

Against The Stream

The Letters of "Norah" in her Tour Through Ireland

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Going To England for Work—Canada and America.

I have been going against the stream on my travels. I am reminded incessantly that I should have begun at Dublin. Going backward, as I am doing, the orthodox route is to Leenane, passing Erriff and the Devil's Mother, but the regular cars were not yet running, I was told, nor were they likely to run this summer, as, owing to the exaggerated reports of outrage, tourists are not expected in any numbers. Was persuaded to take a special car to go by Leenane round the coast. Would have liked to do so, but not to bear all the expense myself. The further west the more expensive the car, I find. Instead, I returned to Castlebar, and on to Balla. Balla is the small town where the Land League was born.

In the compartment to which I was consigned there were some gentlemen, for gentlemen and ladies of very great apparent respectability do travel in the cars devoted to the humbler people ; there were also some respectable looking laborers who were going over to England to look for work. A discussion arose in our compartment as to what constituted politeness. One gentleman defined it as ceremonious manners, the result of early training ; while another objected that that was only the veneer of manners, as all true politeness arose from the heart.

I listened awhile and then spoke across the seat to a decent, dejected looking man with a little bundle beside him tied up in a blue and white check handkerchief. " Yes, he was going to England to look for work ; many had to go for the work was not to be had at home." " The rents were so high, and the taxes, what with one thing and another, there was a new cut always coming heavier than the last." " The people are being crushed out of the country very fast, and that was God's truth." " And you are from America ? It is a fine country they say. I would be there long ago but for the heavy care I have here that I can neither take with me nor leave behind." " Yes, I go over to England every year. For a good many years past I have always worked for the same man, ever since I went there first." " It grows harder to live in Ireland every year."

I told this man amid the craned necks and open mouths of his companions, some of the advantages of Canada as a home. I do not know why it is that the people know so little of Canada. I was listened to with exclamations of " Well, well !" " Boys a boys !" " Dear O dear !" " Hear that, now ! A man might live there !"

Getting at last across the Mayo plains to Claremorris, I parted from my acquaintances with many a " God bless you" while many hands lifted out my travelling bags. At Claremorris a car man asked if I was a pilgrim for Knock which was the first intimation that I had that I was in the vicinity of Knock. Hired this car man, who was also owner of the car, to drive me there, I have always heard that those born on Christmas Day are privileged to see apparitions. I have not yet come into that part of my inheritance, but do not know how soon I may.

On the way, which led through a well-cultivated, fertile country, waving with trees, and showing glimpses of great houses peeping out among them, the driver asked me if I had ever heard of Captain Boycott. I said there were few who had not. "He used to live in that house up there; he was agent in this part of the country, but he left us, thank God." "What made people dislike him so?" "Because he was the height of a great tyrant." "Come now, what did he do?" "Everything he could do to oppress the creatures who were in his power. I have known a man come home to his little family with three shillings for his week's wages, all the rest scratched off him in fines. If you have a family yourself you will understand what their living would be when they paid the rent of the cabin. A man dazed with hunger would not have all his wits about him and there would be more fines. In that way the man hound got his work done for half price, and ground the life out of the people. There was no word of an emergency man to pity or help them. God help us; how true it is that the help does not go where the want is."

We got to Knock, a country church in a country place. Alighted, and while the carman tied his horse I looked round me. There was an enclosure round the chapel. At one side was a row of wooden booths, where relics, beads and trinkets were sold. On the other side of the enclosure was a school for girls. It was at the end of the church where the apparition is said to have appeared that we entered. All the plaster on this end was removed by devotees. In the spot where the apparition was said to have been seen, there was a life-size statue of the Virgin in plaster. All over the gable were strips of wood cleated on, behind which were ranged walking-sticks and crutches in regular order till the whole gable was covered. There was a long frame-work of wood about twelve feet long and three broad, also filled with crutches and walking-sticks.

As I stood looking, the car man came in after tying his horse, and knelt down on the damp earth before the Virgin's shrine and repeated a prayer. He was not ashamed to practice what he believed before the world and in the sight of the sun. When his prayer was over he joined me, and drew my attention to the number of crutches and sticks left behind by those who were benefited. I pointed out to him a very handsome black-thorn stick among the votive offerings, and asked him would it be a sin to steal it, as black-thorns were in demand over the water. He told me if I did that whatever disease was laid down there by the owner of the stick would cleave to me. I thought of Gehazi and restrained my hands from stealing the black-thorn. There is one nice characteristic of a genuine Irishman, he can take a joke.

There were many masons working at an enlargement of the church. We went in. It had an earthen floor, and there were many people kneeling on it at their prayers. Some were silently making the stations of the cross, others, a large number, were reciting the rosary aloud under the leadership of a young woman, who repeated one part, when they all answered in concert. The windows were darkened by the scaffolding and building outside, and as I sat there seeing and hearing, looking toward the altar, in the shadow of a pillar I saw a hand steal out. I own I was startled; but when my eyes got accustomed to the gloom, I saw it was a man at the top of a ladder quietly painting away as if the church were empty.

After a while I came out and went over to the school. There were 78 children present, all girls, all clean and decent. There was one teacher, a pleasant-faced young woman, who had two monitor assistants. The order kept was very good, the school furniture neat, a good many maps on the wall, and the children seemed busy and interested. The teacher told me that the income of the school, owing to results fees—a sum paid by Government according to the progress of the pupils, was sometimes as high as £80 per annum.

After leaving the school, went over to the booths to buy some trifle as a memorial of Knock. The man in the booth told me I had come from America. There was another man with his arm in a sling, who had come from America also. He had come to visit Knock. I asked him if his arm was better. He said it was, but not entirely well. I asked the man in the booth if he had ever seen anything. He said that he did not come there to see anything, but to make a living. He and the American had both bits of the original plaster, which they showed to me.

The priest of the place was not at home. He lives in a cottage down the hill a bit, in sight of the church. I had seen all there was to be seen, so I made my purchase and bid good-bye to Knock, and drove back to Claremorris.

Claremorris is a nice enough little town, very quiet, as if not much of any great work was going on. Where there are factories I notice the people step quickly and look straight ahead. Over towns which depend on the trading of the country round there is an air of repose and leisure. I did not see much of Claremorris, for I soon left it behind in, going to Ballinrobe by car.

The land here seems very rich. I remarked this to my travelling companions, who told me that I was on the rich plains of Mayo. The fields are large and well cultivated. There were no signs of the abject poverty, wee, stony fields, horrible rookeries of houses that exist in the shadow of the Ox hills. Not that the houses of the laborers here were good ; for that, a good, decent laborer's house, I have not yet seen in Ireland, except on Mr. Young's Galgorm estate. They may exist on other estates, I dare say they do, but I have not seen them. This country over which we were travelling was as rich with round-headed trees and wide meadows as a gentleman's park. The road, a particularly meandering one, passed through Hollymount—a lovely place—and through Carrowmore, my companions telling me of the landlords and the tenants as we drove along. The rent was high and hard to make up, the turf far to draw, that was all. There was no account of vexatious office rules or special acts of tyranny related to me at all.

Ballinrobe, on the river Robe, is near Lough Mask, and is another quiet, pretty, leisurely little town. I was troubled with neuralgia and did not see much of it. Opposite the hotel was the minister's residence, amid gardens, all shut in behind a stone wall high enough for a rampart. Through an archway from the street was the church where he ministered, sitting meditating among the tombs. I wandered into this place one day on my way to the post-office. Noticed the great number of the name of Cuffe who were buried there. Cuffe is the family name of Lord Tyrawley.

The Catholic church sits back from the street a good way and the ground before it is laid out in flowers. There are some images of saints through the grounds, which are set in arches of rock work, over which climbing plants are trained. There is also a community of Christian Brothers, who have a school here. Their building had so much glass in front, with so many geraniums in flower, a perfect blaze of them behind the glass, that it looked like a conservatory.

Left Ballinrobe behind and drove to Lough Mask Castle, where the celebrated Captain Boycott managed to kick up such a fuss. We passed a couple of iron huts occupied by policemen, who came out to look at us. I may as well mention that after I left Ballinrobe I found that the driver was more “ than three-quarters over the bay.” He had a way of talking to himself on the land question, of Captain Boycott, Lord Mountmorris and Lord Ardilaun, that was not pleasant to listen to, especially as he spiced his monologue with many words that savored strongly of brimstone. I was not without hope that the fresh air might dissipate the fumes of liquor from his brain as we drove along. I had the more hope of this as I could see that he was

a habitual drinker, poor man, as his face but too plainly testified. Drink is universal here, as medicine a universal remedy, as a daily, almost hourly, stimulant for young, and old, rich and poor, man and woman. They tell me that Scotland is worse ; if so, Scotland should be prayed for. I confess that I have not seen much drunkenness. I saw very few that I could call drunk, but it is constant, steady, universal, or almost so, sipping and tipping.

Lough Mask—Castle Captain Boycott and His Policy—Lord Mountmorris.

Well, my John did sober up considerably before we halted at the entrance gates of Lough Mask Castle. The sharp hi ! hi ! of the driver brought out the gate keeper, a poor looking and sour looking woman, who admitted us into the drive which lay through some fields and beside some young plantations. In one place the driver pulled up, our way lay through a large field divided by the road into two unequal parts.

He told me to look round me, which I did. “ On one side here were the dragoons ; their horses were picketed here ; on the other side was the infantry. It was awful weather. What them men and their horses stood of hardships and misery no tongue could tell. The dragoons marched down here, looking fine and bowld, their horses were sleek and fat and shining, when they marched away they wor staggering with the wakeness and the men wor purty wilted looking. He made them believe he needed protection.” This with a growl that had depths of meaning in it.

“ He’s coming back here again. Out among nagurs or anywhere else he could not find them to put up with him like ourselves.” Of course I omit the strong words that were used as garnishing. I must own that this was the first time that any carman had used profane language before me—and it wasn’t himself was in it at all at all but the whiskey. “ The soldiers, whin they wor here,” continued the old man, “ cut down the trees of the plantation for firing. That went to his heart, it did. How could they help themselves, I’d like to know ? Sure they would have perished with the cowld and the wet among the pelting of the snow and the sleet. Wherever they are this blessed day they don’t admire the memory of Captain Boycott. What I like is behaviour in aither man or baste, and Captain Boycott had no behaviour. They killed a sheep to ate, or maybe two, and sorra a blame to them. It was ate or die wid them ; but ye see the gallant Captain didn t like it.” About this time a volley of anathemas was poured out against the absent Captain.

During all this we were sitting on the car viewing the field where the bivouac had been. A policeman with a questioning look on a pleasant face came along from the great house with a tin pail in his hand. “ What have you got in the can !” asks this inquisitive car driver. “ Milk,” responded the policeman. “ You would have got no milk at the big house in Captain Boycott’s time.”

“ Oh, yes, I would,” said the other, “ when I paid for it.” I did not like to question this man, for he did swear so, but I ventured to ask if Mrs. Boycott were equally as much disliked as her husband. “ Never heard a word against her in my life. The people had no reason but to like her. Hard word or hard deed she left no memory of behind her.”

We drove past the residence where Captain Boycott lived, a fine spacious house finished in plaster to imitate stone. The grounds near the house were nicely laid out, but that is the universal rule in Ireland. Drove through a gateway into the yard. In a stable loft in the yard some policemen were lodged. The driver hallooed at them, and one came down the stone steps to see what protective duty was asked of him. I asked him to show me the ruins and he complied in the kindest manner. Across the barnyard and through a shed we made our way

into the castle ruins. There are many nooks and crannies, as is the case in these ancient ruins generally, but the main body of the castle was divided into two large apartments, with the roof on the floor of course. I noticed the track of recent fire along the old walls. He said it was made by the officers who were down there on protective service for Capt. Boycott. They had one apartment and cooked there, and the police the other. These quarters open to the sky, and having stones on the floor, did not look comfortable.

We went up the circular stairs to the ramparts at the top. There is a walk round the top behind the battlements. Looking down at the remains of a fireplace in what was a lofty second story, my guide told me there was a name and a date there. The name Fitzgerald, I forget the date ; so this must have been one of the Geraldine castles.

There is a fine view from the battlements. Lough Mask, which is very shallow here, a little water and a great many stones overtopping it in profusion, lies before us, and an extensive country, partly fertile, in round hills and green valleys, partly crusted over with stones.

A policeman, not my guide on this occasion, told me, illustrative of the disposition of Captain Boycott, that the hut in which the police were sheltered was very damp—water, in fact, was running on the floor under their bed. They had a small coal stove, and on the coal becoming exhausted before they got a further supply, one of the men being down sick, they ventured to ask Captain Boycott for the loan of a lump or two of coal to keep their stove going till their supplies were received, and he refused them. They were obliged to protect his ass and water cart down into the lake to draw water from out beyond the edge where the water was deep, and, therefore, could be dipped up clean. He would not allow them to get any of the water for their own use after it was drawn, or lend them the ass to draw for themselves. They had either to wade out in the lake or dip up as they could at the edge. I made a slight mistake in saying that the castle was entirely roofless ; there was part of an arched roof where the fire had been. I asked the policeman if they had any night patrol duty now. Oh, yes, he said, we patrol every night, although we never see anything worse than ourselves.

Left Lough Mask, its castled ruins and modern mansion behind us, and drove through the gates again. I felt convinced that the people were not filled with an unreasoning hate against Captain Boycott. They thought they had reason, deep reason, and they scrupulously excepted Mrs. Boycott from any censure bestowed on him.

Along the road we drove, until from an eminence we could see Lough Mask in its beauty, with its bays and islands spread out beneath us. This view gave us a part of the Lough where the water covers the stones. This particular evening the water was as calm as a mirror and as blue as the sky above it, and the trees on the hills and bays around it in their greenness and leafiness, round-headed and massive, were all bathed in sunlight. We came to fields a little more barren-looking, where bare stone fences took the place of the rich hedgerows, turned up a road that lay between these stony ramparts, and drove along for a little time.

I was wondering in my own mind about Captain Boycott. Did he, in his own consciousness, think he was doing right in his system of fines ? He knew how small and miserable the wages were : he knew of the poor, comfortless homes and the “ smidrie o’ wee duddy weans” that depended on the poor pennies the father brought home ; he knew that he came out well fed and leisurely to find fault with a peasant who was working with a sense of gonesty about the stomach. Did he think that increasing the hunger pain would make him more thoughtful, more orderly ? Would he have done better if he had been suddenly brought to change places with his serf ? If he could not help fining the people until he fined off the most of their wages, were they to blame for refusing to work for him ? Was the Government right in taking his

part when it had neither eye nor ear for his people's complaint? I was questioning with myself in this helpless fashion, when I heard my driver inquire in Irish of a bare-footed country girl if we were near the spot where Lord Mountmorris was murdered.

This question, and the surprise with which I became aware that I understood it, made me forget Captain Boycott for the time being and wake up to the present time. We had stopped our car and were waiting on the girl's answer, which she seemed in no hurry to give. At length lifting a small stone she threw it on the road a car's length behind us, answering in Irish that there was the spot where he was found. The murderer was hidden in the field opposite. The road was bare of the shelter of hedge or ditch, bush or tree. It was late; he was coming home alone, his police escort for some reason were not with him that particular night. Lord Mountmorris was murdered, and some one has a mark on his hand that all the water of the Lough will not wash off.

We drove along the road, a bleak and bare road, with a hill on one side of it and a steep slope down on the other, until we came to a small plantation, a lodge gate, and drove up an avenue with small plantations of young trees here and there, some grass lands, a few beasts grazing about, some signs of where flower beds and flower borders had been better cared for once on a time than now, and came to a comfortable, roomy square house finished in plaster. This was castle something, the residence of the late Lord Mountmorris. With a blessing, content and three hundred a year one could fancy that person sung of by Moore, "With the heart that is humble" being able to make out life nicely here. When a man has a title to his name with all the requirements which it implies and demands, one could imagine a constant and wearing struggle going on.

I have earnestly and constantly sought to find a reason that could possibly irritate an ignorant and exasperated peasant to the point of taking the life of this man, I have found none. He was unhappily addicted to drink, it is said, but he must have had a large majority of the inhabitants of Ireland of all creeds and classes on the same side with him in this, to judge by the number of houses licensed to sell liquor to be drunk on the premises which are required for the drouthy part of the population. He is accused of having warped justice to favor his friends in his capacity of magistrate. I have heard that accusation brought against other magistrates again and again, who were not molested. He is said to have boasted when *fou* that he was a spy for the castle authorities, and could have any of them he chose to point at taken up. This was mere bluster, I suppose. There does seem no reason why the poor man should be cut off in the midst of his days by a guilty hand, for there is no record of any tangible injury which he had done to any man. Here on the spot where he fell, among the common people, I did not hear anything that seemed to give a reason for any hatred that would lead to murder being entertained against the deceased nobleman.

We turned away from the house and grounds, and I felt sad enough when we passed the place where he lay in the dark night amid bare, barren loneliness until the alarm was given. Heath in full blossom of purple clung to the ditch back, foxglove in stately array nodded at us from above, flowers that creep and flowers that wave were springing everywhere, the rains of heaven had washed off the red stain, but I could not shut my eyes to it. I saw the human body, dignified into something awful by the presence of death, lying there waiting for the hands that were to take it up reverently, and bear it away for investigation and burial. I saw the dyed stones of the road that will never lose the mark of guilt that colored them with the blood shed there.

Lord Mountmorris' residence was a nice, roomy house. All these houses are called castles, and castles they are compared with the cabins. The land around it did not seem very good.

There was something pathetic in the evident attempt to keep up lordly state on a poor income and off poor soil. Happy America, whose people are not compelled by the inexorable logic of circumstances to be lords, but can be plain farmers. It is really a hard thing to be a lord sometimes, when a place is sunk with mortgages, and burdened with legacies and annuities, and no means of redemption but the rents and these stopped.

We drove back the way we came. Ascending the hill we met a little beast, so small, so black and shaggy, that I thought at first it was one of our Canadian black bears. I asked what it was, and—laughing at my ignorance—the man told me that it was a Highland Kyloe, one of the famous black cattle that I have heard so much about, but had never seen a specimen of the breed before. It would have been big for a bear, but certainly was small for a cow, while a goat has the appearance of giving as much milk.

CONG.

THE land as we neared Cong, between Cong and Lough Mask, as seen from the rather roundabout road we travelled, has a very peculiar appearance. It is stony with a very different stoniness from any part of Ireland which I had seen before. In some places the earth, as far as the eye could reach, was literally crusted with stone. The stone was worn into rounded tops and channelled hollows, as if it was once molten, like red hot potash, and every bubbling swell had become suddenly petrified, or as if it had once been an uptilted hillside over which a rapid river had fallen, wearing little hollows, and sparing rounded heights as it dashed over in boiling fury for ages, accomplishing which result it deserted this channel, and through some internal movement the bed of the torrent was levelled into a plain. Some agency or other has worn this solid rock into a truffle pattern that is very wonderful to see. Over all this part the stony formation recurs again and again. A person remarked to me that it looked like the bottom of a former ocean. Judging by the marks worn into the stone I should say it was not a pacific ocean.

We came to a blacksmith's shop with the arch of the door formed into a perfect horse-shoe ; this, I was told, was the boundary line between Mayo and Galway. In a few minutes we stopped before the " Carlisle Arms," in the little village of Cong. Cong village is not very large, and has not a wealthy appearance. There is a look generally spread over the people who come in to trade as if their fortune was as stoney as their fields.

I had not been long in the " Carlisle Arms" before my attention was called to certain framed mementos that hung round the room. By some of these mementos hung the tale as to how Cong hotel came to be named the " Carlisle Arms." On a certain occasion, when the then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Earl of Carlisle, was making some sort of progress through Ireland, he proposed stopping at the hotel at Maam, a hotel under the thumb of the late Lord Leitrim, who had some pique at the Lord Lieutenant, which determined him to order under pain of the usual penalty that there be no admittance to the Viceroy of Ireland at this hotel. His Lordship for once felt the power of a text of Scripture, and sent orders that from the highways and hedges they should be compelled to come in, that his house should be filled to the entire exclusion of Her Majesty's representative. Lord Carlisle did not, like Mr. Goddard the other day at Charleville, proffer money, or take any steps to try the lawfulness or unlawfulness of this proceeding, but, having sent a courier to precede him, hurried on to Cong, and conferred the distinction of his presence on that hotel. That the proprietors did their best to entertain him I have no doubt, speaking from experience. That he appreciated their efforts he has left on record in a neat acknowledgement, which hangs above the mantle-piece framed and glazed, as Uncle Tom desired to do, with his letter from Massa George. The Lord

Lieutenant's photo hangs there too, in a nice frame, as a memento of his having been received at Cong when refused at Maam. Also he consented that the hotel should be known as the "Carlisle Arms" henceforth. I wonder very much that there was not at least as much public indignation felt against Lord Leitrim or the innkeeper whom he influenced when he refused shelter to Her Majesty's representative here, the head of the executive, as is now expressed against this hotel-keeper, who refused to receive Mr. Goddard. I suppose the cases are different someway.

During the famine time a large sum of money was voted, partly by Government, partly from the county taxes, for Relief Works. It was determined to make a canal to connect Lough Corrib and Lough Mask. The canal was made at the expense of much blasting, much building of strong and costly stone work. If they could only have resurrected the famous Irish architect *Gobhan Saer*, he would have advised making a well-cemented bottom for the canal considering that a subterraneous river runs from one lake to the other under it. They did not do this, however, and when the grand canal was finished and the water let on the bottom fell out in places and the waters fell through to their kindred waters. The next famine they will require to dig and blast downward and still downward till they find the underground river and the runaway water. Coming past the costly and well-built bridge which spans the almost dry stream that pours into the leaky canal somewhere, I saw some women round a hollow in the stream that retained a little water. They were rinsing out some woollen stuffs after dyeing them blue. They had warm petticoats of madder red, and I was glad to see them look so comfortably clad and thrifty.

After returning to the hotel I was waited on by an elderly lady of the peasant class, a woman over eighty years of age. She had for sale some pillow lace edging of her own manufacture, which she offered at threepence per yard. This was the way she made her living, paid her rent and kept herself out of the work-house. The lace was pretty and very strong. She generally succeeds in disposing of it to lady tourists.

There were some lady tourists as well as gentlemen staying at Cong. They were on pleasure bent, and had been dreadfully annoyed and disgusted in Galway at the heartbreaking scene attending the departure of some poor Irish emigrants. They are unreasonable in their grief, and take parting as if it were death ; but it is as death to many of the aged relatives who will see these faces whom they love no more. I could not help thinking how differently people are constituted. When I saw the streaming eyes, the faces swollen with weeping, and heard the agonized exclamations, the calls upon God for help to bear the parting, for a blessing on the departing, I had to weep with them. These people were all indignation where they were not amused. The old women's cries were ill-bred howlings to their ears, their grief a thing to laugh at. They made fun of their dress—how they were got up—as if their dress was a matter of choice ; grew indignant in describing their disgust at the scene. Ah, well, these poor mountain peasants were not their neighbors, they were people to be looked at, laughed at, sneered at, and passed by on the other side ; but I—these people are my people and their sorrow moveth me.

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The Ashford Demesne — Lord Ardilaun — Lough Corrib.

THE Ashford demesne affords walks or drives for miles. Everything that woods and waters, nature and art can do to make Ashford delightful has been done. I got a companion, a pretty girl, a permit from some official who lived in a cottage at Cong, and set out by way of the Pigeon Hole to see at least part of the place.

I may as well mention here how surprised we were to hear the Antrim tongue from the recesses of the cave, and to find a group of strangers exploring on their own account. They were working men who had come from Belfast to work for Lord Ardilaun, and were making the most of a holiday before they began. I was very much surprised to see men from Antrim, where the wages are much higher than here, come down to work in the west where labor is so cheap, and want of work the complaint.

To show how cheaply men work here, I may mention that being at a village which lies outside of Lord Ardilaun's demesne, but on his estate, I was standing on the road and a clergyman was talking in Irish to a man who was employed at mason work in repairing the wall, a small quiet looking man who did not stop work as he talked. Of course I could not understand more than the scope of their discourse, but I understood distinctly one question asked ; " How much do you get for a day's work ?" " One shilling and two pence a day." " Without food of course ?" " Of course." I had heard in the North that casual laborers get two shillings a day there, but they do not get two shillings when employed constantly. The laborers on one well-managed estate which I have been over in Antrim are paid ten shillings a week, and pay one shilling a week out of that for their cottages, which are kept in good repair at the expense of their employer. Of course these men must have been workmen skilled in some particular work, or they would not have come from the wages of the North to the West to work at the common rate of wage going here, which I am told is at the highest seven shillings a week and rent to pay out of that. Of course, when masons are paid one and two-pence, laborers will be paid much less.

The avenue along which we travelled was a causeway made at great expense along the brow of a steep hill or rather ridge, one side being supported by a stone wall. This work, undertaken for the benefit of travellers to Ashford, must have afforded constant employment for a good many men for a long time. Arriving at a modern archway in the ancient style protected by an iron gate, we sought admittance, showing our permit from the office. The keeper's wife examined it and passed it over to the keeper, who examined it also, asked some prudent, cautious questions, and we were admitted to a part of the grounds.

This gate keeper, a remarkably gentlemanly old man, in his respectable blue broadcloth, his comely sagacious, weather-beaten face, his guarded manner of speaking, and his name, Grant, made me quite sure that he was a Highlandman, which he was not, but a Western Irishman. He informed us as we went along that only part of the grounds could be seen on account of the troubled state of the country. Whether there was any part of the demesne that an elderly woman and a pretty girl were likely to run away with became a subject of thought to me. Conscientiously this delightful old man kept us off tabooed walks and shunted us into permissible places. Where all was beautiful and new, and time having a limit, we were quite willing when brought to order, to follow on the allowed path.

I was admiring a tree of the regally magnificent kind, leaf-draped branches like green robes sweeping down to the emerald sward, that always remind me of the glorious trees which sunlight loves to gild in the grounds at Castle Coole ; I remarked on its exceeding beauty to our guide, who said it would bear a nearer view, and we followed him on a path through the grass till we stood beside it. Parting the foliage we found ourselves at a natural grotto of light-colored stone, where a stream of " the purest of crystal" came from under the rock at one end, and glancing in the stray beams of sunlight that found their way in through the arch of leaves, flashed down a tiny cascade in a shower of diamonds, and with a little gargling laugh hid under the rock again, racing on to join the subterranean waters that laugh together over the failure of the great canal.

The new tower is built after the fashion of the ancient towers with the spiral staircase, that was common to all castles and abbeys of the west. The mason work was much coarser and more roughly done, but the imitation of the ancient tower was very good other ways. I do not believe that modern masons could produce so perfect a specimen of workmanship as the tower of Moyne Abbey, with its spiral staircase of black marble. The view from the top of the tower at Ashford repaid well the expenditure of breath to climb up to it.

The house is a castle and made after the pattern of ancient castles ; it is large and must contain any amount of lofty and spacious rooms, which it is to be supposed are furnished as luxuriously and magnificently as possible. It is certainly a very fine building, and looks as nice and new as stone and mortar can make it, but the ivy green will soon cover it all up with its green mantle. We were not able to walk over even the allowed portion of the grounds, as they extended for miles. We parted from our gentlemanly conductor at a certain gate. He was so nice that we felt almost ashamed to offer the expected gratuity which was, however, thankfully received.

I pondered a little way over the man's remarks who had been our guide through the demesne. He always kept repeating that we might have been shown the gardens and the house, but for the disturbance in the country. I wondered to hear hints of trouble on this estate, for no man, woman or child, with whom I conversed, but spoke highly of the generosity, magnanimity and kindness of Lord Ardilaun, and his father before him. I have seen in his lordship's own writing and over his signature the statement that, during prosperous years, even, the rent has not been raised, that he had for years spent on his property more than double the rental in improvements and for labor. When I read this I thought of the causeway raised along the brow of a hill over which I walked in the demesne, I thought at the time what an amount of labor was expended to place it there. There has also been made an addition to the castle, which must have given a great deal of employment. Some, or rather a great deal of the property was bought from the late Earl of Leitrim, who had raised the rents, it is asserted, to the "highest top sparkle" before selling, to enhance the value.

I do not know anything of the value of land here ; it is very stony land. I was pointed out a field which was not very stony, comparatively speaking, but still had more stones, or stony crust rather, than a good farmer would desire, I was told it paid £2 per acre. I wonder how it is possible to raise rent and taxes off these fields, never to mention support for the farmers. The land requires very stimulating manure to produce a crop. When bad years come, and render the tenant farmers unable to purchase guano, the crops are worthless almost. The necessity of buying artificial manure is a terrible necessity that American farmers know nothing of.

I dare say the tenants expect too much in many instances, for they are accustomed to be treated as children in leading strings. The amount of dependence on this one and that one in superior stations is very wonderful, but their utter helplessness to take the first step toward better times is also wonderful. I have heard of men, by the last bad seasons unable to buy guano, having to strip the roofs off their houses that the rain may wash off the soot into the land to fructify it. On account of shelter for game, it is not permissible to cut heather for bedding, for stock, or covering for houses. Breaking this prohibition even on land for which they pay rent and taxes is, they complain, punished with fines of from two and sixpence to seven and sixpence for as much as could be carried on the back.

For a farmer to get on here he must be able to buy manure. The crop on a farm has to pay rent, which is high, and taxes, which are heavy, even if no guard for somebody has to be paid

for, or no malicious outrage is levied for on the county in compensation, and manure, which, if got before paying, is charged, I am told, twenty-five percent additional for waiting ; all this must be met before the support of the family can be thought of beyond merely existing. The more one looks at the want of the people, the more one becomes bewildered with the perplexities of the situation, and the more hopeless about the setting of things right by the Land Bill or anything else.

It is pleasant to hear on all sides praises of Lord Ardilaan as a high-spirited, generous man. The slight difference of opinion between him and his people is blamed on the fact of his not being able to understand how poor the tenants are, or how what is little in his eyes may be life or death to them. There was some trouble, I believe, about the building of a causeway across to some sacred island, which was built by the people without leave asked, or in spite of prohibition given ; but in the main I think that Lord Ardilaun is very much loved.

How it does rain in this green land. I think it. rained every day of the days I remained at Cong except the blink of sunshine that shone on the castle and grounds the day that I went over part of the Ashford *demesne*.

At Cong, for the first time in my life, I heard, the Irish lament or caoine for the dead. Some one was brought in from the country to be buried in the Abbey of Cong. It was a simple country funeral. The dead was borne on one of the carts of the country, followed by the neighbors, and accompanied by the parish priest of Cong. The day was very wet even for Ireland. After the burial service was over the women, kneeling by the new made grave, among the rank wet grass, and the dripping ivy, raised the caoine. It was a most unearthly sound, sweet like singing, sad like crying, rising up among the ruined towers, and clinging ivy and floating up heavenwards. I believe the stories of banshees must have arisen from the sound of the caoine. These mourning women were very skilful, I was told, and were relations of the dead whom they mourned, and whose good qualities mingled with their love and grief rose in wailing cry and floated weirdly over the ruins and up to the clouds.

I had at this time an invitation from Mr. Sydney Bellingham to come over to Castle Bellingham to see life from another standpoint. I was standing at the window debating with myself. I did not like to leave the West before seeing a little more of it, and I do want, in the interests of truth, to look at things from every available standpoint. If I go to Castle Bellingham I must go now, I reasoned, for after this they go to England. As I stood there thinking, a handsome car dashed past with a gentleman and lady on it, followed by another with a guard of policeman. I enquired who this guarded gentleman was, and was told it was that Mr. Bourke who went into the Catholic church armed to the teeth.

I have been nearly five months in Ireland, travelling about almost constantly, and as yet have only seen three persons who were protected by police, two men and one woman. I decided to leave Cong, and after studying on the map the nearest way to Castle Bellingham, determined to take that way.

Left Cong in the early morning to sail down Lough Corrib to Galway. For some reason the landing place has been altered, and is now some distance from Cong, at which it used to be. This change is a drawback to Cong. There are mills at Cong that used to grind Indian corn, but they are not used now for some reason or other, and are falling into ruin. The shifting of the landing place was done by Lord Ardilaun, the stoppage of the mills by him also. The landing place where the little steamer waited for freight and passengers had a little crowd, who seemed to have more to do than just to look on, and there was a little hum of traffic that sounded cheerful.

It was a very windy day ; Lough Corrib's waves had white caps on. The sun came out fitfully, and the clouds swept great shadows over the mountain sides. There were patches of green oats bathed in sunshine, and plantations of larch and fir standing close and locked in shadow. The wind was so strong that the little steamer seemed to plough her way with a bobbing motion like the coots on Lough Gill. We had a fine view from the lake of Ashford *demesne*, and the castle looking still grander and newer in the distance, all its towers and pinnacles bathed in the cold sunshine.

There are many islands in Lough Corrib besides the islands that the priest and people of Clonbur built the causeway to. It is strange that two lords take their titles from islands in this lake, Lord Inchiquin and Lord Ardilaun. Some of the peasantry felt hurt because Lord Ardilaun took his title from an island instead of from some part of the mainland. I was pointed out in the distance from the lake, Moytura house, the home of Sir William Wilde ; it stands where was fought the battle of Moytura in ancient times.

From the steamer we saw the ruined fortress, Annabreen Castle, said to be six hundred years old. The masonry is very curious, being all done within and without, quoins, doorways, window frames, of undressed stone, and yet most admirably done.

I stood on the deck of the little steamer while the wind blew in the teeth of the little boat and made her shiver and rock, and I endured sharp neuralgic pain, and lost my veil, which was blown off and went sailing off into the lake because I would not miss seeing all Lough Corrib had to show. I saw the ivy plaided walls of Caislean na Cailliach, and on a little island the remains of an old uncemented stone fort, so old that antiquity has forgotten it. The scenery was very grand, the islands grassy and round, or waving with trees, the lake covered with white horses riding with tossing manes to the shore ; the little boat with its broad breast holding its own against the swells, the shores with green mountains checked off into fields, with higher mountains blue in the distance rising behind them. All under

“ The skies of dear Erin, our mother
Where sunshine and shadow are chasing each other.”

The little steamer steamed up to the wharf and backed and stopped, in most American fashion, at a lonely backwoods-looking wharf, but the pillars for the snubbing rope were pillars of stone, and near were the ruins of a tall square castle in good preservation. There are also the walls of the bishop's residence here, with the bells of St. Brendan ; they told me— this was the saint who discovered the happy land flowing with milk and honey, the key to which lies hidden in Cuneen Miaul's tomb—and the ruins of an extensive abbey, a monastery and a nunnery and other buildings.

Truly the banks and islands of Lough Corrib are made classic by ruins. They say the carved mouldings and stone work on these ruins are considered the most beautiful and most perfect in Ireland. We passed, farther on, the ruins of Annaghdown, the castle fort of the bog. After this the land got low and flat, and we saw Menlough Castle, where a baronet of the name of Blake resides, when he's at home. It is counted the most beautiful of all the ancient castles which are still inhabited. All I can say is, it looked well from the lake. Lough Corrib is calculated to cover 44,000 acres, and is well supplied with fish.

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Went through Galway to the station as fast as a jaunting car could take me, and took the train for Dublin.

The Letters of “ Norah” on Her Tour Through Ireland : Being a Series of Letters to the Montreal ... (1882)

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