

THE

PARISH OF KILMARAGH, CO. CLARE

AND ITS PEOPLE

1834 - 1851

Ignatius Murphy

CONTENTS

		Page
<u>PART ONE</u>	<u>BEFORE THE FAMINE</u>	
<u>Ch. One</u>	<u>Setting the Scene</u>	1
1.	Historical Background	1a
2.	The Beginnings of Kilkee Town	8
3.	The Parish in 1841	12
<u>Ch. Two</u>	<u>Means of Livelihood (1)</u>	
	<u>Landed and Landless</u>	16
1.	Landlords and Middlemen	16
2.	Farmers	18
3.	Labourers	27
4.	Beggars	30
<u>Ch. Three</u>	<u>Means of Livelihood (2)</u>	
	<u>Sea and Bog etc.</u>	35
1.	Sea	35
2.	Bog	42
3.	Weavers, Shoemakers, Tailors etc.	45

		Page
<u>Ch. Four</u>	<u>Necessities of Life</u>	46
1.	Shelter	46
2.	Food	49
3.	Clothing	52
4.	Sickness and Medical Care	54
5.	Provision for the Future	57
<u>Ch. Five</u>	<u>Religion</u>	60
1.	Fr. Michael Comyn, P.P.	60
2.	A New Catholic Chapel	64
3.	Religious Life	70
4.	The Protestant Parish	77
5.	Itinerant Preachers	79
<u>Ch. Six</u>	<u>Politics</u>	81
1.	Support for O'Connell	81
2.	Poor Law Politics	85
<u>Ch. Seven</u>	<u>Language and Education</u>	88
1.	Language	88
2.	Education	91
<u>Ch. Eight</u>	<u>Recreation</u>	98
1.	Old Customs	98
2.	Kilkee Races	99
3.	Hurling	102
4.	Drinking and Temperance	104
5.	Faction Fights	108

		Page
<u>Ch. Nine</u>	<u>Holiday Resort (1)</u>	110
1.	Transport	110
2.	Accom ^m odation	118
3.	Shopping and Postal Facilities	121
 <u>Ch. Ten</u>	 <u>Holiday Resort (2)</u>	 124
1.	Recreational Facilities	124
2.	Visitors and Natives	135
3.	Conclusion	137

PART TWO

FAMINE

<u>Ch. Eleven</u>	<u>A People "Half-starved"</u>	140
1.	Failure of the Potato Crop	140
2.	Remedial Measures, Autumn-Winter 1845	142
3.	Government Policy and Meetings in Kilkee	147
4.	Kilkee Relief Committee	152
5.	Efforts of Fr. Comyn and Hugh Hogan	156
6.	Public Works	159
7.	Indian Meal	164

		Page
<u>Ch. Twelve</u>	<u>A Second Failure</u>	168
1.	The Harvest of 1846	168
2.	New Government Plans for Relief	171
3.	Waiting for Relief Works to begin	173
4.	Working on the Roads	178
5.	Close of the Year	181
<u>Ch. Thirteen</u>	<u>Soup Kitchens and Deaths from Starvation</u>	184
1.	Deputation to Dublin	184
2.	Soup Kitchens	185
3.	Deaths from Starvation and Fever	188
4.	Preparing for the New Harvest	190
5.	Summer 1847	193
6.	End of Public Works and Soup Kitchens	194
<u>Ch. Fourteen</u>	<u>Towards Utter Destitution</u>	196
1.	Causes of Destitution	196
2.	Autumn and Winter 1847-8	200
3.	Relief Organizations	208
4.	Politics	211
<u>Ch. Fifteen</u>	<u>Evictions</u>	214

		Page
<u>Ch. Sixteen</u>	<u>Kilrush Workhouse (1)</u>	225
1.	Arrival of Captain Kennedy	225
2.	Demand for Outdoor Relief	227
3.	The "Slaughter House"	231
4.	Dismissal of Guardians	233
5.	Further Downhill	237
<u>Ch. Seventeen</u>	<u>Kilrush Workhouse (2)</u>	242
1.	Financial Crisis	242
2.	In Kilrush Workhouse	250
3.	Mortality	253
4.	Kilrush Union under Investigation	255
5.	Supplies of Food	259
<u>Ch. Eighteen</u>	<u>Emigration</u>	261
<u>Ch. Nineteen</u>	<u>Picking up the Threads</u>	272
1.	Population	273
2.	Emigration	276
3.	Pattern of Farming	278
4.	Education and Religion	280
5.	Politics	282
6.	Recreation	283
7.	Holiday Resort	284
<u>Notes</u>		287
<u>Bibliography</u>		347

MAPS

	Page
Kilfearagh and neighbouring parishes	1a
Kilkee Town in 1842	12

PART ONE

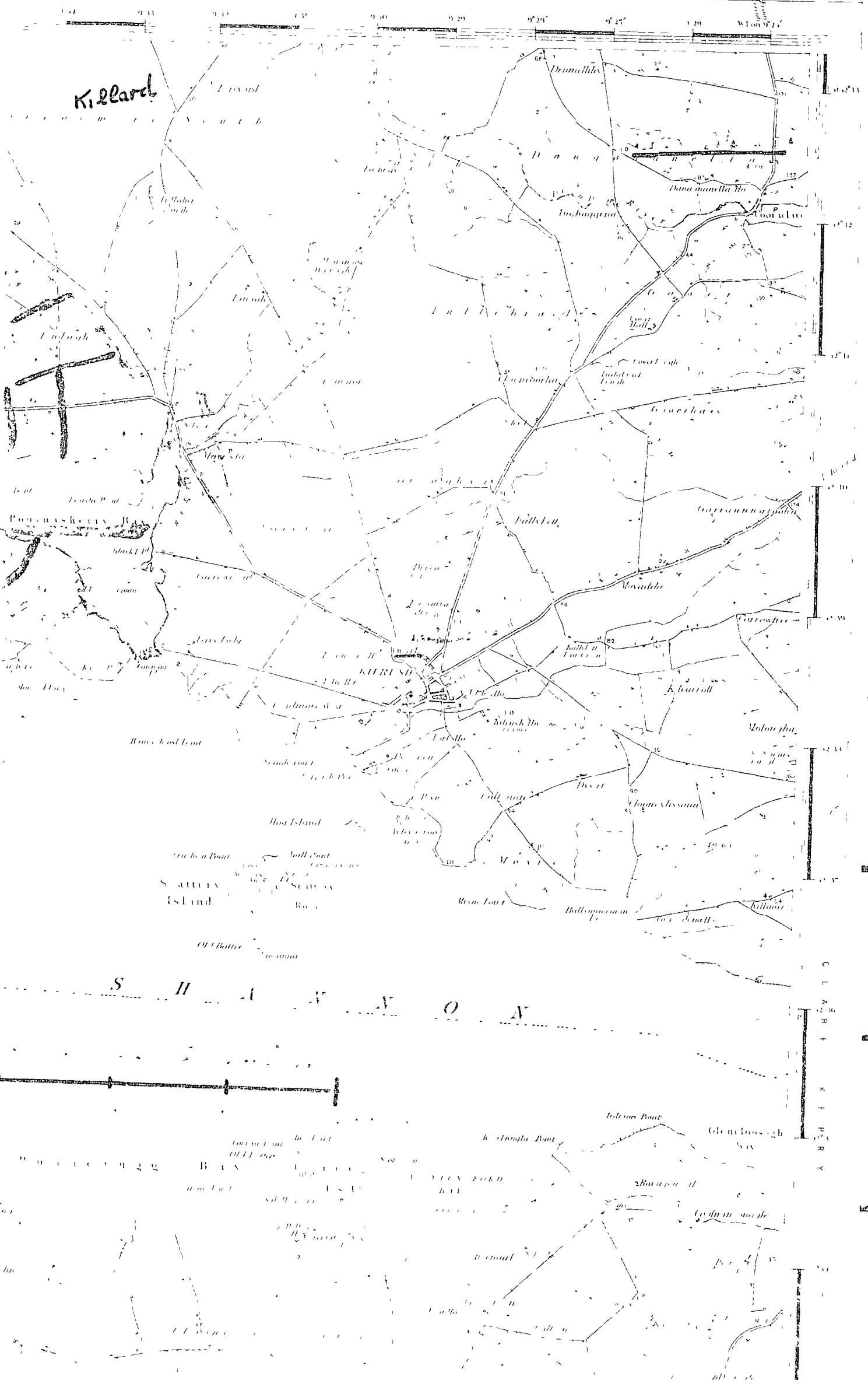
BEFORE THE FAMINE

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE

The parish of Kilfearagh is situated in Moyarta barony on the south west coast of Clare in the peninsula between the Atlantic Ocean and the Shannon Estuary. Its Atlantic coastline is well known for its steep cliffs, an inhospitable sight for the sailor in former times but now much admired by the tourist. Here and there small inlets are to be found but at Farrihy and Kilkee there are larger openings. The bay at Kilkee is a beautiful one, shaped like a horseshoe, and the incoming tide moves across a very fine strand, on the edge of which the town grew up. From the cliffs the land slopes down to Poulnasherry Bay on the Shannon. To the north Kilfearagh parish is bordered by Killard, to the east by Kilrush and to the south and south-west by Moyarta. The present area of the Catholic parish is over 10,000 acres but this includes land gained in a territorial adjustment with Killard in 1854. In the period with which we are dealing the civil and ecclesiastical parishes coincided, having 9,870 acres according to the Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland.¹

The land in the parish is by no means good. There is still some bog, while a considerable amount more has been reclaimed. Even though the bogs are an indication of ancient forests, there are few trees to be seen on the present landscape, a tribute to the power of the breezes which sweep in from the Atlantic allowing only some isolated trees and stunted bushes to remain in their wake.

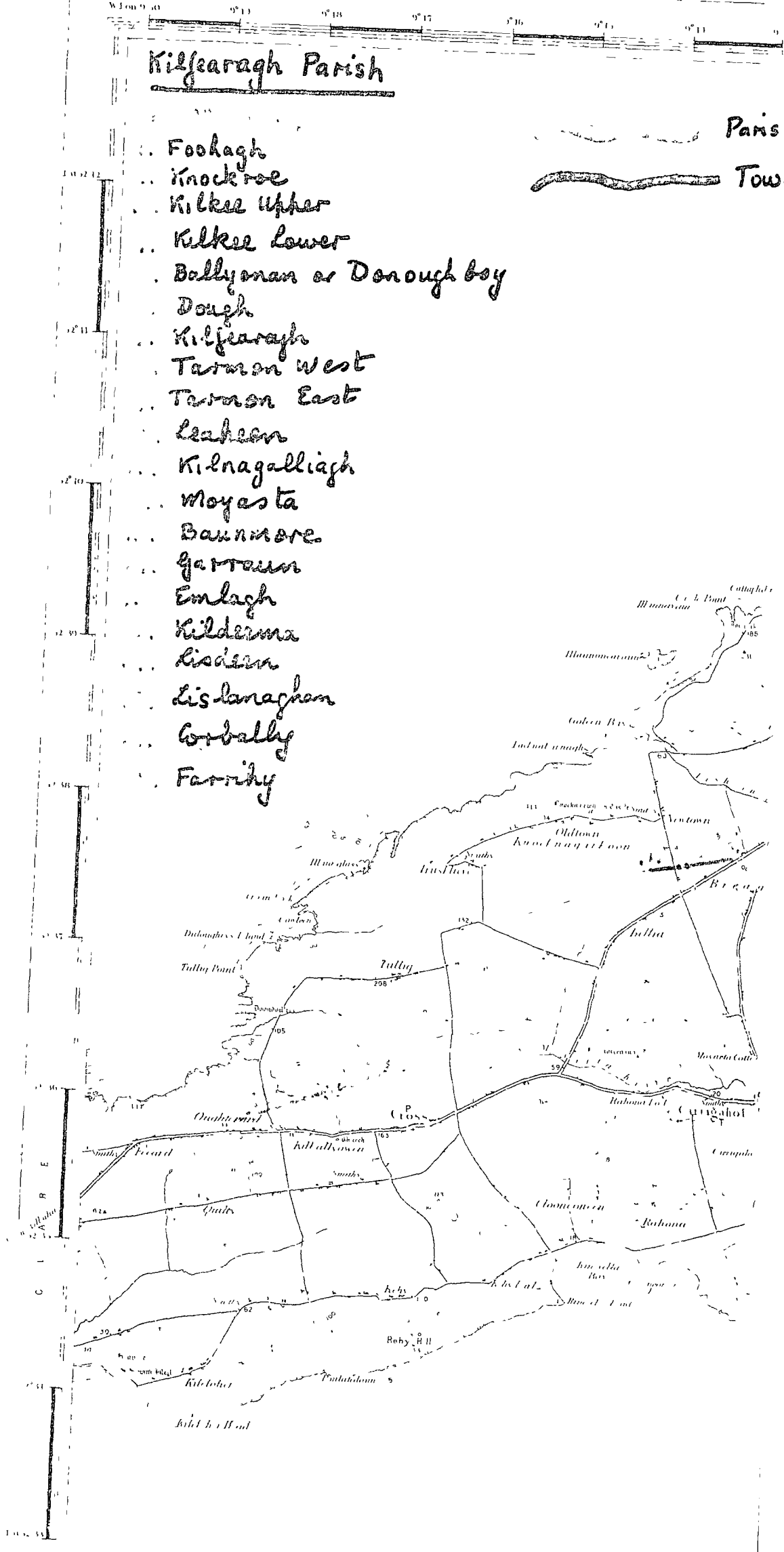


W Long 9° 10' 9° 11' 9° 12' 9° 13' 9° 14' 9° 15' 9° 16' 9° 17' 9° 18' 9° 19'

Kilgearagh Parish

- .. Fookagh
- .. Knockroe
- .. Kilkee Upper
- .. Kilkee Lower
- .. Ballyonan or Donough boy
- .. Dough
- .. Kilgearagh
- .. Tarnon West
- .. Tarnon East
- .. Leakeen
- .. Kilnagalliagh
- .. Moyesta
- .. Bannmore
- .. Garrowan
- .. Emlagh
- .. Kilderna
- .. Lisdeen
- .. Lislanaghan
- .. Corbally
- .. Farnihy

Paris
 Tow



1. Historical Background.

It was only a few miles outside the confines of Kilfearagh that St. Senan was born in the early ^{SIXTH} century and when he later established his famous monastery on Inis Cathaigh its influence, which extended widely, must have had its effect on the neighbouring district. ²

A few miles south west of Kilkee the small but forbidding Bishop's Island, a mere fifty yards from the shore but inaccessible, ³ is traditionally associated with Senan although the ancient circular oratory on the island is somewhat later in date. ⁴

The first documented mention of the parish occurs in the early fourteenth century when, for purposes of ecclesiastical taxation, Kilfearagh was valued at seven marks. ⁵ Thereafter we can get brief glimpses of the ecclesiastical history of the parish through the Calendars of Papal Registers --- and these glimpses suggest that the level of religious life was perhaps not all it might have been. ⁶

Politically Kilfearagh was part of West Corca Baiscinn, which was under the control of MacMahons of Carrigaholt. But sometime in the 15th century a family of the MacSweeneys, the famous mercenary soldiers from Scotland, came to Kilkee and it was probably at this stage that a castle on a height dominating the western side of Kilkee Bay was built. An ancient legal deed signed about 1550 by Edmond Roe, son of Gilladuff MacSweeney of Kilkee, was published by James Hardiman

in Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy in 1828.⁷
 And the Annals of the Four Masters contain many references to battles fought by the MacSweeneys on behalf of the O'Briens of Thomond and other notables in Munster. In 1568, for example, we find the same Edmond, son of Gilladuff, acting as constable to Mac Maurice of Kerry and fighting on his behalf against James FitzMaurice FitzGerald.⁸

In 1588 the parish saw a good deal of hustle and bustle as seven Armada ships put in at Carrigaholt, just a few miles away, while another foundered in Doonbeg Bay.⁹ Some of the victims of this disaster may have been washed ashore at Kilkee as Westropp mentions Armada graves there.¹⁰ However, all memory of these seems to have now disappeared. Ten years later Teige Caech MacMahon of Carrigaholt broke into revolt, supporting O'Neill and O'Donnell. For a time he caused some trouble through a blockade of the Shannon with a ship which had come into his possession.¹¹

But in April, 1599, the Earl of Thomond marched into West Corca Baiscinn and encamped before Carrigaholt. "The property and cattle of the entire country extending from Cnoc Doire (Knockerra) to Leim-Chonculainn were carried to him to that camp."¹² It was probably at this time that Teige Caech went north to O'Donnell in his galley. Later he marched south with his leader to Kinsale and in the following year was accidentally killed by his own son at Beare.¹³ Even before his death his lands in West Corca Baiscinn had already been granted to Daniel O'Brien, brother of the Earl of Thomond.¹⁴ There can be little doubt that Teige Caech was supported in his rebellion by

many from Kilfearagh parish. In 1602 we find pardons being issued to Owen and Colla MacSweeney of Kilkee, Owen McCahane of Lislanahan and others.¹⁵

Within another forty years the district was once again in a ferment. When rebellion broke out in 1641 a number of Dutch and English settlers in Kilrush and its vicinity claimed to have been robbed by some of the local Irish including Sir Daniel O'Brien of Carrigaholt, Charles and Teige Cahane of Termon, Murtagh O'Scanlan from Kilfearagh and others too, from Kilfearagh parish.¹⁶ However, within ten years the wheel had turned fully around and in summer 1651 General Ludlow led his Cromwellian troops to capture Carrigaholt Castle. On the way, in his own words, "In this extremity of weather the poor foot were necessitated to wade through a branch of the sea, near a quarter of a mile over, up to the waste (sic) in water."¹⁷ This crossing has been located by Westropp at Moyasta.¹⁸

Although the Cromwellians met with no opposition at Carrigaholt, a group of them were attacked by the O'Cahans at Kildimo; their commander, Captain Scaff, was killed and his head put on one of the gables of Kildimo church.¹⁹ Undoubtedly the soldiers had their revenge, though history has not recorded it. During their occupation a levy was placed on the inhabitants of Clare and quite possibly the oats which were stored at Kilkee Castle in November 1652, formed part of the payment of this levy.²⁰

Not long after the Restoration a new chapter in the history of the parish opened with the coming to Kilkee of the MacDonnells, a branch of the Antrim family. Daniel MacDonnell may have been the first to settle in

West Clare but his son, James, was much more prominent in public affairs.²¹ When the struggle for the thrones of England and Ireland began, most of Ireland rallied to James II. The Duke of Tyrconnell called on Irish loyalists to take up arms for James and it was decided that County Clare should supply two regiments. Commissions were handed out to the gentlemen of the county, James MacDonnell receiving a captaincy in the Dragoons. A fellow parishioner, Owen Cahane of Lisdeen, was appointed a lieutenant in the same regiment. Little fame was won by Clare's Dragoons in the war which followed. In one of its earliest engagements the regiment was nearly cut to pieces in an ambush near Lisnaskea and it was the most undistinguished of James' cavalry regiments at the Boyne.²²

When the war was over James MacDonnell returned home to Kilkee. Owen Cahane, on the other hand, sailed to France with the Wild Geese in 1691, dying two years later at the battle of Marsaglia in Piedmont. Three of his thirteen brothers also served in the armies of France, one of them, Thomas, being fatally wounded at Ramillies in 1706.²³

While the Cahanes were fighting on the continent James MacDonnell was consolidating his position at Kilkee. It is unlikely that he was already a Protestant but he must have conformed shortly after the end of the war, thus proving his loyalty to the new regime. His patron, Lord Clare, had left the country and all his lands came into the possession of the Crown. In 1698 King William bestowed this large estate on one of his fellow countrymen, Joost Van Keppel, Earl of Albemarle. Only a fortnight later Van Keppel, disposed of his newly acquired property

to Francis Burton, Nicholas Westby and James MacDonnell. The sudden sale was undoubtedly caused by the currency of a rumour that it was the intention of Parliament to revoke grants made by William to Dutchmen -- and, in fact, a year later a bill for the resumption of forfeited estates in Ireland became law. The result was that Burton, Westby and MacDonnell had to purchase once again, on this occasion paying more than four times the price paid to Van Keppel -- £10,161.17.5⁹/₄ as against £2,500. In this way, Burton and MacDonnell acquired control of a large proportion of the land of Kilfearagh parish.²⁴

The MacDonnell family lived in a large house on the western side of Kilkee Bay. It was a sheltered site, with the hill to its back, and near the older MacSweeney Castle. Sean Lloyd described it in 1780:²⁵

"The most western seat on this coast is a spacious and regular old modell'd house with many out-offices, situate on the brink of a delightful bay and a pleasant beach, decorated with sandhills and sheltered from the North West wind."

But although the MacDonnells had conformed to the Established Church they remained Gaelic in sentiment and provided patronage for many well known Clare poets of the first half of the 18th century -- Andrew and Hugh McCurtain, Sean de hOra of Doonaha, John Hartney of Kilkee and others.²⁶ Hugh McCurtain wrote of a quarrel which he had with Charles MacDonnell, son of James:²⁷

A Dia laidir! is mor an daille agas an dithceille dham fein nar thuigeas gur maith an teacht am eagnuis do bhi ag Samhairle Mac Domhnaill, agas a liadhact saoih oirdhearc oile re gach ealadhain do bhi iona thimchioll, agas fos, mar bharr ar gach aineochain, fos me d'fhanmhuin ar sgeird Breacain go minic fa theirce bigh agas digh, airgiod agas eadach, agas gan dul ameasg uaisle agas oirfidighe Chille-Caoi mar a bhfhadhainn ol agas aoibhneas, ceolta agas cluithchidhe.

In 1764 Kilkee suffered a grievous loss when Charles MacDonnell, son of the Charles already mentioned, moved to Newhall, near Ennis. His widowed mother, Isabel,²⁸ however, remained at the Kilkee house. After her death at a very advanced age in 1788, it ceased to be occupied by the MacDonnells and slowly fell into ruin.²⁹ When the town of Kilkee was being built, it was knocked and the stones used to erect new houses.³⁰

The departure of Charles MacDonnell meant that there was no resident landlord in Kilfearagh parish. The Burton properties in West Clare were divided during the 18th century and the Kilfearagh portion of them came under the control of the Conyngham family who were absentees. Most of their property they kept under their direct control. However, in 1793 a large tract of wild land on the eastern side of the Bay of Kilkee was leased to the Studderts of Clonderlaw. These built a residence there, Atlantic Lodge -- one of the many houses which were sonn to be built around the bay by the Studderts and others.³¹ Although the Studderts were merely middlemen

their presence did provide some people of standing in the parish shortly after the death of Isabel MacDonnell.

On the religious front the 18th century was a rather trying time. Owing to a shortage of priests Kilfearagh parish was united with its northern neighbour, Killard, and Daniel Gorman was registered as P.P. in 1704.

In March 1712 we find him in Ennis Gaol in company with many other priests. But he must have been released shortly afterwards because on 13 May, William Butler, High Sheriff of Co. Clare, wrote of him and some others.³²

I believe it would be easier at this time to catch so many wolves or foxes than those priests, their being twelve presented as mentioned in my laste for saying Mass contrary to the Statute.

In 1731 the Report on the State of Popery mentions Martin Sexton and Paul Mollanara as the P.P.s of Killard and Killard.³³ It is unlikely, however, that the parishes had been separated from one another. According to tradition, Mass was celebrated at this period in a little chapel at Corbally Cross about a mile north of Kilkee -- a fairly central point in the dual parish.³⁴ It was not until about the turn of the century that the first chapel of any size since pre-reformation times was built -- at the village of Lisdeen, the only village of any note at that time in Kilfearagh parish. The pre-reformation church in Kilfearagh townland had fallen into Protestant hands, and the original structure was replaced by a new building in the early 18th century.³⁵

2. The Beginnings of Kilkee Town.

At the beginning of the 19th century the parish of Kilfearagh was a wild virtually inaccessible area on the west coast of Clare, much of it bogland and little visited by strangers. Dutton in 1808 makes no mention of a seaside village,³⁶ but a map made in the year 1811 does mark a tiny village of "Killqui". However, these houses were situated between a quarter and $\frac{1}{2}$ half a mile from the present town on the Carrigaholt Road.³⁷ In the immediate area around Kilkee Bay there was little more than extensive sandhills -- apart from Atlantic Lodge on the east side and the MacDonnell residence on the west. Writing nearly sixty years later Fr. Sylvester Malone described the scene:³⁸

Nothing could have been more cheerless than this tract of land, bordered by large heaps of sand accumulating for ages. The sand had been driven by the wind inland from the shore, so that at a distance of a half mile from the sea one waded ankle deep in it. Within the memory of hundreds still living, the several sandhills served as the goal and starting point of a race-course, and the nature and severity of the heats were measured by the number of sandhills encircled in the course.....

Unless when the people met occasionally for amusement at the sandhills, there was no trace of human life.

But even before the end of the 18th century a few visitors were already making the journey to Kilkee. In 1796, five years after the death of Isabel MacDonnell,

we find Kilkee House being advertised in the Ennis Chronicle as available for the bathing season.³⁹ And

the kidnapping of a young girl with a subsequent successful western-style pursuit gives us a glimpse of the possible hazards of sea-bathing in West Clare in 1794.⁴⁰

The earliest visitors probably journeyed from Limerick on the turf-boats which were continually on the move between Kilrush and that port. Then in 1812, Mr. Paterson of Kilrush started the first regular boat-service between Kilrush and Limerick and in 1813 he put a second boat on the river.⁴¹ But regular sailings did not necessarily mean regular arrivals in the days of sail, and these ships, if they encountered a dead calm, could sometimes spend two whole days without making any progress. Nevertheless, by 1816 Kilkee had so progressed that it was described in that year as a village, "remarkable for a fine bathing strand and many neat saltwater lodges."⁴²

By 1818 we find a steam packet plying between Limerick and Kilrush.⁴³ This initial venture was not a very successful one as it was found that the steamer was unable to proceed against the tide when there was a strong head wind. After a short time it was withdrawn from service and broken up.⁴⁴ It was not until 1829 that a steam service was placed on a regular basis. Thereafter, with the exception of the summer of 1831, when the steamer was withdrawn, visitors to Kilkee could travel in the most up-to-date manner as far as Kilrush.⁴⁵

In 1821 Kilkee had a population of 409 and ten years later the figure had more than doubled to slightly over

a thousand. This rapidly increasing population only reflected the growing popularity of the town as a holiday resort. Advertisements such as the following had by now begun to appear in the local newspapers:⁴⁶

Kilkee Boarding House

Margaret Shannon

Most respectfully informs her friends and the public that she has made such arrangements as will enable her to accommodate a select number of lodgers for the season. Exclusive of the advantages of being situated quite near the water, they will find such attention paid as to render her house equal to a private residence. Well-aired beds and the most unremitting exertion to procure every delicacy of the season will, she trusts, ensure her a continuance of that patronage she has already received from the highly respectable ladies and gentlemen who have honoured her house with a preference.

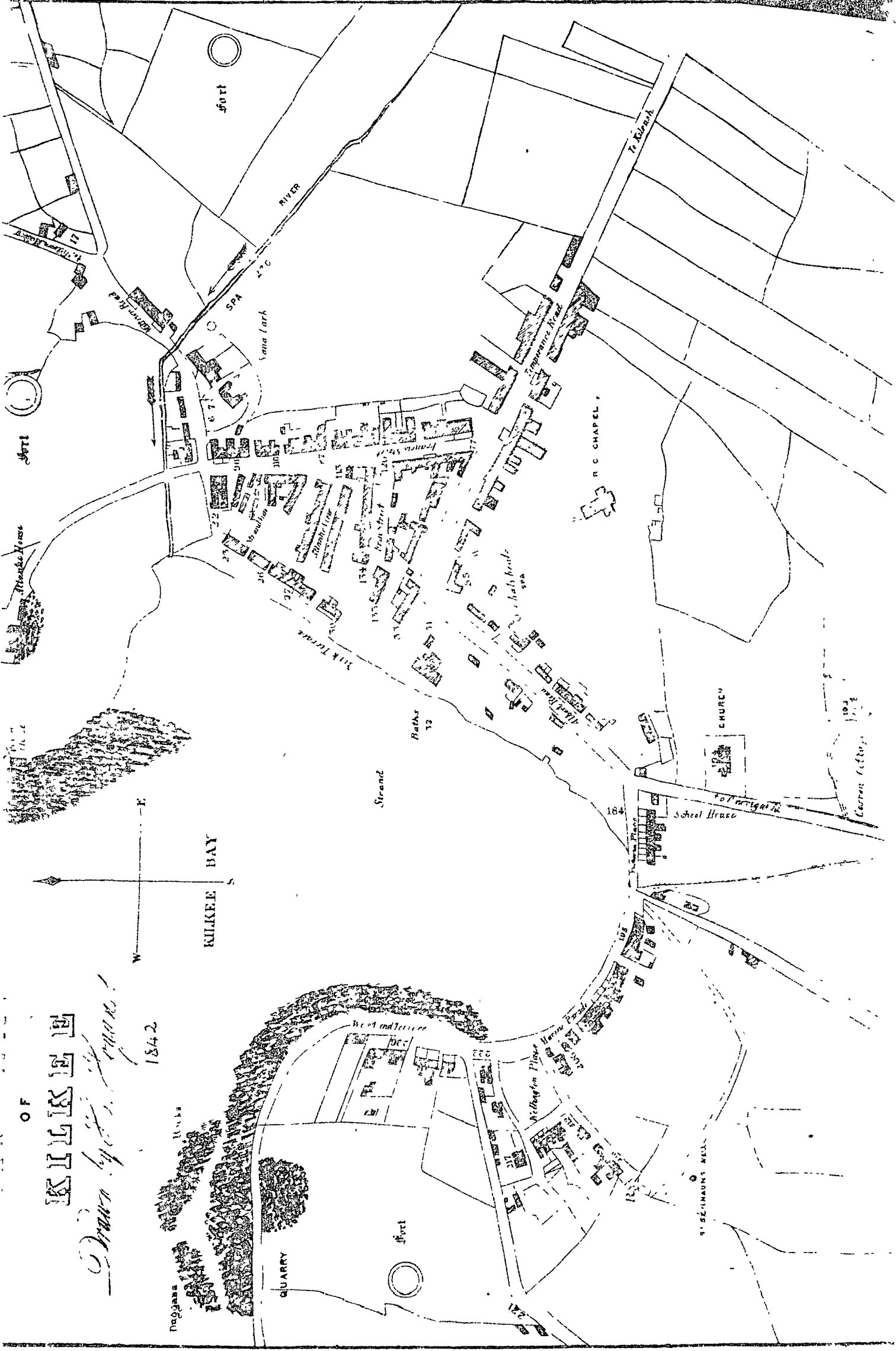
During the thirties the number of lodges available for visitors continued to grow, while those already in use were constantly being improved. And, undoubtedly, these improvements were very necessary as in the earliest lodges only the bare necessities were provided.

Fr. Malone has described the process of improvement for us:⁴⁷

The profit from the lodge in each year was laid out on its enlargement or improvement. In one season the clay floor gave way to the boarded one. In another, the chinks through which the crannying wind

crept were stopped with plaster. By-and-by, the front was rough-cast, or divided off with a trowel into block-work. The profits of another season were devoted to papering the bedrooms. Instead of placing the fire on a stone in mid floor a cast-iron grate was procured. Instead of awnings to catch the falling soot, a nice ceiling was attempted. Instead of the small four-paned immovable sash, there succeeded a large window on pivots, admitting a flood of light and air into the apartments..... The knocker replaced the latch; the brass knob and patent lock replaced the hasp, secured by a piece of wood..... and the cumbrous wickerwork for the emission of smoke gave way to the graceful mitered chimneys.

Although, for the most part, new lodges were erected in definite patterns, this was not the case on the sea-front in the eastern part of the town where an occasional lodge was built now and again with resultant architectural disorder. A visitor in 1835 wrote:⁴⁸ "You have the pleasure of the front of your house looking into the rare (sic) of your neighbour, where you must of necessity be a witness to the most private occupations of his domestics." And a reporter referred to it in 1849 saying:⁴⁹ "In some places you would imagine there had been a volcanic eruption." Although not as obvious at the present day, traces of this irregular building are still noticeable on the Strand Line.



OF KILKEE

Drawn by J. J. ...

1842

QUARRY

KILKEE BAY

Fort

Fort

RIVER

Spa

Yana Lark

Strand

Baths

School House

CHURCH

R.C. Chapel

St. ...

St. ...

3. The Parish in 1841.

First of all a description of the town, the population of which in 1841 was 1,481 -- very much the same as 125 years later. However, the appearance of Kilkee then was very much different from at present. The town had grown out of the sandhills and those which remained were the only barrier between sea and houses for much of the seafront. And when the west wind blew over the dry sand, it came in towards the houses in clouds penetrating every nook and cranny.

The sandy streets, too, provided another reminder of Kilkee's origins. Except for the principal ones, they were left "just as nature intended them"⁵⁰ and in wet weather the mud accumulated to such an extent that, were it not for the fresh Atlantic breeze, the stench would be intolerable.⁵¹

On the eastern edge of the town stood Atlantic Lodge and below it, near the present Boat House, was the Bath House, the property of Jonas Studdert, where visitors could take a warm bath of seawater pumped up from the sea. In the 1830's it had a monopoly but in 1840 Hugh Hogan opened his Baths which were better equipped and more centrally situated on New York Terrace (part of modern Strand Line).

The greater part of the townspeople lived in the section enclosed by Temperance Road (O'Connell St.), New York Terrace and Francis St. (Grattan St.). Within this area there were very many houses, in rows almost at right angles to Francis Street, stretching down towards the sea and covering the present Market Square site.

Quite a number of these houses were in very poor condition -- "unseemly hovels" as they were later described⁵² -- and in the early 1860's they were the scene of wholesale evictions when the landlord (the Marquess Conyngham) decided on demolishing them.

Francis Street was the principal street of the town and contained almost every variety of shop one could desire -- a medical hall, a lace and hosiery ware-room, a shop which sold calico, linen etc., a shoe warehouse, five bakeries, a confectionery, a meal and flour shop, a grocery, wine and spirit stores and a fishing tackle warehouse. In the same street one could visit a publican, a victualler, a painter and glazier, a stuccoman, a stone-cutter, a shoemaker and an apothecary. It also contained the local dispensary, a hotel, the Kilkee Loan Fund Society Office, Billiard Rooms and a Jaunting Car Establishment. Francis Street was also the site of an open-air market where apples, fish, meat, vegetables, eggs, etc., were on sale. In the adjoining Temperance Road a huxter, a nailer, a shoemaker, a tailor and habit-maker and a dress-maker had their premises.⁵³ Circular Road was still twenty years in the future, being as yet open fields.

As the visitor left Temperance Road and turned to his left towards Albert Road (O'Curry Street) Paddy Kean's grocery establishment with its bright red colour was on his right. The aspect of it most likely to catch his attention was a sign depicting Daniel O'Connell, in green coat and yellow trousers, presenting a shamrock "of marvellous dimensions" to King George IV. The king was

clad in an ermine robe clinging to him "very much after the fashion of a wet bathing suit," with a crown on his head and a sceptre in his hand. ⁵⁴

Albert Road in 1841 was still very much in process of growth. On the landward side it was fairly well lined with private houses but on the side nearer the sea very few had as yet been erected and the portion of the modern Strand Line between it and the sea did not yet exist, apart from a few isolated lodges. In any case, it was probably not very safe to build near the sea in this area as there was no sea wall to act as a barrier to the inroads of high seas in winter, if they did not dissipate themselves on the sandhills. After a very high tide in March 1860, the Freeman's Journal reported: ⁵⁵

Altogether the ~~to~~ coming flood did not equal the expectation of the natives, who, on a similar report some years since, retreated inland with their effects several miles at the suggestion of their worthy priest.

At the beginning of Marine Parade there was a "neat stone bridge" ⁵⁶ linking the fashionable West End with the older portion of the town. Behind Marine Parade, St. Senan's Well provided drinking water for the people, while clothes were also washed nearby. It had as well a religious significance for the people of the area. A little further on was the Coastguard Boathouse on the site of the modern West End Stores. ⁵⁷

From the Boathouse back, the West End was only in process of development in 1841 and there were no houses beyond about the modern Clar Eallagh. Farther back the quarry was in full production, providing materials for

building. Beyond it the road finally petered out near the ancient pond, known as Lady Isabella's Pond -- possibly called after Isabel MacDonnell, the last of that family to live in Kilkee.

So much for Kilkee town. The rural part of the parish had a bleak treeless appearance, dotted with little cabins and divided up into tiny patches of potato ground. Its population in 1841 was 5,656. However, many of the people resident in Kilkee also had little plots of ground outside the town. The population density of the rural part of the parish was 367 per square mile; of the parish as a whole, 463.⁵⁸ These figures were very high, even by Irish standards, for a non-industrial population. But the magnitude of the overcrowding is only fully grasped when one realizes that a large tract of land along the edge of the cliffs was uninhabitable and useless for cultivation, while further inland there was a large area of bog. Again, in the vicinity of the tidal Poulmasherry Bay a good deal of land was liable to flooding.

In the pages which follow we will try to build up a general picture of the lives of the people of the parish in the twelve years before the Famine -- how they worked, how they worshipped, what their houses were like, what they ate, etc. We will also see the very different kind of life which went on in Kilkee town during the summer months and how it affected the people of the parish. Finally, we will trace the collapse of the world these people had known in the terrible disaster of the Great Famine.

CHAPTER TWOMEANS OF LIVELIHOOD (1)LANDED AND LANDLESS1. Landlords and Middlemen

The chief landlords in the parish in 1834 were John MacDonnell and the second Marquess Conyngham, descendants of two of the early eighteenth century purchasers of Lord Clare's estates. The Marquess Conyngham, as we saw, had leased portion of his property to the Studdert family and it was on this that the eastern and oldest part of Kilkee was built. The residents of this part of Kilkee, then, had no direct dealings with the landlord. Outside the town Marcus Keane performed the office of agent for Conyngham during the Famine period and for some years previous to it. Although a learned man and an authority in his day on the round towers of Ireland, he was to acquire a reputation in West Clare which was not even rivalled by that of Cromwell. This uneaviable reputation was gained by his severity towards tenants in the years 1847-51, his proselytizing activities in the Carrigaholt - Kilbaha area in the 1850's, and by the mass evictions which he carried out in Kilkee in the 1860's (after the Studdert lease had run out).

Although the Marquess Conyngham showed a slight interest in the development of the town of Kilkee, he visited his estates only very infrequently. John MacDonnell, on the other hand, was a frequent visitor to

the town and was very actively concerned in the development of the West End.

MacDonnell and Conyngham were the principal landlords in Kilfearagh parish but there were also others of lesser importance. Among the more prominent of these was Colonel Vandeleur of Kilrush (one of the few resident landlords in West Clare) who had a large estate in the Kilrush area, one which also included Moyasta townland.¹ At Lisdeen the proprietor was the famous O'Gorman Mahon (non-resident), whose estates here passed into the hands of a receiver during the Famine period.

As the more important landlords were non-resident they had very little direct dealings with their tenants. Yet, there was surprisingly little agrarian unrest. In 1816, with a slump following a boom during the Napoleonic Wars, there was some trouble and again in 1831-2 with the Terry Alts. At this latter period in Co. Clare there was a greater reluctance on the part of many landholders to give potato gardens to the poor at fairly reasonable terms.² The reaction to this was an agrarian secret society, the Terry Alts, which was the cause of many outrages.³ However, although there was some trouble in Kilfearagh parish,⁴ on the whole it was regarded as very peaceable compared with other parts of Clare. But comparative absence of agrarian outrages did not mean that the tenants were perfectly satisfied with their lot. From the time of the Clare election of 1828 when the tenants voted for O'Connell against their

masters' wishes, the landlords were very little inclined to give leases and by 1844 most tenants merely held their lands from year to year.⁵ This was clearly an unsatisfactory position for the tenants, who were anxious to obtain leases at their current rent. And while leases were withheld they had little incentive to improve their holdings.⁶

2. Farmers

Size of Farms and Subdivision:

Nowadays a farm of about thirty acres is classed as small and only marginally viable. But in 1847 Captain Robert Mann, a coastguard employed on famine relief at Kilrush, could write of "strong farmers" of 20 - 30 acres,⁷ and Jonas Studdert of Kilkee informed the Devon Commission that the tenant of over twenty acres became himself a middleman.⁸

What then was the average size of a farm in Kilfearagh parish before the Famine? The field structure at present shows that a very large amount of consolidation has taken place - even though the average farm is still scarcely 30 acres. The documentary evidence available clarifies the picture for us. Giving evidence before a committee inquiring into the state of Ireland in 1824 Major George Warburton said that the three western baronies of Clare appeared almost as a continued village because they were so studded with cottages and divided into small gardens. The land, according to him, was divided into the smallest portions

imaginable though the average was one to two acres each.⁹ Those who possessed the very smallest of these holdings, however, would not be classed as farmers but as labourers, because, having only a tiny little potato patch, they had to supplement their income by offering their services to others. With regard to farmers, properly so called, in 1844 Jonas Studdert said that the average size of farms in Kilrush Poor Law Union was from seven to ten acres, though they varied from three to a hundred.¹⁰

The condition of the small farmers in the Kilkee-Kilrush area was "very low, and not getting better" in 1844.¹¹ But this should not surprise us very much. It has been calculated that somewhat more than seven acres of land were necessary to provide a living.¹² But this calculation was based on average land so that in West Clare the figure would certainly be higher in most cases. Yet the entire tendency in pre Famine times was not towards bigger but towards smaller farms through repeated subdivision.

Originally this subdivision had been encouraged when the 40/- freeholders had a vote, because the greater the number of tenants a landlord had on his estate, the greater the number of votes he could hope to corner. Even after the loss of the vote by the 40/- men after Catholic Emancipation the tradition of subdivision continued on up to Famine times, though it was frowned on now by the landowners.¹³ It was also the only alternative to emigration, which was not yet in any way widespread in West Clare. As well as reducing the general living standard of farmers, subdivision had a further

effect -- it meant that there were fewer big farms and therefore fewer farmers capable of giving employment to others.¹⁴ As a result, even though the number of labourers was growing, there was less employment available from year to year and there was very little seasonal migration from Clare in comparison with counties farther up the western seaboard.¹⁵

Subdivision in Kilfearagh parish usually took place in the following manner. When the father of a family found himself failing -- and this occurred on the approach of sixty with the two acre men and others in similar circumstances¹⁶ -- he divided the farm, such as it was, among his children, keeping, perhaps, some small part with a cabin for his own use. Or, alternately, he might go to live with the youngest son, an arrangement which did not always work out, as one small cottier remarked in 1834:¹⁷

This is a bad practice for they often quarrel, and twice I have known the old father to be bundled out of the house by the daughter-in-law, who has much influence over the son, and frequently finds the old man in the way.

Yet, despite the difficulties involved this was the only system of social security at the time (1834), though shortly afterwards the workhouse was to provide a disagreeable alternative. The children might find it difficult to provide for their parents but they could also see that one day they would be in the same position themselves. James McMahon, a labourer from Kilfearagh

parish, told the 1834 inquiry commissioners that he was supporting his father who was 78 years old. "Many a time I am hard pressed to get him tobacco, and a rag to cover his nakedness; as for the food, he always shares whatever is going with us, and that, thank God, we are able to give him." ¹⁸ And the same would be true of the small farmers.

RENT:

The average rent for land varied from 15/- to 30/- per acre, but occasionally some very poor land might be only 10/-.¹⁹ Some landlords demanded payment when the rent became due but most observed the custom of the "hanging gale".²⁰ This meant that a tenant had not to pay his first six months' rent until nearly a year had elapsed, e.g., the rent for the six months previous to 1st May was not asked for until October. As a result he was always six months in arrears and sometimes even longer, as the poorer tenants could not always pay at the appointed time and some owners and middlemen were not inclined to press them. Jonas Studdert would expect a large tenant to be prompt but would allow greater latitude to the smaller.²¹

When faced with a demand for rent which he had no means of paying, a tenant would probably first of all try to get a loan from the bank in Kilrush. Being insolvent himself he would have to get the backing of someone with means. If he had a friend to do this for him the loan could be got at 6% plus stamp duty. If he had no friend, he might still be able to get someone to go security who would charge for his services at a rate of interest equal

to that of the bank. Thus the tenant would now be paying 12%.²² This was high but yet much preferable to the alternative -- recourse to one of the local usurers whose rate of interest would be 20%, 30% or even sometimes as high as 50%.²³ With such a high rate of interest the borrower would be hard put to pay it so that the principal still remained intact.

When a tenant failed to pay his rent the usual procedure adopted by the landlord was to impound his stock, if he had any. The tenant was then forced to raise the money by some means or other under threat of having his stock sold. When he finally paid it, his stock was returned,²⁴ probably very much the worse of having spent a week in the pound in the middle of winter. To add to his troubles he also had to pay pound fees -- 3s or 4d a day for each cow -- and the cost of hiring the men who had driven the cattle to the pound.²⁵ This method of enforcing payment of rent was becoming less common in 1844 when notices of ejection were becoming much more frequent.²⁶ This is not altogether surprising as many tenants would have had little or no stock.

With regard to the various ways in which land was held we have already seen that in the years after 1829 the number of lease-holders declined. The holding of land in conacre was very common but the people chiefly involved here were labourers and we will return to this when dealing with them. The rundale system had declined to a large extent in West Clare by the 1840's,²⁷ though it is probable that some farms at least were still held in this manner in Kilfearagh parish. Under the rundale

system a farm was held in common by a number of tenants and divided up so that each "received a portion of the different qualities of ground, good, bad and medium, that the property contained." 28

PRODUCE:

In West Clare most of the farms were engaged in tillage and in 1844 the number of dairy farms was declining. This was a trend which was to be reversed after the Famine as the population declined and the size of farms increased and particularly so after 1860. In the 1840's even where cows were kept very little provision was made for feeding them inside in the winter. 30 And, in fact, about three quarters of the farmers had no cows of their own. 31

With regard to the produce of West Clare farms, Capt. Mann has described the situation on the eve of the Famine: 32

Agriculture was at that period in a very neglected state, wheat, barley and oats -- with potatoes as the sole food of the poor -- being the produce. Of the first very little was produced, and that not good in quality; barley a larger proportion and good; oats much greater, but inferior for milling purposes. Various reasons were given for the inferiority of produce -- the quality of the land and deteriorated seed being the cause generally assigned; but I would say that the population being content with, and relying on the produce of the potato as food, which had, with very few exceptions, hitherto proved abundant, there was a general neglect and want of any attempt at improvement.

Green crops were all but unknown, except here and there, a little turnip or mangel wurzel in the garden or field of the better class, the former scarcely to be purchased. Even the potatoes were tilled in the easiest way, in beds called 'lazy beds' not in drills, so that the hoe might, in a very short time, clear the weeds and lighten the soil.

The oats and barley were exported to England in large quantities from Kilrush, which was then a thriving port. And cargoes also included consignments of beans, a crop not mentioned by Captain Mann.³³ Most people, too, kept a pig which was for many of them "the gentleman who paid the rent". This was the case not only with farmers but also with some town dwellers. A visitor to Kilkee in 1840 has left us a graphic description of the interior of a one-roomed house in the town which included a shop, kitchen and bedroom -- and in one corner the inevitable pig, grunting contentedly amid baskets of turf and barrels of herrings.³⁴ The pigs, when fattened, were shipped by steamer from Kilrush to Limerick -- and we can get some idea of the extent of this trade from the consignment of 900 pigs sent in this way in early January 1842.³⁵ As well as the live shipment of pigs from Kilrush they were also exported as bacon to London and elsewhere.³⁶

Many farmers earned a few extra shillings by keeping hens and selling the eggs. Hugh Hogan of Kilkee was the first businessman in West Clare to deal in eggs on a large scale but he was soon followed by others and by 1842 there was a considerable export business in eggs from the port of Kilrush to Liverpool and Bristol.³⁷

FARMING METHODS:

Captain Mann was, as we have seen, quite critical of farming methods in West Clare. And this criticism was corroborated by the evidence of some of the larger farmers before the Devon Commission. Jonas Studdert testified that drainage was very little attended to except on gentlemen's demesnes and that the same was true of the rotation of crops.³⁸ Benjamin Coz of Clarefield, near Kilrush, agreed with him on both these points.³⁹ However, one improvement at least had taken place. There had been no burning of land since the mid thirties.⁴⁰ This was done in order to have the ashes as manure, but when repeated it could result in the eventual destruction of the soil, leaving only sand and gravel.⁴¹ In West Clare the landlords took legal proceedings to put a stop to it, with success.⁴² In any case it was scarcely very necessary in Kilfearagh parish as seaweed was readily available -- though Jonas Studdert was of the opinion that its use was highly detrimental except on bogs. He also deplored the fact that the making of animal manure into proper heaps seemed to be quite unknown.⁴³

Seaweed, then, was the chief and for many the only manure. And the harvesting of it in Kilkee Bay was quite a big undertaking. In early summer canoes went out to cut it away from the rocks and then bring some of it ashore, while more of it was tied together in great bundles and these floated in with the tide. In the shallow water by the strand men and women helped to load the seaweed into carts, at times standing with the water

up to their waists. Not all, however, were fortunate enough to have carts. In many cases the women carried the seaweed in baskets on their backs.⁴⁴ Apart from the general harvesting of seaweed, if a poor farmer wanted some for his plot of potatoes he had to wait until a storm arose which would wrench the weed from the rocks. Then it was not unknown for such men to spend the whole of a night in the water at the height of a storm in order to secure the portions of seaweed which came in with the tide.⁴⁵

In the early 1840's the right of the people to take the seaweed in this manner without the landlords' permission was disputed, not only in Kilkee but also in other places along the Clare coast. Then, in mid March 1843, hundreds of men, women and children proceeded to Kilkee strand in a body and removed the seaweed, thus asserting their right.⁴⁶ The opinion of the Solicitor General was sought and proved favourable to the landlords.⁴⁷

The legal right to seaweed found between high and low water mark is prima facie in the Crown.... It may, however, and frequently does, belong to the owner of the adjacent land; it may be his, either as having been expressly granted to him by the Crown, the original owner; or by usage and exercise of right, warranting the presumption of such a grant.....

But another legal opinion pointed out that the magistrates had no power to convict if the seaweed was taken from below low water mark.⁴⁸

The landlords do not appear to have attempted to bring matters to a head at this time and nothing further was done until about ten years later. This may not have been due to any benevolent feeling on their part but to a fear that the people might retaliate by removing the sand in large quantities from the beaches at Kilkee and elsewhere. And there was a real danger of this. In the early part of the century the farmers of the neighbourhood drew sand from Kilkee sandhills for their land and some had clauses in their leases allowing them to do this.⁴⁹ However, it is doubtful if this continued on a very large scale after Kilkee had gained prominence as a holiday resort. In 1843 the removal of sand was prohibited and the police helped to implement this. But for a while it looked as if the people might assert what they believed to be their traditional right in a mass demonstration. The Limerick Chronicle commented:⁵⁰

Great fears are entertained that an attack on the beautiful strand will also be made, which if bereft of the sand would ruin Kilkee as a bathing-place.

Six months later, in September, two men were convicted and fined at Kilrush Petty Sessions for removing sand from the beach at Kilkee.⁵¹

3. LABOURERS:

The continual subdivision of the land had the result, as we have seen, of lessening the labourers' prospects of employment. During the winter months, from November to March, there was little work available, except perhaps for a short period in January when the wheat was sown. At the

end of March and in early April, when the potatoes were set, the prospects were better. And from May to September or harvest time (when demand for labour was strongest) there was a chance of at least an occasional job.⁵² According to Rev. Mr. Whitty, Rector of Kilrush and Kilfearagh, few labourers in the west of Clare were in constant employment in the mid 1830's and their average earnings would be only about £10 per annum.⁵³ But even this figure seems a bit high as they would get no more than 8d - 10d a day without food.⁵⁴ And wages could be as low as 6d.⁵⁵

Some labourers depended entirely on their earnings and it was of these that Fr. Comyn, P.P. of Kilfearagh and Killard, was thinking when he said:⁵⁶ "A labourer's wages do not give him more than the worst and most unwholesome kind of potatoes; and, therefore, it is quite impossible for him to save." In fact such a man was doing quite well if he could provide a minimum of food and shelter for his wife and family. If he found himself without money or food he might borrow some potatoes from a farmer and then pay them back by giving his labour in exchange.⁵⁷

Most labourers in Kilfearagh parish were not entirely dependent on their wages as they also had a little conacre. This was a contract by which they were given the use of a portion of land to grow one crop -- always potatoes -- and these potatoes provided a year's food for the labourer and his family. The rent for conacre in West Clare was from £4 - £8 an acre⁵⁸ but such rents were not regarded as too great by the Devon Commission. If the

crop did well, the conacre-man could look forward hopefully to the coming year. If the crop failed he was ruined, burdened with a rent he could not pay and without food for his family. Some farmers gave small plots to labourers whom they had in employment and in return demanded a number of days' work in the week. Capt. Mann has described such contracts for us:⁵⁹

A cottage and a small portion of land, generally one-quarter to one-half an acre, which the tenant had to manure and till, was valued at a certain sum as rent and paid for by a number of days work, estimated at 6d or 8d per day with potatoes for meals - (I have heard the value put even lower) - this work continued generally from spring until about November, leaving the man a very little time to till and dig his own land.

In general the condition of the labourers was rather miserable. They married young because waiting would not better their position and their children would be a prop to them in old age.⁶⁰ In fact, their children were one of the few consolations they had in life. James McMahon, to whom we have referred earlier, summed up their position in 1834:⁶¹

We are worked harder and worse treated than the slaves in the colonies. I understand that they are taken care of by their masters when they are sick or old. When we are sick, we must die on the road, if the neighbours do not help us. When we are old, we must go out to beg, if the young ones cannot help us, and that will soon happen with us all; we are getting

worse and worse every day, and the landlords are kicking us out of every little holding we have. This last May 28 families were put out, and next May I am sure there will be as many again within five miles of Kilkee; and if something is not done for those who are turned out upon the world without a rag on their backs, God knows what will happen this country! When we suffer all these hardships, is it wonderful our spirits should be broken down; that we should grow grey, and give up the spark at 58 or 60?

4. Beggars:

At the bottom of the social scale in the parish came the beggars, and very many of these were to be met with in Kilkee, particularly during the summer months. During the off-season there were generally about one hundred strolling beggars moving about in the parish, while during the months of June, July and August these increased to two hundred. As one man remarked: "They follow the quality."⁶²

Many of the beggars came from Kerry in June and July, when their old potatoes had been exhausted and the new potatoes were not yet fit for digging.⁶³ In 1834 some felt that these were attracted by the distribution of a collection taken at the Catholic church, which amounted to about £7 annually.. This money was doled out among the poor, mainly beggars, and the claimants for it became so numerous that a regulation was made requiring them to produce a certificate signed by 'respectable people', stating that they had come to Kilkee for the purpose of curing their complaints

by the seaside.⁶⁴ Protestant visitors also helped through
collections for the poor in their church.⁶⁵

Apart from the small cottiers, who were usually represented by their women and children, weavers and other such workers were most prominent among the beggars. Gentlemen's servants also came now and again trying to get aid from their former masters. "These are in general observed to be great cheats, and frequenters of punch-houses."⁶⁶ This influx of beggars was greatly facilitated by the fact that poor people in general were given free passage on the steamer from Limerick to Kilrush.⁶⁷

The parish of Kilfearagh itself had only four native beggars operating within its confines in 1834. Two of these were too old to work, the other two were disabled. In no instance had they relatives or friends to support them.⁶⁸

The large influx of beggars was not resented by the people of the parish. Certainly, the poorer people gave lodging freely to them, saying, as Miss Knott, a visitor to Kilkee in 1835, remarked: "In lodging beggars, they serve the Lord."⁶⁹ They also gave freely in so far as they were able. As one poor beggerman put it with regard to clothes: "I am sure there is not a farmer that would not give the beggar clothes if they had them to spare."⁷⁰ The usual relief given was potatoes, though in harvest-time they might get a handful of corn or a little flax-seed. The small farmers had little money to give even though the beggars would have preferred that. "He would rather get the money, because it is easier to carry than a bag of potatoes; and how can we do without tobacco? And how can

we get that without money?"⁷¹ However, in November an active beggar could collect three stone of potatoes in a day. In summer he could get enough to eat -- and when he had anything left over he could sell it to buy tobacco

A rather striking aspect of all this question was that the beggars were very largely helped by people little better off than themselves. Where a rich man was concerned his servant disposed of the beggar. The poor, however, received him with the hospitality for which they became justly famous. Fr. Curry, Catholic curate in Kilkee in 1834, commented; "The poor labourer and cabin-holder will not consider whether he will have enough for himself and family tomorrow before he gives today; neither do they think that they will have more by withholding from the beggar," while Patrick Kennedy, a small farmer, added: "It is a great delight to me to hear the beggar say good prayers in honour of my soul."⁷³ Fear of being cursed by the "boccoughs", the old professional beggars, also had some influence with the women.⁷⁴

When plying their trade the beggars were always dressed in rags, though it was remarked that they often appeared at Mass on Sundays with good clothes. Those with sores are usually unwilling to have them attended to, in the experience of Dr. Ryall, dispensary doctor at Kilkee during the 1830's. The reason for this was that the presence of the sores invited compassion.⁷⁵

The practice of begging, then, was fairly lucrative, even though a difficult occupation at times. And the Commissioners of Inquiry in 1834 were so impressed by the success of the beggars that they attached the following

note to the evidence given before them.⁷⁶

The Assistant Commissioners beg leave to observe, that it has appeared in their various examinations, that the order of things is so reversed, and that the condition of every description of labourer is so inferior to that of the regular beggar, that it is unnecessary to say more than that a direct premium is held out, in this part of the country, for mendicancy, and that it is only astonishing that every man has not long since thrown down his spade and gone to beg.

At times, however, the people paid for their generosity to the beggars, especially in the matter of giving shelter. If the beggars were not themselves infected they were frequently carriers of infection and doubtlessly left it behind them after their stay. An Act of 1819 gave magistrates power to apprehend vagrants during the existence of contagious diseases, and to cause their persons and apparel to be cleansed, but little was done to enforce it.⁷⁷

Some beggars, too, were lacking in honesty and frequently helped themselves to clothes which people had placed in the open air to dry after washing. On this topic James McManon told the Commissioners:⁷⁸

It was only the other day that I let a decentish looking fellow come into my house near the roadside, and lay down his wisp of straw near the fire, which was the best place my poor cabin could afford him; and I will tell you what he did for this kindness;

he robbed me of a new pair of shoes, the only ones I had been able to buy for the last nine months by my little savings, and the shirt which I had put out to go clean to mass the next day (Sunday), was also missing.

Before leaving this topic one should point out that a very fine distinction was made between beggars and 'askers'. Old people who were destitute went among their neighbours and were given a meal here and there. These were not regarded as beggars but as 'askers'. However, this was at times the first step towards becoming regular beggars, not at home but in some strange parish.⁷⁹ But very often family pride prevented people who were in dire straits from taking up begging as an occupation, even though it would have greatly improved their condition. "These old people," said Rev. Mr. Murray, Protestant curate of Kilfearagh, "would rather die than have it said that they entailed disgrace on their families, by becoming regular beggars."⁸⁰

CHAPTER THREE

MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD (2)

SEA AND BOG etc.

1. Sea

a) FISHERMEN:

In the 1820's Gerald Griffin wrote that it was generally believed in Kilkee that the fishermen of the district had at one time frequently lit fires on the cliffs to tempt storm-hit vessels near the dangerous rocks.¹ By the early 19th century this lucrative business was a thing of the past but the fishermen of West Clare had another sideline, smuggling. In Mason's Parochial Survey of Ireland (1816) it was recommended that military should be permanently stationed in Kilrush to prevent it.^{1a} The following extract from the Clare Journal of 5 March, 1807 gives some idea of what went on:

For several days past detachments of the Longford Militia have been employed on Revenue duty in different parts of the county in consequence of a smuggling vessel having landed a cargo of Tobacco and Brandy in the west of the county a few days ago and which is instantly removed as soon as landed and generally carried off to the neighbouring counties.

Undoubtedly some of the local fishermen took part in and benefited from this illegal trafficking. However, by 1834 the establishment of coastguard outposts along the Clare coast, including one at Kilkee, had almost completely put an end to it. Yet, there may have been an occasional landing even still. In August, 1841, the Clare Journal reported that a brig, supposed to be a smuggler with

tobacco, had been seen hovering off Kilkee. The revenue cruisers had set out in pursuit of her,² apparently without success.

In 1837 Kilkee was the base for about 25 fishing boats, which did not differ very greatly from the modern currach.³ "They are composed of a frame of light timber or strong wickerwork, covered with sail-cloth rendered waterproof with pitch and tar."⁴ But, not many years had passed from the time when they were covered with horse or cow hides instead of canvas, and when the Lord Lieutenant, the Marquis of Normanby, paid a visit to Kilkee in the early autumn of 1838 he rode down to the strand to be shown the old boats of wickerwork and horse-hide which were then no longer in use.⁵ Apart from being safer, through being less liable to tear, the new boats were also very easily repaired. A sod of lighted turf was held near the tear until the pitch was melted, a fresh piece of sail-cloth was stuck on and the canoe was then immediately launched, as the water hardened the pitch.⁶

At Farrihy Bay in the north of the parish there were about fifty boats,⁷ largely manned by men from the fishing village of Coosheen. Scarcely two decades earlier there were a hundred boats fishing off Baltard, some of which could make fifty or sixty guineas in a season. When the catch was very good often between one and two hundred horses with side creels waited on the shore for the return of the boats and the fish were brought to Kilrush, Ennis, Limerick and even County Kerry.⁸ But by the 1830's this boom seems to have passed and Miss Knott remarked that for the previous few years the fish, to a large extent, seemed

to have left the coast. Nevertheless, turbot and other fine fish were frequently brought to the market at Kilkee, while shell-fish of various kinds were in abundant supply.⁹

Despite the improvement in the boats the life of a fisherman remained a hazardous one. Nobody would normally dare attempt to fish when the sea was rough. But, too frequently a sudden change in weather conditions made a safe return to shore extremely difficult. This danger was accentuated by the presence of Duggerna reef stretching across a large part of the entrance to Kilkee Bay.

In September, 1837, three Kilkee fishermen lost their lives at sea.¹⁰ Four months later, in January, 1838, an even worse tragedy was barely averted. After three canoes containing ten fishermen had put to sea, a heavy fog came down which lasted well on into the night. Consequently there was a serious danger that the boats might founder on the rocks or even move away from the town towards the open sea. To avert such possibilities a fire was lit on the north side of the bay, possibly on George's Head, and muskets were discharged periodically by some of the local inhabitants. The coastguards also joined in, firing several cannon shots and sending up rockets. Thus the fishermen were enabled to keep their bearings in the dense fog and remained safely at anchor outside the bay until the fog cleared and the moon rose. Then they made a safe landing.¹¹

In December, 1844, three boat crews were similarly caught at sea by fog. Two of them managed to get safely ashore but there was no trace of the third. As on the

previous occasion, Jonas Studdert had fires lit and shots fired and horns sounded to provide direction -- but all in vain. The boat struck the Duggerna reef and the bodies of the three men were found the next morning on the shore. Their dependents were reported to be without potatoes or turf or even sufficient clothes to cover them and a fund was set up in order to afford them some relief.¹²

Nearly four years earlier, in February 1841, three other fishermen died when their boat overturned just outside Kilkee Bay. On this occasion one left a wife and ten children.¹³

It must have been after some similar disaster that Gerald Griffin, who had Kilkee connections, wrote his poem, The Bridal Wake. In it he describes how all preparations had been made for a wedding which was to take place as soon as the young man had returned from a day's fishing. But his return was as a corpse to be buried in Kilfearagh graveyard.¹⁴

A fearful call! a sudden doom!

Bridal and funeral.

Ululah! Ululah!

A youth to Kilfiehara's' ta'en

That never will return again.

However, in the battle between man, the sea and the elements, the former did not always lose. In early November 1840, a canoe with three men on board put to sea on a calm day. But before very long the sea became very rough and the men found themselves in imminent danger. Their shouts brought hundreds to the shore but there was little that anyone could do. For about an hour the battle between sea and canoe continued as the men tried to row

towards the shore. While this was going on Fr. Comyn, who had arrived on the scene with his curate, Fr. Stack, knelt down surrounded by thirty or forty men and prayed with them for the safety of the fishermen in danger. And, fortunately, not in vain, for the sea subsided and the men were enabled to get ashore safely. On the following Sunday, accompanied by their families and friends, they went in procession to Mass and received Holy Communion (a not very frequent thing at the time) in thanksgiving for their deliverance.¹⁵

Even if the weather did not cause serious accidents, a lengthy bad period could eventually drive the fishermen to the pawnshop in Kilrush, or, if they were more fortunate, they might be able to get some help from the Kilkee branch of the Irish Reproductive Loan Fund. This Loan Fund originated in 1822. During the famine of 1821-2 a large amount of money was collected in England for the relief of the Irish poor and a sizeable sum still remained in the hands of the committee when a good harvest in autumn 1822 brought an end to the distress. It was then decided to use £40,000 of the residue to establish loan funds in the counties affected by the famine, one of which was Clare.¹⁶

In November, 1823 a branch of this fund was established in Kilkee,¹⁷ which in the early 1840's had an office in Francis Street, and was administered by Jonas Studdert.¹⁸ In 1844 the latter pointed out that the chief beneficiaries from it were fishermen and shoemakers¹⁹ -- probably giving them loans to acquire the tools of their trade, as all loans had to be granted "for the promotion

of industry".²⁰ The interest was fixed at 4d in the £, payable in twenty weeks.²¹

But the Loan Fund could not help the fishermen in their chief need -- the acquisition of bigger boats and the building of harbour facilities at Kilkee. Others saw the necessity for action in this area and at a meeting in Kilkee Chapel in January 1842, a petition was drawn up for presentation to Parliament asking, among other things, for aid to enable the local fishermen to engage in deep sea fishing.²² Six months later we find Fr. Comyn writing to the editor of the Limerick Reporter on the same topic -- the necessity of bigger boats for the West Clare fishermen.²³ It was a subject to which he was to return, despite every disappointment, again and again.

Not all fishing, of course, was done from boats. A more unusual and even more dangerous method of fishing was employed to catch rockfish. Many natives were to be seen sitting with their legs dangling over the edges of the high cliffs while they fished with long handlines in the sea below. This, of course, was only possible on fine days.²⁴ The same method of fishing seems to have survived at least in the Aran Islands right up to near our own day, as some shots from the film, "Man of Aran", show.

The women of the neighbourhood of Kilkee visited Duggerna during low water in order to pick shellfish and carrigeen. Here, if one delayed unduly, there was always the danger of being cut off and drowned by the incoming tide and accidents were by no means unusual. In the spring of 1835 a poor woman gathering shellfish was cut off by a high

sea and all efforts to rescue her proved useless.

Eventually the waves broke over her and swept her quickly into the strand. Hot baths and other means of

resuscitation were immediately applied but to no avail.²⁵

The Limerick Chronicle of 13 June, 1835, mentions a drowning in similar circumstances, probably the same one. And it adds a further detail, that the woman's husband perished in a rescue attempt.

In February 1844 a woman picking seaweed off the rocks was caught by a wave, swept into the sea and drowned in the sight of her two daughters, who very nearly shared her fate.²⁶

A little over three years later, in late June 1847, a mother and a daughter, also gathering seaweed, were similarly swept off and drowned.²⁷

And in June 1848, another poor woman, while gathering seagrass, was cut off by the incoming tide and drowned before help arrived.²⁸ Although seagrass and winkles are still harvested in the same place no drowning has occurred in living memory -- an indication, perhaps, of a frantic attempt in the 1830's and 1840's to use every available minute, despite running the risk of being cut off by the incoming tide.

b) Providing for Visitors to Kilkee.

The presence of holidaymakers in Kilkee during the summer months meant that many services had to be provided for them. There were, as we shall see, a number of hotels, but there were also very many lodges, which were let by the local people to visitors for three or four months of the year. Although the money received from the letting formed a large proportion of the lodge owners' income,

very many of them had little agricultural plots as well. In fact the census of 1841 showed that 104 out of the 290 families in the town were dependent on agriculture.²⁹ The shops and business premises of various kinds also did well during the holiday season, as did the bathing women³⁰ and carmen.³¹ Others again got jobs as servants. Indeed Miss Knott felt that an advantage was to be had by employing a native servant. The country people went around to the lodges with baskets selling provisions of various kinds and as few of these could speak English, an Irish-speaking servant was necessary in order to make bargains.³²

While business was booming all went well for the people of Kilkee. But when the holiday season was a poor one, as happened during some Famine years, then everybody suffered.

2. BOG.

In 1822 Fr. Corbett, parish priest of Kilrush, stated that fishing and the export of turf were the two chief sources of livelihood for the people in Moyarta barony.³³ Fifteen years later this situation had not changed appreciably. In Kilfearagh parish there was a high proportion of bogland, part of which had been reclaimed and this process of reclamation was still continuing. To the poor the bogland meant warmth in winter, as there was a cheap and plentiful supply of turf. It also provided the basis of a thriving trade with Limerick city, which was supplied with turf from West Clare.

Moyasta, on Poulnasherry Bay, was the centre of the turf industry and from there each year huge quantities of turf were sent up the Shannon to Limerick by boat. The boats ~~w~~ used were in general from about 5 to 20 tons.³⁴ The turf was cut and saved in the bogs and then brought down to the edge of Poulnasherry Bay at Moyasta where it was piled up in banks. The boats came in at high tide and, then, when the tide went out they were left high and dry so that the people could bring the turf in carts to them. When the tide came in again the boats refloated and set out on their journey. It was estimated that the trade was worth £10,000 annually in 1835.³⁵ In that same year we find the County Surveyor informing the Grand Jury of Clare that the roads in Moyarta barony had an immense wear on them in consequence of nearly all the turf used in the city of Limerick being carried on them to the seashore.³⁶

The turfboats also played a significant part in the development of Kilkee as a seaside resort as it was on them that the first visitors came down the river. in the early years of the century.

Although the reclamation of the large bogs of Kilfearagh and neighbouring parishes was going ahead year by year, progress was very slow as there was no united effort. However, in the decade before the Famine a determined effort was made by Fr. Comyn, Jonas Studdert and others to get large scale reclamation works under way in Kilfearagh and Killard parishes. The inspiration for this effort seems to have come from news of the foundation in

England in the mid thirties of a society for reclaiming waste lands -- the Irish Waste Lands Improvement Society. The society began its work by taking over a tract of land near Cashel and reports of its progress were favourable. Fr. Comyn became interested and saw its possibilities for his parishes. As a result he entered into contact with Lord Glengal, one of its patrons, and the latter promised to put Fr. Comyn's case before the directors.³⁷ Nine months later the society extended its activities but did not accept Fr. Comyn's invitation.³⁸

Despite this first setback Fr. Comyn was not discouraged. In 1838, after the Commissioners of Waste Lands had declared that they were anxious to help in reclaiming some of the bogs of West Clare, he wrote to Mr. Spring Rice, Chancellor of the Exchequer,³⁹ on the subject, and received a very encouraging reply.⁴⁰ But no further progress was made at the time, seemingly because of difficulties with the landlords concerned.⁴¹ However, by January 1842, the proprietors had become much more co-operative and at a meeting in Kilkee Chapel in that month a petition was drawn up for presentation to Parliament⁴² on the matter. In April Fr. Comyn was told by Mr. John O'Brien, M.P., that he had presented the petition on the night before recess and that he had reason to believe measures were in contemplation on the matter in question.⁴³ If action was taken about waste lands West Clare did not benefit. Yet, even now, the search for help was not fully abandoned and in the early years of the Famine further attempts to secure government action were made.

3. Weavers, Shoemakers, Tailors, etc.

In the 1830's most of the clothes worn by people were still made locally and thus employment was provided for many people. The census of 1841 tells us that in Co.Clare there were 1103 weavers; 1121 boot and shoemakers; 1164 tailors; 978 sempstresses; 1032 dressmakers and 1110 knitters. Undoubtedly, the 88 males and 348 females in Kilfearagh parish who were classified as administering to the clothing wants of the people belonged to these various occupations.⁴⁴ Many of these must have made a very frugal living. We have already seen that the shoemakers were among the main groups aided by the Kilkee Loan Fund Society. And the Poor Inquiry Commissioners of 1834 were told of the hard working habits of the weavers of the parish. As a result of their hard work and the poor ventilation of their houses these were incapable of any great exertion after the age of 55.⁴⁵ From this time on, too, they would have to face competition from the mass produced articles of English factories.⁴⁶

Other tradesmen of whom there were probably significant numbers in the parish were carpenters and stonemasons -- of whom there were 969 and 450 respectively in the county.⁴⁷ These must have been constantly employed in the building of new lodges.

CHAPTER FOURNECESSITIES OF LIFE1. Shelter

In 1842 a German visitor to Ireland, J.G. Kohl, travelled from Ennis to Kilrush making careful note of all he saw and from his book we learn that the housing conditions of the people in west Clare were the worst in Europe. "In Hungary, in Esthonia, in Lithuania and in many other countries of Eastern Europe," he wrote, "one sees habitations of great wretchedness, but such miserable cabins as I beheld in this part of Ireland, I can scarcely remember to have seen in the countries I have mentioned.... A wooden house with moss to stop up its crevices [like among the Lettes in Livonia] would be a palace in the wild regions of Ireland. Paddy's cabin is built of earth; one shovelful over the other with a few stones mingled here and there, till the wall is high enough. A few sods of grass from the neighbouring bog are his only thatch." ¹

The figures provided by the census of 1841 show that Kohl was not exaggerating. In Kilkee itself there were 238 inhabited houses of which 46 were mud cabins with only one room -- and these were occupied by 56 families. In the rural portion of the parish the position was immeasurably worse. Here, out of a total of 923 houses, 586 were one-roomed mud cabins housing 655 families.^{1a} It was of such as these that Kohl was thinking when he wrote:²

There are thousands of cabins in which not a trace of a window is to be seen; nothing but a little square hole in front, which doubles the duty of door, window and chimney; light, smoke, pigs and children ~~all~~^{ob} must pass in and out ~~through~~ the same aperture.

Miss Knott visited a couple of these cabins while in Kilkee. One of them, which lay in the corner of a field, appeared to her like a cow-house. A miserable bed, a form and an iron pot comprised nearly all the furniture of the dwelling, which measured merely ten feet by seven and had six occupants. In another she found that the window frames were filled to the top with sods of grass and mud, except one where a space was left in the upper part to admit light and air. However, at the time of her visit this was stuffed with, among other things, cabbage stalks and turf. The earthen floor in a third cabin attracted her attention and the fact that there was but one chair in the house.³ The cabin with the "miserable bed" shocked Miss Knott. Yet it was somewhat better furnished than many others. Most of the people slept on straw, "and bad straw", as Rev. Mr. Whitty, Rector of Kilrush and Kilfearagh, remarked.⁴ In the famine of 1822 many who had mattresses sold the feathers from them in order to buy food⁵ --- and, indeed, in the 1830's some people still made an extra few pence from the sale of feathers which they got by plucking live fowl, especially geese.⁶

One comfort to the poor people in the area was the plentiful supply of turf which, as we saw, was readily available, so that the cabins could be kept reasonably warm in the winter. But the lack of chimneys meant that the cabin became filled with smoke, which made an escape as best it could through the door or a hole in the roof. With the smoke came soot which, if allowed, soon covered the walls and particularly the thatch --- and when the rain fell heavily it might come through the soot-impregnated thatch as narrated by Brian Merriman in his description of a cabin in 1780, a description which was equally valid in 1840:⁷

Bothán gan áit chun suíche ann,
 Ach súgh síleáin is fáscadh aníos ann,
 Fiadhaile ag teacht go fras gan choimse
 Is rian na gcearc air treasna scríobtha,
 Lag ina dhrom 's na gabhla ag lúbadh
 Is clagarnach dhonn go trom ag tuirlint.

The houses of the better off farmers had, as one might expect, chimneys, and we even find Lady Chatterton remarking that in the Moyasta area chimneys were in such estimation that sometimes two false chimneys were placed at the gable ends of the houses for decorative purposes.⁸

The average mud cabin was bad but one could go lower still. In his evidence to the Devon Commission at Kilrush Mr. Thomas Studdert had this to say:⁹

If there is a class of persons more wretched than any other, they are the class of people called bog squatters. Their hovels are not fit for swine to go into. They have some friend that a corner of the bog belongs to, and he gets permission to build that hut, and whenever he gets there no one can turn

him out without a regular notice, in due course of law and ejection.

Such hovels were not far removed from the "scalp" which was to become very common in "amine times as a refuge for the evicted but which was undoubtedly also to be found in the 1830's. It consisted of a hole dug in the earth, two to three feet deep, roofed over with sticks and pieces of turf, and in this the evicted family existed. A slight variation on this was the "scalpeen", a somewhat larger hole often made within the ruins of a tumbled house.¹⁰

2. Food

The chief food of the people was potatoes and a labouring man could eat a stone of these daily if he had sufficient.¹¹

Prátaí istoiche,

Prátaí um ló,

Agus dá n-eireóchainn i meadhon oidhche,

Prátaí gheóbhainn!¹²

In Kilmearagh, however, potatoes were complemented to some extent by fish, particularly herrings.¹³ In early summer before the new potatoes were ready there was always hunger and quite often starvation. It was by no means unusual for families to be reduced to one meal of potatoes mixed with pressagh, a mixture which seems to have had a harmful effect on children, many of whom became ill.¹⁴ In one of the houses in Kilkee visited by Miss Knott the

potatoes in the pot on the fire were no bigger than walnuts. In another they had a greenish waxy appearance -- and there was neither milk nor salt to go with them.¹⁵ The poor, and most of the people were such, seldom had bread¹⁶ and for many years after 1850 meat was to remain almost an unknown luxury.

Hunger and famine, then, were no strangers. The last very serious famine had been in 1822, after the failure of the 1821 harvest. On that occasion Fr. Matthew Corbett, Chairman of the Relief Committee for the Barony of Moyarta, wrote:¹⁷

We submit that the distress of this Barony far exceeds that of any other in this county, in as much as its proximity to the western ocean exposes it, more than any other, to the inclemency of the weather. That the only crops which suffered little, namely wheat, its poor soil produces little or none of, and that the fisheries and exportation of turf, on which an immense population depended chiefly for support, also failed. The weather having prevented the fishermen from prosecuting the fishery, and the farmer from getting the turf out of his bog. So unfortunately circumstanced, they were during the winter season obliged to kill their pigs and cattle, as well for their own subsistence, as for want of food to preserve them, and were thereby left destitute of any resource whatever, but such as they derive from the charitable societies. And unless some humane effort is made in our behalf to afford us some additional support, the greater proportion of the population of this Barony must inevitably perish.¹⁸

In 1830 again there was a minor famine and it was reported that in this crisis carrigeen moss was used as a food almost for the first time and that it kept alive many people on the coast.¹⁹ In the late 1840's it was to come very much into use again.

In 1836 the potato crop in the area west of Kilrush was an almost total failure and in late May 1837 Fr. Malachy Duggan, P.P. of Moyarta and Kilballyowen, wrote to the Limerick Chronicle:²⁰

In this deplorable state of a population without money, employment or credit, necessity imposed the hard alternative of pledging, pawning and selling every article of domestic comfort, utility and what under similar circumstances could be dispensed with..... There are some thousands this moment subsisting on the scanty pittance of food they borrow from day to day from their next (sic) neighbours.

We have no direct evidence as to the situation in Kilfearagh parish at this time but it could not have been very different. Two years later, in the summer of 1839, we find the City of Dublin Steam Company giving the use of their lighters, barges and steamers free of charge, to carry potatoes from the counties of Limerick and Tipperary for the suffering poor in the vicinity of Kilrush.²¹

Even when there was not a general famine or near famine many individuals were on the borderline of starvation. Miss Knott listened to the story of one poor woman:²²

Often.... when we got up in the morning, we had not the price of our breakfast, and my poor husband's heart used to sink, thinking of our hard lot: then I used to say to him, the Lord was good and often helped us, and we ought still to put our trust in him. Somehow or other before night we would have enough; he would get a day's work, or I would be sent to do a little job, but still it is a hard thing to get up in the morning and not have a bit for ourselves or our children, and both of us able and willing to labour for our living.

And as time went on such cases were becoming more common-place because with a rapidly increasing population and more and more subdivision a greater proportion of the people was to be found on the bare subsistence level - if everything went well.

In conclusion, a quotation from the Limerick Reporter in 1842 commenting on an outbreak of dysentery in West Clare -- an outbreak which had been caused by the use of unripe potatoes after a summer of starvation:²³

These afflicting scenes must recur while the precarious potato continues the staple food of the bulk of the people.

3. Clothing

The general opinion was that the people of the parish were very poorly clothed. "In the most wretched state as to clothes," was Dr. Ryall's report in 1834,²⁴ while Miss Knott commented that the want of clothing among the poor shocked and distressed "the benevolent visitor."²⁵

One poor woman during a pregnancy had to pawn the only good garment in her possession for 3/- in order to be able to make some little preparation for the approaching birth.²⁶

The men were generally dressed in grey frieze coats, well coloured linen shirts with the collars open in front or sometimes fastened by a black ribbon, corduroy trousers with a bunch of ribbons floating at the knee, close-fitting light blue worsted stockings and shoes. This was the typical dress of the poor Irishman which was going out of fashion at the time of the Famine.²⁷

The women were usually dressed in coarse blue flannel gowns and petticoats. Few of them wore either stockings or shoes.²⁸ As one girl from the locality said to Crofton Croker:²⁹ "Is it to have me put my toes into jail you want, sir?" The scarlet cloak was also worn.³⁰

On an occasion like a race-meeting at Kilkee, the country girls could create quite a good impression on the visitor. "The country girls were neatly attired in yellow, pink and fancy coloured shawls, thrown over the shoulders with an artless grace..... A brown homespun, home-made stuff, supplied the place, in most instances, of the frippery and flaunting fourpenny cottons steamed out in English and Scotch manufactories in tons weight for Irish consumption. The nicely-trimmed cap, with a blue or pink bow or two affixed in a fanciful manner, resting, as if by accident, on the luxurious tresses of naturally curling nut-brown or black hair..."³¹

It is clear that if many of the people were poorly clothed, others could muster a good turn-out when the occasion demanded it. Miss Knott and her party met a funeral outside Kilkee and were highly impressed by the dress of the people taking part in it:³²

We do not recollect, at any time, to have seen a better dressed peasantry: the men were attired chiefly in blue coats, overtopped by the collars of their shirts, which, for whiteness, would have done credit to the county of Down --- few of them wore any neckcloth, the collar was simply fastened by a black string; the women were attired in warm blue or scarlet cloaks (the latter being the prevailing colour in this part of the country), without any covering on their heads, save that of a cap, in which they displayed a tasteful variety of form and texture, which struck us with surprise.

4. Sickness and Medical Care

Very hard work, poor food, wretched living conditions, and severe overcrowding all contributed to the spread of sickness and disease. Dr. Ryall expressed the view that potatoes were badly cooked and this tended to bring on indigestion. And when the people had fish these tended to bring on bowel complaints.³³ Among the more common diseases were fever and common cholera,³⁴ and it was on the occasion of a severe outbreak of cholera, that the novelist Charles Lever came to West Clare in 1832.^{34a}

Small pox, too, was never absent and after fever it was the greatest single cause of mortality in Ireland. In the decade from 1831 to 1841, 49 out of every 1,000 deaths in the country were from smallpox.³⁵ In eighteenth century England inoculation was practised as a preventive measure with some degree of success but also with some tragic results. In the first half of the nineteenth century in Ireland the general practice of inoculation seems to have been carried

out not by doctors but by itinerant quacks in whom the Irish people had great faith.³⁶ And these left their mark in Kilfearagh parish where there were very many blind people who owed their blindness to having submitted to the itinerant inoculators.³⁷ However, in 1840-1 inoculation with variolous matter was made an offence, while, at the same time, the Poor Law Board was charged with the duty of seeing that Workhouse Guardians arranged with local doctors for the free vaccination of anybody living in their unions who wished for it.³⁸

In 1805 an Act of Parliament empowered but did not compel Grand Juries to double any contributions made from private sources to dispensaries.³⁹ It was another twenty six years before a dispensary was established in Kilkee, and at the same time (1831) one was established in Carrigahole.⁴⁰ The same doctor had to attend both with the result that he had to cope with a district of immense population. The first man appointed was Dr. Ryall and on his death in 1840 the subscribers to the dispensary elected Dr. John Griffin, a native of Kilrush, to succeed him.⁴¹ Private subscriptions were collected for the financing of the dispensaries and each year the Grand Jury gave an amount equal to that which had been subscribed privately.⁴² Before a person received attention at the dispensary he had to be recommended by a subscriber⁴³ but, nevertheless, the funds available were totally inadequate for the work in hand. "The funds of the dispensary are so low," said Dr. Ryall and Rev. Mr. Murray, "that they are quite insufficient to buy the medicine required; when

the poor are attacked with sickness, they are frequently obliged to borrow money from some kind individual, but this only increases their misery."⁴⁴ The dispensary facilities, then, were clearly inadequate. And during all the 1830's the nearest hospital was that in Ennis. The first hospital in West Clare was a ϕ fever hospital in Kilrush, of which the foundation stone was laid in July 1839 after years of discussion.⁴⁵

One consolation to sick people was the goodness and generosity of their neighbours. It often happened that when a woman was facing a difficult childbirth they banded together to raise the necessary money to pay the doctor.⁴⁶ And, in general, when sickness was present in a house, the neighbours did all they could to help, whether by giving milk and potatoes or whatever else they had. Dr. Ryall could quote cases where the poor attended each other in the case of contagious diseases, thereby saving lives which would otherwise have been lost.⁴⁷ But the tragedy of the friendless, and the heartlessness of some of the better off can be seen from a case quoted by him:⁴⁸

A stranger, a short time ago, got a typhus fever, in a house where she was staying, and being but a servant was put out; and a hut being built for her, in a bog, she was conveyed there; shortly after, I was called in to attend her, and I discovered, through a doorway, which I could not enter without bending myself completely double, the most miserable scene I ever witnessed. In a corner lay the patient on some straw, which scarcely sufficed to cover the floor; that was literally nothing, but the wet floor (sic), which, actually, when I approached, sunk under my feet,

and formed a puddle close round the bed. This was the condition I found the poor woman in on the second day, without any attendance whatsoever -- neglected by all, and apparently in the last stage of existence. Not knowing what to do, I consulted with a respectable individual in the parish, and we both agreed to offer any sum for a nurse tender; we were unsuccessful, and in two days, notwithstanding the kindness of the P.P., she died. A coffin was raised by public subscription, and she was quietly interred.

5. Provision for the Future

In 1834 Fr. Comyn told the Commissioners inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland that it was quite impossible for the labourer to save⁴⁹ and James McMahon, himself a labourer, bore this out when he said: "No man here ever attempted to lay up anything; but if we had 10d and regular employment, we might lay by some trifle for old age."⁵⁰ As we have already seen, the only real protection they had against hunger in their old age lay in their children, whom they looked to to provide for them. If they had no children, then they had to trust to the kindness of their neighbours or take to the roads begging. Writing in the midst of famine in 1847 Captain Mann summarised the position in West Clare in pre-Famine days:⁵¹

Until lately what was the position of the peasant? Work as he would -- till and rear what he may, he could never hope to benefit..... Let misfortune come on him, or disease render him unable to work, he had no inheritance in the land. One a little less poor than himself might help him but who else?

In 1836 the Commission of Poor Inquiry issued its report and recommendations. It was now clearly established that the poor of Ireland were in a very bad state. However, the Government rejected the recommendations and sent one of the English Poor Law Commissioners to Ireland. After a six weeks' tour of the country he decided that the English workhouse system was the answer to the problem and as a result the Poor Law Act of 1838 provided for the erection of workhouses throughout the country.⁵² In these the destitute poor would be meagrely maintained at public expense.

In May 1839 the Poor Law Union of Kilrush was set up, consisting of thirteen electoral districts in West Clare, extending from Kilballyowen to Kildysart and including Kilfearagh parish. It was planned to build a workhouse for 700 at Kilrush.⁵³ Each of these electoral districts would pay a poor law rate for the upkeep of the workhouse, a rate which would vary according to the number of inmates from the districts.

When the workhouse was built in Kilrush it was slightly larger than in the original plan -- accommodation for 800 -- and it was opened on 9 July, 1842. The general supervision was in the hands of twenty nine elected and

nine ex officio Guardians, of whom the first chairman was Crofton Moore Vandeleur of Kilrush. The day to day running was in the hands of the workhouse master. On 2 December, 1843, there were only 164 inmates,⁵⁴ and up to late 1844 or early 1845 the number at any given time from Kilfearagh parish did not exceed four.⁵⁵ For those who were destitute the workhouse did mean that they need not starve but entry into it was an uninviting prospect. It was an extreme measure taken when all else had failed.

CHAPTER FIVERELIGION

The First Report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction states that in 1834 there were 6,637 Catholics and 63 Protestants in Kilfearagh parish.¹ Consequently it is with the 99% Catholic population that we must be chiefly concerned.

1. Fr. Michael Comyn, P.P.

We have already made a number of references to Fr. Michael Comyn, P.P. of Kilfearagh and Killard from 1827 to 1854 and a dominating figure in his parishes during those years. However, the circumstances surrounding his appointment did not augur well for his future ministry. On the death of Fr. Patrick McInerney in late December 1826 the parishioners requested that his brother, Fr. Thomas McInerney, who had been curate of the parishes for 18 years, should succeed him. But the bishop did not accede to their request and appointed Fr. Michael Roughan instead. The parishioners, in turn, accepted this as a challenge and when Fr. Roughan arrived at Doonbeg Chapel on 6 January to say Mass, he was prevented from entering the chapel by a large group of people. Fr. Roughan then went on to Lisdeen where there was a similar scene. After a further fruitless attempt to enter the chapels on the following Sunday he gave up the attempt.²

Faced with a difficult situation the bishop next appointed Fr. Comyn to succeed Fr. Roughan. The choice was a good one. Fr. Comyn was not yet thirty years of age³ and had been ordained priest less than two years previously.⁴

A contemporary described him as follows:⁵ "He was of large frame, well proportioned, of a manly type of beauty, a magnificent presence, as playful as a child, but a lion in courage." He had the further advantage of being a native of the parish, coming from Corbally.⁶ At first he met with the same opposition as Fr. Roughan but before very long had asserted himself and was soon regarded as the leader of the people under his care.⁷

It seems certain that Fr. Comyn provided, at least in part, the raw material for Charles Lever's Father Tom Loftus in his novel Jack Hinton, just as Fr. Comyn's neighbour, Fr. Malachy Duggan of Carrigaholt, was the prototype of Fr. Michael Brennan in Harry Lorrequer. Fr. Comyn and the novelist first met when Lever, in his capacity as a medical doctor, came to Kilrush for some months in 1832 during a cholera epidemic. Later, in 1835 or 1836, Lever stayed for some days with Fr. Comyn, at the priest's invitation. Many years later, Dr. Griffin, dispensary doctor at Kilkee, wrote: "Lever was a little before my time, but I often heard Mr. Comyns speak of him as one he knew well."⁸

The picture presented of the P.P. of Murrnakilty in Jack Hinton is one of a jovial punch-drinking priest deeply devoted to the people under his care. But one aspect of it which deeply grieved Fr. Comyn was an illustration of Fr. Tom sprawling in a rather undignified position in his gig with a jug of punch to his lips. However, if we accept that the character in the novel is somewhat larger than life it is possible for us to get from it true glimpses of the

priest who so dominated the life of his parish for over twenty five years. Lever's words ring true when he wrote:⁹

I learnt from him that in the wild region where he lived there were above 15,000 persons, scarce one of whom could speak or understand a word of English. Of these he was not only the priest, but the ruler and the judge. Before him all their disputes were settled -- all their differences reconciled. His word, in the strongest sense of the phrase, was a law -- not indeed to be enforced by bayonets and policemen, by constables and sheriffs' officers -- but one which in its moral force demanded obedience, and would have made him who resisted it an outcast among his fellows.

We also see him in a different role:¹⁰

The chariot was well known in every town and village, and scarcely was the rumble of its wheels heard coming up the "street", when the population might be seen assembling in little groups and knots, to have a word with "the father" -- to get his blessing -- to catch his eye, or even obtain a nod from him. He knew every one and every thing; and, with a tact which is believed to be the prerogative of royalty, he never miscalled a name, nor mistook an event. Inquiring after them, for soul and body, he entered with real interest into all their hopes and plans, their fears and anticipations, and talked away about pigs, penances, purgatory and potatoes, in a way that

showed his information, on any of these matters, to be
 of no mean or common order.

Other sources help us to get an even fuller picture of Fr. Comyn. Frequently we meet with references to his lavish hospitality. When Paddy O'Neill, a well known Kilkee personality to whom we will be referring again later, broke his leg in Limerick, Eugene O'Curry wrote a poem for him in which he advised him, among other things, to pay a visit to "leabharthigh an tsagairt ghil Choiminigh."
 And the poem continued:¹¹

Do theachd annsúd go dearbhtha
 Ni haithreach leat-sa Choidhche,
 Mar ta feile fiuntaighe is fearamhlachd
 Is fairsinge 'san taciseach.
 Gheobhair eadach cluid is airgead
 Is freastail suilt gan chuimse,
 Is géag ghlan úr de'n leathan-mhart
 Chum smeara' chur id' cheoil-speir.

A contemporary quoted in FitzPatrick's biography of Lever bears this out and adds a further detail:¹² "Though very hospitable, yet, perhaps, no person ever saw him under the influence of spirituous drink."

An incident which occurred in 1839 gives us a glimpse of Fr. Comyn in a different mood. On a Sunday evening in August, the P.P. at the head of a group of men who had finished hurling, encountered some visiting and local gentlemen at the Post Office in Kilkee. A few words were exchanged and then one of the visitors referred to the Clare peasantry as being the best conducted in Ireland. Immediately Fr. Comyn took offence: "Peasantry! Peasantry! - those are gentlemen, sir." After this he

turned to the group with him and said: "Gentlemen, gentlemen, this gentleman or person calls you peasant-ry." Then, apparently addressing his remarks to the visitors, he concluded: "Those gentlemen will be wearing good cloth clothes when you, and you, and you will be in the poorhouses that are building now."¹³

Whatever one's opinion of Fr. Comyn one thing is quite certain → he was always a figure to be reckoned with in the affairs of the parish, inspiring both respect and intense opposition. To the Limerick Evening Post and Clare Sentinel he was the "worthy and talented parish priest of the Sandhills,"¹⁴ while on one occasion the Limerick Standard described him as "of celebrated notoriety in that part of the country, as indeed elsewhere."¹⁵

In his work as pastor Fr. Comyn was helped by some curates. He had probably only one at the beginning but by the mid 1830's the number had been increased to three. In 1839, despite a growing population, one of these was removed and not replaced. Thereafter, until his death in 1854, he had two assistants. In the earlier years of our period the curates were never allowed to remain very long in Kilfearagh-Killard. However, for the last eight years before 1851, Fr. Mortimer Hartney and Fr. William O'Brien remained unchanged.¹⁶

2. A New Catholic Chapel

Soon after his appointment as parish priest, Fr. Comyn set out to provide a new chapel for the rapidly growing town of Kilkee. The chapel at Lisdeen was now far too small for the large population of the parish and many had to kneel in the open air at mass.¹⁷ Furthermore,

It was several miles from Kilkee and thus rather inconvenient for the summer visitors.

Fr. Comyn opened the building fund with a personal contribution of £50.¹⁸ Then, through advertisements in the newspapers and personal visits, he appealed to the people of Limerick for help:¹⁹

The Rev. Michael Comyn will, in the course of a few days, wait on his Limerick friends, to solicit their aid towards the building a CHAPEL on the Sand-Hills of Kilkee. The great distance of the Parish Chapel from the shore, has long pointed out the necessity of affording to the numerous visitors from Limerick and elsewhere, the convenience of a more immediate place of Public Worship, it being a most melancholy truth that, especially in bad weather, numbers were thereby prevented from attending to their religious duties even on the SABBATH DAY.

Subscriptions began to come in quickly, from Protestants as well as Catholics,²⁰ and soon the building work began. Among the contributors were the two M.Ps. for Clare, the O'Gorman Mahon and Major McNamara,²¹ while Mr. Gallaher, a well known ventriloquist, gave a special series of concerts in Limerick to gather funds.²²

Eventually, in the summer of 1831, the cruciform chapel which was to serve the parish for 132 years was opened. However, much work still remained to be done. It had only one gallery instead of the three²³ originally intended by Fr. Comyn and the interior, as one newspaper commented, ill befitted "the respectability of the external appearance."²⁴

The reason for the rough state of the interior was lack of funds and during the years after 1831 the work of collecting the necessary funds went on. In 1834 Fr. Comyn informed the Commissioners inquiring into the state of the Poorer Classes:²⁵

Notwithstanding the influx of beggars to this place in summer, I never saw more than two of them begging at the chapel; but this is because I beg myself for the chapel to pay for its building, and the people give to me in preference to them. If I were to stop, there would be plenty of them.

In his work of collecting for the chapel it seems too that the parish priest was aided by a committee of laymen.²⁶

It is doubtful if the vast majority of the parishioners contributed very much. About ten years previously Fr. Duggan of Carrigaholt found it extremely difficult to collect a half-penny a week and had to give up the attempt -- due mainly to the lack of money in circulation amongst the rural dwellers.²⁷ Probably the principal source of revenue lay in the charity sermons which were preached each year.²⁸

A noted preacher was invited. Crowds went to the chapel for the special occasion with open purse strings and usually contributed very generously. In this way the visitors to Milkee gave quite a lot to the building fund. But a charity sermon could have an unusual ~~seq~~ sequel when a man of Fr. Comyn's hospitable disposition was in charge. On 16 September, 1831 his mother, who was living with him, wrote the following to another son, James:²⁹

The Sunday after we arrived (home from a holiday in Lisdoonvarna) Michael had one of the Limerick priests to preach a charity sermon in the new chapel. All the priests in the country attended together with all the strangers in Kilkee, both Protestants and Chatolocks.(sic) The collection was £80 which he sent to Mr. Spaith the day after. A trifle to what is still due to him. Michl asked every person who attended to dinner which consisted from 40 to 50 persons. Twenty three dined in the parlour, twenty two or four in the Coach house, another table in the drawing room. You may judge what trouble I had turning the house upside down and dragging beds from every house in the neighbourhood to accommodate some of the company, many of whom could go to their lodgings. But Michl is not to be reasoned with when his fits of folly comes^{sic} on him. It would be all well if it was only one day but he kept it up three weeks

Towards the end of the thirties Fr. Comyn faced severe financial difficulties when William McInerney of Kilrush³⁰ brought an action for compensation for work done on the chapel about 1834.³¹ The background to the case is by no means clear but, at any rate, McInerney was awarded £136 and costs.³² Fr. Comyn appealed to the Court of Exchequer and won his case.³³ Again McInerney brought a fresh action before Ennis Assizes and on this occasion was awarded £59 damages and 6d costs.³⁴ At this stage Fr. Comyn seems to have decided to accept the verdict and proceed no further. Instead, he set about raising money to wipe out the debt and complete the furnishing of the chapel. He was also in need of money for the proposed National School.

At this period the greatest attraction one could procure was a well-known preacher and in 1841 the most well-known preacher was Fr. Theobald Mathew, the Apostle of Temperance. Everywhere he went he was mobbed by crowds, very much in the same way as pop singers are greeted in the mid twentieth century. So Fr. Comyn, who was already acquainted with him, invited Fr. Mathew to preach a sermon in Kilkee Chapel in aid of the building fund. Fr. Mathew agreed to do so and preparations got under way for a visit on Sunday, 24 January 1841.

A scale of admission charges to the chapel was drawn up:

Sanctuary	20/-
Gallery	5/-
Aisle	1/-

The bishop of the diocese, Dr. Kennedy, intimated that he would be present and professional musicians were hired to ensure that the sacred music at High Mass would be of the highest order. The Temperance Societies of the surrounding area, too, got ready to give Fr. Mathew a fitting reception.

Many people from the neighbouring counties were expected to travel to Kilkee for the occasion so that the lodge-owners, in anticipation of business, began to prepare sleeping accommodation. Nor were they disappointed, for many strangers were among Fr. Mathew's congregation while others, who could not attend, sent on contributions. The total amount received, including a large personal contribution from Fr. Mathew, exceeded ^{ed} ~~ing~~ £300. Then after Mass, Fr. Mathew administered the pledge to 5,000 people.³⁵

With this money various improvements were made including the enclosure of the chapel grounds with a stone wall. ³⁶ It probably also helped to finance the building of a National School. However, nothing was done about roofing the tower containing the gallery stairs. These stairs had now been open to the elements for over ten years with the result that the wood had slowly decayed. Then, in mid July 1843, the stairs collapsed. Fortunately there were only three people on them at the time and these escaped unhurt. After this mishap the tower was roofed ³⁷ and the stairs rebuilt.

Scarcely four weeks later an event which could have had even more serious consequences took place. As Mr. O'Brien C.C. was commencing to distribute Holy Communion at Sunday Mass a loose stone fell from one of the towers. On hearing this many people thought that the gallery was about to fall. The alarm spread quickly and soon all began to rush for the doors. In the gallery itself the people remained calm at first but before long the panic became general. However, some visitors there managed to calm the majority of those in the gallery. Again no lives were lost but many were trampled on and had their clothes torn, probably receiving bruises in the process. No doubt many of those who acted as a steadying influence remembered a somewhat similar stampede in a Galway chapel the previous Christmas when twenty lives ³⁸ were lost.

3. Religious Life

There is not very much direct evidence available to give us a picture of the religious life of the parish during these years. However, in 1824, Fr. Malachy Duggan of Moyarta and Kilballyowen described some practices in his parishes to a Parliamentary Commission and, almost certainly, these also prevailed in Kilfearagh both then and ten years later. We can also add in some details from Kilfearagh parish itself.

Before the Synod of Thurles in 1850 the Irish Church still retained many customs which had arisen in Penal times, particularly with regard to the celebration of Mass and the administration of the sacraments. The most notable of these customs was the holding of "stations". A station was held in a chosen house in each of the various districts of Fr. Duggan's parish once a year on a date previously announced. Its main purpose was to give the people an opportunity of going to confession and, of course, Mass was also celebrated. Generally, Fr. Duggan arrived at the house at six o'clock in the morning and remained until six in the evening. No collection was taken or accepted during his stay and the only meal he took was breakfast, waiting until he returned home for dinner.³⁹ This contrasted favourably with the position in some other dioceses where the householders were burdened with the provision of expensive entertainment for the priest. For many people the station would be the only occasion on which they would receive the sacrament of penance during the year.

The manner of celebration of Mass did not differ very much from a Latin Mass of the period up to the Second

Vatican Council. However, on special occasions musicians played during the Mass to give *added* solemnity. When Fr. Matthew preached in Kilkee Chapel, as we have seen, some professional musicians were present. Likewise, on the occasion of a charity sermon in 1831, a number of visitors provided the music during High Mass -- some singers, a pianist, and two gentlemen who played on the violin and violincello.⁴⁰

What proportion of the people actually attended Mass each Sunday? This is a question to which it is impossible to give a precise answer but there are indications that it may not have been as high as one might expect. In one of his appeals for funds for Kilkee Chapel, Fr. Conyn pointed out, that because of the smallness of Lisdeen Chapel many people were prevented from attending Mass on Sunday, especially in bad weather.⁴¹ Perhaps habits created in this situation were not easy to break later. In 1834 the First Report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction stated that Mass was celebrated once each Sunday and holiday in Kilkee and Lisdeen Chapels. The average congregations were 750 and 550 respectively.⁴² Thus about 1,300 people out of a Catholic population of 6,637 went to Mass regularly in Kilfearagh parish. Even after making allowance for the very young, the old and infirm and those parishioners who went to Mass in Kilrush or Killard parishes, one is forced to the conclusion that quite a number of the people were not in the habit of going to Mass regularly. It is possible, though, that the low numbers

can to some extent be explained by the absence of children under their mid teens. Such a practice in West Clare in 1816 is suggested in Mason's Parochial Survey of Ireland where it is stated that a girl's first appearance at Mass was understood to be an intimation that her parents were ready to receive marriage proposals for her.⁴³

Religious instruction was given to the children of Fr. Duggan's parish in the chapel every Sunday from May to October, when the weather was not very cold. Catechisms were provided for the poorer children by the bishop, although sometimes there would not be enough of them for all.⁴⁴ In Kilkee in the summer of 1839 we find the priests of Kilfearagh and Killard attending the chapel at Kilkee every Saturday from nine to four to prepare the children for confirmation. A few years later such instruction would be greatly facilitated by the opening of Kilkee National School.⁴⁵ Indeed, in 1847 we find Head Inspector, J. W. Kavanagh complaining that religious instruction was given twice a day in the school although the time-table on display made allowance for it only on Saturday.⁴⁶ Adults in Kilfearagh parish received instruction through the Sunday sermon which, rather surprisingly, was delivered not during but after Mass in Kilkee.⁴⁷

Few parishes could boast of any building apart from the chapel or Protestant church which would be suitable for public meetings. As a result we find the chapels being used for political and other gatherings and those in Kilfearagh parish were no exception. On the occasion

of the Clare election in 1828 which returned O'Connell, John Lavless visited West Clare and addressed the people in their chapels under the sponsorship of their parish priests, including Fr. Comyn.⁴⁸ Fourteen years later we find a meeting to promote the reclamation of waste lands being held in Kilkeas Chapel, with a Protestant, Jonas Studdert, in the chair.⁴⁹ And, no doubt, many other meetings too were held in the chapels.

Visiting the sick and dying was an important part of a priest's duties but because of the size of his parish as a rule Fr. Duggan was not present at burials. "It would be impossible for me to attend all the burials in my populous parish." However, he did attend at the house before the funeral left for the churchyard and it was probably in the house that Mass was said for the dead person.⁵⁰ Clay was also usually blessed beforehand when a priest could not be present to bless the grave. As well as pressure of work, there was also a further reason for non-attendance. The burial grounds used by Catholics throughout Ireland were owned by the Established Church and permission had to be obtained from the Protestant rector to perform the funeral service in them -- a permission which was never requested. Thus there was no formal burial service. In Kilfearagh parish the burial ground was beside the Protestant Church at Kilfearagh -- on the site of the pre-Reformation church.

Before the funeral came the wake, which may be mentioned here even though it can scarcely be described as a religious ceremony. In 1816 Mason gave a vivid description of wakes in West Clare:⁵¹

Some wakes and funerals here exhibit the same savage mixture of mirth and grief which has been so often observed in other parts of Ireland.

Dismal howlings are alternated with songs, plays and ridiculous stories; whilst the various passions of grief, love and anger are in turn elevated to their highest pitch by copious libations of whiskey. It has sometimes been observed on these occasions, that a man who would grudge to buy a bottle of wine, or a blister for his relative when living, has expended thirty guineas in whiskey at the wake and funeral.

Unfortunately we have no direct evidence for the decade or so before the Famine but it is unlikely that there was any substantial change in the intervening twenty years. In 1845 the practice in Limerick was similar to that described by Mason and we find the Catholic bishop, Dr. Ryan, exhorting his people to change their "idle custom" and to have the corpse house visited only by relatives and immediate friends.⁵² It is unlikely that Fr. Comyn, who was such a firm believer in hospitality, would have tried to bring about any significant change in his parishes.

With regard to marriages and baptisms, the usual practice in Ireland before 1850 was to celebrate them in private houses -- as Gerald Griffin's poem,⁵³
The Bridal Wake (referring to Kilfeareagh parish),⁵⁴
 indicates with regard to the former.

The priest stood at the marriage board,
 The marriage cake was made.

Fr. Duggan, as was the general practice on such occasions, took up a collection among those assembled for the wedding -- about £3.10. or £4 on average.⁵⁵

Shrove Tuesday was the greatest day of the year for marriages and Mason remarked that the Roman Catholic priests in west Clare were generally occupied in such celebrations on that day from sunrise to sunset.⁵⁶

However, the marriage register in Kilkee Catholic Church shows that although very many marriages took place just before Lent they were spread over a few days. In all it contains, for example, 101 entries for 1838 and of these 48 were celebrated within the period 22 - 26 February.

A feature of Irish religious life at the time was the performance of devotions at holy wells and Killcaragh had several such places of pilgrimage. One of these was St. Senan's Well, situated behind Marine Parade. In the 1820's people gathered there on Good Friday to pray⁵⁷ and when John O'Donovan visited the parish on Ordnance Survey work at the end of the next decade he noted that stations were still held there.⁵⁸ Another visitor described it as follows:⁵⁹

It is dedicated to St. Sinon, and together with supplying some of the most clear, salutary and limpid water, is devoted also to religious purposes. It is surrounded by a heap of stones on which are stuck a great variety of rags There was a poor innocent creature here, performing her little devotions in the purest secrecy.

A few miles outside the town, not far from the cliffs in Foolagh, was Toberkee, the waters of which were regarded

as being particularly effective in curing eye complaints. In 1904 a centenarian told how, in her youth her mother brought her to the well when she was suffering from a stye. Then, while she bathed her eye with some of the water, her mother performed a round. Before she had finished the eye had been cured.⁶⁰

The above, then, were the principal ways in which the Catholic people of the parish expressed themselves in public worship. Undoubtedly there was also a strong tradition of private prayer expressed according to traditional formulae. Some idea of the richness of this tradition is given to us in the brief collection of prayers collected in the early twentieth century and published in the Irish Educational Review.⁶¹ To quote just part of one -- a night prayer:⁶²

A íosa Críost luigh ar leaba liom,

A uain trócaireach eirigh ar maidin liom.

A bhaighdean ghlórúchar deim duine leat fein díom.

Na trí h-aingil is sine,

Agus na trí h-aingil is óige,

Na trí h-aingil is mó comhacht d'athair ne gloire

Ag teacht i gcoinne m'anama, a's go dtugaich siad
leo ne.

Finally, a word on the priest's income. Dr. Duggan's income was about £200 per annum on average but out of this he had to pay his retired predecessor a pension of twenty guineas, £30 and his support to his curate and an undisclosed contribution to his bishop. This sum came from the Christmas and Easter dues together with the offerings on the occasion of marriages and baptisms.⁶³ In Kilkee the position seems to have been slightly

different. The curates who lived with Fr. Comyn, being boarded and lodged by him, did not receive a fixed salary but were given instead the proceeds of a special curates' collection taken up in summertime. In 1853, slightly after our period, this amounted to a little over £50 to be divided between two men.⁶⁴

4. The Protestant Parish.

In 1834 Kilfearagh parish was part of a union which included the entire western peninsula from Kilrush to Loop Head. The rector was the Rev. Irwin Whitty, who came to the parish in 1777⁶⁵ and resided in Kilrush.

A curate was resident in Kilkee. In early August 1842 Mr. Whitty died⁶⁶ and on his death the union was dissolved.⁶⁷ Kilfearagh was now constituted a separate parish with J. Hastings Allen as rector. In January 1844 Rev. Mr. Allen was transferred to Clonlara and was succeeded by Rev. Mr. Martin who had previously acted as curate in Kilkee.⁶⁸

In the late twenties the Protestant parish was confronted with the same problem as the Catholic one regarding the provision of a church in the town, chiefly to accommodate the many summer visitors. Resident Protestants, as we have seen, were quite few in numbers. The parish church, an early 18th century building, was on the site of the pre-Reformation church at Kilfearagh about a mile from Kilkee. However, it was clear that facilities for worship would have to be provided in the town itself and, in any case, the church does not appear to have been in very good condition. The question of a new church was mooted about the same time as Fr. Comyn was commencing the building of Kilkee Chapel and his

reaction shows that though he was a staunch nationalist and champion of the people's rights he was also very tolerant towards those who did not agree with him in religion. The Freeman's Journal of 17 November 1829 reported:

Rev. Mr. Comyn, P.P. of Kilkee who is building a chapel on the sandhills of that seabathing station, to which he has himself contributed £50, has signified his willingness to subscribe to the erection of a parish church in the same district which the rector is about to commence. This fair principle certainly entitles Mr. Comyn to general support in the work in which he is now engaged.

By 1834 the old church at Kiltearagh was too small to accommodate the Sunday congregations during the holiday season. To solve the problem a temporary place of worship was set up at the end of Marine Parade, near the Coastguard Boathouse, while service also continued to be held in the parish church.⁶⁹ The new chapel-of-ease accommodated 140 people standing.⁷⁰

Meanwhile plans were going ahead for a new Church but very slow progress was made. Sites were offered by each of the local landlords, the Marquis of Conyngham and John McDonnell, and each also offered a subscription of 100 guineas. After "much disputation" the site offered by the latter was decided on -- situated in the West End adjacent to the quarry.⁷¹ But a year later, when work eventually began, it was on the Marquis of Conyngham's land, where the church still stands. Why the change came about we do not

know but the site finally chosen had a much more central location in the town. Estimated cost was £1,400 with Mr. Gallagher of Rathkeale as contractor.⁷²

Two years later, in summer 1843, the new church was finally ready and it was consecrated in August of that year.⁷³ Although it had been designed to hold 400,⁷⁴ on the Sunday after the consecration over one hundred prospective worshippers had to be turned away from its doors⁷⁵ -- a happening which gives some indication of the large number of Protestant visitors at the time.

The payment of tithes in Kilfearagh parish and surrounding area does not seem to have led to any violent protests, though a letter writer to a newspaper in 1836 remarked of Rev. Mr. Whitty, "At the eleventh hour, whilst on the brink of eternity, this aged minister of peace is exacting tythes without either regard for justice or humanity."⁷⁶ However, twelve years previously, Fr. Duggan, who remarked that there were seizures of implements, clothes, etc., in lieu of money, said that the rector of Kilrush was humane. Rev. Mr. Whitty was only one of three people who had a right to tithe money from Fr. Duggan's parishes.⁷⁷

5. Itinerant Preachers.

Itinerant preachers occasionally visited Kilkee -- "methody preachers" as Paddy O'Neill described them.⁷⁸ One "mountebank prescher" annoyed visitors to the town during the last week of August 1845 by blocking up the passage to the cliffs, surrounded by a group of little children, preaching, singing and distributing

tracts. When he left Kilkee he also annoyed his fellow travellers on the steamer from Kilrush to Limerick by holding forth on deck, surrounded by tracts and pamphlets for distribution. Those who tried to escape from this by taking refuge in the cabin found a companion of the preacher reading in a loud tone a tract for some ladies.⁷⁹

In July 1848 an even more unusual character visited the town. One morning when the people awoke they found all the blank walls in the town "placarded over with solemn-looking posters, containing mysterious prophecies of spiritual ruin and warnings not a few to make straight the path of life." The reason for these warnings was that the end of the world was at hand and the apostle of doom had chosen Kilkee as his first theatre of action. During the day he proceeded to the Amphitheatre⁸⁰ followed by a curious crowd and there tried to make himself heard above the roaring of the waves. An abrupt anti-climax came when, following an argument with a local woman, she emptied a basket of periwinkles on him.⁸¹

CHAPTER SIX

POLITICS

1. Support for O'Connell

Politically as well as religiously Fr. Comyn was the leader of the people of Kilfearagh parish and in his politics he was a wholehearted supporter of O'Connell. In 1828 he gave him his full backing at the time of the famous Clare election and, judging from an unusual incident which occurred some time afterwards, he was followed in this by practically all his parishioners.

The Clare Sentinel of 18 July 1828 reported:¹

Several freeholders of the west of Kilrush who happened to vote for Mr. Fitzgerald came on Sunday last to Rev. Mr. Comyn, P.P. of Liscteen to state that from the moment they were led to vote against Mr. O'Connell they could not eat or sleep; and as the only offering they had to make in atonement, they were ready to stand on the altar three succeeding Sundays in white, which they hoped would prove the sincerity of their sorrow and thereby reconcile them to themselves and their neighbours. Mr. Comyn, however, dissuaded them from such a step assuring them he would represent their feelings to his flock, who, he was convinced, would forgive and endeavour to forget their political apostasy.

After the achievement of Emancipation came the demand for Repeal of the Union, and in late 1830 Fr. Comyn was probably at the head of a movement in his parishes to gather signatures for a petition to Parliament on the matter.²

Then from 1835 to 1840 O'Connell was in informal alliance with the Whigs so that repeal slipped into the background. In the meantime other issues held sway. In 1836 the people of Kilfearagh and Killard parishes signed petitions in favour of municipal reform, while at the same time names were being gathered for other petitions asking that the law governing landlord - tenant relations be amended.³

It was April 1840 before the repeal campaign was again launched with the foundation of the National Association of Ireland for full and prompt justice or repeal, re-named three months later the Loyal National Repeal Association. For the first two months the new movement met with scant success. Yet, even at this stage, Fr. Comyn was a vigorous supporter of O'Connell. On Sunday, 1 November, 1840, he was one of the many priests on the platform at a repeal meeting held in the Market Square, Kilrush, and was the first speaker to address the 8,000 people who had gathered to listen.⁴ On Monday 19th April 1841 we find a repeal meeting being held in Kilkee Chapel. The chair was taken by Fr. Thomas Stack, C.C., while the parish priest moved the first resolution. Among those present was Mr. Thomas Reynolds, an organiser from the national headquarters of the movement.⁵

The repeal movement met its first big test in the general election of July 1841, but managed to return only a handful of members to Parliament. In connection with this election a big repeal meeting was held on Sunday 4 July at Ballykett, near Kilrush. The huge crowd present was estimated at 30,000 -- a forerunner of the monster meetings -- and among the speakers we again find Fr. Comyn.⁶ Doubtless, his parishioners were well represented among the audience.

In 1842 the tide began to turn for O'Connell. Archbishop John MacHale and a number of other bishops declared themselves in favour of repeal; the new newspaper The Nation

(founded in October 1842) provided favourable propaganda and the O'Connell "tribute" brought in ample campaigning funds. In January 1843 O'Connell announced that this was to be "the repeal year" and a series of monster meetings was held throughout the country to prove his strength. In mid June he returned in triumph to Clare for one such meeting at Ballycoree, near Ennis, about which the Limerick Reporter carried the headline "Clare Demonstration - the Greatest ever known in Ireland." The crowd was estimated at 700,000, gathered from all corners of the county and well beyond it. Among the speakers with O'Connell we find Fr. Comyn once again.⁷ His presence on the platform at such a meeting is certainly a striking demonstration of his prominence in the movement.

In autumn 1843 the crisis came for repeal when a monster meeting planned for Clontarf was banned at the eleventh hour and called off. Soon after this charges were brought against O'Connell and in May 1844 he was found guilty of "conspiring to excite disaffection,"⁸ and imprisoned. Almost immediately Dr. Kennedy, Bishop of Killaloe, ordered a litany to be recited every Sunday and holiday by the priests of his diocese while O'Connell and his friends were in prison.⁹ And he also recommended that in the prayer before Mass after the words "For the Queen and all that are in high station, that we may lead a quiet and holy life" the following should be inserted: "For O'Connell, the Father of his country, that, being delivered from all dangers he may with renewed energy both of mind and body, securely accomplish at last the glorious object of his distinguished life -- the deliverance of his fellow-countrymen from the blighting curses of unchristian

and unnatural dissension,"¹⁰ ---- a prayer which undoubtedly was recited with great fervour by Fr. Comyn in his parish.

The hierarchy as a whole, too, joined in the prayers for O'Connell. Sunday, 28 July 1844, was designated by them as a day of national prayer to ask God to put an end to the sufferings of the Irish people and grant their leader a speedy liberation.¹¹ In Kilfearagh and Killard parishes Fr. Comyn organized what was described as a "jubilee on a small scale" on this occasion. Saturday, the 25th, was observed as a fast day and the Rosary was said on that and the following night by every family in the district. On Sunday huge numbers of people went to Holy Communion, "to the great edification of the numerous visitors," and the Litany of the Saints and the prayer composed by the hierarchy were recited before Mass. All joined in the responses, including even the very youngest children who had been given tuition beforehand.¹²

On the Wednesday after the day of prayer Fr. Comyn forwarded the sum of £51 to William Smith O'Brien for the Repeal Association on behalf of himself and his parishioners.¹³ And in the following week the Unionist Limerick Chronicle reported that Fr. Comyn was pledged not to taste ardent liquor until the repeal of the Union had been accomplished and added that it took this to be identical with the Matthew pledge and enduring as life. It concluded: "We sincerely exclaim 'Esto perpetua'".¹⁴

In September the O'Connell appeal to the House of Lords proved successful and the prisoners were released. Even though the repeal movement still pushed ahead O'Connell was henceforth a broken man and the hope of 1843 was never

regained. New controversies, too, such as that concerning the Charitable Bequests Act, came to the fore and here also Fr. Comyn supported the *Liberator*. In February 1845, a petition was signed at Kilkee Chapel condemning the Act.¹⁵

The general picture, then, of political life in the parish in the years before the Famine is of a strong national line being taken by Fr. Comyn who was described by the Limerick Reporter as "the patriotic pastor of Kilkee".¹⁶ And in this he had the staunch support of his parishioners.

2. Poor Law Politics

Fr. Comyn's reaction to the Poor Law legislation of 1838 was a very critical one and he made no attempt to conceal his views. In FitzPatrick's Life of Charles Lever an unnamed clergyman who officiated in Kilkee is quoted in this respect:¹⁷

He [Fr. Comyn] appeared to entertain some crotchety notions on the working of the poor laws. His idea was that the more paupers were sent to the workhouse the more speedy would be the downfall of landlords, and, rather than pay his share of the rates, he allowed his kitchen-full of bacon to be auctioned away.

This may or may not be a correct interpretation of Fr. Comyn's actions. However, it is certain that he entertained a basic objection to the poor law. He felt that such a system of aid to the destitute was too negative, "such drivelling legislation"¹⁸ as he described it, and that it would solve no problems. Unless positive measures to provide employment were taken, then the mass of the

people would have their lot in no way improved. His position is perhaps best summed up in a resolution passed at a meeting in Kilkee in January 1842 at which he was the guiding figure:¹⁹

That it is the deliberate conviction of this meeting, that the newly introduced system of Poor Laws into this country, unaccompanied by employment, will, before long, become the fruitful source of increased misery and suffering, and that a benign and paternal Government is bound, in mercy, to an industrious, deserving yet long suffering people, as well as to the Proprietary of the country, who will, in their turn, become the victims of a grinding and almost profitless taxation, to take into their serious consideration the suggestions conveyed in our petition.

Within eight years the truth of these assertions was to be seen.

Despite Fr. Comyn's dissatisfaction with the poor law he took a big interest in the election of Guardians who would be in charge of the workhouse and general arrangements regarding rates etc., in Kilrush Union. Kilfearagh parish returned three members and before the first election took place in late August 1839 Fr. Comyn gave his support to certain candidates, who were duly elected. After the results were announced it was alleged that the voters had been intimidated by their parish priest who, it was said, denounced from the altar all who should vote for the candidates he did not favour. The complaint was also made that he had a number of helpers, whom he called his

"bodyguard", who followed the person distributing the voting papers and declared that those who voted for the people not favoured by Fr. Comyn could never expect salvation. Fr. Comyn strongly denied these allegations of undue influence and maintained that the purpose of the "bodyguard" was to prevent intimidation.²⁰ No further action was taken by the civil authorities on the matter. There can be little doubt, however, that Fr. Comyn had a strong influence on the outcome of the election. Commenting on the affair the nationally minded Limerick Reporter said:²¹ "We candidly confess, we like Mr. Comyn. We think Ireland wants men of his kind." The Clare Journal was less favourable when describing his candidates:²²

Mr. Comyn will not allow any man ~~to~~ who dees not wear a frize coat to be appointed a guardian, and every man who shall be appointed must be a smoker, and take his dudeen into the boardroom to smoke in the presence of the Shoneen ex officio guardians.

Two years later in connection with another election of Guardians Rev. John O'Brien, C.C., attacked from the altar some Protestant landowners in the district. He was reported by them to his bishop, Dr. Kennedy, and was suspended from his priestly duties. Later in the year the suspension was removed and Fr. O'Brien was appointed curate at Cloughjordan.²³ However, he seems to have got into trouble with his bishop again²⁴ and in June 1844 he left the Catholic Church and read his recantation in Kilrush Protestant Church. Later he advanced scriptural reasons for his change.²⁵ What effect this had on the people of Alfearagh parish we do not know.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LANGUAGE and EDUCATION1. Language

After her visit to Kilkee in 1835 Miss Knott wrote that few people in the area spoke English,¹ a remark which would apply not so much to Kilkee itself as to the rural part of the parish. Obviously at this stage the Irish language was still holding its own up to a point, despite the fact that in 1820 Rev. Mr. Whitty, Protestant Rector of Kilrush, Kilfearagh, etc., was of the opinion that the use of Irish was confined to old persons in retired places.² However, even if Irish was still by far the more widely used language in 1835 -- and all the evidence points to this -- there were several influences making for a decline. In 1808 Dutton, in his Survey of Clare, had written:³ "No Irish is spoken in any of the schools, and the peasantry are anxious to send their children to them for the purpose of learning English." This was certainly an exaggeration but it also had a strong element of truth. When Miss Knott visited the schools of Kilkee she found that Irish was regularly taught in only one out of the six. In another it was taught "from time to time".⁴ The town of Kilkee, too, which brought many solely English-speaking visitors to West Clare, must have had an anglicizing influence. It has been said that Eugene O'Curry learned his English by travelling into Kilkee during the summertime in order to hear the language spoken.⁵

In 1845, with the opening of a National School in Kilkee, the cause of English got a further impetus as the entire classwork in all such schools was conducted in English -- even in areas where Irish was the ordinary

language of the people. It was only late in the 19th century that the teaching of Irish as a subject got any recognition. However, in Kilkee, as elsewhere, the National School was not the cause of the decline of Irish. It only served to accelerate a process which was taking place in any event and which was to be greatly speeded up by the Famine. In 1844, when William Smith O'Brien announced that he was about to commence the study of Irish, the Limerick Chronicle⁶ commented:

It is a remarkable fact that within the last ten years no living language in Europe has progressed faster to decay. In twenty years to come, it is believed that not one hundred persons in Ireland will be capable of speaking it fluently -- such is the rapid and universal spread of intelligence by means of the English language, through every corner of Ireland at the present day.

The prophecy was not, as we know, altogether correct, but it did indicate the general trend.

In this rather generally gloomy picture for the Irish language there were also some bright spots. Hogan's Directory of Kilkee (issued in 1842) lists Cornelius O'Mealy of Temperance Road as conducting an Irish Academy,⁷ perhaps the same school visited by Miss Knott. O'Mealy was quite a versatile person. Although the area was no longer the great poetic centre it had been when the McDonnells were resident in Kilkee in the 18th century, the tradition of learning still lingered on, producing its greatest figure in Eugene O'Curry who was born at Doonaha, just a few miles outside the boundary of Kilfearagh parish. O'Mealy played a more humble role. As well as teaching

Irish in his school, he was also a transcriber of manuscripts and two examples of his work are preserved in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth (under the name Conchubhar Ó Maille). Apart from O'Mealy, there were undoubtedly other scribes at work in the parish during this period. The Manuscript Sources for a History of Irish Civilization lists a work on 18th century Munster poetry made by Seamus Best of Kilkee in 1827 and another collection of poetry, transcribed by Mártan Ó Griobhtha about 1864.⁸ As well as playing the part of teacher and scribe we also find Cornelius O'Mealy acting as clerk of the Kilkee Petty Sessions.⁹ It is a safe assumption that he got this position due to his proficiency in the Irish language, as undoubtedly the evidence of many, if not most, witnesses would have to be translated from Irish to English for the magistrates. And in 1847 he held the position of secretary of the Kilkee Famine Relief Committee.¹⁰

Apart from O'Mealy and the scribes there were others, too, who had a strong appreciation of the value of the Irish language. One old man, when accosted by a group of visitors in 1840, spoke with rapture of the verses of Sheanne (sic) and displayed the deepest compassion for his hearers who were unable to understand and enjoy its beauty. "If you could read Irish and understand its power and richness," he told them, "you would never look at a word of your Sassenach tongue. Irish is to English what yonder Atlantic is to a freshwater lake." The visitors then promised him some little books in Irish such as the Negro Servant and Dairyman's Daughter and were delighted at his gratitude for their generosity, little realizing

how utterly unfit such Victorian moral tales were for a man who had stories of Fionn and Oisín running through his head.¹¹

Fr. Comyn, too, could scarcely be blamed for the general lack of appreciation for Irish. When he died in 1854 the Limerick and Clare Examiner wrote in his obituary notice:¹²

His exertions as a priest were indefatigable; and his mastery of the Irish language rendered his ministrations, for the past thirty years and upwards, among a people purely Irish, most effective.

His successor, Fr. Timothy Breen was equally proficient in the language and taught it to the school children in Kilkee.¹³

Despite the efforts of these men and others, particularly Fr. Meehan of Carrigaholt, when the census was taken in 1871 there were only 624 people in the barony of Moyarta who spoke no English -- out of a total population of 21,833. And by this time also, 9,827 people, or nearly 50%, spoke no Irish.^{13a}

2. Education

Before the spread of National Schools throughout the country after 1831, the vast majority of children who received education got it in the pay schools. In Kilfearagh parish the first National School to be opened was that in Kilkee town in 1845. For the educational situation in the years before that we can get a fairly good picture from a survey made in 1824. In that year there were seven pay schools in the parish attended by 428 Catholics and 3 Protestants.¹⁴ Three of these schools were in good

thatched houses, three in mud cabins (one of which was described as a wretched hovel), and one in a farmer's outhouse.¹⁵ Undoubtedly the Kilfearagh pay schools were typical of their kind. Some such schools provided education of a high standard but the vast majority of them throughout Ireland were well described by J.K.L. when he wrote:¹⁶

In the counties of Carlow, Kildare and the Queen's County very nearly all the Roman Catholic children attend school during the summer and autumn, are taught reading, writing and arithmetic, but their masters, in many instances, are extremely ignorant, their schoolhouses are mere huts, where the children are piled on each other, and the sexes promiscuously jumbled together.... In the winter months the children do not attend, generally for want of clothing, fire and a dry schoolhouse.

Even if the teachers were good the obstacles they had to cope with were immense. Michael Meere, for example, in Tarmon West (Kilfearagh parish) had 56 pupils of varying ages in a mud cabin -- almost certainly without any common class books.¹⁷ Yet, despite the great difficulties associated with education the people sought it eagerly for their children. Very early in the 19th century, in his Survey of Clare, Hely Dutton noted that every man who could spare the money gave his children such education as was available.¹⁸ And this was still true twenty and thirty years later.

In 1835 Miss Knott noted that there were six schools in Kilkee. One of these was a classical school with about ten to fifteen boys.¹⁹ This was probably conducted by

Michael Keavy of Temperance Road who is mentioned in Hogan's guide as a classical teacher.²⁰ In common with the remainder of the Kilkee schools it suffered from lack of books.

However, lack of books was not the only drawback. In another school, conducted by an aged man, the writing desks were drawn up to the ceiling as the children had no paper since the previous Easter. The thirty pupils present had eight spelling books and a few primers and catechisms between them. While these were being used by some of the children, the others had to sit with their hands placed before them.²¹ And this, indeed, was typical of this kind of school. There were no common textbooks and there was very little systematic group teaching.

Probably the biggest school was the first one visited by Miss Knott, which had a hundred pupils crowded in to a room 14 x 13½ feet. A door at either side had to be kept open to allow the children to breathe. "We could hardly expect to find much system in so crowded a place, but saw some tolerably good specimens of writing."²²

We have no detailed evidence of the timetable followed in any of these schools. However, when Miss Knott and her companions called to one of them the children had not yet "returned from their breakfast". This seems to indicate that instruction began quite early in the morning and it was only after having completed their morning lessons that the pupils had their first meal of the day.²³

Shortly after Miss Knott's visit to the town funds began to be collected for the erection of a Protestant school. Little calico bags, which were known ~~w~~ as "Penny Subscription Purses", were distributed and the following lines were pasted on them:²⁴

Kind friend, this tiny purse was made
That we might get a little aid
To build a school-house at Kilkee.
For many little ones like me.

One penny is the sum we crave
And they will bless the hand that gave
Twill show thou lov'st the saviour's laws
And help his great and glorious cause.

The total collection amounted to £278. This included a £10 subscription from the Dowager Queen Adelaide and the proceeds of a bazaar.²⁵ The school was built near the site later chosen for the new church -- at the Carrigaholt Road corner.

The census of 1841 showed that the work of the pay schools was affecting only a small proportion of the population. At that time there were 1276 people aged 5 and over in Kilkee. Of these 31% could read and write; a further 10% could read and 59% could neither read nor write. In the remainder of the parish there were 4,862 people aged 5 and over. Of these 13% could read and write; a further 8% could read, while over 30% could neither read nor write.²⁶ While proving a lack of formal education these figures are to some extent misleading. Most of the people spoke Irish and so could hardly be expected to be literate in English. Furthermore

although unable to read or write they were heirs to a rich oral tradition.

The big move towards literacy in English came with the setting up of the system of National Education by the Government in 1831. The system was non-denominational but provision was made for the giving of religious instruction. And it had the great advantage that the State undertook the greater part of the burden in building schools and providing teachers' salaries. Books, too, were provided at subsidized prices -- or even free on occasions. Better buildings, better equipment and more regular salaries for teachers all contributed to the gradual elimination of the pay schools as the National schools forged ahead.

In February 1839 Fr. Comyn applied for a grant towards building a National school in Kilkee, a petition which had the backing of local Protestants as well as Catholics. The school, to be built on ground acquired from the Marquis of Conyngham, would be under the direction of a committee of four, but Fr. Comyn would handle all correspondence with the National board. It was expected that about 600 children would attend and the hours of instruction would be from ten to four each day for six days of the week.²⁷ Sixteen months later, in June 1840, a grant of £149 was finally made -- but the size of school the Commissioners had in mind was for only 200 children. It would have two classrooms,²⁸ 30' x 20' each.

On being informed of the Commissioners' decision Fr. Comyn accepted the grant but stated that a school for 600 children was absolutely necessary. To this the Board replied that it did not wish to establish schools for more than 200. If there was not sufficient accommodation in one school, then Fr. Comyn should build a second.²⁹ In 1842 work on the building began.³⁰

The Board's grant represented two thirds of the estimated cost, leaving £74.10. to be collected locally -- not an insuperable burden considering that in his original application Fr. Comyn had stated that he could reckon on providing £100 out of local funds for the building.³¹

Originally it would appear that Fr. Comyn intended to follow the Board's specifications. But at some stage he changed his mind and the building which eventually emerged had two rooms, 60' \times 30' each³² and was capable of accommodating the 600 pupils envisaged by him. The inevitable result of this change was a financial problem. By March 1844 the school was virtually finished. It had an upper and a lower storey, the former of which had been completed but the latter still lacked a boarded floor. No desks had yet been purchased either.³³ Already the building had cost upwards of £600 -- more than triple the original estimate -- and funds had now run out. At this juncture Fr. Comyn applied for an increased grant. However, the only reply he got was one which stated that no increase could be given and that unless the school was ready for pupils by 1 October 1844 the original grant would be cancelled.³⁴

The threats of the Board did not daunt Fr. Comyn, who was also not helped by some trouble over the lease. But eventually he succeeded in getting an advance of £50³⁵ and this, combined with a personal contribution of his own,³⁶ was sufficient to enable enough progress to be made to allow the school to open in February 1845.

With the opening of the school nearly 700 children were enrolled.³⁷ However, this does not mean that even about 600 would be constantly present -- the average attendance at the time would scarcely be one third of the whole. Despite this low proportion there were still about 120 pupils present daily in each room -- one of which was reserved exclusively for boys and one for girls. Only two teachers were appointed to cope with these large numbers -- James Spelman (a trained teacher)³⁸ in the boys' school and Catherine Dalton³⁹ in the girls'. The National Board provided £15 for Spelman's annual salary and £8 for Miss Dalton's.⁴⁰ Additional payment would be got from pupil payments -- one penny each per week.⁴¹

CHAPTER EIGHT

RECREATION

Despite the rather grim living conditions of the people their lives were by no means joyless ones. As we shall see in the present chapter, they often gathered together for amusement, particularly in the summer months, and, in general, lived up to the reputation of the Irish as a lighthearted people.

1. Old Customs

Mason's Parochial Survey of 1816 mentions a number of old customs which brightened the lives of the people and all of which were probably still in vogue twenty years later. In fact most of them have survived to the present to a greater or lesser extent. On the first of April the people played tricks on one another to produce April fools. A month later, at the beginning of May, the Maybushes -- probably furze bushes in bloom -- were cut and erected before the doors of the cabins, decked with flowers. On 23 June, St. John's Eve, bonfires were lit and the young people danced around them. On Easter Sunday the end of Lent was celebrated with a breakfast of eggs, while everybody also ate meat on that day, -- one of the very few days in the year when it was eaten and an indication how greatly Easter was esteemed as a festival. Up to about 1827 a pattern was held on that day on Scattery Island, combining both penance and celebration.¹ Owing to the amount of whiskey consumed the pattern was terminated by the P.P. of Kilrush.²

These are at least some of the customs prevalent at the time but doubtless there were others as well, helping to produce the general image of the Irishman remarked on by Sir Walter Scott when, after a visit to the country, he wrote:³ "Their natural disposition is turned to gaiety and happiness."

2. Kilkee Races

Long before a single lodge had been built at Kilkee, races had been held on the sandhills. Not surprisingly, then, these races were kept up for the amusement of both visitors and the people of the surrounding countryside. Sometimes just a single race might be arranged for a particular day or, if the sponsors were more ambitious, something approximating to a regular race meeting. And these went on, sometimes weekly,⁴ right through the summer, attracting big crowds of spectators, both visitors and locals. The course by the edge of the sea was marked out by long poles from which coloured pennants fluttered in the breeze.⁵

One method of getting up a race was to arrange a challenge between two gentlemen, as was done for the visit of the Lord Lieutenant, the Marquis of Normanby, in 1838.⁶ Or a subscription might be taken up by some visitors to purchase a prize for a farmers' race -- a saddle or a bridle.⁷ Donkey races were also held, as many as fourteen donkeys taking part in one such contest in 1840.⁸ Canoe races, too, were frequently held, usually in conjunction with horse races.⁹

In 1842 a more ambitious type of race meeting was arranged -- to be run not on the strand ~~at~~ but at the rear of Atlantic Lodge on ground now covered, partly at least, by the golf course. This was to become an annual event, with occasional lapses. But it did not interfere with the more frequently held races on the strand.

On the occasion of the 1842 meeting there were five races on the card and this was fairly typical of the future pattern. Three races were held on the first day, the principal one being worth twenty sovereigns to the winner. Then, on the second day, there were two more races, neither very valuable.¹⁰ The wide advance publicity given to the races ensured a good attendance and the proprietors of the "Garryowen" steamer announced that it would leave Limerick at 6 a.m. on the opening day to allow the passengers to arrive in Kilkee long before the first race.¹¹

The crowds who thronged into Kilkee from the surrounding countryside came not just for the racing alone but also to enjoy the many other attractions offered. The course was lined by many tents and marquees offering all kinds of refreshments.¹² These probably included the vendor of Indian rock who also attended at the strand races, announcing to his listeners that his product was "composed partly of a rare and spontaneous essence, found in the farthest part of Mesopotamia, where the Tigris waters the plains with waves of liquid gold -- and partly of a honey distilled by a foreign bee, only to be found in one part of the deserts of Arabia." "Come and buy", he invited, "it will cure the collic (sic) and the cold,

and the rheumatics if you are old, it will make the old young, and the young happy; only one penny an ounce."¹³ Then there were the wheels of fortune and other similar games tempting onlookers to try to get rich quickly, and for the more sober there was the "temperance game". Twelve competitors each paid in a halfpenny and got a card. Whoever drew the best trump received a loaf of bread as prize.¹⁴

For the 1843 meeting a spacious platform was built near the winning post from which Mr. Vandeleur's band (from Kilrush) gave recitals. The crowd had gathered long before the first race. At one o'clock a trumpet was sounded to clear the course and soon the first contest was under way.¹⁵ A visitor to this meeting was highly impressed by the magnificent setting of the course, "A spectacle more glorious than all that Ascot, the Curragh, or Newmarket ever presented to its ardent votaries," was his description in a letter to the Limerick Chronicle.¹⁶

The days' sport usually did not conclude with the end of the racing. Other attractions were added, the most popular of which was "shawl dancing". Stewards were appointed, a ring was formed and the pipers and fiddlers played jigs, reels and hornpipes as the girls from Kilkee, Baltyrd and other nearby places competed against one another. The judgment was then given and the winners went away proudly wearing the shawls they had been awarded for their victory.¹⁷ Another form of entertainment was to release a pig with shaved and

lathered tail. Anyone who wished could compete for the prize, the victory going to whoever succeeded in halting the pig's progress by holding on to the tail.¹⁸

3. Hurling

On Sunday afternoons and evenings, when the weather was fine, the people of Kilkee and neighbourhood gathered on the green near the Catholic church or on the strand for dancing and hurling. These usually began at about 2.30 p.m. and continued until 7 o'clock. The hurling generally came to a close when Fr. Comyn arrived on the scene and took up the ball.¹⁹

The popularity of hurling in Kilkee during pre-famine times is of very great interest because in the 1880's, when the G.A.A. was founded in the parish, football was the dominant game and hurling had disappeared -- and had disappeared not only from Kilkee but from West Clare in general. In the 1830's and 1840's, however, the situation was very different and exhibition games were staged for the benefit of the visitors. The Limerick Chronicle of 25 August 1841. describes one such game for us:

There was a great match at goal, after divine service on Sunday, at the Strand, Kilkee, between the Bachelors and Benedicts, twenty at each side, distinguished by red and green caps. The contest was distinguished by the usual vigour, agility and good humour of the natives, and after a well fought battle, the Bachelors had the mortification of losing the ball, to the great amusement of the many visitors, who enjoyed the animating spectacle.

That this was a hurling match is clear from some other references and from a line of one of the songs composed by Paddy O'Neill, a local celebrity in the 30's and early 40's. The song also shows that such games, with the same distinguishing marks for the teams, were not unusual:²⁰

In the evening chaps, wid coloured caps, get up a
hurlin' match, sir.....

Another unusual feature of the Kilkee hurling was its attractive quality to the visitors. The usual reaction to hurling at the time was to ask for its abolition. In May 1840 the Limerick Reporter, in describing some injuries at a hurling match in the Limerick area, stated that "the practice of hurling is becoming very prevalent on Sunday evenings among the country people, a practice calculated to generate bad feeling, and at which very serious and sometimes fatal accidents occurred. Nor is it to be wondered at, that the like should occur, it being a complete desecration of the Sabbath..... It is, therefore, the bounden duty of the Catholic clergy and the law authorities to put a stop to them instantly. We rest satisfied that the exhortation and influence of the clergy will be exerted on this occasion, and we hope for the strenuous co-operation of the authorities to the same effect."²¹ Perhaps the reason why the games at Kilkee produced no serious rows or injuries was the absence of inter-parish rivalry.

4. Drinking and Temperance

In the early 19th century many writers commented on the prevalence of drunkenness in Ireland, particularly on such occasions as fairs and patterns. But when Miss Knott visited Kilkee in 1835 she came to a favourable conclusion regarding the practice of temperance there. About a month after her arrival she recorded that she had not yet seen anybody under the influence of drink. But she added: "We reside in a sheltered situation a little out of the town, and the busy season has not yet commenced.²² A month later, at the end of her stay, she could proudly state that her party had seen no woman under the influence of drink and only two men.²³ This did not mean, of course, that there was total abstinence. There were six licensed public houses in Kilkee.²⁴ But it did mean that there was little drunkenness. Some of Miss Knott's friends visited the cottage of one of the men seen drunk and read to him, his wife, family and a few neighbours some pamphlets on the bad effects of selling and drinking spirits. The reception they got was a friendly one and they were even invited back again to read on some other occasion. "There is reason to hope that the advice given on the occasion was not altogether without a good effect."²⁵

In 1835, as we have just seen, there were six licensed public-houses in Kilkee. It is also quite possible that there was an even greater number of unlicensed ones in the parish as illicit distillation was very common in the first half of the 19th century.²⁶

These shebeens were usually situated at the outskirts of towns and villages, often having signboards to entice in the weary traveller.²⁷ The "roadside alehouse" in a small cabin at the entrance to Kilkee from Carrigaholt, which is mentioned in Lever's Harry Lorrequer, may well have been one of them.²⁸ It is more than probable that poteen was made in the more remote parts of Kilfearagh parish during the 1830's and 40's. Constable John Mullarchy, who was stationed in Kilrush from about 1835 to 1849, informed the Committee on Illicit Distillation in 1854 that such activity was carried on in the vicinity of Kilrush.²⁹

In 1836 a Spirits Licence Act was passed which laid down severe penalties for poteen makers -- seemingly without ^much success as the ordinary police had very little power to proceed against those contravening the law in this matter. This act also enabled magistrates to close the drinking booths at fairs and markets at an early hour.³⁰ However, the outstanding factor in eradicating drunkenness and promoting temperance in the seven years or so before the Famine was the wonderfully successful campaign of Fr. Matthew. Long before he visited Kilkee in person his fame had preceded him and many of the local people went to hear him preach and take the pledge from him in places far afield. In July 1839 more than 200 people from Kilrush, Kilkee and other places in West Clare went to Limerick by the Garryowen and Dover Castle steamers, en route to visit Fr. Matthew in Cork.³¹ And caught up in the fever of the crusade, many came to the conclusion that temperance could be just as exciting as intemperance.

Later in 1839 Fr. Mathew came to Limerick and on the eve of his visit the Limerick Reporter commented:³²

"The people of Kilkee and Kilrush are preparing to pour in." On Sunday, 1 December, Fr. Mathew preached in St. Michael's Church and then, because of the huge crowds, went to the Courthouse to administer his pledge. He was unable to finish that day and again on the following day he was busy until 3 p.m. The crowds about him were so dense at this stage that he was unable to get out and an escort of Scots Guards had to be sent to release him. This they succeeded in doing with the active assistance of Fr. Comyn, P.P. of Kilkee, and Mr. M. O'Callaghan. Fr. Mathew, probably accompanied by Fr. Comyn, now went to the quay where there was a group of 700 men still on board the steamers by which they had arrived from Kilrush. These were dealt with there and then, without being allowed to disembark. It was felt that if they went ashore they would only add to the general confusion.³³

By mid 1840 negotiations were under way to bring Fr. Mathew to Kilkee to preach on behalf of the Church Fund and administer the pledge. Although it was originally hoped that he would be able to come in late August in fact he did not arrive until January 1841. Already it was reported that most of the people in the area were teetotallers³⁴ and a proof of this was seen when on St. Stephen's Day 1840 an immense crowd of the pledged from the united parishes of Kilfearagh and Killard assembled on the strand at Kilkee with their band "playing soul-stirring National airs." They then

proceeded to Fr. Comyn's house on the Carrigaholt road, where he addressed them along with his curate, Fr. O'Brien.³⁵ All this enthusiasm for temperance was scarcely much of a help to the distillery opened by Mr. J.W. Patterson in Kilrush in late 1839 and for which he brought over a distiller from the Scottish Highlands.³⁶ Within four and a half years we find him trying to dispose of it.³⁷

In January 1841 Fr. Mathew finally came to Kilkee. His chief purpose in coming was to preach a sermon, which would be the occasion for a collection for the new chapel. But he also administered the pledge to 5,000 people in the chapel after Mass.³⁸ Many of these were certainly from outside the parish and only a small proportion of them could have been able to find accommodation in the chapel during the Mass and Fr. Mathew's sermon. But after Mass they crowded in and, following his usual practice, after a few words of exhortation, Fr. Mathew probably asked them to kneel down and say with him the words of the pledge:³⁹

I promise, with the divine assistance, to abstain from all intoxicating liquors, except for medicinal or sacramental purposes, and to prevent as much as possible, by advice and example, intemperance in others.

After having taken the pledge each person was usually given a formal certificate of enrolment and a Temperance Medal but, most likely, this was not done there and then in Kilkee Chapel.

The effects of Fr. Matthew's crusade did not prove lasting but he did succeed in preparing the way for the orderly conduct of great masses of people at O'Connell's monster rallies in Clare and elsewhere during 1843.

5. Faction Fights

It may seem rather strange at first sight to include faction fighting in a chapter entitled "Recreation" but, in the words of Kevin Danaher, "faction fighting was nothing more than a crude and dangerous form of sport".⁴⁰ in which the number of people killed and injured was by no means very great. The great faction fights usually took place on the occasion of fairs -- in West Clare at Ballykett, Kilmurry and Kilmacduane,⁴¹ where pitched battles were fought. No fairs were held in Kilfearagh parish and it is probably for this reason that we find no mention of faction fights over a long period. However, for some reason which is not clear, the previous quiet was broken just on the eve of the Famine and for a short time Kilkee heard the shouts of the rival Kean and Collins factions.

The first gathering mentioned in the newspapers occurred on a Sunday in late August 1845. But on this occasion the ringleaders were arrested and placed in the lock-up before they had got down to business -- to the great relief of the visitors.⁴² On the following Sunday about a hundred police were drafted into the town to preserve the peace. All recreation centres were closed and the sale of intoxicating drink was forbidden. As expected, the two factions assembled their forces



from the surrounding countryside and prepared to do battle once again. However, through the exertions of Fr. Comyn and others the crowds were eventually persuaded to disperse without a conflict.⁴³

On the last Sunday of the old year a woman had an arm broken in a clash -- for the continuation of which the factions gathered again on New Year's Day. When Jonas Studdert realized what was about to happen he sent to Kilrush for reinforcements and very soon forty police arrived in Kilkee along with a detachment of military "all furnished with a full compliment (sic) of ball cartridges." Faced with such a display of force the prospective combatants had no option but to withdraw.⁴¹

During the winter several of the leaders were fined and imprisoned.⁴⁵ Despite this, the following summer and autumn saw the factions meet again for what were to prove to be their last clashes. In early October 1846
 "A Resident" wrote to the Limerick Reporter:⁴⁶

During the past fortnight I have witnessed with much regret several recurrences of the old faction fight system, that has so often disturbed this peaceful locality during the past winter. Day after day, particularly on an occasion of any public amusement, the visitors sojourning at this watering place are startled by the shouts of country people parading the streets, eager to fight, and evincing a disposition that was every moment liable to be convulsed by the slightest opposition from the other party. Soon after this the faction fighting ceased. This was probably due not to any efforts of the police but to the general paralysis which overcame the people with the progressive spread of famine.

CHAPTER NINEHOLIDAY RESORT (1)

By the mid 1830's Kilkee was regarded as one of the most fashionable seaside resorts in Ireland. The majority of the visitors came from Limerick and surrounding areas, though many also arrived from much farther afield. For the most part they belonged to the upper middle class but they also included members of the nobility. In the first week of August 1843, for example, the arrivals included Lady Anna Maria Monsell, Lady Franklin, the Hon. Wyndham Quin etc., while in the same week the Earl and Countess of Dunraven left for home.¹ At the other end of the scale, quite a large number of the poor and destitute also came to the town, seeking health or alms or both. In this and in the next chapter we will try to build up a picture of Kilkee, the holiday resort -- How did the visitors get to Kilkee? How were they accommodated? How did they spend their time? etc.

1. Transport

Most visitors came to Kilkee by steamer and jaunting car as the road from Ennis was not very good and, in any case, the road journey would take much longer than the trip down the River Shannon. Steam transport between Limerick and Kilrush was provided by paddle steamers belonging to the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company. In 1834 this service was provided by the Clarence which at the end of that year was replaced by the Garryowen. The Garryowen, a boat 125 feet long with 90 h.p. engines, was built in Liverpool expressly for use on the Lower Shannon.² For the next few years it was to be the chief link between Limerick and Kilrush,

being assisted in the summer season by the Clarence
or Kingstown.³

The passengers journeying by the Garryowen could while away the journey by listening to Paddy O'Neill, as he either sang or played on his fiddle or bagpipes. Many of the songs were of his own composition, including one in praise of the boat:⁴

Oh, Garryowen is no more a wrack;
Whoever says she is, is a noted ass;
She's an iron boat that flies like shot
Against the strongest storm. (sic)

As early as 1834 dissatisfaction with the service being provided gave rise to efforts to provide an alternative one.⁵ However, these did not achieve success until late 1838 when the Dover Castle was put on the river in competition to the Garryowen.⁶ In 1839 -40 the competition between the steamers of the rival companies was intense and fares dropped to a very low level. By August 1839 the deck fare on the Dover Castle was only 6d., while the cabin fare was 1/-.⁷ The scene at the pier in Kilrush as two of the competing boats prepared to sail for Limerick has been vividly described for us by a traveller at the time:⁸

Nothing could surpass the bustle and confusion when we reached the pier at Kilrush, where the two rival steamers, the Garryowen and Dover Castle (between which there is at this moment a fierce competition), were drawn up and smoking alongside of each other. Each jaunting car as it descended the hill bearing its freight towards the pier, was eagerly beset by the emissaries of each vessel, and the occupants

severally accosted with "Are you for the Garryowen?" "Are you for the Dover?" the questioner departing in triumph or crestfallen according to the reply given. Our party were for the Garryowen, and as it lay the farthest from the quay, we had to cross the Dover Castle to reach it. When we had safely overstepped and cleared our way through all obstacles -- no easy task -- we were able to look about at the scene of confusion on the pier. Jaunting cars were coming full gallop along the quay crowded with eager-looking passengers fearful of being late; men, women and children pushing and jostling each other on the pier, some brought there by business, others attracted by curiosity; goods of every sort piled up..... pigs yelling as only pigs can yell; the creaking crane surging backwards and forwards, with its weighty cargo -- a huge barrel, a fat pig slung by the middle or a bag of oats or potatoes; and loud above all the din, the unearthly bellowings and hissings of the steam engine.

Another group who added to the confusion were the fruit-women who went aboard the vessels with their merchandise, trying to make sales to passengers before their departure.

As well as cutting fares the owners of the Dover Castle also made another innovation, Sunday excursions between Limerick and Kilrush. And, doubtless, many of these day trippers went on to make a brief visit to Kilkee. Such activity on Sunday seemed almost blasphemous to some. After seeing an advertisement a writer to the editor of the

Limerick Chronicle commented:¹⁰

It occurs to me, should I listen to the Syren suggestions of the placard, I incur a fearful risk. Providence may see good to blast all my pleasures, by causing the boiler of the steam-vessel, on which I purpose to embark this day for a trip of pleasure, to burst.

Many others would have been deterred by the rowdy conduct on the return trip of those who had spent their day visiting public-houses.¹¹ And quite a number of them would have been the mid nineteenth century equivalent of teddy boys, "grand shop-boys from the city, swaggerin' about Kilrush, lock arms, an' sportin' chains, an' canes, an' bushy hair, an' talkin' inglifed."¹²

The Sunday excursions were scarcely very successful. However, if the Dover Castle could make the trip on the river in a shorter time than the Garryowen then, it was felt, she would gain much of the traffic. In early June 1839 a race was arranged between Kilrush and Limerick and at 7.50 a.m. on Wednesday 5 June the two boats sailed out of Kilrush together, watched by a huge crowd of people. The Dover Castle sailed direct while the Garryowen made her usual stops at Tarbert, Foynes and Glin. The result was a tremendous victory for the Garryowen --- finishing in 3 hours 45 minutes, 36 minutes in front of her rival -- despite stops.¹³

In a further attempt to gain the public's support the proprietors of the Dover Castle announced that it would make the Limerick-Kilrush journey direct on alternate days.¹⁴ But all this was to no avail and during August the

boat was withdrawn from service because of insufficient support. In their public declaration to this effect the owners did not mince their words:¹⁵

The Directors of the Limerick Steam Co.....find there is a general feeling (on what principle they know not), to support a strict monopoly, with the consequent attendants, high fares and little civility.

However, the withdrawal proved to be merely a tactical one. Perhaps the company directors hoped that the fares for the Garryowen and Kingstown would be raised when opposition ceased. At any rate, after some improvements had been made to its paddles the Dover Castle was back in action before mid September, making the run to Kilrush in 3 hours 27 minutes. It was now alleged that the Dover Castle was being sailed in a dangerous manner and that but for the presence of mind of the captains of the Garryowen and Kingstown steamers, collisions would have taken place.¹⁶ The agents of the Dover Castle also made their counter charges. When the Garryowen passed the Dover Castle near Tarbert "the conduct of the Kilrush agent, captain and crew of the Garryowen was most indecent and insulting, jumping on the paddle-box, shouting and hallooang, and firing cannon in triumph."¹⁷ Despite the improvements the Garryowen was still faster than the Dover Castle.

During the summer of 1840 the competition continued and fares came tumbling down still further -- each side offering the same rates. The cabin fare was still 1/- but the deck fare was a mere 3d.¹⁸ And these wonderfully cheap fares brought a boom to Kilkee, with visitors crowding

in quite early in the summer.¹⁹ One week-end in August brought such huge crowds that hundreds could find no accommodation. The police barracks was opened to provide shelter for many, while those who had to be turned away managed as best they could under the stars,²⁰

In April 1841 the Dover Castle finally admitted defeat and the boat was sold to its rival, the City of Dublin Company. A new steamer to replace the Kingstown was also obtained shortly afterwards, the Erin go Bragh -- a boat of 330 tons, 134 feet in length, 26 in breadth, with engines of 100 horse power.²¹ However, only two of the boats were used at any one time -- making a sailing each day in opposite directions in summer, sometimes bringing more than 200 passengers and freight.²² With the ending of competition, too, fares immediately shot up and in May 1841 they were 2/6 for cabin and 1/3 for dock passengers.²³

The first part of the journey to Kilkee ended at Kilrush or, more precisely, at Cappa, just outside the town. However, in 1838, when the Lord Lieutenant, the Marquis of Normanby, visited Kilkee a rather unusual proposal was put to him -- that Kilkee would be benefited by the building of a canal, a little more than a mile in length, between the town and the Shannon Estuary. If this were done people and goods could be brought directly from Limerick to Kilkee when the tide in the river was favourable.²⁴ Three and a half years later this idea was still being considered and a resolution concerning it was among those adopted at the meeting in January 1842 to

which we have referred earlier. But no success was ever achieved.

The final eight miles to Kilkee had to be travelled by road -- in the 1830's by open jaunting car. Later, however, larger vehicles were put on the road. The jaunting-car rates were 1/- per person or 4/- per car. But when the competing steamers were providing almost free river travel in the summer of 1840 the car drivers shoved up their fares to 6/-, 10/- or even 15/- per car, to the loud protests of visitors.²⁵ The most well known of these car drivers was John McInerney or Shawn Bawn who frequently wrote letters to the newspapers and styled himself as "Proprietor an' dhriver ov the easiest an' most commodious car, an' the kindest an' most indefatigable horse in all Kilkee."²⁶

The competition between the jaunting-car drivers ~~an~~ was razor-sharp and as soon as the steamer berthed at Cappa they jumped aboard in search of passengers.²⁷ It was probably the same spirit of competition which led to some furious driving on the Kilrush - Kilkee road, sometimes with one car forcing another off the road.²⁸

In 1840, as we have seen, the car drivers shoved up their prices. However, they may have been trying to make as much as they could before being put out of business, because in May 1840 it was reported that Mr. Williams of the City of Dublin Steam Company was contemplating the laying down of a railway between Kilrush and Kilkee. The expense was calculated at £400 - £500 per mile so that a total of about £3,000 would be quite sufficient.²⁹

But a change of mind soon took place. Steam would be too expensive. Instead, a tram^{way} would be laid down and a horse on this tramway could move at the rate of 11 m.p.h. carrying four tons weight. In this way the journey could be made in half an hour.³⁰ This was the plan -- but like many other projects for railways between Kilkee and Kilrush in later years it never got any further.

1845 was the year of the "railway mania" when, as a contemporary later wrote, "lines both possible and impracticable were projected, in every conceivable quarter throughout both countries."³¹ Not surprisingly, then, the question of a line between Kilkee and Kilrush was seriously discussed once again and it was hoped also, by building a railway embankment, to reclaim about a thousand acres in Poulnasherry Bay. Passenger traffic, it was estimated, would be 35,000 per annum.³² Colonel Vandeleur of Kilrush declared his willingness to contribute a generous sum towards the cost and in mid August three engineers arrived from Dublin to survey the route from Kilrush to Kilkee.³³ In mid October the Limerick Reporter carried a half page prospectus for the "Kilrush, Kilkee, Dublin and Belfast Junction Railway with power to extend the line as far as Ennistymon."³⁴ But two months later it announced with regret that the plans of this railway had not yet been lodged with the Board of Trade.³⁵ The high hopes of summer and early autumn were clearly coming to nought.

2. Accommodation

Most of those who came to Kilkee on their holidays came in family groups and generally stayed for at least a month. Indeed, the town's prosperity relied heavily on those families who came year after year -- mostly from Limerick. In early July or August they boarded the steamer in Limerick bringing their own servants and perhaps a horse and carriage as well.³⁶ In a sense it was a transplanting of a little Limerick in Kilkee.

As the families stayed in lodges the demand for hotel accommodation was not very great. Nevertheless, in the mid thirties there were three hotels in the town, each of which charged 25/- per week.³⁷ The first of these, originally a low thatched house, had been opened about 1820 by Catty Fitzgerald and for forty years, until her retirement, she continued to cater for her clients simply but effectively.³⁸ This hotel was situated on Francis Street, and nearby on the same street, was the Conyngham Arms. The third hotel, owned by Mrs. Shannon, was originally in the same area but in the early 1840's she moved to the West End and renamed her hotel The West End Hotel. Mrs. Shannon was also proprietress of the local Post and Stamp Office.³⁹ Early summer 1843 saw the opening of Moore's Hotel (on the site of the present Hydro Hotel) and this was henceforth regarded as the premier hotel in the resort.⁴⁰

As we have seen, it was not in the hotels but in the lodges that most people stayed. In the spring the local people could be seen preparing busily for the approaching season, giving particular attention to the outward

appearance of their lodges. As a result whitewash brushes were in great demand at the time.⁴¹ In the immediate pre-Famine days the number of available lodges was rapidly increasing -- with plenty of incentives from those who were anxious to let sites. In 1841 John MacDonnell was offering sites in the West End on leases for ever, and including in the bargain free stone from the nearby quarry.⁴² In February 1844 twenty lodges were in course of erection and were expected to be completed for the coming season, while, a year later, one hundred men were employed at the quarry raising stones for more new lodges.⁴³

August 1845 saw the current Marquess Conyngham pay his first visit to his estates in West Clare and he was given an enthusiastic reception in Kilkee. A large bonfire was lighted in front of his hotel and he was greeted by a cheering crowd. Then, in an interview with Fr. Comyn, he promised to cherish Kilkee's future interests.⁴⁴ This promise seemed to be bearing fruit when, a month later, it was reported that he had requested a plan and estimate for a terrace in front of the bay and was also contemplating the erection of a range of villas on the eastern side of the bay.⁴⁵ At this same time Mr. Hamilton, agent to John MacDonnell, was employing about a hundred men in constructing a road from the West End quarry to Intrinsic Bay.⁴⁶

The bigger lodges, which were described as fit for noblemen and their families, cost ^oan average £15 - £20 per month, though the very best, such as Rockmount House, could command 100 guineas for the season (about three months).⁴⁷

Average size lodges cost £6 - £8 per month and the smaller ones £3 - £4. These prices included milk, potatoes and turf.⁴⁸ There might also be some fringe attractions as can be seen from the following advertisement:⁴⁹

Sea Bathing, Kilkee

Merton Lodge

Will be let for two or three months, or for the season. The whole was papered, painted and enlarged last year, and contains two sitting rooms, six best Bed Rooms, three servants' do., Kitchen, Larder, Scullery, etc. A Lock-up Yard encloses a Coach House, Stable and other Offices. The Tenant will be supplied with as much turf as he requires, the use of a Bathing Box and Slipper Bath. He can also have a well enclosed Field for a Milch Cow or Horse. The House, which is on the sheltered side of the Bay, stands in the midst of some neatly kept Pleasure Ground.

Such advertisements by individual lodge owners were not uncommon. Occasionally too they banded together to proclaim the attractions of Kilkee, probably hoping to entice people away from the other rival resorts on the Clare coast, Miltown and Lahinch.⁵⁰ The advertisements of their times show that the lodge owners in general possessed good business sense in attracting customers. And when a booking was made they might require a deposit to ensure that there were no frivolous cancellations.⁵¹

3. Shopping and Postal Facilities

As the number of lodges grew so did the trade of the town and in the decade before the Famine many new businesses were opened. In 1838 Mr. J. Ely of Limerick established a fancy bazaar in which clocks of all kinds, musical boxes, Dresden china, London jewellery etc., were available. And in an advertisement which now reads rather quaintly he stated:⁵²

The splendid stock of elegant Articles is such as cannot fail to gratify the taste of the most curious; but puffing not being the custom of the proprietor, he will feel obliged by an early visit - ocular (sic) demonstration being the best proof.

Mr. Ely was only one of a number of Limerick businessmen who opened branches in Kilkee,⁵³ while home investment was not lacking either. In 1844 Hugh Hogan opened a shop near his Baths "for the sale of Groceries, Wine, Spirits and Provisions in General." In it one could obtain French Brandy, Guinness' XX Porter, Lemonade, best Havana cigars, Bacon, Flour, etc.⁵⁴ Another shop, described for us by a visitor in 1840, was much less elegant but providing almost everything one could name. It formed part of a one-roomed house, one end of which contained a counter and some shelves. On these shelves there were "muslins, ribbons, tapes, pins, laces, mixed up with bread, bacon, soup, meal, lard, dried fish, china jugs, mugs and plates, tatter, ink, starch, candles, salt herrings, eggs, blacking etc."⁵⁵ For some visitors a visit to a shop such as this was an event to be remembered because of its quaintness.

All in all, as we have seen in describing Kilkee in 1841, the town was very well provided for as regards shops. In fact, in some respects it must have been unique. In 1842 we are told that it contained twelve baking establishments. This number may seem very high but it is rather moderate when contrasted with the town's eighteen butchers⁵⁶ -- and the trade of all of these must have been done almost entirely with the visitors. Many, if not most, probably closed in winter. Miss Knott noticed a rather unusual practice of some of the local butchers in trying to sell their meat. On the day before a cow was killed it was driven from house to house to give the people a chance of admiring it and informing the owner which part they wished to be supplied with.⁵⁷

Despite increasing business local traders had to cope with one major obstacle. Many families were inclined to bring their own provisions with them from Limerick. As a result, we find advertisements stressing the point that the quality of goods obtainable in Kilkee was just as good as anywhere else and that they were as cheap as in Limerick. In fact, as Pat Kean pointed out, the person who bought in Kilkee saved himself the cost of freight and risk of damage.⁵⁸

The local post office was contained in Mrs. Shannon's premises. However, she was not to blame for the dissatisfaction which arose with the postal facilities in the early 1840's. In 1842, in order to achieve a saving of £10 per annum, the postal authorities decided that the post for Kilkee would no longer be carried by mail-car from Kilrush but would be brought by a boy on foot,⁵⁹

a little boy at that, as the Limerick Reporter pointed
 out.⁶⁰ The journey took him three hours.⁶¹ The
Limerick Chronicle described the change as "discreditable"
 to the authorities and remarked that the mail for Kilkee
 averaged five hundred letters per day in summer.⁶² In
 1843 the people of Kilkee memorialled the Postmaster
 General to speed up the delivery⁶³ and two months later a
 reply was received stating that in future the mail would
 be conveyed to and from Kilrush by car.⁶⁴ A week later
 an official from the General Post Office arrived in Kilkee
 to make the necessary arrangements.⁶⁵

Another source of dissatisfaction was the method of
 distribution of the mail. Up to 1843 the people had to
 collect their own mail at the post office and this must
 sometimes led to quite a scramble as it was suggested
 that a few policemen might be present at the time of the
 mail's arrival to maintain order.⁶⁶ In the summer of 1843
 a postman, or letter-carrier as he was described, was
 attached to the post office. But here again there were snags.
 The mail did not arrive until the evening so that delivery
 did not commence until nearly eight o'clock. On one
 occasion, at least, the letter-carrier had not completed
 his rounds by midnight.⁶⁷

CHAPTER TENHOLIDAY RESORT (2)1. Recreational Facilities

The natural advantages of Kilkee were such that, granted fine weather, the holidaymaker could fill his day quite easily and enjoyably. Most of all he would probably want to bathe and already Kilkee enjoyed the reputation of providing the most convenient and safest bathing on the Clare coast and even much farther afield.¹ However, there were some difficulties. The men were accustomed to bathing without trunks, even on the strand, and many ladies felt that they could not stroll there while such bathing was taking place. A protest was made and, as a result, a meeting of magistrates, visitors and lodge owners was held in August 1833 and the following resolutions were adopted:²

Resolved:

That we have witnessed the disgraceful practice of bathing on the Strand at Kilkee at all hours of the day, to the great annoyance of Females, who are by such indecent exposures, prevented from exercising on the beach. That it is expedient that some measures should be adopted to prevent a recurrence of the practice; and, with this view, it is resolved that the strand shall be divided into three parts; that two sides thereof, to the right and left, shall be appropriated to the use of the Female Visitors for Bathing, and that the portion of the Strand, defined by posts in the centre, shall be for the use of the male part of the visitors, up to the hour of Ten o'clock in the morning of each day, but

that after that hour, no male persons shall be permitted to bathe on the strand. That we are determined by every means in our power to put an end to the shameful custom which prevails, of naked men riding horses through the water; and that the police shall receive instructions to seize all persons offending, in order that they may be prosecuted according to Law; and that all male persons bathing on the strand after the prescribed hour shall also be prosecuted.

After some years these regulations fell by the wayside to a greater or lesser extent and in 1843 they had to be renewed by the magistrates after some complaints had been received.³ In June 1845 we are told that the magistrates and police were now strictly enforcing the bathing regulations. No men or boys were allowed to bathe, presumably from the beach, between 10 and 4. However, between 4 and 5 an opportunity was given to the men -- but "not to exceed one hour."⁴ Soon afterwards the morning limit was set at 8 a.m.⁵

Any man, then, who wished to bathe after the morning deadline had to go to the Pollock Holes, the Churn,⁶ Carns' Hole⁷ or some other place off the strand. Quite a number of drownings occurred during these years⁸ and it was felt by some that the prohibition against bathing on the strand was the cause of several at least of these by compelling the men to go to bathe in places which were not particularly safe for the novice.⁹ Finally, in 1851, a concession was made allowing men to bathe from the strand 10 to 9 a.m.¹⁰

Apart from the presence of a few old invalid men who insisted on their rights, the ladies had the beach to themselves for the greater part of the day. However, they visited the sea, not for a swim but in order to take a refreshing bath. Possibly they would not have been able to swim because of cumbersome sea-wear. In performing their toilet at sea they were assisted by bathing women who also carried them out to a reasonable depth in their
 11
 *MS.

In 1838 Lady Chatterton visited Kilkee while gathering material for her book, Rambles in the South of Ireland, and was quite impressed by what she saw. The one defect was the difficulty experienced by ladies in bathing. As a result she provided at her own expense a large bathing box which could be towed out to sea by a horse, thereby allowing its occupant to wash in sea water in perfect safety attended by a bathing woman.¹² The entire operation was probably not very different from the following description of a lady bathing in an English resort, Broadstairs, at the turn of the present century:¹³

We undressed in the bathing machines. Then we were dragged out by the horses into fairly deep water so that we could descend the four or five steps well into the sea - for reasons of modesty. When we came into the water there was an old lady with a sunbonnet standing up in the water. She would take hold of any of the children and give them a good ducking beneath the water. She was known as the bathing-woman.

The bathing box presented by Lady Chatterton, which was called after its donor, became a prominent feature of the Kilkee scene. Photographs taken in the 1870's or 1880's

now one bathing box differing from all the others by reason of its very big wheels. Very probably this was Lady Chatterton. As can be seen from one of the advertisements which we have quoted earlier there were also other bathing boxes available (though only for undressing) which were painted a gay red.¹⁴

The bathing women in Kilkee, as in Broadstairs, were employed to dip small children -- by carrying them into the sea and then frequently immersing them completely in the water, with, as one could expect, resultant protests from the children concerned. Miss Knott interceded for one such victim -- a poor beggar boy who was being dipped "in a most unmerciful manner" while his "hardhearted" mother looked on. "When brought out of the water the poor creature was quite convulsed. People employed to dip children are not always aware of the injury they do by putting them repeatedly under the water without allowing them time to breathe between each immersion."¹⁵

If something more than mere bathing was required by the visitor who came to Kilkee for the sake of his health, then Mr. Hogan's Baths were available from 1840 on. And the choice facing the prospective customer was almost breath-taking -- "Warm, Cold, Russian, Shower, Steam, Hot Air, Sulphur, Iodine, Chlorine, Harrowgate, etc." The prices in 1841 ("considerably reduced this season") ranged from 6d. $\frac{1}{2}$ for a tepid or cold snower of seawater to 3/6 for a Harrowgate Hot Air or Vapour Bath. Mr. Hogan's own special recommendation for invalids was the Saline Vegetable Bath of which he himself was the

originator. Price -- 2/6.¹⁶

The Baths were open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., but, if that was not sufficient, Mr. Hggan advertised that a portable bath, with hot water and attendant, would be sent to any of the lodges at a quarter hour's notice. In fact, the proprietor's business capacity was such that little was left to be desired. The advertisement continued:¹⁷

The Ladies' and Gentlemen's Baths are in different wings of the building and have elegantly furnished reception rooms attached. Experienced Male and Female Attendants are engaged.

In 1843 a man named Captain Claridge was enjoying a very high reputation in Limerick and elsewhere as a hydropathist and under his aegis hydropathic societies were set up here and there throughout the country, including one in Limerick.¹⁸ His general line of treatment was to swathe the patient in a huge number of blankets to heat the body before taking a cold bath, by means of which, as he claimed, a cure was effected from rheumatism and similar complaints. In late June he visited Kilrush and Kilkee and was besieged by invalids anxious to try his treatment.¹⁹ All this provided Hugh Hogan with food for thought and before the end of September he was claiming that he had discovered how to cure rheumatism. And his method was much simpler than Claridge's. All the patient had to do was to take one of his hot air baths, transfer to his cold shower and after that wrap himself up for a time in the warm blankets which were provided. An advertisement in the newspapers also

included an affidavit from Mr. Thomas Hayes of Limerick declaring that this treatment had cured him from acute rheumatism.²⁰

Undoubtedly Hugh Hogan was Kilkee's most enterprising businessman. In 1842 he produced a guide-book for the town which contained a complete list of all the lodges together with the number of bedrooms etc., in each. To those who sent a Post Office Order for 3/6 the author promised to pencil in the rent of the lodges, with the quantity of potatoes, milk and turf supplied by each.²¹

Despite the fine service provided by Hogan's Baths not all who wanted to take a shower bath frequented them. Such a bath could be taken quite easily by getting someone to pour the water from a height over the head and shoulders. But this method could have its dangers. In September 1846, a young woman who was receiving such a shower bath on the rocks near the sea was suddenly swept out by a huge wave and drowned.²²

Apart from the person desiring a change of air and scenery many delicate people and invalids came to Kilkee in search of a cure. When Mrs. Shannon was advertising for her boarding house in 1831 she concluded as follows:²³

Her house being frequented by people seeking the benefit of their health only, the most perfect order and quietness may be depended on being observed.

Indeed, Kilkee's name was to a great extent founded on the improvement experienced by visitors who were in indifferent health. Some examples were even quoted of crippled people who had been able to lay aside their crutches after spending some time in Kilkee.²⁴ In fine weather the

Invalids were brought on couches to the strand in order to get the full benefit of the invigorating sea air, while some who were suffering from spinal complaints were laid on a broad board which was carried by two persons into the water where the invalids were gently dipped.²⁵ The town was also fortunate in possessing two spas within a mile's radius²⁶ and, at a time when spa water was very highly regarded, no doubt they attracted some visitors.

After a plunge into the sea on a fine day what was to be done next? Many people opted for an excursion or day's outing --- perhaps to Carrigaholt, the Bridges of Ross, Dunlickey, Baltard or even the Cliffs of Moher.²⁷ From 10 o'clock on, the cars would begin to stream out of Blikee in various directions, often travelling together in large groups with perhaps a piper to provide music.²⁸ For many the actual destination was to a large extent immaterial. There was the enjoyment of the sunshine, then a picnic by the cliffside for lunch and afterwards, if there was a group, music and dancing which might continue until dusk.²⁹ One aspect of the return journey, however, gave rise to some complaints. Quite frequently the car found its way barred by a string of worsted tied across the road, a device used by the people of the nearby house to stop its progress in order to obtain money from the visitors.³⁰

A trip in a canoe to explore the coast near the town was one possible alternative to an excursion and on fine days the boatmen were very busy. However, a correspondent of the Limerick and Clare Examiner in 1849 urged caution in making a decision: "I would strongly recommend parties visiting this bay to be cautious as to canoes, and select

all weather if they cannot be content with terra firma."³¹
 as we have seen these canoes were quite dangerous in heavy
 seas and many fishermen lost their lives on different
 occasions. The visitors seem to have fared much better
 and there is no record of any casualties.

Excursions and boating were for the finer days. But
 there were few days when it was not possible to walk as
 far as the Amphitheatre³² or Look Out and a stroll each
 day was a must. The author of Letters from the Coast
of Clare wrote:³³

The Amphitheatre is the grand rendezvous in this
 place. Everyone in Kilkee seems to think himself
 in duty bound to visit it once a day at least;
 you are always sure to meet all your friends either
 there, or else on the road to or from it.

During the summer of 1836 most strollers continued on
 past the Amphitheatre as far as Look Out Hill. In the
 little bay below this hill on the previous 30 January the
 "Intrinsic" of Liverpool had been wrecked in a fierce storm.
 All those aboard -- about fourteen people -- died in the
 disaster.³⁴ Part of the "Intrinsic's" cargo consisted
 of copper and steel and it was felt that it would be
 worthwhile to institute salvage operations for these.
 Accordingly, Mr. C.A. Deane, inventor of new diving equip-
 ment was engaged for the task. He arrived in Kilkee in
 May 1836 and within a few days had succeeded in locating
 what remained of the ship and cargo - in a ravine under
 twelve fathoms of water.³⁵ The place was marked with a
 buoy and then the slow and difficult task of salvage began.

In early June the body of one of the crew was taken from the ship³⁶ and then, on calm days, the iron and steel and other goods were gradually brought ashore.³⁷ During the summer the work went on and proved a big attraction to the visitors.³⁸ Among those who visited the scene of operations was Tom Steele, himself the author of a book on submarine operations and maker of a diving bell.³⁹ During his stay in Kilkee Steele made a brief descent in the diving suit.⁴⁰

When salvage operations ceased the Amphitheatre once again became the main meeting place for friends on the western side of the bay. However, it was also more than this. It was in a real sense an open-air concert hall in which the crowd sat on the terraces as they listened to some performer. On Sunday 12 July, 1840 a group of people gathered there to hear Mr. John Murray of Limerick play the cornepean.⁴¹ Two years later it was the venue for a concert given by the band of the Limerick Musical Academy.⁴² And in early September, 1843 "a spacious saloon" was fitted up there in which a number of musicians playing the harp, pipes, cornepean and violin provided entertainment. Refreshments were also available and the day was usually concluded with dancing to the accompaniment of the music.⁴³ Indeed, whatever defects Kilkee may have suffered from, shortage of music was not among them. Even when a group of people went out for a walk they might find themselves accompanied by one of the many itinerant fiddlers.⁴⁴

Some wanted more strenuous amusements and these more energetic ones could enjoy a ride on a horse or a donkey -- whether cantering across the strand or splashin

through the sea. "About twenty donkeys are always ready, booted and saddled for ladies, as well as gentlemen, at the rate of 4d per hour." However, it was the children who most enjoyed the novel experience of a ride across the strand on a donkey, under the careful supervision of the youthful hirer.⁴⁵ Apart from riding, the children enjoyed themselves on the strand in the usual manner of children of all times -- in the words of a contemporary describing them at play at Kilkee:⁴⁶ "Some running races on the smooth firm sands...and more amusing themselves with throwing sticks and pieces of oar-weed into the water for two fine dogs, who plunged barking into the waves."

For those who liked to take things in a more leisurely manner a visit to the reading room was in order, where the London, Dublin and provincial papers were available.⁴⁷ And there was ample opportunity, too, for a bit of leisurely fishing. Some gentlemen liked to spend their time scanning the horizon with their telescopes⁴⁸ in the hope of seeing a sail, either of a coaster or of a ship heading out into the Atlantic from the Shannon. Perhaps it was one of these who noticed the great sea serpent which was reported to have been seen sunning itself off the Clare coast near Kilkee in September 1850.⁴⁹

When dusk came it did not yet mark the end of the day. A letter-writer to the Limerick Standard in August, 1840 gave his version of the various amusements engaged in:⁵⁰

At night the real divarshin' comes on. Everything imaginable gattin' forward. Leshins o' punch, cards, pitch an' toss, -- dice or a divilment. God help the bathin' boxes about two in the mornin' sic

It was at this stage that the fiddlers really came into their own. Organized balls or dances do not appear to have been held very frequently, apart from one held in conjunction with the annual major race meeting.⁵¹

However, anyone could arrange to have a dance in a private lodge and these dancing parties were a regular feature of life in Kilkee during the summer. The first prerequisite was to secure the services of a musician. Pipers were not very plentiful and some families even brought their own pipers with them from Limerick.⁵² Fiddlers were more easily got though, on occasions, because of the large number of dances being held, a fiddler was known to play for two parties in adjoining lodges. When singing commenced in one he went out to the other and then returned when singing began there.⁵³

When a musician had been hired for the evening the host then took a stroll along the strand issuing invitations to those who were not already engaged elsewhere. These, in turn, returned the invitation later so that a regular round of dances was kept up.⁵⁴ The actual dances ranged from the traditional Irish jig to the latest fashion, in the 1840's. the polka.

Some preferred a game of cards to a dance -- and these sessions sometimes lasted until the early hours of the morning.⁵⁵ And there was also the occasional concert

when somebody like Mr. Gallagher, the ventriloquist,⁵⁶ or Mr. Gardiner, the comedian,⁵⁷ visited the town. Some more unusual performers, too, met with a good deal of success. Mr. Wilson, a phrenologist, was able to draw large crowds to listen to his lectures.⁵⁸ "Mr. Wilson examined the heads of many of his auditors, thereby affording them the most satisfactory test of the practical utility of the subject by exposing to view the hidden secrets of that wondrous prison house, the human brain."

Occasionally, though, the nocturnal amusements of some might not be quite as peaceful as this. In August 1840, a party of young men, on a visit to Kilkee, twisted the knockers from the doors of some houses in Marine Parade, "while the trembling females inside, awoke by the noise, every moment expected the housebreakers would burst in upon the sanctity of their quiet and peaceful asylum." After this they went on to wrench the doors off some of the bathing boxes on the strand. This seems to have been quite fashionable at the time because a fortnight later there was a similar occurrence at Salthill, only this time the bathing boxes were thrown into the sea.⁵⁹

2. Visitors and Natives

In so far as it is possible to ascertain it, the attitude of many of the well-to-do visitors to the less well-off natives of Kilkee was one of amused tolerance and condescension. In the early years of the nineteenth century Hely Dutton wrote that in Clare many pagan rites still remained, "and the poor ignorant native little

thinks, when he is dancing round his bonfire, or dressing his Maybush, that he is using the same ceremonies the worshippers of Baal did."⁶⁰ Traces of the same attitude but a greater willingness to acknowledge the people's good qualities are to be found in Miss Knott's work:⁶¹

The natives appear to have but little idea of the gradations of society; the simplicity of their manners, though not always convenient, is often amusing.....

The natives of Kilkee are, as it were, emerging from an uncultivated state, and but young in the arts of civilized life. We found them remarkably honest, sober, kindhearted, civil and benevolent; by no means deficient in intellectual endowments.

Other writers convey the impression of holding similar attitudes.

However, the politeness and civility of the natives to their visitors were without question, while their honesty was frequently remarked upon. During Terry Alt disturbances in 1831 the Limerick Evening Post and Clare Sentinel remarked that "as in the good olden times, the window requires no bar, and the door of the stranger may remain unlocked, it being the disposition and interest of the natives to be peaceable and happy."⁶² And Miss Knott commented on the fact that a heap of turf outside the door of her lodge remained untouched by any pilfering hand, while articles left on the strand were also quite safe -- at least until the influx of strange beggars began.⁶³

What effects had the visitors on the people of Kilkee and neighbourhood? One obvious one was the more rapid introduction of the English language. Gerald Griffin, in one of his stories, "Card Drawing" strongly suggested another -- that the people had become more mercenary. He wrote of the inhabitants of the extreme west of Clare:⁶⁴

They talk Irish - kill fish - go to sea in canoes - traffic in kind - eat potatoes and oaten bread - and exercise themselves in offices of kindness and hospitality towards strangers. This latter virtue has, however, in some parts of the region suffered injury from the efflux of bathers from the interior in the summer season, which taught them the use and convenience of ready money, in preference to their patriarchal modes of payment; and gave them, unfortunately, a more decided impression of its value than was consistent with the general character of Munster cottagers.

3. Conclusion

From what we have seen it is quite clear that a holiday in Kilkee in the 1830's and 1840's could be very enjoyable -- provided the weather obliged. And it was no worse than in any average summer at present, while there were the usual grumbles when the sun hid itself. Paddy O'Neill summed up the situation in a line of one of his songs:⁶⁵

Och! be the powers, in sunny hours (if they would only shine a bit).....

One final point, the length of the holiday season. About the beginning of June or a little earlier the first families arrived from Limerick and elsewhere but business did not really reach its peak until mid July. So far very much as in the 1960's. But in the 1830's and 40's the peak period continued until after the middle of September. In fact September was regarded as the best bathing month.⁶⁶ On 21 September, 1842, the Limerick Chronicle could report:

Kilkee continues nearly as full of company as at any period during the season, and lodges still in request.

Then, in the latter part of September business fell off rapidly. And in October the steamers on the Shannon reverted to their winter schedules, though some visitors still remained.

PART TWO

FAMINE

CHAPTER ELEVENA People "Half-starved"1. Failure of the Potato Crop

During the summer of 1845 life went on very much as usual in Kilfearagh parish. There was quite a good number of visitors to the town of Kilkee and in the countryside the prospects for a plentiful harvest were as good as in other parts of the country. And these prospects were bright indeed in the early part of the summer. In late May the Limerick Chronicle reported:¹

Not a single failure has been reported in the potato crop.....Should it please Providence to continue the same favourable prosperity, the next harvest will be one of the earliest and most abundant remembered in this country.

Three months later the same newspaper was still very optimistic -- the harvest would be a most abundant one.² However, a week previously, a strange blight which a few years earlier had made its appearance in North America was detected in England, and such was the rapidity of its spread that it could only be a matter of time until Ireland also was affected. In early September the dread news came. On September 13 the English Gardener's Chronicle reported:³

We stop the Press with very great regret to announce that the potato Murrain has unequivocally declared itself in Ireland. The crops around Dublin are suddenly perishing.... where will Ireland be in the event of a universal potato rot?

Despite these warnings the Clare Journal was by no means alarmed. Having made an inquiry into the state of the crops it announced on September 18 that an average crop was expected in Clare. But it did add that a complete picture could not be got until the time for digging the general crop at the end of October.⁴

As the weeks slipped by in October it was becoming increasingly clear that there was a general failure of the potato crop and it was predicted that an early and prolonged famine would be the consequence unless immediate measures were taken at least to mitigate the calamity.⁵ In 1822 and 1830 the failures had been confined to areas in the west. In 1845 the damage to the potato crop was much more widespread. On 25 October the Tipperary Vindicator reported the prevalence of "apprehensions of the most painful description."⁶ And it continued:

We hope in the goodness of an all-wise Providence that He in his wisdom and bounty will spare this land from the tremendous scourge of famine and typhus, and open up the means of employment and sufficiency to a People who, in all their unheard of trials and sufferings, have ever steadfastly clung by the anchor of Faith.

Yet, even at this stage some continued to be optimistic. Mr. John Fleming of Kilrush felt that the fears of many people were exaggerated. He had seen whole fields ruined by the blight. But he had also seen that many were only partially affected, while others again had emerged completely unscathed. In his opinion, if even

half of the very abundant potato crop could be preserved there would be sufficient for all.⁷

Mr. Fleming's hopes were not \forall to be realized. Even as he wrote his letter to the Limerick Reporter in early November it was only too clear that the people around him in West Clare were faced with starvation. The potatoes which had been pitted in sound condition were decaying and already many families were suffering severe illness from eating diseased potatoes. Masses were offered up in the country chapels asking God to save the people from the almost inevitable disaster.⁸

2. Remedial Measures Autumn-Winter, 1845.

Meanwhile the Government was growing increasingly disturbed because of the reports being received about the potato crop and in mid October a commission was set up to suggest means of preserving potatoes which were sound when dug, of using diseased potatoes and of obtaining seed for the coming year. It surveyed the problem and issued suggestions, all of which proved valueless.⁹

At the end of October, unaware of the Government's inquiries and fearing that no preparations were being made, a committee of private citizens was formed at the Mansion House, Dublin, to examine the situation and propose remedies. And on 3 November a deputation including Daniel O'Connell, the Duke of Leinster and many other prominent citizens waited on the Lord Lieutenant to present him with their proposals. These called for the prohibition of food exports, the establishment of stores of food and relief machinery in each county and the

provision of useful employment. The Lord Lieutenant, unaware of what the Government proposed to do, received them rather coolly and read a prepared non-committal statement.¹⁰

A fortnight later the Government appointed a relief commission for Ireland and it held its first meeting on 20 November. Its immediate duty was to prepare to receive a supply of Indian corn and meal which had already been ordered from the U.S.A. And it also collected information from all parts of the country regarding the progress of the potato disease.¹¹ Among its informants was Fr. Comyn who gave such a gloomy description of the state of the crops in his parishes that the Commissioners immediately wrote to other people to find out if the situation was as described. Jonas Studdert's reply showed that though he feared a scarcity he scarcely envisaged a famine.¹² E.I. Morriss, a coastguard who visited the area on the Commissioners' request, saw the dangers of the situation more clearly and noted the apprehensions of the people: "I found the people everywhere quiet and civil, but under great alarm."¹³ Dr. Griffin, on the other hand, was inclined to dismiss these fears and informed Assistant Commissioner, John Hancock¹⁴ "that every rational person in the parish was laughing at the statement made by certain parties relative to the state of the parish."

In the meantime, following Fr. Comyn's representations, the Commissioners had asked him for more information concerning his proposals regarding Waste Lands and Fisheries. On 6 December, then, he forwarded a detailed petition on the second of these topics, promising

a later one on Waste Lands. The development of deep sea fisheries he regarded as a positive way of countering the potato failure for many. In their present frail boats the fishermen could not venture out the twenty miles necessary to reach the rich fishing area. His reason for the poor fishing within twenty miles of the coast was a rather curious and ingenious one. He pointed out that originally the coast of Corca Baiscinn extended out for this distance but an earthquake¹⁵ in the ninth century had submerged it. The former land area was still very little frequented by fish.¹⁶

Shortly afterwards Fr. Comyn visited the Commissioners in person to see what prospect of relief they held out to the poor in his parishes. After the meeting he felt that he had succeeded in convincing them that unless help was given within a short time the people would have no alternative to starvation. He also got a promise that they would impress on the Government the need for providing immediate employment in the area.¹⁷

Fr. Comyn was active, too, on another front at this time. At the weekly meeting of the Loyal National Repeal Association held at Conciliation Hall, Dublin, on 15 December, Mr. John O'Connell remarked that a very interesting letter had been received from Rev. Mr. Comyn, P.P. of Kilkee, with reference to the fisheries of Ireland and the great employment they could give to the people in the present state of distress. Fr. Comyn certainly hoped to arouse more than mere interest on the part of John O'Connell and his father, the Liberator, who was also present. But when the letter had been read it was probably given no further thought.¹⁸ A few weeks before this the Mansion House Committee had been supplied with statistics

concerning Kilfearagh and Killard parishes. In the townland of Kilfearagh it was pointed out to them, there were 88 families whose total produce of potatoes was 1,450 barrels of which only 187 were good. At a meeting of the committee it was decided to bring these statistics to the attention of the government relief commission.¹⁹

Back in West Clare the Kilrush Poor Law Guardians, among whom there were representatives from Kilfearagh parish, were also getting worried. At their meeting on 26 November, they drew up a petition to Queen Victoria asking her to call a meeting of Parliament as soon as possible in December to devise measures of averting the threatening famine. Another resolution very likely had the proposed Kilrush-Kilkee railway in mind:

That it is suggested to have Parliament meet thus early to expedite the passing of Railway Bills and such other measures of employment as would enable the poor and working classes to purchase food and clothing during the approaching season of want and inclemency.²⁰

Less than four weeks later the chairman of the same Board of Guardians made a personal contribution to the increase of misery when, a few days before Christmas, three families were evicted from their little plots on his estate at Moyasta and their houses levelled before their eyes.²¹ This was a scene which was to be repeated many times in the ensuing years.

3. Government Policy and Meetings in Kilkee

By the beginning of 1846 a four point plan for combating the threat of famine had been devised by Sir Robert Peel and his Government:²²

1. The Relief Commissioners were told to form local committees composed of landowners, agents, magistrates, clergy and other residents of note. These committees would raise money locally out of which food could be bought for resale to distressed persons or even given free in urgent cases.

2. The Board of Works was to provide employment by making new roads -- a procedure which had also been followed in previous famines.²³

3. Foreseeing that fever would inevitably follow destitution, it was directed that a separate fever hospital was to be got ready as soon as possible in connection with each workhouse.

4. As soon as food prices rose unreasonably some of the Indian corn in government stores was to be thrown on the market, to bring prices down.

To implement the first two points in this plan it was decided to call a meeting of gentlemen in each area where distress was expected. A representative of the Board of Works would attend and he would be able to ascertain what help local landlords were prepared to give, how many persons would need employment and what were the possibilities for works in the area.²⁴ The first such meeting was arranged for Kilkee on 10 January 1846 a choice probably suggested by Fr. Comyn's earnest representations on behalf

of his parishioners in the previous month²⁵ and the evident distress in the area.

From any point of view the Kilkee meeting could hardly be described as successful. The first difficulty arose when many people could not gain admittance to the meeting place owing to lack of space. The local magistrates were blamed for this as they had chosen the Billiard Room in preference to the more spacious National School which had been put at their disposal by Fr. Comyn. At the meeting Henry Burton of Carrigaholt, the only resident landlord in the area, acted as Chairman, with Robert FitzGerald of Donoughboy House, Kilkee, as Vice-Chairman and Mr. Tuite of Kilkee as secretary. An official of the Board of Works, Mr. Russell, was also present,²⁶ as was Mr. C.W. Hamilton, agent for John MacDonnell.

The first resolution adopted indicated that although some potatoes were still available they were scarcely fit for human consumption:

That the potatoes having now become so unfit for human use, that even the cattle are beginning to loathe them, the people are earnestly recommended to discontinue the use of any unless the few half-~~fit~~ sound ones in hand, and that it becomes absolutely necessary for their sustenance to have immediate recourse to the consumption of bread at least once or twice a day, henceforward.

But how could the people make bread? Unaware that the Government was obtaining Indian corn, the meeting called for the opening of storehouses at Doonbeg and Kilkee -- for the purchase and preservation of the remanent of corn still left in the country. Another resolutiön called for the immediate passing of the Kilrush-Kilkee Railway Bill

and the gathering also endorsed in toto a memorial adopted at a New Year's Day meeting in Kilkee. This earlier meeting had made a number of suggestions for providing employment in the area. These included the provision of harbour facilities in Doonbeg Bay; the building of some coast roads leading from Kilkee -- to Saltard Tower on one side and to Dunlickey Castle and Leahy Hill on the other; a few embankments against the tide on Kilkee beach and the building of a landing slip for Kilkee fishermen.²⁷ Finally, the proceedings on 10 January ended with the appointment of a local committee.²⁸

The meeting in the Billiard Room had been held in the morning. Then, in the afternoon, a number of people with landed interests locally, some of whom had been present at the earlier meeting, met at the West End Hotel, and drew up a rival memorial for presentation to the Government.²⁹ What was the reason for this second gathering? Jonas Studdert, in a letter to Sir Lucius O'Erién, explained:³⁰

As I apprehended, our meeting of yesterday was interrupted by Mr. Comyn, assisted by Mr. Robert FitzGerald, Doctor Tuite, and at the head of a large mob. Everything was carried by shouting from the people tutored by him. No committee formed, but at the latter part of the day he proposed a Committee not having the slightest regard for the mode of choosing one as directed by you. And in fact mostly composed of his own relations..... Mr. Russell was treated as a menial under their orders and not even allowed to explain what his instructions were....

Mr. C.V. Hamilton added that it was only with great difficulty that Fr. Comyn had succeeded in getting Mr. [redacted] into the chair, but then stood by him and proposed the resolutions himself without reference to the chair. However, Mr. Hamilton pointed out that the letter convoking the meeting had specified that all interested parties were invited. Therefore Fr. Comyn "had naturally grounds for making it a mob meeting."³¹

The rival meetings and the resolutions adopted at them meant that nobody was satisfied with the day's happenings. Those who took part in the second meeting were clearly dissatisfied with what had taken place at the first -- while many of the local people were quite indignant with those of the gentry who participated in the second gathering. And this indignation was strongly expressed in a resolution adopted at a meeting held in Kilkee Catholic Chapel on 18 January:³²

That we scout with indignation the pigmy efforts of certain gentlemen and others, who, without license (sic) or authority from the people or government, formed themselves into a self-constituted Board at a meeting stealthily got up after the regular proceedings of the day..

All this was not a very promising start to the hoped for joint local effort to combat the distress and although on the surface harmony was soon achieved the undercurrents of tension remained, breaking out every now and again. On 16 March, 1847, Captain Mann wrote to Trevelyan:³³

Grieved am I ~~am~~ to say that in other cases party and jealous feeling produces most baneful consequences; a sad proof came before me a few days since as regards that wretched place Kilkee, where I fear dissension will never cease to do mischief, and the poor to suffer by it, instead of their being united in exertion to do good, casting aside all selfish and other feelings; there it is the very reverse, and how to cure this it is impossible to say.

To the Government, too, the Kilkee meetings proved a big disappointment. It had been hoped that the meeting arranged there would set a precedent for other such gatherings but Sir Randolph Routh, the leading member of the Relief Commission, was of the opinion that instructions to be issued would now have to be re-modelled in the light of the Kilkee experience. The chief cause of disappointment was the lack of any offers of local contributions.³⁴ These had not even been mentioned at the first meeting, while at the second the gentry had merely made a vague reference to the repayment by instalment of loans for public works. Jonas Studdert wrote in this connection:³⁵ "It is clear money will not be placed at the disposal of such mad speculators," referring to Fr. Comyn and his supporters. One feels that this was an excuse rather than a reason for non-contribution for a few days later Mr. C.W. Hamilton informed the Relief Commissioners in Dublin that under the present difficulties the proprietors would not be able to make any contributions nor could they offer sufficient security for the future repayment of loans.³⁶

Yet, despite this disappointment, in a letter to Trevelyan, Routh did admit that the distress in the Wilke area was undeniable and he pointed out that it was for the Government to decide, in the light of all the facts, how much employment they would be prepared to give at the public expense to meet the immediate want.³⁷

4. Kilkee Relief Committee

Despite the squabbles a local relief committee soon got down to work³⁸ and appointed Fr. Comyn and Rev. J. Martin to carry out an investigation into the condition of the people in the neighbourhood. The result of their work was put to the members at a meeting in late February at which Mr. Russell of the Board of Works was also present. The report stated very emphatically that 160 householders and their families were in a state of abject poverty and nearly deprived of every earthly means of subsistence. Some potatoes were still available but pigs and fowl which had been fed on them for the previous two months were now found to have diseased livers. "The stench of these potatoes when boiled is so offensive and unbearable, that the people rush out of the cabin with the iron pot in their hands, lest the effluvia should cause a fever, and they let them remain some time outside, in order that the fresh air may pass through them, for others, even those who are starving, are unable to touch them." Even when the best parts had been picked out they were still very unpalatable. Many people had been eating these since November and it seemed impossible that they should be able to escape disease as

a consequence. In the final analysis then:³⁹

The actual fact is that hundreds of people here, are, what would be understood in England as 'starved' and what is understood in Ireland as 'half-starved'. Their cheeks are hollow and transparent, the mouth enlarged, the nose pinched in, the eyes glassy or else of a watery clearness. They scarcely utter any complaints; they do not beg of anyone walking about the village, but follow him silently in a crowd.

This analysis was borne out by an official report made about the same time by Dr. John Griffin. He pointed out that a form of fever had been prevalent in the locality for the previous three or four months and this was to be attributed, in some degree at least, to the use of unsound potatoes. Unless protective measures were taken to avert the threatened famine, an outbreak of disease could also be expected.⁴⁰ And on 22 February he told the Relief Commissioners that a fever hospital in the area would be of very great help in checking the spread of fever.⁴¹ All this was in marked contrast to his attitude in the previous December when interviewed by Mr. Hancock.

It was against this background that the Kilkee Relief Committee memorialled the Lords of the Treasury in mid March outlining the plight of the people in the area and pointing out that the Board of Works engineer was awaiting Treasury sanction to start relief works which would give much needed employment. To demonstrate the seriousness of the situation they remarked that the

people were now beginning to eat the potatoes which had been kept for seed -- a point which was also made in a memorial from the inhabitants of the townland of Kildimo to the Lord Lieutenant.⁴² The final conclusion of the Kilkee Relief Committee was that the corn purchased by the Government should be immediately distributed in the area.⁴³ And a week later a somewhat similar plea was made by Colonel Vandeleur, Chairman of the Kilrush Board of Guardians. To offset the high prices being demanded for provisions, the Government should send its Indian corn to Kilrush and Kilkee and sell it to the poor who had obtained tickets authorising them to receive it⁴⁴ -- a suggestion which was in line with the Government's policy for the control of food prices. At this period, according to Captain Mann, a coastguard officer in charge of relief at Kilrush, the portion of Kilrush Workhouse allotted to Kilfearagh district was nearly full.⁴⁵

Meanwhile Sir Randolph Routh was complaining that the landed gentry in the Kilrush - Kilkee area seemed to be determined to make no money contributions towards providing relief.⁴⁶ However, on 31 March he was able to tell Trevelyan that Colonel Vandeleur had given £50⁴⁷ -- a beginning at least had been made. But in Kilkee there were no unsolicited contributions and the Relief Committee was showing no signs of requesting any. Finally, in early May, under threat of refusal of meal supplies by Capt. Mann,⁴⁸ it appealed for funds and circularized people with landed interests and wealthy lodge-owners who were living outside the parish. By

12 May only one of the absentees, John MacDonnell, had responded with a contribution (£8), although it would appear that soon afterwards the Marquess Conyngham gave £10.⁴⁹ Rev. James Martin remarked that the local farmers would willingly contribute but were unable. However, Jonas Studdert gave £8, Fr. Conyn £5 and Rev. James Martin £5. In all £38.2.0 had been gathered by 12 May.⁵⁰ To this, on the advice of Sir Edward Twisleton, the Lord Lieutenant added £23.⁵¹ It was stated that the money would be used to provide food for those in extreme want and give employment to women and children during the summer season. The secretary of the committee (Hugh Hogan) also pointed out, with an eye to the holiday season, that arrangements would be made to prevent strolling beggars from annoying the visitors.⁵²

In March the Relief Committee took steps in another direction also. It was decided that an industry could do a good deal for the town and parish and Hugh Hogan, as secretary of the committee, was instructed to enter into communication with Messrs. Wallace, Sharpe and Co., of Glasgow with a view to starting the manufacture of lace and muslin in Kilkee. Mr. Hogan wrote to the firm concerned giving details of the population, etc., of the area. The reply did offer some hope that in the not too distant future the firm might extend its activities to Kilkee -- but no further moves seem to have been made in the matter.⁵³

5. Efforts of Fr. Comyn and Hugh Hogan

Fr. Comyn and Hugh Hogan were both members of the Relief Committee but they were also very active as private individuals in trying to do something for the people. In mid January Fr. Comyn again wrote to the Relief Commission in Dublin and, in his promised petition on the subject, tried to press home his views on the development of the wastelands in his parishes. "It is evidently better," he wrote, "to locate our surplus population on these unprofitable wastes in their own native land, than compel them to emigrate to some foreign and hostile disposed country to Great Britain, to swell the ranks of her enemies; or be obliged to maintain them in idleness at home in workhouses, at the public expense." Such development, however, could only come about if the wastelands were taken by compulsion from the landlords who were neglecting to do anything about them.⁵⁴

Fr. Comyn also lacerated John MacDonnell for his failure to give any encouragement to the development of potter's clay which lay in his land within a mile of Kilkee.⁵⁵ Two months later, on 22 March, at a meeting in Kilkee Repeal Reading Room a memorial was drawn up for the local application of the provisions of a recent drainage act.⁵⁶

Fr. Comyn also brought the troubles of his parish to the notice of William Smith O'Brien. At a conference of Irish M.Ps. held in Dublin towards the end of January O'Brien alluded to a conversation he had with Fr. Comyn a few days previously in which Fr. Comyn told him that the condition of the poor in his neighbourhood was most deplorable.⁵⁷

At first sight the fishermen might seem to be far better off than those who were depending exclusively on the produce of the soil. Even when the potatoes failed (for each had his little plot of ground) they could still turn to the sea. But the winter of 1845-6 proved to be a particularly disappointing one for fishing,⁵⁸ so that when spring came the fishermen were, if anything, even worse off than their neighbours. In late January, following up the idea proposed by Fr. Comyn to the Relief Commissioners in December, Hugh Hogan wrote to Mr. Robert Greene of the Irish Deep Sea Fishing Company, regarding the prospects for fishing in West Clare and received a very encouraging reply. Mr. Greene promised to purchase all fish caught but he pointed out that little could be done without facilities. However, he felt confident that any petition to the Government would get a favourable hearing.⁵⁹

Hugh Hogan, having thus ensured a market for any fish caught, now began to gather information for a petition. He discovered that the local fishermen were in such dire straits that not only had some of them pawned or sold their beds or clothes but many had even pawned their fishing nets in Kilrush. Immediately, he wrote to Mr. Jeremiah^{Dowling}, the pawnbroker, requesting details. The reply was revealing. Mr. Dowling had 72 nets from the Kilkee area in pawn, on which he had paid out £15. But this was not all. He went on to write: "So great is the distress among the fishermen that I think if they could convey their boats to the office we would have them also."⁶⁰

The first memorial drawn up by Hogan was to the Lord Lieutenant, asking for a grant or loan to supply the necessary requisites for deep-sea fishing. The reply was unfavourable and Mr. Hogan tried again -- this time in a petition to Parliament which was presented to the House of Commons on 9 March.⁶¹ Again he met with no success, although a few days previously a bill which was very relevant to his petition received the royal assent. This was an act which provided an annual sum of money, £5,000, for the construction of piers and harbours.⁶² As a last resort Mr. Hogan wrote to the Prime Minister himself, Sir Robert Peel, with similar negative results.⁶³

Meanwhile, during the month of March, Mr. Greene had sent a representative, Mr. Fraser, to Kilkee to report on the possibilities for development in the area. And while in West Clare, Mr. Fraser, at the direction of his employer, secured the release from pawn of all the nets of the Kilkee fishermen.⁶⁴ It was probably as a result of this visit that Mr. Greene decided to establish an agency in Kilkee for the curing and preservation of fish. He also promised to open a loan-office to help and encourage needy fisherman.⁶⁵ We have no evidence, however as to whether these promises ever came to fruition. If the condition of the fisherman had not been improved this was certainly no fault of Hugh Hogan's, and, as a token of their gratitude for his efforts on their behalf, they volunteered their services and cut his turf in early May.⁶⁶

6. Public Works

Whatever private individuals or the local Relief Committee did, the fate of the people of Kilfearagh parish depended on the manner of implementation of government policy in the area. As remarked later by Captain Mann⁶⁷ this involved the taking of three steps:

- 1) The poor had to be provided with the means of earning money wages.
- 2) A substitute food for the potato had to be introduced.
- 3) Owing to the absence of small shopkeepers who would deal in Indian meal, those operating the relief scheme would have to take their place and sell it in small quantities here and there throughout the peninsula.

The first of these steps was seen to by the Board of Works' public relief schemes. In early February the magistrates and cesspayers of Moyarta barony met and petitioned for the commencement of certain specified works. But⁶⁷ the meeting was got up with great haste, the actual descriptions of the proposed works and the estimated costs were not sufficiently accurate for immediate implementation. Mr. Pussell, the Board of Works engineer, on this account, felt that it would take some time to get the works under way as more exact calculations would have to be made. However, he thought that a beginning could be made with some hill-cutting and improvements.⁶⁸ A week later, on 25 February, the Commissioners of Public Works recommended a number of projects in Moyarta Barony to the Treasury including the following in Kilfearagh parish:⁶⁹

£300 for the improvement of the Kilkee - Kilrush road
 £900 for a road from Kilkee along the cliffs to the
 mills at Moveen.

£30 for the improvement of the Corbally - Lislanihan
 road.

£60 for cutting the hills on the Corbally Road.

£100 for the Kildimo - Emlagh Road.

For these works, if finally approved, the Government would advance the full cost, of which half would be in the form of a loan to be repaid by the local landowners over a period of years.

In the meantime Mr. Russell had returned to Kilkee with employment tickets.⁷⁰ Employment on the projected public works would generally be given only to a holder of one of these tickets, which were to be distributed at meetings of the local Relief Committee to those who were considered unable to provide food for their families.⁷¹

In Kilkee, as final approval from the Treasury for the projects was awaited, people applied for these tickets -- but, at first, not nearly as many did so as had been expected. In their report on the district in late February, Fr. Comyn and Rev. Mr. Martin tried to give an explanation for this. The country people, in their opinion, were under the impression that the townspeople would get first preference and therefore did not apply for employment in such numbers as their extreme want would warrant. In all there were only 40 applications from the country and 160 from the town. However, at this stage it looked as if only 50 of these would get immediate employment -- at 10d a day.⁷²

By early March, when work had not yet begun, people began to grow impatient -- and in their memorial to the Treasury of about 7 March the Kilkee Relief Committee reminded the Treasury Officials that their sanction was being awaited.⁷³ A few days later 250 men were given employment⁷⁴ but this only whetted the appetite for more work. On 19 March a letter-writer in the Clare Journal complained that in Kilkee scarcely one man in twenty was employed, notwithstanding the extraordinary exertions of its inhabitants and clergy.

The main projects being undertaken were the building of a new road from the West End to Look Out Cliff and thence to Dunlickey Castle and beyond; and the ~~building~~^{cutting} and levelling of the hills on the Kilrush - Kilkee road. It was hoped that by means of the latter project passenger cars would be enabled to make the journey from Kilkee to Kilrush in an hour instead of an hour and a half. The embankment of the cliff on the west side of Kilkee, which had long been in a dangerous condition, was also begun.⁷⁵

Other possibilities for works were also being proposed and agreement was reached that a coast road between Kilkee and Doonbeg by Chimney Bay and Baltard Castle was desirable.⁷⁶ And in March the tenants on the Marquis of Conyngham's estate sent a memorial to their landlord asking him to contribute, along with the Board of Works, towards making a carriageway or embankment round the bay.⁷⁷ In late April a promise of a contribution of £100 was received -- if the Board of Works undertook the project.⁷⁸

After work on the various schemes had begun the number of employed rose rapidly. On 28 March the Board of Works had 1,600 employed in Clare. Three days later the figure was 5,487 and on 7 April it had risen to 10,870.⁷⁹ In Kilkee and Doonbeg parishes 620 were employed in mid May and further applications were being received.⁸⁰

The rate of payment on the public works for men was, we have seen, 10d a day. Strong boys got 8d and small boys received 6d.⁸¹ These wages were supposed to be under the general current rate in order to encourage people to take up other employment if available. In a letter to the Relief Commissioners at the end of January, Mr. C.W. Hamilton protested at this arrangement. If a man did not get sufficient wages he would have to enter the Poor-house in order to feed his family and, in Hamilton's view, this would be disastrous as it would strike at the independence of the labourer's character.⁸²

There could be other difficulties, too, in the practical day to day administration of the works. On 9 June, 1846, Rev. James Martin wrote to the Relief Commissioners complaining of the undue amount of power exercised rather arbitrarily by some of the gangers. "If it suits their convenience they will take a recommendation from the committee -- if it does not -- they will reject it."⁸³ And he enclosed a petition from one poor labourer who felt he had been victimized. This is of sufficient interest to reproduce in full:⁸⁴

To the Sitting Committee of Public Works of Kilkee
 The Humble Petition of James Carrig of Kilfiera most
 humbly sheweth

That your petr. having Five in family to support and not a morsel of food since Christmas last but what he earned by his daily labour, petr. got into the public works when the Cliff Road commenced, and continued until last Saturday fortnight, he petr. gave one day's work to a man that gave him a basket of black potatoes for his little children to pick, and came to work on the Monday following as usual. When about 12 o'clock on said day Sullivan the Steward dismissed him and would not allow him even that half days wages.

Then when petr. was murmuring for having him dismissed Sullivan desired him go to the Priest and that if he gave him a ticket he would take him in the work which petr did obtain from the Priest, and got but one days work afterwards. Your petr having pawned his coat for which he only got 2s. to buy provisions for his family. And that himself and them are living these three days back on one meal a day Your petr is surprized that any Committee would allow this imposter Sullivan to go on in this manner when they have a power to discontinue such infernal practice

Your petr will pray

James Carrig

On the receipt of Rev. Mr. Martin's complaint the Relief Commissioners decided to make an inquiry into the matter and get further information from the Board of Works..⁸⁵

7. Indian Meal

With the provision of employment the first step had been taken as some money was now in circulation. The next necessity was to provide an alternative to the potato which, as we have seen, was the staple diet of the average smallholder and labourer. In areas like West Clare cooking any other food had become a lost art. As Trevelyan wrote:⁸⁶ "There is scarcely a woman of the peasant class in the west of Ireland whose culinary art exceeds the boiling of a potato. Bread is scarcely ever seen and an oven is unknown." But when there were no potatoes, what was to be done? In late 1845 the Government realized that famine was threatening and it obtained supplies of Indian corn from America -- not to replace the potato or feed the people but to be kept in reserve and released on the market when provision prices rose unduly. In fact, however, in the early summer of 1846 this Indian meal was to stand between many people and utter starvation.

When supplies of the corn arrived in Ireland in early 1846 depots were established throughout the country in various centres including Kilrush. In March, Captain Mann began to issue it at a cheap rate in Kilrush, but as yet the distribution seems to have been confined to this central depot.⁸⁷ During May minor depots were set up at various points in West Clare including one at the Coastguard Boathouse, Kilkee⁸⁸ -- all exactly as Colonel Vandeleur had petitioned some time previously.⁸⁹

The provision of Indian meal did not, however, solve all problems, for, at first, it seemed quite likely that people would not eat it. Previous experience had prejudiced them against it and in some areas it became known as "Peel's brimstone". Captain Mann soon found that the reaction in West Clare was anything but favourable as the people feared unpleasant effects. However, Fr. Kenny, P.P. of Kilrush, decided that this prejudice would have to be combated in a practical manner and for two weeks "all but lived entirely with two curates, on the meal made into bread and stirrabout."⁹⁰

As a result of Fr. Kenny's example the problem soon was not one of disposal but of ensuring a sufficient supply of meal. The corn was received unground and so had to be brought to a mill before sale. In Kilrush while Mr. Paterson's mill had a plentiful supply of water and remained working, all was well, but there was at least one occasion when it was out of action for three days.⁹¹ And when it did break down, there was nobody at hand who had an expert knowledge of its workings.⁹²

The problem experienced in Kilrush in May was one which had to be faced elsewhere also -- the uncertainty or inadequacy of facilities for grinding. In Kilkee a man who was occasionally employed as a coastguard brought up one answer. He began manufacturing querns which he sold for 10/- and 12/-. Others followed his example and by early November 1846 quite a nice little trade had been established. However, one is inclined to have some reservations about the grinding qualities of these querns. When interviewed by Captain Mann the originator of the project said that he had already ground horse-beans and

by a little manipulation he felt sure he would also be able to grind Indian corn.⁹³

Just at this time Trevelyan was toying with the idea that, as there were not sufficient mills, the people should grind the corn themselves. He had been searching for specimens which could be copied and at first succeeded only in getting an "inferior Indian model". Later, he managed to get a better specimen from the Shetland Islands.⁹⁴ When word came, then, of what was happening in Kilkee Trevelyan was very interested and anxious to see one of the querns. He wrote personally to Capt. Mann who immediately went to Kilkee and bought one of them to send to Mr. Routh as Trevelyan had requested.⁹⁵

A month later Mann wrote to Routh:⁹⁶ "The value of our common quern is now fully proved. Scarcely a cabin but has one and a great many are being taken away to other parts. The farmers and peasantry generally are grinding their own grain." And in the beginning of January 1848, Twisleton told Trevelyan that the handmills had been distributed to the different unions throughout the country. "I have not heard anything about the effect of them. Still they were a useful present, and I feel obliged to you for them."⁹⁷

When discussing the importation of the Indian corn, an obvious question to be asked is -- Why Indian corn at all? What happened to the corn and other food produced locally? Perhaps the best answer to this question is contained in a letter written by Routh to Trevelyan on 1 January, 1846. Routh pointed out that the Irish people did not regard wheat, oats and barley as food -- these were

grown to pay the rent and to pay the rent was the first necessity of life in Ireland. It would be a desperate man who ate up his rent, with the certainty before him of eviction and death by slow torture.⁹⁸ And this is exactly what happened in Kilfearagh parish in 1846.

Even though the people had corn and other produce, these had to be sold to pay the rent. As a result, when the situation was rather desperate in early March before relief employment had begun, Kilrush port was busy exporting. According to Captain Mann:⁹⁹ "We were literally stopped by carts laden with grain, butter, bacon etc., being taken to the vessels loading from the quay. It was a strange anomaly, and well might be said, could not be matched but in this country." And in the final week of April the Clare Journal reported that 3,500 quarters of grain had been exported from Kilrush to London and Glasgow.¹⁰⁰ Yet, despite this anomalous situation the people survived, mainly because of the Indian meal, and looked forward with hope and fear to the next harvest.

CHAPTER TWELVEA SECOND FAILURE1. The Harvest of 1846

As 1845 gave way to 1846 some people were already thinking of the coming harvest and the possibility of avoiding a recurrence of the disease. At a public meeting held in Kilkee on New Year's Day 1846 this subject was discussed and in a memorial drawn up for the Relief Commissioners it was claimed that reclaimed bogland alone could be confidently expected to produce sound potatoes in the coming autumn. The memorial stated:¹

Your memorialists beg to assure you that their apprehensions are very considerable, and that they feel loth to venture tilling the land heretofore growing potatoes, fearing that it retains the Malaria that has been so fatal the last season. We also fear that the contagion has been wafted by the wind to the neighbouring cornfields so that we look with confidence to the BOGLANDS ALONE for a secure supply of potatoes for after seasons.

This is not the conclusion your memorialists alone have arrived to, but is the opinion also of skillful and scientific men.

Mr. G.H. Fitzgerald of Kilkee concerned himself with another aspect of the problem -- sufficiency of seed potatoes. In a letter to the Limerick Chronicle in March he claimed that after having made several experiments with diseased potatoes he had discovered a process which destroyed all infectious matter and made them safe and clean for seed. His process was a simple one -- steeping the potatoes for a few minutes in a solution of bluestone.² At the same time he also sent a letter to the Chairman of the Relief Committee in Dublin informing him of his discovery.³ Although quite confident of his success in March, no doubt he found reason to revise his views when autumn came again.

As the days of summer passed by, all eyes were on the new crop of potatoes. The Government was determined to keep fully informed of developments and long before the crisis time had arrived, sent for reports on the situation from constables throughout the country. Reporting for Kilfearagh parish on 29 May, Constable Robert Griffin stated that a quarter of the arable land had been planted with potatoes, a decrease from the previous years when about one third had been similarly used. Of this somewhat less than one third had been let in conacre. A notable feature, perhaps inspired by the theories advanced at the meeting on New Year's Day, 1846, was that more bog had been tilled than for years previously -- despite a decrease in the overall acreage.⁴

On 21 July, as harvest-time approached, a Treasury minute directed that all relief schemes be stopped, except in certain unusual cases. However, on various

excuses most continued to function but not, it would seem, in Kilfearagh. Towards the end of July the local Relief Committee made a plea for three or four weeks' further employment. Otherwise "we apprehend that Riots may be the consequence." On the very day of writing a crowd had assembled and threatened to break open the meal stores if they were not given the means of subsistence.⁵ And about the same time Jonas Studdart reported that want of money had already induced many to plunder the potato fields.⁶

But what of the potato fields? On the 31st of July and the 1st of August, Mr. T. Smith made an inspection in Kilfearagh parish and, in general, found the potato crop in a fairly healthy condition. However, in Lisdeen he detected three acres of diseased potatoes and in Farrihy two more.⁷ These were signs of what was to come -- and the change came so suddenly that it was scarcely possible to believe it. In the words of Captain Mann, reporting from the western peninsula of Clare:⁸

I shall never forget the change in one week in August. On the first occasion, on an official visit of inspection, I had passed over 32 miles thickly studded with potato fields in full bloom. The next time the face of the whole country was changed, the stalk remained bright green but the leaves were all scorched black. It was the work of a night, distress and fear was pictured on every countenance, and there was a general rush to dig and sell, or consume the crop by feeding pigs or cattle, fearing in a short time they would prove unfit for any use. Consequently

there was a very wasteful expenditure, and distress showed itself much earlier than in the preceding season.

The disaster was total. As the potatoes were generally set in mid May their growth was therefore checked in less than three months. What was left was no bigger than a marble, completely black, not a quarter ripe and hastening to decomposition when taken out of the ground.⁹ In 1845 the failure had been partial and, at the very worst, the people had half-sound potatoes to eat for a long period. In 1846 the blight had come earlier and had spared nothing. As early as 11 August an official reporting on Galway and Clare was able to say:¹⁰

I am therefore clearly of opinion that the scarcity of the potato last year will be nothing compared with this, and that, too, several months earlier.

2. New Government Plans for Relief

On 9 August a correspondent from Kilkee writing to the editor of the Tipperary Vindicator called on the Government to come forward and save the people from inevitable ruin. The Mansion House committee should be reconvened while the corn should not be allowed out of the country as in the previous year.¹¹ Eight days later Lord John Russell, the new premier, informed the Commons that "the prospect of the potato crop is even more distressing than last year," and that extraordinary measures for relief should be taken. The measures adopted were, in fact, anything but extraordinary and were

scarcely calculated to satisfy the writer from Kilkee.

1) Public works would again be undertaken but, unlike the previous year when the British Government bore half the cost, all the cost would now have to be met by the district where the works would be carried out.

Presentment sessions, or meetings of ratepayers to discuss the works to be undertaken in a district, would be held as before but instead of being voluntary they would now have to be summoned by the Lord Lieutenant. Works proposed had to get the approval of and would then be carried out by the Board of Works. The Treasury would advance the cost but it would have to be repaid within ten years by means of a rate levied on all poor-rate payers in the locality i.e., those possessed of some means. In addition, the Government allocated £50,000 for grants to districts too poor to bear the whole cost of public works. Finally, all relief schemes undertaken were to last no longer than a year and to be wound up by 15 August, 1847.

2) With a slight exception the Government would neither import nor supply any food. As Captain Mann wrote:

"The object of the second series commencing September, 1846, was to endeavour to turn the supply of food to the country into its legitimate channel, the Trade."¹²

And Trevelyan pointed out that merchants could not be expected to get in big stocks if there was a possibility of their being undersold by the Government. However, west of the Shannon and in a few other areas government food depots would be established here and there -- but these were to be opened only as a last resort when private

traders had failed to provide supplies of food.

3) Members of local relief committees were no longer to be elected but nominated by the Lieutenant of the county -- which, of course, meant the disbanding of existing committees. The new committees would not be able to issue employment tickets -- they would only be allowed to provide lists of persons eligible for employment. Subscriptions would still be collected locally for relief, but the government contribution would not exceed one half at most.¹³

3. Waiting for Relief Works to begin

About the same time as the blight struck again the meal depots closed their doors. The new relief plans had not yet come into operation so that the people were thrown back on their own resources, which were practically non-existent. The cessation of the relief works meant that many had neither food nor the means of obtaining it. On 27 August Fr. Malachy Duggan wrote:¹⁴

The suspension of Public Works here and the sale of Indian Meal almost contemporaneous. (sic) has excited a degree of alarm among the people, not easily conceived, and will probably be as fatal in its consequences as any measure the Government could adopt under existing circumstances. And four days previously, on Sunday 23 August, a petition for presentation to the Government, outlining the position in the parishes, had been signed by over 4,000 people at the chapels of Kilkee and Doonbeg.¹⁵ The picture painted was not a very pleasant one:

Up to the first of this present month your petitioners have been cheered by the prospect of an abundant harvest, the potato gardens looked so luxuriant, but at present, through all parts of this extensive district, nothing meets the eye but withered leaves and stalks, emitting a most intolerable odour, and the esculents that ought to be fit for use are perfectly black, almost unfit for feeding swine. They look for employment, some relief and a reconsideration of the Poor Law valuation in the parish, with a view to exempting the poorer classes of occupiers from taxation.

And the petition ended as follows:

N.B. Diarrhoea and other diseases are already rife in this district, doing the work of death slowly, yet surely.

An official reply was soon received, which promised that if an inquiry ^{were held} and the statements in the petitions were found to be correct, the Lord Lieutenant would lose no time in putting into operation the acts through which relief might be afforded to the people. Immediately Fr. Comyn appointed men who visited every townland in the parish and estimated the provisions available to each individual family. It was found that in the whole parish of Kilkee there was not sufficient corn, meal, flour and potatoes to last, upon an average, for one month. The returns were then checked and confirmed by the Relief Committee, after which Fr. Comyn set out for Dublin. On his arrival there he sought and obtained an interview with Mr. Labouchere, Chief Secretary for Ireland, who gave him a sympathetic hearing. ¹⁶ Doubtless in this interview, as in a public letter to the

Secretary, Fr. Comyn advocated the building of a railway between Kilrush and Kilkee, pointing out that it would be of more general and lasting benefit than the levelling of insignificant hills and the making of new roads which could well be dispensed with.¹⁷

It may well have been Fr. Comyn's suggestions which made Trevelyan at this time think over the possibility of constructing railways as a famine relief work. In a long letter to Mr. Labouchere on 6 October he pointed out that there were many objections, which he enumerated, and that therefore such a scheme was not a practical possibility. Four months later Lord George Bentinck proposed a bill in Parliament to spend £16 million on railways in Ireland. It was defeated.¹⁸

No relief works could begin until all the necessary formalities had been gone through and the projects approved. The first presentment sessions were not held until 4 September and that for Moyarta barony took place after the middle of the month. A number of projects, costing £5,700, were recommended for Kilfearagh parish. These included the completion of the protecting wall on the west side of the town of Kilkee and a road around the bay in front of the lodges.¹⁹ The Board of Works was then asked for its approval.

Unfortunately, just at this time presentment sessions were being held all over the country and the Board of Works was literally swamped with applications. Furthermore, as no immediate local contributions had to be made and as nobody was held directly responsible for paying back the government loan, the result was what Mrs. Woodham Smith has described as "an orgy of wild

extravagance."²⁰ For Kilfearagh parish alone the sum sought was about four times that approved in the previous year. And as the Board of Works, with its poor office facilities and small staff, tried to sort things out, the beginning of the actual works was held up.

In early October the application from Moyarta Barony was considered by the Board of Works and out of a sum of £25,484 applied for only £1,158 was granted. This was so ridiculously low as to be valueless. As a result it was reviewed a month later and finally £10,077 was granted. The new decision was a big improvement on the first one but, in the meantime, over a month had slipped by -- a month in which the people were kept waiting while they grew increasingly impatient.²¹

In late September an unexpected storm again reduced the Kilkee fishermen to desperate straits. As the sea rose four of them went out in their canoe in a despairing effort to save their nets. At first it looked as if they might succeed because they managed to haul the nets into the boat. However, they had scarcely finished doing this when the sea claimed boat, nets and fishermen. A fund was immediately opened for the relief of the twenty six dependents of the four drowned men. Twenty nets belonging to other fishermen were either lost or destroyed in the same storm.²²

As the days of October slipped by and there was still no sign of immediate employment, the people grew more and more anxious. On 11 October, Captain Mann reported that the better class of farmers had a few potatoes remaining but the common cottiers and the labourers were, in most cases, without any. Potatoes were selling at 6d a stone (three times the usual price), Indian meal at 1/9 to 1/10 a stone²³ and all other food in proportion. Normally the

poor had their own little gardens and got some employment digging the potatoes of the larger farmers -- this year there was little of either. And he went on: "They are very patient in my immediate neighbourhood, I may say all my district for relief purposes, as yet, and I hope will continue so."²⁴ The situation was bad but it would have been worse if many of the people had not large quantities of cured fish, which were to be a big help in the hungry winter months which followed.²⁵

Few have inexhaustible patience, particularly when they are starving. About the middle of October a meeting of the new Relief Committee was held in Kilkee Courthouse where it was resolved to memorial the Lord Lieutenant for the immediate commencement of the works. Hundreds of poor unemployed filled the courthouse, "their haggard appearance testifying their destitute state."²⁶ And on the 22nd of the month a large number of people from the surrounding parishes gathered in Kilrush, again for the purpose of demanding employment.²⁷ Two days later a public meeting was held in the Courthouse, Ennis, to deal with the problems facing the county, and Fr. Comyn was among the attendance.²⁸

In the meantime the Kilkee Relief Committee had petitioned the Commissariat Relief Office for the re-establishment of a food depot at Kilkee. The reasons for the request were outlined by Rev. J. Martin. The price of food was "becoming every hour higher and will soon be so high that not only the labouring poor but the people generally will be unable to purchase." If a depot were formed -- even though it did not make sales -- it would at least be a check.²⁹ The reply received showed that the Government was going to give no help in bringing down

food prices from their very high level.³⁰

Commissary-General Sir Randolph J. Routh begs to inform you that the establishment of a depot for the sale of food in Kilkee, which you recommend, would not effect the object you have mainly in view, the reduction of prices below the market rates, as, wherever a depot is opened, the latter must rule the sales; this course being indispensable for securing the intervention of trade, without which, the public wants cannot be supplied, as it is not practicable for the Government to supply food for the whole population; and it cannot be expected that trade competition could intervene if prices were to be adopted at the depots which would not enable traders selling at the same rates to realize their reasonable profits....

Sometime after this, however, Captain Mann did succeed in getting permission to make sales from the Kilrush depot at a price which forced the big wholesale merchants to lower their prices,³¹ and in late Nov., it was decided to issue meal to Kilkee Relief Committee.³²

4. Working on the Roads

At the very end of October or in early November relief work finally began -- even though the projected works had not yet got final approval from the Board of Works. In Kilkee 750 men were employed and the task of making a road and footpath around the bay was begun.³³ Within days the numbers employed on relief works in Clare reached fantastic proportions -- 23,899 on 8 November,

reckoned as one in three of the able-bodied male population and far higher than the number employed in any other county.³⁴ However, in the extreme west of Clare public employment was needed not just for a third of the able-bodied but certainly for well over two thirds and at a meeting in Carrigaholt on 5 November for the parishes of Kilfearagh, Moyarta and Kilballyowen, dissatisfaction was expressed at several aspects of the working of the relief scheme. It was pointed out that the rate of wages, 8d per day, would require nine days' work from a man in order to enable him to buy two stone of meal at the then current rate of 2/10 to 3/- per stone.³⁵ This amount of meal for nine days would not even provide as much daily for the average family as they would later get under outdoor relief.

The insufficiency of the wages was also noted by two members of the Society of Friends, James Harvey and Thomas Grubb, who visited West Clare in early 1847. They remarked in their report that families were by this time entirely dependent on the wages received from the roadworks and that generally only one person from each family could get employment. Their report continued:³⁶

Indeed, their week's wage, when exchanged for food, is not more than sufficient for three or four days' consumption. They endeavour, however, to stretch it over the week; but it is no uncommon thing with many families to be without any food for 24 or 36 hours before the succeeding pay day comes round, with the exception of the man or boy who is at work. To prevent his strength (upon which all their living depends) from failing,

the scanty subsistence of the others is still further reduced, to provide him^m with sufficient to sustain him. So pressing are the calls of hunger that when the week's supply of meal is brought home (perhaps a distance of six miles) it is in many cases eaten before it is fully cooked; some bake it on a griddle; but among the very poorest, and where the family is large, in order to make it go far it is boiled into gruel. Is it then to be wondered that dysentery the general result of insufficient and imperfectly cooked food, should be, as it is, so prevalent among them?

Insufficient food was not the only cause of hardship for the roadworkers. It was a cold winter and they were not used to working in the open at this time of the year. As a result they were poorly clothed in face of the icy gales. Captain Mann wrote:³⁷ "I always considered that from the beginning of December to February, the suffering from weather, want of food and clothing was the severest and past (sic) any description of mine -- causing afterwards the sad effects from disease." And even where labourers had some clothing at the beginning of winter this eventually went into pawn. The result, in the words of Dr. Griffin, was that "the poor people go literally half naked to their work and sleep at night without changing their clothes, having no other night covering."³⁸ It was little wonder, then, that fever and other sicknesses soon began to wreak havoc.

One result of the relief employment was that farm work was neglected, even though Captain Wynne, Inspecting Officer for West Clare, tried to reduce the numbers on the works and get the people back to their farms.³⁹

At the end of November Captain H.D.Hutchinson, Inspecting Officer for Clare, reported that in a journey of 56 miles he saw only one plough at work preparing the ground for wheat.⁴⁰ And, about a month later, it was stated from Kilrush that all the small farmers in the vicinity had neglected their land as they had no seed. Unless the Government supplied this the consequences would be serious.⁴¹

In general, then, the picture was a dismal one and there was little to relieve the gloom. However, in October, some landlords began to reduce rents and in mid November the Nation began to publish lists of landlords who were reducing or foregoing rents.⁴² One such was the Marquess Conyngham. In early November it was reported that he had instructed his agent, Marcus Keane, to reduce the rents on his Clare estate by 25% and 15%⁴³ according to the circumstances of the tenantry.

5. Close of the Year

Although elsewhere in Clare there were disturbances of various kinds, Kilfearagh remained quiet. But it was only a surface calm. In early November the following notice was found at Doonbeg Chapel and probably at Kilkee also:⁴⁴

Notice is hereby given, to the needy and distressed in this parish, to assemble on Monday at the Kilrush Workhouse in order to be admitted themselves and their families, and if refused, to be willing to commit depredations, slaughter cattle, open stores and farmers' yards, before they die of hunger.

N.B. One of these is sent to every parish in the union.

Later in the month the Kilrush Board of Guardians sent a memorial to Lord John Russell suggesting assisted emigration as the best method of tackling Ireland's problems:⁴⁵

We do not hesitate to suggest, that every great feature leading to, or now exhibited by the present crisis, points to an extensive system of emigration, as the remedy not only best adapted to relieve the distress of this land, but also to become a means of increasing our Empire, by reclaiming to the use of man, some of the large uncultivated tracts of our colonies.

Perhaps they already had some premonition of the pressure which was soon to be put on their own resources - but, then, no premonition was needed. One had only to look at the actual condition of the people. On 5 December Captain Wynne wrote:⁴⁶

In the Barony of Moyarta Mr. Marcus Keane, a gentleman of high character, has investigated and ascertained at my instance the state of the several townlands and parishes and it is truly deplorable; including theremnant of the potato crop, there are not provisions for three weeks and these too in the hands of a few individuals; now at the expiration of this period all the money in the Treasury cannot meet the wants of the frightful population in that district without importing provisions.

And three weeks later he added:⁴⁷

Without food we cannot last many days longer; the Public Works must fail in keeping the population alive. What is to become of the thousands to whose cases the Relief Works are totally inapplicable? The Relief Committees have not a shilling; they cannot, or will not, pay even for stationery and postage. I am obliged to pay these expenses; therefore nothing is to be expected from them.

CHAPTER THIRTEENSOUP KITCHENS and DEATHS from STARVATION1. Deputation to Dublin

As the old year closed so did the new year open. Cold, hunger and disease now went hand in hand. On 4 January, the Clare Journal wrote: "The state of this country is becoming every day more alarming.... Gaunt famine has already spread her sable wings over the land..." And three days later it commented: "Throughout the entire extent of this county destitution prevails to a frightful extent but perhaps in no part of it is the condition of the people more painfully distressing than in Kilkee and the surrounding country."

It was not surprising, then, that in the early days of January a deputation consisting of Henry S. Burton, Rev. Mr. Martin, Rev. M. Duggan, P.P., Carrigaholt and Fr. Comyn went to Dublin to request further employment for the poor of their district. When they met Mr. Labouchere, the Chief Secretary, they pointed out that in their area the proportion of the destitute employed on public works was no more than one in $7\frac{1}{2}$. Those employed had been seen staggering through weakness while at work and, according to the stewards, hundreds of them were never seen to taste food from morning to nightfall. The people had pawned their very day clothes and night-covering and, after a hard day's work, had to lie down at night on a bed of straw without a blanket or coverlet of any kind. In Kilkee oatmeal now cost 5/- per stone -- far too dear for the ordinary people. In fact there were so many destitute in the area that it would cost £1,500 a week to provide them with one meal a day. The deputation also recommended the reclaiming of 20,000 acres of bog in the district of Kilmearagh and Killard. In doing this they probably had

particularly in mind the memorial of the Kilrush Board of Guardians to Lord John Russell regarding emigration as they urged that people should be located on the waste lands in preference to the colonial lands.¹

Mr. Labouchere referred the deputation to Colonel Jones and Sir Randolph Routh. The latter asked that local subscriptions be immediately collected but was reminded that Mr. Burton himself was the only resident landlord in a district of 26 miles. Nevertheless, Routh continued to insist on an attempt being made to collect money, promising a grant equal to the amount donated. Such a promise was of doubtful value as local subscriptions would almost inevitably be quite small. However, the deputation did not go away empty-handed as they also got an assurance that instructions would be given for increased employment in the area.²

Fr. Comyn next turned to the Duke of Leinster and in a letter asked him to use his influence with the Central Relief Committee of Ireland³ to get a grant for the starving poor of his parishes.⁴ Here his efforts were successful for shortly afterwards it was reported that the General Central Relief Committee had given him £60, while he got another £20 from the Indian Relief Committee.⁵ Rev. Mr. Martin also got £20 from the latter committee, as well as the gift of a boiler.⁶

2. Soup Kitchens

The gift of the boiler by the Indian Relief Committee is indicative of the new trend being taken by relief efforts --- and not just by private organizations but by the Government also. On 25 January, Lord John Russell outlined his latest proposals in the House of Commons:⁷

1) For the third time since the first failure of the potato crop, new relief committees were to be nominated by the Lord Lieutenant and these were to be given the duty of establishing soup kitchens which would feed the people without any work being required in return.

2) The purpose of the free distribution of soup was "that labouring men should be allowed to work on their own plots of ground, or for the farmers, and thus tend to produce food for the next harvest and procure perhaps some small wages to enable them to support their families." Consequently, as the distribution of food became general, the public works would be gradually closed and would not be re-started.

3) Although it had been a fundamental principle of the Irish Poor Law system that nobody received relief unless he became an inmate of a workhouse, this was now to be changed. Under the new proposed legislation paupers would be given outdoor relief, to be paid for out of the local rates, and in fact the Soup Kitchen Act was only intended as a temporary measure to feed the people until the necessary legislative and other steps had been taken to provide outdoor relief at the workhouses. It was not until four months later that the Irish Poor Law Extension Bill permitting outdoor relief was finally passed and it became law on 8 June. Meanwhile the Soup Kitchen Act was in operation, having become law on 26 February.

In the meantime, before Lord John Russell's official proclamation of his Soup Kitchen policy in Parliament, the deputation from Kilfearagh and other West Clare parishes had returned home from Dublin. Immediately a

soup kitchen was established, with official approval, and placed under the management of a committee consisting of Jonas Studdert, Fr. Comyn, Dr. John Griffin, and Thomas Parker. Francis O'Donnell was treasurer and Rev. J. Martin secretary. It was decided that, pending the arrival of the promised boiler from Dublin, use would be made of the boilers which heated water for the Baths.⁸ The new soup kitchen was to be supported by monthly donations -- seemingly promised by individuals -- and any donations received otherwise.⁹ They also had the promise made by Routh of matching any local donations from government funds. Quite possibly the £5 which Fr. Comyn received from Dr. Kennedy, Bishop of Killaloe, in mid February for the relief of the poor, was also used for this purpose.¹⁰ Commenting on the establishment of the soup kitchen the Limerick Chronicle remarked that the destitution in Kilkee was very great as many poor people followed the summer visitors to the town and then, by easily getting lodgings in winter, remained as a permanent burden on the locality.¹¹

Under the provisions of the Soup Kitchen Act a new relief committee had to be formed in Kilkee, as the one supervising the soup kitchen in early spring had been formed before the act came into effect. This new committee held its first meeting in early April.¹² Its activities, however, were not confined to doling out soup. It was entitled to distribute meal also and to issue ration cards stating the amount of food to which the holder was entitled.

But the relief committee was not the only source from which the people received help. The Society of Friends frequently sent gifts of money, food and clothing during 1847 and following years, as did many private individuals

also. The gifts of clothing were channeled through the Ladies' Clothing Society at Kilkee which seems to have done a good deal to keep the people decently clothed.¹³

3. Deaths from Starvation and Fever

As winter changed into spring deaths began to be recorded from starvation. A Kilkee correspondent wrote to the Limerick Reporter in late February:¹⁴

I am sorry to inform you that Kilkee, I fear, will soon be a second Skibbereen, the starving poor day after day falling off the works, and dying. A poor man named Blood.....was found prostrate on the road, having thrown up a large quantity of blood, and, in a short time after he expired. This untimely end the poor man declared to be the effects of starvation. Many others, it is to be apprehended, will meet the same fate in this locality. God only knows when and where it will stop.

And there were many others:

Limerick Chronicle 6 February¹⁵ --- "An inquest was held on Sunday last in Kilkee on the body of a poor man who died on his way to the workhouse, Kilrush."

Limerick Chronicle 27 March¹⁶ --- "A poor man fell dead of cold and starvation at Moyasta."

But the very fact that individual deaths were being reported shows such happenings were not so frequent as no longer to arouse comment.

Fever now began to sweep the country. At the beginning of March the Kilrush Workhouse had 1,100 -- 1,200 inmates, even though it had been built originally to cope with only 800. Fever was rampant; nearly a quarter of the inmates were sick and the master, his daughter and the doctor were down with fever. The guardians, with a few exceptions, were afraid to go near it through fear of disease.¹⁷ The fever hospital, built originally for 36 patients, had 48 at the beginning of March but the mortality rate does not appear to have been particularly high.¹⁸ However, the worst of the fever epidemic had not yet come. In the country in general it reached its climax in April but did not begin to subside until September.¹⁹ Describing the situation in Moyarta barony in July, Fr. Michael Meehan, C.C., Kilrush, said that about every tenth family was in actual fever:²⁰

There are, and have been all the summer, hovels in this barony and in every parish of it, where the sick were obliged to grope and totter to the door for turf, water, meal, etc., which a charitable neighbour would bring to the threshold and no further -- the only friend that would enter there was the Priest.

The town of Kilkee seems to have fared somewhat better than the surrounding countryside. In late June it was reported to be free from disease.²¹

Fr. Meehan also gives us a glimpse of a priest's work at this time. With reference to the priests of Moyarta barony he wrote:²²

Most of the priest have ten or twelve calls per day, and must ride twenty or thirty miles to take them in. The physician and the humane may go to some with temporal relief; the poor Priest must go to all with the consolations of his ministry. And, indeed, not the least of our hardships is that, ~~at~~ exploring the most thrilling abodes of distress, we have not wherewithal to make our corporal works of mercy commensurate with the spiritual. X

It was against this background that emigration began to appear as the only way of escape. On 18 March the Clare Journal reported: "Emigration from all parts of this country is now taking place to a most unprecedented extent." In Kilfearagh parish the numbers leaving would not, as yet, be very great, though it was stated that in Kilkee many were trying to dispose of their farms and lodges so that they could begin life anew on the other side of the Atlantic.²³

4. Preparing for the New Harvest

On 16 March, Captain Mann wrote:²⁴ "As yet, except among the strong farmers, tillage is very much neglected." Four days later the first reduction in numbers on the public works took place and further reductions took place at intervals after that. Although the purpose of this was to leave the labourers free to till the fields, the hoped for result was not achieved. On 24 March the Limerick Chronicle reported that there

was no sign of the land being worked in the vicinity of Kilkee,²⁵ and there was no immediate improvement in the situation. There were several reasons for this lack of preparation:

- 1) After two successive failures of the potato crop, many felt that there was little point in sowing potatoes. It was known that in America the potatoes had failed in three successive years.
- 2) The conacre system had virtually come to an end. In 1846 nobody who had let out land on conacre had received any rent and as a result the owners were now inclined to keep it themselves for grass and cattle. In any case, quite probably nobody would be inclined to take land on conacre, even if it was available.²⁶
- 3) There was a widespread shortage of potato seed and, indeed, of seed of any kind. In many cases what had at first been kept for this purpose was eventually wholly or partly eaten as food. In March a supply of bere and rye seed arrived in Kilrush and was sold by Capt. Mann -- but not without difficulty, only "by dint of persuasion and having it published by the R.C. clergy." The rye was to prove particularly successful. During the winter a supply of it had arrived at the Kilrush depot from Russia and it had become quite popular with the poor. Now a considerable amount was sown in West Clare -- where it could be planted on inferior land -- and was to prove a good substitute for the potato when harvested.

Captain Mann's difficulty in disposing of the seed may seem strange at first sight. But there was a simple explanation. The Government at one stage intended to

advance £50,000 to landlords to enable them to purchase and distribute seed to their tenants. The seed merchants objected and as the plan might interfere with private enterprise it was withdrawn. However, in March and early April the farmers in West Clare were still hopeful of receiving free seed and therefore were very reluctant to purchase. On 12 April H.M.S. Dragon brought another supply of seed to Kilrush. A little was purchased by a few landlords and then the ship sailed away again with most of its cargo. It was only at this stage that it finally dawned on the people that they were not going to get any free seed and Captain Mann was now besieged with applications for seed of any kind. A few days later a steamer arrived with a cargo of oat seed and the greater part of it was immediately purchased and sown.

"A sudden and favourable reaction took place, all appearing anxious to till something, and not let the land run to waste."

About the same time a large amount of turnip seed was imported by local dealers in West Clare and those who could, bought and sowed it. Then, at the end of May, Sir R. Routh found that he had 40,000 lbs. of turnip and green crop seed left on his hands and he gave them to the Society of Friends for free distribution. A small quantity of the turnip seed was received by Captain Mann for distribution in his district.²⁷

The final result of the spring sowing was that the amount of potatoes planted was very much smaller than in the other hand, a vast increase had taken place in the acreage under turnips. In County Clare as many as 6,129 acres were planted with potatoes in 1847, while 10,968 were planted with turnips.²⁸ Such a

change about would have seemed incredible even two years previously; but it was to have some beneficial results. In the following winter the turnips were to save many lives, as Mr. Twisleton noted on 25 January 1848, when he wrote:²⁹

The gratuitous distribution of the turnip seed last year I believe saved more lives than almost anything else.

One final point about the spring work must be noted. By the beginning of June, little turf had been cut near Pouinasherry for the Limerick trade.³⁰ This was to mean a big income loss to the area.

5. Summer 1847

The summer season at Kilkee opened on a rather ominous note. The theft of a quantity of meal from the local relief depot became a minor matter when the body of a murdered woman, a visitor to Kilkee, was found in a bog about two miles from the town. The police immediately fixed their suspicions on a man named Ryan, who, like the murdered woman, was from Hospital, Co. Limerick. When they visited the house where he had been staying he had fled but they discovered the stolen meal in a bed-tick. Three weeks later Daniel Ryan was arrested by Head Constable John Mullarchy of Kilrush and charged with murder.³¹ His motive was thought to be a desire to get possession of a few pounds the poor woman was reputed to have.³²

Even when reporting the murder incident the Limerick Chronicle hastened to assure its readers that, despite the destitution, there had been no outrage or

plunder at Kilkee.³³ And, as we have already mentioned, the town was free from fever. A month later a correspondent of the Limerick Reporter painted an even brighter picture:³⁴

I have much pleasure to announce to the visitors who frequent this much admired watering-place, that the people, as usual, are most peaceable, and that new potatoes are now exposed for sale at the low price of 8d per stone, perfectly sound and free from disease, ^{not/}withstanding the prognostications of the black prophets of the west. Vegetables are plenty (sic), and our markets are well supplied with beef and mutton at 5d per lb., and our village presenting a gay appearance already. Wheat and barley are doing very well, but the oat crop is rather deficient. Many of our poor natives have suffered rather severely during this trying season, which they bore with that patient endurance characteristic of the Irish peasant.

In mid August Kilkee was stated to be more crowded than it had ever been³⁵ -- but soon afterwards the season ended prematurely,³⁶ And to add to the people's losses the potato crop, such as it was, was by no means the healthy one expected in July.

6. End of Public Works and Soup Kitchens

As we have seen, the soup kitchens were to tide the people over the gap between the gradual winding up of the public works and the coming ~~to~~ into operation of outdoor relief. At first a closing date of 15 August was fixed

for the soup kitchens but the extreme want in many areas, especially in the south and south-west and probably including Kilkee, caused some delay. However, 1 October was definitely fixed as the last day for the distribution of rations in any union through the soup kitchens.³⁷

By this time the public works had also been wound up -- a process which had been virtually completed by the end of June -- and the Government was quite determined not to restart them. Nevertheless, in late September, a memorial from the "Clergy, Gentry and Inhabitants of Kilkee" was presented to the Lord Lieutenant, complaining of the unfinished state of the sea-wall and other public works and stating that all of what had been done in Kilkee would be swept away by the high tides of winter unless completed before then.³⁸ A few weeks later a deputation from Clare called on the Lord Lieutenant and asked for a loan for the re-commencement of public works already begun and incomplete. The answer held out no hope. "We understand that his Excellency, while he deplored the wretched state into which the country had been plunged, held out no hope that the prayer of the Memorial, so far as related to a loan of money, could be granted."³⁹ Still exploring every avenue, Fr. Comyn wrote to Henry Grattan, M.P. at the end of October, with a view to having the situation in the Kilkee area brought before the notice of the Irish M.Ps. at a meeting to be held shortly afterwards.⁴⁰ All in vain. The public works and the soup kitchens were now very definitely a thing of the past and West Clare was thrown back on its own resources -- with terrible results.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTOWARDS UTTER DESTITUTION1. Causes of Destitution

Looking back at the suffering of the previous twelve months Captain Mann wrote on 15 November, 1847:¹

A great deal has been written and many an account given of the dreadful sufferings endured by the poor. Believe me, my dear Sir, the reality in most cases far exceeded description.

Indeed none can conceive what it was but those who were in it. For my part I frequently look back on it as a fearful and horrid dream, scarcely knowing how to sufficiently express gratitude to the Almighty for having brought the country through it even as it is.

Mann was correct in assuming that a chapter had closed but he appears to have been totally unaware that a new and more terrible one was opening. There were several reasons for the increased destitution. The cessation or near-cessation of conacre had meant that the poorest section of the population had no supply of food for the winter. Those who had planted potatoes were caught by the new failure and, as we shall see, even those who formerly were a little above subsistence level were caught between the rival claims of the rent and rate collectors. In November "A Looker-On, Kilkee" wrote:²

Last year the poor had pigs and potatoes, such as they were. The pigs are gone, and the small quantity of potatoes remaining from this year's crop are rapidly becoming diseased. I know a respectable person who, in the last fortnight, lost ten barrels out of fourteen....The grain

food is rapidly disappearing....It has been officially stated that rents were never better paid than this year. In many instances it is true; but it is equally so that the majority of those who have been thus punctual, were so through fear of being turned out of the ground; and I know of several who, after paying their rents, are without any means of supporting their families.

Throughout the whole district it is one scene of misery and distress; the paupers are starving notwithstanding the poor law; and the other classes are but a few degrees removed from them. Every available article is either sold or in pawn, even to the very beds and blankets; and no man can assist ~~the~~ his neighbour as heretofore.

In place of the public works and soup kitchens the people now had to turn to the workhouse for their salvation and it can be truly said that from this time on the story of the people of Kilfearagh parish becomes centred more and more on Kilrush Workhouse. Under the Poor Law Extension Act of 1847 it was possible now to grant outdoor relief i.e., the workhouses could give food to people who were not inmates. But normally this relief would be given only to the destitute who were aged or infirm, widows or children. The ablebodied would receive relief only within the workhouse -- as otherwise it was feared that the scheme would be unworkable because of the number of applicants.³ However, outdoor relief to the ablebodied could be given if the Poor Law Commissioners issued an order authorizing it.⁴

Practically all this new and heavy expense would have to be paid for out of the poor law rates collected locally --- although Kilrush Union did get some help from the Government, being classified as "distressed". Already, in many places, quite a lot of difficulty had been experienced in collecting and the burden was now far greater. It had also some side effects. Landlords were liable for the rates on holdings valued at £4 and under, and this was true even though the rent had not been paid. To avoid the rates the cabin had to be pulled down. It is no coincidence, then, that the beginning of the mass evictions in Kilrush Union coincided with the coming into operation of the new system of relief. Furthermore, a clause in the new act, known as the "quarter-acre clause" or "Gregory clause" aided the landlords in this process. Under this provision no relief was granted to the family of a man who held a quarter acre of ground or more. He had the choice, then, of keeping his farm and getting no relief or giving up his farm and entering the workhouse.⁵ Indeed the position with regard to this clause was such that Mr. Twisleton could write on 13 January, 1848:⁶

It would seem.....that a Relieving Officer cannot give relief, even in cases of starvation, to anyone who occupies more than a quarter of an acre of land.

The increased rates spurred the landlords on to evictions. But the farmer with a valuation of a little over £4 was almost the hardest hit of all. Before 1845 these would have been reasonably comfortable by Irish

standards. Now they were hit on all sides -- the landlord competing with the rate collector to see who would get his payment. Trevelyan even asked: "Is there no power of securing the rates out of the produce of the crops seized for rent?"⁷ Seemingly there was not. Writing from Kilrush Union on 11 November, Captain Kennedy, the newly appointed Poor Law Inspector,⁸ stated that a major mistake had been committed with regard to the issue of the warrant for collection of rates in the union. If it had been done a month earlier the rate collectors would have arrived before the crops were swept by the landlords or sold by the tenants.⁹ And a week later he wrote:¹⁰

Empty walls, an iron pot and children in swarms are all I can see or the collector find. In some lawless localities, I expect resistance, but in these places they are able to pay; the law being vigorously put in force with a few, will, I trust, decide the matter....I hope for the countenance of the R.C.clergy in the collection of this most righteous impost.

And it was little wonder that many were unwilling to pay the poor rate. In 1845 it had been 10d in Kilkee Electoral Division, By 1846 it had gone up to 1/3 and in 1847 it soared to 6/10. Combined with a Grand Jury rate of $3/10\frac{3}{4}$ this meant that $10/8\frac{3}{4}$ had to be paid on each £1 valuation. Some statistics supplied by the Poor Law offices explain the rising costs, keeping in mind also the cessation of government aid. In 1845 the

proportion of people relieved by the poor law in Kilfearagh parish was 1/238. In 1846 it was 1/102. By 1847 it was 1/29 and, continuing the rapidly worsening position, in 1848 it was 1/3 and in 1849 1/2.¹¹

As destitution spread it moved from the labourer to the small farmer and eventually even to those who had been quite comfortable in 1845. In 1851 we can find a notice like the following in the obituary column of the Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator:¹²

At Kilrush Workhouse, Martin Haren, formerly a
respectable farmer.

In the face of all this the efforts of individuals could no longer do anything to achieve results like those got by Fr. Comyn, Rev. Mr. Martin, Hugh Hogan and others in 1845-6 and for most of 1847. These now move completely into the background as the Guardians and officials of Kilrush Workhouse take the centre of the stage. For two years after the first appearance of the blight the old way of life had been held tenuously together. In the months and years after autumn 1847 it gradually disintegrated.

2. Autumn and Winter 1847-8

In mid October three fishermen were drowned at Farrow, ¹³ the first of a number of such accidents in this part of the parish over a period of a few years. Just as most men had for long been unfit to work on the roads or elsewhere, so too the fishermen had not the stamina required for fishing. Fr. Meehan wrote of the fishermen in Moyarta barony:¹⁴

This year they were not able to fish; for each canoe (light boats made of laths and tarred ^{sic} canvass) required three men to fish effectively, and these should row, while fishing, about ten miles. This length of rowing in our very rough seas required strength and agility, which had fled from the skin and bones frames of our poor fishermen this year.

By early 1848 the fishermen were absolutely destitute. It was claimed that the fish had gone from the coast and there was nothing to catch. Their nets had once again been brought to the pawnshop and, although worth £1 each, only 5/- had been given for them. The simple truth was that even at this low price the pawnbrokers could not get buyers¹⁵ -- because very few were fishing. In the district along the coast from Tarbert Island to Black Head there were 676 boats employing 2393 men and boys registered with the coast-guards on 1 January 1846. On 1 January 1848 the figures for the same area were eleven vessels and forty men.^{15a} Yet, despite their great hardships, Captain Kennedy found that the fishermen, as a class, were very slow to enter the workhouse^{15b} -- seemingly even much slower than others.

In November 1847 Mr. Walsh, an agricultural instructor sent by Lord Clarendon and the Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland, was deputed by the Guardians of Kilrush Union to deliver a lecture in Kilkee. Mr. Walsh was especially concerned with drainage, the use of manure and the encouragement of

the growing of flax.¹⁶ But by this time something more than mere advice was needed. If, nearly two years previously, the people had been merely "half-starved" in the Irish sense of the term, they were now "starved". In the neighbourhood of Kilkee men, women and children were to be seen rooting up the potato fields, already dug, in the hope of finding a few stray potatoes which had been previously overlooked.¹⁷ On 25 November Captain Kennedy wrote:¹⁸

The north and west of the union, including the divisions Kilmurry, Killard, Kilmacduane, Kilkee and a part of Moyarta, are in a most lamentable state. The parts on the coast are most densely populated, with a turf-digging, seaweed gathering, fish-catching, amphibious population; as bad fishermen as they are agriculturalists. They have no regular mode of gaining a livelihood... A few acres of reclaimed bog planted with potatoes has heretofore supplied their wants, and rendered them content on the lowest possible scale of existence. While westerly gales prevail during the winter, large numbers eke out a wretched existence gathering seaweed, which they carry and sell further inland for manure. The villages of Mullagh, Doonbeg, Bealaha and Kilkee are wretched nests of filth, famine and disease.

Captain Kennedy went on to say that the whole district seemed swept of food and he reckoned that one third of the population would be without food at Christmas, two thirds starving before February and the whole without food or money before May.

In Kilkee some of the lodge-owners were quite well off but the remainder were every bit as badly circumstanced as their country brethren. In the outskirts of the town a special reporter of the Limerick and Clare Examiner saw scenes of "unparalleled wretchedness".

"God alone knows how they are to get over the winter; I fear much, it will be a winter of death for many of them."¹⁹ A short distance from the town, on his way to Carrigaholt, he saw 80 acres which had been left untilled for want of seed. Inquiring about this he was told:²⁰

It wasn't tilling we were thinking of, but the hunger -- we had nothing to put in it. When the famine came, they died, as the birds do, when the frost comes, and what we thought we never would see, they were buried without the coffin.

Burial without a coffin was the ultimate sign of destitution -- and with the coffin disappeared most of the funeral ritual so dear to the people. Fever was now raging and in some localities in West Clare cases of smallpox also occurred.²¹ As a result, funerals, which had formerly been attended by great throngs of people, had become smaller and smaller. The frequency of their occurrence and fear of infection reduced the number of mourners to a group barely sufficient to carry the

coffin to the grave and bury it -- if there was a coffin.²² Many corpses, perhaps half of those now being buried in West Clare, were wrapped in straw and swathed around with a sugawn. And Captain Kennedy met one poor man carrying his two dead children to the grave in a cradle.²³ Needless to remark, wakes had become rare occurrences.²⁴ During most of 1847 Kilrush Workhouse provided a large number of coffins for people who were not inmates^{24a} --- but even here the contractor was unpaid in early November and threatening to stop supplies.²⁵ And in this same month the Poor Law Commissioners informed Boards of Guardians ^{that they were} not to provide coffins for those who did not die in the workhouse.²⁶

From late 1847 onwards, then, many people entered the workhouse for the sole purpose of getting what they considered to be a decent burial. In February 1851, Dr. Madden, historian of the United Irishmen, visited Kilrush Workhouse and described a crowd seeking admission \times as follows:²⁷

These sick and famishing creatures were brought there, as I was informed, by neighbours who had lent cars to carry them to the Poorhouse, and a great number of them, to use their own language, "for a coffin". On surprise being expressed at hearing this reason given for the removal of these people, and the question being repeated, one of those moribund applicants for admission in order to get a shell and a grave, - a man more like a skeleton than a living man, yet not much above forty years of age -- said in a low hollow-toned voice -- "Yes, to get a coffin, your honour."

The type of burial they got, however, hardly made their visit to the workhouse worthwhile. Again to quote Dr. Madden:²⁸

The dead are interred every morning in a churchyard (Shanakyle) about a mile and a half from the town. The bodies are carted away without any appearance of a funeral ceremony; no attendance of priest or parson, no pall. The coffins -- if the frail boards nailed together for the remains of paupers may be so called -- are made by contract, and furnished "at a very low figure". The paupers' trench in a corner of the churchyard, which I visited, is a large pit, the yawning aperture about twenty feet square. The dead are deposited in layers, and over each coffin a little earth is thinly scattered, just sufficient to conceal the boards. The thickness of the covering of clay I found did not amount to two inches over the last tier of coffins deposited there. A pauper who drives the cart, and another who accompanies him to assist in taking the coffins from that conveyance, and slipping them down into the trench, are the only funeral attendants. It is very rare that any of the kith ~~and~~, or kin of a pauper accompany his remains to the grave, because there are so many deaths, and so much difficulty in ascertaining anything about the identity of such a multitude of paupers as those amounting to half a hundred or more who die in a

week, that it is seldom anything is known of the deaths in the Poorhouse by the friends outside, if any there be left, until long after they have taken place.

The charge was also made that those who had a shirt were not even given a shroud.^{28a} It was this final indignity which prompted an anonymous writer to contribute some verses to the Nation:²⁹

Aye, buried like dogs are the Poor-house Dead
 In this Christian land, without shroud or shred
 Of a winding sheet on the wasted frame---
 And this Godless thrift is our Guardians' aim!
 No prayer for the Dead, to offend the ear
 Of our Saxon "Saints" is repeated here;
 Of "mummeries", none that "degrade the mind"
 And debase the soul, in Kilrush you'll find.

Thus did many of the people of Kilfearagh parish to to their final resting place.

If deaths were on the increase, marriages were on the decrease. In 1840 104 marriages from Kilfearagh and Killard parishes were entered into the register at Kilkee Catholic Church. In 1846 the number was 106, well up to and perhaps even above the average of the previous decade. But in 1847 this had dropped to 36 (19 of them with addresses in Kilfearagh parish) and in the two years 1848-9 there were only 41 in all. The reduction in the number of marriages and the general straitened circumstances of his flock caused a serious drop in Fr. Comyn's income. Perhaps his charitable efforts too, contributed to his having to leave his house and farm on the outskirts of Kilkee and go into lodgings in the town.^{29a}

By 18 November 1847 over 6,000 notices to quit had been served in Kilrush Union, and Kilfearagh parish was no different in this respect from the others. The land under ejection was literally bare of all stock and produce.³⁰ Little wonder, then, that the Limerick Chronicle could write in mid December of the Kilkee area: "The people, we have heard, are one half starving, the other half plundering." A threatening notice against Jonas Studdert and two others, which was signed "Molly Maguire", was found on the door of Kilkee Protestant Church one Sunday morning, while armed bands were seen on different occasions on the road between Kilkee and Doonbeg.³¹ On 14 December Captain Mann wrote:³² "Hitherto we have been most quiet and outrage has been unknown, but I do fear we shall not always be so. There is undoubted reason to think that there are some ruffians lurking about in the vicinity of Kilkee and Killard who are on a mischievous errand. The police are using every exertion to find them out and occasionally get on their track." Soon afterwards the number of soldiers in Kilrush was increased.³⁵

As 1848 opened robberies became more frequent occurrences. At the beginning of January two women were committed to Ennis Gaol for stealing tea, sugar, powder and shot from a milk-can left in front of a Kilkee public-house.³⁴ In February Miss Fahy, mistress of the National School at Kilkee, returned home from school one evening to find that she had been robbed of £20 and her clothes.³⁵ A fortnight later Mr. Hogan's grocery store was broken into at night.³⁶ However, when seen against the general background of want these happenings become more understandable.

The traders, or at least many of them, were now reaping the reward of government non-intervention and the people were utterly at their mercy. In January the Limerick Chronicle reported that the greatest imposition was generally practised by traders in West Clare³⁷ and on 1 March Captain Kennedy wrote:³⁸

I know that a description of Indian meal, hardly fit for human food, is retailed at an immense profit through the Union, and that the retailers have realized very large sums.

Advantage, too, was being taken of the very many men who were ready to grasp any opportunity of obtaining work. Captain Mann commented on 11 February:³⁹

Employment there is none and I am sorry to say it is stated and with truth that the farmers are in many instances taking advantage of this state of things and getting their work done for the man's diet and perhaps a little tobacco, thus leaving the wife and children no share.

3. Relief Organizations

When a man had no means of supporting his wife and children they generally had eventually to face towards the workhouse. Some, however, were supported through help from charitable organizations. We have already seen that in 1847 the Society of Friends commenced sending donations and gifts to relieve distress in Kilfearagh parish. Such help continued to arrive during 1848, probably increasing in volume. In January Rev. James Martin acknowledged the receipt of 12 barrels of Indian meal and one barrel of pork⁴⁰ and a fortnight later a cwt. of rice arrived from the same source.⁴¹ Other gifts included bales of clothing material and bed covering.⁴²

Private individuals and firms also helped, probably after having been applied to. Mrs. Driver of Peckham sent £5 for the employment of poor women in their own cabins;^{42a} an anonymous Friend sent three dozen men and boys' caps,⁴³ while various people sent small money donations.⁴⁴ In the stricken area itself few of the better off opened their purses. But, then, they had not been accustomed to doing so. In the context of West Clare Captain Mann wrote on 13 February 1848:⁴⁵

The old cant that charity was so unbounded etc. etc., is all humbug; the poor always cared for the poor -- what have the rich as a body done throughout this awful visitation? -- some do make a great fuss and try to beguile themselves into a belief that they are doing wonders.... But what is the wondrous work? Why being very active in distributing the funds sent from various charitable institutions and trying to secure the largest amount for their own immediate dependents.

Along with the Society of Friends there was another voluntary organization which made a very valuable contribution towards stemming the tide. This was the British Association for the Relief of the extreme Distress in the remote parishes of Ireland and Scotland, founded in January 1847. In early January 1848 Trevelyan told Captain Mann to make an application for aid to Count Strzelecki of the British Association. Mann followed his instructions and the result was a grant of £100 for relief in Kilrush Union, together with a promise of £500 for the purchasing and making of children's clothes. Captain Mann was delighted at this -- as it would provide a market for homemade serge together with giving employment



to destitute widows.⁴⁶ The cloth was then bought in the market at Kilrush and a house was rented in which the clothes were made under the supervision of some local ladies.⁴⁷ Employment was given there to 150 poor women.⁴⁸ The end products were distributed among the poor children of the district.⁴⁹

Although further cash grants were made by the British Relief Association to Kilrush Union, its most important project was the provision of food for children attending national schools in this union and elsewhere in the West of Ireland. Between 1 October 1847 and 25 April 1848 3,362 national school children in Kilrush Union received meals. And in a five month period from December to April (inclusive) nearly half a million meals were served.⁵⁰ Kilkee N.S. shared in this bounty which was invaluable to the children.⁵¹ Captain Mann commented: "It is impossible to estimate too highly the value and importance of feeding the destitute children at the schools."

Although only very poor children were helped in the schools by the British Association, Captain Kennedy revealed an anomaly in mid March. In Kilkee N.S. the teachers demanded the payment of one penny a week from each child -- and this excluded the really destitute from the school and put them outside the scope of the scheme. This was a rather awkward situation as it was National Board policy that portion of the teachers' salaries should come from weekly contributions from the pupils. When informed of the situation in Kilkee it ordered that children receiving British Association relief were not to be charged for instruction.⁵²

On 1 July 1848 the funds of the British Association finally dried up but Lord John Russell promised that the relief it was giving to 200,000 school children would be kept up by the Government.⁵³ But a little over two months later, despite this promise, the free distribution of food in the schools of Kilrush Union came to an end.⁵⁴

4. Politics

Although most people in Kilfearagh parish no longer had the intense interest in politics of five or six years earlier when O'Connell was at the height of his repeal campaign, 1848 was the year in which the political developments of the decade came to a head. In January 1847 the Young Irelanders, having earlier seceded from the Repeal Association, founded a new and militant organization, The Irish Confederation. The plan was to found confederate clubs throughout the country to exert pressure on the Government to repeal the Act of Union. In fact very few such clubs were founded initially. However, in May and June 1848 events swiftly moved the Young Irelanders towards an armed rebellion and an effort was made to increase the number of clubs. In early June an attempt was made to unite the Repeal Association and the Irish Confederation through the replacement of both by a new association, the Irish League. It was agreed that the confederate clubs were not to be disbanded but were to remain, the nucleus of a national guard. Gavan Duffy believed that the League would provide a means of introducing armed clubs into the rural areas where the Confederation had previously made little progress.⁵⁵

On 21 June Fr. Comyn expressed his delight at the prospect of a reunion among Repealers⁵⁶ and about three weeks later attended a meeting of the League in Dublin at which he was proposed for membership by Thomas D'Arcy McGee.⁵⁷ Fr. Comyn, however, was no republican revolutionary and was obviously expecting constitutional agitation. He would have little sympathy then with the aims of some of those who founded The Lord Clare Club in Kilkee about this same time.⁵⁸ When the ill-fated rebellion broke out shortly afterwards there were no incidents in Kilkee beyond the sending of a threatening letter to Dr. Tuite. For this the secretary of the club, Patrick Kean Jr., was summoned before the magistrates and got away with a "salutary stricture" for want of evidence.⁵⁹

In August Kilkee was visited by a group of military and police in search of some of the Young Ireland leaders whom they believed to be in hiding in the town. This was the outcome of a report that Richard O'Gorman and two companions had dined in one of the town's hotels on the previous day. At midnight the hotels and a number of private houses were surrounded and searched. "The traitors were said to be disguised as females and occupied ladies' apartments; it therefore became absolutely necessary that all the ladies' bedrooms should be searched. This painful duty was performed by Mr. Little R.M. alone and in the most delicate manner possible." The search did not meet with any success and a few days later the Limerick Examiner reported that Richard O'Gorman had succeeded in making his escape, disguised as an old woman in black, on board a steam-boat at Kilrush.⁶⁰

Despite the troubled times visitors still came to Kilkee in the summer of 1848. In the very early part of the season, in mid June, the town was reported to be free from disease.⁶¹ But a month later fever in the surrounding countryside prevented visitors from making some of their usual excursions.⁶² One picnic party, which visited Dunlickey Castle, about four miles from the town along the coast, had an unusual experience, which illustrates the change brought about by famine. The party of visitors was held up by a group of about ten men with two or three guns, in what seemed to be an attempted robbery. However, the visitors, despite the presence of the guns, resisted their opponents and managed to put them to flight. Apart from the manner in which it ended the incident was unusual in that it was the first occasion on which visitors to Kilkee were ever molested in this manner.⁶³ Ten days later two men were charged at Kilkee Petty Sessions in connection with it. It now transpired that they were not attempting a robbery. The field in which the holiday party was enjoying itself belonged to one of the accused and he claimed that he was merely trying to get money for the use of it, a claim which was accepted.⁶⁴ The whole affair does, however, show the change which had taken place from pre-Famine times and how desperate some people had become.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

EVICTIONS

From the end of 1847 the lives of the people of Kilfearagh parish came to be dominated by three interconnected things -- evictions, Kiltrush Workhouse and emigration. In many cases evictions forced people to the workhouse while some, in order to get aid from the workhouse, had to give up their plots of ground -- so that their situation was very close to eviction.

We have already seen that by the autumn of 1847 lack of money to pay rents and a desire for clearance because of rising rates had led to 6,000 notices to quit being served in Kiltrush Union. Those who still had some money or stock were caught between the rival claims of rent and rate collectors. On 22 December Captain Mann remarked that the landlords were trying to screw out their rents,¹ while a few weeks earlier he had noted that some of the landlords, dissatisfied with their agents, had transferred their agencies to Marcus Keane "who is a wellknown stringent and successful collector of rents."² This was the same Marcus Keane who acted for the Marquis of Conyngham in Kilfearagh parish and of whom the Limerick Reporter was to remark not very much later that he was "unhappy when not exterminating."³

Captain Kennedy commented on the large sums being demanded as rent. An acre of land worth about 15/- was being let for £3 and the occupiers, being unable to pay, were bound to give 140 days' labour in spring and harvest-time when they needed it most themselves. Similarly, cabins worth about 7/6 a year were being let for 100 or

120 days' labour.⁴

As the stage was set for the mass evictions which were to follow, a tenant right meeting took place at Lisdeen and a petition was adopted calling on the Government to extend the tenant right of Ulster to that locality.⁵ Captain Mann had been slightly worried before the meeting took place⁶ but after the event he could describe it as a "very hole in the corner affair."⁷ He must have been right for nothing further was heard about tenant right from the area for quite some time.⁸

When a landlord wished to evict what did he do? The ordinary ejection procedure involved getting the sheriff's authority and the serving of notices in advance to the people concerned including the local relief officer, "to allow preparation to be made for the reception or subsistence of the families." The majority of landlords in West Clare, however, found this a little too involved and so they adopted different and simpler procedures. In most cases they moved by Civil Bill against the tenant for arrears of rent. He was then arrested and released only when possession had been given to the landlord by the other members of his family and he had agreed to having the house knocked down. Or, alternately, a small sum of money might be given to the tenant and a discharge from all claim of rent on his giving up possession and the house being demolished.⁹ However, when Rev. S. Godolphin Osborne visited West Clare in 1849 evictions witnessed by him involved the use of the first method. It is worth giving his account of this in full as the scene described must have been typical of many:¹⁰

The legal forms necessary to obtain the Sheriff's authority to take possession having been gone through, and the proper notices served on the parties concerned, a notice is also served on the Relieving Officer, informing him on what day the people will be ejected. At the appointed hour we will suppose ourselves to be on the spot; there are, say, some six dwellings in a group, nearly adjoining each other, and all situated close to a public roadside. Some of these dwellings may be larger than others, but in outward form and actual structure they are all much alike, simply two stone gables, built of the stone of the country, a thatched roof connecting them, and descending to some five or six feet from the ground. A gig or outside car arrives with the Sheriff's deputy; the Agent for the property is in attendance on horse-back, with some ten or twelve rough looking peasants, one or two of them having iron crowbars and other necessaries for their business of destruction. A certain form is quickly gone through by the Law's Officer, the effect of which is, to put the Agent of the property in possession, in other words, giving him full power to turn out the people and pull down the dwellings, if it is his pleasure to do so. In very many districts a small body of armed police attend, in case of any forcible resistance. The Relieving Officer calls out the names from the list sent to him and, as he may think proper, offers to the parties now to be ejected orders for

admission to the Union House. These orders are very generally refused, or if accepted, are not acted on.

The word is now given by the Agent to his "destructives". If the people will not come out of the dwellings they are dragged out; with them the bed, kettle, old wheel, tub, and one or two stools, with perhaps an old chest; few cabins have anything to add to this list of furniture at the time the tenants are ejected; the living and dead stock being alike out in the road; now begins a long and long sustained chorus of intermingled prayers, blessings, reproaches, revilings, weeping, etc., generally ending in low monotonous imprecations on the heads of those who thus are crowning the ruin of the ejected.

The women will 'kene'^{ll}, beat their breasts, throw themselves on the ground, embrace the knees of the Agent's horse, hang on to the steps of the Sheriff's car; they will do and say all an excited Irishwoman can say and do, to either obtain money, or invoke vengeance; and truly poor creatures, they are gifted with powers of eloquence, aided by a power of action and gesticulation, which, as it may be employed, to bless or curse, is in either way most impressive.

Agents and sheriff's officers, however, from the nature of their avocation, have become case hardened against these attacks upon the softer feelings of our nature; the groans and prayers of the ejected, like the dust of the falling thatch of their roofs, are unavoidable evils, the regular result of the routine of 'house tumbling'.....

A man jumps up on the roof, and soon uncovers a part of the beam, which goes from the point of one gable to the other; he fastens a rope round it, it may require, perhaps, a little action from a saw, to weaken it; the rope is passed through the door of the house; it is manned at once by some others of the band; an iron bar is now placed under the wall plate, at one of the angles: a pull at the rope, breaking the back of the roof, and the lifting of the bar, hoisting it from its bearing on the wall, down it goes in a cloud of dust, sometimes falling wholly within the walls, sometimes a part will remain resting one end on the ground, the other against the gable.

The methods we have mentioned were within the law. But not all ejections followed exact legal procedures and the poor tenant had little redress. One man, named Honan, from Tarmon, returned from a visit to Kilrush in search of outdoor relief to find that his cabin had been levelled in his absence. Knowing that this was illegal he summoned the landlord to Kilrush Petty Sessions, won his case and was awarded £1 for the demolition of the cabin. But the landlord then appealed the sentence knowing that Honan could not possibly afford the cost of this.¹²

Between November 1847 and July 1848 about 900 houses, containing 4,000 inhabitants, were levelled in Kilrush Union and still the work of destruction went on.¹³ In early March 1848 56 people, many of whom had paid their rent, were evicted from their holdings at Emlagh near Kilkee. Their houses were levelled to the ground and their neighbours warned not to take them in. The remarks made by some of the evicted to a newspaper reporter must be expressive of the feelings of many such:¹⁴

The landlords can transport or hang us -- poverty is our only crime --, many of us would pay our rent if left in --the landlords make a home-made Botany-bay of the Workhouse; but in New South Wales we would get enough to eat. Oh! the landlords don't want a Gallows-green while the Workhouse stands -- that's what can clear their properties of the poor, who are ready to live by their work if they got it to do.

All through summer and autumn the evictions went on. In October 86 people were evicted from O'Gorman Mahon's property at Lisdeen, while 55 more were evicted by Colonel Vandeleur at Banemore. In November 129 had to leave their homes at Lislanihan and 85 more at Tarmon. More evictions from O'Gorman Mahon's property -- 23 people this time. On condition of being allowed to take away their crops they had to level their own houses. In mid November the biggest eviction was from the Conyngham property at Kilfearagh -- 107. These people had given up their lands in the previous May but were permitted to remain on in their homes as caretakers until the onset of winter when they were eventually driven out and their houses levelled.¹⁵ In early December some 30-40 people were evicted in Kilkee.¹⁶ And so the numbers of homeless grew and grew. On 4 December 1848 Captain Kennedy stated that he had listed the eviction of 6,090 souls in Kilrush Union since the previous July.¹⁷ And the specific instances we have mentioned were probably just a few of the many in Kilfearagh parish.

After eviction the people just wandered about burrowing behind the ditches or under a few broken rafters of their old homes until eventually compelled to face towards the workhouse. Some got shelter from their neighbours, but when fever and dysentery made their appearance they were put out by the roadside to die.¹⁸ Some landlords, as we have already seen, forbade the neighbours to give shelter -- because if the destitute remained in the locality they would have to be paid for by it in rates when they eventually went to the workhouse.

The final stage, then, was the workhouse. And Captain Kennedy has vividly described for us a typical scene while the evictions were in full swing. On 16 March 1848 he wrote:¹⁹

We admitted a considerable number of paupers, among whom were some of the most appalling cases of destitution and suffering it has ever been my lot to witness. The state of most of these wretched creatures is traceable to the numerous evictions which have lately taken place in the Union. When driven from their cabins they betake themselves to the ditches or the shelter of some bank and there exist like animals, till starvation or the inclemency of the weather drives them to the workhouse. There were three cartloads of these creatures, who could not walk, brought for admission yesterday, some in fever, some suffering from dysentery, and all from want of food. They were immediately handed over to the medical officer and provided with nourishment. I leave no effort untried to mitigate their misery.

It was Captain Kennedy who did most to alleviate in some little way the sufferings caused by the evictions in West Clare and soon afterwards to publicize them throughout

Great Britain. Many years later, when he was staying with Lord Carnarvon at Highclere Castle the conversation turned to the Irish Famine. A fellow guest has recorded Captain Kennedy's words to his host:²⁰

I can tell you, my Lord, that there were days in that western county when I came back from some scene of eviction so maddened by the sights of hunger and misery I had seen in the day's work, that I felt disposed to take the gun from behind my door and shoot the first landlord I met.

A small incident which occurred at Kilkee in November-December 1848 is worth recalling. A poor man who had two goats supported himself by the sale of their milk. He fell into arrears with his rent, owing 10/-, and for this his goats were seized by the bailiff. A benefactor, whom I think we can safely identify with Captain Kennedy, sent him the 10/- with which he could recover his goats -- and later when the poor man was able to offer to return the money his benefactor refused it.²¹

The lack of humanity and mercy displayed by landlord or agent in the above incident was terrifyingly common. In early 1848 some of the poor people realized that the Gregory Clause could be circumvented by giving up the greater part of their land but retaining a little bit on which the cabin stood, less than a quarter acre. But Dr. Foley of Kilrush cited the case of a poor widow who tried to keep her house. The landlord refused to accept the land without the house and as a result her claim for outdoor relief was objected to because she held more than

a quarter acre. Dr. Foley commented:²²

Many landlords appear to be most anxious to take advantage of the present distressed and helpless condition of poor people holding one or more acres^(sic) of land, and obliged for the present to seek the aid of legalized relief...

The relaxation of the Gregory clause in May 1848, then, was a great boon to many poor people -- provided they could pay the rent.

During 1848 and early 1849 Captain Kennedy's letters to the Poor Law Commissioners kept them informed in detailed fashion about the evictions in Kilrush Union. In April 1849 these letters were published in a Parliamentary Blue Book²³ and this brought the horror of the evictions before the British public. On 8 June Mr. Poulett Scrope M.P. referred to them in the British House of Commons and Sir Robert Peel joined in the discussion saying that he knew not if it were possible to apply a legislative remedy but he hoped that the expression of their abhorrence of such scenes might have some effect in checking them.²⁴ This speech was greeted with cries of "Hear,hear", which did little to check the work of destruction in Clare.

Meanwhile Marcus Keane was doing his utmost to discover inaccuracies in Captain Kennedy's reports and in August he had a petition presented to the House of Commons embodying the results of his research. He could not, very obviously, deny the misery existing in the union and so he had to adopt a different approach:²⁵

These reports, your petitioner regrets to say, are not overdrawn, but he denies (so far as the properties under his management are concerned) that evictions, or the imposition of rackrents are at all the cause of the misery described.

It is doubtful if many believed that the rackrents and evictions were not making a significant contribution to the misery.

The publication of the Blue Book brought Kilrush Union into the news in Britain for the first time and it was to remain there for the next few years, as other reports came in on the happenings in the West of Clare. In autumn 1849 Mr. Poulett Scrope M.P., who had already shown concern at the evictions, travelled over to make a personal investigation. He saw for himself that the reports were by no means exaggerated and he calculated that 20,000 had been evicted in Kilrush Union in the previous two years. And where were these at the time of his visit? In his own words:²⁶ "My informants assured me that, to the best of their knowledge, the greater number of these are dead."

Another visitor in mid 1849 was the Hon. and Rev.S. Godolphin Osborne who incorporated the results of his observations in Clare and elsewhere into his book, Gleanings in the West of Ireland. Of the evictions in Kilrush Union he said that although Captain Kennedy's reports had often been declared to be exaggerations, in his view, no report could exaggerate the amount of wholesale house levelling which had taken place.²⁷ And at the end of the year a reporter from the Illustrated London News

toured the union. His reports and accompanying sketches bore out everything that had already been said. To him the unroofed walls which had been left standing in many instances were like "the tombs of a departed race."

"I felt actually relieved at seeing one or two half-clad spectres gliding about, as an evidence that I was not in the land of the dead."²⁸

The visitors to Kilkee in the summer of 1849 must also have been keenly aware of the great misery and distress in the countryside, because when travelling on picnics and excursions they were surrounded on all sides by grim evidence of the mass evictions. One person's jarvey gave a brief but penetrating reminder when, pointing at one of the ruined cabins, he merely remarked:²⁹

"There's more of it sir." Then, immediately changing the tone of his voice he continued: "Isn't it a rare fine day and isn't that as good driving as ever you had in them nasty steam coaches that's breaking all the poor boys wid horses..."

Despite fears of competition the jarveys were not too badly off -- much better off than most others as they still had a source of income. As we have seen the evicted in their destitution finally faced for the workhouse in Kilrush and they were accompanied in their journey by others who were not yet homeless but had absolutely no resources left. In the next two chapters we will attempt to trace the history of the workhouse in these years, catering as it did for thousands of people from Kilfearagh among many others. The fortunes of the workhouse were the fortunes of a large proportion of the population of Kilfearagh.

CHAPTER SIXTEENKILRUSH WORKHOUSE (1)1. Arrival of Captain Kennedy

In November 1847, with the beginning of the mass evictions in the union, Kilrush Workhouse came under heavy pressure for the first time and was ill equipped to meet the demands made upon it. However, this was not altogether surprising as these demands went far beyond anything ever envisaged. It was at this stage that Captain Kennedy arrived on the scene as Poor Law Inspector and he, more than anybody else, tried to get the workhouse resources organized to meet the crisis. Indeed, it can be said that but for his work during the next two and a half years a very great tragedy would have been far worse. And this was not merely a matter of organization on his part. As time went on he had also to face intense opposition from the better off classes for his exposure of the evictions and his attempts to secure an adequate poor law rate.

When Captain Kennedy arrived in Kilrush in early November 1847 he found that the running of the workhouse was being performed in a far from efficient manner. In a letter to the Poor Law Commissioners he wrote:¹

I need not recapitulate the numerous and culpable irregularities I have found to exist in the house, and which I have undertaken to correct by daily visits. How the house has so long escaped general infection I am at a loss to conceive. On the last visiting day I found a side gate open, and free access for the friends of fever patients to pass to

and from the hospital.

Immediately he began to make arrangements to have the fever patients removed to other premises but a full month slipped by before he succeeded in doing so.²

The school for the children in the workhouse he described as "a mere farce". "The master utterly unfit for that or any other calling; attending his school is a pure waste of time."³ The master of the workhouse itself he described as "inert and...too old to learn those habits of order and regularity necessary to the Government and well being of a large Body."⁴ And soon afterwards he wrote:⁵ "The house has improved in order and cleanliness, but I apprehend no permanent improvement can result under the present master." The assistant master and matron, however, he regarded as zealous and efficient.⁶ In late December the Poor Law Commissioners issued an order removing the master from his office.⁷

Before Captain Kennedy's arrival the capacity of the workhouse had already been increased from its original 800 to 1,100. And in the following two years a number of additional buildings were taken over so that eventually the original workhouse and its six auxiliaries were capable of accomodating over 5,000 people. However, in November 1847 it could as yet take only about 1,100 and by the middle on the month -- because of the numerous evictions -- the house was crowded with more and more clamouring for admission. One day alone nearly two hundred people were taken in. Captain Kennedy wrote:⁸

Such a tangled mass of poverty, filth and disease, as the applicants presented, I have never seen. Numbers in all stages of fever and small-pox mingling indiscriminately with the crowd, and all clamouring for admission. I had them separated as quickly as possible....It was really an appalling sight.

But before very long he was to grow accustomed to even more terrible scenes.

2. Demand for Outdoor Relief

In mid November no outdoor relief had as yet been given to anybody.⁹ But, as pressure on the workhouse increased, it was decided to grant it to the non-ablebodied destitute in order that these people could leave the workhouse and make room for the ablebodied.¹⁰ The outdoor relief was to consist of food alone, despite a recommendation from Captain Kennedy, with the backing of the Poor Law Commissioners, to give cash as well.¹¹ Two and a half years later, in a report drawn up for Parliament, Mr. Poulett Scrope M.P. commented on the results of this policy:¹²

The outdoor relief afforded... has been always limited to a weekly dole of raw meal alone, clearly inadequate, under the circumstances of the great bulk of the recipients, to preserve them from gradual decay if not immediate starvation, through want of the other ordinary necessaries of life.

With a promise, then, of supplies of food but of nothing else, many of the poor women and children went out of the workhouse -- not always with good results.

On 14 December Captain Mann wrote:¹³

A man and his family who were in the house and whose case left no doubt as to their utter destitution were removed out of it on out relief,^{sic} in order to make room for receiving ablebodied claimants in. The change from the comfort inside the House to what they could get out, had the effect of causing the poor children to get ill, and three died in ten days.

To the ablebodied there was to be no relief except in the workhouse. And for a while in December there was such a clamour for admission that, as Mann remarked, the workhouse would have been swamped if the Gregory clause had not been strictly enforced.¹⁴ Others tried to bring pressure on the authorities to give outdoor relief to the ablebodied. When Captain Kennedy arrived at the workhouse on 1 December he was faced with what seems to have been an organized demonstration. Although it was still morning a crowd of about 1,000 had already assembled near the workhouse. Soon a general cry for outdoor relief was begun, accompanied by a waving of blackthorn sticks. Captain Kennedy then addressed the crowd, some of whom made an unsuccessful attempt to force the outer gate of the workhouse. One who struck Captain Kennedy was dragged in and placed in the lockup and shortly afterwards he was joined by eight or nine others. This quietened the crowd. Meanwhile, a continuous stream of people was seen approaching from the Kilkee direction. Colonel Vandeleur, Chairman

of the Board of Guardians, had been on his way to Kilkee but when he met the large crowds he considered it more prudent to turn back. Before long the crowd outside the workhouse, augmented by the new arrivals from Kilkee, had swelled to about 3,000. The police and a troop of military were the next to arrive on the scene. Fortunately, prudence prevailed at this stage and the people dispersed, leaving the really destitute to apply for admission to the workhouse. Subsequently three hundred of these were taken in.¹⁵

In his report to the Poor Law Commissioners on 2 December Captain Kennedy pointed out that this had been an organized demonstration, engineered, it would seem, by Fr. Comyn:¹⁶

A more bare faced attempt at intimidation I have never seen -- Four fifths of this mob were from "Kilkee" and a part of "Moyarta" district -- and it is with pain I am constrained to believe they were encouraged and incited to this turbulent demonstration by their Roman Catholic pastor with a view to compel the Guardians to give indiscriminate "outdoor relief". This Reverend Gentleman's conduct is I fear generally an exception to that of his Brother Clergymen in this Union -- who seek to mitigate suffering and support the law.

On 21 December the Poor Law Commissioners authorized outdoor relief for the ablebodied, while laying down certain conditions:¹⁷

- 1) That the relief, which could be given in food alone, should, as far as practicable, be in cooked food.
- 2) That every ablebodied male relieved should, as far as practicable, be set to perform a task of work during eight hours at least of every day for which he received relief.
- 3) That no ablebodied person in employment, nor any part of his family, should receive relief under the order.

Although the Guardians now had authorization to give outdoor relief to the ablebodied they were quite reluctant to do so and Captain Kennedy concurred with them in this. Despite threats, as when Colonel Vandeleur and Kennedy were warned to have their wills made,¹⁸ this course of action was persevered in for about three months -- probably until mid April when there was a sudden big jump in the numbers relieved.¹⁹ The long deferment of the relief was partly explained by Captain Kennedy when he wrote:²⁰ "The lamentable want of truth and shame would render it a matter of great difficulty to distinguish between the really destitute and the shameless beggar." There was also a further factor. In January and February for reasons which we shall see, there was an extreme reluctance to enter the workhouse, and while there were places available in the house it was official policy not to give outdoor relief. Otherwise, as Captain Mann remarked:²¹ "One general ruin would be the result," because nobody would want to enter the house and the finances of the union would probably break under the strain of having to feed huge numbers ^{out of} ~~of~~ doors.

3. The "Slaughter House"

On Captain Kennedy's arrival, as we have seen, he immediately tried to make provision to get the fever patients removed from the workhouse to separate premises. He met with some difficulty in procuring a building for the purpose and eventually had to make do with the slaughter house of a bacon store.²² His purpose in making the new arrangement was to prevent the spread of infection. But, in fact, after the new premises had been occupied the situation worsened and the number of deaths began to go up. In the last week of the old year 60 of the 131 patients in the temporary fever hospital died.²³ On one morning, when Captain Kennedy visited it, he found that eight patients had died in the previous night. Two relieving officers, the matron and assistant master of the workhouse were themselves down with fever, while the nurses and attendants in the fever hospital were so scared that it was only with difficulty that they could be prevailed upon to perform their duties.²⁴

In the first week of the new year 75 people died in the fever hospital, about 35% of the weekly admissions. Captain Mann was convinced that this was not due to neglect but was caused by the fact that most of those admitted were nearly dead already in any case. However, this was not seen by people considering entrance to the workhouse. Finally, one particular case dispelled any remaining doubts. A car brought four people in from the country. When taken from the cart at the workhouse two were found to be already dead; one died during the night and the fourth next day. When the report got into circulation that the four had died within a day of arriving at the

workhouse, the general view was confirmed that it was certain death to go into it. And the fever hospital came to be known once again as the Slaughter House though this time in a different context from previously.²⁵

The overall result was an extreme reluctance to enter the workhouse, so that even though thousands of people were starving most of them remained outside. And while there were vacant places in the house outdoor relief would not be given to the ablebodied.

Previously most people had been very reluctant to enter. Mr. C.W. Hamilton had commented in early 1846 that it was too much to expect that a labourer who had been hitherto independent "should at once yield and with his whole family (for they must all go) leave his house... passing at once from a position of honourable independence to that which he looks upon as the lowest state of degradation."²⁶ This aversion was now strengthened with an even more compelling motive for remaining outside so that many only came to the workhouse as a very last resort. On Dr. Madden's visit to Kilrush in early 1851 he found that this was the case with the applicants for admission with whom he spoke:²⁷

These applicants for admission into the Kilrush Poorhouse..... had only come there when every other means of sustaining life had failed. There was not one of those I questioned who had not a mortal terror of that Poorhouse of Kilrush, and had not overcome it, only when the charity on which they had eked out a miserable existence had been utterly exhausted, or when the use of the boiled nettles and other weeds which had been their food of late had brought them to the brink of the grave.

4. Dismissal of Guardians

By mid February Captain Kennedy was complaining of the inefficiency of the Kilrush Board of Guardians²⁸ and a week later he wrote:²⁹ "I have no confidence in the energy or foresight of the Board of Guardians as a body should serious difficulties arise." A number of factors forced him to this conclusion... One was the election, with only two dissentient votes, of Mr. Pat Kelly (son of the previous master) as master.³⁰ Captain Kenney described him as "a mere lad and in my opinion (as that of the Chairman of the Board) utterly incompetent for such a charge."³¹ But the matter which finally brought affairs to a head was a financial crisis which struck the union at the end of February. On the 24th of the month the treasurer had a mere £50 in hands while debts amounted to nearly £1,000. Captain Mann, who was supplying the rye meal required to give outdoor relief to 10,000 people, was owed £120 and refused to give further supplies until paid. Colonel Vandeleur was absent, probably recuperating from a severe illness which he had suffered in January, and Captain Kennedy was quite certain that in his absence the Guardians would not be able to obtain any credit as they had the confidence of neither the public nor of the bankers.³²

However, there was one apparent temporary solution to the problem. Captain Mann had some funds given to him by the British Association and Captain Kennedy now applied to him for a loan in order to be able to keep up the outdoor relief during the following week. Captain Mann felt that, in the circumstances, he had no option but to oblige. But he was also quick to point out that the reason for the crisis was the non-payment of rates by

many and these included quite a number of the ex officio and elected Guardians. Among the defaulters there were also some magistrates "who have signed distress warrants for rates on poor wretches who have perhaps but a house or cow to support them."³³

When Trevelyan heard what had happened he could scarcely believe it. If it was true that the funds of the British Association had been used to make good the default of magistrates and Guardians then, in his view, it was a great abuse and would have to be remedied by an effective collection of rates.³⁴ And within a week the Poor Law Commissioners had made an order dissolving the Kilrush Board of Guardians.³⁵ They were to be replaced by two paid Vice-Guardians. This step, however, was by no means unusual. Within the previous twelve months half of the Boards of Guardians in Ireland had been dissolved, mainly because they had been unwilling to collect sufficient rates.³⁶ In Kilrush also the chief reason was a financial one. In the previous August an average rate of 4/11 in the £,³⁷ amounting to £8,884, had been struck. By the end of January £4,948 of this had been used leaving a balance of £3,936 to be collected to meet liabilities until the following July. Clearly this sum was going to be inadequate and on 29 January Colonel Vandeleur made this point in a letter to Sir R. Routh:³⁸ "It is perfectly clear the Union will not be able to meet the demands upon it without assistance from Government." Such demands for assistance were the last thing the Government wished to hear of and so, when the financial crisis came in late February and early March,

the dissolution of the Board of Guardians was almost inevitable.³⁹

The Guardians' point, in not wishing to strike a new rate before July, was that 4/11 was the most that could be demanded during the course of a year. They probably had selfish motives in asserting this but there was also the valid point that the impoverished union could not afford even this rate and that the collection of it was bringing some ratepayers themselves down to destitution level. Six months later this point was acknowledged at government level when Twisleton told Trevelyan that it would be unwise to insist on a larger rate than 5/-. "I believe," he wrote, "that ~~the~~ more money is likely to be realized with a 5/- rate than with a rate of a larger amount."⁴⁰

The new Vice Guardians in Kilrush Union appear to have got over the financial crisis by means of borrowing and assiduously collecting the remainder of the current rate.⁴¹ A new rate was not struck until August. In Kilkee electoral division it was expected that the rate would be 50% higher than in the previous year when it was the highest in the country at 6/10. However, Captain Kennedy used some money obtained from the British Association to subsidize the poor rate and as a result it was only 3/-. As a mark of their gratitude to Captain Kennedy, the people of Kilkee lit large bonfires and carried a lighted tar barrel around on men's shoulders.⁴²

About the same time as the dismissal of the Guardians there was another minor crisis at Kilrush Workhouse. When the fever mortality was very high in early January Captain Kennedy sent a special report on the matter to the

Poor Law Commissioners⁴³ and the result of this was an inspection by Dr. Phelan who ordered changes in diet and medical treatment.⁴⁴ One of the workhouse doctors, Dr. Donovan, did not take too kindly to this and shortly afterwards he resigned, although the Guardians had passed a vote of "unbounded confidence" in their two doctors.⁴⁵

5. Further Downhill

As 1848 progressed it was clear that the whole situation was still getting worse rather than better. In 1847 only a small acreage had been planted with potatoes. In 1848 with renewed hope the people made very great sacrifices to plant as much as possible and this was as true of West Clare as elsewhere. In Clare as a whole 16,836 acres were planted with potatoes compared with 6,129 in 1847. The acreage planted with beans also rose from 642 acres to 1,411, while the turnip acreage fell from 10,988 to 8,032.⁴⁶ But the expectations were, unfortunately, not fulfilled. In the latter part of July symptoms of the blight were noticed at Kilkee though it did not appear to be nearly as bad as in '46 and '47. However, as time passed the situation worsened. On 25 August The Times of London printed a letter from Kilkee which stated that the late potatoes on the west coast were gone and that the early ones were going. Potatoes, beans and turnips were being plundered nightly. The writer concluded on a very pessimistic note:⁴⁷ "Altogether the prospects here are far more awful this winter than at any of the worst periods these three years." And ten days previously Twisleton had written to Trevelyan in a similar vein but with more general application:⁴⁸ "We have

another visitation of the potato disease this year....
The Empire will reel under this blow."

Two months later the Limerick Chronicle commented on the Kilkee area:⁴⁹ "Plundering is worse this season than last year. Neither gardens, haggards or houses escape." And the reason for this can be readily seen in one of Captain Kennedy's reports:⁵⁰

During my attendance at the admission on two days and part of a third, I took the opportunity of inquiring of every ablebodied applicant where and with whom he had last been employed and at what rate of wages? Almost the whole number declared that even during the harvest, they had laboured for 2d and 3d per day, seldom getting 4d, and that at present they could not exchange or obtain their food for their labour..... I believe (however incredible it may appear) that nineteen-twentieths of the labouring population of the Kilrush Union are without employment or resource of any kind, nor do I see any attempt to remedy this state of things, though the land is undrained and not half cultivated.

And during all this time the evictions were continuing.

As the new year approached another shadow appeared on the horizon. In December 1848 an outbreak of Asiatic cholera, or the "devouring pestilence" as the Clare Journal⁵¹ described it, made its appearance in Belfast. From there it spread throughout the country reaching its peak in May, but declining in most parts in June. As the epidemic was gaining in force the Central

Board of Health in Dublin sent out many circulars with instructions for setting up special dispensaries, nursing etc. However, all expenses had to be met out of Union funds.⁵² In March 1849 the cholera made its appearance in West Clare and a cholera hospital was established at Kilkee. Among the people there was near panic, though the outbreak of the disease in the area does not appear to have been very severe. Captain Kennedy remarked that the temporary hospitals at Kilkee and Carrigaholt were made necessary not so much by the cholera itself as by "choleraphobia". And he continued:⁵³

"Such is the senseless dread of this disease that any wretched creature afflicted with diarrhoea is immediately supposed to be a cholera case and thrown out of their lodging." In early April, accompanied by Dr. O'Donnell, he visited the cholera hospitals at Kilkee and Carrigaholt in an attempt "to allay popular excitement."⁵⁴

By the end of April Dr. Griffin, the local medical officer, was able to give a good report of the cholera situation in Kilkee. His letter also gives some indications of the procedures adopted to combat the spread of the disease:⁵⁵

A few cases of the disease did occur here, the first being persons who came ill from Limerick, but owing to the speedy removal of those attacked, the cleansing, whitewashing the houses of the poor, and other measures promptly adopted by the local Sanatory Committee,^{sic} the further spread of the malady has been effectually checked; and I am happy to state that no case has occurred in the

village or immediate neighbourhood for several days past. I may also add, that the mortality amongst those attacked has been very much below the average.

The summer season in Kilkee in 1849 was not very much affected by the cholera or by the plight of the rural population. At the end of July the town was full with scarcely a lodge vacant,⁵⁶ and this situation lasted until well on into September. There were the usual dances in the lodges, races on the strand and in mid August a three day regatta was held.⁵⁷ But though outward appearances were maintained and the round of entertainment was very much as in pre-Famine times, visitors to Kilkee during this summer could not but be aware of the dreadful condition of most of the natives of West Clare. A visitor wrote in mid August:⁵⁸

"Embarrassment, distress and misery are experienced in Kilkee, exorbitant as the prices are at which some of the lodges are temporarily let." And of the immediate countryside another visitor reported in September that there were no cattle at all left and that few of the ratepayers had either a cow, a sheep or a horse.⁵⁹ All were being reduced to the one common denominator. In mid September three fishermen were drowned at Farrifhale while trying to catch a net:

... and Kilkee to view the situation at first hand. Accompanied by William Monsell⁶² and Aubrey de Vere he

inspected Kilrush Workhouse and was favourably impressed
 by the arrangements there.⁶³ Of their visit to Kilkee
 Aubrey De Vere wrote in his Recollections:⁶⁴

We passed the next day in roaming over famine-stricken moors and bogs in the neighbourhood, then among the most severely tried districts of Ireland. I shall not soon forget one visit, which, accompanied by the local inspector, we paid to a deserted cabin among the morasses. Its only inmate was a little infant, whose mother was most likely seeking milk for it. On slightly moving the tattered cov̄arlet of the cradle, a shiver ran over the whole body of the infant and the next moment the dark emaciated little face relapsed into stillness. Probably the mother returned to find her child dead. Mr. Monsell burst into a flood of tears. Nothing was said; but a few days later, on Lord Arundel's return to England, the inspector at Kilkee received a letter from him enclosing a cheque for £200 to be added to the local famine fund.

To the Clare Journal Kilkee was now the Deserted Village and in November its Kilkee correspondent reported that within a few miles of the town the tenants had left their farms, carrying with them all their movable possessions if they had not already converted them into money.

"High rents, no abatements, low prices for agricultural produce have discouraged them."⁶⁵ This was one of the first indications of the vast emigration movement which was now in its initial stages in West Clare, and of which we shall see more later. And it was at this stage that another and far more serious financial crisis hit Kilrush Union.

CHAPTER SEVENTEENKILRUSH WORKHOUSE (2)1. Financial Crisis

In the Spring of 1849 the Government came forward with a new plan to give financial assistance to the poorer unions -- a plan which would involve very little expense to itself. A rate-in-aid was to be levied on the more prosperous unions and, in addition, a rate of 6d in the £ was to be paid by every union, against which the Treasury would make advances, not exceeding £100,000, for relief.¹ As a result of this, Kilrush Union benefited to the extent of £15,000 between March and November 1849. Yet, despite this assistance, when the time came to strike a new rate for the union in November its liabilities were £15,000, liabilities which could be only partially balanced by £4,500 in rates which were still outstanding.²

It was against this background that the paid Vice Guardians, who had been in charge of the union for the previous eighteen months, were replaced by a new Board of Guardians on 27 October. The first and most pressing duty of the members of the Board was to strike a new rate, and this they did on 10 November. To meet all the demands being made upon them by their own unaided resources they would have had to strike a rate varying from 19/11½ in Kilrush electoral district to 41/3½ for Killard. The Kilkee rate would have been 33/5½.⁴ It would have been sheer madness to do this and so, quite rightly, they decided that there was no point in attempting the impossible. However they probably set their sights too low when they settled on a flat rate of 3/- for the union.⁵ At their next meeting, on the 17th, Mr. Lynch, a Poor Law Inspector, told them that

the rate they had struck would realize only £7,000 whereas £36,000 was needed. And, addressing a group many of whom had landed interests, he continued: "It is not the rates but the rents that are ruining your country."⁶ But there can be no doubt that there was much to be said for the action of the Guardians. Fifteen months previously, Mr. Twisleton had remarked on the futility of striking a rate above 5/-⁷ -- and the situation was now immeasurably worse.

At the meeting Captain Kennedy drew attention to the Guardians' immediate problem -- how and where, without money, they were to obtain supplies for the ensuing week.⁸ This crisis was somehow overcome but it was to recur week after week while the union finances remained in a precarious state. On 24 November the Guardians were informed by the Poor Law Commissioners of the inadequacy of the rate they had struck and that one of from 11/- to 21/- was needed. Captain Kennedy also pointed out that they could not expect any help from the Treasury unless they agreed on a reasonable rate. The Guardians now decided to raise the rate -- but it was a mere gesture -- from 3/- to 3/6, declaring, with a good deal of truth, that a higher rate could never be collected. They also decided to effect some economies and, on a split vote, withdrew the outdoor temporary medical department of the union i.e. medical attendance at some places distant from the workhouse.⁹ The rate, small as it was, had not yet been collected. Owing to the already huge debt it was impossible to get supplies until eventually a few of the Guardians personally went security. In this way 13,000 people were tided over the last few days of November.¹⁰

In early December the breaking point was finally reached. A reporter who visited the workhouse found that there was not even sufficient food to give the inmates their dinner:¹¹

The Master and the Matron, fearing the worst, exerted themselves in the early hours of the day, and had a quantity of turnips and parsnips which were grown in the workhouse ground boiled; and on this species of food the paupers dined.

For five days these vegetables remained the chief food in the workhouse.¹² During this period 600 - 700 people who arrived from Kilmurry, Killofin and Kilkee seeking admission were sent home again as they could not be fed.¹³

The Board of Guardians now decided that the only remedy was to appeal to the Poor Law Commissioners for help and a memorial outlining their case was despatched:¹⁴

Resolved, that having been refused further supplies by Mr. Russell and other merchants, or any advance of money by our treasurer, we call the attention of the Commissioners to the awful state of the Union, with 12,000 on the outdoor relief, without rations for the current week, with over 2,000 inmates in the workhouse and auxiliaries, and no provision for their next meal, except turnips, which has been their principal food for the last two days, and we feel satisfied that unless immediate assistance be sent us, the consequence will be fearful in the extreme.

But the Commissioners were not inclined to listen very sympathetically to this request as they felt that the Guardians could get money from rates.¹⁵ And as the wrangle continued the people starved owing to the stoppage of outdoor relief.

In this situation crowds from the outlying parishes began to throng to Kilrush in the hope of getting something to eat. On 12 December the Limerick and Clare Examiner carried a report from a Kilrush correspondent:

The streets of our town are thronged -- shopdoors choked up..... with swarms of famished miserable beings, piteously screaming and craving the least morsel of food. Along the roads that lead to the town may be seen numbers of cars laden with emaciated, half-naked creatures, huddled together in loathsome squalidness, proceeding towards the workhouse, where they hope to be relieved; but whence, alas! after they remain shivering and fainting whole days, and some times nights together, they are obliged to return to their hovels to die in despair, or, if they prefer it, to rush upon the town like wild and raving maniacs.

On the evening of 12 December about forty people boarded a ferry which would take them across the mouth of Foulnasherry Bay and so shorten their journey to the West -- after most of them had spent a fruitless day waiting for food in Kilrush. About halfway across the boat sank and all were drowned except about three.¹⁶ Some of these whose bodies were washed ashore on the following morning were interred in the little burial ground at Kilnagalliagh. It was little wonder that a local poet was prompted to write of the hardships in Kilrush Union in 1849:¹⁷

Without a prayer or passing bell,
The shroudless armies hourly swell.

Miserere!

The dying, ghastlier than the dead;
 With blanched lips have vainly said,
 'Give us this day our daily bread'.

Parce nobis Domine!

A day or two after the ferry disaster Colonel Vandeleur and others of the Guardians were pelted with mud and missiles and hooted at their every appearance in public by those who had been refused outdoor relief. And the Limerick Reporter stated:¹⁸

The town (of Kilrush) is in danger, and guarded by policemen, who move constantly through the streets.

The excitement is immense.

For nearly eight weeks outdoor relief remained suspended. On 27 December Captain Kennedy wrote: "No kind of property is safe out of doors; but to say the truth there is little to steal beyond a few miserable cattle, which are housed at night." And he added: "Those who are absolutely in want are without the strength or energy to commit a robbery." During this period those who survived had nothing to eat but a few turnips, given in charity by farmers who now had very little left themselves. And on the sea-coast there was a plentiful supply of shellfish.¹⁹

Yet, even at the height of this crisis, as Christmas approached, a number began to leave the workhouse. This was a regular occurrence during the famine years. Many left the workhouse for the festival but returned again during the following week. For despite all the want and suffering, Christmas was still the season of goodwill. "Charity is liberally given, and hordes of both stationary and strolling poor subsist on it during the Christmas holidays."²⁰

In the workhouse itself, because of the food crisis, Christmas seems to have been even grimmer than usual. A reporter wrote:²¹

The Guardians carefully and considerately guarded the poor in this workhouse from the invidious approach of appoplexy (sic), by a water gruel diet; and practically persuaded the outdoor poor that they were keeping Lent instead of Christmas, by a total deprivation of any kind of food.

As the New Year dawned the crisis continued. A letter to the Limerick and Clare Examiner from Yilrush expressed the despair, hopelessness and anger felt by many:²²

Every day brings a fresh bundle to the faggot heap by which the funeral pyre of the old Celtic race is burned to cinders. Landlords crippled -- farmers crushed -- shopholders ruined -- and the poor rotting in heaps -- aye, in heaps, among the bogs and ditch-pits of the country.

When a reporter of the Clare Journal visited Lisdeen he found its people very badly off. The village was part of the estate of the O'Gorman Manon but had passed into the hands of a receiver who, for some time previously, had been carrying out the functions of a landlord. And around the village were cabins of people who had been evicted elsewhere and had congregated here. Their lifeline had been the outdoor relief until its suspension.²³

Meanwhile, attention remained focussed on the workhouse and Guardians. The latter, having received bad publicity since their reconstitution, excluded newspaper reporters from their meetings.²⁴ Their Chairman, Colonel Vandeleur,

In a letter to the Poor Law Commissioners, argued that a higher rate would "render the district a waste" and he attributed a good deal of the existing troubles to the facility with which outdoor relief had been given. As a result of it, he said, the people had lost all dependence on their own exertions.²⁵ It was clear that, if he could help it, outdoor relief would be given as seldom and to as few as possible in the future. About the same time it was rumoured that steps were being taken against Captain Kennedy who was somewhat of an embarrassment. And when Vandeleur went to Dublin, probably to press home his case with the Poor Law Commissioners, people saw his journey as an attempt to get rid of Kennedy.²⁶

Eventually outdoor relief was restored. Then, after a short period, it was cut off again, possibly because the contractors were pressing for payment of their debts.²⁷ The money collected under the rate struck in November was all but exhausted and the only remedy was to strike a supplementary rate.²⁸ Meanwhile, many charitable persons tried to help out in at least a little way by sending contributions to the parish priest of Kilrush, Fr. Kelly. Some of this money he placed at the disposal of the local St. Vincent de Paul Society, more of it he gave to the parish priests of the neighbouring parishes, probably including Kilmearagh, to meet cases of extreme necessity.²⁹ And all the time, the poor of Kilmearagh, Moyarta and other western parishes kept pouring into Kilrush in the hope of faring better there than at home. Fr. Kelly wrote: "The houses of the benevolent and good are actually assailed by destitute persons supplicating relief. Their lamentations and shrieks are truly heartrending." In early February the St. Vincent

de Paul Society gathered a crowd of these poor people into a large timberyard and distributed one penny each to 3,102 persons.³⁰ Yet, during this period, Kilrush port was exporting corn in fairly large quantities.³¹

At the end of March the Kilrush Guardians petitioned Parliament for help,³² a petition which drew from The Times the rejoinder that in that area all alike, proprietors, paupers, priests, etc., were joined in a conspiracy "to deceive the state, to defraud one another, to evade the laws and pervert relief."³³ In Kilkee there was very definitely an attempt to defraud the Guardians when a number of the wealthier lodge-owners, who were non-resident for the greater part of the year, claimed that they should have to pay less in rates on the ground that they were not in occupation when the rate was struck.³⁴ But the Poor Law Commissioners, when consulted, stated that the occupation of houses during the bathing season should be held as equivalent to occupation throughout the entire year.³⁵ From a letter to the Limerick and Clare Examiner it would appear that towards the end of 1849 these same wealthy lodge-owners had petitioned the Poor Law Commissioners that the West End of Kilkee should be joined to a different electoral district in which the rates would be lower -- as they felt that they should not have to contribute to the maintenance of the numerous paupers who had settled in the less fashionable part of the town.³⁶

Despite everything Kilrush Union managed to weather the storm in the early part of 1850 and the Government was soon again giving grants from the rate in aid. However, on at least one occasion the workhouse must have been on the verge

of closure and, of course, the outdoor relief was suspended for long periods.

2. In Kilrush Workhouse

We have already seen that Colonel Vandeleur was not very much in favour of outdoor relief. The alternative was to increase the numbers of workhouse inmates and these climbed very rapidly from the beginning of January 1850 onwards. By early June there were almost 5,000 people in Kilrush Workhouse and its auxiliaries, practically double the amount at the beginning of the year.³⁷ No doubt, too, the Guardians' policy was aided by the uncertainty of outdoor relief, which was cut off several times in late winter and spring. And Kilfearagh parish provided its own proportion of these -- on 31 January alone it was reported that there were 250 applicants for admission from Kilkee.³⁸ In fact, most admission days saw huge crowds from all parts clamouring to get in and the procedure adopted meant that many of them might have to go away unheard. Every applicant had to have his case for admission examined by some of the Guardians and if there were not enough of them present many might have to go away without even getting an opportunity of making an application -- and they would have to wait until the next admission day, a week later. Captain Kennedy, in one of his reports, described the situation on 2 February:³⁹

The list was not commenced till 3 p.m. and the more distant divisions, Kilballyowen and Kilmurry, were not commenced till 6 p.m. when the majority of applicants, having 15 or 20 miles to travel, had returned home and did not appear. The applicants from Kildysart, Kilfiddane and Kilkee were sent away undecided on.

And three months later the same thing was still happening. Although at least three Guardians were present on 9 May the chairman alone was ruling the books and "36 hours would certainly not have sufficed to hear and rule each case." As a result, many again had to be sent away unheard and unrelieved. Captain Kennedy's comment was: "I think that this system is carried on to an unwarrantable and impolitic extent."⁴⁰ One suspects that it was used as a method of controlling numbers when there were too many applications.

What was life like in the workhouse for the many people from Kilfearagh parish who entered it at this period? On 25 March 1850 the diet provided for the inmates was as follows:⁴¹

1. Able-bodied Working Males

Breakfast - 6 oz Indian Meal; 2 oz. rice; 1 oz. butter

Dinner - 16 oz eye and whole flour bread; $\frac{2}{3}$ pints soup.

2. Able-bodied Working Females

Breakfast - $5\frac{1}{4}$ oz Indian Meal and $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz. rice; 1 oz. butter

Dinner - 14 oz. rye and whole flour bread; $1\frac{1}{2}$ pints soup.

3. Persons not at work, and Infirm

Breakfast - $4\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Indian meal and $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz. rice; 1 oz. butter.

Dinner - 12 oz. rye and whole flour bread; $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz. soup.

4 Children under 15 and over 9

Breakfast - $3\frac{3}{4}$ oz. Indian meal; $1\frac{1}{4}$ oz. rice; $\frac{1}{2}$ pint new milk

Dinner - 10 oz. rye and whole flour bread; 1 pint soup.

Supper -- 4 oz. rye and whole flour bread; $\frac{1}{2}$ pint soup.

This was the official diet, giving two meals a day to adults. But when a financial crisis struck, the paupers could find themselves dining mainly on turnips, as in

December, or on half rations, as happened in late February.⁴²

The average cost of the food per inmate at this period was probably scarcely a penny a day. At any rate, a year later when the diet had improved to some extent, it was costing only 8d per week per person.⁴³ Dr. Madden commented on it at this stage:⁴⁴ "In the Kilrush dietary, then, we look in vain for animal food, for vegetables, for milk,⁴⁵ and indeed for bread fit for the food of man."

As the numbers admitted to the workhouse grew, so also did the numbers requiring treatment in the infirmary. A visitor in April 1850 said he found four boys and one man, all of them ill, in a bed not too large for one person. Colonel Vandeleur's reply was that they had two beds drawn together.⁴⁶ A year later, commenting on a remark that there were three patients in each bed in the infirmary, he said that there were 79 beds for 130 patients "so that few of the beds contained three patients."⁴⁷ Seemingly he regarded this as quite satisfactory. Throughout the remainder of the workhouse it is doubtful if the situation was any better.

Another complaint made about the house, and quite a serious one, was the want of sufficient warmth during the winter of 1849-50. And even for a while, though it was surrounded by bogs, there was a total lack of fires.⁴⁸ At first sight, poor heating might not seem to be a very serious complaint. But the people of West Clare always had a very good supply of turf and were used to well-heated and cosy houses. Captain Yonally remarked that they complained more of the want of sufficient warmth than of any other part of the discipline of the workhouse.

He also hinted rather broadly that something could be done about this.⁴⁹ Colonel Vandeleur, however, felt that it would be impossible to give satisfaction with large numbers as in their own homes they had been accustomed "to sit in very large chimneys."⁵⁰

3. Mortality

As the Guardians and Captain Kennedy grappled with vast financial and organizational problems in the early months of 1850, memories of the Slaughterhouse revived once again with a rapidly rising death rate. There had been 505 deaths in the workhouse in the year ended 29 September 1849 -- a big decrease from the 1070 in 1847⁵¹ and perhaps reflecting the improvements brought about by Captain Kennedy. But the tide had turned again with a vengeance and in the month of April 1850 alone 213 deaths occurred. And in the twelve months from 25 March 1850 to 25 March 1851 the total number of deaths was about 1,700 or an average of 140 per month.⁵² Mr. W.H. Lucas, a Poor Law Inspector, attributed this heavy mortality to the low physical condition of those entering:⁵³

A large proportion of the pauper population of Kiltrush Union having hitherto existed in a great measure on turnips and other vegetables, it is no wonder that debility, dysentery and diarrhoea should now prove so fatal, especially when it is considered that turnips at this season⁵⁴ become unfit for human food.

To this one might add that the four to five years of hunger were now taking their toll. A few years previously most people had been able to make their own way to the workhouse -

now a vast number were being brought on carts by their friends or relations. Dr. Madden saw a large number of low backed cars, from which the horses had been unyoked, ranged around the wall in front of the workhouse. "On these cars the applicants for admission were lying stretched on straw, chiefly aged people of both sexes, and children, even infants. On some cars there were as many as four or five pallid, listless, emaciated, ragged children; on others, famished creatures, far gone in fever, dysentery and dropsy, unable to walk, stand or even to sit upright."⁵⁵

Although many adults were now suffering very greatly, it was the children who were worst hit by disease and death as they had even less resistance to withstand a long period of deprivation. However, the Rev. Sidney Godolphin Osborne remarked that he was comforted by the fact that few starving children seemed to be in great pain:⁵⁶

It has never been my lot to hear one single child, suffering from fever or dysentery, utter a moan of pain; I have seen many in the very act of death, still not a tear, not a cry. I have scarcely ever seen one endeavour to change his or her position. I have never heard one ask for food, for water -- for anything; two, three, or four in a bed, there they lie and die, if suffering, still ever silent, unmoved.

In Kilrush Workhouse most of the deaths were of children, Of the 213 deaths, for example, in April 1850, 167 were of children aged 14 and under.⁵⁷

The children who died were undoubtedly better off than those who lived -- for in the workhouse it was simply impossible to care adequately for them. In the Leadmore auxiliary over 1,500 "healthy" children were under the care of two teachers. And in the Ballyera auxiliary fellow paupers were in charge of over 120 sick children, while the same situation prevailed in another building where there were 200 children, aged 2 - 5.⁵⁸

4. Kilrush Union under Investigation

From the time of the publication of Captain Kennedy's reports on the evictions, Kilrush Union remained very much before the public eye, and particularly so during the financial crisis of late 1849 and early 1850. In the House of Commons Mr. Poulett Scrope made sure that his fellow M.Ps. were kept fully informed. On 7 March 1850 he gave a comprehensive description of what was taking place and pointed to the inadequacy of the relief machinery. "Who was responsible for this refusal of relief? The guardians threw the responsibility on the Poor Law Commissioners and the Commissioners threw the responsibility on the Government." All he wanted was a commission to inquire into the matter and suggest a remedy. But his motion was defeated, 76 - 63.⁵⁹ Eight days later Mr. Scrope was inquiring about the evictions but was informed by Lord John Russell that there was no measure in contemplation by Her Majesty's Government to put an end to that of which the honourable gentleman complained.⁶⁰

However, official attention had been drawn to Kilrush Union and in the end of March Mr. Bourke, a Poor Law Inspector, was sent to investigate.⁶¹ His report,

submitted a few weeks later, did not get to the core of the difficulty but did make the admission that the outdoor relief being given to the people was "clearly inadequate to supply their wants" -- as they got nothing to supply them with lodging or clothing or any kind of food apart from the meal which they were doled out.⁶² Meanwhile, during April, Mr. Scrope continued his one-man campaign in Parliament⁶³ and eventually, in mid May, succeeded in his objective of getting a Parliamentary Committee to inquire into Kilrush Union. This Committee had fifteen members including Sir Lucius O'Brien, Lord Naas, The Earl of Arundel and Surrey and Mr. Scrope himself as chairman. Its terms of reference were to inquire into the administration of the Poor Law in Kilrush Union since 29 September 1848.⁶⁴

At the end of May the inquiry got under way and a number of witnesses including Captain Kennedy, Colonel Vandeleur, Marcus Keane and Fr. Meehan, P.P. of Moyarta and Kiliballyowen, travelled to London to give evidence. As one might expect, the evidence of people with such widely differing viewpoints did not quite tally but, at the same time, there was no doubt in the mind of anyone about the miserable state of Kilrush Union. Two reports were drawn up, neither of which was adopted by the committee. One of these, written by Mr. Scrope, concluded as follows:⁶⁵

It is with regret that your Committee come to the conclusion that, whether as regards the plain principles of humanity, or the literal text and admitted principle of the Poor Law of 1847, a neglect of public duty has occurred, and has

occasioned a state of things disgraceful to a civilized age and country, for which some authority ought to be held responsible.

Another report, drawn up by Sir Lucius O'Brien and endorsed by many of the committee,⁶⁶ was not as critical of the landlords as was Scrope's.

The principal people involved in relief work in West Clare were now passing from the scene. Already Captain Mann had been transferred to England⁶⁷ and, shortly after his return from London, Captain Kennedy learned that he had been moved to Kilkenny.⁶⁸ This was something for which many of the Guardians had undoubtedly been agitating behind the scenes for some time as Captain Kennedy's exposure of the numerous evictions had long since rendered him a persona non grata. At their meeting in mid August it was alleged that Kennedy had deliberately misinformed the public by arranging a "showbox" at Doonbeg -- thus endeavouring to blacken the character of the Guardians.⁶⁹ This slander was let pass but a further attack on him in October was replied to with a letter to Vandeleur in which Captain Kennedy's true feelings were revealed. In it he wrote:⁷⁰ "You are as prodigal of life at one time, as you are of character at another" and went on to challenge Vandeleur to a duel. Unfortunately, the newspaper report to which Captain Kennedy reacted had not been correct and the offensive statement had been made by someone other than Colonel Vandeleur. But Vandeleur did not reveal this to Kennedy and when the latter did discover his mistake, his apology was not accepted.⁷¹

Instead, Vandeleur went on to bring an action against Kennedy for his insulting letter and challenge to a duel. This case was tried at Cork Assizes in August 1851 with Kennedy's defence conducted by two very noted advocates, Isaac Butt and Sir Colman O'Loughlin. Vandeleur's action failed when the jury disagreed -- seven reportedly being for acquittal and five for conviction.⁷² Thus ended Captain Kennedy's connection with Kilrush Union, in the service of which he had worked in so dedicated a manner.⁷³

If Colonel Vandeleur and the other Guardians had disposed of one thorn in their sides when Captain Kennedy was transferred, they soon began to suffer considerable embarrassment from another direction. The Rev. Sidney Godolphin Osborne, who had already shown considerable interest in Kilrush Union, began to write fairly regularly to The Times in the spring of 1851 giving progress reports on the destitution and misery in the area and pointing out where he considered the authorities were falling down.⁷⁴ This interest sprang from a deep humanitarian feeling and quite clearly there was an intense personal involvement on his part. In late March or early April he wrote:⁷⁵

When, the other day, I looked on the Crystal Palace and thought of Kilrush Workhouse, as I have seen it and now know it to be, I confess I felt, as a Christian and the subject of a Christian government, utter disgust.

Osborne's letters received such attention that the Poor Law Commissioners asked Mr. Lucas, their inspector at Kilrush, to submit a report and this was published as a refutation of some points made by Osborne.⁷⁶ Shortly



afterwards two doctors, Hill and Hughes, were appointed as temporary medical inspectors to inquire into the sanitary state of Kiltrush and Ennistymon Workhouses.⁷⁷

These arrived in Kiltrush in early August but their method of procedure soon aroused grave suspicion as to the possible bias of their report.⁷⁸ Mr. Osborne claimed that they had spent a day with Colonel Vandeleur on his yacht before beginning their work,⁷⁹ while the Munster News described the investigation as a farce.⁸⁰

In the meantime Kiltrush Union was mentioned several times in the House of Commons, where Mr. Scrope made an unsuccessful attempt to get lists of deaths published.⁸¹

Mr. Osborne was also clamouring for a similar publication and eventually, on the motion of Mr. Reynolds M.P., a Blue Book⁸² containing such lists was ordered to be published.⁸³ It contained the names of all who died in Kiltrush and Ennistymon Workhouses between 25 March 1850 and 25 March 1851 together with age, sex, cause and date of death. When a writer in the Munster News saw a copy of it his reaction probably summed up the feelings of many:⁸⁴

"No wonder it should have been so long withheld. It is an appalling and terrible compilation." But, then, so was the whole history of Kiltrush Workhouse in the previous five years.

5. Supplies of Food

In 1849 the harvest, including the crop of potatoes,⁸⁵ was a good one but insufficient potatoes had been sown to make any appreciable difference to the majority of the population. The stronger farmers, however, had sufficient to enable them to put a good supply on the market and, in

the first half of 1850, when the workhouse resources were under severe strain, Kilrush market was chock full of produce. On 16 February it was difficult for a pedestrian to walk along the public pathway because of the large amount of food for sale.⁸⁶ And in May a visitor to Kilkee remarked that there was reason to believe that many had vast quantities of potatoes hoarded up for high prices in the ensuing month.⁸⁷

When Mr. Scrope was drawing up his report for Parliament during the summer he was impressed by the amount of food which had been available to the person with money to purchase. In this context he wrote:⁸⁸

This is no case of famine; provisions have been unprecedentedly cheap and plentiful throughout the period to which the inquiries of Your Committee extend.

Whether the provisions would have proved sufficient if the money had been available is another question which cannot be answered satisfactorily. However, a very large number of people had no ready money and no prospect of obtaining any and so they made their way to the workhouse for indoor or outdoor relief, passing the carts loaded with potatoes and other food in the streets of Kilrush. In 1851 the amount of food for sale may not have been quite so large as the summer of 1850 saw a recurrence of blight.⁸⁹

CHAPTER EIGHTEENEMIGRATION

Even before the first potato failure of 1845 there was already emigration on a fairly large scale to North America from many parts of Ireland, while there was also a long established seasonal migration to Britain from the West and north-west. Although there was certainly some emigration to America from Kilfearagh parish, it was on a very small scale.¹ Neither was there very much migration. On this subject Captain Kennedy commented in 1850 that fewer people, in his opinion, migrated from Kilrush Union than from probably any other union in Ireland. The reason he assigned was the geographical location of the union.²

In 1845 Lord Stanley commented on the Irish attitude to emigration as follows:³

The warm attachment of the Irish peasant to the locality where he was born and brought up will always make the best and most carefully conducted scheme of emigration a matter of painful sacrifice for the emigrant.

However, as potato failure, eviction and starvation crowded on top of one another in the years which followed, this attitude changed to an almost frenzied desire to sail for the New World and a new life.

The first failure of the potato crop induced quite a number of fairly well to do people to leave Ireland in the spring of 1846.⁴ After the second failure emigration put itself forcibly before the minds of many more, both of prospective emigrants and officials. In November 1846

the Kilrush Union Guardians decided to inform the Government that an extensive system of emigration offered the only solution to the country's problems.⁵ And a few weeks later Captain Wynne, a Board of Works official in Clare, made a similar suggestion.⁶

In the spring of 1847, when the new year's sailings resumed after the winter recess, the headlong flight from the land began. Observers at the time were of the opinion that it was the small farmer, if not the class above him, who formed the backbone of the 1847 movement.⁷ And it is at this stage, and among this group, that we get the first mention of emigration from Kilfearagh parish. In March 1847 it was stated that in Kilkee many were trying to sell their farms and lodges in order to leave the country for America.⁸

In March 1847 Mr. Gregory, who introduced the notorious "quarter-acre" clause, proposed another amendment to the Government's relief bill, which was accepted. According to this amendment, if the landlord of an occupier of under £5 valuation paid two thirds of the cost of the occupier's emigration, the union might provide the remainder, even if the tenant had spent no time in the workhouse.⁹ A month later when Colonel Vandeleur, landlord and Chairman of the Board of Guardians, offered free passages to America to his tenantry,¹⁰ he was probably trying to avail of this provision. It does not seem that very many availed of this offer and there is no mention of any similar offer by the other landlords in Kilfearagh parish.

From the spring of 1847 on the flow of emigration from many parts of Ireland continued to gather momentum. In West Clare, however, the movement was scarcely as pronounced as elsewhere for about two years. But as failure followed failure, with the resultant wholesale evictions of 1848 and 1849, the poor began to give very serious thought to the prospect of emigration, no matter how much they disliked it. Nevertheless, whatever their mental attitude, for most of them emigration was not a practical proposition. As Captain Kennedy wrote in early November 1848:¹¹

The habits of the poor of this district are repugnant to emigration -- they have neither the means nor energy when left unassisted.

In early 1849 Captain Studdert, R.N., of Pella, Kilrush, published a pamphlet entitled Plan for Free Emigration indicating the local interest in the matter.¹² A few months later intending emigrants got a further impetus from the cholera epidemic. And in April 1849 a letter-writer to the Freeman's Journal from Kilrush indicated the mood of the people but also their still unresolved major problem:¹³

The only desire that seems to fill the minds of the people is to get out of the country to America -- but comparatively few among those who are most desirous to go have the means.

Meanwhile, a very partial solution to the problem of pauper emigration had come from the government. In 1848 it was decided to select female orphans from work-houses throughout the country for emigration to Australia.

The unions were to provide the girls with clothing for the journey and send them to Plymouth. And there the Emigration Commissioners took over and provided special ships to bring the girls to Australia.¹⁴ In December 1848 Lieutenant Henry, R.N., the Emigration Commissioners' Dublin agent, visited Kiltrush Workhouse and selected thirty young girls,¹⁵ who were later on board a ship which sailed from Plymouth in mid January 1849 with 500 orphans on board.¹⁶ It is quite possible that this was not the first such group to leave Kiltrush, as there had been many other sailings in the previous months, and there may have been others before the general scheme came to an end in April 1850.¹⁷ Opposition in Australia was the reason for the cessation of this type of assisted emigration. Yet, in May 1851 we find that 150 female paupers from Ennis, Ennistymon and Kiltrush Unions embarked at Dublin for Plymouth en route to Australia.¹⁸ Their precise destination was probably Tasmania, because there can be little doubt that the group of 45 from Kiltrush Union which left Plymouth for there in late May or early June belonged to the same party.¹⁹ There is no indication that these were orphans, although this is not only possible but likely.

In 1849, as the amount of general emigration from West Clare began to increase, two ships sailed from Kiltrush for Canada with 220 passengers in all. In contrast with what very often happened on these ships, they arrived in Canada with a larger number of passengers than left Ireland, as there were no deaths on board, while there was one birth. Sixteen of the passengers were assisted to emigrate by the Poor Law Union.²⁰

After the reconstitution of the Board of Guardians in autumn 1849, there could be little help for intending emigrants from the union, owing to its desperate financial situation. Nevertheless, the volume of emigration from the area increased considerably in 1850. During the late spring and early summer the local newspapers contained many paragraphs such as the following in the Limerick Chronicle of 20 April:

Cleared out this day the Princess Victoria for New York with 96 steerage passengers from Kiltrush; the Ariel for Boston, 64 steerage passengers; the Jessy for Quebec has also cleared with 34 additional passengers from Kiltrush.

And in mid May the Clare Journal reported:²¹

Emigration from this town [Kiltrush] and neighbourhood is progressing on a large scale; numbers have left during the past month, and others are preparing, waiting to get remittances from their friends in America.

These American remittances, now in their infancy, were part of the key to the growing emigration from the union. One member of a family, usually the husband and father, managed to put together the fare for America. Then, when he had made a little money outside, he sent home the fare to his wife and children to enable them to join him.

Thus the emphasis, and this was true throughout Ireland,²² was not on individual but on family emigration. In a letter to The Times in March 1851 Col. Vandeleur remarked that he was happy to corroborate a fact mentioned by Mr. Osborne,

that large sums of money were being sent back to Ireland from America. And, probably writing in the light of his own experience at Kilrush, he went on to say that the workhouses were crowded with deserted women and children who were waiting the day when their passage money would arrive from their husbands and parents in America. Even though they might have to wait several years this money seldom failed to arrive.²³ In late spring 1850, just as the mass emigration movement from West Clare was eventually getting under way, Kilrush Poor Law Guardians suggested that the rate in aid might be used for emigration purposes but were given what amounted to a negative response.²⁴

What had been a steady stream gathering momentum in 1850, became a torrent in 1851. The Rev. S.G. Osborne wrote in April of Kilrush Union and elsewhere in Clare:²⁵

Those who hope to live, hope only in the belief that they will be able to fly the land; those who feel they cannot fly are as men who see their doom.

And the Munster News in its first issue, six weeks later, commented:²⁶

The emigration from this ill fated country is terrible. All the emigration agents in Kilrush are employed and your Port [Limerick] bears testimony to the extent of the business they are called upon to contract.

Nobody disputed the now widely accepted fact that the only solution to Kilrush Union's ills was large scale emigration. A charitable lady put a sum of money in the

hands of Rev. S.G.Osborne for emigration purposes and he allotted portion of this to Kilrush. The actual choice was left in the hands of Fr. Moran, C.C., and Dr.O'Donnell, who made the selection of families from all the electoral districts of the union, including Kilkee.²⁷ Kilrush Board of Guardians contributed £3 to the project.²⁸

On Kilrush Quay, as the emigrants left, there were "tears, lamentations and the wild Irish caine,"²⁹ a scene which was to be often repeated.

About this same time the Kilrush Board of Guardians received a grant for emigration. As soon as a rumour got around that a large number of the workhouse inmates were to be sent to America, there was an immediate rush of applicants for admission.³⁰ Meanwhile the Guardians advertised for proposals from shipowners and others who were prepared to bring between 300 and 400 inmates of the workhouse to Quebec or some other port in British Canada.³¹ In early August the first group of one hundred marched from the workhouse to the quay, accompanied by the chairman and other members of the Board³² and within a few days 715 paupers had embarked at Kilrush on four ships for Quebec. A good proportion of these, probably about half, were from Ennistymon Union.³³ It was also reported that 150 paupers from Kilrush would shortly embark at Limerick for the same destination.³⁴ Three months later news came that all these Kilrush and Ennistymon emigrants had arrived safely in Canada and had immediately secured employment.³⁵ And the presence of those in North America was an incentive to further emigration, as before long the remittances would be arriving back in West Clare.

One wonders what were the feelings of these emigrants with their memories of evictions, starvation, and workhouse. They must have been rather similar to those expressed in a contemporary ballad to be found among the Trevelyn Papers.³⁶ One verse of it perhaps sums up its general tone. It is addressed to the emigrants' former landlord:

Now all your sooty mud wall cabins
 You may hang them on the shelf
 And when you sell out³⁷ your mansion
 You can live in one yourself,,
 But with the change of diet I fear,
 Your guts they won't³⁸ comply,
 When the India-buck you try it,
 Oh, your honour don't you cry.

Wreck of the "Edmond"

The conditions which the people had to endure in many of the emigrant ships are well known and the mortality rate was high -- though it does appear that quite a number of the ships with people from West Clare were particularly fortunate in this regard. However, one of the greatest single tragedies associated with the exodus to America occurred when the Edmond was wrecked in Kilkee Bay on the night of 19 - 20 November 1850. Ninety eight of her passengers and crew perished in the disaster.³⁹

The Edmond was a London-registered barque of 399 tons, which had been chartered by Alderman John McDonnell of Limerick to bring a party of emigrants to New York. On its way down the Shannon it called at Carrigeholt. Then, on Monday 18 November, it left Carrigeholt at 8 a.m. When



It was about thirty miles out to sea a terrific gale arose and carried away all its canvases. Helpless before the storm it was blown into Kilkee Bay and stuck on the Duggerna Reef. It was soon blown off that and, after the anchor had been lowered, it came to rest against the rocks off Sykes' House. The time was about 11.30 p.m.⁴⁰

Richard Russell of Limerick who was staying in Sykes' House at the time, was the first on the scene, accompanied by one of his servants. Describing what he saw, he wrote:⁴¹

At first there was no appearance of any living person on board, but as soon as we made our appearance there was one burst of horrid agony for assistance. I can never forget it -- the sound will long continue fresh in my ear.

Russell sent his servant for the coastguards, two of whom soon arrived on the scene with an assistant. Meanwhile, the captain had ordered the weather rigging of the foremast to be cut and this provided a means by which passengers were enabled to crawl from the ship to the shore. They were helped in this by the five men on the rocks. About one hundred reached safety in this manner but when the tide rose, it became absolutely impossible for those still remaining to get off the ship. Shortly afterwards, at about 3 a.m., it broke in two. Several people now made a vain attempt to get on to the rocks but failed and were drowned. Over fifty others were on the part of the wreck which drifted ~~eastward~~^{towards} the beach at the east end, but most of them were washed overboard before safety was reached. Among those who survived this terrible journey were the members of a Crotry family who, it was

said, were landed almost at their own doorstep. In all 93 people died and there were 119 survivors.⁴²

To add to the horror of the scene a number of local people, probably near death from starvation themselves, tried to get whatever plunder they could. An eyewitness wrote:⁴³

Nothing could exceed the brutal, and, I regret to say, successful efforts of some people to plunder whatever they could lay their hands on; they actually stripped the clothes from the dead bodies, together with, of course, any money in them, which latter, it is supposed, was considerable. All the clothes, beds and property were, in the most cool and heartless manner, carried off by those unfeeling wretches, and this done in the presence of these shipwrecked creatures, who in vain had to beg even their clothes to cover their halfnaked bodies.

Perhaps too harsh, a judgment, considering the circumstances of the plunderers.

Another visitor described the scene on the following day:⁴⁴

I saw lying side by side, on a sail spread on the beach, many of the poor drowned ones, most of them young women and children; others were constantly being washed ashore and were laid with those already there.....All that was left of her [the ship] were fragments scattered on the rocks and beach.

Thirty of the dead were heaped in the small yard before one of the lodges at the end of Marine Parade. These and

the others were later buried in Killfearagh graveyard.⁴⁵
But for weeks later bodies were still being washed
ashore.⁴⁶

Fr. Comyn had played a prominent part in the rescue work and, later, the Catholic priests of the parish were able to induce the people to restore much^{of} the plundered property.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, in early December, a number of people were fined from £5 to £20 each for concealing property taken from the wreck, while some others got gaol sentences.⁴⁸ Even Jonas Studdert was brought to court on a similar charge but he was acquitted on the ground that the property had been brought to his yard without his knowledge.⁴⁹ Richard Russell and the coastguards were awarded the silver medal of the Royal National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck for their rescue work.⁵⁰

CHAPTER NINETEENPICKING UP THE THREADS

When the potato crop failed in 1845 few suspected that the resultant hunger and distress would have appreciably different results from previous severe failures. It was obvious that a wider area was affected on this occasion but, at the same time, it was hoped that all would be well again after the harvest of 1846. When a second failure occurred in '46 and a third followed in '47 the stage was set for a process which was, in many respects, to greatly change the way of life of the people. In Kilfearagh not only were the habits, attitudes and way of life of many people changed but even the very appearance of the countryside was greatly altered. By 1851 it was dotted with ruined cabins, while many fields which had formerly been sown with potatoes were now again under grass.

The years 1845-51, then, undoubtedly witnessed the greatest disaster the parish had ever known and one which, in the most literal sense of the word, was almost indescribable. From an early stage writers had used very strong adjectives, such as "terrible", "appalling", "horrible" etc. to describe what they had seen. These continued to be used, for want of any others, but their meaning took on a new depth and intensity as time went on.

As we saw, the condition of Kilrush Union received a good deal of publicity after the wholesale

evictions had got under way. However, by the end of 1851 it had ceased to be news. The worst was now over, though the return to normality was slow. In the last full week of September 1852, for example, the workhouse had 2,683 inmates, quite a large number but significantly below the figure of 3,276 of a year previously. And in another respect this week was a very important one -- it was the first since the beginning of the Famine in which no death had occurred in the workhouse.¹ But the previous six years had seen many, very many deaths. What effect had these deaths on the population structure of the parish?

1. Population

In the half century before 1845 the population had been rising rapidly. In 1831 it was estimated at 6,239 for Kilfearagh and 6,700 three years later.² And in 1841 it was 7,137. Whatever about the precise accuracy of the 1831 figure, one thing is quite obvious -- that the population was very much on the increase. All this was to change with the Famine. In 1851 the usual decennial census was held and its figures are extremely revealing. However, in comparing them with those for 1841 a few things must be kept in mind. Firstly, when the census was taken in 1851 the state of emergency was not yet over in West Clare, unlike other parts of the country. Secondly, there had been a significant increase in population between 1841 and 1845. Thus in the latter year the population of the parish was almost certainly over 8,000 and quite possibly much higher. Captain Mann, in a letter to Sir Randolph Routh in December 1847, mentioned that the population of Kilrush Union had increased since

3
1841. Captain Wynne, a Board of Works Officer in
4
Clare, was more specific:

The Census of 1841 being pronounced universally to be no fair criterion of the present population and consequent destitution, I tested the matter in the Parish of Clondegad, Barony of Islands, where I found the present population more than a third greater than that of 1841 -- this I believe to be the case in all the districts along the coast.

The following figures therefore only serve to give some idea of the decline between 1845 and 1851. In fact the position was much worse. We also give the 1861 figures here to illustrate that a halt was by no means called in 1851.
5

Kilfearagh Parish

<u>Townland</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>
Ballyonan	331	233	160
Baunmore	213	88	92
Corbally	587	368	237
Dough	553	405	362
Emlagh	143	119	116
Farrinhy	138	86	98
Foohagh	120	98	27
Garraun	115	92	91
Kildeema	154	123	100
Kilfearagh	665	436	400
Kilkee Lower	60	31	50
Kilkee Upper	49	4	18
Kilnagallagh	202	69	29
Knockroe	26	18	4

Kilfearagh Parish

<u>Townland</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>
Leaheen	67	27	12
Lisdeen	587	354	270
Lisluinaghan	489	276	259
Moyasta	578	303	349
Termon East	239	43	44
Termon West	340	291	253
Kilkee Town	1481	1869	1856
Total	7137	5413	4827

It will be noted that the population of Kilkee Town had increased by almost 400 between 1841 and 1851. However, as we saw, considerable expansion took place between 1841 and 1845 so that it had probably reached 1800 by the latter date. Thus, though many of its inhabitants suffered very much during the Famine, it at least maintained its level of population -- possibly being assisted by the large numbers of evicted country people who drifted in in search of lodgings. The position of the town as a holiday resort was clearly a very great help.

If we take the rural portion of the parish alone, the results of the years 1845-1851 become very obvious.

Rural portion 1841 -- 5656

Rural portion 1851 -- 3544

The decline here is 37%⁶ and it was probably nearer 50% between 1845 and 1851. And during the following ten years it continued, though in not quite as marked a manner.

Rural portion 1851 -- 3544

Rural portion 1861 -- 2971 -- a decline of 19.2%

In some of the townlands the position was far worse than the parochial average:

	<u>1841</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>
⁷ Fooohagh	120	98	27
⁸ Kilnagalliagh	202	69	29
⁹ Leaheen	67	27	12
^{9a} Tarmon East	239	43	44

2. Emigration

Deaths and evictions played the major part in causing the decline between 1841 and 1851. From 1851 on the continued decline was mainly caused by emigration. Almost up to this time emigration had not been an important issue in West Clare. Before the famine began, even though the population was rising and the standard of living was going down through repeated subdivision, the people's vision was bounded by the parish of their birth. They accepted the place in which they lived, for better or worse, and also the fact that they might have to go hungry at times when the harvest was not very good. However, as C.W. Hamilton pointed out,¹⁰ they were a very independent people who accepted the difficulties of their way of life and were prepared to face them.

The years 1846-1850 changed all this. The whole world which these people had known now collapsed about them. The food supply, always precarious, failed time and time again -- underlining a fact already very evident, that there was an over dependence on the potato. With the successive failures a vicious spiral began. The labourers and smallest farmers had to have recourse to Poor Law relief. The poor law rate, as a result, increased and multiplied. Farmers who were

already struggling were now hit with this heavy demand and many eventually found that they too had to join those who were depending on rather than contributing to the rate. And, of course, the landlords, in order to avoid paying the rates on small patches of ground which they had rented out had recourse to eviction. In all this matter, too, the repeal of the corn laws did not help. Thus within a few years the whole pattern of life for several thousand people changed. Those who had formerly been independent and assured of at least the basic necessities of life found that they were reduced to a worse state than the beggars who had previously called at their doors. The beggars had always been able to get shelter for the night, but the newly evicted often found that the landlord had forbidden their neighbours to take them in. Eventually the sufferings of their wives and children forced them to swallow their pride and face towards the workhouse in Kilrush.

After eviction or a voluntary giving up of their farms the people concerned no longer had any stake in the country. The relief afforded by the workhouse might keep them alive for the moment -- but what of the future? Had they any future? It was at this stage that emigration to America came to be seen as a new hope -- an opportunity of getting out of the present misery and making a fresh start in life of a kind which was impossible in Ireland. Others who still were eking out a wretched existence on their farms began to look on it in the same way. After the first emigrants had reached America they soon brought out their wives and families and, once begun, this process

went on and on. The "Irish Emigrant's Address to his Irish Landlord", part of which has been quoted already, shows us the attitude of at least one of these to his own country:

11

I'm now going to a country, where
From Poor Rates I'll be free,
For Poor Ireland's going to the dogs
As fast as fast can be,

And when the immediate crisis was over a tradition of emigration had already been built up so that it continued at a frightening pace during the 1850's. No longer were the emigrants people who had to emigrate but people who wanted to emigrate. The result was that a decade later a commentator could write:

12

There is scarcely a family in Clare which has not some member or members in America or Australia, and remittances are constantly being sent by these exiles to their relatives at home.

3. Pattern of Farming

With evictions and emigration the size of holdings increased. This consolidation was certainly desired by the landlords and an opportunity to bring it about presented itself when many tenants fell heavily into arrears, particularly after the third potato failure. The wholesale evictions caused terrible suffering and were often done in a very heartless manner. However, the landlords also had their difficulties as they found their incomes declining and their bills for poor law rates mounting. It was the waging of their own battle for self-preservation which in many cases drove them to evict and also,

on the part of those who were members of Kilrush Board of Guardians, to attempt economies which would keep down the rates. The only landlord in Kilfearagh parish whose estates actually passed into the hands of a receiver was the O'Gorman Mahon. In 1855 we find that Lisdeen was now the property of Jonas Studdert and Francis Coffey.¹³ Of the other principal landlords John MacDonnell died in June 1850¹⁴ and was succeeded by his nephew, William Armstrong. Both Colonel Vandeleur and the second Marquess Conyngham¹⁵ survived the famine period and lived on for many years. Marcus Keane was to add a few more unhappy chapters to the story of Kilfearagh and adjoining parishes before his death in 1883.

With consolidation and a declining population there was a movement away from tillage to cattle and dairy farming. The repeal of the corn laws in 1846 also made a significant contribution to this trend. In 1862 Henry Coulter, a correspondent for Saunders's News Letter¹⁶ could write of West Clare:

The large farmers have converted all their arable land into grazing ground, to feed stock and make butter, instead of growing corn as they used formerly do. For instance, previously to 1846, more than 100,000 barrels of oats were annually exported from Kilrush; but the quantity now exported does not amount to 50,000 barrels a year; cattle, pigs and butter having taken the place of corn.

In 1863 the Marquess Conyngham obtained a patent to hold four fairs¹⁷ in the year in Kilkee.

Although conacre had almost disappeared during the later famine years it again revived and Coulter

remarked on this practice in West Clare. £4 was then the general charge for an acre in the Kilkee area.¹⁸ The existence of conacre in the 1860's gives an indication of something which is obvious from other sources. Though the Great Famine had shaken the faith of the people in the potato, it had not broken their dependence on it. And despite the smaller population, after poor harvests there were to be many other periods of hunger though, fortunately, no famines. However, the Famine had introduced some changes. The potato crisis had induced many farmers, who had never previously done so, to sow turnips, beans and some other crops. And after 1850 they continued to do so.¹⁹

4. Education and Religion

In educational matters a significant change had come during our period with the opening of Kilkee National School in 1845. The era of the hedge schools was now drawing to a close and though a few may have lingered on, their days were numbered. The Irish language, too, as we saw, was very much on the decline, even before the opening of the National School. If any further impetus was needed for the movement to learn English, this was provided by the American emigration, for the purpose of which knowledge of the English language was especially useful.

The big educational question in the 1840's and 1850's was not the position of the Irish language in the National Schools but the provision of education for Irish Catholics which would be free from even the suspicion of proselytism. And this the National system provided, apart from some exceptions, mainly in the north of Ireland. The problem of proselytism

was quite a live one about 1850 and in the next decade considerable efforts were made to woo and even force people away from the Catholic faith in the parishes of Moyarta and Kilballyowen. In October 1851, just as the attack in these parishes was well under way, it was reported that a sum of £75 had been sent to Kilkee for proselytizing purposes, and in the following month Rev. W. Wilberforce preached in the chapels of Kilkee and Carrigaholt "to counteract the recent fast progress of the Scriptural schools",²⁰ It does not appear, however, that any real attempt was made to concentrate on Kilfearagh parish. Perhaps the presence of the redoubtable Fr. Comyn was too much of a deterrent. At any rate, when he died three years later, the Limerick and Clare Examiner wrote in his obituary notice:²¹

One circumstance highly creditable to his zeal and determination is that no souper or bible reader ever set up shop in the parish of Kilkee.

In religious matters the period 1834-51 marked the end of the penal era, which could be said to have been officially and ceremoniously closed with the Synod of Thurles in 1850. One of the purposes of this national synod was to bring the discipline of the Irish Church into line with the discipline of the universal Church and, in the process, eliminate many of the customs which had grown up during the penal times. Thus, the synod, with some insignificant exceptions, forbade the practice of performing marriages and baptisms in private houses. If Dr. Cullen had his way it would also have effectively put an end to the stations by forbidding the hearing of women's confessions in

private houses. In this instance the bishops who were in favour of retaining the penal customs prevailed and succeeded in obtaining a decree which still tolerated, though it did not encourage the practice.²² Thus after 1850 parochial life came to be more centred on the chapels which were also emerging from the penal style of thatched roof and bare earthen floor without any seating. It is certainly doubtful if there were any, or very many, seats in Kilkee Chapel for quite some time after it was opened.

5. Politics

In politics, as we saw, Fr. Comyn was a very strong supporter of O'Connell and even though he was a close friend of Fr. John Kenyon²³ he had little sympathy with the revolutionary aspects of the Young Ireland movement. With the death of O'Connell in 1847 an era in Irish history came to a close and also a chapter in the political history of Kilfearagh parish. After the illfated rising of 1849 came the foundation of the Tenant Right League in 1850 and the attempts to secure an independent opposition in the decade which followed. Probably Fr. Comyn's last political fight was in an election in 1853 in which the Conservative candidate for Clare, Colonel Vandeleur, was defeated. There was a general hubbub in Kilkee when the popular news came of Vandeleur's defeat. Jonas Studdert tried to intervene and Fr. Comyn attempted to restrain him. As a result Studdert brought a charge of riot and assault against Fr. Comyn, while the latter, in the best Irish tradition, returned the compliment by bringing a charge of assault

and riot against Studdert. The affair ended when
Studdert withdrew his charges. ²⁴ It does show, however,
that there was still plenty of political vigour in
the parish and that it only awaited a good cause and
effective leadership to be brought once more to the
pitch of enthusiasm which had been aroused for
O'Connell and his policies. Indeed, the more one
studies local politics in the middle of the nineteenth
century, the more aware one becomes of the intense
involvement of the people. Politics for them meant
not just an occasional election but provided, a good
deal of the brightness in their lives as they travelled
to meetings, signed petitions and lit the omni-present
tar barrels on the occasion of the visit of a notabil-
ity such as Smith O'Brien to Kilkee.

6. Recreation

If politics can be regarded as one facet of the
people's diversion, then there was no major change
here about 1851 apart from the different issues and
policies involved. The Kilkee Races also survived
the changing times, though some of the other amusements
associated with them, such as shawl-dancing, seem to
have died out. The faction fighters, too, are heard
of no more after the Famine, though this is fairly
true of the country as a whole in the 1850's in which
there were only a few instances of the old time faction
fights. However, if faction fights were doomed to
die a natural death in any event, this was not true
of hurling which appears to have been quite popular
in the early 1840's and is never mentioned again after
the Famine. One can only conclude that the general
run of life was so dislocated that men had no longer

for example, we find two grandsons of Louis Philippe of France among the visitors, along with many other members of the French nobility.²⁵ And two years²⁶ later the Limerick Chronicle informs us:

On Monday a large assemblage of the rank, beauty and fashion of the neighbourhood attended in Merton Square to take part in the new and popular game of croquet and to enjoy the delightful strains of a band, hired for the occasion.

This shows that Kilkee was still very much to the fore with the latest fashions as croquet was as yet²⁷ very much a novelty in Britain and Ireland.

That Kilkee did not continue to develop as previously during the 1850's and thereafter may be in part due to the expansion of railways about this time, thereby making access easier to very many places at home and abroad which could hitherto be reached only after journeys involving extreme discomfort. Between Limerick and Kilkee the only advance was a railway between the former and Foynes, from which place the boat could be taken to Kilrush. From 1845 on there were repeated unsuccessful attempts to secure a railway between Kilrush and Kilkee. Thus, whereas in 1835 Kilkee was one of the most easily accessible resorts in the country, the position had radically changed twenty years later through developments elsewhere and the lack of them in West Clare.

the opportunity, desire or energy to hurl for several years -- and when the situation had changed once again the old tradition had been broken. As mentioned already, it was Gaelic football alone which was played in the area after the foundation of the G.A.A. in the 1880's.

7. Holiday Resort

In the 1830's and early 1840's Kilkee was a booming holiday resort and was undoubtedly one of the most popular and fashionable in Ireland. New lodges were constantly being built, new businesses were opening every year and the general impression was of a go-ahead rapidly expanding town. Then, during the famine years, although large crowds of visitors still continued to frequent the resort, business was not, as one would expect, quite as good as in the preceding decade. However, the coming of the Famine also meant an end to the rapid expansion which had been taking place and, once lost, this impetus was never recovered again. Very few new lodges were built during those years and there was a slight recession rather than a further expansion in trade. When normality returned in the early 1850's it probably did not occur to anybody at first that things were any different from a decade earlier. However, the era of expansion was now over and although further building did take place over the next few decades, it was no longer at the same pace as before the Famine and could in general be regarded as consolidation. A decline had not set in but development had been very largely arrested. The town was still a very popular and fashionable resort. In August 1855,

To conclude. From 1834 to 1851 was not a very long period in time. But a new world had emerged for the people of Kilfearagh parish by the latter date. Many things had changed because of the Great Famine; others had changed for different reasons which also came to the fore about this time. And if the people's world had changed, so also had many of their attitudes to the environment in which they found themselves. But they were still a deeply religious people, still deeply interested in politics and still prepared to down tools to urge on the horses of their choice at the Kilkee Races.

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONSA. General

3321 - 3379	National Library of Ireland MSS 3321 - 3379, which contain newspaper clippings relating to County Clare.
Devon Commission	Evidence taken before her Majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland -- Parliamentary Papers 1845 XX (evidence taken at Kilrush).
D.U.M.	Dublin University Magazine
N.L.I.	National Library of Ireland
N.M.A.J.	North Munster Antiquarian Journal
P.P.	Parliamentary Papers
R.C.P.	Relief Commission Papers

B. Newspapers

C.J.	Clare Journal
L.C.	Limerick Chronicle
L. and C.E.	Limerick and Clare Examiner
L.E.P. and C.S.	Limerick Evening Post and Clare Sentinel
L.R.	Limerick Reporter
L.R. and T.V.	Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator

Chapter OneSetting the Scene

1. Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland, 10 parts, Dublin, London and Edinburgh, 1845-6, 418 (Part V).
2. v. Aubrey Gwynn, S.J., and Dermot Gleeson, A History of the Diocese of Killaloe, vol. 1, Dublin, 1962, 307.
3. In the nineteenth century sheep were put on the island to graze as it was believed that the result was a high quality mutton. The difficult operation of getting the sheep off the island has been described by Mary John Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, a Watering Place in the County Clare, near the mouth of the Shannon, with an account of a voyage down that river from Limerick to Kilcush, Dublin, 1856, 77-8.
4. William F. Wakeman, Archaeologia Hibernica, A Handbook of Irish Antiquities, Dublin, 1891 (second edition), 146.
5. Gwynn and Gleeson, A History of Killaloe, 314.
6. Calendars of Papal Letters, London, 1895-, vols. 1 - XIV.
7. James Hardiman, Ancient Irish Deeds and Writings, chiefly relating to Landed Property, from the twelfth to the seventeenth century, with Translations, Notes and a Preliminary Essay in The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, vol. XV (1828), 60-1 (Antiquities).
8. John O'Donovan (ed.), Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters, 7 vols., Dublin, 1851, a. 1568.

9. Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland of the reign of Elizabeth 1588 - 1592 (ed. H.C. Hamilton), London, 1867, 50-1, 38.
10. Thomas J. Westropp, Notes on the Armada Ships lost on the Coast of Clare, 1588 in Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland, vol. IX (4th series), 1889, 132.
11. Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland of the reign of Elizabeth 1598-9 (ed. E.G. Atkinson), London, 1895, 471.
12. Annals of the Four Masters, a. 1599.
13. Ibid., a. 1601, 1602.
14. Calendar of Carew MSS 1601-3 (ed. J.S. Brewer and William Bullen), London, 1870, 105.
15. Fiants of Elizabeth, 6615, 6617 in 18th Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records in Ireland, Dublin, 1886.
16. James Frost, The History and Topography of the County of Clare, Dublin, 1893, 360-7.
17. C.H. Firth (ed.), The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, Lieutenant-General of the Horse in the Army of the Commonwealth of England 1625-1672, 2 vols., Oxford, 1894, I, 291.
18. T.J. Westropp, Carrigaholt and its Neighbourhood II in Journal of the North Munster Archaeological Society II.1 (July 1911) 37.
19. William Shaw Mason, A Statistical account or Parochial Survey of Ireland, 3 vols., Dublin, 1814-9, II, 434.

20. Philip Dwyer, The Diocese of Killaloe from the Reformation to the Close of the 18th Century, Dublin, 1978, 302.
21. Sir Bernard Burke, A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland, 2 vols., vol. II, 7th ed., London, 1886, 1176. Burke says that Daniel MacDonnell, father of James, was in residence in Kilkee in 1671.
22. Frost, History and Topography of Clare, 565-7.
23. Richard Hayes, Biographical Directory of Irishmen in France, Dublin, 1949, 233-4.
24. John O'Donoghue, Historical Memoir of the O'Briens, Dublin, 1860, 345-7.
25. John Lloyd, A Short Tour in the County Clare 1780. An exact reprint edited by Henry Henn M.A., Cambridge, 1893, 12-3.
26. v. Brian O'Looney (ed.), Danta ar Chleam Domhnaill an Chlair. A Collection of Poems written on different occasions, by the Clare Bards, in honour of the MacDonnells of Kilkee and Killone in the County of Clare, Dublin, 1863; and Brian Mac Cumhghaill, Sean de hOra, Boile Atha Cliath, 1956.
27. O'Looney, Danta, 8.
28. She was an O'Brien from Ennistymon and is included in a list of converts from Popery in 1718.
29. Mason, Parochial Survey, II, 426;
T.J. Westropp, Kilkee and its Neighbourhood I in Journal of the North Munster Archaeological Society II.4 (Jan. 1913), 219.
Mason remarked of her: "she was noted for keeping up the old practice of indiscriminate and unbounded hospitality for many years".

Chapter OneSetting the Scene

30. Some gate pillars from the old MacDonnell residence can be seen at the entrance to some houses in the West End.
31. C.J., 14 Jan. 1850.
32. William P. Burke, The Irish Priests in the Penal Times (1660 - 1760), Waterford, 1914, 400-2.
33. Report on State of Popery in Ireland 1731 in Archivium Hibernicum II (1913), 148.
34. John Clancy, Notes in Molua (1952), 48.
35. Samuel Lewis, A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland, 2 vols., London, 1837, II, 93.
36. Hely Dutton, Statistical Survey of the County of Clare, Dublin, 1808.
37. Third Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the nature and extent of the several Bogs in Ireland and the practicability of draining and cultivating them (PP 1813-4, VI, Part I), Map facing Appendix, 110.
38. Sylvester Malone, Tenant Wrong Illustrated in a Nutshell or a History of Kilkee in relation to Landlordism during the past seven years in a letter addressed to the Rt. Hon. W.E. Gladstone, M.P., Dublin, 1867, 5-6.
39. Ennis Chronicle, 27 June 1793 (Canon Clancy Papers).
40. Ibid., 14 Aug. 1794.
41. Mason, Parochial Survey, II, 474.
42. Ibid., II, 425.
43. Ennis Chronicle, 11 April 1818.
44. Maurice Lenihan, Limerick: its History and Antiquities, Cork, 1967, 468.

Chapter OneSetting the Scene

45. L.E.P. and C.S., 19 May 1829; 1 June 1830;
12 Aug. 1831.
46. Clare Sentinel, 20 June 1828 (5321, 133).
47. Malone, Tenant Wrong Illustrated, 9.
48. C.J., 25 June 1835.
49. L. and C.E., 15 Sep. 1849.
50. Ibid., 1 Sep. 1849.
51. Ibid., 8 Sep. 1849.
52. Hugh Hogan, A Sail down the Shannon and Visitors' Handbook for Kilkee, Limerick, 1863, 14.
53. Hugh Pogan, A Directory of Kilkee in the County Clare, on the western coast of Ireland, with a map showing the situation and number of the lodges, Limerick, 1842, 13-6.
54. M.F.D., Letters from the Coast of Clare in D.U.F. XVIII (July 1841), 60.
55. Freeman's Journal, 13 March 1860.
56. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 67.
57. The coastguards remained there until a new building was erected for them on the eastern side of the bay in the early 1860's.
58. Calculations based on figures in Report of the Commissioners appointed to take the Census of Ireland for the year 1841, Dublin, 1843, 158-9.

Chapter TwoMeans of Livelihood (1)

- 1.v. Joan Clancy, Gleanings in 17th Century Kilrush in N.M.A.J. III (Autumn 1943), 203-212, for background information on Vandeleurs.

Chapter TwoMeans of Livelihood (1)

2. L.E.P. and C.S., 29 March 1833.
3. Patrick White, The History of Clare and the Dalcassian Clans, Dublin, 1893, 344-5.
4. e.g. L.C., 14, 28 May 1831.
5. Devon Commission, 703 (Mr. Thomas Studdert, Danganelly, Kilrush).
6. Ibid., 703; 700 (Mr. B. Cox, Clarefield, Kilrush).
7. Trevelyan Papers, Captain Robert Mann to Sir Charles Trevelyan, 15 Nov. 1847, T64/367A(3).
8. Devon Commission, 708.
9. FP 1825 VII, 127-8.
10. Devon Commission, 707.
11. Ibid., 701 (Cox).
12. T.W. Freeman, Pre-Famine Ireland, Manchester, 1957, 58.
13. Devon Commission, 709 (Jonas Studdert).
14. Ibid.
15. Freeman, op. cit., 42
16. FP 1835 KXXII (i), 234
17. Ibid., 235.
18. Ibid.
19. Devon Commission, 702 (Thomas Studdert).
20. Ibid., 709.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 700 (Cox); 712 (Rev. John Kenny, F.P., Kilrush).
23. Ibid., 703 (Thomas Studdert); 718 (Rev. Malachy Duggan).

Chapter TwoMeans of Livelihood (1)

24. A visitor to Kilkee in 1829 saw Fr. Comyn secure the release of some poor people's cattle, which had been impounded by the agent of the Marquess Conyngham -- L.E.P. and C.S., 22 May 1829.
25. Devon Commission, 712 (Rev. J. Kenny).
26. Ibid., 703 (Thomas Studdert).
27. Ibid., 702 (Thomas Studdert). The Tithe Applotment Book for Kilfearagh Parish (1828) seems to indicate a certain amount of ruddle by references such as "Michael Sweeny and partners".
28. Cecil Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, Ireland 1845-9, London, 1962, 33.
29. Devon Commission, 699 (Cox).
30. Ibid., 707 (Jonas Studdert).
31. FP 1835 XXXII(1), 627.
32. Quoted in J.P. O'Brien, The Great Famine in Ireland and a retrospect of the Fifty Years 1845-1895, London, 1896, 50-1.
33. L.C., 10 Feb. 1841.
34. M.F.D., Letters from the Coast of Clare in D.U.M. XVIII (July 1841) 60.
35. L.C., 5 Jan. 1842.
36. L.C., 10 Feb., 14 April 1841.
37. L.C., 16 March 1842.
38. Devon Commission, 707.
39. Ibid., 699.
40. Ibid.
41. Freeman, op. cit., 64-5.
42. Devon Commission, 699 (Cox).
43. Ibid., 707.

Chapter TwoMeans of Livelihood (1)

44. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 43-4, 55.
45. Malone, Tenant Wrong Illustrated, 7.
46. L.C., 22 March 1843 (3323, 14).
47. L.R., 4 April 1843.
48. L.C., 20 May 1843 (3323, 54).
49. Devon Commission, 717 (Mr. Robert Fitzgerald, Donoughboy, Kilkee).
50. L.C., 22 March 1843 (3323, 14); L.R., 21 March 1845.
51. L.C., 6 Sep. 1843 (3323, 81).
52. Selection of Parochial Examinations relative to the Destitute Classes in Ireland, Dublin, 1835, 233.
53. Replies to Questions circulated by the Commissioners for inquiring into the conditions of the Poorer Classes in Ireland (PP 1836 XXXI - XXXIII), PP 1836 XXXI.
54. Ibid.
55. Devon Commission, 701.
56. PP 1835 XXXII (i), 316.
57. Selection of Parochial Examinations, 233.
58. Devon Commission, 701.
59. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Trevelyan, 15 Nov. 1847, T64/367A(3).
60. Selection of Parochial Examinations, 233-4.
61. Ibid., 234.
62. PP 1835 XXXII (i), 624.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., 235-6.
65. L.C., 20 Sep. 1834, 6 Oct. 1838.
66. PP 1835 XXXII(i), 624.
67. Ibid.

Chapter TwoMeans of Livelihood (1)

68. Ibid., 625.
69. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 90.
70. PP 1855 XXXII (i), 626-7.
71. Ibid.; 627.
72. Ibid., 625.
73. Ibid., 627.
74. Ibid., 628.
75. Ibid., 625.
76. Ibid., 235.
77. K.H. Connell, The Population of Ireland 1750 - 1845, Oxford, 1950, 222.
78. PP 1335 XXXII (i), 626.
79. Ibid., 235.
80. Ibid., 234.

Chapter ThreeMeans of Livelihood (2)

1. Gerald Griffin, Holland Tide, The Aylmers of Ballyaylmer, The Hand and Word and the Barber of Ebury etc., Dublin, 1859, 124 (The Hand and Word).
2. Mason, Personal Survey, II, 464. Mason's Personal Survey wrote that Eugene O'Curry smuggled tobacco and hid it "in a holy hollow" under Fr. Malachy Duggan's altar". O'Curry was born about four miles from Kilkee in the parish of Movarta of which Fr. Duggan was P.P. when O'Curry was a young man. This incident is referred to in Michael Herity, Eugene O'Curry's Early Life: details from an unpublished letter in N.M.A.J. X.2 (1967), 144.
3. C.J., 9 Aug. 1841.

Chapter ThreeMeans of Livelihood (2)

3. Lewis, A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland, II, 93.
4. Knott, Two Months at Kilkeec, 45.
5. L.C., 5 Sep. 1838.
6. Knott, op. cit., 46-7.
7. Lewis, op. cit., II, 93.
8. Mason, Parochial Survey, II, 451.
9. Knott, op. cit., 41.
10. C.J., 25 Sep. 1837.
11. Limerick Star, 23 Jan. 1838.
12. L.C., 4 Jan. 1845 (3325, 9).
13. C.J., 22 Feb. 1841.
14. Gerald Griffin. The Poetical and Dramatic Works of Gerald Griffin. Dublin, 1895, 79-80.
15. M.F.D., Letters from the Coast of Clare in D.U.M. XVIII (Nov. 1841), 554; L.R., 10 Nov. 1840.
16. T.C. Foster, Letters on the Condition of the People of Ireland, London, 1846, 308.
17. Minute Book of Irish Reproductive Loan Fund Institution for Co. Clare (P.R.O. London - T 91. 138), 43.
18. Devon Commission, 708.
19. Ibid.
20. Minute Book of Irish Reproductive Loan Fund Institution (Clare), Resolution of 21 July 1834.
A visitor to Kilkeec in early 1841 stated that £40 was applied for on the day of his visit. Of this £15 was granted (C.J., 11 Feb. 1841).
21. Devon Commission, 708.
22. L.C., 12 Jan. 1842.
23. L.R., 1 July 1842.

24. W.R. Le Fanu, Seventy Years of Irish Life,
London, 1893, 89.
25. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 62-70.
26. L.C., 7 Feb. 1844.
27. Tipperary Vindicator, 3 July 1847.
28. L. and C.E., 24 June 1843.
29. Census of 1841, 159.
30. v. pp. 126-7.
31. v. p. 116.
32. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 42, 61.
33. Report of the Committee for the Relief of the
Distressed Districts in Ireland 1822, London,
1823, 57.
34. Mason, Parochial Survey, II, 477.
35. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 32.
36. C.J., 5 March 1835. The surveyor also pointed
out that sand and seaweed were carried back into
the interior on the return journey.
37. Limerick Star and Evening Post, 17 Jan. 1837;
C.J., 19 Jan. 1837.
38. C.J., 21 Sep. 1837.
39. This may well have been after a personal contact
as the Chancellor with his family and brother-in-
law, Aubrey de Vere, visited Kilkee in Sep. 1838.
(C.J., 20 Sep. 1838).
40. L.R., 23 June 1840.
41. L.C., 12 Jan. 1842.
42. Ibid.
43. C.J., 18 April 1842.
44. Census of Ireland 1841, 164.
45. PP 1835 XXXII (i), 234.

Chapter ThreeMeans of Livelihood (2)

46. Freeman, PreFamine Ireland, 6.
47. Census of Ireland 1841, 164.

Chapter FourNecessities of Life

1. J.G. Kohl, Ireland, London, 1843, 47.
- 1a. Census of 1841, 158-9.
2. Kohl, op. cit., 48.
3. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 91-2, 88-9, 96.
4. Replies to Questions, PP 1836 XXXI.
5. PP 1825 VII, 207.
6. Knott, op. cit., 57-8.
7. Quoted in Daniel Corkery, The Hidden Ireland, A Study of Gaelic Munster in the Eighteenth Century, Dublin, 1956, 13.
8. Lady Chatterton, Rambles in the South of Ireland during 1838, 2 vols., London, 1839, II, 213.
9. Devon Commission, 704.
10. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 72.
11. Replies to Questions, PP 1836 XXXI.
12. Corkery, op. cit., 15.
13. PP 1835 XXXII (ii), Supplement to Appendix B, 206.
14. PP 1835 XXXII (i), 624.
15. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 91, 97.
16. Ibid., 97.
17. Report of the Committee for the Relief of the Distressed Districts in Ireland 1822, 57.

Chapter FourNecessities of Life

18. A visitor to Kilkee in 1822 remarked:

"In the town of Kilkee, in the county of Clare, when I was passing through it in the time of the distress in the year 1822, the people were in a group at the side of the pound, receiving meal in the way of charity, and at the same time the pound was choke-full of cattle; of course the milk of those cows would have been worth something if it could have been obtained. (PP 1825 VII(501), 132).

19. Knott, op. cit., 27.

20. L.C., 3 June 1837.

21. L.R., 16 July 1839.

22. Knott, op. cit., 63-4.

23. L.R., 22 July 1842.

24. PP 1835 XXXII(ii), Supplement to Appendix B, 206.

25. Knott, op. cit., 105.

26. Ibid., 62-3.

27. Ibid., 60;

M.F.D., Letters from the Coast of Clare in D.U.M.
XVII (June 1841), 771.

28. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 60.

29. M.F.D., Scenes on the Shores of the Atlantic, II,
295.

30. M.F.D., Letters from the Coast of Clare in D.U.M.
XVIII (July 1841), 61.

31. L.R., 11 Aug. 1840

32. Knott, op. cit., 120.

33. PP 1835 XXXII(ii), Suppl. to Appendix B, 206.

34. Ibid., 62.

Chapter FourNecessities of Life

- 34a. C.J., 25 June 1832 - "Dr. Lever arrived from Dublin in Kilrush on Monday. He was sent down at the request of the Board of Health".
35. K.H. Connell, The Population of Ireland, 1750 - 1845, 217.
36. Ibid., 213.
37. PP 1835 XXXII (i), 626.
38. Connell, op. cit., 217.
39. Ibid., 203.
40. PP 1835 XXXII(ii), Suppl. to Appendix B, 62.
41. L.R., 13, 24 March 1840; C.J., 26 March 1840.
42. PP 1835 XXXII(ii), Suppl. to App. B, 62.
43. Ibid.
44. PP 1835 XXXII(i), 316.
45. L.C., 4 Jan. 1837; 6 June 1838; 24 July 1839.
46. PP 1835 XXXII(i), 316.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. PP 1835 XXXII(i), 316.
50. Ibid., 236.
51. Trevelyan Papers, Captain Mann to Trevelyan, 15 Nov. 1847, T64/367A (3).
52. P.F. Egan, The Parish of Ballinasloe, Dublin, 1960, 225.
53. L.C., 25 May 1839.
54. Thom's Irish Almanac and Official Directory for the year 1844, Dublin, 1844, 481.
55. L.R., 24 Jan. 1845.

Chapter FiveReligion

1. PP 1855 XXXIII, 228c.
2. Dublin Evening Post, 30 Jan. 1827 (3321, 98).
3. A memorial tablet to Fr. Comyn in Kilkee Catholic Church gives his age at death as 56 years (+1854). It was not unusual at this period for men under thirty to be appointed as parish priests in Killaloe diocese.
4. Comyn Correspondence, Thomas Comyn to Matt Moore, 1 Aug. 1825: "would you beg of the Dacon (sic) Michl to write to me". Clearly he had not yet been ordained priest at this stage. The recently published list of Maynooth students from 1795 to 1895 tells us that he entered Maynooth in 1817 but gives no ordination date, a factor which points to his having been ordained outside the college. -- Canon Patrick J. Hamell, Maynooth Students and Ordinations 1795-1895, Index in Irish Ecclesiastical Record, 5th series, CIX.3(March 1968), 200.
5. Quoted in W.J. Fitzpatrick, The Life of Charles Lever, London and New York, n.d., 161n.
6. Dublin Evening Post, 30 Jan. 1827 (3321, 98). This points out that he was a native of Kilfearagh parish. That he came from Corbally is clear from the Comyn Correspondence.
7. Fr. Tom McInerney is almost certainly the person referred to in a letter from Fr. Comyn's mother to her son, James, (11 May 1832) in Comyn Correspondence -- "Michael ...is out saying Mass to-day for the unfortunate Fr. Tom who departed this life last night after a few hours illness brought on, no doubt, by his intemperance. The poor man had been suspended for some time back".

Chapter FiveReligion

8. Fitzpatrick, op. cit., 78, 82, 103.
9. Charles Lever, Jack Hinton, The Guardsman, 15th ed., London, 1857, 239-40.
10. Ibid., 228.
11. Pas an Phiobaire in Irisleabhar na Gaeilge (The Gaelic Journal), vol. 8 (Bealtaine 1897), 16.
12. Quoted in Fitzpatrick, op. cit., 161n.
13. L.R., 15 Sep. 1839.
14. L.E.P. and C.S., 25 May 1830.
15. Limerick Standard, 20 Aug. 1839.
16. Irish Catholic Directories of the period.
17. L.E.P. and C.S., 13 Nov. 1829.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. L.E.P. and C.S., 18 Dec. 1829.
21. Ibid., 12 Nov. 1830. Major McNamara contributed £10, O'Gorman Mahon 10 guineas.
22. Ibid., 26 Oct. 1830.
23. Ibid., 13 Nov. 1829.
24. Ibid., 29 July 1831.
25. PP 1835 XXXII(i), Appendix A, 625.
26. C.J., 4 March 1839. "Mr. Comyn used to count the money to the treasurer, Mr. Keon, after coming out of the chapel".
27. C.J., 24 Feb. 1840. "Patrick Kean was treasurer of the fund".
28. PP 1825 VII(501), 129.
29. e.g. L.E.P. and C.S., 16 Aug. 1833;
Limerick Star and Evening Post, 19 Aug. 1834;
Ibid., 29 July 1836.

Chapter FiveReligion

29. Comyn Correspondence.
30. McInerney's father was a plasterer and stuccoman and the two of them had worked together.
31. C.J., 4 March 1839.
32. L.C., 2 March 1839.
33. L.C., 18 Jan. 1840.
34. L.C., 22 Feb. 1840.
35. L.C., 20, 27 Jan. 1841.
36. L.C., 31 Aug. 1842.
37. L.C., 19 July 1843 (5023, 113).
38. L.C., 20 Aug. 1840 (3523, 113-4).
39. PP 1825 VII, 218. Confessions were heard before Mass and the priest had to fast until after Mass. Therefore breakfast would have been quite late.
40. L.E.P. and C.S., 23 Aug. 1831.
41. L.E.P. and C.S., 13 Nov. 1829.
42. P1 1835 XXIII, 229c.
43. Mason, Parochial Survey, II, 460.
44. PP 1825 VII (501), 126.
45. L.R., 25 July 1839.
46. National Schools Register, County Series, Co. Clare, Vol. I, 149.
47. L.R., 25 July 1839.
48. L.E.I. and C.S., 1 July 1828.
49. L.C., 12 Jan. 1842.
50. PP 1825 VII, 219.
51. Mason, Parochial Survey, II, 460-1.
52. L.C., 7 May 1845.
53. P.C. Barry, S.J., The Legislation of the Synod of Thurles, 1850, in Irish Theological Quarterly XXVI.2 (April 1959), 138 - 143.

Chapter Five* Religion

54. Gerald Griffin, Poems and Plays, 79.
55. PP 1825 VII, 217.
56. Mason, Parochial Survey, II, 458.
57. Munster News, 3 Jan. 1863.
58. Letters containing information relative to the Antiquities of the County of Clare collected during the progress of the Ordnance Survey in 1839, 3 vols., 1928 (typescript), I, 354.
59. L.E.P. and C.S., 22 May 1829.
60. From an MS in Canon Clancy Papers.
61. Giollamhuire, Kilkee Irish in Irish Educational Review VI (Sep. 1913), 719 - 726.
62. Ibid., 720.
63. PP 1825 VII, 217-8.
64. L.C., 13, 20 Aug. 1853.
65. PP 1836 XXXIII, under Kilrush, Kilfearagh etc.
66. L.C., 10 Aug. 1842.
67. L.C., 21 Aug. 1844.
68. L.C., 17, 20 Jan. 1844.
69. L.C., 6 Sep. 1834; The Limerick Times and Evening Herald, 10 Aug. 1835.
70. L.C., 31 July 1839.
71. Ibid.
72. L.R., 4 Aug. 1840. The Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland, 418, reported that it was built with a donation of £1,184/1/6 from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and £200 from private donations.
73. L.C., 5 Aug. 1843 (3323, 111).
74. L.R., 4 Aug. 1840.
75. L.C., 16 Aug. 1843 (3323, 111)
76. Limerick Star and Evening Post, 30 Dec. 1836.

Chapter FiveReligion

77. PP 1825 VII, 222.

78, L.C., 11 Sep. 1841.

79. L.R., 5 Sep. 1845.

80. The Amphitheatre, on the west side of Kilkee Bay, is a natural rock formation shaped like an amphitheatre, with one side opening to the sea.

81. L. and C.E., 19 July 1848.

Chapter SixPolitics

1. Clare Sentinel, 18 July 1828 (3321, 265). In Fr. John Brady's Catholics and Catholicism in the Eighteenth Century Press (Maynooth, 1965), we find an example of a similar penance taken from the Dublin Chronicle of 17 Sep. 1791: "Cork, Sept. 10. Eleven persons, who had gone to church to see a neighbour's child married, and partook of the bridal feast, were obliged to perform public penance in the North Chapel, standing in white sheets, as a warning to others how they should dare to profane themselves, by going within the walls of a church, or partake of heretical food". (Brady, 278). Fr. Comyn's part in the actual election can be seen from the following: "In one of the booths yesterday the Rev. Mr. Comyn, P.P. of Killard, after some of the voters he had brought with him had declared for O'Connell, used to shake them by the hand and kiss them as warm as ever a young Irishman kissed the girl of his heart. He must by this time be an adept in the art". (C.J., 3 July 1828 - Canon Clancy Papers).

Chapter SixPolitics

2. L.E.P. and C.S.; 19 Nov. 1830.
3. Limerick Star and Evening Post, 10 June 1836.
4. L.R., 3 Nov. 1840.
5. C.J., 22, 26 April 1841; L.R., 23 April 1841.
6. L.C., 7 July 1841.
7. L.R., 16 June 1843.
8. J.C. Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923, London, 1966, 327.
9. L.C., 5 June 1844.
10. L.C., 8 June 1844.
11. L.R., 26 July 1844.
12. L.R., 2 Aug. 1844.
13. Ibid.
14. L.C., 10 Aug. 1844 (3524, 89).
15. L.R., 25 Feb. 1845.
16. L.R., 2 Aug. 1844.
17. Fitzpatrick, Life of Charles Lever, 161-2n.
18. L.C., 12 Jan. 1842.
19. Ibid.
20. C.J., 5 Sep. 1839; L.C., 28, 31 Aug., 4 Sep. 1839.
21. L.R., 27 Sep. 1839.
22. C.J., 29 Aug. 1839.
23. L.C., 4 Sep. 1841; 29 June 1844.
24. L.C., 29 June 1844.
25. L.C., 19 June, 9 Oct. 1844.

Chapter SevenLanguage and Education

1. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 42.
2. Abstract of Information in Answer to Queries

2. (Contd.) concerning the Parishes in the Dioceses of Killaloe and Kilfenora 1821. (N.L.I. MS. 352).
3. Dutton, Survey of Clare, 303.
4. Knott, op. cit., 109.
5. Clare Champion, 28 Sep. 1968 (Article on Eugene O'Curry by Micheál Ó hAodha). According to John O'Donovan, O'Curry also taught for a while in a school at Kilkee -- Michael Herity, Eugene O'Curry's Early Life: details from an unpublished letter in N.M.A.J. X.2 (1967), 144.
6. L.C., 24 Aug. 1844. The following report appeared in the Munster News of 25 June 1864 on the death of Smith O'Brien: "That the interest taken by the lamented William S. O'Brien in the cultivation of the harmonious Gaelic, was greatly appreciated by patrons of schools, and masters themselves of the native language, was shown by the fact that the Rev. Mr. Breen, the respected P.P. of Kilkee, and Rev. Mr. Malone, his zealous curate, author of the Church History of Ireland, travelled the whole way to Limerick on Thursday, and yesterday proceeded to Cahernacoyle, to attend the funeral at which so large a body of their sacred order were present. Perhaps one of the most pleasing visits ever paid by the eminent Irishman to Kilkee was the last, when he took part in the examinations of the Irish pupils, whom the clergymen named prepared for the purpose, and honoured the letter in the hospitable residence which it was hoped he would again favour....".
7. Hogan, A Directory of Kilkee, 11. O'Mealy is also mentioned in the lists of teachers compiled in 1824.

8. All these are listed under Kilkee.
9. L.C., 1 Oct. 1851. This tells us that O'Lealy was re-elected Clerk of the Kilkee Petty Sessions.
10. R.C.P. 1845-7(Clare), Note on a letter of Dr. John Griffin to Sir Randolph Routh, 8 March 1847.
11. M.F.D., Letters from the Coast of Clare in D.U.M., XVIII (Sep. 1841), 344.
12. L. and C.E., 8 Nov. 1854.
13. v. note 6.
- 13a. Census of Ireland 1871 (Munster), Dublin, 1874.
14. T. Corcoran, S.J., Some Lists of Catholic Lay Teachers and their illegal schools in later penal times, Dublin, 1932, 114.
15. Ibid.
16. W.J. Fitzpatrick, The Life, Times and Correspondence of Rt. Rev. Dr. Doyle, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, 2 vols., Dublin, 1861, I, 168.
17. Corcoran, op. cit., 114.
18. Dutton, Survey of Clare, 562.
19. Knott; Two Months at Kilkee, 109.
20. Hogan, A Directory of Kilkee, 14.
21. Knott, op. cit., 109-110.
22. Ibid., 108.
23. Ibid., 109.
24. M.F.D., Scenes on the Shores of the Atlantic, 2 vols., London, 1845, II, 4-6.
25. Ibid., II, 20.
26. Census of 1841, 158-9.
27. Applications for Grants for National Schools, Clare, 1835-47, No. 59.
28. Note on back of above application.

Chapter SevenLanguage and Education

29. National Schools' Register, County Series, Co. Clare, vol. I, no. 46.
30. Ibid.
31. v. note 27.
32. Applications for Grants (Queries to be answered on application to Commissioners of Education for aid towards the salary of the Teachers of Kilkee National Schools), no. 110.
33. National Schools Register, Co. Clare, Vol. I, 46.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. L.C., 15 Feb. 1845 (3325, 8).
37. L.C., 12 April 1845 (3325, 26).
38. Applications for Grants (Queries on application for aid towards teachers' salaries), no. 110.
39. Ibid.
40. National Schools Salary Books, Munster 1844-5.
41. Applications for Grants (Queries on application for aid towards teachers' salaries), no. 110.

Chapter EightRecreation

1. Mason, Parochial Survey, II, 459-460.
2. Dwyer, The Diocese of Killaloe from the Reformation to the Close of the Eighteenth Century, 500.
3. Constantia Maxwell, The Stranger in Ireland, London, 1954, 263.
4. L.C., 15 Aug. 1838.
5. L. and C.E., 1 Sep. 1849.
6. L.C., 5 Sep. 1838.
7. L. and C.E., 1 Sep. 1849; L.C., 21 Sep. 1844.

8. L.R., 18 Aug. 1840; L.C., 21 Sep. 1844.
9. L.R., 28 July, 8 Sep. 1840.
10. L.C., 3 Aug. 1842 (giving programme).
11. L.C., 27 Aug. 1842 (3322, 123).
12. L.C., 26 Aug. 1843.
13. L.R., 11 Aug. 1840.
14. Ibid.
15. L.C., 26 Aug. 1843.
16. L.C., 2 Sep. 1843.
17. L.C., 5 Sep. 1838; L.R., 12 Aug., 8 Sep. 1840.
18. L.R., 8 Sep. 1840.
19. L.R., 17 Sep. 1839; 12 June 1840. Fr. Comyn probably began to do this only after taking up permanent residence in Kilkeo.
20. L.C., 11 Sep. 1841; v. also L.E.P. and C.S., 11 June 1830.
21. Quoted in Mark Tierney O.S.D., Murroe and Boher, The History of an Irish Country Parish, Dublin, 1966, 114-5.
22. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 62.
23. Ibid., 164.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., 164-5.
26. v. Dutton, Survey of Clare, 205, "Private stills abound in every direction", and L.C., 23 April, 1841 for a seizure by excise officers near Kilrush.
27. PP 1854 X, 139.
28. Charles Lever, Harry Lorrequer, 18th ed., London, n.d., 60.
29. PP 1854 X, 177.
30. Tierney, Murroe and Boher, 116.

Chapter EightRecreation

31. L.C., 31 July 1839.
32. L.R., 29 Nov. 1839.
33. L.R., 3 Dec. 1839.
34. L.R., 7 July 1840.
35. L.R., 29 Dec. 1840 gives the figure 20 - 25,000 but this was far more than the entire population of the parishes. It is probably a mistake for 20 - 25 hundred.
36. L.R., 13 Dec. 1839.
37. L.C., 11 May 1844 (3324, 30).
38. L.C., 27 Jan. 1841.
39. Tierney, Murroe and Boher, 118.
40. Kevin Danaher, In Ireland Long Ago, Cork, 1962, 148-9.
41. Mason, Parochial Survey, II, 455.
42. L.C., 27 Aug. 1845 (3325, 70).
43. L.C., 3 Sep. 1845 (3325, 71).
44. Tipperary Vindicator, 10 Jan. 1846.
45. L.C., 4 Feb. 1846 (3326, 9); L.C., 22 April 1846 (3326, 36).
46. L.R., 6 Oct. 1846.

Chapter NineHoliday Resort (1)

1. L.C., 5 Aug. 1843 (3323, 64).
2. C.J., 1 Jan. 1835.
3. C.J., 20 Mar. 1837.
4. L.R. Le Fanu, Seventy Years of Irish Life, 85.
5. L.C., 15 Nov. 1834.
6. L.C., 1 Dec. 1838.
7. L.R., 6 Aug. 1839.

Chapter NineHoliday Resort (1)

8. M.F.D., Letters from the Coast of Clare in D.U.M.
XVIII (Dec. 1841), 685.
9. Limerick Star and Evening Post, 12 Aug. 1836.
10. L.C., 8 June 1839.
11. L.C., 5 June 1839.
12. L.C., 31 Aug. 1839.
13. L.C., 8 June 1839.
14. Limerick Standard, 6 Aug. 1839.
15. L.R., 23 Aug. 1839.
16. L.C., 14, 18 Sep. 1839.
17. L.C., 18 Sep. 1839.
18. L.R., 11 Aug. 1840.
19. L.C., 20 June 1840.
20. L.R., 11 Aug. 1840.
21. L.C. 28 April 1841.
22. v. L.R., 16 July 1839.
23. L.R., 4 May 1841.
24. L.C., 5 Sep. 1838.
25. L.C., 19 Aug. 1840.
26. L.R., 3 July 1840.
27. C.J., 3 April 1851. v. also ^{Limerick Star & EP} ~~L.C.~~ and O.S.,
16 Sep. 1836.
28. L.C., 18 Aug. 1849 (3329, 72).
29. L.R., 12 May 1840.
30. L.R., 26 May 1840.
31. W.P. O'Brien, The Great Famine in Ireland and a
retrospect of the Fifty Years 1845-1895, 10.
32. L.C., 11 June 1845 (3325, 44).
33. L.C., 28 May, 16 Aug, 1845 (3325, 37 and 69).
34. L.R., 17 Oct. 1845.
35. L.R., 19 Dec. 1845.

Chapter NineHoliday Resort (1)

36. The Limerick Times and Evening Herald, 10 Aug. 1835.
37. Hogan, A Directory of Kilkee, 3.
38. Hogan, A Sail down the Shannon, 13.
39. Mrs. Shannon was probably the most prolific advertiser among the hotel owners.
40. L.C., 6 May 1843 (3323, 29).
41. Limerick Star, 13 April 1837; C.J., 28 May 1840.
42. L.C., 8 May 1841.
43. L.C., 24 Feb. 1844 (3524, 11).
L.C., 15 Feb. 1845 (3325, 8).
44. L.C., 13 Aug. 1845 (3325, 68).
45. L.C., 17 Sep. 1845 (3325, 74).
46. L.C., 9 Aug. 1845.
47. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 37; L.C., 26 May 1841.
48. Knott, op. cit., 37.
49. L.C., 18 May 1842 (3322, 56).
50. e.g. L.C., 4 June 1842 (3322, 60).
51. L.C., 10 Aug. 1844.
52. L.C., 18 Aug. 1838.
53. e.g. L.C., 18, 25 May 1844.
54. L.C., 10 July 1844.
55. M.F.D., Letters from the Coast of Clare in D.U.M.
XVIII (July 1841), 60.
56. L.C., 22 June 1842.
57. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 98.
58. L.C., 19 July 1843.
59. L.C., 31 Aug. 1842.
60. L.R., 23 Sep. 1842.
61. C.J., 25 May 1843.
62. L.C., 31 Aug. 1842.
63. L.C., 24 May 1843.

Chapter NineHoliday Resort (1)

- 64. L.C., 19 July 1843.
- 65. L.C., 2 Aug. 1843 (3323, 63).
- 66. L.C., 24 Sep. 1842.
- 67. L.C., 2 Aug. 1843.

Chapter TenHoliday Resort (2)

- 1. L.C., 31 May 1854, 15 June 1844; C.J., 28 April, 1845; James Fraser, Handbook for Travellers in Ireland descriptive of its Scenery, Towns, Seats, Antiquities etc., 4th ed., Dublin, 1854, 380, describes Kilkee as "probably the best bathing place in Ireland".
- 2. Handbill enclosed in 3322.
- 3. L.C., 19 Aug. 1843 (5323, 76).
- 4. L.C., 28 June 1845 (3325, 49).
- 5. v. L.C., 30 Aug. 1851.
- 6. At modern Edmond Point, then a favourite bathing place for men.
- 7. So called after a man who lost his life while bathing there in the early part of the century -- L.C., 9 Oct. 1852.
- 8. e.g. L.C., 16 Aug. 1843; L. and C.E., 9 Sep. 1848, 10 Aug. 1850, 17 Sep. 1851.
- 9. e.g. L. and C.E., 9 Sep. 1848.
- 10. L.C., 17 Sep. 1851.
- 11. L. and C.E., 12 Sep. 1849; L.C., 25 Aug. 1838.
- 12. M.F.D., Letters from the Coast of Clare in D.U.I. XVIII (Sep. 1841), 343.
- 13. Recording taken from a B.B.C. radio programme of 23 Jan. 1965 (Title - Scrapbook for 1902).

Chapter TenHoliday Resort (2)

14. L.C., 11 Sep. 1841 (Song by Paddy O'Neill).
15. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 165.
16. Hogan, A Directory of Kill'ee, 32;
L.C. 29 May 1841.
17. Hogan, op. cit., 32-3.
18. e.g. C.J., 6, 27 July 1843.
19. L.R., 4 July 1843.
20. L.C., 30 Sep. 1846.
21. L.C., 18 June 1842.
22. L.R., 25 Sep. 1846.
23. L.E.P. and C.S., 5 July 1831.
24. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 65-7.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., 39.
27. L.R., 14 July 1840.
28. L.R., 18 Aug. 1840.
29. L.R., 6 Sep. 1844.
30. L.R., 18 Aug. 1840.
31. L. and C.E., 15 Sep. 1849.
32. w. Chapter Five, note 80.
33. M.F.D., Letters from the Coast of Clare in D.U.M.
XVIII (Sep. 1841), 341.
34. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 205-9; Hogan, A Sail
down the Shannon, 21;
L.C., 3, 6, 13 Feb. 1836.
35. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 210-5; L.C., 18, 28 ^{May}
1836.
36. L.C., 4 June 1836.
37. e.g. L.C., 18 June 1836.
38. Limerick Star and Evening Post, 12 Aug. 1836.
39. C.J., 16 Feb. 1834; C.J., 30 May 1836.
40. C.J., 2 June 1836.

Chapter TenHoliday Resort (2)

41. L.R., 14 July 1840.
42. L.C., 24 Aug. 1842.
43. L.C., 9 Sep. 1843.
44. L.R., 14 July 1840.
45. L.C., 28 Aug. 1841.
46. M.F.D., Letters from the Coast of Clare in D.U.M. XVIII (July 1841), 61-2.
47. L.C., 31 May 1834.
48. L. and C.E., 8 Sep. 1849.
49. Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator, 17 Sep. 1850. There were several reports about this time regarding the sighting of the sea serpent, mainly from the Cork area. A Cork sea captain described it as follows: "I saw close under the surface of the water, and on the starboard bow, a dark appearance, and in an instant it appeared on the surface as a huge living monster showing the head and over 60 feet of the centre of the back over the water, and on heading the cutter we observed the tail, and close after two other fish of a similar description but smaller. The largest was fully 150 to 200 feet in length, and the head appeared square of immense size, with oval white eyes of fully five feet long each. The entire body seemed nearly black, with a lump on the centre of the back, and seemed to be in circumference about the size of the hull of a vessel of 300 tons. The two small fish were about 40 feet long each and similar to the large one" (L.R. and T.V. 17 Sep. 1850).
50. Limerick Standard, 24 Aug. 1840.

Chapter TenHoliday Resort (2)

51. L.C., 3 Aug. 1842.
52. L. and C.E., 1 Sep. 1849.
53. L. and C.E., 15 Sep. 1849.
54. Ibid.
55. L.C., 11 Sep. 1841 (Song of Paddy O'Neill).
56. L.C., 25 June 1836; L.R., 10 Oct. 1845.
57. L.C., 20 July, 9 Aug., 1845.
58. L.C., 22 Oct. 1834.
59. M.F.D., Letters from the Coast of Clare in D.U.M.
XVIII (Sep. 1841), 343;
L.C., 19 Aug., 2 Sep. 1840.
60. Dutton, Survey of Clare, 365.
61. Knott, Two Months at Kilkee, 42.
62. L.E.P. and C.S., 20 May 1831.
63. Knott, op. cit., 64.
64. Gerald Griffin, Tales of the Munster Festivals
containing Card Drawing, The Half Sir and the
Coiner, London, 1848, 18-9.
65. L.C., 11 Sep. 1841.
66. L.C., 11 Sep. 1850.

Chapter ElevenA People "Half-starved"

1. L.C., 24 May 1845.
2. L.C., 27 Aug. 1845.
3. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 40.
4. C.J., 18 Sep. 1845.
5. C.J., 16 Oct. 1845.
6. Tipperary Vindicator, 25 October, 1845.
7. L.R., 7 Nov. 1845.
8. L.C., 8 Nov. 1845.

9. R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams (eds.),
The Great Famine, Studies in Irish History 1845-52,
Dublin, 1956, 210-1.
10. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 48-9.
11. Edwards and Williams, op. cit., 213.
12. R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 80,
Studdert to Relief Commissioners, 9 Dec. 1845.
13. Ibid., 141, Morriss to Relief Commissioners,
12 December 1845.
14. Ibid., 173 $\frac{1}{2}$ (sic), Hancock to Relief Commissioners,
13 Dec. 1845.
15. v. A.F.M., a. 799 (recte 804).
16. R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 136;
L.R., 16 Dec. 1846.
17. L.R., 19 Dec. 1845.
18. Ibid.
19. The Times, 5 Dec. 1845 (5325, 97).
20. L.R., 2 Dec. 1845.
21. C.J., 19 Jan. 1846.
22. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 61-2.
23. With regard to the second proposal, Colonel Harry Jones, Chairman of the Board of Works, was rather pessimistic. In the places worst hit by distress the more important roads had been laid down in previous famines and there was little left to be done except roads leading to farms.
24. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 63-4.
25. PP 1846 XXXVII (41), 9 - 13, Roth to Trevelyan,
15 Jan. 1846.
26. C.J., 15 Jan. 1846.
27. Tipperary Vindicator, 14 January 1846.

28. The committee included four honorary members -- Mr. Burton, C.W. Hamilton, John Westropp of Limerick and Captain Creagh. There were thirteen in the working committee including Fr. Comyn, Fr. W. O'Brien, C.C., Rev. J. Martin, Dr. Tuite, Dr. Griffin and Robert Fitzgerald.
29. L.C., 14 Jan. 1846 (3326, 5).
30. R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 343, Jonas Studdert to Sir Lucius O'Brien, 11 Jan. 1846.
31. Ibid., 343, Hamilton to Sir Lucius O'Brien, 12 Jan. 1846.
32. L.R., 27 Jan. 1846.
33. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Trevelyan, 16 March 1847, T64/362A(10).
34. PP 1846 XXXVII(41), 10, Routh to Trevelyan, 15 Jan. 1846.
35. R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 343, Jonas Studdert to Sir Lucius O'Brien, 11 Jan. 1846.
36. PP 1846 XXXVII(41), 10, Routh to Trevelyan, 15 Jan. 1846.
37. Ibid.
38. This was undoubtedly different to that set up on 10 January, although a number of people would be common to both.
39. L.R., 6 March 1846.
40. PP 1846 XXXVII(479), 3.
41. R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 594.
42. PP 1846 XXXVII(429), 8.
43. Ibid., 3.
44. Ibid., 7.
45. PP 1846 XXXVII(41), 224.

Chapter ElevenA People "Half-starved"

46. Ibid., 82, Routh to Trevelyan, 28 March 1846.
47. Ibid., 86, Routh to Trevelyan, 31 March 1846.
48. R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 2113, Mann to Sir James Dombtrain, 6 May 1846.
49. The L. and C.E. of 20 May 1846 reported that one landlord with an annual rental of £1,200 gave £10. There is no such contribution mentioned in Rev. James Martin's letter. Perhaps it arrived after 12 May -- from the Marquess Conyngham.
50. R.C.P. 1845-7 (Clare), Rev. J. Martin to Relief Commissioners, 12 May 1846.
51. PP 1846 XXXVII(41), 224.
52. L.C., 16 May 1846 (3326, 44).
53. L.C., 1 April 1846 (3326, 28).
54. Tipperary Vindicator, 28 Jan. 1846;
R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 392.
55. L.R., 23 Jan. 1846.
56. L.R., 31 March 1846.
57. C.J., 26 Jan. 1846.
58. L.R., 20 March 1846.
59. C.J., 9 Feb. 1846.
60. L.R., 20 March 1846.
61. L.C., 28 March 1846 (3326, 27-8).
62. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 78.
63. L.C., 28 March 1846 (3326, 28).
64. L.C., 21 March 1846 (3326, 25).
65. C.J., 27 April 1846.
66. L.R., 12 May 1846.
67. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Trevelyan, 15 Nov. 1847, T64/367A(3).
68. R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 573, Russell to Board of Works, 18 Feb. 1846.

Chapter ElevenA People "Half-starved"

69. PP 1846 XXXVII(41), 273-4.
70. L.C., 18 Feb. 1846 (3326, 11).
71. Edwards and Williams, The Great Famine, 219.
72. L.R., 6 March 1846.
73. PP 1846 XXXVII(429), 3.
74. L. and C.E., 11 March 1846.
75. L.C., 25 March, 11 April 1846 (3326, 27, 33);
L. and C.E., 20 May 1846.
76. L. and C.E., 20 May 1846. This coast road was,
in fact, never constructed.
77. L.C., 25 March 1846 (3326, 27).
78. C.J., 27 April 1846.
79. PP 1846 XXXVII(41), 82, 86, 87.
80. L. and C.E., 20 May 1846.
81. R.C.P. 1846-7, Accounts etc. relative to Relief
Districts 1846, Circular answered by Milrush
Relief Committee.
82. R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 421,
C.W. Hamilton to Relief Commission, 30 Jan. 1846.
83. Ibid., 3084, Rev. James Martin to Relief
Commissioners, 9 June 1846.
84. Enclosure with above.
85. Note on summary of Martin's letter enclosed with
above.
86. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 76.
87. L. and C.E., 13 May 1846;
Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Trevelyan, 15 Nov. 1847,
T64/367A(3).
88. R.C.P. 1845-7 (Clare), Letter of Rev. James Martin
to unnamed recipient, 8 Oct. 1846;
Inspecting Officers, Reports, 2113, Mann to Sir
James Dombtrain, 6 May 1846.

Chapter ElevenA People "Half-starved"

89. v. supra p. 154.
90. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Trevelyan, 15 Nov. 1847, T64/367A(3).
91. L. and C.E., 13 May 1846.
92. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Routh, 14 Dec. 1847, T64/369B(1).
93. PP 1847 LI, 239, Mann to Trevelyan, 5 Nov. 1846; John C'Rourke, The History of the Great Irish Famine of 1847, Dublin, n.d., 242.
- The handmills produced in Kilkee may have been used for other purposes than grinding corn. It was stated before the committee inquiring into illicit distillation in 1854 that handmills were used in making spirits illicitly --
- FP 1854 X, 66.
94. PP 1847 LI, 211, Trevelyan to Routh, 30 Oct. 1846.
95. Ibid., 274, Mann to Trevelyan, 16 Nov. 1846.
96. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Routh, 14 Dec. 1847, T64/369B(1). The prices must have gone down from the 10/- to 12/- previously mentioned by Mann as few of the cabin-holders would have such sums at their disposal.
97. Trevelyan Papers, Twisleton to Trevelyan, 3 Jan. 1848, T64/367C(1).
98. Woodham Smith, The Great Hunger, 76.
99. PP 1847 LI, 152, Mann to Crafer, 11 Oct. 1846 (describing the situation in early March).
100. C.J., 30 April 1846.

Chapter TwelveA Second Failure

1. L.R., 6 Jan. 1846; Tipperary Vindicator, 14 Jan. 1846.

2. L.C., 14 March 1846 (3526, 16).
3. R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 650, Mr. G.H. Fitzgerald to Mr. E. Lucas, 28 Feb. 1846.
4. R.C.I. 1845-7, Constables Reports on Potato Crops 1846.
5. R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 4662 (enclosed with 4796), Milkee Relief Commission to General Relief Committee for Ireland, n.d. (July 1846).
6. Ibid., 4965, Jonas Studdert to Wm. Stanley, n.d.
7. Trevelyan Papers, T64/366C(1).
8. Ibid., Mann to Trevelyan, 15 Nov. 1847, T64/367A(3).
9. L.R., 11 Sep. 1846.
10. PP 1847 LI, 6, Mr. White to Assistant Commissary General Wood, 11 Aug. 1846.
11. Tipperary Vindicator, 12 Aug. 1846.
12. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Trevelyan, 15 Nov. 1847, T64/367A(3).
13. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 106-8.
14. R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 5581, Fr. Malachy Duggan to Relief Commissioners, 27 Aug. 1846.
15. L.R., 22 Aug. 1846; C.J., 31 Aug. 1846.
16. L. and C.E., 16 Sep. 1846; L.R., 11 Sep. 1846.
17. L.R., 25 Sep. 1846.
18. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 120-1.
19. L.R., 25 Sep. 1846.
20. Woodham-Smith, op. cit., 113.
21. Trevelyan Papers, T64/362B.

Chapter TwelveA Second Failure

22. L.R., 25, 29 Sep. 1846; L.C., 30 Sep. 1846 (3326, 87).
23. A few days previously the Clare Journal of 8 October had stated that Indian meal was 2/9 a stone in Kilrush.
24. PP 1847 LI, 151/2, Mann to Mr. Crafer, 11 Oct. 1846.
25. Tipperary Vindicator, 9 Oct. 1847.
26. L.C., 21 Oct. 1846 (3326, 97).
27. L. and C.E., 24 Oct. 1846.
28. C.J., 26 Oct. 1846.
29. Relief Commission Papers 1845-'7(Clare), Letter of Rev. J. Martin, 8 Oct. 1846.
30. PP 1847 LI, 175.
31. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Trevelyan, 15 Nov. 1847, T64/367A(3).
32. PP 1847 LI, 298.
33. L.C., 4 Nov. 1846 (3326, 105).
34. The Tablet, 21 Nov. 1846. Clare's nearest rivals were Roscommon (20, 106), Limerick (18,282), Galway (14,714), Mayo (13,149) and Cork (10,566). By contrast, in Dublin only 48 were employed.
35. Tipperary Vindicator, 11 Nov. 1846. This amount of meal for nine days would not even provide as much daily for the average family as they would later get under outdoor relief.
36. Society of Friends, Transactions of the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends during the Famine in Ireland in 1846 and 1847, Dublin, 1852, 179-180. On 15 Nov. 1846 the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends was set up in Dublin. It was to do very fine work

Chapter TwelveA Second Failure

- 36(contd.) during the Famine and as its first object it decided to obtain "trustworthy information respecting the real state of the more remote districts". Hence the visit to West Clare.
37. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Trevelyan, 15 Nov. 1847, T64/367A(3).
38. Relief Commission Papers 1845-7(Clare), Dr. John Griffin to Sir. R. Routh, 8 March 1847.
39. PP 1847 L, 270-1, Captain Wynne to Board of Works, 19 Nov. 1846.
40. Ibid., 281.
41. Ibid., 483.
42. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 123.
43. L.C., 11 Nov. 1846 (3326, 111).
44. PP 1847 LI, 240.
45. C.J., 26 Nov. 1846.
46. Trevelyan Papers, Capt. Wynne to Capt. Larcom, 5 Dec. 1846, T64/362B.
47. PP 1847 L, 436, Capt. Wynne to Lieut. Col. Jones, 24 Dec. 1846.

Chapter ThirteenSoup Kitchens and Deaths from Starvation

1. C.J., 7 Jan. 1847; L.C., 2 Jan. 1847 (3327, 1).
2. C.J., 7 Jan. 1847; L.C., 6 Jan. 1847 (3327, 2).
3. This was the General Central Relief Committee, set up a short time previously on 29 Dec. 1846, under the presidency of the Marquess of Kildare, eldest son of the Duke of Leinster. The name used in Fr. Comyn's letter to the Duke might tend

- 3 (contd.) to suggest the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends but we know that Fr. Comyn afterwards received a donation from the General Central Relief Committee.
4. L.R., 12 Jan. 1847.
5. L.C., 20 Jan. 1847 (3327, 10).
6. L.C., 20 Jan. 1847 (3327, 10).
7. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 172-3.
8. PP 1847 LII, (333), 53, Capt. Mann to Commissary-General Hewetson, 22 Jan. 1847.
9. L.C., 27 Jan. 1847 (3327, 10).
10. L.R., 26 Feb. 1847. In early 1847 the Catholics of Liverpool sent Dr. Kennedy £142/17 per the Archbishop of Cashel, for the relief of the destitute poor of Killaloe diocese. During February many parishes, like Kilfeareagh, acknowledged the receipt of £5 from Dr. Kennedy -- probably the division of the £142.
11. L.C., 27 Jan. 1847 (3327, 13).
12. L. and C.E., 17 April 1847.
13. v. L.C., 10 April 1847 (3327, 41); 1 May 1847 (3327, 48); 5 June 1847 (3327, 56); 4 Aug. 1847 (3327, 95).
14. L.R., 26 Feb. 1847.
15. L.C., 6 Feb. 1847 (3327, 17).
16. L.C., 27 March 1847 (3327, 36).
17. C.J., 4 March 1847.
18. The Tablet, 14 Aug. 1847 (Letter of Fr. Neehan); C.J., 15 March 1847.
19. Woodham Smith, The Great Hunger, 202-3.
20. The Tablet, 14 Aug. 1847.

Chapter Thirteen Soup Kitchens and Deaths from
Starvation

21. L.C., 23 June 1847 (3327, 59).
22. The Tablet, 14 Aug. 1847.
23. L.C., 24 March 1847 (3327, 35).
24. Trevelyan Papers, Captain Mann to Trevelyan,
16 March 1847, T64/362A(10).
25. L.C., 24 March 1847 (3327, 35).
26. The Tablet, 23 Jan. 1847.
27. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Trevelyan, 15 Nov. 1847,
T64/367A(3); Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 286.
28. Trevelyan Papers, T64/366B.
29. Ibid., T64/368B.
30. L.R., 4 June 1847.
31. L.C., 23 June 1847 (3327, 59); C.J., 26 July 1847.
32. Tipperary Vindicator, 19 June 1847.
33. L.C., 23 June 1847 (3327, 59).
34. L.R., 27 July 1847.
35. L. and C.E., 21 Aug. 1847.
36. L. and C.E., 20 Nov. 1847.
37. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 302-3, 307.
38. L.C., 29 Sep. 1847 (3327, 114).
39. L.R., 15 Oct. 1847.
40. L.R., 2 Nov. 1847.

Chapter Fourteen Towards Utter Destitution

1. Trevelyan Papers, Captain Mann to Trevelyan,
15 Nov. 1847, T64/367A(3).
2. L.C., 6 Nov. 1847 (3327, 126).
3. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 307-8.
4. Edwards and Williams, The Great Famine, 251.

5. Ibid., 253. The Gregory clause was later relaxed in May 1848.
6. Trevelyan Papers, Twisleton to Trevelyan, 13 Jan. 1848; T64/367C(1).
7. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 316.
8. These inspectors examined the accounts and administration of the union to which they were assigned and reported incompetence and mal-administration to the Poor Law Commissioners. They also kept the Commissioners informed of affairs in the district.
9. PP 1847-8 LIV (29), 155, Capt. Kennedy to Poor Law Comms., 11 Nov. 1847.
10. Ibid., 157, Capt. Kennedy to Poor Law Commissioners, 18 Nov. 1847.
11. Trevelyan Papers. T64/370C(1), Printed Memo marked confidential.
12. L.R. and T.V., 28 March 1851.
13. L.C., 25 Oct. 1847 (3327, 122).
14. The Tablet, 14 Aug. 1847.
15. PP 1847-8 LVI, 790, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms., 11 Feb. 1848.
- 15a. PP 1847-8 XXXVII (213), 284.
- 15b. PP 1847-8 LVI, 790, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms., 11 Feb. 1848.
16. L. and C.E., 27 Nov. 1847; C.J., 29 Nov. 1847.
17. L.C., 13 Nov. 1847 (3327, 127).
18. PP 1847-8 LV, 381, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms., 25 Nov. 1847.
19. L. and C.E., 20 Nov. 1847.
20. Ibid., 6 Nov. 1847.

Chapter FourteenTowards Utter Destitution

21. PP 1847-8 LIV (29), 155, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms.,
11 Nov. 1847.
22. PP 1847-8 LV, 394, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms.,
30 Dec. 1847.
23. Ibid., 402, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms., 29 Jan. 1848.
24. Ibid., 394, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms., 30 Dec. 1847.
- 24a. R.C.P. 1845-7, Poor Law Commissioners, Reports
and Returns, 1844-7, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms.,
18 Nov. 1847.
25. PP 1847-8 LIV(29), 155, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms.,
11 Nov. 1847.
26. The Tablet, 4 Dec. 1847.
27. T.M. Madden (ed.), The Memoirs (Chiefly Auto-
biographical) from 1798 to 1866 of Richard Robert
Madden, M.D., F.R.C.S., London, 1891, 244.
28. Ibid., 252-3.
- 28a. L.R. and T.V., 2 May 1851.
29. Quoted in Munster News, 9 August 1851.
- 29a. L.C., 28 Aug. 1850.
30. PP 1847-8 LIV (29), 157, Kennedy to Poor Law
Commissioners, 12 Nov. 1847.
31. L.C., 18 Dec. 1847 (3327, 136).
32. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Routh, 14 Dec. 1847,
T64/369B(1).
33. Ibid., Mann to unnamed recipient (possibly Routh),
22 Dec. 1847, T64/366C(2).
34. L.C., 5 Jan. 1848 (3328, 1).
35. L.C., 1 March 1848 (3328, 35).
36. L.C., 15 March 1848 (3329, 39).
37. L.C., 22 Jan. 1848 (3328, 22).
38. PP 1847-8 LVI, 801, Capt. Kennedy to Poor Law
Commissioners, 1 March 1848.

Chapter FourteenTowards Utter Destitution

39. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to unnamed recipient
(Probably Trevelyan), 11 Feb. 1848, T64/370C(4).
40. L.C., 26 Jan. 1848 (3328, 25).
41. L.C., 12 Feb. 1848 (3328, 31).
42. L.C., 22 April 1848 (3328, 64).
- 42a. L.C., 26 Feb. 1848 (3328, 34).
43. L.C., 22 April 1848 (3328, 64).
44. L.C., 12 Feb. 1848 (3328, 31); L.C., 2 Sep. 1848
(3328, 106).
45. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to unnamed recipient,
13 Feb. 1848, T64/370C(4).
46. Ibid., Mann to Trevelyan, 12 Jan. 1848, T64/367C(1).
47. L. and C.E., 15 April 1848.
48. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to (probably) Trevelyan,
11 Feb. 1848, T64/370C(4).
49. L. and C.E., 15 April 1848.
50. Trevelyan Papers, T64/367B(1).
51. Ibid., Mann to (probably) Trevelyan, 11 Feb. 1848,
T64/370C(4).
52. National School Register (Clare, vol.1).
53. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 367.
54. L.C., 13 Sep. 1848 (3328, 108).
55. Nevin B. Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal, A Study
in the Relations between Great Britain and Ireland,
1841-1850, London and Toronto, 1965, 206-7.
56. L.R., 27 June 1848.
57. Tipperary Vindicator, 22 July 1848.
58. L.C., 22 July 1848 (3328, 95).
59. L.C., 23 Aug. 1848 (3328, 103).
60. L.C., 19 Aug. 1848 (3328, 102); L.R., 18 Aug. 1848;
C.J., 24 Aug. 1848.

Chapter FourteenTowards Utter Destitution

61. L. and C.E., 17 June 1848.
62. L.C., 22 July 1848 (3328, 95).
63. L. and C.E., 2 Aug. 1848.
64. Ibid., 12 Aug. 1848.

Chapter FifteenEvictions

1. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to (probably) Routh, 22 Dec. 1847, T64/366C(2).
2. Ibid., Mann to Trevelyan, 20 Nov. 1847, T64/367A(3).
3. L.R., 24 Nov. 1848; v. also supra p. 16.
4. PP 1849 XLIX (315), 4-5, Capt. Kennedy to Poor Law Commissioners, 6 April 1848. Not all landlords acted in such a manner. The Clare Journal of 22 June 1848 reported the sale of his yacht by Mr. Burton of Carrigaholt to make money for the poor.
5. Tipperary Vindicator, 29 Dec. 1847.
6. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Routh, 14 Dec. 1847, T64/369B(1).
7. Ibid., Mann to Trevelyan, 21 Dec. 1847, T64/369B(1).
8. Fr. Hartney, C.C., Kilfearagh, was present at a Tenant Right demonstration in Ennis in late Oct. 1850 (L.R. and T.V., 1 Nov. 1850).
9. PP 1849 XLIX (315) 30. (Report of Vice Guardians of Kilrush Union, 21 Oct. 1848).
10. S. Godolphin Osborne, Gleanings in the West of Ireland, London, 1850, 26-8.
11. Osborne mistakenly uses the word "skene". Perhaps it is a misprint.
12. L. and C.E., 2 Dec. 1848.

Chapter FifteenEvictions

13. PP 1849 XLIX (315), 7, Capt. Kennedy to Commissioners, 5 July 1848.
14. L. and C.E., 11 March 1848.
15. PP 1849 XLIX (315), 30, 31, 33, 35, 37.
16. The Tablet, 9 Dec. 1848.
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22. Ibid., 12 Feb. 1848.
23. In PI 1849 XLIX -- Reports and Returns relating to Evictions in the Kilrush Union.
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25. C.J., 20 Aug. 1849.
26. C.J., 4 Oct. 1849.
27. Osborne, Gleanings in the West of Ireland, 21.
28. Illustrated London News, 22 Dec. 1849.
29. L. and C.E., 12 Sep. 1849.

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2. PP 1847-8 LV, 388, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms., 16 Dec. 1847.
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8. PP 1847-8 LIV(29), 156, Kennedy to Comms.,
18 Nov. 1847.
9. Ibid., 155, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms.,
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12. PP 1850 XI(529), x.
13. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Routh, 14 Dec. 1847,
T64/369B(1).
14. Ibid.
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17. PP 1847-8 LV, 383, Poor Law Comms. to Kennedy,
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18. Ibid., 395, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms., 1 Jan. 1848.
19. PP. 1847-8 LIV(313), 259.
20. PP 1847-8 LV, 398, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms.,
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22. Ibid.
23. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Trevelyan, 12 Jan. 1848,
T64/367C(1).
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28. PP 1847-8 LVI, 791, Kennedy to Poor Law Comms.,
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1848, T64/369B(3).
33. Ibid., Mann to Trevelyan, 27 Feb. 1848,
T64/370C(4).
34. Ibid., Trevelyan to Twisleton, 2 March 1848,
T64/370C(4).
35. PP 1847-8, LVI, 800.
36. Trevelyan Papers, Twisleton to Trevelyan,
6 Feb. 1848, T64/370C(4).
37. Although the average rate in Kilrush Union was
4/11, it was 6/10 in Kilkee Electoral Division.

Chapter SixteenLilruch Workhouse (1)

38. Trevelyan Papers, Abstract of Papers relating to the buying and collection of Poor Rates in certain unions, T64/370C(3).
39. On 3 February 1848 Twisleton informed Trevelyan that his main object in appointing paid Guardians was to prevent the Irish Unions making demands on the national funds at a time when, if carried on to any great extent, this might be "seriously injurious to the Empire". In his view it was essential to throw Ireland on its own resources as far as possible. The best means for extracting money from unwilling ratepayers was through paid Guardians -- T64/370C(4).
40. Trevelyan Papers, Twisleton to Trevelyan, 15 Aug. 1848, T64/367B(2).
41. L.C., 22 April 1848 (3328, 64).
42. L.C., 10 May 1848 (3328, 71); 9 Sep. 1848 (3328, 108); 13 Sep. 1848 (3328, 108).
43. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Trevelyan, 12 Jan. 1848, T64/367C(1).
44. L.C., 23 Feb. 1848 (3328, 35).
45. Ibid.; L.C., 11 March 1848 (3328, 36).
46. Trevelyan Papers, T64/366B.
47. The Times, 25 Aug. 1848 (3328, 103).
48. Trevelyan Papers, Twisleton to Trevelyan, 15 Aug. 1848, T64/367B(2).
49. L.C., 18 Oct. 1848 (3328, 115).
50. PP 1849 XLVIII(87), 53, Kennedy to Poor Law Comas., 12 Nov. 1848.
51. C.J., 2 April 1849.
52. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 380-1.

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53. PP 1849 XLVIII(171), 29, Kennedy to Poor La, Corns.,
3 April 1849.
54. C.J., 3 April 1849.
55. L.R., 1 May 1849.
56. L.R., 31 July 1849.
57. L.C., 25 Aug. 1849 (3329, 73).
58. L. and C.E., 15 Aug. 1849.
59. Ibid., 8 Sep. 1849.
60. L.C., 15 Sep. 1849 (3329, 77).
61. PP 1850 XI(520), 108 (Evidence of Fr. Nechan of
Carrigaholt).
62. Later Lord Emly.
63. L.R., 12, 16 Oct. 1849; L. and C.E., 13 Oct. 1849.
In these newspaper reports Stephen de Vere is
mentioned three times and Aubrey de Vere is
mentioned once. However, it is clear from his
Recollections that Aubrey was accompanying
Arundel and Monsell. And he makes no mention of
his brother, Stephen.
64. Aubrey de Vere, Recollections of Aubrey de Vere,
New York and London, 1897, 250.
65. C.J., 12, 19 Nov. 1849.

Chapter SeventeenKilrush Workhouse (2)

1. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 379.
2. L. and C.E., 10 Nov. 1849.
3. PP 1850 XI(529), 1.
4. L.C., 14 Nov. 1849 (3329, 142-3).
5. L. and C.E., 1 Dec. 1849; L.C., 21 Nov. 1849
(3329, 143).

Chapter SeventeenKilrush Workhouse (2)

6. L. and C.E., 24 Nov. 1849.
7. v. supra, 236.
8. L. and C.E., 24 Nov. 1849.
9. During their period of office the Vice Guardians appointed medical officers to each of the electoral divisions of the union (Dr. Griffin in Kilkee district). These treated the sick poor in their own houses and were allowed to order rice, milk, oatmeal or other such food for them. With the abandonment of this service such sick people would now have to enter the workhouse. (PP 1850 XI(529), 133).
10. L. and C.E., 1 Dec. 1849.
11. Ibid., 8 Dec. 1849.
12. PP 1850 XI(529), xi.
13. L. and C.E., 8 Dec. 1849.
14. PP 1850 XI(529), 16.
15. Ibid., 17.
16. C.J., 17 Dec. 1849; L.R., 18 Dec. 1849.
17. Munster News, 25 Sep. 1867.
18. L.R., 18 Dec. 1849.
19. PP 1850 XI(529), 28, 30, 107.
20. Ibid., 27 (Capt. Kennedy to Poor Law Commissioners, 27 Dec. 1849).
21. L. and C.E., 9 Jan. 1850.
22. Ibid., 5 Jan. 1850.
23. C.J., 7 Jan. 1850.
24. The Tablet, 5 Jan. 1850.
25. Printed Memorandum marked Confidential. Vandeleur to Mr. Stanley (for Poor Law Commissioners), 31 Dec. 1849, T64/3700(1).

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26. L. and C.E., 12 Jan. 1850.
27. L. and C.E., 2 Feb. 1850.
28. The Tablet, 2 Feb. 1850.
29. Ibid., 9 Feb. 1850.
30. Ibid.
31. L. and C.E., 16 Jan., 6 Feb. 1850.
32. C.J., 1 April 1850.
33. Quoted in C.J., 8 April 1850.
34. C.J., 25 April 1850.
35. L.C., 24 July 1850.
36. L. and C.E., 28 Nov. 1849.
37. PP 1850 XI(529), 240.
38. L. and C.E., 9 Feb. 1850.
39. PP 1850 XI(529), 57.
40. PP 1851 XLIX(279), 64, Kennedy to Poor Law Commissioners, 13 May 1850.
41. Ibid., 47.
42. The Tablet, 2 March 1850.
43. T.M. Madden (ed.), The Memoirs (Chiefly Autobiographical) from 1798 to 1836 of Richard Robert Madden, M.D., F.R.C.S., 247.
44. Ibid., 248.
45. The milk in the children's diet in early 1850 was later changed to artificial milk as a good deal of difficulty was experienced in getting milk supplies. In May 1850 the milk contractor admitted that she skimmed the milk before delivery (L.C., 22 May 1850).
46. PP 1851 XLIX(209), 51.
47. C.J., 24 April 1851.
48. L. and C.E., 26 Feb. 1850.
49. PP 1850 XI(529), 50.

50. Ibid., 131.
51. Madden, op. cit., 247; PP 1850 XI(529), 3,
Evidence of Captain Kennedy.
52. PP 1851 XLIX (279), 2 - 26.
53. PP 1851 XLIX (271), 4.
54. This was written in mid April.
55. Madden, Memoirs, 244.
56. Osborne, Gleanings in the West of Ireland, 18.
57. PP 1851 XLIX (279), 2 - 6.
58. PP 1850 XI (529), 80-1.
59. The Tablet, 9 March 1850.
60. Ibid., 23 March 1850.
61. L. and C.E., 3 April 1850.
62. Ibid., 1 May 1850.
63. v. The Tablet, 27 April 1850.
64. PP 1850 XI (529), ii. The evidence was published
in this volume of Parliamentary Papers.
65. Ibid., xii - xiii.
66. C.J., 28 Oct. 1850.
67. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 367.
68. L. and C.E., 31 July 1850.
69. C.J., 22 Aug. 1850.
70. L. and C.E., 9 Nov. 1850. Captain Kennedy had
already at this stage been dismissed from his
Kilkenny post by the Poor Law Commissioners
although the local Guardians unanimously
petitioned for his retention.
71. The Tablet, 25 January, 1851.
72. L. and C.E., 13 Aug. 1851.

Chapter SeventeenKilrush Workhouse (2)

73. In that same year Kennedy was appointed Governor of Gambia and in 1852 was transferred to Sierra Leone. From 1854 to 1862 he was Governor of Western Australia and held several other appointments in the colonial service during the next fifteen years. In 1877 he returned to Australia as Governor of Queensland. This was his last post as he died en route to England from there in 1883. He was knighted in 1868.
74. e.g. C.J., 17 March 1851 (Vandeleur to The Times rebutting Osborne); C.J., 7 April 1851.
75. L.R. and T.V., 8 April 1851.
76. PP 1851 XLIX (271).
77. L.C., 25 June 1851.
78. The Tablet, 9 August 1851.
79. L.C., 16 Aug. 1851.
80. Munster News, 6 Sep. 1851.
81. L.R. and T.V., 8 April 1851; C.J., 17 April 1851; L.C., 9 April 1851.
82. PP 1851 XLIX (279).
83. Munster News, 3 March 1852.
84. Ibid., 8 Nov. 1851.
85. PP 1850 XI (529), 9 (Evidence of Captain Kennedy).
86. C.J., 18 Feb. 1850.
87. L.C., 11 May 1850 (3330, 32).
88. PP 1850 XI (529), xii.
89. L.R. and T.V., 6 Aug. 1850.

Chapter EighteenEmigration

1. Fr. Comyn's brother, Thomas, emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1822. Some of the letters he wrote home still survive in Comyn Correspondence.

Chapter EighteenEmigration

2. FP 1850 XI(529), 68.
3. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 206.
4. Ibid., 214.
5. The Times, 23 Nov. 1846 (3326, 114).
6. Trevolyan Papers, Wynne to Captain Larcom, 5 Dec. 1846, T64/362B.
7. Edwards and Williams, The Great Famine, 321.
8. L.C., 24 March 1847 (3327, 35).
9. Oliver MacDonagh, The Poor Law, Emigration and the Irish Question, 1830 - 1855 in Christus Rex, Jan. 1958, 32.
10. L.C., 21 April 1847 (3327, 45).
11. PP 1849 XLVIII(87); 51, Capt. Kennedy to Commissioners, 7 Nov. 1849.
12. L.C., 10 Feb. 1849 (3329, 14).
13. Quoted in Tipperary Vindicator, 29 April 1849.
14. Joseph A. Robins, Irish Orphan Emigration to Australia, 1848 - 1850, in Studies, Winter 1968, 375-7.
15. C.J., 21 Dec. 1848.
16. L. and C.E., 17 Jan. 1849.
17. Robins, art. cit., 397.
18. L.R. and T.V., 16 May 1851.
19. L. and C.E., 4 June 1851.
20. PP 1850 XL, 14 - 17.
21. C.J., 13 May 1850.
22. Edwards and Williams, The Great Famine, 328.
23. C.J., 17 March 1851.
24. C.J., 20 May 1850.
25. The Tablet, 26 April 1851.
26. Munster News, 7 June 1851.
27. Ibid., 18 June 1851.

Chapter EighteenEmigration

28. Ibid., 25 June 1851.
29. Ibid., 18 June 1851.
30. C.J., 19 June 1851.
31. L.C., 25 June 1851.
32. C.J., 7 Aug. 1851.
33. The Tablet, 16 Aug. 1851.
34. L.C., 9 Aug. 1851.
35. C.J., 24 Nov. 1851.
36. Enclosed in Trevelyan Papers, T64/370C(1).
37. "ou" in text.
38. "won" in text.
39. L.C., 27 Nov. 1850.
40. L.C., 23 Nov. 1850.
41. L.R. and T.V., 22 Nov. 1850.
42. L.R. and T.V., 22 Nov. 1850; L.C., 23 Nov. 1850;
The Tablet, 30 Nov. 1850.
43. L.R. and T.V., 22 Nov. 1850.
44. W.R. Le Fanu, Seventy Years of Irish Life,
92 - 3.
45. L.C., 23 Nov. 1850.
46. L. and C.E., 14 Dec. 1850.
47. L.C., 11 Dec. 1850.
48. C.J., 5 Dec. 1850.
49. L.C., 11 Dec. 1850.
50. The Tablet, 13 Jan. 1851.

Chapter NineteenPicking up the Threads

1. Munster News, 29 Sep. 1852.
2. PF 1835 XXXIII, 228c.
3. Trevelyan Papers, Mann to Routh, 14 Dec 1847,
T64/369B(1).

4. Ibid., Wynne to Capt. Larcom, 5 Dec. 1846, T64/362B.
5. Census of 1871 (Munster).
6. Between 1841 and 1851 the population decline was 15.5% in Leinster, 16% in Ulster, 23.5% in Munster and 28.6% in Connacht (Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, 412). It is clear from these figures that West Clare was among the worst hit areas in the country and the devastation in its rural parts was scarcely equalled elsewhere.
7. Property of John MacDonnell and later of his nephew, William Armstrong.
8. Property of Samuel Cox and Anthony Hickman (Griffith's Valuation, Co. Clare, Dublin, 1855).
9. Hickman property:
 - 9a. Ibid.
10. R.C.P. 1845-7, Inspecting Officers, Reports, 421, C.W. Hamilton to Relief Commission, 30 Jan. 1846.
11. Trevelyan Papers, T64/3700(1).
12. Henry Coulter, The West of Ireland: its Existing Condition and Prospects, Dublin, 1862, 56.
13. Griffith's Valuation, Co. Clare.
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15. Ibid., II, 1382; Sir Bernard Burke, A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage together with Memoirs of the Privy Councillors and Knights, 40th ed., London, 1878, 276.
16. Coulter, The West of Ireland, 59.
17. Munster News, 10 June 1863.
18. Coulter, op. cit., 71.

19. Ibid., 65.
20. Munster News, 22 October 1851; L.C., 29 Nov. 1851.
21. L. and C.E., 8 Nov. 1854.
22. v. Barry, The Legislation of the Synod of Thurles, 1850 in Irish Theological Quarterly XXVI.2 (April 1959), 133 - 145.
23. John Kenyon preached a panegyric at Fr. Comyn's Month's Mind.
24. L.C., 6, 23 July 1853.
25. L.C., 27 Aug. 1853.
26. L.C., 19 Sep. 1855.
27. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Chicago etc., 1967, VI, 808.

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- II. Parliamentary Papers
- III. Other Official and Similar Publications
- IV. Newspapers
- V. Contemporary Books, Pamphlets and Articles
- VI. Later Works
- VII. Works of Reference
- VIII. Select Bibliography for earlier history
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