

Observations  
On  
The State Of Ireland,

*Principally directed to its*

Agriculture

And

Rural Population ;

A Series of Letters,

*Written on a tour through that country.*

By J. C. Curwen. M.P.

VOL. II.

London:

1818.

Edgeworth's Town, Oct. 2 ; 1813

THE hospitality with which travellers are uniformly made welcome by all ranks in Ireland is not less a general than an admirable trait in the national character. We have gratefully to acknowledge many civilities which contributed in a high degree to the pleasure of our tour, and have deeply to regret, that we have it so little in our power to make any return for such kind attentions.

Under all circumstances talent must inspire respect, but peculiarly in its zealous application to the benefit and improvement of mankind. It then calls forth the warmest feelings of the heart, uniting esteem with great regard. On approaching this mansion I felt that respect which is due to the friend of the friendless! The impressive and elegant pen of Miss Edgeworth has depicted vice and folly in such forcible colors, and given such salutary warnings against their consequences, that I can have no doubt, but that by her writings the best interests of her country have been long, and will continue to be, very materially promoted. In these the Irish character appears to be most justly and most happily represented, and that melange of wit, generosity, feeling, and folly, fairly exhibited, which are constantly producing so much to admire and to condemn at the same instant. The exposure of corruption and oppression has not been quite palatable in all instances ; a cry has been attempted to be raised against her, as being deficient in patriotism : such efforts, however, will prove as ineffectual in depreciating the well deserved celebrity of this lady, as the passing cloud, which, if it succeed in obscuring the sun for a moment, serves only to give additional splendor to his re-appearance. We were pressed to extend our visit to another day, which being too great a temptation to be resisted, you will reasonably expect to receive some account of Miss Edgeworth, whose works you so highly admire.

She is at once so modest and so natural, that those unapprised of her talents would not believe it possible she could appear so unconscious of the high reputation she possesses. The admiration of the world has affected neither her head nor her heart; for whilst she seems

wholly unconscious of her own merit, she is feelingly alive to the desert of every other individual. What was said by Maria Theresa of General Loudon may be very appropriately applied to this lady. The General being wanted at a levee by the Empress, and not being found, she observed, that “ in peace you must seek him behind the door, in the day of battle you are certain of finding him in the front of danger.”

Miss Edgeworth, in the common intercourse of life, is free from every assumption of superiority ; it is with her pen alone she exercises it, in vindicating the cause of virtue and suffering humanity. The family is composed of children, of different marriages ; yet nothing can be more delightful than the harmony which prevails. The ardent sentiment of benevolence, that prompts and animates their general labors, has the effect to modify or extinguish every individual selfish feeling ; while the most strenuous endeavors of every member of this pleasant community are called into action, to promote the comfort and happiness of the whole. The first care of each seems to be that of forwarding such objects as meet the general wish of the whole party.

The present Mrs. Edgeworth is a daughter of Dr. Beaufort, and is not less distinguished for accomplishments, than for good sense in the conduct and arrangement of her domestic concerns.

The extraordinary endowments of every branch of this family make their acquaintance not less sought with avidity than valued when attained.

Mr. Edgeworth has long been eminent as a scholar, and man of genius. His studies have principally been directed to mechanics, in which science he has been very successful : to his suggestions and hints are the public indebted for some of the most valuable modern improvements. Mr. Edgeworth’s vivacity renders him a most pleasing companion ; time seems to have been sensible of this, and to have kept no record against him.

Such is the general outline of this charming family, who are all equally emulous to make their abilities useful in promoting the substantial interests of virtue and morality. Did I consider myself at liberty to descend to particulars, there is not a member of this little community, of whom an interesting portrait might not be drawn ; I cannot, however, avoid remarking, that if I have any pretension to prognostication, I shall not be disappointed in seeing a younger branch (Miss H.) on a future day, emulate her elder sister.

The smiles and flattering commendations of the world have corrupted many a heart, and diminished the estimation due to splendid talents, by creating unbounded expectations in their possessors, and obliterating the just claims of others. Not a particle of this disposition is discoverable here ; the kind assiduity and attention shown to all around justly endear them to every rank, and make their residence a real blessing to the neighbourhood.

It is not the want of interesting matter, or of a disinclination to detail it, that induces me to refrain from proceeding on a subject, which would be as gratifying to you as to myself ; but conformity to a rule to which I strictly adhere, that whatever I hear or see under any hospitable roof is to be considered as sacred. Indiscriminate censure would be highly ungrateful in the partakers of hospitalities : praise of the like description might subject such parties to the odium of adulation. Could I have felt authorized to have availed myself of the sentiments and opinions of others, I could have detailed numerous anecdotes which would greatly have diversified my observations, and rendered them more entertaining to you ; but the objections I stated to this species of registry at the commencement of my tour have not since been violated.

In the course of the morning, we drove to several farms on Mr. Edgeworth’s estate. The

occupations were larger, and the farming buildings more extensive, than we had hitherto generally met with. Considerable attention is paid to the fences, but the husbandry was far from perfection. The tenants are to be considered rather as grazing than tillage farmers. The soil, when not incumbent on bog, is a strong clay. The average size of the farms is about one hundred acres, let at about thirty shillings an acre. This seems comparatively a moderate rent.

Longford, from the flatness of its surface, ought to be an early county ; late sowing however, and other bad management, accounted for our seeing much of the corn still uncut. Winter ploughing is here held to be injurious, and is supposed to make the land work badly so little do modern practices seem to have made their way in this country.

A farm well conducted would be of great service in this district. It cannot be expected that any practical farmer, who has his rent to pay and bring up his family, should embrace new modes of husbandry merely on the reputation of any theory, however strongly recommended : nothing short of ocular demonstration that a new practice is more beneficial than his own, can prudently justify the practical man in its adoption.

Two of Mr. Edgeworth's tenants were invited to dinner : I rejoiced in an opportunity of meeting a class of men so respectable in our own country, and who I heartily wish were more frequently to be met with in Ireland. The parties were presbyterians, of Scotch descent, and in their manner and appearance retained very perceptible traits of their origin. Much as they were prepossessed in favor of their present practices, yet as they had both good sense and candor, I am persuaded they would soon become converts to the prudence of adopting a better system of husbandry.

As far as I was enabled to form a judgment, Mr. Edgeworth has much reason to be proud of his tenantry, who appear substantial and respectable men : every thing about their farms seemed to exhibit sufficiency and comfort ; and the subsisting friendliness towards them, on their landlord's part, was highly creditable to both.

The spirit of enterprise now so rapidly extending over Ireland, cannot be long in producing improvement. Agricultural societies are forming in every quarter ; I had the pleasure of being present at the establishment of one of these at Cavan. The expense too frequently attending such associations becomes fatal to their continuance ; and, as I could not but suspect at the time, will be destructive in the present instance. Lord Farnham signified his intention of giving premiums among his tenantry for superior management a measure which in my opinion cannot fail in having the desired effect. Experience has convinced me such rewards ought to be restricted to practical farmers, and that the exclusion of gentlemen as competitors is indispensable to maintain a general good intelligence.

Edgeworth's Town has in a great measure been rebuilt. The church is modern ; and the spire, constructed of cast iron, was raised to its present eminence by machinery. Although there are a it number of presbyterians in the neighbourhood, the catholic chapel is a large building.

Our visit has been highly gratifying, and inspires a hope that it may lead to a further intimacy with this amiable family, which I feel warranted in pronouncing would be highly agreeable to you. Adieu.

J.C.C.

Athlone, Oct. 3, 1813.

IN the county of Longford a husbandman's wages are, for the summer months, twelve pence ; in winter, ten pence, per day. Fuel, one of the prime necessaries among the lower orders, is easily procured. The general appearance of the country induces me to believe, whenever a correct return of the population may be obtained, that the numbers will exceed every estimate hitherto produced : should this opinion prove correct, a very serious question may arise, whether the population may not be doubled in the next five-and-twenty years.

It is some consolation that the culture of the potatoe may be improved—its produce perhaps doubled : the haulm, instead of being suffered to remain and wither on the ground, if the potatoes be planted in proper time, may be cut off, and will afford food for milch cows. The reclaiming of bog, and the cultivation of mountain districts, comprehending nearly a third of the country, are resources capable also of being made subservient to a further production of food. Cheering as this prospect may appear, and happy as it would be under some circumstances, it is not so here ! All hope of augmenting the store of human happiness is vain, where the means of employing a super-abundance of rational beings are wanting! Man to be happy must be engaged in some pursuit : that of the subordinate classes is restricted to bodily labor ; among the next in rank, intellectual researches are added to bodily exertion yet does occupation in both form the basis of substantial human felicity. Great as the labor may appear of procuring subsistence, it will employ but a small portion of a civilized population ! How then is subsistence to be found for the remainder ?

The church at Edgeworth's Town being under repair, there was no service. We were induced to protract our departure, for the purpose of seeing the numbers who attended the service of the catholic chapel : the congregation was numerous ; not only the large building, but all the avenues leading to it, were crowded. The ringing of a bell warned the congregation to kneel and rise : several were prostrated on the ground devotion was so unaffectedly displayed in the conduct of the majority, as to increase the regret we felt that they were not better informed. It is seldom they obtain any material instruction ; and what knowledge they possess of right and wrong is perhaps more to be ascribed to the efforts of well-disposed minds, than any cultivation of them by education. They were all decently dressed, and their behaviour was highly becoming. From their great numbers I should conclude that they must have come from some distance.

A singular instance of courage and humanity occurred during the rebellion in Mr. Edgeworth's family : compelled as they were to quit their residence on a very short notice, a difficulty arose as to what could be done with a female servant who was too ill to be removed. The housekeeper, who was an elderly woman, volunteered to remain and take care of the invalid ; and the house was accordingly left in her charge. A few days after the family had removed, the insurgents arrived, and, surrounding the house, demanded arms. The housekeeper refused to open the door a consultation was held, and it was resolved the door should be forced. At this moment, one who had some influence with the party came forward and remonstrated with the rest, observing, the Edgeworth family had always acted with kindness and attention towards their poor neighbours, and that he would defend their property at the risk of his life. His courage and generosity had the desired effect the whole of them departed without offering the least violence or injury to any thing about the premises. When the rebellion had subsided, this grateful fellow returned to his home near Edgeworth's Town. On some dispute with a neighbour, he was threatened with an information for having held a commission in the rebel army, on which Mr. Edgeworth offered him his interest to procure him a pardon. The man thanked him, but declined it, saying, he had no fears, as he had a *Corny* in his pocket, meaning, a card of protection, with Lord Cornwallis's seal and the initial letter C., of which it appears a distribution had been made to the peasants who returned quietly to their habitations an instance that in the worst of times, kind treatment in Ireland would not fail of its influence even with those actually enrolled under the banners of rebellion.

We at length took our leave, highly indebted for the kindness and attention we had received, and fully impressed with no less respect than admiration of the party to whom we reluctantly bade adieu.

It was ten miles to Ballymona : in this distance we saw several handsome residences. The surface of the country is flat, and the soil worthy of better treatment than it received. A few miles before we reached Ballymona, we passed the birth-place of Goldsmith, to which he is said to have alluded ; and though the place in itself possesses little beauty or interest, the Muses have rendered it immortal.

Ballymona is a poor little town in the midst of a fine country. Our next stage was ten miles to Athlone, which we were anxious to reach in good time, being fearful we might not obtain accommodations, on account of the approaching fair at Ballinasloe. The soil appeared light, and its cultivation wretched. We passed many gentlemen's seats, some of which were of considerable magnitude.

At a small village, about half way, we encountered a funeral. The dirge, which had sounded so harsh and discordant at Cork, was conducted here in a manner and with an effect totally different. The performers were young females. The corpse, we were told, was that of a female under twenty, who appeared to be greatly lamented, as we observed many a tearful eye. The tones and cadence of the mourners partook so much of real grief, as to give a character of feeling to the whole, and created a deep and painful interest. I did not suspect the Irish funeral ceremony could have been rendered so truly impressive and affecting.

How variously chequered are the scenes of life! We had scarcely recovered from the melancholy sensations the last spectacle had produced, when we became arrested by a large party, assembled at the entrance of a village, and engaged in dancing reels in the road. Their performance, which by no means disgraced them as dancers, exhibited so much life and spirit, that we became interested spectators of their rural festivity. Such was the buoyancy of youth, animated by the presence of beauty, that the discordant notes of a miserable fiddle called forth a joy and light-heartedness truly enviable.

We obtained an extensive view of Lough Rea, with its numerous islands. Its margin is flat ; and the Shannon, which passes through it, may be considered as forming the lake.

Athlone is a considerable town, and rendered important as commanding the passage of the Shannon. The surrounding country is still flat, and has few beauties to recommend it. Athlone is the station of a large military force and a numerous staff. Lines have been cast up on the south side of the Shannon, to protect the place against any sudden commotion, but they could oppose no effectual barrier against a regular force.

The Grand Canal passes through Athlone ; and as it is also on the great road from Dublin, we found difficulty in getting ourselves and horses accommodated. The number of people who had passed in the last twenty-four hours had been immense. We considered ourselves fortunate in obtaining any kind of quarters.

The accommodations for horses at Ballinasloe were reported to be so bad, that I resolved, if possible, to avoid taking mine thither ; and as all the post horses and carriages were engaged, we mean to take our chance of seats in one of the public carriages which pass through the town : if we can get conveyed thither, I take it for granted we shall find no difficulty in returning. Adieu.

J. C. C.

Ballinasloe, Oct. 4, 1815.

IN the many hundred miles we have travelled through this country, we have never, except in one instance, had the least article pilfered at any of the inns. At Athlone, the preceding night, the chambermaid purloined a night ribband : though in itself of little or no value, the want of it induced me to inquire after it. As soon as the girl was called, she said it must be hidden by the bed clothes, and set about to find it ; but the mode of her examination convinced me she had taken it, and on my imparting my suspicions, she became highly offended, and communicated the circumstance to her mistress. The character given of the young woman induced me to acquiesce in her acquittal, though my servant had not laid down the ribband ten minutes before it was missed. I mention this insignificant occurrence only as a proof of the general honesty of the servants at the inns, and as being contrary to the opinion and representation of many travellers. Had the servants been disposed to pilfer, many opportunities were afforded them of taking articles infinitely more valuable.

The concourse of people passing all the evening, and through the night, prepared us for the bustle we had to encounter. We were fortunate in finding room in the mail from Athlone carrying four inside passengers : the driving was steady, and the horses were good, as was evinced by their performing the twelve miles in less than two hours. We observed a great extent of bog to the southward, connected with the bog of Allen; the soil in general appeared to be light, and the cultivation of it very indifferent.

Ballinasloe is a considerable town ; at its autumnal fair, it is calculated to receive ten thousand visitors, the price of whose beds varies from sixpence to a guinea per night.

The farming society of Ireland have a very good house here, with admirable accommodations for the company, and ample convenience for the reception and exhibition of stock. The arrangement of the prize cattle is perfectly well conducted. The order and regularity of the meeting is extremely suitable, not only to the purpose of business, but that of conviviality also.

We lost no time in finding out Mr. Dix, and our kind friend Mr. Radcliffe, who had secured us beds at the house of the catholic priest. The display of the first day consisted of sheep assembled in Lord Clancarty's park. The whole were driven in before ten o'clock the preceding night, and the sale is considered to be over by ten the following morning, when driving them out commences. From sixty to eighty thousand sheep, worth from forty shillings to four guineas and upwards each, were here collected on a space not exceeding one hundred acres ; but the beautiful inequalities of the ground on which the flocks were shown, exposed the whole to great advantage. The noise and uproar was excessive, yet amidst all this apparent hurry and confusion great order prevailed. Not a dog is permitted to be present the whole business is ably performed by the shepherds, who are surprisingly dexterous. As we entered the park two flocks had met, of very unequal strength : the most powerful one forced a passage directly through the other flock, breaking the line, and threatening the weaker animals with total destruction ; this, however, was prevented by the activity of the shepherds, for before they had reached the turnpike, at the distance of little more than a mile, the inferior flock was again perfectly collected

The line of drift is principally by the Athlone road, and, considering the numbers which pass, the losses sustained are trifling ; and these arise chiefly from their being kidnapped in towns, or driven over by carriages. The shepherds are entitled to great praise for their alacrity, care, and vigilance. If a sheep separate from any of the flocks, it is immediately caught and brought back in an instant. Independently of an opportunity being afforded to us of seeing and examining every flock distinctly, the appearance of the whole so beautifully disposed was a grand spectacle.

The Irish sheep, though possessing more spirit and action than the Leicester, much resemble that breed ; the form of the Irish is supposed to have been much improved by crossing with the best rams of the Leicester : the flavor of their mutton is good, and they attain a great size. There were several lots of wethers sold for above four guineas each, though the average price did not much exceed three pounds.

After spending two hours in this animating field, we returned to inspect the stock in the Society's yard ; of which the specimens of various breeds were numerous, and all well arranged. Lord Farnham and the Bishop of Kilmore's Devons could hardly be surpassed in any county in England. We observed also some very good Herefords : Mr. M'Gill's attracted particular attention, and among the long-horned cattle were as fine samples of the breed as I had ever before seen.

The regulations of the society in the premium given for bulls are calculated to be highly beneficial to the country, by disseminating the best breeds among the farmers of small, as well as of large, occupations. The premium bulls cover gratis, and must serve a certain number of cows to be entitled to the rewards, which are very liberal. In consequence of this excellent rule, no one is precluded from improving his stock, and within the two last years the cattle of the country have received great improvements. Of the Leicester, South-down, and Merino sheep, there were also many good specimens.

To one of the society's regulations I think a material objection may be taken. The certificates of the ages of the stock are delivered on oath by the bailiffs ! There is something in the exaction of a sacred affirmation on this occasion which does not comport with my feelings : if the protestation of the servant, sanctioned by the principal, whose honor is pledged, be not sufficient to prevent improper claims, I should have little reliance on an extra-judicial oath, punishable only by contempt ; which would equally attach to an unattested declaration. The practice any where would be highly objectionable ; but in Ireland, where the word of honour is held in such high respect, it seems extraordinary that an oath should be required.

The company assembled were very numerous ; one hundred and sixty gentlemen sat down to dinner, the expenses of which were moderate. At a fixed hour the party broke up ; and a supper, for those who were inclined to partake of it, was prepared in a room below. I never was present at a better conducted assembly where more spirit seemed to prevail, or more solicitude was manifested to pro-mote the great object for which they had met, that of furthering the patriotic labors of the institution, from which the most important advantages to Ireland may reasonably be expected to result. Adieu. J. C. C.

Athlone, Oct. 5, 1813,

AMONG the pleasures of yesterday, I must not overlook that of my being introduced to Mr. Garnett, a very respectable gentleman in his eighty-fourth year. In the course of the last sixty-four years he had attended Ballinasloe fair sixty-three times. The opportunity of resorting to such a living chronicle, promised a rich treat to an agricultural amateur, as, in that period, the changes which he had witnessed must have been very striking. Though much of this gentleman's attention had been devoted to stock, yet the alterations had been so gradual and progressive, as not to have made such impression on his mind as I had been led to expect. He admitted that the augmentation in point of value, with other causes, had increased the price of cattle nearly four-fold ; but he was not prepared to allow that so much had been gained in size and symmetry of the several breeds as I had supposed, and indeed it is probable that this improvement is only of recent date. The general face and state of the country, he observed, was entirely altered, and bore no resemblance to what it was in his early youth, when the lands were unenclosed, and little grain of any description was produced. The noise and bustle of the place precluded my obtaining that extent of valuable information, which this venerable gentleman was so competent and obligingly ready to afford ; I became, however, perfectly

satisfied, that little attention was formerly paid to the objects connected with the husbandry of the country.

This day and the succeeding are the horse fairs. The ability of the Irish horses in leaping is surprisingly great. The custom here is to leap the horses shown for sale into the pound, which is surrounded by a stone wall, five feet high on the upper, and six on the lower side. Many went over the lower part, and in some instances over both. Were I to communicate the feats I saw performed, I might hazard a similar reproof to that of the late Bishop of Killala, Dr. Law, to Lord D , who in speaking of his alert regiment of volunteer cavalry, asserted that he had brought them to such perfection, that in charging and clearing a six foot wall, the line would not be put into the least disorder ! “ That, my Lord,” exclaimed the Bishop, “ is indeed a wonderful bounce !”

We spent some time in a further inspection of the stock, which greatly surpassed my expectation, as I must confess, that I never saw, at any show, better specimens of the most valuable breeds of cattle.

In the course of the morning we rode to the ground on which the battle of Aghrim was fought ; the conflict which finally extinguished the hopes of the Stuarts. James was in himself so devoid of every trait which could create attachment or respect, that his fall calls forth not one sentiment of commiseration.

Near this spot we had an opportunity of seeing two hundred oxen, the property of Major Kirwan. In point of size they were remarkably equal, and very neat cattle in appearance ; short in the leg, well formed in the carcase, and of a description not commonly driven to market. Two thousand pounds were offered for one hundred of them, by Sir A. Bryan ; and refused, guineas being the price demanded ; which I have little doubt would be obtained. Major Kirwan occupies some hundreds of acres of grazing land, worth four pounds per acre.

I was much concerned at quitting Ballinasloe before the conclusion of the meeting ; as I should have been pleased to have seen the prizes awarded. The business of the institution is ably conducted, and has, and will continue to produce the most important public benefits. The decision of the judges, however impartial and correct, it is impossible to expect should be agreeable to all parties ; it is on this point dissatisfaction and disunion generally has arisen, and, however to be lamented, it is I fear unavoidable.

Great and respectful regard is paid to strangers ; no occasion of polite attention towards us was neglected ; nor can I, in terms adequate to my feelings, express how sensibly I was gratified by the distinguished compliment I received on being elected an honorary member of the institution.

We dined at Lord Clonbrock’s, whose residence is about five miles from Ballinasloe ; the mansion is new, and the grounds laid out in the modern style. The country is too flat to be beautiful ; the mode of husbandry stands in great need of improvement. The grazing land lets from three to five pounds, the arable from forty to fifty shillings the acre. An excessive repetition of corn crops prevails, and though the stock on the farms is abundant and valuable, no winter provision of green crops is attempted.

Difficult as we had found it to reach Ballinasloe, never had it occurred that any trouble could attend our departure ; but this confidence was misplaced : not a carriage, nor even post-horse, could be procured ; every possible exertion proved ineffectual, till at length my catholic host obligingly undertook the task, and after some time reported that he had procured me a man and horse to be ready at four o’clock the next morning. The engagement was punctually observed. I was prepared not to expect an inimitable nag, but any thing like the poor beast produced, I confess, had not entered into my contemplation. The miserable animal

was the picture of famine, and laboring under a complication of maladies. I could not help expressing my apprehension that the half-starved creature would die on the road “ Never fear, your honor, he is better than he looks,” replied the owner ; and having no alternative I mounted. The distressing efforts to accomplish two miles reconciled me to the determination of dismounting, and proceeding on foot ; when, most fortunately, a carriage with the coachman alone on the barouche seat, came in sight ; I at once decided to make my case known, and take the chance of being permitted to mount with the driver. I rode up to the window, and, addressing myself to the gentleman, stated, that I had never in my life been a candidate for a place till this moment, when, from a combination of disappointments, I was nearly reduced to the necessity of walking, and as this ill suited with my engagements, I should feel highly obliged to obtain *a place* on the barouche seat. As I suspected, the parties became amused with the style of my application, and the manner in which I was appointed. I doubt not I should have succeeded with any Irish gentleman, but I became perfectly secure of my object on being recognized by Mr. Garnett. In the course of our drive, I learned an interesting anecdote of the spirit with which the old gentleman, to whom I had become so much obliged, had conducted himself. On returning the preceding year from Ballinasloe, he was attacked by a footpad ; the man stopped the carriage, and presented a pistol ; Mr. Garnett refused to deliver his money, though he had only a stick with which to defend himself. The villain fired and wounded him in the face, which, however, did not prevent a continuance of his resistance, until some persons fortunately came up and seized the man, who was afterwards tried and executed for the crime.

The whole of our path was so crowded with sheep, that I do not think there were a hundred yards clear, at any time, during the whole way ; and as the road is narrow, it required the greatest care to avoid doing them injury.

I forgot to state that, after getting through the turnpike, I was stopped by a poor fellow who appeared in great agitation. The innocence and earnestness with which he made inquiries after his brindled cow, of one, who by no possibility could afford him the least information, marks the extreme simplicity which characterizes the peasantry of this country, while his apparent distress interested me much, in spite of the vexation I was at the moment enduring. My only surprise was, that in so prodigious a bustle and throng, greater losses did not occur.

Our journey was very pleasant ; after making my best acknowledgments for the accommodation so kindly afforded me, I proceeded to the inn where our horses were left.

This visit to Ballinasloe afforded us great entertainment ; and we should gladly have protracted it, had not an engagement to Baron’s Court compelled us to leave the fair sooner than we could have wished. Having breakfasted, we are about to set off. Ever yours, adieu.

J. C. C.

Baron’s Court, Oct. 6, 1813.

OUR first stage often miles was to Ballamona : the road is nearly parallel to that which we had travelled from Edgeworth’s Town, but leads through a country more undulated and diversified. From the rising grounds the views were often extensive. The soil is light, and the fences good ; but the husbandry in general was very indifferently conducted. In two instances only small patches of turnips were observed, though the surface is particularly well adapted to their growth ; while the luxuriance of some parts through which we passed appeared to be so great, as to require the incontrovertible evidence of seeing to become satisfied of the fact.

A portion of Lord Sunderlin’s estate, at Springles, has been let for the last eight years in con-acres, at eight pounds each ; during which period these lands had produced three crops of

potatoes in succession without manure, and were afterwards succeeded by five crops of oats, the last of which was the most productive.

How much longer this land is capable of enduring such treatment remains to be proved : so long, however, as the rent can be procured, the land will have no rest, but continue to be let in the present mode. Parts of other estates in this district are let in the same way. My information was derived from Mr. Bertie, the land agent to Lord Sunderlin, on whose correctness I can rely. I was by no means surprised at this information, as I have frequently met with instances of the same extraordinary fertility ; and have much regretted that I have not had an opportunity of examining the nature of the land so occupied. The soil of Springles is a deep loam ; the substratum, a limestone gravel. I was much struck with the strength of the stubbles on the lands adjoining this property. To the limekilns in the neighbourhood may possibly be attributed a great portion of the luxuriance of the crops, the general management being incompetent to the effect, and deserving great reprobation.

A considerable number of gentlemen's seats appeared in this line, with extensive plantations about some of them. We were greatly perplexed by the sheep on the road, an inconvenience which attended us for more than thirty miles, but which, however, afforded us an ample opportunity of inspecting the flocks. The cross with the Leicester is very observable, and has evidently improved the form of the Irish sheep : their average weight is now about thirty pounds a quarter. Many of the flocks must have travelled a great distance in the last few days; and though the road was wet, they had not suffered so much as I should have expected from such rapid driving, which may be owing to their native activity and spirit

Whilst we were stopping to refresh our horses, Mr. Garnett arrived. He said he remembered almost the whole of this country without hedges, very thinly inhabited, and that the state of the working classes was now more comfortable than in ancient times he had known them. The changes in eighty years have undoubtedly been great, and have infinitely augmented the luxuries among the higher ranks ; but unless it be that the introduction of the potatoe has prevented the lower orders from starving, I cannot, from what I have observed, see how it is possible their condition should be improved, when it is not easy to conceive rational beings to exist under greater privations than they at present endure.

Observations on the state of Ireland, principally directed to its agriculture and rural population : in a series of letters, written on a tour through that country (1818)

Author : Curwen, J. C. (John Christian), 1756-1828

Volume : 2

Subject : Agriculture — Ireland ; Agricultural laborers -- Ireland ; Ireland -- Social conditions

Publisher : London : Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : MSN

Book contributor : Kelly - University of Toronto

Collection : toronto

Source : Internet Archive

<http://www.archive.org/details/observationsst01curwuoft>

Edited and uploaded to [www.aughty.org](http://www.aughty.org)

June 21 2010