

All The Poor Want

The Letters of "Norah" in her Tour Through Ireland

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Departure of Emigrants—Turlough—The Fitzgeralds—Fish—The Royal Watchdogs.

The day on which I had to return to Sligo from Castlebar an immense crowd was gathered at the station, and I wondered what was the matter. It was a gathering to see emigrants start for America. The emigrants took the parting hard. If they had been going to instant execution they could not have felt worse. Three young girls of the party had cried until their faces were swollen out of shape. The crowd outside wept and wailed ; some clasped their hands over their heads with an upward look to heaven, some pressed them on their hearts, some rocked and moaned, some prayed aloud—not set prayers, but impromptu utterances wrung out by grief. The agony was so infectious that before I knew what I was about I was crying for sympathy.

I was not to say sorry for them, for I knew the fine, healthy, strong girls were likely to have a better chance to help their parents from the other side of the water than here, and the young men might make their mark in the new world and make something of themselves over there. Still it was hard to witness the agony of their parting without tears.

When the carriage moved off, the cry "O Lord!" with which the passengers started to their feet and the relatives outside flung up their hands, was the most affecting sound I ever heard. It was a wail as if every heart-string was torn. A countryman explained to me that the Irish were a people that wept tears out of their hearts till they wept their hearts away. By the conversation of the emigrants, I found that one girl had turned back. "She failed on us, my lady," said her comrade. "Her heart gave up when she saw the mother of her in a dead faint and she turned back. One has but the one mother and it is hard to kill her with the bitter grief of parting before the time."

People who have travelled much, and are loosely tied to any spot on earth, ridicule the affection of these mountain people for their cabin among the hills, but love of home is a glorious instinct, and if the country of these people could afford them a little bit of the soil for a home—liberty to live and toil—they would be both loving and loyal. All the poor want is permission to live in a corner of their own country.

Castlebar is reached by rail. The station is a little out of town. Castlebar is the first town where my few belongings were fought for. The victor in the strife was a most determined old man. I thought he had a car, but he had only his sturdy old legs. He shouldered my big bag, little bag and handbox and trudged off. I ventured to ask him had he not a car. "Sorrah a car, miss. After all your sitting in the cars sure it will do you all the good in life to walk a bit." They think to flatter elderly women by calling them Miss individually.

I had an introduction to a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary in Castlebar. He was son to a gentleman who was kind enough to claim kindred with me in Antrim. When I alighted from the cars I noticed a sub-constable with quiet face taking note of all arrivals, and saw that he was good enough looking to be an Antrim man. Found I was right and entered Castlebar protected by a member of the force. Paid the victorious old heathen who had walked off with my luggage the price of a car, partly for his bravery and partly for his impudence. The approach to Castlebar from the station, about a mile, is bounded on one side by Lord Lucan's demesne, shut in behind a high wall, over which the tall trees wave their arms at you. Another domain, Spencer Park, I think, is on the other side, and as it is only shut in by a hedge, one gets delicious peeps at it as one goes along.

Went with my new acquaintance, who got leave and put on plain clothes for the occasion, to the small Presbyterian Church in Castlebar. There were about a dozen present. Presbyterianism does not, as a rule, flourish in Mayo, though there are a good many small congregations and many mission schools.

My friend of "the force" got leave of absence for a day and having got into plain clothes drove with me to Pontoon Bridge between Lough Conn and Lough Cullin. As we passed the poorhouse he told me of the awful crush that took place round its doors, where the relief was served during the scarcity. The press and struggle of the hungry creatures were so dreadful that no serving could be attempted for some days. I could not help pitying the force standing in mud ankle-deep trying to beat back the frantic people, to make serving the relief possible. But, oh ! the despair of the people who had to go and come again because the press was so great. It seemed to a civilian like me that the matter was badly planned and by heartless people, or two or even three places would have been appointed for the distribution of the relief and not send them home without. I often wonder if I am too tender-hearted, too easily moved. The want of feeling toward the very poor strikes me forcibly wherever I turn. I think that it was not so to such a perceptible degree before the poorhouses were built. I solemnly think the Poor Law system educates people into hardness of heart.

The road out from Castlebar was very beautiful but thinly populated. All gone to grass near the town, hardly any cottages at all. Our first visit was to Turlough where there is a round tower with an iron gate quite close to the ground. The other two which I had seen before at Devinish and at Killala had their doors about eleven feet from the ground. The top of this round tower was broken and it had been mended by the Government. There is a story among the peasantry to the effect that it never had been finished at all. They say it was the work of the celebrated Gobhan saer, an architect who seems to have had a hand in every ancient building almost. The finishing of the rounded top of this tower was done by an apprentice who was likely to rival his great master. He, in a sudden fit of jealousy, before it was quite finished pulled away the scaffolding and the too clever apprentice was killed.

There is a ruined abbey adjoining the round tower. It is roofless and open, yet still an iron gate opens from one part to another. Here in this abbey has been the burying-place of many of the sept of the Fitzgeralds, and it was interesting to pass from tablet to tablet and read of the greatness that had returned to dust. The most remarkable dust which moulders here is the celebrated George Robert Fitzgerald, a man who was handsome, well educated, who had spent much of his time at the French Court. In Ireland he felt himself as absolute as King Louis (le petit grand). In pursuance of a private feud he arrested his enemy, and with a slight color of law murdered him. The act was too glaring, he was tried and to his great surprise hung. The rope broke twice, and the country people believe that the breaking of the rope gave

him a right to a pardon. They tell me that the sheriff, a personal enemy, in spite of the signs and tokens of the breaking ropes, hung him while he had a reprieve in his pocket. There is a kind of Rob Royish flavor about the memory of this man in the country side.

Continued our drive to Pontoon. As soon as the land became rugged, boggy and comparatively worthless the tenant houses became more plentiful. Saw some sheep about, which is always a cheering sign amid the utter poverty of the people. On the way to Pontoon, on the top of a rock stands one of the famous rocking stones of the Druidical time in Ireland. A party of soldiers in their boisterous play determined to roll it down from the rock. This they were unable to do, easy as the matter looked, but they destroyed the delicate poise of it, and it rocks no more.

The rocks become bolder and the scenery wilder as you come to the shores of Lough Conn. Lough Cullen, or lower Lough Conn, has bare round-shouldered rocks sleeping round it, reminding one of the rocks on the Ottawa about the Oiseau. The Neiphin Mountain towers up among the rocks far above them all, looking over their heads into the lake. Lough Conn is three miles long, and in its widest place three miles wide. Where the upper and lower lakes meet it is narrow as a river, and over this the bridge is placed. The marvel here is that a strong current sets in from Lough Conn to Lough Cullen half the time, and then turns and sets from Lough Cullen to Lough Conn. The bridge is called Pontoon because a bridge of boats was made here at the time of the French invasion.

Saw some fishermen fishing in the lakes. There were many boats here and there lying on the sandy shore, or anchored out in the lake. These fishermen had no boats ; they had waded out waist-deep, and stood fishing in the water dressed in their shirts. As the fishing is strictly monopolized, I should not wonder if these breekless, boatless fishermen were poaching.

The quantum of fish in the waters, the scarcity of fish on the shore is often referred to as a proof of the people's laziness. The fishing is so severely monopolized that fish diet and fishing are to the people almost lost arts. I heard of the delicious oysters found on the coast, but one would require to go to England or Dublin to test their flavor. Lobsters could be purchased in their season at Montreal, but not at the seaports in Mayo. I asked for a bit of fish at Castlebar, where I remained some time, and once succeeded in buying a small herring, for which I paid 2½ pence.

To return to Pontoon ; we stood on the bridge in the sunlight and drank in the scene— broad blue waters, spotted with islands, guarded by the munitions of rocks, watched over by the eternal mountains, bald and wrinkled, every wrinkle scored deep on their brows, heather on the cliffs, ivy creeping some places, ferns waving their delicate fronds in another ; bare, desolate grandeur here, tree-crowned hill tops waving their magnificence before you there. This was the scene spread out on either hand.

We came back over the bridge to the police barracks, sitting on a rock with its back to a grove of trees, and reached by a flight of stone steps. I was introduced to the sergeant in charge, a fine specimen of the Donegal men. Tall and straight, strong and kindly are the men of Donegal. The sergeant took us to a hill back of the barracks where was a very lonely vale surrounded by steep hills wooded to the top. Down the perpendicular sides of this hill a waterfall dashes in the rainy seasons, but it was only a tinkling splash at this time. The sergeant and I had some conversation about Donegal, and of course Lord Leitrim. This noblemen has graven his name with an iron pen and lead on the rocks for ever.

We bade adieu to the kindly sergeant and drove back to Castlebar in the quiet evening. Opposite the Turlough round tower is the charming residence of a Fitzgerald, one of the race whose dust moulders in an aristocratic manner in the ruined abbey of Turlough. This gentleman, not thinking himself safe even under protection, has left the country. Only fancy a squad of police marching from their barracks in the dusk, five or ten miles as the case may be, pacing round a gentleman's house in rain or snow, sleet or hail, no shelter for their coercion heads, no fire at which to warm their protecting fingers ; pace about from dusk till dawning, march back to barracks and to a few hours' rest. I was silly enough to suppose that the protected family would provide a bowl of hot coffee for their protectors through the silent watches of the night, or a glass of the handier and very popular whiskey, but dear, oh no ! the most of them would not acknowledge the existence of the Royal Irish protectors with a word or a nod, no more than if they were watch dogs.

Castlebar—Wasting The Land—Castle Bourke—Ballintubber Abbey.

CASTLEBAR is not a large town at all. It is, like all other towns which I have yet seen in Ireland, swarming with houses licensed to sell liquors of different kinds to be drunk on the premises. In one street I noticed on the side of the car on which I sat every house for quite a little distance was a licensed whiskey shop.

The country people bring in ass-loads of what they have to sell. Very few horses are to be seen in the hands of country people. Their trading is on a decidedly small scale. The number of women who attend market barefoot is the large majority. The ancient blue cloth cloak is the prevailing hap. Upon a day my friend and I went out to see the glories of Ballintubber Abbey. It was not possible for him to go in plain clothes so soon again ; so I had the appearance of an obnoxious lady of the land, protected by a member of the force.

We drove out of Castlebar some seven or eight miles in the opposite direction from where Pontoon Bridge lies. Our road lay for miles through the country wasted of inhabitants by the Marquis of Sligo after the great famine. Here and there a ruin where a cabin has been speaks that it was once inhabited. The people tell that Lord Sligo's people were rented the land in common by the settlement. All but two of one settlement had paid ; as those two could not pay, the whole were evicted. My informant thought the settlement deserved eviction when they did not subscribe and pay for the two who could not pay. He never seemed to think they might not be able to do so, nor that it was cruel to evict all for the sake of two.

Lord Lucan made a great wasting also at that time. Between the land near the town devoted to private demesnes, laid out for glory and beauty, and the lands wasted of inhabitants, you can travel miles and miles on more than one side of Castlebar and see scarcely a tenant ; a herd's cabin, a police station, being the only houses. As soon as we come to barren land over-run with stones, tenant houses become thicker.

We passed a cabin of indescribable wretchedness ; a woman who might have sat for a picture of famine stood at the door looking at us as we passed. She had a number of little children, of the raggedest they were, around her. Some time ago the father of these scarecrows was suspected of having stolen some money, and a posse of the much enduring police were sent out to search in the dead of the night. The family were in bed. The bed was a few boards laid on stones, on which was spread a little green hay, and among the loose hay they slept. The terror of the little creatures pulled out of bed, while the wretched lair was searched

and they stood on the floor naked and shivering, was described to me by one who assisted at the search. The bed was overturned, but the money was not found. We drove on through the "stony streak" out to a clearer grass country to Castle Bourke, a lonely looking ruin sitting among her own desolations. It once covered a great deal of land, and there is evidence of additions having been made to it at different times. This Castle Bourke was one of the castles of the Queen of the West, the celebrated Grace O'Malley. This castle is one of those given to Grace by her husband of a year, Sir Richard Bourke.

There are still the remains of three buildings ; one, said to be the prison, was loopholed through the solid stone, some loopholes being quite close to the ground, some straight through, some slanting, so as to cover a man come from what direction he might, or what height soever, even if he crept on the ground. Most of the castle, as well as these buildings attached, had their roof on the floor, but in the square tower of the castle proper still remains a stone staircase of the circular kind.

As you go up this stair lit by narrow slits in the wall formed in hewn stone you find an arched door at three different places admitting to three arched galleries roofed and floored with stone. These have their loophole slits to peep out of, or fire out of, stone spouts through which molten lead or boiling water could be poured on the besiegers. In one gallery a trap door let down to an underground passage which came out at the lake some distance off. By this they could send a messenger to raise the O'Malley clans, or by it could escape if necessary.

The goats of Mayo are inquisitive, and would persist in climbing the circular stair and exploring the galleries. Whenever they found this secret passage, for pure mischief they fell down and were killed, to the great loss of their owners ; so the secret passage is filled up, for which I was very sorry.

We must take our car again and rattle back over the road to Ballintubber Abbey. Ballintobar (town of the well) near this was one of the sacred wells of St. Patrick. The abbey gates were locked, and it was some time before the key was forthcoming. The church part of the abbey is entire except the roof and the lofty bell tower. The arch that supported the tower was forty-five feet in height, but I do not know how high the tower was which it supported. At last the key was found and we were admitted into the church, The chancel is still roofed, and here in these solemn ruins, watched over by the crows and the jackdaws, the few inhabitants still left assemble for mass. There is a rude wooden altar and a few pine benches ; the ivy waves from the walls ; the jackdaws caw querulously or derisively ; the dead of the old race for centuries sleep underneath, and now in a chancel the remnant gather on a Sabbath. I cannot describe it as an architect or antiquarian, and these classes know all about it better than I do, but I want to convey as far as I can the impression it made upon me to others as delightfully ignorant on the subject. The roof is made in the same way as all arched roofs of old castles which I have yet seen, of thin stones laid edge-wise to form the arch and cemented together. The country people tell me that a frame of wood was made over which they formed the arch and then poured among the stones thin mortar boiling hot. On the inside of the arch run along ribs of hewn stone cemented into their places, running up to meet in a carved point at the extreme top. These groinings spring from short pillars of hewn stone that only reach part way down the wall to the floor and run to a point. These consoles are highly ornamented with sculpture. The mouldings round the floors, and the stone window frames and sashes, are wonderfully well done, and would highly ornament a church of the nineteenth century.

I think we undervalue the civilization of the far past of Connaught. Those who erected such churches, such abbeys and such castles were both intelligent and possessed of wealth in no small degree. The ingenuity of the cut stone hinge on the stone that closes the tomb in the chancel, the carving on the tomb of the Prince of the O'Connor line, the staunch solidness of every wall, the immense strength of every arched roof, show skilled builders, whether they worked under the direction of the Gobhan Saer or another man. The plans of the castles, for offence, defence or escape, show them to have been built by men of skill for men of large means and great power.

Over-Population of The West—How People Form Their Opinions—Mr. Smithwick and Jonathan Pym—A Dearth of Fish.

LEFT Castlebar with regret and went down to Westport. I find at every step since I landed the information that in going round Ireland I should have begun at Dublin. In Dublin I could have procured a guide book. I have sought for one in every considerable town from Belfast round to the edge of Galway without obtaining it. If I had started from Dublin I should have taken a tourist's ticket there. Well, I am not sorry for that, for it is rather hard on me when I get into the beaten track where I encounter tourists—some of them are trying specimens of humanity.. However, I am made to feel as if I was putting the wrong foot, instead of the best foot foremost.

I got into Westport in the fair sunlight in the early part of June. Between Castlebar and Westport the land is part stony, part bog, part better land under grass. Mountains with hard names that one makes haste to forget, are to be seen all round from whatever side of the car you look. They are all over—a good deal over—one thousand feet high. A few lakes are spread out here and there also. I am as ignorant of their names as of those of the lakes I saw crossing Maine. Westport, like Castlebar has a mall. Castlebar mall is a square of grass with some trees drawn up on one side. It is fenced in with chains looped up on posts—a fence that nobody minds except to step over and they track the grass with paths running in every direction. Westport's mall is a long space with trees standing sentry by a river, walled in as if it were a canal.

I had a wish to meet with a Mr. Smithwick, a land agent, from whom I might receive a good deal of information. I had information from himself that he should be at Newport upon the day after I arrived at Westport. I fought successfully against myself, and got up at an uncomfortably early hour and went to Newport by mail car. Newport, Mayo, is six Irish—seven and a half English—miles from Westport and is at the head of Clew Bay. The road lies through a nice rolling country, entirely desolate and empty.

The only passenger by the car besides myself was a gentleman, English I presume, who, after he became tired of silence, began a conversation with me, taking for his subject the over-population of the West. I looked to the side of the car where we sat—it was a country of fine grassy hills with not one wreath of smoke curling up from a solitary chimney as far as the eye could reach. I leaned over the well of the car and looked to the other side—to the limit of the horizon, behold, the land was empty of house or home or human being. I looked over the horses' ears—there was the same scene of utter desolation. I turned round with difficulty and looked behind us—saw the same grassy hills swelling up in green silence without man or beast. I said softly, “Lift up thine eyes, sir stranger, and look northward and southward, eastward and westward. Is not the land desolate without inhabitant, where then is the over-population?” The strange gentleman looked, not at the empty hills and the silent

green valleys, but at his fellow-traveller with emotions of fear. To doubt that this fair and desolate Mayo is over-populated is to show signs of lunacy or worse. Fenianism, Communism, or even Nihilism, is possible if there is no lunacy to account for such strange ideas.

Mildly, but with resolution like Samantha's, I urged on the gentleman to look at the prospect, and he was like one awakening from a dream, for the country from Newport to Westport, seven and a half miles, is without inhabitants. I believe Lord Lucan was chief exterminator over this stretch of country. Brought up at the little inn at Newport, and the stranger and I had breakfast together. We conversed about over-population. He had travelled much, and when he recollected what his eyes saw instead of what his ears heard of a false cry, he admitted that a loneliness had fallen upon this part of the west.

After breakfast he went his way, with a new subject for thought, and I, deserted in a wilderness of a commercial room, took out some paper and began to write. There was no sound but the steel scratch of a pen that grew monotonous. After a long time—some hours—of solitude, the door opened and a gentleman entered with some luggage and a young woman followed him. I gathered up my scribblings and put them away. The gentleman took off his overcoat, and shining out of the breast pocket was a bright revolver. I grew afraid, though, generally speaking, I am too busy to think of being afraid. There was a trans-Atlantic look about the gentleman, a Mississippi appearance about the too conspicuous revolver, and, I admit, I thought of some Fenian leader and wondered what Stephens was like. I heard the gentleman order lunch and afterward he left the room.

When he returned he introduced himself as Mr. Smithwick. He was not at all the kind of gentleman I had expected to see. By some perversity he had become fixed in my imagination as a very tall gentleman with fair curled hair. Now this was sheer foolishness, but it had a disastrous effect on the interview. My mind, instead of gathering itself up into an attitude for receiving information about the land question, would go off wool-gathering in speculation whether this was the very Mr. Smithwick or not. The gentleman said with all politeness that he was willing to give me all the information in his power on any subject on which I wanted information.

There is something not canny in the west. I had felt it before, but never as I did then. I could not possibly disentangle my ideas enough to be clear as to what information I did want. I was under some spell. I could only look at Mr. Smithwick, wondering if he was he, and smile at my own stupidity. Time passes quickly ; the gentleman remained but about an hour and a half at most, and he had to have luncheon out of that and attend to some little business in town besides. Before I got to be myself he was gone. We did talk a little about reclaiming bog land. He put the cost per acre for trenching, laying stones in the drains, sand and manure, at £21 per acre. Reclaiming bog land has been done by tenant farmers all over the country, who were evicted afterward when they fell behind in rent in the bad years, and did not get any compensation for the land so reclaimed. Mr. Smithwick did not think the relief money in all cases reached those for whom it was intended ; believed it was partly intercepted on the way. Did not have a high opinion of his countrymen of the poorer class. Thought them a useless set who did not do the work of their farms properly ; did not even make a drain properly if done for themselves ; made it in a proper manner if made on another man's land, because there he was overseen, and if he slighted his work he would not get paid for it. In short, " Paddy anywhere but at home is a splendid man, but at home he is worthless."

Mr. Smithwick deplored the present agitation among the people ; deplored as an agitation got up, not for people's benefit, but to feather the nests and fill the pockets of agitators. He informed me that he himself had to carry a pistol wherever he went. In speaking of rents Mr. Smithwick informed me that tin lands were really rented low ; that llu; people could pay, and were quite able to pay, were it not for the advice of agitators ; said he was getting no rent at all these years. The total cessation of rent coming in was a great deprivation to landlords, who depended on their rents for the means of living.

Mr. Smithwick thought emigration was the remedy for the undeniable poverty of the country, for if the people got their farms for nothing they could not make a living out of them, owing to their shiftless method of farming. I objected that it would be scarcely fair to send their people, who were so useless and helpless, over to be a burden on us, but Mr. Smithwick thought that they would soon come in to our ways, and help themselves, and be not a burden but a help to the community. I found out in conversation with this gentleman that to reach Ballycroy, where he lives, I should have come from Ballina. I seem perversely to take the long way round. Mr. Smithwick kindly explained to me the way I should go to reach Ballycroy by private car. He thought there was so little of interest in that direction that it would hardly repay me for a long tiresome journey, and that Connemara direction was much more full of interest. After his croydon had driven off I began to remember various points on which I should have liked to obtain his opinion that I had never thought of once when I had the opportunity. Perhaps it was the very early drive that had wearied me, but I was dreadfully stupid all through the interview. I had counted a great deal on seeing this man, and I seemed to myself to have gained nothing of facts to which one could refer triumphantly in support of an opinion in consequence of it.

To wake myself up I enquired of the civil landlady if there were any wonderful sights to be seen in the neighbourhood within an easy drive. Yes, there was Borrishoole Monastery (the place of owls) and Carrig a Owlagh (rock of the fleet) Castle, one of the strongholds of Granna Uisle. Well, got a car and driver and drove off to see these ruins. I was told that no tourist ever visited Newport without going to see them.

As we rattled and jolted over the roughest bit of road which I have yet seen in Ireland, the driver, a dark, keen-eyed man, began to talk of landlords, of the wasting and exterminating Lords Lucan and Sligo. I asked him whom did he think a good landlord. He answered immediately, "Jonathan Pym." "If you think him so good you might say Mr. Pym." "When a man is the best in any way he's too big for Mr.," said the man readily. "I dare say," I remarked, "that this Jonathan Pym is very little better than the rest." "But I say he is," retorted the man fiercely. "Where inside of the four seas of Ireland will you get his aiqul ? He bought the land, coming among us a stranger, and he did not raise the rents. The people live under the rents their fathers paid." "Well, that's not much ?" "If you were a tenant you would think differently. He took off the thatch of the cabins and put on slates at his own expense. There is not a broken roof on the land that he owns. Every tenant he has owns a decent house, with byre and barn, shed and stable, and he done it all out of the money he had, that never was lifted out of the land, and after all left them in at the ould rents. There has never been wan eviction on his place yet." "Has he been shot at yet ?" I enquired innocently. "Arrah, what would he be shot for ?" demanded the man, turning his swarthy face and black eyes full on me. "I thought maybe some one might shoot him for fun," I explained, feebly. "Fun !" growled the car-man, "quare fun ! If a man is shot or shot at he deserves it richly. He's not a rale gentleman, word and deed, like Jonathan Pym."

The driver continued to praise the wonderful landlord, Jonathan Pym, in a growling kind of tone as if, were I his spouse, he would thwack me well to cure my unbelief, as we jolted over the stones to the ruins of the monastery of owls.

There is a lake, the lake of owls, near this ruin, and in it, it is said, gentlemen anglers can readily obtain leave to fish. I have heard that amateur anglers give the fish they catch to the person who gives the permit, retaining the sport of catching as their share, or if they want the fish paying for them at market price. I think this unlikely, but it may be so nevertheless.

The monastery was once a splendid place, to judge by the remains of the carving on window and arched door. One of the skulls of Grace O'Malley used to be kept here as a precious relic. There was another at Clare Island and I think I also heard of another. It seems some speculative and sacrilegious Scotchman brought a ship round the west coast of Ireland to gather up the bones lying in the abbeys to crush them for manure, and they took the brave sea queen's bones and skull with the rest.

By The Shore of Clew Bay—Across Achill Island—A Lonely Lovely Retreat.

The drive from Newport, Mayo, to Mulrany was very pleasant. The roads winds along Clew Bay, that bay of many islands, for quite a distance. Clew Bay was resting, calm as a mirror, blue and bright, not a lap of the wave washed up on the shore of Green island or Rocky Point the day we drove past. No fisher's boat divided the water with hopeful keel. The intense solitude of bays and inlets as well as the loughs looks like enchantment. It reminds one of the drowsy do-nothingness of "Thompson's Castle of Indolence," only here the indolence is not the indolence of luxurious ease but of hunger and rags. If the knight of arts and industry will ever destroy monopoly, and these silent waters will be alive with enterprise :

"When many fishing barks put out to fish along the coast."

there will be a happy change in the comfortless cabins that dot the shores of Clew Bay.

The islands of Clew Bay, being treeless and green, have a new look, as if they had just heaved up their backs above the waters and were waiting for the fiat that shall pronounce them good. I looked with longing eyes in the direction of Clare Island, that has one side to the bay and one side to the broad Atlantic which lies between me and home. On Clare Island is the remains of Doona Castle, the principal stronghold of the heroic Grace, where she held the heir of Howth captive till ransomed, and till his father learned to understand what *Cead mille faille* means at dinner time.

Here, by Tulloghan Bay, I was told to look across the bay, where the heather-clad mountains rise above the broad heather-clad bog, where the road to Ballycroy winds along between the bay and the mountains, past houses of mortarless stone, hard to be distinguished from the heath ; for over there in a certain spot occurred the shooting affray which has made young Mr. Smith, the son of the then agent for the Marquis of Sligo, a man of renown.

The hard feeling between the exterminating Marquis, the agent who executed his will and the tenantry was intense. Four men were lying in wait here with the intention of shooting Mr. Smith, who was expected to pass that way. He drove along accompanied by his son. The would-be assassins fired ; they were concealed above the road ; the shots passed harmlessly over the heads of the two Smiths. Young Mr. Smith, who is an exceptionally good shot—can

hit a small coin at an immense distance—saw the men run and fired after them, killing one, fired again, wounding another, and would have fired again, but was prevented by his father.

Young Mr. Smith is quite a hero among the people on this account. There is an expressed regret that Mr. Smith the elder interfered to prevent the young marksman from shooting them all ; very few would blame him if he did, as the men, though too nervous to do harm, lay in wait for the purpose of murder. Still it is revolting to hear people in cold blood regret so heartily that there was not more bloodshed.

The scenery—as scenery—was as grand as bare heathery mountains and wide desolate waters could make an almost treeless solitude, but viewed as a home for human beings, viewed as land that has rent and taxes and existence to be carved out of it, it has a hopeless look.

The houses are something dreadful, to consider them in the light of human habitations. Limestone does not abound here, and therefore the houses of the poorer sort are built like a cairn or a fence of loose stones without mortar. When the Atlantic winds sweep in here in winter time, the crevices in these houses will be so many chinks to whistle through. God pity the poor !

The people along the road here had a thrifty look ; the men wore homespun coats ; the pinned-up dresses of the women showed petticoats which were homespun of warm madder red, well dyed, good and comfortable looking. Of course the majority of the women were barefoot, but they were used to it.

At Molraney we stopped to deliver mails. In these cases the passengers sit on the car in the street, while the driver hands in the mail, gossips awhile, goes into the convenient “ licensed to sell ” for a taste of something, and the police saunter down for the mail and look you over, judiciously but not offensively, and at last you make another start.

Arrived at the Sound, you find a nice-looking hotel for such a remote place. There is any amount of liquor to be got : you can also get the never-varying chop or steak served up with another variety of miserable cooking, but you cannot get a bit of fish any more than if the sea were five hundred miles off instead of lapping on the rocks less than a perch away. Was pulled across the Sound by two young girls, who handled the big oars as if they were used to them, and urged the boat with its load of men across the green waters very swiftly with their strong white arms. As we neared the island of Achill trees were conspicuous by their absence, and purple heather was plentiful.

Achill island is a treeless place. There are mountains beyond mountains lying against the sky, heather clad or mossgrown ; there are small lakes lying at the foot of mountains or between mountains ; there are dreary expanses of bog stretching for miles on each side of the road between us and the mountains, and rising out of the bog are wee bits of fields and most horrible habitations. We passed the plantation, noticeable because there is not another, that Mr. Pike has coaxed to flourish round his fine house. There are dark green firs, feathery light green larches, birches, and other trees that dress in green only when summer comes ; great clumps of laurel and rhododendron, the latter one mass of blossoms that almost hide the leaves beneath their rosy purple. Mr. Pike has already made for himself a delicious looking home amid this barren waste. It enriched our eyes to look at it.

Mr. Pike and Mr. Stoney, of the castellated new building down at the edge of Clew Bay, have the distinction of being the most unpopular landlords in this part of the country. After we passed Mr. Pike's place there were no more trees. The houses are very bad indeed ; the cattle in the pasture are of the small native breed, and have little appearance of milk ; the sheep are very miserable and scraggy. I have often heard of Cook's recipes saying, " Take the scrag end of a piece of mutton." These recipes must have emanated from Achill Island, where the mutton must be pretty much all scrag.

After we drove a long way—what appeared a long way—I do not believe they measure all the crooks and turns of this most serpentine of roads into the miles—we passed the establishment of lay brothers called the Monastery. There is quite a block of white buildings, and a good many reclaimed fields, green with the young crops, lie in the valley below them. There is a bell in a cupola that will call to work and worship, and a chapel where they meet to pray. The valley where their fields lie stretches to the sea, and in the bay lay a smack of some kind by which they trade to Westport. They labor with their own hands, so have not the name of employing any laborers, but have the name of dispensing charity. I should have liked to see the buildings and the brethren, but did not make the attempt.

At length we came to Dugart, the Missionary settlement. A little row of white-washed houses on one side of a street that ran up hill, another row of whitewashed houses that ran along the brow of the hill at a right angle, Slieve Mor behind towering up between the village and the sea ; below the hill at the foot of another mountain is the rectory, beside it the church, both having a trimming of young trees ; some good fields, the best I have seen in Achill, and a pretty garden lie round both rectory and church. This is the mission village of Dugart.

At the corner where the two rows of whitewashed houses meet is the Post Office. As we drove up there was a gentleman with a northern kindness in his face, a long brown beard, an unmistakable air of authority, whom we found out was the rector of Achill. After introduction and some conversation, he kindly invited me to the rectory after I had brushed off some of the dust of travel.

The Dugart hotel possesses a large collection of stuffed sea birds, the proprietor having taste and skill in that direction, and I was enabled to take a nearer view of specimens of the birds that sail and scream round the Achill mountains, eagles and gulls, puffins and cormorants, than I would otherwise have done. After a little rest and refreshment I walked down the hill to the lonely, lovely rectory in the valley below.

There is a solidity about a stone house, stone porch and stone wall in every part of Ireland ; a strength that makes one think how easily a house could be turned into a fortalice at a short notice.

I confess, I liked this rector, so tall and stately, with his long beard, grave, kindly face, northern speech, penetrating look, with a certain air of authority as became a pastor in charge. When he asked me pleasantly if I had come as a friend, I thought at once of the Bethlehem elders to Samuel, " Comest thou peaceably ?" I think I almost envied this man his position, the power which he holds as a leader to be a patriot worker for the good of his countrymen and countrywomen on the barren isle of Achill.

We walked upon the shady path that leads from rectory to church, under green arches of leafage, in the real dim religious light which grand cathedrals only imitate. There is a nice useful garden on one side of the path, stocked with things good for food and pleasant to the eye. Along one side is a hedge eight feet high of fuschia growing thus in the open air, proving that it is possible to turn sheltered spots of barren Achill into nooks suggestive of Eden.

The little church to which this romantic path brought us was such a church as one might snuggle down in to learn the way to Zion, and enjoy the comfort of the old, old story. This mission was begun by the Rev. Edward Naugh, I believe, in the famine time. It invaded the island with bread and the Bible. I hear that it has done much good, chiefly, I believe, in educating and emigrating the people.

The village of the mission opposite the rectory has two schools, an inn or hotel, a co-operative store, a post-office, some dwellings of coastguard's men and other official and semi-official people, the agent over the mission property for one. A little further away on the sea sands is a miserable collection of cabins inhabited by the people. There were some poor-looking farmhouses dotting the mountain side.

As far as I could learn there was no industry on Achill Island but tilling their miserable crofts. The fishing was monopolized by one man, a Mr. Hector, a Scotchman. The people as far as I could learn had no boats fitted for deep sea fishing and the coast fishing was monopolized. They are said to be lazy, unthrifty, unenergetic. I enquired a little about this and it seemed to me as if there was a door locked and barred between them and any field for the display of energy with hope—without an atmosphere of hope, energy is a plant that will not thrive. It is hope, and nothing but hope, that nerves the backwoods settler of Canada to do battle with summer heat and winter snow, with the inexorable logic of circumstances, and he conquers because he has hope. Over every peasant holding in Ireland of the western part there is written, "Here is no hope." The superior mind looks upon the peasantry as minors who are not able to judge for themselves, who need to be tied down with office rules, and held in by proprietary bit and bridle. They admit that they do well in the free air of Canada, but they contend that thrift, forethought, frugality is produced in them by desperation. I see desperation all round here producing a recklessness and despair. I know that hope is the star that shines for the backwoods Canadian to light him to competence.

I did not see any of the mission tenants in Achill. I saw nothing but what lay on the surface. I have no doubt that the mission has done good in many ways, great good. I am sorry, however, that they lost the opportunity of testing the capabilities of the islanders to nourish as peasant proprietors. It is not always well for the church to have vineyards and oliveyards, menservants and maidservants. It is well sometimes for the church to come down like her Master and to be alongside of the discouraged mortal who has toiled through a life-time and caught nothing but hunger and rags, to share with them the toil and want.

Remembrances of The Great Famine—The "Planted" Scotch Farmers—A Beautiful Edifice.

On my return from Achill Island I decided that I would not take another post car drive to Ballycroy, and returned to Mulraney again along the same road in the shadow of the mountains. On to Newport we drove, back over the road winding along the side of Clew Bay, and across the head of the bay through the lonely country leading back to Westport.

The driver, a weather-beaten man in a weather-worn drab coat, entertained me with tales of the clearances made in the famine time that left the country-side so empty. It is hard to believe that ever human beings were so cruel to other human beings in this Christian land, and that it passed unknown, or comparatively unknown, to the rest of the world.

This man told, with a certain grim satisfaction, of what he called God's judgments which had fallen on "exterminators." The common people of the West have a firm belief that God is on their side, no matter what trouble he allows to come over them. "Sure I do feel my heart afire when gentlemen sit on my car driving through this loneliness an' talk of over-population. Over-population ! and the country empty !" I wish I could remember all this old man said, but I can only recall snatches here and there.

It is most amazing to think that, when the world at large was sending help to save the Irish people alive in the awful visitation, so many were throwing their tenants out on the road to die. And these people had by hard toil won a living here and paid rent. Every rood of this land, every cabin had helped to swell princely revenues, until the finger of God came down in famine, and then, when the revenue stopped, there was no pity, and it seemed to these poor people that there was no one that regarded them. I do not wish to ever come to that time of life when I can hear of the scenes that wasted this country without feeling a passion of sorrow and regret.

I spoke of these things to a worthy gentleman resident in another part of the country and he brushed it aside as if it were a fly, saying, "Oh, that is long past, thirty years and more." Memory is very strong among people who seem to have little to look forward to—the past seems the principal outlook. Every incident of the French landing here so far back as '98 is told to me in the West here with a freshness of detail as if it happened a few years ago ; one can imagine, therefore, how the cruel evictions of the famine time fit themselves into the memory of the people, especially as the rush of fresh evictions are awaking all the horrors of the past.

It seemed a gloomy satisfaction to this man to tell over what he considered God's judgments which had fallen on exterminators. He pointed out to me many who seemed doomed to be the last of their race.

At last we passed the long, dead wall which encloses the magnificent demesne of the Marquis of Sligo and drew up at Westport once more. The local papers which await me are full of Miss Gardner and her war with her tenants—more evictions, emergency men from Dublin to hold possession and all the rest. I was introduced by a Protestant clergyman to a gentleman connected with the executive of the law for a quarter of a century. He knows the heartrending inner history of legal eviction. This gentleman has a wonderful tenderness in his heart for Miss Gardner. "Sure she grew up among us. The other one (Miss Pringle) found her as kindly a woman as was on God's earth and has made an ogre of her."

I will give an extract or two out of the softest part of the statement he has drawn up for me.

He tells of a landlord who evicted whole townlands in 1847. He hated the people because the famine swept over them. He became possessed with the same ideas as other landlords of the period, whose income had diminished through the visitation of God, that if the present possessors were rooted out and depopulated lands planted with Scotchmen, their skill and capital would prevent a recurrence of famine.

Now it is a fact freely attested to me by clergymen of different denominations that the planted people of Mayo required help, and help to a very large amount to keep them from starvation during the last scarcity. On many estates in Mayo and the adjoining parts of Sligo the Protestant population would have died of hunger but for the large help given both denominationally and otherwise. They could not have seeded their grounds but for seed freely given them. Fields in Mayo this season are lying bare because the wretched people are not able to get seed to put in the ground. Some of the planted people complained to me that though when they settled on their present lands they got them cheap, two shillings and sixpence an acre for wild land, yet as they improved their land the rent was raised to five, to seven and six, to fourteen, and now to over a pound an acre. These men also complained that they could not possibly exist at all during these last seasons and pay the rent which was laid on them in consequence of the improvements done by their own labor. I find by the most conclusive proof that a difference of religious belief did not enable the settlers any more than the natives to pay a rent that could not be produced from the soil. The desire to change the nationality and religion of his tenants was so strong in one landlord that, in the words of my informant, "A scene of ruthless havoc began among his tenantry. To stimulate the slowness of the crowbar brigade he was known to tear down human habitations with his own hands." I remember these poor people standing in the market in those dark days of famine, having their bits of furniture for sale on the streets, and there were none to buy. I have heard the wailing of men, women and children on the coach-top day after day, when these fortunate unfortunates were escaping from their native land forever. I saw those who could not go in the agonies of death in the fever sheds. These scenes happened over thirty years ago, but they will never be forgotten. Four large townlands, on which eighty homes had been, became a wilderness of grass and rank weeds. No Scotch were forthcoming for the wrecked farms. There was a Nemesis in store for him. His day of eviction came about, and in his trouble his tenants saw retribution. As charity kept some of his tenants alive, so he also was indebted to the charity of friends, and passed away to meet his tenants at a bar where high blood or aristocratic connections do not sway the Judge who sits on the throne of justice, nor does party prejudice blind his eyes.

When Miss Gardner came of age it took all the property of her father to pay the money secured to her by her mother's settlement, and she entered into possession in his stead. Like Queen Elizabeth, whom Miss Gardner greatly resembles, she had in her youth known troubles ; sympathy for these trials, so well known to the peasantry, made them receive her with open arms and open hearts.

In mercy to the readers, I will only say that Miss Gardner has intense courage and an intellect of masculine strength, and resembles Queen Elizabeth in more ways than one. It is a great pity that she has not Queen Bess's popularity or her care for her people.

Westport, when I have time to look at it, is a very pretty town. Its buildings, its hotels and the warehouses on the quay look as if it once had an extensive and flourishing trade, or was prepared for and expecting it. There was, I am told, once a flourishing linen trade here, but it has gone to decay. The town is in a little hollow, with pleasant tree-crowned green hills rising all round it ; at one side is the demesne of the Marquis of Sligo, which is open to the public. These grounds extend for miles, and are as beautiful as gorgeous trees, green grass, dark woods, waters that leap and flash, spanned by rustic bridges, can make them. There are winding walks leading through the green fields, under trees, into woods, up hill and down, into shady glens, where you might wander for miles and lose yourself in green-wood solitudes.

Crowds of Westport folk, in the calm evening, saunter through the grounds and enjoy their beauty.

The little town has a subdued expression of prosperity. You feel conscious that some business is going on that enables the inhabitants of the town to live comfortably and to dress respectably. You hear of the mills of the Messrs. Livingstone, of their business in trailing and land-owning, until you are convinced that they are the centre round which this little world revolves.

I had a lady pointed out to me here as being in such embarrassed circumstances, owing to the non-payment of rent, that her son was obliged to join the police force to earn a living. I heard also great sympathy expressed for another gentleman in Dublin who has many sons, whom he has brought up to do nothing, and who has been reduced by the strike against rent to absolute poverty. I am told that banks in Dublin are glutted with family silver left as security for loans. These people are to be pitied, for poverty is poverty in purple or in rags ; but when poverty comes to actual want, it is still more pitiful.

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

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