

Adventure Tourist 1882

The Adventures of A Tourist in Ireland

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1882

The Act of Edward III.—The No Rent Manifesto.

NEXT morning I breakfasted with a lady who told me that at her father's death the rent of their land had been greatly raised, and her mother had been told that she must sign the new lease or leave her home. She would not mention names, for fear of getting her family into trouble for the crime of complaining ; but she gave me several facts about landlordism which I am sorry to be obliged to suppress, since she forbade me to get the details printed, ' as the guilty parties would know that they were meant.'

I called on another priest, who repeated the old story, and said that the English could never become really acquainted with the facts of the Irish Land Question, and asked naïvely why we refused to let them have Home Rule, if only to save the expense of taking all bills about purely local matters across the Irish sea to London. He said that the landlords had tried to put a stop to the races to pay the people out for stopping the hunting, and that they made it a point of honour not to reduce rents—so much so that one landlord who had granted reductions was prevented from becoming a magistrate in consequence ; but he again refused to mention any names. At the same time I heard from another quarter that the landlords were not so bad as the agents, and that in one case at least, when the tenant had insisted on obtaining an interview with his landlord, a reduction of rent which the agent had flatly refused was granted at once.

From Gort I drove to Corofin, to meet there the ' long cars' which run between Ennis and Lisdoonvarna, and on the way I talked to the driver, and tried to elicit his opinion about the outrages at Loughrea. He declared that, for his own part, he would rather be driven out of the country and emigrate to America than take away a man's life ; but yet in the case of a man like Blake, who persisted in eviction and rack-renting in spite of repeated warnings, all he could say was that he was no loss to anybody, and that his death served him right. At Corofin I joined the cars from Ennis, and talked to a man who told me of the case of a baronet who had ruined himself in England with horse-racing, and then came over to his property in Ireland, and raised all his rents twenty per cent., giving the tenants their choice between eviction and the payment of a full year's rent in advance. This, however, occurred twenty years ago, when there was no agitation in the country, and no organisation to assist the tenants in a struggle with their landlord, so they were obliged to submit to whatever he chose to demand.

Before we arrived at our destination we came to a steep hill, which the over-driven horses stoutly refused to ascend, so the ladies and an elderly priest, who had as yet maintained his position in the car, were obliged to dismount. I talked to this reverend gentleman as he came panting up the incline, and he gave it as his firm conviction that Ireland would be perfectly loyal if her just grievances were removed. On being further asked what he considered her just grievances to be, he replied generally that there would be no end to the trouble until the

Government bought out the landlords : and that there were an immense number of people whom the Land Act did not touch, such as the leaseholders, who were in great straits now after the bad seasons which had lately occurred.

On arriving at Lisdoonvarna I found that I had at last come to a place where strangers were not looked upon with suspicion, as it was crowded with groups of loungers and idle water-drinkers, who had come with the insane intention of imbibing its sulphurous springs, and the sensible one of seeing the cliffs in its neighbourhood. Such, at least, was my private opinion of the wisdom of their motives for visiting Lisdoonvarna, but I ought to have made allowance for difference of tastes. Passing by the Spa, with its smell of sulphur and its crowds of priests—for priests seem to find a special attraction in these ill-flavoured waters—I went about the village to see something of its inhabitants. I saw a tenant who had built a cottage on his little plot of ground, and instantly had his rent increased by 10*l.*, which he paid until the bad years came, and then fell into arrears. I talked to another tenant whose position was much more satisfactory, for he also had built his own cottage, but he had been lucky enough to obtain a promise that he should never be asked for more than the ground-rent, which was only 5*s.* a year. This seemed moderate enough, but he told me with immense glee that he should be expecting a reduction like every one else. I asked him whether ten per cent, would satisfy him, or if he should stand out for fifteen, but he only replied, ‘ Begorra, what-ever the rest get, I’ll be contented with,’ and I left him chuckling hugely at his own wit.

I then called on a suspect who had been treasurer of the Land League in this district, and had accordingly been locked up in Galway gaol for inciting to the non-payment of rent. He told me that he had at first been imprisoned under the Act of Edward III. for refusing to give bail, although four magistrates in the neighbourhood had signed a petition in his favour. He said that he did not at all approve of the nationalisation scheme, which he thought would undo the work of the last two years ; they had been working to establish peasant proprietors, and did not want to see the land in the hands of the State. As he was walking back with me to my hotel after ten o’clock, when it was very dark, I suggested to him that he was running some danger of another arrest under the Curfew clause of the Coercion Act ; but this he denied, saying that such a thing was impossible unless he was a great distance from his own home, and reasonably suspected of criminal intent. Thinking he must have a better acquaintance with the working of the Coercion Act than I could possess, I was glad to see that its administration was not quite so arbitrary as I had supposed ; but two days afterwards this illusion was dispelled, for I saw in the papers that he had been arrested the very next night, close to his own door, for taking a stroll in the air after his day’s business was done, that he had been ‘ locked up all night in a filthy cell,’ and then brought before a magistrate the next morning, who immediately ordered his discharge. That seems to be the way with Coercion Acts ; the Government proposes, but a petty police-constable disposes, and the most excellent intentions would be turned awry by his disposition.

The Act of Edward III., under which my acquaintance was first imprisoned, deserves the tribute of a slight digression from my tour. When the Government declared that they meant to rely upon the ordinary law, it was not generally known that they included in this term a, statute which had been enacted in Norman-French in the reign of Edward III., but never been enforced since the time of that lamented king, and consequently never translated from its original language. However, this statute, having been dug out by an antiquarian, and proving eminently suitable to the spirit of modern government (at least in Ireland), was forthwith translated from its quaint old Norman-French into the ordinary language, that it might prove its right to be described as ordinary law. Its most useful point was the fact that it did not require strict evidence, which all other ‘ ordinary law’ has a tiresome habit of demanding, but enacted that, if a man was taken up on general principles, and the police could manage to impress the mind of a magistrate with the belief that he was a suspicious character, that

magistrate might insist on his giving bail, or commit him to prison until he could produce it. An 'ordinary law' of such an extraordinary character was simply a godsend to an active police; its discovery was hailed with joy, and its provisions widely enforced. Its victims were generally so indignant at its application that they refused on principle to give any bail whatever, and according were locked up for an indefinite time.^{xv} What could be more successful in the eyes of the police? All this was done under the 'ordinary law.'

There was indeed another provision in this same providential statute, which the police unaccountably neglected to enforce. This would have given them power to arrest every labourer who overpassed the boundaries of his native county to stray into a neighbouring one; to brand him in the forehead with the letter F, and to return him to his own county a sadder and a wiser man. Their neglect of this most salutary provision seems simply unaccountable. Aliens on outrage bent would have been instantly checked in their career and returned to their homes, and the peculiar charm of branding with the letter F under the rule of Mr. Forster would have disarmed all hostile criticism. The only explanation of its non-employment appears to be that the aspect of so many faces with this new 'mark of the beast' stamped well into their foreheads might have contributed not a little to increase that unaccountable unpopularity under which Mr. Forster laboured with the people of Ireland.

From Lisdoonvarna I drove to Milltown passing on my way the famous cliffs of Moher, which descend 700 feet sheer into the sea. The day was rainy and misty, and there was no distant view, sometimes indeed no view at all, but the glimpses through the clouds were wonderfully grand, and far surpassed anything of the kind I had seen in Cornwall. Thousands of gulls were perching in crannies of the cliff or flying between me and the sea below; and, as the fitful gusts of wind opened rifts in the curtain of cloud, I saw beneath me the seething waves in everlasting battle with the jagged rocks that stood out boldly above them, defying them to do their worst. The drive continued all along the coast, leaving the cliffs behind and passing through the village of Lehinch, at which place we stopped to feed the horse. The people of Lehinch told me that their landlords were good, and consequently everything was quiet there. At Milltown, on the contrary, there has been much agitation, and about twenty of the inhabitants have been taken up as suspects, for almost the whole place is owned by one landlady, who refused to grant any reductions in the bad years, and, as the people had leases, they could not appeal to the Land Court. One of this lady's tenants declared to me with emphatic solemnity, 'She's the greatest divil, glory be to God, that has ever come into the world.' This form of interpolated doxology puzzled me a good deal. I thought at first that the man meant to give glory to God for not having yet created a worse specimen; but this interpretation is perhaps too far-fetched, and I am inclined to think that it was merely intended to add weight to the assertion, and give it something of the character of an unimpeachable affidavit.

I wanted to drive on in the evening to Kilkee, but was told there was no car to be had in the town; though I afterwards ascertained that there was one available, but that its owner had been boycotted for driving the police, and consequently had no other customers. He seemed however to be doing a pretty good business, as the police in that neighbourhood have plenty to do, and require a good deal of driving. Not being able to proceed, I made the best of it by seeing whatever I could at Milltown. The magistrates happened to be holding a sessions in the place, and were busily employed in fining several evicted tenants, who had had the audacity to dig up some of the potatoes which they had planted themselves before they were evicted. After watching the proceedings for some time, and finding them rather monotonous, I went down towards the shore to see some evicted people, who had been supplied with Land League huts. On the way I talked to a man who had applied to the Land Court and had his rent reduced from 17*l.* to 10*l.* by the Commissioners. He said, he had had a long family, but

the Almighty had taken all but three ; and on being asked what was the immediate cause of their death, he replied that it was ‘ a decline, from having nothing but praties to eat.’

Finding two Land League huts near the shore, I went into one of them, and was told by a woman that her husband was now working as a labourer, and that when they were turned out of their home four of her children had caught typhoid fever, but, thanks be to the Almighty, they had been cured by a good doctor, though she had been obliged to send them to the work-house. The other hut was empty, but next morning the man whose family had occupied it, having heard that I had been there, came up to see me at the hotel, and gave me an account of his troubles. I was very sorry for his case, and I am bound to say that all his sufferings seemed directly due to the No Rent manifesto, which in some instances has caused a great deal of harm. If the entire body of Irish tenants had agreed to stand by one another, and adhere to its principle, it is impossible to imagine how the landlords could have met it ; but its authors seem to have counted too far on their influence with the people, the majority of whom were not in harmony with such an extreme measure, and the result has been that it has caused a great deal of suffering, and they now acknowledge it to have been a mistake. This man told me that he had been evicted by his landlady, and that he had been quite able to pay his rent, but had refused on principle, so long as the suspects were detained ; saying that there were better men than himself in prison, and why should he be a coward and be afraid of going there too ? So he was turned out with his wife and children, and then he was arrested on the usual charge, and while he was in gaol his wife had a baby and also caught typhoid fever. Upon this his father came forward and paid the rent without his knowledge, so they returned to their old home and he was released from prison ; but, when he came out, his wife died, and he assured me that not even in the town of London could there be found a better or an honest woman ; and that, when she died, the priest had said as much to the people in a sermon he preached about her from the altar. He is now living in his old house, but his land has no crops on it, his children are in the hospital, and his wife is dead. All this, as far as I could see, was owing to the ill-judged issue of the No Rent manifesto. His landlady has granted reductions in other cases, but in his she exacted every penny of the rent and costs, because he had begun the stand.

I afterwards called on the priest, who corroborated these statements, and said it was a very sad case, and that he had preached a sermon condemning the No Rent circular as soon as it was issued. He declared that the agents preferred to have the tenants slightly in arrears, as it gave the landlord an extra pull over them ; for whenever any of the agent’s little army of bailiffs and rangers and multifarious stewards reported to him that a man had taken drift-wood, or brushwood, or heather, or turf from the estate, he would come suddenly down on him for the rent that was owing, when he would probably not have it ready, and so might be summarily evicted. While I was talking to the priest, the parson came in to ask him to go out shooting with him ; for in this parish there are, for a wonder, some Protestants even among the poor, and priest and parson live side by side on terms of excellent friendship. On parting with the priest, I drove away to Kilkee, hoping to get on to Killarney on the next day.

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Lord Lansdowne’s Estate—Rearrest At An Eviction.

IN the last chapter I started from Milltown to Kilkee. Talking to my driver on the way I learned that he had been taken up some time ago on the charge of rioting at an eviction, and after being remanded on several occasions had been tried and acquitted ; and finally, as he was leaving the gaol, was rearrested as a suspect, and shut up for six months in Kilmainham. He showed me a copy of the warrant under which he was taken, with the usual charge of inciting to the non-payment of rent. While we were driving along, a man in a donkey-cart,

thirsting for information, drove furiously after us, and entreated me to tell him if it was true that Mr. Gray had been imprisoned and fined. I told him it was, and he exclaimed : ‘ That Lawson is a divil. The money will not matter to Gray, but the divil will carry away Lawson by-and-bye before long as he did Keogh.’ Another man. remarked ‘ If prayers can do Mr. Gray any good, he has them from the whole country in his behalf.’

Arriving at Kilkee I found myself at a fashionable seaside resort, with beautiful cliff scenery stretching away on each side of it, closely resembling the Cornish coast. An eviction had just taken place here, and I had a talk with the late tenant, who was very eager to present me with an exact statement of his circumstances. I gave him my address at Killarney, and soon afterwards received a letter, which reminded me so forcibly of Mr. Micawber’s epistolary efforts that I will reproduce its most eloquent portions. He began by saying that he would lay the matter before me ‘ in globo,’ with a true and authentic account of the details. These details I will omit, giving only the end of the letter verbatim. It concludes as follows : ‘ Alas ! it was from the moment I came here that the hardships and misery of a respectable career began. In 1876 I came here and did well, but in two years after a disease set in, and I lost all my cattle, viz. 17 milch cows and younger beasts, 26 in all, exclusive of milch cows. I always represented my losses to the landlord, but to no avail ; he treated me with the most abject coolness, the “ pound of flesh” should come forth and no abatement. Last winter all my hay was blown away with the storm, and God knows the sale of it did not realise the cutting and saving. This year I offered him one year’s rent out of the two and a half years’ that was due, and in reply to my letter the sheriff came, threw me on the world, left me compassionate and homeless in the wayside by the dreary shores of the Atlantic, with the bitter breeze of a hard northerly wind blown upon me, to shelter myself near the shores of Kilkee, thrown on the world ; and were it not for the kindness of a few neighbours to-day, the workhouse would be my doom.’

From Kilkee I went to Kilrush, thence by steamer up the Shannon to Tarbert, where I took a car to Listowel, and was told by my driver that a few years ago he had had the honour of driving ‘ Mr. Tennyson, the poet, and his sons.’ At Listowel I had to wait some hours for a train, so went and watched the work of one of the numerous weavers who may be found in the West of Ireland, manufacturing frieze from the wool which the peasants spin. In the marketplace I was stopped by a suspicious policeman, who made me give him full particulars of my journey, and then pronounced that Englishmen generally travelled by twos and by threes, and that my singleness was very suspicious. At this I could not help laughing, and he began to see that I was not a very dangerous character, and that he might be only making a fool of himself if he arrested me ; so on my assuring him that I had been travelling by twos until lately he said that he would accept my statement, and went off to report the interview.

I arrived at Killarney, where an English tourist this year seems to be a *rara avis*, and found the hotels almost empty and their keepers loud in complaints. I went up Mangerton, and through the Gap of Dunloe, but the beautiful scenery of the Lakes of Killarney is one of the few things in Ireland with which the English are generally acquainted, so I will not waste time in describing it. I saw several places on Lord Kenmare’s estate from which the inhabitants had been evicted, the houses pulled down, and their farms turned into plantations or grazing land. Some of the people had been readmitted as caretakers, paying a penny a week, and being liable to be turned out again at a week’s notice. At one place which I drove past I found that a bailiff had been shot the very night before. He had taken land from which the tenant had been evicted, and was also obnoxious to the people as a server of writs. He was said to have invited the tenants on one occasion when he was ill to come and arrange a settlement with him, and when they presented themselves at his bedside to have served them with writs instead ; but this was probably a calumny upon him. My driver’s only comment upon his murder was that he would now serve no more writs.

From Killarney I drove to Kenmare, and there visited the convent where the celebrated Nun of Kenmare used to reside ; after which I called on Mr. Trench, J. P., Lord Lansdowne's agent, to whom I had an introduction. He had had no trouble with any of the tenants on a very large property, and only two had applied to the Land Court in the whole estate. He said that in 1875 some of the rents were high, but that when bad times came he reduced them at once. It was by trying to keep rents always at high-water mark that the landlords had caused all the trouble. That very morning some tenants had applied to him for a reduction of rent, and on his asking them why they did not go into the Court they replied that they would rather leave it to him ; so he offered to have their land valued, to which they at once agreed. By not demanding more than a fair rent he has avoided arrears, and he maintained that the Arrears Act was a great boon to the landlords, who otherwise had no chance of getting in their bad debts. I asked why in that case the Lords had opposed it, and he said because they ought to be drowned, there was no other reason except party purposes. It was a very good settlement both for landlord and tenant, and as to the difficulty of ascertaining whether the tenant could pay his arrears himself or not, he said they would all swear they could not pay : but what did it matter ? They were used to perjury, and besides, to use an Irish expression, the perjury would nearly always be true, for there were hardly any cases where tenants who were able to pay owed several years' rent. Refusing to pay on principle was a new thing, and the Act did not affect those who owed less than two years. He blamed severely those landlords who merely collect their rents and ignore their own responsibility to the tenants, saying that on this estate the people were always supplied with materials for improving their houses, and encouraged to do so without the fear of a sudden rent-raising as a consequence of the improvement. In his opinion rents will never be raised again since the establishment of the Land Court, and this he thought perfectly fair, since it is the tenant who improves the land and not the landlord. At the same time he advocated very severe measures of government, saying he would give the tenants good laws, fair rents, and the right to all their improvements ; and then if there was any disturbance and ' pegging at the police,' he would order them to fire on the people the instant the first stone was thrown at them. They were the representatives of the Queen, and no mercy should be shown to those who resisted their authority.

I drove more than twenty miles through Lord Lansdowne's estate, and talked to many of the tenants, but did not find any who had the least complaint against their landlord or his agent. They all seemed contented, and had very good houses and moderate rents, presenting the strongest possible contrast to the position of tenants on some of the neighbouring estates. The next day I saw Mr. Trench again, finding him in his grounds with a revolver, with which he wounded several trees in the distance, to show me his skill in its use. He told me that when the No Rent manifesto was issued three hundred of the tenants came in a body to tell him they would not pay. They were led by three men, whom he attacked and ridiculed in an extempore speech, with such success that the leaders slunk away, and every man of the three hundred paid his rent on the spot

He said that a strong hand was wanted on the reins of government, and a firmer and more equal administration of the laws, instancing as a specimen of unfairness his belief that if he were shot no one would be hung for it, but if he were to shoot a tenant he would swing for a certainty. He was convinced that his reputation as a good shot had been very useful to him since some of his strict rules had made him enemies. For instance, he would not allow subdivision of farms ; and his remedy for this, if it was done, was to turn both the parties to it out upon the road, as an example to the others ; but this summary method would be impossible under the Land Act, and he did not see how to prevent unlimited subdivision for the future. I asked him for a prophecy on the political prospect, and he replied that he looked forward to perpetual rows, which the granting of Home Rule would not appease but aggravate.

From Kenmare I drove on to Glengariff, passing through the property of Lord Bantry, and seeing some of the most miserable hovels I had yet met with—as bad as any in Connemara or even the wilder parts of the Isle of Skye. As a contrast to the habitations, the scenery of Glengariff Bay was as beautiful as anything in Ireland. Driving on from Glengariff to Bantry, I passed on the right a substantial farmhouse from which the family had been evicted, and on the left a sort of cupboard on the hillside, in which they now live. I went up to this cupboard, and talked to the woman who emerged from it. She told me that it was at present the home of herself, her husband, four children, and a sister-in-law, they themselves having built the large house which I saw on Lord Kenmare's property, and round which several policemen were lounging at the time. Their present residence was not more than twelve feet long and six wide. They used to pay 80*l.* a year for their farm, but a few years ago 30*l.* was suddenly added to the rent ; and as they refused to pay this, they were turned out, and now have to content themselves with a cupboard on the side of the road. I asked if I could help them in any way, but they said they did not want help ; what they wanted was their own house which they had built, and good laws to prevent the landlord taking it away from them.

From Bantry I went to Cork, and there took a ticket for Goold's Cross, the nearest station to Cashel ; but at Limerick Junction, seeing many armed police get out of the train and drive away into the country, I suspected an eviction, and left the train also, engaging the only available car at a fabulous price to drive me wherever the police had gone before. There was no difficulty in tracking them, as all the people we met on the way were eager to give information, though at one place I was loudly hooted by a party of women, who knew an eviction was coming off, and supposed that I was an agent or an ' emergency man.' Arriving at the scene of action, I found a large body of police drawn up in a field, and protecting an agent, who was arguing with a tenant who owed 42*l.* and could only produce 39*l.* asking to be given time for the rest. This the agent declined to do, and presently the sheriff and his men began to carry out the furniture—beginning with a number of bowls full of milk, which they arranged in a row in the yard outside, when at last the tenant managed to borrow the odd 3*l.* from his neighbours, and so satisfied the agent and stopped the eviction. A good many people had assembled, but there was no disturbance of any kind. However, the police began to get tired of idly watching the proceedings, and became jealous of the presence of an extra spectator whom they did not know and had not expected. So two of them suddenly marched up to me, and asked me the usual questions as to my residence and business in those parts. I answered them as well as I could, and showed my ticket for Goold's Cross ; but this only increased their suspicion ; for though, as to Rome, all roads may be said to lead to Goold's Cross, I had certainly taken a very roundabout way to that station. I explained that I had changed my plans on seeing the police, and only wished to shape my course by theirs ; but no explanations were of any avail, and, to the great interest of the lookers-on, I was arrested, and marched across the field to Mr. Meldon, a resident magistrate, who, fortunately for me, was present at the eviction. I was presented to him as a suspicious stranger with no fixed residence in Ireland or any ostensible business in my travels ; but my arrest did not last long, for, on ascertaining that I was the person who was arrested at Loughrea, the magistrate at once ordered the police to release me. Then they all marched away to another farm half a mile off, where the tenant owed four years' rent, of which the agent demanded one and the costs. He said he could pay the one year's rent, but not the costs ; and after some wrangling the sheriff proceeded to throw his bedding out into the mud. On seeing his pillows fall into the dirty yard, and hearing the lamentations of his wife, this tenant also contrived to satisfy the agent's demands, and the sheriff allowed the pillows to be carried in again. After this they went on to another farm, and I drove away to Tipperary.

Next day I resumed my interrupted journey to Goold's Cross, where I called on a priest to whom I had an introduction. I had a long talk with him, and he told me there had been many evictions in the neighbourhood. He had himself tried to effect a settlement between Lord

Hawarden's agent and his tenants, who had all made a stand for a reduction of their rents, and now agreed to have their land valued, but refused to pay the costs of the writs of ejectment. He had made an offer to the agent on behalf of the tenants, that they should pay the costs in all cases in which the valuer pronounced the old rent to be fair, but not if he declared it unfair. The agent agreed that this arrangement would be just, and referred the matter to the landlord, who refused to assent to the proposal. The tenants have all been evicted, and the farms are occupied by emergency men, who are guarded by police. The priest said that some of these tenants had just been sent to gaol, and bail refused, because they had saved some of their crops which are now going to ruin. He was very indignant with the idea that the Irish are idle, and said that the landlords confiscated all the results of their industry ; and after taking away all their worldly possessions, now try to take away their characters too. I went to see one of the farms, and found four policemen established in the kitchen, and the emergency men going about armed. It seems expensive work, for these men each get 1*l.* a week, and have nothing to do but to keep off trespassers, as they may not take the crops themselves, and will not let the former tenants do so.

From Goold's Cross I went to Dublin. So far I had not met with any annoyance on my tour except from the police, but in the next chapter I shall have to describe a very different experience.

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Bombarded In A Bedroom—The Police Strike.

IN the previous chapters I have described the annoyance I was caused by the police, and the hospitality I met with from the people ; but in this one I shall have to give an account of an adventure which might have terminated seriously for myself, and in which I was driven to desiderate the presence of the police ; though, as they were not there when I wanted them, I may be allowed still to retain my old opinion of their inefficiency in Ireland.

I had been given an introduction to Captain Dugmore of Broughall Castle, Frankford, in King's County, and I was anxious to see him, because I had heard of him as an English officer and Conservative who had not long ago superintended in his military capacity at many evictions, but had now retired from active service and taken up the cause of the people instead. This seemed to me as complete a conversion as that of St. Paul ; for whereas formerly the sheriffs, as it were, laid their garments at his feet, while employed in ejecting the people from their homes, and he and his soldiers were identified with the Government which had suppressed the Land League as an illegal association, he now preached those very doctrines, and had become a prominent advocate of that very League which he had once persecuted.

Wishing to make his acquaintance for these reasons, I took a ticket one evening for Tullamore, and thence drove to Frankford, arriving at that place too late at night to present myself at Broughall Castle. There are only two inns at Frankford, one of which was boycotted at the time, and as I knew nothing about the place and left the choice to my driver's discretion, he of course landed me at the other. This turned out to be a very mouldy-looking establishment ; but supposing that no better accommodation could be had I made the best of it, ordered a bedroom, and talked to several people about the state of the neighbourhood, the police, the Land League, Captain Dugmore, and other such burning questions. I was not aware that I was in a place where the police in general, and one active constable in particular, had made themselves specially obnoxious by numerous unwarrantable arrests, and that they were the reverse of scrupulous in their methods of obtaining information which they called reliable, or in acting on their own authority without any information at all. This action of theirs had led to a

state of things in which every man was afraid to trust his neighbour, and a stranger arriving suddenly in the place without credentials was liable to peculiar suspicion.

Consequently it was not long before my general inquisitiveness had caused the inhabitants to come to the conclusion that I was a detective, and as such deserved to be summarily ejected from the inn. In blissful ignorance I retired to my bedroom overhead, while a council of war was being held in the kitchen below, and the best way of dealing with me was decided on. Just before getting into bed I had looked for a key to my door, and found there was not even a bolt, much less a lock ; but as I had noticed that some of the visitors to the inn seemed doubtful characters, and for the first time since I had been in Ireland felt some anxiety for the safety of my purse, I planted a heavy piece of furniture against the door on the inside, and went to bed. Immediately afterwards, at about half past eleven, the handle was turned, and the door was violently pushed from without ; but the furniture held firm, and I heard some one outside remarking that he did not know there was a lock to the door. This sounded ominous, and I demanded from my bed to be told who was there. The individual on the wrong side of the door replied that this was his room, and he was coming to bed, and I must at once retire in his favour. Concluding that some one the worse for drink had mistaken the way to his bedroom, I politely informed him that he was under a delusion, and that if he would call the servant he would be shown his right quarters for the night. At the same time I pulled lustily at a rope that was suspended over my bed, thinking to ring the bell for the aforesaid servant, but without any other result than the sudden descent of the rope itself, along with a shower of dust dislodged by its fall. This was disappointing, but I again encouraged my unknown friend to call for the servant. This, however, he declined to do ; and, after another fruitless attempt to open the door, he modified his demands, and asked to be admitted at any rate for an instant that he might take away his things, if he was really to sleep in another room. Knowing there was nothing in the room which did not belong to me, I assured him that all his things had already been removed, and that I did not intend to admit him on any consideration whatever. Upon this he began to abuse me in no measured terms, and to make further efforts to force open the door, so that I was obliged to get up and hold it against him as best I could. I now heard the voice of the landlady entreating him from a distance to come away ; but for half an hour he continued his attack, and kept me in a ridiculous and somewhat chilly position, though happily on the right side of the door. Finding politeness of little avail, I tried what threats would do, and declared that if he did not depart I would come out and knock him down ; but it was lucky that I did not carry out this intention, as nothing would have pleased him better, for I discovered next morning that he had three men in reserve at the foot of the stairs, ready to throw me down them as soon as he should effect an entrance into my room. Luckily for my peace of mind I was not aware of this at the time, or my night's rest might have been disturbed by serious apprehensions for the safety of my neck, for the stairs were steep, and a descent head foremost would have had the reverse of a soothing effect. But the door held firm, and soon after twelve o'clock the attack ceased, my tormentor retired himself, and took the rest of his party of midnight marauders with him. Rejoiced to be rid of him, I went to bed again and had a very good night, not being disturbed again even by a dream.

Next morning I went up early to Broughall Castle, and presented my letter to Captain Dugmore, who very kindly asked me to stay, offering me a haunted room at the Castle for my next night's rest, an offer which I gladly accepted, not being so much afraid of ghosts as of drunkards. In the course of the day, however, he managed to ascertain for me that instead of a drunken freak it had been an organised attack, and that the word had been passed about among the people that I was to be considered a detective. He did his best to correct and contradict this impression, and with such success that the man who had struggled with my door himself came and apologised to me for his conduct, alleging in excuse that the police and the English Government were always suspecting them, and the result was that they were driven to look with suspicion on every stranger. I suggested that this was rather hard on

inoffensive travellers, and he said he was very sorry, but it was all the fault of the Government, and besides, I had roused his suspicions by asking questions about subjects which did not concern ordinary tourists, who, indeed, very rarely came into that neighbourhood at all. I could only accept his excuse and congratulate myself that no harm had come of the mistake.

I was told that the other inn had a harp surmounted with a splendid golden crown as its signboard, and that one night the crown had been blotted out by a thick layer of tar, which some evil-disposed person had had the audacity to apply. The outraged innkeeper had applied for compensation, assessing the damages at 10*l.* ; and I was told that the compensation is always allowed on so liberal a scale that the victim of an outrage of this sort makes a very good thing of it, and instances have occurred of persons destroying their own property with a view to getting this public reward. I heard of one man who had been boycotted, and consequently could not sell his hay ; but, not to be baffled, he set fire to it and then applied for compensation at twice its value. On this application it was suggested by his enemies that the rick might have caught fire from his own chimney, which was quite close to the hay ; but he met this insinuation manfully by swearing that the wind was blowing from the rick to the chimney at the time. This seemed a good move, but unfortunately its effect was a good deal lessened by the policeman who was quartered in his house as protector to him and his property, and who for his part swore that the wind was blowing in exactly the opposite direction. However, perjury is a venial fault when compared with disaffection, and loyal subjects must be supported, especially if they have been boycotted by their enemies, so the compensation was granted, and the perjury condoned.

Captain Dugmore drove me over to Birr, or Parsonstown as it was rechristened, where he had been summoned to attend himself in order to identify a revolver which had been found there after the murder of a policeman. The county had been proclaimed some time before, although a resident magistrate admitted that it had been remarkably free from crime. Shortly after it was proclaimed the policeman was murdered ; which to many people proved the necessity, though hardly the utility, of its previous proclamation. It was generally supposed at the time that the county had been proclaimed because the great landlords wanted to bring the additional powers conferred by the Crimes Act to bear upon the poachers who trespassed on their preserves, against whom the Curfew clause could be used with great effect. While Captain Dugmore was giving evidence that he had missed a revolver from his house, I talked to one of the priests at Birr, who said that the great grievance of the Irish was that, although the vast majority of the people were Catholics, hardly any magistrates or grand jurors were appointed who were not of the Protestant persuasion ; and that this led the people to distrust the fairness of the administration of the law.

I asked him if he thought the secret societies were spreading, and he said they did not gain many recruits in the country, though undoubtedly they are very numerous in the towns. The priests are not allowed to give absolution to those who confess that they are members, and consequently the members generally abstain altogether from confession. I must say that I met with other evidence which entirely contradicted the idea that they are not numerous in the country, and led me to believe that their ramifications extend everywhere, and that they are winning adherents daily, chiefly among those who are continually being irritated by the action of the police and the working of the Coercion Act

During the drive back to Broughall Castle with Captain Dugmore, he told me that Lord Rosse's agent had raised rents even this year, and in spite of all the agitation. The tenants are about to appeal to the Land Court, and the agent seems to expect that the Commissioners will reduce the rents without any reference to the fair value of the land ; and he has therefore raised them just before-hand, in order that they may have a good large margin to reduce without really benefiting the tenants or lowering the rents below their former level ; while, if they

do not take into account this last arbitrary increase, the reduction will look larger than it really is, and will strengthen the outcry of the landlords against the Commission.

I also heard about the late raid upon Broughall Castle which had been made by the police. They were ostensibly searching for arms, but the object seems to have been chiefly annoyance to Captain Dugmore ; for, although they searched most of the rooms, throwing everything, including even the boxes of the maid-servants, into irretrievable confusion, they never once entered the dining-room, which had arms and revolvers hanging on all its walls, and in which was a writing-desk full of letters and documents. They carried off with them some valuable rifle barrels, fitted with telescopic sights, which were extremely delicate and expensive, suspecting that they were intended for practising upon policemen at very long ranges, for the sake of additional security to the telescopic sharp-shooter. Captain Dugmore has written to Mr. Trevelyan, demanding their restitution, and pointing out that they could be of little use to the constables, not being meant for charges of buckshot.

In the afternoon Captain Dugmore showed me his falcons, which he had trained to perfection, though they had only been caught a month. They soared grandly in the air overhead, and made frequent stoops at the lure with which he tantalised them. One falcon, however, was obstinate, and insisted on having a bath in the river before it would come to his call. A beautiful little tercel, or ‘ tassel-gentle,’ was more obedient, allowing itself to be ‘ lured back again’ at once by the tempting offer of a dead rook. After this interesting sight, which reminded me of the stories of earlier days, when hawking was a more general amusement, I was brought back to the present by an interview with some men who had been lately arrested on suspicion by the energetic and over-zealous constable to whom I have referred already. They had been several times remanded on the statement of the police that they had ‘ reliable information,’ out of which they were confident of making a case against the prisoners ; and then, when the assizes came on, they had been released by proclamation, as the police in fact had no evidence whatever, and could not even venture to put their case before the grand jury. This had happened in several instances, and the practice afforded the police great scope for petty tyranny, as imprisonment at harvest time was no slight penalty, even with the certain prospect of being released at the assizes. The late murder at Parsonstown had put fresh vigour into their proceedings, and they were now arresting the inhabitants of Frankford right and left. I asked one man who had just been imprisoned for a week what charge the police had made against him, but he said that he really could not say ; for he had been arrested at midnight, and taken out of bed to prison, and never having been there before he was frightened and confused, and could only make out that they had sworn something against him, but what it was he did not understand. The very next day his relations had proved conclusively that he was working on his farm the whole day of the murder, but in spite of this he had been remanded for a week before he was released. There was one man whom every one was commiserating at the time, who had been in delicate health for some time, and had been ordered by the doctor to go to the seaside for change of air. Most unfortunately for himself he was passing through Parsonstown on his way to the seaside the day after the murder was committed, and was promptly pounced on by the police and locked up in prison for three weeks, thus obtaining a change of air at the expense of the Government ; but, though very unexpected and complete, the change was hardly so salutary to him as the sea breezes he had hoped to enjoy. We met the doctor driving in to the town to give evidence that he had ordered the man to the sea, but in spite of this he was not then released, and may be still in prison for anything that I know to the contrary.

Before leaving Broughall Castle I expressed to Captain Dugmore my surprise at his position as an English Conservative working hand and glove with the Irish Land League. He maintained that he could not possibly have acted otherwise after what he had seen and known

in Ireland : and a few days later he wrote me a letter, from which I will give a short extract which shows the line he takes in the matter.

‘ Though an English Conservative, apart from Ireland, I am only too glad to welcome the co-operation of men of any party in the hard task of making known the truth, and letting in light that will expose the hideous blunders committed by ignorant workers in the dark. In Irish matters the English Conservatives are acting in a dense fog of obstinate ignorance and hopeless stupidity, into which they have been led by their interested and unnatural allies the Irish Tories, a class having no affinity to anything in politics unless the old French noblesse immediately before the Revolution. Nothing but the wonderful moral sense of the Irish people, and their law-abiding disposition, saves the said Irish Tories from the fate of their prototypes. You will perhaps open your eyes at the word “ law-abiding ” ; but I refer to the natural and moral law, and not to the artificial law imposed on them by aliens without their consent or representation, and which the system in force is carefully educating them to regard (as in the bad old times) as their natural enemy.’

After bidding good-bye to Captain Dugmore I returned to Dublin, which I found in rather an abnormal condition ; for the whole police force had struck, and I was able to walk the streets even after dark without the ever-present fear of summary arrest impending over me. Accordingly I sallied forth at ten o’clock from my hotel with a new sense of freedom, and proceeding to Sackville Street found a considerable crowd there assembled, but no disorder whatever. I was soon made aware that, though the police had disappeared, they had been already replaced by the military ; for a column of soldiers came charging down the street at a double, with their bayonets gleaming ominously in the electric light, and the crowd dispersed like water before them, to reassemble and hoot the men who brought up the rear as soon as they had passed.

Thinking it best to retire from Ireland before the police returned to a sense of their duty, I took a ticket for Queenstown one evening and travelled in one corner of a compartment which was separated from the next only by a partition rising half the height of the carriage. In the extreme corner of the other compartment a fight presently began between the men who occupied the two window seats, and I perceived a heavy ruffian pounding away tremendously at the face of a smaller villain whom he had forced into a helpless position. I waited to see if their neighbours would interfere ; but as they only stared, and I did not want to see the man’s face entirely disfigured, I pushed past the other people, and forced the bully off his victim. Then others helped, and the row was quieted. Soon afterwards we embarked on the mail steamer, and I had a talk on deck with a man from the North of Ireland, who clearly explained to me that the Land Act was neither more nor less than legalised robbery. Then, as the wind freshened, I retreated to the cabin, and did not emerge before we arrived at Holyhead.

The adventures of a tourist in Ireland (1882)

Author : James Leigh Joynes

Publisher : Kegan Paul, Trench & Co

Year : 1882

Language : English

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Edited and uploaded to www.augty.org

November 29 2013