Famine Issue

THE LONDON TIMES

January 1847

POTATO BLIGHT IS A BLESSING TO BRITAIN

For our parts, we regard the potato blight as a blessing. When the Celts once cease to be potato eaters, they must become carnivorous. With the taste of meats will grow the appetite for them; with the appetite, the readiness to earn them. With this will come steadiness, regularity, and perseverance; unless, indeed, the growth of these qualities be impeded by the blindness of Irish patriotism, short-sighted indifference of petty landlords, or the random recklessness of Government benevolence. (*The Times*, September 1846)

THE WRETCHED, INDOLENT, HALF-STARVED IRISH

All knew that Irishmen could live upon anything and there was plenty grass in the field though the potato crop should fail.
(The Duke of Cambridge, from the minutes of the Agricultural Society, January 1846)

Before our merciful intervention, the Irish nation were a wretched, indolent, half-starved tribe of savages . . . notwithstanding a gradual improvement upon the naked savagery, they have never approached the standard of the civilized world.
(*The Times*, January 1847)

The land in Ireland is infinitely more peopled than in England; and to give full effect to the natural resources of the country, a great part of the population should be swept from the soil.
(Thomas Malthus, English economist, in a letter to David Ricardo,1817)

ENGLAND TO DELAY AID

There is such a tendency to exaggeration and inaccuracy in Irish reports that delay in acting on them is always desirable.
(Sir Robert Peele, prime minister of Great Britain, 1845)

I have always felt a certain horror of political economists since I heard one of them say he feared the famine . . . in Ireland would not kill more than a million people, and that would scarcely be enough to do any good.
(Benjamin Jowett, British economic adviser, 1848)



ON SALE JAN. 27, 2026

REPORTS FROM IRELAND REMAIN BLEAK

The children were like skeletons, their features sharpened with hunger and their limbs wasted, so that there was little left but bones . . . and the happy expression of infancy gone from their faces, leaving the anxious look of premature old age.
(William Forster, a Quaker, 1846)

A woman with a dead child in her arms was begging in the street yesterday and the Guard of the Mail told me he saw a man and three dead children lying by the roadside.
(Major Parker, relief inspector of the Board of Works, December 1846)

Families, when all was eaten and no hope left, took their last look at the sun, built up their cottage doors, that none might see them die nor hear their groans, and were found weeks afterwards, skeletons on their own hearth.
(Journal of John Mitchel, 1815–1875, Irish journalist and activist)

The stench was intolerable, and on my complaining of it the Mother pointed to . . . the putrid—the absolutely melted away remains of her eldest son. On inquiry why she did not bury . . . she waited till her other child would die, and they might bury both together.
(*The Telegraph*, Castlebar, County Mayo, February 1847)



James Mahoney, "Illustration of the Irish Potato Famine by James Mahoney, 1847.," Technohistory!