

A Visit to Ireland 1844

Henry Colman

Dublin, 15th August, 1844.

My Dear M—— :

You will not be surprised at any address to my letters, knowing that I am now in a state of locomotion. My difficulty is to preserve my own personal consciousness ; and, among so many changes, transitions, lodgings, persons, places, and objects, to remember my own name and self. Be sure, however, that my mind and heart constantly revert to that which has been so many years the object of affectionate attraction.

My last was dated, I think, at Brighton. After leaving Brighton. I went on to Eastbourne to see some interesting agricultural experiments of Mrs. Gilbert, a benevolent woman, full of active plans for doing good, of which my Reports will contain an account. From Brighton I went back to London, and from London I came to this place last Tuesday, to attend the great meeting of the Irish Royal Agricultural Society. In London I saw, in the first place, Mrs. R—— and Miss G——, whom I was most happy to meet. Mrs. R—— gave me to understand that she had a present from you to me, but as she seemed not disposed to give it, (altogether a piece of affected coyness on her part,) I concluded to wait patiently for the payment, as she was kind enough to say it would be upon interest. In the end, however, I found she was ready to pay both principal and interest, which I have duly received, and was quite thankful you sent it by so handsome and agreeable a lady. I inferred you sent the same by that many years' favorite of mine. Miss G——, with her sunshiny face, so I took that without inquiring ; to which the good soul made no very serious objection. By Mrs. P——, my old pupil, I send you a return compliment, which she promises to deliver, only regretting that I cannot have this matter at first hands without passing through any intermediate stage, however fragrant it might be rendered on the passage.—But an end of nonsense. Mrs. —— gave me some letters from several of the family, all of which were most heartily welcome. E's purse was very handsome, and will reach its destination as soon as the lady returns from Paris. I thought the embroidery of the handkerchief, which I sent, was beautiful. I have wished very much to send S—— a pattern for an ottoman, of two dogs. London now is almost as familiar to me as Boston, but its immensity is absolutely over-whelming, and can never cease to amaze me.

The only great cause of embarrassment is, that there is so much to be seen and observed, and such an immense field to go over, that I day by day go on discovering how little I know, and how much ought to be seen ; but I must do what I can in as short a time as possible, as there seems to be the work of a life before me. My Report, I learn, has been published, not in the Magazine only, but almost the whole of it in several of the provincial papers, in the Bristol papers, Norwich papers, Dublin papers, &c., &c. ; but, as I never see any thing but one or two London papers, I only know this from report. Papers here are not as accessible as with us. The country and provincial papers have all a limited circulation in their own districts ; the two leading London papers, the Times and the Chronicle, opposite in politics, go over the whole country. They are altogether political.

While on this subject, let me say a word of "The Times." I should like, on some more convenient occasion, to give you a full account of this extraordinary publication, probably the most extraordinary of the kind in the world. It is edited with unsurpassed ability. It is reputed to have a circulation of more than thirty thousand, the greater portion of which are sold at the counter of their publishing office to the news-venders, an entirely separate class of men, at

four and a half pence, or nine cents apiece, always in cash. No subscriptions are ever taken at the office. Out of this sum a penny is paid to the government, for the stamp.

It is published daily, at an early hour, and though Parliament, on some occasions, does not adjourn until two o'clock in the morning, the entire proceedings, and every speech, will be found reported at full length, and with an exactness almost literal. By mid-day, therefore, the inhabitants of many of the country towns, a hundred miles distant from London, and of Liverpool and Bristol, more than two hundred miles distant, get the whole of this information of the proceedings of the preceding night.

The advertising in the Times is a source of immense income, as an advertisement is paid for at the same price for every insertion, and not as with us by a gradually diminished scale, on repetition.

Eight times out of nine, the Times publishes a supplement, and very frequently two supplements, almost exclusively devoted to advertisements. The charge for advertising is always considerable, though there is included a heavy duty to the government. Each column of advertisements, after the duty to the government is deducted, may be expected to pay at least twelve pounds sterling, or say sixty dollars. Now, in counting the columns in the Times, with its two supplements, which lays before me, I find seventy-six columns of advertisements. This would be £ 912, or \$4,560, for the advertisements in this single paper ; now two-thirds of this sum, say for three hundred days, would be \$ 912,000. Add to this, the proceeds of twenty-five thousand papers sold, after allowing the government tax, which would be \$1,750 per day, and would be, by the year, \$546,000, making a total of the receipts for a single newspaper establishment, of \$1,458,000. What do you say to this ?

The expenses are of course enormous, and the establishment is kept up in a suitable style, maintaining correspondents in all parts of the world, and several editors upon the most liberal scale ; sparing no expense whatever to secure the earliest, the fullest, and the most authentic information, on every interesting and important subject, relating to any country and every part of the world ; and commanding always, in their editors and correspondents, the talents of men of the highest ability and education, and rejecting always, without perusal, every communication which has not a responsible name. I came from London to Liverpool in a day, twelve hours ; entered on board the Dublin steamer at nine o'clock in the evening, and reached Dublin the next day at half-past two. The passage was very rough, and sick enough was I, with many miserable souls to keep me company. I detest the very sight and smell of a vessel, and really begin to look forward with a good many misgivings to the recrossing of the Atlantic. I have found a great many persons here disposed to pay me every attention. I have had two very pressing invitations to make my home with persons to whom I brought letters, but having engaged excellent lodgings, I thought best not to remove, but with one exception have engaged to breakfast and dine out every day while I remain. The Irish are a very hearty people, full of humor and generosity. Dublin is a magnificent city in respect to its public buildings ; but desolation and solitude mark all its public places. A thick cloud of superstition hangs over the minds of the people, and the objects of misery that constantly meet you, are frightful in the extreme. The contrasts here, as in London, are most painful. I did not attend the two public dinners ; the Marquis of Downshire, the President of the Council, invited me, but I had no wish to go. I was afraid they would call on me to speak ; so I chose to dine with a private party of gentlemen on the second day, and the first day satisfied myself with a mere lunch. The dinners I am told were uncommonly splendid. Then in the present state of feeling and excitement in Ireland, especially since the Philadelphia riots, I was afraid I might unfortunately say something which might be misunderstood or perverted, and which I should regret.

I have now several invitations in the country. I think there is much to interest me here. I go to-morrow a few miles out of town, to see an agricultural school, on an improved plan, which, it is said, is worth a visit to Ireland. I must close, or miss the mail. Adieu.

Dublin, 16th August, 1844.

My Dear Sir :

By Mr. Parker, I send to your care a small box containing a little present for Mrs. C—— . Mr. C—— has been so kind to me, that I felt anxious to make some little acknowledgment in this form ; and this box contains a copy of Chantry's celebrated monumental statue, in Litchfield Cathedral, in memory of two sisters. The original, which is of the size of life, is considered as his great work, and indeed is much admired. I have, as yet, seen few things more beautiful.

There is just published a very fine engraving of Landseer's, called the watch-dog, which represents a large mastiff laying down with an intent expression of countenance, and a small dog near him. They are much thought of, and the engraving is admirable. I do not myself consider it nearly as handsome as the "Chancellor laying down the law." I found, likewise, a new engraving, presenting a Neapolitan scene called Harvest Home, which has just come out, and which is extremely beautiful.

The extracts which I have seen from the American papers, indicate an extraordinary degree of prosperity in the United States. The English still seem confident that if they would relax their corn laws, or rather abolish them, the United States would at once abandon their tariff. I tell them there is no chance whatever of any such result. The Government, I think, fully understand it ; and there is no present prospect of any change in their policy. The government here was never stronger, nor upon the whole, the nation more prosperous. Misery, indeed, there is enough ; there has always been a great deal ; but the whole constitution of things must be changed here, before any thing like a remedy can be found. I see nothing left for them to do, horrible as is the alternative, but to suffer on and die. Much is done for its alleviation, yet it would appear that, let them build alms-houses and work-houses ever so extensively, and fill them to repletion, the floating mass of misery and destitution does not seem to be diminished. Here it presents itself in the most squalid and frightful forms, yet the beggars in Dublin are not so numerous as I expected to see. Heaven knows there are enough of them. Temperance, or rather total-abstinence, has done an immense work for the Irish ; but it reaches only to the lower classes, excepting as it may seem indirectly to affect the upper strata. Father Matthew is expected here on Sunday, and I hope to see him. I have not yet called on O'Connell, but design to do it, before I leave, as I have letters to him, and why should I not see all the great objects of interest ? O'Connell is at present confined in one of the prisons, but holds a levee daily, between one and two o'clock, when visitors are admitted. A friend here has promised to introduce me, and I shall therefore see the Lion in his cage. There is attached to the prison or keeper's house, a spacious garden, in which he and his companions are allowed at pleasure to recreate themselves. He has likewise a chapel fitted up in the prison, for his own particular accommodation, (so that this republican does not worship with the vulgar herd,) and a priest for his own personal service. What use he has for a confessor, must be best known to himself. Adieu.

Dublin, 26th August, 1844.

My Dear M—— :

I LEAVE this to-morrow morning, on my tour through the Island, a place of the deepest interest and full of various instruction. I have been here ten days, and every moment fully occupied. I never found more hospitality. I took lodgings, but have taken only four meals at home, and if I could eat six times a day instead of three, there would be a demand upon my time, I have been urged by three most respectable and agreeable Quaker families, to come at once with my luggage to their houses, but have thought best to decline, because I could not command my time ; they press me when I return to Liverpool to come again to Dublin, and they insist that I shall never go again to a public house or lodgings.

You can have no conception of the wretchedness of parts of this country, and I never saw human nature in such a state of degradation as in this city. It never entered my thoughts that people could exist in so forlorn and wretched a condition. I saw thousands of people at the Donny Brooke Fair yesterday, which was called the Walking Sunday, and thousands came up and kneeled round the platform where I stood, to take the Temperance Pledge from Dr. Sprat, who succeeds Father Matthew, — old and young, ragged and whole, clean and squalid, fair and sunken and miserable. I never witnessed a scene more affecting, but I cannot tell you now more about it. My best love to all.

Limerick, Ireland, 31st August, 1844.

My Dear S—— ;

I AM here only for the night. As I thought you would like them, I beg your acceptance of a pair of “ Limerick ” gloves, from the Queen’s glover. This kind is to be obtained at no other shop in the kingdom ; and could I have sent the nut by mail, they would have gone to you in a walnut shell, as I saw others put up. I am told the quality is extraordinary, and that they will last a long time and bear cleaning. I hope the deed will suit, if the gloves do not. They are one dollar per pair. They can be sent to any part of the kingdom per mail for a penny—is not that convenient ?

I was anxious to see the best and the worst of Ireland, and for that reason have taken a route of three days circuit more than were indispensable. I was desirous to see, first, the redemption of the bogs of Ireland ; second, the experimental small farms at Armagh ; and third, the agricultural school at Templemoyle, and some others. I am not sorry that I came. I spent yesterday at the Lake of Killarney, and at the Gap of Dunlop, which, with the exception of the ancient ruins of castles and abbeys and churches, and the purple heath which everywhere covers the hills and gives them at this season a singular beauty, is much like the White Mountains, the Notch, and Winnipiseogee Lake, though on a smaller scale. I have not now time to give you a description, further than to say that I ate as good a dinner at the summit of the notch or gap of the mountains as I could desire, of bread and goat’s milk ; of goats the woman keeps a herd of thirty. Her cottage, which is the resort of travellers, was singularly neat. The daughter goes three times a week to Killarney, ten miles, on foot and barefoot, making a jaunt of twenty miles each time, to obtain bread for the guests who may visit them. She was a civil person, of about eighteen years old, and the picture of health and strength, and seemed not at all to regard her walk, from which she had just returned, having started at four o’clock and reached home at noon, ready for another excursion upon the mountains after the goats, of which she had the principal care.

In strolling out upon the mountains with a son of this family as a guide, we met in one of

the most solitary places a poor, forlorn, half-clad woman, leading about two very pretty children with clean faces, but less than half-dressed, who, in a language of which I did not understand a word, offered to sell us some tobacco, which no doubt had been obtained by smuggling. I gave her a small piece of money and kissed the two children, for which her gratitude seemed unbounded, and the tears filled her eyes ; after I had got half or quarter of a mile from her, I turned back and saw her and her two children upon their knees, evidently, by her gestures, invoking blessings upon my head. Though humble, these seem certainly a most grateful people ; and if half their blessings were obtained in full, all life and happiness would be attainable upon easy terms.

I shall give you hereafter, in a different form, a full account of my tour. I have, I am almost ready to say, never seen a more beautiful country than Ireland, yet I have explored only a part of it ; but all and any language is inadequate to describe the condition of the people. It is poor, filthy, squalid, ragged, wretched, wretched, wretched, in a physical point of view, beyond all conception to those who have not seen it. The family where I dined yesterday never have any bread or meat excepting a small quantity at Christmas, and they have nothing what-ever but potatoes and milk, generally sour milk, for three hundred and sixty-four days out of the three hundred and sixty-five, yet they are on the whole an agreeable people, full of life and humor, of brilliant imagination, and dealing a good deal in fiction ; ready to serve you with any thing they have ; grateful to an excess for any kindness, and making no whining nor complaints. The women, if they had the advantages of dress, would be uncommonly beautiful ; but, poor things ! I have no doubt, as Saturday is a great market-day, I passed a thousand, perhaps many more, and will venture to say not fifty of them had on either stock-ings or shoes. Strange as it may seem, the common people, I mean the men, are in some re-spects well educated. I was in a school yesterday of one hundred and twenty scholars ; they appeared, as far as improvement went, extremely well. Last night the inn-keeper called in a ragged boy of ten years old out of the street of Killarney, the son of a shoemaker, living only upon potatoes and milk, and he bore a good examination in the Greek and Latin grammars and recited well in Virgil and the Greek Testament. This morning, as I was waiting for the coach to start, a school boy passed me on his way to school with his books under his arm, and I asked him to let me see them. He was fifteen years old, and was going to recite Homer in Greek, which he had in his hand. Adieu.

•

Belfast, 16th September, 1844.

My Dear M—— :

I WROTE to you last from Dublin, from which I went to Cork, then to Killarney, thence to Limerick, thence to Galway, thence to Sligo, Derry, the Giant's Causeway, to Belfast ; from this place, where I arrived last Monday, I went to Armagh, and returned on Saturday evening. Yesterday I spent Sunday with the Rev. Dr. Montgomery at Dun-Murry, about four miles from town. To-day is to be given to letters for home. To-morrow I go to the Marquis of Downshire's, at Hillsboro, where I do not mean to be persuaded to stay, though he has been very kind in his attentions to me ; and on Wednesday I quit for Ayr in Scotland, in the steam-boat. I see by this morning's paper, the arrival of the steamer, and shall hope to meet my letters at Ayr. I thank Heaven daily and hourly, for the power of keeping the chain of communication and affection whole and bright, though so many thousand miles of deep ocean separate us.

Yesterday morning, on going down to breakfast, I had the agreeable surprise of meeting Mr. Ticknor of Boston, bookseller, who will take my letters ; and if you will give yourself the trouble of calling on him, he will be able to tell you all about me.

My visit to Ireland has been on many accounts highly agreeable and instructive. At Dublin, a party of kind Quakers, the Webbs and others, were unremitting in their attentions. I certainly never saw kinder, and seldom ever saw so kind people ; and the only thing that seemed to give them any trouble was, that I would not quarter myself upon them. They would not consent that I should breakfast, dine, or tea, but with them ; and if I delayed in the morning, a deputation was sure to come after me. They have their reward in the pleasure of doing good and making others happy. The good souls, however, seemed to be sadly afflicted when I told them that in all physical and political comforts, the condition of the American slaves was infinitely better than that of the lower Irish. From Dublin I proceeded by Clonmel to Cork, and here my Quaker friends had written to their friends, to anticipate my coming. I arrived at three o'clock, and as I proposed only to remain one night, I had not been there fifteen minutes, when my wish was complied with to see Father Matthew. On my return, a dinner was prepared for me, in spite of my protestations ; a carriage was at the door with the charming lady of the house for my guide, to take me to Blarney Castle, and to show me all within and without the city that was interesting, and to bring me back to pass a most agreeable evening, stretched out beyond midnight, and then to overwhelm me with invitations to stay longer, and kind wishes for the successful prosecution of my journey. From Cork, however, next morning I proceeded to Killarney, stealing one day, and going out of my way about twenty miles, in search of the picturesque. The scenery was charming, and my labor amply repaid. In two respects the lakes of Killarney and their neighborhood differ from the New Hampshire scenery ; first, in several old ruins of castles and abbeys, which are exceedingly picturesque ; and second, in the swarms of beggars which beset your carriage, and almost threaten to take your purse and pockets by force. I never saw the like. Several of the coach passengers on our arrival, "wished them all to the devil," in which pious ejaculation I am not certain that I should not have joined, if I had believed there was any worse devil, than had already got hold of them ; but I certainly wished them in the lakes of Killarney until they could at least have been washed clean from a dirt and squalidness, and raggedness and filth, of which I am certain you never saw an example.

The tour of the lakes and the Gap of Dunlop, includes about ten miles, and may be accomplished either by a car, a pony, or a boat. To enjoy my independence, I determined to take a pony, and let my own tongue serve the purpose of a guide. Alas, for my unfortunate decision. At eight o'clock in the morning, a red pony came to the door, brought by a woman with a large shelalah in her hand, sharp pointed at one end, in the most public street of Killarney, crowded with market-women, vagabonds, pony-letters, importunate guides, beggars, and every offensive description of biped and quadruped, to the amount at least of a thousand. Lo ! I *descended* to *mount*, (which by the way is good Irish.) It was not necessary for me to put my foot in the stirrup, but only to throw my leg over the saddle, upon the back of a most forlorn-looking animal ; and with my legs dangling within an inch of the ground, and two ragged boys pulling at the bridle, and two bare-footed wenches with only the semblance of a petticoat on, beating and punching the animal behind, I essayed to move ; but my horse would not budge an inch, any more than Balaam's ass ; and after *not* swearing a word, or in any way breaking the Queen's peace, though I am quite certain my looks must have indicated a terrible ferocity, I dismounted, or rather stepped off, throwing the reins over the creature's head, and sneaked into my lodgings, amid a tumultuous shout of derision, of which I fancy I still hear the shrill and guttural notes. The next thing was to get a car and a guide, and the day ended far more auspiciously than it began.

The succeeding morning I started for Limerick, where I passed the night ; and as I found none of the gentlemen at home to whom I had letters, I started early next morning for Galway, and at night reached Lord Wallscourt's, at Ardfry, where I had been invited, and where I was made heartily welcome. Dr. Howe had visited him, and left a most agreeable im-

pression. No pains were spared by land or water to show me every thing interesting. A fortnight it seems would not have satisfied them, but I could stay only three nights. I went to Galway to attend the great Cattle Fair, at Fair Mount, where four thousand ponies were brought for sale ; and at eleven o'clock, Wednesday evening, after I had engaged my passage in the coach, Lord Wallscourt came to tell me he should not leave me yet, but should take the coach with me in the morning, and go on a day and a half's journey, which he did with a view to show me some important agricultural improvements at Glenash, about fifty miles from his house. Here we separated, he with a thousand kind wishes, and I with as many sincere thanks for his attentions. I reached Sligo at night ;— you will easily follow me on the map. The town of Sligo is vile enough in itself, but the hills in its vicinity are beautiful, embracing a landscape of surpassing richness, variegated by lake, river, mountain, and ocean scenery, and presenting a view upon the whole, I think, more varied than, and as pleasing as Mount Holyoke in Northampton. My journey next day to Derry was dreary enough, from a pouring rain to which I was exposed on the outside of the coach. Derry has many objects of interest, but my chief aim was to visit the Agricultural School at Templemoyle, in its vicinity. Here I went on Sunday afternoon, after church, and then at eight o'clock in the evening left for Coleraine, twenty-six miles ; I reached a stopping place at twenty minutes past twelve, at night. I had then ten miles to go to the Giant's Causeway, and eleven miles back, to meet the coach on its way to Belfast, at half-past nine o'clock the next morning, which the inn-keeper said it was *impossible* to do. I could not afford another day. I wanted to see this great curiosity, and I determined it was *possible*. Ten Irish miles are about thirteen English miles, so I ordered a car at a quarter before three, rolled over half a dozen times on the bed, and at the time appointed was on my way — reached the Causeway soon after five, staid nearly two hours, got my breakfast, and was back in season, waiting for the coach on its arrival at the usual hour—left for Belfast, and reached the Imperial Hotel here, the best and cheapest tavern I have almost ever found, at five o'clock. On Wednesday, I took the cars for Dun-Murry and Lisburne to deliver letters, and passed the day with the Rev. Dr. Montgomery, his wife, two grown up daughters, and a little sweet girl of about fourteen. I never met more intelligent and agreeable people, and his situation realized to my mind the *beau ideal* of a country clergyman's life. He is one of the best preachers in the country, or in any country. I knew his reputation, and heard him yesterday. He is one of the best farmers in the country, and withal one of the most liberal men. He is about my age ;—I wish I was half as wise. His wife is a very pleasing woman, of charming manners, and his daughters are highly cultivated and refined. I had seen one of them in London, I had visited Dr. Montgomery there repeatedly, during an illness with which he was attacked last winter. In five minutes they put me entirely at home. Their cottage resembles Elfin-glen. The railroad has cut off their front yard, but what remains is most tastefully adorned with flowers, and shrubs, and their church is in the rear of the manse, beautifully embowered among the trees. Nothing can be prettier. I left at night, literally carried off by two agreeable ladies, who had come out there to tea, and who insisted upon my taking a seat alongside of them on an Irish car, to the town. It was dark, or perhaps they would have been ashamed to be seen with such an old fellow, and have dropped me before we reached the town.

Thursday I went to Armagh, to see Mr. Blacker, the most distinguished agriculturist perhaps in Ireland, agent for Lord Gosford, to whom I had letters, but who is on the continent. Mr. Blacker has the care of twenty-five hundred small tenants ! He devoted himself to my service, took me about the country many miles, and showed me various farms, and various specimens of cultivation ; then I dined with the Precentor of the Cathedral, Rev. Dr. Allot, with a large party of gentlemen, an elegant entertainment at eight o'clock ; where I, poor soul, after travelling many miles and having had no lunch, unfortunately was obliged to yield to malign influences, after the cloth was removed, and was joggled at the elbow at half-past ten, to remind me that coffee was ready in the other room. How long or how deeply I slept, I cannot say. It was idle to plead not guilty ; so the only way was to laugh it off, taking

all their jokes in good part, and show off, after the coffee, with as much brilliancy as I could bring out.

The next day, Mr. Blacker again took me under his protection ; first, to breakfast at ten o'clock. He had sent for my baggage to the tavern, but as my clothes were wet by the rain of Saturday, and needed repacking and drying, I thought it best to lodge at the tavern. In the evening I dined with him and a most agreeable party of intelligent gentlemen ; and I beg to assure you, did not get to sleep. But how is a man to go to bed at twelve at night, rise soon after five, drive about the whole day, get no lunch but an apple, eat a hearty dinner at eight o'clock in the evening, sit comfortably down in a warm room, and not be quite disposed to shut his shop-windows ?

Saturday afternoon, in a soaking rain, I returned to Belfast. Yesterday, I spent the day at Dr. Montgomery's, and heard him preach a capital sermon. I have not passed a Sunday so entirely to my mind, since I crossed the Atlantic. My former impressions were strengthened, though one of the young ladies was absent. The walk five miles in the morning, after the whole country had been refreshed by rain, and all was still and calm, people in their best dresses gathering in all directions for public worship, was most delightful ; and when I got out of the town, " the busy haunts of men," and following the road lined with beautifully clipped hedges, and the wide spread fields stretching out far before the eye, and the bold mountains bounding the distant prospect, and the still river marking its silver line through the meadows, and occasionally spreading out its broad surface like a mirror encased in a frame of living green, my heart bounded towards home with an elasticity which wholly unmanned me, because I wished that other hearts could share in my delights, and my whole soul went up to heaven in a spontaneous and irrepressible hymn of thanksgiving. God be praised for his goodness, and for the million of undeserved blessings which he has poured out upon me.

I shall quit Ireland on Wednesday, having travelled in it many hundreds of miles. I never saw a more beautiful country, though art has done little for it. I never met with a more hospitable, generous, witty people. But the wretchedness of the great mass of the population is utterly beyond all description. I have been into cabins dug out of the bog, with no walls but the peat mud in which they have been excavated, with the roof covered with turf and straw, and the water standing in puddles on the outside, without chimney, window, door, floor, bed, chair, table, knife, or fork ; the whole furniture consisting of some straw to lay down upon, a pot to boil the potatoes in, a tin cup to drink out of, and a wicker-basket to take up the potatoes in after they are boiled, which is set down in the middle of the floor, and parents and children squat down like Hottentots, on the ground, and eat their food with their fingers, sometimes with salt, and often without ; and this is literally the whole of their living, day after day, and year after year, excepting that on Christmas day they contrive to get a little piece of meat and a bit of bread. You will be curious to know if I have seen *many* living so — Yes, hundreds — hundreds ? yes, thousands — thousands ? yes, a million. I could hardly credit my own senses until I went into the cabins, and felt my way in the smoke and darkness, and actually put my hand upon the turf sides. Here they all lie down, parents and children, brothers and sisters, on the straw at night, huddled together, literally naked, (because, the Irish coachman said, if they wore their shirts they were afraid they would be stolen,) with the pigs, and oftentimes the ass or the horse, and sometimes the cow in the same room. In one cabin I found a woman and six young children in a room not much larger than a small parlor, with a sow, and nine pigs a month old, which had been farrowed and reared there, and a large flock of poultry roosting over head ; and they brought the ass in at night, or rather he came in and out, as he pleased. Then as to the clothing of these people. I went into one cabin ; the parents were at work in the bog ; three little children almost naked were nestling around the turf fire, which was made upon the floor, for there was no chimney or fire place ; and there was a beautiful little girl about fourteen, of sweet address and manners, with nothing on but a rag

covering the upper part of her person, and a piece of flannel reaching not quite down to the knees, for a petticoat ; and she told us she had no other clothes. There are thousands of similar cases. The women are universally barefoot, a large portion of them, I am assured, having no stockings or shoes to wear, even in winter, when snow is on the ground ; and this in a country belonging to the richest and most refined people on the globe, not forty-eight hours' journey from London ; not one-fourth part of which is cultivated, and containing millions of untilled acres of as rich land as the sun shines upon. But I will not go further now ; you must be tired. I thought I would make one general letter for all.

After visiting Ayrshire, I am going north, to see the Duke of Richmond, who promises to show me the country in his neighborhood, and if time admits, to the Duke of Sutherland's, at the extremity of Scotland. Of this, however, I am doubtful.

It makes me quite miserable to see one friend after another sailing for home ; but my time will come presently, and that not far distant ; for how fast the wheel goes round ; I find myself quite advanced, and yet it seems to me I have hardly begun to live. Love to all. I do not forget a single one : mind that. Adieu.

•

Belfast, 16th September, 1844.

My Dear Sir :

There is still another chance of writing you by the mail of to-morrow, and I will not forego the pleasure of acknowledging your last letter. I have been much gratified by my visit to Ireland, obliged by the most kind and friendly attentions, and, as much as possible, interested in the country, and the condition of the people. My main objects were, to see the agricultural schools, of which I have visited three ; the model farms, of which I have seen two ; the management of small farms in one of the counties, of which much has been said ; and the cultivation of flax, to which an extraordinary impetus has been given in this part of the country, the great centre of the linen manufacture, which is conducted here under circumstances of great success and improvement. In all these respects, my visit has been most satisfactory, the evidences of which will be, I hope, duly given to the public, and I will not now anticipate them.

This seems to be a remarkably thrifty town, and well built and laid out. I may add, for an Irish town, very clean, which is, however, after all, only an equivocal compliment. The tall chimneys of the linen manufactories rise in every direction, within and around the town, and the fields in the vicinity are white with the beautiful fabrics of their looms — for the bleaching of the linen is done upon the grass. There is comparatively little idleness or vagabondage in the town ; and, after passing through many of the other towns of Ireland, it is an unspeakable relief to find one, where you are not grossly offended by the sight of the half-clad and filthy inhabitants, or by the comfortlessness and wretchedness of their habitations, compared to which, many a pig-sty which I have seen, must be considered as almost a palace.

The condition of Ireland is now everywhere arresting the attention of the world, and the liberation of O'Connell, effected, it would seem, almost by an accident, has produced here the most intense excitement. What is the next move he will make on the board, it is not so easy to conjecture ; but it is quite certain there will be no want of caution, on his part, to escape falling again into the clutches of the government, between whom and himself there is certainly no love lost. His promise of effecting a repeal of the union of the two countries, is as likely to be executed, as that we shall have snow in summer ; and the whole will probably evaporate, like Miller's prophecy about the end of the world. The repeal of the union would

work nothing but ill to Ireland ; and Ireland being left to herself, there would be war to the hilt, of the most dreadful kind, between the Catholics and the Protestants, for which, it is but too obvious, that the mastiffs and bull-dogs, on both sides, are panting to be let loose. The condition of a large portion of the Irish people involves an amount of destitution and wretchedness, which admits of no description, and, in comparison with which, the physical condition of the southern slaves is almost a condition of felicity. It is idle to expect that any legislative enactments can remedy this, or that, by any process whatever, a thorough, or even a considerable change can be speedily effected. Much is doing for the improvement of the country ; but, in my opinion, one of its greatest curses is its clergy, all parties of which are full of hate to each other, and are uniting to oppose and crush all systems of education and improvement, which injuriously affect their power, and do not involve the teaching and direct extension of their peculiar tenets. [1]

[1] I subjoin a curious document, showing: the immense fortunes accumulated by the Episcopal bishops in Ireland, in the discharge of their pastoral duties. Out of whom this money comes, it is not difficult to say. The use of these bishops, and the value of their services, we leave it to those who enjoy such luxuries, to calculate. Perhaps it is only just, as Dr. Jortin says, that they who feed the sheep should fleece the sheep : —

Sums accumulated by Irish Bishops of the English Protestant Episcopal Church.

Extract from probates of fortunes left by Irish Bishops, laid before the House of Commons, 1832.

Stopford, Bishop of Cork,	£25,000
Percy, Dromore,	40,000
Cleaver, Ferns,	50,000
Bernard, Limerick,	60,000
Knox, Killaloe,	100,000
Fowler, Dublin,	150,000
Beresford, Tuam,	250,000
Hawkins, Raphoe,	250,000
Stewart, Armagh,	300,000
Porter, Clogher,	250,000
Agar, Cashel,	400,000
Total,	£1,875,000

This was within a period of forty or fifty years

European life and manners; in familiar letters to friends (1849)

Author : Colman, Henry, 1785-1849

Volume : 1

Subject : Europe — Description and travel

Publisher : Boston : C. C. Little and J. Brown ; London, J. Petherham

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : MSN

Book contributor : University of California Libraries

Collection : cdl ; americana

Source : Internet Archive

<http://www.archive.org/details/europeanlifemann01colm>

Edited and uploaded to www.augty.org

August 29 2011