

Wilds Immeasurable - Walk1817

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Walks Through Ireland

1812, 1814, and 1817.

Third Walk,

Through Munster And Connaught, in 1817

Erris, October, 1817

As Sunday morning proved exceedingly fine, I devoted a great part of it to mixing among these people in Mr. Nash's neighbourhood. They suffer from the system of tenancy in common, much as I have described to exist in over parts of Connaught ; and also from that of duty work, or day's-labour, due to, and to be called for, at the will of the landlord. The latter oppresses very much, takes the small farmer from his own business, and gives him nothing in return.

Tenancy in common prevents individual prosperity, and binds the bad and good tenant unjustly, and indeed cruelly, together. It resembles the tyranny of Mezentius, and ties the living and dead together,—the sluggard, or sot, and the industrious man. Duty-work completes the hardships of that system, and deducts from industry, perhaps at the most inconvenient moment, the exertions it owes at home. The abolition of these systems, in the parts of Connaught where they exist, would do great good. This act of manumission by all the land-lords, would invigorate agriculture and manufacture, and give the post of freemen to those too often now obliged to obey as slaves.

High rents are complained of in Erris, as well as in almost every part of Ireland we have recently seen. They act more severely, I apprehend, in the tenancy-in-common system than where individuals hold separately, for the sum calculated for the whole is more easily rated high than one separate rent. But as the population is, upon the whole, not so great in Erris, or other parts of Connaught, as in Leinster or Munster, and as there is not much of an influx of strangers to add materially to it, the same disorders have not been excited here on account of land, as I have frequently alluded to in former letters. The mildness of the people in Erris tends also to preclude them. The agriculture in it is not so good as in the barony of Forth. In the former, a feudal system has existed time immemorial. In the latter, the rational independence of decent yeomen. The inference must be plain to the most unprejudiced in Ireland, that English laws and customs were favourable to freedom and to agriculture.

In Erris we see no green crops, good enclosures, or gardens ; it is nature in her undress. But in the qualification and improvement of the mind, this interesting portion of Connaught excels most parts of Ireland. This people's persons are very good, well-formed, and active ; their dress neat and genteel. They resemble French peasants in many respects. They have abundance of food from the vicinity of the sea, producing quantities of fish and shell-fish, and the fertility of the land, much arising from the vast heaps of the mucilaginous sea-moss thrown on their shores. They marry very young ; the girls at twelve or thirteen, and the young lads at seventeen. Nature finds nothing to damp her operations in this happy spot, and the genial passion of love, which scatters the sweetest roses in the early part of life, inspires them

to be happy as soon as possible. No cares for the support of a future family impede them ; the soft smile of Venus bids them early seize the golden moments of a fleeting life, and they obey. Accordingly, population is rapidly increasing ; but great tracts of mountain and heathy land are still quite uninhabited. Their houses in general are neat, well furnished, have good beds and linen, and are white-washed, and of decent appearance. Their crops are potatoes, oats, barley, and flax ; but tithes are found very oppressive. The great wants of the people of Erris are roads and markets. The nearest market-town is forty miles distant from some parts of it. A new road is planned, with the approbation of government, it is said, from Castlebar to the Mullet ; but the burthen a very large undertaking of this kind must lay on the land will be heavy.

The fishery of herrings at Erris is sometimes wonderfully productive, as those fish come to these shores three or four times in the year.

Weavers are numerous in Erris ; they grow much flax. Many persons conversant in the linen-manufacture came to it in the year 1796 ; but although they have advanced the linen-trade, some think they will not benefit the tranquillity of the country.

The introduction of forty-shilling freeholders has caused many mountain-tracts to be subdivided, and farms to be established in them. In the wildest spots, until lately, they burnt their corn, instead of thrashing it, and harrowed by the horses' tails ;—a mark of extreme poverty, I think.

Having walked through Erris a good deal this day, I afterwards met Mr. Nash at Baldurrock, as we had appointed, where a patron was held. A patron in Ireland is the festival of a saint held at a particular place consecrated to his memory. The Catholics observe these holidays frequently on the Sunday, and combine, religion and innocent recreation, not improperly, together. As I perceived the people hastening to Baldurrock, I followed. An interesting scene presented itself.

Imagine, my dear L., an extensive sandy shore, and hills,—a few cottages,—an unfinished chapel,—the Atlantic rolling near,—and an assemblage of country-people,—an unmixed remnant of the Irish nation, extremely well dressed—of gentle manners, and socially enjoying themselves— a row or two of booths, covered with canvas, containing simple wares and fruit. The picture was not only novel, but highly delightful. I entered the pattern, as prayers were performing near it by the priest in the open air. These good people, with their hats off, and kneeling, surrounded him. Never did I behold the Deity worshipped in a more affecting and sublime manner ! Not the slightest noise was heard, but that of the softly-murmuring ocean ! Not a thought was given, but to the great Deity, who looked down on his adoring creatures! What a study for a painter ! A Raphael, or a Poussin, might have returned from it instructed.

When divine service had ended, every one walked about, and diverted themselves in the pattern. There I observed this pleasing people at my leisure. The men were very respectable and orderly ; the females possessed a great deal of beauty of the most delicate kind, and had fine teeth and hair. Their countenances were of that Grecian, or foreign antique cast, I remarked at Achill, and full of sensibility and modesty. How those charming eyes spoke ! How truly graceful did these Erris beauties appear ! In this assemblage every thing was harmonious and tranquil,—the voices of all were low and soft. The language was almost universally Irish, and spoken by the gentle fair ones we saw, sounded sweet and clear, whilst the smile from their lovely eyes dazzled, or the cordial shake of the hand, evinced their joy. Modesty,

too, the first charm of the sex, adorned these charming young women, and no intoxication disgraced the men.

As I joined our party, Mr. Nash introduced me to the priest of Carne, the pastor of these good creatures. Mr. Dixon was an amiable and excellently educated young man, and had just escaped death from the direful fever which has penetrated here. The congratulations of his flock were bestowed with the best grace possible. There was neither servility nor familiarity, but blended respect and love.

In some adjoining cottages the music of the Irish-pipes resounded, and we visited the dancers. They shelved grace and agility, and, as all the Irish do, seemed fond of the dance, and excelled in it. The beauty of the females was here seen to great advantage. I observed in these cottages a primitive degree of simplicity in the transparent parchment used for glass in their windows. To us, who had now attained the extreme point of our walk, and had explored these remote regions, this entire scene was perfectly delightful. How many prejudices vanished ! How many pleasing, social ideas succeeded ! How delighted did I dwell mentally on my theory of a people happy, amiable, and civilised, dwelling in Ireland before the Milesians arrived ! Was not this a portion of them, yet surviving the iron pressure and cruel conflicts of Milesian kings ? Was it not evident, too, that English power had made no devastation here, since so unchanged and unvitiated a remnant of the Irish lived happily to this day under it ? Good people !—No discontent, or disaffection inflames your breasts ! Satisfied, under a paternal government, to cultivate your lands, to worship God unmolested, to live in social peace, without desire for accumulated wealth, or rage for power, your days glide on calmly ; but it is the duty of that government. to save you from all remaining local oppression, and the injurious superiority of a few privileged neighbours ! How great is your merit now, when thus tranquil though still degraded ! How glorious a task for that government to turn your tranquillity into joy.

We returned from Baldurrock to dinner with Mr. Nash. A new source of satisfaction was opened to us. Mr. N. introduced us to Mr. Barret, the venerable poet of Erris. He is a fine old man, between seventy and eighty years of age, modest, of conciliating manners, having the deportment of a plain English country gentleman, with all the mildness of polished life. His conversation was sensible, and the vivacity of the poet often broke out. He sung for us an air of Carolan's, with Irish words, and an additional stanza of his own composition. The tune and words went melodiously together, and, had a charming effect. We spent an exceedingly pleasant evening with Mr. Barret, whose social powers improved. He favoured us with several English verses of his own composition, which he sung to different airs. Mr. B. was a school-master for some years, but found the confinement of that kind of life irksome, and has long given it up. He resides on a small farm of his own, in simple but genuine independence. He owes nothing, and has but few wants : his books are his companions ; he writes poetry both in the English and Irish languages, and is quite content on five acres of land. I waited on Mr. B. the following morning at his cottage, where he received me with a hearty welcome, and in every manner a pleasing reception. I prevailed on this venerable son of the Muses to read me some of his productions in English. They are. written in the manner of Hudibras, and have a great deal of point. Mr. B. is a satirical poet, and has displeased as well as pleased his neighbours, on some occasions. Some years ago he wished to have his turf drawn speedily home, and sent poetical applications for their assistance, to all his respectable neighbours. They were so well penned, and so ingenious, that he succeeded with all, Mr. B. was good enough to translate for me some verses of an old Irish poem, on the battle of Clontarfe, when Brian Borom fell : they were not without merit. This fine old man expanded his mind more in this morning visit, than he had done the preceding evening: he told me he had not learned the Irish language grammatically till some years ago, but writes now, in English or Irish, with

equal ease. I advised him to attempt some considerable work. “ In this retired place (said he), no one to encourage, and little hope existing that any production of mine would meet any notice, I have long abandoned thoughts of that sort ; though they did once intrude, when I was younger and more ambitious ;—but, since you request me to attempt something, I will do so, if you promise to read it and tell me truly your opinion of it.” I assured Mr. Barret I would ; and I sincerely hope to be able to announce to you, next spring, what progress this western bard has made ! Shall we not, my dear L., if possible, rescue his strains from obscurity?

It is an extraordinary truth that Ireland, with all her poetic genius, has produced no epic poem. On her drama I sent you my remarks in a former letter, from Leinster. It is singular, that no great poetic work, of the heroic nature, has distinguished her ; and I much incline to suspect, that the royal princes of the Milesian race, and many English deputies, were small ' encouragers of that noble vein of poetry, which aims at the highest things, and ill answers for the sickly taste of despotic or voluptuous tyrants. Homer composed his divine works in a country of free men. Virgil wrote before the republic was quite extinct at Rome, and under a mild and benignant chief governor, fond of the arts, and a friend to literature. Ariosto and Tasso caught the last reflected rays of the past glories of Italy. Milton, and some very noble modern English poets, have tuned the lyre in a free country ; but Ireland, though eminently gifted, has been enslaved ! Petty despotism, with all its endless genealogies, its pomp, and selfishness, allowed not the vigorous emanations of free minds !

The most early times of this western isle are lost in night, and we know not what bard, coeval with or anterior to Homer, may have existed here. The waves of stormy times have passed over Ireland, and may have washed away the work of the historian, and more exalted effusions of the poet ! We cannot pierce into that abyss of dark waters, and discern the luminous pages of long—long-departed genius ! We must bow submissive to the Creator's will, and submit to our ignorance in common with other countries; which, also, have had their periods of glory, and darkness, in awful vicissitude !

The solution I attempt to give of Ireland's deficiency in the epic walk of poetry, may be nullified by the production from some hidden store of an Irish epic ; but I imagine Mr. Macpherson, long ago, took the best parts of their beautiful, but irregular poems, from the Irish, and that no complete epic has been ever formed among them.

On taking leave of Mr. Barret, some young gentlemen, on a visit at Mr. Nash's, proposed an excursion to Doonamoe, a rocky promontory, washed by the Atlantic waves, to see some curious old fortifications there. As we wished to see more of Erris, we willingly consented to do this, and accept of Mr. Nash's hospitable invitation to remain another day at his house. We set forward through a new part of Erris.

As we got some miles towards Erris-head, we found still better farming than we had seen ; the people comfortable and well-dressed, and inhabiting commodious houses. In some we saw querns or small stone hand-mills, of great antiquity, which they still use. Several hamlets, with considerable numbers of houses, were seen in our walk—the adjoining land let in common. Fever has made fatal ravage among them ! In one cottage the father, two sons, a son-in-law, and daughter, were swept away within one week. A very young girl remained. As they are very far distant from any town, apothecary, or dispensary, (at least forty miles), the situation of these good people will be most melancholy, if fever spreads entirely among them. In ordinary cases, they can have their ancient remedies, and the powerful hand of nature for relief ; but in this contagious malady, the fever-hospital, and prompt application of medicine, can only prevent death and depopulation. Figure to your mind, my dear L., a whole hamlet

attacked by this plague—no medical aid near, or hospital ! What must follow but a scene of horror too painful to dwell on ! Yet such may be the state of many districts of Ireland this moment. Can any measures be too strong—any expence too great to remedy it? Road-making may assist tenants, and relieve the distressed estates of many ; but, in the mean time, the dead and dying ; may be in every cottage, and the vital springs of agriculture be out off!

As we passed on, we observed how much corn they grew everywhere in Erris. It is very fertile, and Irish industry is unceasing, in its toils, where it has the least glimmer of independence. Land is let at two guineas, or forty shillings, for somewhat more than an acre, which is much too high.

We perceive the general dress of the men to be light-blue home-made cloth, in the coat and waistcoat, and the other parts of the dress decent and good. The clumsy frize great-coat is little used among them. The women wear red-cloaks, neat gowns of stuff or cotton, and many have laced mob-caps, which are becoming and tasteful. The duty-work demanded by landlords is everywhere found a great grievance.

Our walk, this day, proved very interesting.

The shores of Errishead are sublimely grand! Great gulphs, and perpendicular precipices of dark massy rock, here meet the fury of the Atlantic wave, which, in winter-storms, becomes tremendous, casting great stones and flags on the grass above, and tearing and raking the whole strand with its mighty surge ! Doonamoe point presents to the curious the spectacle of a very old and massy wall drawn across it, with an entrance left, and a kind of large guard-house within on one side. In front stone-stakes, of great height and size, had been driven in, in manner of the chevaux-de-frize. The nature or cause of this antique fortification is unknown to all the people of Erris. Conjecture, the antiquarian's ally and friend, can alone pronounce. To us, who do not forget our visit to the memorable Bag and Bun, on the eastern coast of Ireland, this seemed something of a similar entrenchment as there, but far more ancient, and much stronger. It may have been formed by the Danes in their early invasions, and exhibits the strong kind of building they used ; or, amongst the many more distant invasions, may have proved a temporary shelter against the fury of the disturbed inhabitants. Near it may have been performed actions worthy Greece or Troy. On the level plains adjoining, many battles may have been fought, and Baldurrock, or some other ancient city, may have sustained many an assault from the foe entrenched here. Warlike heroes have doubtless fallen in contests worthy of record ; but the green turf covers them ; their names and deeds are lost in the gloom of the past ; no bard sung them, or his verses are lost ; the same grave entombs all, and the swelling Atlantic, in his wintry-rage, washes the forgotten spot where their bones moulder to dust !

The wonders of these shores would require days and weeks, not hours, to explore ! Caves running under the ground, into which the sea enters, and marine grottos, with lofty arches, are common here. The whole forms a scenery bold and awful beyond conception ! Nature seems to have used all Her powers to fortify the land against the mighty invader in the winter's tempest; but woe betide the hapless vessel which, driven here in the dire December night, strikes on the foam-clad shore ! No chance of escape remains !

The owner of great part of the lands at Doonamoe, a gentleman farmer of very great intelligence and most obliging manners, accompanied us in our wanderings over these wild parts, and facilitated every research with a promptitude and activity that made us acquainted with a great deal in a short time. He offered us every hospitality, and did not omit to entreat us to return in another summer, and partake of all his house and farms afforded. How grateful this

generous, unsolicited kindness, instead of the haughty coldness of the great, which so often shuts the door on the traveller and stranger, in more frequented parts of the world ! Such, indeed, is the hospitality and rural virtue we' have seen in Achill, Ballycroy, and Erris, that I may well apply to them the bard's beautiful picture of another country :—

“ Turn we to survey
Where rougher climes a nobler race display ;
Where the bleak Swiss their stormy mansion tread.
And force a churlish soil, for scanty bread ?
Yet still, e'en here, content can spread a chano.
Redress the clime, and all its rage disarm;
Tho' poor the peasant's hut, his feast tho' small.
He sees his little lot, the lot of all.
Cheerful at morn, he wakes from short repose.
Breathes the keen air, and carols as he goes ;
about sped,
He sits him down, the monarch of his shed.
Smiles by his cheerful fire, and round surveys
His children's looks, that brighten in the blaze ;
While his lov'd partner, boastful of her hoard.
Displays her cleanly platter on the board ;
And haply, too, some pilgrim, thither led.
With many a tale repays the nightly bed !

We returned to Mr. Nash's to dinner, and having met one of his tenants on our walk, a young roan of some genius, and fond of writing, had requested him to bring to us in the evening some of his productions. I shall, perhaps, surprize you when I tell you what they were.—Two dramatic works ;—one a tragedy, and the other a comic opera ! We bestowed part of the evening on their perusal, and found them very far from contemptible, though unfit for the stage. Their rustic author had heated his mind by reading dramatic works, such as he could lay his hands on, and, without sufficient education, had made the not ignoble attempt to form some himself. Proceeding from such a person, so circumstanced, they had peculiar merit. The sanguine author expected fame and profit from them, and the painful task fell on me to disappoint his hopes, by sending him a note the following morning, encouraging him to farther and better exertions.

On the third day we bid farewell to Mr. Nash, to whose hospitality and unceasing politeness we owed so much ;— to the Rev. Mr. Dixon, whose liberal mind shone forth in the loneliness of Erris ;— and to the venerable Bard, whose poetry and conversation sparkling in his rural cottage, would do honour to princely mansions.

We turned our steps from this country with many lively emotions, and passing the neck of the Mullet, which joins the singular peninsula we had left to the other parts of Erris, we examined a projected plan for a canal, connecting Broadhaven and Blackroda-bays. Ireland must become more of a manufacturing country, and a happier agricultural one, before such extensive works are required. The population must be better adjusted before capital to any great extent will be invested in either branch of national Wealth. The making very great public works in Ireland, constituted as it is now, is but sporting with public misery.

In our walks, we have seen canals, roads, quays, fortifications, and great buildings, little wanted or used,—the sad contrast to a nation's poverty, and an evidence of great superfluous expence.

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Two young gentlemen accompanied us from Mr. N.’s ; and one of them had the goodness to join me in a very pleasing excursion through the wild mountains of Erris, to Mr. Conway’s. We passed Lake Keremore, a fine piece of water, and made our way by a small mountain-road, where

“ Wilds, immeasurably spread,
Seem’d lengthening as we went ;”

and where the most sublime scenery, without beholding a human being for miles, environed us. We saw many, many thousands of acres quite waste, which human industry, rightly encouraged, would soon convert into tolerable land and smiling farms. In like manner, around Newport, and in the barony of Tyrawley, great quantities of land of this description invite the peasant’s toil. Thus Ireland can scarcely be said to be too populous till all these extended grounds be cultivated. Though very populous indeed, how far does it fall short of Holland or of China? In Connaught, the population only requires to be well spread, and liberally treated by landlords, to make it the happiest part of Ireland. Many other portions of the island are similarly situated, but are less civilized and harmonious.

Passing through many a mountain-glen and dell we concluded our long and fatiguing tour through these grand scenes, by entering a valley of great length. A few cottages were sprinkled here and there, and a river of much beauty ran through it. The people spoke nothing but Irish ; and my friend, in whom was combined the appellations of guide, companion, and interpreter, found some difficulty in exploring our way. The urbanity of the cottagers was, however, great, and we often experienced the benefit of a guide in some young man, or lad, running a quarter of a mile with us, along-side my friend’s poney, which he brought from Carne with him.

In this late excursion to Erris, we have heard the song resound sweetly from the cheerful peasant, bringing corn on the horse’s back, as they do, from the fields, and were much charmed with the strains of music in the pure Irish taste, thus every where enlivening the rural scene ; but this day our excursion was too lonely to meet it, and the cottages, few as they were, bespoke great poverty; their inhabitants tended a few cows and sheep in silence, or partook of an humble meal within-doors. Such solitude, equally barren of the crimes, the virtues, or the improvements of society, must always powerfully strike the mind in a society like that of Ireland, where, in other parts, too little room causes so much flagrant disorder ; as here, too much presents a mere desert to the view.

In this extended vale was good land, and charming situations for cottages and farms. There was no small road,—no village—scarcely the human face divine, except in the cots of the poor herds we had seen. Instead of £20,000 expended on a magnificent road, or other public work in this county or that, half the sum would make many vallies, such as this, hum with human labour and industry. Excessive population in one place might be relieved by enlivening a desert in another ; and by a simple operation of this sort (combined with judicious and well-planned emigration), might the whole island be saved from much of its misery,—government from perpetual care and expence,—our excellent judges from constant torture to their feelings—and the calendar of crimes return to a common and ordinary size, and statesmen discover a cheap way of maintaining public peace in Ireland.

In viewing such silent wastes, one cannot avoid, also, regretting the nakedness of their scenery, from the want of trees. The ancient laws of Ireland adverted to woods, with peculiar care, and gave us the idea of this charming country once beautifully clothed by them. I con-

fess, my dear L., I think some of the cares of a cabinet—some of the benevolence of a prince—might be happily applied to renovating, adorning, and strengthening Ireland— one of the noblest portions of the British empire—instead of attending too anxiously to the minutiae of foreign states.

The circumstance of the expence Ireland causes, is alone a strong reason for taking some new ground to avoid it. If her people be made happier, they will not be turbulent ;—if not turbulent, they will be less expensive ;—and if less expensive, they truly become the strength instead of the weakness of a state. Kings of England, from the days of Edward the First and Thirds began to complain and feel how burthensome Ireland was ! They too much omitted to search into the cause.

I pencilled these reflections in this “ valley of solitude,” as my companion advanced before me ; but, rejoining him, we hastened, and as our way lay through boggy and wet grounds, we began to find it very troublesome. Discovering, through the means of an obliging guide, a way along the seashore, it became better. There great quantities of the mucilaginous sea-moss lay unused ; and the bounty of Heaven was cast on the land without human beings to use it ! Is it possible to avoid recurring to reflections, with such objects presenting themselves ?

We arrived very late at Duna-castle, and found a hearty welcome from Mr. and Mrs. Conway, and their nephew, the Rev. Mr. Conway. An exceedingly good dinner, and most hospitable entertainment, prolonged the evening till late. The remainder of our party had reached Mr. Conway’s long before us. As Mrs. Conway gave us excellent beds, and the finest linen, we soon lost in repose the fatigues of this day. The following morning, after breakfast, we took a final leave of our worthy hosts. The thanks we offered were faint expressions of our gratitude for their warm and unaffected exercise of hospitality. Our walk, on departing from Duna-castle, was made quite through the country. We pursued our way alternately through bogs and cultivated ground. We had left Erris, and were to make our day’s journey through Ballycroy and Borrishool, to the house of Mr. M’Loughlin, a gentleman residing within six miles of Newport. The day was charming, and we proceeded for some time near the sea. Achill, with its admirably picturesque mountains and shores, highly adorned the picture ; and the smiling works of harvest still went on in the country we passed through. Erris we had left far behind ; and Ballycroy, with its varied and romantic scenery, intervened between. We learnt that rents, in general, were oppressive beyond endurance in these parts; and sighed, as we went on, to think that such misery must endure till landlords slowly yield to the voice of reason, and the cries of the people !

As we stopped to enquire our way, at a hut of very small dimensions and built of turf on the side of a bog, which contained a man, his wife, and four fine children, we were told his short story. “ Simple are the annals of the poor ;” and, oh ! my dear L., in those of one poor family how many annals of thousands of families may be comprized ! The simplicity of the history is then lost in the magnitude of the wretchedness it may represent. The account this poor fellow gave, was, that he had a very good farm till last year,—the high rents had ruined him ;— his things were all sold by auction ;—and he was now existing oh the bog-side, not knowing well what to do, and unable to procure daily labour ! He was a young man of very intelligent countenance, and well formed. As we said we wished the poor people to be relieved, and, perhaps, would endeavour to do something to ameliorate their present misery, he listened and looked,—his countenance glowed,— his eyes filled with tears,— he cast down the shoes and stockings he held,—and instead of pointing out our way, ran on before us, to be himself our guide and guardian. He brought us to a small inlet of the sea, as our shortest way, and carried each of us across, the water reaching to his knees. For this service he refused money. All was the impulse and the act of a few moments.

If gratitude was thus easily made to burn in one poor peasant's breast, my dear L., how might it be lighted up in those of millions ! A similar character reigns among the Irish, particularly the people of Connaught. Their sensibility is extraordinary. It has been to them the source of much misery and little joy . England has never for centuries understood them ; and the severe hand of the unfeeling elder brother has lain heavily on their bowed necks. Who could restrain the tear at perceiving this wretchedness—these feelings,—this gratitude in the poor peasant at the bog-side ?—in the fellow-creature and man ?—This unhappy being had lost his paternal farm,—his fields, meadows, and well-known streams !

On our return through Ballycroy and Borrishool, we met many proofs of the distress of the people, and of the goodness of their hearts. They always guided us with cheerfulness through the best paths ; and but for their friendliness, we should scarcely have accomplished our attempt of making a short way, as we intended.

The want of a market-town in some convenient part of Ballycroy is very obvious to the pedestrian. It is required for Achill, and all the country opposite to that island. Nor can there be a doubt but that government would give all possible encouragement to one there, and another in Erris. They would be public benefits, and greatly animate the agriculturists and manufacturers. But it is the duty of landlords to do their parts in such undertakings.

For my part, my dear L., I would rather see such towns rising up in modest usefulness, to benefit the population of this Hebrides of the west of Ireland, than hear of distant victories, or acquisition of new territories for the empire. Strength at home gives power abroad. In like manner are small market-towns wanting in the west and south of Galway. The ravages of fever more strongly impress on the mind of the pedestrian the necessity of such things. As we approached the barony of Borrishool, we heard melancholy tidings of it, and we no longer ventured to enter the cottages. Nothing, however, could be more noble than some of the mountain-scenes this day. A long arm of the sea, running far into the interior, assumed the semblance of a fine lake, encompassed by mountains. Unfortunately, they wanted wood, but wanted that alone, to make their grandeur and beauty surprizingly great ; I have scarcely seen any thing finer.

As we came within sight of Mr. M'Loughlin's house, by ascending the mountain-road, we obtained a charming view of Clew-bay, on the shore of which it is situated. The declining sun mildly gilded the lofty mountains we had passed through, and the sea behind and before us glowed with his evening-rays ! We sat down on a hillock, to enjoy the sublime landscape around us, when two old men, mountaineers and peasants, approached and joined us. To our enquiries as to fever, they answered, that—*it was everywhere*,—spreading their hands ! Of rents they spoke with despair ; and, on being asked, if generally lowering them would relieve the country ? they rose up with enthusiasm, as if catching the glimpse of hope ; and, as they departed, their voices blessing those who would contribute to it, sounded loud and shrill in the evening breeze. The sound still vibrates on my ears ! It was an in-voluntary burst of nature,—unsophisticated and simple,—and agonized by malady, oppression, and poverty !

Mr. M'Loughlin having heard of our approach, received us with great politeness and hospitality. An excellent dinner and wine, the conversation of a most pleasing family, and tranquil rest in the good beds one always meets in Connaught, made us quite forget the labours of a toilsome walk of sixteen or seventeen miles. The next morning the charming views of Clew-bay saluted our eyes.

Mr. M'Loughlin's house is beautifully situated on the water-edge, and commands a fine prospect. This worthy gentleman made our stay in every way agreeable, and pressed us to remain some days. His fortune, which is handsome, is spent in the country, and he fulfils in every respect the duty of a true country gentleman, by protecting and encouraging his tenantry. We left his house with much regret. Such, my dear L., is the genuine hospitality of these parts, and such is the social intercourse of the traveller and stranger with the worthy inhabitants.

On proceeding to Newport, we passed a castle of the celebrated warrior and heroine Granvile. It stands at the head of a small bay. This female's memory lives in the tradition of the country, not for her amours only, but as a leader of fleets, and besieger of castles. An unfinished house of a Mr. Arbuthnot, an English gentleman, (I believe father, or near relative, to the highly-respectable secretary to the treasury,) is beautifully situated near this castle. He is said to have liked the country, and chose this spot ; but, from reasons unknown, never finished the house. On the ninth day of our excursion, we reached Newport. The very remote and truly-interesting portion of the west of Ireland we have seen, has afforded us pleasure intermixed with pain. The mind revolts at beholding an intelligent and industrious people loaded by any remnants of a feudal or oppressive system ; but the great civilization, in the true sense of the word, existing there, imparts the rapturous conviction that Ireland has not needed anti-social plans, or cruel laws, to tranquillize her ! In Erris, one of the most distant points from the seat of English government (happily and probably long exempt from the tyranny of Irish or English despots), a mild and polished people exist to this day.

Neither the establishment of circuits and the terrors of law, nor the sword of power, or the planting of English, have caused this pleasing phenomenon. Education and religion have time immemorial, flourished in these sequestered scenes, and their fruits have been such as I have endeavoured to give you some idea of.

Worthy people! how should I rejoice if it were possible, by any effort, to ameliorate your still depressed situation ! Who could forget so much genuine hospitality !—the cheerful guide who ran along the vale or mountain-side—the ready and intelligent converse—the wish to oblige, without the thirst for money, or the desire to pry ! May that day be not far distant when convenient towns shall arise, manufacture spread, malady be not dreaded, as now, from want of aid, and every farmer, looking round, see that each one's lot was “ the lot of all !”

As I conclude this narrative, I cannot omit mentioning to you a singular circumstance. A very old man was pointed out to me at Newport, who seemed a claimant to the second sight, so often met with in Scotland, but never, within my knowledge in Ireland.

This venerable man was eighty years of age, and stated, that forty years ago he was seized at night with an unaccountable and heavy melancholy, and saw revealed to him then, the miserable scenes of human suffering which now exist in Ireland. Every thing, he said, was plainly set before his eyes, and the impression was so lively, that his face became bathed with tears he could not restrain. He had never been used to low spirits before, or since ; and, on his wife enquiring what caused such dreadful grief, he repressed her curiosity, and concealed what he had seen. It was not any dream, as he was perfectly awake, as was his wife, who always recollected the circumstance of his mysterious sorrow, though she did. not know the cause. He was a person of some reading and education, and of a very strong and clear mind ; spoke on history and past events with precision and calmness, and appeared to have nothing of the enthusiast about him. The vision he had presented to his eyes was not of wars, but of dreadful domestic calamities, as he stated, and the fore-knowledge he then had, had ever since dwelt in his memory ! This good old man confined himself to the statement of the fact.

I shall in like manner, my dear L., leave the matter so, adding that such things are, at least, extraordinary.

Before I close this letter I wish to answer your enquiries as to the Irish harp and manuscript poetry. We have not met, in our western tour, with the harp in any place ; but an Irish harper, named O'Donnel, was very lately in this town. His playing was not remarkable ; The harp is dropping into oblivion, and I am sorry for it

Of Irish manuscripts we have heard little. Mr. Barret has a few, and shewed me some beautiful specimens of poems, written in the Irish phraseology. But in our pedestrian toils, it has been quite impossible to make all the researches we might have wished of this kind.

In Cork the Catholic bishop, who is a very excellent and exalted character, is forming a large collection of Irish manuscripts, and spares no expence in doing so. In other collections many may be found ; but good translations of the best, in a pleasing and free style, are wanting. The Rev. Mr. Conway, of Ballycroy, has promised to translate and send me some Irish poems in his possession, which you may like to see, and which I shall forward to you when they arrive. There is certainly a love of literature in Connaught ; and, during our stay in Newport, we have had many choice books lent to us. I see no reason why Irish and English literature should not be both cultivated in Ireland. All would tend to improvement of mind. Having laid down my pen to take leave of Sir Neal O'Donnel, and to make the few arrangements a pedestrian requires, I have agreed to dine with the family of this small inn, and to depart in the evening. I now, therefore, bid you farewell, &c.

Walks through Ireland in the years 1812,1814, and 1817 : described in a series of letters to an English gentleman (1819)

Author : Trotter, John Bernard, 1775-1818

Subject : Trotter, John Bernard, 1775-1818

Publisher : London : Sir R. Phillips and co

Year : 1819

Language : English

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Book from the collections of : New York Public Library

Collection : americana

Source : Internet archive

<http://www.archive.org/details/walksthroughire00trotgoog>

Edited and uploaded to www.augty.org

December 20 2010