, to an alarming extent has, at length, made its appearance in this county. Our Foxford Correspondent states, that never, in his memory, was fever so prevalent



A village in famine times.

in that locality as at present. In the villages between that town and the Pontoon, entire families are lying, and many dying. He mentions one family in particular, eight of whom are confined to the bed of sickness, their only attendant being a boy six years old! Several other families have no person to wet their parched lips, the neighbours being in dread to approach the cabins of contagion. The scourge has now gone forth, and what may be spared by one calamity will, we fear, be hurried off by another. – Such is the situation of the poor while the rich are making no effort, by friendly contributions, to relieve the necessities of the people, whose sinewy arms enabled them to fare sumptuously every day. Now they are lying low and their moans unheeded, save by the carrion crow, who, perched aloft upon the top of some lofty oak, croakes on the dying knell of many hapless victims of fever and starvation. God of mercy, receive their souls into thy glorious kingdom. May their transit from this world be a happy one.

CASTLEBAR

The Telegraph (6-10-1846)

In the neighbourhood of Castlebar, we have heard of parents putting their children to

bed to sleep off the hunger which was gnawing their hearts. Nay, we have talked with a poor woman a few days since who told us that she had left four children at home in bed – that for the two days previously they had not tasted food – on that day she earned a few pence, by carrying out turf on her back from the bog to the road side – that she undertook this laborious work, on a weak and empty stomach – that she might get even one stone of potatoes for her poor children. Does the statement of this wretched woman need comment?

CONG

The Telegraph (6-10-1846)

The accounts which have reached us from all parts of Ireland since our last publication, regarding the sufferings of the poor, are truly heart-rending. We read of parents dying from want of food – children, unconscious of the extent of their misery, standing at the bedside of their lifeless parent calling to him for something to appease their hunger – they call in vain – hunger has snatched to another, and a better world, their prop and mainstay. This reader, is no fiction, it has occurred at Dungarvan.

But why should we look for such proof of want elsewhere when we

can be supplied with abundance of them in our own country? The Rev. Mr. Waldron, P.P. of Cong, states that three of his unhappy parishioners have paid the debt of nature from the pressure of distress, and this in a county where abundance of provisions is said to exist. - From the same place the respected Protestant Rector, the Rev. Mr. Moore, has again forwarded a memorial to the Lord Lieutenant, giving a most appalling description of the state to which his parishioners are reduced and calling upon the Government to act with promptitude. The Dublin Evening Mail, in the most unbecoming and uncalled for manner treats the statement of Mr. Moore, as a well conceived fiction. Alas! little does the editor know the wants and sufferings of the poor in Mayo.

BALLINA

Tyrawly Herald (26-11-1846)

An inquest was held in this town, on Tuesday last, by Mr. Atkinson, Coroner, on the body of Hugh Daly. After the examination of witnesses, amongst whom was the medical gentleman, Dr. Whittaker, who examined the body, the jury found that the deceased came by his death in consequence of insufficiency of food.

BALLYCASTLE

Tyrawly Herald (29-10-1846)

We regret to state that on Tuesday last, a worker, named Bridget Thomash, died of actual starvation within a short distance of Ballycastle. It was sworn to at the Inquest that she had not partaken of more than one scanty meal per day, for the last fortnight, and on some occasions she had nothing whatever to support nature. There are hundreds of poor creatures in the same locality who are similarly circumstanced, and if immediate relief is not afforded they, too, shall meet with the same dreadful death.

PALMERSTOWN

Tyrawly Herald (12-11-1846)

On Friday morning last a woman named Melody died of starvation near Palmerstown. The unfortunate creature procured shelter during the previous night in the cabin of another poor woman, and while there drank a mixture of a very small quantity of meal she had with her and some water. She slept on some straw, and in the morning when she made an effort to get up she fell from exhaustion and died shortly afterwards. Surgeons,

Neilson and Townley, who made a post mortem examination at the Inquest, deposed that her death was caused by insufficiency of food. They found that her stomach, which was greatly contracted in size, contained only about two table-spoonfuls of fluid, and that there was no food whatever in the large intestine. The heart was extremely small, and there were some traces of inflammation in the stomach. A verdict was returned by the jury in accordance with the medical evidence.

CROSSMOLINA

Tyrawly Herald (10-12-1846)

On Thursday last, Mr. Atkinson, Coroner, held an inquest at Crossmolina on the body of man named Martin M'Gever. The jury found a verdict of death from want of sufficient food. On Saturday, Mr. Atkinson held an inquest on the body of John Barrett, at Cloomalagh near Killala. Several witnesses were examined who, with Dr. Neilson, who examined the body, stated that the deceased came by his death in consequence of insufficiency of food.

On Sunday, the same Coroner inquired into the cause of the death of Anthony Malley, at Notlish, in

the vicinity of Crossmolina. Dr. McNair, who made a post mortem examination concurred with the witnesses, that death was caused by starvation.

On the same day, Mr. Atkinson held an inquest on the body of John Munnelly, at Ballymoholy. After the examination of witnesses and the medical attendant a similar verdict to the foregoing was returned.

LACKEN

Mayo Constitution (22-12-1846)

On Friday the coroner held an inquest on the body of John Ruane of Lacken. Deceased was found on Thursday, by a little girl, near the chapel of Lacken, lying dead on the footpath. He belongs to a colony of fishermen, who were comfortable in their own way, before the present calamity, but are now scattered throughout the country. The jury returned a verdict of death from starvation.

ROBEEN

Mayo Constitution (22-12-1846)

MORE STARVATION – On the 16th instant, Mr. Rutledge, coroner, held an inquest at Robin, on the body of Catherine Walsh, who died of absolute starvation. One of the witnesses deposed that the deceased was able to work on the roads until the inclement weather set in, when, from her age, she was unable to withstand the cold, and therefore she could not procure food. Dr. Little declared the cause of her death to be from the absolute want of the necessaries of life.

CROSSMOLINA

Mayo Constitution (22-12-1846)

On Tuesday last, Mr. Atkinson, Coroner, held an inquest at Crossmolina, on the body of Bernard Regan, son of a butcher, who was in the employment of Messrs. Russell of Limerick. Being out of employment, and having been refused admittance there, he made his way to Galway – together with his seven children – where they were also denied poorhouse relief. They then begged their way to Crossmolina, where the boy died. After the examination of Dr.

McNair, and the father and mother of deceased the jury returned a verdict that death was caused by want of food.

WESTPORT

The Telegraph (13-1-1847)

APPALING – The following communication we have received from a Westport correspondent, dated January 8th, 1847: “While walking through the town yesterday, I was asked to go down to the house situated next to the Iron gate (an entrance to the Marquis of Sligo’s demesne), and look at the situation of a poor woman who was lying beside her dead husband, a man named Fadgen, a native of Sligo, but the wife belongs to this place. I did go down, and such a deplorable sight I never witnessed. He was lying upon a pallet of straw and the poor wife beside him with her thigh bone out of joint and her leg much swollen. The man’s face was fearful to look at, the rats having disfigured it much during the night. A coffin was made which was paid for by Mr. Hildebrand, Captain Higgins and Mr. Levingston. This poor man was interred by the Scavengers, and I have no doubt his death was caused by hunger, and that many such cases are of daily occurrence in this town.”

1846!

Would that we could say farewell! But that is impossible: we are groaning with anguish: we are palled at the wreck thou hast made. We could curse three – but no – you are gone: and we fight not with shadows.

1847

You have found us unsubdued: you have found us crushed down by starvation, disease, and death: be it thy happy destiny to change this order of things: to stay the ravages of famine: to throw over the troubled earth the cornucopia: to cheer the drooping, bereaved, and the broken hearted: to cause the soil of our lovely country to reward the toil of the husbandman with plenty of food for the use of God’s creatures. In your career may peace and happiness accompany you: and may our rulers, even in this thy day, take wise counsel, and see that it is their solemn and bounden duty to protect, by every means they can command, the lives of Her Majesty’s subjects: this they must do if they desire the peace and prosperity of this country, and the stability of the British Throne. Buoyed up with this hope we bid thee, 1847! a thousand welcomes! and may our adieu at your departure, by our bettered condition, be words of regret for your short stay.

The Telegraph (6-1-1847)

MAYO ABBEY

Mayo Constitution (12-1-1847)

SHOCKING We have been informed that a poor man, at Mayo, near Balla, after having been reduced to the greatest destitution, was obliged to leave his home to beg, leaving his wife, a feeble old woman, after him. In a few days after his departure some of the neighbours went to the wretched hovel of the old woman, and found her lying on a litter of straw in the corner, with the flesh of her shrivelled arms and face mangled and eat by rats! The wretched creature died in a short time after.

ATTYMASS

Tyrawly Herald (18-2-1847)

Owing to the indisposition of Mr. Atkinson, the Coroner for this district, we are unable to give a list of the number of deaths from starvation, which occurred in this neighbourhood during the past week; but we are informed by a gentleman from Attymass, a parish within three of four miles of this town, that between Friday and Tuesday last, no fewer than eleven persons died from starvation in that locality. When such has been the number there we may imagine what

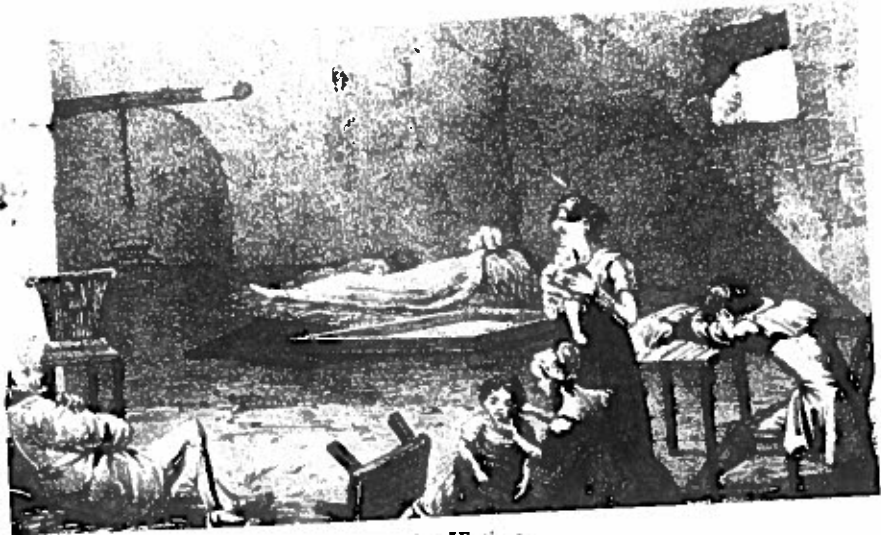
must have been throughout the entire district of the coroner. A heavy and an extraordinary visitation is upon the poor people of his country. When shall they receive permanent relief?

BELMULLET

W. J. Bennett (16-3-1847)

We entered a cabin. Stretched in one dark corner, scarcely visible, from the smoke and rags that covered them, were three children huddled together, lying there because they were too weak to rise, pale and ghastly, their little limbs - on removing a portion of the filthy covering - perfectly

emaciated, eyes sunk, voice gone, and evidently in the last stage of actual starvation. Crouched over the turf embers was another form, wild and all but naked, scarcely human in appearance. It stirred not, nor noticed us. On some straw, soddened upon the ground, moaning piteously, was a shrivelled old woman, imploring us to give her something - baring her limbs partly, to show how the skin hung loose from the bones, as soon as she attracted our attention. Above her, on something like a ledge, was a young woman, with sunken cheeks - a mother, I have no doubt - who scarcely raised her eyes in answer to our enquiries, but pressed her hand upon her forehead, with a look of unutterable anguish and despair.



Famine Victims



A view of Castlebar from Knockthomas. (Wynne Collection)

BALLYCROY

Asenath Nicholson (1847)

A visit to the national school gave not a very favourable impression of the state of the children; nearly a hundred pale-faced and bare-footed little ones were crowded into a cold room, squatting upon their feet, cowering closely together, waiting for ten ounces of bread, which was all their support, but now and then a straggling turnip-top. The teacher, with a salary of £12 a year, could not be expected to be of the nicer sort, nor of the highest attainments in education. The improvement of the children would not in some time fit them for a class in college.

CASTLEBAR

The Telegraph (31-3-1847)

“On last Sabbath day while walking in company with a young man from your office, and by my own son, through Gallowhill, in this town, my attention was drawn to a cabin into which we three entered: at the fire was sitting a poor man in an exhausted state from hunger, almost naked, with a child in his arms, the picture of death, sucking the father's fingers as if they were the mother's breast. In an opposite corner stood what answered as a bed, in which were three children lying, with no covering save a fold of an old sooty blanket or sheet. Those children

might be aged from six to fourteen years, but from their haggard appearance I cannot be certain as to the probable age of the elder girl – the poor creatures had lost their hair from famine. I involuntarily shrunk back, dreading I was standing in the midst of fever, but being assured there was no danger I asked the half-dead creatures where the mother was, and was told she was out begging with two other little ones who were not as weak as those in the bed. The father said he was after a long attack of sickness which deprived the family of his work on the roads, and that those in the bed were endeavouring to sleep away the gnawings of hunger, not having for two days previously as much food for the eight as would suffice for one! and that they could not command the price of the soup. I promised to send some relief to the poor victims – and by doing so a fresh claimant attacked me for aid – a poor man with four children and a sick wife: his case was equally bad, for he had been out begging all the morning, without success. In reply to my question he said he would not be admitted in the Poor House without his wife, and she was so sick and weak from want, he could not remove her. Here was a cabin with fourteen skeletons of human beings on the Lord's Day without a fire – without a mouthful of food, and without as much clothes as would cover one out of the fourteen.

KILCOMMON ERRIS

W. J. Bennett (16-3-1847)

Perhaps the poor children presented the most piteous and heart-rendering spectacle. Many were too weak to stand, their little limbs attenuated – except where the frightful swellings had taken the place of previous emaciation – beyond the power of volition when moved. Every infantile expression entirely departed; and in some, reason and intelligence had evidently flown. Many were remnants of families, crowded together in one cabin; orphaned little relatives taken in by the equally destitute, and even strangers, for these poor people are kind to one another to the end. In one cabin was a sister, just dying, lying by the side of her little brother, just dead. I have worse than this to relate, but it is useless to multiply details, and they are, in fact, unfit. They did but rarely complain. When inquired of, what was the matter, the answer was alike in all – “Tha shein ukrosh”! – indeed, the hunger. We truly learned the terrible meaning of that sad word “ukrosh.” There were many touching incidents.

INVER

Tyrawly Herald (27-5-1847)

In some of the remote parts of this Union, particularly in the barony of Erris, disease is committing serious havoc. On Monday, the 17th inst., in the townland of Inver, in the barony referred to, there were no less than thirty-two human beings dead, – dead of famine – dead of pestilence produced and propagated by want. The deaths in this district, arising from destitution and its consequences, are awfully numerous, and of daily occurrence. Even sudden deaths are now of almost momentary frequency, so worn and exhausted are the physical energies of the poor people. On Tuesday last a wretched man dropped dead at Crosspatrick, near Killala, from mere destitution. This is a fearful state of things and what renders it doubly so is its pervading generality.

ERRIS

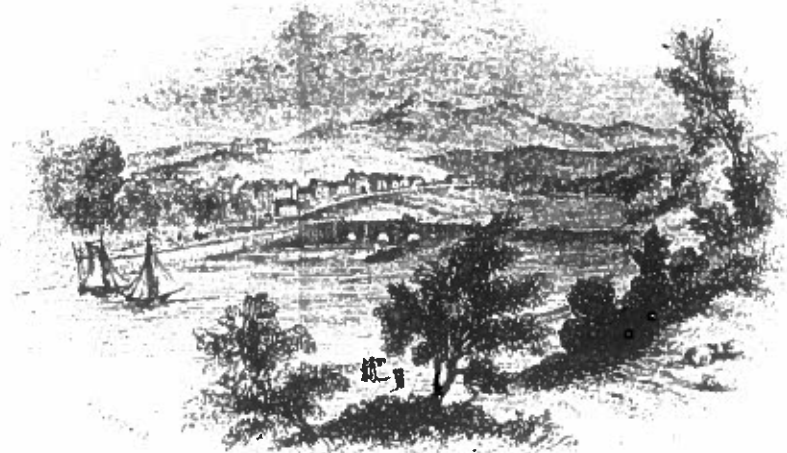
Asenath Nicholson (1847)

When I went over desolate Erris, and saw the demolished cabins belonging to J. Walshe, I begged to know if all had died from that hamlet – “Worse than died,” was the answer; for if



The poor Children presented the most piteous and heart-rendering spectacle.

they are alive, they are in sand banks on the bleak sea-shore, or crowded into some miserable cabin for a night or two, waiting for death; they are lingering out the last hours of suffering.



Newport, County Mayo. c.1840

NEWPORT

Asenath Nicholson (1847)

I found here, at Newport, misery without a mask; the door and window of the kind Mrs. Arthur wore a spectacle of distress indescribable; naked, cold and dying, standing like petrified statues at the window, or imploring, for God's sake, a little food, till I almost wished that I might flee into the wilderness, far, far from the abode of any living creature.

Mrs. Arthur said: 'I have one case to place before you, and will leave all the rest to your own discretion. I have fed a little boy, once a day, whose parents and brothers and sisters are dead, with the exception of one little sister. The boy is seven-years-old, the sister five. They were

told they must make application to the poorhouse, at Castlebar, which was ten Irish miles away. One cold rainy day in November, this boy took his little sister by the hand, and faint with hunger, set off for Castlebar. And now, reader, if you will, follow these little bare-footed, bare-headed Connaught orphans through a muddy road of ten miles, in a rainy day, without food, and see them at the workhouse, late at night. The doors are closed – at last, they succeed in being heard. The girl is received, the boy sent away – no room for him – he made his way back to Newport the next morning, and had lived by crawling into any place he could at night, and once a day called at the door of my friend who fed him.

ISLANDEADY

The Telegraph (20-10-1847)

STARVATION – On Thursday morning last a poor, but once comfortable and respectable man named Patt Henry, of Tovneena, in the parish of Islandeedy, with his daughter, died from the effects of hunger. He has left a wife and five children, who will, we fear, soon follow him from the same cause. On the previous day the poor man was seen aboard thro' the village, and it was only after the decease of Henry and his daughter that the neighbours ascertained the extent of the want and misery of this once happy family.

ACHILL

Achill Missionary,
Herald, February 1847

We are sorry to report that the famine increases in intensity in this island. Whatever little resources the natives had are now entirely consumed and they are wholly dependant on the imported supplies of food and the money which they can earn to purchase it. The distress in some of the villages is so great that the poor are endeavouring to maintain themselves on the limpets which they gather on the rocks, and boiled sea weed. During the last month we gave employment to 2,192 labourers, of whom 740 were Roman Catholics, and 1,452 Protestants. This aggregate number gives an average of 100 men per



Dooagh, Achill, c. 1840

day. The feeding of the 600 children, mentioned in our last, was partially suspended for some time, as our supply of Indian-meal was consumed, but on our being allowed the privilege of purchasing at the government store, the charitable work was resumed.

A small sloop, the Expedition of Milford, freighted with 60 tons of food and different kinds of seed, sailed from the port of Dublin for Achill, on Thursday, the 18th inst. We thank our friends for their liberality in enabling us to send this second cargo, but we are constrained to inform them that we must still draw largely upon their liberality— as we must greatly increase the number of persons employed on the Mission farms. Unless this is done, and done largely and promptly, the same appalling occurrences which have taken place in Skibbereen will be witnessed in Achill. We must therefore earnestly call upon our kind supporters to use their influence in procuring pecuniary assistance. We regret to say that the markets, and freights and insurances have greatly advanced since we despatched the last cargo, so that the same amount of good cannot be accomplished with the same sum of money which might have sufficed some months ago.

We have also to report the appearance of both fever and dysentery in the island. One of our settlers, the mother of a large family, fell a victim to the former. God only knows what suffering is to be endured before the harvest of this year comes in. Were not our trust in Him we should be overwhelmed with anxiety, but we know that He can do great and wondrous things which we looked not for.

BEKAN

Mayo Constitution (11-1-1848)

Richard P. O'Grady, Esq., Coroner, held an inquest on the 8th ultimo, on the body of Michael Cunnane, of the parish of Becan. Verdict — “Death from insufficiency of food.”

The same Coroner held inquests on the 10th, 11th, 12th and 18th ult., on the bodies of James Cunnane, Winifred Kilgallen, Thomas Kilgallen and Patrick Duffy, when verdicts of death from want, destitution, etc., were found by the same juries.

SHRULE

Mayo Constitution (11-1-1848)

ANOTHER DEATH FROM STARVATION — On Wednesday last, Mr. Rutledge, Coroner, held an inquest at Shrule, on the body of John Toole, who was found dead on the road side, having been overcome by exhaustion and hunger whilst on his way to beg a morsel of food. The jury after examining several witnesses returned a verdict of “death from starvation.” The fearful list of deaths from starvation again threaten to become as horrifying this season as last, with much less hopes of relief, and we trust that some steps will be taken by which to meet the exigencies of the present moment.

CASTLEBAR, KILLASSER, NEWPORT

The Telegraph (16-2-1848)

STARVATION DEATHS! — We are again called upon to record the work of destruction, through want, in our neighbourhood. Our statistical accounts this day must appeal every person possessed of Christian faith:—

No. 1.: A poor woman found dead on the Westport road, left for days unburied on the side of the road, with a stone at the head and another at the feet. A shocking sight!

No. 2: Thomas Cosgrave, of Lacheel, Parish of Drum.

No. 3: Cosgrove's child.

No. 4: Rose Hoban, of Knocksaxon, parish of Strade: eight days dead before she was interred!

No. 5: John Malley, of Carreenchar, parish of Balla, an orphan boy.

Within the last month in the parish of Killasser, Barony of Gallen, County of Mayo:

No. 6: Joseph Gallagher's wife of Tolligne.

No. 7: Patt Holleran, of Dunmeanor.

No. 8: Patt Holleran's son, of same place.

No. 9: David Moran's daughter, of Cartron.

No. 10: On Monday a poor man dropped dead in the same parish, who was turned out of the workhouse, after his having used many entreaties to be left in the house. After his eviction he only scrambled about three miles from Swinford when he dropped dead on the road.

No. 11: Mrs. Kilcoyne, of Struphane, Castlebar, dysentery, through want.

No. 12: John Duffy, of same street, same complaint, and

occasioned by want.

No. 13: A poor person in same street, name not known to us, same complaint, brought on by want.

No. 14: In Barrack Street, a child of Moran's, the Clifden School-master, died of starvation - the mother and the rest of the children starving since they lost the relief - the husband and father, neglecting to support his family. The Guardians should relieve the wretched creatures and take proceedings against the expounder of the Scriptures in Clifden.

No. 15: A young man in Newport: carried on his old mother's back to the grave, without a coffin! slung by two straw ropes.

No. 16: A boy on the Newport road, so long dead that we are told the body had partly melted away!

No. 17: A poor man, name unknown, was found dead in a village in the parish of Kilmecna, on Saturday last, lying by the side of the ditch; and was exposed there three days before the priest heard of it.

BALLINTUBBER

The Telegraph (23-2-1848)

PARISH OF BALLINTUBBER - Ned Burke, a widow's son (nine in family). The deceased applied to the relieving officer for

relief: offered to give up his house and land. The middleman refused the possession. The unfortunate man then went to the agent of the head landlord (Lord Erne): the agent refused to interfere. The man's sufferings at last terminated after lingering on for a whole week nearly without a morsel of food.

Michael Connor, in the same village died from starvation. The deceased also offered his house and land to the landlord, but would get no licence for relief without throwing down his house. After having made several efforts, in vain, between the middleman and the relieving officer, to obtain relief, the unfortunate wretch at last sunk under his sufferings and perished from hunger.

Mary Tuohy, of Greenfield, died from hunger. She held a small cabin, but having refused to throw it down, she was refused a certificate for relief.

John Donelan, of Ballintubber, died of starvation.

Peggy Moran, fund dead on the 20th by the ditch side. She applied three times for relief. The third time her name was put on; but she was a corpse when the relief was obtained.

Bridget Colleran, died on the 20th, of hunger.

Anne Tuohy, died on the 20th, of starvation.

James Kyne, of Clonee, Ballintubber, dead by hunger.

Michael Carney, Feebane; Pat

Fitzmaurice, Banoryues; Walter Burke, Mellonhill; Anthony Roach, Mellonhill; Michael Joyce, Knockavaha; Thomas Byrne, Knockavaha - Some in the prime of life - the hope and pride of the parish blasted like a young flower.

BALLYHAUNIS

Mayo Constitution (29-2-1848)

The scenes which last year have made our county notorious for sufferings and deaths from starvation, have not, we regret to say, ended with the year 1847. The present season promises to be as fruitful in horrors, without any prospect of such noble interest being taken in our misery, the public being deluded into the impression that out door relief will or can meet the wants of the people. The following inquests prove the unfortunate condition in which the people are, and, we are sorry to say, they are not a tithe of the cases of "starvation" which are of daily occurrence, and must fearfully increase:-

On the 25th inst., Richard O'Grady, Esq., Coroner, held an inquest at Ballyhaunis, on the body of John Loftus; the jury returned a verdict of "death from starvation and cold."

On the same day, the same

Coroner held an inquest on the body of Denis Carroll; verdict - "death from extreme hunger."

LOUISBURGH

Asenath Nicholson (1848)

The little town of Louisburgh, two miles from "Old Head," had suffered extremely. An active priest and faithful protestant curate were doing to their utmost to mitigate the suffering, which was like throwing dust in the wind; lost, lost for ever - the work of death goes on, and what is repaired today is broken tomorrow. Many have fallen under their labours. The graves of the protestant curate and his wife were pointed out to me in the church-yard, who had fallen since the famine, in the excess of their labour; and the present curate and his praiseworthy wife, unless they have supernatural strength, cannot long keep up the dreadful struggle. He employed as many labourers as he could pay, at four-pence a-day, and at four o'clock, these "lazy" ones would often be waiting at his gate to go to their work. He was one day found dining with the priest, and the thing was so novel, that I expressed a pleasant surprise, when he answered: "I have consulted no one's opinion respecting the propriety of my



Struck down by fever

doing so; I found," he added, "on coming here, this man a warm-hearted friend to the poor, doing all the good in his power, without any regard to party, and determined to treat him as a neighbour and friend, and have, as yet, seen no cause to regret it."

AUGHAGOWER

The Telegraph (8-3-1848)

The following are the names of persons who died from want in the parish of Aughagour, within the last fortnight: - March 1st: Duke Dawson; interred without a coffin, on the fifth day after his death. Thomas Geraghty, of Garue, March 3rd: two sons of Francis Nugent, of Curdarngh, one 7 and

the other 9 years old, February 28th: in Srakan, two children of Bryan Scahil. Also the grandfather and grandmother of the Scahils. At Letrun, Peter Gavan, who went into a roofless cabin, where he died. At Lanmore, Peter Mulholland, fell on the road from exhaustion, from which he was carried into a cabin - buried in 4 days after, without a coffin, in a turf bank. On Saturday last a poor woman carried her dead son in a rope, to the grave, but she was so exhausted she could not bury him. A charitable man opened a grave for the coffinless dead. March 6th: At Doon, the wife of Richard Freighan.

SWINFORD

Tyrawly Herald (13-4-1848)

On the 7th instant, the Coroner held an inquest at Swinford, on the body of Sebina Conmee. Verdict, died from want and cold in the old waste forge, where she remained for two days. The Relieving Officer stated that she would not go into the Workhouse.

On the 8th instant the same Coroner held an inquest in the parish of Bohola, on the body of Richard Cusack, who was found dead on the road side. Verdict, died from cold and hunger.

WESTPORT

Asenath Nicholson (1848)

A cabin was seen closed one day a little out of the town, when a man had the curiosity to open it, and in a dark corner he found a family of the father, mother and two children, lying in close compact. The father was considerably decomposed; the mother, it appeared, had died last, and probably fastened the door, which was always the custom when all hope was extinguished, to get into the darkest corner and die, where passers-by could not see them. Such family scenes were quite common, and the cabin was generally pulled down upon them for a grave. The man called, begging me to look in. I did not, and could not endure, as the famine progressed, such sights, as well as the first, they were too real, and these realities became a dread. In all my former walks over the island, by day or night, no shrinking or fear of danger ever retarded in the least my progress; but now, the horror of meeting living walking ghosts, or stumbling on the dead in my path at night, inclined me to keep within when necessity did not call.

GLENISLAND

The Telegraph (25-4-1848)

DEATHS FROM STARVATION IN GLENISLAND - On the 13th instant, widow Kelly and daughter, of Cloggan, confined by Mr. John Carabine of Castlebar. On the 21st Anne Kelly, another daughter of the widows: and some days previous to the poor woman's decease a son of hers died also. The deaths of two more of her sons are hourly expected. On Sunday, Mary Faden, of Gravashbeg, and Pat McTigue, of Laplough. On the 2nd instant, Francis Lally. On the 10th, Pat Cormick, of Cloondaff. On the 17th, Nancy Cleary, of Bracklaugh. We have been furnished with a second list of persons in comparative affluence, drawing relief in Glanisland, while the really destitute are allowed to die of starvation.

ERREW

The Telegraph (14-3-1849)

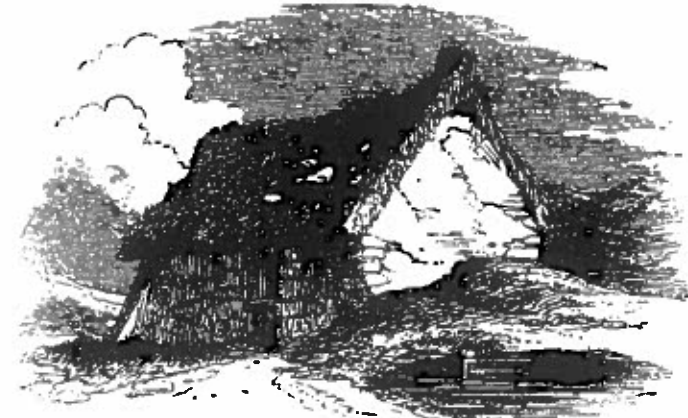
DEATHS AT ERREW - Some days since a poor man named Kelly, with his wife and two children, from the parish of Mayo, called at the Monastery of Errew for some charity, which was given them. Next day, at a little distance

from that excellent institution, the father and children were found dead. The bodies were put into coffins provided by the Christian Brethren at Errew, who had them buried. The poor woman was also supplied by them with other little requisites befitting her weak condition. To those who enjoy even a little of the good things of this life, we would say - take example by the Christian Brethren at Errew, who deny themselves for the comforting of God's afflicted.

NEPHIN

Tyrawly Herald (15-3-1849)

On Saturday last, Charles Atkinson, Esq., Coroner, held an inquest on the body of Martin Moffatt, at Nephin in the electoral division of Adragool. From the circumstances detailed before the jury, it appeared that himself and wife, and three children, had to live upon one stone of meal in the week, and that quantity was only sufficient to supply them with gruel for three days, so that for the remainder of the week they were without any description of food. The poor man's constitution was thus worn out and he died of exhaustion. A verdict to that effect was accordingly returned.



A typical cabin at the time of the famine

RATHNAMAUGH

Tyrawly Herald (13-12-1849)

On Saturday last, Peter Nolan, Esq., Coroner, held an inquest at Fortfreed, Rathnamaugh, on the body of a man, aged about 50 years. It appeared from evidence, that the deceased was a poor man wandering about one part of the country begging, whilst his wife and children frequented another. They all attended the Relief Depot together, and after getting their allowance divided it, the man retaining his own share and the wife and children theirs. Very little compassion was manifested towards him in the part of the country which he resorted, being sometimes obliged to sleep out in the ditches without the least covering. It also appeared that the portion of the relief which he received was 10 lbs., which he consumed in three days,

remaining the rest of the week without any support unless the little that he got from some of his distant relatives. On the night of his death he was lying out at the end of a dwelling house, where he was heard moaning by the woman to whom it belonged. She sent out here maid with some new milk to him which he was unable to drink. The woman then alarmed her next neighbour, and the man was brought into the house where he died two hours afterwards. On the next morning they threw the body out on a dunghill, where they left it exposed, until they heard the Coroner was coming, when they again brought it in.

The jury found that the deceased came by his death in consequences of insufficiency of food and exposure to cold, both by day and night.

After the inquest the Coroner provided a coffin to have the body interred.

Tragedy at Doolough

One of the most infamous occurrences in County Mayo during the Famine happened in March of 1849, in the Louisburgh area. The circumstances of the event, which needlessly compelled many starving people to walk twenty miles or more, gives testimony to the callous and uncaring attitude of some officials charged with administering the Poor Law. The tragedy has long lived in the minds of the people of the Louisburgh area and is now commemorated annually by the Famine Walk, from Louisburgh to Delphi



Delphi Lodge

Mayo Constitution (10-4-1849)

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MAYO CONSTITUTION.

Louisburgh, April 5th, 1840.

Sir – On last Friday, 30th ult., Colonel Hogrove, one of the vice guardians of Westport union, and Captain Primrose, the poor law inspector, arrived here on that morning for the purpose of holding an inspection on the paupers who were receiving outdoor relief in this part of the union, but, from some cause or other, they did not, but started off immediately for Delphi Lodge. In a short time after, the relieving officer, a person of the name of Carroll, ordered the poor creatures forthwith to follow him to Delphi Lodge, as he would have them inspected early on the following morning, Saturday, 31st; and in obedience of this humane order, hundreds of these unfortunate living skeletons, men, women and children, might have been seen struggling through the mountain passes and roads for the appointed place. The inspection took place in the morning, and I have been told that nothing could equal the horrible appearance of those truly unfortunate creatures, some of them without a morsel to eat, and others exhausted from fatigue, having travelled upwards of 16 miles to attend the inspection.

It is not for me to say why the inspection took place at Delphi, it being the most remote part of the union, and some of the poor, as I have before stated, having to travel

upwards of sixteen miles.

I have now the melancholy duty of informing you and the public, that a woman named Dalton, from Wastelands, six miles to the West of this town, her son and daughter, were all found dead on the road side, on the morning after the inspection, midway between this town and Delphi: and about one mile nearer to this town, two men were found dead – in all, five. The bodies of these ill-fated creatures lay exposed on the road side for three or four days and nights, for the dogs and ravens to feed upon, until some charitable person had been buried in a turf hole at the road side.

Now, Sir, I call upon you, as the sincere friend of the poor, and in the name of that just God who is to judge all at the last day, to call upon the Lord Lieutenant of this county to demand a searching inquiry into this melancholy affair, and prevent, if possible, so many of the poor being sacrificed. If inquests are held, I will let you know the result. –

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

A RATEPAYER.

DOOLOUGH

Mayo Constitution (17-5-1849)

TO THE EDITOR OF THE
MAYO CONSTITUTION

Louisburgh, April 13th, 1849.

Sir - In my letter of the 5th instant, I attempted giving you an account of the first loss of life which took place in this part of the country, on the night of the 31st ultimo. I have this day the melancholy duty of informing you that two more miserable creatures were found on the mountain passes dead - in all 7, and I am confidently informed that 9 or 10 more have never reached their homes, and several of those that did, were so fatigued with cold and hunger that they in a short time ceased to live. Gracious God! will my Lord Lucan, as Lieutenant of this county, suffer such extraordinary and cruel conduct to pass without a deep and searching inquiry, and to punish those who dare to sport with the lives of the people.

I tell Colonel Hogrove, and Captain Primrose that the relieving officer ordered the poor creatures to follow them to Delphi, in order that they might be inspected at 7 o'clock on the morning of the 31st, at that lodge, and I challenge them to contradict what I state; further

that the cause of their not stopping at Louisburgh was, that the relieving officer had not his books ready & it was at the court-house the following order was given - all persons not attending at 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning, at Delphi, would be struck off the relief; the people did attend, but the relieving officer did not until 12 o'clock.

I now think it right to inform you that a strictly private inquest was held by Mr. Coroner Burke, aided and assisted by a member of his family. Doctor Burke, who is the poorhouse doctor, and the jury returned the following verdict, after a post mortem examination on the bodies of two of them: - "Died from starvation and cold," when instead of providing coffins for those creatures, the bodies were again thrown into a mountain slough, with a few sods thrown over them immediately after.

The Coroner and his staff proceeded to Delphi Lodge, and on the following day returned and held another inquest; like verdict was returned, when the Coroner and doctor returned to their mansions, leaving three more unfortunate creatures at the road side, with scarce a covering of sods upon them.

Thank God all are not so hardened as the above, for that

excellent and humane clergyman. I mean the Rev. Thomas O'Dowd, the Catholic Curate, gave five coffins to Mr. Walshe, who, to his credit be it said, both himself and his men had all the bodies taken out of the sloughs on the 12th instant, and placed in coffins, and had them respectably interred in a burial place.

It is much to be regretted that both Mr. Moroney, R.M.; Mr. Garvey, J.P., and Mr. Walshe did not attend, if they did, I am certain that they would not sanction hole-and-corner inquests to be held. Why not examine witnesses who would prove who issued the inhuman order to follow their honours to Delphi Lodge? I tell both the coroner and his staff, as well as the guardians, that, a deep and searching inquiry shall and must be held, and show those gentlemen that they cannot sport with the lives of the poor in this part of the country.

Now, sir, will you believe it, that the relieving officer will take no applications for relief from any persons in this town or neighbourhood, but obliges the creatures to go to the village of Cregganbane, a distance of at least six miles, before he placed their names on the relief book, and then his honour must be followed to Westport.

I will now leave the matter in your hands, knowing you to be the sincere and steady friend of the poor. In my last, I stated that the poor had not to travel more than 10 or 15 miles, I now tell you that the residence of some of those found dead was at least 28 miles from Delphi - the same distance back.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

A RATEPAYER.

I omitted giving you the names of the persons found dead - Catherine Dillon, Patt Dillon and Honor Dillon, mother, son and daughter, living two-and-a-half miles from this town. Catherine Grady and Mary McHale of Wastelands, 10 miles from this; James Flynn of Rinnacully, 13 miles; so that instead of receiving their rations of the 30th - the day they expected it - in this town, they had to proceed on to Delphi Lodge, without a morsel to eat, a distance of at least fourteen miles. Furthermore, unless some steps be taken, I fear much that ere one month many a poor creature will meet the same fate.