

Little Tour in Ireland.

*Being*

*A visit To Dublin, Galway, Connamara, Athlone, Limerick, Killarney, Glengarriff, Cork.*

*Etc, Etc, Etc.*

By

An Oxonian.

Samuel Reynolds Hole

“ By suffering worn and weary,  
But beautiful as some fair angel yet.”

1859

Prefatory.

The catastrophe, which caused our happy days in Ireland, befel as follows.

“ ’Twas in the prime of summer time, an evening calm and cool, that I found myself wandering among the shrubberies of —— Castle with a most lovely girl. A large picnic party had been enlivened by archery and aquatics, and I fancy that the glare of some new targets, and the sheen of the “ shining river,” had not only dazzled my eyes, but likewise had bewildered my brain. In spite of the cooling beverages, the cobblers and the cups, I was actuated by an extraordinary liveliness. I sang songs for the company, not quite reaching the high notes, but with intense feeling, doing all in my power to indicate to the lovely girl that she was *my* Annie Laurie, and that for her I should consider it a pleasant gymnastic exercise to expire in a recumbent position. I made felicitous alterations in the words, such as “ hazel is her e’e” for “ dark-blue ;” and in the song of “ *Constance*,” instead of “ I lay it as the rose is laid on some immortal shrine,” I contrived, with immense difficulty, and by means of a terrific *apoggiatura*, to substitute the word *stephanotis*, of which I had that morning given her a bouquet. But “ *brevis esse laboro ;*” we were alone, and I resolved to propose. I seized her elbow with both hands, a ridiculous position, but I was very nervous, and was about to ask the momentous question, when she said with such a tone of gentle pity as took away half the pain, “ Philip, I am engaged to Lord Evelyn. Shall we go back for coffee ?” I seconded the motion, but oh, what an amazing period of time we seemed to occupy in carrying our proposition out ! The first idea which presented itself to my mind was suicide, but it met with an unfavourable reception ; the second, to enlist immediately, and to secure the earliest *coup-de-soleil possible* ; the third, to insult Lord Evelyn (the beast was at Christ Church, and I knew him), and subsequently to shoot him in Port-Meadow. “ What right had he,” I asked myself, “ to anticipate me, and win her heart ? I hate these accursed aristocrats, who suck the life-blood of the people.”

At last, we rejoined the party, and found them talking the silliest rubbish conceivable, and apparently enjoying the nastiest coffee I ever remember to have drunk.

That night, and at the witching hour, when men and women tell each other everything, (in the strictest confidence), they in their dormitories, and we in our smokerooms, I revealed my

misery to my friend Frank C—— who happened happily to be staying with me. Frank has Irish blood in his veins, and his first impulse was to have “a crack at the Viscount,” but he ultimately took a less truculent view of the case, and suggested brandy and water. From this source, and “from the cool cisterns of the midnight air,” for we were smoking our cigars out of doors, “our spirits drank repose,” and we finally resolved “to banish my regret,” and to replenish our sketch-books, by a fortnight’s tour in Ireland.

To Dublin.

“The Rows” of Chester are very picturesque and quaint, but do not make a favourable impression upon a giant with a new hat, and, being on the upper side of six feet, I was glad to leave them for that pleasant, briny, breezy, railway, which takes one, *viâ* Conway, to Bangor, and thence,—thundering through the Britannia Tube, and just allowing a glimpse of Telford’s triumph, the Bridge of the Menai, grand and graceful,—over drear Anglesey, [1] to Holyhead. And, oh, how glad we were, to find old Neptune in his mildest mood, only now and then just raising his shoulders, as some good-humored athlete, who should say, “I’m in the jolliest frame of mind, my lads, but I could pitch the biggest of you into the middle of next week, any moment, with the most perfect ease.” Pleasant it was to pace the broad, clear deck, with perfectly obedient legs, and to ask what we could have for dinner, with a real curiosity on the subject. Frank C——, not distinguished for deeds of naval daring, began, in the joy of his heart, to sing songs of an ultra-marine description, alluding to the land with severe disparagement, and stigmatising that element as “the dull, tame shore.” I must say, that when I heard him chanting,—

“Give to me the swelling breeze,  
And white waves heaving high,”

I trembled to think what a change would take place in the key-note of that cheery vocalist, and what dismal misereres would ensue, should his rash petition be conceded. Happily it was not attended to, and we had but one invalid, a lady (the captain very properly put a young man in irons, for saying something about no Cyc-lades in these seas); and she, I believe, only wanted sympathy and sherry from her husband, who was evidently a recent capture, and who administered both these cordials in due proportions, first a sip and then a kiss, ever and anon, when he thought that no one was looking, taking liberal gulps for his own private refreshment.

It was very beautiful, as the day declined, to watch the vivid phosphorescence of the sea, myriads of those marine glow-worms, whose proper names, I know not, but who cause this brilliant phenomenon, lighting up their tiny lamps. Then the light of “Ireland’s eye” (bright and clear, though there must be a *sty there*), seemed to welcome us, blinking bonnily; and entering the bay of Dublin, with grateful recollections of its haddock, we were safely landed upon Kingstown quay. Forty minutes more on the rail, and we reach the city, some of our fellow-passengers having only left London that morning, and having travelled from one capital to the other in little more than twelve hours.

We had our first experience of Ireland proper when, emerging from the station at Dublin, we called for an “outside car,” and a son of Nimshi, responding in the distance, charged down upon us through a phalanx of vehicles, and reached us, I know not how, amid the acrimonious observations of his brethren. The first feeling, as we sat on the low-backed car, “travelling edgeways,” as Sir Francis Head designates this style of transit, was one of extreme insecurity, and though we laughed, and made believe that we liked it, we were glad

enough to hold on to the iron-work until we arrived at Morrisson's. Our account with the charioteer was as follows :—

	<i>s. d.</i>
To Driver . . . . .	1 6
To small boy, seated at driver's feet, whipping the horse, and exciting him with cries of "Yap" . . . . .	0 6
To man, for holding on our luggage, by embracing it with extended arms . . . . .	1 0
Total . . . . .	3 0

In the next place, we committed the pious fraud of making a hearty supper under pretence of tea, instructing Mark the waiter, very willing and active, but with no time for works of supererogation, to brew us a large vessel of that beverage (which we never touched), as though it gave a dignity to the proceeding, and justified, by its respectable appearance, our large potations of *Guinness*. So we drew on to midnight, and to (*Ay de mi !* Won't my friend with the bandy legs denounce "this wine-bibbing book" in "*the Record!*") Irish whiskey. Nevertheless, of Irish whiskey this must be said, that, when tastefully arranged, it's a drink for dukes ; and he who skilleth not to brew it, *more Hibernico*, may thank me, perhaps, for thus instructing him, *Imprimis*, to take the chill off his tumbler (just as he would air his best bed for a beloved friend) by holding it for a few seconds over the hot water ; *secondly*, to dissolve three lumps of sugar, medium size, in a small quantity of *aqua calidissima* ; *thirdly*, to pour in the whiskey (*Kinahane's "LL."*) from one of those delightful little decanters, which would make such charming adjuncts to a doll's dinner party ; *fourthly*, to fill up and drink. Frank suggests a *soupeçon* of lemon ; and this was the sole point upon which, throughout our tour, we were not quite unanimous !

#### From Dublin To Galway.

THE next morning at breakfast, a Scotch gentleman, with an amazing accent, would read the newspaper in such loud tones to his friend, that, not being monks, nor accustomed to be read to, *more monastico*, at our meals, we really could not enjoy our food, and were compelled to toss up which should recite to the other the list of Bankrupts from *The Times*. I lost, but had not progressed far in my distinct enunciation of the unhappy insolvents, when the Caledonian took the hint, and we ate our mackerel in peace.

Leaving Dublin by the "Midland Great Western Railway," at 10.30, we reached Galway at 3.45. The intermediate country is, for the most part, dreary and uninteresting, at times resembling the bleaker parts of Derbyshire, and at times Chat Moss. "I am no botanist," as the Undergraduate remarked to the Farmer, who expostulated with him for riding over his wheat ; but the agriculture appeared to be feeble, and to show want of *management* in its twofold signification. The green crops looked well everywhere, but the corn was thin, and the pastures by no means of that emerald hue which we had expected to find. With the exceptions of peasants, cutting and stacking peat for their winter fuel, children at the doors of cottages, the railway passengers and officials, there seemed to us, coming from densely populated England, to be really "nobody about ;" and the contrast between our present route and that which we had travelled, two days before, through the "Potteries," was as marked as contrast well could be. This comparative quietude and silence prevailed wherever we went, as though we were wandering through the grounds of some country place, "the family" being abroad,

and most of the servants gone out to tea.. Ah, when will the family come back to live at home, to take delight in this beautiful but neglected garden, weed the walks, turn out the pig, and look after these indolent and quarrelsome servants ? indolent and quarrelsome, only because there are none to encourage industry and to maintain peace.

We passed the station of *Maynooth*, but did not see the “ Royal College of St. Patrick,” and are therefore unable to vituperate that establishment, as otherwise it would be our duty to do. Missing this fashionable Christian exercise, I amused myself by attiring a portly, close-shaven priest who sat opposite to me, and who had a face which would have represented anybody with the aid of a clever *costumier*—in all sorts of imaginary head-dresses, dowagers’ turbans, Grenadiers’ caps, Gampian bonnets, beadles’ hats, etc., and endeavoured to fancy the feelings of his flock, if they were to see him in reality, as I in thought.

Passing through county Meath, we were again reminded of Swift, who held the rectory of Agher, with the vicarages of Laracor and Rathbeggan therein, and of the beautiful Hester, sacrificed to his vanity, and crying aloud, in piteous tone, “ It is too late ! It is too late !”

Nigh to *Athlone* (of which more hereafter) is the village of *Auburn*, formerly called *Lissoy*, the residence of Parson Goldsmith, and the early home of the poet. The scenes of his childhood and his youth were doubtless remembered by him, when he wrote “ The Deserted Village,” and many features of resemblance may still be traced.

At *Ballinasloe* (everybody has heard of its great horse-fair, and how the hunters jump over the walls of the “ Pound,” in height about eight feet, Irish) we entered the county of *Galway*, and tremblingly anticipated, after all we had heard of its wild, reckless sons, that some delirious driver would spring upon the engine, with a screech louder than its own, put on all steam, run us off the line for fun, and cause us to be challenged by our fellow-passengers, should we escape with our lives, for not appreciating the sport. But we travelled onwards, demurely and at peace ; and, indeed, throughout our little tour, so far from being provoked or annoyed, we met with nothing but kindness and courtesy, and a good-humoured willingness to be pleased and to please.

The Railway Hotel at *Galway* is the largest that we saw in Ireland, and contains, as we had been informed, “ a power o’ beds.” These want sleepers sadly, and at present the tourist, as he wanders from coffee-room to dormitory, feels very much

“ Like one that treads alone  
Some banquet-hall deserted,  
Whose guests are fled,” &c.,

and cheers his loneliness with the thought, that should *Galway* become (as all who care for Ireland must hope) *the* port for America, this solemn stillness shall depress no more. The inn forms one side of the principal Square, and, the neighbour buildings being comparatively small and dingy, resembles some grand lady, in all her crinoline, teaching the third class at a Sunday school. The grass-plot and garden are nicely kept, but their chief ornaments struck us as being rather incongruous, to wit, *hydrangeas* and *cannon* ! The guns were pointed at our bedroom windows, and it really required some little resolution next morning to shave ourselves with placidity “ at the cannons’ mouth.” Having secured places for the morrow on the Car to Clifden, specially stipulating for “ the Lake side” of the conveyance, we selected a shrewd-looking lad from a crowd of candidates (the Roman candidati wore white togas in the market-place, but these young gentlemen did not), and went to see the sights. We saw a great

deal that was very interesting, and a great deal that was very dirty ; we saw the traces of Spanish architecture, in quaint gateways and quadrangular courts, but were not “ reminded of Seville,” our only association with that city being a passionate love of marmalade ; we saw Lynch’s castle, and its grotesque carving is very curious ; we saw the house in Deadman’s Lane, where lived that Fitz-Stephen, Warden of Galway, who, according to the worst authenticated tradition, assisted at the hanging of his own son ; we saw warehouses sans ware ; granaries, some without grain, and others with “ the meal-sacks on the whitened floor ;” we saw and greatly admired Queen’s College; we saw chapels and nunneries, whence the Angelus bell sounded as we passed; above, all we saw the *Claddagh*. Going thither, our little showman told us of the big trade in wines between this place and Spain which flourished in the good times of old, and I foolishly thought to perplex him by the inquiry, “ whether much business was done in the Spanish juice line ?”

“ And sure,” said he, “ your onner must know, *that* was the thrade intirely. Divil a taste of anything else did they bring us, but the juist of their Spanish vines.”

The Englishman who desires a new sensation should pay a visit to the Claddagh. When we arrived, the men were at sea ; but the women, in their bright red petticoats, descending half-way down the uncovered leg, their cloaks worn like the Spanish mantilla, and of divers colours, their handkerchiefs and hoods, were grouped among the old grey ruins where the fish market is held, and formed a tableau not to be forgotten. Though their garments are torn, and patched, and discoloured, there is a graceful simple dignity about them which might teach a lesson to Parisian milliners ; and to my fancy the most becoming dress in all the world is that of a peasant girl of Connamara. Compare it, reader, with our present mode, and judge. Look at the two, sculptor, and say which will you carve ? Say, when “ Santa Philomena” is graved in marble, shall it be with flounces and hoops ?

No, whatever may be the wrongs of Ireland, no lover of the picturesque and beautiful would wish to see her *re-dressed* (so far as the ladies are concerned—the gentlemen might be improved) ; no one would desire to see her peasant girls in the tawdry bonnets and brass-eyed boots, which stultify the faces and cripple the feet of the daughters of our English labourers.

As to the origin of these Claddagh people, I am not sufficiently “ up” in ethnology, to state with analytical exactness the details of their descent ; but I should imagine them to be one-third Irish, one-third Arabian, and the other Zingaro, or Spanish gypsy. [2] I thought that I recognized in one old lady an Ojibbeway chief, who frightened me a good deal in my childhood, but she had lost the expression of ferocity, and I was, perhaps, mistaken.

The men are all fishermen (very clumsy ones, according to Miss Martineau, who talks about harpoons as if they were crochet needles, in her interesting “ Letters from Ireland”) ; but they give up their cargoes to the women on landing, only stipulating that from the proceeds they maybe supplied with a good store of drink and tobacco, and so get due compensation on the shore for their unvarying sobriety at sea.

They live (some 1500 souls in all) in a village of miserable cabins, the walls of mud and stone, and for the most part windowless, the floors damp and dirty, and the roofs a mass of rotten straw and weeds. The poultry mania—(and if it is not mania to give ten guineas for a bantam, in what does insanity consist ? [3]) must be here at its height, for the cocks and hens roost in the parlour. But “ the swells” of the Claddagh are its pigs. They really have not only a “ landed expression,” as though the place belonged to them, but a supercilious gait and mien ; and with an autocratic air, as though repeating to themselves the spirited verses of Mr. A. Selkirk, they go in and out, whenever and wherever they please. I saw one of them, bold

as the beast who upset Giotto, [4] knock over a child with his snout ; and I have a sad impression that the juvenine was whipped for interfering with the royal progress. Frank solemnly declared that he saw one, as pourtrayed with his back against the lintail of his home, and smoking his evening pipe.

I receive this statement *cum grano salis* (always appropriate to bacon), as I do Phil Purcel's, " that there was in Ireland an old breed of swine, which is now nearly extinct, except in some remote parts of the country, where they are still *useful in the hunting season*, if dogs happen to be scarce ;" [5] and (with all deference to the lady), Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall's, " an acquaintance of ours taught one *to point*, and the animal found game *as correctly as a pointer*. He *gave tongue*, too, after his own fashion, by grunting in a sonorous tone, and understood when he was to take the field as well as any dog." [6] But, however this may be, everything in the Claddagh is done to " please the pigs ;"

" Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,  
You see them, lords of all around, pass by ;"

and Og reigneth once more in Basan. He is precious and he has his privileges. " I think" (said Phil from the hob) " that nobody has a better right to the run of the house, whedher up stairs or down stairs, than *him that pays the rint*." Such is the great destiny of the Irish pig. He is not associated in the prospective contemplations of his owner with low views of pork and sausages ; for Paddy says, with Launcelot, " if we grow all to be pork-eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money," and

" As for eating a rasher of what they take pride in,  
They'd as soon think of eating the pan it is fryed in ;" [7]

but he represents the generous friend and benefactor, who is about to render an important service at considerable personal discomfort.

It was a washing-day at one of the cabins, and a great variety of wearing apparel was hung out to dry. We could not discover a single article which at all resembled anything known to us, or which a schoolboy would have accepted for any part of his Faux.

Nevertheless, one likes the people of the Claddagh ; they seem to be honest, industrious, and good-tempered, and they have, at least, one great virtue like Lady Godiva, they are " clothed on with chastity." Sir Francis Head, who had the best means of getting information from the police, and used them with his exhaustive energy, could not hear that there had ever been an illegitimate child born in the Claddagh. They never intermarry with strangers, and " *their marriages are generally preceded by an elopement*" (vide the article on " *Galway*," in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, which one is surprised to find discoursing on such festive pleasantries), " *and followed by a boisterous merry-making.*"

### The Famine.

AS SCHOOLBOYS, to whom " next half" begins tomorrow—sailors on the eve of a voyage—invalids, expecting a physician, who, they know, will prescribe an unwelcome diet—yea, even as criminals before execution,—amplify their meals, and, from their dreary expectations, educe a keener relish,—so we, awfully anticipating the *cuisine* of Connamara, made a mighty dinner at Galway. It was brought to us, moreover, by a dear old waiter, who evidently had a proud delight in feeding us, as though he were some affectionate sparrow, and we his

callow young, taking off the covers with a triumphant air, like a conjuror sure of his trick, and pouring out our Drogheda ale, with quite as much respect and care as Ganymede could have shown for the Gods.

“ Was the salmon caught this morning, waiter ?”

“ It was, sir. Faith, it’s not two hours since that fish was walking round his estates, wid his hands in his pockets, never draming what a pretty invitashun he’d have to jine you gintlemen at dinner.”

This was followed by a small saddle of “ Arran mutton, y’r onner ;” and “ what can mortals wish for more,” except a soupçon of cheese ?

Ah, but we felt almost ashamed of being so full and comfortable, when our conversational attendant began to talk to us about the Great Famine. “ That’s right, good gintlemen,” he said, “ niver forget, when ye’ve had yer males, to thank the Lord as sends them. May ye niver know what it is to crave for food, and may ye niver see what I have seen, here in the town o’ Galway. I mind the time when I lived yonder” (and he pointed to Kilroy’s Hotel), “ and the poor cratur come crawling in from the country with their faces swollen, and grane, and yaller, along of the arbs they’d been ating. We gave them bits and scraps, good gintlemen, and did what we could (the Lord be praised !), but they was mostly too far gone out o’ life to want more than the priest and pity. I’ve gone out of a morning, gintlemen,” (his lip quivered as he spake), “ and seen them lying dead in the square, with the green grass in their mouths.” And he turned away, (God bless his kind heart !), to hide the tears, which did him so much honour.

Can history or imagination suggest a scene more awfully impressive than that which Ireland presented in the times of the Great Famine ? The sorrows of that visitation have been recorded by eloquent, earnest men ; but they come home to us with a new and startling influence, when we hear of them upon Irish ground. Most vividly can we realise the wreck, when he, who hardly swam ashore and escaped, points to the scene of peril ; and while the storm-clouds still drift in the far horizon, and the broken timbers float upon the seething wave, describes, with an exactness horrible to himself, that last amazement and despair.

In the beautiful land of the merry-hearted, “ all joy was darkened,—the mirth of the land was gone.” In the country of song, and dance, and laughter, there was not heard, wherever that Famine came, one note of music, nor one cheerful sound,—only the gasp of dying men, and the mourners’ melancholy wail. The green grass of the Emerald Isle grew over a nation’s grave. The crowning plague of Egypt was transcended here, for not only in some districts, was there in every house “ one dead,” but there were homes in which there was but one living—homes, in which one little child was found, calling upon father, mother, brothers, and sisters, to wake from their last, long sleep,—homes, from which the last survivor fled away, in wild alarm, from those whom living he had loved so well. Fathers were seen vainly endeavouring (such was their weakness) to dig a grave for their children, reeling and staggering with the useless spade in their hands. The poor widow, who had left her home to beg a coffin for her last, lost child, fell beneath her burden upon the road and died. [8] The mendicant had now no power to beg. The drivers of the public cars went into cottages, and found *all* dead, or Rachel weeping for her children, and praying that die she might. By the sea side, men seeking shell-fish, fell down upon the sands, and, impotent to rise, were drowned. First they began to bury corpses, coffinless, then could not bury them at all. Of indignities and mutilations, which then befell, I will not, for I cannot, speak.

Indeed, it may be asked, wherefore should we repeat at all these sad, heart-rending details ? Because,—

“ Never did any public misery  
Rise of itself ; GOD’S plagues still grounded are  
On common stains of our humanity ;  
And to the flame which ruineth mankind  
Man gives the matter, or at least the wind ;” [9]

the oftener they are had in painful remembrance, the less likely they are to recur in terrible reality ; because and because, when we know the cause and the symptoms, we can the more readily prevent and prescribe.

Every one knows, of course, the origin of the Irish Famine.

“ The blight which fell upon the potato produced a deadly famine, because the people had cultivated it so exclusively, that when it failed, millions became as utterly destitute, as if the island were incapable of producing any other species of sustenance.” [10] They, “ who are habitually and entirely fed on potatoes, live upon the extreme verge of human subsistence, and when they are deprived of their accustomed food, there is nothing cheaper to which they can resort. They have already reached the lowest point in the descending scale, and there is nothing beyond but starvation and beggary.” [11]

The remedy is just as clear,—to induce the peasantry of Ireland no longer to *depend* upon an article of food, which is difficult to procure, cumbrous to convey, possesses so little nourishment that it must be consumed in large quantities, [12] creates a strange unhealthy distaste for other food, [13] is subject to so many diseases from humidity and frost, and which has wrought such grievous desolation through the length and breadth of the land. [14]

*How* that remedy is to be applied, let legislators and landlords tell ; meanwhile, my friend, and I, having sorrowfully sipped our pint of sherry, shall essay to cheer ourselves with a mild cigar and a farewell walk to the Claddagh.

The shades of eve were falling fast, as we set forth, and we were just in time to see the last haul of the nets, and the silver salmon lying on the bank. Then we revived our spirits by a little conversation with young Claddagh, (merry and mischievous urchins), and by a distribution of copper, every half-penny of which raised such a tumulus of rags as would have kept a paper mill at work for weeks. Then

“ the sun set,  
And all the land was dark.”

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WE left Galway for Clifden at 9:30 next morning. The public conveyance is a large-paper edition of the outside car, with an elevated seat for the driver. There is one place to be avoided on some of these vehicles, that nearest to the horses on the off-side, on account of the iron bar of the drag, which operates from time to time very disagreeably on the back and shoulders of the contiguous traveller. The scenery gradually increases in interest. First we have trees, farms, houses and the quiet aspect of country life ; then we have delightful views at intervals, of Lough Corrib and its islands, and the landscape becomes diversified, less

under culture, and more wild in consequence ; and, lastly, the sublime and solemn beauty of the mountains and lakes of Connamara. Some of the residences amused us greatly. You see a large lodge by the wayside, and look out, in the distance, for some princely castle, or baronial hall, at any rate ; but there is no need for any such optical exertion, the mansion being close to you, eighty yards perhaps from the entrance, and only a size larger, (a small size larger, as they say at the glove-shops), than the lodge itself. Some of the gateways, too, would have been very imposing, if most of their principal ornaments had not been mutilated or missing. Our favourite, among the more perfect specimens, was adorned with a stone pine-apple on one pillar, and a Swede-turnip or pumpkin on the other ; and had a rich effect. Most of the field-gates have massive pillars of stone, and would render the inclosures most secure, if there were not, now and then, easy apertures through the turf-dykes, which form the fence hard by, suggesting the idea of a front door barred and locked against thieves, with one of the hall-windows wide open !

As to the people, there is little difference, so far as appearance is concerned, between Paddy in England and Paddy at home ; the same flaccidity of hat ; the same amplitude of shirt-collar, which would cut his ears off, if it were severely starched ; the same dress coat of frieze ; drab breeches (aisy at the knees), grey-stockings, and brogues. The same in aspect, but in action how different ! In England, he will rise with the sun, reap under its burning heat until it sets, and dance in the barn at midnight. In Ireland, he seems to be always either going to his work, or looking at his work, or resting from his work, or coming away from his work, in brief, to be doing nothing, cordially assisted by his friends and neighbours. The potatoes will prevent his famishing from hunger, if the season be propitious ; the peat-stack will keep him from perishing by cold ; and His Royal Highness, the Pig, will pay the landlord his rent.

The women are, for the most part, goodlooking, erect, and graceful movers (for there are no corns in Connaught) ; and, from the bright colours of their costume, their red petticoats and blue cloaks, are ever a pleasant refreshment to the eye, and picturesque addition to the scene. They are uniformly and painfully shy. Francis, and I, are both of us what may be termed remarkably handsome men, but they wouldn't look at us ; and I shall never forget the agony of a young housemaid, who, assisting the waiter one morning with a tub of water to my room, caught sight of my dressing-gown through the open door, and instantly, though the garment is of a pleasing pattern, and descends quite to the ground, rushed off, like Dorothea from Cardenio and his companions, and, I verily believe, is running now.

As regards children,—there are crosses in Ireland, which are saluted by wives, who would be mothers also ; and these crosses, or something equally efficacious, appear to be universally embraced. Every cottage sent forth a running accompaniment (*allegro*) to the car, healthful, cheery children, and would be beautiful, in spite of their wretched homes, and meagre diet, and rags, if their mothers could be induced to recognise the utility of soap and a comb. Their raiment is very scant and curious. Ould Larry's coat with the tails cut off, makes young Larry “ an entire juvenile suit,” and the inexpressibles of Phelim *père* form a noble panoply for Phelim *fils*, with his little arms thrust through the pocket-holes. These tatterdemalions beg as they run by the car, but seem indifferent as to the result, enjoying their “ constitutional,” and parting from us with a pleasant smile whether we gave to them or not. Some of a literary turn of mind asked rather urgently for “ penny buy book,” but the imposition was a little too patent, so very far from a bookseller's shop, and we recommended them to quench their thirst for knowledge in the only volumes to be perused (and that gratuitously) in the neighbourhood, the “ books in the running brooks.”

A few professional beggars come round, when there is a change of horses (excellent horses they are), but are neither so frequent nor so importunate, as we had been led to expect.

One old lady had evidently got the last new thing in begging, a letter to her “ poor darlint boy as was gone to Merrikey, and would ye bestow a trifle, good gintlemen, to pay the bit o’ postage, God bless yer bewtifle young faces.” Of course, we would, every mother’s son of us. What an affectionate, exemplary parent ! When we returned, a few days afterwards, she was again in correspondence with her beloved son, far away from her yearning tenderness, beyond the broad Atlantic ; and, indeed, I have reason to believe from information which I gathered from the driver and our fellow-passengers, that this disconsolate mother writes to her exile child every day, except Sundays.

The miserable huts of the peasantry, seen by the feeble light which comes through the doorway and smoke-hole (to talk about chimneys would be an insult to architecture) give one the idea, not so much that the pigs have got into the parlour, but that the family have migrated to the sty. An unpaved clay floor below, a roof of straw and weeds, dank, soaked, and rotting, overhead, a miserable bed in the corner, an iron pot over a peat fire, are the principal items of the property. Before the door is a sink, black and filthy, for the refuse. And yet the inmates look hale and happy beyond what one would hope to see, and the thought at once suggests itself, how much might be accomplished by such a people, awaking to assert its dignity, and to discharge its duty. Here and there are roofless cottages, gravestones, on which is written, as on Albert Durer’s, “ *Emigravit* ;” he has gone to seek over the wide seas the comforts which here he could not, or would not, win ; or he has gone “ to the land, which is very far off,” to hunger and thirst no more,—

“ There fell upon the house a sudden gloom,  
A shadow on those features fair and thin;  
And softly, from that hushed and darkened room,  
Two angels issued, where hut one went in.”

It is sad indeed to see these monuments, “ where memory” (as an Irish poet [15] sings)” sits by the altar she has raised to “ woe,” monuments of suffering and dearth, amid scenes of surpassing beauty, and fields which might stand thick with corn, but where, from the shameful indolence of His creatures,

“ *In vain*, with lavish kindness, the gifts of God are strewn.”

There is no town between *Galway* and *Clifden*, unless we compliment with that title the large village of *Oughterarde*, pleasantly situated hard by *Lough Corrib*, with its picturesque bridge, marvellously transparent stream, handsome constables, and (comparatively speaking) magnificent church. The Roman Catholic churches are, for the most part, so very plain and poor, having little but the Cross, and a melancholy imitation of Gothic mullions in wood, to denote their consecration, that the building of *Oughterarde* has quite an imposing effect, and we went up the hill to see it. The leisure and liberty allowed to passengers by car are amusingly refreshing in these days of steam ; and I thought, as we sauntered towards *Sainte Terre*, how astonished the guard of an express train would be, to behold his fellow-travellers quietly strolling off to inspect the cathedral, at *Peterborough*, *York*, or *Lincoln*. We found little to admire, as to architecture without, or ornament within ; but a priest, who went with us from the car, said it was “ beautiful,” and looked as if to him it was so indeed, as he knelt with others reverently praying there. I thought of our grand old churches at home, locked and barred, most of them, except for a few hours on Sunday (as though the soul should be treated, like a boa-constrictor, with six days sleep, and then a rabbit) ; and I envied that poor pilgrim through a prayerless world his privilege and opportunity.

## Connamara.

*Oughterarde* is termed the entrance to *Connamara*, but the boundaries seem somewhat undefined, like the sensations induced by the wildly beautiful scenery,

“ The vague emotion of delight,  
While climbing up some Alpine height.”

Measured and mapped *Connamara* may be, but painted or described it never can. Those sublime landscapes of mountain, moor, and mere, are photographed on the memory for ever, but cannot be reproduced on canvass ; and a great master of art, a *Michael Angelo (Titmarsh)* throws down his brush, with the wise confession, “ all that we can do is to cry, Beautiful !” Who shall take it up, and paint ? Not mine, a prentice hand, to daub a caricature (about as like the original, as a pastile to Vesuvius, or a “ cinder-tip” to the Himalayas) of those glorious Irish Alps, of the *Maum-Turk* mountains, or of *Bina Beola*, rising, in solemn majesty, amid a sea of golden and roseate flowers. It requires a confidence which I do not feel, to attempt the Hallelujah Chorus on my penny trumpet, or, where Phidias distrusts his chisel, to commence a Colossus with my knife and fork. But I shall never forget our silent happiness, a happiness like childhood’s, so complete and pure, as, mile after mile, we watched the sunlight and the shadows, sweeping over hill, and lake, and plain, (so swiftly that every minute the whole view seemed to change), and saw the snow-white goats among the purple heath, and the kine, jet-black and glowing red, knee-deep in the silver waters.

But there are minds no scenery can delight or awe. I remember, how, travelling by rail, one glorious morning in December, the trees all hoar with frost, and glittering against a sky blue as the turquoise, I met a Cockney gent, who condescendingly surveyed the scene, and said that “it reminded him of *Storr* and *Mortimer’s* ! The water was very like those plate-glass things, which were used to set off the silver, and the trees a good deal resembled the candelabra clustered above.” And he smiled as one who was pleased to approve the article which Nature humbly submitted to his inspection, and seemed, out of his overflowing goodness, to pat Creation’s head. And now, seated upon the box, a “ party” from Sheffield insulted that pure delicious atmosphere with very villainous “ shag,” and talked as flippantly and without restraint, as though he were in the Chair at “ The Cutler’s Arms,” presiding over a Free-and-Easy. No sooner did he ascertain from the driver that the grand Highlands before us were known as “ *The Twelve Pins*,” than he desired the company to inform him, “ what degree of relationship existed between them and the *Needles* off the Isle of Wight ?” a genealogical problem, which would have been received with a due and dignified silence, but for his own unrestrained applause and laughter. Then he favoured us with an enigma, “ Why have them pins no *pints* ? Because they’re principally composed of *quartz* !” His geology he had got from a guide-book, out of which he treated us to various extracts, appending commentaries of his own. “ Miss Martineau says the hair ’ere” (of course he transplanted every h) “ is very like breathing cream. Wonder whether the old gal meant cream of the valley, or milk-punch—ha ! ha ! ha !” From this subject he passed very naturally to mountain dew, and the illegal manufacture of whiskey, shouting at the top of his voice, “ I cannot help loving thee, *Still* ;” and then singing, “ *Still*, I love thee, *Still*, I love thee”—“ Farewell thee well, and if for ever, *Still*, for ever fare thee well” the music by Mr Joseph Miller), until, happily for us, his pipe went out, and playfully wondering “ how he should obtain a light, where all around was *matchless*,” he collapsed into a state of quiet suction, like a gold fish in a vase.

Incidents, in a country unreclaimed and almost uninhabited, must necessarily be small and infrequent, like the currants on an Irish cake. We had a change of horses at the *Half-way*

*House* (half-way between *Oughterarde* and *Ballinalinch*), and this rapid flight of horsemanship was performed something under the half-hour. I took advantage of the interval to recline on the green sward hard by, and commenced, in dreamy enjoyment, a silent oration to the scenes around. “*O Connamara*,” I began, “*non amara, sed amæna !* let me hear and heed thy sermons in stones, though thine own sons be deaf to them. Alas ! for the sad contrast, where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile ! [16] Why should not fields of golden corn, and orchards heavy with fruit, bring plenty from thy fertile plains ? Why should rank weeds, rag-wort, and loose strife, (evil signs and sounds !) usurp thy untilled soil, a ‘soyle most fertile,’ as old Spenser saith, ‘fit to yielde all kinde of fruit that shall be committed thereunto ?’” And the answer which I heard, “awaking with a start” from my reverie, was a surly grunt close to my ear, and a loud laugh from Frank...

We lunched at “*The Recess*” a pleasant little inn (with a cheerful landlady and civil waitress), but somewhat damp withal ; for Ireland is “the Niobe of nations,” [17] and, as the beautiful bride of the Atlantic, oftentimes weeps in her western home, when her husband is at low water, or subject to lunar influence. But there is no time for metaphor or meteorology, the cutler having already scooped the interior from the heads of both the lobsters, and it being quite necessary to propose some saving clause to this sweeping Act of shellfishness. “I am no gastronome,” as the old lady observed, when they asked her to go out and see the comet, but I do acknowledge, in unison with the majority of my fellowmen, the powerful fascinations of lobster ; and I shall not shrink from the confession, that our feelings, as we witnessed this gross monopoly, were hot and acid as the pepper and the vinegar, which was almost all he left us. At the same time, it may be said, in mitigation of his ill-taste and our ill-temper, that the love of the lobster has ere now troubled the equanimity of greater and better men ; and I have seen a most noble Duke to scowl malignantly at an unconscious Earl, whose plate preceded his own. But all ended well, for our greedy knife-grinder having finished his lobster, two bottles of Guinness, one ditto Bass, and a go of whiskey “for luck,” had scarcely ascended the box, and favoured us with that assurance of plethory, which the Chinese expect as a compliment from all well-bred (and well-fed) guests, than his head began slowly to fall and rise, like a large float, lazily influenced by some undecided fish ; and he only intruded himself upon our silent admiration of that magnificent scenery with occasional imitations of swine asleep.

There was a time when the Martins ruled in *Connamara*, and *Ballinahinch*, which we now pass, was the palace of Richardus Rex; when Lord Lieutenants were told plainly, that the excellent claret they were drinking had done its duty without discharging it ; and gaugers, bailiffs, writ-servers, and the like, were as rare upon the mountains as the Irish elk. The estate extended to *Oughterarde*, some six and twenty miles away, and “*Martin’s Gate-house*” is shown there still ; but extravagance and neglect brought all to the hammer at last, and the very name of Martin will soon only survive, in its association with the humane Act for the prevention of cruelty to animals, which was originated by the Lord of *Ballinahinch*. The Law Life Insurance Company are now the owners of this property, and are making, we were informed, very great improvements. There can scarcely be an estate more capable thereof. The immense extent of bogland presents an excellent “fall” for the drainer; and a large quantity of it, lying upon limestone, would grow any amount of pasture or of cereal produce. (The monosyllable *corn* would be equally expressive, but it looks “mean and poky,” as Martha Penny said of the Protestant religion, when compared with “*cereal produce*.” Then there is abundance of manure close by, in the sea-weed and coral-sand ; and under the soil lie rich veins of marble, rose colour, and yellow, and white, and green ; and of which you may purchase specimens from the little merchants who come round the car. But where, it may well be asked, are the hands to ply the mattock and pick ? For famine, and ejection, and the Exodus, have swept away the working men ; and though it is evident, from the number of

children, that great efforts are being made to repopulate the country, there seems to be no staff on the spot for any large undertakings. [18] But men are to be found when they are wanted by master-minds ; and the Irish and English labourers, instead of deserting for America and Australia a land so full of promise, [19] would readily be induced, by leaders of energy and capital, to appropriate advantages nearer home. The sale of encumbered estates (one of the cleverest, cleanest cuts, that surgeon ever made, to save his patient from mortification), amply justifies the healthful hope that English and Scotch farmers [20] will soon be numerous upon Irish soil, not to become, like the Norman visitors of yore, “ *ipsis Hibernis Hiberniores*” but to inoculate Paddy with their own activity and earnestness, and to persuade him, just for once and by way of a change, to work in his own land, as he can and will in any other. The Saxon says that the Celt (how one despises those malicious nicknames, stereotyping hate, and perpetuating a lie, as if there were a true Celt or Saxon extant ! ) that the Celt will shoot him ; and, perhaps, he may, if nothing is done to conciliate, but everything to offend his prejudices. Those prejudices are the growth of ages, and will not vanish before slang and compulsion, but only before goodness, teaching by example a better and a happier way. If I wish to propitiate a high-spirited unbroken steed, not warranted free from vice, and can do so by checking him sharply with the curb, and by sticking in both spurs, without ruining the horse, and finding myself in a position to take an uninterrupted view of the firmament, Mr. Rarey and reason plead in vain. John Bull is a magnificent fellow, but his mere repetition of “ curse the Pope” will do no more to evangelise mankind than Grip the Raven’s “ I’m a Protestant kettle ;” nor can we specify any signal blessings as likely to accrue to the human race, when “ Sawney, with his Calvinistic creed in the one hand, and allaying irritation with the other,” denounces smiling on Sunday as a deadly sin, or goes

“ Bellowing, and breathing fire and smoke,  
At crippled Papistry to butt and poke,  
Exactly as a skittish Scottish bull  
Hunts an old woman in a scarlet cloak.”

Were I desirous to impress upon the people of Connaught the advantages of protecting their feet with leather, I should scarcely proceed to demonstrate my proposition by kicking them with hob-nailed boots ; and although bread as an article of food is vastly superior to potatoes, few men would essay to enforce this argument by pelting the peasantry with quartern loaves.

The Saxon says that the Celt will shoot him ; and nothing can be more vile and despicable than those cowardly murders which disgrace Ireland. But we must not forget, in our righteous horror, that our own capital convictions are thrice as numerous, according to population, as those in the sister-country ; and, though this does not denote the exact proportion of crime, because conviction in Ireland is far more difficult than with us, it may still suggest a wholesome restraint, when we are minded to sit in judgment upon others.

- [1] In the time of the Druids it was called “ *the Shady Island*,” and, though no longer umbrageous, the name is not altogether inappropriate.
- [2] Wales is represented by the Joneses, The original John may have come over with Thomas Joyce, who was good enough to appropriate “ the Joyce Country” to himself and family, in the reign of Edward the First.
- [3] This form of delirium is by no means of modern origin. *Οριθομάδιά*, a passionate love of rare birds, was known among the ladies of Athens.
- [4] We read in *Lanzi’s History of Painting*, that as *Giotto* was walking with his friends, one Sunday, in the *Via del Cocomero*, at Florence, he was overthrown by a pig running between his legs. Whereupon the painter, albeit he was in his best clothes, philosophically

recognized a just retribution, “ for,” said he, “ although I have earned many thousand crowns with the bristles of these animals, I never gave to one of them a spoonful of swill in my life !”

- [5] Carleton’s “ Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry.”
- [6] In their pleasant volume, “ The West and Connamara.”
- [7] Goldsmith’s “ Letter to Lord Clare.”
- [8] See a most interesting article on the “ Famine in the South of Ireland,” in Eraser’s Magazine, for April, 1847, p. 499.
- [9] Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke.
- [10] Report of Census Commissioners for Ireland.
- [11] *Edinburgh Review*, No. 175, p. 233.
- [12] The evidence taken before the Poor Law Commissioners, previously to the establishment of the New Poor Law in Ireland, proves that “ ten pounds, twelve pounds, and even fourteen pounds of potatoes are usually consumed by an Irish peasant each day.”—*Letters on the Condition of the People of Ireland*, by J. Campbell Forster, Esq., the Times’ Commissioner.
- [13] “ When this famine was at the worst in Connamara, the sea off the coast there teemed with turbot, to such an extent that the laziest of fishermen could not help catching them in thousands ; but the common people would not touch them,” *Quarterly Review*, vol. Ixxxii., p. 435.
- [14] Cobbett called the potato, that “ root of poverty.”
- [15] Curran.
- [16] Lord Chesterfield spoke of Ireland as “ that country for which God has done so much, and man so little.”
- [17] “ If,” writes Mr. Young, in his *Tour in Ireland*, “ as much rain fell upon the clays of England as upon the rocks of the sister country, they could not be cultivated.” I should doubt this, taking into account our modern improvements as to drainage ; but, at all events, it is evident that “ the humidity of the climate renders Ireland decidedly better fitted for a grazing than for an agricultural country.” See *M’Culloch’s Statistical Account of British Empire*, ed. a. vol. II. p. 367.
- [18] According to the Report of the Registrar-General, the population has decreased to the number of half a million since the Census of 1851.  
By the middle of 1888 it was estimated that the population of Ireland had decreased to 4,777,534. (consisting of 2,340,978 males and 2,436,556 females), and by the middle of 1889 to 4,730,533.—*Chambers Encyclo. Vol. VI.* 1890.
- [18] See *Letters from The Times’ Commissioner*, ed. 2, p. 271, and *The Saxon in Ireland*, chapter x.
- [19] Why are there so many more Scotch than English ? It appears that there are 756 ‘ Britishers’ agriculturally settled in Ireland, and of these 660 are natives of Scotland.”  
—*Agricultural and Social State of Ireland in 1858*, by Thomas Miller.

A little tour in Ireland : being a visit to Dublin, Galway, Connamara, Athlone, Limerick, Killarney, Glengarriff, Cork, etc., etc. (1891)

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