

**He rescued thousands from starvation in
a time of severe hardship.**

**His unconventional thinking gained him
the highest honours.**

**Yet his deeds have been largely forgotten
or ignored by history.**

In 1847, Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki arrived in Ireland, a country gripped by one of the most devastating famines in history. After witnessing the suffering of the people, Strzelecki developed a radical plan of action to help destitute families.

His innovative scheme was an astonishing success. He won the hearts of the people and his inspiring actions gained him a knighthood.

Through extensive archival research, Felix Molski reveals the work, successes and character of Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki: a nobleman, explorer and great humanitarian.

Felix Molski

The Best of Human Nature

Strzelecki's Humanitarian Work in Ireland

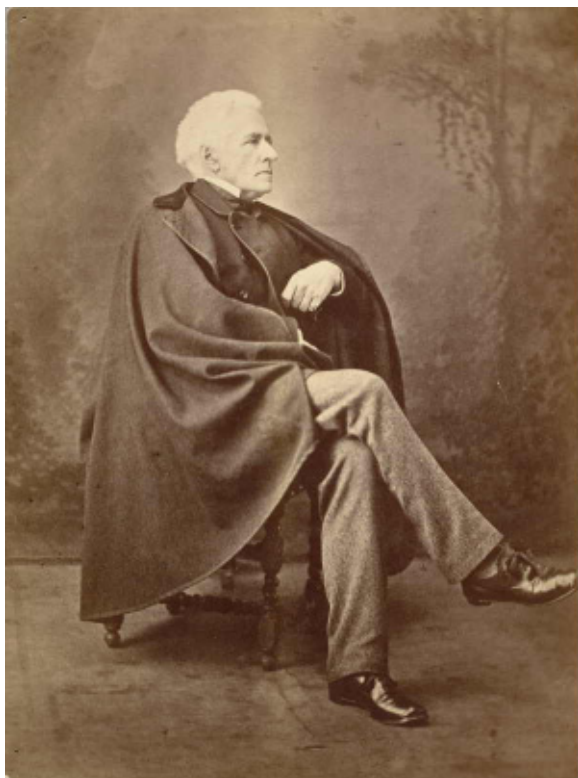


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Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki
Photographer unknown, State Library of Victoria

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Felix Molski

Kosciuszko Heritage
Sydney

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Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki: a great humanitarian? Yes, but not renowned as one. Yet, of his many outstanding accomplishments, this would have to rank as his greatest! It is true that Strzelecki was a great explorer, with many firsts to his name, but all he achieved in his non-humanitarian activities someone else would have done later.

However, a starving child cannot wait. A premature death is still a death forever. What is the value of a single human life? If someone saves hundreds of thousands of children from starvation, how long is he or she worthy of being remembered?

Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki was successful in saving hundreds of thousands of children, and countless adults, from starvation during the Great Potato Famine in Ireland, in the late 1840s.

A system was also organized under the superintendence of Count Strzelecki, the agent of the Association, acting in concert with the Poor Law Inspectors, by means of which upwards of 200,000 school children in the distressed districts were clothed and fed. The sum provided from funds of the British Relief Association from the 1st of October 1847 to 8th July, 1848, amounted altogether to 236,500£ ... At the price of provisions of last year the average cost of maintaining each individual who was relieved out of the workhouse was about 20s, for nearly three-quarters of a year. The Poor Law Commissioners report that ... not less than 200,000 persons would have perished last year for want of food in the distressed districts.¹

Background: Cultural, Religious, Political and Landownership Tensions

For centuries, English rulers had made incursions into Ireland, but they didn't wrest complete control until after the Battle of Kinsale (1601). However, the native Gaelic Irish culture, which included people who had intermarried and assimilated into it, was incompatible with English Central Government and Common Law. English law was based on the personal ownership of property, and primogeniture, where the eldest son inherited all titles and power, but under Irish Brehon Law, ownership was clan-based and inheritance was determined by clan leaders electing those whom they thought could best take their clan forward.

During the Reformation period, Henry VIII of England split with the Roman Catholic Church and became Protestant, but the Irish remained Catholic. This sharpened divisions between the Irish and their English overlords. The English

strengthened their rule over Irish resistance by adopting the policy of colonisation in an attempt to replace Irish culture, law and language. To anglicise the local culture, Irish held land was confiscated and settled by English Protestants and Scottish Presbyterians, especially in the north and north-east regions.

Failed insurrections led to more confiscations and the landholdings of the defeated were sold to English Crown loyalists. 'Plantation' was the term used by the Irish to describe this system of colonisation. The confiscated small landholdings were consolidated and 'colonisers' were 'planted' onto these new large estates. The big landholders found their way into the Irish House of Lords, where they formed the new 'ruling class' and the process of Anglicisation intensified. The political domination of Ireland by a small minority of owners of large estates, some of them huge, was referred to as the Protestant Ascendancy.

Confiscations on a massive scale occurred after Ireland's unsuccessful rebellion against English Rule in the English Civil War period between 1642 and 1651. Oliver Cromwell invaded and massacred men, women and children, and millions of acres of land were transferred to the Protestant Ascendancy.

Roman Catholics, the vast majority of the population, were excluded from the 'ruling class', as were small landholder Protestants and anyone else who failed to give allegiance to the English Crown. Laws enacted by the Irish Parliament were particularly nasty after the Irish took up arms in 1688 to support James II and Catholic France against the ascension of William of Orange to the English throne. The Irish Catholic army was defeated at the Battle of the Boyne (1690) and the newly enacted Penal Laws brought vengeance and hindered Irish advancement. For example, Irish Catholics were, amongst other things, banned from:

- Holding public office, entering the legal profession, joining the judiciary or engaging in trade and commerce;
- Standing for election to the Irish or British Parliaments;
- Voting;
- Practicing their Faith;
- Purchasing land;
- Inheriting, or receiving as a gift, land from Protestants;
- Receiving an education in Ireland or overseas and also from teaching in public or private houses;
- Holding firearms;
- Intermarrying with Protestants; and
- Reaping from their land any profit higher than a third of its rent value.

Soon after crushing the Irish rebellion of 1798, England enacted Union

(1800) and took direct control of Ireland. It closed the Irish Parliament and most of the ruling class moved to London and became absentee landlords. Only the Protestant Ascendancy could be elected to the British Parliament until Catholic Emancipation in 1829, but, by that time, the cultural damage had been done.

For over 130 years, the Ascendancy held a monopoly in electing representatives to the law-making body, during which it dictated the terms of the landlord/tenant relationship in its own favour, and a lot more besides:

First, any improvement he made to his holding became, when his lease expired or was terminated, the property of the landlord, without compensation. Second, he very seldom had any security of tenure; the majority of tenants in Ireland were tenants 'at will', that is, the will of the landlord, who could turn them out whenever he chose.²

Irish tenants had no incentive to make permanent improvements in the land they were tilling. For example, a tenant who built a fence at his own cost, improved the land drainage, or constructed a small dam could find himself being asked to pay a higher rental when it came time to renew his tenancy, because the land was now more productive. In the rest of Britain, including Ulster, under 'tenant right', the landlord was obliged to compensate the tenant. The tenant owned what accountants call the 'goodwill' value of the enhanced property, and just like businesses today are sold for their goodwill, the tenant could sell the good will value of his tenancy to others willing to take over it.

Deprived of security of tenure, the peasant's focus was short-term. Over the years, farmland became more degraded. The consequences of unjust land tenure laws took the Irish down the path of pauperisation. Generations of Irish leaders argued, pleaded and fought for 'tenant right'. It was always one of the tenant's biggest grievances; it needed to be changed to give Ireland a stronger footing to withstand the inevitable hard times. Without a voice in Parliament, the Irish argued in vain.

The absentee landlords' prime interest in their Irish estates was rental income. They let their estates to agents at a fixed rate over long terms, assuring themselves of regular and lucrative returns that would support their lifestyles in London. The agents then sublet the land to Irish peasants. The sublets tended



Interior of a peasant cottage
Pictorial Times, February 7, 1846

to be small and 'uneconomic' because, by having more tenants, rental incomes could be maximised.

Poverty in Ireland was so extensive that having land to till for subsistence was often the difference between life and death. Those without land roamed the countryside offering their labour, usually through 'conacre', where the tenant allowed the labourer to work on a small portion of his already-small plot. The tenant reduced his own rental burden by charging the labourer for conacre. Desperation for land was so intense that the size of the plots being worked kept getting smaller and smaller.

The religious, cultural, political and landownership context described here largely explains the impoverishment and illiteracy of the Irish Catholic peasant



The failure of the potato crop
Pictorial Times, August 22, 1846

at the beginning of the Great Famine. Irish peasants could survive these conditions because they cultivated potatoes. Potatoes were easy to grow plentifully on small holdings, requiring little more than a spade, minimum effort in summer and none in winter. Pigs, cows and chickens could be fed on it, and for people it was a highly nutritious and easily cooked food staple. Life could be survived so long as

outbreaks of potato blight did not totally destroy the crops. The Irish peasant's dependence on potatoes proved tragic in the late 1840s, when, throughout the countryside, a fungus-like organism, *phytophthora infestans*, turned potatoes into a rotten, stinking, slimy and inedible mush.

The British Government's Response to Irish Poverty

Poverty was common in Ireland. Employment opportunities were scarce and many became destitute. Since the Act of Union made Ireland a part of Britain, the destitute tried to improve their lot by moving to England. This inflow was not popular with the locals, so, to quarantine England from sea crossing by Irish paupers, the Irish Poor Law (1838) was enacted.

The destitute were offered food and accommodation in workhouses. The feudal administrative hierarchy of province, county, barony, townland was considered unsuitable, so new districts called 'Poor Law Unions' were formed and the Poor Law was administered through these. Townlands, the smallest

existing administrative subdivision, were combined and 130 'Unions' were created. Each Union was centred on a market town and subsequently subdivided into 'District Electoral Divisions' for the purpose of electing one or more people to a Poor Law Board of Guardians and to simplify its administration.

The maxim "the property of Ireland must support the poverty of Ireland" was applied, and the creation of workhouses and the running of the system were financed through the Poor Rate: a tax levied on the rental value of properties within a Union or District Electoral Division. Conditions within the workhouses were designed to be worse than conditions experienced by the able-bodied 'outside' to deter those not genuinely in need from abusing the system. Only basic needs were provided for; families were split-up, with men, women and children living and working separately. Only workhouse inmates could receive help; outdoor relief was banned. The system was not devised to handle the destitution arising from one-off catastrophes, such as a widespread famine.



The workhouse at Clifden in County Galway
Illustrated London News, 1849

The British Government's Response to the Famine

The initial response was a denial that any crisis existed. The estate owners sensed that they would have to bear the cost, in one way or another, for wasteful and 'unnecessary' relief measures. The Ascendancy's denials of mass starvation proved false. The Famine Relief Commission (1845) was established and Local Relief Committees were formed across Ireland to procure maize and deliver it to Depots operated by the Commissariat (Quartermasters), where the famished could buy it at market prices. British authorities had decided to treat the famine as a one-off catastrophe. The Poor Law was not to be used to help the victims of the potato blight.

The Board of Works was authorised to provide employment and income to the distressed by offering them 'outdoor' work on projects that the Board had approved from the many proposals submitted by landowners, such as the building of bridges and roads. It was stipulated, however, that the projects must benefit the general community and not specific landlords. Funding was to come from voluntary subscriptions from landlords, supplemented by an equal amount contributed by the British Government.

These measures failed. The food Depots were not resupplied and were closed down. Charles Trevelyan, the Director of Irish Relief, considered them only a single-season solution to food shortages. Their continuation risked 'relief dependency' and the disruption of private enterprise responses to market prices in the supply of food. Trevelyan seemed oblivious to Irish circumstances arising from centuries of British oppression. The rural economy was subsistence-based. Tenants did not pay rent in cash. Their non-potato work was set off against their rent at an agreed daily rate. In exchange, tenants were given a small patch to grow the potatoes on which they subsisted and a hovel for shelter.

Earning income from public works proved irresistible and the Board of Works was overwhelmed. It failed. It was not staffed to cope with the scale of the reaction of those in distress; resources were short, because not all landlords donated; robbing and corruption was rife; labour was diverted from crop planting; many projects were wasteful: roads to nowhere, bridges without a river, and holes being dug and refilled; the programs fell into chaos, with riots and violence being common.

It was time for a new approach. Government-run soup kitchens replaced the chaotic Board of Works employment schemes. The Poor Law had been amended to permit 'outdoor' relief in this form. The destitute would now be classed as paupers to be dealt with through the Poor Law workhouses. However, the maxim wasn't changed; Ireland was still expected to support its own distressed. To reduce the number qualifying for 'outdoor' relief, the Quarter Acre Clause in the Outdoor Relief Act (1846) excluded members of a family tilling more than a quarter acre from receiving help. When these families harvested rotten potatoes, they had the horrible choice of starving immediately, or giving up their tenancy to qualify for Relief.

British Corn Laws had, for decades, placed high tariffs on grains imported into England; they kept grain prices artificially high. After 'Union', Ireland was no longer 'foreign', so the Ascendancy profited by selling Irish produce in England 'tariff-free'. Even after the Corn Laws were repealed near the end of 1846, wheat, oats and barley produced in Ireland continued to be freighted to England and sold to the traders in London. The British Government refused all entreaties to use these crops to feed the starving in Ireland. Irish bitterness about this has persisted.

The resources of Ireland were insufficient to cover the costs of Relief, especially at a time of potato crop failure. Many landlords and tenants were in arrears on their poor rates. The £4 Clause in the Poor Law mandated that landlords pay the relief rates levied on land with a rental value of £4 or less, whether or not the landlord actually received any rent on it at all. Landlords responded by evicting tenants with small holdings. Moreover, small holdings would be unprofitable for

growing other crops, so landlords were eager to clear their land of small holders to allow more profitable crops, such as wheat, oats and barley, to be cultivated on a bigger scale. The solution for the landlord was to evict the tenant families. Evictions during the famine years occurred on a massive scale, and the evicted joined those seeking relief.

Non-Government Relief Efforts

The two main source of private charity were the Society of Friends, also known as the Quakers, and the British Relief Association. The Society of Friends got word out around the world about the desperate circumstances in Ireland and gathered donations of money, food and clothing that it distributed to the distressed. The 'Friends' did the volunteer work to establish the soup kitchens that helped feed the starving throughout the Irish countryside. Cecil Woodham Smith, the author of *The Great Hunger*, had direct access to the Society's archives and she gives a full account of their role in her book.



The Cork Society of Friends' soup house
The Illustrated London News, January 16, 1847

In the mid 1840s, when the world became aware of the famine that had befallen Ireland:

Charity the most unbounded was ready to open the hand of succour to the sufferers, and nothing appeared wanting but a competent machinery for administering the public munificence.³

The British Relief Association was formed by a group of noble individuals for the purpose of helping those in dire need in the Emerald Isle by channelling the benevolence of dispersed human hearts eager to donate. In their 1849 Report, the Association stated that Strzelecki had volunteered his time and talent to them on the 20th of January, 1847. Two days later, the Association wrote:

I am desired by the Committee of the British Association to acquaint you, that they have accepted the services of the Count Strelizski, for the purpose of proceeding to Ireland and visiting the counties Sligo, Donegal, and Mayo, and such other districts as may be hereafter determined upon.⁴

Testifying to the British Parliament, to the Select Committee on the Poor Laws of Ireland, when asked if he had resided in Ireland, Strzelecki replied:

Yes, I was, as an executive officer of the British Relief Association for 18 months, during the distress of 1847 and 1848, and afterwards, two months as the Agent of the Treasury, to administer the remainder of the relief, on the same principle as I administered that of the British Relief Association.⁵

Strzelecki's Personal Qualities

Animosity is a feature of Irish/English relations. Strzelecki was acceptable to both and could work comfortably with both. He was highly respected by the upper classes of English society, but the Irish were aware that he was neither a natural-born Englishman nor a Protestant.

Born on July 20, 1797, Strzelecki lived in partitioned Poland under foreign oppression, so he empathised with Irish feelings of being 'under the heel' of the Protestant Ascendancy. On May 4, 1849, Strzelecki gave evidence on the Operation of the Irish Poor Law before the Select Committee of the House of Lords. His empathy with the Irish is clear in the answers he gives to some of the questions put to him. In his reply to a question about Irish character, we can make the inference that Strzelecki believed that the Irish had the natural ability to improvise, innovate, adapt and make improvements; however, in Ireland, there was something holding them back. Strzelecki testified:

Yes, the Irishman improves in two or three years by emigrating to Australia; he acquires habits of industry; he learns to rely upon himself more than he does here; he has an openness in his character, and shows all that he can do, while here he does not show it. In two or three years he makes himself entirely independent⁶

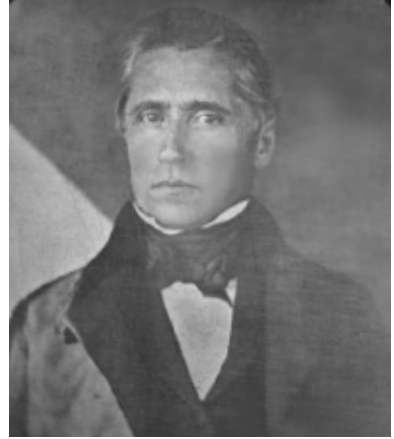
One of the Lords condescendingly asked if:

... the habits of the Irish people, as far as your observation enables you to form a judgment, are not these simple occupations in pastoral life and in agricultural life more peculiarly the habits for which the Irish peasant is well fitted and adapted? ⁷

Strzelecki insightfully contradicted this ruling class stereotyped depiction of the Irish as nothing more than 'simpleton peasants'.

I should take a wider range of the capabilities of the Irish peasant. I should say that he is fit to act under more difficult circumstances than that of pastoral life; I would say that he is adapted for everything; if he only knows and sees his own interest, and understands and sees his way through, he adapts himself to every circumstance in which he is placed.⁸

Attempting to help four million people to avoid starvation is a daunting task. The counties of Donegal, Sligo and Mayo are located in the isolated north-western part of Ireland. This was the most difficult region in which to administer relief because famine was most serious here and the population was much dispersed and lacked basic infrastructure. Strzelecki was familiar with such regions. He had explored the world for 14 years, much of it on foot across rugged and inhospitable terrain. He was mentally and physically strong and energetic. He had the tough constitution needed to take on such a physically and emotionally sapping task as providing relief in these counties. His physical fitness helped him survive the typhoid fever he contracted in late March, 1847. This fever had killed many people around him, but Strzelecki continued organising relief afterwards.



Count Strzelecki
Government Printing Office, April 1914
State Library of New South Wales

Strzelecki was an efficient administrator. He was thorough and organised. He had proven his administrative ability when, as a young man, he was appointed plenipotentiary by Prince Francis Sapieha of his grand estates in Poland. He was a man of impeccable integrity. Strzelecki ended the chaos and mismanagement that he inherited and brought order, purpose and integrity to the administration. Lech Paszkowski, his biographer, states that:

Strzelecki had restored the estates to a good financial position.⁹

During his four years as a plenipotentiary, Strzelecki had gained firsthand experience in working with poor, uneducated tenant farmers. He was able to connect with Irish peasants effectively; he was aware of their problems, their capabilities, their attitudes, and how to communicate with them, simply, directly and honestly. In restoring the Sapieha estates to profitability, he had to deal with systemic mismanagement and corruption. It honed Sir Paul's ability to judge character and he recognised the importance of having good people in positions

of trust and the need for control procedures.

Sir Paul was discerning in his recruitment of people. He put together a capable, dedicated, hardworking and honourable team of volunteers to superintend the mission of the Association of helping those suffering from famine in Ireland. He was constantly on the lookout for capable and “trustworthy and benevolent persons, to whom, in case of need, a charitable body could apply in full confidence”.¹⁰

In allocating Association funds to districts being efficiently administered, Strzelecki commented:

... experience has demonstrated to me, that whatsoever the misery is in a district, the grant to alleviate its horrors becomes a dead letter without an efficient Committee.¹¹

When reporting his observations about the work being done by the Relief Committees, he informed the Association that:

I fear that some of the Electoral Divisions of that Union, particularly the barony of Erris (Belmullet) will not, and cannot be stimulated to do what is right, for in that unfortunate locality the only persons present, who from their social position are entitled to be members of Relief Committees, are also those who, from habits of negligence, apathy, jobbing and speculation, ought to be excluded from them.¹²

Strzelecki's attention to detail is evident in the way he efficiently stored the massive quantity of information he had gathered over 14 years of world exploration. Throughout his explorations, he took compass readings, recorded temperatures and air pressure, checked geological formations, chemically analysed minerals, gathered fossil and mineral samples, surveyed the land, made sketches, kept a written record of his observations about soil, botany, mineralogy and geology and prepared detailed maps. After analysing and organising years of collected data, he published *A Physical Description of New South Wales and Van Dieman's Land*, in London in 1845.

First Observations

Soon after arriving at Westport, county Mayo, Strzelecki was in the field, traversing the countryside, sometimes on foot through severe winter conditions, finding out firsthand what was happening. He worked out priorities and devised a plan of action to save as many as he could. Strzelecki was horrified by what he saw. Early in 1847 he reported:

January 29

At Carrick-on-Shannon, I found the poor-house and hospital crowded with half-naked and emaciated men, women and children, a prey to dysentery and fever which terminated fatally...

Between Carrick and Sligo, numberless struggling and ragged families were observed; some crawling, some squatted on the road-side, through utter exhaustion; all bearing downcast, broken, and worn-out countenances; fearful results of starvation, sickness, and the exposure to the inclemency of the weather...

At Sligo, I found the streets swarming with the distressed; clamorous through hunger...

Between Sligo and Westport ... the desolate aspect of the country is more fearful still. The population seems as if paralyzed and helpless, more ragged and squalid; here fearfully dejected, there stoically resigned to death ... Of the fate, gloomy and awful, which overhangs the whole population, that of the poor children, and the babies at the breasts of their emaciated and enervated mothers, excites the highest feelings of commiseration.¹³

February 10

In the barony of Erris (Belmullet), where I arrived on the 8th instant, I have found generally the most melancholy and deplorable destitution amongst the inhabitants, and which in many cases proves fatal...

...the destitution is extending wider and wider; that fever and dysentery become more and more virulent and prevalent, and that both, but particularly starvation, are fearfully increasing the mortality of the barony.¹⁴

March 15

No pen can describe the distress by which I am surrounded. It has actually reached such a degree of lamentable extremes that it becomes above the power of exaggeration and misrepresentation.¹⁵

March 25

I am sorry to report to you, that during the last week the distress has become more pressing upon the people, and that melancholy cases of deaths occurring on public roads and in streets are more frequent.¹⁶

Feeding and Clothing Children During the Famine

Prolonged hunger is the most harrowing of human circumstances. Difficult as it may be for the human spirit to cope psychologically with exposure to the odour, groans and moans of the sick, starving and dying, and the nightmare of looking



Beggars on the O'Connell estate
Pictorial Times, February 14, 1846

at the haunting, hollow-eyed stares of the famished, there can be nothing more anguishing than the vision of famished children, and to contemplate, if the children survived, what shocking memories they would have of what they witnessed in their childhood.

As the tragedy of the Irish famine deepened and became exposed, even the most insensitive individuals were moved

to respond, to help in some way, any way. The normal method of help was to provide relief to the parents, who, being fed and employed, could tender properly to their children. Sir Paul Edmund turned this orthodox wisdom on its head! The British Association began to reconsider the idea which:

was originated by Count de Strzelecki, and carried into effect in twenty seven of the poorest Unions, viz. that of daily rationing the destitute children attending schools. During the period the Count de Strzelecki was acting for the Association in County Mayo, he had tried this system of relief at Westport with the greatest possible success.¹⁷

In a spark of brilliance, Strzelecki changed the focus from the parents to the children! The priority was to relieve the suffering of the children and to provide certainty in the minds of parents that their loved ones would be properly clothed and fed – every day – in a safe environment. The parents too would be helped, but the important point was that, by taking away the parents' anxiety about the fate of their children, they could focus more on helping themselves.

Since Paul Edmund was the decision-maker for County Mayo, he was free to put his idea into practice in the districts within. He would provide relief to the children through the existing schools. His first task, an impossible one it would seem considering Irish history, was to convince discordant Catholic and

Protestant clergy to set aside their differences and consent to his scheme.
He succeeded!

I took the opinion of both Catholic and Protestant gentlemen upon the subject, and everyone confessed that, in these extraordinary and exceptional times, when nakedness and hunger amongst children threaten them with most severe suffering and demoralization, the assistance in food and clothing given to them through the medium of schools, of whatsoever denomination they may be, cannot be construed either into favouritism or indifference to the principle on which a school is to be conducted.¹⁸

Strzelecki then had to put together a team of capable, caring people to administer the scheme, source a continuous supply of nutritious food, obtain suitable clothing and deliver it without fail every day to the schools and children.

Again, he succeeded!

Some ideas may appear to be good on paper, but in practice things don't work out as well. There are always unforeseen circumstances and obstacles. Not in this program.

It succeeded better than expected. Strzelecki's final move was to extend this pilot scheme to other Counties, but for these he was not the final decision-maker. He had to convince the Commissioners of the Association that the idea was worthy of approval. He was already highly respected by the Commissioners for his successes in County Mayo and his arguments were strong.

Evolving Methods

Strzelecki had been appointed to the Association's headquarters at Dublin in June 1847 as the executive officer for the provision of relief throughout Ireland. His appointment was made at about the same time as Charles Trevelyan, the chief of Government Relief Programs, used the amended Poor Law to implement the Government's new method of 'outdoor relief' by giving away cooked food directly to the destitute in Government-run Soup Kitchens. The British Association's food-granting depots were becoming redundant.

Strzelecki responded by transforming the manner in which the Association operated. Instead of duplicating Government efforts, he harmonised with them. The Association would not operate its own infrastructure, but it would work cooperatively with Government Relief bodies to supplement the Government's inadequacies.

Trevelyan wrote to the Association supporting the idea:

... on the subject of Count Strzelecki's plan for disposing of the balance of your fund.

I recommended that you should not form any new independent machinery, which you might find it difficult to manage ... but that you should select, through the Poor Law Commissioners, a certain number of Unions in which there is reason to believe that the ratepayers will not be able to meet their liabilities, and that you should appropriate from time to time such sums as the Poor Law Commissioners may recommend, for the purpose of assisting in giving outdoor relief in certain districts of these Unions; the expenditure for this object being conducted under the special superintendence of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, who would take care that no misappropriation took place.

This plan is substantially the same as that which was last recommended by Count Strzelecki; and it would be attended with the double advantage of limiting the relief afforded by the Association, to those parts of the country which are undoubtedly the most distressed...¹⁹

In addition to supplementing Government inadequacies, Strzelecki passionately wanted to apply his Schools Scheme to the most distressed districts. Before making their decision, on October 27, 1847, the Commissioners sought the opinion of Trevelyan.

The subject of affording assistance to schools ... the Count [Strzelecki] has in this letter reopened the question, and resumed his arguments in its favour, and the subject will be taken into consideration, and be finally decided upon by the Committee tomorrow. Under these circumstances it would be of the greatest service if you could favour me with your views and opinion upon the question for the use of the Board.²⁰

The perception, although uncorroborated, is that Trevelyan opposed Strzelecki's plan. However that may be, the revolutionary scheme of relieving children through schools was approved and extended to the most distressed Unions in Ireland.

The extension succeeded! The program exceeded expectations. Not only were the physical needs of children met, but the children located in the most illiterate parts of Ireland improved their educational standards; they learned good hygienic practices to minimise their chances of catching diseases rampant at a time of famine. All of the Inspecting Officers of the Unions were:

requested by Count Strzelecki to require that water, towels, soap, and



Interior of a peasant cottage
Pictorial Times, January 24, 1846



A farmer taking potatoes to market
Pictorial Times, February 28, 1846



Old Chapel Lane, Skibbereen
By James Mahony
The Illustrated London News, February 13, 1847



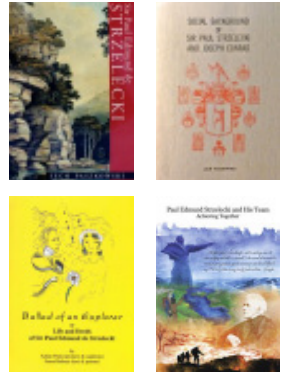
Woman begging for money to buy a coffin for the dead child she carries
By James Mahony
The Illustrated London News
February 13, 1847



After the ejection
The Illustrated London News
December 16, 1848

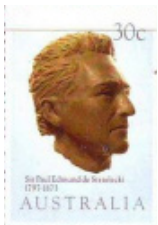


Scene in a chapel at Thurles
The Illustrated London News, August 26, 1848

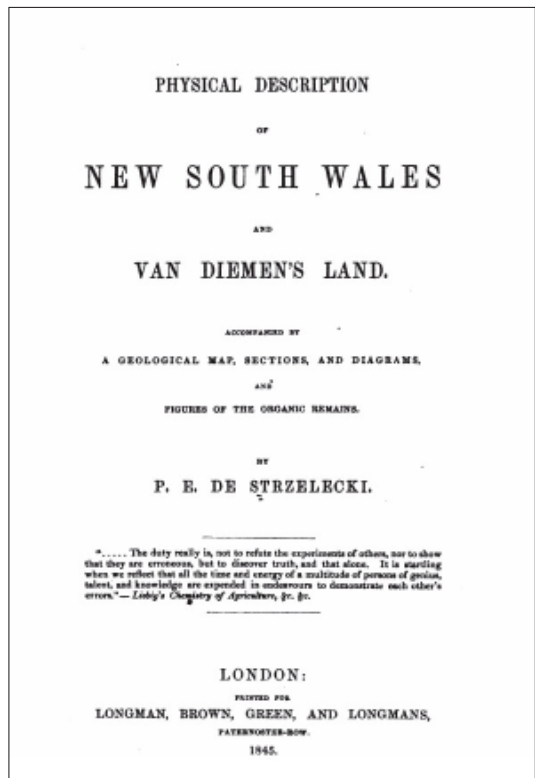


Newspaper clippings about Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki
Assembled by Felix Molski

Books about
Strzelecki



Strzelecki on Australian
and Polish postage stamps
and a Polish coin



A page from Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki's book,
Physical Description of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land



Pregnant Woman, Ireland Park, Toronto
Sculptures by Rowan Gillespie
Photograph by Benson Kua
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Famine, Custom House Quay, Dublin
Sculptures by Rowan Gillespie

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Famine, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin
Memorial by Edward Delaney

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commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Memorial_St._Stephen%E2%80%99s_Green_Dublin.jpg

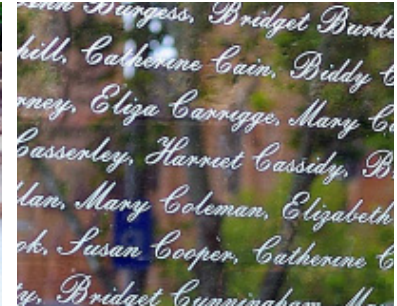




Photographs by the Great Irish Famine Commemoration Committee, Sydney



Photograph by Christopher Shane



Details from the Australian Monument to the Great Irish Famine,
located at the Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney

combs are provided at each school at which our relief is afforded, and that no child be allowed to partake of his ration without having first well washed his face, and hands, and combed his hair.²¹

Local employment opportunities were created for the fabrication of children's clothing.

As regards clothing, which is of paramount necessity and importance, next to food, a couple of thousand pounds set apart for this object will be of the greatest charity; and if invested through the agency of Dublin Ladies' Reproductive and Industrial Society, would prove of a double benefit; for that Society, of which the Honourable Mrs Newcombe and Mrs Humphrey Lloyd are the active members, succeeded most wonderfully in fostering native industry amongst the females of Ireland, as their stores of frieze, flannels, drugget, and such like, attest, and are fully competent and capable to undertake the making and the furnishing of any articles of clothing required.²²

Parents were relieved that their loved ones, the children they had brought into the world and for whom they felt great responsibility, were being properly assisted. It had a powerful effect on their psychological outlook and they responded by trying to get out of hardship through self-help.

Testimonials

It was magnificent! Praise, abundant praise, poured in from the districts that had adopted the Strzelecki scheme. The resounding success is evident in the reports made to the Association by the Inspectors of the Unions. This is a sample of what they said:

Clarke, Cahirciveen

No measure has given more universal satisfaction than that of giving food and clothing to the children of destitute parents attending the existing schools, which will, I believe, do more to soften down religious animosities than any other that could have been devised.²³

Dempster, Ballinrobe

When explaining to the poor people the advantages their children would enjoy through the humane interposition of the British Relief Association, they were quite happy at the prospect of their being so kindly dealt by; and all stated that, whilst the children got any food, they themselves

would do all in their power to earn a subsistence however precarious or scanty, rather than go to the workhouse, or even to ask for outdoor relief.²⁴

Marshall, Skibbereen

I am glad to inform you that the people generally are in much better spirits; as when a man, though able to work, saw his family of helpless children crying for something to eat, and had not the means of relieving them, he was cast down, and rendered unable to earn his own bread; but now the case is different, and in place of gratuitous relief being a check to industry, it will stimulate the parents to exertion.

A Roman Catholic clergymen who had been most violent in complaining of the state of the people lately, came to me a few days ago and said, "Since the children are fed, matters are now becoming quite cheering."²⁵

Hotham, Tralee

I determined to ride round the western part of the Union, and see all Schools which lay in my way, taking them quite by surprise, having given them no previous notice. I think I saw about fifteen Schools, and the result was highly satisfactory. ...

I assure you that it was a great comfort to me, after seeing the terrible destitution of the country, to witness so many little children happy and healthy amidst the dreadful desolation which surrounded them, and I sincerely wished in my heart that the subscribers to the Association Fund could witness the real good ... it has caused.²⁶

Gilbert, Sligo

I need not remark on the material benefits this system of relief is to this Union; they are most manifest in decreasing the clamour and demand for relief amongst the adult and able-bodied of the destitute, who would, were not this aid afforded them, become a burden on the poor house, and an additional taxation to the already impoverished rate-payers. Many of the paupers have left the workhouse, on finding their children would be supported at the schools, and with this responsibility taken away, have endeavoured to shift for themselves.²⁷

Mr Deane, Clifden

As soon as it became generally known that food was about to be given to the children attending the schools, the numbers increased to the full

extent for which accommodation could be provided.

It is scarcely possible to overestimate the value and importance of the course adopted by the Committee of the British Association, in the relief afforded to children at the schools, which now in number exceed 2000.

I feel persuaded, from my knowledge of the state of things in this Union, that were it not for the step which has been so wisely, taken, the greater number of those who are now deriving the benefit of instruction ... would have advanced to adult age uneducated ...²⁸

Kennedy, Kilrush

I have established a bakery for the school children under Count Strzelecki's auspices; and I find the rye bread succeeds admirably. It is palatable and wholesome.²⁹

Mann, Kilrush

I cannot tell you how much benefit is derived from feeding the destitute children at the Schools; it prevents the little creatures from starving, and improves their habits, and leaves the parents free to seek for their own subsistence; and about here it is fully appreciated by everyone, as a well-timed, judicious charity.³⁰

Ommanney, Kenmare

I am happy to report that the benefit derived by this system are now manifested, and every day shows the great advantage it has conferred on the district; the relief afforded is very extensive; but for this bounty there would be now many hundreds without the means of subsistence.

I am constantly about the country, and inspect the Schools ... when I contrast the aspect of the children when I first came to the Union, with the present time, the result of my trouble is most satisfactory. Instead of numbers of emaciated children, struggling all over the country, there are but very few to be seen now, in the middle of the day; ... I also perceive a very great improvement in the appearance and condition of the children.³¹

D'Arcy, Baillyshannon

I have much pleasure in forwarding you the copy of a Resolution passed by the Board of Guardians, in which they express their thanks to the Association for the benefit the Union has received from the food

distributed to the children in the Schools. ...

Proposed by Mr John R Dickson, seconded by Mr J C Bloomfield:-
That we offer our sincere thanks to the British Association, and to their able and courteous agent, Count Strzelecki, for the great and judicious assistance given to their Union, through the medium of food distributed to the destitute children in Schools, as, independent of the charity to them, it has been of signal service in reducing the pressure for relief both in and out-door, as many persons who are almost on the verge of destitution because so relieved by the bread given to the children, that the hands of the families have endeavoured to support themselves, when otherwise the whole would have been thrown upon the Union for support.³²

Changing relief priorities from adult to child was a stroke of genius. Reverend O'Rourke noted:

A peculiar feature of this relief system, adopted and carried into effect by the advice of Count Strzelecki, was the giving of clothing and daily rations to children attending school. This was done in twenty-seven of the poorest Unions, and with the best results. By the first of January, 1848, the system was in full operation in thirteen Unions, and 58,000 children were on the relief roll of the Association.³³

At the beginning of March 1848, the number of schoolchildren being fed, clothed and educated had risen to 176,304. Two months later, they had increased to their highest level:

This humane and well-devised plan has since been carried most effectively and extensively into execution, under Count Strzelecki's able and benevolent superintendence.³⁴

The figures in summary were:

The returns show further, that the maximum number of children participating in the daily food was 201,427, and that 21,621,881 rations of bread had been distributed since November last, at a cost of one halfpenny per ration.³⁵

The rapid increase in the number of children taking advantage of the Strzelecki Scheme since its approval by the Commissioners of the British Relief Association on October 28, 1847, is itself a strong indicator of the scheme's effectiveness.

In Britain and around the world, when it was perceived that the worst of

the famine was over, donations to the British Relief Association dwindled and the Relief being offered to schoolchildren was proportionately reduced in accordance with the distress being experienced. The school relief program came to a close on August 31, 1848.

Count Strzelecki to the Commissioners:- July 31, 1848

I beg to enclose, for the information of the Poor Law Commissioners, a statement showing the periods on which, according to the opinion of the Poor Law Inspectors, the relief to children should stop in their respective Unions.

Enclosure.

Statement showing the date at which the Poor Law Inspectors recommend that the Relief to Children should be closed:- *[see page 26]*

There ensued a torrent of messages of appreciation that conveyed the sense of reverence that springs naturally from the human psyche when people behold the best of human nature being exercised. Goodness for goodness' sake: the community was in unanimous agreement.

Strzelecki's virtues were extolled by community leaders and the fellow volunteers who were responsible for carrying out his ideas and who went to him whenever they needed help.

Count Strzelecki,
An Address From the Temporary Poor Law
Inspectors To the Count Strzelecki
Dublin, 7th September

Dear Sir, - We the undersigned, Temporary Poor Law Inspectors of those unions in Ireland which have been assisted by the British Relief Association through the great difficulties of their transition from a state of dependence on a gigantic system of imperial support to that of an effective law for the maintenance of the destitute out of the treasures of the land of their birth, desire to express to you our sense of the humane and benevolent spirit which has actuated all your operations in the dispensation of the funds placed at your disposal during the last ten months, amounting to £240 000, and of the kind solicitude you evinced to secure the young and helpless portion of the population from physical want and suffering, by providing those who attended schools with food and clothing.

Our position, having brought us into frequent personal intercourse with

Unions in which the relief is to be closed on the 20 th August			Unions in which the relief is to be closed on the 31 st of August		
No	Name of Union	Number of Children	No	Name of Union	Number of Children
1	Ballina	14291	1	Boyle	3960
2	Bellmullet	3683	2	Carrick-on Shannon	4140
3	Ballinrobe	7023	3	Castlelea	8744
4	Ballyshannon	8185	4	Kilrush	4189
5	Bantry	9411	5	Listowel	7017
6	Cahiriveen	2614	6	Milford	2716
7	Castlebar	4858	7	Manorhamilton	4000
8	Clifden	4226	8	Roscommon	2117
9	Donegal	5955	9	Sligo	8000
10	Galway	4618	10	Dingle	2715
11	Glenties	6211			
12	Kenmare	4213			47598
13	Skibbereen	19141			
14	Swineford	19064			
15	Tuam	4640			
16	Westport	8380			
		126513			
		47598			
	Total number of children	174111			

Dublin, 31st July, 1848P E DE STRZELECKI ³⁶

you, we cannot omit this opportunity of acknowledging your unvarying kindness, courtesy and prompt attention to any suggestion or wish conveyed in our communications.

The prominent and active part taken by you during the last two years in all the measures the British Association for the relief of the unprecedented distress overwhelming an entire nation, is now a matter of history, and cannot be forgotten by any acquainted with the progress of the Irish famine, so replete with painful details. Desirous also to preserve the recollection of our personal connection with yourself, we request the acceptance of the accompanying memorial of our esteem and regard.

Inscription on the Shield:- Presented to Count P E Strzelecki, as a token of their private esteem and regard, by the temporary poor-law inspectors of those unions in Ireland assisted from the funds of the British Relief Association, by grants in part devoted to the support of destitute children attending schools:. On the lower shield:- AD "1847 and 1848."³⁷

His virtues were extolled by the people to whom he reported.

London, July 21, 1848.

Mr Lloyd, Chairman of the British Association for the Relief of Distress in Ireland and Scotland, to Count Strzelecki:- July 21, 1848.

I am specially instructed by the Committee of the British Association for the Relief of Distress in Ireland and Scotland to transmit to you the enclosed resolutions. In discharging this duty, I feel it difficult to confine myself to the cold and measured language of official form. Having devoted an almost uninterrupted attention to the business of the Committee, I have had the means of observing and appreciating the value of the assistance which you have rendered to us from the commencement to the final termination of our proceedings; and which, I am sure, even the warm language of the resolutions does but imperfectly express.

No great length of time has elapsed since I came forward to certify your fitness to be admitted to the privileges of a British subject. I gave this testimony as a private individual, upon the knowledge which I then possessed of your character, and I did it with unhesitating confidence. But little did I then anticipate that I should so soon be called upon, in a more public capacity, to recognise the abundant proof which you have since afforded that you possess those high moral qualities which the British public always holds in the greatest esteem, and at the same time to thank you for the valuable co-operation which you have rendered in carrying

out one of the noblest efforts which even British generosity has ever made for the relief of distress arising out of a most appalling national calamity.

You have indeed established the strongest claim upon the gratitude of the country which you have adopted; long may you live to adorn it by your virtues, and to benefit it by the further services which you are capable of rendering it.

I cannot express to you too strongly the respect and esteem which your conduct has created in the breast of every member of the Committee.

The resolutions which I transmit to you are a candid and honest expression of our united feeling on this subject. To these let me add the assurance of the personal regard and admiration of your faithful servant and friend.

At a meeting of the Committee of the British Relief Association, held on Thursday, the 20th July, it was resolved unanimously –

Enclosure:

That this Committee, on the occasion of bringing to a close their official intercourse with the Count P. E. de Strzelecki, feel that the services which he has rendered to the British Association, in their efforts for the relief of distress in Ireland, demand a peculiar and marked acknowledgment.

That the Committee recognise, with deepest respect and gratitude, the noble spirit which induced Count Strzelecki to place his gratuitous services at their disposal in the commencement of their proceedings, and the steady perseverance with which, during eighteen months, he has discharged duties involving great labour and anxiety, and a considerable degree of personal risk, in carrying out the purposes of the Association, first in some of the most distressed and desolated districts in Ireland, and subsequently in Dublin.

That the successful result which has attended the labours of the Committee, the grateful acknowledgments which they have received, as well from the gentry and clergy of all denominations in Ireland as from the recipients of the bounty of the Association, and the full approbation of the measures of the Association expressed by the Lord Lieutenant and the Government in England, have afforded to the Committee the greatest satisfaction, for which they feel that they are largely indebted to the very able and zealous assistance which they have received from the Count de Strzelecki.

That the Committee, while tendering to Count Strzelecki this testimony

of respect and gratitude for services equally remarkable for their efficiency as for their disinterested character, cannot refrain from expressing their hope that the preserving energy, the correct judgment, and the varied capacity of usefulness, of which he has afforded such abundant proof during his connexion with the British Association, may still be rendered available in some other form to his adopted country.

That a copy of these Resolutions be transmitted to Count de Strzelecki by the Chairman on behalf of the Committee.

By order of the Committee,
S J Lloyd, Chairman

Committee-room, South Sea House
July 21, 1848.³⁸

They were also extolled by the chief government administrators.

The Commissioners to Count Strzelecki
July 27, 1848.

... the Commissioners deem it right to express to you the high sense which the Commissioners entertain of the advantages which the Inspectors and the Commissioners have derived from the method, punctuality; zeal; and discrimination with which you have superintended the operations for the relief of the school children in the distressed districts. And the Commissioners are convinced that it must be a source of true and refined pleasure to your benevolent mind, to know that your exertions in behalf of the poor children have been attended with even more than that measure of success which could have been anticipated, considering the unfortunate circumstances in which the population of the south and west of Ireland have been placed during the last two years, by the total or partial failure of their accustomed food.³⁹

And they were extolled by people prominent in the communities benefiting from Strzelecki's brilliant ideas.

Testimonial to Count de Strzelecki, from the Protestant Patrons of the Skibbereen Union, dated September 5th, 1848.

Sir,

Having experienced the bounty of the British Association in supplying the children of our Schools with food, by which they are not only in

a healthy but in a very thriving condition, and as (unhappily, we fear) its funds are exhausted, and it will therefore no longer be able to act by us the generous part it has so long done, we, the Protestant Patrons of the Schools so assisted, cannot suffer the opportunity to pass (while we lament the cessation of its needful assistance at this time) of thanking its Members most cordially, and the British Public through them, for the salutary and extensive aid we have hereby received.

If any circumstance could increase our gratitude, it is the judicious mode selected for bestowing it, and for which, as we are informed the Association is indebted to you, Sir, for the suggestion and working of the system, we beg to render you our thankful acknowledgment. It was one of the most judicious methods that could be thought of for affording us the assistance we required, as (carried out in the spirit of the intention) it was a means of correcting the degraded habits engendered by gratuitous feeding in the rising generation, teaching them, while improving their minds and principles, to know the scriptural rule, that "if a man will not work, neither should he eat." It was calculated to raise them into a comparative state of respectability, when it could be said by them in a sense, that they had earned what they ate.

Blessing God for putting it into the hearts of those who supplied your Association with the means, and for suggesting, through you, the excellent mode of dispensing the funds entrusted to its care, we implore the Divine mercy to give to you all the full satisfaction of those benevolent minds who feel the highest gratification in being useful to their fellow-creatures.

(Signed) Alexander Stuart, Archdeacon of Ross and Vicar of Aghadown
Elizabeth Fleming, New Court
Thomas Morris, Mohann
James Freke, Rector of Kilcec and Clear
John Triphoor, Rector and Vicar of Skull
Henry Justice, Bally Dohob
Richard Boyle Townsend, Vicar of Abbey Strewry
Elizabeth Newman, Betsborough
Henry Newman, Betsborough
Alexander McCape, Curate of Creagh
Edward Spring, Curate of Tullagh
Charles Bushe, Rector of Castlehaven
Robert Oliver, Curate of Myross
William Baldwin, Rector of Kilfanghunbeg
C C Townsend, Rector of Kilmacabea
Elizabeth Townsend, Derry, Roscarbery
William Johnson, Probandary of Kilkenmore and Rector of

Cestrum Ventry

R H Somerville, Point House, Castle Townsend

Thomas Tulkey, Rector of Drimoleague

William Molesworth, Rector of Drinagh⁴⁰

Strzelecki was lauded and feted by his generation. On November 21, 1848, Queen Victoria bestowed on him the knighthood of the Order of the Bath for his great humanitarian work in Ireland.

In 1961, even novelist the Helen Heney, who in her private letters had voiced a dislike of Sir Paul and who wrote a fictional Kitty Kelley-type of biography that assassinated his character, had to praise him for his humanitarian work. She concluded that the UN adopted Sir Paul's ideas in helping those displaced by WWII.

He [Strzelecki] had set a model for modern relief distribution, in his foresight in providing for the children within the stable framework of those who normally had the care of them, and it is interesting to note that in the large-scale relief works of U.N.R.R.A. in Germany after the Second World War professional social workers followed the same method.⁴¹

Famine Aftermath

It is difficult to pinpoint a specific date for the end of the Great Famine. Disease had regularly affected potato crops on a regional level before 1845, and spotty outbreaks continued to occur in the following decades. After 1848, because blight was no longer widespread, there was a mistaken perception around the world that famine in Ireland had been defeated. Private relief efforts ended due to a lack of donations.

The British government also scaled back its relief programs, closing soup kitchens and relying on Poor Law workhouses to help those in need. However, workhouse restrictions were more strictly enforced at the same time, as the number needing assistance was rising. It was no longer potato blight that was causing famine; instead, it was Government 'blight' that was responsible for the continuation of destitution in Ireland.



Returning from market (Kilkenny)

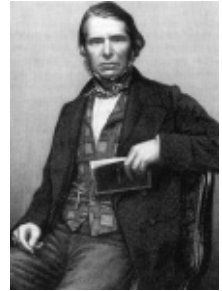
By E. Fitzpatrick

The Illustrated London News, January 24, 1857

The negative consequences of regulations such as the £4 clause and the quarter acre clause matured and impacted the levels of poverty. Ireland seemed to be trapped in a vicious circle. Farm output dropped and tenants were in arrears in their rentals and in their contributions to the poor rate. Evictions were rampant and this increased the burden on Poor Law workhouses. Revenue shortfalls from the poor rate in many Unions meant that the operating costs of workhouses were unable to be met. The British government tried to make up the shortfall by increasing the rates and enacting 'rate in aid' legislation, which forced Unions not yet in trouble to bail out those in irretrievable bankruptcy. Landlords were trapped in the circle, too, because steep falls in rental income and increases in the poor rate were driving them into insolvency.

In 1849, Charles Trevelyan pushed through the Encumbered Estates Act, which allowed the creditors of properties in heavy debt to petition successfully for the encumbered land to be auctioned off. A huge quantity of farmland was sold at basement prices and the new owners, eager to consolidate their properties, evicted the tenants still remaining on the land with little compunction. Tenant homes were demolished and farmland clearance took place on a massive scale.

The famine period was a time when Ireland was being depopulated. The 1821 Irish census reported a population of 6,801,827 souls and this number had increased to about 8.3 million by 1845. In the 1851 census, the population had fallen to 6.5 million, putting it below the level recorded 24 years previously. The 1901 census stated that less than 4.5 million people were living in Ireland at the turn of the century. Over the famine years, starvation had increased the mortality rate; however, epidemics, which arose from people being packed into workhouses in close proximity with the ill, killed many more. Emigration to Britain, America, Canada and Australia also



Sir Charles Trevelyan
Circa 1840s



Irish emigrants leaving home: the priest's blessing
The Illustrated London News, May 10, 1851

contributed to the rapid fall in the Irish population. After his work for the British Relief Association had ended, Strzelecki played an active role in encouraging young Irish folk with few good prospects in their homeland to immigrate to

Australia. Having explored extensive areas of NSW and Van Diemen's Land, he had the firsthand knowledge to convince people of the potential of this new land where hard-working people could find new opportunities and make a good life for themselves. Furthermore, Strzelecki:

Devoted his attentions to the rescue of young women and girls from the dangers of the streets of London, and was the means of sending some thousands to a new home in Australia.⁴²

Negative memories of the famine became so deeply etched in the Irish psyche that the humanitarian deeds of people such as Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki were left behind.

Other Aspects

Strzelecki's thinking went beyond the desperation of overcoming the present crisis. He took measures to reduce the risk of famine arising again from the same cause: the reliance on a single crop. Growing potatoes on small plots seemed to be the means by which tenant farmers could overcome the pauperising context of the laws under which they tilled the land. By growing potatoes, Irish tenant farmers could survive and maybe even prosper. Over several decades, output had been good.

'...The potato deluge during the past twenty years has swept away all other food from our cottagers and sunk into oblivion their knowledge of cookery.' There was no means of distributing home-grown food, no knowledge of how to use it ... Routh writing to Trevelyan on January 1, 1846, told him that the Irish people did not regard wheat, oats and barley as food—they were grown to pay the rent ...⁴³

Strzelecki believed that if farmers added turnips to their subsistence plantings they would have a good back-up should blight return. He procured and distributed turnip seed to the Unions.

Allow me to embrace this opportunity of urging you to employ all the interest you have with the British Relief Association to procure as much turnip seed as possible in England, and to send it over; for it will be, under the blessing of God, the foundation of the regeneration of this at present wretched country.⁴⁴

Sir Paul broadened the peasant diet. He had introduced rye bread to children

in the school relief scheme and he was receiving positive feedback about the children's acceptance of it as a food staple. However, he had to overcome the loss of bread-making skills that had occurred due to the reliance on potatoes.

I have despatched four bakers from Dublin, to inspect and instruct the contractors in provinces in the manufacture of bread. It is a melancholy reflection, when one reviews the obstacles which are to be met with in introducing here an art which is familiar to the whole world.⁴⁵

Conclusion

Where does Strzelecki stand today in the history books? Unfortunately, his deeds have been forgotten by later generations. In books themed around the Potato Famine, he barely rates a mention, but the evidence of Strzelecki's humanitarian successes can be found in the correspondence, reports, papers and investigations in the archives of the British Parliament. The brilliance of his original concept in changing the mindset about the way in which Relief was provided, and the fact that the School Scheme was authoritatively assessed as saving more than 200,000 children from starvation, is worthy of transcending the nineteenth century, without even mentioning the countless number of adults he helped save over the same period of time.



The Strzelecki Statue, Jindabyne

Strzelecki's humanitarian work nearly cost him his life when he contracted typhoid fever, and it affected his health for the rest of his days. Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki's 'noblesse oblige' to Ireland should be remembered and honoured today and in the years to come, especially as there are many people today who would not be alive were it not for Sir Paul's humanitarian work in Ireland.

Footnotes

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