

My tour of Mayo 1849

*The Plantation Scheme;*

*Or,*

*The West of Ireland*

*As*

*A Field for Investment.*

James Caird

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Among the various projects for the regeneration of Ireland, none has excited so much attention as the Plantation Scheme, developed by Sir Robert Peel. It at once gained the notice of England, and raised the drooping hopes of Ireland, while it also indicated a new and untried field for the enterprise of the capitalist, landlord, and skilled farmer.

At the time of its announcement, the competition for farms in Scotland, and the consequent increase of rent, was progressing to such a degree as materially to lessen the profits of the farmer ; and the development of the Plantation Scheme was, therefore, hailed as possibly an advantageous outlet for our agricultural capital and skill. The success of the scheme would be, in an important degree, secured, if to the philanthropic views of statesmen and great capitalist companies, could be added the narrower, but still equally essential principle, of commercial profit to the men through whom its development was to be practically accomplished.

Inquiry was then made for sources of information whence might be learned the nature of the soil, its capabilities, its advantages or disadvantages, as compared with this country, and the probable feeling of the population towards immigrant farmers ; but on these points the different “ tours” in Ireland were altogether deficient. To satisfy himself, the Author resolved to visit the country ; and his tour proved so interesting and instructive to him, that he hoped its publication might, in some degree, supply the information wanted.

Before going to Ireland he had an opportunity, through a friend, of mentioning his intention to the distinguished statesman to whom this volume is dedicated. With the utmost readiness, Sir Robert Peel proffered an introduction, which secured access to information which has been of the greatest value to the Author.

His EXCELLENCY the LORD LIEUTENANT of IRELAND, ever watchful for the good of the people over whom he has been called to preside, was considerately pleased to countenance the Author’s object, and to secure for him many facilities, for which he must ever feel deeply grateful.

To Mr Griffith of the Board of Works he has been also peculiarly indebted for the very valuable aid which his extensive knowledge of the country and its physical capabilities enabled him to afford.

Baldoon, Wigtown, *January 1850.*

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Hollymount—Mr. Lindsay's Farms Described—"Turloughs"—Lord Lucan's Farms—Ballinrobe—Cong—Castlemagarret—Plains of Mayo—Castlebar—Lord Lucan's Estate and Management.

Arriving at Hollymount on the evening of the 6th October, I had just light enough to see that this was a very clean, well-built village, adjoining the demesne of Mr Spencer Lindsay, whose hospitable mansion was my headquarters for the next three days. The park and grounds, intersected by the river Robe, to which on both sides the rich pastures slope gently down—the stream itself ornamented by the overhanging branches of the trees, fine groups of which are also scattered throughout the demesne, under the shelter of whose spreading branches fat lazy sheep and cows were browsing—with the spacious and comfortable mansion on one hand, and the spire of the parish church in the midst of a group of trees on the other, form quite an English scene. Mr Lindsay's gardens are very extensive and productive, but the dahlias and heliotropes had been completely cut down by the sharp frost of the two previous mornings. The church is a handsome building fitted up with square seats of oak, and heated by a stove. The congregation might number from 50 to 60. The service was conducted with great solemnity and decorum, and an excellent practical discourse delivered by the clergyman. An offertory was collected and laid on the altar.

On Monday, I was joined by Mr Elwood, inspector of drainage for Mayo, with whom I accompanied Mr Lindsay in a long ride through the neighbouring country. We first visited the farm of Layhinch, adjoining the demesne of Hollymount. It is almost all in old pasture, well fenced, and beautifully sheltered with fine ornamental timber. It is rich dry hazelly land, admirably suited for sheep, intersected by good roads, and in excellent condition. A farm of 400 acres of prime land could be had here. Mr Lindsay would build the necessary farmhouse and steading for a tenant of capital.

We next rode to Kilrush, close to the village of Hollymount, where another farm of 400 acres or so might be had. The greater part of this farm is good feeding land, long in grass ; part of it reclaimed bog, lying on limestone gravel ; and part good dry land, lately laid to grass. A set of buildings for an agricultural school was some years ago erected here, but that object having been abandoned, they have now become the farm-steading. The proprietor would add what may be necessary, do such farther draining as may be required, and let the farm on a 19 or 21 years' lease, taking upon himself all rates and burdens whatsoever, and giving the farm at 25s. per English acre. For land of such quality, fenced in a way that we have no notion of in Scotland, (with five feet stone-and-lime walls,) with abundance of lime and limestone gravel beneath the surface, and plenty of turf to burn it, with a convenient homestead in a good neighbourhood, and the high-road to Dublin as one of its boundaries, such a farm would be taken up at once at this rent in Scotland.

We next rode to Greyhans, some miles farther south, where there is an excellent dwelling-house, garden, and most substantial buildings, in good order ; and where one farm of 1000 acres, or two farms of from 400 to 600 acres, may be had. This land is well enclosed, but it is more various in quality than either of the former. One kind of it may consist of the finest feeding land, old grass ; the rest is land of good quality, but in wretched condition, having been held on the con-acre system, and much exhausted ; a portion consists of "Turloughs" or low grounds, flooded in winter, but good cattle-pasture in summer, though not sound for sheep. These "Turloughs" are all expected to be laid permanently dry by the arterial drainage operations now going on. In some places the soil lies on cavernous limestone ; and when the rivers are flooded by heavy rains, the water spreads through these hollow underground

passages, bursting up here and there to the surface, in a powerful stream sufficient to turn a mill, and then at some lower point disappearing as mysteriously as it arose. Where these outbursts take place, “Turloughs” are formed. The whole of this farm is capable of very great improvement, and will yet, I have not a doubt, prove an excellent investment to some tenant of skill and capital.

The next farm we visited was Frenchbrook, within three miles of the upper end of Lough Corrib. It adjoins the hamlet of Kilmain, where there is a church and chapel, and contains about 500 acres. There is no wood here, but the stone-walls are even more than usually substantial and good. The greater part of this farm is the finest feeding land for sheep and cattle—dry, friable, undulating land, all on limestone. The fields of rich old grass are superior to anything we have, except in small patches, in any part of Scotland I at present remember. The best of it is too good for tillage, but about one half of it might be profitably brought under the plough. The sheep and cattle then grazing on it were excellent. This is a very desirable farm, though the neighbourhood did not appear so inviting as in any of those which I had previously visited. The proprietor would erect all necessary buildings; and, as there are none at present, these could be constructed on the most approved plan. The present rent paid for this farm by an extensive grazier, an excellent tenant, is not more than 25s. per Irish acre, the owner paying all rates of every kind.

These farms all lie upon limestone, with access to “turf.” They are twenty to twenty-eight miles from Oranmore, the nearest station on the Dublin and Galway railway; which station, when the line is opened, may be five hours’ ride to Dublin. They are likewise within from three to ten miles from Lough Corrib, which in two years is expected to be navigable by steamers from Galway and the sea, some thirty miles distant. Their height above sea-level does not at any point exceed 150 feet. The winters are mild, and the climate most suitable for grass and green crops; the soil is in every way adapted for feeding off green crops if desirable, or for finishing sheep and cattle for the fat market. The milk and butter are of the richest quality. Labourers’ wages are at present from 8d. to 10d. a-day,—the people most peaceable, and very intelligent, though negligent and idle to an uncommon degree, if not carefully superintended. Land may be dug over by contract, 12 inches deep, all the large stones laid on the surface, and the whole placed in fine state for further operations, for about £1 per English acre. Lime can be burned on every farm at from 5d. to 6d. a barrel, of 3 imperial bushels. The rapidity with which the land on this limestone subsoil recovers itself, and, without any seeds being sown, reverts to good pasture, is very remarkable. I saw one instance here of a field exhausted to the last degree, as I was assured, by the con-acre system,—which had been abandoned to nature not more than five years ago, and it is now covered with a rich sward of grass.

After passing Frenchbrook we skirted a “turlough,” laid dry by arterial drainage, the whole subsoil of which, several feet thick, was rich shell marl. This marl is used with great success, though in a limited degree to what it might be, by the neighbouring cottier-farmers, whose comfortable circumstances, during all the famine, can be attributed only to the good crops of grain which the application of this substance enabled them to grow without any other expense. It is a most valuable deposit.—A little farther on, the country is covered with masses of limestone, extending to the borders of the county of Galway, (between Loughs Corrib and Mask,) which are so thickly studded as altogether to put a stop to the labours of the husbandman. Much of this tract might be profitably planted with oak or larch, which would at the same time enhance, by shelter, the value of the pastures intermingled with it.

Some of the soil over which we rode to-day from Hollymount, proved, when turned up by the spade, of uniform appearance for 18 inches in depth, beneath which was limestone, sand, and gravel. It reminded me of the deep black loam on the braes of the Carse of Gowrie, which, however, wants the limestone substratum. Other parts were a reddish, and what is here considered a richer soil—deep friable land, suitable for all kinds of crops.

Next day we examined the farms of Cloonagashel and Gallowshill, a portion of Lord Lucan's estate, in the neighbourhood of Ballinrobe. A considerable part of both these farms, which are nearly 2000 acres in extent, is under tillage ; nearly all of it divided into regular enclosures, with excellent stone-and-lime walls. The soil consists partly of a fertile black mould, of great depth, on a limestone gravel, with some stronger land and some lighter, but all admirably adapted for green crops and grass ; and from the level nature of the ground, and its gentle slopes to the sun, well suited for tillage. There are two farm-steadings, lately constructed, with threshing machinery, &c. Two or three farms, of from 700 to 1000 acres of land, could be got here, as good land as the average of East Lothian, at a rent of 18s. the imperial acre, and the poor-rate guaranteed not to exceed 1s. per £1. The tenant must also pay the grand-jury cess ; but Lord Lucan hands his farms over to his tenants with every permanent improvement executed—so that the farmer may have nothing to do but to stock and work his farm. Wheat and barley are grown on both farms, and lime is to be got on the land at from 5d. to 6d. a barrel, and has been applied with excellent effect.

These farms are within a mile or two of Ballinrobe—a market-town, at which a canal from Lough Mask is now being constructed, which, in connexion with Lough Corrib, will give a water-carriage to Galway.

From Ballinrobe to near Cong, the country is bare and uninteresting. In the neighbourhood of Cong the soil and climate improve ; and when Lough Corrib and the distant mountains of Connemara open on the view, the scene becomes very beautiful. Cong is a small market-town, beautifully situated at the head of Lough Corrib. The principal feature in it is the ivy-covered ruins of an ancient abbey, and three powerful corn-mills turned by the waters of Lough Mask, which here burst out of the bowels of the earth in a mass as broad as the Thames at Richmond, and as clear as crystal. The overflow of Lough Mask disappears through a subterranean passage in the cavernous limestone, from which, after flowing underground for upwards of two miles, it is discharged at Cong. The situation of this little town, with its old ivied abbey, near to the walls of which flows this beautiful crystal river, expanding as it goes into an arm of Lough Corrib, with the wooded demesne of Ashford on the opposite bank of the stream, and the setting sun casting its golden light over the mountains of Connemara, is strikingly picturesque. This is likely to become a favourite resort, when steamers ply on Lough Corrib from Galway, which they are expected to do in the course of a year or two. The climate is very mild. Wheat of fine quality is produced here, and myrtles flourish in the open air.

On the morning of 10th October, accompanied by Mr Elwood, I left Hollymount on my way to Castlebar, passing near Lord Oranmore's at Castlemagarret, a fine wooded demesne of 900 acres, all in grass. We visited the estate of General Sir Robert Arbuthnot, who is carrying out a judicious system of improvement by draining and green crops. After calling at the residence of Mr Lambert, a neighbouring proprietor and extensive stock farmer, we came on through a somewhat elevated district for a mile or two, when, again descending to a lower level, we soon reached the plains of Mayo. These extend for some miles, and are fine gently sloping lands, with no impediment to husbandry, but everything to encourage exertion. In some places they are still untouched by the plough, in others they have gone through the

usual course of con-acre. It is not easy to imagine a situation more enticing to an extensive green-crop farmer than these plains present. After passing them, the soil becomes inferior. The slope of the country has now fallen to the west and north, and the climate is more severe with this change of aspect.

Around Castlebar, Lord Lucan is taking all the land into his own hands. I walked over great part of his farms, and found them well managed, and all the permanent improvements, draining and fencing (which are done under the Land Improvement Act) being executed with great care and skill. He has built a new and very handsome and commodious farm-steading here, with threshing-mill, flax-scutching apparatus, bone-crushing machinery, &c. His green crops were excellent ; but there is great difficulty in safely harvesting grain crops, or even in extirpating weeds among the green crops, on account of the long-continued wet weather, so frequently experienced here in July and August. A dairy of upwards of 100 milk-cows forms part of the establishment ; and cheeses, on the Cheshire plan, are made of good quality, all of which find a ready market at 6d. per lb. at the dairy.

Within a few miles of Newport, Lord Lucan has an extensive tract of country, which he is enclosing. I had here the good fortune to meet with his lordship, when he kindly entered into many details as to the management he proposed to adopt. In this place he has 6000 acres, which he is dividing into four farms of 1500 acres each. The land here is hilly ; the hollows of each farm will, when drained, be the arable part—the rising ground is intended for grazing. Lord Lucan will build suitable farm-steadings and substantial enclosures ; he will drain it where necessary, remove all obstructions to tillage, and give a 19 or 21 years' lease. Rent of each farm about £600, and poor-rate guaranteed not to exceed 1s. per acre.

Lord Lucan has been much blamed for dispossessing the people who formerly held the land. It is not for me to discuss that question, nor have I all the information which would be necessary for any one to form a satisfactory judgment upon it ; but when the amount of employment he is now giving, and the superior style of husbandry practised on his farms, are taken into account, it may be doubted whether the former possessors could earn as much by the miserable cultivation of their own lands as they now do in the capacity of hired labourers. There can be no doubt of the vast increase of the total annual produce under the present system, and the gain to the entire community must be the greater by the amount of that increase.

Lord Lucan is probably the most extensive tillage-farmer in Great Britain. He has at present upwards of 10,000 acres under his personal superintendence, having farm-stewards on the different farms, who all take their instructions from himself. He had this year upwards of 1000 acres of white crop, and between 400 and 500 acres of green crop. He has a stock of 800 cattle, 60 of which are working bullocks, and 600 sheep. He has 40 work-horses, and gives daily employment on his farms to 600 men, including those who are making drains, &c. The whole of this extensive establishment is managed in the most orderly and systematic way — each department has its separate head, who is answerable for it alone—and the quiet and regular progress with which everything is going on at once convinces the spectator that the ruling mind here is defective neither in energy nor skill. It is a great and most important experiment, and assuredly deserves to be successful.

Landlords generally, even those of the highest class in the empire, might do well to take a lesson from the example of Lord Lucan. He has not thought it beneath his station to acquire an intimate practical knowledge of his OWN BUSINESS—the management of his estate. The want of this essential requisite to the profitable ownership of land, has done more to retard the

agricultural advancement of the country than can well be calculated. It has led to the very general appointment of a class of agents unqualified by previous education for the important duties they ought to perform. It has exhibited an unreasoning jealousy towards prosperous farmers, whose exertions, instead of being encouraged, are only regarded as a source of increased rent. It has crushed, by culpable negligence, the efforts of the industrious tenant, willing to struggle against adverse times, if only fairly met by a considerate landlord. It forms the true solution of the different success which distinguishes the commercial and manufacturing capitalist from the great landlord. The first makes his business a study, and develops it to the utmost ; the last too often thinks it beneath his notice, and trusts it to persons who are frequently as ill qualified for its duties as himself.

It may not be possible, and probably would not be desirable, that many should imitate Lord Lucan in the extensive occupation and cultivation of their own lands. But it would be of vast importance to themselves, their tenantry, and their successors, if our great landlords on both sides of the Channel were in some degree to emulate him in the personal study and attention which he devotes to the practical business of his estates.

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Castlebar—Union Workhouse—Gaol—Charitable relief works—Newport—Sir Richard O'Donnel's Estate's—Flax cultivation—Courtrais method of steeping—Clew Bay—Westport—Marquis of Sligo's Estate—Stock farms—Killery Harbour—Kylemore—Maume—Doorus—Clonbruck—Ross—Lord Leitrim's Demesne—Ashford subterranean river—Canal.

ON the 11th October I visited the union work-house at Castlebar, and was conducted over the whole establishment by the chairman of the paid guardians. The house is very extensive, every part of it seemed clean and well ventilated, and it appeared in all departments to be conducted in the most orderly manner. The gate was surrounded by a crowd of applicants for admission, in which misery of every kind was represented. The financial position of this union (population 61,063) is deplorable. The annual rental of the land which it embraces is £49,988. The estimated expenditure for the poor to 29th September last, for twelve months, £31,068. The rate per £1 on net value ranges from 9s. 7¼d. to 26s. 7d. The gross debt amounted, on 25th March, to £60,815. The appearance of the inmates in the day rooms was listless and indifferent, and troops of children were being marched about the grounds for exercise.

The county gaol is a large and well-constructed building. I was shown over it by the governor, and found everything very clean, and apparently well conducted. The prisoners in their different yards were marshalled in single file along the walls for our inspection. The first impression one received by looking at them was that of a cold shiver ; for the weather was frosty, and the teeth of many of the poor creatures were chattering with cold. Hopeless wretchedness was the prevailing expression in their countenances ; many bore the marks of pinching want—their contracted features, and keen eye, and ape-like faces betokening the lowest grade of humanity. Some well-fed scoundrels there were, but not many ; and one could not look round these rows of miserable beings without shuddering at the idea of an innocent person, on suspicion or wrongly convicted, being forced to herd with such companions. The average number of prisoners confined in this gaol is about 400. The offences, as recorded in the prison-book, seemed chiefly petty thefts ; for instance, “stealing a hen, value sixpence,” “stealing turnips,” “rooting potatoes,” and so on ; “taking relief meal from Bridget Mooney.” Many were of a deeper dye—viz., for stealing sheep, cattle, or horses ; some for assaults ;

some for running out of the poor-house, and some for making forcible way into it. [1] There were no crimes of the most serious nature, such as murder, or premeditated attempt at it.

Indeed, the great proportion of the cases seem naturally to arise out of the entirely de-ranked state of society which exists in this part of the country.

The town of Castlebar has suffered much from the effects of the late famine, the industry of its inhabitants having been paralysed by the cessation of all demand from the surrounding country. To obviate as much as possible the misery resulting from this, a society was organised by a number of benevolent individuals in the town, of whom Messrs Curley and Gerraghty, the Roman Catholic curates, took the lead. They purchased a quantity of wool, and then employed the different artisans of the town in spinning, weaving, dyeing, shap- ing, and sewing it into suits of clothing. Upwards of one hundred individuals, representing several hundreds of the population of the place, have thus received constant employment at their several occupations during a time when the natural sources of employment have been in abeyance. Excellent suits of frieze clothing (five hundred of which have been purchased by Count Strelitzki for distribution in some other distressed part of the country) can be supplied for 10s. the suit. When these are sold, the original subscribed fund will be repaid, and the society enabled to continue their benevolent scheme, should the necessity of the time still re- quire it. The efforts of these gentlemen were not confined to the town of Castlebar. They fore- saw the misery that must fall upon the small holders of land in the surrounding country, if no effort was made by them to cultivate their holdings, and so provide a store for the coming winter. The potato having failed, these poor people had nothing to fall back upon, neither money to buy seed, nor skill to use it properly when they got it. A relief committee was organised by the same benevolent individuals, assisted by Mr Murphy as their treasurer. They collected subscriptions to a considerable amount, principally from England, which they ex- pended first in purchasing turnip seed, a portion of which was given to each individual, with directions how to manage it. Inspectors were appointed, who went to each holder, and then paid him in advance for a fortnight's work as laid out to him on his own land, the rate being 1d. a-day for each individual in a family. At the end of the fortnight each person was again visited ; and, if the allotted task had been completed, he was again paid in advance, being at the same time instructed as to the next fortnight's duty. If any one neglected to do his task, he received nothing till it was completed ; and if the same indolence was continued, he was struck out of the list altogether ; but it was scarcely in any instance necessary to resort to this extremity. Nearly four hundred families were thus maintained on their own lands in industry, during all the summer, at a cost of little more than £400 ; and now that the summer is ended, the land which would otherwise have been waste, is carrying crops of turnips, cabbages, &c, which will be a great help to the poor people during the winter. Being anxious to see whether much real benefit had resulted from this benevolent plan, I visited several of the small holders, occupying an acre or so of land, who had received this assistance, and found them most thankful for the arrangement by which they had so greatly benefited. They had fair crops of turnips, which they were mixing with their potatoes to make the latter go farther as food. When the potatoes are done, they will mix the turnips with a little Indian meal, with which food they hope to manage to " make out life" during the winter. This is an instance of relief laid out in a reproductive manner, and the cost of management did not exceed 2 per cent on the expenditure ; but this of course arose from the gratuitous services of the gentle- men forming the committee. Surely such deeds of benevolence are worthy of record, and none may grudge the honour that is due to the truly Christian philanthropy of the good Fathers Curley and Gerraghty. If more of our Christian ministers were actuated by the same spirit, we should have fewer scoffers at religion.

From Castlebar to Newport the road is not very interesting. The latter is a clean little town, situated on the side of a wooded river, which here falls into the sea at the head of Clew Bay. The principal proprietor of this place and the adjoining country is Sir Richard O'Donnell, Bart., whose hospitable mansion, immediately adjoining the town, I reached on 11th October. Next morning I accompanied him on a walk over part of his estate. He offers 5000 acres, lying together, the nearest point within a mile of Newport, part of it on a lease for 200 years, the rest three lives, or thirty-one years, at an annual rent of 2s. 2d. per acre, besides the rates. The land is all situated at a low elevation, ranging from 30 to 60 or 80 feet above sea-level. Half of it is said to be capable of regular cultivation ; the rest is fair pasture for Highland cattle, and very improvable. Sea-weed and coral-sand can be got at the sea-beach, which is within about half a mile of the lands, for 1s. a boat-load, containing about four cart-loads. Upwards of 100 acres of this tract have been drained, and enclosed with substantial stone fences ; and a commodious barn and other houses have been erected. I walked over part of the improved land, and found it deep, strong soil, with a good many large stones in it, and susceptible of much improvement by draining. Flax is cultivated on it with success ; and I was assured, to my surprise, by a farmer of Sir Richard O'Donnell's, that the oats here produced sometimes weighed as much as 46 lb. a bushel.

The same proprietor has plenty of other land, which he is anxious to let. That which lies along the sea-coast appeared to be of good quality, and, from the peculiar conformation of the coast, it did not seem to suffer from exposure to the Atlantic. Clew Bay is very peculiar. Its spacious basin is sheltered by the lofty Clare Island, which shuts it in from the ocean ; and along its coast there are hundreds of little islands, affording shelter to the jutting points of the mainland ; while numberless indentations of the sea, running a mile or two up into the land, give safe and convenient water-carriage to every part of the coast. On many parts of the sheltered sides of these bays and islands, wood grows to the water-edge ; and, under careful management, they are capable of being made most picturesque. The climate is mild, and the soil very suitable for green-crop husbandry.

Sir Richard O'Donnell has exerted himself greatly to introduce, with an improved husbandry, the growth and manufacture of flax. He has erected flax-mills at Newport, which are now let to Mr Bernard, a Swiss gentleman, who kindly explained to me every part of the improved process he adopts in steeping and scutching. He manages the flax on the Courtrais or Belgian system, steeping it in warm water, heated to 90 degrees by steam-pipes passing through the steeping vats. In this way the process occupies only sixty hours, which, by the old method, took two or three weeks. After being steeped, the flax is dried in the open air if the weather suits, or in drying sheds, which are cheaply constructed. It is then sorted and taken to the scutching-mill. The whole of the finer portion of the flax is sent to Belfast, where it is sold to the spinners ; the refuse, or tow, is woven into sacking, and made into bags, as, from its low value, it would not pay carriage to send it far in the bulky unmanufactured state. This factory gives employment to about three hundred people in Newport throughout the year, and works up the produce of several hundred acres, yielding to the farmer, under the present imperfect cultivation, from £6 to £9 an acre. The seed, which is separated from the flax before it is steeped, is reckoned to be about one-fourth the value of the crop. The steeping process adopted here greatly simplifies the management to the farmer, as in this way he grows and pulls the flax, and then stooks and stacks it like a corn crop, selling it to the manufacturer when it best suits either party, and without having any intricate process to attend to. The machinery seemed simple, and requires neither large capital nor great skill to conduct it ; so that, where desirable, this manufacture might be very easily extended.

In driving along the road, we occasionally disturbed the labours of the husbandmen threshing out their crops. They choose a dry smooth part of the public road for a threshing-floor, and winnow the corn by riddling it slowly in a breeze of wind. We drove over the top of several heaps of half-threshed corn in the middle of the road, the threshers suspending their labours till we passed.

From Newport to Westport the country is of an undulating character, the road skirting the heads of the numerous inlets of the sea, though, from the peculiar character of the coast already mentioned, a glimpse of the sea is scarcely to be got the whole way. The distance by road is six miles ; following the coast-line, along every bay, it is not less than sixty. The land generally is under wretched management, though the farm of Mr Bridges, a tenant of Sir Richard O'Donnell, is a striking exception. The neat fences, good roads, and comfortable residence, with the trimly thatched stacks, here led me to make some inquiry about the tenant ; and I learned that his father had been an English settler, and that he himself had been educated in England.

Westport is a very prettily situated seaport town, also on Clew Bay : the houses are handsome and well built ; and nestled as it is in a hollow, with a row of trees overhanging the stream which intersects it, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the fine demesne of Westport House, the residence of the Marquis of Sligo, it is quite a place in which the traveller will feel desirous to spend a leisurely afternoon. The trees around Westport House are of great size and varied beauty, and, with the verdure of the park at this season, indicate a mild soft climate.

Lord Sligo kindly accompanied Mr Elwood and myself through part of his estate. The country soon becomes hilly after leaving Westport on the way to Connemara. The lofty Reek, or Croagh Patrick, forms a grand object, running up from the edge of the sea to a conical peak 2500 feet high, perfectly shapely and smooth. The greater part of this hill-country, till you reach the Killeries, belongs to Lord Sligo, who is anxious to let his lands to tenants of capital and enterprise. He would sell a portion in any part of his estate, if he could thereby induce the purchaser to reside in the country and assist in its improvement. In the valley of the Errive, about five miles from the head of Killery Bay, he would let a hill-farm of 5000 acres, on a lease of three lives or thirty-one years, and give a lease in perpetuity of the land on which the tenant built his house. This farm is bounded by the river Errive, along the bank of which there is a considerable tract of alluvial land, and gradually rising from it an extensive natural wood of great beauty, in which a residence, commanding a magnificent mountain landscape, might be most picturesquely placed : behind this, the land quickly runs up to a high mountain. The whole forms a good sheep-walk, with feeding for cattle, and some 40 or 50 acres of low ground of good quality for cultivation. An excellent public road runs along its whole extent. This farm would at present be let for £120.

From this point to the Killeries the valley widens and improves, the natural produce of the soil being sweet short grass in the low grounds, with strips of verdure running up the hollows of the mountains. Several good stock-farms might be got in this quarter ; but for many miles in this direction not a sheep or head of cattle is at present to be met with. The sheep were said to have been stolen during the famine, and the holders of the lands had not the means of putting a new stock on them.

At the foot of the valley we came upon the harbour of the Killeries, which is an arm of the sea running up between high mountains for some eight miles, till it receives the waters of the river Errive. There are here some cottages for sea-bathing ; and certainly few spots in the

British islands could be selected, which unite more beauty and grandeur of scenery with such perfect retirement.

Passing down the south side, a view of the Atlantic is got in the distance ; while on the opposite side of the narrow bay towers Muilrea, the highest mountain in Connaught, rising directly from the sea to a height of 2700 feet. The road then leaves the sea and crosses the moors to the south-west, affording a fine view of the Connemara mountains. We are now in an unpromising tract of country ; the moors are very barren, and not a sheep or a house to be seen on them for miles.

At Kylemore there is an inland lake of considerable beauty, shut in on all sides by conical mountains. At the western extremity of this lake lies the farm of a young Englishman, from Lancashire, who, with several brothers, has settled in this country. Their choice of a location has not been fortunate ; and it may be doubted, whether the capital expended in erecting expensive farm-buildings, in a tract where the soil and climate forbid cultivation, will be re-productive. If the same energy and capital had been employed on some of the fine arable lands of Mayo or Galway, how different would the result have been ! Strangers should not too rashly expend their capital, in the vain hope that they can at once import the agricultural management of an English county, into a region where the soil and climate are totally unsuited for such a change. But neither must any general conclusion be drawn from the result of such an experiment, adverse to investments judiciously made in more favoured districts of the West of Ireland.

Remaining all night at Kylemore with two parsons who keep a hotel here, and help to entertain the traveller, (thus adding to their cure of souls a personal attention to the wants of the body,) we returned next morning to Leenane, thence up a valley through Joyce's country to Maume, at the western extremity of Lough Corrib. Great part of this valley is very suitable for sheep-farming, the mountains affording much sweet pasture, as also the slopes and banks of the river. From Maume to Cong the road sweeps along the north-west side of Lough Corrib, the country being very stony and in miserable condition, though capable of much improvement. As the car slowly toils up some of the steep ascents on this road, the traveller may turn aside for a moment to enjoy the beauty of the scene. Beneath him lies an arm of Lough Corrib, which, with its many islands, stretches away to the east ; before him is one little isle with its old ruined castle, the fastness of some ancient Irish chieftain, while in the distance are seen the desolate moors and fine mountains of Connemara.

At Doorus, a promontory of 500 acres running out into the Lough, the land improves ; and this, with about 1600 acres more adjoining it, and stretching up into the hills, is for sale. It is occupied by a great number of small farmers, but is very capable of improvement, and, if judiciously laid out into small farms, might become a profitable investment. It would require a considerable outlay of capital to provide suitable houses for such tenants, and give them every encouragement, which they would need ; and a resident landlord, devoting himself to the task, could alone make the experiment with success.

Some way further on, the road branches off to Clonbruck, in the neighbourhood of which, on the margin of Lough Mask, is the house and demesne of Lord Leitrim. The wooded islands in front of the house, with the lake and the distant mountains, form a very pleasing scene. Within the demesne is situated the parish church of Ross, built chiefly at the expense of Lady Elizabeth Clements. It is a small chapel, capable of containing about sixty persons, but it is all of exquisite workmanship, both within and without. The windows, of stained glass, are in the highest style of the art ; and the woodwork and roof, which is open to the

ridge, are of carved oak. This little church is quite a gem, and will well repay the time occupied in deviating from the main road to obtain a view of it.

We next proceeded to the estate of Ashford on Lough Corrib. It comprises 1100 acres, very stony, but deep dry land, suitable for grazing or crops. The situation of the old mansion-house, at the entrance of the river into Lough Corrib, is very beautiful. The grounds are undulating, and, in the demesne, plentifully interspersed with wood, much of which is old, and highly ornamental. This estate is for sale, and would make a most desirable investment for a man of moderate capital. Bounded, as it is on two sides, by the river and lake, it is very conveniently situated for water carriage ; and in clearing the ground of stones, (which would be the heaviest outlay in improving the property,) thousands of loads could be tumbled into the lake, where they would be entirely got rid of. The best of it, comprising the demesne and deer park, between 200 and 300 acres, could be kept in hand by a resident proprietor ; and the rest, which is all arable, could be either subdivided into well-arranged small farms—for its very stony character forbids extensive tillage-farming—or laid down to grass, and let for grazing. It is immediately opposite to the old abbey and town of Cong, where the last O'Connor, king of Connaught, was buried. There are several singular caverns in the limestone rock on this estate ; and one in particular, where, after descending seventy or eighty steps, you come to the bed of the subterranean river which flows from Lough Mask to Lough Corrib ; and when it is lighted up by the blazing torch of the guide, who, as he jumps from rock to rock, drops burning sparks, which are instantly extinguished in the black silent stream, the effect is striking and not unmingled with awe.

In the afternoon, I walked up the new canal, at present being formed to open a navigable passage from Lough Corrib to Lough Mask. Upwards of 300 men are employed on it. Besides opening up this communication, it is expected to reduce the waters of Lough Mask permanently to their summer level, and thereby drain an immense tract of low country on the river Robe and its tributaries in Mayo. I was informed by Mr Collins, the resident engineer, that the men employed were all natives of the province ; and he found their workmanship, now that they were taught, as good in building dry masonry as that of experienced English workmen. The men, all along the line, were working with as much diligence and assiduity as I have ever seen in England. They are employed in gangs by *task-work*, and their diligence affords a remarkable contrast to the indolent style of work which I observed wherever the labourers were paid by daily wages, unless they were, at the same time, under the most vigilant superintendence. This great operation is expected to be completed in two years. The whole cutting is through solid limestone rock : horizontal, lying on vertical beds. It is everywhere split into great crevices or “ swallow-holes” and these require all to be puddled ; but nature, everywhere bountiful in this country, has placed the very material required for this purpose in the hands of the workmen—a bed of the finest plastic clay (called by the men “ California”) having been cut into in the course of the operations.

As illustrative of the effect of task-work, and the physical ability of the labourers of this district, I quote from the Annual Report for 1848 of Mr S. N. Roberts, C.E.—“ The works throughout the entire district have been executed by task, strictly in accordance with the commissioner’s instructions ; and I cannot advert too strongly to the necessity there was for the strictest attention to this, for I never witnessed more want of power of exertion than among the labouring classes in this part of the country, when first the works were commenced. With the exception of a few quarrymen, found in the town of Galway, they were unskilled in every class of public work ; there were many instances where gangs of men did not earn more than threepence per day, although allowed full prices for their work. Generally speaking, however, the men are greatly improved in habits of industry, and, of course, in the

amounts of their earnings. But the greater portion of them are so perfectly destitute, and so wretchedly fed, that it would be impossible to enable them to realise a rate of wages calculated to support them in a proper manner, without paying prices which the economical execution of the work would not permit.”

Here ended my tour of Mayo, a county containing agricultural resources which may be shortly recapitulated. It is nearly all, except the northern mountainous parts, situated at a very moderate elevation above sea-level. It consists generally of a deep dry soil, very suitable for green crops and grass. Along Lough Mask and Lough Corrib, the land is very stony, and can be profitably cultivated only in small farms, or laid out to pasture. The middle and eastern portions of the county present fine open plains for extensive farms, in every way suited to a high system of cultivation. All this part of the country contains within itself abundance of limestone, and “turf” with which to burn it ; and almost every large farm might have a portion of bog attached to it, to be annually reclaimed, and which would add much to the resources of the dry land. The bogs generally contain, either beneath their surface or on their margin, abundance of limestone gravel, and sometimes shell-marl, with which they may be mixed and enriched. The lands, when laid to grass, are soon covered with white clover, and through-out the district there is plenty of fine old feeding land. In the north-western division, returning from Castlebar to Newport and Westport, the country is hilly, and not so well adapted to tillage. Limestone cannot be got so cheaply, but, near the sea, coral-sand and seaweed may be readily obtained. The western and northern mountainous districts afford pasture for hill flocks, which might be profitably managed in union with the turnip farms of the south and middle divisions. One advantage of these high districts, as compared to hill-farms in the north of Scotland, is, that their winters are never severe, and, consequently, the expense of smearing the sheep with butter and tar, as required in Scotland, is saved.

Excellent stones for building and fencing can be had everywhere ; and, generally, there is not a great outlay needed in thorough draining, on account of the natural dryness of the soil. The farms recommended are chiefly held by the landlords themselves, or by non-resident graziers. The roads everywhere are good, and a happy exemption is enjoyed from that most costly, wasteful, and vexatious system of collecting a revenue—tolls. The people are peaceable and intelligent, and willing to work if properly looked after ; and wages being low, all kinds of manual labour can be executed at a very moderate cost. When the railway from Dublin is opened to Galway, the nearest station from the better parts of Mayo will not be more than from thirty to forty miles distant from a point whence Dublin may be reached in five hours. There is room in this county for hundreds of farmers of skill and capital, to whom nature affords a fair prospect of success. But they must select their location with care and skill, having regard to both soil and climate ; and let them not rashly expend the capital, which they will require for cultivation, in erecting farm buildings, which are solely the landlord’s business ; and let them come to a precise and definite understanding with their landlords, as to a limitation of rates and taxes, until some provision shall be made by law for protecting those who expend their skill and capital in improving and cultivating the soil, from excessive rates, and above all, from an increase of rates through the higher valuation consequent on their improvements.

[1] This reminds one of the story told of one of our northern judges Hearing an altercation at the entrance-door of his court-room—" What's that noise ?" he demanded of the door-keeper. " It's a man wanting in, my lord."—" Keep him out," was the peppery rejoinder. By-and-by there was a noise again. " What's that now ?" demanded the judge. " It's the man wanting out, my lord."—" Keep him in, then," was the judicial award.

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