

Clonmel To Michelstown 1834

Ireland in 1834. A journey throughout Ireland, during the spring, summer, and autumn of 1834

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Journey to Clonmel—Cahir, and its beautiful neighbourhood—Lord Glengall—The Catholic Chapel, and a Scene—The Priesthood—Condition of the People—Scenery of the *Suire*—Fine Gardens—Cahir Fair—Weddings in this part—Road to Clonmel—Prosperity of the Town—Trade of Clonmel—Corn Mills in England and in Ireland—Mr. Bianconi—Employment of Labour—Religious Sects—General indications of prosperity—Libraries—Public Institutions—State of Society in the Southern Counties—Environs of Clonmel—Journey to Mitchelstown.

I LEFT Tipperary, for Cahir and Clonmel, the evening following my arrival.

It is impossible to conceive any drive more beautiful than this. The Galtee range of mountains lay to the right, at but a short distance ; and these, under a sinking sun, exhibited the most beautiful diversities of light and shade. The nearer heights, sometimes close to the road, were covered with thriving plantations ; magnificent parks, with the finest timber scattered over them, were passed by in succession ; and finer crops of grain, or more beautiful grass, eye never rested on.

Cahir, where I arrived a little after sunset, is charmingly situated ; I am not sure that I do not prefer its picturesque beauties to those of Avoca. There is every constituent of the picturesque—wood, a fine river, a bridge, ivied ruins, and a magnificent back-ground of mountains. The view, from the windows of the inn, embraces all these. The fine domain of Lord Glengall commences just at the back of the town ; and with the Suir running through the centre of it, abounds in scenes of beauty. Lord Glengall has not of late had much in his power ; but great expectations have been formed, from his lordship's late alliance, and from his avowed intention of residing on his property. The land on this property is not considered to be much over-let. It averages, to the actual possessors, about 40s. ; and is generally excellent land. Lord Glengall himself does not receive any thing like this average, a great part of the estate being in the hands of middle-men.

The town of Cahir lies on the side of a hill ; and is adorned by two very pretty spires ; one, belonging to the new Protestant Church, a handsome little edifice ; the other, appertaining to the Catholic chapel, a grander and far larger edifice. A considerable number of the most recently erected Catholic chapels have spires, which, in height and architecture, quite eclipse those of the churches of the Establishment.

I am sorry to be obliged, in this place, to record a fact, to which I could not have given credit on any evidence, less conclusive than that of my own eyes. The Roman Catholic chapel is newly erected, and is yet unfinished ; and I was told, that the anxiety to obtain funds for its completion, gave rise to the enactment of some curious scenes at the door. I went there, about ten o'clock ; and I certainly did witness a scene of a most singular kind. The gates were shut, and four men stood by. One had a silver salver, to receive the larger contributions : two were provided with wooden ladles, for the copper offerings ; and these they shook in the ears of every one who approached : and one man, the priest, stood just within the gate, armed with a shillelah. *No one was admitted who did not contribute !* I saw a man attempt to pass without

contributing; and I saw the priest push and buffet the man, and, at length, strike him several times with his stick, and knock his hat off his head ! This is no matter of hearsay. I saw it : and I saw from thirty to forty persons kneeling outside of the gate, on the high road,—poor persons, who had not a halfpenny to spare. To be more and more sure, that this was the cause of their remaining without, I gave some halfpence amongst them, and saw them admitted.

The influence of the Catholic priesthood in this neighbourhood is great ; but, from all that I could learn, and from conversations I have myself held with the lower classes, I have some reason to think it is on the decline. An instance occurred only a few days before I left Tipperary, in which a Catholic priest who attempted to interfere in a fight, was set upon by both parties, and treated with very little reverence.

Mr. O'Connell's proposition, respecting the allowances to the Roman Catholic clergy, created a great sensation in this part of Ireland : the priests generally affirmed their hostility to the proposal; but I should take the liberty of greatly doubting whether that hostility would be very obstinate, in case of the proposal being actually before them, for acceptance or rejection. Some are of opinion, that its acceptance would be a death-blow to Catholicism ; but this opinion must not be taken up too hastily : so long as dues are exacted by the priests, for the performance of those offices, upon which the people consider their title to heaven to depend, so long will the priest receive these dues ; and so long, therefore, will a large portion of influence be retained.

Cahir is rather an improving place. The flour trade is pretty extensively carried on, both in grinding, and in carrying to Clonmel. Very extensive com mills have recently been erected ; and they are in full employment. About 80,000 barrels of wheat were brought into Cahir last year : and the trade is on the increase. But, notwithstanding this trade, want of employment is felt in Cahir. I noticed, on Sunday, in coming from church, the street crowded with labourers, with spades and other implements in their hands, standing to be hired ; and I ascertained that any number of these men might have been engaged, on constant employment, at 6*d*. per day, without diet ; for partial employment 6*d*., with diet, or 9*d*., without diet, was usually given.

I remained some little time at Cahir, and in its neighbourhood ; and was delighted with the scenery on the Suir. I shall not soon forget the charming scenes which a day, spent with some hospitable friends, introduced me to. The climate, in this part of Ireland, must be very favourable to the productions of nature ; and, after seeing a garden in this neighbourhood, I found reason to think, that I had overrated the exclusive capabilities of Guernsey and Jersey. In the garden to which I allude, I found azahas in the utmost perfection ; magnolia ; aloe ; camellia ; arbutus, quite a tree ; evergreen magnolia ; myrtle ; althea frutex ; daphne ; rhododendron, of all colours ; and from thirty to forty species of holly, in flower : besides innumerable fine specimens of laurel and bay. All of these were growing in the open air, and without flower-pots.

The whole valley of the Suire, here, is beautiful ; there are deep woods, and green slopes, and a sparkling river ; and two fine mountain ranges—the Galtee and the Lismore hills ; and, if one descends as far, the ruined castle of Ardfinane, and its village, the property of Lord Donoughmore, who sadly neglects it. I understand, however, that his lordship is fettered by middle-men ; and is but partially responsible for the state of Ardfinane. A great part of the population is Protestant ; and the place is, altogether, miserably poor.

It chanced to be the fair at Cahir on one of the days I spent in its neighbourhood ; but the unfailling accompaniment of Tipperary fairs—fighting—seldom takes place at Cahir ; for there are extensive cavalry barracks, and a regiment of dragoons, within five minutes ride of Cahir. One does not see so much rustic gallantry at an Irish, as at an English fair. In fact, from

all that I could learn, marriage in this country is a very commercial concern ; arranged by parents ; and, respecting which, there is as much higgling as about any other bargain. Girls are extremely obedient ; and sometimes never see the bridegroom until the moment of the marriage ; for it not unfrequently happens that the girl's father and the intended husband differ, about a pig, or a chair, or a table, less or more ; and another " boy," who chances to stand in need of a wife, making a more liberal offer, he is accepted, and the first lover discarded.

On the night of the fair I returned to the town, about midnight, having been dining in the country, a mile or two distant. I met several persons on the road, but no interruption or insult of any kind.

I left Cahir, at an early hour in the morning, for Clonmel, the largest town in the county of Tipperary, and one of the most important towns in the interior of Ireland. After a charming drive of nine miles, through a very agreeable and improving country, I passed under the gateway of Clonmel, and alighted at " the Great Globe."

At once, on entering Clonmel, one perceives a hundred indications of an improving town. This was truly refreshing, after Kilkenny, Cashel, and the many other wretched places I had passed through and sojourned in. For the last fifteen years the prosperity of Clonmel has been steadily increasing, and it is, at present, a decidedly improving town. It is the great point of export for the county of Tipperary,—which is one great granary,—as well as for parts of other counties ; for it is the first point at which water carriage commences.

The chief branches of the trade of Clonmel are, the corn trade, the bacon trade, and the butter trade. The first of these is very large, not fewer than between two and three hundred thousand barrels of wheat being annually brought into Clonmel. The corn-mills in, and about Clonmel, are upon a very extensive scale, and are very numerous. A corn-mill in England is, generally, a little picturesque building, crossing a rushing stream, and employing " the miller and his men,"—some half-dozen perhaps. Corn-mills at Clonmel are very different things : they are like the great factories, or mills, which we find in the English manufacturing districts, and employ almost as many persons.

The bacon trade here is also very extensive,—not fewer than 50,000 pigs being on an average killed in one year. Last year, some considerable diminution in this trade took place ; owing probably to several conspiring causes ;—among which may be named, a preference in England of English curing ; the abrogation of the duty on salt, which lessens the expense of English curing ; and the constantly increasing facilities of steam conveyance, for the export of the live pig. The butter trade, which is still large, has lately been somewhat on the decline. It is common in Clonmel, for all these three branches of trade to be united.

Clonmel has other inferior branches of trade, which give considerable employment. There is a very large distillery in the neighbourhood, as well as several breweries ; there is also a branch of the calico manufacture : and I must not omit, amongst the sources of employment and prosperity, the establishment of Mr. Bianconi, of which Clonmel is the headquarters ; for it is obvious, that the care of so many horses—the wages paid to so many men,—the building, and painting, and repairing of so many cars,—the making and mending of so much harness,—must give profitable employment to a great number of persons. Clonmel would be greatly advantaged by the improvement of the navigation of the Suir, which only admits boats of small tonnage up to Clonmel. But this, I fear, is a distant prospect ; since it would require a larger sum to effect it, than, for some time at least, is likely to be vested in Irish improvements. There are not, in Clonmel, many able-bodied labourers out of employment ; destitute persons are of course found, and some mendicants ; though the number is few, con-

sidering the size of the place ; labourers however live little better here than they do elsewhere ; and a great part of the higher wages of artizans is spent in whiskey. In Clonmel, there are no fewer than 160 licensed houses.

I was pleased to learn, that great harmony exists in Clonmel between Catholic and Protestant. They live very amicably together. The population of Clonmel is about 18,000 ; of whom about 15,000 are Catholics, the remaining 3000 being of various sects. There are about 1800 Episcopalians, and a considerable number of the Society of Friends ; the members of which, in Clonmel, are generally prosperous, and somewhat aristocratic. I noticed among the Quakeresses, more smartness of dress, and a greater disregard of the strict *costume*, than in any other place I ever visited.

The population of Clonmel wears a respectable look ; one sees few ragged and bare-footed people, and few idlers. There is an appearance of something doing ; a bustle and throng, evidently arising from people having an object in view. The shops, too, are good, well filled, and well frequented. Nor must I omit another unequivocal sign of improvement. I found two very respectably-stocked booksellers' shops, and two respectable circulating libraries. These were the first libraries I had seen, since leaving Kilkenny : neither at Thurles, Cashel—the archiepiscopal city of Cashel—nor at Tipperary, is there any circulating library, or book society. This is certainly a singular and unpleasant fact. Towns in England, containing, as these do, from seven to ten thousand inhabitants, would certainly afford at least one public library, and more than one reading society. A library was attempted at Tipperary ; but it was not supported, and either was lately, or now is, on sale.

I visited the chief public institutions in Clonmel ; the most important of which, is the House of Industry. One thing struck me as an error. I saw a great number of persons, who were sent there by a magistrate, for no other reason than because they were females of bad character.—This I cannot but regard as hurtful to the general morals, and indirectly tending to the corruption of female character ; for the vacuum occasioned by forcibly withdrawing these individuals, is speedily filled. A large lunatic asylum is now in progress ; and this, during the last two years, has been another source of employment to the inhabitants of Clonmel.

Besides its principal commercial streets, Clonmel has many other good streets, inhabited evidently by respectable individuals ; and there are a considerable number of resident gentry in the neighbourhood who keep up much friendly intercourse : and having mentioned this word, I am reminded by it, that I have not said any thing of the state of society, since leaving Dublin. With few exceptions, and unless for some particular object, I do not mention the names of individuals from whom I received attentions. But I have seen enough of society in Wexford, Waterford, Kilkenny, and Tipperary counties, to entitle me to speak of it.

I should say, that throughout the country, there is a great deal of intercourse, and a constant interchange of visits ; and that every one, whose means are sufficient, and whose house is large enough, has resident company : and I must add, that a considerable difference is observable in the mode of life among the same class of persons, in England and in Ireland. I think there is generally more display in Ireland, and a less apparent regard to economy : though it must be recollected, that this display costs less in Ireland, than in England. Two or three servants are seen waiting at table in Ireland, in a house where in England, one would suffice : but then, wages are at least a third lower than they are in England ; and it costs a much less sum to support servants in Ireland, because they are contented with a different description of food. Vehicles, too, are more common. Every body keeps a jaunting car ; but then a jaunting car costs but 20*l.* or 25*l.* building, with all its et ceteras ; and there is no tax on either carriage or horse ; and in many counties, no toll-bars.

People entertain handsomely in Ireland ; but in looking over the dinner table, one must recollect the difference between London and the Irish markets, in the price of provisions. A pair of fowls, that in London would cost 5s. or 6s., may be bought in most parts I have yet visited for 1s. or 1s. 6d. The turkey, that in London would cost 10s., 12s., or 15s., is placed on the table in Ireland, for 2s. 6d. or 3s. : and I have seen a roasting pig, which could not have been purchased in any part of England for 6s., bought in Ireland for 1s. 6d. The profusion of a dinner table, therefore, is not an expensive profusion.

In the article of drink, there is less apparent, as well as less real expense, than in England : in the best society, little wine is taken; and unless in the very highest society, whiskey punch is universally introduced. I have seen whiskey punch at the tables of country gentlemen, worth at least five or six thousand per annum ; and where, in nothing else, any deviation could be found from the elegance which pervades the dinner table of men of equal fortune in England. Excellent claret, however, is always at the option of the stranger, if he prefer it.

Of Irish hospitality towards strangers, I need say nothing : that hospitality, is not mere civility ; it is kindness also. It must be borne in mind, that in the observations I make at present, I am not qualified to speak of other parts of Ireland, than of the counties of Wexford, Waterford, Kilkenny, and Tipperary. Of Connaught society, I shall be enabled to speak by and by.

The environs of Clonmel are extremely pretty. The slopes of the hills which form the right bank of the Suir, and which, opposite to Clonmel, are of very considerable altitude, are cultivated almost to the summit ; reminding me, in some places, of the slopes of the lower Pyrenees, in the neighbourhood of *Bagnères*. From an elevation called Fairy Hill, situated on the right bank of the river, about half a mile below Clonmel, a magnificent view over the valley of the Suir is laid open,—not surpassed, in richness and variety, by any of the celebrated vales of England or Wales.

Many delightful excursions may be made from Clonmel : particularly up the banks of the river, and through the domains of Mr. Bagwell, Lord Donoughmore, and Colonel Greene. Lord Donoughmore's is a very fine domain, abounding in magnificent specimens of ash, elm, and lime trees ; and Kilmanahan Castle, the residence of Colonel Greene, is a fine structure, and beautifully situated. I am sorry I can say nothing in favour of these three landlords. Mr. Bagwell, to whom a great part of Clonmel belongs, does no good, and evinces little sympathy with the people : and the virtues of Colonel Greene, as a resident landlord, are far from being conspicuous. Mr. Bagwell is still young ; and it is to be hoped, may yet discover what are the true interests of a landlord.

Having spent some pleasant days at Clonmel, I left that town for Mitchelstown. The first nine miles of the road I was already acquainted with ; for the road to Mitchelstown, travelled by Bianconi's cars, lies through Cahir. There is, indeed, another road, by Clogheen and Ballyporeen, famed in song ; but the road being (as I was informed) uninteresting, and there being no public conveyance, I preferred taking advantage of Bianconi. Between Cahir and Mitchelstown, there is nothing very attractive ; the country is not all under cultivation, nor susceptible of a high state of improvement. The Galtee hills lie all the way on the left, at no great distance from the road ; and offer to the eye those pleasant resting-places, and those agreeable diversities of light and shadow, in which mountain views are prolific. I reached Mitchelstown early in the afternoon, and established myself in the Kingston Arms' Hotel ; where I remained for about ten days, writing up my notes, digesting my information, and occasionally enlarging my observations : I shall always recollect with pleasure, my sojourn at Mitchelstown.

Mitchelstown and its situation—Lord Kingston's Domain and Castle—Miserable condition of the People of Mitchelstown, and details—State of the surrounding Country—Rents—The Sessions at Mitchelstown—Lord Kingsbro's Mountain Lodge—Prices of Provisions—Mitchelstown Caves—Journey to Mallow—Donneraille—Mallow—State of the Poor of Mallow and of the Neighbourhood—Farmers—Mallow as a Watering-Place—Suburbs—Duty on Glass—English and Irish Ideas of Comfort—Difficulties in the way of Improvement—Schools—Markets—and rough Manners—The Vicinity of Mallow—Neighbouring Landlords—Bad feeling between the Aristocracy and the People—Return to Mitchelstown—Its excellent Hotel.

I LIKE greatly the situation of Mitchelstown,—fine mountain boundaries form its horizon ; and its neighbourhood offers an agreeable diversity of scenery, in the inequalities of its surface, and the abundance of wood : but above all, there is here the splendid domain of the Earl of Kingston, of which I shall afterwards have occasion to speak more in detail. There is one very singular feature about Mitchelstown. It possesses, what I believe no other town of the same size, or of even much larger dimensions, can boast—a square ; not the mere market-place of a country town ;—there is that besides ; but a square surrounded by well-built houses, and as large as some of the smaller of the London squares. One half of this square, consisting of about seventeen houses, is called the College ; and is an endowment of the Kingston family, for the reception of reduced respectable families, who have a free house and 40*l.* per annum ;—the house, too, being kept in repair. The gate into the Kingston domain forms part of one side of the square, and the hotel is opposite to it.

Free admission into Lord Kingston's park is a great advantage, possessed by all the inhabitants. The gardens even are open to all respectable persons. Lord Kingston's domain contains about twelve hundred English acres ; and whether in forest paths, or grassy walks, or wide gravel roads, offers all that can be desired, either for the gay promenade or the solitary ramble. The house—Mitchelstown castle—is one of the most magnificent in Ireland : it is built in the castellated form ; and both from its extent and height, is a most imposing object from every part of the surrounding country, seen, as it generally is, towering above the surrounding woods. The interior is not unworthy of the external appearance of the edifice. It has a magnificent gallery, fine suites of apartments, and all besides, that comfort can add to splendour.

Mitchelstown and its neighbourhood have suffered grievously, by the late affliction which has fallen upon the Kingston family :—the deprivation of an expenditure of 40,000*l.* per annum, has been most seriously felt in the country ; and the deterioration of Mitchelstown and its neighbourhood, has fast followed the misfortune to which I have alluded ;—if I were to search Ireland throughout, I could not find a better illustration of the difference between residence and non-residence, than in the present situation of Mitchelstown.

The evils which have resulted from the misfortune of the Kingston family, affect the whole of the lower classes in the town and its vicinity :—when I was in Mitchelstown, the distress was so urgent, that in order to prevent the actual starvation of hundreds, a public meeting was held, and a subscription entered into ; and the scenes, which the investigation that followed, for the distribution of meal, &c., laid open, were of the most aggravated misery. Will it be believed that in a town containing about five thousand inhabitants, *eighteen hundred persons* were found in a state of starvation ? at least *twelve hundred* of these were unemployed labourers and their families ; the remaining *six hundred* consisting of the aged, the infirm, widows, and their children. In one side of one street, five hundred and seventy persons were found requiring relief : and besides the eighteen hundred requiring relief in the town, nearly twelve hundred more were in a state of destitution, in the immediate surround-

ing country and within the parish. These are facts, and fearful facts they are : and well worthy the attention of those who are inimical to the institution of *any* system of poor-laws, or of a labour-rate ; or who look coolly upon any proposal for providing extensive employment. I should like to know how Dr. Chalmers' "sympathies" would have permanently provided for the six hundred aged and infirm. I do not approve of the argument of those who say, "at present the son supports the infirm father—the brother, the aged sister ;—why disturb that arrangement which nature points out ?" Ireland is not a country in which additional burdens ought to be thrown upon the industrious poor. The willingness of an industrious son—a labourer at eight-pence a-day—to support his father, is no reason why the rich, Who are more able than he, ought not to give of their abundance.

The property around Mitchelstown is, upon the whole, in a good condition, as to the rents and the comforts of the landholders. A great part is held directly from Lord Kingston ; and it may be fairly said, that there are no rack-rents. The average rent of land to the occupier, may be stated at about 25s. The mountain farms are yet very low, as low as 5s. an acre : and it was no unusual thing with Lord Kingston, to remit altogether, the rent of a man who was active and of improving habits. Few thatched farm-houses are to be seen. They are mostly stone slated houses, built in the English mode. Where I know that there are the means of comfort within, I like to see a neat exterior. Land is generally under a fair state of husbandry ; though no where in the condition of which it is susceptible.

Every where in Ireland, when the opportunity presented itself, I attended the sessions, and I did not neglect the opportunity in Mitchelstown. Here, I was pleased with the administration of justice,—as indeed I had generally been, elsewhere : it appeared to me to be patient, painstaking, and equitable. A stranger is exceedingly struck with the different complexion of the cases which come before an English and an Irish sessions. Among the twenty-six cases which were called, on the day on which I attended the sessions at Mitchelstown, there was not one case of theft. Five were cases of assault, generally arising out of the merest trifles : and some of these, assaults of the most aggravated character—so much so, that in England they would certainly have been transportation cases : here they were punished summarily, by fine, and imprisonment at hard labour. The rest of the cases were made up of summonses for wages. In these, I observed generally, a great spirit of litigation, and a good deal of quibbling : the sums claimed, were mostly for wages at eight-pence a day, without diet ; and one claim was for wages at so low a rate as five-pence. This, however was claimed by a youth. In the cases for assault, the weapons with which the assault was committed, were generally produced,—staves, that would have felled an ox ; or stones that would have shivered a three inch board. These latter are the most usual, and fatal weapons in the hands of an irritated, or malevolent Irishman. A stone is hurled at once, upon the least provocation ; and it is with stones, that many of the most savage and deliberate murders have been committed.

A visit to Lord Kingston's mountain lodge, where Lord Kingsboro' usually resides, forms an agreeable excursion from Mitchelstown. It lies about five miles from Mitchelstown, among the outposts of the Galtee mountains ; and is certainly a delightful retreat. The "lodge" is built on a mount, which rises out of a hollow ; and all above, below, and around, are thick fir woods, with a fine back-ground of dark mountains. A rapid stream, too, circles round the height upon which the house stands.

I must not forget to mention the holy well, which is near Mitchelstown. The Catholic priest has greatly beautified the approach to this spot, which is much resorted to by the devout, for devotional purposes. I have often seen them praying on the brink of the well, which is generally believed to work miraculous cures, and is dedicated to some saint whose name I forget—a saint, not so famous, I think, as some others.

Mitchelstown is a very cheap place of residence : and in proof of this, I annex the following list of prices.

Beef sells at from $3\frac{1}{2}d.$ to $4d.$ per lb. Mutton, at from $4d.$ to $5d.$ Lamb, in the season, about $3d.$ Veal is rarely to be had, and is not of a good quality. Pork, about $2\frac{1}{2}d.$, but is sometimes as low as $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ per lb. Bacon pigs, average $20s.$ per cwt.

Fish is scarce. A good cod may be bought for $2s. 6d.$ A haddock, $6d.$ to $1s.$ The very best salmon may be bought at $5d.$ per lb., and trout a $1s.$ a dozen.

Rabbits are sold at $8d.$ a couple ; turkeys, $3s.$ a couple ; geese. $1s. 10d.$ a pair ; ducks. $1s.$ a pair ; fowls $10d.$ to $1s.$ a pair.

Bread of the first quality is $2d.$ per lb. Fresh butter, $9d.$ per lb. in summer ; and $1s.$ or $1s. 1d.$ in winter. Milk is sold at $3\frac{1}{2}d.$ for four pints, all the year round. Vegetables are not supplied in great variety, or plenty, except potatoes, which average about $2\frac{3}{4}d.$ per stone.

Coals are $26s.$ a ton : turf, $1s. 8d.$ a horse load.

A mason will receive for his labour $2s.$ a day ; a carpenter, $2s. 6d.$; a slater, $2s.$; but they cannot get constant employment.

The rent of a good house, containing two sitting rooms, three bed rooms, good attics, a commodious basement story, with garden, coach house, and stables, rates at about $20l.$ per annum. Smaller, but respectable houses, may be had at $10l.$

Some of my readers may have heard of the recently discovered Mitchelstown, or as they are sometimes called, Kingston, caves,—having been discovered on the property of the earl. Indisposition prevented me from visiting these caves ; and having allotted the last day of my sojourn at Mitchelstown for this visit, it was impossible for me afterwards to make up for the omission; because to have delayed my departure, would have forced me to break engagements in other parts of the country ; and in particular, one,—to meet the crown solicitor of Munster, at the Clare and Limerick assizes, which I was anxious to attend. I confess, however, that my disappointment was not great ; caves, though in Ireland, are nothing *Irish* : and I had reason to know, that there had been considerable exaggeration, on the subject of the caves. I have no great curiosity about these things myself, having seen caves and mines in abundance ; and having been always disappointed ; and I know also, that my scientific knowledge would not have enabled me to speak learnedly of stalactites, and stalagmites. Such were my grounds of consolation. I annex, however, a few particulars, gathered from the best sources.

The caves are situated about midway between Cahir, in the county of Tipperary, and Mitchelstown, in the county of Cork, but are rather the nearest to Mitchelstown ; and as the inn at Mitchelstown is of superior excellence, that is the best point to visit them from. The entrance is scarcely wider than sufficient to allow one to get in ; but it has lately been somewhat improved. After entering, you partly walk, and partly slide down an indined plane, about fifty feet in length ; and arriving then at the edge of a precipice, you descend a ladder, and reach, about twenty feet below, another inclined plane, with a very rugged bottom. This leads to one of the halls, not very large, and about thirty feet high ; and from thence the visitor creeps on all fours into another hall, where there is much to attract and please. Here are four crystallized pillars, reaching from the floor to the ceiling ; one of them, nearly twenty feet in circumference at the base, and forming an irregular cone. Besides this hall, there is what is called the gothic gallery, which is about twelve feet wide ; and the garret cave, about

thirty feet square ; the great attraction of all these, being the brilliant spar, in many places covering the bottom ; the stalactites depending from the roof ; and above all, the festooning and drapery of beautiful crystallization, which hang from the projecting rocks, in singular graceful folds. More minute description of a cave than this appears unnecessary. After rainy weather, the bottom is wet : but is passable enough at all times. A good deal of scrambling is requisite, and some creeping ; but these only give a zest to an expedition of this kind : and there can be no doubt that the caves, although the subject of ridiculous exaggeration, are worth a visit by any one, and must be extremely interesting to those who are learned in spars and stalactites.

Mallow, which lies about eighteen miles from Mitchelstown, and not very far from the centre of the county of Cork, I visited before proceeding farther south. In going to Mallow, I passed through Kildorrery, and Donneraille. The former of these scarcely requires a passing word. The latter is more interesting ; both because it is much larger, and because it is surrounded by the beautiful scenery of Lord Donneraille's domain, which contains about seven hundred acres, and abounds in fine timber. The town is poor enough. Lord Donneraille gives little encouragement to any thing calculated to improve the place ; and evinces but a very moderate sympathy with the condition of the people. His lordship's agent is well-disposed ; but his good dispositions receive small encouragement from his superior.

After leaving Donneraille, the road to Mallow is uninteresting. The country is scantily wooded ; and a great proportion of it appeared to me to be under very indifferent cultivation. There is a constant gradual descent of between two and three miles to Mallow, which lies in a hollow of the hills : but with a richly wooded and beautiful country immediately around it, and extending up and down the Blackwater river, which runs by the town.

Mallow has long had the character of being a highly respectable town ; inhabited by many respectable persons ; with a numerous resident gentry around it ; enjoying a thriving retail trade ; and a great resort of invalids, for the benefit of its waters. Some of these advantages it yet retains ; in others, it has declined. Mallow still enjoys a good trade, partly arising from the well-peopled resident neighbourhood ; and partly by the demand of the country dealers ; for there are several capitalists, tradespeople in Mallow, who lay in their stocks in London, and who supply the dealers as advantageously as if they went to Cork or Dublin. I found no complaint, therefore, of the retail trade of Mallow, except that which arose from the dull season of the year, and the low means of the agriculturists. Indeed, I should say of the chief street in Mallow, that it had as thriving a look as any English country town.

But these general indications of prosperity, and the really favourable condition of the retail trade, I found to be no index to the condition of the labouring classes. I have every reason to believe I do not speak much wide of the truth, when I assert, that seventy-five per cent, of the working classes of Mallow are not in constant employment ; and the remuneration for labour is at the lowest ebb, more than eight-pence per day, without diet, being scarcely ever given. I walked through the establishment of an extensive pawnbroker, and received from my visit no very favourable impression of the condition of even those classes above that of the labouring poor. I saw numerous articles, the property of small farmers,—articles worth from 10s. to 30s., and generally pledged, as I was informed, for payment of county rates. I was also told, that at the time when tithes were sued for, the business of the establishment was extremely flourishing, owing to the property put in pawn by the farmers.

As a resort for invalids, Mallow has greatly declined. Some years ago, it was visited, during the season, by not fewer than a hundred families on an average ; and there are not now one-sixth part of that number of visitors. Various reasons are assigned for this. It may be partly owing to the caprice of fashion, which has of late years been setting in in favour of

Cove ; but it is more the result of the increased steam intercourse with England, which permits Irish invalids to take advantage of the waters of Cheltenham, Clifton, and other places of resort across the Channel ; which, whether better than Mallow or not, have the superior attraction with which every distant place is invested. The waters of Mallow are recommended in cases of consumption, not perhaps so much with the hope of cure, as with the view of alleviating symptoms. The climate too, is mild ; the town is entirely screened from cold blasts ; and there is a great variety of beautiful and enticing drives. The Spa house is pretty and convenient.

The inhabitants of Mallow are not without their sources of indoor recreation. They have a commodious club house, with a reading room, and tolerable library ; and there is a public circulating library in the town, kept by a respectable bookseller.

Mallow, like all Irish towns, has its bad lanes, and its indifferent suburbs ; but I have seen worse cabins in most other towns. Few or none were without bedsteads, and some furniture, and glass windows—diminutive indeed—but windows nevertheless. I will not omit this opportunity of observing, that the repeal of the duty on glass would very materially tend to better the habitations of the Irish peasantry. The cabin with a bit of a glass window has quite a superior air, in comparison with its unenlightened neighbours. It must be admitted, however, in throwing out any suggestion for improvement of this kind, that the character of the Irish peasant presents some obstacles ; and that the progress of improvement in food, habitation, and clothing, will not be a rapid one : education only can check the tendencies which naturally stand in the way of improvement. There is little or nothing at present of that feeling among the Irish peasantry, which spreads comfort and neatness about and within the cottage of an English labourer ; which white-washes, or sands his floor ; polishes his table ; brightens his utensils ; twines honeysuckle and roses round his porch ; and covers his table with the materials of a comfortable meal. The Irish peasant is too easily satisfied. The English peasant will work, not only that he may live, but that he may live well and comfortably. The Irish peasant, on the contrary, will generally work only up to the acquirement of mere subsistence : he would rather be idle, than work for what he calls “ kitchen :” (i. e.) all beyond the necessities of life. But first of all, let us enable the Irish peasant to live, even without “ kitchen.” These superior tastes will follow.

Of the population of Mallow, there are about seven Catholics to one Protestant ; and the Protestants are greatly divided : the most numerous body of dissenters from the establishment being the Wesleyan Methodists. I visited one of the schools in their connexion, and found it well attended. There were two or three Catholic children present ; and I may take this opportunity of saying, that I have found frequent examples of Catholic parents sending their children to Protestant schools, because they thought their children received a better education in them than in their own ; and from my own observation, I think they are right.

In a visit which I made to the market at Mallow, I was considerably struck by the very uncivilized demeanour of the venders. I was accompanied by a highly respectable inhabitant of the town : and not contented with setting forth the excellence of their legs, loins, shoulders, &c., of the beef, mutton, and lamb exposed, they beset my companion like so many savages ; and followed him out of the market, half the length of a street ; one thrusting a quarter of lamb, the other a saddle of mutton, in his face.

I made an excursion through the beautiful country which surrounds Mallow, visiting, in leaving the town, the pretty residence of Mr. Jephson ; and the fine old castle, now ruined and ivy-grown, beautifully situated at the entrance of the pleasure-grounds. I had ample evidence in my drives round Mallow, of the extensive resident neighbourhood. Handsome or pretty villas were everywhere seen, and all inhabited by the proprietors of them ; but notwithstand-

ing this advantage, I found a fearful lack of employment for the labourer. In one parish, where I made minute inquiries, I ascertained that almost any number of labourers could have been hired for constant labour, at six-pence a day—working, out of that miserable allowance, the rent of a cabin,—perhaps eighty days' labour.

The large properties in this part of Cork are under very different management. Lord Arden, who owns a fine estate in this neighbourhood, is a noble-minded man,—perfectly liberal, if not perfectly judicious ; and studying, in every way, the comfort of his tenantry. His lordship gives no leases—a practice of which I have already spoken, as not altogether unsuitable to the present condition of Ireland, but which the growth of capital would necessarily put an end to.

A very different landlord from Lord Arden, is Lord Limerick. *He* draws the uttermost farthing.

I was sorry to learn, that a bad feeling existed in this neighbourhood, between the gentry and the lower classes. This originated in arrears of rent being demanded from those who had promised votes ; but who, when the time arrived, voted as they said, “ for their clergy and their country.” Some of these individuals were committed to prison ;—the amount of rent due was collected at the Catholic chapel door ; and the priest, heading a crowd of people, released the individuals from confinement ; and in returning through the streets, took the opportunity of haranguing the people on the tyranny of the upper classes. God forbid that I should quarrel with any man for voting in such a manner, as he conceives likely to serve his country ; or that I should defend any acts of revenge, in punishment of supposed political offences. But neither can I excuse the conduct of a minister of religion and peace, irritating the passions of the lower classes, and endeavouring to widen the breach, which unhappily now subsists, between the aristocracy and the people.

From Mallow I returned to Mitchelstown, which I now prepared to leave, for Fermoy, Lismore, Youghall and Cork.

At Mitchelstown, one of the schools under the new education board, is in operation ; but I shall abstain from making any observations upon these schools, until I have had more extensive opportunities of judging of them.

Let me not leave Mitchelstown, without doing justice to the excellence of the hotel,—which, I really think, has not a fault. Excepting in some parts of Scotland, I have never eaten such breakfasts as at Mitchelstown. As for dinners, no one could desire better. I shall not soon forget Mrs. Sing's dressed lambs' heads, or rhubarb pies ;—wine and whiskey are alike worthy of the dinner that precedes them ; and, in civility, accommodation, and moderate charges, Mitchelstown Hotel must satisfy every one.

Ireland in 1834. A journey throughout Ireland, during the spring, summer, and autumn of 1834 (1835)

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