

In The Old World

Ireland, as I saw it : the character, condition, and prospects of the people

William Stevens Balch

My People are destroyed for lack of Knowledge—HOSEA.

1850

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TO MY DEAR FRIEND ——— :

You ask me to publish an account of my travels in the Old World, for your gratification, and for the instruction of your children. You flatter me, when you compliment my Letters, and say you “ want a book written in my peculiar style—plain, familiar, and off-hand, and yet so minute in its details that others may see what I saw, and feel as I felt.”

I went to see and learn—to gratify myself ; and, to refresh my memory in after years, I made as copious notes as possible—jotted down, at the time, such thoughts, impressions, and incidents as occurred to me. I did not take much pains to reckon time or measure proportions, in a way to give minute descriptions. Historical and statistical facts are only introduced to add vividness to the pictures drawn. I traveled neither as philosopher, sage, or poet, but simply as a plain republican, curious to see, and anxious to learn all I could, in a given time.

Of course, I measured every thing by such standard as I had, and pronounced my own judgment upon it. I went not to ape the manners of others—to Europeanize my notions and habits—to be pleased with every thing foreign, and dissatisfied with the plain, homespun habits of our own country. Neither did I carry a bigoted attachment to the customs and institutions under which I was reared. I went without prejudice, and under the influence of a principle broad and deep, which recognizes kings as companions, beggars as equals, and all men as brethren. I carried with me a disposition to study the true, approve the good, honor the great, and admire the beautiful.

I gazed with astonishment and admiration on much I saw, and my heart yearned deeply over the wrongs, oppressions, ignorance, and misery I beheld I saw more to approve in the character of the people than I expected, more to lament in their condition, and more to condemn in the operation of aristocratic institutions. But these were undergoing such rapid transformations—every thing was so agitated, so unsettled, that I could do little more than contemplate the past, and catch glimpses of the future through the auguries of the present.

I answer, then, your request, by these brief sketches of what I saw, and as I saw it, and the reflections suggested at the time. You may not see as I saw, nor feel as I felt. In honesty, I can describe nothing different from what it appeared to me. I had no eyes, no heart but my own. You may dissent from my conclusions—that is your right ; but you must not impeach my veracity ; for I have tried to be faithful, let praise or condemnation fall where it might.

I have been minute—I hope not tediously so—in all cases where I thought it necessary to a clear apprehension of the case in hand. As you say, “ the fault of many books of travel is, they deal too much in generalities, describe great things, make us acquainted with castles and kings, but not with cottages and peasants—as if the writer had seen nothing humble in all his

travels." My sympathies have ever been with the "common people," and for their sakes I write. I commenced my journey with a determination to pay particular attention to the condition of the masses—to keep along the side-hill of life, so as to see below as well as above me, and calculate the chances for the improvement of the one, and to amuse myself with the proud displays of the other. I have done both—looked on kings and queens, in their palaces ; eaten "stir-a-bout" with cottiers on the banks of the Shannon ; "butterbrod" with the peasantry of Deutschland, and green figs with the lazzaroni of Italy ; and I have formed my estimate of things as they appeared to me.

Of Ireland, to which country the present volume is devoted, little has been written by American travelers. I therefore venture to supply a work which, I trust, will afford some entertainment and instruction relative to a country of the character and condition of which we have heard much, but known little. Since the composition of these pages, a work entitled "Letters on the Condition of the People of Ireland, by T. Campbell Foster," has fallen into my hands, from which I have made some valuable extracts, and appended them as notes, to sustain the positions I have taken,

I have sought to embody just enough of my personal narrative to keep the reader close by me, and let him know what sort of a companion he is traveling with, that he may form a just estimate of the facts and circumstances detailed, and get a clearer insight into the character, condition, and prospects of the people.

Ireland

Crossing The Atlantic.

IRELAND occupies a peculiar position. It is intimately connected with the ancient and the modern. It properly belongs to neither. The ravages of time have demolished the Old, but the spirit of progress has not constructed the New. Nor can it be ranked in the transition series. It is in a state of social and political abnegation. The relics of feudalism are found in abundance among the mouldering ruins of its cloistered abbeys, its tottering castles, and moss-covered cathedrals ; but are more distinctly seen in the extreme wretchedness of its starved, oppressed, and demented population.

Still, faith espies, as in a grave-yard, ethereal specters which shall assume forms of life and beauty ; and hope, clinging to its object, is dug out of the accumulated wrongs of centuries. It requires all the works of the former, and the patience of the latter to endure the sight of present degradation and misery which abound in such odious contrast with the physical beauty and fertility of the country.

The casual observer will stumble upon little to please him or excite his curiosity, except in natural scenery. Objects of loathing will meet him every where ; and, if he has no heart to pity, no hand for relief, no far-seeing philanthropy, he will turn back in disgust, none the wiser for having looked upon this dark picture. But if he desires to learn, and has the ability to appreciate the actual condition of a people governed too much, and loved too little, he may here see the most indubitable proofs, and cogent illustrations. He will find no difficulty in tracing all these miseries to the curse of aristocracy, and the social depravity of the people, and will learn valuable lessons for the regulation of his own conduct. Let us go and see it.

What was a mere aspiration of youth, became a fixed purpose of maturer age—an *object* of my life, worthy of much labor, care, and sacrifice, to the accomplishment of which much effort has been directed.

My favored time has come at length ; the preparation has been made. My hesitations have been overcome ;—who does not hesitate, when wife, and children, and friends, with heaving hearts, and tearful eyes, and choked voices, cling about to breathe a long, perhaps a last, farewell ; and would, we know, though they say it not, dissuade us from an absence so long, and a journey so dangerous ?

But the last words have been spoken ; the last look, the last signal given ; and our ship is floating on the bay, waiting for wind and tide to carry us out to sea.

Going To Sea.

April 27.—The feelings of one's heart, on parting with home, and friends, and country, to venture upon the uncertain sea, and among the turbulent commotions of strange countries, in times like the present, are too profound and intense to find utterance in words. ; and the anguish is made keener by being detained in close proximity to those whom we have left behind, perhaps for ever. We long to return and gladden their hearts, and our own ; to light a smile where we last saw the darkness of sorrow, to utter words we could not speak at parting. The excitement of preparation is all over, and the warm blood curdles about the heart. We feel faint, and sick, and sad. Then comes the real struggle ; affection reproving desire ; duty quarreling with ambition ; the heart warring with the head ; fear growling at courage, and stirring up apprehension to a meddling interference with the plans and hopes of years. Hesitation points at assurance, and, like the forlorn rush of an assailant on his foe, makes a last desperate effort to overpower resolution and control judgment. Oh, the bitterness, the misery of such an hour ! Heaven only has recorded the thoughts and feelings of my last night.—I feel calm and assured this morning, and am only anxious to start on our voyage.

One of our passengers has been overpowered by apprehension and gone ashore, preferring the security of home to a voyage across the trackless deep. He was a middle-aged man, who had suffered much from sickness. He had been advised by his physician to cross the sea, and he resolved to do so ; but his heart has failed him, and he prefers to return, at the forfeit of his passage money.

At eight o'clock this morning we saw, with satisfaction, the captain and pilot putting off from Castle Garden in a small boat. All was ready to receive them. They came on board, and in an hour we were drifting slowly down the harbor. A south wind coming up, we were obliged to come to an anchor in the lower bay, where we lay till night, when a favorable breeze set us on our course, and we made Sandy Hook with a single tack ; and passed the lighthouse at half past seven. At eight, we discharged our pilot, and put directly to sea. As long as we could, we gazed through the darkening twilight at the receding shores of our native land ; and when we could trace the dim outline no longer, nor see a twinkle of the beacon light, we raised a prayer to Heaven for ourselves and friends, our home and country, and retired, lonely and sad, to our room, feeling more conscious than ever of the littleness and helplessness of man, and the greatness and goodness of God.

My Journal.

April 29.—Yesterday was a dull, dreary day, light wind and little progress. Our spirits were duller than the weather. To-day, we have a clear sky, a warm sun, and a smart breeze. Everything is cheerful, and we are happy. Our affairs are all arranged for the voyage and we begin to feel at home. The Siddons is a good, comfortable ship, and her officers gentlemanly, attentive, and faithful. We have but four cabin passengers, eight or ten in the second cabin,

and as many in the steerage. Ample provision has been made to render our voyage as comfortable and pleasant as possible.

May 2.—A stiff breeze from the south and increasing towards night. The sea rolls heavily, and our ship is tossed about like a very little thing. One passenger begins to complain of illness, looks pale about his lips, and leaves his place at the table vacant. The rest of us keep up good courage, but with a doubtful prospect ahead.

May 6.—Well, it is over, thanks to the milder wind and calmer sea, and I am again on my legs, staring sullenly, and in a stifled rage, at the impertinence of the sea. Four days gone, I can hardly tell how. On the night of the 2d Neptune stretched forth his trident, and demanded of me a sacrifice, for daring to encroach upon his domain. I retired like a sorry penitent to my state-room, to do penance for my temerity ; prostrated myself, and poured out my libations freely upon the dread altar. I was horribly sick for thirty hours. Not until to-day have I felt myself freely and fully forgiven. One of our passengers still lingers at the confessional.

May 7.—Another dark, drizzling day. What is duller than a dull day at sea !—the wind lulled into a dead calm : the heavens overcast with thick clouds, which rest down upon the surface of the waters ; the dark swelling waves, murmuring mournfully by. The ship rolls and pitches heavily, her timbers creaking at every joint, and the wet sails flapping lazily, with a most doleful sound. Oh, the tedium of the sea ! Its poetry is all gone. It has vanished like the “ baseless fabric of a vision.” The romance of the sea is all on shore. Seated on some safe, jutting cliff, beneath the spreading branches of a tree, one may dream about the poetry of the “ deep blue sea,” as its waves come surging to the shore and spend their fury in harmless dashing at his feet. But this eternal tossing, pitching, tumbling, and creaking, of “ the house we live in,” as if an earthquake were beneath us, and one dash more would rend it to atoms, and send us to sleep on coral beds below ; the tramp and bawl of the sailors over head ; the dark, damp atmosphere ; the entire prostration of all mental vigor ; the utter inability to read, think, talk, or write ; nothing to amuse or comfort ; every expression of sympathy construed into a desire to mock one’s sufferings ; all becomes too real, too discordant to admit any play of the imagination, to weave chaplets of poesy with which to wreath the brow of old ocean. On such a day one gets out of patience with himself and the world, and curses the folly and madness which ever induced him to exchange the security and comfort of home, the close communion of beloved friends, and the thousand sources of enjoyment, for the dulness and misery of a voyage across the sea.

May 9. — Encouraging. By the captain’s reckoning, we are half way across the Atlantic. The sea is calm, the sky is clear, the wind favorable, and we are careering on in fine style. What an influence the outer world has over the spirit of man ! How close and intricate, is the connexion of soul and body ; and how inwoven are the powers which play upon each other ! Two days ago, all was regret, and gloom, and apprehension. To-day, everything is full of cheer, and hope, and happiness. Nothing but necessity could force us backward from our purpose. The clouds are cleared away from the mental horizon, and I can look upon the sublimity and awful grandeur of this vast wilderness of waters with the profoundest admiration and delight. Around, above, beneath, are manifest the mighty works of him “ who spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea,” “ who hath gathered the wind in his fists,” and “ stilleth the noise of the sea, the noise of the waves, and the tumult of the people.”

May 10.—I have been watching, to-day, the working of the ship, noting the order and regularity which prevail in every department, admiring the skill and energy of the officers, and the promptitude and cheerfulness of the sailors. There stands the captain, always at his post, in defiance of cold, or wet, or darkness, pacing to and fro on the windward side of the

quarter deck, till he has worn a track from the binnacle to near the main-mast. He eyes each sail, to keep it full ; marks the least increase or diminution of the wind, and gives commands to reef, or unfurl, or set more sail, to jibe, or luff, or wear about ; anxious to do everything to speed the passage, and give security to the persons and property committed to his charge. Then here are the under officers, equally faithful to their trust, and alike anxious for the safety and comfort of all on board. Then come the poor, neglected, and too often despised sailors, a rough and hardy set of fellows, but for whose fidelity, and, sometimes dangerous daring, all would be unsafe and disastrous. The commands of the officers would be unavailing, the ship unmanageable, the winds our masters, the coral reefs our bed, but for their promptitude and courage in the discharge of their duties. The other night, when the gale carried away our main-top-gallant mast, all hands turned out, and were ready to mount the rattlings, to clamber out to the very ends of the yards, while the ship rolled and pitched fearfully, clinging among the shrouds, at the great risk of their lives, to furl the sails and repair the injury. No danger is so great as to deter them from doing what a superior officer commands. Suddenly awakened from the slumbers of night, they start to the post of duty without a murmur.

Who will say no goodness dwells in the sailor's heart ; that all is dark, depraved, and vile ; that this rough covering envelopes no nut, no germ of moral excellence, which retains the impress of its divine parentage, and needs but the application of truth and love to bring out the innate quality, arm it against all circumstances, and set it on its heavenward course ? Who can tell us how far bad influences—uncared for childhood, neglected youth, the crushing weight of poverty and ignorance, the indifference and abuse of employers, and the cold scorn and hard denunciation of the professedly good and pious, have tended to make them what they are, and immeasurably worse than they otherwise would have been ? And the treatment they receive at home and abroad is not much calculated to make them better. They are stowed away in the low, dark fore-castle, without seats, without lights, without dishes, save a tin plate and cup, and wooden noggin. They are fed upon the most miserable fare, served out in the meanest manner. Their physical comfort is altogether disregarded. They are treated with less attention to their comfort than a cartman's horse. There is little done for them by their rich, and sometimes pious employers, to elevate their minds, to promote their welfare, and to make them think more seriously of their characters as men, and their responsibilities as the children of God.

May 12.—What a wonderful influence weather has upon one's spirits ! A clear, bright day, with a fair breeze, dispels all gloom, and makes one cheerful and happy. How much are most people affected by outward circumstances ! Some may be controlled wholly by them. Such are like seed sown on thin soil, " they have not root in themselves." Every man should attain to the possession of a degree of self-reliance which will raise him above all circumstances, and give him an independence and fortitude sufficient to signalize his individuality and show that his character is not a mere chameleon-hue, taking its tinge from whatever is reflected upon it. No matter if there are coarse, rugged features, observable to those accustomed to look only upon the flat surface of life's picture, to admire the minglings of light and shade in the arrangement of forms and figures which stand out only in appearance.

May 14.—It is Sunday : a calm and quiet day, with a fair, soft breeze. The sea is tranquil, disturbed only by our ship, which leaves a faint ripple behind, but which is all vanished ere we are out of sight of it. What an emblem of the good man's life ! He lives, and loves, and blesses. His years flow smoothly on. He dies. But his memory lives after him, till the generation that knew him passes away and then he is not forgotten. Not so with the selfish and vile. Their memory, like our ship's track in a storm, is soon obliterated, or exhibits only the scattered fragments of a wasted life.

Our passengers are so few that no public religious service has been proposed. But God is worshipped acceptably by the heart that kindles with devotion at the mightiness of his power, the grandeur of his works, and the sufficiency of his grace. He asks the sacrifice of the heart, and accepts it without a lip-service. The forms of worship are of little worth, unless they become suggestive, waking up religious emotions, and giving utterance and direction to genuine feelings of reverence and devotion. Who can be witness to what we have seen—the “wonders of the Lord in the great deep,” and feel no sentiment of thankfulness, no desire to honor and obey, to praise and adore the merciful Benefactor, who has preserved us in all our lives, supplied all our wants, comforted our hearts in sorrow, and given us the promise of a glorious and happy immortality ?

May 15.—Eleven ships in sight at one time, this morning. Scarcely a day has passed, that we have not fallen in with one or more. Sometimes they come near to us, at others are so far off that only the topsails can be seen, appearing no larger than little boats. One day, when about half across the ocean, we spoke a brig, which had been thirty-six days at sea, bound from London to Quebec. She had no tidings to communicate, no request to make, but feeling lonely and discouraged at such poor progress, desired a little relief from the monotony of the sea by a trumpet-talk with us. At another time, the second mate came into the cabin while we are at dinner, saying “a ship is off our beam, talking bunting to us.” “Answer him,” said the captain, and all the passengers ran on deck to see the process. Small signals of different colors are set in the shrouds, and exchanged which, like old-fashioned telegraphs, have a certain meaning affixed to them, by which enough can be communicated to tell the name, nation, latitude and longitude, time out, port of destination, and so forth. Sailors generally have a great dislike to all attempts at sociability, between ships on the sea, and avoid them when possible.

But such interruptions serve to break the monotony of a voyage, and afford subject of conversation for an hour. One on land would be surprised, perhaps would laugh, to see what interest is awakened at the sight of a ship, a lost spar, a stick of wood, or any object floating on the surface of the sea—a whale, a shoal of porpoises, a shark, a lonely gull, a Mother Carey’s chicken—any thing to divert the attention, from gazing at the broad heavens above, bounded by the blue sea beneath. The fact is, man is not all selfish ; he can not contract himself, like a tortoise, into his own shell, and be content.

The condition of our cabin has been again rendered somewhat uncomfortable by the impertinence and dictatorial overbearing of one of our passengers, who is in everything, but his religious opinions, a very kind, companionable and excellent man, one whom we much esteem. A foreigner by birth and education, he has not learned to appreciate aright the independence of American character, and the principles of religious toleration, free inquiry, and equal rights. Unfortunately, there are too many, even among protestants, not unlike him, who sink the gentleman and Christian in the sectarist, and forget the commonest civilities of life.

May 16.—Good courage! We are promised, this morning, that we shall see land before night. Pleasant sight !—though it shall be to us the land of strangers ! It is a wonderful achievement of human skill, that enables the mariner to note his exact position at sea. How fixed and benevolent are the laws of God in all their adaptation ! The sun, and stars, and earth, move on with the utmost precision. They form the basis of his calculation.

The wind has lulled into a calm, and our eyes must sleep another night without the sight of land. Disappointments are necessary to try the strength of a man’s faith. Always prosperous, he would be like a hot-house plant, unfitted for the real world. He who can not be patient

under denial is ignorant of the sources of enjoyment. No man has a right to inquire why God made the world as he did, or governs it as he does. It is the part of true wisdom to find what his will is : submission is then his duty. His happiness depends upon doing it. There is, sometimes, as much virtue in endeavor as in performance. Both are essential to a true life.

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Sight of Land.—Hailed by some Irishmen.—Leave the Ship.—An Irish Hooker.—A Dinner.—Approaching the Land.—Appearance of the Coast.—Landing.—A Stroll.—Taking Tea.—Kinsale.—Servants.—Beset by Beggars.—An Irish Coach.—Ride to Cork.—A grand Prospect.

The Landing.

May 17.—Rose at daylight, and on going on deck was greeted with the pleasing intelligence that a light-house had been in sight several hours. I took the glass, and traced the rough shore of Ireland, from Cape Clear eastward, distant some twenty miles. “A change came o’er the spirit of my dream.” I breathed more freely. My blood coursed more rapidly. All was joy and gladness. I roused up our fellow-passengers, that they might enjoy the pleasure also. How much is one’s happiness enhanced by making others happy ! And it sometimes costs little to make them so.

Assured by the captain, at the breakfast table, that we should probably fall in with a fishing boat before noon, which would come along-side to sell fish, we could have an opportunity to carry out our previous plan, and land on the south coast of Ireland, thus avoiding the delay frequently experienced at this season of the year in sailing to Liverpool. We hastened to make the necessary preparation—packed our sacks with what we should need for a few weeks, arranged about the deposit of our trunks, wrote up our notes, and waited the arrival of a boat. Before noon, several were in sight, making for our course. We were under gentle sail, with all our canvas set. At 12, one hailed us and came along-side—a miserable, dirty-looking affair, manned by a ragged, piratical-looking set of fellows as were ever looked on. The captain doubted if we should get a better, so we authorized him to contract for our conveyance to the Cove of Cork, on the most favorable terms he could.

“Where are you from ?” asked the captain.

“Sure, an’ ar’nt we from Cork ? Would yer honor be afther buyin’ soome fish ?”

“Well, take a line.”

The sailors threw one, which they all scrambled after, and finally succeeded in making it fast to the mast of their craft.

“Will you take some passengers on shore, at the Cove of Cork ?”

“Sure, an’ it’s the same thing we’d like to be afther doing,” answered all at once.

“For what price will you land them there ?”

“How mooney might there be ?” asked two or three.

“Four, with small sacks.”

“ Two poounds a-piece, then ;” answered two voices.

“ They will not give it. It is a great deal too much. So let go the line.”

“ An’ hoow much would the ginthilmin bay afther giving ?” demanded one.

“ Two pounds for all four, if you land them at the Cove.”

“ Sure, an’ we’ll do that same thing to plase the ginthilmin,” ejaculated all at once.

“ Haul in, there, and let them come close along-side.”

They veered about in the most awkward manner, as if afraid our ship would roll over them, all acting as commanders, one ordering this and an other that, until the patience of our captain was well nigh exhausted. They finally succeeded in bringing their boat within jumping distance, and we all leaped from the main-chains, at considerable risk of our lives and limbs, into the wildest, craziest looking craft that ever floated on the sea, the Chinese junk not excepted. Our bags, coats, and luncheon followed. In a moment the hawser was cast off ; we waved adieu to our excellent and gentlemanly commander, and to all on board—towards whom we had come to feel a warm attachment, and soon found ourselves floating far astern the Siddons, twenty miles from shore, and in a little, black, dirty fishing boat—called a “ Hooker,” managed by five men and two boys, all looking, if possible, worse than the boat itself. We took courage when we learned that the name of the hooker was the “ Teetotaller,” and had an old man on board called “ Admiral,” who showed us a temperance medal which had been given him by Father Mathew. Likeness of principles soon inspires friendship, and sobriety begets confidence. We soon contrived to get up a conversation on various topics connected with the business of fishing, by which we became acquainted with the hard fate of these poor fellows. They spend weeks on the sea, amid cold and storms, toiling at great peril for a most wretched and precarious subsistence. We inquired of them about the state of affairs in Europe, which were so threatening when we left home ; especially in England and their own country. But they were ignorant of every thing disconnected with their business ; none of them being able to read or write. Their home and government was in this little vessel, which they managed upon shares—the owner fitting it out with sails, rigging, and tackle, for one half the profits. Their income affords a scanty support. Sometimes they go out thirty and forty leagues, and are absent a week or two, without any success. At other times, they return in a few days with a full cargo.

My readers will pardon me for the description of an Irish “ hooker,” when they remember that many thousand human beings live in them. It is some thirty feet long, nine feet beam, drawing seven feet, loaded. Ours had a rough board deck, five feet below the gunwale ; the midships filled with a large pile of netting and buoys, or floats, made of calf-skins, sewed tight, as if whole, and filled with air, looking like hideous monsters from the deep. It was sloop-rigged,—some are schooners,—with a high pointed mainsail, the peak of which ran up far above the mast, a jib and flying-jib, all besmeared with grease and tar, to preserve them from the influence of the weather. Forward of the mast was the cabin which was entered by getting down two or three feet into a transverse opening two feet wide, in which stood a common iron pot, filled with burning turf. Then, by doubling down as best we could, shutting our eyes meanwhile, to keep out the smoke, we thrust our heads through a small aperture eighteen inches wide and fifteen high, and dragged our bodies into the “ gentleman’s cabin.” The carpet was loose oat straw, about eight inches thick, which served, at the same time, for chairs and beds. From the straw to the roof was just two feet, by measure. The breadth of the cabin was the width of the hooker, and, fore and aft, the length of a man. Various articles

were stowed into the forward end. Into this Calcutta black-hole we crawled, during a violent shower which came on, and remained till we were well nigh suffocated with the smoke from the pot of turf, which came in by the “ companion way,” or main side hatch. There was no opening for it to escape. The helmsman had a small box-compass set loose on the deck, by which he steered. The commands were mutually given, in a broad dialect we could not understand. We felt that we were among strangers and approaching a foreign land.

The dinner hour arrived, and it was proposed to cook us some fresh mackerel. We assented, but wondered how it was to be done. Half a dozen were prepared, put in a pot, and set upon the other filled with turf. By dint of hard blowing, the pot was made to boil, though closely watched. For a table a rough board was placed on a pile of fish-nets, so as to keep a steady position, on which we spread a newspaper for a cloth. On this the fish were placed and “ dinner was ready.” No knife, no fork, no plate. These are needless things for ultra-utilitarians. Fingers before forks ; boards before tables. They are more primitive, more natural. We asked for salt, and a man brought some in his hands and poured it on the table. Salt-cellars are needless expenditures. It was of a quality between table and Turk’s Island, a sort of “ coarse fine.” We ate as best we could, and gave portions of the liberal allowance furnished us by the generous steward of the Siddons, of which the poor, half-starved fellows partook with a hearty good relish, mixing in many expressions of thankfulness. Such was our first meal among foreigners.

The wind freshened into a stiff breeze, the waves rolled high, sometimes dashing the spray all over us, and our little craft was tossed about most fearfully. We sheltered ourselves as best we could and submitted to our fate. The novelty of our position filled us with indescribable emotions.

The approach to the shores of the Old World is full of novelty and excitement. Reality begins to supplant imagination, and scenes are developed at once strange and pleasing, in almost every respect dissimilar to those with which one has been familiar in his own country. Not least among the sources of happiness in that hour, was the thought that the treacherous sea had been crossed, and we were soon to set foot on the solid ground. This thought would have filled us with joy, had we not been compelled to turn a surly look, half contemptuous, half imploring, at the old ocean ; as much as to say, Though I despise thee, I will not vent my detestation, lest I wake thy wrath, to be remembered when I recross thy trackless and turbulent waves, to my country and my home. I have crossed thy domain. Let us be at peace. Spite retained for injuries past, destroys the peace of him who cherishes it.

As we drew nearer, the long line of undulating coast appeared more and more distinct. The “ Old Head of Kinsale,” jutting several miles into the sea, and rising to the height of two hundred and fifty feet, crowned with a large white light-house and the crumbling walls of an old castle, like the out-sentinel of another world, stood upon our left, and protected the little bay we were entering from the strong winds we had encountered. On our right, arose rocky and precipitous cliffs, which stretched eastward out of sight, and whose base is for ever lashed by the surging waves of the broad Atlantic. Before us the land rose by gentle acclivities, covered all over with little fields of various shapes and colors. The fresh-plowed ground looked black from the rain just fallen. In some the new-sprung grain looked green and soft. The close-fed pastures were of a lighter hue, in which sheep, and goats, and cattle were grazing. The bright yellow furz, in full blossom, scattered about the borders of the fields, or in large patches, here and there, added greatly to the novelty and beauty of the scenery. Then, the asses and mules, heavily laden, winding up the steep sides of the hills, driven by barefoot boys or girls ; the peculiar dress of the men and women working in the fields ; the singular appearance of the low mud hovels ; the entire absence of forests, or copses of wood, with

scarce a tree or shrub in view ; the queer construction of the water craft we met or passed ; the hoarse, broad dialect heard from the boats and the shore ; every thing was strange and curious, wholly unlike any portion of our own country, or aught I had seen or imagined before.

By a single tack we entered, through a narrow passage, into the calm and beautiful harbor, completely surrounded by rising grounds, with a large fort in front, whose “ war-dogs,” mounted on lofty battlements, frowned gruffly at our entrance, like a maddened bull, ready for attack. One can hardly imagine the feelings of enthusiasm we felt on finding ourselves secure from the rocking sea, and approaching a large town, pleasantly situated around the Cove up which we were sailing. We wound round the low point on which stand the ruins of an old fort, and came directly up to the town. We were hailed in rough, hoarse language, by a set of ragged and filthy fisherwomen, who paddled their dirty boats out to meet us and buy our fish, if we had any. But the only produce of this voyage was three live Yankees and a French priest—poor property in an Irish market. Several boats had arrived just before us, on board of which were several women, wrangling, and swearing, and scolding, in words so loud that they echoed back from the town in no very agreeable accents, as they broke the stillness of that quiet and beautiful scene.

The joy we felt on leaping from the boat to the steps of the “ Royal George Hotel,” where we lodge, was unbounded. It surpassed description. The declining sun, which had been obscured since noon, burst through its cloudy veil, and shone brightly and beautifully upon the green hills and that part of the town not shaded by the rising ground in the rear. The birds sang merrily, and the sweet aroma of the flowers perfumed the mild zephyrs of evening. The scene was, to us, enchanting. We could not restrain our delight. We ran, and frolicked, and chattered like children just out of school. This saved us from the appearance of awkwardness we should otherwise have exhibited, from the uncontrollable movements of our locomotive machinery, which had got somewhat deranged by our toppling motions on ship-board. We managed to get into the “ Royal George,” whither our boatmen followed us, demanding some extra pay for *drink-money*. We refused ; first, because we did not understand that after paying, according to contract, £2, any further claim could be rightfully made against us ; second, because they agreed to carry us to Cork, but had brought us to Kinsale, not half the distance. This we overlooked, so glad were we to get on shore, any where ; third, because we could not see what “ drink-money” had to do with a temperance crew of the “ Teetotaller.” But we could not reason the matter. They said it was the custom to do so ; and gave us any thing but their blessing when we plead ignorance of all such laws, civil, social, or martial.

After warming and drying ourselves by a good fire, we issued out to make our first acquaintance with an Irish town. We wandered about through several streets, and ascended an eminence on the north, where we saw whole streets of low cottages, with roofs fallen in, and nothing but the naked stone walls remaining. The remark of one was, “ They must have had a great fire here.” A few turns more and we came to other streets in the same desolate condition, when the same remark was repeated by another, forgetting we were in the Old World, where ruins were to be looked for—in Ireland, where poor tenants are robbed of their dwellings by their merciless landlords. Passing the Catholic Church, we saw our clerical friend going in with his missal in his hand.

Fatigued with a short walk, we returned and ordered tea. This opened to us an entire new scene in the customs of social life, and the art of hotel keeping. It was served on this wise. The table was set without a cloth, furnished with a plate and knife, a cup and saucer for each. A square loaf of bread was placed in the center, with a dozen small pieces of butter, the size of hickory nuts, on a plate beside it. A sugar bowl, milk pitcher, and tea-pot, and a small

square box beside, completed the table furniture. A tea-kettle was set by the side of the grate, when the waiter said, "Tay is ready, sir." We sat down, and looked inquiringly at each other. One essayed to pour out the tea, when lo ! the pot was found to be empty. We explored the interior and found no tea. We stared at each other, and burst into a hearty laugh. The waiter had left the room. The bell was rung, and he returned. We informed him of his mistake. "Och," said he, "here is the tay," opening the little ornamented box, which contained two apartments, one filled with black, and the other with green tea. "An' ye'll plase put in the tay, an' I'll be afther poouring the wather upon it." We did so, and the pot was filled with water from the kettle and sat upon the table. In a little time it was duly steeped, and we proceeded to partake of a meal served in a manner quite novel to us.

After tea, we arranged for our departure to Cork on the following morning. A large crowd of men, women, and children, most of them young, ragged, and dirty, were gathered in the street to hear the stories and witness the feats of a stripling harlequin, who attempted some very foolish and unattractive exploits, a woman, meanwhile, going round for such contributions as she could raise, to encourage the renegade to go on with his nonsense. The "ha'-pennies" came in as sparingly as they do to the music grinders in our own country.

Kinsale

May 18.—We retired early last night, with hearts full of gratitude to Almighty God for having preserved our lives, and given us a safe and pleasant voyage across the Atlantic. We had fond hopes of a quiet night, and sound and refreshing sleep, but were doomed to disappointment. The transition we had passed, the strange scenes we had witnessed, the influence of the *tay*, or something else, so disquieted my nerves that I could not sleep at all. Oh, the horrors of a sleepless night ! How miserable, how perfectly wretched ! I wished myself at home, on board the ship, snugly cradled in my birth, to be rocked to sleep by the rolling waves,—any where, but to be rolling and tumbling in a fever of sleepless excitement. How forcible were the words of poor Sancho Panza, " Blessings on the head of him who first invented sleep." I never rejoiced as I did this morning, to see the dawn of day, to be able to forsake my couch of sleepless misery, and go forth and find relief in the world of realities.

I roused my companions and started for a more general inspection of the town. We passed through all the principal streets and ascended the lofty eminence called " Compass Hill," which overlooks the bay and a large tract of the surrounding country and commands a fine prospect of the town, several villas, the forts, harbors, " Old Head," and the sea. The sun arose in sweetest beauty and ascended a cloudless sky. The birds sang sweetly, and twittered from spray to spray in the gardens and orchards. The fields were decked in their richest robes. Several small boats laden with various articles for the market were coming down the Bandon river which forms a frith in the rear of the town. The hum of busy feet and voices in the town, the rolling beat of the reveille in the capacious barracks opposite, the marshaling of the red-coat soldiery, every thing wore the charm of novelty.

We strolled about visiting the spacious grounds and splendid garden of some nobleman whose name we have forgotten, squinting at the extensive military preparations and looking at the lean market and leaner inhabitants—wretched, squalid, and filthy—sembled about it. Here were women with early vegetables, milk, bread, butter, fish, or something else to sell ; then a long row of men with spades waiting for some man to hire them. There went an ass loaded with two monstrous panniers suspended across its back and reaching nearly to the ground, containing milk, potatoes, turf, or some other marketable stuff ; everything looked odd, awkward, strange and miserable.

The town itself is dilapidated, being of little importance compared with its former rank. It bears the mark of age, and must have been at one time a place of great business. We are told it was once the depot of all outward bound fleets, having a safe and commodious harbor for ships of all sizes ; that it was so much more noted than Cork, that letters were directed to “ Cork, near Kinsale.” The Spaniards at one time had possession of the town. Prince Rupert took shelter here during the protectorate of Cromwell, at which time, and in the reign of James II, it was the scene of several bloody engagements. It suffered so severely, that it has never recovered its former importance. A strong fort commands the harbor. There are several venerable churches ; that of St. Multaria was built in the 14th century. The Catholic chapel and Carmelite priory, the workhouse, the barracks, and the jail are prominent objects of attraction. The houses, generally, look dingy. Nothing about the place indicates thrift or comfort, except a few private dwellings.

After a breakfast, like our tea of the preceding night, with the addition of two boiled eggs a piece, we paid our bill and arranged to leave. Each took his small sack and started for the coach office. We were followed by a boy, who demanded pay for himself, the chambermaid and the waiter. The justice of this claim we did not understand. We had paid our bill—for tea, 1s 6d ; for lodging. 2s 6d ; for breakfast 2s, (5s 37 ;) and Mr. Boots and Miss Chambermaid we had not seen. We carried in our own baggage and brought it away. What else was wanted ?

“ Sure, an we get nothin but our chances ; an the gintilmin will not lave us without somethin.”

“ Your *chances* ! what are they ? We take our chances in our country and work our way as best we can. We paid our bill, for all that we had, and all that was demanded, now what do you want more ?”

“ Jist what yer honors plase—a shillun to the sarvant, a shillun to the chambermaid, and sixpence to the boots.”

“ Why, that will make half a crown for each ; half a sovrein in all.”

“ Ay, jist that same thing it will be, sure, and we’ll pray God to prosper yer journey.”

“ There, take that, and go to grass, and take your chances with Nebuchadnezzar. We will give you no more. This is not the way to do business any how. We pay for what we have, but do not beg for charities, nor give gratuities *on demand*.”

By this time we had arrived at the coach office, and poor boots, made himself, very busy, in detailing his unlucky chances with these Americans. The coach stood before the door, and several passengers were already taking their seats, although the horses were not yet hitched to it. As we had engaged outside seats, for the purpose of *seeing*, we were anxious to secure good ones, so we mounted a tier behind the driver’s box, which was wide enough for our party of four. Behind the coach, over the baggage box, is another seat, and another still, facing backwards, so that eight passengers can ride there ; then two with the driver, making, in all, fourteen outside, while only six can ride inside. The outside seats are much the pleasantest in good weather, or when it is dusty. They are, generally, all occupied, when, perhaps, there will not be a passenger inside. Even some who pay for inside seats, which are at about one-third higher price, often ride outside, when the weather is fine.

While waiting for the horses and mails, we noticed several sleek-looking young men, dressed in blue clothes, with standing collars to their coats, on which were figures in silver with polished leather tops to their hats. We could not make out their business ; they eyed us very closely, and at one time we supposed them to be custom-house officers, looking after our baggage ; for nobody had asked us about it. We afterwards learned that they were policemen and were taking particular notice of us, so as to be able to describe us, if ever inquired of. In these rebellious times, Americans are looked upon with some suspicion, as well as all who sympathise with the people.

But another scene soon occurred, illustrative of Ireland's degradation. An old woman, went among the passengers about the door of the office begging. I was the only one at the time on the coach, the others had left to escape a slight shower. She came to me, and reached up her lean, shrivelled hand, with a " Plase yer honor, and will ye give the poor woman a ha'penny, and God bless ye for it ?" Her dress had been patched with as many colors as Joseph's coat, and was all tattered and torn at that. Some old clogs, like shoes, were on her feet, and a ragged shawl was thrown over her head. Her ankles, arms, and neck were naked, and she might well say, with the prophet, " My leanness, my leanness ;" or with Job, " Thou hast filled me with wrinkles, and my leanness beareth witness to my face." I had no heart to send her away empty. So I took a bag of ginger-cakes I had provided against sea-sickness, (which danger being over, I could well spare,) and gave her a handful. In less than a minute, more than twenty gathered around the coach, each striving to get nearest, all reaching up their lean hands, and saying, " May God bless ye, sir ;" " May God Almighty return ye safe to yer home and yer blissid coounthry ;" " May God reward ye in heaven ;" " May the Hooly Virgin protict ye ;" " Och, sir, ye'll geve me some, for Jesus' sake, for my poor, famishing childers ;" " Plase give me some, sir," said a little, ragged boy, who had climbed up the wheel, " and I'll carry them to my poor, sick mother."

A young woman crowded up, with a child in her arms. Both looked as if half-starved. I reached her a hand full, and as she took them and looked up to express her thanks, I saw big tears trembling in her eyes, and she turned away without speaking. Not so with all, for many besought me the second time, and the old woman who came first put in her request the *third* time, with the most solemn protestations that she " had not a single bish-cake at all, at all." Some others hid theirs away in their bosoms, and then said they had not received one, and plead, in God's name, for a single cake. I could not appease them till the last cake was gone and the bag turned inside out. They then withdrew, with many appeals to God for blessings on the " kind gintilmin," and stood about the buildings, some showing their cakes to the hosts who continued to collect, begging for a taste. I saw the little boy who asked some for his mother, steal out of the crowd and run away, while several others chased after, trying to rob him.

It was not curiosity that brought these poor creatures about me. They were actually hungry. Their hollow looks betokened the emptiness of their bellies. A gentleman assured us that probably one-third of the people about Kinsale did not get a full meal, even of the coarsest food, one day in seven, and many families went whole days with nothing. And when I remembered that this was not far from Skibbereen, where the famine of winter before last did its deadliest work, I could not discredit him. The very looks of the people satisfied me that he told the truth. What a shame that such multitudes should live in such wretchedness and ignorance under the government of the Mistress of the world ! And the evil seemed greater when I saw large tracts of fine land uncultivated,—kept for pasturing, and the hunting and pleasure grounds of noblemen ! The land is fertile, but husbanded in the worst manner. The rents and taxes are so enormous that the tenants can not, with their awkward manner and limited means, make it pay them half a living for their labor. So the people cluster about the

towns, to labor what they can for hire, and beg for the rest. The scene of this morning was such as I never witnessed before. I never saw humanity so degraded, not even among the slaves of our Southern States. I wonder there is no more interest felt in the welfare and improvement of this people. It would seem the interest of the owners of these estates, the honor and prosperity of the nation, would produce a better state of things, to say nothing about the demands of Christian philanthropy. But I shall, doubtless, be wiser on these subjects when I have seen more of the actual state of this country.

At length all was ready ; the driver on his box, and the guard, a burly old fellow, with a bright-red coat trimmed with black, mounted the hind seat, with several little mail bags in his hand, and gave command ; when off we started at a smart trot, which was continued, up hill and down, till we reached the half-way house, where the horses were changed in less than three minutes, and we were again on our way. The road is excellent, being well graded and thoroughly macadamized. The stages being short, not over eight or nine miles, the horses are driven that distance in an hour, so that we reached Cork, nineteen miles, in two hours. A supply of hands are in waiting at the relay stations, who change the teams without calling the driver from his seat. He simply throws down his reins and sits at his ease, till others are handed him. He has nothing to do with horses, but to drive them.

The prospect from the hill we passed, in ascending from the cove in which Kinsale is situated, is extensive, varied, and beautiful. The bay, the harbor, the town and its environs, a vast region of undulating country, with its green and gently sloping hills, and rich and verdant vallies, bounded by a distant range of mountains on the north, and the broad ocean jutting into the land here and there, on the south, present a landscape as grand and pleasing as I ever saw. But the beauty of it is sadly marred, and the glory of it vanishes when the eye falls upon the low mud hovels, waste fields, and squalid population, close at hand. Mingled feelings of admiration and regret, of thankfulness and pity, were awakened in my breast, and I could smile at the beautiful works of God, and weep for the misery of man.

For some distance we traced the line of the great south-western railroad, which is under contract, to extend from Dublin by Cork and Bandon, and thence to Bantry Bay. It is completed nearly half the way—to Clonmel—and partially graded the remainder. The political troubles in this country, and the scarcity of money, have caused a temporary suspension of the work. When completed it is thought that passengers from America, by the Liverpool mail steamers, will pass over it, and thus shorten the passage from England to America about two days. There will also be considerable local business along the road, which can not fail to improve this part of the country, now said to be the most neglected and wretched portion of the Island.

Ireland, as I saw it : the character, condition, and prospects of the people (1850)

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