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What Is to be Done for Ireland?

The Irish scientist John Ball (1818–89), active in the study of natural history and glaciology, held fellowships of both the Royal Society and the Linnean Society. When the Irish Potato Famine took hold, Ball returned from European travel and study intent on helping his countrymen. In 1846 he became an assistant poor law commissioner, and witnessed the deepening crisis at first hand. The first edition of this pamphlet was published in 1847. Reissued here is the second edition of 1849, the year when Ball assumed the more senior office of second poor law commissioner. He uses the pamphlet to argue passionately for the urgent revision of government legislation relating to poor relief, the public works programme, land improvement, labour and taxation, which he felt had exacerbated matters. He also believed the famine had been forgotten by the English and calls for them to show more sympathy towards the Irish.

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