

From A Far Country - 1844-1845

Asenath Nicholson

*Ireland's welcome to the stranger, or, An excursion through Ireland, in 1844 & 1845*

1847

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Visit to the Schools at the Colony—Walk to the Keem Mountains—A Centenarian—The Amethyst Quarries—The Author's Acknowledgments and Censures Explained—Mr. Nangle's Weekday Lecture—Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Nangle—Doctrinal Conversion is not all that is due to the Convert from Popery—A Reformed Roman Catholic Priest—Renewed Hospitality at the Sound—Another Short Visit to the Colony—Newport—Intemperance not Banished from the County of Mayo—Westport—Castlebar—Sligo—A Beautiful Gem—Hospitality in Death—Picturesque Scenery of the County of Sligo—Return to Dublin—The Mendicity Association.

Meeting the good Dr. Adains near his own door, I inquired if they had no better accommodations in the colony than those which had been served up to me the preceding night ; that I regretted that they had no more *self-respect* than to send a stranger there, even if they had no Bible knowledge of the claims of a stranger. I then asked if I could buy a piece of bread in the place, and was answered “ Not any.” To do justice to the doctor, he said to the friend at whose house I dined the preceding day, that a comfortable place should have been provided for me to lodge ; and *I* should not have been shocked at his Christian benevolence had he given me a breakfast at his own table. A third, who was standing by, said, “ Mrs. Barrett has occasionally sold it ;” and the other then kindly invited me to his house for a breakfast ; but as there was a little probability of getting bread at Mrs. Barrett's, and the kind man had given me a dinner the day before, I declined, went to Mrs. Barrett's, and not only bought a roll and got a breakfast at two o'clock, but was offered a decent bed in a snug little room without charges, and their kindness never abated while I was in Achill. After breakfast I visited the infant-school. The children, who were orphans, were tolerable in appearance, though the dresses of some needed a little repairing ; and their inattention to their lessons was in agreement with the management of the teacher, who certainly did not take her diploma in the University at Glengariff, where the school dame said, “ I teaches sewing, ma'am, and they gets along finely,” for there she would have been instructed to offer strangers a seat, and to treat them with a little civility. I next visited the female-school, taught by a young lady from Dublin ; the room was cleanly, the scholars the same, and the writing, which was all I saw, commendably done, and the teacher somewhat civil. I then entered the school for boys ; they were reading a chapter in Acts, and the teacher requested me to examine them. I did so ; they answered well, and evinced good training, and the teacher showed that he was not afraid to be decently courteous. I now felt myself rising a little in the scale of respectability by these three steps of regular advance, and returned quite satisfied with my afternoon's visit. Mr. Barrett requested me to give him any letters of introduction I might have, as he wished to show them to Mr. Nangle. I had one from a Protestant clergyman in New York to a gentleman of respectability in England, a friend of Mr. Nangle's. I had a second from good authority, who was an Editor of a Christian paper, and a small religious manuscript, which I thought of getting printed : these I sent, accompanied by a note, that I would call when I returned from an excursion to the other side of the island in a day or two.

A laboring man belonging to the colony called in the evening, and hearing that I wished to visit the Keem mountains, offered to send his daughter as a guide, adding, “ You are not to pay her. I know what it is to be a stranger ; you have come a great distance to see our country, and we should be more than brutes not to treat you well.” This was a mollifying ointment indeed ; and the next morning the cleanly little miss was at the door ; we had not proceeded far,

when the father joined us, saying, "I was afraid my little gal wouldn't rightly understand your accent, and wouldn't well show you what you want to see, and I thought I had better follow you."

Here was an industrious tradesman, having half-a-crown a day for labor, leaving this, and saying at the onset he would not take a farthing. He took me through an ancient village, built after the manner of the huts where I lodged above the colony, with no roads but foot-paths ; and the village being large, we were long in making our way through. As we entered, a ragged man was sitting on the top of his hut, with a company of as ragged children, sunning themselves ; and seeing a stranger, he rose, and saluted the man in Irish, asking who I was, and what was my country. When he was told he cried out, "Welcome, welcome to Ireland, twice welcome." His children then all echoed the same. I turned over the wall, and gave them my hand, and as well as I could returned them my thanks. Never could be seen a more miserable group, and never was more kind-heartedness shown. As we passed on, the whole hamlet was in motion ; those not in the way managed to put themselves there. The kind salutations, the desire to know everything about America, and the fear that I was hungry, almost overpowered me. One old woman, who with her fingers told me she was three score and fifteen, whose teeth were all sound, and her cheeks yet red, approached, put her hand upon my stomach, made a sorrowing face, and said in Irish, "She is hungry ; the stranger is hungry." We were so delayed that we feared we should be limited in time, and we hurried on a couple of miles to another village of the same description, though not so much inhabited, being used by the inhabitants of the first as a kind of country-seat, common stock of all who assemble their cattle and sheep, to drive them upon the mountain for pasturage, to fatten them at a favorable season of the year. There were but a few now in it ; but walking by a number of deserted huts, we came to one where sat an old woman and her two married daughters, by the sunny side of the hut. Asking the old lady her age, she put up her fingers, and counted five score ; she asked for a penny, then prayed for me in Irish, and I asked her if she wished to live any longer ? "As long as God wishes me," was the answer. "Do you expect to go to heaven?" "By God's grace I do." What could be more consistent, if she understood the import. Keem was now near. This mountain descends many hundred feet, nearly perpendicular, to the sea, through which is made a road about midway, and the pedestrian may look up to the top of the dizzy height, or down in the yawning abyss, as his nerves may best serve him.

Government has here made a good road, for the sole purpose of giving strangers, as well as countrymen, the privilege of walking through, and looking upon the grand height, and visiting the diamond quarry of amethysts which have been turned to very profitable account by many foreign travellers. I gathered a few, and while standing there, a native from a village of the same description of that just passed, offered a splendid specimen of the stone for a few shillings, which I foolishly refused, not then knowing its value. I shall not soil Mrs. Hall's pretty sketch of this mountain and sea-view by attempting a description, but refer the reader to the description itself, and return back to the town, as a four-mile walk is before us. On our return we meet the old woman of five score, with a load of turf upon her back, which would have done credit to the strength of a woman of sixty. The villagers greeted us heartily, and were anxious to make more inquiries when we passed, and much concerned lest I should be hungry. As we approached the colony, we called at the house of an old Bible-reader, who had been converted from Catholicism more than twenty years ago, and said he had been reading the Scriptures to these mountaineers ever since, and so they were without excuse if they did not know the way of life and salvation. We passed out, and the man who accompanied me disappeared without giving any intimation, to avoid, as I have ever thought, the offer of any reward from me. Such noble disinterested kindness cannot be forgotten. Should the reader be led to think that too much severity is manifested towards such as have been unkind, let him read the multiplied acknowledgments of favors, and then taking into account, that but a small part of the out-of-the-way, uncalled-for rudeness and unkindness which I have received has

been recorded, and he may be disposed to give credit for my lenity. Again, those which are recorded have been divested in most cases of their roughest and rudest deformities.

The next afternoon the weekly lecture at the church in the colony was to be held, and I inquired if any one would allow me to accompany him or her to the place of worship. The answer was, "You need no one ; go in, and there is a woman there who will show you a seat." Mr. Barrett accompanied me in sight of the place ; told me that the females living near his house, with whom I had often conversed, had gone in, and he and his family could not attend that afternoon. This was all legible hand-writing, easily to be read. I went, saw no seat, and stood till every person except the speaker probably might have testified to the color of my hair and eyes, before I was shown a seat. At last a female handed me a stool or small bench, and I took a seat, not far distant from the feet of the preacher. The meeting was not in the main body of the church, but in a school-room. The room was cleanly, the people attentive, the sermon not faulty, and the females dressed tidily. Mr. Nangle must have been apprised of the object of my visit, as I had sent to him either by note or by a member of his church, that I wished from his own lips to get a sketch at least of the success of his mission, for the sole benefit of the American press, as it would be an object of great interest to us. When the amen was pronounced, being so near him, the assembly not large, and the room not a public one, I could not but reasonably expect, without requiring any marked attentions, that he would give me a nod in passing, if not stop to speak. He turned quickly about, addressed a lady of the congregation, and I waited perhaps with too much perseverance, hoping I might yet speak to him; till so many had retired that I withdrew, without a word being spoken by an individual, but not without a most faithful staring, till I was well from the door.

Saturday was the appointed day for me to call on Mr. Nangle for my letters, and I went with strong hopes that I should through them get access to him, and acquire the desired information. I went to the door ; Mrs. N. refused to see me, unless I had a special message. I sent word that I had called for papers which Mr. Nangle had of mine. "Mr. Nangle is in the post-office, and you can go there, the mistress says." I went to the post-office . Mr. Nangle said, "In three-quarters of an hour I will see you at my house." Before I reached his door, the nurse with an infant in her arms met me and kindly said, "Step into the next shop, and when Mr. Nangle comes I will let you know." [1] To that nurse I am for ever obliged. I had no sooner entered, than a company were gathered about me, and without preface, or apology, commenced talking of the merits of Ireland, its wealth, especially at Achill, and how much Americans were indebted to the Irish ; that though Ireland had the appearance of poverty, yet she was quite comfortable and independent, and that she had carried much money to America.

I had only time to answer that it was a great pity some of it had not circulated among us, either for their benefit or ours, for we certainly had many of them to support. The nurse now entered, saying, "Mr. Nangle has returned," and she led me to the hall. As I passed the window, two or three young misses, the daughters of Mr. Nangle, were looking through it, laughing in a low, vulgar manner ; and I was afterwards informed that the governess, who had more good breeding than influence, rebuked them for their rudeness, but to no purpose. The nurse left me seated in the hall, and Mr. Nangle showed me to the parlor, and handed me my letters without adding a word. I asked some questions about the colony. In a few words he told me its prosperity, and ended by saying it exceeded all expectation.

Having seen a number of the converts who had families, and could not read, I inquired of Mr. N. if they had Sabbath-schools for adults ? "Not to teach *them* to read, but to *read* to them, and instruct them in the Scriptures." Are they not anxious to read the Word of God for themselves ? I asked. He gave me to understand that it would be a difficult task. I then for encouragement referred him to a New York adult school of Irish, where many of the ages of

forty-five, fifty, and even sixty, had been taught to read. I was afterwards told that this was considered an officious dictation, as though he was incapable of managing his own affairs.

A female now entered, whose silent, fixed stare and appearance altogether led me to suppose that she was some upper servant in the house ; but when she seated herself opposite to me at the table, in presence of Mr. Nangle, her eyes still fastened on me, I knew that no servant would do this in a parlor in presence of her master, and ventured to break the silence by asking, “ Is this Mrs. Nangle ?” I certainly feared that an indignity had been offered Mr. Nangle by this question, but the answer, with its rude accompaniment, told me who she was, and my own insignificance in her presence. “ What brought you here ?” “ Did you mean, madam, what brought me to Ireland, or what brought me to Achill ?” “ What brought you to Achill ?” “ I came to see the colony, and to hear from the founders of it, its progress and true condition, that I might tell to my own country what good work was going on in this remote island of the ocean.” “ Let me tell you that you came on very improper business.” Mr. Nangle now walked silently out. Knowing that a “ soft answer turneth away wrath,” and that the Irish heart settles into kindness when its first effervescence has been flung off, I waited a little, and asked, “ Is not the colony free of access to all strangers ?” “ Not without letters, madam.”

“ I have letters in my hand which Mr. Nangle has had ; will you read them ?” “ I can read them if you want me to do so.” “ I do not, madam, for my own sake. I have not the least anxiety to change your opinion concerning myself.” “ Do you not think the Virgin Mary can do more for you than anybody else ?” The question, with the tantalizing manner in which it was put, was so disgusting, that I hesitated whether to answer. I had never before been treated by any female with such vulgarity and so little courtesy. I answered that the Virgin Mary could do no more than she could, if she had the spirit of Christ. The question was re-peated, and the only answer I gave was, “ If you wish to read my letters, here they are.” She read one from a Protestant clergyman ; handed it back, saying, “ This, I suppose, is from a Jesuit.” Taking the second, she read it, and pushed it across the table without speaking. After a short pause, she added, “ You say you come to get information of the colony, and I should say you come to ask charity.”

“ What occasion have I given for this supposition ? Have I asked charity ; does my apparel appear improper, or like a beggar ?” “ Your dress looks well enough.” I arose, and said, “ Mrs. Nangle, if these letters be true I would ask you, as you profess to be a Christian, should you like to be treated as you have treated me in your parlor this morning, or have your children treated thus ?” “ I hope my children will never go about the world carrying such letters as these.”

I went out. The nurse was waiting at the door, and asked, “ How were you treated ? Ah! she has a stony heart, and I feared she would abuse you. Smiles are put on, good dinners got up, a fine story told of the colony when the quality come, while the poor servants are stinted and miserably paid.” Though I could have no doubt but a woman so unlady-like and unchristian in her conduct as she had been that day, might be guilty of all this, I answered only by saying, “ If you are not treated well, why not go away?” “ Because I can get no money to take me home.”

I reached Mr. Barrett’s, and paused upon the steps, and though I could not see the whole colony, yet enough was in sight to show what the hand of industry had done, and I could not be so unjust as not to acknowledge heartily that much has been done, and well done, to make a barren waste a fruitful field. The neat white cottages and the pleasant road made a striking contrast with the hurdles about Molly Vesey’s, and the paths around her domicile ; but I do not speak sarcastically, when I say that the manners of the people in the shop where I waited, and in the parlor of Mr. Nangle, were not in so good keeping with Christian refinement as were those in the cabin of Molly. Pity, pity that Bible Christianity should ever have a counter-

feit ! That Christianity, which possesses such a life-giving power, which is pure, peaceable, long-suffering, condescending, disinterested, forgiving, given to hospitality, self-denying, kind, and courteous to strangers, how is it perverted by ambitious, proud worldlings in every generation ! I had looked into the cabins of many of the converts in Dingle and Achill, and though their feet were washed cleaner, their stools scoured whiter, and their hearths swept better than in many of the mountain cabins, yet their eight pence a day will never put shoes upon their feet, convert their stools into chairs, or give them any better broom than the mountain heath for sweeping their cabins. It will never give them the palatable, well-spread board around which their masters sit, and which they have earned for them by their scantily-paid toil. These converts, turned from worshipping images to the living and true God, as they are told, holding a Protestant prayer-book in their hands which they cannot read, can no more be sure that this religion, inculcated by proxy, emanates from the pure Scriptures, than did the prayer-book which they held in their hands when standing before a Popish altar. They must be in the same predicament with that of a woman in America who had been a slave. At the age of forty she gained her freedom, went into a free state, and in a Sabbath-school there learned to read the word of God. One day she carried her Testament to the superintendent, asking him to show her the chapter beginning with, “ Servants, be obedient to your masters.” She soon returned, and in the simplicity of her heart asked if all the Testaments are alike. She was told they were. “ But one verse, the last in the chapter,” she added, “ is not in my Testament. My master was a pious man, and every Sabbath he assembled the slaves and read this chapter to us, and the last verse was, *And let the disobedient servant be whipped till his back is sore. !*”

But I have stood too long on the steps of Mr. Barrett’s door. A reformed Roman Catholic priest, attached to the colony, heard that I had visited Mrs. Nangle, and called to inquire. Knowing that we cannot “ unknow our knowledge,” and that if he had been a Jesuit, he could not forget the skill, I was guarded. His well managed Questions were tolerably evaded, till he asked, “How did Mrs. Nangle treat you, and how did you like her?” “ She treated me, I believe, just as she *felt*, and I ought to be thankful that towards *me* she was no hypocrite.” His answer was, “ There is a great deal of religion in the world, but a very little piety ; and after all, probably the Mahometans are the true church.”

I had thought of hearing Mr. Nangle preach the next day, but at that moment the kind Mrs. Savage and her daughter rode up, and invited me to take a seat on her car, and accompany her home. This was a treat. Her well ordered house, her unaffected politeness, proceeding from genuine benevolence of heart, made me lose the feelings of a stranger by her comfortable fire-side and table. With feelings of deep gratitude do I record the kindness of Mr. Barrett, his wife, and children. They had not taken their principles or practices of theology in the colony. They had, I trust, learned them in the school of Christ, before they attached themselves to Achill. On the car was a Christian gentleman from Castlebar, a man of intelligence and kind feeling, who was spending a few days at the house of Mr. Savage. He was acquainted with the colony, and bade me feel no regret at the treatment I had received.

*Sabbath morning*, a company of children assembled from the mountains, at Mr. Savage’s house, where a piece of bread was given them, and then a young daughter of the family took them into a shop, and instructed them in reading and saying lessons in the Bible. It was a pretty sight to see so many children from the bogs and mountains, listening to the voice of instruction from one that was but a child herself. My stay on this wild beach was a pleasant one ; not an item was wanting to make the guest feel like a member of the family.

On Tuesday morning I returned to the colony, to get a few articles I had left, and to take a letter to the office I had written to Mrs. Nangle, the true copy of which is now in my hands, and should this be thought too severe, that may appear in a second edition. On my way to the colony, I met a stranger returning from Achill who lived in the country. He had some years

since become a convert to the Bible, by reading and meditating upon it, and in a few sentences he manifested such a knowledge of his own heart, of the character of God and of the Scriptures, as I had not seen in any person, whether learned or unlearned. He was taught of God, emphatically. How different are such from man-made Christians! A girl accompanied me a mile, who talked intelligibly on the Scriptures. A Baptist man, she said, had some years before given her a Bible, and she was well acquainted with it. She was a Catholic, but said she intended to join the colonists, for the sake of getting better schooling, and being more cleanly: I advised her to do so. I stopped but a few minutes in the colony, and saw none of my old friends but the family where I had lodged. Walking back, a little shower sprinkled the earth, and a beautiful rainbow appeared. A peasant stopped to admire, and pointing to it said, "A sign ! a sign !" He could speak but a little English, and supposing he meant the promise that the world should not be drowned, I spoke of the flood ; but he had never heard of it, and gave a vacant stare, then said, " Rain, rain !" He was old, had always lived on that island, and never knew that God had drowned the world. [2]

The following Friday I left, with regret and gratitude, the hospitable family at the Sound, and took a car for Westport. Stopped at Newport, at the house of Mr. Gibbon, the itinerant and Bible reader, and passed the time pleasantly till Tuesday with his family, and the kind Christian widow Arthur, who kept the post-office. A kind of romantic charm seems flung about Newport. Sir Richard O'Donel and his lady have established schools on liberal principles. The lady herself teaches two or three days in a week, and Sir Richard has an admirably well fitted school-room, where he teaches a Sabbath-school himself. The effects of a fair on Monday night showed that Ireland is not emancipated from the effects of whiskey. Rioting and fighting lasted through the night, and in the morning many an inebriate was staggering home to his family. I walked to Westport with the peasantry, and at six in the morning was on a car for Castlebar. Called a few moments on a Baptist minister there, who presented me with a bundle of tracts, which were quite too sectarian to suit my purposes in visiting Ireland.

I stopped at a hotel in Sligo, stayed twenty-four hours, and saw almost the whole town. Took a morning walk three miles from my lodgings to the most beautiful glen I had met, in some particulars. The peasants were so desirous to talk with me on America, that I was three hours going three miles. An avenue, entered by a gate, leads to the cottage, where lives Mr. Nicholson, the proprietor ; supposing it might be the breakfast hour, I sat down on a rustic seat, with the sea at my left and the glen at my right ; and hearing the sound of a hammer, I entered the glen, and was accosted by a company of laborers breaking stones. " Good morrow kindly, and ye're takin' the pleasantest walk in all Ireland. There's not sich a glen in all the kingdom ; and sure ye didn't come alone. Well ! no harm 'ill befall ye here, and the master has all free to everyone here." " You've a good master, I hope ; one who pays you well." " And that he does." "What does he give ?" " Eightpence a day." " And you eat your own potatoes ?" " Yes, we aits our own potatoe, when we git enough of that same." I find in all Ireland the laboring classes, when I first speak to them, are ever praising their master. Just as in America, although the slaves may be often under the lash or in the stocks, yet to a stranger they durst not speak out, lest some " bird of the air should tell the matter ;" so the peasantry of Ireland are in such suffering, that lest they should lose the sixpence or eight-pence they occasionally get while employed, they will make an imperious landlord an angel to a stranger.

" Will ye walk through the glen, ma'am ?" A road of comfortable width, richly bordered with wild flowers for three-quarters of a mile from the cottage, opens to the eye a rare treat of wonder. A wall of stone rising above the head, upon each side, as smooth as if sawed, and appearing as if once united, overhung with rich foliage, especially the ivy, which in rich fantastical testoons is hanging and twining in every part ; and upon one side a part of the wall seems set aside for more favored ornament, having a curtain of ivy, knotted at top in the

centre, as if over a window, then running on either hand a distance of three yards, it falls gracefully down upon the wall, gradually coming to a point as if trimmed with shears. Between these graceful hangings the wall is entirely smooth, and water is continually percolating down its surface, giving a monotonous murmur in the stillness of the glen. As I gazed, supposing the skill of the gardener had arranged this unparalleled ivy curtain, and clustered these knots upon the top, which were three in number, a peasant approached, " Good morrow kindly, ma'am ; and did ye come far in the glen ?" I answered, " I am fixed to this spot. The gardener must possess exquisite skill to have fitted upon a wall such drapery as this !" " The hand of the mighty God, ma'am. Nothin' else that planted it there—no gardener has ever touched a hap'orth, ma'am, not a ha'porth." " And what a mighty God must the maker of all this be ! What will become of you and me, sir, when these rocks shall be melted, and these mountains around us flee away ?" " Ah ! that's true for ye, ma'am, I've often haird this world's to be burnt some day or other. That's true, God help us." I was left alone, fixed in admiration for a time ; then walked on till a gate and wall told me the glen was terminated. Returned, and took a second view of the enchanted spot.

Reaching the cottage, I was met and welcomed by a man grown grey, and a cripple. But a young wife, just out of her teens, pleasantly invited me into her fairy parlor and ante-room, and then said, " You will have some breakfast—the long walk must have given you an appetite." Brown bread and milk were placed before me, and while partaking it, she told me that three weeks ago, she had buried the best of fathers, at the advanced age of ninety ; but his intellectual faculties brightened as his body decayed, especially his religious views ; that his hospitality, for which he had ever been celebrated, was manifested at the last dying moment. A friend had entered to see him die. He beckoned his daughter to the bed, and inquired, " What is preparing for dinner ? This kind friend has come in to see me die, and something nice must be placed before him." These were his last words. His mantle had fallen upon his daughter. The law of kindness was on her tongue. On my way to town, the peasants so detained me by inquiring about America, and what I thought of Ireland, that I had to make much haste on reaching the hotel, to be in time for the boat at three. I regretted leaving Sligo so soon. Such ready access to all classes was not usual, and I should have been much gratified by availing myself profitably of it. The beautiful and novel Bay of Sligo made me forget all else. Nothing but the Blackwater could equal it, and that could not boast such picturesque mountains. Here are mountains of rock, standing out in circular shape, with the appearance of pillars, as if hewn by an architect ; others, like a box, with a cover shut over it, and the edges of this cover plaited. This singular appearance of rock and mountain continued for several miles ; while the little islands in the river, the green meadows, and tasteful demesnes upon the border, made an indescribable treat as the sun was setting.

We reached the termination of the route at nine o'clock, and found an expensive lodging house, as it was crowded on account of the assizes. My next day's ride on the top of a coach was eighty-one miles to Dublin, some part of it romantic. The sea-coast was rocky and wild, and presented little that was inviting for the abode of man. The road took us through a part of Leitrim, Westmeath, and Longford. At the latter place, while waiting for a change of horses, the beggars seemed to have rallied all their forces, followed by the rags and tatters of the town, who surrounded the coach to hear from America. I answered the beggars, that I had nothing but books to give. A truce for a moment succeeded, when a clamor for books was set up, similar to the one on the island of Omey. Giving them some tracts, all commenced reading, when one cried out that they said nothing of the Blessed Virgin, and immediately one was torn in small pieces, and thrown upon my lap. The crowd had become quite numerous, and the clamor boisterous. Two or three more tracts were torn, and thrown into the air or upon the coach. Asking if they thought the Virgin was looking upon them, " Yes, yes," was echoed and re-echoed. " How do you think she is pleased with the disrespect you have paid her Son ? Those books, which you have torn, are his words, and you have despised them, and torn them in pieces," All for a minute were silent ; every laugh was changed into a look of

sorrow. "In truth," said one, "we have done wrong ; we did not know it ; and ye are right, ma'am, and we are sorry." A few words were said on their lost condition if out of Christ, and they listened with most respectful silence, and walked quietly away.

The long ride to Dublin terminated at eight o'clock, and though I knew it was not my own fire-side that I was approaching, yet the same kind greeting and welcome at the home I had left, made me feel that though in a land of strangers, I was not in a family that could not reciprocate my wants, if not my feelings, and do all in their power to make me comfortable. I spent a few pleasant weeks in Dublin, visiting public institutions. The Academy of Painters was a place of interest, because so many proofs are there given that Ireland spares no expense in perpetuating the virtues and talents of her sons. With my first and constant friend Miss H. I went to the Mendicity ; and to a tourist this institution is one of no small interest. Paupers assemble here in the morning, and stay till six at night, and get two meals for picking oakum. The breakfast is stirabout ; the dinner, potatoes and some kind of herbage pounded together, well peppered, put into barrels, shovelled out into black tins, and set out upon the floor. [3] Here they sit upon the dirty boards, and eat, some with spoons and some with their fingers. It was a most disgusting sight. The crowd was immense. Never had I seen so much filth embodied in one mass, with so many ugly, forlorn, and loathsome faces. They seemed to be the "odds and ends" of the workmanship of ages, flung together into this pile, as offal that had been picked and culled, torn and shaken, till all that could be used had been worked up. We turned from the forbidding sight into the school-room, where the children of these woe-begone parents were assembled for instruction ; and here a war was in progress, between the mistress and a woman who had entered demanding the services of a scholar. The mistress refused, and the fight became so serious that I begged the overseer to take the case in hand. He declined, and the battle ended in favor of the mistress. This Mendicity does this : it keeps many from actual starvation, and is a tolerable quietus to the penurious, who would rather see a fellow-being metamorphosed into a brute, than lighten their purses.

Who could look on a sight like this without asking, what political economy could produce such a picture of God's best and noblest workmanship ? What fountain but the stagnant Lake of Sodom could send forth streams like these ? Where is the *somebody* that has done all this, and what is his name and genealogy ? Bring him out, if he can be traced, in the face of the congregation—yes, in the face of high heaven. Let him be examined before the judges, and if he cannot answer for this his strange work, send him away ; let him hide his face for ever from the face of man. If it be voluntary idleness, pay the culprit no premium for sloth and filth. "He that will not work shall not eat," should be the stereotyped motto while seed-time and harvest remain. But if his idleness be, because no man hath hired him ; if his rags be the remuneration for days of faithful toil ; if there be a watchman on Judah's towers, a nobleman, a husbandman, a shopkeeper, who has defrauded this poor man of his wages, who has kept back part of the price that he should give, let him see to it, and let him see to it in season ; for God, be assured, is a correct accountant. Not a figure will be added or subtracted wrong. Not an injured poor man will cry to him for redress, but that cry will be heard. Not a forbidding mendicant, who here has his food flung out to him as though he were a dog or an ass, but has his cause registered in the high court of heaven, and the immaculate Lamb of God is his pleader. And that Pleader never practised, and never acknowledged any benevolence but a self-denying one, and paid no honor to any station but honest poverty. "He took on him the form of a servant." Was this, I ask, disgracing poverty ?

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Mr. Nagle's Notice in the Achill Herald, of the Author's Visit to the Settlement—Remarks upon this Document and the motives which probably dictated it—Concluding Observations relative to the objects of the Writer's Tour in Ireland, and the Reception she met with from various Classes of the Community.

It was in the month of July, 1845, about six weeks after my return from Achill, that I was presented, in the Tract Depository, Sackville-street, Dublin, with an article to read in the Achill Herald, which I take leave to insert in this volume as one which should be preserved. Any document that is worth reading once is worth reading twice. As this was written by a valued man, and inserted in a valuable paper, and as newspapers are liable to be mislaid and torn, I call it again from its repose of two years, that the thousands of subscribers who read the Achill Herald may, if they will condescend to do so, have their minds refreshed by what was once thought a matter of deep interest to the religious community : —

“ During the last month, this settlement was visited by a female who is travelling through the country. (We have traced her from Dingle to this place.) She lodges with the peasantry, and alleges that her object is to become acquainted with the Irish character ; she states that she has come from America for this purpose. She produced a letter purporting to be addressed by a correspondent in America to a respectable person in Birmingham ; [4] but in answer to a communication addressed by the writer to that individual, he stated that he has no acquaintance with her, either personal or by letter.

“ This stranger is evidently a person of some talent and education ; and although the singular course which she pursues is utterly at variance with the modesty and retiredness to which the Bible gives a prominent place in its delineation of a virtuous female, she professes to have no ordinary regard for the Holy Book. It appears to us that the principal object of this woman’s mission is to create a spirit of discontent among the lower orders, and to dispose them to regard their superiors as so many unfeeling oppressors. There is nothing in her conduct or conversation to justify the supposition of insanity, and we strongly suspect she is the emissary of some democratic and revolutionary society.”

In publishing this document, the writer acted as his views of worldly policy suggested, in the circumstances in which he was placed by his conduct towards me. A stranger came from a far country to visit the colony, and came with the best intentions. These intentions had been made known to Mr. Nangle in a suitable manner ; but the stranger was sent out to lodge in a most improper place, and this place was recommended by his people. In his own parlor, into which he had invited his visitor, he allowed her to be treated, I will not merely say *uncivilly*, but *degradingly* and *wickedly*. I subsequently wrote to Mrs. Nangle, speaking plainly, unsparingly, and conscientiously, on the responsibilities of her station, informing her that my visit to the colony would make an interesting page in my published journal. What could Mr. Nangle do under these circumstances, but acknowledge the error of his conduct towards me, or advertise the public in season to beware of the scrutinizing democrat, whose virtues, according to Solomon’s ideas, are much to be doubted ? I make no apology to Mr. Nangle I make none to the public, for visiting Achill, and visiting it as I did. I had a national right, a civil and religious one to do so, either with or without letters, as long as my conduct was proper. This city set upon a hill, by the bounty of the religious word, and the labors of those who inhabit it, says to all the world, “ Come and see our zeal for the Lord.” And if there be not some Sanctum Sanctorum for the priests alone to enter, some Holy Inquisition where heretics are to be tried and condemned, then who can be justly prohibited from going about its walls, and telling the towers of this Zion ?

In conclusion I would say, that though IRELAND’S WELCOME has some dark shades, yet these only serve to give light and life to the picture. Had my reception among the higher and middle ranks been as Christian-like and as civil as among the poor, it would have been one monotonous tissue, which might have spread a false coloring before my eyes, so that her true character would have been hidden. Had all men spoken well of me, had all treated me kindly, the woe of Christ must have been mine, and I might have been an idler in my Master’s vineyard. They have done me good ; and to all who have so little understood the true principles of

gospel self-denial and gospel kindness towards the poor, as to censure the course I have taken, they should be pitied, they should be prayed for, they should be forgiven, and be assured that by me they are forgiven. And happy should I be to testify my forgiveness in my own country, and by my own fireside, and at my own table, should these comforts ever again be mine. America, faulty as she may be, will extend the cordial hand to the Irish stranger ; and if he be poor, she will give him bread and clothing ; she will pay him for his toil, and will allow him to stand erect, and call himself, a man. I speak of Free America. With the oppressors of the South I have no sympathy. I have often been tauntingly asked, “ Why do you not labor for the slaves in your own country ? ” I answer, “ I have done so, and it was a strong inducement to bring me to Ireland. I saw the most of your nation who land upon our shores are not only destitute, but ignorant of letters, and crouching and servile till they get power, and in all these lineaments bear a good comparison with our slaves.” And I could not but ask, What but oppression could produce this similitude ? And painful as is the fact, yet it must be told of the Irish in America, too many, quite too many strengthen the hands of the avaricious oppressor, and help him to bind the chains tighter about the poor black man ; and I came to entreat you to show your people a better way. I came to beg you to help us knock off our fetters, by sending a more enlightened and free people among us, who cannot be bribed by flattery or money.

But who shall teach them these noble lessons ? For while I have seen the same jealousy, the same jesuitical caution, and a greater unkindness in many cases exercised towards me by masters in Ireland, than by slaveholders in the American Slave States, how can I hope better things till better principles get possession of the heart ? Let not these re-marks be misunderstood ; let them not be misconstrued ; I speak not of all Ireland. There are noble hearts in the Emerald Isle, who do not practise oppression ; but I speak to the guilty, and let them hear. I was a friend to Ireland, before I left home. I have remained her friend here, and shall return, if possible, still more so. Yes, though much of the painful toil might have been spared, and my means of doing good been greatly enlarged, had those who had it in their power received and treated me more kindly ; yet it has not loosened one cord that tied my heart to the suffering poor, it has not induced me to shun one neglected alley, where lay on their cold pile of straw the starving and the dying. No, it has stimulated me more to stir up my country to come to your aid, and I will do it so long as my pen can move and my country has a loaf to spare. If any one think me too severe in any of these pages, let him reverse the picture ; let him suppose that America for the last fifty years had been pouring in her destitute ragged paupers upon you, by wholesale and retail. Suppose you had welcomed these paupers, had given them labor and bread till they could walk upon the earth as men and women. And suppose, at the end of fifty years, an Irish woman should be disposed (however strange the whim) to visit that country, to see what these Americans were at home, to learn their manners and habits there, in order to better understand them here, and do them good ; should you not expect that the law of civility, the law of Christianity, and the law of *equity* at least should induce them not only to receive her cordially, but to do all in their power to facilitate such rational designs ?

I ask no answer. I put the question not to anger you, not to complain, but to convince you that such were the most honorable, the most Christian-like way to act ; and should the like again happen, the Bible mode will be the best to adopt, to “ be careful to entertain strangers,” till you know they are impostors ; and suspect not their letters as forged ones, till some marks of forgery can be detected. What would have become of your poor countrymen, think you, in America, had they been treated thus ? I am glad I came ; I am glad to be here in your dreadful famine ; I am glad to be honored with doing a little for the wretched among you. Would to God I could do more. Three years almost I have gone over, and looked at your pretty island, and with all my privations, my toil, and cold repulses, I have been paid, doubly repaid ; and from my heart can I say, were it not for the suffering my eyes have seen, I should place these years among the happiest of my life. I love you all, and would do you all good, were it in my

power. To the Roman Catholics, both duty and inclination require that I should acknowledge a deep debt of gratitude. They have opened the doors of convents, of schools, of mansions, and cabins, without demanding letters, or distrusting those that were presented. They have sheltered me from storm and tempest ; they have warmed and fed me without fee or reward, when my Protestant brethren and sisters frowned me away. God will remember this, and I will remember it.

Should I ever reach home, I hope to give a fuller detail of my tour, which embraced all but the county of Cavan. I have made no mention of the north of Ireland, for want of room, but cannot close without saying that in Belfast I spent a few pleasant weeks. The Protestants there made me feel as if I were by a New England fireside, where I was neither worshipped as a goddess nor made a second-hand article, though I might perform some domestic service appropriate to women. Their religion appeared, in many cases, like that of the heart, and their labors through the past winter of famine, and which have not yet relaxed, testify that their faith has produced good works.

I have spoken plainly, that I might render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's ; and as I visited Ireland to see it as it is, so I report it as I found it. I have stayed to witness that which, though so heart-rending and painful, has given me but the proof of what common observation told me in the beginning—that there must needs be an explosion of some kind or other. But awful as it is, it has shown Ireland who are her worthy ones within her, and who are her friends abroad, and it will show her greater things than these.

May God bring her from her seven-times-heated furnace, purified and unhurt, and place her sons and daughters among the brightest of the stars that shall shine for ever in the kingdom of heaven, is the sincere desire of the writer.

- [1] This nurse afterwards apologised for this, by saying that she did it to save me the pain of the abuse which she feared I might receive in the house.
- [2] Before leaving the Sound, the palsied man and his wife called to go to the island. “ God bless you. The Testament you gave me has been a blessing to my soul.” “ And that it should,” his wife remarked, “ for he sits up in his bed to read to me every night.”
- [3] I did not then see any tables, though they have them now.
- [4] The individual here referred to is Mr. Joseph Sturge of Birmingham, who had not seen the letter referred to by Mr. Nangle at the time of my visit to Achill. He has since not only acknowledged the receipt of this letter, but has very kindly intrusted me with money for the relief of the Irish poor.

Ireland's welcome to the stranger, or, An excursion through Ireland, in 1844 & 1845, for the purpose of personally investigating the condition of the poor (1847)

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