

## The Green Island 1835

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

John Barrow Esq.

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IT was on the morning of the 28th of August that I left Netherby at day-break, and proceeded to Gretna, quite alone I assure you, and for no other purpose than to await the arrival at that place of the mail for Port Patrick ; and being lucky enough to secure an outside berth, I arrived at the end of my day's journey about bedtime. From Dumfries to Port Patrick the mail is drawn by two horses only, and during one of the stages (that into Newtown Stewart) a runaway mare, with a broken jaw, was harnessed to the coach, consequently there was no bit in her mouth, and she was driven in this cruel and dangerous manner, totally unmanageable, and galloping furiously without any restraint down the hills, I could not help observing to the driver that this was discreditable to His Majesty's Post-office Department, and highly reprehensible in the contractor, as by such an intractable animal the lives of the passengers were placed in great and imminent jeopardy.

Finding that the steam-packet, which was to carry the mail, would not put off till the following morning, I availed myself of the delay to get a night's rest at Port Patrick. I had taken with me a letter from Sir James Hay, of Glenluce, to Lieut Fayrer, who commands the Spitfire, one of the Post-office packets which runs between Port Patrick and Donaghadee, and on delivering it the following morning I received from this officer every possible attention and civility. The weather was fine, and the passage of twenty-two miles occupied exactly two hours and twenty minutes, the pleasantest voyage, I may safely say, because the shortest, that I have ever made at sea. On landing at Donaghadee, I proceeded to the hotel, where I had not been long before Lieut. Fayrer called to inform me that the Marquess O'Neill, Lord Lieutenant of Antrim, was in the town, having come for the purpose of sea-bathing ; and to say that he should be glad of the opportunity of introducing me to his lordship. He did so accordingly, and nothing could be more courteous and civil than the reception I met with from this kind-hearted and amiable nobleman.

His lordship expressed himself most desirous to use all his influence in the county of Antrim to assist me in the objects which I had in view ; and regretted that he could not be himself at Shane's Castle to receive me ; but the next best thing he could do would be to give me a letter to his house-keeper, directing her to furnish me with bed and board as long as it might suit me to stay ; and he also gave me a letter of introduction to his brother, General O'Neill, who resides at Cushendun on the north-east coast, at no great distance from Fairhead and the Giants' Causeway.

Having bidden leave of Lord O'Neill and Lieut. Fayrer, with my acknowledgments to the latter for his kindness and civility, I mounted, for the first time, a vehicle, which you, as well as myself, have often heard of, namely, a jaunting-car,—but which neither of us, I believe, had ever seen. I shall, therefore, endeavour to give you a sketch of this article of universal use, as I am assured it is, in Ireland, that you may be prepared for the mode of travelling when you visit this country, which to the traveller is a matter of no slight importance. I was told, however, that they were of two kinds. “ Would your honour please to have an inside or an outside car ? ” “ My good fellow, let me know what the difference is, and I will then tell you.” “ The difference, sure, is this :— the inside car has the wheels outside, and the outside car the wheels inside.” After this luminous exposition, I thought it best to see them, and made choice of an outside one, which I will endeavour, by the double aid of pen and pencil, to make you

comprehend, that you may know what sort of thing the usual machine of the country is, for the conveyance of passengers, There are, it is true, dandy-cars in Ireland as we have dandy-cabs in England—but of these I speak not

An outside car then is this ;—a platform or floor of a few boards has two sides, which are raised up and down on hinges— raised, for no other use that I can see, except it be to grease the wheels. These sides are of canvass stretched on wooden frames, which drop from the edge of a seat, and have a foot-board at the bottom of the frame ; the backs of the two seats form a narrow *well*, as it is termed, for the stowage of baggage in the centre, a name by no means inappropriate, as it is generally full of water when it rains,—and when does it not in Ireland ? The passengers, of course, sit back to back, which made some facetious wag call the vehicle an Irish *vis-à-vis*.

If a single person takes it, the driver asks, “ Which side of the country would your honour like to see ?” and, quitting his box, perches himself, very much at his ease, cross-logged, on the opposite side. But my objections to them are, that they are positively dangerous, inasmuch as the legs of the passenger, being outside the wheel and totally unprotected, are liable to be struck, and perhaps broken, through the carelessness of the driver, especially when he has posted himself as I have stated ; and not giving a single thought whether or not in passing another vehicle on the road, or turning a corner, he endangers “ his honour’s” legs, which are likewise by no means free from a rub of the wheel through the canvass when the opposite one plunges into a rut.

If the car has its full fare of four persons, and the Hibernian Jehu must in that case keep to his stool (alias box-seat), it may happen that, twitching the mouth of his jaded beast, by way of coaxing him into a trot, he pokes his elbow into his neighbour’s face, with which it is just upon the level. With this number in going *up* hill, the whole weight of the front passenger falls upon him in the rear, which is by no means agreeable, particularly if he should chance to be a heavy one ; and the same thing must happen to the front passenger in going *down* hill.

If there be but one in the car, *up* hill he slips to the farthest end of the seat, and *down* hill he is involuntarily sent back to the other extremity. Even on level ground he is ill at ease, as the points of the shafts are generally on a line, or nearly so, with the top of the horse’s collar ; and, consequently, it requires no little exertion to maintain his seat and avoid these slips. My driver, however, made very light of these matters. “ Och! your honor will asily fall into the way of that.”—“ Perhaps so, if I don’t fall out of it !” But, *allons !* let us proceed.

Setting aside, however, all these petty inconveniences, I must say that, of all the contrivances I ever met with in any part of the world, for the accommodation of travellers, an Irish car is just the very worst, and more particularly so for travellers in Ireland, where it rains, I verily believe, at least three hundred days out of the three hundred and sixty-five ; and yet the car affords neither protection for his person nor his baggage—(squeezed into the well in the middle between the seats)—from the wet. But an Irishman seems never at a loss for an expedient. “ What shall I do,” said I, “ if it rains ?” “ Change sides wid me, your honour, and if the rain comes in front, go over to the opposite side, and take it in the rear,” A miserable alternative, it must be confessed.

The mail was dispatched from Donaghadee for Belfast in a car of the same description, though it bore the name of The Royal ; and I might have availed myself of this conveyance into the town, distant about twenty miles, but I learnt that the direct road was dull and uninteresting, and might give me an unfavourable impression at first starting. I therefore felt myself disposed, in fairness to the Green Island, and to avoid catching an early prejudice, to take the road which was most likely to give me a favourable impression, and that was the one leading along the shores of the Lough or bay of Belfast, which, although it lengthened the

distance, would well repay me for the short detour. The drive did not disappoint me, nor did my vehicle, for it was just as uneasy, and gave me just as many merciless jars and jolts, as I had anticipated. The diversified views of the country, however, fully compensated for the inconvenience. On the right was a broad expansive sheet of water, on which were a number of small vessels, and two or three of a larger class, under sail. The opposite shore, enlivened with numerous white-washed houses, standing in the midst of gardens and cultivated grounds, gave to that side of the bay a cheerful appearance ; and the town of Carrickfergus, with its ancient castle, built on a rock that juts out into the sea, is an object of importance, and sufficiently near to give an interest to the landscape.

At a short distance from the opposite coast the country rises into a succession of hills, the most important of which is that known by the name of Cave Hill, said to be upwards of a thousand feet above the level of the sea. On the shore of the Lough, along which I was travelling, we passed through two small bathing-places, the one named Bangor, the other Hollywood. They are neat villages, and the houses generally appeared to be good ; as, indeed, they must be, to attract bathers from Belfast and the neighbouring country. At Bangor I remarked two large cotton manufactories, the one belonging (as I was informed) to Colonel Ward, and the other to a company at Belfast. Colonel Ward resides in a pretty-looking castellated house, completely surrounded with plantations and wood, but visible from the road. It was here I understood that the late Lord Castleraagh was brought up, and received the first rudiments of his education.

In the course of the journey we passed a poor aged woman, who seemed to be exerting herself greatly beyond her strength in walking with hurried steps towards the town, in pursuit, as it appeared, of some object of great interest to her. She begged hard of the driver of my car to give her a lift, which he flatly refused to do. The poor creature uttered a most piteous sigh, and said do more ; but, having observed the melancholy expression of her countenance, that denoted some heavy affliction, I felt grieved that this little mark of kindness, which would have cost him nothing, should have been denied to her ; and I asked him why he refused to receive her, to which he replied, “ Sure, your honour, we’re better without her.” “ Perhaps,” I rejoined, “ the poor woman may not be of the same opinion.” This seemed to have its weight. And evidently observing that it was my wish, and intention too, to accommodate the poor aged and way-worn traveller, he presently turned round to me, as we were leisurely ascending the hill, and respectfully touching his hat, said, “ I’m just thinking, please your honour, we’ll be apt to take her in now ;” and accordingly stopped to receive her. I learnt from this poor creature that she was actually on her way to Carrickfergus, to which place, she told me, with tears in her eyes, she was going for the purpose of reclaiming a watch, pocket-book, and pencil-case, the property of her son, who had been wrecked in a sailing-boat off Bangor, and was unfortunately drowned in her presence. By her account he had clung to the mast for several hours, and no one on the shore could be prevailed on to venture out to his assistance, but coolly witnessed his situation and suffering, regardless of all her entreaties. I must hope it was the state of the weather alone that prevented any attempt to save the life of the young man.

We stopped once, about half way, to give the horse a wisp of hay and a little water ; and in the interval I had ample proof that beggars were plentiful enough in these parts. I was very sorry, too, to see some miserable objects amongst them (one man dreadfully swollen with dropsy) who ought to have been the inmates of an hospital, rather than outcasts on a high road.

The situation of Belfast, at the very extremity of the Lough, is low, and not very inviting ; nor could any one, approaching it by the road on which I had travelled, suppose it, from the view at a little distance, to be a town of much importance. With this feeling I entered Belfast, across the Lagan, over a long and narrow bridge which I was told was more than two

thousand feet in length, and supported on twenty-one stone arches. On driving through the town, however, and entering the broad High-street, my impression was more favourable. But before I say anything of Belfast, I ought to tell you that nothing more astonished me, in proceeding from Donaghadee to this city, than the extraordinary difference between the appearance of the country here, and that which I had left on the other side of the water. The long dry summer, as you know, had converted all the parks and the green fields of England, (and Scotland too had partaken of the same russet hue,) into the colour and appearance of a turnpike road ; but from the moment of landing in Ireland, such was the fresh, vivid, and brilliant verdure, interspersed with fields of waving com fit for the sickle, that I was ready to exclaim, “ This truly is the Emerald Island !”

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#### Visit To Antrim and Shane’s Castle.

Route to Antrim—Country near Belfast—Massereene Castle—Shane’ Castle—Murder of the late Earl O’Neill in the Rebellion of 1798—Grounds of Shane’s Castle—Greatt extent of Territory—Moving Bog—Lough Neagh—Fishery and Fish—River Bann—Round Tower — Miss Beaufort’s Opinion respecting it—Danish Forts, or *Raths*—Favourable Appearance of the People.

*Belfast, 31st August.*

It was about midday when I drove into Belfast, and established myself at the Donegal Arms. My first visit was to your friend Captain Skinner, to whom you gave me a letter of introduction, and whom I found to be one of the chief magistrates of Belfast, He was residing with his father and mother, the latter of whom was overjoyed, as she told me, to see the son of one of the oldest acquaintances she had in the world, and whom she had known from her infancy. The father is a gentleman well known and esteemed by all ranks in Belfast, and one who rendered good service to the Government in the unfortunate rebellion of 1798. Finding that my first object was that of visiting Lough Neagh, Antrim, and Shane’s Castle, Mr. Skinner the elder immediately and most kindly volunteered to accompany me ; and a more acceptable companion I could not possibly have had, as he was well acquainted with everything worth seeing in this part of Antrim. The next day was Sunday, and we therefore fixed on the following Monday for our excursion ; and accordingly a jaunting-car was put in requisition for the purpose.

The environs of Belfast to the westward are very beautiful ; numerous villas surrounded with plantations, the abode chiefly of the opulent merchants and manufacturers of the town ; —neat and comfortable looking cottages ;—verdant fields, intersected by bleaching-grounds covered with linen as white as snow,—afforded a cheerful and lively prospect, more particularly to a stranger not accustomed in his own country to look upon the latter object. The linen is laid out in long narrow strips, the width of the web, and, with the blades of grass standing up between them, has the effect, from a little distance, which is produced just when the snow is in the act of dissolving with the warmth of the sun.

Our road took us near to the foot of Cave Hill, which is superior to any other in the neighbourhood of Belfast. It is remarkable for having a stratum of basalt on the summit, resting upon the great body of limestone of which it is composed. Between the basalt and the limestone are said to be many caves, lined chiefly with a conglomerate. To have visited these, and the fine view which this hill must command, would have consumed more time than I had to spare, nor could I think of dragging my companion up such an ascent. After passing Cave Hill the country is flat and well cultivated, and continues to be so until the approach to Antrim, affording but little to interest the traveller, except the gratification to be derived from

seeing what is always interesting—a country smiling with cultivation, and a peasantry well clothed, and dwelling in neat, comfortable houses.

The first object that catches the attention, on approaching Antrim, is the modern steeple or spire of the church, which has certainly an elegant appearance. It was erected on a plan and at the expense of Lord Ferrard, who inherits the Massereene property in the immediate neighbourhood, by virtue of his marriage with Harriet, Viscountess Massereene. Antrim Castle, or Massereene Castle (as I believe it is generally called), is in fact the residence of Lord Ferrard. It is situated at the extremity of the town, the garden-walls of which face the market-place in the centre of the great street ; the only one, I may say, in the town, and which runs parallel with a sort of canal, called the Six-mile-water. The Castle is nothing more than an ordinary dwelling-house of a gentleman, with several small but comfortable apartments, leading into each other,—some of them hung round with pictures, consisting chiefly, however, of family portraits. The grounds, bordered on one side by Lough Neagh, are laid out with great taste ; and the lime-tree avenues are very beautiful.

At Antrim we procured another car to take us to Shane's Castle, the seat of the Marquess O'Neill, in order to give the horse which had brought us from Belfast an opportunity of feeding and resting himself, as we intended to return in the course of the evening. The distance to Shane's Castle is very trifling, and might soon be approached by walking through Lord Ferrard's park ; but, as the chief object in visiting Shane's Castle was to go round the grounds, which I was told were very extensive and beautiful, and that we should not be able to do so on foot in the short time we had to spare, we proceeded thither in our car.

You are probably aware that the castle was burnt down in the year 1816, and that nothing was left remaining but the mere walls, which still present to the view a grand and melancholy ruin. The fire took place in the evening, when a large party of the Marquess's friends were at dinner. One of the chimneys, it is said, caught fire, and continued to burn till it approached near the top, when it burst out with great violence, and, communicating with the timbers of the roof, spread with such rapidity, that the upper story was instantly involved in one general conflagration. Every attempt to extinguish the flames was in vain, and the whole of this venerable pile was reduced to a ruin. The title-deeds and valuable papers of the family, together with some of the plate, were the only article saved,—everything else perished in the flames.

Close to these ruins, but a little apart from them, the foundation, up to the ground-story, of a new mansion-house appears to have been laid, and proceeded upon by the present Earl ; but the intention of continuing it has long since been abandoned. The plan appeared to be on a magnificent scale ; and the edifice, if completed, would unquestionably have far surpassed the former, which, from a drawing I have seen, could never have boasted of much architectural beauty.

In lieu, then, of a stately castle. Lord O'Neill contents himself with the far more simple and, at the same time, convenient residence, fitted up in a long range of offices, with every possible attention to comfort, and a total disregard of all ostentation, forming a cheerful suite of apartments, in which he can lodge and entertain a very great number of his friends. I cannot give you a better idea of what Lord O'Neill has done, than by saying, that it is just the plan which I understand your friend Sir George Warrender adopted at Clifden, where the ancient house suffered the same fate as Shane's Castle. In one of the rooms was a parchment, framed, bearing an inscription in gilt letters, which I read, as I have often before done, with great satisfaction. It was a copy of the answer given to Lord Grenville by his late Majesty, George III., when applied to in March, 1807, respecting Catholic emancipation.

“ MY LORD,

“ I AM ONE OF THOSE THAT RESPECT AN OATH ; I HAVE FIRMNESS SUFFICIENT TO QUIT MY THRONE, AND RETIRE TO A COTTAGE, OR TO PLACE MY NECK UPON A BLOCK ON A SCAFFOLD, IF MY PEOPLE REQUIRE IT ; BUT I HAVE NOT RESOLUTION TO BREAK AN OATH, WHICH I TOOK IN THE MOST SACRED MANNER AT MY CORONATION.”

May this noble sentiment, so beautifully and energetically expressed, never be lost sight of by any future monarch of this realm !

I have already told you that I was accompanied to Shane’s Castle by Captain Skinner’s father. That I was so, I thought myself most lucky, as the presence of one who took so active a part during the rebellion, and who was quartered in these parts at the very time of the memorable battle of Antrim, when Lord O’Neill (the father of the present Earl) was cruelly murdered, could not fail to add a more than common interest to my visit. This interest was doubly increased from the circumstance of Mr. Skinner falling into conversation with an old housekeeper, who had been forty years and upwards in the family, and who had seen many a sad change in so great a lapse of time.

The first meeting of two persons who were present at the memorable event of the death of Lord O’Neill,—now thirty-seven years ago,—was to me, as well as to the parties, an interesting occurrence, and I listened to the tale of their recollections with great attention.

It was on the 6th of June, 1798, in the midst of the rebellion, that the rebels attacked Antrim, when Lord O’Neill had his horse wounded and it became restive and refused to advance. In this state, while endeavouring to urge it forward, his lordship was knocked down by a pikeman, and mortally wounded when on the ground within fifty yards of a party of yeomanry, posted behind the wall of Lord Massereene’s garden. His lordship shot one of the men who attacked him, and the yeomanry two more, but the fellow who had given him the mortal wound escaped.

The body was carried into the hall of Massereene Castle ; and Mr. Skinner pointed out to me, when there, the exact spot where it was placed. He was a nobleman universally esteemed ; of whom Sir Richard Musgrave, in his History of the Rebellion, justly remarks, that

He had a tear for pity, and a hand  
Open as day for melting charity.

Shane’s Castle is finely situated on the north-east comer of Lough Neagh, and commands an extensive view of the Lough, of which, however, I am no great admirer, except for its expanse of water, which reminded me of the great Wenern Lake in Sweden in this respect, that, standing on their borders, the waters of both, like those of the sea, are to the spectator boundless. The eastern shore is not very interesting, as far as the eye can reach ; and I understand the western one is still less so, being one dead flat, a very considerable part of which is overflowed in the winter season. I had not the opportunity of enlarging my view, as Lord O’Neill’s steam-yacht was under repair, which otherwise, through his lordship’s kindness, would have been at my disposal. I regretted this the more as I was anxious to see Ram Island, on which there is a round tower ; as well as some other spots on this shore of the lough that are said to be worth visiting. The yacht was sharp built, and drew but little water—the engines of thirty-six horse-power. Nothing could be more elegant than the manner in which she was fitted ; and the Marquess, I was told, made frequent use of her, and spent much of his time on the Lough.

The grounds of Shane’s Castle are, in a great measure, thrown open to the public ; but no one, I believe, is allowed to visit the deer park without special permission. In driving through

the latter I remarked some fine herds of deer, and among them four or five bucks of a larger kind than are usually met with. The keeper informed me that there were no less than five hundred head of deer in the park, A new, and I may say elegant, cottage had just been erected for the dwelling of the gamekeeper, and the building was really so tasteful, and altogether presented so desirable a residence, and in such a charming situation, that I almost envied his occupation of it

The flower-garden appeared to be well kept up, and among the plants I remarked an American aloe, which was of finer growth than any I have seen elsewhere. The drive through the finely-wooded grounds of Shane's Castle cannot fail to afford to the most fastidious a high treat. This part of the demesne extends from the north-east corner of Lough Neagh to Randalstown, about three miles in length, and of the mean width of one mile, and consequently contains an area of about two thousand acres. It is well planted with woods of oak, beech, and elm,—the beech-trees remarkably fine ; and the river Main, which divides the grounds from the deer-park, and contacts them by two bridges, is embosomed with wood. The deer-park I should suppose to be nearly, if not wholly, equal to a square mile, or six hundred and forty acres.

In a lonely sequestered spot, concealed by a thick plantation of trees and shrubbery, is the old family burial-place, consisting of a vault, well calculated to inspire melancholy thoughts, which I was disposed to indulge in, till somewhat relieved by the perusal of an inscription over the door in which the iteration of the names of M'Shane, M'Brien, and M'Phelim, ring the changes as merrily as the parish bells.

“ This vault was built by Shane M'Brien M'Phelim M'Shane M'Brien M'Phelim O'Neill, Esq., in the year 1722, for a burial-place to himself and family, of Clanneboy.”

Some idea may be formed of what the territory consisted which formerly belonged to the O'Neills of Shane's Castle, when I state (and I do so under the hand of Lord O'Neill) that “ the *remnant* of the estate consists of about fifty-two thousand five hundred Irish acres (eighty-five thousand English), of which about thirteen thousand five hundred Irish are let in perpetuity, at almost nominal rents, and the remainder mostly on twenty-one years' leases, and in small farms, few of them exceeding twenty acres.” I may add, that the tenantry of this splendid estate, as far as I had an opportunity of ascertaining, consider the present Lord O'Neill as a most kind and excellent landlord [1].

The only outlet of the waters of Lough Neagh is about the centre of the northern extremity, at a place called Toome ; and here there is a substantial bridge of nine arches over the river Bann, which supplies the place of an inconvenient ferry : it was built by the late Earl O'Neill at his own expense. This river, after passing through a small lake named the Beg, continues to flow to the northward, till it empties itself into the North Sea a little beyond Coleraine. As not fewer than twelve or fourteen streams flow into this great Lough, some from every part of the compass, and as its waters are wholly discharged by the Bann, it will readily be supposed that the neighbouring shores, being low, are subject to frequent inundations when the heavy rains have set in. Lieut. Graves, who carefully surveyed the Lough, mentions in his report that, at such periods, it usually rises from six to nine feet perpendicularly, and spreads over about ten thousand acres of land more than it does at its lowest, when its surface is said to extend over a space of not less than one hundred thousand acres.

The dimensions of Lough Neagh, by the Ordnance Survey, are about seventeen miles mean length, and ten miles mean breadth, making one hundred and seventy square miles, or one hundred and eight thousand eight hundred statute acres. The summer level of the lake is forty-eight feet above the level of the sea at low water, spring-tide. It has more than once

been proposed to drain Lough Neagh, which, however absurd, and even impossible, is every now and then brought into discussion. The soundings, as ascertained by Lieut Graves, are not less than ninety-eight feet on the north-west side, and, generally, from forty to fifty and sixty feet. The inundation, however, on the western coast might be prevented, and the acquisition of some land from the sides of the lake be at the same time obtained, if a cut to the eastward of the rocky outlet of the Bann were made a few feet deeper than the bed of that river at Toome, and carried into it at a short distance lower down.

The Lough is entered on the south-east corner by the Belfast canal, which joins the river Lagan ; but there is said to be some defect in the required supply of water. The intention is to continue this navigation across Ireland into Donegal Bay, by opening a canal on the south-west corner of the Lough, and carrying it across the level country into Lough Erne, which is now under a survey by two lieutenants of the navy, from whence the navigation, by the river Erne, or a canal, is intended to be carried to Ballyshannon.

The lake abounds in various species of the salmon tribe and, besides those periodical visitors from the sea, with the common trout and the char, the perch, the bream, the pike, and other species of fish. The *gillaroo* trout, which is found in most of the lakes of Ireland, is plentiful in Lough Neagh. This trout was once considered as a distinct species, but I believe it has been decided that their thick membranous stomach, which assumes the appearance of a gizzard, is caused by feeding on the *Helix tentaculata* and the *Tellina cornea*. The lake is more particularly noted for the abundance of fresh-water herrings, as they are called, or *pollan* (which is a *salmo*), and eels ; these, taken together, may be said to constitute the principal fishery. The salmon which ascend the Bann do not remain in the Lough, but frequent the several influent rivers, in order to spawn. Lieut. Graves, in speaking of the value of the fisheries, says, that the present Earl O'Neill purchased the right of the eel-fisheries alone, on the lake and the Bann, from the Marquess of Donegal, for 8000*l.*, besides the payment of a yearly rent of 400*l.* The multitude of eels that frequent Lough Neagh are said to be almost incredible, and they soon grow to an enormous size after reaching the lake ; that they ascend the Bann in shoals, like pieces of packthread, and are so weak, as to be assisted in their progress past the falls, or rocky parts of the river, by wisps of straw, to enable them to crawl up.

A notion prevails among the peasantry of the existence of a city beneath the waters of Lough Neagh. One of the Irish seamen employed by the Lieutenant, while heaving the lead, on finding a sudden alteration in the depth of water, and some obstruction in getting up the line, is said to have exclaimed in sober earnest, " By my *sowl*, Captain, it's down a *chimley*, your honour !" This puts me in mind of a verse of Moore :—

On Lough Neagh's banks, as the fisherman strays,  
When the clear cold eve's declining.  
He sees the Round Towers of other days  
In the waves beneath him shining.

Among the Irish legends it is also reported, that Fin M'Coul, who they say is Fingal, scooped out as much mud from Lough Neagh as, being thrown into the Irish Channel, created the Isle of Man ; and this may be proved by the latter being of the same shape and size— which it is not ; but Pat has more confidence in the legend than in the most accurate measure that can be made. It is also believed that the waters of Lough Neagh possess the quality of converting wood into stone, which, as far as I could learn, is not exactly true, though the soil and some little streamlets on the shores possess that power. I was told, indeed, that the best hones for setting razors and other cutting instruments are the petrifications of holly, which are sold in Dublin as Lough Neagh hones. Abundance of pebbles, resembling agates and calcedonies, are gathered on the beach, and offered for sale to visitors.



In the grounds of Mr. Clarke, at the distance of about a mile to the right, or east of the town of Antrim,—

There is a stern round tower of other days,  
Firm as a fortress.

It is one of those numerous towers which are met with in various parts of Ireland, and which have caused so much matter of conjecture among the learned, as to the purpose for which they were built, no certain tradition remaining with respect to them. Some suppose them to have been belfries, which is considered as the more probable, from their generally standing near the ruins of churches ; others designate them as watch-towers ; others again imagine them to have been the abode of hermits ; while many contend that they were store-houses, in which were deposited articles of value, more particularly books. Few have entered more deeply into the question than Miss Beaufort, and few, perhaps, so well qualified to discuss the merits of it. She has examined all the authorities, ancient and modern ; and having come to the conclusion, which I believe to be generally adopted, that civilization has rolled on from the east to the west, she infers that Ireland, long before the Christian era, was peopled by some of the Oriental nations, and conceives, from some curious analogies, that Persia may have been the cradle. The same thought has been entertained by others, one of whom grounds his opinion on the similarity of the names *Iran* and *Erin*, which is of no great weight. Miss Beaufort winds up her ideas concerning the round towers by saying, that “ from the above details it seems a reasonable conclusion, that lofty, slender towers, intended, like the obelisk and pyramid, to symbolize a ray of the sun, were erected to preserve the sacred fires of Bel [2].” We are therefore to understand that the four windows, in the upper part of the tower, corresponding with the four cardinal points of the compass, were intended for the exhibition of the sacred fire ; and that the ruins which adjoined them, where no church has been erected, were the cells in which the fire was kept burning. The idea of their serving as belfries is completely scouted ; and the churches, or ruins of churches, so frequently near them, are supposed to have assumed these stations from a feeling of the religious character of the towers, just as some of the Pagan temples of Rome were selected as places for Christian worship. The tower, which I visited near Antrim, might be from eighty to ninety feet in height, and from fifteen to eighteen in diameter at the base. I was desirous of obtaining a look at the inside, but found it quite impracticable. The entrance, or door-way, turned with a Roman arch, was about twelve or fourteen feet from the ground, something like that of our Martello towers, without steps, and no ladder at hand. The workmanship was perfect, the joining of the stones presented a fine line, and the cement as hard or harder than the stones. I have heard that the foundation of one of these towers, giving way on one side, caused its centre of gravity to lean beyond its base : it fell, and not a stone of it separated

But before I leave the vicinity of the Lough, I must mention to you another object of antiquity to be met with in thousands in this country, and which are in multitudes around the shores of Lough Neagh. These are the *raths*, or what are usually called—improperly, I should think—*Danish forts* ; as they are found in numbers far exceeding those which the invading Danes could erect, and in places where the Danes never set foot. They are constructed, if such a term can be applied to them, on hills, or little eminences where such are to be found, if not, on the plains. They are all circular, and most commonly complete circles, surrounded by a sort of breast-work, from which they slope down to a moat or ditch that runs round them.

Though usually on the summits of hills, they are not unfrequently, at least in the neighbourhood of Lough Neagh, on the plain. Sometimes they are planted with trees. The word *rath* is understood to mean safety, security ; and the probable conjecture is that, when Ireland was in a more savage and disturbed state than now, these raths served as so many fortified habitations, in which whole families lived together with their cattle, as places of security against the depredations of their neighbours or some common enemy. Many of them are now disfigured and demolished, but are easily distinguishable rising above the common surface.

In the Ordnance Maps they are marked as *forts*. I am disposed to think that my friend, Crofton Croker, who knows more of the history of Ireland than most people, is right when he says, “ To me it appears probable that these works were thrown up by the native Irish around their little *wigwam* settlements, as a defence against any sudden attack from an enemy, or from wolves, and that subterranean chambers or cellars were formed for granaries, or as secure depositories in time of danger for the their rude property.” Why should not their wigwams have been within the entrenchments ? Miss Beaufort mentions something like ruins being found in some of the large ones, which are supposed to have been the castles of the kings or chiefs. The perfect state in which numbers of these raths are found is ascribed by Mr. Croker to the gross superstition of the peasantry, who regard them as the abode of “ good people” or fairies, and who believe that some severe misfortune would befall the person who should be indiscreet enough to disturb them. In the two parks of Shane’s Castle there are not less than fifty of these raths, many of them planted with fir and other trees. Some few mounds, such as those we call barrows, were also planted.

Gratified in the highest degree with this day’s excursion, having every where observed the pleasing aspect of the country, the land smiling with cultivation, the people cheerful, well-behaved, well-clothed generally, and in apparent robust health which was also the case with those I met when skirting the shores of the Bay from Donaghadee to Belfast (with the exception of a few beggars with whom I fell in)—seeing this healthful state of the country, I could not forbear asking myself, “ Can this be Ireland ?” Is this that accursed country where we are told the most horrible and deliberate murders are of every-day occurrence—where political feuds and religious animosities and persecutions tear to pieces the bonds of society —where the peasantry are clothed in rags,—huddled together in wretched hovels—feeding on potatoes and butter-milk, and frequently not able to procure these—in short, reduced to a state of starvation and extreme want—where—— ?—but I forget that I am but as yet on the threshold of the island, in the immediate neighbourhood of a long-established, prosperous, commercial and manufacturing city, and one of the very few in which the Protestant religion may be said to be predominant.

[1] Part of the demesne is bog, and a remarkable circumstance occurred shortly after my visit, of a part of Farlough Bog, to the eastward of the River Main, slipping away to the north-east, blocking up the mail-coach road from Randalstown to Ballymena, and continuing its route into the River Main, covering about fifty acres of arable land. The bog from which it took its flight was about one hundred and forty acres. Taking the average depth of the land covered at three feet and a half, the quantity of bog moved will be equal to 282,333 cubic or solid yards. It is said that multitudes of fish were poisoned by that part of the bog which floated into the Main.

[2] Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, vol. xv.

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

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