

An Irish Sketch Book of 1842

William Makepeace Thackeray

The Guide-book mentions that one of the aboriginal forests of the country is to be seen at a few miles from Limerick, and thinking that an aboriginal forest would be a huge discovery, and form an instructive and delightful feature of the present work, I hired a car in order to visit the same, and pleased myself with visions of gigantic oaks, Druids, Normans, wildernesses and awful gloom, which would fill the soul with horror. The romance of the place was heightened by a fact stated by the carman, viz. that until late years robberies were very frequent about the wood ; the inhabitants of the district being a wild lawless race. Moreover, there are numerous castles round about, and for what can a man wish more than robbers, castles, and an aboriginal wood?

The way to these wonderful sights lies through the undulating grounds which border the Shannon ; and though the view is by no means a fine one, I know few that are pleasanter than the sight of these rich, golden, peaceful plains, with the full harvest waving on them and just ready for the sickle. The hay harvest was likewise just being concluded, and the air loaded with the rich odour of the hay. Above the trees, to your left, you saw the mast of a ship, perhaps moving along, and every now and then caught a glimpse of the Shannon, and the low grounds and plantations of the opposite county of Limerick. Not an unpleasant addition to the landscape, too, was a sight which I do not remember to have witnessed often in this country—that of several small and decent farmhouses, with their stacks and sheds and stables, giving an air of neatness and plenty that the poor cabin with its potato-patch does not present. Is it on account of the small farms that the land seems richer and better cultivated here than in most other parts of the country ? Some of the houses in the midst of the warm summer landscape had a strange appearance, for it is often the fashion to whitewash the roofs of the houses, leaving the slates of the walls of their natural colour : hence, and in the evening especially, contrasting with the purple sky, the house-tops often looked as if they were covered with snow.

According to the Guide-book's promise, the castle began soon to appear : at one point we could see three of these ancient mansions in a line, each seemingly with its little grove of old trees, in the midst of the bare but fertile country. By this time, too, we had got into a road so abominably bad and rocky, that I began to believe more and more with regard to the splendour of the aboriginal forest, which must be most aboriginal and ferocious indeed when approached by such a savage path. After travelling through a couple of lines of wall with plantations on either side, I at length became impatient as to the forest, and, much to my disappointment, was told this was it. For the fact is, that though the forest has always been there, the trees have not, the proprietors cutting them regularly when grown to no great height, and the monarchs of the woods which I saw round about would scarcely have afforded timber for a bed-post. Nor did any robbers make their appearance in this wilderness : with which disappointment, however, I was more willing to put up than with the former one.

But if the wood and the robbers did not come up to my romantic notions, the old Castle of Bunratty fully answered them, and indeed should be made the scene of a romance, in three volumes at least.

“ It is a huge, square tower, with four smaller ones at each angle ; and you mount to the entrance by a steep flight of steps, being commanded all the way by the crossbows of two of the Lord De Clare's retainers, the points of whose weapons may be seen lying upon the ledge of the little narrow *meurtrière* on each side of the gate. A venerable seneschal, with the keys of office, presently opens the little back postern, and you are admitted to the great hall—a noble chamber, *pardi !* some seventy feet in length and thirty high. 'Tis hung round with a thousand trophies of war and chase, the golden helmet and spear of the Irish king, the long yellow mantle he wore, and the huge brooch that bound it. Hugo De Clare slew him before the castle in 1305, when he and his kernes attacked it. Less successful in 1314, the gallant Hugo saw his village of Bunratty burned round his tower by the son of the slaughtered O'Neil ; and, sallying out to avenge the insult, was brought back—a corpse ! Ah ! what was the

pang that shot through the fair bosom of the *Lady Adela* when she knew that 'twas the hand of *Redmond O'Neil* sped the shaft which slew her sire !

“ You listen to this sad story, reposing on an oaken settle (covered with deer's skin taken in the aboriginal forest of Carclow hard by) placed at the enormous hall-fire. Here sits Thonom and Diaoul, ' Dark Thomas,' the blind harper of the race of De Clare, who loves to tell the deeds of the lordly family. ' Penetrating in disguise,' he continues, ' into the castle, Redmond of the golden locks sought an interview with the Lily of Bunratty ; but she screamed when she saw him under the disguise of the gleeman, and said, " My father's blood is in the hall !" At this, up started fierce Sir Ranulph. " Ho, Bludyer !" he cried to his squire, " call me the hangman and Father John ; seize me, vassals, you villain in gleeman's guise, and hang him on the gallows on the tower ! " ”

“ ‘ Will it please ye walk to the roof of the old castle and see the beam on which the lords of the place execute the refractory ? ’ ‘ Nay, marry, ’ say you, ‘ by my spurs of knighthood, I have seen hanging enough in merry England, and care not to see the gibbets of Irish kernes. ’ The harper would have taken fire at this speech reflecting on his country ; but luckily here Gulph, your English squire, entered from the pantler (with whom he had been holding a parley), and brought a manchet of bread, and bade ye, in the Lord De Clare's name, crush a cup of Ypocras, well spiced, *pardi*, and by the fair hands of the Lady Adela.

“ ‘ The Lady Adela! ’ say you, starting up in amaze. ‘ Is not this the year of grace 1600, and lived she not three hundred years syne? ’

“ ‘ Yes, Sir Knight, but Bunratty tower hath *another Lily* : will it please you see your chamber? ’

“ So saying, the seneschal leads you up a winding stair in one of the turrets, past one little dark chamber and another, without a fire place, without rushes (how different from the stately houses of Nonsuch or Audley End!), and leading you through another vast chamber above the baronial hall, similar in size, but decorated with tapestries and rude carvings, you pass the little chapel (‘ Marry, ’ says the steward, ‘ many would it not hold, and many do not come ! ’) until at last you are located in the little cell appropriated to you. Some rude attempts have been made to render it fitting for the stranger ; but, though more neatly arranged than the hundred other little chambers which the castle contains, in sooth 'tis scarce fitted for the serving-man, much more for Sir Reginald, the English knight.

“ While you are looking at a bouquet of flowers, which lies on the settle—magnolias, geraniums, the blue flowers of the cactus, and in the midst of the bouquet, *one lily* ; whilst you wonder whose fair hands could have culled the flowers hark ! the horns are blowing at the drawbridge and the warder lets the portcullis down. You rush to your window, a stalwart knight rides over the gate, the hoofs of his black courser clanging upon the planks.

A host of wild retainers wait round about him : see, four of them carry a stag, that hath been slain no doubt in the aboriginal forest of Carclow. ‘ By my fay ! ’ say you, ‘ 'tis a stag of ten. ’

“ But who is that yonder on the grey palfrey, conversing so prettily, and holding the sportive animal with so light a rein :—a light green riding-habit and ruff, a little hat with a green plume sure it must be a lady, and a fair one. She looks up. O blessed Mother of Heaven, that look ! those eyes, that smile, those sunny golden ringlets ! It is *it is* the Lady Adela : the Lily of Bunrat * * * ”

If the reader cannot finish the other two volumes for him or herself, he or she never deserves to have a novel from a circulating library again ; for my part, I will take my affidavit, the English knight will marry the Lily at the end of the third volume, having previously slain the other suitor at one of the multifarious sieges of Limerick. And I beg to say that the historical part of this romance has been extracted carefully from the Guide-book ; the topographical and descriptive portion being studied on the spot. A policeman shows you over it, halls, chapels, galleries, gibbets and all. The huge old tower was, until late years, inhabited by the family of the proprietor, who built himself a house in the midst of it : but he had since built another in the park opposite, and half-a-dozen “ Peelers, ” with a commodity of wives and children, now inhabit Bunratty. On the gate where we entered were numerous placards offering rewards for the apprehension of various country offenders ; and a turnpike, a bridge, and a quay have sprung up from the place which Red Redmond (or anybody else) burned.

On our road to Galway the next day, we were carried once more by the old tower, and for a considerable distance along the fertile banks of the Fergus lake, and a river which pours itself into the Shannon. The first town we come to is Castle Clare, which lies conveniently on the river, with a castle, a good bridge and many quays and warehouses, near which a small ship or two were lying. The place was once the chief town of the county, but is wretched and ruinous now, being made up for the most part of miserable thatched cots, round which you see the usual dusky population. The drive hence to Ennis lies through a country which is by no means so pleasant as that rich one we have passed through, being succeeded “by that craggy, bleak, pastoral district which occupies so large a portion of the limestone district of Clare.” Ennis, likewise, stands upon the Fergus—a busy little narrow-streeted foreign-looking town, approached by half-a-mile of thatched cots, in which I am not ashamed to confess that I saw some as pretty faces as over any half-mile of country I ever travelled in my life.

A great light of the Catholic Church, who was of late a candle-stick in our own communion, was on the coach with us, reading devoutly out of a breviary on many occasions along the road. A crowd of black coats and heads, with that indescribable look which belongs to the Catholic clergy, were evidently on the look-out for the coach ; and as it stopped, one of them came up to me with a low bow, and asked if I was the Honourable and Reverend Mr. S—— ? How I wish I had answered him I was ! It would have been a grand scene. The respect paid to this gentleman’s descent is quite absurd ; the papers bandy his title about with pleased emphasis—the Galway paper calls him the very reverend. There is something in the love for rank almost childish : witness the adoration of George IV. ; the pompous joy with which John Tuam records his correspondence with a great man ; the continual My-Lording of the Bishops, the Right-Honourabing of Mr. O’Connell—which title his party papers delight on all occasions to give him nay, the delight of that great man himself when first he attained the dignity : he figured in his robes in the most good-humoured simple delight at having them, and went to church forthwith in them. As if such a man wanted a title before his name !

At Ennis, as well as everywhere else in Ireland, there were of course the regular number of swaggering-looking buckeens and shabby-genteel idlers to watch the arrival of the mail-coach. A poor old idiot, with his grey hair tied up in bows, and with a ribbon behind, thrust out a very fair soft hand with taper fingers, and told me, nodding his head very wistfully, that he had no father nor mother : upon which score he got a penny. Nor did the other beggars round the carriage who got none seem to grudge the poor fellow’s good fortune. I think when one poor wretch has a piece of luck, the others seem glad here : and they promise to pray for you just the same if you give as if you refuse.

The town was swarming with people : the little dark streets, which twist about in all directions, being full of cheap merchandise and its vendors. Whether there are many buyers, I can’t say. This is written opposite the market-place in Galway, where I have watched a stall a hundred times in the course of the last three hours and seen no money taken : but at every place I come to, I can’t help wondering at the numbers ; it seems market-day everywhere—apples, pigs, and potatoes being sold all over the kingdom. There seem to be some good shops in those narrow streets : among others, a decent little library, where I bought, for eighteenpence, six volumes of works strictly Irish, that will serve for a half-hour’s gossip on the next rainy day.

The road hence to Gort carried us at first by some dismal, lonely-looking, reedy lakes, through a melancholy country ; an open village standing here and there, with a big chapel in the midst of it, almost always unfinished in some point or other. Crossing at a bridge near a place called Tubbor, the coachman told us we were in the famous county of Galway, which all readers of novels admire in the warlike works of Maxwell and Lever ; and, dismal as the

country had been in Clare, I think on the northern side of the bridge it was dismaller still—the stones not only appearing in the character of hedges, but strewing over whole fields, in which sheep were browsing as well as they could.

We rode four miles through this stony dismal district, seeing more lakes now and anon, with fellows spearing eels in the midst. Then we passed the plantations of Lord Gort's Castle of Loughcooter, and presently came to the town which bears his name, or *vice versâ*. It is a regularly-built little place, with a square and street : but it looked as if it wondered how the deuce it got into the midst of such a desolate country, and seemed to *bore* itself there considerably. It had nothing to do, and no society.

A short time before arriving at Oranmore, one has glimpses of the sea, which comes opportunely to relieve the dulness of the land. Between Gort and that place we passed through little but the most woful country, in the midst of which was a village, where a horse-fair was held, and where (upon the word of the coachman) all the bad horses of the country were to be seen. The man was commissioned, no doubt, to buy for his employers, for two or three merchants were on the look-out for him, and trotted out their cattle by the side of the coach. A very good, neat-looking, smart-trotting chestnut horse, of seven years old, was offered by the owner for 8 *l.*; a neat brown mare for 10*l.*, and a better (as I presume) for 14*l.*, ; but all *looked* very respectable, and I have the coachman's word for it that they were good serviceable horses. Oranmore, with an old castle in the midst of the village, woods, and park plantations round about, and the bay beyond it, has a pretty and romantic look ; and the drive of about four miles thence to Galway is the most picturesque part perhaps of the fifty miles' ride from Limerick. The road is tolerably wooded. You see the town itself, with its huge old church-tower, stretching along the bay, "backed by hills linking into the long chain of mountains which stretch across Connemara and the Joyce country." A suburb of cots that seems almost endless has, however, an end at last among the houses of the town : and a little fleet of a couple of hundred fishing-boats was manœuvring in the bright waters of the bay.

Galway—"Kilroy's Hotel."—Galway Nights' Entertainments—
First Night : an Evening with Captain Freeny.

WHEN it is stated that, throughout the town of Galway, you cannot get a cigar which costs more than twopence, Londoners may imagine the strangeness and remoteness of the place. The rain poured down for two days after our arrival at "Kilroy's Hotel." An umbrella under such circumstances is a poor resource ; self-contemplation is far more amusing ; especially smoking, and a game at cards, if any one will be so good as to play.

But there was no one in the hotel coffee-room who was inclined for the sport. The company there, on the day of our arrival, consisted of two coach-passengers,—a Frenchman who came from Sligo, and ordered mutton-chops and *fraid potatoes* for dinner by himself ; a turbot which cost two shillings, and in Billingsgate would have been worth a guinea ; and a couple of native or inhabitant bachelors who frequented the *table d'hôte*.

By the way, besides these there were at dinner two turkeys (so that Mr. Kilroy's two-shilling ordinary was by no means ill supplied) ; and, as a stranger, I had the honour of carving these animals, which were dispensed in rather a singular way. There are, as it is generally known, to two turkeys four wings. Of the four passengers, one ate no turkey, one had a pinion, another the remaining part of the wing, and the fourth gentleman took the other three wings for his share. Does everybody in Galway eat three wings when there are two turkeys for dinner ? One has heard wonders of the country,—the dashing, daring, duelling, desperate, rollicking, whisky-drinking people ; but this wonder beats all. When I asked the Galway

turkiphagus (there is no other word, for Turkey was invented long after Greece) “ if he would take a third wing?” with a peculiar satiric accent on the words *third wing*, which cannot be expressed in writing, but which the occasion fully merited, I thought perhaps that, following the custom of the country, where everybody, according to Maxwell and Lever, challenges everybody else, I thought the Galwegian would call me out ; but no such thing. He only said, “ If you please, sir,” in the blandest way in the world ; and gobbled up the limb in a twinkling.

As an encouragement, too, for persons meditating that important change of condition, the gentleman was a teetotaller : he took but one glass of water to that intolerable deal of bubbly-jock. Galway must be very much changed since the days when Maxwell and Lever knew it. Three turkey-wings and a glass of water ! But the man cannot be the representative of a class, that is clear : it is physically and arithmetically impossible. They can't all eat three wings of two turkeys at dinner : the turkeys could not stand it, let alone the men. These wings must have been “ non usitatae (nee tenues) pennae.” But no more of these flights ; let us come to sober realities.

The fact is, that when the rain is pouring down in the streets the traveller has little else to remark except these peculiarities of his fellow-travellers and inn-sojourners ; and, lest one should be led into further personalities, it is best to quit that water-drinking gormandizer at once, and retiring to a private apartment, to devote one's self to quiet observation and the acquisition of knowledge, either by looking out of the window and examining mankind, or by perusing books, and so living with past heroes and ages.

As for the knowledge to be had by looking out of window, it is this evening not much. A great, wide, blank, bleak, water-whipped square lies before the bedroom window ; at the opposite side of which is to be seen the opposition hotel, looking even more bleak and cheerless than that over which Mr. Kilroy presides. Large dismal warehouses and private houses form three sides of the square ; and in the midst is a bare pleasure-ground surrounded by a growth of gaunt iron-railings, the only plants seemingly in the place. Three triangular edifices that look somewhat like gibbets stand in the paved part of the square, but the victims that are consigned to their fate under these triangles are only potatoes, which are weighed there ; and, in spite of the torrents of rain, a crowd of barefooted red-petticoated women, and men in grey coats and flower-pot hats, are pursuing their little bargains with the utmost calmness. The rain seems to make no impression on the males ; nor do the women guard against it more than by flinging a petticoat over their heads, and so stand bargaining and chattering in Irish, their figures indefinitely reflected in the shining varnished pavement. Donkeys and pony-carts innumerable stand around, similarly reflected ; and in the baskets upon these vehicles you see shoals of herrings lying. After a short space this prospect becomes somewhat tedious, and one looks to other sources of consolation.

The eighteenpennyworth of little books purchased at Ennis in the morning came here most agreeably to my aid ; and indeed they afford many a pleasant hour's reading. Like the “ Bibliothèque Grise,” which one sees in the French cottages in the provinces, and the German “ Volksbücher,” both of which contain stores of old legends that are still treasured in the country, these yellow-covered books are prepared for the people chiefly ; and have been sold for many long years before the march of knowledge began to banish Fancy out of the world, and gave us, in place of the old fairy tales, Penny Magazines and similar wholesome works. Where are the little harelequin-backed story books that used to be read by children in England some thirty years ago? Where such authentic narratives as “ Captain Bruce's Travels,” “ The Dreadful Adventures of Sawney Bean,” &c., which were commonly supplied to little boys at school by the same old lady who sold oranges and alycompayne ? they are all gone out of the world, and replaced by such books as “ Conversations on Chemistry,” “ The

Little Geologist,” “ Peter Parley’s Tales about the Binomial Theorem,” and the like. The world will be a dull world some hundreds of years hence, when Fancy shall be dead, and ruthless Science (that has no more bowels than a steam engine) has killed her.

It is a comfort, meanwhile, to come on occasions on some of the good old stories and biographies. These books were evidently written before the useful had attained its present detestable popularity. There is nothing useful *here*, that’s certain : and a man will be puzzled to extract a precise moral out of the “ Adventures of Mr. James Freeny ;” or out of the legends in the “ Hibernian Tales ;” or out of the lamentable tragedy of the “ Battle of Aughrim,” writ in most doleful Anglo-Irish verse. But are we to reject all things that have not a moral tacked to them? “ Is there any moral shut within the bosom of the rose?” And yet, as the same noble poet sings (giving a smart slap to the utility people the while), “ useful applications lie in art and nature,” and every man may find a moral suited to his mind in them ; or, if not a moral, an occasion for moralising.

More rain in Galway—A walk there—And the second Galway Night’s Entertainment.

“ Seven hills has Rome, seven mouths has Nilus’ stream,
Around the Pole seven burning planets gleam.
Twice equal these is Galway, Connaught’s Rome :
Twice seven illustrious tribes here find their home. [1]
Twice seven fair towers the city’s ramparts guard :
Each house within is built of marble hard.
With lofty turret flanked, twice seven the gates,
Through twice seven bridges water permeates.
In the high church are twice seven altars raised,
At each a holy saint and patron’s praised.
Twice seven the convents dedicate to Heaven,—
Seven for the female sex—for godly fathers seven.” [2]

Having read in Hardiman’s History the quaint inscription in Irish Latin, of which the above lines are a version, and looked admiringly at the old plans of Galway which are to be found in the same work, I was in hopes to have seen in the town some considerable remains of its former splendour, in spite of a warning to the contrary which the learned historiographer gives.

The old city certainly has some relics of its former stateliness ; and indeed, is the only town in Ireland I have seen, where an antiquary can find much subject for study, or a lover of the picturesque an occasion for using his pencil. It is a wild, fierce, and most original old town. Joyce’s Castle in one of the principal streets, a huge square grey tower, with many carvings and ornaments, is a gallant relic of its old days of prosperity, and gives one an awful idea of the tenements which the other families inhabited, and which are designed in the interesting plate which Mr. Hardiman gives in his work. The Collegiate Church, too, is still extant, without its fourteen altars, and looks to be something between a church and a castle, and as if it should be served by Templars with sword and helmet in place of mitre and crosier. The old houses in the Main Street are like fortresses : the windows look into a court within ; there is but a small low door, and a few grim windows peering suspiciously into the street.

Then there is Lombard Street, otherwise called Deadman’s Lane, with a raw-head and cross-bones and a “ memento mori” over the door where the dreadful tragedy of the Lynches was acted in 1493.

The waters of Lough Corrib, which “ permeate” under the bridges of the town, go rushing and roaring to the sea with a noise and eagerness only known in Galway ; and along the banks you see all sorts of strange figures washing all sorts of wonderful rags, with red petticoats and redder shanks standing in the stream. Pigs are in every street : the whole town shrieks with them. There are numbers of idlers on the bridges, thousands in the streets, humming and swarming in and out of dark old ruinous houses ; congregated round numberless apple-stalls, nail-stalls, bottle-stalls, pigsfoot-stalls ; in queer old shops, that look to be two centuries old ; loitering about warehouses, ruined or not ; looking at the washerwomen washing in the river, or at the fish-donkeys, or at the potato-stalls, or at a vessel coming into the quay, or at the boats putting out to sea.

That boat at the quay, by the little old gate, is bound for Ananmore ; and one next to it has a freight of passengers for the cliffs of Mohir on the Clare coast ; and as the sketch is taken, a hundred of people have stopped in the street to look on, and are buzzing behind in Irish, telling the little boys in that language—who will persist in placing themselves exactly in front of the designer—to get out of his way ; which they do for some time ; but at length curiosity is so intense that you are entirely hemmed in and the view rendered quite invisible. A sailor’s wife comes up—who speaks English—with a very wistful face, and begins to hint that them black pictures are very bad likenesses, and very dear too for a poor woman. And how much would a painted one cost does his honour think ? And she has her husband that is going to sea to the West Indies to-morrow, and she’d give anything to have a picture of him. So I made bold to offer to take his likeness for nothing. But he never came, except one day at dinner, and not at all on the next day, though I stayed on purpose to accommodate him. It is true that it was pouring with rain ; and as English waterproof coats are not waterproof in *Ireland*, the traveller who has but one coat must of necessity respect it, and had better stay where he is, unless he prefers to go to bed while he has his clothes dried at the next stage.

The houses in the fashionable street where the club-house stands (a strong building, with an agreeable Old Bailey look), have the appearance of so many little Newgates. The Catholic chapels are numerous, unfinished, and ugly. Great warehouses and mills rise up by the stream, or in the midst of unfinished streets here and there ; and handsome convents with their gardens, justice-houses, barracks, and hospitals adorn the large, poor, bustling, rough-and-ready-looking town. A man who sells hunting-whips, gunpowder, guns, fishing-tackle, and brass and iron ware, has a few books on his counter ; and a lady in a by-street, who carries on the profession of a milliner, ekes out her stock in a similar way. But there were no regular book-shops that I saw, and when it came on to rain I had no resource but the hedge-school volumes again. They, like Patrick Spelman’s sign (which was faithfully copied in the town), present some very rude flowers of poetry and “ entertainment” of an exceedingly humble sort ; but such shelter is not to be despised when no better is to be had ; nay, possibly its novelty may be piquant to some readers as an admirer of Shakespeare will occasionally condescend to listen to Mr. Punch, or an epicure to content himself with a homely dish of beans and bacon.

When Mr. Kilroy’s waiter has drawn the window-curtains, brought the hot water for the whisky-negus, a pipe and a “ screw” of tobacco, and two huge old candlesticks that were plated once, the audience may be said to be assembled, and after a little overture performed on the pipe, the second night’s entertainment begins with the historical tragedy of the “ Battle of Aughrim.”

Though it has found its way to the West of Ireland, the “ Battle of Aughrim” is evidently by a Protestant author, a great enemy of Popery and wooden shoes : both of which principles incarnate in the person of St. Ruth, the French General commanding the troops sent by Louis

XIV. to the aid of James II., meet with a woful downfall at the conclusion of the piece. It must have been written in the reign of Queen Anne, judging from some loyal compliments which are paid to that sovereign in the play ; which is also modelled upon “ Cato.”

The “ Battle of Aughrim” is written from beginning to end in decasyllabic verse of the richest sort ; and introduces us to the chiefs of William’s and James’s armies. On the English side we have Baron Ginkell, three Generals, and two Colonels : on the Irish Monsieur St. Ruth, two Generals, two Colonels, and an English gentleman of fortune, a volunteer, and son of no less a person than Sir Edmundbury Godfrey.

There are two ladies—Jemima, the Irish Colonel Talbot’s daughter, in love with Godfrey ; and Lucinda, lady of Colonel Herbert, in love with her lord. And the deep nature of the tragedy may be imagined when it is stated that Colonel Talbot is killed, Colonel Herbert is killed, Sir Charles Godfrey is killed, and Jemima commits suicide, as resolved not to survive her adorer. St. Ruth is also killed, and the remaining Irish heroes are taken prisoners or run away. Among the supernumeraries there is likewise a dreadful slaughter.

The author, however, though a Protestant, is an Irishman (there are peculiarities in his pronunciation which belong only to that nation), and as far as courage goes, he allows the two parties to be pretty equal. The scene opens with a martial sound of kettle-drums and trumpets in the Irish camp, near Athlone. That town is besieged by Ginkell, and Monsieur St. Ruth (despising his enemy with a confidence often fatal to Generals) meditates an attack on the besiegers’ lines, if, by any chance, the besieged garrison be not in a condition to drive them off. After discoursing on the posture of affairs, and letting General Sarsfield and Colonel O’Neil know his hearty contempt of the English and their General, all parties, after protestations of patriotism, indulge in hopes of the downfall of William. St. Ruth says he will drive the wolves’ and lions’ cubs away. O’Neil declares he scorns the Revolution, and, like great Cato, smiles at persecution. Sarsfield longs for the day “ when our Monks and Jesuits shall return, and holy incense on our altars burn.” When

“ *Enter a Post.*

“ *Post.* With important news I from Athlone am sent,
Be pleased to lead me to the General’s tent.

“ *Sars.* Behold the General there. Your message tell.

“ *St. Ruth.* Declare your message. Are our friends all well ?

“ *Post.* Pardon me, sir, the fatal news I bring
Like vulture’s poison every heart shall sting.
Athlone is lost without your timely aid.
At six this morning an assault was made,
When, under shelter of the British cannon,
Their grenadiers in armour took the Shannon,
Led by brave Captain Sandys, *who with fame
Plunged to his middle in the rapid stream.*
He led them through, and with undaunted ire
He gained the bank in spite of all our fire ;
Being bravely followed by his grenadiers
Though bullets flew like hail about their ears,
And by this time they enter uncontrolled.

“ *St. Ruth.* Dare all the force of England be so bold

T' attempt to storm so brave a town, when I
With all Hibernia's sons of war am nigh ?
Return : and if the Britons dare pursue,
Tell them St. Ruth is near, and *that will do*.

“ *Post*. Your aid would do much better than your name.

“ *St. Ruth*. Bear back this answer, friend, from whence you came. [*Exit Post*.”

The picture of brave Sandys, “ who with fame plunged to his middle in the rapid strame,” is not a bad image on the part of the *Post* ; and *St. Ruth*'s reply, “ Tell them *St. Ruth* is near, and *that will do*,” characteristic of the vanity of his nation. But *Sarsfield* knows Britons better, and pays a merited compliment to their valour :

“ *Sars*. Send speedy succours and their fate prevent,
You know not yet what Britons dare attempt.
I know the English fortitude is such,
To boast of nothing, though they hazard much.
No force on earth their fury can repel,
Nor would they fly from all the devils in hell.”

Another officer arrives : *Athlone* is really taken, *St. Ruth* gives orders to retreat to *Aughrim*, and *Sarsfield*, in a rage, first challenges him, and then vows he will quit the army. “ *A gleam* of horror does my vitals *damp*,” says the Frenchman (in a figure of speech more remarkable for vigour than logic) : “ I fear *Lord Lucan* has forsook the camp !” But not so : after a momentary indignation, *Sarsfield* returns to his duty, and ere long is reconciled with his vain and vacillating chief.

And now the love-intrigue begins. *Godfrey* enters, and states *Sir Charles Godfrey* is his lawful name : he is an Englishman, and was on his way to join *Ginkell*'s camp, when *Jemima*'s beauty overcame him : he asks *Colonel Talbot* to bestow on him the lady's hand. The *Colonel* consents, and in Act II., on the plain of *Aughrim*, at five o'clock in the morning, *Jemima* enters and proclaims her love. The lovers have an interview, which concludes by a mutual confession of attachment, and *Jemima* says, “ Here, take my hand. 'Tis true the gift is small, but when I can I'll give you heart and all.” The lines show finely the agitation of the young person. She meant to say, Take *my heart*, but she is longing to be married to him, and the words slip out as it were unawares. *Godfrey* cries in raptures—

“ Thanks to the gods ! who such a present gave :
Such radiant graces ne'er could man *receive (resave)* ,
For who on earth has e'er such transports known ?
What is the Turkish monarch on his throne,
Hemmed round *with rusty swords* in pompous state ?
Amidst his Court no joys can be so great.
Retire with me, my soul, no longer stay
In public view ! the General moves this way.”

'Tis, indeed, the general ; who, reconciled with *Sarsfield*, straightway, according to his custom, begins to boast about what he will do :

“ Thrice welcome to my heart, thou best of friends !
The rock on which our holy faith depends !
May this our meeting as a tempest make

The vast foundations of Britannia shake,
 Tear up their orange plant, and overwhelm
 The strongest bulwarks of the British realm !
 Then shall the Dutch and Hanoverian fall,
 And James shall ride in triumph to Whitehall ;
 Then to protect our faith he will maintain
 An Inquisition here like that in Spain.
 “ *Sars*. Most bravely urged, my Lord ! your skill, I own,
 Would be *unparalleled*—had you saved Athlone.”

—Had you saved Athlone !” Sarsfield has him there. And the contest of words might have provoked quarrels still more fatal, but alarms are heard : the battle begins, and St. Ruth (still confident) goes to meet the enemy, exclaiming, “ Athlone was sweet, but Aughrim shall be sour.” The fury of the Irish is redoubled on hearing of Talbot’s heroic death. The Colonel’s corpse is presently brought in, and to it enters Jemima, who bewails her loss in the following pathetic terms :

“ *Jemima*. Oh ! he is dead ! my soul is all on fire,
 Witness ye gods ! he did with fame expire.
 For Liberty a sacrifice was made,
 And fell, like Pompey, by some *villains* blade.
 There lies a breathless corse, whose soul ne’er knew
 A thought but what was always just and true ;
 Look down from heaven, God of peace and love,
 Waft him in triumph to the throne above ;
 And, O ye winged guardians of the skies !
 Tune your sweet harps and sing his obsequies !
 Good friends, stand off—whilst I embrace the ground
 Whereon he lies——and bathe each mortal wound
 With brinish tears, that like to torrents run
 From these sad eyes. O heavens ! I’m undone.
 [*Falls down on the body.*]

“ *Enter* Sir CHARLES GODFREY. He raises her.

“ *Sir Char*. Why do these precious eyes like fountains flow,
 To drown the radiant heaven that lies below ?
 Dry up your tears, I trust his soul ere this
 Has reached the mansions of eternal bliss.
 Soldiers ! bear hence the body out of sight.
 [*They bear him off.*]

“ *Jem*. Oh, stay—ye murderers, cease to kill me quite :
 See how he glares !—and see again he flies !
 The clouds fly open, and he mounts the skies.
 Oh ! see his blood, it shines refulgent bright,
 I see him yet—I cannot lose him quite,
 But still pursue him on—and—*lose my sight.*”

The gradual disappearance of the Colonel’s soul is now finely indicated, and so is her grief: when showing the body to Sir Charles, she says, “ Behold the mangled cause of all my woes.” The sorrow of youth, however, is but transitory; and when her lover bids her dry her *gushish* tears, she takes out her pocket-handkerchief with the elasticity of youth, and consoles herself for the father in the husband.

Act III. represents the English camp : Ginkell and his Generals discourse ; the armies are engaged. In Act IV. the English are worsted in spite of their valour, which Sarsfield greatly describes. “ View,” says he

“ View how the foe like an impetuous flood
Breaks through the smoke, the water, and—the mud !”

It becomes exceedingly hot. Colonel Earles says

“ In vain Jove’s lightnings issue from the sky,
For death more sure from British *ensigns* fly.
Their messengers of death much blood have spilled,
And full three hundred of the Irish killed.”

A description of war (Herbert) :

“ Now bloody colours wave in all their pride,
And each proud hero does his beast bestride.”

General Dorrington’s description of the fight is, if possible, still more noble :

“ *Dor.* Haste, noble friends, and save your lives by flight,
For ’tis but madness if you stand to fight.
Our cavalry the battle have forsook,
And death appears in each dejected look ;
Nothing but dread confusion can be seen,
For severed heads and trunks o’erspread the green ;
The fields, the vales, the hills, and vanquished plain,
For five miles round are covered with the slain.
Death in each quarter does the eye alarm,
Here lies a leg, and there a shattered arm.
There heads appear, which, cloven by mighty bangs,
And severed quite, on either shoulder hangs :
This is the awful scene, my Lords ! Oh, fly
The impending danger, for your fate is nigh !”

Which party, however, is to win the Irish or English ? Their heroism is equal, and young Godfrey especially, on the Irish side, is carrying all before him when he is interrupted in the slaughter by *the ghost of his father* : of old Sir Edmundbury, whose monument we may see in Westminster Abbey. Sir Charles, at first, doubts about the genuineness of this venerable old apparition ; and thus puts a case to the ghost :

“ Were ghosts in heaven, in heaven they there would stay,
Or if in hell, *they could not get away.*”

A clincher, certainly, as one would imagine : but the ghost jumps over the horns of the fancied dilemma, by saying that he is not at liberty to state where he comes from.

“ *Ghost.* Where visions rest, or souls imprisoned dwell,
By Heaven’s command, we are forbid to tell ;
But in the obscure grave—here corpse decay,
Moulder in dust and putrefy away,—
No rest is there ; for the immortal soul
Take its full flight and flutters round the Pole ;
Sometimes I hover over the Euxine sea—

From Pole to Sphere, until the judgment day—
Over the Thracian Bosphorus do I float,
And pass the Stygian lake in Charon's boat,
O'er Vulcan's fiery court and sulph'rous cave,
And ride like Neptune on a briny wave ;
List to the blowing noise of Etna's flames,
And court the shades of Amazonian dames ;
Then take my flight up to the gleamy moon :
Thus do I wander till the day of doom.
Proceed I dare not, or I would unfold
A horrid tale would make your blood run cold,
Chill all your nerves and sinews in a trice
Like whispering rivulets congealed to ice.

“ *Sir. Char.* Ere you depart me, ghost, I here demand
You'd let me know your last divine command !”

The ghost says that the young man must die in the battle ; that it will go ill for him if he die in the wrong cause ; and, therefore, that he had best go over to the Protestants which poor Sir Charles (not without many sighs for Jemima) consents to do. He goes off then, saying

“ I'll join my countrymen, and yet proclaim
Nassau's great title to the *crimson plain.*”

In Act V., that desertion turns the fate of the day. Sarsfield enters with his sword, drawn, and acknowledges his fate, “ Aughtim,” exclaims Lord Lucan,

“ Aughtim is now no more, St. Ruth is dead,
And all his guards are from the battle fled.
As he rode down the hill he met his fall,
And died a-victim to a cannon ball.”

And bids the Frenchman's body to

“——— lie like Pompey in his gore,
Whose hero's blood encircles the Egyptian shore.”

“ Four hundred Irish prisoners we have got,” exclaims an English General, “ and seven thousand lyeth on the spot.” In fact, they are entirely discomfited, and retreat off the stage altogether; while, in the moment of victory, poor Sir Charles Godfrey enters, wounded to death, according to the old gentleman's prophecy. He is racked by bitter remorse : he tells his love of his treachery, and declares “ no crocodile was ever more unjust.” His agony increases, the “ optic nerves grow dim and lose their sight, and all his veins are now exhausted quite ; ” and he dies in the arms of his Jemima, who stabs herself in the usual way.

And so every one being disposed of, the drums and trumpets give a great peal, the audience huzzas, and the curtain falls on Ginkell and his friends exclaiming

“ May all the gods th' auspicious evening bless,
Who crowns Great Britain's *arrums* with success !”

And questioning the prosody, what Englishman will not join in the sentiment?

In the interlude the band (the pipe) performs a favourite air. Jack the waiter and candle-snuffer looks to see that all is ready ; and after the dire business of the tragedy, comes in to

sprinkle the stage with water (and perhaps a little whisky in it). Thus all things being arranged, the audience takes its seat again and the afterpiece begins.

From Galway to Ballinahinch.

The Clifden car, which carries the Dublin letters into the heart of Connemara, conducts the passenger over one of the most wild and beautiful districts that it is ever the fortune of a traveller to examine ; and I could not help thinking, as we passed through it, at how much pains and expense honest English cockneys are to go and look after natural beauties far inferior, in countries which, though more distant, are not a whit more strange than this one. No doubt, ere long, when people know how easy the task is, the rush of London tourism will come this way ; and I shall be very happy if these pages shall be able to awaken in one bosom beating in Tooley Street or the Temple the desire to travel towards Ireland next year.

[1] By the help of an Alexandrine, the names of these famous families may also be accommodated to verse.

“ Athey, Blake, Bodkin, Browne, Deane, Dorsey, Frinche,
Joyce, Morech, Skereth, Fonte, Kirowan, Martin, Lynche.”

[2] If the rude old verses are not very remarkable in quality, in quantity they are still more deficient, and take some dire liberties with the laws laid down in the Gradus and the Grammar :

“ Septem ornant monies Romam, septem ostia Nilum,
Tot rutilis stellis splendet in axe Polus.
Galvia, Polo Niloque bis æquas. Roma Conachtæ,
Bis septem illustres has colit ilia tribus.
Bis urbis septem defendunt mœia turrets,
Intus et en duro est marmore quæque domus.
Bis septem portæ sunt, castra et culmina circum,
Per totidem pontûm permeat unda vias.
Principe bis septem fulgent altaria templo,
Quævis patronæ est ara dicata suo,
Et septem sacrata Deo cœnobia, patrum
Fœminei et sexus, tot pia tecta tenet.”

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