

Historical And Descriptive Sketch

Of The Past And Present

State of Ireland.

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*Excursions through Ireland:
comprising topographical and historical delineations of each province ;
together with
descriptions of the residences of the
nobility and gentry,
remains of antiquity,
and every other object of interest or curiosity.
Forming a complete guide
for the traveller and tourist.*

IRELAND, by Caesar and Tacitus distinguished by the name of *Hibernia*, by Ptolemy, the geographer, called *Ivernia*, by Diodorus Siculus *Iris*, and by Strabo *Ierne*, enjoyed, at a very remote period, considerable celebrity as a seat of religion and learning. After the dawn of Christianity in Europe, from the number of erudite and holy men it sent as missionaries to other parts of the world, as yet immersed in Gothic ignorance and darkness, this island acquired the dignified title of *INSULA SANCTORUM*, or the Isle of Saints a title which it continued to retain during the fifth and two following centuries. In the eleventh century it was called *Scotia*, in common with the modern Scotland ; and “ all correct writers,” says Archbishop Usher, “ in mentioning the two countries, distinguished them by *Vetus et nova Scotia, major or minor, ulterior and citerior.*” Even so late as the fifteenth century, Ireland is mentioned by foreign writers under this name.

Though we cannot give implicit credit to the relations of the Irish historians, in regard to the high degree of civilization, and the progress of the arts of peace, for which, as they assert, their country was eminent at the distant period alluded to ; yet it appears but reasonable that these effects should have been in part produced by the ages of tranquillity and prosperity enjoyed by the island, previous to the invasion ordered by Egfrid, King of the Northumbrians, in the seventh century ; when its lands, churches, and monasteries, were laid waste. This irruption, together with those of the Norwegians and Danes, (the *Ostmen*, or *East men*, of Irish history,) towards the close of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century, terminated not merely in the entire subjection [1] of the island to the Norwegian leader, Turgesius but by the intestine wars which ensued between the natives and the new settlers, for nearly three hundred years following, occasioned the destruction of their learned seminaries for which Ireland had been long justly famous, “ whence savage septs and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge, and the blessing of religion,” and reduced the people and the country that state of moral and political degradation, from which owing to the mistaken we had almost said *similar* policy of the government which succeeded to that of the barbaric hordes, they are yet far from having completely emerged.

At the era of which we are about to speak that the arrival of the English in 1170 the civil contentions of Ireland having produced its division into several petty kingdoms, nominally dependant on the King of Connaught ; Roderic O’Connor, then King of that province, and monarch of Ireland, invaded the territory of his vassal the King of Leinster, in punishment for

the manifold cruelties and acts of oppression by which the latter had made himself odious to the people under his immediate sway. This Prince, by name Dermot Mac Morogh, flying from the arms of Roderic, sought refuge in England ; whence passing into Aquitaine, and throwing himself at the feet of our Henry the Second, he elicited his protection, and took an oath of allegiance happy to avail himself of so favourable a conjuncture, Henry, who even as far back as 1155 had procured a bull from Pope Adrian to authorize his invasion of the sister island, immediately issued an edict (being precluded from rendering personal assistance by the war he as carrying on in Aquitaine) importing that he had received Dermot into his protection, grace, and favour: “ *Wherefore that all they, that to him as oure lawfull man helpe yieldeth into his land him to restore, oure grace and oure good love have they thereto.*” After some delay, Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke, surnamed Strongbow from his excellence in archery, a man of courage and address, but of desperate fortunes, espoused the cause of the exiled Prince ; and undertook to lead a body of men to Ireland in his service, on condition that Dermot would give him his daughter Eva in marriage, and settle upon him and his heirs the inheritance of the kingdom of Leinster. It is scarcely necessary to add that the efforts of the gallant Earl were crowned with success, and laid the foundation of the English power in Ireland : Henry soon after setting sail from Milford Haven for the scene of the late contentions ; confirming, by royal grant, the possession of the province of Leinster to Strongbow ; and receiving from him, and from all the other petty sovereigns of the country, not excepting the titular King of Ireland, Roderic O’Connor, himself, the oath of submission and fealty. Then, having distributed large tracts of land to the principal of his followers, and appointed Hugh de Lacy (to whom he had given in fee the county of Meath) the first general governor, under the title of Lord Justice, he returned to England : from which period the Kings of England have been the acknowledged sovereigns of Ireland ; and have appointed successive viceroys, who were at first called Keepers or Wardens of Ireland, afterwards Justices and Deputies, now Lords Lieutenant, and, in their absence, Lords Justices.

That the English government, thus permanently settled in Ireland, has, from its commencement almost to the present era, been radically and most lamentably *wrong*, many circumstances tend to demonstrate. In every other country of Europe, the progress of civilization, of the liberal arts, and of those tastes and elegant desires which mark the improvement of humanity, has been commensurate with that of letters and of time : Ireland alone, the greater part of it at least, remains immersed in nearly all its pristine barbarity. In England; and yet more conspicuously perhaps in Scotland, the general division of labour, and the successive improvements in machinery, have advanced agriculture and manufactures to a pitch of excellence hitherto unprecedented in the annals of the world ; in Ireland, the subjected peasant yet weaves for himself the garments that he wears, rears for himself the wretched cabin that he inhabits, tills with his own hands the ground for every morsel of produce upon which he subsists, and unites in his own person every office of rural, domestic, and manufacturing economy. The consequence is, that his garments are generally such as an English labourer would scarcely stoop to pick up from the ground, his cabin and his food such as would be appropriated for the lodgment and subsistence of our working animals, while he himself, in many instances, performs the various species of labour in England allotted to those useful brutes. Far be from us the wish, from national pride, or for the encouragement of prejudices, as prevalent as they are unworthy of us, to overcharge the picture we have drawn : *the facts* have been before our eyes ; and with sentiments of the sincerest pity we repeat those facts, as a necessary first sketch of the features, prominent to the view of every tourist, in the ill fated country we have undertaken to describe.

We have alluded to defects in the government of the country, as the prime source of its complicated wretchedness ; and, without the slightest intention of engaging in political disquisitions, or evincing the slightest shade of bias in regard to any political point, we must revert to, and in some measure enlarge upon, the opinion thus generally expressed, in order to render our ideas of the actual state of Ireland in any degree clear to those who may favour us with their perusal.

The selfish and exclusive spirit which, immediately upon the conquest of this country, separated “the meer Irish,” as the original inhabitants were insolently called, from the hateful aristocracy of *the pale*, continued, with very little alteration, (although its distinctions, subsequent to the reformation, became religious rather than national,) to actuate the reigning administration until the year 1778 ; [2] and, truth compels us to add, the traces of this spirit are still but too perceptible in an ‘united’ government, the constitution of which, according to the eloquent Burke, “is not *made* for *great general proscriptive exclusions*,” since “sooner or later it will destroy them, or they will destroy it!” Yet have not those great prescriptive exclusions, by which the immense majority of the Irish population are debarred from every exertion for individual improvement, by the deprivation of the grand prospective solace of all human effort, hope of individual honours and rewards have not those exclusions, by their deep though silent operation for ages, in themselves been calculated to produce that abject disregard for all the comforts and conveniences of life, that slavish awe of wealth and power, which so peculiarly characterize the ‘proscribed’ many among the poor in Ireland ; together with those tyrannical and overbearing habits which in that country are as peculiarly, and, we fear, almost universally, the attributes of the affluent and favoured few? The reader will perceive that we make no distinct allusion to the chief political question, in regard to Ireland, of the day that we consider the oligarchical settlement of the country by Henry, the tyrannous acts of that otherwise great and enlightened Queen, Elizabeth, [3] the exterminating policy of Cromwell, [4] the bad faith of the ‘constitutional’ William, [5] the rigours exercised in the extinction of the recent rebellion, [6]: and the whole past and present temporal disabilities of the catholics, but as so many links in the chain of causes which produced the effects we deplore. Singular, indeed, as unfortunate, has been the fate of Ireland. Though Henry introduced the English laws within the pale, though Elizabeth, finally expunging the Brehon code, [7] established our system of legislature throughout the country, yet for ages after that period the people in general received no advantages from its establishment : and, notwithstanding the subsequent union of the two countries has wrought out some substantial benefits for Ireland, and has paved the way for greater, the beneficent and equalizing spirit of our legal institutions is still far from being generally understood, as well as from operating for the benefit of that class for whose protection laws were principally made, in this hitherto unhappy island. Even now the poorer orders consider an appeal to interest, or the eloquence of a bribe, as the only certain means of obtaining justice ; even now, though high judicial situations are filled by men of undoubted honour and integrity, too many of the petty magistrates oppress, insult, or neglect the populace, as it may suit their humours or their convenience ; and the populace, in their turn, finding the

“Laws grind the poor, and rich men rule the law,”

imbibe feelings of contempt (well masked by seeming obsequiousness) for the magistracy they in other circumstances would honour ; and not unnaturally conceive *themselves* privileged to redress the wrongs of which they might fruitlessly complain to their superiors. Hence the numerous outrages which disgrace the nightly annals of the country ; hence the associations of “Carders” and “Threshers” associations so far from originating in *mere* disaffection to the government, as is very generally supposed, that they invariably arise out of a spirit of opposition to some attempts of local despotism ; and are the genuine results of the desperate fear and deeply-brooding revenge of men feeling themselves aggrieved, yet deprived of all hope of legal recompence by their natural protectors. Private acts of malice and revenge are indeed the only stain upon the national character of the Irish : and having observed the sources whence they flow, as from a fountain-head of heart-burnings and discontent, it better becomes the generosity of the English character to palliate than very severely to condemn them. The Irish have been accused also of cruelty and deceit—no opinions, if applied to the great body of the nation, can be more erroneous : and though individual instances in support of such opinions should be adduced, yet surely they must be repeated with a bad grace by a people whose government and whose ancestors have both deceived and oppressed, and who themselves but too frequently ridicule and insult them ; whose penal laws and whose arbitrary sway have, it is probable, rendered a character, originally open and unsuspecting,

jealous, cunning, and distrustful ; and have reduced a frank and noble nation to a state in which prevarication and cheating become modes of self-defence, and in which the low vices of barbaric life are necessarily and inevitably generated. “ To place no trust in a people,” says an elegant writer, “ is often an effectual way to make them unworthy of trust : and when the Irish find that they are no longer aliens in the lands of their fathers, they will be amongst the most faithful subjects of the British empire.” [8]

Strong reasons exist for believing that the native Irish and the Highlanders of Scotland were anciently one people : their customs, manners, language, and superstitions, bear a resemblance to this day ; and the Highlander converses easily with the ‘ wild Irishman.’ With some limitations, it is true that the Irishman, as well as the Highlander, possesses “ the generous and chivalrous spirit—the self-subdued mind—the warm affection to his family—the fond attachment to his clan—the love of story and of song—the contempt of danger and of luxury—the mystic superstition equally awful and tender :” and, observes the writer we have just quoted, “ he only requires to be placed in circumstances favourable to moral improvement, in order to exhibit the same lovely picture of simplicity and innocence, of affection and fidelity, that may be seen in the glens and recesses of the north :” although “ the Irish peasant (now) does not much excel the savage in just notions of liberty, or in due respect for the laws and civil institutions of man!” [9]

The *hospitality* of the Irish has become proverbial ; and it is confined to no rank or class, language or religion. *Welcome! kindly welcome!* is the universal salutation to the traveller who approaches their cabins in the more frequented parts, where English is generally spoken ; and *Cead mile failte duit!* a hundred thousand welcomes is shouted by man, woman, and child, to every visitant, in the native Erse of the mountains. This language, it has been observed, and may be repeated by the way, abounds with terms of *endearment* another proof of the “ mild and tender enthusiasm” proper to the Irish character. It is spoken by 3,000,000 of the people ; and, like the vernacular languages of the Welsh and Highlanders, is loved and venerated by all those “ to whose infant minds it first conveyed the tender and endearing accents of maternal affection,” to a romantic extreme.

The mention of the language in common use among so large a proportion of the population, (a population, of which though there are few accurate returns, we are induced to estimate as rather exceeding 6,000,000,) naturally leads us to a subject, in one point of view intimately connected with it, though too generally considered as extraneous. We allude to the state of education among the lower orders of the Irish ; which, in very few instances, that we could discover, at the period of our recent tour, was conveyed in the national tongue of the inhabitants, in which only instruction can by any possibility be efficiently received by those who speak it. Schools are sufficiently abundant ; and immense sums are annually expended in their support ; but the lessons are invariably *in English*, though intended, as we are warranted in supposing, for the benefit of the poor natives, who are incapable of maintaining a conversation in any language but the *Erse* ! A fact scarcely to be credited ; and sufficient of itself to account for the deplorable ignorance of the great mass of the people ; as well as for the actually increasing prevalence of that language, and that religion, both of which, it is to be presumed, this *protestant* mode of teaching was intended to exterminate. Should popery indeed be rooted from the island ?—enlighten the minds of the people, then, in the only way it is possible they can be enlightened ; and the mists of delusion will of themselves fall from their eyes : and though a majority might continue papists in name, there are countless instances to prove, that the name alone would neither make them bad men nor disloyal subjects. Should the influence of the priests be abolished ?—let the clergy of the established church *preach* to their benighted flocks in the dialect of the majority [10] of those they have taken under their spiritual care ; and the flocks themselves, deserting their ignorant and selfish guides, would, in the natural course of things, prefer the teaching of sound learning, disinterested zeal, and eloquent ability. Or should the Irish language, on the ground of the benefits to be derived from national unity of speech, be extirpated, at least so far as it is a medium of *oral* communication ?— still, strange as may appear the means we would devise for this end,

we would simply recommend that, by versions of the Bible, Prayer-book, &c. in that tongue, as well as by teaching, and, for a time at least, preaching also in the same dialect, its temporary cultivation should lead to its final eradication. This has ever been found the only rational method that could be adopted for the extinction of a language, spoken by a class only in a nation, the language of whose government is dissimilar to it ; and its expediency has been fully shewn both in Wales and in the Highlands, the respective national dialects of which are hourly wearing away, under the like system of cultivation. Indeed, the principles upon which this method is founded, are the principles of our common nature itself ; since mankind in general, it is seen, will cling to their native habits the more obstinately for their being proscribed ; since, unless coerced by their rulers, men are naturally prone to imitate their modes of speaking as well as of living ; and since they, not only obtain a foreign tongue more easily by being first enabled to enlarge their ideas in their own, but, finding the materials of knowledge scanty in the dialect of their fathers, are led to gratify their now awakened thirst for information, by more familiarly acquainting themselves with a language containing the treasures of that erudition they admire.

These remarks are more particularly applicable to the *Irish* poor, as they are themselves eminently prepared for the reception of a liberal system of education, calculated to supply their wants, without wounding their nationality, or unnecessarily disturbing their prejudices. Their efforts for the attainment of knowledge, the

“ Majestic tree, that proudly waves
“ Its branching words, its letter-leaves ;
“ Whose root is truth, whose stem is power,
“ And virtue its consummate flower,” [11]

are unremitting and universal ; and *inquisitiveness* is among the more obvious of their national characteristics. Unlike the lower classes in many countries, conspicuous only for their boorish stupidity, they are, as a distinguished member of the British senate, Mr. Curwen, observed, “ the most pleasing peasantry in Europe ;” arch, vivacious, shrewd, and intelligent. Neither is it any exaggeration, that an Irishman “ will walk miles with you to discover whence you come, where you are going, and what is your business : he will appear merry to make you frank, and perfectly untutored and simple, with a design constantly in view.” [12] It should be noticed also, that these people possess no common talent for striking and original remark ; and with this faculty probably is connected the not less amusing habit of blundering ; but, let it be remembered, that their blunders “ are never blunders of the heart.” With those among the Irish, habituated only to the native dialect, this propensity, it is justly thought, may be ascribed, in a great measure, to the circumstance of their conversing, when with strangers, in one language, while they are at the same moment *thinking* in the abrupt and highly figurative idioms of another ; for in the Erse, which alone in general they perfectly understand, they are not observed to make more blunders than other people. And should it be objected to this apology, that even where no Irish is spoken the natives are equally liable to these *Hibernianisms*, we have only farther to plead, that a certain dry humour, a considerable degree of enthusiasm, and exuberance of fancy—no unpleasing traits of character in a people—may, possibly, both with the Irish and Anglo-Irish, be the grand sources of their production, and our consequent entertainment.—It may be remarked also, as in some measure corroborating this view of the subject, that among the Highlanders, who are equally distinguishable for enthusiasm and warmth of fancy, though inferior in humour to the Irish, the same propensity has been observed, although in a less degree.

A high sense of *honour* is also so prevalent among these people, as to be entitled to the distinction of a national characteristic : of all professions, that of an informer is the most universally execrated ; and accordingly men of this class are rare in proportion to the contempt and detestation in which they are held. The *general honesty* existing amidst so much distress, is yet more to be commended : as an instance, the potatoes, which are the chief food of the poorer orders, and are generally left embanked in large quantities in the fields, are rarely,

even in seasons of scarcity, known to be pilfered. *Charity* ranks high in their list of virtues : from the very meanest cabins, the shout of welcome extends not less to the common beggar than to the wayfaring man. Among a people thus alive to all the generous impulses of feeling, and as eager to be grateful as to give, it were an anomaly in the human heart were they not equally susceptible of resentment : accordingly we find the Irish the warmest and best of friends, and worse foes we cannot readily imagine. And that the scale of morality among such a people should be inconsistent and imperfect, will not be wondered at by such as are acquainted with the influence of national depression upon national character : it should be an axiom in political economy, that “ every circumstance, which divests the individual of respectability, either in his own or others’ estimation, is injurious to his *moral* interests. ”

The population of Ireland is excessive; evidently exceeding its means of support. Its increase of late years has been out of all proportion to that of capital and means of employment ; both of which, in most countries, are concomitant with, if not the creative sources of, numerical growth in the inhabitants. In 1185, Giraldus Cambrensis tells us, Ireland was without roads, and nearly *uninhabited* ; even in 1652, Sir William Petty supposed the population not to exceed 850,000 ; yet at the present moment, as already stated, it probably amounts to more than 6,000,000 ! A prodigious increase for any country in the time ; and particularly for a country circumstanced like Ireland. But perhaps the very circumstances generally supposed to retard population in a country, in Ireland have contributed to augment it. National debasement produces a general disregard for consequences ; and poverty becoming, as it were, indigenous to successive generations, appeared to inspire less horror as the portion of their offspring : marriages therefore were early and inconsiderate ; and the children, when grown up, being compelled, from insufficiency of provisions in the parental cabin, to seek establishment for themselves, created an increased demand for minute subdivisions of land, (from the time of the Brehon laws too prevalent in Ireland;) while this excessive subdivision again afforded “ too great a facility to marriage.” Thus cause and effect operated and re-operated upon each other ; while the aggregate consequences were augmented and are yet augmenting by the general desire among persons of landed property to multiply the number of settlers upon their estates, for the purpose of making *freeholders* ; by a process, both novel and peculiar to this country, which we may hereafter take an opportunity of describing.

This extraordinary increase in the number of inhabitants, has likewise not unfrequently been ascribed chiefly to the introduction of the potatoe in Ireland ; a root, by the cultivation of which, while *fifteen* Irish, it is calculated, are maintained by the same extent of land as is necessary for the support of *one* English manufacturer, the truth of that position has also been proved, which asserts that “ cheap food is not always a blessing.” Some again have been inclined to consider the want of manufactures a leading cause of the redundancy as well as of the general misery of the people ; since, as is most true, manufactures have a tendency to create the wants they are instituted to supply ; and, by thus teaching improvement in the modes of living, become a relative check to population, when it is foreseen that, consistent with the enjoyment of such and such comforts and conveniences, any great increase in numbers cannot be supported by the soil. But both these causes are resolvable into the primary ones of political debasement, and excessive subdivision of land ; as, without the latter, the peasant could not be able to appropriate so small a portion of ground as is equal only to his demands for rent and subsistence upon potatoes ; and, unless politically debased, no nation would be long content with such an utter deprivation of the blessings of life, as this mode of subsistence argues ; but would of itself establish the manufactures at home, or the commerce abroad, necessary to the supply of its growing wants, were industry and enterprise but efficiently protected, and exertion sure of its reward.

The state of agriculture in Ireland may in some measure be inferred from our previous remarks ; as well as from the established fact, that a large proportion of its inhabitants subsist upon potatoes. Notwithstanding, however, a considerable quantity of corn is raised, both for consumption in the large towns, and for exportation. But the general system of husbandry is wretchedly barbarous ; and the redundancy of *manual* labour, to an English eye, not a little

remarkable. Even potatoes, experience in the growth of which, it might be presumed, would have produced absolute perfection in their mode of culture, might be reared by methods infinitely preferable to those here in use. One fourth of the land in tillage is supposed to be applied to the cultivation of this root. The soil is remarkably fertile, excepting that of a very few spots in the island ; so much so, that, as the English agricultural reader will be surprised to learn, three successive crops of grain, obtained, *without manure*, from the same land, are considered but ordinary instances of its productiveness, and by no means calculated to deteriorate its quality. The general want of capital, for the improvement of this branch of industry, is seen, throughout the country, in the smallness of the farms, (the possession of an hundred acres by one person being thought extraordinary;) in the want of stock, implements, and out-buildings ; in the field divested of a hedge, and the gateway stopped by a broken car. Two causes have been assigned for this state of things, as independent of the political situation of the country—the prevalence of *absentee-ship* among the great landed proprietors, and the existence of *middlemen*. But the first of these, it is evident, arises out of the primary political cause ; since, but for the supposed insecurity of persons and property, and the general barbarity of manners, (both of which have been traced to a political origin,) the temptation to living in the sister country would scarcely have occurred to the opulent proprietor, capable of blessing and being blessed by a grateful and affectionate tenantry ; and the middlemen are mere excrescences on the soil, the consequences of absentee-ship, in a great measure, and of the long leases formerly and still too generally granted ; which rendering it next to impossible to prevent the lands from being relet, jobbers in land have taken advantage of these circumstances, to engage large tracts for this especial purpose. But, undoubtedly, whatever may have produced absentee-ship and middlemen, both are diametrically opposed to the agricultural improvement, and the general happiness of the country. In the absence of the head landlords, their agents and middlemen too generally rack the sub-tenants without mercy ; and, since the latter know that, whatever improvements they may make upon their farms, they will be rewarded for them at the expiration of their own *short* leases, by demands for exorbitantly increased rent, or by deprivation of the very lands on which they have spent their money and their time, they force the soil to its very utmost capability of bearing ; both with a view to present profit, and in order to obtain easier terms, should they be so fortunate as to have their leases renewed to them.—For the same reason, if they possess the means, they neglect the opportunity to erect barns and other out-buildings; for what men will diminish their actual property, for the purpose of ultimately *increasing* their yearly expenditure?

Such a system, it must be seen, is, both to the head-landlord and sub-tenant—to all but the middlemen—ruinous in all its bearings ; yet such is the system almost universally pursued ; and the sacrifice of individual happiness is great, beyond all proportion even to that of individual profit, occasioned by it.

A class of men whose profession connects them with agricultural pursuits, and who, generally speaking, are the only rural economists who arrive at opulence in Ireland, are the graziers : but their success is not to be attributed to any superiority of knowledge or skill ; but, partly to the absence of tithes, (tillage land only paying the church dues throughout the island,) and partly to the greatly increased demand for cattle, of late years, for the purposes of exportation. But this circumstance affords only an additional example of the impolitic and vexatious constitution of things ; for the great proportion of cultivated land is under tillage, and let to *cotter-tenants* ; these latter therefore (and the majority of them catholics) contribute no less than a full tenth of the scanty produce of their toil, for the support of an establishment of which they are not members ; while the domains of the nobility, and the pastures of the wealthy grazier, are exempt from a burden, which in Ireland is literally “ a tax upon indigence.” We would not encourage, but we must commiserate, the disaffection of a people to the government which protects them not from oppression like this : tithes are a subject upon which, to the honour of the country, we think, all ranks in Ireland—those who do not, and, in general, even those who *do* profit by them—are agreed : all execrate, or, at the least, wish for an equitable commutation of them : and few in England, we conceive, can wonder at the risings of “ Threshers” and “ Whiteboys,” when they knew them to have originated in resist-

ance to those who, in their extortion of tithes, have sold the cow, or the produce of the potatoe garden, necessary for the support of a clamorous and starving family. Nor need we be surprised, if men, thus goaded to revenge, are incapable of restraining themselves to the object for which in general they professedly assemble—that of *swearing* their fellow-sufferers not to submit to so intolerable a burden—but if, having weapons of destruction in their hands, they raze to the ground, or commit to the mid-night flames, the mansions of their oppressors ; and sometimes even murder the tithe-proctors and collectors themselves ; accompanying their retributive vengeance with every mark of unrelenting barbarity.

It is, however, an admitted fact, that the presbyterians of the north are far more averse to the payment of tithes, than the catholics themselves ; and that, in collecting it, much more trouble is given by the opposition of the former than of the latter.

The presbyterians, as a body, are, in many points of view, highly deserving of respect. Undepressed by the galling restrictions of the popery laws, and possessed of the only national manufacture, [13] they are an industrious, thriving, and, comparatively, even a wealthy people. But participating just so much in the misfortunes of their country, as to perceive the difference between their own situation, and that of their English brethren ; and deriving from their habits of trade, and superior styles of living and appearance, more ascendant minds, and higher notions of self-consequence, than the catholics ; they are yet more turbulent and unruly than the members of that religious persuasion. It has been noticed, that they were the principal instigators to the unfortunate rebellion of 1798.

Generally speaking, the personal appearance of the inhabitants of the north is superior to that of their southern countrymen. They excel them in stature, are better formed, and more athletic. The females in general derive from nature no small share of their appropriate loveliness ; but, among the poorer orders, the smoke and filth of their cabins, and the rude manual labours to which they are exposed, contribute early in life to deface this fair distinction, and too frequently they are observed to look old in their very prime. “ Beauty in the fair sex,” says Mr. Curwen, very justly, “ is as much prized, and as little taken care of, in Ireland, as in any country in the civilized world.” The women are also fruitful mothers, and take a pride in the number of their offspring; whom they value besides for their assistance in husbandry : any number of children below a dozen is not considered a large family.

Religious as well as political parties run high in Ireland ; particularly in the north, where the manners and sentiments inspired by church, kirk, and Roman catholic chapel, are more than ordinarily distinguishable. The several congregations differ as much in numbers and appearance as in their religious creeds. This is sometimes strikingly exemplified on the Sabbath in the same town ; where the catholic chapel will be crowded to excess with worshippers, to the full as remarkable for poverty as devotion ; the kirk well attended, and its occupants all in decent habiliments ; the church, if occupied, only by the well-dressed few, and, too generally, all but empty ! The proportion of catholics to members of the established church, for the whole country, is as seven to one. The miserable pittance derived by the Romish pastors from their flocks, depends mainly upon the abject thralldom in which they are enabled to keep them ; therefore, that men so circumstanced should themselves possess the desire to enlighten those, whose ignorance is the staff on which they lean, and the very means of their subsistence, is too much to expect from human nature. They besides possess the key to the ears and hearts of the catholic fold, by their universal acquaintance with the national language. In regard to the clergy of the established church, though, doubtless, numbers of them are eminently zealous in the performance of their official duties, yet the good they effect is, as has been already hinted, limited to those who are capable of understanding English : certainly, however, in a country where the system of *jobbing* is notorious among the higher classes in general, the clergy have not altogether escaped the imputation of a too exclusive regard to temporalities ; and, indeed, if common report is to be believed, the traffic in church preferments has been carried to a scandalous extent in Ireland. But this system, it is to be feared, pervades here nearly universally with those who have least occasion for the benefits to be de-

rived from it ; for in Ireland almost all public works too often projected, or else thwarted in their beneficial operation, for private purposes—are literally “ jobs.” Canals are cut, bridges and roads, are constructed, from the same motive, and with views to the same end : hence it is, that the canal, however magnificent in itself, precedes the extension of commerce, which alone could evince its necessity, by half a century, it is probable, at least; that the road, though exceedingly well made, and indefatigably preserved, runs just where it is absolutely useless, except to the proprietor to whose lands it is contiguous ; and who probably obtained the ‘ presentment’ for its construction, *at the expense of the country*, from the grand jury. From this latter abuse, however, some good results, where the roads happen to lie in directions really serviceable they are in general excellent, those maintained by turn-pikes being usually the worst.

Proceeding from the roads to the general surface of the country, we must not omit to mention the bogs—not the least remarkable among the natural productions of Ireland. They are very different, both in appearance and qualities, to what is generally understood by the term in England. The soil of the English marshes, we are informed by Mr. Young, [14] the celebrated agriculturist, is “ a black spongy moor of *rotten* vegetable matter :” that of the Irish bogs, on the contrary, consists of “ *inert* vegetable matter, covered more or less with unproductive vegetables, and containing a large quantity of stagnant water”. [15] The difference is, according to an eminent statistical writer, [16] that the rotten vegetable matter of the one produces unrivalled crops of grass, corn, &c. while the inert vegetable matter of the other throws out no kind of plant useful to man. The bogs, however, are far from being incapable of cultivation ; many of them are gradually reclaiming ; and at no very distant period, it is probable, all traces of their very existence will have disappeared. At present, they are obstacles, it is true, to the extension of a population, already too redundant ; and a more serious evil may be the great quantity of land they cover, unproductive, until reclaimed, of necessary food : but both these evils, in the existing situation of the country, are more than balanced by their immense resources in the article of fuel. With the poor, the peat-moss they produce is for this purpose a requisite of life ; and the most enviable site for a cotter’s cabin is immediately contiguous to a bog. Neither is their vicinity unhealthy ; which seems to result from the insoluble and antiseptic qualities of the peat. The growth of this vegetable production is slow in proportion to that of the richer grasses ; but its progress to the state of putrefaction immeasurably slower. Centuries after it has ceased to grow, something of its original fibre and texture remains visible ; and the growth of one year rising over that of the preceding, time presents the bogs to us, possessing the vast depth to which they now extend. In regard to the sources of their formation, opinions are very various ; and all, being founded on very doubtful data, are involved in correspondent uncertainty. Thus much, however, appears highly probable, that their existence may be ascribed to stagnant water, by some accident or convulsion of nature confined to particular places. It is farther likely, that the immediate causes of such stagnation were the immense forests, which, formerly overspreading the island, by their natural decay, or their destruction by earthquakes, or fire communicated to them by the inhabitants, retained, from the recumbent position of their intermingled remains, the water, which otherwise would have fulfilled the purposes of only natural irrigation to the soil ; while a portion of their vegetable matter, the leaves, branches, &c. advancing rapidly to the state of putrefaction, formed the primary ground-work of the bog. And, in one point of view, this theory is confirmed by the circumstance, that immense trunks of trees are still frequently found buried in the moss, with their under sides entire ; their upper parts, judged to have been exposed to the weather until the moss gradually rose over them, having partially suffered from corruption. But a considerable difficulty occurs here, if it is asked *why* a portion only of the primeval forests should have submitted to dissolution—and if it be answered that a difference in the ages of the trees, or the action of strong winds, will account for this—how the dissolution of a part should have generated a matter, in itself originally composed of putrid elements, which, notwithstanding, should be found a preventive to the dissolution of the remainder? In reply to the latter query, nothing in the least satisfactory has been stated, unless by Mr. Kirwan, who observes, that wherever trees are found in bogs, though the wood may be perfectly sound, the *bark* of the timber has uniformly disappeared ; and that the

decomposition of this bark forms a considerable part of the nutritive substance of morasses. But Mr. Aiton, [17] on the contrary, contends that the bark is by no means uniformly found to have disappeared from fossil trees, “at least on the under side,” where, it is clear, as the under side of the wood is in-variably in the best state of preservation, its decomposition must have been most complete, if to that were to be attributed the chief agency in the tree’s indissolubility. From all which it appears, that this subject is yet far from being undivested of its obscurities: yet nothing is more certain than the existence of a singularly antiseptic quality in these bogs; some curious instances of which will appear in the body of our work.

Ireland has been supposed to be peculiarly rich in minerals ; and the whole island is said to be supported on an immense rock, or bed, of granite, which is seen bursting out from some of the high and primitive mountains. Precious stones, such as jaspers, amethysts, crystals, &c. have been discovered in various parts; together with good marble; and an abundance, on the northern coast, in the most awful and stupendous forms, of that singular though comparatively useless production of nature, basaltes ; a more particular description of which will be found in our account of the Giant’s Causeway. Iron is abundant; and iron-works, so long as the woods supplied fuel for smelting, were extensive in this country. Lead, copper, silver, and even gold, have been met with in various places ; but, were they ever so abundant, little profit could be made of their farther discovery, from the general want of wood for fuel.

Yet that the woods of Ireland formerly waved over its entire surface, will appear probable from some of our previous remarks ; and that this was really once the fact, is proved from authentic records. But much, as in every country of Europe, was destroyed for the purpose of extending tillage, as the population gradually advanced ; and here, as in all rude states, at early periods of society, wood, doubtless, was employed to a wasteful extent for firing. The evils resulting from such practices are perceived, by well-ordered governments, and their effects in a great measure obviated, long before their several countries arrive to that excess of nakedness in this particular, for which Ireland has been many years conspicuous. Here too the neglect of planting is the more to be deplored, as in no country in the world do trees rise more luxuriantly : their absence necessarily gives a baldness to the views, in many parts, by magnitude and grandeur themselves not easily compensated. Notwithstanding, the mountain, lake, and coast scenery, are not to be surpassed in Europe ; and many are the spots of gentler loveliness, to which the pencil can impart no added charm, while the unassisted pen must very inadequately describe them.

The general richness of the soil may be inferred from the abundant results of its worthless management ; as well as from the species of produce most common. The very general cultivation of flax is of itself a proof of this fertility ; as it is a plant which, in poor land, never attains to perfection. No great diversity, in regard to soil, obtains throughout the island. But it may be remarked, that sand is to be met with only in places on the shore ; that clay is rare, and chalk unknown ; though the general sub-soil of the country is limestone, or calcareous gravel.

The climate is more equably temperate than that of England ; the summers are cooler, the winters warmer, than ours ; but showers are much more frequent, owing to the prevalence of the westerly and south-westerly winds, which collect the vapours of the vast Atlantic Ocean.

On the subject of antiquities we shall dilate as we go along; they are abundant, and some of them peculiar to the island. It may be observed, however, that their number tells audibly the “ tale of the times of old;” and forces upon us the idea of the long-lost happiness and prosperity of Erin : while it need not be concealed, that though the *pointed order* prevails in the ruins of its religious buildings, yet that in general these bespeak an era, when it had become shorn of its elegant simplicity : of this more, in relation to the numerous remains of abbies, &c. we shall have occasion to describe.

Many modifications of these our general remarks, will occur in the course of the “Excursions”—particularly in regard to the cities and towns, as yet wholly unnoticed—and many exceptions must be made to our general strictures on men, places, and things : but of this our readers may be assured, that we will “nothing extenuate nor set down aught in malice ;” and, in the mean-time, we solicit their attention to our view of the extent, topographical and ecclesiastical divisions, of the country, previously to their embarking with us, from Liverpool or Holyhead, for Dublin.

LENGTH.—Greatest, from north-east to south-west, or from the two most remote points, Fair-head, in the county of Antrim, to Mizen-head, in Cork, 241 Irish, or rather more than 306 English statute miles.

Greatest, *along a meridian line*, or from the Stags of Cork harbour, to Bloody-Farland Point, in Donegal, 185 Irish, or 235½ English miles.

BREADTH. Greatest, from Emlagh-Rash, in Mayo; to Carnsore Point, in Wexford, 163 Irish, or 207 English miles.

Greatest, *nearly on a parallel of latitude*, from Emlagh-Rash, to the mouth of Strangford Lough, county of Down, 142 Irish, or 182 English miles.

Ireland is therefore, next to Britain, the largest island in Europe: yet there is not a spot on its surface fifty miles from the sea.—Its geographical boundaries are the Atlantic Ocean on its northern, western, and southern sides; and the Irish Sea, or St. George’s Channel, on its eastern.

SUPERFICIAL CONTENTS. 32,201 English square miles; 12,722,615 Irish acres; 20,437,974 English

NOTE. 1760 yards make an English, 2240 an Irish mile: 11 Irish miles are equal to 14 English. 4840 square yards make an English, 7840 an Irish acre : 121 Irish acres are equal to 196 English.

Measures (and weights also) differ in almost every place even in the same county.

GLOSSARY.

Agh, a field

Ana, *Anagh*, or *Awin*, a river

Ard, an elevated spot, or rising ground

Ath, a ford

Ballin, or *Bally*, a town, or any inclosure of habitations

Ban, *Bane*, white, fair

Beg, little

Ben, an abrupt head, or other summit of a mountain

Bun, a bottom, root, or foundation

Car, *Cahir*, a city, or large town

Carrig, *Carrick*, or *Carrow*, a stony soil, a rock

Clara, a level, or plain

Clogh, or *Clough*, a large stone

Clon, a glade, or smooth pasture

Croagh, *Croghan*, a hill pointed at its top

Col, or *Cul*, a corner

Corcagh, or *Cork*, a bog, fen, or swamp

Curragh, a marshy plain

Derry, a clear dry spot situated in a woody swamp

Don, a height, fastness, or fortress

Donagh, a church
Drom, a narrow ridge of heights or considerable hills
Inch, or *Inis*, an island
Ken, a head
Kill, a church, or burial-place
Knock, a single hill, or hillock
Lick, a flat stone
Lough, a lake, sometimes a pool
Magh, a plain
Main, a collection of hillocks
More, large, great
Rath, an earthen mound, a barrow; less correctly, a military entrenchment
Ross, a point or tract of land projecting into a lough or other waters
Shan, old
Sliebh, a mountain range, a heathy hill
Tach, a house
Temple, a church
Tom, or *Toom*, a bush
Tobar, or *Tubber*, a well, a spring
Tra, a sea-beach, or strand, verge of a river
Tullagh, a small elevation, rising ground, or common
Tully, a spot often flooded

- [1] According to Giraldus Cambrensis: though later writers suppose Turgesius to have conquered only some considerable portion of the country.
- [2] When “ some of the most galling and degrading parts of the code of popery-laws were abrogated.” *Earl of Darnley’s speech in parliament.*
- [3] Three successive insurrections took place in Ireland during the reign of this Queen : the last of which, becoming a national warfare, was protracted seven years, and not finally terminated at her death. The extensive forfeitures succeeding every attempt, and the intolerable oppression of the natives by the recent settlers, rekindled the flames which immature efforts to *force* the reformed religion upon the country had originally fomented: but though Philip of Spain seconded with all his might the rebel armies, both the Spaniards and Irish were at length universally subdued ; and the consequence of this immense bloodshed was only the more complete establishment of the English power, than at any previous period, in Ireland.
- [4] The rebellion extinguished by this fortunate general had lasted eleven years, commencing with the general massacre of the protestants in 1641 ; and was productive of the most baneful consequences to the peace, union, and prosperity of Ireland. The severe restrictions imposed on the catholic party had produced a burning desire for revenge; the protestants were not behind-hand in sanguinary retaliation; the horrors acted on both sides almost surpass belief, and the number of inhabitants who perished in these years was not less than 600,000! The march of Cromwell was one track of devastation and bloodshed. After the re-establishment of the protestant interest, the population of the old native Irish was much *exceeded* by that of the old and new inhabitants of the British race.
- [5] The battle of the Boyne, with which ended the hopes of the Second James, was succeeded by the treaty of Limerick. In this treaty it was stipulated, that the catholics should “ enjoy such privileges in the exercise of their religion as were consistent with the laws of Ireland ;” and “ the said Roman catholics” were promised “ such further security in that particular as may preserve them from any disturbance upon the account of their said religion.” Yet in the face of this first article of the treaty, that code of defensive and preventive statutes was compiled, which extended to the very abolition of this their venerated religion a code which impeded the progress of catholic industry, and thwarted every species of laudable ambition among the people of that persuasion; which exposed them to unnumbered outrages and spoliations, reduced them almost to the condition of slaves, obstructed matrimonial alliances between them and the protestants; and, in the end, set the

son against the father and the father against the son, and threatened the destruction of every tie of filial and fraternal affection, by the act (in the reign of Anne) by which it became law that “ the elder son of a catholic remaining a catholic, the younger, professing himself a protestant in his father’s life-time, should inherit the estate!”

- [6] This last rebellion, it must be admitted, was the fruit of political rather than religious differences in the country; and the false glare of the French revolution was undoubtedly the first active stimulant to the long-slumbering elements of civil disunion. The insurrection broke out among the presbyterians of the north; and the catholics were mere tools in their hands. But, precluded from taking up arms on the side of government, the latter, even if loyalty disposed, were in numerous instances compelled by self-defence to enlist under the banners of the rebels; as they were, by turns, driven from their homes and means of subsistence by the army, or forced into the passing bands of the disaffected. As soon as the presbyterians perceived the ascendancy derived, in the progress of events, (from mere numerical strength,) by the catholics, they changed sides, and secretly assisted the government: and this circumstance, uniting with the mild and conciliatory measures *at length* adopted under the administration of Marquis Cornwallis, alone preserved the country.
- [7] The *Brehon* laws were those of the aboriginal Irish: so called from the Brehons, or officers by whom they were administered. They were extremely rude and imperfect, suited only to an early and turbulent state of society; and their chief feature the *eric*, or line of compensation they allowed for every imaginable crime.
- [8] Derwar’s Observations on Ireland.
- [9] Mr. Newenham.
- [10] We beg to be understood here in a restricted sense ; as speaking only of those parts of Ireland, where the Erse *is* the dialect of the majority.
- [11] Dr. Drennan.
- [12] Mr. Dewar.
- [13] That of linen.
- [14] Annals of Agriculture, vol. xxi. p. 114.
- [15] Davy’s Letter to the Secretary of the Commissioners, Feb. 1811.
- [16] Mr. Wakefield.
- [17] Treatise on Moss.

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