

## On Leaving Westport

*A tour round Ireland, through the sea-coast counties, in the autumn of 1835*

John Barrow

*Westport to Tuam and Clydagh House.*

Road to Tuam, through Castlebar—A Four-horsed Coach—A singular Character—Tuam—Roman Catholic Chapel—Dr. M'Hale—Achill Mission—Attempted Destruction of, by M'Hale—His Letter to the Bishop of London—Extract of a Letter, describing M'Hale's Visit—Description of the Mission, and Character of Mr. Nangle—Proceed to Clydagh House, by Headford.

*Clydagh House, Lough Corrib, 15th September, 1835.*

My intention on leaving Westport was to proceed by the direct road to this place, passing between the lakes Mask and Carra, through Ballinrobe, Cong, and Headford. Of the caves of Cong I had heard a great deal, but my taste, I confess, leans more towards lofty mountains than damp and dark underground chambers : even my friend Crofton Croker's legend of the fair lady changed into a white trout, which inhabits one of these caves, could not turn me out of my projected route, not though one traveller has vouched for the pallid whiteness of the trout of the cavern—I suppose from the same cause,—privation of light,—which had changed the colour of a miserable gold fish in the catacombs of Paris to a deadly white : the poor thing was swimming in a small well or basin, at the foot of a wall of skulls and cross-bones.

The truth is, I had made up my mind to see Tuam and the new Catholic chapel, which is now in progress at that place, and of which so much has been said. I therefore took my seat outside a four-horsed coach, and out we started for Castlebar, where the road to Tuam turns off in a south-east direction. I think it would have astonished one of our four-in-hand whips to have seen us on our road to this town. The poor animals were so miserable in appearance, and so weak, that their united efforts could scarcely drag the coach up some, not very steep, acclivities of the road. The coachman first enlisted a parcel of ragged boys into his service, who were evidently on the look out for the coach, to trudge alongside, and by shouts and blows to urge the animals up the hill. Finding this to fail, he dismounted from the box, handing over the reins to the passenger who was seated next to him, and, with whip in hand, ran up the hill along with his cattle, flogging them all the way with his utmost energy, until he had got them to the summit, when he resumed his seat :—all this, too, happened at first starting, so you may suppose our progress towards Castlebar was by no means rapid, and our prospect of reaching Tuam not very encouraging ; and yet, bad as this is, travelling in Ireland has no doubt, wonderfully improved of late years : we now hear no more of that horrid practice of putting wisps of lighted straw under the bellies of the poor animals, nor does that equally horrid practice of ploughing by the tail, as I understand, any longer exist.

Immediately after leaving Castlebar we came to a part of the road which was under repair, and left in such a state, that I should have supposed it next to impossible to cross it. Every one dismounted and walked on, as it seemed a general opinion that the coach must of necessity be over-turned—notwithstanding which they contrived to get it safe over, somehow or other ; more, I believe, good luck than good management.

A very singular, wild-looking character got upon the roof of the coach at Castlebar, and seated himself next to me. Fierce as his aspect was, he had much the air and manner of a

gentleman, though shabbily dressed. Resolved to enter into conversation with him, I commenced by talking of Croagh Patrick, which just then reared its proud head in the distance, and observed, that I had yesterday ascended to the top, which required some little exertion. As yet my friend had not opened his lips, but now, in a voice of thunder, and in a very abrupt manner, he exclaimed, with extreme rapidity, “D——d non-sense, exerting oneself to get up a hill—exert yourself to get on in life, that’s *something*.” How pregnant is the remark of this Cynic ! thought I to myself. He now began to open in right earnest, commencing with an extraordinary and quite unintelligible account of the services he had rendered to Government, and how ill they had been requited ; and winding up with a vociferous shout, “Wasn’t *that* pretty treatment—Eh ?” which was the burden of his whole discourse, and the winding up of every Grievance. I wished him at the d—l (excuse my saying so) : but he only went as far as the first stage—I mean of our journey. I remarked to the coachman that I thought him tipsy, who said it was lucky for me that I did not throw out any such hint, as no-thing irritated him more, being conscious of his failing, and that he certainly would have struck me with the awful *shilelah* he carried in his hand, and which he, ever and anon, brandished about in the most approved fashion of the Emerald Island.

The country between Castlebar and Tuam is generally flat and uninteresting, but well cultivated ; and there appeared to be more private gentlemen’s seats, and large farm-houses, than I had yet observed since entering Connaught. Among the former we passed that of Lord Clanmorris. At Roundfort is a good house belonging to Mr. Blake, surrounded with plantations ; and not far from this, Mr. Lindsay had built a large house, which we passed pretty near, intended, I understood, for a school of agriculture, but the speculation seems to have been a failure, as few pupils ever attended it.

Tuam is a small, ordinary-looking-town, with some few good houses, and apparently a place of some activity : the streets seemed full, and every one bustling about. It is, in fact, a central spot, from whence great turnpike-roads branch out in all directions to every part of the island, and is in a direct line from the north-west coast to Ballinasloe, where the greatest cattle-fair is held in all Ireland. In consequence of this, coaches and cars are constantly passing through the town ; and I am told that, at an early hour in the morning, the horns of the mails are as frequent and noisy as in any central town in England.

Tuam is the residence of His Grace Power le Poer Trench, one of the Protestant Archbishops of Ireland, who is also Bishop of Ardagh,—a venerable, humane, and charitable man. He resides much on the spot, in the old palace, the grounds of which are pretty, and kept in good order. The cathedral is an old Gothic building, small, and has nothing in its architecture to recommend it. But there is another in progress, superintended by another archbishop, at least one who assumes the title, by name M’Hale, of whom I shall have something to say presently. *His* cathedral is the lion of the town, and that which brought me to it. It is certainly an extremely elegant building, in the Gothic style of architecture. It is not on so grand a scale as I had been led to expect, but is infinitely the finest and most tasteful building I have yet seen on my travels in Ireland. The columns and the lofty ceiling are very striking. At one end, and immediately behind the altar-piece, is a large painted window, but, as there was a quantity of scaffolding in front of it, I could not obtain a sufficiently good view to enable me to judge of its merits. I saw, however, that it was full of armorial bearings, chiefly, I was told, of subscribers, among whom are reckoned some liberal Protestants. The altar is entirely of Italian marble, of various descriptions : it was made at Rome, and sent as a present from the Pope, carefully packed in boxes. Four spiral fluted columns support the canopy, which is also composed of marble. The workmanship of the whole is exquisite. It had just been placed in its situation ; and I could not help thinking that they had been in too great a hurry in putting it together, as there were several workmen employed about that part of the chapel, and, as I

have said, a quantity of scaffolding was still remaining, which came in close contact with the altar-piece. This splendid chapel, I understand, has been built partly by small subscriptions, even so low as a penny, and by gratuitous labour. A place is left, and the foundation finished, for the reception of a steeple, which the Catholics are determined to have on many of their chapels,—aye, and bells too, and carillons into the bargain ; and why not ? Since the emancipation there ought to be no alternative but this,—to give the Catholic as full, as free, and as unfettered rights as the Protestant has ; or, if he abuses them, put his shackles on afresh.

I shall now give you some account of the person under whose auspices this chapel has been built. You have no doubt heard, or you soon will hear, much of the titular Archbishop of Tuam, Dr. M'Hale, a man who has always shown a most inveterate and deadly hatred to the very name of Protestant, but yet apparently so meek, so mild, and so humble ;—his dwelling is so lowly, just at the foot of the gate leading to the archiepiscopal palace, that the stranger cannot avoid remarking on the contrast between the splendid mansion of the Protestant and the mean dwelling of the Roman Catholic Archbishop. But, as the poet says, —

—There are some that use  
Humility to serve their pride, and seem  
Humble upon their way, to be prouder  
At their wish'd journey's end.

From all accounts, and from that I am about to give you, such a person as the poet here describes is Dr. M'Hale. Whether his character be estimated truly in Tuam, of course I know nothing ; but a ragged boy, when conducting a friend of mine to the schools, said that Dr. M'Hale was “ the bright star of Ireland ;” and he also said that “ the Bible was a bad book.” If such be the instruction given to children in the schools under the Doctor's superintendence, —from which we know the Bible is excluded,—instead of a “ bright star,” Dr. M'Hale may be considered rather as an *ignis fatuus*, to seduce his flock into the bogs and quagmires of error and the relieve them.

You may perhaps have heard of an island named Achill, part of the county of Mayo, but removed to the farthest west, where its rugged and lofty front braves the blasts and the billows of the stormy Atlantic. It is about thirty miles in circumference, part of its surface being mountain and rock, part heath and bog, and the rest fit for pasture and cultivation. Its inhabitants are said to be from 3000 to 4000 : and to support themselves by planting potatoes, rye, barley, and oats ; some few possess a cow and a pig, and some, in addition, a few sheep ; but they are represented to be miserably poor, ignorant, and of course superstitious. In 1831, when relief was sent, from England, most of them were in a state of starvation, many hundreds subsisting chiefly on sea-weeds, mostly on the *fucus saccharifera*, known in Ireland by the name of Sloke,—and the typhus fever was raging among them. Almost the only collection of cottages, or hovels, that deserves the name of a village, is Dugurth, situated close under the lofty, bleak, and barren mountain of *Slieve More*, where the eagle builds his aerie, and whence he frequently pounces on his prey, be it poultry, fish, or a young lamb.

The attention of certain humane and benevolent persons had for some time been called to the lamentable condition of the poor inhabitants of Ireland who in insular and remote situations were left without any spiritual comfort ; and subscriptions were raised to a considerable amount for the establishment of home-missions, whose chief objects were to endeavour to confer the benefits of religious instruction and civilization on these poor, neglected beings. Two or three clergymen of the Church of England, with as many Scripture-readers, who understood both the English and Irish language, undertook to establish a

mission on Achill, the object being to instruct these poor people, not only in the word of God, but to teach them a better mode of cultivating their land, and how more successfully to carry on the fishery ; to construct their cottage in a better, cheaper, and more comfortable style ; to open schools for the education of their children ; and, in short, to conduct this home-mission pretty much upon the plan of a Moravian establishment.

Mr. Nangle, a most respectable clergyman, undertook this mission. A lease of ground was procured ; buildings were erected ; three or four schools were opened, and children flocked to them from all quarters of the island, to the number of from 300 to 400 ; the inhabitants attended at each other's houses, to hear the reading of the Bible in their native tongue ; and the utmost harmony prevailed ; when, in an evil hour, a certain priest thwarted the benevolent views of Mr. Nangle : he denounced the schools from the altar, the consequence of which was, that about 130 of the pupils were withdrawn; but Mr. Nangle was too much for him, and the pupils were gradually returning. The priest, however, is supposed to have aroused the alarm or the jealousy of Dr. M'Hale, who determined to make a personal visitation to Achill, and, by his presence, to crush at once, if he could, this charitable and humane establishment. To do this more effectually, he is said to have put himself at the head of some fourteen of his priests, proceeded to the island, marched into the village in grand procession, with music playing and banners flying, and, clothed in all the pomp of his splendid pontificals, directed his satellites to fulminate those denunciations, the consequence of which the most ignorant of the Catholics full well understand. No angel, it seems, stood in the way of this modern Balaam ; no compunctious visitings of nature arrested his progress ; no misgivings of conscience at the unholy proceeding he was about to exercise, troubled his mind ; and, instead of one Balak, a whole host of them attended his will, loaded with curses. Did not his heart smite him when he beheld the comfortable dwellings that had risen among the wretched sod-huts of the poor islanders, which he was about to destroy ? Did not the feelings of our common nature, as he beheld the pleasing prospect from the Pisgah of Achill, touch his heart, and bring to his recollection that beautiful apostrophe of Balaam of old ? “ How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel ! Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.” Ah, no ! his heart would appear to have been incapable of relenting ; the schools and the children were denounced and dispersed, and a “ flaming sword” was brandished through the whole island.

Having thus discharged the full vial of his wrath against the mission and the poor islanders, this proud prelate, flushed with his ignoble victory, coolly sits down to address a letter to the Right Rev. Dr. Blomfield, Lord Bishop of London, dated “ Achill Island, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin [1].” The style and tone of the letter is as indecorous and insolent as the spirit of it is vulgar and vindictive. Dr. Blomfield, in his place in Parliament, had observed on the growth of Protestantism in Ireland, and this roused the wrath of John Tuam.—“ As for your churches,” he says, “ so far from being any evidence of the growth of the Protestant religion, their steeples, like the London Monument, are so many tall and lying bullies.” He pronounces the exertions of the Achill Missionary Society “ abortive”—asserts that it could make no advances in this island—that in vain was it attempted to seduce the people from the faith of their fathers—that they treated the pretensions of these “ ignorant fanatics with contemptuous scorn”—that “ the Achill Mission is already another tale of the numerous failures of fraud and fanaticism”—and that “ its buildings, now unfinished are, like the Tower of Babel, a monument of the folly and presumption of their architects.”

His malicious and insulting sneer at the poor plundered clergy of Ireland is disgraceful to the character he assumes. “ Already the parsons,” he says, “ are commencing the practices of the Catholic religion ; fasting is become a favourite observance—nay, hateful as celibacy

appeared to the Protestant churchmen, they are beginning to agree with Malthus that it would be unjust to be burdening society with an unprovided offspring.”

One part of his letter is amusing enough. Having, as I have observed, made the anniversary of the coronation of William IV. coincident with that of the “Nativity of the Blessed Virgin,” he thus takes the opportunity to contrast the two great performers on the occasion—one in Westminster Abbey, and the other in the Vatican. “A discourse on the respective duties of the assembled auditory formed a part of each of these solemnities. The one was delivered by a prelate of exalted rank and supercilious bearing, whose full and corpulent frame, unwasted by fasts or vigils, attested the sincerity of his belief in the superstition of such practices. It was Dr. Blomfield, the Protestant Bishop of London ; the other by a capuchin, than whom nothing could more strongly contrast with the former figure. The feet, almost bare, were bound by a few lachets to their scanty sandals ; a coarse, dark, flowing garment was wrapped by a leathern girdle round his emaciated body ; the sinews upon his attenuated wrists and fingers were seen to rise like reeds upon a column; and the fulness of the tonsure, which his downcast head had rendered visible, manifestly revealed how completely he had got rid of all the vanities of the world.”

It required no small degree of impudence on the part of this Dr. M’Hale to venture on this contrast, evidently intended as the personifications of pride and humility, at the very moment when, with unparalleled pride and meanness, he had exhibited himself, not like the capuchin with his bare feet, his downcast head, and his coarse garments, not as one having “got rid of the vanities of the world,” but in all the pomp of pontifical tawdry, to astonish and terrify an ignorant and wretched population, and to destroy that pleasing prospect of happiness which was on the point of being realized.

What followed this undignified, disgraceful, and inhuman exhibition, which any other titular prelate of Ireland would be ashamed of, I learned from an accomplished lady who visited Achill very shortly after M’Hale’s departure. She left that extraordinary man, Mr. Nangle, nothing cast down, nor in any way disheartened ; on the contrary, he had no doubt that the schools would in time be re-opened. With the permission of this intelligent lady I will give you an extract from a letter, written by her soon after to her sister, *currente calamo*, which describes so admirably the firm, the undaunted, yet meek and placid character of Mr. Nangle, that it ought not to be hidden under a bushel. She first relates her journey to Achill, and thus proceeds.

“At Ballycroy we were detained four days by a hurricane, living all this time in the coast-guard watch-house and the cottage of the chief boatman. At the end of this time, Mr. Nugent took us over in his galley to the Bull’s Mouth Station, in the Isle of Achill, whence we proceeded to the village of Dugurth, the seat of the Rev. Mr. Nangle’s new Missionary Establishment ; where, if we had not had a letter of introduction from Mr. Nugent, we should probably have been equally well received. In fact, no one can visit, or, at least, no one can sleep in Achill, without either going to Mr. Nangle’s or to the humble cottages of the coast-guard men. I had never heard of Achill or Mr. Nangle till I saw Mr. —— at Dublin.

“Like another Luther is Mr. Nangle in Achill, preaching twice every day against Popery, exposing the craft of the priests, and holding up to ridicule their arch-mystery, the converting a bit of paste, boiled in their own sauce-pan, and clipped with a pair of scissors, into the body and blood of Christ, their Creator and God ! Day after day does Mr. Nangle’s household, consisting of Protestants, converted Catholics, and some few Catholics not yet converted, listen to this astounding proposition, comparing it with *the* only one all-sufficient sacrifice of the cross. The convert weeps, the unconverted Catholic smiles, and likes to hear the doctrine of

the wafer thus presented to his understanding. Perhaps before he smiles, he rages ; for this, with those who care for their faith, is the natural and first effect of the doctrine thus preached to them. Yet there is some attraction to the Irish mind in the very *daring* of the proceeding ; he *likes* the boldness of it ; it rouses and interests him. You may reason with and try to persuade and conciliate him, and use delicate and measured language for ever. He appears to agree and is not impressed ; but to hear his priest called, as I once heard Mr. Nangle call him, “ a ruffian priest ;” to hear the awful Bishop M‘Hale called a man like themselves, who, like themselves, was a few years ago running barelegged over the bogs, is what seizes their imagination and rouses their interest.

“ Much, therefore, as I reasoned with Mr. Nangle against the imprudence, if not the impropriety, of this mode of proceeding, I am notwithstanding convinced that, with the ignorant and enslaved Irish, this is the only way to do anything. And is it not the way in which Luther went to work ? Mr. Nangle is another Luther in boldness, but not in violence of temper. He is in his person and manner the very *beau ideal* of a missionary, as much so as Mr. Malan of Geneva. He appears about thirty-five years of age, very tall and thin, pale, and dark, with finely-formed features, and an expression so mild and so pensive, that you would think he could not utter a harsh word, or raise his voice beyond the breathings of a prayer. Yet, when animated, the most extraordinary fire lights up in his eyes, and the sweetest smile plays upon his countenance ; his voice is always subdued and gentle—he scarcely ever laughs. How can a man laugh who believes that thousands of his deluded brethren are perishing around him in their sins and their errors, and that he is a minister of God to save a few and only a few ? Far as I am from agreeing with him, or any of his brethren, in this particular view of things, I believe it is nothing less than a motive of such overwhelming force, that can lead a man not only to risk his personal safety, but to devote his whole soul, his every energy, to sacrifice his health, and to persevere through good and evil report, through persecution and calumny, fatigue and privation of every description, without looking back or fainting in his course. I have seen many missionaries in many countries, but never any one so devoted, so pure and high-minded, as Mr. Nangle.

“ I wish I had time to tell you more of our visit to Achill ; how we ascended its highest mountains ; and how we *missionized* along the road, I mean how our two guides and the Scripture-reader, who accompanied our horse’s steps, dropped a word here, and another there, got the country people into conversation, and sowed the seed of their missionary doctrines by the way-side, in the hope that it might some day spring up again. It was a curious scene ; but it may be more interesting to tell you that Mr. Nangle’s colony consists of five stone slated building’s of two stories, a thing never seen in Achill before ; that he has now ten acres of land producing potatoes, and will soon have a great many more—is building eight cabins for the converts, not better than those of their neighbours, in order that they may find shelter, but not anything which could be called bribery ; that the amount of his converts since his arrival in Achill a year ago is thirty-one individuals ; and that Dr. Adams, a rich physician of Dublin, is about to come and devote his fortune and medical talents to the colony. If Achill and Mr. Nangle have excited as much interest in England as they appear to be doing in Ireland, you will be glad to have heard of them—if not, you will wish I had left Achill sooner. We did not do so till after four days, and then crossed the Sound of Achill to sleep at one of our coast-guard cottages, and proceeded through the mountains of a district called Curraan, to Newport.”

I entirely agree with the amiable and intelligent writer of this letter, as to the imprudence and impropriety of throwing ridicule on sacred subjects, however contrary, or even repugnant they may appear, to our principles of faith. It is no excuse to say that argument is of no avail ; if neither this nor persuasion will make converts, I do not think we have any right to push our

endeavours farther. The mysteries of religion are not, fit or fair subjects for derision. A man's religious opinions is an affair between God and himself ; and so long as they do not interfere with the peace and the welfare of society, it, appears to me that, to unsettle a man's mind by endeavouring to draw him away from the religion of his fathers, can hardly be called a legitimate proceeding. But if, by reading and expounding the word of God—by setting the example of a sober, righteous, and holy life—by imparting the benefits of education to the youth of both sexes—and by instructing adults in the useful arts and the beneficial employment of time, Roman Catholics may be converted to the Protestant faith—if these be the sole objects of the Achill mission, the endeavours of Mr. Nangle and his coadjutors must be considered as worthy of all praise.

Having procured a car I proceeded direct for Clydagh House, where I now am, the seat of our excellent friend, Sir George Staunton, situated on the eastern shore of Lough Corrib, about thirteen miles from Tuam. We drove through the little town of Headford, the chief proprietor of which is Mr. St. George, who is the nearest neighbouring gentleman to Clydagh. Headford is certainly a more tidy-looking little town than any I had passed through since leaving the province of Ulster. In lieu of the eternal dunghill before the door, some of the cottages could boast even of a piece of ground in front, with roses climbing up the side of the walls. Another unusual feature in this town of Headford is the enormous square chimneys, rising out of several of the thatched roofs, apparently of ancient structure, and sufficiently numerous to give a peculiar character to the place. After leaving Headford, the road passed over a dreary, desolate-looking country, portioned off into small patches with high stone walls, loosely placed together, which continued until I approached a wood sweeping down to the shore of Lough Corrib, upon the bank of which stands Clydagh House.

I was not sorry to find myself comfortably housed and most kindly welcomed by Mrs. Lynch, whose husband you are aware is unfortunately absent from home, so that I shall be deprived of much valuable information, which his long residence in this part of the country would have enabled him to afford me.

#### CONNAMARA.

Cross Lough Corrib—Oughterarde—Martin's Gatehouse—Flynn's half-way House—Miss Flynn—Arrival of Company—Failure in getting up a Dance—Ballinahinch—Roundstone and Biterbuy Bays—Mountains of Maam Turk and the Twelve Pins—Clifden—Journey to Lenane—The Killery—Residence of Big Jack Joyce—now a Member of a Temperance Society—The use of Whiskey necessary—Address to—Singing party—Trait of kind feeling in Joyce—His anxiety to give his children a good education—Origin of the Joyces—Joyce's Kitchen—Detention by the Weather—Further Conversation—Departure for Maam Lodge—Wretched State of the Peasantry—in their Dress and Hovels—Recross Lough Corrib from Maam Lodge—Arrival at Clydagh.

*Clydagh House, 19th September, 1835.*

I had arranged with Mrs. Lynch to set out early in the morning for Connamara ; and accordingly she had kindly ordered the four-oared boat to be ready to cross Lough Corrib, and to remain at my disposal. The weather was as usual wet, "very" (as Fanny Kemble would say), and unsettled till towards twelve o'clock, when it began to improve a little. I therefore walked down to the water-side, taking with me nothing but a carpet-bag, containing such things as I might want for a two days' absence.

The distance across to Oughterarde may be about seven or eight miles, which our boatmen pulled in about an hour and a half, the wind being against us. I acted as coxswain on the

occasion, and acquitted myself so well, that I only scraped her bottom once by taking her over a sunken rock, in consequence of keeping too near a reef which ran out from one of the small islands. Oughterarde is well situated on the banks of a small river or creek, about a mile from the shore of the lake : it is navigable by boats to within a few hundred yards of the town, through which it passes in a clear, limpid, gurgling stream, issuing from a chain of small lakes, and falling in a succession of rapids to the plain. At this spot, on a green slope of the right bank, stands the church, which the rapid stream appears to be undermining, and likely, ere long, to sweep away. Here, too, on the opposite bank, stands a little lodge, built by the late Dick Martin of Galway, as he was familiarly called, and in which he spent much of his time. It is known by the name of the Gatehouse, at which his property commences, and whence one may drive six-and-twenty miles on end to Ballinahinch Castle, the family seat, without passing out of it. It was the boast of Martin, or it was said perhaps for him, that “ the king’s writ would not run in Connamara ;” but if such was ever the case, the cause of its lameness has long ceased to exist.

There is an excellent barrack at, Oughterarde, at present, however, unoccupied. There is also a neat little Catholic chapel, built of limestone, which was erected by subscription ; and no less than three *hotels*, the interior of none of which did I see, as I proceeded direct to the residence of Mr. Boyce, who is married to a sister of Mr. Lynch. The family pressed me kindly to pass some time with them, but I was compelled to make my usual excuse of want of time. Mr. Boyce exerted himself to get me a good horse and car for Ballinahinch, but I believe there was but one available horse to be had in the town ; at least, notwithstanding all his intercession, it was a sorry brute that was at last brought out for me ; and the car, judging from its rickety state, had, like the poor animal seen better days : they were somewhat akin to the king’s writ—they would not run. As I intended, however, to go no farther that night than to Flynn’s, the half-way house, I concluded they would serve my turn. The two sloping sides of the hills, between which the first part of the road was carried along the enclosed valley, were extremely barren, but their wild and lonely character, and the idea of this route being but little frequented by strangers, gave to the country an interest which otherwise it could lay no claim to. But as I journeyed onwards, I hailed the delightful prospect of soon entering among the mountains of Connamara, to which I had looked forward with great interest, even before my departure from England.

The only human beings I had to encounter in the course of the route were two or three small detached parties employed in making or mending the road : the rest of this evening’s journey was performed without meeting another creature. This part of the country, indeed, appeared to be uninhabited ; at least I did not remark any houses, or even cabins, on either side of the road. I was not sorry, therefore, when towards the close of the day I drove up to the door of Mr. Flynn, who keeps the half-way house between Oughterarde and Ballinahinch. This name of Ballinahinch reminds me of a story I have heard you tell, concerning the late Lady Macartney’s first visit to Ireland, when once, on observing the girl at the inn, who acted as chamber-maid, to be very dirty about her neck and arms, her ladyship said, “ My young woman, do you never wash yourself ?”—“ Wash !” exclaimed the girl, as loud as she could vociferate, “ is it wash you *mane* ?—the devil a wash since Ballinahinch fair.”

But I am just entering Mr. Flynn’s house. On making my bow to the inmates, being somewhat moistened by the rain, I walked forward into the kitchen, which I found full of people of various descriptions, who had collected there in consequence of being employed on the repairs of the road. This party were, under the direction of a superintending engineer, blasting the rocks, and preparing materials close to Mr. Flynn’s house. They too being wet were clustered round the fire, but most civilly and immediately gave place, on observing that I was a stranger ; I did not, however, long enjoy my position as, on looking up, I saw suspended

just over my head a whole regiment of hams and flitches of bacon, whose solid fat, feeling the effect of the fire, began to

—————melt,  
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,

which dew was dripping plentifully upon my shoulders ; I therefore, without further loss of time, decamped from the kitchen, which was immediately on the right of the entrance ; opposite to it, on the left, was a small narrow apartment, with two beds placed head and foot together, and completely occupying one side of the room, the fire-place being opposite. These appeared to be the only rooms on the ground-floor, but there was a story above them.

Mr. Flynn, I had heard, was formerly Mr. Martin's coachman. I found him an exceedingly respectable and civilly-disposed man, and his wife no less obliging. You have read Inglis's book—so had I—you may therefore suppose that the first object of my curiosity was to get a sight of that “ magnificent creature, the daughter of the hostess, with a fine expressive, and somewhat aristocratic face, and a form of perfect symmetry ;” in short, the finest specimen of an Irish girl he had seen in all Ireland. What can I, having now seen this paragon of perfection, say more ? Only this,—that I do not much like the word *magnificent* ; I think it, as Polonius says, “ an ill phrase” when applied to a beautiful young woman, and is better fitted for some middle-aged *embonpoint* duchess-dowager ;—*majestic*, in the present case, I take to be more appropriate—

—————In her face  
Sat meekness, heighten'd by majestic grace.

Miss Flynn is, in simple truth, a very fine and beautiful girl ; tall, yet extremely graceful ; possessing one of the most amiable expressions of countenance I almost ever beheld ; and yet, with all her beauty, and all the praises that have been lavished upon her, and of which she has no doubt heard something, she appeared to be perfectly free from all vanity, willingly and good-humouredly going to her work, assisting her mother to cook the dinner, lighting the fire in the apartment I was to occupy, and serving up the dinner when ready : her dress was plain and neat, not put on for the occasion apparently, but of every day's wear. She has a younger sister, who is also a pretty, good-humoured, pleasing-looking damsel, and promises to be no less remarkable than, though probably not so fine a figure of a woman as, her sister.

Whilst dinner was preparing for me, I made an attempt to ascend a hill at the back of the house, but after trudging some distance over a bog, and finding myself a miserable hand at bog-trotting, being constantly above my ankles in wet *sludge*, as they call it, I gave up the pursuit. It is rather remarkable, as I afterwards found, that all the hills and mountains of Connamara have large patches of bog, like so many plaisters, on their sloping sides.

I had not been long at Flynn's before another traveller, on a little ambling poney, rode up to the door ; and Mrs. Flynn whispered in my ear, with a little degree of consternation, as I thought, that it was the *gauger*. There was a time when no such person ventured to pass the Gatehouse. About the beginning of the present century, Martin of Galway entertained the Lord- Lieutenant, who, having tasted some very superior claret, inquired of his host the price, and where he got it, Martin answered the former part of the question, mentioning something very low, on which his guest observed, “ *That* surely is exclusive of duty.” “ Duty, my lord !” said Martin, “ we know nothing of duties in Connamara.” It would seem the king's *gauger* at that time could no more *run* beyond the Gatehouse than the king's writ.

Almost immediately after the gauger came a third gentleman, in one of the usual jaunting-cars of the country ; both from the direction of Oughterarde. Now, as there were only two beds and one room, at least below stairs, it was evident that, even if I were lucky enough to be the occupier of one of the beds, I should have the pleasure of a companion in the other. As both of the newly-arrived parties appeared to be well known to Mrs. Flynn, I began to dread that it would fall to my lot to wrap myself up in my cloak, and sleep on the floor, a mode of passing the night which, though pretty well used to in my northern rambles, is not to be coveted. On expressing some doubts as to the arrangement that could be made, Mrs. Flynn at once put me at my ease, by quoting the old proverb of “ first come, first served,” and giving me the choice of beds. The gauger however occupied the second, and I heard Mrs. Flynn tell the third gentleman that she would give up her own bed to him ; but whether he was un-gallant enough to accept the offer I know not, as I saw nothing more of him.

My friend the gauger asked permission to join me at dinner, to which I readily assented. I found him an agreeable, well-informed man : he had commenced life in the Commissariat Department, and was attached to the army of occupation at Brussels. He seemed to take pleasure in the recollection of those days, and entered freely into conversation. Dinner being dispatched, we both agreed that the best way of passing the evening would be, if possible, to get up a little dance ; accordingly we took an opportunity of communicating our wishes to Miss Flynn, who seemed to be of the same way of thinking, and entered with great cordiality into our views. I now began to look forward to the pleasure of being her partner in the dance, and anticipated no small degree of satisfaction at the idea of witnessing the manner in which so fine a figure would acquit herself ; but, alas ! there was no fiddler at hand, and the night was so stormy and wet, that this important personage could not be sent for, and, if he were summoned, in all probability would not have come. I bore up against the disappointment with that becoming fortitude which I have long since learnt to display on such occasions ; so, bidding good night to the gauger, I tumbled into bed with the determination of falling - fast asleep and forgetting my disappointment.

Having previously engaged the car in which I came from Oughterarde to take me on to Ballinahinch and Clifden, I was up at daybreak, and started off on my journey. For my own part, nothing delights me more than to be up at early sun-rise, when “ the repose of night is yet upon the earth, and the calm of the early morning is more perfect and unbroken than that of evening.” We were now getting fast into the midst of the mountains, which became bolder and loftier as we advanced, the road lying mostly over the bogs at their feet, which were quite elastic, bending under the horse’s feet at every step he took. A succession of small lakes continued on our left, some of them very pretty sheets of water, on the banks of one of which is situated the house of the Dean Mahon, to whom I had a letter of introduction from Mr. Browne, but did not make use of it. On a river issuing from a lake near the Dean’s, there was good fishing with the fly. I had passed a dwelling called the *Recess*, belonging to Mr. Steely, the contractor for keeping the roads in repair, where travellers may find accommodation for the night.

Not far from the Dean’s is Ballinahinch Castle, a large, plain-looking building, situated close to a lake, from which a rapid salmon-stream descends to the southward, into Roundstone Bay ; here Mr. Martin has built, or rather Mr. Nimmo has built on his ground, a small village, with the view of making the bay an export and import station. It is one of those numerous inlets that intersect Connamara, just outside the Bay of Galway : it has depth of water enough for large vessels, but at present there are said to be some rocks which must be removed before it can be considered perfectly accessible and safe. It appears well sheltered from the westerly winds, as it opens directly to the southward. The neighbouring Bay of Biterbuy, which is contiguous, is reported equally good, and more extensive. I was the bearer

of a letter to Mr. Martin ; but, as my usual ill-luck would have it, I heard that he was absent, but expected daily. His family however were residing there ; and, had my time allowed me to stop, I have no doubt I should have shared that welcome and hospitality for which they are so well known.

The mountain-range of Maam Turk was on my right the whole way from Flynn's to Ballinahinch ; and an inferior range of hills on the left, casting their sombre shadows on the intervening valley, from one side or the other as the day advanced : but at Ballinahinch I found myself amidst the splendid mountains called the Twelve Pins, situated on the right, their conical tops rising to the height of from two thousand to two thousand five hundred feet ; the loftiest bearing the name of *Lettery*. A good deal of this mountain-tract belongs to Mr. Martin, who has opened marble quarries, which are said to produce a beautiful light-green steatite, and a bottle-green serpentine.

Having started from the half-way house at a very early hour, I was not sorry to arrive at the *hotel* of Clifden, a small town situated about six miles to the west of Ballinahinch, in time to take a late breakfast, for which the mountain-air had given me a keen appetite. Clifden is a very neat town, quite new, as its adjunct of Newton (which is often used in Ireland) implies. Indeed, some twenty years ago, not a house was seen where the town now stands, but only a few straggling cottages, whose inhabitants were mostly employed in digging turf out of the bogs for exportation to Galway. The houses are good, and it has a considerable coasting trade. The population is estimated to be from 1500 to 2000. The liberal terms on which Mr. D'Arcy lets his land have given great encouragement to those who may desire to build : it is evidently a thriving place, and, having a tolerably good harbour in the Bay of Ardbear, the trade is likely to increase along with the town.

I walked by the side of the river on which the town is built, down to the harbour, from whence at a short distance is the castellated house of Mr. D'Arcy, very delightfully situated on the slope of the hill at the entrance of the bay, which it faces, and sheltered from the westerly winds ; the plantations on this account seem to thrive remarkably well. On returning by the upper road, a charming view is afforded of the little town of Clifden, with its white houses backed by the high, broken, and denuded mountains of the Twelve Pins of Benabola, on the broad and rocky sides of which the light and shade were beautifully playing, as the clouds flitted across the sun.

[1] The reverend prelate thus commences with something very like a fiction to produce *an effect*, by making the anniversary of the Blessed Virgin coincident with the coronation of William IV. The coronation of William IV. was on the 8th September. I know just as little as Dr. M'Hale does *when* the Nativity of the Virgin happened—but I do know that he was *not* in Achill *Island* on the 8th September : he arrived on the 2nd, and left the island on the 5th of that month.

A tour round Ireland, through the sea-coast counties, in the autumn of 1835 (1836)

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