

From Westport by the mail 1842

The Irish sketch book

William Makepeace Thackeray

Westport to Ballinasloe.

THE mail-coach took us next day by Castlebar and Tuam to Ballinasloe, a journey of near eighty miles. The country is interspersed with innumerable seats belonging to the Blakes, the Browns, and the Lynches ; and we passed many large domains belonging to bankrupt lords and fugitive squires, with fine lodges adorned with moss and battered windows, and parks where, if the grass was growing on the roads, on the other hand the trees had been weeded out of the grass. About these seats and their owners the guard—an honest shrewd fellow—had all the gossip to tell. The jolly guard himself was a ruin, it turned out : he told me his grandfather was a man of large property ; his father, he said, kept a pack of hounds, and had spent everything by the time he, the guard, was sixteen : so the lad made interest to get a mail-car to drive, whence he had been promoted to the guard's seat, and now for forty years had occupied it, travelling eighty miles, and earning seven-and-twopence every day of his life. He had been once ill, he said, for three days ; and if a man may be judged by ten hours' talk with him, there were few more shrewd, resolute, simple-minded men to be found on the outside of any coaches or the inside of any houses in Ireland.

During the first five-and-twenty-miles of the journey, for the day was very sunny and bright,—Croaghpatrick kept us company ; and, seated with your back to the horses, you could see on the left, that vast aggregation of mountains which stretches southwards to the Bay of Galway ; on the right, that gigantic assemblage which sweeps in circular outline northward to Killule. Somewhere amongst those hills the great John Tuam was born, whose mansion and cathedral are to be seen in Tuam town, but whose fame is spread everywhere. To arrive at Castlebar, we go over the undulating valley which lies between the mountains of Joyce country and Erris ; and the first object which you see on entering the town is a stately Gothic castle which stands at a short distance from it.

On the gate of the stately Gothic castle was written an inscription not very hospitable : “ WITHOUT BEWARE, WITHIN AMEND ; ”—just beneath which is an iron crane of neat construction. The castle is the county gaol, and the iron crane is the gallows of the district. The town seems neat and lively ; there is a fine church, a grand barracks (celebrated as the residence of the young fellow with the bird's-eye neckcloth), a club, and a Whig and Tory newspaper. The road hence to Tuam is very pretty and lively, from the number of country seats along the way, giving comfortable shelter to more Blakes, Browns, and Lynches.

In the cottages, the inhabitants looked healthy and rosy in their rags, and the cots themselves in the sunshine almost comfortable. After a couple of months in the country, the stranger's eye grows somewhat accustomed to the rags : they do not frighten him as at first ; the people who wear them look for the most part healthy enough : especially the small children—those who can scarcely totter, and are sitting shading their eyes at the door, and leaving the unfinished dirt-pie to shout as the coach passes by—are as healthy a looking race as one will often see. Nor can any one pass through the land without being touched by the extreme love of children among the people : they swarm everywhere, and the whole country rings with cries of affection towards the children, with the songs of young ragged nurses dandling babies on their knees, and warnings of mothers to Patsey to come out of the mud, or Norey to get off the pig's back.

At Tuam the coach stopped exactly for fourteen minutes and a half, during which time those who wished might dine : but instead, I had the pleasure of inspecting a very mouldy

dirty town, and made my way to the Catholic cathedral—a very handsome edifice indeed ; handsome without and within, and of the Gothic sort. Over the door is a huge coat of arms surmounted by a cardinal's hat—the arms of the see, no doubt, quartered with John Tuam's own patrimonial coat ; and that was a frieze coat, from all accounts, passably ragged at the elbows. Well, he must be a poor wag who could sneer at an old coat, because it was old and poor ; but if a man changes it for a tawdry gimcrack suit bedizened with twopenny tinsel, and struts about calling himself his Grace and my Lord, when may we laugh if not then ? There is something simple in the way in which these good people belord their clergymen, and respect titles real or sham. Take any Dublin paper,—a couple of columns of it are sure to be filled with movements of the small great men of the world. Accounts from Derrynane state that the “ Right Honourable the Lord Mayor is in good health—his Lordship went out with his beagles yesterday ;” or “ His Grace the Most Reverend the Lord Archbishop of Ballywhack, assisted by the Right Reverend the Lord Bishops of Trincomalee and Hippopotamus, assisted,” &c. ; or “ Colonel Tims, of Castle Tims, and lady, have quitted the ‘ Shelburne Hotel,’ with a party for Kilbally-bathershins, where the *august* [1] party propose to enjoy a few days' shrimp-fishing,” and so on. Our people are not witty and keen of perceiving the ridiculous, like the Irish ; but the bluntness and honesty of the English have well-nigh kicked the fashionable humbug down ; and except perhaps among footmen and about Baker Street, this curiosity about the aristocracy is wearing fast away. Have the Irish so much reason to respect their lords that they should so chronicle all their movements ; and not only admire real lords, but make sham ones of their own to admire *them* ?

There is no object of special mark upon the road from Tuam to Ballinasloe—the country being flat for the most part, and the noble Galway and Mayo mountains having disappeared at length—until you come to a glimpse of Old England in the pretty village of Ahascragh. An old oak-tree grows in the neat street, the houses are as trim and white as eye can desire, and about the church and the town are handsome plantations, forming on the whole such a picture of comfort and plenty as is rarely to be seen in the part of Ireland I have traversed. All these wonders have been wrought by the activity of an excellent resident agent. There was a countryman on the coach deploring that, through family circumstances, this gentleman should have been dispossessed of his agency, and declaring that the village had already begun to deteriorate in consequence. The marks of such decay were not, however, visible—at least to a new comer ; and, being reminded of it, I indulged in many patriotic longings for England : as every Englishman does when he is travelling out of the country which he is always so willing to quit.

That a place should instantly begin to deteriorate because a certain individual was removed from it—that cottagers should become thriftless, and houses dirty, and house-windows cracked,—all these are points which public economists may ruminate over, and can't fail to give the carelessst traveller much matter for painful reflection. How is it that the presence of one man more or less should affect a set of people come to years of manhood, and knowing that they have their duty to do ? Why should a man at Ahascragh let his home go to ruin and stuff his windows with ragged breeches instead of glass, because Mr. Smith is agent in place of Mr. Jones ? Is he a child, that won't work unless the schoolmaster be at hand ? or are we to suppose, with the “ Repealers,” that the cause of all this degradation and misery is the intolerable tyranny of the sister country, and the pain which poor Ireland has been made to endure ? This is very well at the Corn Exchange, and among patriots after dinner ; but, after all, granting the grievance of the franchise (though it may not be unfair to presume that a man who has not strength of mind enough to mend his own breeches or his own windows will always be the tool of one party or another), there is no Inquisition set up in the country : the law tries to defend the people as much as they will allow ; the odious tithe has even been whisked off from their shoulders to the landlords' ; they may live pretty much as they like. Is it not too monstrous to howl about English tyranny and suffering Ireland, and call for a Stephen's Green Parliament to make the country quiet and the people industrious ? The

people are not politically worse treated than their neighbours in England. The priests and the landlords, if they chose to co-operate, might do more for the country now than any kings or laws could. What you want here is not a Catholic or Protestant party, but an Irish party.

In the midst of these reflections, and by what the reader will doubtless think a blessed interruption, we came in sight of the town of Ballinasloe and its “gash-lamps,” which a fellow-passenger did not fail to point out with admiration. The road-menders, however, did not appear to think that light was by any means necessary : for, having been occupied, in the morning, in digging a fine hole upon the highway, previous to some alterations to be effected there, they had left their work at sundown, without any lamp to warn coming travellers of the hole which we only escaped by a wonder. The papers have much such another story. In the Galway and Ballinasloe coach a horse on the road suddenly fell down and died : the coachman drove his coach unicorn-fashion into town ; and, as for the dead horse, of course he left it on the road at the place where it fell, and where another coach coming up was upset over it, bones broken, passengers maimed, coach smashed. By heavens ! the tyranny of England is unendurable ; and I have no doubt it had a hand in upsetting that coach.

Ballinasloe to Dublin.

DURING the cattle-fair the celebrated town of Ballinasloe is thronged with farmers from all parts of the kingdom—the cattle being picturesquely exhibited in the park of the noble proprietor of the town, Lord Clancarty. As it was not fair-time the town did not seem particularly busy, nor was there much to remark in it, except a church, and a magnificent lunatic asylum, that lies outside the town on the Dublin road, and is as handsome and stately as a palace. I think the beggars were more plenteous and more loathsome here than almost anywhere. To one hideous wretch I was obliged to give money to go away, which he did for a moment, only to obtrude his horrible face directly afterwards half eaten away with disease. “A penny for the sake of poor little Mery,” said another woman, who had a baby sleeping on her withered breast ; and how can any one who has a little Mery at home resist such an appeal? “Pity the poor blind man !” roared a respectably dressed grenadier of a fellow. I told him to go to the gentleman with a red neckcloth and fur cap (a young buck from Trinity College)—to whom the blind man with much simplicity immediately stepped over ; and as for the rest of the beggars, what pen or pencil could describe their hideous leering flattery, their cringing swindling humour !

The inn, like the town, being made to accommodate the periodical crowds of visitors who attended the fair, presented in their absence rather a faded and desolate look ; and in spite of the live-stock for which the place is famous, the only portion of their produce which I could get to my share, after twelve hours’ fasting and an hour’s bell-ringing and scolding, was one very lean mutton-chop and one very small damp kidney, brought in by an old tottering waiter to a table spread in a huge black coffee-room dimly lighted by one little jet of gas.

As this only served very faintly to light up the above banquet, the waiter, upon remonstrance, proceeded to light the other bec ; but the lamp was sulky, and upon this attempt to force it, as it were, refused to act altogether, and went out. The big room was then accommodated with a couple of yellow mutton-candles. There was a neat, handsome, correct young English officer warming his slippers at the fire, and opposite him sat a worthy gentleman, with a glass of “mingled materials,” discoursing to him in a very friendly and confidential way.

As I don’t know the gentleman’s name, and as it is not at all improbable, from the situation in which he was, that he has quite forgotten the night’s conversation, I hope there will be no breach of confidence in recalling some part of it. The speaker was dressed in deep black—worn, however, with that *dégagé* air peculiar to the votaries of Bacchus, or that nameless god,

off-spring of Bacchus and Ceres, who may have invented the noble liquor called whisky. It was fine to see the easy folds in which his neckcloth confined a shirt-collar moist with the generous drops that trickled from the chin above,—its little percentage upon the punch. There was a fine dashing black-satin waistcoat that called for its share, and generously disdained to be buttoned. I think this is the only specimen I have seen yet of the personage still so frequently described in the Irish novels—the careless drinking squire—the Irish Will Whimble.

“ Sir,” says he, “ as I was telling you before this gentleman came in (from Westport, I preshume, sir, by the mail ? and my service to you!), the butchers in Tchume (Tuam)—where I live, and shall be happy to see you and give you a shakedown, a cut of mutton, and the use of as good a brace of pointers as ever you shot over—the butchers say to me, whenever I look in at their shops and ask for a joint of meat—they say : ‘ Take down that quarther o’ mutton, boy ; IT’S NO USE WEIGHING IT for Mr. Bodkin. He can tell with an eye what’s the weight of it to an ounce !’ And so, sir, I can ; and I’d make a bet to go into any market in Dublin, Tchume, Ballinasloe, where you please, and just by looking at the meat decide its weight.”

At the pause, during which the gentleman here designated Bodkin drank off his “ materials,” the young officer said gravely that this was a very rare and valuable accomplishment, and thanked him for the invitation to Tchume.

The honest gentleman proceeded with his personal memoirs ; and (with a charming modesty that authenticated his tale, while it interested his hearers for the teller) he called for a fresh tumbler, and began discoursing about horses. “ Them I don’t know,” says he, confessing the fact at once ; “ or, if I do, I’ve been always so unlucky with them that it’s as good as if I didn’t.

“ To give you an idea of my ill fortune : Me brother-’n-law Burke once sent me three colts of his to sell at this very fair of Ballinasloe, and for all I could do I could only get a bid for one of ’em, and sold her for sixteen pounds. And d’ye know what that mare was, sir ?” says Mr. Bodkin, giving a thump that made the spoon jump out of the punch-glass for fright. “ D’ye know who she was ? she was Water-Wagtail, sir,—WATER-WAGTAIL! She won fourteen cups and plates in Ireland before she went to Liverpool ; and you know what she did. *there?*” (We said, “ Oh! of course.”) “ Well, sir, the man who bought her from me sold her for four hunder guineas ; and in England she fetched eight hunder’ pounds.

“ Another of them very horses, gentlemen (Tim, some hot wather—screeching hot, you divil—and a sthroke of the limin)—another of them horses that I was refused fifteen pound for, me brother-in-law sould to Sir Rufford Bufford for a hunder’-and-fifty guineas. Wasn’t *that* luck?

“ Well, sir, Sir Rufford gives Burke his bill at six months, and don’t pay it when it come jue. A pretty pickle Tom Burke was in, as I leave ye to fancy, for he’d paid away the bill, which he thought as good as goold ; and sure it ought to be, for Sir Rufford had come of age since the bill was drawn, and before it was due, and, as I needn’t tell you, had slipped into a very handsome property.

“ On the protest of the bill, Burke goes in a fury to Gresham’s in Sackville Street, where the Baronet was living, and (would ye believe it?) the latter says he doesn’t intend to meet the bill, on the score that he was a minor when he gave it. On which Burke was in such a rage that he took a horse-whip and vowed he’d beat the baronet to a jelly, and post him in every club in Dublin, and publish every circumstance of the transaction.”

“ It *does* seem rather a queer one,” says one of Mr. Bodkin’s hearers.

“ Queer indeed : but that’s not it, you see ; for Sir Rufford is as honourable a man as ever lived ; and after this quarrel he paid Burke his money, and they’ve been warm friends ever since. But what I want to show ye is our infernal luck. *Three months before, Sir Rufford had sold that very horse for three hunder’ guineas.*”

The worthy gentleman had just ordered in a fresh tumbler of his favourite liquor, when we wished him good-night, and slept by no means the worse, because the bedroom candle was carried by one of the prettiest young chambermaids possible.

Next morning, surrounded by a crowd of beggars more filthy, hideous, and importunate than any I think in the most favoured towns of the south, we set off, a coach-load for Dublin. A clergyman, a guard, a Scotch farmer, a butcher, a bookseller’s hack, a lad bound for Maynooth and another for Trinity, made a varied pleasant party enough, where each, according to his lights, had something to say.

I have seldom seen a more dismal and uninteresting road than that which we now took, and which brought us through the “ old, inconvenient, ill-built, and ugly town of Athlone.” The painter would find here, however, some good subjects for his sketch-book, in spite of the commination of the Guide-book. Here, too, great improvements are taking place for the Shannon navigation, which will render the town not so inconvenient as at present it is stated to be ; and hard by lies a little village that is known and loved by all the world where English is spoken. It is called Lishoy, but its real name is Auburn, and it gave birth to one Noll Goldsmith, whom Mr. Boswell was in the habit of despising very heartily. At the Quaker town of Moate, the butcher and the farmer dropped off, the clergyman went inside, and their places were filled by four Maynoothians, whose vacation was just at an end. One of them, a freshman, was inside the coach with the clergyman, and told him, with rather a long face, of the dismal discipline of his college. They are not allowed to quit the gates (except on general walks) ; they are expelled if they read a newspaper ; and they begin term with “ a retreat.” of a week, which time they are made to devote to silence, and, as it is supposed, to devotion and meditation.

I must say the young fellows drank plenty of whisky on the road to prepare them for their year’s abstinence ; and, when at length arrived in the miserable village of Maynooth, determined not to go into college that night, but to devote the evening to “ a lark.” They were simple kind-hearted young men, sons of farmers or tradesmen seemingly ; and, as is always the case here, except among some of the gentry, very gentlemanlike and pleasing in manners. Their talk was of this companion and that ; how one was in rhetoric, and another in logic, and a third had got his curacy. Wait for a while ; and with the happy system pursued within the walls of their college, those smiling good-humoured faces will come out with a scowl, and downcast eyes, that seem afraid to look the world in the face. When the time comes for them to take leave of yonder dismal-looking barracks, they will be men no longer, but bound over to the Church, body and soul ; their free thoughts chained down and kept in darkness, their honest affections mutilated. Well, I hope they will be happy to-night at any rate, and talk and laugh to their heart’s content. The poor freshman, whose big chest is carried off by the porter yonder to the inn, has but twelve hours more of hearty, natural human life. To-morrow, they will begin their work upon him ; cramping his mind, and biting his tongue, and firing and cutting at his heart,—breaking him to pull the Church chariot. Ah ! why didn’t he stop at home, and dig potatoes and get children ?

Part of the drive from Maynooth to Dublin is exceedingly pretty : you are carried through Leixlip, Lucan, Chapelizod, and by scores of parks and villas, until the gas-lamps come in sight. Was there ever a cockney that was not glad to see them ; and did not prefer the sight of them, in his heart, to the best lake or mountain ever invented ? Pat the waiter comes jumping

down to the car and says, " Welcome back, sir !" and bustles the trunk into the queer little bedroom, with all the cordial hospitality imaginable.

Two days in Wicklow.

THE little tour we have just been taking has been performed, not only by myriads of the " car-drivingest, tay-drinkingest, say-bathingest people in the world," the inhabitants of the city of Dublin, but also by all the tourists who have come to discover this country for the benefit of the English nation. " Look here !" says the ragged bearded genius of a guide at the Seven Churches. " This is the spot which Mr. Henry Inglis particularly admired, and said it was exactly like Norway. Many's the song I've heard Mr. Sam Lover sing here a pleasant gentleman entirely. Have you seen my picture that's taken off in Mrs. Hall's book ? All the strangers know me by it, though it makes me much cleverer than I am." Similar tales has he of Mr. Barrow, and the Transatlantic Willis, and of Crofton Croker, who has been everywhere.

The guide's remarks concerning the works of these gentlemen inspired me, I must confess, with considerable disgust and jealousy. A plague take them ! What remains for me to discover after the gallant adventurers in the service of Paternoster Row have examined every rock, lake, and ruin of the district, exhausted it of all its legends, and " invented new" most likely, as their daring genius prompted ? Hence it follows that the description of the two days' jaunt must of necessity be short ; lest persons who have read former accounts should be led to refer to the same, and make comparisons which might possibly be unfavourable to the present humble pages.

Is there anything new to be said regarding the journey ? In the first place there's the railroad : its no longer than the railroad to Greenwich, to be sure, and almost as well known : but has it been *done* ? thats the question : or has anybody discovered the dandies on the railroad ?

After wondering at the beggars and carmen of Dublin, the stranger can't help admiring another vast and numerous class of inhabitants of the city—namely, the dandies. Such a number of smartly-dressed young fellows I don't think any town possesses : no, not Paris, where the young shopmen, with spurs and stays, may be remarked strutting abroad on fête-days ; nor London, where on Sundays, in the Park, you see thousands of this cheap kind of aristocracy parading ; nor Liverpool, famous for the breed of commercial dandies, desk and counter D'Orsays and cotton and sugar-barrel Brummels, and whom one remarks pushing on to business with a brisk determined air. All the above races are only to be encountered on holidays, except by those persons whose affairs take them to shops, docks, or counting-houses, where these fascinating young fellows labour during the week.

But the Dublin breed of dandies is quite distinct from those of the various cities above-named, and altogether superior : for they appear every day, and all day long, not once a week merely, and have an original and splendid character and appearance of their own, very hard to describe, though no doubt every traveller, as well as myself, has admired and observed it. They assume a sort of military and ferocious look, not observable in other cheap dandies, except in Paris perhaps now and then ; and are to be remarked not so much for the splendour of their ornaments as for the profusion of them. Thus, for instance, a hat which is worn straight over the two eyes costs very likely more than one which hangs upon one ear ; a great oily bush of hair to balance the hat (otherwise the head no doubt would fall hopelessly on one side) is even more economical than a crop which requires the barber's scissors oft-times ; also a tuft on the chin may be had at a small expense of bear's-grease by persons of a proper age ; and although big pins are the fashion, I am bound to say I have never seen so many or so big as here. Large agate marbles or " taws," globes terrestrial and celestial, pawn-brokers' balls,—I cannot find comparisons large enough for these wonderful ornaments of the

person. Canes also should be mentioned, which are sold very splendid, with gold or silver heads, for a shilling on the Quays ; and the dandy not uncommonly finishes off with a horn quizzing-glass, which being stuck in one eye contracts the brows and gives a fierce determined look to the whole countenance.

In idleness at least these young men can compete with the greatest lords ; and the wonder is, how the city can support so many of them, or they themselves ; how they manage to spend their time : who gives them money to ride hacks in the “ Phaynix” on field and race days ; to have boats at Kingstown during the summer ; and to be crowding the railway-coaches all the day long ? Cars go whirling about all day, bearing squads of them. You see them sauntering at all the railway-stations in vast numbers, and jumping out of the carriages as the trains come up, and greeting other dandies with that rich large brogue which some actor ought to make known to the English public : it being the biggest, richest, and coarsest of all the brogues of Ireland.

I think these dandies are the chief objects which arrest the stranger’s attention as he travels on the Kingstown railroad, and I have always been so much occupied in watching and wondering at them as scarcely to have leisure to look at anything else during the pretty little ride of twenty minutes so beloved by every Dublin cockney. The waters of the bay wash in many places the piers on which the railway is built, and you see the calm stretch of water beyond, and the big purple hill of Howth, and the lighthouses, and the jetties, and the shipping. Yesterday was a boat-race (I don’t know how many scores of such take place during the season), and you may be sure there were tens of thousands of the dandies to look on. There had been boat-races the two days previous : before that, had been a field day—before that, three days of garrison races—to day, to-morrow, and the day after, there are races at Howth. There seems some sameness in the sports, but everybody goes ; everybody is never tired ; and then, I suppose, comes the punch-party, and the song in the evening—the same old pleasures, and the same old songs the next day, and so on to the end. As for the boat-race, I saw two little boats in the distance tugging away for dear life—the beach and piers swarming with spectators, the bay full of small yachts and innumerable row-boats, and in the midst of the assemblage a convict-ship lying ready for sail, with a black mass of poor wretches on her deck who, too, were eager for pleasure.

And so having reached Dublin it becomes necessary to curtail the observations which were to be made upon that city ; which surely ought to have a volume to itself : the humours of Dublin at least require so much space. For instance, there was the dinner at the Kildare Street Club, or the Hotel opposite, the dinner in Trinity College Hall, that at Mr. ——, the publisher’s, where a dozen of the literary men of Ireland were assembled,—and those (say fifty) with Harry Lorrequer himself, at his mansion of Templeogue. What a favourable opportunity to discourse upon the peculiarities of Irish character ! to describe men of letters, of fashion and University dons !

Sketches of these personages may be prepared, and sent over, perhaps, in confidence to Mrs. Sigourney in America—(who will of course not print them) but the English habit does not allow of these happy communications between writers and the public ; and the author who wishes to dine again at his friend’s cost, must needs have a care how he puts him in print.

Suffice it to say, that at Kildare Street we had white neckcloths, black waiters, wax-candles, and some of the best wine in Europe ; at Mr. ——, the publisher’s, wax-candles, and some of the best wine in Europe ; at Mr. Lever’s, wax-candles, and some of the best wine in Europe ; at Trinity College—but there is no need to mention what took place at Trinity College ; for, on returning to London, and recounting the circumstances of the repast, my

friend B ——, a Master of Arts of that University, solemnly declared the thing was impossible : no stranger *could* dine at Trinity College ; it was too great a privilege in a word, he would not believe the story, nor will he to this day ; and why, therefore, tell it in vain ?

I am sure if the Fellows of Colleges in Oxford and Cambridge were told that the Fellows of T. C. D. only drink beer at dinner, they would not believe *that*. Such, however, was the fact : or may be it was a dream, which was followed by another dream of about four-and-twenty gentlemen seated round a common-room table after dinner ; and, by a subsequent vision of a tray of oysters in the apartments of a tutor of the University, some time before midnight. Did we swallow them or not ?—the oysters are an open question.

Of the Catholic College of Maynooth, I must likewise speak briefly, for the reason that an accurate description of that establishment would be of necessity so disagreeable, that it is best to pass it over in a few words. An Irish union-house is a palace to it. Ruin so needless, filth so disgusting, such a look of lazy squalor, no Englishman who has not seen can conceive. Lecture-room and dining-hall, kitchen and students'-room, were all the same. I shall never forget the sight of scores of shoulders of mutton lying on the filthy floor in the former, or the view of a bed and dressing-table that I saw in the other. Let the next Maynooth grant include a few shillings'-worth of whitewash and a few hundredweights of soap ; and if to this be added a half-score of drill-sergeants, to see that the students appear clean at lecture, and to teach them to keep their heads up and to look people in the face, Parliament will introduce some cheap reforms into the seminary, which were never needed more than here. Why should the place be so shamefully ruinous and foully dirty ? Lime is cheap, and water plenty at the canal hard by. Why should a Stranger, after a week's stay in the country, be able to discover a priest by the scowl on his face, and his doubtful downcast manner ? Is it a point of discipline that his reverence should be made to look as ill-humoured as possible ? And I hope these words will not be taken hostilely. It would have been quite as easy, and more pleasant, to say the contrary, had the contrary seemed to me to have been the fact ; and to have declared that the priests were remarkable for their expression of candour, and their college for its extreme neatness and cleanliness.

This complaint of neglect applies to other public institutions besides Maynooth. The Mansion-house, when I saw it, was a very dingy abode for the Right Honourable Lord Mayor, and that Lord Mayor Mr. O'Connell. I saw him in full council, in a brilliant robe of crimson velvet, ornamented with white satin bows and sable collar, in an enormous cocked-hat, like a slice of an eclipsed moon.

The Aldermen and Common Council, in a black oak parlour and at a dingy green table, were assembled around him, and a debate of thrilling interest to the town ensued : it related, I think, to water-pipes. The great man did not speak publicly, but was occupied chiefly at the end of the table, giving audiences to at least a score of clients and petitioners.

The next day I saw him in the famous Corn Exchange. The building without has a substantial look, but the hall within is rude, dirty, and ill-kept. Hundreds of persons were assembled in the black streaming place ; no inconsiderable share of frieze-coats were among them ; and many small Repealers, who could but lately have assumed their breeches, ragged as they were. These kept up a great chorus of shouting, and “ hear, hear !” at every pause in the great Repealer's address. Mr. O'Connell was reading a report from his Repeal-wardens ; which proved that when Repeal took place, commerce and prosperity would instantly flow into the country ; its innumerable harbours would be filled with countless ships, its immense water-power would be directed to the turning of myriads of mills ; its vast energies and resources brought into full action. At the end of the report three cheers were given for Repeal, and in the midst of a great shouting Mr. O'Connell leaves the room.

“ Mr. Quiglan, Mr. Quiglan !” roars an active aide-de-camp to the doorkeeper, “ a covered kyar for the Lard Mayre.” The covered car came ; I saw his Lordship get into it. Next day he was Lord Mayor no longer ; but Alderman O’Connell in his state-coach, with the handsome greys whose manes were tied up with green ribbon, following the new Lord Mayor to the right honourable inauguration. Javelin-men, city marshals (looking like military undertakers), private carriages, glass coaches, cars, covered and uncovered, and thousands of yelling ragamuffins, formed the civic procession of that faded, worn-out, insolvent old Dublin Corporation.

The walls of this city had been placarded with huge notices to the public, that O’Connell’s rent-day was at hand ; and I went round to all the chapels in town on that Sunday (not a little to the scandal of some Protestant friends), to see the popular behaviour. Every door was barred, of course, with plate-holders ; and heaps of pence at the humble entrances, and bank-notes at the front gates, told the willingness of the people to reward their champion. The car-boy who drove me had paid his little tribute of fourpence at morning mass ; the waiter who brought my breakfast had added to the national subscription with his humble shilling ; and the Catholic gentleman with whom I dined, and between whom and Mr. O’Connell there is no great love lost, pays his annual donation, out of gratitude for old services, and to the man who won Catholic Emancipation for Ireland. The piety of the people at the chapels is a sight, too, always well worthy to behold. Nor indeed is this religious fervour less in the Protestant places of worship : the warmth and attention of the congregation, the enthusiasm with which hymns are sung and responses uttered, contrasts curiously with the cool formality of worshippers at home.

The service at Saint Patrick’s is finely sung ; and the shameless English custom of retreating after the anthem, is properly prevented by locking the gates, and having the music after the sermon. The interior of the cathedral itself, however, to an English-man who has seen the neat and beautiful edifices of his own country, will be anything but an object of admiration. The greater part of the huge old building is suffered to remain in gaunt decay, and with its stalls of sham Gothic, and the tawdry old rags and gimcracks of the “ most illustrious order of Saint Patrick” (whose pasteboard helmets, and calico banners, and lath swords, well characterise the humbug of chivalry which they are made to represent), looks like a theatre behind the scenes. “ Paddy’s Opera,” however, is a noble performance ; and the Englishman may here listen to a half-hour sermon, and in the anthem to a bass singer whose voice is one of the finest ever heard.

The Drama does not flourish much more in Dublin than in any other part of the country. Operatic stars make their appearance occasionally, and managers lose money. I was at a fine concert, at which Lablache and others performed, where there were not a hundred people in the pit of the pretty theatre, and where the only encore given was to a young woman in ringlets and yellow satin, who stepped forward and sang “ Coming through the rye,” or some other scientific composition, in an exceedingly small voice. On the nights when the regular drama was enacted, the audience was still smaller. The theatre of Fishamble Street was given up to the performances of the Rev. Mr. Gregg and his Protestant company, whose soirées I did not attend ; and, at the Abbey Street Theatre, whither I went in order to see, if possible, some specimens of the national humour, I found a company of English people ranting through a melodrama, the tragedy whereof was the only laughable thing to be witnessed.

Humbler popular recreations may be seen by the curious. One night I paid twopence to see a puppet-show—such an entertainment as may have been popular a hundred and thirty years ago, and is described in the *Spectator*. But the company here assembled were not, it scarcely need be said, of the genteel sort. There were a score of boys, however, and a dozen of labouring men, who were quite happy and contented with the piece performed, and loudly applauded. Then in passing homewards of a night, you hear, at the humble public-houses, the sound of many a fiddle, and the stamp of feet dancing the good old jig, which is still main-

taining a struggle with teetotalism, and, though vanquished now, may rally some day and overcome the enemy. At Kingstown, especially, the old “ fire-worshippers” yet seem to muster pretty strongly ; loud is the music to be heard in the taverns there, and the cries of encouragement to the dancers.

Of the numberless amusements that take place in the *Phaynix*, it is not very necessary to speak. Here you may behold garrison races, and reviews ; lord-lieutenants in brown great-coats ; aides-de-camp scampering about like mad in blue ; fat colonels roaring “ charge” to immense heavy dragoons ; dark riflemen lining woods and firing ; galloping cannoneers banging and blazing right and left. Here comes his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, with his huge feathers, and white hair, and hooked nose ; and yonder sits his Excellency the Ambassador from the republic of Topinambo in a glass coach, smoking a cigar. The honest Dublinites make a great deal of such small dignitaries as his Excellency of the glass coach ; you hear everybody talking of him, and asking which is he ; and when presently one of Sir Robert Peel’s sons makes his appearance on the course, the public rush delighted to look at him.

They love great folks, those honest Emerald Islanders, more intensely than any people I ever heard of, except the Americans. They still cherish the memory of the sacred George IV. They chronicle genteel small beer with never-failing assiduity. They go in long trains to a sham Court—simpering in tights and bags, with swords between their legs. O heaven and earth, what joy ! Why are the Irish noblemen absentees ? If their lordships like respect, where would they get it so well as in their own country ?

The Irish noblemen are very likely going through the same delightful routine of duty before their real sovereign—in *real* tights and bagwigs, as it were, performing their graceful and lofty duties, and celebrating the august service of the throne. These, of course, the truly loyal heart can only respect : and I think a drawing-room at St. James’s the grandest spectacle that ever feasted the eye or exercised the intellect. The crown, surrounded by its knights and nobles, its priests, its sages, and their respective ladies ; illustrious foreigners, men learned in the law, heroes of land and sea, beef-eaters, gold-sticks, gentlemen-at-arms rallying round the throne and defending it with those swords which never knew defeat (and would surely, if tried, secure victory) : these are sights and characters which every man must look upon with a thrill of respectful awe, and count amongst the glories of his country. What lady that sees this will not confess that she reads every one of the drawing-room costumes, from Majesty down to Miss Ann Maria Smith ; and all the names of the presentations, from Prince Baccabocksky (by the Russian Ambassador) to Ensign Stubbs on his appointment ?

We are bound to read these accounts. It is our pride, our duty as Britons. But though one may honour the respect of the aristocracy of the land for the sovereign, yet there is no reason why those who are not of the aristocracy should be aping their betters ; and the Dublin Castle business has, I cannot but think, a very high-life-below-stairs look. There is no aristocracy in Dublin. Its magnates are tradesmen—Sir Fiat Haustus, Sir Blacker Dosy, Mr. Serjeant Bluebag, or Mr. Counsellor O’Fee. Brass-plates are their titles of honour, and they live by their boluses or their briefs. What call have these worthy people to be dangling and grinning at lord-lieutenants’ levies, and playing sham aristocracy before a sham sovereign ? Oh, that old humbug of a Castle ! It is the greatest sham of all the shams in Ireland.

Although the season may be said to have begun, for the Courts are opened, and the *noblesse de la robe* have assembled, I do not think the genteel quarters of the town look much more cheerful. They still, for the most part, wear their faded appearance and lean half-pay look. There is the beggar still dawdling here and there. Sounds of carriages or footmen do not deaden the clink of the burly policeman’s boot-heels. You may see, possibly, a smutty-faced nursemaid leading out her little charges to walk ; or the observer may catch a glimpse of

Mick the footman lolling at the door, and grinning as he talks to some dubious tradesman. MICK and JOHN are very different characters externally and inwardly ;—profound essays (involving the histories of the two countries for a thousand years) might be written regarding Mick and John, and the moral and political influences which have developed the flunkeys of the two nations. The friend, too, with whom Mick talks at the door is a puzzle to a Londoner. I have hardly ever entered a Dublin house without meeting with some such character on my way in or out. He looks too shabby for a dun, and not exactly ragged enough for a beggar—a doubtful, lazy, dirty family vassal—a guerilla footman. I think it is he who makes a great noise, and whispering, and clattering, handing in the dishes to Mick from outside of the dining-room door. When an Irishman comes to London he brings Erin with him ; and ten to one you will find one of these queer retainers about his place.

London one can only take leave of by degrees : the great town melts away into suburbs, which soften, as it were, the parting between the cockney and his darling birthplace. But you pass from some of the stately fine Dublin streets straight into the country. After No. 46 Eccles Street, for instance, potatoes begin at once. You are on a wide green plain, diversified by occasional cabbage-plots, by drying grounds white with chemises, in the midst of which the chartered wind is revelling ; and though in the map some fanciful engineer has laid down streets and squares, they exist but on paper ; nor, indeed, can there be any need of them at present, in a quarter where houses are not wanted so much as people to dwell in the same.

If the genteel portions of the town look to the full as melancholy as they did, the down-right poverty ceases, I fear, to make so strong an impression as it made four months ago. Going over the same ground again, places appear to have quite a different aspect ; and, with their strangeness, poverty and misery have lost much of their terror. The people, though dirtier and more ragged, seem certainly happier than those in London.

Near to the King's Court, for instance (a noble building, as are almost all the public edifices of the city), is a straggling green suburb, containing numberless little shabby, patched, broken-windowed huts, with rickety gardens dotted with rags that have been washed, and children that have not ; and thronged with all sorts of ragged inhabitants. Near to the suburb, in the town, is a dingy old mysterious district, called Stoneybatter, where some houses have been allowed to reach an old age, extraordinary in this country of premature ruin, and look as if they had been built some six score years since. In these and the neighbouring tenements, not so old, but equally ruinous and mouldy, there is a sort of vermin swarm of humanity : dirty faces at all the dirty windows ; children on all the broken steps ; smutty slipshod women clacking and bustling about, and old men dawdling. Well, only paint and prop the tumbling gates and huts in the suburb, and fancy the Stoneybatterites clean, and you would have rather a gay and agreeable picture of human life—of workpeople and their families reposing after their labours. They are all happy, and sober, and kind-hearted,—they seem kind, and play with the children—the young women having a gay good-natured joke for the passer-by ; the old seemingly contented, and buzzing to one another. It is only the costume, as it were, that has frightened the stranger, and made him fancy that people so ragged must be unhappy. Observation grows used to the rags as much as the people do, and my impression of the walk through this district, on a sunshiny clear autumn evening, is that of a fête. I am almost ashamed it should be so.

Near to Stoneybatter lies a group of huge gloomy edifices—an hospital, a penitentiary, a mad-house, and a poor-house. I visited the latter of these, the North Dublin Union-house, an enormous establishment, which accommodates two thousand beggars. Like all the public institutions of the country, it seems to be well conducted, and is a vast, orderly, and cleanly place, wherein the prisoners are better clothed, better fed, and better housed than they can hope to be when at liberty. We were taken into all the wards in due order : the schools and

nursery for the children ; the dining-rooms, day-rooms, &c., of the men and women. Each division is so accommodated, as also with a large court or ground to walk and exercise in.

Among the men there are very few able-bodied : the most of them, the keeper said, having gone out for the harvest-time, or as soon as the potatoes came in. If they go out, they cannot return before the expiration of a month : the guardians have been obliged to establish this prohibition, lest the persons requiring relief should go in and out too frequently. The old men were assembled in considerable numbers in a long day-room that is comfortable and warm. Some of them were picking oakum by way of employment, but most of them were past work ; all such inmates of the house as are able-bodied being occupied upon the premises. Their hall was airy and as clean as brush and water could make it : the men equally clean, and their grey jackets and Scotch caps stout and warm. Thence we were led, with a sort of satisfaction, by the guardian, to the kitchen—a large room, at the end of which might be seen certain coppers, emitting, it must be owned, a very faint inhospitable smell. It was Friday, and rice-milk is the food on that day, each man being served with a pint-canful, of which cans a great number stood smoking upon stretchers—the platters were laid, each with its portion of salt, in the large clean dining-room hard by, “ Look at that rice,” said the keeper, taking up a bit ; “ try it, sir, it’s delicious.” I’m sure I hope it is.

The old women’s room was crowded with, I should think, at least four hundred old ladies—neat and nice, in white clothes and caps—sitting demurely on benches, doing nothing ; for the most part ; but some employed, like the old men, in fiddling with the oakum. “ There’s tobacco here,” says the guardian, in a loud voice ; “ who’s smoking tobacco?” “ Fait, and I wish dere *was* some tabaccy here,” says one old lady, “ and my service to you, Mr. Leary, and I hope one of the gentlemen has a snuff-box, and a pinch for a poor old woman.” But we had no boxes ; and if any person who reads this visit, goes to a poor-house or lunatic asylum, let him carry a box, if for that day only—a pinch is like Dives’s drop of water to those poor limboed souls. Some of the poor old creatures began to stand up as we came in—I can’t say how painful such an honour seemed to me.

There was a separate room for the able-bodied females ; and the place and courts were full of stout, red-cheeked, bouncing women. If the old ladies looked respectable, I cannot say the young ones were particularly good-looking ; there were some Hogarthian faces amongst them—sly, leering, and hideous. I fancied I could see only too well what these girls had been. Is it charitable or not to hope that such bad faces could only belong to bad women ?

“ Here, sir, is the nursery,” said the guide, flinging open the door of a long room. There may have been eighty babies in it, with as many nurses and mothers. Close to the door sat one with as beautiful a face as I almost ever saw : she had at her breast a very sickly and puny child, and looked up, as we entered, with a pair of angelical eyes, and a face that Mr. Eastlake could paint—a face that *had* been angelical that is ; for there was the snow still, as it were, but with the footmark on it. I asked her how old she was—she did not know. She could not have been more than fifteen years, the poor child. She said she had been a servant—and there was no need of asking anything more about her story. I saw her grinning at one of her comrades as we went out of the room ; her face did not look angelical then. Ah, young master or old, young or old villain, who did this !—have you not enough wickedness of your own to answer for, that you must take another’s sins upon your shoulders ; and be this wretched child’s sponsor in crime ? . . .

But this chapter must be made as short as possible : and so I will not say how much prouder Mr. Leary, the keeper, was of his fat pigs than of his paupers—how he pointed us out the burial-ground of the family of the poor—their coffins were quite visible through the nig-gardly mould ; the children might peep at their fathers over the burial-ground play-ground-wall—nor how we went to see the Linen Hall of Dublin—that huge, useless, lonely, decayed

place, in the vast windy solitudes of which stands the simpering statue of George IV. , pointing to some bales of shirting, over which he is supposed to extend his august protection.

The cheers of the rabble hailing the new Lord Mayor were the last sounds that I heard in Dublin : and I quitted the kind friends I had made there with the sincerest regret. As for forming “ an opinion of Ireland,” such as is occasionally asked from a traveller on his return—that is as difficult an opinion to form as to express ; and the puzzle which has perplexed the gravest and wisest, may be confessed by a humble writer of light literature, whose aim it only was to look at the manners and the scenery of the country, and who does not venture to meddle with questions of more serious import.

To have “ an opinion about Ireland,” one must begin by getting at the truth : and where is it to be had in the country ? Or rather, there are two truths, the Catholic truth and the Protestant truth.

Ask about an estate : you may be sure almost that people will make misstatements, or volunteer them if not asked. Ask a cottager about his rent, or his landlord : you cannot trust him. I shall never forget the glee with which a gentleman in Munster told me how he had sent off MM. Tocqueville and Beaumont “ with *such* a set of stories.” Inglis was seized, as I am told, and mystified in the same way. In the midst of all these truths, attested with “ I give ye my sacred honour and word,” which is the stranger to select ? And how are we to trust philosophers who make theories upon such data?

Meanwhile it is satisfactory to know, upon testimony so general as to be equivalent almost to fact, that, wretched as it is, the country is steadily advancing, nor nearly, so wretched now as it was a score of years since ; and let us hope that the *middle class*, which this increase of prosperity must generate (and of which our laws have hitherto forbidden the existence in Ireland, making there a population of Protestant aristocracy and Catholic peasantry), will exercise the greatest and most beneficial influence over the country. Too independent to be bullied by priest or squire—having their interest in quiet, and alike indisposed to servility or to rebellion ; may not as much be hoped from the gradual formation of such a class, as from any legislative meddling ? It is the want of the middle class that has rendered the squire so arrogant, and the clerical or political demagogue so powerful ; and I think Mr. O’Connell himself would say that the existence of such a body would do more for the steady acquirement of orderly freedom, than the occasional outbreak of any crowd, influenced by any eloquence from altar or tribune.

[1] This epithet is applied to the party of a Colonel somebody, in a Dublin paper.

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