

Into Terra Incognita 1832

*Wild sports of the West ;
interspersed with legendary tales, and local sketches*

William Hamilton Maxwell

1832

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“ And sure it is yet a most beautifull and sweete countrey as any is under heaven, being stored throughout with many goodly rivers, replenished with all sorts of fish most abundantly, sprinkled with many very sweet islands and goodly lakes, like little inland seas, that will even carry shippes upon their waters.” *Spenser’s State of Ireland*, 1596.

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.....and here I am fairly over the border, and safely deposited in the kingdom of Connaught, without injury or interruption worth recording.

On the subject of my travels I intend to be laconic, inasmuch as, with a temporary intervention of steam, I have resided in the royal mail since I left the lamps of London. I believe I am not exactly cut out for a traveller : I am incurious as to names of guards and coachmen— never inquire after their wives, or take the population of their families ; I generally sleep from the start to the close of the stage. I did observe that the colour of corn was nearly alike in both countries ; and remarked further, that English drivers seemed partial to ale and overalls, and Irish ones preferred frieze coats and naked whiskey.

And now, George, you shall have the particulars of my escape ; and, since the times of the Anabasis, or the more recent exploits of Lavalette and Ikey Solomons, never was retreat effected in more masterly style. Candour obliges me to admit, that mine was unaccompanied by sound of trumpet, or other “ pomp and circumstance of war ;” and rather resembled the hasty retirement of a detected thief from a tabernacle, than a bold operation in noonday, and in the face of the enemy. But let that pass. I embarked a miscellaneous cargo of guns, dogs, and fishing-tackle, under the *surveillance* of a trusty servant, on board a Dublin steamer, and the following evening started quietly for “ the Head ;” leaving directions with mine host in Grafton-street to acquaint Lord Leatherby, and all suspicious-looking inquirers, that I had departed for Constantinople, and that any commands for me must be forwarded, under cover, to the Sublime Porte.

I have no talent for statistics, but if my memory serve, the interesting portion of the British empire from which I write, is thus laid down by a modern tourist :—“ It lieth,” says this intelligent traveller, “ under a dark gray cloud, which is evermore discharging itself on the earth, but, like the widow’s curse, is never exhausted. It is bounded on the south and east by Christendom and part of Tipperary, on the north by Donegal, and on the west by the *salt say*. It abounds in bogs, lakes, and other natural curiosities ; its soil consists of equal quantities of earth and stone ; and its surface is so admirably disencumbered of trees, shrubs, hedges, and ditches, that an intelligent backwoodsman from Louisiana was heard to declare with rapture, that it was the most perfectly-cultivated territory in Europe.

“ Further,” saith the tourist, “ its gentry are a polished and religious race, remarkable for their punctuality in pecuniary transactions, and their freedom from a litigious or quarrelsome

disposition. The prevailing mode of belief among the upper classes is *anythingarianism*—that of the people, pure Popery.”

This premonitory sketch will save you and me, George, an infinity of trouble. You have here the country graphically placed before you, as well as the distinguishing traits of character, for which the pleasant and virtuous community who abide in this interesting department of the Emerald Isle are so eminently distinguished.

The town of Ballinasloe is seated on a river, the name of which I neglected to inquire. It is much frequented by saints and cattle dealers, carries on a smart trade in sheep and proselytes, and Bibles and bullocks are “thick as leaves in Vallombrosa.” The cabins, moreover, are whitewashed ; pigs and popery are prohibited ; and travellers wayfaring on the seventh day denounced, and, under perilous ameracements, enjoined to take their ease in their respective inns.

While the horses were being brought out, I strolled into the street, and, in a show-room of the Farming Society, discovered a collection of biblicals in full activity. From a short gentleman with soiled linen and an impeded delivery, I learned the gratifying fact, that the spread of the Gospel was progressive in California ; and, further, that a second-cousin of the King of Siam had been baptized by a Moravian Missionary. This latter annunciation elicited a thunder of applause ; and a young lady with a lisp pinched my elbow playfully, and requested me to propose that a piece of plate be transmitted to the converttee. Now, pinching one’s elbow on a five minutes’ acquaintance is alarming ; I accordingly levanted, leaving *Lispy* to propose the plate in person. I observed in my retreat a mob assembled round the chapel, and, pushing through a crowd of ragged urchins, established myself in the doorway. Within there was a meeting of Radical Reformers, and a tall man was pouring forth a philippic from the altar, in which he made an awful example of the king’s English, and, in his syllabic arrangements, differed totally from modern orthoepists. The gist of his oration went to prove, that Catholic Emancipation was a humbug—concession a farce—and luck or grace would never visit this unhappy island, until Mr. Cornelius Cassidy, of Killcooney House, was sent to represent us in the Imperial Parliament.

The horses are being put to, and I must say farewell. I shall, however, note my adventures, and in due time favour you with another epistle.

Adieu, always yours.

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Journey continued—Inn of Glantane—Tuam—A Bad Night—Out of the Frying-pan into the Fire—A Country Ball, and the Finish.

As my journey hither has been singularly propitious, I shall only trouble you with the leading incidents.

My carriage broke down close to the inn of Glantane, a solitary house, as the song goes, “delightfully placed in a bog.” As some delay must necessarily occur before the repairs of the vehicle could be effected, after the example of that accomplished cavalier, Major Dalgetty, I determined to seize on this opportunity to provision the garrison. To this prudent proceeding on my part I found there was an insurmountable obstacle : the landlady assured me that the “*matériel*” was in the house—there was bacon in the chimney, and chickens in the yard, but there was no turf within, till *the boys—the devil bother them for staying !*—came home from, the blacksmith’s funeral. Now, that the hotel of Glantane should be de-

ficient in this point was marvellous. The surface of the circumjacent country, in its proportion of tillage-ground to turbary, bears an acreable ratio of one to five hundred ; and yet, though in the bosom of a bog, there could not be a sufficiency of fire obtained to boil a potato-pot ! But human ingenuity is surprising : after a delay of three mortal hours I reascended my chaise, and, without further accident, was deposited in the town of Tuam.

On the merits of the Mitre Inn I shall be silent ; it produced in good time a respectable quarter of cold lamb, and a dish of exquisite potatoes. By the way, we cannot cook this latter esculent in England. Had my fare been worse, I would have submitted without a murmur ; for the waiter assured my servant that I had got the best bedroom in the house. Now, in the course of my narrative, I omitted to mention, that on the preceding night I had scarcely closed an eye. On retiring to my dormitory, I remarked that the grate was heaped with black turfs, apparently in the same state in which they had been removed from their parent moor ; but, anxious to court the drowsy god, I extinguished the candle, sprang into bed, and too late discovered that I was overloaded with a mass of ponderous blanketing, while a faint spark twinkled in the bottom of the grate, and, like the cry of wisdom in the streets, was disregarded. I fell into a temporary doze, and awoke an hour afterwards in a burning fever ; for the grate, in place of cold turfs, exhibited a roaring fire. In vain I opened door and window ; in vain I tumbled blanket after blanket on the floor : hours elapsed before the fever-warmth of the apartment could be abated. At last, exhausted by heat and exertion, I threw myself upon the outside of the bed-coverings, and made myself up for repose. Just then a brace of obstinate curs determined to “ bay the moon :” one established himself beneath my window, and the other took up a position at the opposite side of the street, and for three long hours they barked incessantly, relieving themselves occasionally by indulging in a mournful and nerve-torturing howl. Human forbearance could not support the martyrdom I suffered : I was driven to desperation, and, collecting every missile article in the chamber, with repeated discharges routed my persecutors, and once more endeavoured to procure some rest.

I sank into a delicious slumber ; but suddenly the door was flung open, and in rushed the waiter with portentous speed. “ The house must be on fire !” I ejaculated as I somerseted into the centre of the floor. My fears were fortunately groundless : Dennis merely awoke me to inquire if I would drive three miles out of town to see two scoundrels fight, who had quarrelled the preceding night about a game of cribbage. Judge then, dear George, after all these visitations, whether the annunciation of a quiet bed at Tuam was not to me “ a sound ecstatic !”

I swallowed a pint of rascally sherry without a murmur, fortified it with a dose of diluted alcohol, yawned my way to my room, found clean linen—no fire, and, in five minutes, was buried in sleep “ fast as a watchman.”

Presently arose a hum of many voices ; dreams and phantasies disturbed my uneasy slumbers ; a noise like distant music at times was faintly audible ;—at last a crash of instruments awoke me, and the first quadrille was in full execution within four feet of my distracted head !

Heaven granted me patience, although I was on the very brink of a country ball-room, and separated from “ the gay throng” only by the intervention of a slip of deal-board, while through the chinks you might have passed the poker, or interchanged a parasol.

I raised myself up on my elbow, and what a group was there ! A short man, in a claret-coloured coat, was paired with a stout gentlewoman in bright scarlet : she must have been descended from “ the giant ;” I would as soon grapple with her in a waltz, as commit myself to the embraces of a boa-constrictor. *Vis-à-vis* was a police-officer, in state uniform, with a

pale beauty in cerulean blue ; and a personage of immense calf, in black *tights*, confronted a skeleton in nankeen *unmentionables*. The ladies were gloriously adorned with silver ribbon, gilt wreaths, and every flower that blows, from a pink to a peony ; the lords of the creation sported stiffened cravats and a plurality of waistcoats ; and the ball-room emitted “ an ancient and fish-like smell”—a miasm of musk, assisted by every abomination in perfumery.

I was in an intermediate state between frenzy and fever, and turned over in my mind the expediency of setting fire to the bed-curtains, and sending myself, the quadrille, and the whole company to the skies, by igniting ten pounds of Harvey’s *treble strong*, which was stowed away somewhere in my luggage. Did tired Nature quiesce for a moment, I was fearfully roused with a tornado of torturous sounds. “ Places, gentlemen !”—“ Ladies-chain !”—“ Now, don’t dance, Patsey ; you know you’re drunk !”—“Arrah ! Charley, are you stupid ?”—“ *Dos-à-dos*, Miss Rourke !”—“ Up with the Lancers !”—“ Aisy, Mr. Bodkin ! remember there are ladies here !”—“ Waiter ! there’s porter wanted at the card-table !” Somnus ! deity of my adoration ! never expose me to such misery as I endured in the archiepiscopal town of Tuam !

Morning came, and the company retired to supper below stairs. Anticipating the consequences, I fortified my chamber-door with all the moveables I could collect. It was a prudent precaution ; for, blessed be God ! a row ensued, that finished both delph and dancing. I suffered nothing in person, but my less-fortunate valet got a black eye from a Connemara gentleman, who, unluckily for poor Travers, mistook him for the master of the ceremonies, with whom he of Connemara was at feud.

For the present, farewell.

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Loss of a Waiter—Precocious Talent—The Mad Major and the Mendicants of Mullingar—Cursing an Adjutant—Death of Denis O’Farrell.

It was noon when I arose, and the inmates of the Mitre were still in exquisite confusion. Breakfast, after much delay, was provided by the agency of the housemaid. She apologized for the non-attendance of the waiter, at present a patient in the Infirmary ; he having, in the course of the entertainment, been ejected from the window by a pleasant gentleman of Loughrea.

Anxious to be off as soon as possible, I ordered the horses to ; but an unforeseen difficulty occurred in removing my luggage to the carriage, as the door was blocked up four deep by a gang of beggars. With relation to the sizes of the respective places, the lazaroni of Naples are far out-numbered by the mendicants of Tuam. A trace broke at starting, and thus enabled me to form a pretty correct idea of this multitude. I reckoned to fifty-seven, and then became confused. Although beset on every side, I was proof against importunity, and refused parting with a sixpence. Cursing was next tried ; and to the curious in that accomplishment, I would suggest a week’s residence at the Mitre. One boy, a cripple in a dish, excelled the united talent of the remainder. English and Irish epithets were with him “ common as household words ;” he used both languages with surpassing fluency, and there was an originality of conception in his style of execration, which was what the Cockneys call most refreshing. This precocious prodigy could not be much above fifteen ; and, if he lives, will in this peculiar department of national eloquence be without a parallel. I have “ erst while” passed through Billingsgate, when the fair ; inhabitants betrayed symptoms of irritation ; I have heard hackney-coachmen cursing at a crowded opera over a fractured panel or broken pole ; I have listened to a score of watermen squabbling for a fare at Westminster Bridge ; I have been on

board a transport in a gale of wind, with an irreligious commander ; but Tuam for ever! there cursing is perfection.

Mine, George, is but a rambling narrative, and my details, however interesting, lay no claim to the *lucidus ordo* ; therefore I reserve full liberty from the very start to bolt into digressions when and as I please.

Of the many anecdotes that I have heard my father narrate of his friend, the Mad Major, one was particularly characteristic.

When the gallant 50th were removed to Mullingar, it was supposed that this town produced a greater number of beggars than any in the king's dominions : a swarm of paupers rendered the streets almost impassable, and ingress or egress to or from a shop was occasionally impracticable. Now, beggars were to the Mad Major an abomination ; and for two days he ensconced himself in his lodgings, rather than encounter the mendicants of Mullingar. Confinement will increase bile, and bile may induce gout ; and at last, wearied of captivity, he sallied forth, and to every application for relief, he specified an early day, requesting the numerous supplicants to be punctual to the appointed time. His wish was faithfully attended to ; and on the expected morning, the street where he resided was literally blocked up. The Major, under a volley of blessings, appeared at the hall-door. " Are you all here ?" he inquired, in accents of the tenderest compassion. " All, your honour—all, young and owld !" responded a big beggarman. " We're all here, colonel, *avorneen !*" exclaimed a red virago, " but my own poor man, *Brienev Bokkogh*, [1] and he, the crater ! fell into the fire a Sunday night, and him hearty, and sorrow stir he can make good nor bad."—"Ah, then," said the humane commander, " why should poor Brien be left out ? Arrah ! run yourself, and bring the cripple to us," In a twinkling off went the red virago, and, after a short absence, issued from a neighbouring lane, with Brienev on her shoulders. " Are you all here now ?" inquired the tender-hearted chieftain. " Every single sowl of us," said an old woman in reply. " Ogh ! that the light of heaven may shine on his honour's dying hour ; but it's he that's tender to the poor !" " Amen, sweet Jasus !" responded a hundred voices. " Silence !" said the Mad Major, as he produced a small book neatly bound in red morocco. " Whisht, your sowls !" cried the big beggarman. " Are ye listening ?"—" Sha, sha ! yes, yes !" was responded in English and Irish. " Then, by the contents of this blessed book—and it's the Bible—a rap I won't give one of ye, you infernal vagabonds, if I remained a twelvemonth in Mullingar !" A yell of execrations followed ; but the Major bore the cursing like a philosopher, and kept his promise like a monk. To the surprise of all, the beggars left the way when he walked out, and absconded from the shop he entered. They crossed themselves devoutly if they encountered him unexpectedly at a corner, adjuring the Lord to " stand between them, the Mad Major, and the devil !"

Apropos to cursing ; the late Sir Charles Asgill told a story of this eccentric personage. During the time the 50th remained in Ireland, the Colonel was mostly absent from ill health, and the command of course devolved upon the Major. By one of the military abuses at that time too common, a little Scotch Doctor, who had somehow been appointed Adjutant to a Fencible regiment, was transferred from it to the 50th. Incompetent from professional inability, he was further afflicted by a constitutional nervousness, that made him badly calculated to come in contact with such a personage as the Mad Major.

Shortly after the little Scotchman joined, the half yearly inspection took place. Major O'Farrell, in the course of his evolutions, found it requisite to deploy into line, and called to his field-assistant " to take an object." " Have you got one ?" cried the commander, in a voice of thunder. " Yes, Sir," replied the alarmed Adjutant, in a feeble squeak. The word was given, and the right wing kept moving, until the face of the regiment assumed the form of a semi-

circle. “Hallo !—where or what is your object ?” roared the Major. “A crow, Sir,” replied the unhappy Scotsman. “And where is the crow ?” roared the Commander. “Flown off,” was the melancholy response. “May the devil fly away with you, body and bones ! Halt — dress ! Stop, Sir Charles — do stop. Just allow me two minutes to curse that rascally Adjutant.” To so reasonable a request, Sir Charles, who was a most obliging officer, readily assented. The General mentioned often, that the damning of a stupid Adjutant was no novelty ; but that he never saw a man cursed to his perfect satisfaction, until he heard the Scotch Doctor anathematized in the Phoenix Park.

The death of poor Denis was in such perfect keeping with his life, that I am tempted to give it to you.

The regiment was in garrison, and at a race-ball a trifling misunderstanding occurred between a young Ensign and a country-gentleman. It was, however, instantly adjusted. A few days afterwards, some intemperate expressions which had fallen from the gentleman at the ball, were reported to the Mad Major. These he considered as reflecting upon the character of his corps, and he despatched the senior Captain for an explanation. The answer to this demand was unsatisfactory, and the Captain was directed to deliver a hostile message. The officers of the “Half Hundred” were a brave body—they vainly endeavoured to make it a regimental affair, and insisted that the person to resent the insult should be indifferently selected (by lot) from the corps.

“Gentlemen, I thank you ;” said the Mad Major, as he struck his broad hand upon the mess-table. “Your motives are personally kind—but as I am at the head of this regiment, I hold myself to be the conservator of its honour.”

That evening the Major had a violent attack of gout, to which for years he had been a martyr but he concealed it carefully, and when his friend called him on the morning, he was found dressed and powdered, but unable to move without assistance. Captain M—— pressed upon him the necessity of postponing the meeting, or permitting another officer to be his substitute ; but Denis was immovable in his resolve. He proceeded to the ground, and supported by a crutch, after a discharge of pistols, received a satisfactory apology. Poor fellow ! this was his last feat. Exposure to the cold of a damp spring morning brought on a renewed attack of gout—that night the disorder settled in his stomach—and the morning after he was a corpse.

The body was carried to its last resting-place, accompanied by all the pomp of a military funeral. His own beloved company, the grenadiers, who had often followed their lion-hearted leader into action, now formed his guard of honour to the grave ; and when his remains were committed to the earth there was not a dry eye among the “Dirty Half Hundred.”

Two months afterwards, when an Irish soldier was questioned on the merits of his successor—“The man is well enough,” said Pat, with a heavy sigh, “but where will we find the equal of the Mad Major ? By Jasus, it was a comfort to be cursed by him !”

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Castlebar—Newport—Departure from Christendom—Progress into Terra Incognita—Roads and scenery—Mulranny—Passage down the Inlet—Incidents—Lodge in the Wilds of Erris—Description of the establishment.

WITHOUT any adventure worthy of a place in this itinerary, I reached in safety the capital of Mayo. From other provincial cities, this town is distinguished in having a new drop and an

old gaol ; a swamp in the centre of the town surrounded by an iron chain, judiciously placed there, I imagine, to prevent cattle and children being lost in the morass which it environs ; a court-house, with a piazza and façade, of an original order of architecture, only known to Irish professors of the art of building ; trade and manufactures are limited to felt-hats and poteen whisky ; and the only machinery I could discover was the drop, aforesaid. I was informed that the chapel and petty-sessions are generally crowded, as is the market, upon a hanging-day.

I was called next morning at five o'clock by the waiter, to proceed by the Sligo mail, although on the preceding night I had taken considerable pains to persuade him that my course lay westward. One hour afterwards, the chamber-maid roused me to inquire if I had any intention of proceeding to Hollymount by a hackney car. To save these worthy people further trouble, I arose and dressed, and, wishing to avoid a vestry to be that day holden in the town, and where, in the course of argument, it was believed that divers lives would be lost, I took an early breakfast, and departed.

I stopped at Newport ; it was the last cluster of houses arrogating to itself the title of a town, that I should now meet with, for I had reached the *ultima Thule* of civilized Europe—and when I had given directions to the post-master touching the transmission of my letters in my cousin's bag, I looked around me, and took a silent but mournful farewell of Christendom.

I found at the public-house that my kinsman had provided for my farther progress into *terra incognita*. A couple of rudely-constructed vehicles were waiting to receive myself and personal property, and a wild bare-legged mountaineer, with a leathern bag strapped across his shoulders, announced himself as guide. “ Had he no horse ? ” “ *Devil a horse !* but he would warrant he would keep up with me,”—and away we went under a salute of our dogs, and the furtive glances of sundry ladies with their hair in papers.

Some distance from the town we crossed an ancient bridge of many arches, through which an extensive lake communicates with the sea, and farther on passed the old tower of Carrigahowla. Our route was contiguous to the sea—on the left were the numerous islands of Clew Bay ; on the right an extensive chain of savage hills and barren moorland. The road now became hardly passable ; constructed without the least regard to levelness,—*here* it dipped into a ravine, and *there* breasted some sudden hill, inaccessible to any carriage but the light machines we travelled with. Its surface was rough, and interrupted by a multitude of loose stones ; while some of the bridges were partially dilapidated, and others had never been completed. In these, the ragged line of granite which formed the key-stones of the arches stood nakedly up, and presented a barrier that no common carriage could overtop without endangering its springs and harness. Yet this forlorn road is the only communication with a highly improvable country, covering at least fifty square miles, with numerous and profitable islands attached, and an immense line of sea-coast, possessing rich fisheries, and abounding in kelp-weed and manure ! And why was this neglect ? Were the proprietors of this deserted district so cold to that true spring of human action, self-aggrandizement, as to omit providing an outlet for the sources of their opulence ? Were there no public monies allocated to these abandoned corners of the earth, and so much lavishly expended on many a useless undertaking elsewhere ? Yes : large sums have been presented and *re-presented* by the Grand Juries for the last twenty years, but they have been regularly pocketed by those to whose good faith they were entrusted. Would it be believed in England, George, that this atrocious system of peculation has been carried to such an extent, that roads have been passed, *as completed*, when their lines have been but roughly marked out—and bridges been actually paid for, the necessary accounting affidavits having been sworn to in open court, when not a stone was ever laid, and to this day the stream runs without a solitary arch to span its flood from the

source to the debouchement ? Ay—these delinquencies have been often and notoriously perpetrated, and none have had the courage to drag the criminals to justice.

At the *clachan* of Mulranny we struck into a pass in the mountains, and turned our backs upon Clew Bay. A branch from the waters of Black Sod runs some ten miles inland, and meets this opening in the hills, affording a communication by boats with Erris. There my kinsman's galley was waiting for me, and in it I embarked my person and establishment. Taking advantage of a south-westerly wind, the boatmen hoisted their close-reefed lug, and away we shot rapidly towards the entrance of the inlet. From the high lands which rose on every side, the squalls fell more heavily and frequent than I found agreeable ; but in an hour we cleared this confined and dangerous channel, and, running between Currane Point and the island of Innis Biggle, entered Black Sod Bay.

The passage down the inlet, was marked with several incidents which were in perfect keep-ing with the wild and savage scenery around. A seal would suddenly raise his round head above the surface, gaze for a moment at the boat, and, when he had apparently satisfied his curiosity, sink quietly from our view. In rounding the numerous headlands through which this inlet irregularly winds, we often started flocks of curlews, [2] which, rising in an alarm at our unexpected appearance, made the rocks ring with their loud and piercing whistle. Skirting the shore of Innis Biggie, we disturbed an osprey or sea-eagle, [3] in the act of feeding on a bird. He rose leisurely, and, lighting on a rock, waited till we passed, and then returned to his prey. We ran sufficiently close to the shore to observe the size and colour of the bird, and concluded that a grouse had been the eagle's victim.

When we had cleared the islands, the breeze blew fresh and steadily ; the boatmen shook out the reefs, which had hitherto confined their canvass ; the galley, with increased velocity, rushed through the rippling water, till, doubling a neck of land surmounted by a ruined castle, and running up a sheltered creek, I found myself at the termination of my voyage, and warmly welcomed by my Irish kinsman, from whom for fifteen years I had been separated.

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I have been here three days, and am as much domesticated in the mansion as my cousin's Newfoundland dog. I know the names and "*sobriquet*" of the establishment ; can discriminate between "*Hamish-a-neilan*" (James of the island) and *Andy-bawn* (Fair Andy) ; I hold converse with the cook, and am hand-and-glove with the housemaid. Really I am delighted with the place, for every thing is wild, new, and out-of-the-way ; but I must describe the locale of my kinsman's domicile.

At the bottom of a narrow creek, you must imagine " a low snug dwelling, and in good repair." The foam of the Atlantic breaks sometimes against the windows, while a huge cliff, seaward, defends it from the storm, and, on the land side, a sudden hill shelters it from the north wind. Here, when the tempest roars abroad, your friend Laura might venture forth and not endanger a *papillotte*. The bent [4] roof is impervious to the rain ; the rooms are neat, well arranged, and comfortable. In the parlour, if the evening be chilly, a turf fire sparkles on the hearth ; and when dried bog-deal is added to the embers, it emits a fragrant and delightful glow, superseding the necessity of candles. The long and measured swell of the Atlantic would almost lull a troubled conscience to repose ; and that rural hum, which attends upon the farmyard, rouses the refreshed sleeper in the morning. In the calm of evening I hear the shrill cry of the sand-lark ; and in the early dawn, the crowing of the cock-grouse. I see the salmon fling themselves over the smooth tide, as they hurry from the sea to reascend their native river. And while I drink claret that never paid the revenue a farthing, or indulge over that proscribed beverage the produce and the scourge of this wild district I trace from the

window the outline of a range of hills, where the original red-deer of Ireland are still existing none of your park-fed venison, that tame, spiritless diminutive, which a boy may assassinate with his “birding-piece,” but the remnant of that noble stock, which hunters of other days, *O’Connor the Cus Dhu*, [5] and *Cormac Bawn Mac Tavish* once delighted in pursuing.

The offices of this wild dwelling are well adapted to the edifice. In winter, the ponies have their stable ; and kine and sheep a comfortable shed. Nor are the dogs forgotten ; for them a warm and sheltered kennel is fitted up with benches, and well provided with straw. Many a sporting-lodge in England, on which thousands have been expended, lacks the comforts of my kinsman’s unpretending cottage. Where are the coach-houses ? Those, indeed, would be useless appendages ; for the nearest road on which a wheel could turn, is ten miles distant from the lodge.

[1] Bryan the Cripple.

[2] The bill is long, equally incurvated, and terminated in a blunt point ; nostrils linear, and longitudinal near the base ; tongue short and sharp-pointed ; and the toes are connected as far as the first joint of the membrane.

With the curlew, Linnæus begins a numerous tribe of birds under the genuine name of *Scalopax*, which, in his arrangement, includes all the snipes and godwits, amounting, according to Latham, to forty-two species and eight varieties, spread over various parts of the world, but nowhere very numerous.

Buffon describes fifteen species and varieties of the curlew, and Latham ten, only two or three of which are British birds. They feed upon worms, which they pick up on the surface, or with their bills dig from the soft earth : on these they depend for their principal support ; but they also devour the various kinds of insects which swarm in the mud and in the wet boggy grounds, where these birds chiefly take up their abode.

[3] “Eagles are well knowne to breed here, but neither so bigge, nor so many, as books tell. Cambrensis reporteth of his own knowledge, and I heare it averred by credible persons, that barnacles, thousands at once, are noted along the shoares to hang by the beakes about the edges of puttified timber, shippes, oars, anchor-holders, and such like, which in processe, taking lively heate of the sunne, become water-fowles, and, at their time of ripenesse, either fall into the sea, or fly abroad into the ayre.” *Campion’s Historie*.

[4] The customary thatch in parts of Erris.

[5] Blackfoot

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