

## Extent of Country 1835

*A tour round Ireland, through the sea-coast counties, in the autumn of 1835*

John Barrow

1836

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.....To see and admire the Giants' Causeway, the intellectual mind must accompany the eye, otherwise the visiter will be sure to go away disappointed. An Irishman, however, would be shocked to hear it slightly spoken of ; there is nothing like it, he says, in the world besides. One of their ingenious countrymen, Doctor Richardson (of *Fiorin Grass* memory), was quite indignant that Mr. Pennant should think of preferring Staffa to the Giants' Causeway ; and in a burst of national feeling, thus writes for the honour of Ireland : “ It is mortifying to read the animated description given by my friend Sir Joseph Banks of the colonnades at Staffa, and the humiliating comparison he makes between them and the diminutive productions of human architecture. I do not wish to derogate from the beauty, nor to depreciate the grandeur of the Staffa colonnades ; but as Mr. Pennant institutes the comparison, I must tell him that, while the longest pillar at Staffa is fifty-five feet, ours at Fairhead are two hundred and fifty. The continuous colonnade at Fairhead is longer than the *whole Island of Staffa* ; and the colonnade of Bengore three times as long, and one of its *two* parallel ranges of pillars equal to the solitary range in Staffa.

“ Though I never saw Staffa, I may fairly pronounce our façades to be far more stupendous ; for the highest point in the Island of Staffa is but one hundred and twenty-six feet above the level of the sea, while Pleaskin, scarcely higher than the rest of the façade, is three hundred and seventy, and the uniform columnar range of Fairhead five hundred and fifty”. [1]

But, with submission to the Doctor, Staffa and Fairhead are not objects of fair comparison ; the one, a vestibule surrounded with regular polygonal jointed pillars ; the other, a magnificent precipice faced with irregular unjointed prisms, nearly five times the dimensions of the former.

There is a little bay to the eastward of Port Noffer, which is named on the charts *Port da Spagna*, from a notion that a portion of the Spanish Armada was wrecked on this part of the coast, having been deceived by some prominent points of pillars on the summit of the precipice called the Chimney tops. There is no authority for this.

I now drove on to Bush Mills, at which place there is a tolerably good inn recently established, where travellers may remain a day or two with good accommodations and comfort ; from this place it is convenient to visit the various points of attraction along this bold coast, which to a geologist must be particularly interesting. The constant alternation of white and grey limestone and basalt, the frequent occurrence of whin-dykes penetrating the former ; the basaltic strata that caps the summit of the limestone, sometimes in a columnar shape ; the conglomerates which appear at the base, mixed with the variously tinged ochreous clays that here and there occur ; and, above all, the splendid columnar forms of the basalt which, commencing at Fairhead, extend the whole way, intermixed with limestone of brilliant whiteness,

as far as Ballycastle ;—such a variety of formations cannot fail to be highly interesting to the geologist, while the bold character of the coast must prove equally so to the general observer.

From Bush Mills I directed my course towards Portrush, taking the ruins of Dunluce Castle in my way, which are said to have a most imposing appearance from the sea ; but I cannot, ascribe to them any remarkably picturesque beauty when seen from the shore. They present an unintelligible heap of ruins, interesting only on account of their antiquity and the history connected with them. Nothing, however, could be more adapted to a scene in romance than the wild position of Dunluce Castle, perched as it is on the summit of a naked and lofty rock, surrounded by the sea, and cut off from the main land, except by a narrow stratum of rock or wall, that serves as a foot-bridge over a deep gulf, through which the sea roars below with a fearful noise. Traditional stories, indeed, are not wanting of the abduction and imprisonment of beautiful virgins by some O'Neill or O'Cahan or M'Mahon, or some other *Mac* or *O*, which O'Hallaran says are affixes of dignity and meaning, by indicating the true Milesian breed, as is fully demonstrated by an old Latin pentameter—

Per *Mac* atque *O* tu veros cognoscis Hibernos :  
His duobus detnptis, nullus Hibernus adest.

It is universally believed by the Irish, and what everybody believes must be true, that there are no snakes, nor any kind of venomous animals in Ireland, St. Patrick having laid his ban upon the whole tribe. They have plenty of frogs, however, in their swamps and bogs ; but this same O'Hallaran says they were sent, as a present from England.

“ We never had frogs in Ireland till the reign of King William. It is true some mighty sensible members of the Royal Society, in the time of Charles II., attempted to add these to the many other valuable presents sent from England, but ineffectually; as they were of Belgic origin, it would seem they could only thrive under a Dutch prince ; and these, with many exotics, were introduced at the happy revolution.” And this is History !

On arriving at Portrush, I called upon the Rev. Hamilton Maxwell, the author of that clever and most amusing book, “ The Wild Sports in the West ;” but found to my great disappointment that he had just left home ; and as I had resolved to proceed as far as Coleraine, I was deprived of the pleasure of meeting with him.

I was much pleased with Portrush, which is situated on a sort of peninsula projecting into the sea. It possesses a small but well-sheltered harbour, which is now completing, and in which were two or three small vessels at anchor ; and a very pretty little yacht, belonging to the Royal Yacht Squadron, had just come in from Southampton.

Portrush appears to be much resorted to for the purpose of bathing, and some neat and comfortable houses have been erected, all of which appeared to be inhabited.

Having seen all that I was desirous to see, I went on to Coleraine, where I had arranged to pass the night.

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## From Coleraine To Londonderry

Town of Coleraine—The River Bann and Salmon Leap—Catholic Chapel and other Public Buildings—Pleasures of a public Jaunting-Car—The Road—Limavady—First appearance of Lough Foyle and Derry—City of.

*Coleraine, 6th September.*

THE town of Coleraine is divided into two parts by the River Bann, the chief portion being on the right bank, and a wooden bridge across the river connecting it with the opposite part, or suburbs, which are not considerable. This small town, once the capital of Derry, still wears marks of its antiquity in the buildings, many of which are in the Elizabethan style of architecture ; others have recently, as it would appear, been pulled down and modernized ; and a few, though but a few, are new. The best and most tasteful building about Coleraine is a new Catholic Chapel. There is one tolerably good street, leading directly into the square, or, as it is here called, the Diamond, in the centre of which is the Town Hall. The same street continues beyond it down to the bridge.

Standing on this bridge, the spectator has a fine view of the Bann on both sides of it ; that to the northward embraces, among a number of decent-looking villas or farm-houses, a very pretty mansion and grounds on the left bank, close to the suburb, called, from its owner I imagine, Jackson Hall ; and the view in the contrary direction, or up the river, exhibits many neat villas, well planted with wood. Among them a parkish-looking place, on the left bank, caught my attention, and I walked, along a good road, not merely to get a nearer view of it, but also to take a look at the salmon-leap, which I knew to be about the spot. This place is named Somerset, and is held at a pepper-corn rent by Captain Bruce of the navy.

The salmon-leap, or the Cutts, as it is called, is a little beyond this place. It is considered one of the most productive fisheries in Ireland ; and I was told that the season had been a very favourable one, and had but just ended. It is, I believe, one of those munificent gifts bestowed by James I. on those worthy citizens of London who constitute the Irish Society of London.

It was a fine evening, and I wished to see whether an Irish salmon leaped as vigorously as a Norwegian one ; but not a single fish favoured me with a specimen of its prowess. A good woman, who was living in a neighbouring cottage, came out to show “ his honour ” the falls, which I interpreted to mean neither more nor less than to earn a sixpence. She appeared to be very much distressed that the gentleman should be so disappointed in not seeing a salmon leap, even if but one, assuring me that they were plentiful at all other times, and that it was very provoking that I should go away without being gratified. I found the means, however, of consoling her ; and explained to her that a salmon-leap was no novelty to me, and that I was fully persuaded that an Irish salmon *did* sometimes leap, as well as those of other countries, although I was not so fortunate as to see it.

Close to the Cutts stand the ruins of a building of considerable size, which I was told was formerly a large mill, that unfortunately had been destroyed by fire. It must once have been a splendid building, and being the property of the London Irish Society, it is rather surprising they have not thought of re-building it. At a short distance, on the opposite bank, stands one of those mounds or barrows which are not uncommon in England, and which are supposed to have been the graves of distinguished persons in days of yore. It was lofty, and planted with

trees to the very summit. There is a new and an old church at Coleraine, and several chapels of different persuasions, from the Presbyterians downwards ; a free-school, erected by the London Irish Society, and others supported by private contributions. There is a reading-room, and two or three booksellers' shops. The population, I was told, was between 5000 and 6000 souls.

Coleraine has long been celebrated for its fabrics of all kinds of linen ; but I neither saw nor heard of any large manufactures, and I should think that the establishment of those at Belfast has superseded the necessity of them at Coleraine. It is, however, a good market for all that is manufactured in the surrounding country, to a considerable distance from it, by hand-loom. In the immediate neighbourhood I observed only two bleach-greens. The superior quality of the fabric is said to have induced the manufacturers and agents of other places to mark their pieces as *Coleraines*. The port is a very indifferent one for trade ; the rapid course of the Bann, and the swell setting in from the sea, have caused a dangerous bar at the mouth of the river. I saw but one vessel, a small cutter, moored to the bridge. The chief trade, I understand, is with Liverpool, which supplies them with colonial produce, barilla, flax-seed, coals, and other articles, in return for linen, salmon, both fresh and salt, salt butter, eggs, and grain.

I passed the night at Coleraine, in a tolerably good inn, at a corner of the square, and on the following morning started for Londonderry in one of the *public* cars—not Bianconi's, of whom you have no doubt heard, whose celebrated vehicles are chiefly confined to the south—but one of those self-same *outside* cars, drawn by a single horse, that carried me to Belfast, and in which I have hitherto travelled since parting with my friends at Cushendall, the same being adapted for the conveyance of four passengers. Now, as this was to me a new mode of travelling in public, though not a new conveyance, I determined to try it, particularly as the distance is not very great, and we had the whole day before us. The fare was very low, and the conveyance bad in the same proportion. At first starting there was but one other passenger, and we got on tolerably well, but before long we took up two in addition. We had now not proceeded many paces, when snap went the spring, and down went the car, the seat resting on the wheel, and throwing off the passengers on that side, leaving myself and another perched up, on the opposite side, with our heels dangling in the air. It happened, unluckily, to give way just as we were passing a parcel of boys on the road, and we were of course fair subjects for their amusement and ridicule. My companion whispered to me that as Pat is seldom at a loss on a pinch, we shall somehow or other soon get right again ; and, sure enough, our driver procured, I know not how, a log of wood, and fastening it under the broken spring, raised the car from off the wheel, so as to enable us to proceed. The little boys *hurraed* us along, and in a few minutes, greatly to their delight, bump went the car again, owing to the slipping of the wood. Again it was replaced, and again we jogged on slowly, until the harness gave way, and a third time we came to a full stop. Add to all this, the horse took it into his head to make several occasional halts, and all the swearing, and whipping, and coaxing, could hardly prevail on the animal to move. Indeed, several times I thought that we should never reach Derry this day.

It appeared to me that Pat himself was very much disposed to *leave us on the road* ; and, in fact, on arriving at Londonderry he bundled us out of his car, on the middle of the bridge, bag and baggage, saying that he could go no farther, as he had already gone beyond his mark ;— and, totally regardless of all my intreaties to be taken to an inn, the unfeeling fellow left me to trudge into the town, a couple of little boys having volunteered to carry my baggage, while I walked alongside, desiring them to take me to the first inn we should come to. I can pardon the driver, however, after having seen the town ; for I am quite certain that it

would have been utterly impossible for his jaded beast ever to have ascended one of the steepest streets in Europe.

I may now give you a brief sketch of the road. For some distance from Coleraine, on either side of it, were small houses of the villa kind, with gardens and orchards adjoining ; and beyond them were substantial farm-houses, where they were getting in their hay, which, I apprehend, from the lateness of the season, must have been the second crop. Wheat, barley, and oats were still uncut. To these succeeded a brown heathy moor of considerable elevation, where no houses, save one at the top of the hill, appeared for a distance of four or five miles : this moor I soon discovered to be a peat-bog, from the number of peat-stacks piled up in different spots, besides which there was little to attract attention. Beyond these the country put on a smiling appearance ; and when about half-way to Derry, we arrived at Newtown Limavady, to give our jaded beast a wisp of hay and a little water. Limavady is a well-built decent-looking village, or small town, of one spacious street, consisting of remarkably good houses. It is situated on the Roe, a delightful clear stream, flowing through a deer-park, named after the river, and thence pursuing its course to Lough Foyle. Nothing can be more beautiful than the valley through which the Roe winds its course ; and, indeed, the whole landscape about Limavady as far as the eye can reach. The country around is well inhabited, and every house appears to have its orchard and garden, and appropriate outhouses. Within a short distance of the village are not less than nine or ten bleach-greens, from which I conclude that a great portion of the country is employed in the culture of flax and the preparation of linen. The smell of the flax steeping in the wells sufficiently indicated this. The little cottages, no doubt belonging to the weavers, are, like those of Antrim, built of stone, and have a neat appearance ; but there is this distinctive character which makes them differ from an English cottage,—that they are all open to the road in front, and want that little paled-off garden enclosure, so common to our meanest cottages, to protect the daisies, the lilies, and the wallflowers below, and the China-roses, the woodbine, the jasmine, or clematis, that trail up their sides, and hang in festoons over the door.

At three or four miles from Limavady is Walworth-house, in the midst of a wood that cannot be less than three or four hundred acres, planted, as I was informed, chiefly on bog ; it belongs to the London Society. We now came in sight of Lough Foyle and the long range of Innishowen mountains on the opposite side of the Lough, and which divide it from Lough Swilly. This ridge of hills is generally known by the name of the *Backbone*, from the resemblance, or supposed resemblance, of their summits to the vertebrae of this part of the animal structure.

The whole of this great extent of land between the two Loughs, famous, as you may perhaps have heard, for its *potheen*, or, as it is vulgarly called, whiskey, is, I am told, the property of Lord Donegal, whose character stands high in this part of the country. All seemed to agree that he was one of the best landlords in Ireland. Sir Robert Fergusson, the member for the city of Derry, whose property lies a little away from the town, is also spoken of as a good landlord.

From hence the greater part of the land, as we approached Derry, belongs to the different London companies, while the London Society has all within the walls and for three miles round them, which are called the Liberties. We passed a large portion of this property, called Green's Hall, and I was much struck with the handsome buildings—good houses, schools, churches, all substantially built with brick, and as easily distinguished from the common run of houses, as the Ordnance buildings are in England. After a beautiful drive close to the shores of Lough Foyle, a turn in the road to the left brought us in sight of Londonderry.

The situation of this city is beautiful. In descending towards the town, the first object that catches the eye is the tall and elegant spire of the Cathedral, which stands upon the very summit of the hill, on which the town is built. Advancing nearer, the whole extent of the town, sloping down to the river Foyle, which sweeps round it, opens to the view, presenting a curious and picturesque appearance, such as is not usually met with in England. It is another Edinburgh on a small scale. The streets are so very steep that I should suppose them not accessible by a carriage ; very irregular, with the exception of four main streets, which open into the Diamond, or square, in the centre of which is the Corporation Hall. Each of these streets is terminated by an arched gateway through the old city wall. There are some good shops in Derry. One in particular, kept by a fashionable milliner, with its large plate-glass windows, would not disgrace our Regent Street. There are, also, several booksellers' shops and two reading-rooms. Altogether Derry is a clean and a pretty town. A beautiful broad walk is carried round the ramparts, which is the public promenade, and from it is an extensive and splendid view both of the Lough and the River Foyle. The suburbs are rather extensive, especially on the south-west side, where a continuation of Bishop's Street is carried beyond the wall to the distance of nearly a mile, passing a piece of ground prettily laid out, called the Bishop's Garden.

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The advantages of steam-navigation are here sensibly felt by the farmers along the whole line of coast from Derry to Dublin. Their live stock, particularly pigs and sheep, are sent to Glasgow, Bristol, and Liverpool at a very cheap rate. A firkin of butter, for instance, can be sent from Derry to Liverpool for a penny ; in fact, the certainty and cheapness of steam-navigation are such, that an Irish farmer, in the vicinity of a port, is quite as well off for a market, as an English or Scotch farmer at sixty miles from Liverpool or Glasgow.

The Foyle is here about a quarter of a mile in width, and is crossed by a wooden bridge one thousand and sixty-eight feet long, with a naked wooden floor, over which the rattling noise of the cars put me in mind of that of the droskies over the Isaac Bridge across the Neva with its wooden floor, to which that of the Foyle bears a resemblance. One part of the floor draws up to let vessels pass, and the Foyle is navigable by lighters and other craft of twenty or thirty tons burden as high up as Lifford, a distance of twelve or fourteen miles, and to Strabane, with the aid of a canal which joins the Foyle. By these rivers, and the Finn and the Mourne, the produce of Tyrone and of Donegal easily finds its way to Derry, receiving in return, barilla, pearl-ashes, flax-seed, deals, coals, and iron,—the trade and the manufacture of linen thus extending over the whole county. All this business is transacted by a few established houses in Derry and Coleraine, which will, perhaps, be sufficient to account for their small increase in population. If we compare the two counties of Antrim and Derry, we shall find them stand as under : —

	Population.	Acres.
Antrim . . .	227,934	492,000
Derry . . .	<u>263,622</u>	<u>405,334</u>
Difference	35,688	86,666

Hence it is clear that Antrim, having more land and less population than Derry, must be less agricultural and more manufacturing than Derry, and consequently more favourable to an increase of population in its towns.

The fisheries of the Foyle contribute little to the trade or the consumption of Derry. The salmon do not appear to affect this stream. In some of the branches that fall into the Lough on the right bank below the bridge there are a few taken, but of no importance. I understand, however, that there is an extensive oyster-bank in the Lough, so productive as, in the season, to be sold at from threepence to sixpence a hundred ; and that a few years ago twopence a hundred was the common price, but that now they were sent, like all other articles of provision, to Liverpool.

The banks of the Foyle are not so well wooded as those of the Bann, but numerous handsome villas are seen scattered over the country both above and below Derry ; and I should say, from what I have seen of the county and of this neighbourhood, that it wants nothing but more trees and some hawthorn hedges, to place it on a comparison with some of the best parts of England.

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From Londonderry To Enniskillen.

Mail-coach—Strabane and Lifford—Castle Finn—Sterile Country—Gap of Barnesmore—Mistake respecting Rapin—Donegal—View of the Atlantic—M'Swine's Gun—Ballyshannon—Salmon-leap—Specimen of Irish Travelling—Arrival at Enniskillen.

*Enniskillen, 8th September, 1835.*

HAVING satisfied my curiosity in and around Derry, I took my place in the mail-coach, on the morning of the 6th, for Donegal. This being my second trial of his Majesty's mails in Ireland, I was glad to find it very differently conducted from that between Belfast and Larne. It was in all respects a well-appointed coach, and travelled at the rate of eight or nine miles an hour ; but they are not so particular here about being *behind time* as the mail-coaches are in our own country.

We carried the Foyle and its pretty banks along with us nearly as far as Strabane, on the borders of the County of Tyrone, and enjoyed the prospect of a beautiful and well-cultivated country the whole way, abounding with gentlemen's houses and good substantial farms ; most of the land under tillage. The mail stopped merely to change horses at Strabane, so that you must not expect me to furnish you with any description of the place ; but, from the roof of the coach, the houses appear of a higher order, cleaner, and in better condition, than they commonly are in towns of this class. It is, in fact, a central mart for cattle, linen, grain, and other produce, to be conveyed hence for shipment at Derry. On the whole, I should imagine it a thriving town ; that it is so, may be further surmised from comparing the population of 1821 with that of 1831. In the former it was 4116 ; in the latter 4700, being a difference of 584, or an increase of 14 per cent, in ten years. Both Strabane and Lifford, which are near each other, and the latter of which we passed at a short distance, had much the same appearance as an ordinary small town in England.

The Foyle loses its name at Lifford, but not before it has received the waters of three considerable streams—the Finn, flowing out of Lake Finn—which, after collecting several smaller streams from the mountains of Donegal, sweeps along with considerable rapidity into the Foyle ; and the Morne and the Poe from Tyrone also add their supplies to the volume of the Foyle. Our road lay along the banks of the Finn as far as Castle Finn, a village to which it is said to be navigable for small craft.

We here turned off to the westward, passed Stranorlan and Ballybofey, when we left the river on our right, and proceeded to the southward in the direction of Donegal. Here the face of the country suffered a change for the worse ; the number of peat-stacks, in the shape of truncated pyramids, denoted the presence of bogs. To the southward of Castle Finn is another small town called Newtown Stuart, behind which are seen two conical mountains, whose summits were just visible above the horizon, known by the whimsical names of Bessy Bell and Mary Gray, which I always thought were Scotch and not Irish “ bonny lassies.”

The appearance of the country had now not only changed its character to that of sterility, which increased as we proceeded, but all to the right, as far as the eye could reach, was one continued waving line of brown barren heath, ascending in the distance to lofty hills, which, I was told, continued to join the chain of mountains bounding the whole sea-coast of Donegal. It was just that kind of country, and I believe we passed the very spot, which drew from the Earl of Bristol the observation, “ that it presented nothing curious to engage admiration, and nothing horrid enough to stare at.”

We soon, however, approached an object which, though not horrid enough to stare at, was certainly curious enough to engage admiration : this is the remarkable gap, or pass, between two mountain-ranges, of which you may probably have heard, that takes the name of the Gap of Barnesmore. As we advanced towards it, I was particularly struck with the strong resemblance to each other of the two abrupt mountainous elevations which form the entrance into the defile. Their height, on a rough guess, may be about eight hundred feet, rising at once out of the level plain. The two cheeks of the gap, as I perceived in driving through it, had an exact similarity of formation,—so very exact indeed, that one would not hesitate to say they must at one time have been united, were it not for the great width of the gap, probably about four hundred yards. The two slopes at the base exactly agree, and the inequalities of the ridges at the summits are the same on either side ; the strata of the rock, where visible, also correspond ; and, in short, it appeared to me that the surface of the two sides, if brought together, would exactly fit each other.

The length of this ravine I concluded to be about three miles, and at every little turning the wind howled through it furiously. A small stream of water ran down it to the northward, and here and there was the appearance of water having gushed down the two sides. In winter, I imagine, the passage of it must be peculiarly wild and dreary. The only thing that now enlivened it, even in summer, were the blossoms of the furze and the heath that grew vigorously about the bases, and up the sides in the crevices of the rock. The road through it is very good, and nearly level.

A reverend divine, who some years ago published “ Sketches in Ireland,” under the signature of C. O., mentions a sort of castellated ruin near the northern entrance, in a position commanding the defile, said to have been erected in King James’s war. I saw nothing of it ; though at a distance, on the right, I observed something-like a castle or fort on a hill. “ Here it is said,” observes this author, “ that Rapin, one of those French Huguenots who did William such good military service, and who have been beneficial to every country where they took refuge ; here, it is said, this honest and impartial historian compiled his voluminous history.” I need not observe to you, that this is wholly incorrect. Rapin followed the Prince of Orange into England, went as an ensign to Ireland, distinguished himself at the siege of Carrickfergus, where he was promoted to a lieutenantancy, was present at the battle of the Boyne and at the siege of Limerick, where he was wounded, and returned to England to take charge of the education of the Duke of Portland’s son, and never again visited Ireland. His History was



written at Wesel, in the duchy of Cleves, where he lived in retirement, and spent the remainder of his life.

After emerging from the defile, I observed rather a pretty lake on the right, though it was not set out with any very picturesque or romantic accompaniments, beyond a few patches of wood : it is called the Eask, and from it issues a river which continues its course to Donegal, and thence into the bay. On the left, after quitting the defile, the same kind of dreary waste of heath and bog continues, as that which at the entrance presented itself to our view ; but the course of the Eask took us to some distance over a beautiful country studded with villas and good substantial farm-houses.

We passed several parties on the road and, being Sunday, all appeared tidily dressed, the women wearing bright red cloaks, such as are common in Wales. They were evidently going to their several churches and chapels to attend divine service ; and I am free to confess, I felt a little uneasy and ashamed at the bad example I was showing in travelling on that day, which, as you know, is not my usual custom. I had, indeed, intended to remain at Derry and to attend the cathedral service ; but those to whom I carried letters of introduction were absent, and I had seen all that I was desirous of seeing.

But though the people were well dressed, and exceedingly decent in their manner, we had passed on both sides the gap some very wretched habitations, by far the most so, indeed, that I had hitherto seen in Ireland. They were built of unshapen stones, loosely placed together, without mortar or even clay to stop up the crevices, and thus but ill calculated to keep out the weather ; roofed, too, in a manner suited to the walls ; miserably thatched with sticks and rushes, or covered with sods instead of thatch ; some had a sort of basket-work chimney and others only a hole to let out the smoke.

It was about three in the afternoon when the mail drove into Donegal, where it had been my intention to have slept ; but I found to my great mortification that the only hotel in the town was full of visiters, who usually resort hither during the summer months to drink the waters of a spa in the neighbourhood which is in great repute, and the more so, as Sir Humphry Davy, I was assured, had “ analysed and tasted the water,” and pronounced it to be admirable. As far as I could judge from the smell, which was quite enough, and from what I heard others say, the water of this spa is as nearly as possible of the same quality as the hepatic waters of Harrowgate.

Donegal is a very small town, so small indeed as scarcely to entitle it to any thing beyond the name of a village. They told me the population was about 900 or 1000 souls. It would seem, however, to be a little on the increase. There is a pretty-looking church and a chapel, besides two or three meeting-houses ; indeed, I heard that in this small population they reckoned no fewer than nine different persuasions of Christians. The town is evidently improving. I remarked some good houses in progress for the accommodation of the summer visiters. There is said to be a good market for grain ; and that oats for Liverpool, and emigrants for America, are the principal exports. Vessels of considerable burden sometimes come up to take in their cargoes at the very quay, but the channel is narrow and insecure, and they mostly prefer lying in the bay. At the corner of a large open street (no doubt the market-place) in which the hotel was situated, stands a very fine ruin of an old castle, said to have been the ancient residence of the O'Donnells.

I was amply repaid by strolling up a hill to the right of the town ; it had the appearance of a mound thrown up by human hands, and is said to have been the place on which the kings of

the O'Donnell race were crowned. From this spot a beautiful view of the sea opens out upon the spectator ; and this being the first glance I had obtained of the tumultuous Atlantic since my arrival in Ireland, I was not a little transported at the sight. There is something in surveying the boundless expanse of the ocean that elevates the mind, while at the same time it appears to depress the spirits. To me, at least, it has the effect of inspiring a sort of melancholy pleasure, which I can neither explain nor account for. In the vastness and grandeur of a boundless ocean like the Atlantic,—as unlimited to the eye as the infinity of space or the eternity of time is inconceivable by the mind,—we feel the idea of the sublime, more strongly, perhaps, than in viewing any other object of the creation. My own feelings, on such occasions, are in full accord with what the noble poet has so beautifully expressed :

“ There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,  
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,  
There is society, where none intrudes,  
By the deep sea, and music in its roar ;  
I love not man the less, but Nature more,  
From these our interviews, in which I steal  
From all I may be, or have been before,  
To mingle with the universe, and feel  
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.”

Turning the eye landwards from the point where I stood, the whole extent of the country is seen chequered with a succession of hills and valleys, while a range of broken mountains extends along the sea-coast to the northward. The Bay of Donegal is rendered the more interesting by the number of little islands scattered over its surface. In short, this hill affords as pretty and varied a panorama as one would wish to see. I am not sure whether this mound is within the domain of Mountcharles, a seat of the Marquess of Conyngham, that stretches along the heights of this part of the coast, and overlooks the Bay of Donegal, but I believe it is. Here also, on the same ridge, is a seat belonging to the Earl of Belmore.

I had hoped for an opportunity of making some inquiries after an ancient wooden house that had been discovered on the shore of Donegal Bay, at the bottom of a deep bog, and examined and described by Captain Mudge, of the Royal Navy, who had been surveying that bay, and to whom I had a letter of introduction ; but he was absent. I shall, however, get the particulars, and let you know further about this singular discovery.

I had read some wonderful account of a natural curiosity on the coast of Donegal, called M'Swine's gun, where it is said to give a report so loud as frequently to be heard twenty or thirty miles inland, when “ firing Nature's signals of distress,” as the writer of “ Sketches in Ireland” has it ; and further, that “ the report announces that earth and ocean are labouring in the hurricane.” This natural gun, it seems, is a perpendicular shaft, rising to the surface from a horizontal cavern under a cliff ; and when the sea is forced by a storm into the cavern, up flies the water through the shaft “ some hundreds of feet high, like the geysers of Iceland, with a report louder than cannon, and has been heard in the city of Derry !” How a sensible man can write such impossibilities !

Being unable, as I have said, to obtain a night's lodging, I hired a jaunting car and drove on to Ballyshannon, where I hoped to meet with better luck, as the evening was closing in. I had paid in the north at the rate of eightpence a mile for this species of conveyance, but here the demand was no more than sixpence, and both the vehicle and horse were good of their kind. The distance from Donegal to Ballyshannon is ten miles. Half-way is the village of

Ballintra, near which are some fine plantations of wood belonging to Mr. Hamilton. From Donegal to this place there was an evident improvement in the cottages, which were, generally speaking, neat and comfortable-looking dwellings ; and the road is rendered interesting by occasional glimpses that are obtained of the sea ; but the scenery became wild and dreary as we approached Ballyshannon ; the mountains were naked, and the valleys abounded with heath and bogs.

I drove to the *hotel*, as the landlord is pleased to call it, but you must not picture to yourself a second Clarendon, for every dirty inn in Ireland appears to be equally dignified by the name of hotel ; nor must you suppose that I mean to speak slightly of Mr. Brown's establishment, where I passed the night, and which was quite as good as a traveller has any right to expect in such an out-of-the-way spot as Ballyshannon. I was sorry to hear that some of the people of the neighbourhood, on the Donegal side, are considered to be ill-disposed, and that the town itself has many bad characters in it. I was told it was not safe to venture even as far as the bridge at the foot of the street after dusk, without a brace of pistols in one's pocket ; but when the narrator mentioned to me, as a grievance, that the Catholics at Ballyshannon outnumbered the Protestants as three to one nearly, I set him down for a party-man, and, as such, not much entitled to belief.

There was, however, a very suspicious and odd-looking man in the streets of Ballyshannon, who, if he had not been pointed out to me as a well-known character, might have raised a doubt in my mind how far it was safe to trust myself with him. He was a sort of tramping beggar, (I believe they call them *buckaghs*) who had all the air and freedom of a man of the world, with

“ An eye like Mars to *threaten* and command.”

On observing his large eyes sternly and steadily fixed upon me, and having been told that he had marked the gentleman so as he should always know him again wherever he might chance to fall in with him, I thought it prudent, at least, to be on good terms with him ; and therefore took an opportunity of sending him on an errand, for which I was careful to give him what I thought an ample remuneration, and with which he was quite satisfied. I was informed that, with all his fierce looks, he was a very gentle, good-humoured fellow ; and, indeed, so I found him when sober, but at other times that one could not feel quite so safe in his company. He was described to me as merely one of those meddling busy bodies of the Dicky Gossip breed, who make it their study to know everybody and every thing that is going on.

Ballyshannon is a small town of little interest, where there is but one object of attraction—the fall of the river, or salmon-leap, to which, of course, I paid a visit. It is a fine rush of the Erne over a ledge of rocks, somewhere about the height of fourteen or fifteen feet, which, when the tide is in, may be reduced to ten or twelve. The fall is just below the bridge, and not far above the mouth of the river. I found one or two people amusing themselves with a rod and line throwing the fly, but I did not see them land any fish. *Apropos* of this salmon-leap. It is commonly said that “ there is no accounting for tastes.” A sensible and travelled gentleman, who wrote a “ Tour in Ireland”—’tis sixty years since,—says “ the Giants’ Causeway is an object which is scarcely worth going so far to see ; but the salmon-leap at Ballyshannon is a scene of such a singular nature as is not to be found elsewhere, and is as peculiar to Ireland as bull-fights are to Spain.”

There is but a single street deserving the name of one at Ballyshannon, in which the hotel is situated. It slopes down to the river, and at the foot of it is the narrow, ill-constructed

bridge, close to which, on the right, stands the barracks. There is, however, another street on the opposite side of the river, and nearly parallel to it. The only building that attracted my attention, besides the barracks, was the church, which stands on an eminence just above the salmon-leap, apart from the town. It is a plain-looking structure.

Not far from Ballyshannon, on the sea-side, is a little watering-place called Bundoran, which they say is much resorted to ; and such would appear to be the case, as no less than three cars, which passed through the town on their way to Enniskillen at different periods of the morning, were quite full. I could not, therefore, obtain a seat, and was compelled to wait till the afternoon, and then to proceed by the mail ; and as it is of some importance to know “ how one travels in Ireland,” I cannot do better than give you another specimen of this day’s proceedings.

The Enniskillen mail was drawn by three horses, one being driven as a leader, which was not easily managed, as is rarely the case when harnessed with only one leader. He was a violent-tempered, furious *kicker*, and could only be kept quiet, as to his heels, by dint of flogging and making him do his work. Going down hill, when the traces became slack, and he felt himself somewhat at liberty, he was particularly unruly ; and the driver was therefore compelled to flog him into a gallop, at which frightful pace we descended the hills. Just as we had reached the foot of one of them in safety, and were ascending the next, we stopped to receive a bag of letters, and at this very moment it was discovered that the fore axletree was broken in two, holding together only by a splinter, and the fore wheels spreading out on either side ; the coach was so disabled that it could not even be moved, but was obliged to be left in the midst of the high road. The guard mounted one of the horses, and rode away towards Enniskillen with the mail, while the coachman, as we afterwards found, mounted another, and went back to Ballyshannon to procure a fresh coach ; it being absolutely necessary that one should be at Enniskillen to bring away the mail the following morning.

It was no small consolation to find that I had escaped with my limbs unbroken, and I may say with something more serious ; for, being seated on the box, if the axletree had broken one minute sooner when galloping down the hill, both the coachman and myself must inevitably have been thrown between the horses : of this I can speak from experience, having when a boy, as you know too well, been thrown from the box of your carriage by a similar accident, when both wheels passed over me, and I narrowly escaped with my life.

Leaving our baggage in the coach, three other passengers and myself decided to walk on to the nearest place, where we hoped to procure a car. This was the little village of Belleek, between three and four miles from Ballyshannon. We went to a decent-looking house, a sort of inn, where we had been told that a car was likely to be obtained, it is true there was one ; but in vain were our entreaties for the use of it, as it was unfortunately engaged for a certain hour of the afternoon, and could not be parted with. The good woman of the house seemed, as I thought, to waver, and I used all my persuasive eloquence with her daughters, two fine bouncing girls, to assist us in our difficulties, but with no success. It happened, luckily, that one of our passengers was well known in those parts, and through his activity we got a car, and not without great difficulty a horse, one that, by much persuasion, and a valuable consideration, we prevailed on the owner to take out of a cart, in which the poor creature had been worked, so at least we suspected, all the morning, and on we jogged at a very slow pace towards Enniskillen.

We were not suffered to remain long in making the discovery, how hopeless a case it was that the animal could ever reach Enniskillen ; but, after halting on the road to feed him, we

contrived to get as far as the place where the mail was to change horses. Here we found two horses, the guard having ridden on with one, and we all used our utmost endeavours to get possession of another ; the ostler, however, was determined against us, and argued that if the mail should come up and find only one horse to draw it, he should never hear the last of it, while we, on the other hand, endeavoured to quiet his conscience, and to assure him that there was no chance of the mail coming that evening ; in fact, we were not then aware that the coachman had gone back, after we left him, for another coach. However, in the midst of the argument up drove the coach, greatly to the amusement of the ostler, who had the laugh against us : and quitting the car we proceeded on to Enniskillen, where, driving along the shores of Lough Erne, a noble lake, of which I must endeavour to give you some account in my next, we arrived some two or three hours after our time, about sunset.

[1] Survey of the County of Antrim, vol, ii. App. p. 19.

A tour round Ireland, through the sea-coast counties, in the autumn of 1835 (1836)

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