

Passage to Ireland 1835

Friedrich Ludwig Georg von Raumer

•

Ireland—Distress—Orangemen—Intolerance—Reform—Dublin—Clonmel—Kilkenny—  
Calne— Early History—Cork—Misery—Beauty of the Irish Women.

*Cork, 19th August.*

TO-DAY, on the anniversary of your birth-day, dear Herman, I have reached nearly the remotest point of my journey ; our thoughts, however, doubtless meet in affection and regard. May you continue to proceed blameless in the career of life, improve your mind and heart more and more, and lead a life as rich as possible in every enjoyment that active virtue can bestow. You have only twice caused me the greatest apprehensions, once when you were ill, and at the point of death in Dobrau ; and when I was not able to find you in the night on a road in France. Otherwise, I have never had reason to complain of you, and you certainly not of me. So may it continue till death parts us in this world !

I am much in arrear with my accounts, for I had no time, especially quiet hours in the morning, to write anything ; add to this, that I have in my head so much, both general and special, so much that is personal, that I do not know where to begin, or how to make any orderly arrangement. Well, if it cannot be reduced to order, let all be mingled together as it flows from the pen. Go on.

All my plans to visit the lakes in Scotland were defeated, as I have already told you, by the unfavourable weather ; however, I was able to see the two banks of the Clyde. The river and bay, before you sail from Greenock southwards to Ireland, close in such a manner, that you fancy you are sailing on an extensive lake surrounded with cultivated hills.

The time that I saved in Scotland I determined to employ in Ireland, because this much-talked-of country has become doubly remarkable in our days, and it is scarcely possible to decide, without ocular demonstration, which of the opposed opinions and assertions are correct. The following is my route :—Belfast, Lisburn, Newry, Dundalk, Drogheda, Dublin, Naas, Carlow, Kilkenny, Clonmel, Clogheen, Fermoy, Cork, Killarney (the Lakes), Limerick, and back to Dublin.

The Bay of Belfast, with its green hills and environs, the city with its shipping and activity, excite a favourable opinion of Ireland, and (to begin with a consolatory declaration) there is no doubt that Ireland has, in general, made great progress in improvements, if we compare it with its condition in former centuries, with respect to legislation, manufactures, agriculture, &c. But that, for this reason, there is nothing more to be done, and that every complaint is unfounded or merely produced by excitement, can be affirmed only by persons who know nothing, or will know nothing, of Ireland. A country of such extent has, of course, barren, stony, or marshy tracts ; nor is Ireland distinguished as one of the most picturesque parts of Europe ; but, on the whole, it is fertile, perhaps more fertile than England, and as beautiful as La Belle France. The first thing that strikes you is, that close to the finest and richest fields of wheat, barley, oats, potatoes, and clover, there are other adjoining tracts wholly uncultivated, overgrown with high weeds ; that an equally fruitful soil here manifests the highest cultivation and activity, and there the greatest neglect and abandonment. There is no want of good soil or of agricultural knowledge, nor of industry ; there are so many hands, that the Irish emigrate by hundreds to work for very low wages. Whence, then, does this

happen ? The whole clearly points to the centre of all the evil,—to a defective, nay, a ruinous and condemnable legislation, Let us, however, proceed step by step, otherwise you might believe that I sought only to introduce pathetic declamations as a cover for falsehood or partiality.

Why does not the Irishman cultivate his land ? Because he has none. Why does not the landlord employ those under him ?—Because there is no landlord there.

If we take two steps, but with seven-leagued boots, we are at once on the summit of the naked rock from which we can overlook the whole misery of Ireland. Let us begin our considerations, as is fitting, with the Lords. Where are they ? They are absentees,—they are absent. No, not absent, for he who is absent intends to return to a home which he loves, where he grew up, and which he doubly values after having seen many countries and nations. An Irish absentee, on the contrary, is one who neglects his country,—who never visits it, nor intends to do so. He has no home, and desires none. This is the hereditary curse of the ancient dreadful confiscation. Violence gave them land, but with the mode of acquisition the avenging Nemesis joins the condition that it should never become their fatherland. But he who possesses land without loving it as a fatherland loses the noblest foundation for property, and there remains only the dead letter of the law,—and here in Ireland what is the law ?

Public law and private law both equally require prescription ; and no man can be farther than I am from desiring to stifle life, as it at present exists, in order to find, somewhere or other, an original germ of all life, and of a pretended eternal law. But as great sovereigns have been obliged to sanctify the defective origin of their new position by a praiseworthy system of government, or go to ruin, the landlords of Ireland who first intruded, and then absented themselves, are doubly bound to remain there, and to promote the interest of the country. Where only one performs this condition, I saw walls, fences, and hedges in good condition ; plantations formed ; the land free from weeds ; the houses, at all events, kept in better repair, and the people rather better clothed, &c. And then, close by, what a contrast ! Let him who would see the blessings of a well-disposed resident aristocracy in a few single instances, and the curse of an absent oligarchy in innumerable places, go to Ireland.

This is so fortunate a circumstance in our country, that the great landowners devote themselves more and more to agriculture, love their occupation, promote every improvement, and, directly or indirectly, exercise a salutary influence over the free peasantry. Here, on the contrary, the great landowners too often despise the country, agriculture, and people. The whole wisdom of their improvements is to squeeze more and more from the tenants-at-will. Instead of living in noble activity in the Emerald Isle, they idle away their existence in the arid, grey Provence, or sentimentalize about the beggars in Itri and Fondi, while hundreds of beggars are produced in Ireland by the harshness of their principles.

No other country can, in this respect, be compared with Ireland. Everywhere some wealthy persons travel, everywhere there are some individuals who seek a home abroad. But here the exception has become the rule, and measures which, in other places, appear not only superfluous, but absurd, here urge themselves as almost necessary through the power of circumstances.

The landowner *will* do nothing for the cultivation of the soil. The tenant *can* do nothing. Capital and credit are everywhere wanting. Only the industry of the tenants raises the rich harvest ; but in the midst of an abundance which does not belong to them, they perish from misery and famine.

How shall I translate tenants-at-will ? *Weg jagbare* ? *Expellable* ? Serfs ? But, in the ancient days of vassalage, it consisted rather in keeping the vassals attached to the soil, and by no means in driving them away. An ancient vassal is a lord compared with the present tenant-at-will, to whom the law affords no defence. Why not call them *Jagdbare* (*chaseable*?) But this difference lessens the analogy, that for hares, stags, and deer there is a season, during which no one is allowed to hunt them ; whereas tenants-at-will are hunted, and may be hunted, all the year round. And if any one would defend his farm (as badgers and foxes are allowed to do) it is here denominated rebellion.

But I hear it objected,—have we not a right ? Do we violate any law if we live where we like ; if we take from the tenants what they freely offer ; and treat them according to the law, if they do not keep their engagement ? Undoubtedly, you have a right, a perfect right ; as much right as Shylock had to exact from Antonio the pound of flesh, and drain the life-blood from his heart. *Fiat justitia et pereat mundus* is the whole code of your laws. True justice, however, is not destructive, but conservative, and includes (as Plato shows) wisdom and moderation. True justice distributes, but does not plunder ; and if any doubt could be entertained upon the subject, the Christian virtues step forward, and show how your heathenish Roman justice is to be purified. *Summum jus, summa injuria* !

*Killarney, Friday, August 21st, 1835.*

I have commenced with general observations. This is not unnatural, for in Ireland everything individual immediately leads to generalities, and both are evidently connected. In England the case is similar, but yet different. There I see (at least *hitherto*) in the great and prominent contrasts, only the living forms of constant development ; and the stupid or fanatic cries of some individuals have but slightly impeded the regular progress of the whole. But in Ireland, those great and animating contrasts are changed into inextricable, destructive conflicts. In the same manner as the bases of the life of a people, namely, agriculture, and the means of subsistence in general, so it is with the summit of all thought and existence,—namely, religion.

Could Philip II. have conceived a more mortifying disgrace for his great opponent, than that which he now experiences in Ireland that the Protestant union, which has adopted the intolerant principles of that tyrant, is called the *Orange Association* ? As far back as the sixteenth century, William I. opposed, with equal energy and superiority, the fanaticism of the Catholics, and of the Puritan image-breakers : shall we of the nineteenth century consent to remain behind him ? Somebody objects,—it is not William I., but William III., that we are talking of. I am well aware of this, and believe that I more duly honour that great man, than those who abuse his great name in Ireland. He began to reign in England three years after the cruel expulsion of the Protestants from France, and in the same year when *tolerance* was used by James II. as an excuse for intolerant measures. To prevent this in England was the first business for 1688 ; the greater business of his whole life, in which all Europe was concerned., was the contest with France, or the ambition and tyranny of Louis XIV. And you would measure such a man by your own petty standard, and explain and justify the present state of things by the very different circumstances of those times ? The intolerant laws of those days did not originate with William, but with the Whigs ; and the Whigs of our times must do much more for Ireland than they yet have done, before they can atone for the sins of their ancestors.

On the other hand, no Orangeman must complain that his name is misused by the Orange Lodges, as the Catholics, in their associations, misuse even the name of *Christ*. Thus religion, which should produce and strengthen charity and unanimity, is here the source of hatred and dissension ; and both parties, in their infatuation, equally persuade themselves that they are

proceeding in the true Christian course. Those noble-minded men, therefore, deserve a double portion of praise, who boldly speak and act, against party prejudices and party hatred, in favour of toleration and reconciliation. The absurd notion, which has been refuted for centuries, by theory and practice, that Ireland can be governed only by a party and by the sword, still haunts the imagination of many persons who fancy themselves statesmen. A Protestant lately argued with me on the necessity and advantage of a civil war, with as much composure as if he were speaking of having his coat brushed ; and the extirpation of the heretics is the natural counter-cry of the Catholics. Who is to blame ? Both parties ! But, above all, the lawgivers—the Parliament ! A whole century passed before even private rights were granted to the Catholics, and with what reluctance was each concession made ; in what an offensive, ungracious manner were even the most equitable demands contested, till defiance and power extorted them !

At length the emancipation was brought about in this manner, and the opponents of it sought and found consolation in the declaration, that it was a final measure for Ireland. I repeat it,—those must know nothing, or resolve to know nothing, of Ireland, who can entertain so erroneous an opinion. The emancipation was only the first of a whole series of measures which will and must follow. It was an act of justice which, however, is immediately advantageous only to a few ; but it is the right and the business of these few to employ their newly-gained position for the benefit of their country. What avails the stale joke of O'Connell and his tail ?—if you do not like it, cut it off, and dissolve the Union, as he requires.

You will ask if I entertain this opinion ? By no means ! The three kingdoms may and ought to live in union, like sisters. But if Ireland is treated like a step-sister, do not be surprised at the cry of distress which your injustice extorts from her. A person who has never seen Ireland, and considers the case merely in a general and theoretical point of view, must decide without hesitation against the dissolution of the Union. But he who is better acquainted with it conceives how well-disposed persons may rely on this sheet-anchor, and consider it as the only, the best remedy. I now excuse the demand, without approving it. This erroneous hope, this false confidence, will, however, not be dispelled till more wholesome laws are passed for Ireland than O'Connell himself required. I carry my demands beyond his, according to the example of him whom he himself calls the greatest reformer in Europe.

Firstly : Provision must be equally made for the schools and churches of the Protestants and Catholics, out of the church property already existing or to be created. If there is no surplus of the Protestant church property, other measures are necessary: if it is insufficient, it will soon appear that this grant cannot be the last. Neither the sword, nor civil war, but education and Christian charity alone, can exterminate hatred and barbarism.

Secondly : The tithes must be by some means abolished, for they are a bad mode of taxation. A change in the manner of raising the tax does not, however, abolish the tax itself. To deprive the church of its due, and to make a present of it, without any reason, to the landlord, would not only be an act of injustice, but might, perhaps, in the end, render the situation of the poor tenants worse, rather than better : for the clergyman had not so many means to dis-train and drive off the cattle, as the temporal landlord ; and he was, perhaps, more often averse to employ them than the latter.

Thirdly : Poor laws are indispensably necessary for Ireland. I scarcely conceive how O'Connell could so long oppose their introduction, merely because he saw the abuses that occurred in England from their misapplication. These abuses must be done away with, and only what is truly useful must be ordered. But if such a law is more necessary in Ireland than in any other country in Europe, it is likewise more difficult. More *necessary*, because nobody takes any care of the poor, the number of whom exceeds all belief ; more *difficult*, because a

wealthy middling class is wanting, which is the broad, indispensable foundation of all financial arrangements. In the towns, which are improving, it may be possible to overcome the difficulties ; but how can it be done in the country, where *all* appear to be beggars ? We are, therefore,—

Fourthly, compelled to make a law respecting the absentees. This, exclaim many, is as impossible as unjust. What then is impossible or unjust ? Is it impossible for a man to live in his own country ?—unjust for him to perform his duty there ? As the king,, the clergyman, the professor, the merchant, must be upon the spot where they are called to exercise their functions, so should the landowner. All may absent themselves, gain information, and return. It is one of the many false notions of private property, that it imposes on the landowner no duties, but grants him unconditional rights. Where is the title-deed by which a few oligarchs are allowed to convert a whole people into beggars ?—to deprive them of all possibility of existing as becomes human beings ? I would not, however, compel them to return home, but leave them all personal liberty. I would not alter the laws of inheritance, by which a very great change would be made in the several relations. I will only tax them, as those who are present (I see this clearly) tax themselves here, for the good of those who surround them, and are active in promoting their advantage. Let the absentee, therefore, pay more to the poor-tax than he who is present. Is this also impossible ? Have not the Catholics borne for centuries higher taxes than the Protestants ? This was possible, *without reason* ; and, therefore, the other would be very possible, *with good reason*. After so much that has been considered as revolutionary, as impossible, have we come to the end of the course ? By no means. All these measures are only preliminary preparations for greater things.

Let us suppose all the complaints respecting churches, schools, tithes, absentees, the poor are removed, the mass of the people still remain in the most wretched situation ; for the poor-law can comprehend only the aged, the sick, lame, blind, &c., not the able-bodied men, and the former are not a thousandth part of those who are actually in distress. What then shall we do with the nine hundred and ninety-nine ?

Thus we at last come to the point where, perhaps, a final measure is to be taken for the happiness and prosperity of Ireland ; at least, without this, all others would be palliative remedies, and the complaints, sufferings, and wrongs will continue unremovable. This measure is—

Fifthly, The complete abolition of the system of tenants at will, and the conversion of all these tenants at will into proprietors. On reading this, the Tories will throw my book into the fire ; and even the Whigs will be mute with astonishment. The whole battery of pillage, jacobinism, dissolution of civil society, is discharged at me ; but it will not touch me—not even the assertion that I would, like St. Crispin, “ steal leather, in order to make shoes for the poor.” Even the Radicals ask, with astonishment, how I would work this miracle. There is a Sibylline book, a patent and yet hidden mystery, how this is to be effected ; and there is a magician who has accomplished it—the Prussian municipal law, and King Frederick William III. of Prussia.

To repel those violent reproaches, I could find in my armoury other arguments and proofs how, precisely through the system attacked by me, revolutions are promoted and civil societies dissolved. To-day, however, I have neither time nor inclination to enter upon these partly theoretical discussions ; I will rather, in order to allay peoples’ apprehensions, grant in practice that my proposal ought to be rejected, unless both parties are gainers.

The ancient doctrine that, in trade and commerce, in custom-house laws, treaties of peace, &c., only one party can and ought to gain, and that the greatest wisdom consists in deceiving

and cheating the other party,—this doctrine of short-sighted selfishness is repudiated by every judicious philanthropist, and has been satisfactorily refuted in theory and practice. Un-less both parties gain, there must be want of prudence or of justice, or both together, and the merited punishment never fails to follow.

As all maintain that those who were raised to the class of landowners would gain very much, I may save myself the trouble of proving it, and put aside a subsequent question,—what new dangers may one day threaten them as proprietors ? But that the present proprietors must likewise gain, results from the indisputable truth, that, in the long run, the tenant-at-will is able to produce and to pay less than he who has a long lease, the latter less than the hereditary farmer, and the hereditary farmer less than the proprietor....till pains are taken in England to become acquainted with our laws on this subject, it is impossible to make oneself understood, and to form a correct judgment, either in praise or blame.

But to those who, in our country, are displeased with the whole, on account of some defects, or who, from ignorance, overlook the value of our reforms, or, out of ancient prejudices, wish for the return of greater evils,—to them I exclaim, “ Go to Ireland ! in order to perceive with horror the consequences of an intolerant, barbarous legislation, and to bless the progress of improvement in Prussia.”

Ireland is the most deplorable instance in modern history that a great and noble people may, for centuries together, be involved in the same injustice and infatuation; and all the highly-praised forms of the constitution be often paralyzed by the force of passion and prejudice. Kings, lords, and commons have alternately or simultaneously wronged Ireland ; how should humanity, mildness, and obedience to the laws proceed from such education ? What all the forms of the constitution denied, what even now the boldest minds in England conceive to be impossible, our kings have accomplished, for schools, churches, cities, towns, peasants, landed property, trade, tolls, military institutions, &c., and laid the basis of a freedom of which Ireland, if no quicker progress is made, will be destitute for centuries to come. Our kings were effectually seconded by the persons in office, in whom the highest degree of civilization and knowledge is concentrated, and will be so, while they are not changed into servants removable at pleasure. The people everywhere co-operated, with correct judgment and good-will, and all reap, besides the advantages they have gained at home, daily more praise from impartial observers abroad. We are not vain on this account; we know (as I have often said) that one kind of bark does not grow on all trees ; but a tree of liberty, without bark, is, and remains, a dry stick, though I deck it with ribbons of one or of many colours.

*Limerick, August 22nd. 1833.*

You are, doubtless, tired of these reflections, and ask for my own travelling observations. Very well. Yet they will sound almost the same strings. In Belfast, some figures passed me in the evening, attired as I had never seen any. In England I had looked almost in vain for poverty ; and in Scotland I found only, according to the custom of the country, some women and children barefooted. There was, therefore, in Belfast a carnival joke, or some had plundered a paper-mill, and, in their wantonness, displayed all the rags in tokens of victory. Lisburn and Newry, two thriving towns, seemed to confirm my hypothesis ; and the distressed appearance of Drogheda I connected with the ancient misdeeds of that hypocrite of liberty—Cromwell.

On the river Boyne a new feeling came over me. Germany justly considers the victory of William III. as a happy event, as a deliverance from a foreign yoke. But can the Irish participate in this opinion, so long as the yoke of the laws connected with it is not removed ? They fought, under Charles I., for that which is now considered as legitimate and con-

servative ; and yet Charles II. confirmed the confiscations of the republic, which were not confined to the leading chiefs, but extended to the wholly innocent tenants. By this title-deed, the Conservatives of our day prove that no Irishman has a right to the soil of his country ; but that the absentee possesses it exclusively, and without modification, to all eternity. Under James II., the Irish again fought for what was legitimate and conservative ; and, for that reason, the Conservative Tories, at present, will have nothing to do with them. The Whigs, on the other hand, say very late, indeed, yet they do say—*Pater, peccavi*.

*Dublin.*—A large city : the streets like those in the west end of London ; the public buildings in a good style, apparently all agreeing, and of one piece. I say *apparently*, for the English, Scotch, and Irish, the Catholic and Protestant, come here in too hostile collision to grow up, and blend, and flourish together ; and to this painful feeling were added scenes such as I never beheld. On Sunday, while crowds of well-dressed people gaily paraded the streets, they were thronged by equally numerous crowds of beggars—and what beggars were these ! Such spectres remain elsewhere in their dens, till the light of day has vanished, and the darkness of night has set in. Here the sun must testify that Europe, too, has its parias. No, not Europe, but Ireland alone !—for, compared with these miserable phantoms, all the beggary that I saw in Switzerland, the Papal dominions, and even in southern Italy, was a mere trifle.

On Monday the 17th, the son of our consul, Mr. W , very politely took me about the city ; and invited me to dine with him in a very agreeable party, where many Irish matters were considered and discussed, in the point of view which prevails here. How different is this point of view from that in Germany !

On my way to Mr. W——, I saw, at a distance, a crowd of people : I thought I should see another street-preacher ; it was, however, no Scotch edification, but, as somebody told me, an Irish amusement. Two fellows, stripped to the waist, were engaged in a combat, not like the noble Greeks in Olympia, or even like well-trained boxers, but a desperate buffeting. After they had beaten each other black and blue, were covered with blood and half flayed, one of them fell almost senseless into the kennel. To take him by the arms and legs, lay him on a dry spot, pull his mouth open, pour in half a quart of whisky, and throw a pail of water over his body, was the work of a minute. Then the furious adversaries were again set upon each other like mad dogs ; at the same time, the seconds, or *mâitres des plaisirs*, displayed incessant and astonishing activity. In order to clear the ground, they struck the spectators with large whips, so that nobody in the three first rows escaped without the severest cuts, one of which I should not have got over in four weeks. Here it seemed to make no more impression than when, among us, somebody says, “ Be so good as stand a little on one side.”

On Tuesday the 18th, in hopes of fine weather, I mounted the roof of the coach, and not to have the wind and sun in my face, chose the backward seat at the back of the coach. On my right hand was an old woman ; opposite to her, her grand-daughter ; and next to the latter, another woman, about thirty years of age, and her son. Only the place on my left hand was still vacant ; and now a man mounted the ladder, so dressed, that the expression “ dropped from the gallows” might have been very well applied to him ; and he certainly would have been refused admittance on any German stage. On the supposition that the man was well skilled in entomology, I drew as closely as possible to the old lady, my neighbour. *Mutantur tempora, et nos mutamur in illis*. The sky became clouded, it began to rain faster and faster, and my large umbrella was the only one in the company ; so the two younger persons crouched at our feet, and the other four put their faces so close to the stick of the umbrella, that their noses almost met ; in particular, the head of the old woman rested on my right, and that of the gentleman on my left, shoulder. Through this water ordeal we became in a very short time friends and acquaintances, and I reaped much praise for my civility and humanity.

The cultivation of the land, as I have already observed, was of a mixed character—here admirable, and there neglected. The Wicklow and Wexford mountains adorn the county on the side. At Kilkenny there is an old castle, and innumerable beggars. My second hypothesis, that only the capital could produce such beggars, was likewise refuted by the crowds in the small towns. The coach is besieged by them, and their cries resound from all sides, and in all gradations of old and young voices. In order to gain air and room, I threw from my elevated seat some pence among the crowd. Two girls, about eighteen years of age, had picked up the best share, and thanked me, like the female dancers at Berlin, when they are applauded by the public, kicking up their legs behind—what is to be seen on such occasions you know : there is a difference here, the costume of the fair of Kilkenny being in a more airy style. I was in a mood to be diverted at all this, when I saw a mother pick up the gooseberry skins which one of the travellers had spit out, and put them into the mouth of her child. I never saw any thing like this even at Fondi, in the kingdom of Naples.

“ Is there room on the top ?” asked a man. Though we were crowded, the coachman called out, “ An excellent place—the finest fresh air !” The man ascended the ladder, seated himself on the pyramid of trunks, with both his legs hanging in the fresh air ; but this position appearing to him too dangerous, he turned one leg inwards, and planted it between my shoulders. This was lucky for me, for he covered the iron edge of a trunk ; and instead of a hole in my coat, I got only a spot of dirt.

*Callen.*—A wretched hole, which its owner (Lord C——, as I hear), probably for that reason, never visits ; but all round are the most fertile fields, and the richest produce. By famine is everywhere understood, want of a sufficiency of corn. In Ireland the people are starving in the midst of abundance. It is exported to Liverpool, where compassionate Englishmen purchase it, send it back to Ireland for the indigent, and procure them, in insufficient quantities, what perverse and hard-hearted legislators refuse them on a large scale.

The evening and night of the 18th I passed at Clonmel. For the first time, I saw in the inn no carpets, and a ragged towel, but a larger and better bed than anywhere in Germany. It is only in our country that the erroneous notion prevails, that a man has no more need to turn in bed than in his coffin : hence the wretched, narrow cribs into which all classes suffer themselves to be squeezed.

On Wednesday, the 19th, Hermann’s birthday, when I went down stairs in the morning, profound peace reigned among the persons assembled in the room on the ground-floor. God knows what spark fell into this powder-barrel ; for at once there was such a storm of punches in the ribs, blows, and boxes on the ear, which succeeded each other so rapidly, and in such numbers, that it was impossible to see and count them. Two minutes afterwards, perfect tranquillity again prevailed. This amusement of the Catholics in Clonmel, and the Protestants in Dublin, show at least that there are some similar points of contact between the two parties.

. . . .

The coach stopped, early in the morning, before a hut, which, if you please, you may call a house. A sow—the Irish sphinx—lay with her hind quarters buried in black mud, while she rested on her fore feet, and addressed me in a very remarkable speech. The house-cock flew from within to the hole in the mud wall, the only window in the house, and attempted to clap his wings. The hole being too small, he was obliged to drop them, stretched his neck, and said something, which I did not understand so well as the speech of the sow : at the same time the door opened, and, like Alceste from the gloom of Erebus, the very strikingly draped, or undraped, mistress advanced into the foreground with her two children, on which two sucking

pigs immediately ran to salute their playfellows. This scene of the golden age drew my attention so much, that I had nearly overlooked the master of the house, who was sitting on one side upon some fragments of turf. In attempting to put on his breeches, he had unhappily missed the legitimate way, and had passed his leg through a large, revolutionary, radical hole, so that he found it very difficult to remedy the mistake, still keeping the rags together.

I hope that some of our painters in this line will make use of these hints in the next exhibition, and know how to give dignity to the subject ; and send me at least a copy of their works, in return for my picturesque description.

But what said the sow ? Things bitter, unexpected, remarkable. She began—“ Wretched mortal, who hang suspended between Heaven and earth, as on the gallows, if you came down I would let you know what punishment you deserve, for disturbing the last prophetic sphinx of Ireland in her repose. You ramble about the world to no purpose, rummage among old papers treating of old women, and pride yourself in your stupid impartiality. Why do you direct your eyes to the wretched creatures who here call themselves men, and have no notion what a greater people deserve your attention in Ireland—the people, the swine ?”

I know not how the sphinx might have continued, had not the cock, the woman, and the sucking pigs interrupted her. She only added a few words to inform me (as a reward for my goodwill, of which she was well aware) of the existence of the most remarkable fragment of the history of ancient times, and where I might find it.

This fragment contains (after the manner of Persia) the annals of the state of the swine, and is divided into two principal heads, the times of the *Boaries* and the *Pigs*. In the sequel, vain men (like the Roman consuls and emperors) applied these names to themselves ; but being ignorant of their origin, have corrupted them, by means of absurd etymologies, into *Tories* and *Whigs*. In ancient times, those, the boars or boaries were the sole lords and masters of the country : it was the time of noble freedom and independence, till weak and degenerate descendants stigmatized it as an age of club or snout law, and gave this first heroic age the name of *Wild Swinery*. I cannot give to-day the eventful history of this feudal aristocracy, but pass at once to the time when the Pigs appeared as a second party, and *Piggism*, or *Tame Swinery*, found greater and more numerous advocates.

This happened in the following manner : when the race of men, who call themselves, by way of distinction, the Old Irish, came to the island, a dreadful struggle began between them and the boars, the ancient rulers of the land. The increasing distress and danger suggested the idea of entering into an agreement, and of concluding a perpetual peace. Deputies of both parties met, and drew up a convention, of which I select the following articles as the most important :—

1. The boars, who have hitherto lived in the woods, shall be received with their families into the houses of the Irish, and be treated like children of the house.
2. From the moment that the peace is concluded, no boar shall be bound to do any work, or take the least care to provide for his own subsistence. All are, on the contrary, resolved to devote themselves henceforward to a contemplative mode of life.
3. If there should not be provisions enough, the swine are to be first taken care of, and then the children.
4. For all these great advantages, and others, which are passed over for the sake of brevity, the Irish obtain the right of *slaughtering* their new inmates.

When these conditions came to be discussed in the house of the boars, the majority (composed of the old wild forest boars) opposed the last objectionable article in particular with so much warmth and eloquence, that the treaty was rejected by a large majority, and it was resolved to make no change in the state of things handed down from their ancestors. Meantime, the war with the Irish took a very unfavourable turn ; and the pigs, the advocates of reform, adduced more powerful arguments in support of their opinion. They detailed the advantages of improved civilization ; of constant peace ; of exemption from the cares of life ; of agreeable society ; and of a philosophic mode of existence, with so much ingenuity and eloquence, that in the new diet which was convoked, the boaries themselves could not deny the weight of the argument. The *fourth* article alone was still violently opposed : then one of the most eloquent of the pigs rose, and incontrovertibly proved that all swine, whether wild or tame, must die ; that the time of death was uncertain, and lasted but a moment ; that, on the other hand, the whole life would derive new and increased value by the proposed change from boarism to piggism. Lastly, that there was no ground for the apprehension that the tame swine were threatened with an earlier death, for even the wild sucking-pigs were not spared ; and to die in youth, before the sufferings of age and disease, was a great happiness, as the poets had proved, and sung in the cases of Achilles, Balder, and Siegfried, which are also applicable to tame swine.

When the boaries saw that the pigs triumphed, those who were called ultra-boaries withdrew to the country and the forests ; and the convention, which founded and confirmed the new tame swinery, was carried by a great majority. Only two additional articles were proposed by the pigs, and acceded to by the Irish : first, the slaughtering shall be only at that time of the year when life is a burden, namely, winter : secondly, the pigs are free to squeak when they are slaughtered, and this shall not be considered as a want of the old heroic courage, but rather as the dying song of the swine.

This treaty was observed for centuries to the satisfaction of both parties, till in later times a change took place, which materially affected the Irish. The English, a new victorious race of men (passionately fond of the literal interpretation, and the maintenance of rights and laws) discovered that it was stated in the original convention, that the Irish had a right to *kill* the swine, but it was not added that they had a right to *eat* pork. Thus it has been brought about by various means that the Irish dare not eat meat, but must send it to Liverpool, where all the Irish boaries and pigs, without respect to person, are consumed by the English Tories and Whigs in honour of right and justice ; and that even the swine in Ireland think this unjust, and give a different interpretation of their original contract with the Irish, has hitherto not been of any avail to the latter.

*Dublin, 23rd August.*

On the 19th of August I went from Clonmel to Cork. At first there was a wooded valley, then the monotonous desert valley of the Suire, military barracks in Fermoy, and a handsome approach by the side of the river or bay to Cork. The city is more bustling, more purely Irish, than Dublin ; the hills to the sea, and toward the interior of the country, ornamented in a most diversified and pleasing manner with country houses ; in the green meadows along the road-side there were quiet sheep, instead of the grunting swine, which elsewhere are the only domestic animals to be seen. I looked at the theatre with as much indifference as if I had never been a friend to theatrical amusements ; and, the evening being fine, preferred a walk in the environs. From one house I heard the German waltz, *Ach du lieber Augustin*.

On the 20th I went to Killarney, and hastened to Ross Castle, in order to enjoy the prospect of the picturesque mountains and lakes. I the more willingly refrain from comparisons,

because the weather all at once became extremely unfavourable, and compelled me to give up the plan of seeing the whole. I returned to Dublin by way of Limerick, through fertile tracts, tedious bogs, and barren heaths, the rain pouring down all the time.

You must be satisfied with this bare enumeration ; and, if you desire descriptions of scenery, you may read over again what I wrote last year, about the same time, from Switzerland. My mind is filled with one thought—I can entertain no other—it is that of the inexpressible wretchedness of so many thousands. In England I looked in vain for misery, and all the complaints that I heard seemed to me to be partial and exaggerated : here, no words can express the frightful truth which everywhere meets the eye. To form an idea of it you must see these houses—not houses, but huts—not huts, but hovels, mostly without windows or apertures ; the same entrance the same narrow space for men and hogs—the latter lively, sleek, and well fed, the former covered with rags, or rather hung with fragments of rags in a manner which it is impossible to conceive. If I except the respectable people in the towns, I did not see upon thousands of Irish a whole coat, a whole shirt, a whole cloak, but all in tatters, and tatters such as are nowhere else to be seen.

The ruins of ancient castles were pointed out to me ; but how could I take any pleasure in them while the desolate ruined huts surrounded me, and testified the distress of the present times more loudly than the others did the grandeur of the past ? But then the lords were of the same race—of the same language ; they were on the spot, and the people certainly not so wretched as since the confiscations of the English conquerors. Other huts were half fallen down, but the occupants crept into the remaining half, which was not larger than a coffin for the wretched family.

When I recollect the well-fed rogues and thieves in the English prisons, I admire, notwithstanding the very natural increase of Irish criminals, the power of morality I wonder that the whole nation does not go over and steal, in order to enjoy a new and happier existence. And then the English boast of the good treatment of their countrymen, while the innocent Irish are obliged to live worse than their cattle. In Parliament they talk for years together whether it is necessary and becoming to leave 100,000 dollars annually (15,000*l*) in the hands of the pastors of 526 Protestants, or 10,759 dollars to the pastors of 3 Protestants ; while there are thousands here who scarcely know they have a soul, and know nothing of their body, except that it suffers hunger, thirst, and cold.

Which of these ages is the dark and barbarous—the former, when mendicant monks distributed their goods to the poor, and, in their way, gave them the most rational comfort ; or the latter, when rich (or bankrupt) aristocrats can see the weal of the church and of religion (or of their relations) only in retaining possession of that which was taken and obtained by violence ?

All the blame is thrown on agitators, and discontent produced by artificial means. What absurdity ! Every falling hut causes agitation, and every tattered pair of breeches a *sans-culoite*, Since I have seen Ireland I admire the patience and moderation of the people, that they do not (what would be more excusable in them than in distinguished revolutionists, authors, journalists, Benthamites, baptized and unbaptized Jews) drive out the devil through Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

Thrice-happy Prussia, with its free proprietary peasantry, its agricultural nobles, its contented and tolerant clergy, its well-educated youth !

I endeavoured to discover the original race of the ancient Irish and the beauty of the women. But how could I venture to give an opinion ! Take the loveliest of the English maid-

ens from the saloons of the Duke of Devonshire or the Marquis of Lansdowne, carry her—not for life, but for one short season, into an Irish hovel,—feed her on water and potatoes, clothe her in rags, expose her blooming cheek and alabaster neck to the scorching beams of the sun, and the drenching torrents of rain, let her wade with naked feet through marshy bogs, with her delicate hands pick up the dung that lies in the road, and carefully stow it by the side of her mud resting-place, give her a hog to share this with her—to all this add no consolatory remembrance of the past, no cheering hope of the future—nothing but misery—a misery which blunts and stupifies the mind—a misery of the past, the present, and the future ;—would the traveller, should this image of woe crawl from out of her muddy hovel, and imploringly extend her shrivelled hand, recognize the noble maiden whom a few short weeks before he admired as the model of English beauty ?

And yet the children, with their black hair and dark eyes, so gay and playful in their tatters—created in the image of God—are in a few years, by the fault of man and the government, so worn out, without advantage to themselves or others, that the very beasts of the field might look down on them with scorn.

Is what I have said exaggerated, or, perhaps, merely an unseasonable and indecorous fiction? or should I have suppressed it, because it may offend certain parties ? What have I to do with O'Connell and his opponents ? I have nothing either to hope or to fear from any of them ; but to declare what I saw, thought, and felt is my privilege and my duty. *Discite justitiam, moniti, et non temnere divos !*

*Liverpool, August 24, 1835.*

Thank God, I am again in England, though not with the same feelings that I left it ! Last night, as I quitted Dublin in the steam-boat, the dark clouds traversed the sky in rapid confusion, and when the sun burst through them, the mountains on the right and left threw their long shadows towards England. This shadow spreads in my fancy over the lately so glowing scene, and the more I endeavour to efface it, the more indelible does it appear, like the blood stains to Lady Macbeth. I have read and written much on the sufferings of different ages and nations, and wrote and read with sympathy ; but it is a far different thing to see them ; to see them in their gigantic form in our highly-extolled times, denied and extenuated nay, acknowledged and justified by those who, like the French, fancy that they are at the head of all human civilization. No wonder if the native Irish, like the prophet of old by the waters of Babylon, sit down and weep, if I, a stranger, am compelled to reckon the few days I passed among them as the most melancholy of my life. Of other, and I trust more cheering matters, in my next.

•

*Manchester, 21st August.*

THE continued bad weather defeated my plan of proceeding from Dublin to Holyhead, and thence through North Wales to Liverpool ; but I should not have been able to see anything, for the rain still continues.

The rough weather increased my apprehensions of sea-sickness. The ladies soon disappeared from deck ; and one, who had taken refuge in her travelling carriage, was carried half dead into the cabin by four persons. Some gentlemen, who lingered a little longer, set me a very bad example ; and only a sprightly lady's maid, who mounted the deck with great boldness, persevered for a long time in the vicinity of the paddles, and gazed upon the foaming waves. I went up to her, in the hope of some conversation ; but, attracted by the wonders

of nature, it was some time before she turned her head, and when she did—oh ! the misery of sea-sickness ! I cannot conceive how I have escaped without even the slightest attack. It is perhaps owing to my love of music. I certainly kept correct time with the motion of the ship ; so that the greater the rising and sinking, the more agreeable it was to me. I hope I shall not have to suffer the more on my passage to Hamburg.

Owing to the density of the fog, I did not see Liverpool till I reached it. No city of England, nay of Europe, has increased so rapidly in wealth and extent within a short period, a result of its favourable situation, and likewise of extraordinary industry and activity. How could Bristol have otherwise remained behind ? The whole of Lancashire, however, is an example of amazing improvements. The population of the county in 1700 amounted to 166,000 inhabitants ; in 1750, to 297,000; in 1800, to 672,000 ; in 1831, to 1,336,000. The docks and warehouses in Liverpool surpass in size even those of London ; and the city is extending with much taste and regularity, though Edinburgh leaves all others far in the rear in this respect. The Exchange is equal to those of London and Paris, and the Town Hall is superior to the Mansion House in London ; the interior arrangements, too, are grand and simple, much better than Buckingham House. A bronze monument in honour of Nelson, which has been set up between the Exchange and the Town Hall, would be deserving of commendation, were it not for the skeleton which appears beneath the mantle. Surely the motto, “ England expects every man to do his duty,”—the attitude of the falling hero,—the laurel wreath held over his head by the Goddess of Victory,—all this is surely sufficiently expressive and emblematic. Wherefore, then, this hideous addition ? Had I any voice in Liverpool, I should certainly propose to draw the mantle over the skeleton, and entirely to conceal it. The purchase of Roscoe’s library reflects honour on the city ; and we must hope that it will be enriched by many additions.

After the Prussian consul, Mr. G, had shown me every civility in his power, I, of course, went on the iron rail-road from Liverpool to Manchester. In spite of all that one may have heard and read on the subject, it makes a peculiar impression, to see this long row of waggons, loaded with so many passengers and goods, hasten along with unparalleled velocity, merely by the agency of a little water and fire. It is commendable that Germany desires to participate in the wonderfully far increased facilities of intercourse. But let us take care not to throw away large sums, if unfavourable circumstances should prevail. There is a noble enthusiasm which will not remain below what is attainable ; but there is also a vain-gloriousness which vaunts of impossibilities, and treats practicable and useful enterprises with very unjust disdain. The construction of the iron rail-road from Liverpool to Manchester, which is thirty English miles in length, cost above five and a half millions of dollars. Such a capital cannot yield sufficient interest, except where two very large cities lie at a short distance from each other, of which the one imports and the other exports an immense quantity of goods. Such a state of things is scarcely to be met with a second time in the world. No rocks can be blasted, and no valleys raised, for the sake of a few individuals, who would like to travel more rapidly for their pleasure. Nothing but an extraordinary traffic makes such an enterprise practicable and useful.

England in 1835, being a series of letters written to friends in Germany during a residence in London and excursions into the provinces (1836)

Author : Raumer, Friedrich Ludwig Georg von, 1781-1873

Volume : 3

Subject : England — Social life and customs; England — Description and travel

Publisher : London : Murray

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : MSN

Book contributor : Robarts - University of Toronto  
Collection : robarts; toronto

Source : Internet Archive  
<http://www.archive.org/details/englandinbeingse03raumuft>

Edited and uploaded to [www.aughty.org](http://www.aughty.org)  
August 22 2011