

these were chiefly required for the supply of a single parish. From the 27th of December 1846, to the middle of April 1847, the number of human beings that died in the Cork workhouse was 2,130 ! And in the third week of the following month the free interments in the Mathew Cemetery had risen to 277—as many as 67 having been buried in one day.

The destruction of human life in other workhouses of Ireland kept pace with the appalling mortality in the Cork workhouse. According to official returns, it had reached in April the *weekly* average of 25 per 1,000 inmates; the actual number of deaths being 2,706 for the week ending the 3rd of April, and 2,613 in the following week. Yet the number of inmates in the Irish workhouses was but 104,455 on the 10th of April—the entire number of houses not having then been completed.

More than 100 workhouse officers fell victims during this fatal year to the Famine Fever, which also decimated the ranks of the Catholic clergy of the country. Mr. Trevelyan gives the names of 30 English and Scotch priests who sacrificed their lives to their zealous attendance on the immigrant Irish, who carried the pestilence with them in their flight to other portions of the United Kingdom.

The pestilence likewise slew its victims in the fetid hold of the emigrant ship, and, following them across the ocean, immolated them in thousands in the lazar-houses, that fringed the shores of Canada and the United States.

In meal, and coffins, and passenger ships, was the principal business of the time. A fact may be mentioned which renders further description of the state of the country needless. The Cork Patent Saw Mills had been at full work from December 1846 to May 1847, with twenty pairs of saws constantly going from morning till night, cutting planks for coffins, and planks and scantlings for fever sheds, and for the framework of berths for emigrant ships.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The People rush from the Country into the Towns—Instances of the Destruction of Life amongst them—An awful Spectacle—Father Mathew in his Element—He warns the People against Intemperance—America sends Food to Ireland—The public Measures of Relief—An honourable Testimony.

THE destruction of life amongst those who rushed into the towns, scared by the naked horrors of the starved country districts, was almost beyond belief. A single instance will afford an idea of this frightful carnage.

In a small house in one of the lanes off Clarence Street, a crowded thoroughfare of Cork, some two or three families from the country had sought refuge. The writer was in the company of another gentleman of the city, when his attention was directed to this wretched abode of famine and pestilence. A tall man, of once powerful frame, stood leaning against the door-post, and apparently indifferent to everything in this world—even to the moans and cries which proceeded from a kind of closet, a few feet from where he stood. Every trace of expression, save that of blank apathy, had been banished from his face; and the skin of his face, neck, and breast—for his discoloured shirt was open in front—was more of the hue of a negro than of a white man. It was the dark colour of the famine. In the front room, lay, stark and stiff, stretched on the bare floor, the dead bodies of two of his children—one a girl of thirteen, the other a boy of seven; and in the closet, on a heap of infected straw, raving and writhing in fever, lay

the dying mother of the dead children, and wife of the dying father and husband who was leaning against the door-post. Sixteen human beings sought an asylum in that dwelling, and in less than a week *eleven* were taken out dead!

One or two other facts, witnessed by the writer during the month of April 1847—not in the midst of some wild mountain district, but in the heart of a populous city—will afford a further idea of the *reality* of the famine. The writer, accompanied by a friend, as in the preceding instance, entered a wretched house in the same district, a room of which was occupied by a destitute family, who had also come in from the country. On opening the door of the apartment, a miserable sight presented itself. On the floor was the dead body of an infant; on a kind of bed—a bundle of straw, on which was thrown a man's coat—lay the mother of the child, tossing and moaning in the delirium of fever, with another infant, in the last stage of the disease, lying collapsed by her side; and, crouching over the scanty embers of an almost empty grate, were a great gaunt man, and a little girl, her head resting upon his lap. The man, on whose shoulders was some kind of female garment, was nearly speechless, and could with difficulty articulate a word, or indeed be induced to notice that he was spoken to. The air of the apartment was thick and deadly, and the odour intolerable. Fever—the true Famine Fever—was here in all its malignity. The mother was removed to the nearest hospital, whose wards were then crowded with the victims of the terrible typhus, and relief was administered to the other members of that afflicted family. When the door of that chamber was opened a few days after, the consummation of the tragedy was then beheld. In the middle of the floor, his face turned to the boards, the father was stretched—a corpse. He had evidently fallen in that position, and died where he fell. On the straw which had been recently occupied by the poor mother, lay one of the children, also dead; and crouched up under the grate,

with its little arms crossed on its bosom, was another dead child. Of that family of seventy-five children and their parents—there was but a single survivor.

If it were thus that the Famine and the Famine Fever slew its victims in the very midst of large populations, one may imagine, though faintly, the awful horrors of the country districts.

Among many others who suffered the penalty of their devotion to the relief of suffering humanity, was a respectable gentleman of the city,* a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul—a society which, having its origin in Ireland with the Famine, has since then become the most important charitable organisation in the south of Ireland. The funeral, from the character and position of the deceased, assumed somewhat of a public nature, and was attended by the local bodies and the society of which he had been a member. Father Mathew was among the clergymen who marked their respect for the virtues of this martyr to charity. As the procession reached the church of St. Anne Shandon, a cry of horror was raised at the spectacle which was there beheld. Under a kind of open shed, attached to a guard-house which has since been removed, lay, huddled up in their filthy fetid rags, thirty-eight or forty human creatures—men, women, children, and infants of the tenderest age—starving and fever-stricken—most of them in a dying state—some dead—and all gaunt, yellow, hideous, from the combined effects of famine and disease. Under this open shed they had remained during the night, and until that hour—about ten in the morning—when the funeral procession was passing by, and their indescribable misery was beheld by the leading citizens of Cork, including the Mayor, and several members of the Board of Guardians. The odour which proceeded from that huddled-up heap of human beings was of itself enough to generate a plague. On their return from paying the last mark of respect to the

* Mr. John Lynch.

deceased member of the Society of St. Vincent, the authorities sent for carts to convey the unfortunates to the workhouse; but before they were placed, carefully and tenderly, on the straw with which the carts were supplied, the necessary precaution was taken of sprinkling their clothes plentifully with chloride of lime, which was also profusely distributed over the place on which they had lain during the night. It was a sad sight to behold those helpless and unconscious creatures borne off to almost certain death; for, in all probability, by the end of the week, there were not five out of the entire number that had not found a shallow grave in the choked cemetery of the Union.

The public mind became familiarised with the horrors which were of daily occurrence. A little group clustered round some object in the street: you enquired what was the cause of the apparent interest, and you found it was some one who had just 'dropped from the hunger;' or, perhaps, it was an emaciated human being who was actually drawing his last breath on the public highway of a populous city. I have myself witnessed more than one awful occurrence of the kind. I have beheld women, in scanty rags, that did not reach much below the knee, whose legs had no more flesh on them than there is on the leg of a crane. From knee to ankle, there was nothing but bone and shrivelled skin—not the faintest indication of the ordinary calf. Literally, the streets swarmed with walking skeletons. In every face was care; on every brow was gloom; in every heart was sorrow and depression. The healthy hue seemed to have been banished from the countenance even of youth; the brightness of the eye was dimmed, and the once gay laugh of a light-hearted people was hushed. The very atmosphere was charged with sorrow and suffering and death. It was indeed a sad time for that stricken people.

But although there was no class in society that did not feel the terrible pressure of the hour, either through positive loss

of income or the multiplied burden of taxation, there existed a noble feeling of charity pervading the whole community. Few indeed were there hard-hearted enough to refuse the application of a suffering neighbour, or to turn the wandering beggar from the door, notwithstanding that infection was disseminated by the starving beings who had rushed in from the country, and that in every fold of their wretched rags and filthy blankets the deadly typhus lurked.

It was a time truly in which to try the souls of men; and at no period of his career did the character of Theobald Mathew shine out with a purer and holier lustre, as in this terrible crisis. He was the life and soul of every useful and charitable undertaking; and there were many such at a moment which called into activity the best feelings of our common nature, and united those who had been previously opposed, in fraternal and Christian concord. Industrial schools, clothing societies, relief associations, visiting committees—these and similar efforts sprang from the necessity of the time and the compassion of the good; and there were few of these that did not derive aid and strength from the cooperation or countenance of Father Mathew. What influence he could employ, he brought to bear upon those whose interest it was to make a profit of the great necessary of life, upon every ounce of which depended the safety of a fellow-creature; and by his lavish and unbounded charity—for the excess of which he was afterwards to endure many a moment of mental torture—he supplemented the public relief, and thereby rescued thousands from an untimely grave.

Between Father Mathew and the Irish people no ordinary bond of sympathy and affection existed. He was their leader in a movement such as the world scarcely ever before witnessed, and they were his obedient and devoted followers. If no such link had united them to him, they would have equally claimed his best services in their behalf, and he would have spared no effort or sacrifice for their relief; but as their

leader, who had shared with them the joy and exultation of happy days, he felt bound, in a hundred-fold degree, to stand by them in their hour of mortal peril. In a letter addressed to an American correspondent, we find this feeling strongly expressed :—

Cork : January 30, 1847.

DEAR MR. ALLEN,—There is no desire more ardent in my breast than to visit the United States, that great and glorious Republic. Obstacles, not of great magnitude, impeded my wishes heretofore. Now, there is an insurmountable impediment in the Famine that desolates our stricken land. It would be inhuman—it would be a flagrant act of baseness, to abandon, in their hour of sorrow, my dear, my dying countrymen—men who, in the pride and joy of their hearts, enrolled themselves, at my word, under the banner of Temperance, and who now, though tempted to violate the pledge, to drown their agonies in drink and die, cling to their sacred engagements with desperate fidelity, braving every temptation. A brighter day is dawning. Our Government and the benevolent people of England are liberally contributing to save us from destruction. Your happy land, through its length and breadth, sympathises in our sufferings, and is making mighty efforts for our relief. Ten fold more effectual would American aid be, if, out of your abundance, bread-stuffs were shipped for Ireland, instead of money. We are in the deadly grasp of corn monopolists, who compel starving creatures to pay 19*l.* a ton for what could be purchased in your country for little more than one-third of that famine price.

When it will please a Merciful Providence to stay the hand of the Destroying Angel, and bless with plenty old Ireland; I shall gladly avail myself of the opportunity, and gratify the dearest wish of my heart.

Again thanking you for your great kindness, I am, with high respect, dear Mr. Allen, your devoted friend,

THEOBALD MATHEW.

Not only did Father Mathew expend his last shilling, and involve himself in new difficulties, to relieve the starving, but he availed himself of every opportunity to warn the people against the sin and madness of intemperance at such a moment. Thus he continued to accept invitations to preach for local charities in many parts of the country, because, inde-

pendently of his desire to assist his brother clergymen in promoting works of charity or advancing the cause of religion, it afforded him the occasion of addressing their flocks upon his great theme. One of the happiest of his addresses was delivered in the commencement of the Famine, at Lisgoold, a village some miles from Cork. It was spoken from the altar of the Catholic Church, and produced a profound impression upon a congregation whose faces wore a sad and anxious expression; for '*the hunger*' was already in many a home in the parish. An extract or two from that admirable address will be found appropriate in this place :—

Thousands upon thousands now pine in want and woe, because they did not take my advice; to them the horrors of famine and the evils of blight are aggravated, while tens of thousands of those who listened to me and adopted my advice, are now safe from hunger and privation, because they had the virtue to surrender a filthy sensual gratification, and the wisdom to store up for the coming of the evil day. Thousands are now perishing, who, if they had not the folly to spend their hard-earned money in drink, in riot, and in debauchery, would now be safe from danger, and enabled to assist, by their charity, creatures who are now without a friend to comfort or assist them. The prison and the poor-house are opening wide their doors for many who have wilfully brought ruin on themselves and their families, and who, had they only sense, would now be among the wealthy of the land. I will not upbraid such victims for the past, I would rather cheer and console; I would rather tell them that it is not yet too late, that no one should despair, that there is still balm in Gilead, still a physician there. I would assure them that the oldest and most inveterate habit can be overcome by a simple effort of moral courage, by one virtuous resolution. Habit and custom tyrannise over men, because they want courage to face and oppose their tyrants; but the strongest chain of passion that ever fettered the soul, and led man's senses captive, can be broken by a bold, a virtuous effort. The pledge which I ask you and others to take, does not enslave, it makes free—free from vice, free from passion, free from an enslaving habit. The fewer passions that rule us, the freer we are; and no man is so free as the man who places himself beyond and out of the reach of temptation; for, as the Scripture says, those who court danger shall perish therein. The freedom which I advocate is one you can obtain

without any sacrifice of health, of pleasure, of money, or of comfort. On the contrary, it will add to your health, your wealth, your pleasure, and your comfort. Temperance brings blessings in both hands; blessings for time, and blessings for eternity. Let the drinker of the strong drink examine his past life, and he cannot fail to see that the darkest moments of his life have borrowed their murky hue from intemperance. I never knew a young man or young woman to go astray, and walk in the way of lewdness, whose departure from the path of virtue was not chiefly from the influence of strong drink.

There is no difficulty in taking the pledge. No man performs his duty better than a teetotaller; no man is better able to brave the vicissitudes of the season. I am now in the habit of travelling constantly during the last nine years, in heat and cold, in rain and snow, by day and night; and I have never suffered any serious inconvenience from it, because I was a teetotaller; and now, thank God, I am as active and as full of energy as ever, and as determined now as I was nine years ago, to devote myself to the great cause of reformation, and moral as well as social advancement. I never knew what true happiness was until I became a teetotaller; for until I became so, I could never feel that I was free or out of danger, or could say to myself, with confidence, that I would not at one time or another be that most degraded thing, a *drunkard*. Let no man tell me that he is safe enough, that he has no occasion to take the pledge, that he is above temptation. There is no one strong enough or firm enough to resist temptation; no one so strong or firm that he may not fall. I have seen the stars of the heavens fall, and the cedars of Lebanon laid low. I have seen the proudest boasters humbled to the dust, steeped to the very lips in poverty, and sunk in dishonoured graves.

I am here in the name of the Lord. I am here for your good. This is a time to try men's souls; and that man or that woman must be a monster who would drink while a fellow-creature was dying for want of food. I don't blame the brewers or the distillers—I blame those who make them so. If they could make more money in any other way, they would; but so long as the people are mad enough to buy and drink their odious manufacture, they will continue in the trade. Is it not a terrible thing to think that so much wholesome grain, that God intended for the support of human life, should be converted into a maddening poison, for the destruction of man's body and soul? By a calculation recently made, it is clearly proved that if all the grain now converted into poison, were devoted to its natural

and legitimate use, it would afford a meal a day to every man, woman, and child in the land! *The man or woman who drinks, drinks the food of the starving*; and is not that man or woman a *monster* who drinks the food of the starving?

It would be difficult to say in what country or among what people the most active sympathy was displayed towards the suffering people of Ireland. The generosity of the people of England of all classes was most munificent; but the practical benevolence of America was in a special degree cheering and timely. In the great cities of the United States, meetings were held in the early part of 1847, to raise money for the relief of Ireland, and these meetings were attended by the most influential men of the country. Thus, in Philadelphia, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court presided over a meeting held in that city on the 28th of January 1847; and the noble charity displayed on that occasion wiped out the last trace of the blood shed in the riots of 1844. The Vice-President of the United States presided over a meeting held in Washington. In New York and Boston the same sympathy was felt, and the most active exertions were made to afford the description of relief then most required by Ireland. Providence had vouchsafed that to America which it had, for wise reasons, denied to Ireland—an abundant supply of food for man; and America, in giving from her abundance to her distressed sister, proved how beautiful and holy is that bond of humanity which links nations, the most remote, in one great family, sympathising with each other's joy and sorrow.

On Monday the 13th of April, a noble sight might be witnessed in Cork Harbour; the sun shining its welcome on the entrance of the *unarmed* war-ship 'Jamestown,' sailing in under a cloud of snowy canvass, her great hold laden with bread-stuffs for the starving people of Ireland. It was a sight that brought tears to many an eye, and prayers of gratitude to many a heart. It was one of those things which a nation remembers of another long after the day of sorrow

has passed. Upon the warm and generous people, to whom America literally broke bread, and sent life, this act of fraternal charity, so gracefully and impressively offered, naturally produced a profound and lasting impression, the influence of which is felt to this moment.

The captain of that unarmed war-ship was thus favourably introduced to Father Mathew :—

Boston, U. S. A.: March 27, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—This will introduce to you the commander of the United States *unarmed* ship, the 'Jamestown,' Robert B. Forbes, Esq., who has nobly volunteered his services to convey to your shores a cargo of provisions for the relief of the destitute.

It affords me great pleasure to make this philanthropic countryman of ours known to one who is personally known to me, and to millions in both hemispheres, as one of the greatest benefactors of his race. In Mr. Forbes you will find one of nature's nobles, who, leaving the endearments of home at this boisterous season, crosses the ocean to imitate His and our SAVIOUR, to feed the hungry and raise the desponding. To you, my excellent friend, I cordially commend him, hoping at no distant day to grasp your hand, and welcome you on our shores, and then assure you that our sympathies and hearts are one, though separated by the ocean and a different faith.

With high esteem, your friend,

JOHN TAPPAN.

The Very Rev. Theobald Mathew.

Father Mathew lost no time in paying his respects to Captain Forbes, who expressed in the strongest terms the pleasure he felt in meeting and knowing the man with whose name he had been so long familiar, and spoke of the impatience of the American people to receive him among them. Captain Forbes concluded by offering Father Mathew a passage in the 'Jamestown;' which offer was gratefully declined, on the ground that the state of the country required the best exertions of everyone who could in any way assist her, and that it would be an unpardonable crime to desert her in the hour of her direst necessity.

The commander of the United States frigate 'Macedonian,' another bread-laden ship of war, also desired to have the honour of taking Father Mathew to the States in his ship :—

United States Frigate 'Macedonian.'
New York: May 15, 1847.

REVEREND AND RESPECTED FATHER,—This frigate will leave for Ireland and Scotland some time during the present month; and having understood that it was the intention of your reverence to visit this country during the summer, I take the liberty of respectfully offering to your consideration the propriety of returning with me.

It would give me great pleasure to have the honour of your company on my homeward voyage; and I can only assure you, that should you determine to accompany me, no pains shall be spared to make your voyage as pleasant to yourself as it is hoped it will be profitable to my fellow-citizens of the United States.

Accept the assurance of high regard, consideration, and respect from

GEORGE C. DE KAY,
Commander of U. S. F. 'Macedonian.'

To the Very Rev. Father Mathew, Cork.

It is not within the scope of this biography to enter into a detail of the measures adopted by Parliament and the Government for the relief of Irish distress, or within the province of the writer to attempt a criticism, much less to pass judgement, upon the merits or the shortcomings of those measures, or the manner of their administration. This properly belongs to the historian who writes the history of the Irish Famine. But it is much to be deplored that the works undertaken at that time, with a view to provide employment, were not in most instances of a remunerative character, and that some such scheme as that proposed by Lord George Bentinck—to lend fifteen millions of money for the construction of the earth-works of railways—was not even partially adopted. For, while it would be untrue to state that considerable good was not accomplished by the works then executed, especially in opening up, and rendering accessible to traffic, remote or hilly districts of the country; it would be equally untrue to state

that many most useless and unprofitable works were not undertaken. Allowance must, however, be made for a time of panic, which is always fruitful of measures of precipitation, as of blunders and disasters.* The delay in granting work to a parish or district was fatal to life, and the work itself was, in fearfully numerous instances, almost equally fatal. When the work was obtained, the physical energy of the workman was gone; and the very effort to use the spade, the wheelbarrow, or even the hammer, accomplished the destruction of a life which hunger and dysentery had undermined.

In the month of March 1847, there were employed on the public works the enormous number of 734,000 persons, representing, says Mr. Trevelyan, 'at a moderate estimate of the average of each family, upwards of three millions of persons.' It being apprehended that the drawing away of such an enormous amount of labour from the ordinary agricultural operations of the country would dangerously interfere with the harvest of 1847, and thus bring about a renewal of the famine which then afflicted Ireland, it was determined to substitute for those works gratuitous distributions of food; and on the 20th of March a reduction of 20 per cent. of the numbers employed on the works was carried out, and the same plan of reduction was persevered in until the new system of gratuitous relief was brought into full operation. Even the partial diminution of the numbers so employed was attended with the most serious consequences, as it tended to aggravate the distress, which was at its height in the months of April, May, and June. The Temporary Relief Act was brought into effective operation in July, during which month over

* In a note to his article in the *Edinburgh Review*, Mr. Trevelyan has the following—

'A Member of the Board of Works, writing to a friend, observed as follows :—
"I hope never to see such a winter and spring again. I can truly say, in looking back upon it, even now, that it appears to me, not a succession of weeks and days, but one long continuous day, with occasional intervals of nightmare sleep. Rest one could never have, when one felt that in every minute lost a score of men might die."'

3,000,000 of persons received daily rations. The machinery by which this gigantic system of relief was administered, consisted of Relief Committees in each electoral division, with a Finance Committee and a Government Inspector in each union, the entire being under the control or direction of a Board of Commissioners in Dublin.

This system of relief, which Sir John Burgoyne exultingly described as 'the grandest attempt ever made to grapple with famine over a whole country,' was administered through more than 2,000 local committees, to whose honour and trustworthiness Mr. Trevelyan thus bore testimony :—'It is a fact very honourable to Ireland, that among upwards of 2,000 local bodies to whom advances were made under this Act (the Temporary Relief Act), there is not one to which, so far as the Government is informed, any suspicion of embezzlement attaches.'*

The estimated cost of this relief in food was 3,000,000*l.*; but the amount actually expended was 1,557,212*l.*, being nearly 500,000*l.* less than what had been allowed by Parliament to be raised under the Act.

* Article on the 'Irish Crisis' in the *Edinburgh Review*, Jan. 1848.