

Connemara Excursion 1852

*Four Days in Connemara.*

Sir. Digby Neave, Bart.

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Quicquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira voluptas,  
Gaudia, discursus, nostri est farrago libelli.

JUVEN. *Sat.* i. 85.

Prefatory Dedication.

It cannot be of the slightest interest to any who may cast their eyes over these pages, to learn the mental process, by which about the usual proportion of vanity, under the self-deceptive guise of good intentions, gradually wrought upon me, till order to pass the Rubicon was given by and to myself, and “faith, I’ll prent it” passed my lips in soliloquy.

I had calculated on having to prepare many letters of four closely written pages, and, as some were to cross the line,—with their lines crossed too (a blinding process, twice cursed—by him that writes and him that reads, thanks to the penny postage, now only worth the trouble of application to foreign correspondence) ; but so many recollections came importunately pressing for insertion, and claiming place in my budget, that I began to think of a few others whom I should like to make acquainted with my seeings and doings.

My excellent friend and travelling companion, Edward Penrhyn, in the years 1817 and 1818, has a right to know all the particulars; besides I long to be abused by Lady Charlotte for committing a pun in the course of my narrative. Our kind friend and excellent neighbour, Miss Trotter, is entitled to hear anything I may have to say of the well-doing of our Protestant churches, to which she has been so constant a benefactress ; and there is a reverend Master of his calling in Lancashire, whom I will not leave out, and others among my friends and neighbours must have copies privately printed for them ; but then neighbours expect neighbours’ fare.

In that dilemma the transition to publication was abrupt and certain, the disgust of a forced fishing circulation, obliging civil replies and partial judgments from my victims, being too great to endure. Publication, once resolved upon, I felt my best hope of pleasing would be by holding on to the robe of some, who had given more time and brought more ability to their task ; and with this view I have taken pains to insert in the form of notes some interesting matter. I have endeavoured to illustrate the subject-matter with anecdotes conveying a moral, and content with preserving continuity in the narrative, have been tempted away to great distances from the scene of my ramble.

Among the scraps gathered at the feasts of reason to which one has been bidden, or to which from time to time one has intruded oneself uninvited, are sure to be some morsels worth preserving. And if the desire of parading them is here and there transparent, I trust they may still be considered not to have been inappropriately woven into these pages ; and that a recurrence of feeling may excuse an occasional repetition of sentiment. Whatever opinion may be pronounced of my little volume, it must be severe to negative all the pleasure I have

had from the occupation, or the advantage, during an interval of suspense, of having withdrawn my mind from a dreary circle of apprehensive thoughts.

London,  
December, 1852.

Visit to Maynooth.—Bog of Allen.—Election Warfare.—Effects of Evictions.—Present and prospective conditions of Ireland.

JULY 1852. Landed at Kingstown. I turned towards the Wicklow Highlands, but a vivid oral description of Glendalough, the Seven Churches, and the Irish Towers, had the unexpected and contradictory effect of disposing me to visit scenes, which had not been so graphically portrayed to me, and of all places in the world, I found myself next day at Maynooth. This deviation from the western line was a partial failure. To be sure I saw the ruins of the Castle, and was for the first time personally introduced to the squalor of the Roman Catholic poor, reminding me forcibly of their fellow-martyrs abroad.

To do justice to Maynooth, I saw more rags there than I met with in the far west, where even rags are a scarce commodity ; but the main feature of the place was not to be inspected, for throughout the week “ the Praests,” as the porter informed me, “ were in rethrait.” Several hundreds assembled from the provinces were all in “ wrethtraight ;” I make another attempt at giving the porter’s pronunciation its due value.

The explanation given by a self-constituted Ciceronine was that the praests had two ounces of bread for breakfast, and were praying till supper-time. The version of one better informed, but of a different creed, was that they were met to report on the coercion, spiritually and physically exercised by them over their flocks for ecclesiastical and political purposes, during the late election. Whichever opinion is correct, the fact was undoubted, they were in retreat, and could only be seen by the stranger from the bridge. That distant point did not lend much enchantment to the view, though the sight of some students playing at fives helped to cheer it.

Rejoining the rail I passed a spot as familiar to my ear as Maynooth, the Bog of Allen, a designation common to the bogs of six contiguous counties. If any process can tame a bog, black or red, the last is the most irreclaimable ; it is the iron chain of railway connecting it with *terra firma*. I would not shrink from trying my hand on a *given* quantity so circumstanced ; it must be a moderate quantity, lest, like the rajah’s insidious gift of elephants to his rival, it prove ruinous ; but whether I would acquire a sequestered bog at an Encumbered Estate Court valuation, is another matter. Though flat, it has a mean elevation of 250 feet above the level of the sea ; the great canal which passes through it is about 270 feet above the tide level of Dublin Bay.

Remarking a blighted potato field, the sympathy of a fellow-traveller was interrupted by one, evidently hot from election warfare, observing moodily, “ And a good thing too ; they will not be able to use their sticks so handily the next election, and that will not be long first.”

A passing glance at Athlone gave rise to the remark, that less than one hundred votes returned the successful candidate. Can there have been fair play there ? This has subsequently been explained by the poll having been stopped by Mr. Lawes, but further explanation is wanted to show why the five members for Athlone, Cashel, Ennis, Mallow, and New Ross, collectively, could have been elected by 356 electors only, as named in a letter of the *Times* of August 9th. The writer, signing M. A., Lowestoft, August 6th, remarks, “ I do not know

whether, in all or any of these cases, the poll was brought to an untimely close by the resignation of one of the candidates, but if the above figures give us a fair specimen of the electoral force of these constituencies, I ask on which of the two grand principles, of intelligence or numbers, do they claim the right of sending members to the imperial Parliament ?”

I strained my neck to see the site of the far-famed fair at Ballinasloe. My visit to Connemara has since added to its importance in my eyes.

It is not necessary to spy the land to see its nakedness, it stares at one hideously, even within sight of the railway, in whose presence things in general are apt to put on their best looks. The cramped area on which the evicted lived is apparent from the dark green turf and shallow trench, marking the wall-line of the stacks of the levelled cabins. The primitive, or rather barbarous order of their architecture, is shown by the absence of any stones about them ; if any were used in the construction, they are now piled in the irregular walls, run up, not as I supposed to divide the fields, but to clear them.

A glance at these spots in passing, satisfied me, that little as is the space man wants below the sod, in his long home, it is almost as wide as that occupied by the cotter’s family during their earthly pilgrimage. Eviction, though it may be softened by transfer to other homes, must always be a heart-breaking process. Alas ! the throes of the new birth of Irish rural life, accompanied and followed as they have been by famine and pestilence, with cholera super-added, present to view an ordeal which, if it has had its parallels in Irish history, has never before been so painfully recorded. As the mode of existence so cut short is abject and hopeless in the extreme, it is consoling to think that one of the greatest of those obstructions is at length removed, which have hitherto opposed the approach of that good time, that civilized state of hopeful exertion and advancement, necessary to raise human creatures above the level of brute existence.

But it is not so easy to see any source of consolation either in retrospect or in prospect on view of the yawning stone-gables of well-constructed houses and premises, when the stone-chimney stands up alone and slates lie around, showing enough of comfort to have made a home—the capital which should have employed the poor scattered to the winds, or borne on their wings to a distant and better country. That there is on earth a better country than that which has England for its partner, is a humiliating thought indeed, but every patriotic Englishman will make all legislative, social, and charitable endeavours to induce the Irish to alter that verdict.

Irishmen, whatever their race, whatever their creed, should be disabused. Englishmen of this century will never admit the right of any one, however his veins may swell with the purest Celtic blood, to say that they have not near their hearts the welfare of their western sister, [1] whom God and nature have placed by each other’s side. They feel the tie formed by the Union to be as indissoluble as it is natural, and it is their hope and trust to make it as reciprocal as it is indissoluble. England desires the communication of *all* the liberty she herself enjoys and jealously guards, and it distresses her to see that the blessings of her high civilization (we should be unworthy of any one of them if we did not acknowledge them to be the greatest blessings), are not as frankly accepted by those who have the guidance of Ireland’s warm-hearted peasantry as they are honestly proffered.

I have given no prominent place to the lower considerations of monied interest, so well and so tersely put by the eloquent Mr. Wyndham, who, on a doubt being expressed as to whether Ireland would accept the Union, observed, “ Did you ever hear of a poor man refusing to enter into partnership with a banker of established reputation ;” but I look to that

interchange of charities and good will which neighbourhood should, and now is engendering for the commencement of a happier jubilee for Ireland than history has yet recorded.

A picture, feelingly drawn by a farmer, of the acme of misery another failure of the potato crop would bring with it, occupied my interest till I bethought me of the necessity of changing an English note before the Galway car started for Clifden. A frank offer of Irish notes, to our reciprocal convenience, from one who had not joined in conversation, relieved me very pleasantly, by showing confidence in an English stranger.

## II.

Expectation of Trans-Atlantic Traffic.—Sale of Encumbered Estates.—Reflections on Famine.—Irish Repartee.—Clifden Workhouse and Church. English Settlements.—Irish Heath. The Killaries.—Melwrea. Scenery of Beanabrack.

I was long enough in Galway to see among a motley crowd round the car, one woman with a decidedly Spanish cast of countenance, and admire the proportions and workmanship of the new hotel to be opened when the double line of rail is completed, showing how large and how confident are the expectations of trans-Atlantic traffic.

For a few miles out of Galway the sides of the road are well-planted, and the seats seem well-cared for. Loughcorrib occupied the middle distance, bordered by a petræan tract, on which the stones seem to have been hailed down. [2]

A purchaser of some lots of the O'Neil estate was on the car, and in a glow of anticipated enjoyment of a visit to his bargain, but he gradually lost much of his vivacity as the gardens showed the increasing ravages of the dread disease. The prospect of income from his new tenantry seemed to dissolve into a sombre vision of subscriptions, rates, rates in aid, and other out-goings. The thought of his fisheries, a green potato-bed, and a vague idea of supplying Billingsgate seemed to revive him. I had not the malice to show his hopes to be forlorn, by referring to the proceedings in Galway Bay, whereby it has been put to the proof that the Irish will not be made to fish, except in troubled waters.

With the famine fresh in my memory and its cause in active operation before my eyes, an instinctive sense of self-preservation turned my thoughts to the weak points of my own individual position as an Englishman, living in a peaceful and plentiful land of windmills. A horrid picture grew up before my mind's eye of what England, what the civilized world would become were it ever to be the will of Providence to visit the cereal crops as universally and severely. How sudden would be the relapse into barbarism ! how infernal the transition ! It was a thought which, like others that will not bear thinking of, haunted me. The thing that has been is the thing that may be ; and I have heard of the existence of a tablet at Naples, indicating that by such a visitation Etruria was obliterated from the list of Nations.

My day night-mare was driven away by a very opportune trait of Irish repartee ; a ragged fellow the coachman had good-naturedly suffered to ride on the luggage, being asked jeeringly how he found himself up there, treated us with, “ If the world frowns on me, the sun shines on me ;” and indeed the evening sun did shine beautifully, showing the curiously serrated edges of some of the Twelve Pins to perfection, and imprinting on my mind a lasting impression of the beauty of the Irish highlands.

On approaching Clifden, the workhouse stands out as a leading feature, but I am happy to say a church is rising on a still more commanding site, and it is to be hoped that soon the police-station will not remain a single specimen of planting and neatness.

Taking the road towards the Killaries, and not far from Ballinakill Harbour, several English settlements showed like oases in the waste. I fervently wished them the success they deserve ; what seems most necessary to success is, that others should follow their example.

Time must be allowed to capital to raise crops, not for market, but for rearing stock to walk there, for here, produce to fetch money must walk, and far beyond the district in which it is raised. Men were receiving ten pence and eight pence ; ten women in a turnip-field three pence a day, a sum in the aggregate, that never used to circulate in these townships, and a crop seldom before grown.

The foot of Mount Molage crosses the western end of Lough Kylemore ; a wooded steep on its north side above the road deserves mention for its effect in the landscape, as well as from its rarity in these parts, and last not least, for the splendid specimens of the true Irish heath growing rampantly over it. [3]

On the Killaries and the Twelve Pins wood is not much missed from the view ; beautiful clouds ever varying the lights and shadows on the jagged outlines against the sky, and over the cones and acclivities of mountains, of which the forms are in perfect keeping with the rugged and deeply indented coast.

Passing along the southern bank of Killary Harbour, to nearly its most inland extremity by Leenane, Melwrea, apparently the largest, as well as the loftiest of the Connaught range, loomed before me to its fullest height, from the harbour to the sky. I had no more than time to admire the scene, under a becoming veil of cloud, before the sun, a deep sense of whose especial favour to me during my ramble, will always remain “ charactered on the tablets of my memory,” lit up the face of the mountain, and piercing into the gorges and through the passes of Joyce’s country, played beautifully over the landscape.

Casting lingering looks back upon charms from which I was parting, only too hastily, I turned south, towards Lough Corrib, between secondary heights of much picturesque beauty, and reached Maum before sunset. The evening was still and serene, the reflection of sky and earth in the waters of the Beanabrack, more perfect than I had ever gazed upon in any latitude, in any season or hour. On the river with a party from the inn, I had the rare treat of having the exquisite scene before me, most musically, poetically, and faithfully described by a lady reciting the exquisite stanzas from “ Childe Harold ;” indeed, so beautiful were the atmospheric effects, that they could hardly have been described naturally, if not poetically :

“ The moon is up, and yet it is not night ;  
Sunset divides the sky with her : a sea  
Of glory streams along the Alpine height  
Of blue Friule’s mountains ; heaven is free  
From clouds, but, of all colours, seems to be  
Melted in one vast Iris of the west,  
Where the day joins the past eternity ;  
While, on the other hand, meek Dian’s crest  
Floats through the azure air, an island of the blest !

“ A single star is at her side, and reigns,  
With her, o’er half the lovely heaven ; but still  
Yon sunny sea heaves brightly, and remains  
Rolled o’er the peak of the fair Rhetian hill,  
As day and night contending were, until

Nature reclaimed her order. Gently flows  
The deep-dyed Brenta, where their hues instil  
The odorous purple of a new-born rose,  
Which streams upon her stream, and glassed within it  
glows.

“ Filled with the face of heaven, which, from afer,  
Comes down upon the waters ; all its hues.  
From the rich sunset to the rising star,  
Their magical variety diffuse ; '  
And now they change, a paler shadow strews  
A mantle o'er the mountains ; parting day  
Dies, like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues  
With a new colour, as it gasps away,  
The last still lovelier, till—'tis gone— and all is gray.”

### CHAPTER III.

Maum Turc.—A Cairn—Bed O' St. Patrick.— The Martain Domain.—Dreary Scenery.—The Bogs.—Suspicious looking Lough.—The Twelve Pins.—A Fair Mountaineer.—Frequency of Rain and Rainbows.

The next morning, after passing and re-passing in continual zigzag over the shallow bed of the Failmole, I at length gained a dilapidated mountain-road, across Maum Turc, through the south-western-most side of Joyce's country. Five or more miles of rough ascent through a gorge of alpine grandeur, brought me to the summit of the Pass of Main, [4] and in sight of a small Mountain Lough [5] of characteristic shadow and gloom, lying on the left, at the foot of a steep cliff, forming part of Mount Shanfoliglin. [6]

On the way-side is a Cairn, a heap of stones raised, where a coffin and its bearers (for in climbing such a steep, their efforts should be honourably mentioned) have rested on the way to interment. Good Roman Catholics contribute a stone, and say a prayer in passing. I have it on my conscience to have abstracted a specimen of quartz from it.

A rather cramped recess in the rock, called the Bed of St. Patrick, [7] would prove on the great and Catholic Saint [8] to have been of smaller stature, than the former inhabitants are said to have been famous for ; a race, as far as I saw, as extinct as the fossil elk. Hard by the bed, is a spring also bearing his name. Illicit whiskey has never been wanting in the mountains, to qualify its icy coldness.

From this point the block, as it were, of the Martin domain is overlooked ; its loughs and bogs occupying the middle distance ; the Isle of Arran rises on the southern horizon. In illustration of the opinion of the natives, as to the marketable value of the district then in view, on naming to the guide that a far-west property of great extent had lately been purchased for five shillings and sixpence an acre, pointing to the surface beneath, he said, “ That is not worth fifteen-pence, and it is much to say that a twentieth part has value for farming purposes.” [9]

If St. Patrick did really occupy his bed in the teeth of a south-wester, what wonder if he vented his spleen on the quarter from which it blew by condemning it to sterility.

The distribution of the mountains that here surrounded me, the wild gorge I had ascended, and the dreariness of the loughs rising from out the red bog I was looking down upon, made it a fitting scene for the journey of the fisherman in the “Arabian Nights,” who, after ascending a mountain with the elfrit he had liberated from the bottle, descended over a wild tract to a lake in the midst of four mountains from which the fish of four colours were to be drawn, and from under which the enchanted city was brought to light.

We know that vestiges of the dwellings as well as of the cultivation of past ages are found beneath the bogs. What may not now be unearthed by modern curiosity? and we must add modern capital; for if the new order of proprietor do break through the soft crust of the bog, they will most assuredly pay for peeping. Like the ashes over Pompeii, the bogs may be reserving an archaeological treat for us. Some of the old colleges, which in the fifth century sent out their three-hundred and fifty saints of the first class, [10] may have been as it were potted down, and destined again to flourish in rivalry of the “godless colleges;” it may then be tested whether like Peranzabuloe, the chapel in Cornwall, the churches of that date did contain the means and appliances for carrying out the ultra-montane encroachments on the simplicity of the worship of the early Christians. [11]

There was one so very suspicious looking a lough, that, though no fisherman myself, I longed to draw it for the mysterious fish. [12] It would be no easy matter to predicate their colours, but it is to be expected that their hues will have been changed with the latitude, and instead of white Muslims, blue Christians, red Magians, yellow Jews, they would here be found party-coloured. A Violent orange and an ultra-montane green would be anachronisms, but this much is certain, that the Christian blue would be neither ultra-marine nor ultra-montane.

As for Jews, [13] neither Jew nor gipsey, who might be supposed to take the place of Magians, [14] ever take root in Ireland.

I turned, at mid-descent, northward into the valley on my right, and the guide having gone in search of whiskey and milk, I threw myself on the sloping heather—behind me rose Maum Torc. Lougher, or the Ladies’ Pin, the least of the group of Benna Beola, was on my left; the foremost of the mighty Twelve, stood up from out of Lough Derryclare, and Lough Inagh before me. White clouds, moving over the bright azure of a noon-day sky, left me, now in light, to watch their overcast sides, now in welcome shade, to gaze on their sunlit cones; and, momentarily, alternating light and shade would be general over the landscape.

By degrees, a sense of uneasiness crept over me from the uninterrupted view of still life, uncheered by any thing animate.

No bell tinkled in the valley, there was no bleating on the hill-side, no pipe echoed through the rocks, no eagle screamed from the ridge, or careered over it; when the picture was suddenly lighted up by the presence of a fair mountaineer of pleasing form and native grace. As she stooped to offer me milk, a strong hope crossed my mind, that the insatiable New World, which cries to the Old, “Give, give!” and is never satisfied, would not root so fair a flower from its native hills.

It would be most unreasonable in a tourist basking in the sun, where there are fewer days without rain than in any other spot in the three kingdoms, [15] to lament the absence of phenomena attendant on rain. Those less favoured than I have been, may derive some compensating pleasure from witnessing the beauty and breadth of rainbows, of which a succession, sometimes as many as five in a day, evidence the humidity of the climate

and is peculiar to it. In short, as my guide said in passing through Connemara, you may now chance to see as many rainbows as cattle in a day's walk. [16]

Traversing the length of Lough Inagh, I passed between the north-western point of Maum Turc and Winteroun, and joining the Killary road, I gained the easternmost bank of Lough Kylemore, and retraced my steps to Clifden, in the first real rain that had fallen during my excursion.

[1] "Facies non omnibus una

Nee di versa tamen, qualem decet esse sororum."

[2] A traveller on an Irish car, with luggage piled up in the middle, has but a one-sided view of the country. I was on the favoured side, looking inland. The country on the left hand is well described by Mr. Inglis, except that at present there are neither herds nor herdsmen.

"Five or six miles from Galway I found myself leaving the flat country and getting among hills, low, however, and with no character but that of bleakness. These hills extend on the left as far as the sea bays, and are entirely uncultivated and uninhabited, except at particular seasons, when cattle from the low grounds are sent there to graze, under the charge of herds, who make their temporary homes among the hills."

[3] Sowerby's English Botany, vol. i. p. 35, 1790 ; *Erica Dabeoci*, Irish heath. That the knowledge of the Irish Flora was, at that date, very imperfect, would seem proved by Mr. Sowerby's remark : "Till lately, Ray had been supposed in error, when he described this plant as a native of Ireland."

[4] In Butler's "Lives of the Saints, vol.i. p. 353, I find the following :—Nennius, Abbot of Bangor, in 620, in his "History of the Britons," published by the learned Thomas Gale, says, "that St. Patrick took that name only when he was ordained bishop, being before called Main," which appears to be fair ground for the spelling I have adopted.

[5] Without a name even in the map of the Ordnance.

[6] Described in the Ordnance map, Leckanrea, 2003 feet above the sea, between Letterbreckaun, 2189, on the north and Leckanrea to the south.

[7] As St. Patrick continued his missions over Ireland for forty years, it is not so easy to verify the date of his occupation of any one bed ; but he most probably lodged there his way to the coast, when between sixteen and seventeen years of age (the smallness of the gît favouring the conjecture), and six months after first landing from his native country, during which interval he had been obliged to keep cattle in the forests, in hunger and nakedness, amidst snows, rain, and ice.

Dreaming that a ship was ready to receive him, and making for the distant coast, having no money, the sailors, in compassion, gave him his passage, and, after three days' sail, he reached Scotland. I have felt half inclined to set this down as an historical fact (see Butler's "Lives of the Saints," vol. i. p. 353), leaving future travellers to contradict it if they can ; but, at any rate, the probabilities are surely sufficient to justify future guides in doing so. How few of their stories rest on such good evidence !

In Nicholson's Irish historical library, amongst the works of St. Patrick, Mr. Stanihurst (Descrip. Hiber., cap. 7) reckons Octæporicon Hiberniæ, which means a journal of his own travels through the kingdom. So the above may some day be tested.

[8] Archbishop Usher has shown that the system of doctrines taught by Patrick, were free from the erroneous novelties of the church of Rome.—*Vide* Leland.

Again, in Nicholson's Irish Historical Library, p. 26, our oldest ecclesiastical canons, if genuine, must be those which Sir Henry Spelman has published, as the acts of two several synods, held by St. Patrick and his suffragans, 450 or 456 A.D. The thirty-four canons, of the first of these synods, which bears the name of the Saint and his two suffragans, he transcribed out of a faulty copy in the library of Bennet College, Cambridge, to which there is annexed a collection of Scripture rules, among the rest, the Ten Commandments entire,



even the second, drawn up by the said prelates.

[9] Arthur Young, vol. i. p. 337, says, “ The great tract of mountain is the three baronies of Eyre-Connaught, Ballinahinch, and Moycullen. They are forty miles long, and fifteen broad, and are, in general, uncultivated.” This was the state of the district in 1776. Speaking of Connemara, “ Mr. Martin has the largest tract ; he has left it to Mr. Popham ; 14,000 Irish acres for three lives, at no rent at all ; then three lives more, at 150*l.* a year, and, after them, for sixty years at the same rent. There is limestone-gravel upon part of the land, but not generally in Eyre-Connaught, any more than limestone, at least, according to common report.” The concluding observation indicates a lack of geological investigation in the far west, up to the date of his visit.

[10] *Britannia Sancta*, 1746. Part I., p. 181.

As to the other saints of Ireland, the disciples or successors of St. Patrick, the learned Usher in his “ *Antiquities of the British Churches*,” (473, 474), has published from two old manuscripts, an ancient catalogue, in which they are divided into three ranks or classes. The first class contains the saints who were contemporary with St. Patrick and his assistants in preaching the gospel ; these were in number three hundred and fifty, all illustrious and holy prelates, full of the spirit of God, and founders of the churches of God in Ireland, some of them being natives of the island, others Britons, Romans, or French. The saints of the second class came after the death of St. Patrick, being three hundred in number, some few of them bishops, the rest priests, who flourished during four reigns, and were chiefly the men who propagated monastic discipline and sacred learning among the Irish. These according to the catalogue learned their liturgy or order of the mass, from three British saints, St. David, St. Gildas, and St. Docas.

The saints of the third class, in number a hundred, were for the most part priests, and flourished also during four reigns down to the time of the great pestilence, living in deserts on herbs and roots, and leading most austere and abstracted lives. “ This last class,” says the catalogue, “ was holy, the second more holy, but the first most holy ;” which therefore this author compares to the sun, the second and third to the moon and stars.

It may be expected we should say something here of St. Patrick’s purgatory, of which some authors have written very wonderful things. But whatever it may have been heretofore, at present, as I have learnt from such as have been there in pilgrimage, it is remarkable for nothing else than its being a place for devotion, to which many resort to perform a nine days’ spiritual exercise, fasting all the day on bread and water which they take but once a day, lying on rushes or furze, performing daily their station round the island bare-foot, and after confession and communion, concluding all by watching twenty-four hours in prayer in St. Patrick’s cave, and as they hope by these exercises, performed in a penitential spirit, to purge away their sins, they give the place the name of St. Patrick’s Purgatory. The island lies in a lake called Lough Dearg, in the county of Donegal or Tyrconnel.

It was necessary to append the above extract in order to separate the genuine doctrine of the missionary and his coadjutors, from the corrupt backslidings of their successors. As sixty-two biographers wrote lives of St. Patrick, it may be expected that some heterodox matter may have crept in. With respect to the saints of the third class, a reference to the Synod of St. Patrick (p. 4, *Concilia Magnse Britannia et Hiberniae*) will show from the mouth of St. Patrick himself, how far they must have departed from the text of their great master, and will vindicate his memory from all association with the disgusting superstitions still carried on in his name at Lough Dearg, and so graphically given by Mr. Foster in a note to p. 82, in his “ *Letters on the Condition of the People of Ireland*.”

Canon of St. Patrick.—“ *De abstinentia ciborum. Abstinentia corporalium ciborum absque charitate inutilis est ; meliores sunt ergo qui non magno opere jejulant nec supra modum a creaturâ Dei se abstinent. Cor intrinsecus nitidum coram Deo sollicitè*

servantes, a quo sciunt exitum vitæ, quam illi qui carnem non edunt nec cibis secularibus delectantur ; neque vehiculis equisque vehuntur, et pro his quasi superiores cæteris se putantes quibus mors intrat per fenestras elevationis.”

[11] Page 146, Life of Archbishop Usher, 1625. In the words of Selden, Festo Avieno Insula sacra dicta Hibernia.

“ The Irish a people anciently, according to the name of Holy Island, given to Ireland, much devoted to, and, by the English, much respected, for their holiness and learning.”

[12] That eminent chemist, the late Professor Frederick Daniell, in experimenting on the composition of ice, had stopped the chemical mixture securely in a cast-iron bottle ; but alarmed at a fatal explosion which took place in a French theatre, full of students, during an exhibition of the same process, the Professor sank the bottle near Waterloo Bridge. It may, perchance, astound some future fishermen, like the elfrit escaping from the bottle.

[13] However, it may be named among the symptoms of a “ good time coming,” that Jews are looking in that direction.

[14] The district is not without its legendary tradition of enchanters. A writer in the “ Irish Penny Journal,” speaking of the castle of Caislean-na-circe, or the Hens’ Castle, situated on a low promontory on Lough Corrib, in the valley of Maum, observes, “ That an object so situated—leaving no accompaniments around, but those in keeping with it—should, in the fanciful traditions of an imaginative people, be deemed to have had a supernatural origin, is only what might have been naturally expected. And such, indeed, is the popular belief ; if we inquire of the peasantry its origin, or the origin of its name, the ready answer is given, that it was built by enchantment in one night, by a cock and hen grouse, who had been an Irish prince and princess.”

[15] The general elevation of rain-clouds appears to be from 600 to 2000 feet ; the detached mountain bosses of Ireland and the lowlands near are the wettest part of the country. The general amount of rain is in proportion to the quantity of vapour raised into the air, the direction in which the clouds are carried by prevailing winds, and the change in temperature necessary for its condensation.

But the climate of Ireland at all times is more tempered and modified by the influence of the prevailing warm westerly winds loaded with moisture ; they sweep over the land, producing cold damp summers and mild wet winters, and equalising the temperature of the different seasons to a remarkable degree. The difference of temperature of day and night on the sea-coast is comparatively little in winter.—Whitley, sec. 24.

[16] “ Irish Highlands,” by Blake.—With feelings of grateful recollection we may hail the repeated visits of this heavenly messenger, occasionally as much as five or six times a-day, in a country exposed to such astonishing and almost incessant floods of rains.

Four days in Connemara (1852)

Author : Neave, Sir Digby i.e. Richard Digby, 3rd bart., 1793-1868

Publisher : London, R. Bentley

Year : 1852

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : Google

Book from the collections of : New York Public Library

Collection : americana

Source : Internet Archive

<http://www.archive.org/details/fourdaysinconne00neavgoog>

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February 13 2012