

Connemara Sketch 1842

From Galway to Ballinahinch.

William Makepeace Thackeray

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TO
CHARLES LEVER, Esq.
OF TEMPLEOGUE HOUSE, NEAR DUBLIN.

MY DEAR LEVER,

HARRY LORREQUER needs no complimenting in a dedication; and I would not venture to inscribe this volume to the Editor of the "Dublin University Magazine," who, I fear, must disapprove of a great deal which it contains.

But allow me to dedicate my little book to a good Irishman (the hearty charity of whose visionary red-coats, some substantial personages in black might imitate to advantage), and to a friend from whom I have received a hundred acts of kindness and cordial hospitality.

Laying aside for a moment the travelling title of Mr. Titmarsh, let me acknowledge these favours in my own name, and subscribe myself, my dear Lever,

Most sincerely and gratefully yours,

W. M. THACKERAY.

LONDON, *April 27*, 1843.

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After leaving the quaint old town behind us, and ascending one or two small eminences to the north-westward, the traveller, from the car, gets a view of the wide sheet of Lough Corrib shining in the sun, as we saw it, with its low dark banks stretching round it. If the view is gloomy, at least it is characteristic : nor are we delayed by it very long ; for though the lake stretches northwards into the very midst of the Joyce country (and is there in the close neighbourhood of another huge lake, Lough Mask, which again is near to another sheet of water), yet from this road henceforth, after keeping company with it for some five miles, we only get occasional views of it, passing over hills and through trees, by many rivers and small lakes, which are dependent upon that of Corrib. Gentlemen's seats, on the road from Galway to Moycullen, are scattered in great profusion. Perhaps there is grass growing on the gravel-walk, and the iron gates of the tumble-down old lodges are rather rickety ; but, for all that, the places look comfortable, hospitable, and spacious. As for the shabbiness and want of finish here and there, the English eye grows quite accustomed to it in a month ; and I find the bad condition of the Galway houses by no means so painful as that of the places near Dublin. At some of the lodges, as we pass, the mail-carman, with a warning shout, flings a bag of letters. I saw a little party looking at one which lay there in the road crying, "Come take me !" but nobody cares to steal a bag of letters in this country, I suppose, and the carman drove on without any alarm. Two days afterwards a gentleman with whom I was in company left on a rock his book of fishing-flies ; and I can assure you there was a very different feeling expressed about the safety of *that*.

In the first part of the journey, the neighbourhood of the road seemed to be as populous as in other parts of the country ; troops of red-petticoated peasantry peering from their stone-cabins ; yelling children following the car, and crying, “ Lash, lash !” It was Sunday, and you would see many a white chapel among the green bare plains to the right of the road, the courtyard blackened with a swarm of cloaks. The service seems to continue (on the part of the people) all day. Troops of people issuing from the chapel met us at Moycullen ; and ten miles farther on, at Oughterard, their devotions did not yet seem to be concluded.

A more beautiful village can scarcely be seen than this. It stands upon Lough Corrib, the banks of which are here, for once at least, picturesque and romantic ; and a pretty river, the Feogh, comes rushing over rocks and by woods until it passes the town and meets the lake. Some pretty buildings in the village stand on each bank of this stream : a Roman Catholic chapel with a curate’s neat lodge ; a little church on one side of it, a fine court-house of grey stone on the other. And here it is that we get into the famous district of Connemara, so celebrated in Irish stories, so mysterious to the London tourist.

“ It presents itself,” says the Guide-book, “ under every possible combination of heathy moor, bog, lake, and mountain. Extensive mossy plains and wild pastoral valleys lie embosomed among the mountains, and support numerous herds of cattle and horses, for which the district has been long celebrated. These wild solitudes, which occupy by far the greater part of the centre of the county, are held by a hardy and ancient race of grazing farmers, who live in a very primitive state, and, generally speaking, till little beyond what supplies their immediate wants. For the first ten miles the country is comparatively open ; and the mountains on the left, which are not of great elevation, can be distinctly traced as they rise along the edge of the heathy plain.

“ Our road continues along the Feogh river, which expands itself into several considerable lakes, and at five miles from Oughterard we reach Lough Bofin, which the road also skirts. Passing in succession Lough-a-Preaghan, the lakes of Anderran and Shindella, at ten miles from Oughterard we reach Slyme and Lynn’s Inn, or Halfway House, which is near the shore of Loughonard. Now, as we advance towards the group of Binabola, or the Twelve Pins, the most gigantic scenery is displayed.”

But the best guide-book that ever was written cannot set the view before the mind’s eye of the reader, and I won’t attempt to pile up big words in place of these wild mountains, over which the clouds as they passed, or the sunshine as it went and came, cast every variety of tint, light and shadow ; nor can it be expected that long level sentences, however smooth and shining, can be made to pass as representations of those calm lakes by which we took our way. All one can do is to lay down the pen and ruminare, and cry, “ Beautiful !” once more : and to the reader say, “ Come and see !”

Wild and wide as the prospect around us is, it has somehow a kindly friendly look ; differing in this from the fierce loneliness of some similar scenes in Wales that I have viewed. Ragged women and children come out of rude stone-huts to see the car as it passes. But it is impossible for the pencil to give due raggedness to the rags, or to convey a certain picturesque mellowness of colour that the garments assume. The sexes, with regard to raiment, do not seem to be particular. There were many boys on the road in the national red petticoat, having no other covering for their lean brown legs. As for shoes, the women eschew them almost entirely ; and I saw a peasant trudging from mass in a handsome scarlet cloak, a fine blue-cloth gown, turned up to show a new lining of the same colour, and a petticoat quite white and neat—in a dress of which the cost must have been at least £10 ; and her husband walked in front carrying her shoes and stockings.

The road had conducted us for miles through the vast property of the gentleman to whose house I was bound, Mr. Martin, the Member for the county ; and the last and prettiest part of the journey was round the Lake of Ballinahinch, with tall mountains rising immediately above us on the right, pleasant woody hills on the opposite side of the lake, with the roofs of the houses rising above the trees ; and in an island in the midst of the water a ruined old castle cast a long white reflection into the blue waters where it lay. A land-pirate used to live in that castle, one of the peasants told me, in the time of “ Oliver Cromwell.” And a fine fastness it was for a robber, truly ; for there was no road through these wild countries in his time—nay, only thirty years since, this lake was at three days’ distance of Galway. Then comes the question, What, in a country where there were no roads and no travellers, and where the inhabitants have been wretchedly poor from time immemorial,—what was there for the land-pirate to rob ? But let us not be too curious about times so early as those of Oliver Cromwell. I have heard the name many times from the Irish peasant, who still has an awe of the grim resolute Protector.

The builder of Ballinahinch House has placed it to command a view of a pretty melancholy river that runs by it, through many green flats and picturesque rocky grounds ; but from the lake it is scarcely visible. And so, in like manner, I fear it must remain invisible to the reader too, with all its kind inmates, and frank cordial hospitality ; unless he may take a fancy to visit Galway himself, when, as I can vouch, a very small pretext will make him enjoy both.

It will, however, be only a small breach of confidence to say that the major-domo of the establishment (who has adopted accurately the voice and manner of his master with a severe dignity of his own which is quite original) ordered me on going to bed “ not to move in the morning till he called me,” at the same time expressing a hearty hope that I should “ want nothing more that evening.” Who would dare, after such peremptory orders, not to fall asleep immediately, and in this way secure the repose of Mr. J—n M—ll—y ?

There may be many comparisons drawn between English and Irish gentlemen’s houses ; but perhaps the most striking point of difference between the two is the immense following of the Irish house, such as would make an English housekeeper crazy almost. Three comfortable, well-clothed, good-humoured fellows walked down with me from the car, persisting in carrying one a bag, another a sketching-stool, and so on. Walking about the premises in the morning, sundry others were visible in the courtyard, and near the kitchen-door. In the grounds a gentleman, by name Mr. Marcus C—rr, began discoursing to me regarding the place, the planting, the fish, the grouse, and the Master ; being himself, doubtless, one of the irregulars of the house. As for maids, there were half-a-score of them skurrying about the house ; and I am not ashamed to confess that some of them were exceedingly good-looking. And if I might venture to say a word more, it would be respecting Connemara breakfasts : but this would be an entire and flagrant breach of confidence ; and, to be sure, the dinners were just as good.

One of the days of my three days’ visit was to be devoted to the lakes ; and as a party had been arranged for the second day after my arrival, I was glad to take advantage of the society of a gentleman staying in the house, and ride with him to the neighbouring town of Clifden.

The ride thither from Ballinahinch is surprisingly beautiful ; and as you ascend the high ground from the two or three rude stone-huts which face the entrance-gates of the house, there are views of the lakes and the surrounding country, which the best parts of Killarney do not surpass, I think ; although the Connemara lakes do not possess the advantage of wood which belongs to the famous Kerry landscape.

But the cultivation of the country is only in its infancy as yet, and it is easy to see how vast its resources are, and what capital and cultivation may do for it. In the green patches

among the rocks, and on the mountain-sides, wherever crops were grown, they flourished ; plenty of natural wood is springing up in various places ; and there is no end to what the planter may do and to what time and care may effect. The carriage-road to Clifden is but ten years old : as it has brought the means of communication into the country, the commerce will doubtless follow it ; and in fact, in going through the whole kingdom, one can't but be struck with the idea that not one-hundredth part of its capabilities are yet brought into action, or even known perhaps, and that by the easy and certain progress of time, Ireland will be poor Ireland no longer.

For instance, we rode by a vast green plain, skirting a lake and river, which is now useless almost for pasture, and which a little draining will convert into thousands of acres of rich productive land. Streams and falls of water dash by everywhere—they have only to utilise this water-power for mills and factories and hard by are some of the finest bays in the world, where ships can deliver and receive foreign and home produce. At Roundstone especially, where a little town has been erected, the bay is said to be unexampled for size, depth, and shelter ; and the Government is now, through the rocks and hills on their wild shore, cutting a coast-road to Bunown, the most westerly part of Connemara, whence there is another good road to Clifden. Among the charges which the “ Repealers” bring against the Union, they should include at least this : they would never have had these roads but for the Union : roads which are as much at the charge of the London taxpayer as of the most ill-used Milesian in Connaught.

A string of small lakes follow the road to Clifden, with mountains on the right of the traveller for the chief part of the way. A few figures at work in the bog-lands, a red petticoat passing here and there, a goat or two browsing among the stones, or a troop of ragged whitey-brown children who came out to gaze at the car, form the chief society on the road. The first house at the entrance to Clifden is a gigantic poor-house—tall, large, ugly, comfortable ; it commands the town, and looks almost as big as every one of the houses therein. The town itself is but of a few years' date, and seems to thrive in its small way. Clifden Castle is a fine chateau in the neighbourhood and belongs to another owner of immense lands in Galway Mr. D'Arcy.

Here a drive was proposed along the coast to Bunown, and I was glad to see some more of the country, and its character. Nothing can be wilder. We passed little lake after lake, lying a few furlongs inwards from the shore. There were rocks everywhere, some patches of cultivated land here and there, nor was there any want of inhabitants along this savage coast. There were numerous cottages, if cottages they may be called, and women, and, above all, children in plenty.

At length we came in sight of a half-built edifice which is approached by a rocky, dismal, grey road, guarded by two or three broken gates, against which rocks and stones were piled, which had to be removed to give an entrance to our car. The gates were closed so laboriously, I presume, to prevent the egress of a single black consumptive pig, far gone in the family way—a teeming skeleton—that was cropping the thin dry grass that grew upon a round hill which rises behind this most dismal castle of Bunown.

If the traveller only seeks for strange sights, this place will repay his curiosity. Such a dismal house is not to be seen in all England ; or, perhaps, such a dismal situation. The sea lies before and behind ; and on each side, likewise, are rocks and copper-coloured meadows, by which a few trees have made an attempt to grow. The owner of the house had, however, begun to add to it ; and there, unfinished, is a whole apparatus of turrets, and staring raw stone and mortar, and fresh ruinous carpenters' work. And then the courtyard ;—tumble-down outhouses, staring empty pointed windows, and new-smear'd plaster cracking from the walls—a black heap of turf, a mouldy pump, a wretched old coal-scuttle, emptily sunning

itself in the midst of this cheerful scene ! There was an old Gorgon who kept the place, and who was in perfect unison with it : Venus herself would become bearded, blear-eyed, and haggard if left to be the housekeeper of this dreary place.

In the house was a comfortable parlour, inhabited by the priest who had the painful charge of the district. Here were his books and his breviaries, his reading-desk with the cross engraved upon it, and his portrait of Daniel O'Connell the Liberator to grace the walls of his lonely cell. There was a dead crane hanging at the door on a gaff : his red fish-like eyes were staring open, and his eager grinning bill. A rifle-ball had passed through his body. And this was doubtless the only game about the place ; for we saw the sportsman who had killed the bird hunting vainly up the round hill for other food for powder. This gentleman had had good sport, he said, shooting seals upon a neighbouring island, four of which animals he had slain.

Mounting up the round hill, we had a view of the Sline Lights—the most westerly point in Ireland.

Here too was a ruined sort of summer-house, dedicated “ DEO HIBERNIÆ LIBERATORI.” When these lights were put up I am told the proprietor of Bunown was recommended to apply for compensation to Parliament, inasmuch as there would be no more *wrecks* on the coast : from which branch of commerce the inhabitants of the district used formerly to derive a considerable profit. Between these Sline Lights and America nothing lies but the Atlantic. It was beautifully blue and bright on this day, and the sky almost cloudless ; but I think the brightness only made the scene more dismal, it being of that order of beauties which cannot bear the full light, but require a cloud or a curtain to set them off to advantage. A pretty story was told me by the gentleman who had killed the seals. The place where he had been staying for sport was almost as lonely as this Bunown, and inhabited by a priest too a young, lively, well-educated man. “ When I came here first,” the priest said, “ *I cried for two days* .” but afterwards he grew to like the place exceedingly, his whole heart being directed towards it, his chapel, and his cure. Who would not honour such missionaries—the virtues they silently practise, and the doctrines they preach ? After hearing that story, I think Bunown looked not quite so dismal, as it is inhabited, they say, by such another character. What a pity it is that John Tuam, in the next county of Mayo, could not find such another hermitage to learn modesty in, and forget his Graceship, his Lordship, and the sham titles by which he sets such store.

A moon as round and bright as any moon that ever shone, and riding in a sky perfectly cloudless, gave us a good promise of a fine day for the morrow, which was to be devoted to the lakes in the neighbourhood of Ballinahinch : one of which, Lough Ina, is said to be of exceeding beauty. But no man can speculate upon Irish weather. I have seen a day beginning with torrents of rain that looked as if a deluge was at hand, clear up in a few minutes, without any reason, and against the prognostications of the glass and all other weather-prophets. So in like manner, after the astonishingly fine night, there came a villanous dark day : which, however, did not set in fairly for rain until we were an hour on our journey, with a couple of stout boatmen rowing us over Ballinahinch Lake. Being, however, thus fairly started, the water began to come down, not in torrents certainly, but in that steady, creeping, insinuating mist, of which we scarce know the luxury in England ; and which, I am bound to say, will wet a man's jacket as satisfactorily as a cataract would do.

It was just such another day as that of the famous stag-hunt at Killarney, in a word ; and as, in the first instance, we went to see the deer killed, and saw nothing thereof, so, in the second case, we went to see the landscape with precisely the same good fortune. The mountains covered their modest beauties in impenetrable veils of clouds ; and the only consolation to the boat's crew was, that it was a remarkably good day for trout-fishing— which amusement some people are said to prefer to the examination of landscapes, however beautiful.

Oh you who laboriously throw flies in English rivers, and catch, at the expiration of a hard day's walking, casting, and wading, two or three feeble little brown trouts of two or three ounces in weight, how would you rejoice to have but an hour's sport in Derryclear or Ballinahinch ; where you have but to cast, and lo ! a big trout springs at your fly, and, after making a vain struggling, splashing, and plunging for a while, is infallibly landed in the net and thence into the boat. The single rod in the boat caught enough fish in an hour to feast the crew, consisting of five persons, and the family of a herd of Mr. Martin's, who has a pretty cottage on Derryclear Lake, inhabited by a cow and its calf, a score of fowls, and I don't know how many sons and daughters.

Having caught enough trout to satisfy any moderate appetite, like true sportsmen the gentlemen on board our boat became eager to hook a salmon. Had they hooked a few salmon, no doubt they would have trolled for whales, or for a mermaid ; one of which finny beauties the waterman swore he had seen on the shore of Derryclear—he with Jim Mullen being above on a rock, the mermaid on the shore directly beneath them, visible to the middle, and as usual “ racking her hair.” It was fair hair, the boatman said ; and he appeared as convinced of the existence of the mermaid as he was of the trout just landed in the boat.

In regard of mermaids, there is a gentleman living near Killala Bay, whose name was mentioned to me, and who declares solemnly that one day, shooting on the sands there, he saw a mermaid, and determined to try her with a shot. So he drew the small charge from his gun and loaded it with ball that he always had by him for seal-shooting fired, and hit the mermaid through the breast. The screams and moans of the creature whose person he describes most accurately were the most horrible heartrending noises that he ever, he said, heard : and not only were they heard by him, but by the fishermen along the coast, who were furiously angry against Mr. A——n, because, they said, the injury done to the mermaid would cause her to drive all the fish away from the bay for years to come.

But we did not, to my disappointment, catch a glimpse of one of these interesting beings, nor of the great sea-horse which is said to inhabit these waters, nor of any fairies (of whom the stroke-oar, Mr. Marcus, told us not to speak, for they didn't like bein' spoken of) ; nor even of a salmon, though the fisherman produced the most tempting flies. The only animal of any size that was visible we saw while lying by a swift black river that comes jumping with innumerable little waves into Derryclear, and where the salmon are especially suffered to “ stand :” this animal was an eagle—a real wild eagle, with grey wings and a white head and belly : it swept round us, within gunshot reach, once or twice, through the laden sky, and then settled on a grey rock, and began to scream its shrill ghastly aquiline note.

The attempts on the salmon having failed, the rain continuing to fall steadily, the herd's cottage before named was resorted to : when Marcus, the boatman, commenced forthwith to gut the fish, and taking down some charred turf-ashes from the blazing fire, on which about a hundredweight of potatoes were boiling, he—Marcus—proceeded to grill on the floor some of the trout, which we afterwards ate with immeasurable satisfaction. They were such trouts as, when once tasted, remain for ever in the recollection of a commonly grateful mind—rich, flaky, creamy, full of flavour. A Parisian *gourmand* would have paid ten francs for the smallest *cooleen* among them ; and, when transported to his capital, how different in flavour would they have been !—how inferior to what they were as we devoured them, fresh from the fresh waters of the lake, and jerked as it were from the water to the gridiron ! The world had not had time to spoil those innocent beings before they were gobbled up with pepper and salt, and missed, no doubt, by their friends. I should like to know more of their “ *set*” But enough of this : my feelings overpower me : suffice it to say, they were red or salmon trouts—none of your white-fleshed brown-skinned river fellows.

When the gentlemen had finished their repast, the boatmen and the family set to work upon the potatoes, a number of the remaining fish, and a store of other good things ; then we all sat round the turf-fire in the dark cottage, the rain coming down steadily outside, and veiling everything except the shrubs and verdure immediately about the cottage. The herd, the herd's wife, and a nondescript female friend, two healthy young herdsmen in corduroy rags, the herdsman's daughter paddling about with bare feet, a stout black-eyed wench with her gown over her head, and a red petticoat not quite so good as new, the two boatmen, a badger just killed and turned inside out, the gentlemen, some hens cackling and flapping about among the rafters, a calf in a corner cropping green meat and occasionally visited by the cow her mamma, formed the society of the place. It was rather a strange picture ; but as for about two hours we sat there, and maintained an almost unbroken silence, and as there was no other amusement but to look at the rain, I began, after the enthusiasm of the first half-hour, to think that after all London was a bearable place, and that for want of a turf-fire and a bench in Connemara, one *might* put up with a sofa and a newspaper in Pall Mall.

This, however, is according to tastes ; and I must say that Mr. Marcus betrayed a most bitter contempt for all cockney tastes, awkwardness, and ignorance : and very right too. The night, on our return home, all of a sudden cleared ; but though the fishermen, much to my disgust—at the expression of which, however, the rascals only laughed—persisted in making more casts for trout, and trying back in the dark upon the spots which we had visited in the morning, it appeared the fish had been frightened off by the rain ; and the sportsmen met with such indifferent success that at about ten o'clock we found ourselves at Ballinahinch. Dinner was served at eleven ; and, I believe, there was some whisky-punch afterwards, recommended medicinally and to prevent the ill effects of the wetting : but that is neither here nor there.

Clifden to Westport.

ON leaving Ballinahinch (with sincere regret, as any lonely tourist may imagine, who is called upon to quit the hospitable friendliness of such a place and society), my way lay back to Clifden again, and thence through the Joyce country, by the Killery mountains, to Westport in Mayo. The road, amounting in all to four-and-forty Irish miles, is performed in cars, in different periods of time, according to your horse and your luck. Sometimes, both being bad, the traveller is two days on the road ; sometimes a dozen hours will suffice for the journey—which was the case with me, though I confess to having found the twelve hours long enough. After leaving Clifden, the friendly look of the country seemed to vanish ; and though picturesque enough, was a thought too wild and dismal for eyes accustomed to admire a hop-garden in Kent, or a view of rich meadows in Surrey, with a clump of trees and a comfortable village spire. “ Inglis,” the Guide-book says, “ compares the scenes to the Norwegian Fiords.” Well, the Norwegian Fiords must, in this case, be very dismal sights ; and I own that the wildness of Hampstead Heath (with the imposing walls of “ Jack Straws Castle” rising stern in the midst of the green wilderness) is more to my taste than the general views of yesterday.

We skirted by lake after lake, lying lonely in the midst of lonely boglands, or bathing the sides of mountains robed in sombre rifle green . Two or three men, and as many huts, you see in the course of each mile perhaps, as toiling up the bleak hills, or jingling more rapidly down them, you pass through this sad region. In the midst of the wilderness a chapel stands here and there, solitary, on the hillside ; or a ruinous useless school-house, its pale walls contrasting with the general surrounding hue of sombre purple and green. But though the country looks more dismal than Connemara, it is clearly more fertile : we passed miles of ground that evidently wanted but little cultivation to make them profitable ; and along the mountain-sides, in many places, and over a great extent of Mr. Blake's country especially, the hills were covered with a thick natural plantation, that may yield a little brushwood now, but might in

fifty years' time bring thousands of pounds of revenue to the descendants of the Blakes. This spectacle of a country going to waste is enough to make the cheerfullest landscape look dismal : it gives this wild district a woful look indeed. The names of the lakes by which we came I noted down in a pocket-book as we passed along : but the names were Irish, the car was rattling, and the only name readable in the catalogue is Letterfrack.

The little hamlet of Leenane is at twenty miles' distance from Clifden ; and to arrive at it, you skirt the mountain along one side of a vast pass, through which the ocean runs from Killery Bay, separating the mountains of Mayo from the mountains of Galway. Nothing can be more grand and gloomy than this pass ; and as for the character of the scenery, it must, as the Guide-book says, " be seen to be understood." Meanwhile, let the reader imagine huge dark mountains in their accustomed livery of purple and green, a dull grey sky above them, an estuary silver-bright below : in the water lies a fisherman's boat or two ; a pair of seagulls undulating with the little waves of the water ; a pair of curlews wheeling overhead and piping on the wing ; and on the hillside a jingling car, with a cockney in it, oppressed by and yet admiring all these things. Many a sketcher and tourist, as I found, has visited this picturesque spot : for the hostess of the inn had stories of English and American painters, and of illustrious book-writers, too, travelling in the service of our Lords of Paternoster Row.

The landlord's son of Clifden, a very intelligent young fellow, was here exchanged for a new carman in the person of a raw Irishman of twenty years of age, " having" little English, and dressed in that very pair of pantaloons which Humphrey Clinker was compelled to cast off some years since on account of the offence which they gave to Mrs. Tabitha Bramble. This fellow, emerging from among the boats, went off to a field to seek for the black horse, which the landlady assured me was quite fresh and had not been out all day, and would carry me to Westport in three hours. Meanwhile I was lodged in a neat little parlour, surveying the Mayo side of the water, with some cultivated fields and a show of a village at the spot where the estuary ends, and above them lodges and fine dark plantations climbing over the dark hills that lead to Lord Sligo's seat of Delphi. Presently, with a curtsy, came a young woman who sold worsted socks at a shilling a pair.

It required no small pains to entice this rustic beauty to stand while a sketch should be made of her. Nor did any compliments or cajolements, on my part or the landlady's, bring about the matter: it was not until money was offered that the lovely creature consented. I offered (such is the ardour of the real artist) either to give her sixpence, or to purchase two pairs of her socks, if she would stand still for five minutes. On which she said she would prefer selling the socks. Then she stood still for a moment in the corner of the room ; then she turned her face towards the corner and the other part of her person towards the artist, and exclaimed in that attitude, " I must have a shilling more." Then I told her to go to the deuce. Then she made a proposition, involving the stockings and sixpence, which was similarly rejected ; and, finally, this splendid design was completed at the price first stated.

However, as we went off, this timid little dove barred the door for a moment, and said that " I ought to give her another shilling ; that a gentleman would give her another shilling," and so on. She might have trod the London streets for ten years and not have been more impudent and more greedy.

By this time the famous fresh horse was produced, and the driver, by means of a wrap-rascal, had covered a great part of the rags of his lower garment. He carried a whip and a stick, the former lying across his knees ornamentally, the latter being for service ; and as his feet were directly under the horse's tail, he had full command of the brute's back, and belaboured it for six hours without ceasing.

What little English the fellow knew he uttered with a howling into my ear answers—which, for the most part, were wrong—to various questions put to him. The lad's voice was so hideous, that I asked him if he could sing ; on which forthwith he began yelling a most horrible Irish ditty—of which he told me the title, that I have forgotten. He sang three stanzas, certainly keeping a kind of tune, and the latter lines of each verse were in rhyme ; but when I asked him the meaning of the song, he only roared out its Irish title.

On questioning the driver further, it turned out that the horse, warranted fresh, had already performed a journey of eighteen miles that morning, and the consequence was, that I had full leisure to survey the country through which we passed. There were more lakes, more mountains, more bog, and an excellent road through this lonely district, though few only of the human race enlivened it. At ten miles from Leenane, we stopped at a roadside hut, where the driver pulled out a bag of oats, and borrowing an iron pot from the good people, half filled it with corn, which the poor tired, galled, bewhipped black horse began eagerly to devour. The young charioteer himself hinted very broadly his desire for a glass of whisky, which was the only kind of refreshment that this remote house of entertainment supplied.

In the various cabins I have entered, I have found talking a vain matter ; the people are suspicious of the stranger within their wretched gates, and are shy, sly, and silent. I have, commonly, only been able to get half-answers in reply to my questions, given in a manner that seemed plainly to intimate that the visit was unwelcome. In this rude hostel, however, the landlord was a little less reserved, offered a seat at the turf-fire, where a painter might have had a good subject for his skill. There was no chimney, but a hole in the roof, up which a small portion of the smoke ascended (the rest preferring an egress by the door, or else to remain in the apartment altogether) ; and this light from above lighted up as rude a set of figures as ever were seen. There were two brown women with black eyes and locks, the one knitting stockings on the floor, the other “ racking ” (with that natural comb which five horny fingers supply) the elf-locks of a dirty urchin between her knees. An idle fellow was smoking his pipe by the fire ; and by his side sat a stranger, who had been made welcome to the shelter of the place a sickly well-looking man, whom I mistook for a deserter at first, for he had evidently been a soldier.

But there was nothing so romantic as desertion in his history. He had been in the Dragoons, but his mother had purchased his discharge : he was married, and had lived comfortably in Cork for some time, in the glass-blowing business. Trade failing at Cork, he had gone to Belfast to seek for work. There was no work at Belfast ; and he was so far on his road home again : sick, without a penny in the world, a hundred and fifty miles to travel, and a starving wife and children to receive him at his journey's end. He had been thrown off a caravan that day, and had almost broken his back in the fall. Here was a cheering story ! I wonder where he is now : how far has the poor starving lonely man advanced over that weary desolate road, that in good health, and with a horse to carry me, I thought it a penalty to cross ? What would one do under such circumstances, with solitude and hunger for present company, despair and starvation at the end of the vista ? There are a score of lonely lakes along the road which he has to pass : would it be well to stop at one of them, and fling into it the wretched load of cares which that poor broken back has to carry ? Would the world he would light on *then* be worse for him than that he is pining in now ? Heaven help us ! and on this very day, throughout the three kingdoms, there are a million such stories to be told ! Who dare doubt of heaven after that ? of a place where there is at last a welcome to the heart-stricken prodigal and a happy home to the wretched ?

The crumbs of oats which fell from the mouth of the feasting Dives of a horse were battled for outside the door by a dozen Lazaruses in the shape of fowls ; and a lanky young pig, who had been grunting in an old chest in the cabin, or in a miserable recess of huddled rags and straw which formed the couch of the family, presently came out and drove the poultry away,

picking up, with great accuracy, the solitary grains lying about, and more than once trying to shove his snout into the corn-pot, and share with the wretched old galled horse. Whether it was that he was refreshed by his meal, or that the car-boy was invigorated by his glass of whisky, or inflamed by the sight of eighteenpence—which munificent sum was tendered to the soldier—I don't know ; but the remaining eight miles of the journey were got over in much quicker time, although the road was exceedingly bad and hilly for the greatest part of the way to Westport. However, by running up the hills at the pony's side, the animal, fired with emulation, trotted up them too—descending them with the proverbial surefootedness of his race, the car and he bouncing over the rocks and stones at the rate of at least four Irish miles an hour.

At about five miles from Westport the cultivation became much more frequent. There were plantations upon the hills, yellow corn and potatoes in plenty in the fields, and houses thickly scattered. We had the satisfaction, too, of knowing that future tourists will have an excellent road to travel over in this district : for by the side of the old road, which runs up and down a hundred little rocky steps, according to the ancient plan, you see a new one running for several miles, the latter way being conducted, not over the hills, but around them, and, considering the circumstances of the country, extremely broad and even. The car-boy presently yelled out “ REEK, REEK !” with a shriek perfectly appalling. This howl was to signify that we were in sight of that famous conical mountain so named, and from which St. Patrick, after inveigling thither all the venomous reptiles in Ireland, precipitated the whole noisome race into Clew Bay. The road also for several miles was covered with people, who were flocking in hundreds from Westport market, in cars and carts, on horseback single and double, and on foot.

And presently, from an eminence, I caught sight not only of a fine view, but of the most beautiful view I ever saw in the world, I think ; and to enjoy the splendour of which I would travel a hundred miles in that car with that very horse and driver. The sun was just about to set, and the country round about and to the east was almost in twilight. The mountains were tumbled about in a thousand fantastic ways, and swarming with people. Trees, cornfields, cottages, made the scene indescribably cheerful ; noble woods stretched towards the sea, and abutting on them, between two highlands, lay the smoking town. Hard by was a large Gothic building—it is but a poorhouse ; but it looked like a grand castle in the grey evening. But the Bay—and the Reek which sweeps down to the sea and a hundred islands in it, were dressed up in gold and purple and crimson, with the whole cloudy west in a flame. Wonderful, wonderful ! . . . The valleys in the road to Leenane have lost all glimpses of the sun ere this ; and I suppose there is not a soul to be seen in the black landscape, or by the shores of the ghastly lakes, where the poor glass-blower from the whisky-shop is faintly travelling now.

Westport.

NATURE has done much for this pretty town of Westport ; and after Nature, the traveller ought to be thankful to Lord Sligo, who has done a great deal too. In the first place, he has established one of the prettiest, comfortablest inns in Ireland, in the best part of his little town, stocking the cellars with good wines, filling the house with neat furniture, and lending, it is said, the whole to a landlord gratis, on condition that he should keep the house warm, and furnish the larder, and entertain the traveller. Secondly, Lord Sligo has given up, for the use of the townspeople, a beautiful little pleasure-ground about his house.

“ You may depend upon it,” said a Scotchman at the inn, “ that they've right of pathway through the grounds, and that the marquess couldn't shut them out.” Which is a pretty fair specimen of charity in this world—this kind world, that is always ready to encourage and applaud good actions, and find good motives for the same. I wonder how much would induce that Scotsman to allow poor people to walk in *his* park if he had one 1

In the midst of this pleasure-ground, and surrounded by a thousand fine trees, dressed up in all sorts of verdure, stands a pretty little church ! paths through the wood lead pleasantly down to the bay ; and, as we walked down to it on the day after our arrival, one of the green fields was suddenly black with rooks, making a huge cawing and clanging as they settled down to feed. The house, a handsome massive structure, must command noble views of the bay, over which all the colours of Titian were spread as the sun set behind its purple islands.

Printer's ink will not give these wonderful hues ; and the reader will make his picture at his leisure. That conical mountain to the left is Croaghpatrick : it is clothed in the most magnificent violet colour, and a couple of round clouds were exploding as it were from the summit, that part of them towards the sea lighted up with the most delicate gold and rose colour. In the centre is the Clare island, of which the edges were bright cobalt, whilst the middle was lighted up with a brilliant scarlet tinge, such as I would have laughed at in a picture) never having seen in nature before, but looked at now with wonder and pleasure until the hue disappeared as the sun went away. The islands in the bay (which was of a gold colour) looked like so many dolphins and whales basking there. The rich park-woods stretched down to the shore ; and the immediate foreground consisted of a yellow cornfield, whereon stood innumerable shocks of corn, casting immense long purple shadows over the stubble. The farmer, with some little ones about him, was superintending his reapers ; and I heard him say to a little girl, " Norey, I love you the best of all my children !"

Presently, one of the reapers coming up, says, " It's always the custom in these parts to ask strange gentlemen to give something to drink the first day of reaping ; and we'd like to drink your honour's health in a bowl of coffee." *O fortunatos nimium !* The cockney takes out six-pence, and thinks that he never passed such a pleasant half-hour in all his life as in that corn-field, looking at that wonderful bay.

A car which I had ordered presently joined me from the town, and going down a green lane very like England, and across a causeway near a building where the carman proposed to show me " me Lard's caffin that he brought from Rome, and a mighty big caffin entirely," we came close upon the water and the port. There was a long handsome pier (which, no doubt, remains at this present minute), and one solitary cutter lying alongside it ; which may or may not be there now. There were about three boats lying near the cutter, and six sailors with long shadows, lolling about the pier. As for the warehouses, they are enormous ; and might accommodate, I should think, not only the trade of Westport, but of Manchester too. There are huge streets of these houses, ten stories high, with cranes, owners' names, &c., marked Wine Stores, Flour Stores, Bonded Tobacco Warehouses, and so forth. The six sailors that were singing on the pier no doubt are each admirals of as many fleets of a hundred sail that bring wines and tobacco from all quarters of the world to fill these enormous warehouses. These dismal mausoleums, as vast as pyramids, are the places where the dead trade of Westport lies buried—a trade that, in its lifetime, probably was about as big as a mouse. Nor is this the first nor the hundredth place to be seen in this country, which sanguine builders have erected to accommodate an imaginary commerce. Mill-owners over-mill themselves, merchants over-warehouse themselves, squires over-castle themselves, little tradesmen about Dublin and the cities over-villa and over-gig themselves, and we hear sad tales about hereditary bondage and the accursed tyranny of England.

Passing out of this dreary pseudo-commercial port, the road lay along the beautiful shores of Clew Bay, adorned with many a rickety villa and pleasure-house, from the cracked windows of which may be seen one of the noblest views in the world. One of the villas the guide pointed out with peculiar exultation : it is called by a grand name—Waterloo Park, and has a lodge, and a gate, and a field of a couple of acres, and belongs to a young gentleman who, being able to write Waterloo Park on his card, succeeded in carrying off a young London heiress with a hundred thousand pounds. The young couple had just arrived, and one

of them must have been rather astonished, no doubt, at the " park. " But what will not love do ? With love and a hundred thousand pounds, a cottage may be made to look like a castle, and a park of two acres may be brought to extend for a mile. The night began now to fall, wrapping up in a sober grey livery the bay and mountains, which had just been so gorgeous in sunset ; and we turned our backs presently upon the bay, and the villas with the cracked windows, and scaling a road of perpetual ups and downs, went back to Westport. On the way was a pretty cemetery, lying on each side of the road, with a ruined chapel for the ornament of one division, a holy well for the other. In the holy well lives a sacred trout, whom sick people come to consult, and who operates great cures in the neighbourhood. If the patient sees the trout floating on his back, he dies ; if on his belly, he lives ; or *vice versa*. The little spot is old, ivy-grown, and picturesque, and I can't fancy a better place for a pilgrim to kneel and say his beads at.

But considering the whole country goes to mass, and that the priests can govern it as they will, teaching what shall be believed and what shall be not credited, would it not be well for their reverences, in the year eighteen hundred and forty-two, to discourage these absurd lies and superstitions, and teach some simple truths to their flock ? Leave such figments to magazine-writers and ballad-makers ; but, *corbleu !* it makes one indignant to think that people in the United Kingdom, where a press is at work, and good sense is abroad, and clergymen are eager to educate the people, should countenance such savage superstitions and silly grovelling heathenisms.

The chapel is before the inn where I resided, and on Sunday, from a very early hour, the side of the street was thronged with worshippers, who came to attend the various services. Nor are the Catholics the only devout people of this remote district. There is a large Presbyterian church very well attended, as was the Established Church service in the pretty church in the park. There was no organ, but the clerk and a choir of children sang hymns sweetly and truly ; and a charity sermon being preached for the benefit of the diocesan schools, I saw many pound-notes in the plate, showing that the Protestants here were as ardent as their Roman Catholic brethren. The sermon was extempore, as usual, according to the prevailing taste here. The preacher, by putting aside his sermon-book, may gain in warmth, which we don't want, but lose in reason, which we do. If I were Defender of the Faith, I would issue an order to all priests and deacons to take to the book again ; weighing well, before they uttered it, every word they proposed to say upon so great a subject as that of religion ; and mistrusting that dangerous facility given by active jaws and a hot imagination. Reverend divines have adopted this habit, and keep us for an hour listening to what might well be told in ten minutes. They are wondrously fluent, considering all things; and though I have heard many a sentence begun whereof the speaker did not evidently know the conclusion, yet, somehow or other, he has always managed to get through the paragraph without any hiatus, except perhaps in the sense. And as far as I can remark, it is not calm, plain, downright preachers who preserve the extemporaneous system for the most part, but pompous orators indulging in all the cheap graces of rhetoric—exaggerating words and feelings to make effect, and dealing in pious caricature. Church-goers become excited by this loud talk and captivating manner, and can't go back afterwards to a sober discourse read out of a grave old sermon-book, appealing to the reason and the gentle feelings instead of to the passions and the imagination. Beware of too much talk, O parsons ! If a man is to give an account of every idle word he utters, for what a number of such loud nothings, windy emphatic tropes and metaphors, spoken, not for God's glory, but the preacher's, will many a cushion-thumper have to answer ! And this rebuke may properly find a place here, because the clergymen by whose discourse it was elicited is not of the eloquent dramatic sort, but a gentleman, it is said, remarkable for old-fashioned learning and quiet habits that do not seem to be to the taste of the many boisterous young clergy of the present day.

The Catholic chapel was built before their graces the most reverend lord archbishops came into fashion. It is large and gloomy, with one or two attempts at ornament by way of pictures at the altars, and a good inscription warning the incomer, in a few bold words, of the sacredness of the place he stands in. Bare feet bore away thousands of people who came to pray there ; there were numbers of smart equipages for the richer Protestant congregation. Strolling about the town in the balmy summer evening, I heard the sweet tones of a hymn from the people in the Presbyterian praying-house. Indeed, the country is full of piety, and a warm, sincere, undoubting devotion.

On week-days the street before the chapel is scarcely less crowded than on the Sabbath : but it is with women and children merely ; for a stream bordered with lime-trees runs pleasantly down the street, and hither come innumerable girls to wash, while the children make dirt-pies and look on. Wilkie was here some years since, and the place affords a great deal of amusement to the painter of character. Sketching, *tant bien que mal*, the bridge and the trees, and some of the nymphs engaged in the stream, the writer became an object of no small attention ; and at least a score of dirty brats left their dirt-pies to look on, the bare-legged washing-girls grinning from the water.

One, a regular rustic beauty, whose face and figure would have made the fortune of a frontispiece, seemed particularly amused and *agaçante* ; and I walked round to get a drawing of her fresh jolly face : but directly I came near she pulled her gown over her head, and resolutely turned her back ; and, as that part of her person did not seem to differ in character from the backs of the rest of Europe, there is no need of taking its likeness.

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The Guide-book will inform the traveller of many a beautiful spot which lies in the neighbourhood of Westport, and which I had not the time to visit ; but I must not take leave of the excellent little inn without speaking once more of its extreme comfort ; nor of the place itself, without another parting word regarding its beauty. It forms an event in one's life to have seen that place, so beautiful is it, and so unlike all other beauties that I know of. Were such beauties lying upon English shores it would be a world's wonder : perhaps, if it were on the Mediterranean, or the Baltic, English travellers would flock to it by hundreds ; why not come and see it in Ireland ? Remote as the spot is, Westport is only two days' journey from London now, and lies in a country far more strange to most travellers than France or Germany can be.

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