

Letter to the Editor, *Cork Examiner*

Lismore Union, Dec. 12th, 1847.

DEAR SIR— It is sorely against my will that I am compelled to trespass upon your columns; believe me, Sir, it is the direct necessity that constrains me to do so; and were I not well aware of your readiness to lend a willing ear to the piercing and soul harrowing cries of the poor— actually famishing of want— I would still hesitate.

The Lismore Board of Guardians can boast of some high-minded and honourable members. I need only name the chairman— Sir R. Musgrave— and yet both ratepayers and paupers have reason to complain. Weeks and weeks have been wasted away in mock attempts at striking a rate, and it was only after the 29th September it was finally settled.

However, it has been struck, and very generally collected; and yet, week after week, the trembling skeletons of human beings are denied relief, there being no room in the Workhouse— and are sent back to their cold and cheerless homes— if homes they can be called— without a morsel to eat, or perhaps a rag to cover their attenuated limbs. Have these men hearts to feel? —is it by violating God's most imperative precept they expect to extricate themselves and the country from its present awful and embarrassing position? No— no— the cry of the hungry widow and the orphan penetrates the clouds; heard it likely will be. Why not allow the relieving officers to afford them as much relief as would help to sustain life at all events, till such time as room was made for them in the regular Workhouse or elsewhere?

Unless deprived of all feeling, and dead to all sense of shame and humanity, they will not continue this barbarous and wholesale system of thinning the population. —I have contributed more than many, much even beyond my means, to the support of the poor, and yet cheerfully would I meet another call from the Collector, rather than be forced to witness the miserable remnants of human beings wasting away before my eyes. Hoping you will excuse this trouble. —I am, dear Sir,

A FRIEND TO HUMANITY.

The Cork Examiner, 17 December 1847. Views of the Famine.

<https://viewsofthefamine.wordpress.com/1847/12/>. Accessed 11 February 2015.



BOY AND GIRL AT CAHERA.

‘Boy and Girl at Cahera,’ *Illustrated London News*, 20 February 1847

“The first Sketch is taken on the road, at Cahera, of a famished boy and girl turning up the ground to seek for a potato to appease their hunger. ‘Not far from the spot where I made this sketch,’ says Mr. Mahoney, ‘and less than fifty perches from the high road, is another of the many sepulchres above ground, where six dead bodies had lain for twelve days, without the least chance of interment, owing to their being so far from the town.’”

Views of the Famine. <https://viewsofthefamine.wordpress.com/image-index/boy-and-girl-at-cahera/>.
Accessed 11 February 2015



Gog and Magog Giving Paddy a Lift out the Mire

This cartoon, appearing *Punch* in July of 1849, appears to be anonymous. According to the title, Paddy is lifted out of the mire by the smiling Gog and Magog. (Gog and Magog are two mythical survivors of a race of British giants, whose effigies act as porters at the gate of the royal palace.) Under the title is written:

"A Special Court of Commons Council was held on Thursday to consider the propriety of purchasing estates in Ireland, with a view to cultivate and improve the same. * * * That London can and will do this work, her own history affords the most abundant guarantees." Vide "Times," July 7.

Views of the Famine. <https://viewsofthefamine.wordpress.com/punch/gog-and-magog-giving-paddy-a-lift-out-of-the-mire/>. Accessed 11 February 2015

Letter of Charles Edward Trevelyan to Thomas Spring-Rice, Lord Mounteagle, 9 October 1846

Charles Edward Trevelyan, Assistant Secretary to the Treasury in London (1840–59), held firmly to the doctrine of *laissez faire* (that state intervention in society and economy should be minimal), and persisted in this opinion in the face of calamitous famine in Ireland. He blamed the Irish landlords for the chronic distress in Ireland. But he went further in seeing the Famine as the result of a failure in the Irish character, and as the judgement of God on the Irish. In this letter to the Lord Mounteagle, a concerned Irish landlord, he sets out his views about the Famine, and about the minimal role of the Government in relief.

My Dear Lord,

I have had the pleasure of receiving your letter dated 1 inst., and before proceeding to the subjects more particularly treated in it, I must beg of you to dismiss all doubt from your mind of the magnitude of the existing calamity and its danger not being fully known and appreciated in Downing Street.

The government establishments are strained to the utmost to alleviate this great calamity and avert this danger, as far as it is in the power of government to do so; and in the whole course of my public service, I never witnessed such entire self-devotion and such hearty and cordial co-operation on the part of officers belonging to different departments met together from different parts of the world, as I see on this occasion.

My purchases are carried to the utmost point short of transferring the famine from Ireland to England and giving rise to a counter popular pressure here, which it would be the more difficult to resist because it would be founded on strong considerations of justice.

But I need not remind your lordship that the ability even of the most powerful government is extremely limited in dealing with a social evil of this description. It forms no part of the functions of government to provide supplies of food or to increase the productive powers of the land. In the great institutions of the business of society, it falls to the share of government to protect the merchant and the agriculturist in the free exercise of their respective employments, but not itself to carry on these employments; and the condition of a community depends upon the result of the efforts which each member of it makes in his private and individual capacity. ...

In Ireland the habit has proverbially been to follow a precisely opposite course, and the events of the last six weeks furnish a remarkable illustration of what I do not hesitate to call this defective part of the national character. The nobility and the gentry have met in their respective baronies, and beyond making presentments required by law, they have, with rare exceptions, confined themselves to memorials and deputations calling upon the government to do everything, as if

they have themselves no part to perform in this great crisis of the country. The government is expected to open shops for the sale of food in every part of Ireland, to make all the railroads in Ireland, and to drain and improve the whole of the land of Ireland, to the extent of superseding the proprietor in the management of his own estate, and arranging with his tenants the terms on which the rent etc. is to be adjusted. ...

I must give expression to my feelings by saying that I think I see a bright light shining in the distance through the dark cloud which at present hangs over Ireland. A remedy has already been applied to that portion of the maladies of Ireland which was traceable to political causes, and the morbid habits which still to a certain extent survive are gradually giving way to more healthy action. The deep and inveterate root of social evil remains, and I hope I am not guilty of irreverence in thinking that, this being altogether beyond the power of man, the cure has been applied by the direct stroke of an all-wise Providence in a manner as unexpected and unthought as it is likely to be effectual. God grant that we may rightly perform our part, and not turn into a curse what was intended for a blessing. The ministers of religion and especially the pastors of the Roman Catholic Church, who possess the largest share of influence over the people of Ireland, have well performed their part; and although few indications appear from any proceedings which have yet come before the public that the landed proprietors have even taken the first step of preparing for the conversion of the land now laid down to potatoes to grain cultivation, I do not despair of seeing this class of society still taking the lead which their position requires of them, and preventing the social revolution from being so extensive as it otherwise must become.

Believe me, my dear lord, yours very sincerely,

C. E. Trevelyan. Treasury, 9 October 1846.

Multitext Project in Irish History, Emancipation, Famine & Religion: Ireland and the Union, 1815-1870.
University College Cork.

http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/Letter_of_Charles_Edward_Trevelyan_to_Thomas_Spring-Rice_Lord_Mounteagle.

Accessed 11 February 2015