

## Mayo to the Shannon 1834

*A Journey Throughout Ireland During the Spring, Summer, and Autumn of 1834*

Henry David Inglis

1838

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Journey to Ballina and Sligo—Loch Conn, and its peculiarities—Lord Lucan—Rent-free Possessions—Ballina, and its Situation and Trade—The surrounding Country—Rackrents and Driving—Detail of Profits—Road to Sligo—Pounds full of Cattle—Land-owners and Land-occupiers—Balisedare—Sligo, and the beauty of its Environs—Streets, Houses, and Shops—Trade of Sligo—Public Institutions—Condition of the neighbouring Tenantry—Mr. Wynn—Lord Palmerston—Reply to an anti-cipated Charge—The People of Sligo—Improved Dress and Appearance—Strange Discrepancies—Prices of Provisions—Charming Views—Loch Gilley and Hazel wood—A day on Loch Gilley.

My route lay through Mayo, by Loch Conn, to Ballina. I found the first part of this road uninteresting. The country is poor and stony, and offers no object of interest, or subject for reflection. About seven miles from Castlebar, Loch Conn appears at a little distance ; and, soon after, the road approaches, and skirts it, though not close to its banks. Loch Conn is a large sheet of water, not much less than fourteen miles in length ; and varying, in breadth, from one to three miles, except at the point of junction between the upper and lower lake, where the breadth is contracted to narrow river breadth, and where a bridge has been constructed, along which the new road to Ballina and Sligo is carried. The upper lake is entirely devoid of interest : its banks are low, stony, and uncultivated ; and, even with all the advantages of a fine evening, it looked positively ugly.

I passed by several farm-houses, newly erected on the bog and waste land, belonging to Lord Lucan. His lordship has built the houses, and given the adjacent land to tenants who are to pay no rent during the first seven years. This is so far liberal ; but still the tenant has not a sufficient interest in the land he cultivates. To ensure the best possible results, it would be necessary that the cultivator should have a lease for a very long term of years ; and that, after the expiration of the seven years during which no rent was to be paid, the precise rent should be stipulated during the different periods into which the duration of the lease might be divided ; and this rent, especially during the first periods, should be fixed at a very low rate. It is not sufficient advantage to the cultivator that, during the first seven years of his possession, he pays no rent for uncultivated land, and a moderate rent for the remaining fourteen years of his lease, if, at the expiration of twenty-one years, he is liable to be charged the full value of all his accumulated labour on the land. Yet this, or something akin to it, has been hitherto too much the practice in Ireland. Improvements have been conducted too much on the principle of ultimate benefit to the landlord solely,—who, in many instances (some of which have come within my knowledge), takes advantage of the competition for land, and deprives the improving tenant of the legitimate fruit of his industry, by charging a rent for the improved land, which it requires its whole produce to pay.

The scenery is agreeable, but not any way striking, at the bridge which crosses the channel between the upper and lower lakes. It is a singular fact, for which I shall not endeavour to account, that Loch Conn regularly ebbs and flows, though not at periods corresponding with the tide. The lake is situated considerably above the level of the sea, and has no tide communication with it. The banks are, in many parts, of a fine sand, which shows the high-water line. The shores of the lower lake, on the west side, abound in little bays and creeks ; and show

some bold outlines. The Nephin mountains rise at no great distance from its shore. The eastern banks of Loch Conn are low, and not very interesting. The country at a little distance from the lake is singularly ugly, flat, stony, and boggy. Everywhere, however, I saw attempts—and successful attempts—at cultivation ; everywhere improvement *progressing*. I never saw finer oats than were growing on land which had only borne one former crop. Sea-weed is universally used here ; and is carried a great distance up the country. A navigable communication between Loch Conn and the river Moy, below Ballina, would essentially serve all that part of Mayo which adjoins Loch Conn. Improvement must proceed slowly, where there are no facilities for carrying the produce to market.

Ballina is rather larger, and a better-looking town than Castlebar. It has one excellent street, the greater part of which is nearly new, and which contains many good houses, and shops which would be creditable to any town. It is also a town of very considerable trade. For several years previous to 1833, the export—chiefly of grain—had reached 10,000 tons. In 1833 it was under 8,000 ; but this decrease was chiefly owing to the failure of a house in the trade ; and it was thought that, for 1834, the export would increase at least 1,000 tons. The retail trade is considerable ; but is sadly crippled by absenteeism, and by the embarrassed circumstances of the squires and squireens.

Ballina has ample facilities for trade : the Moy is navigable from Killala bay to within a mile of the town ; and to that point, where there is a good quay, vessels of 200 tons can come up. The river navigation, however, is defective, and stands much in need of improvement.

It is a fine old structure, the bridge at Ballina, and it is a fine river that flows beneath it. Just above the bridge are considerable rapids, and an extensive salmon fishery. Among other objects of interest at Ballina, is the magnificent Catholic chapel, now in course of being erected ; and at a short distance from the town. Colonel Gore owns a handsome mansion, which is worth a visit.

I found the condition of the poor, in Ballina, bad : and I regretted to learn that the number of poor, in Ballina, is greatly owing to the harshness of the neighbouring landlords, who charge rack-rents, and “ drive ” for their rent. The state of the land-occupiers in the surrounding country, is what might be expected. The size of farms is from twelve to twenty-four acres ; the average of good farms about twenty acres. The land is, of course, of various quality ; and the average rent, throughout the baronies, may be stated at about 28s. This is certainly more than the land, over-head, can bear. I found many who could live but on the verge of starvation ; and many who admitted they were in arrear, and never could pay their arrears. In the course of one of my excursions in the neighbouring country I found a farmer holding twenty-one acres, at 25s, per acre ; and about one-fourth of this quantity was marsh and bog. The rest was capable of growing oats. Now, let us consider what is likely to be the profit on an acre of oats, for which the farmer pays 25s.

Seven barrels of oats are about the average produce of an acre of land in this part of the country ; the value of which, at 12s. the barrel, will be 4l. 4s. The straw may be worth another pound : so that the whole produce of the acre, is 5l. 4s. We next come to the expenses. The rent is 1l. 5s. ; the seed may be stated at 1l. 5s. ; taxes at 6s. ; harrowing 3s. ; tithe (which, up to this time, at all events, has been exigible) 10s. The whole of these chaises amount to 3l. 9s., which being deducted from 5l. 4s., the value of the produce, leaves 1l. 15s.,—which 1l. 15s. remains to the farmer for labour, and for the sustenance of his family. This profit, too, is only applicable to those acres of a farm capable of producing oats ; but in no farm is every acre arable. In the farm which led me to make these observations, no profit whatever, excepting the use of turf, would accrue from five of the acres, for each of which rent was alike charged ; and consequently, the 6l. 5s. of rent paid for these acres, becomes a deduction from the profits of the remaining sixteen,—upon each of which, therefore, the profit is not 1l. 15s., but 7s. 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. less than this sum. Another thing must also be considered. This is the most valu-

able crop the farmer can take off his land ; and it does not leave the land worth 10s. an acre the following year.

Besides the more considerable farmers, there are many very small landholders located on the larger farms ; and these are in a miserable condition. I found a number of these individuals gone to the harvesting. I have scarcely anywhere in Ireland seen more proofs of a pauper population than in Ballina. I counted no fewer than twenty-seven beggars round a coach which was about to start for Castlebar.

After three days spent at Ballina, and in its neighbourhood. I proceeded to Sligo. The greater part of the road between Ballina and Sligo is interesting only as exhibiting proofs of an improving country. An immense tract of bog-land on the right, is bounded by a range called the Lurgan hills ; and on the left, the sea-line is described at some considerable distance. Everywhere in this neighbourhood, proofs are seen of recent triumphs obtained over bog and mountain land. Looking on every side, one would say, this is an improving country. But this improvement in husbandry, and extension of tillage, have not produced any corresponding effects on the condition of the people. The demand for labour still lags far behind the supply ; the farmer can barely live out of his land, and has no sufficient permanent interest in his improvements ; and between the higher and lower ranks, there is little intercourse, and little amicable relationship. In the early part of this day's journey, I had melancholy demonstration of the frequency of driving for rent. I passed two pounds ; in one of which were three cows and a horse ; in another, five cows and three horses.

Where the rent-charge on a farm is a fair one ; and where the tenant either will not pay his rent, or through idleness, cannot pay it, nobody will dispute the propriety of forcing payment in the one case, and of ejecting the tenant in the other. I do not look upon him as a good landlord, who after letting his land at its value, permits his tenants to get into arrear. But I suspect, that driving for rent is rarely necessary, where the rent is regulated by the value of the land. Rent, in Ireland, is most commonly all that can be scraped together by the farmer, after paying the expense of labour, and seed, and bare subsistence. Wherever an increased profit is possible, rent is increased in proportion ; and if we find in any district, advantages which would seem to bear peculiarly on the favourable condition of the farmer,—such as good roads, navigable communication, or abundance of cheap manure, we do not find the farmers in a better condition ; we only find that higher rents are paid to the landlord. I fear that, so long as this disposition exist, improvements in public works would tend more to the benefit of the landlord than the tenant. It is little source of congratulation to the traveller in Ireland, that he sees the pigs about the miserable cabin by the road side, or that he sees within the cabin a wheel going, or a loom spinning ; because these are only so many evidences of the difficulty of paying rent, and only so many sources of paying it. There are exceptions, no doubt ; and where the linen trade exists, which is inherently a profitable trade, the loom is frequently the source of little comforts : but this is only confined to certain districts.

A few miles before reaching Sligo, a fine sea view opens on the left,—an extensive bay, indented by numerous narrower and picturesque inlets, with lofty boundaries, and in many places not wanting in wood. The situation of the little town of Balisedare, about four miles from Sligo, is extremely pretty. A foaming stream dashes, in a succession of fine rapids, past the town, and by the roadside ; and a narrow and picturesque sea bay comes up nearly to these rapids. A straight and broad road runs between Balisedare and Sligo, which I reached a little before nightfall.

The situation of Sligo is beautiful : it stands in a rich, highly cultivated, and finely-wooded country. A magnificent bay, with lofty banks, lies to the west : a fine river flows through the town ; and towards the east, the banks of the river upwards are redolent of every kind of beauty, and soon expand into Loch Gilly,—one of the most lovely of the Irish lakes ; and to which I shall presently conduct the reader.

Sligo has the look of a town of some consequence,—more so, I think, than any town I had seen since leaving Limerick.

In streets, houses, bustle, and shops, Sligo holds a respectable rank. The latter, indeed, are scarcely surpassed, even by those of Cork or Limerick. The retail trade, too, is very extensive ; for Sligo is the chief mart for the north-west of Ireland ; and without a due consideration of the geographical situation of Sligo, one might feel surprised at the very extensive warehouses of groceries, cloths, cottons, cutlery, &c. But Sligo stands in a very populous neighbourhood, and is itself a large town, containing at least 15,000 inhabitants ; and there is no town of any note westward, nearer than Ballina ; eastward, nearer than Enniskillen ; northward, nearer than Ballyshannon ; and southward, nearer than Boyle ; the nearest of these towns nearly thirty miles distant.

The export trade of Sligo, is the largest in the north-west of Ireland. It consists chiefly of grain, and is steadily increasing. The export of oats from Sligo, in 1831, was 136,000 quarters ; in 1832, it was 134,000 quarters ; and in 1833, it had increased to 154,000 quarters. The export of wheat also has trebled within these three years : 3127 quarters were exported in 1833. The butter trade of Sligo, too, is increasing, steadily and rapidly. Not fewer than 150,000 casks were exported, from December 1832, to December 1833.

The provision trade has trebled with the last three years ; and the pork trade has doubled itself : 8547 barrels were exported in 1833. The tonnage inwards, in 1833, was 19,600 ; the tonnage outwards, in 1831, was 21,000 ; in 1832, 19,452 ; in 1833, 30,000. The tonnage of foreign trade inwards, in 1833, was 3462.

Sligo enjoys some general trade ; and counts among her citizens some rich merchants. The general trade is chiefly in timber, and to the Baltic. Sligo has no manufactures. The linen trade scarcely exists. There are three breweries, and one distillery ; but the distillery is not at work.

There are two Protestant churches in Sligo ; a fever hospital, dispensaries, a mendicity society, a gaol—handsome, like all the new gaols in Ireland ; and no fewer than three libraries,—one, a public subscription library, and two circulating libraries. These were the first libraries I had seen since leaving Limerick.

Religious and political animosity prevails to a considerable extent in Sligo. This I have generally found to be the case in Ireland, wherever there is not an overwhelming majority on one side. The Conservative, and Protestant population of Sligo, and the neighbourhood, is large,— of which there is a pretty strong evidence in the fact, that the only newspaper published in Sligo, is high Tory.

The chief proprietors of the town of Sligo, are Lord Palmerston, and Mr. Wynn. The land in the barony, especially Mr. Wynn's, is let extremely high. Mr. Wynn's tenants are, with very few exceptions, in arrear ; but he is one of those short-sighted landlords, who is resolved at all costs to keep up the nominal amount of his rent-roll. His rents are taken in dribbles,—in shillings and copper ; and agents have been known to accompany tenants to market with their produce, lest any part of its value should escape the landlord's pocket. This gentleman has been at great pains to establish a Protestant tenantry on his estate ; and in the appearance of their houses, &c., there is some neatness, and some show of comfort : but these are not in reality in any better condition than the other tenantry. None of them are able to do more than barely to subsist : and they, as well as the Catholic tenantry, are generally in arrear : indeed, I found no one exception. The whole land in this barony average 2*l.* 5*s.* per acre. In the county, excluding bog and mountain land, it averages about 26*s.* ; and good cultivated land may average 2*l.* There is no living, and paying such rents.

Lord Palmerston's property is an honourable exception.

On an estate between Sligo and Ballyshannon, his lordship expends more in improvements,—in roads, drains, piers, corn stores, &c., than the amount of the whole revenue of the estate. In every way, improvements, and an improving tenantry, are encouraged ; and the people on that estate are in a comparatively comfortable condition. This is one of the few instances I found, in which the tenantry on an estate were allowed to benefit by the advantages and improvements of the district.

I lay my account with being blamed by some, for mentioning landlords by name ; but for this course, I expect to be commended by others. My desire is, not only to tell truths, but to tell them in the way most likely to produce some good results. First, as regards the public : general statements carry little weight with them. Now I want to enlist the public on my side, and constrain belief : but if I merely say, rents are high in this neighbourhood, or in that neighbourhood, I tell little more than the public know, because rents are well known to be generally high throughout Ireland ; whereas, if I tell what amount of rent is paid, and to whom it is paid, my statement carries with it an authority, and makes an impression, which no general statement could do. Then, in the next place, as regards landlords. Why should I confound the good with the bad ? But if I made a general statement, that rents were high in a certain neighbourhood, I should be acting unfairly towards those to whom the observation is not applicable. No just and humane landlord will be displeased at the favourable mention of his name ; and if those of whom a less favourable mention is made, be displeased, my object is thereby partly helped ; because if it be displeasing to a man to be told that he is heartless and oppressive, it is possible he may wish to avoid a repetition of that which is unpleasant, by removing the cause. But above all, in naming some hard landlords, I fix the public eye upon them ; and that is something. The bad landlords of Ireland deserve no favour : their sordidness, injustice, and oppression; their carelessness of those who depend upon them; their heartless desertion of their country : what have these not done ? How much misery,—how much poverty,—how much crime are they answerable for ? And why, then, should the bad landlords of Ireland be spared ? Spectacles of misery may not move them ; the supplications of those whom they oppress may be unheard,—or if heard, unheeded ; but the severe eye of public reprobation is difficult to withstand ; and the measure of justice, which mercy and compassion would never deal out, may be made to run over by the strong tide of public reproof. Let me trust, that this hope may be realized. On the publication of the first edition of this work, the reviews gave full effect to my observations on this head ; and I am satisfied I have succeeded, through the instrumentality of the public press, in fixing the public eye upon some, who have cause to shrink from its scrutiny ; while at the same time I have the satisfaction of believing, that, through the same medium, I have rescued from obloquy the characters of others, who had long been the objects of unmerited censure. But to return.

Sligo is a decidedly improving town. With the exception of two or three months in the year, there is employment for the people ; and I did not observe many symptoms in the town of a pauper population. In the general aspect of the population, I perceived an improvement. I saw fewer tatters than I had been accustomed to ; and fewer bare feet on market day, when all wear shoes and stockings who can. I observed also that a large proportion of the men wore clean linen shirts. The poor of Sligo are not increased in numbers by ejections in the country. This is not the practice of the landlords here. They do not drive for rent, or eject. They excuse the arrear, and allow the tenant to quit. This has the appearance, at first sight, of generosity ; but it is, in fact, matter of necessity. Exorbitant rents are irrecoverable by driving, or by any other means. How much more rational it would be to lower rents, and actually to receive the amount of one's rent-roll.

I found at Sligo a considerable change in the dress and manners of the people. Here I could not discover any traces of Spanish origin. The women were no longer seen with the hoods of their cloaks thrown over their heads ; nor were the men seen with huge top-coats, as

in the more south-western parts. The women wore caps and bonnets ; and the girls nothing on their heads. There appeared to be much love of dress among all ranks ; and among the lower classes, singular discrepances. A well-dressed woman might be seen carrying in her arms a baby decked out in muslin, lace, and ribbon, and by her side a boy running with bare feet and ragged clothes ; or a girl with a tattered gown, and without shoes and stockings, might display a fine shawl or a handsome frill.

Sligo is a cheap town. Besides the regular markets, every kind of meat is carried from door to door : mutton so bought, averages *4d.*, per lb. ; beef, *6d.* ; pork, *2d.* ; flour was *2s. 6d.* the first quality, and *1s. 10d.* second quality, when I visited Sligo. Potatoes were *3½d.* a stone ; butter was *7d.*, per lb. ; a pair of fowls, *10d.* ; a good turkey, in the season, costs *2s.* ; a green goose, *10d.* Potteen whiskey might be purchased *2s. 6d.* under the price of parliament whiskey.

Sligo possesses the ruins of a once spacious monastery ; the remains are yet extensive, and some parts of them are in tolerable preservation. Three sides of the cloister yet remain entire, covered with an arched roof ; and the pillars and arches are of good workmanship. The east window is beautiful ; and some tombs within exhibited considerable elegance of design. The monastery is said to have been founded in the year 1245.

The environs of Sligo are beautiful. The day after I reached Sligo, I ascended an inconsiderable hill, called “ the Cairns,” at a short distance from the town, and enjoyed a prospect from it, which is not often commanded from higher elevations ;—a beautiful lake, dotted with islands, fringed with wood, and its banks adorned by fine country seats, and extensive lawns ; a broad river, running from the lake, through a rich, green, shaded, and picturesque country ; a bay of the sea, with magnificent mountain boundaries ; and beyond, the great ocean itself ; a town, with its mass of buildings, and ancient remains ; and a wide, undulating, richly-wooded and picturesque country, with many villages, seats, and cottages ;—such is the assemblage of objects which form the prospect, from the elevation called “ the Cairns.”

But the chief object of attraction, in the neighbourhood of Sligo, is Loch Gilly ; a lake which is not sufficiently known, to enjoy the reputation it deserves. I hired a boat at Sligo, and ascended the river, through a succession of beautiful scenery, to the domain of Hazelwood, the property of Mr. Wynn. This is a very lovely spot : the views of the lake, from a hundred points, are enchanting ; and in the disposition of lawn, wood, and shrubbery, taste and art have taken ample advantage of the gifts of nature. Finer evergreens I never saw in the most southern countries. The laurels and bays, grown into great trees, rivalled, if they did not surpass, those of Woodstock or Curraghmore ; and here, I again found the arbutus,—not indeed quite equal in its perfections to the arbutus of Killarney, but not greatly its inferior ; and giving to the scenery all that advantage of colouring, which is the boast of Killarney. The timber too, on this domain, is equal to almost any I have seen ; and I often found myself pausing before some magnificent ash, oak, elm, or lime, throwing its deep shade across the green amphitheatre, which it seemed to have made for itself.

But I must not forget Loch Gilly, which, indeed, it would be difficult to do. The domain of Hazel wood extends over that part of the banks of the river where it widens into the lake, and forms the first promontory, and receding shore of the latter. I walked across the promontory, and embarked on the lake on the other side. Loch Gilly is about eight miles long, and from one to two broad ; and, in the character of beauty, will bear a comparison with any lake in Ireland. Its scenery is not stupendous—scarcely even anywhere bold : but it is “ beautiful exceedingly.” Its boundaries are not mountains ; but hills of sufficient elevation to form a picturesque and striking outline. The hill sides, which in some places rise abruptly from the water, and which in others slope more gently, are covered to a considerable elevation with wood ; and the lake is adorned by twenty-three islands, almost every one of them finely wooded. Here, too, as well as on Hazelwood domain, I found that the arbutus is not con-

fined to Killarney. The extent of Loch Gilly is highly favourable to its beauty. The eye embraces at once its whole length and breadth ; the whole circumstance of its shores ; all their varieties and contrasts at once ; all its islands. One charm is not lost in the contemplation of another, as in a greater lake. The whole is seen at once, and enjoyed. I remained many hours on Loch Gilly, rowing here and there, or not moving at all ; landing on its islands ; two of which—Church island and Cottage island—are full of beauty ; putting ashore in little coves and inlets ; and visiting a holy well, two or three hundred yards from the banks ; where I saw eleven devotees, four of whom went from station to station on their knees. I also visited a house of public resort near the lake, which the citizens of Sligo frequent on Sundays ; and tasted their favourite beverage, called *scolteen* ; composed of the following *elegant* ingredients— whiskey, eggs, sugar, butter, carraway seed, and beer.

The inhabitants of Sligo did not appear to me a healthy race ; I thought I never saw so many sickly, pale-faced people. It is possible that fancy may have assisted this conclusion, having heard so much of the extraordinary visitation of cholera, which two years before threatened to depopulate the town. Nowhere, in Ireland, did cholera rage with such deadly violence as in Sligo ; and I found in the town, when I visited it, the greatest dread of its re-appearance,—a few cases having appeared at Ballina, and in some of the intervening villages.

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Journey to Boyle and Enniskillen—Singular Usage—Loch Arrow—Boyle—Boyle Abbey—Lord Lorton—Land and Tenantry—Domestic Feelings and Home Comforts in England and in Ireland—Rockingham House—Carrick-on-Shannon—Loch Allen, and the Source of the Shannon.

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My route now lay in an opposite direction from the coast, and the great northern coast road. I was desirous of visiting some parts of the interior of the country, which I had not been able to comprehend in any former part of my journey ; and, first, I shaped my course to Boyle, which lies about thirty miles south of Sligo, in the county of Roscommon, purposing to proceed from thence, by Carrick-on-Shannon, across the counties of Leitrim and Cavan, to Enniskillen and its interesting environs.

The first few miles of the road, from Sligo to Boyle, I found to be the same as I had already travelled. I passed through the village of Balisedare ; but then struck to the left, skirting the pretty village of Coloony. Beyond this village I found a fertile and tolerably well cultivated country—a considerable part of it, however, under pasture—and no greater part of it bog-land than might probably be wanted for consumption. I was surprised to meet, every few hundred yards on this road, carts heavily laden with country people, many of them of the lowest orders, and with different articles of furniture piled upon or attached to the carts ; and I learned with some astonishment, that all these individuals were on their way to sea-bathing. This is a universal practice over these parts of Ireland. A few weeks passed at the sea-side is looked upon to be absolutely necessary for the preservation of health ; and persons of all classes migrate thither, with their families. In my way to Boyle, I met upwards of twenty carts laden with women, children, and boys. One may ask how the people afford this annual expense ; but the expense is extremely small. There are numerous cabins and cottages, at the lower end of Sligo, on the bay, in which a room is hired at 1s. 6d, per week. This is almost the whole of the expense ; for all carry with them,—besides their beds and an iron pot,—a quantity of meal, some sacks of potatoes, and even turf, if there be room for it.

The road to Boyle runs all the way by the side of the river Arrow ; a pretty, clear, rapid stream, as its name would denote ; and flowing out of a lake of the same name. After reaching the lake, the road continues to skirt its bank, though the grounds attached to some gentle-

men's seats intervene between the road and the lake. Loch Arrow is a pretty lake, about seven miles long, and from one to two broad ; and without presenting any very striking beauties, the scenery of its shores is of a very pleasing kind. There are sloping, green, and cultivated banks ; finely wooded promontories,— low but stretching far into the lake ; and some very green islands, reposing on the still waters.

After leaving Loch Arrow, the road ascended considerably, and passed through a wilder and very poor country. I never saw poorer cabins than in passing through this district. Many of them were not to be distinguished from the mud heaps around ; they were fully as black, and no bigger ; and built of the same material. Scarcely a patch of cultivation was visible around any of them.

The first view of Boyle and its neighbourhood, from the heights by which I approached, is very striking. Loch Key, and the adjacent splendid domain of Lord Lorton, with its spreading woods and islands, lie a few miles to the left ; and Boyle itself, far below, yet built on a rising ground, embosomed in wood, looks like a spot where one might expect to find comfort and repose. And this expectation is not disappointed; for the inn at Boyle—there is but one—is excellent, and offers an agreeable contrast to the more ambitious hotel at Sligo. Let me not omit to do a good turn, when I chance to have an opportunity. After spending three days, very uncomfortably at one hotel in Sligo, I tried the hotel kept by Mrs. Ross ; and I recommend all travellers to try Mrs. Ross in the first instance. There is nothing very attractive without, but there is a fair share of comfort within.

Boyle is a very pretty town, situated on a fine rapid river, of the same name. It is but a very small town, but it is neat and tolerably clean, and has a great deal of wood, and a fine country round it. It also contains a particularly fine ruin, called Boyle Abbey : certainly one of the most beautiful ruins I have seen in Ireland. There is a nave, a choir, and transepts, and a square tower rising from the centre of the cross. One pauses too under many fine arches, and surveys some curious workmanship ; and the mere lover of the picturesque will be greatly gratified with the general outline of the ruin,—its situation, the moss-grown and ivied walls, and the great ash-tree that grows within them.

The town, and whole district of country round, is the property of Lord Lorton. I spent some time in the neighbourhood of Boyle, and made myself acquainted, as far as I was able, with the condition of the people. This I found to be very various. All who held their land on old leases, I found to be comfortable : rents were decidedly low : and the farmers admitted that they could pay their rent, and even save a little money. Lord Lorton has lately divided those holdings which have lapsed, into farms of sixteen acres each, and given new leases : no smaller holdings than these are allowed. In the present state of Ireland, I have my doubts whether a landlord be justified in this course, unless he has a tract of unreclaimed land, whereon to offer those a holding who are dispossessed ; or pays the expense of emigration, for those who wish to take advantage of it. Driving for rent is not practised on Lord Lorton's estate. When three half-years are unpaid, the tenant is ejected ; but the arrear is forgiven. There is no reasonable objection to this course ; but if the adoption of it becomes frequently necessary, the necessity of having recourse to it might naturally suggest a reduction of rent. The new leases on these estates are for short periods, and the rents are not exorbitantly high. Many very small holders are located on the land in this neighbourhood, by the farmers who hold old leases. These, in conformity with the system pursued by Lord Lorton, will by and by be cleared. The tenants on this estate pay nothing for turf, and some poor creatures are permitted to earn a trifle by cutting and selling it in the town. I should say of the agriculturists of this part of Ireland generally, that they are able to pay their rents, and live off their land. I noticed great deficiency of cross roads in this part of the country. Many farmers and farm-houses appeared to have scarcely any access to them at all.

In my visits among the country people here, I could not help making an observation, which had been repeatedly forced upon my attention in other parts of Ireland ; I allude to the less affection that exists between man and wife, among the country people in Ireland, than is found to adorn domestic life in the humbler spheres on the other side of the water. I think no one can have visited many of the Irish cabins and farm-houses, without having been struck with this fact. Marriage is not, among these classes in Ireland, the same thing which it is among the like classes in England. It is seldom the result of long and tried affection on both sides ; but is either a rash step, taken by unthinking children, or else a mere mercenary bargain, in which the woman has little voice, and in which her partner is actuated solely by sordid views. I have no doubt that the effects of this are not altogether unimportant as regards the condition of the people of Ireland. Who can say, how much of those home comforts which are gathered around the hearth of an English country fireside, is the result of that strife for mutual happiness, which can arise only from mutual affection ; or how much of that utter want of and indifference to comfort, which characterize an Irish cabin, may arise from the absence of domestic feelings ?

Rockingham-house, the seat of Lord Lorton, is situated about five miles from Boyle, and is every way a magnificent place. The domain is of great extent, and nature and art have combined to render it attractive. It is seldom that so fine a lake as Loch Key lies partly within a domain ; but Rockingham possesses this advantage. The house stands upon an elevation, sloping down to the lake, which, with its many wooded islands and promontories, is spread out below. These islands are extremely beautiful : fine timber and delightful verdure cover most of them; and upon some are seen the ruins of castles and of religious edifices.

Rockingham-house is one of the most celebrated in Ireland. Mr. Nield, in his survey of the county of Roscommon, says, “ One of the most striking peculiarities of the house, consists in its very insulated position, no office of any kind being visible ; but the whole being surmounted by beautiful shorn grass, interspersed with beds of flowers and ornamented walks. This arrangement has been effected by having most of the offices of the basement story covered over, and subterranean passages carried from underneath the eminence on which the house stands, towards the lake, in one direction, and in another, towards the stables, which stand at a considerable distance, screened by trees ; the covered passage, however, does not reach the whole way to the latter ; but merely far enough to prevent the appearance of movement near the mansion.” Rockingham-house has another peculiarity. It is built solely of marble ; of which a specimen of the highest polish, and of an ornamental form, is seen on the great staircase. The marble was obtained from a quarry belonging to Lord Lorton, on these estates. Every part of Lord Lorton’s domain is kept in excellent order ; and his lordship constantly employs a great many men upon his estate, at 1s. per day.

I now left Boyle for Enniskillen, by slow and short journeys. For several miles after leaving Boyle, the road skirts Lord Lorton’s domain, and then passes through a rather fine country, to Carrick-on-Shannon. Here, I again found that majestic river which I had parted from a month before : and I still found it the same noble stream. The Shannon, at Carrick, is upwards of two hundred miles from the sea ; and I scarcely could discover any diminution of the stream, which flows a hundred miles lower down. From Carrick and its neighbourhood, I made two excursions ; one down, and another up the river. There is much interest in the banks of the river for ten or twelve miles down, passing Jamestown and Drumsna. Up the river, the interest is less. Leitrim is a miserable little place ; and betwixt that town,—the last on the Shannon,—and Loch Allen, there is little attraction. Loch Allen is certainly the true source of the Shannon. Like every other lake. Loch Allen has its feeders. Two considerable streams fall in at its head ; and many small rivulets,—upwards of twenty in number,—fall into it from different directions around ; but these are the feeders of Loch Allen, not the source of the Shannon. It is only where a great river enters a lake, after a long previous course, that the lake is not properly the source of the river which flows out of it. Such, for example, is the Rhone, which, after a long course, enters the lake of Geneva, which is nothing

more than an expansion of the Rhone : but as nothing deserving the name of a river flows into the head of Loch Allen, the loch is certainly entitled to be considered the source of the Shannon.

Loch Allen is not in itself an interesting, or beautiful, or picturesque lake ; neither is the scenery on its banks sufficiently bold, to make the smallest approach to grandeur : it is merely wild and solitary ; and the only further interest which the lake possesses, arises from its being the source of the Shannon. The lake is embosomed in hills of a moderate elevation, not picturesque in their outline, nor clothed with wood ; and there are some, though not many, islands scattered over its surface ; and upon one of them, a small monastic remain is still visible. Loch Allen is about seven miles long, and varies from one to four in breadth ; and its average depth is said to be greater than any of the lower expansions of the Shannon. The chief mountain boundary of the lake, is “ the Iron Mountain,”—so designated from the riches which it contains in this valuable metal. In all the gullies which have been worn by the mountain floods, iron ore is to be found in great abundance, both in large masses and in minute particles ; and the under strata of the neighbouring heights is composed of alternate layers of iron and limestone. It is now more than forty years since iron works have been established in this neighbourhood, known by the name of the Arigna iron works,—Arigna being the name of the stream which flows by them, and which joins the Shannon, just as it flows out of Loch Allen,—one branch of the river, indeed, emptying itself into the lake. Little advantage has hitherto resulted from working the Arigna iron works ; but there is little reason to doubt, that—the Shannon navigation being now extended to Loch Allen—capital embarked in these works would find a profitable investment.

I had now seen the banks of the Shannon from its mouth to its source ; and I think I may venture to say, that although we cannot find on the banks of the Shannon that precipitous wood scenery, which distinguishes the Rhine, nor the extreme richness and softness, which lie along the Loire, or the Garonne, infinitely greater variety is found throughout the course of the Shannon, than is presented either on these or any other rivers that I recollect. And the Shannon possesses one attribute, which, as far as I know, is exclusively its own. It is navigable (with some slight interruptions) from its mouth to its source, a distance of 234 miles. In the extent of its navigation, therefore, though not of its course, it ranks with many of the great continental rivers. The interruptions to its navigation, which consist of rapids here and there, have all been overcome by canal cuts ; though much yet remains to be done, both in improving the canals, and the navigation of the river itself. The whole fall of the Shannon, from Loch Allen to the sea, is one hundred and forty-six feet,—which is only seven inches and a fraction in a mile : and it is a curious fact, that the greatest fall is not during the first part of its course, which one might naturally expect, but in that part which approaches the sea. From Killaloe to Limerick, a distance of but fifteen miles, the fall is ninety-seven feet ; and from the source of the river to Killaloe, the whole fall is but forty-nine feet.

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