

Mr. & Mrs. Hall's Mayo

By

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Ireland, its scenery, character and history

1842 - 1850

The maritime county of Mayo, in the province of Connaught, is bounded on the east by the counties of Sligo and Roscommon, on the south by the county of Galway, and on the north and west by the Atlantic Ocean. It comprises, according to the Ordnance Survey, an area of 1,355,048 statute acres ; of which 871,984 are cultivated land ; 425,124 are unprofitable mountain and bog ; and 57,940 are under water. It is divided into nine baronies—Burrishoole, Carra, Clanmorris, Costello, Erris, Gallen, Kilmain, Murrisk, and Tyrawly. Its principal towns are, Castlebar (the assize town), Ballina, Ballinrobe, and Foxford ; and the seaports are Westport, Killala, and Newport. The population in 1821 was 293,112 ; in 1831 it amounted to 367,956 ; and in 1841 it was returned as 388,887, a population which bears no proportion even to its cultivated land ; taking no account of the 425,124 acres within this single county, which are suffered to remain unproductive and useless, although there are thousands of unemployed hands in every district, and the tide of emigration flows from this province as rapidly as it does from others.

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We must request the reader to retrace his steps, postponing his entrance into Connamara, and, regaining the great Dublin Road, proceed with us to Castlebar. The town looks thriving and prosperous ; it contains some neat public buildings, and a “ green ” of some extent as a promenade for the inhabitants. The suburbs, however, are, as usual, exceedingly wretched. The mountains surround Castlebar, sufficiently remote to add to their picturesque character ; and in its immediate neighbourhood are numerous fine lakes. The neat and comfortable inn at which we abode commanded a fine prospect of both. Looking from its clean and well-arranged sitting-room, several fine pictures presented themselves, which our friend, the artist, turned to very valuable account.

The district north of Castlebar is full of interest and wild beauty ; about midway to Ballina, and on the direct road to Sligo, the tourist passes between the lakes Con and Cullen. A bridge was built across their juncture by the late Lord Lucan, who has handed down his name to posterity as one of the benefactors of Ireland ; for previously a dangerous ferry was the only mode by which travellers could pass from one side to the other.

From Castlebar we proceeded to Newport,—called, to distinguish it from other towns of the same name, Newport-Mayo. A few years back it was little better than a collection of hovels, and a modern traveller, in 1839, complains bitterly, that he was domiciled at “ an ugly, mean-looking pothouse, redolent of sour beer, and effete whiskey punch,” the bed-chamber of which was “ small, frouzy, and unclean : ” he adds, however, that “ Newport was *intended* to be a better town,”—and a better town it now, unquestionably, is. The “ hotel ” is neat and comfortable ; the cars are good ; several pretty houses have been built along the quay, and some large storehouses “ in progress ” indicate increasing prosperity. Few towns on the coast, indeed, are more fortunately situated ; a somewhat broad and rapid river, aiding the picturesque, and “ full ” of charms to the angler, here makes its way into the sea: the beautiful bay of Clew, with its hundreds of islands, that leaves a deposit of soft sand upon the adjacent shore, rendering the neighbourhood highly attractive to bathers. At the quay, a vessel of four

or five hundred tons may unload. The town, and a vast district to the west of it, including nearly the whole of the island of Achill, are the property of Sir Richard O'Donell, who is said to be the "nominal owner" of eighty thousand statute acres of land ; but so much of it is let upon long leases, or is mountain-waste, that his real income is understood to be very small. Nevertheless, under the watchful care of a judicious agent, and by the help of a most benevolent, active, and intelligent clergyman, who has shown how completely prejudices may be overcome, and who happily mingles firmness of principle with just and generous liberality, the town is rapidly rising into an importance that will, in a short time, render it second to none on the western coast.

The scenery in the immediate neighbourhood is very pleasing, striking, and picturesque.

To the tourist and the occasional resident, Newport-Mayo has many temptations of sea, lake, and land ; its attractions to the sportsman and the angler are abundant of every class and kind, and both may pursue their pleasure without "let or hindrance," the sole stipulation being that they shall reside at the inn.

At Newport-Mayo we had an opportunity of inspecting one of the singular boats, the Corragh, or Corach, the construction of which appears to have undergone little alteration for many centuries, being almost precisely similar to that in use by the ancient Irish. It is of a rude form, the stem being nearly as broad as the stern. It is made of wooden laths, covered with coarse tarred canvas ; this canvas is manufactured by the peasantry, and the cost of the whole vessel is about thirty shillings. The size is, usually, sufficiently large to contain four men ; each man rows two oars ; the oars are short, flat, and broad, and a hole is made, into which is introduced a single trolach. It is, of course, very light, and rises and falls with every wave—literally dancing on the waters ; they are seldom or never upset, and are peculiarly calculated for this wild shore, for if suddenly struck against a sunken rock, the hole thereby made in the canvas covering is stopped in an instant. We took a row in one ; its owner regretting that we were not "in town last week" to see the "fine one intirely that was there then." Our specimen was old and much worn, but not therefore the less picturesque.

A still greater treat, however, awaited us in Newport a visit to its Schools. This, be it remembered, is a wild district ; with none of the advantages which accrue from the near residence of a landlord, *able*, as well as *willing*, to provide for the physical and moral wants of his dependents. Yet in no part of Ireland have we seen schools better, if so well, managed, in all respects, or bearing surer evidence of the vast good to be distributed by education. There are three schools under the superintendence of the Rector, and although the funds are derived from sources connected with the Diocesan, part of them are supplied by "The Church Education Society for Ireland," with which they are in direct connection. A large proportion—certainly above half—of the pupils were Roman Catholics ; yet no compromise had been entered into with either the clergy or the parents of the children ; the teachers were members of the Church of England, and the authorized version of the Scriptures was read daily ; in fact, all the objections commonly urged against schools in connection with the Established Church existed here in full force ; yet the parents had sent, and continued to send, their children to receive the benefits of the establishment, although there is a Roman Catholic school, and a school in association with the National Board, in the immediate neighbourhood. We confess that this fact, very startling at first, surprised us infinitely less when we had looked more closely into it. The plans for education are sensible, sound, and *agreeable* ; the school-houses were exceedingly neat and orderly ; the discipline included strict attention to cleanliness, good manners, and punctuality ; the pupils were in very few instances of the lowest class ; but, above all, the school teachers were able and experienced persons, well qualified for the discharge of their duties, and known to be so. They were consequently *amply* remunerated for their labour ; their salaries, including the house and other necessaries, being

each about £80 per annum. This was the great secret of their success ; it was explained to us in a sentence—The parents will, in spite of all opposition, send their children to the best masters ; let a master become famous for turning out good scholars, and nearly every obstacle will be overcome. Good masters can be procured only by paying them well ; consequently, this should be a primary consideration—the first object—with persons who aim at establishing schools for the benefit of *all classes*. We assume, as matter of course, that there will be no evidence of a design to proselytize, although there may be even a suspicion of such a purpose. The fact is, that where there has been a contest for the introduction of the authorized version of the Scriptures, it has been accompanied too often by proof that they were intended to be made use of less with a view to inculcate religious and moral duties, than to convert the readers and hearers from the religion of their parents. Thus hostility was aroused ; it was encountered with more zeal than meekness ; and resistance to proselytism was not unfrequently unjustly construed into fear or “ hatred of the Bible.”

The schools in connection with the Church Education Society are, of course, all under the superintendence of CLERGYMEN OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH ; yet this fact operates by no means to their prejudice ; for these clergymen, generally, have the confidence, and very often the affections, of the people. They are, with few exceptions, generous, considerate, conciliating, and charitable—*charitable* in the widest and most extended meaning of the term ; the best landlords, where they hold land ; the most accomplished gentlemen ; the surest lessons in the benefits of good order and adherence to social duties ; always foremost where the temporal wants of their neighbours are to be attended to ; the zealous promoters and steady supporters of every institution for relieving the poor in sickness or poverty ; and continually inculcating by argument and example the divine precept of their Master, “ peace and good will.” The Irish clergy, some twenty or thirty years ago, must have been characterised in opposite terms. Now, it is not too much to say, there never existed a body of men, in all respects, so unexceptionable ; so distinguished for learning ; so remarkable for integrity, in its widest sense ; so conspicuous indeed for the daily exercise of all the virtues. Wherever we have been—in every part of Ireland, among its by-ways as well as its high-ways—we have almost invariably found the rector, or the curate, a model for the higher, and an example for the humbler, classes.

From Newport-Mayo we proceeded to the island of ACHILL, distant about fourteen miles. It is the largest island off the Irish coast, being sixteen miles in length by seven in breadth, and contains between 5,000 and 6,000 inhabitants. The scenery that leads to it is remarkably wild and barren ; on one side are the bleak and bare mountains, and on the other is the beautiful bay—Clew Bay—for nearly half the distance, until the view opens upon the broad Atlantic. In natural grandeur and rude magnificence, the district is certainly unsurpassed—if indeed it be approached—by any other in Ireland ; on no occasion have we so completely felt our utter inability to render justice to the wonderful works of Nature. Nor is the neighbourhood without its interest, arising from associations with the olden time ; the remains of the ancient monastery of Burrishoole and the castle of Carrig-a-Hooly, one of the castles of Grace O’Malley, are among the most striking and remarkable of the ruins of Ireland. Those of the former stand upon the east bank of the river, and adjacent to the lake, of Burrishoole ; both afford famous sport to the angler, and unrestricted permission to fish in either is, as we have intimated, readily accorded to the tourist. The venerable ruin is highly picturesque ; it retains many tokens of early splendour, and some of the mullions and capitals are curious specimens of art. As usual the relics of mortality are scattered profusely within and around it ; it is literally “ a place of skulls ;” every nook, crevice, and cranny is “ crammed” with the “ dry bones.” The old castle was evidently built for strength ; it is situated at the extremity of an arm of the sea, and immediately adjoining it, we were informed there was depth enough, at low water, for a vessel of considerable burthen to ride in concealment and in perfect shelter

from the fiercer winds. In this vicinity, too, there are some singular caves, believed to be Druidic.

The beauty and magnificence of the scenery increases as we proceed ; about midway to Achill Sound is the small village of Bunown, where the tourist will certainly give his horse a rest ; for probably the whole line of the Irish coast does not supply a view at once so grand and so inconceivably lovely. Yet it is all taken in at a glance. In the extreme distance, across the bay, rises a line of mountains, of which the venerable and legend-haunted Croagh Patrick is the highest—seen with its peaked top in the clouds. Midway is the broad bay, dotted with islands. We stand above a terrific precipice ; the rocky strand beneath us, although at a considerable distance off, seems so immediately under our feet, that a stone thrown from the summit by a child's hand may reach the ocean—and so indeed it will, but not at a single bound ; it goes rushing and plunging down the steep, leaping over every opposing barrier, now and then springing upwards many feet into the air, and at length, when nearly out of sight, surmounting its last obstruction, and plunging in among the breakers, the white foam of which dashes against the sides of the huge precipice below.

The scenery becomes still wilder ; and we enter upon a tract of country thronging with lakes in the midst of extensive bogs, formed by innumerable streams that rush into the valleys from the adjacent mountains. It is impossible to convey to those who can appreciate the grace and beauty of “ naked Nature,” an idea of the many and powerful fascinations that meet the eye at every step ; each turn of the road brings in view some striking object near or distant—the shadowy but picturesque outlines of the far-off hills, the foaming cataracts near at hand, and the white threads, as it were, that mark their progress down the amphitheatre of hills, which seem actually to render the valley impassable, and now and then to permit no other egress but by the ocean. Not the least of the many attractions of the scenery consists in the countless hues cast upon the landscape by either the rising, the mid-day, or the setting sun, shining upon the rocks covered with heath and wild flowers, and the thin herbage—“ ever-green.”

Perhaps no country of the world is so rich in materials for the PAINTER ; nowhere can he find more admirable subjects for his pencil, whether he studies the immense varieties of nature, or human character as infinitely varied. The artist by whom this district has not been visited, can indeed have no idea of its surpassing grandeur and sublimity ;—go where he will he finds a picture ; the lines of the mountains covered with heather ; the rocks of innumerable shapes ; the “ passes,” rugged, but grand to a degree ; the finest rivers, always rapid—salmon-leaps upon almost every one of them ; the broadest and richest lakes, full of small islands, and at times clothed with luxuriant foliage along their sides ; in fact, Nature nowhere presents such abundant and extraordinary stores of wealth to the painter—and even now it has been very little resorted to. Add to this, that every peasant the artist will encounter, furnishes a striking and picturesque sketch ; and as they are usually met in groups, scarcely one will be without this valuable accessory to the landscape.

At length, by an easy descent, we approach the coast of which, for some miles, we have had but occasional glances ; and the island of Achill, appearing as part of the mainland, rises to sight,—the tops of its two high mountains, Croghan and Slievemore, having been for a long time visible. At Achill Sound there is a ferry-boat to the island ; the passage across being about a quarter of a mile, at low water. The boat, of course, conveys the car with the passengers. At “ the Sound,” there is a plain but very comfortable inn, at which the traveller will do well to rest. It is kept by a Mr. Savage, who was for several years a sub-officer of the coast-guard. He is a very intelligent guide, also, to the objects of interest in the neighbourhood ; and a “ famous” counsellor to the sportsman, whether of the rod or the gun. The island and the mainland are both full of lakes that abound with trout ; and the grouse are as plentiful

on the mountains as sparrows round a barn-door. The driver of the car to be obtained here is also one of the few examples left of the “characters” of former times ; a pleasant, good-humoured fellow, with a budget of legends and a few jokes.

Our principal object in visiting Achill was to examine the “PROTESTANT COLONY,” concerning which we had heard very opposite accounts. By one party it has been “cried down” as a bundle of firebrands ; and by another it has been “cried up” as a sanctuary for the oppressed—the germ of a great tree that was destined to overshadow Ireland with its protecting branches. In fact, very contradictory statements of its advantages, or its mischiefs, have been for a long time in circulation, and it has, consequently, attracted no small degree of public attention.

The colony is situated on the northern part of the island, near the village of Dugorth, at the foot of Slievemore, and at the mouth of a small bay. It consists of a terrace, at one extremity of which is the school, with the offices connected with it ; at the other are the infirmary, the mill, and the dispensary ; and in the centre are a small hotel, the printing-office, and the residence of the missionary-in-chief, the Rev. Edward Nangle.

The dwellings of the labourers are built up the hill at the back of this terrace, which seems to be occupied exclusively by the official personages of the mission ; some of the workmen have also residences at Dugorth. The period of our visit to the colony was an unfortunate one ; a contagious disease had been raging there, the school was, for a time, deserted in consequence, and we may, no doubt, thus account for an absence of neatness and cleanliness upon which we had calculated, as marking the distinction between the colonists and their less-favoured neighbours.

The establishment of the colony was commenced in the year 1833, for the avowed purpose of “converting Romanists ;” a tract of reclaimable land (being, however, nearly the worst upon the island, and most inauspiciously selected) was obtained, and the minister “entered upon his work” on the 1st of August, 1834. The colony was to be supported, and *is* supported by donations and subscriptions raised throughout the kingdom. The documents at our command relative to the settlement are but few ; we are not, therefore, enabled accurately to trace the progress of the colony from its formation ; what advances it has made in its receipts ; or what increase there has been in the number by whom its protection has been sought.

There are—if we rightly understand the Report, which is a very confused document four or five distinct and separate modes of collecting money. The first, is for the Mission ; the second, is for the Orphan Asylum ; the third, is for the Dispensary ; the fourth, is for the Achill Bible and Church Missionary Society ; and a fifth, is “donations of clothing ;” a sixth—may be occasional—“for relief of distress in Achill ;” and a seventh, may be “for the Infant School.” From all these sources a large sum is collected, and this sum seems to be expended in salaries to missionaries, schoolmasters, and schoolmistresses, workmen’s wages, repairs, buildings, expenses of printing-office, dispensary, &c., the affairs of the Mission being managed by the missionaries, and Dr. Adams (a most excellent and estimable physician, whose motive at least in thus exchanging independence and a high position for a settlement in this colony cannot be mistaken) ; and there is also a committee of gentlemen of irreproachable character, the greater number of whom probably have never visited the settlement, but who believe that it is really conferring practical benefit upon the community.

The principal feature of the colony, however, is the orphan school ; the mere gathering together a few labourers who have been catholic, and now are protestant, is a matter of very trifling national importance. But the education of even a small part of the rising generation in

good habits and right principles, is a work upon which the moneys of the wealthy might be most advantageously expended. Whether this object has been to any extent attained, or is in course of attainment, we cannot with certainty say ; but the impression left upon our minds regarding it was by no means satisfactory. We imagine that the results must be unimportant, for by the eighth Report (1841) we learn no more than that “ *three* of the female orphan children educated in this settlement are now earning their bread as servants, *eight* of the boys are learning trades in the settlement, and of these, *two* are sufficiently advanced to support themselves ;” while the Report (1840) states that three orphans had been apprenticed to trades, one of whom we are told in the Report (1841) was placed on board a ship of war, *from which he deserted*. The Report of 1840 gives the number of children educated in all the schools superintended by the Mission as two hundred and forty-two, “ being an increase of *two* in the number reported as in attendance last year.” Of these there were, in 1840, “ in our Institution” one hundred, and in 1841 exactly the same number, one hundred ; so that in that year there had been no increase. The greater number of these orphans are sent to the colony from distant parts ; children whose parents, “ one or both,” had been Roman Catholics, who were left destitute, and for whom some benevolent individuals undertook to provide, by sending them to receive board and education at the settlement.

Our suspicions as to the beneficial results of the orphan asylum,—the only portion of the plan out of which extensive good to the community could arise—are founded, however, upon something like substantial grounds. It is our duty to describe them : On our way to the colony, from which we were five or six miles distant, on the mainland, we met a poor wretched-looking boy about thirteen years of age, clothed in rags. Upon questioning him we found he had been dismissed from the school, that Mr. Nangle had taken away his decent clothes and given him three shillings, (this we afterwards learned from Mr. Nangle himself was perfectly correct,) to convey him *a distance of about sixty miles* into the county of Sligo, where his grandfather lived, his parents being both dead. We reasoned with the boy as to the sad position in which he had placed himself by his misconduct, contrasted his future prospects with his past condition ; and he readily, and indeed eagerly, listened to our advice that he should return as a repentant prodigal, to obtain the forgiveness of the minister of Christ, and be once more received into the fold, where there would have been—as we expected—joy over the sheep that had been lost and was found. We were mistaken. On presenting the penitent to Mr. Nangle, and interceding for him, that clergyman declined to take him back ; assigning no cause for his refusal ; merely saying “ he was a bad boy and he would not receive him ;” giving no account whatever of misconduct that shut him out from mercy. We, therefore, took the lad upon our car out of the island, and, adding a few shillings to his scanty store, sent him to beg his way to Sligo. The boy’s name was Hart, and if he had so displeased his master as to have been justly an outcast, it was evident that he had not lost the favour of his schoolmates, for several of them gathered round our car as we were driving off, bidding him good-by, and begging God to bless him ! We should, perhaps, have taken no notice of this fact,—for we might have argued ourselves into a belief that the boy had merited his unhappy fate by conduct more than commonly atrocious, which Mr. Nangle did not feel called upon to explain—but that another circumstance occurred the next day, which compelled us to the conclusion that the divine precept which teaches forgiveness to a repentant sinner who had offended, not seven times but seventy times seven, had not been learned, if it was taught, at the colony. Returning through Newport, the clergyman of that town brought to our indoor five other boys who had been also dismissed from the orphan-school of the settlement; he brought them to us in order that we might explain to them the inutility of their desire to go back to its shelter, by stating to them the results of our experience as regarded the boy Hart. And we did inform them that, judging from our experiment in his favour, there would be no use in their making the attempt, for that Mr. Nangle would not receive them. Thus six poor little helpless and deserted children were cast upon the world, nearly naked and penniless ; without parents, without homes, and without friends ; for the few friends of their infancy

would have either forgotten them, or have been exasperated into a hatred of them by their virtual apostacy from their religion.

Upon these facts we have no desire to comment.

We do not apologise for the space we have occupied in considering this matter, because it is annually made the topic of a public meeting in London (to obtain subscriptions) ; because a very large proportion of those who sustain the settlement, know nothing about it except its name ; and because, in Ireland, it is a fruitful source of much discreditable and uncharitable discussion, and strengthens that bitterness of spirit which forms the grand barrier to the improvement of the country. Moreover, it is sufficiently notorious that all accounts of this colony have been derived from prejudiced sources, for or against : at least we are not aware that it has been inspected by any tourist uninfluenced by party views,—excepting the one whose opinion we shall quote.

We consider every conscientious accession to the Protestant faith as a contribution in aid of the well-being of the state, and the prosperity of Ireland, more especially ; but such experiments as that at Achill, will be made in vain; we have shown that here it has been a complete failure ; the principles upon which it has been conducted have not been in accordance with the divine precept of “ charity,” nor has the clergyman under whose control the settlement is placed been an example of that gentle, peace-loving, and *persuasive* zeal, that “ meek and unaffected grace,” which should distinguish a humble follower of “ THE LORD AND MASTER.”

One word more, and we dismiss this subject : it was impossible not to appreciate the magnanimity of the poor, miserable, utterly destitute, and absolutely starving, inhabitants of Achill, who were at the time of our visit enduring privations at which humanity shudders,—and to know that by walking a couple of miles and *professing* to change their religion they would have been instantly supplied with food, clothes, and lodging. Yet these hungry thousands—for it would be scarcely an exaggeration to say that nine-tenths of the population of this island were, in the month of July last, entirely without food—preferred patiently to endure their sufferings, rather than submit to what they considered a degradation. Such fortitude we do believe to be without parallel in the history of any “ ignorant and unenlightened” people since the creation of the world.

We have of course abstained from taking note of the many statements we have received, and opinions we have heard, in proof of the evil working of the system pursued at Achill, preferring rather to confine ourselves to the results of our own observations and experience ; for, as our readers will readily believe, “ the colony” is seated in the midst of enemies, whose hostility continues unmitigated, manifested by a total absence of all charity, and by the exercise of the very worst passions, and it has been opposed in a spirit akin to that of the darkest age of superstition and bigotry ; the greater number of the stories that have reached us, we have therefore considered as gross calumnies. But we have deemed it our duty to submit the case fully to our readers, with a view, particularly, to invite the consideration of English subscribers to the “ Mission.”

We cannot conclude the subject better than by quoting the following eloquent and generous observations from a little work, entitled “ Notes on Irish Natural History,” printed in 1840, by Edward Newman, Esq. : “ The natives of Achill are charged with being thieves and murderers ; and if I were to place full reliance on all I heard at the settlement, they would appear to be so. Mr. Long, however, (a farmer in the neighbourhood, whose farm Mr. Newman describes as ‘ bearing on the extreme productiveness of the soil of Achill,’) with everything constantly exposed, walls and hedges being here unknown, and living amongst a population from whom he has no power at all to defend himself, *has never lost even a*

potato. I allude not to this subject politically ; but bearing in mind solely the natural history of the island and its capability of improvement, I pronounce, without hesitation, that if goodness of soil, lowness of rent, cheapness of labour, and SAFETY OF PROPERTY, be recommendations, then, that no spot I have ever seen is more likely to reward the emigrant than the Island of Achill. Would that some unpolitical philanthropists,—MEN WHO TOOK A HUMAN VIEW OF THE HUMAN WANTS AND HUMAN FEELINGS OF THESE POOR ISLANDERS—would settle among them, and place in their hands the plough and the spade, teach the children to read and write, the boys to make shoes and coats, to fish and to dig, and rake and sow and reap, and build houses, and the girls to knit and spin, and make gowns,—*and use them like brothers, sisters, and children.*” To all this we devoutly say, Amen !

The preceding remarks were written in the autumn of 1842, and although some of the details they contain are no longer applicable to the state of the Mission, we have determined to allow them to remain, as expressive of the opinion founded upon the best possible data,—that of actually visiting the places described. But, after a lapse of eight years, many of our readers may be tempted to inquire what is the Achill Mission doing now ? We are sorry to say that the materials furnished by the reports of 1849, (the last in our hands,) are not more lucid than those to which we have alluded elsewhere. We will, however, briefly continue our sketch of the proceedings during the later years of its existence. A church has been erected at Dugorth, and after a time it was found necessary to enlarge its accommodation by the addition of a gallery ; since then it has been again extended, and is at present so much too small, that a new building, capable of containing 600 persons on the ground-floor, is at present in course of erection.

Another settlement has also been made at Meelan, about seven miles from Dugorth, where a large tract of land has been secured, and a church, a schoolhouse, a minister’s house, and twelve cottages erected. The church was built to accommodate 200 persons ; but it is so constructed that it can be greatly enlarged at a trifling expense. In addition to these buildings, the Mission has recently added a training-school for the education of the most intelligent of their scholars, in the duties of schoolmasters and scripture readers ; it is proposed to educate fifty boys for this purpose, and it is calculated that about two and a half years’ instruction, at an expense of £20, exclusive of outfit, will be sufficient to qualify these youths for their future occupation.

Besides the churches at Dugorth and Meelan, a third is in progress at Achill Sound, the foundation-stone of which was laid by the Bishop of Tuam in 1849. In the meantime Protestant worship is celebrated at Achill Sound in a room where the Petty Sessions are held ; it is also stately performed at Duach and at Duniver, in the eastern and western extremities of the island. The report states, that the total number of persons attending these various services exceeds 1,000. The present number of children in the Refuge is about 100 ; they are lodged, boarded, and clothed ; and, when sufficiently advanced, are sent out as servants, or brought up to various trades.

The Hospital and Dispensary are under the care of Dr. Adams, to whose high character we have borne testimony in a previous page. The former is intended for the reception of the members of the colony, and other inhabitants as far as the accommodation will permit. At the latter, advice and medicine are given to the population of the island and its vicinity. The number of medical services average 7,000 per annum.

During the famine years of 1845, 1846, 1847, there can be no denial of the fact that the Mission did much to alleviate the sufferings of the peasantry of Achill. Its promoters have been indefatigable in their efforts to raise funds for their operations, and have distributed, with no sparing hand, to those who must otherwise have perished. They opened schools in the

various villages, and had as many as 1,800 children under instruction at the same time, and to these they have distributed rations of Indian meal and other provisions, obtained by the contributions of the charitable. They also employed many of the adult population on the estates of the Mission, and, if not so successful as they could wish in securing the spiritual welfare of their poor neighbours, they may, at least, congratulate themselves on having materially improved their temporal condition.

The instruction afforded in the Mission-schools is exclusively in the Irish language, being that in which the children think and converse, and which is the only language understood by the majority of them ; the teachers are generally chosen from the most intelligent of the adult converts, and we wish that we could safely affirm that the zeal for proselytism was never allowed to stand in the place of ability to impart instruction, but this would, perhaps, be too much to expect from the promoters of a system of education in which the spread of protestantism is made the primary object, and in which the repetition of controversial catechisms takes precedence even of writing and arithmetic.

We turn to a pleasanter topic—the singularities and natural beauties of this Island of Achill. The people have many primitive customs. A few days before our arrival, an occurrence took place which we understood is by no means uncommon—a race for a wife. A young man, a carpenter, named Linchigan, applied to the father of a girl named Corrigan, for his daughter in marriage. A rival, called Lavelle, asked for her also, on the plea that as he was richer, “ he wouldn’t ask so much with her.” Whereupon, the factions “ of the swains” were about to join issue and fight ; when a peacemaker suggested that “ the boys should run for her.” The race was run accordingly, a distance of some miles up and down a mountain ; Linchigan won, and wedded the maiden. The islanders consist almost entirely of four principal families ; and we were informed that they could be easily distinguished the one from the other ; indeed, of this fact we had positive proof. They have, in many respects, separate habits and customs ; and seldom intermarry apart from their clans. The Lavelles are of French extraction—the descendants of French fishermen, who in former times used to fish off the island of Boffin ; they are for the most part “ light, smart, and handsome men ;” the Scholefields are of English descent—and “ proud of it ;” the Caulfields are dark curly-headed men, and retain tokens of Creole blood ; the Morans are of Danish descent—“ heavy and dull men,” with red hair and whiskers. The O’Malleys, Gaughans, and Maughans, are of the aboriginal Irish ; and they, added our informant, a very intelligent person, who had long lived among them, are “ cleverer than the others,” their countenances being animated and full of expression. The several classes were repeatedly pointed out to us, and in no instance was there a mistake as to the name or family of the person to whom reference was made. The habitations of the islanders are very singular. Their houses are heaps of rude stones moulded by the tide, procured from the beach, un-cemented ; they are rounded at the gables, and roofed with fern, heath, and shingles, fastened on by straw bands. In the village of Dooagha, consisting of about forty cabins, there is not a single chimney. Some of the wealthier graziers, however, have an odd custom of residing in such houses, or in houses of a still more simple construction, only during the summer months, when the season for fishing is “ on,” and their cattle are brought down towards the coast to feed on the young herbage. These hovels they call “ Builly houses.” The island was long famous for illicit stills ; a few years ago there were at least fifty at work there ; at the time of our visit there was not one, Father Mathew having utterly destroyed the trade. There is not a single tree upon the whole island, with the exception of two or three recently planted in “ the colony ;” although there are abundant marks of its being long ago one huge and pathless forest. It is full of lakes ; the shores abound in wild-fowl of every description, and the mountains with grouse. The foxes are so numerous, that the young lambs are never safe. Seals are seen at times in shoals among the rocks ; and the ravens and the eagles exist in astonishing numbers in the cliffs and recesses of the hills. The eagles, indeed, seemed so unconscious of fear that they remained within a very short distance

of us ; and one magnificent fellow soared over our heads, within pistol-shot, for above an hour, keeping on our course so near that we could count the feathers on his wings.

Our first object after entering the island was to engage the services of guides : two stout-limbed, athletic, and most obliging fellows, brothers of the name of O'Malley—a “ grate name” in Mayo, and a “ powerful faction” among rich and poor—presented themselves, and were retained. Under their direction we commenced the ascent of the Croghan mountain 2,254 feet above the level of the sea. We should scarcely have been tempted to this arduous undertaking, but that the top seemed at no great distance ; when we had surmounted it, however, we found ourselves at the foot of another still higher ; and when this difficulty was overcome, a third was before us, higher yet. In fact, we had to climb three mountains instead of one. But, in truth,

“ The mountain top, when climbed, did well o' erpay
The scalers' toil.”

From the commencement of the ascent, indeed, we became exceedingly interested in the prospect all around us : we soon obtained a view of Clew Bay, with its host of islands—Clare Island, with its tremendous precipices, topping them all. The hills were covered with wild flowers, in immense varieties ; of the orchis tribe there were numerous specimens ; the heaths were in rich luxuriance, and among them is plentifully found the *Erica Mediterranea*, to be procured in no other part of Great Britain ; and the wild juniper formed almost a close matting under our feet. Two or three foxes ran along our way ; and many times the eagle rose from his eyrie and hovered above us. Once we nearly trod upon the nest of a grouse ; the bird was sitting, and flew off as we approached. We stood a few minutes to examine her eggs, and were startled by an almost human cry of sorrow from the summit of an adjoining crag. It was the wail of the frightened bird ; and we passed upwards without disturbing her dwelling. Looking below, we saw the village of Keem—a group of dots of stone ; and further east, the village of Dooagha, dwindled almost to a few specks ; while the winding roads about the island seemed no broader than a ribbon. At length we reached the summit—and what a view ! On one side was beautiful Clew Bay ; and on the other a bay scarcely less beautiful, Blacksod Harbour. Behind us were the island hills and valleys, and the mountain of Slievemore, which although nearly as high as Croghan, we seemed to look down upon. Before us was the broad Atlantic—no spot of rock or land upon which a seamew could find rest, between us and America ; so that, literally, as the guide said, “ if we flung a stone out of our hands it would fall into another world, barring it didn't sink in the sea.” It was, indeed, a glorious sight, but one to which no language can do justice. Having “ drank our full” of the grandeur, magnificence, and surpassing beauty of the scene, we sate awhile upon a moss-covered bank, just above the mighty ocean that rolled back in masses from the black rocks against which it foamed ; and we spoke of the land and sea legends which, as may be imagined, are here closely mingled. Beneath us were two solitary rocks, seemingly broken off from the mainland, but in reality parts of it, although separated by a frightful chasm, through which the sea rolls at high-water. After the long and toilsome ascent, the traveller finds, on gaining the summit, that he stands on the brink of an enormous precipice, presenting a nearly perpendicular wall to the Atlantic. This side of the mountain forms a sort of semicircular bay and these two lone islands, or rather rocks, jut out to the sea beyond ; their savage quietude being broken only by the billows that beat against their base. They fall back into the sea foaming and sparkling ; but no sound is heard—we are far above its reach—and the effect is not a little enhanced by the strife of waters continuing in silent power beneath us. The islands themselves seem but as fallen masses of rock, and the enormous fragments that have fallen to the foot of the mountain upon which we stand, appear but as “ pieces” that might easily be lifted by the hand. It is difficult to believe that the dark atoms which move over their surface are human creatures—some of the fishermen, inhabitants of the island. Here dwelt, in former

times, a murderer, who came there with his two dogs, and used to hunt the deer chasing them to this chasm, over which they were used to leap ; but their enemy had built a wall on the other side, against which they sprung, falling down the precipice, where their bodies were found by the dark hunter. Two graves are still pointed out as the graves of the good hounds; but their master was carried off by evil spirits across the ocean.

From Achill we retraced our steps to Newport-Mayo, for the weather was too unsettled to permit our venturing across the bay ; and from thence we proceeded, through a wild and uninteresting district, a distance of six miles, to Westport. Westport is a town of considerable size, containing a population of nearly 5,000. The “ Hotel ” is situated on “ the Mall,” through which runs a clear stream ; it is opposite the Roman Catholic Chapel—an ugly building, the exterior of which we regretted to see defaced by “ posting-bills ” of sales and auctions. The inn is large, and abundantly furnished, containing five sitting-rooms and twenty-four bedrooms ; it was built and, we understood, supplied with furniture, free of expense to the host—who holds it rent-free—by the Marquis of Sligo, with the sole view of benefiting the town, by affording accommodation to all who are drawn thither by business or pleasure. Travellers have been loud in praises of “ the house ; ” to our minds, however, it is in ill keeping with all things in its neighbourhood : comfort is sought to be compensated for by state ; and wax candles, in the “ far west,” seemed to be sadly out of place.

The seat of the Marquis of Sligo adjoins the town, through the grounds of which there is a pleasant road to the quay—a road generously left free to all comers and goers. The quay is at some distance from the town; it seemed bustling and lively, notwithstanding the doleful aspect of a long line of storehouses, ostentatiously marked “ wine in bond,” “ tobacco in bond,” and so forth. The demesne of the Marquis is exceedingly beautiful ; nature had amply provided for the improvements of art ; a fine lake almost washes the steps of the hall-door; and the trees, of which it is full, are of magnificent growth. The most noble peer was for some years an absentee, occupied in discharging his duties as Governor of Jamaica ; happily he is now generally “ at home,” setting a good example to his wealthy neighbours, encouraging the industrious, and comforting the poor. He was described to us by persons of all classes, as a good and generous landlord ; most estimable in all the relations of private life ; courteous, kind, and condescending; an enlightened gentleman, a sure friend, and a true patriot.

The vicinity of Westport is full of attractions : the lovers of the picturesque will find enjoyments in abundance ; while here, as in every other part of this primitive district, there are innumerable sources of pleasure open to the sportsman.

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