

## Kings & Troglodytes

*A Tour in Ireland : With Meditations and Reflections.*

James Johnson

1844

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It has often been objected to tourists, that they draw sweeping conclusions, characters, and descriptions of countries, over which they travel at railroad speed, and with very little real knowledge of those countries. The said objections are not always groundless ; though strangers will not seldom, even in a hurried tour, make judicious remarks and observations that escape the resident inhabitants. In justice to myself, however, I must observe that eighteen years—the best, because the first, of my life, were spent in Ireland ; besides several tours through it at subsequent periods. This circumstance exempts me from the *prima facie* charge of total “ ignorance of the country.” Of all the lands through which I have journeyed, Ireland is that which calls forth the most frequent and the most conflicting emotions in the mind of a traveller of any sensibility, observation, or reflection. Laughter and grief—indignation and pity—admiration and contempt—rise, mingle, displace, or supersede each other, at almost every step, in that fine, but ill-fated portion of the British dominions !

The present tour was made, too, during a period of extraordinary excitement . . . when the fierce political and religious passions were ever ready to boil over, had they not been restrained by the wand of a magician and the miracle of a monk. It has seldom been the lot of a traveller to stand, as I did, on the sacred hill of Tara, surrounded by *three hundred and fifty thousand* “ wild Irishmen,” harangued by the most eloquent “ Conspirators” that ever addressed an inflammable populace,—without seeing a broken head, or hearing an angry expression !

With ample food and field for thought, in every direction ;—and with little inclination, and less talent, for scenic delineation, itinerary details, or collection of anecdotes, I have, as on former occasions, and other tours, confined myself almost exclusively, to observations and meditations on the more striking objects that presented themselves to my senses, or to my mind’s eye.

It is impossible to travel through Ireland, without occasionally indulging in reflections, moral, political, and polemical, on those great questions that have convulsed that fine, but unhappy country, for many years—I might say, centuries. That I am “ slave to no sect,” and wedded to no party, is not a very great assumption of merit, as will probably be proved by the censure which this little volume will receive from very different and opposing factions. To this, however, travellers may make up their minds, and that in proportion to their own freedom from party-spirit and sectarian animosity. But there is still a large class of impartialists in the world, and the sanction of these is all that we can reasonably expect or hope for.

If I have dipped my pen rather too freely into the serio-comic, or the serio-satiric, I trust I have mixed very little gall with the ink. The fact is, that the atmosphere of Ireland, besides hydrogen and other inflammable and luminous materials, contains a large excess of

“ LAUGHING GAS,” which strongly affects the temperament of every one who inhales the air of Erin. I doubt whether the Mussulman, from the banks of the Bosphorus, would not smile at his own solemnity, while smoking opium and quaffing poteen on the banks of the Liffey or the Shannon, Even Sawney M’Gregor, from Glasgow, with his pack of remnants on his back, soon acquires a sprinkling of humour—I had almost said wit—among his Milesian customers, John Bull, himself, loses much of his taciturnity, and becomes almost a sociable traveller on the car ; while the Frenchman's sentimentality soars to the sublime, or sinks to the ridiculous at every step.

Some allowance, also, may be made for the release of a prisoner from captivity among scenes of sickness, suffering, and death, to enjoy the free air of Heaven among the mountains, lakes, and valleys of Green Erin.

JAMES JOHNSON, M.D.

*Suffolk Place,*  
*May, 1844.*

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TARA.

The harp that once through TARA'S Halls  
The soul of music shed.  
Now hangs as mute on Tara's walls,  
As if that soul were fled.

THE “ Hill of Tara” three or four miles from Naran, celebrated as not only the site of an Irish city, many centuries before the Christian Æra ; but the seat of learning, laws, music and philosophy, is now again marked in the annals of fame by a new *Convocatum*, not very different from, though more numerous than the assemblages of princes, nobles, and priests, &c. called together by King OLLAMH FODHLA, and his successors—entitled the “ TRIENNIAL CONVENTION of TARA.” These conventions consisted of the Monarch, the Druids, and the people. They were convened together for the making and passing of laws and regulations. So we see there is nothing new under the Sun ! King Dan, the priests, and the people assembled on the venerable Hill of Tara, to commemorate *Conventions* of the same kind held on the same spot, between two and three thousand years previously, and which were continued for many centuries ! This hill must have called up strong emotions in the mind of the Liberator, and of those of his followers who have read the page of history. Some of those reflections might fairly partake of pride—but others of sorrow.

The “ Hall of Tara,” in the reign of Cormac Ulfada, in the third century, is described as being 900 feet square—containing 150 apartments and 150 dormitories. Its height was 27 cubits, and there was an average of one thousand daily guests, “ besides princes, orators, men of science, musicians, and artists.” They consumed two oxen, two sheep, and two hogs at each meal. The Chronicles do not say how much whiskey was drunk ; but they state that there were 150 drinking horns in the palace ; which, no doubt, were often emptied and replenished in the course of the feast. Of this splendid palace, and the city itself, only a few tumuli or mounds remain—the largest being about 80 yards in diameter—and cannot be distinguished from a Danish rath or fort. So far the recollections may excite feeling of pride, not unmixed with melancholy reflections on the *vanity* of human hopes and wishes. But there is one

mound there, which is calculated to excite anything but pride—the tumulus, or trench, under which lie the bones of many who were called *patriots* by their friends, but *rebels* by their government, in the Insurrection of '98 ! !

I do not think a more ugly object could present itself to the eye of an AGITATOR than the tumulus in question, with its barbarous designation—“ The CROPPIES' GRAVE.” It must have been as unwelcome to Dan, as was the intrusion of BANQUO on a feast, of which he could not himself partake, and which he would not permit MACBETH to enjoy ! It is possible, however, that a glance at the “ LIA FAIL,” or “ Coronation Stone” of the ancient Irish kings, standing in silent solitude on the summit of TARA HILL, and now as the headstone of the horrid trench, may have conjured up strange thoughts in the breast of the *Repealer*, not entirely dissimilar to those which flashed across the mind of Macbeth, when the Weird Sisters propounded their mysterious riddle of his future greatness !

There stands the “ LIA FAIL,” the mute historian of Royal ACCESSIONS.

“ And points to the mementos scattered round,”

for the sequel ! If the LIA FAIL had a tongue, it could recount some tragic tales since its official coronation duties first commenced. We are told by Gibbon that, at the foot of the Byzantine Throne, the grave was always kept ready dug,—and was seldom long without its royal tenant. Ireland was not far behind her eastern contemporary, in her “ brief paroxysms of sovereignty.” “ Out of some thirty-two kings (sa3rs Moore) who are said to have reigned during the interval between OLLAMH FODHLA and the royal builder of Emania, not more than three are represented as having died a natural death, and the great majority of the remainder fell by the hands of their successors.” [1]

The LIA FAIL is not one of those prophetic wizards—

“ Who palter with us in a double sense,”

but yet its present attitude and former office may have suggested some ideas of a new and startling nature to a less powerful personage than the great LIBERATOR. Whether the two words—“ DANIEL THE FIRST”—vibrated on the mental tympanum of the Regenerator, when surveying the countless army of Repealers that swarmed on the HILL of TARA , in sight of the Coronation Stone, I do not pretend to determine. He, of course, will repudiate indignantly the idea. So did Cromwell—so did Napoleon—even the Bishop, when offered the mitre, meekly but firmly replies—“ Nolo Episcopari”—“ I will *not* be episcopized :”—and yet a little gentle persuasion generally leads the holy man to encircle his brows with the insignia of his sacred office !—And who knows but the pure flame of patriotism glowing in the Liberator's breast—the bright hope of freeing his bleeding country from Saxon thraldom—and the ardent prayers of seven millions of oppressed Milesians, might overcome his personal repugnance to the purple, and induce the patriot to found the glorious dynasty of DAN the DELIVERER !

It must be conceded that the LIBERATOR has not, as yet, evinced any disposition, by word or action, to—“ wade through slaughter to a throne.” On the contrary, he is one of the most peaceable and *legal* agitators, that ever kindled the flame of political enthusiasm through the whole extent of an inflammable and excitable people. But no man is a complete judge even of himself.

“Manners with fortunes, tempers change with climes :—  
Tenets with books, and principles with times.”

There is little doubt that many a worse and many a weaker man ascended the LIA FAIL on TARA HILL, than Daniel O’Connell ; but, be that as it may, we may here allude to a curious fact in history, connected with this celebrated locality. One of the best and wisest kings of Ireland (Cormac) that ever assumed the diadem on the LIA FAIL, having received an injury which precluded him from continuing on the throne, retired to solitude, sad the cultivation of religion, philosophy, and literature. In his seclusion he wrote letters to his son and successor, containing various moral and political maxims, breathing wisdom, morality, And philanthropy. One only of these I shall here allude to, as not quite insignificant at the present time. “Hearken to the instructions of the wise—*be deaf to the mob.*” Whether the LIBERATOR considers this maxim as indicative of the “wisdom of our ancestors,” I cannot say ; but one thing is certain that, whether he be deaf or not to the mob, the mob are not deaf to him.

While on my passage from Dublin to the Shannon, in the fly-boat, I stopped at the house of a friend (Newbury Hall), and next morning started at six o’clock for TARA (15th August), in order to see with my own eyes THE “monster-meeting” expected to assemble at that celebrated spot—distant from the canal 21 Irish miles—18 miles from Dublin—and three or four from Navan. Until we got to Enfield (some seven or eight miles from the hill) we overtook only a few stragglers, but all proceeding in the same direction as ourselves. At every mile, however, from Enfield to the grand scene of action, the plot thickened, and, although at the early hour of eight to nine o’clock, the last four miles of the road were actually crammed with people—almost wholly males—decently dressed—some on cars—some on horse-back—but the majority on foot. They proceeded very orderly, chatting together—some smoking their pipes—and evidently in good spirits—but without any gibes or jokes ! Father Mathew has destroyed nearly the whole of Irish wit and humour—bad luck to him for *that* ! These most valuable of Hibernian articles are now confined to their hereditary possessors—the BEGGARS—whom even the Apostle of Temperance could not eject from their “HOLDINGS.” The moving mass consisted, I might say, exclusively of tradesmen, artizans, and peasantry, in their frieze coats. We did not overtake a single carriage of any respectable appearance. Our smart post-chaise, with two gentlemen, attracted considerable attention, not only from the pilgrims on the road to TARA, but from the cottiers along the line, who greeted us, from time to time, with hearty plaudits, and evidently set us down as REPALERS of the first water !—Wherever it was possible, they made way for our carriage—the pedestrians jumping over the hedges for that purpose, and the equestrians actually riding into the ditches, in order to facilitate our march ! At length we approached the foot of TARA HILL, and here a scene of the most indescribable tumult, rather than confusion, presented itself ! We were glad to find a retreat for our carriage, and we commenced the ascent of the sacred mount amidst thousands of other scramblers, like ourselves. As we ascended above the level of the surrounding country, a magnificent panorama opened on our view, and trains of people were seen, in all directions, not only along the roads, but across the fields, converging to the same point. We gained the summit—pressed through a crowd of more than a thousand people into the Danish rath—and reached the LIA FAIL standing at the head of the “Croppies’ Grave.” This was about ten o’clock in the morning, and there were more than ten thousand people already congregated on Tara Hill. At the LIA FAIL, however, the spectacle which I witnessed will not easily be eradicated from my memory. The whole mound or rath was encircled by the Drogheda trades with their band of music and twenty-four banners, which waved there during the whole day. The “Croppies’ Grave” or huge trench, was covered with men on their knees—all praying for the souls of the “murdered patriots”—and many of them with tears in their eyes ! As soon as any of them had

finished their Ave Marias and rose from their knees, their places were instantly occupied by others, eager to perform the same sacred offices to the manes of their countrymen, whose bones were mouldering beneath ! A solemn Mass was also celebrated at the LIA FAIL, as a requiem for the repose of souls that had flitted to other regions nearly half a century ago. [2] This was not all. The summit of Tara produces grass of a red colour and spear shape. This was carefully picked up, after the prayers and genuflections, and preserved in their bosoms. On inquiry, I learnt the universal belief that such grass was never seen on the sacred mount, till after the murder of the patriots—and that it was their blood which caused the grass to grow red, and also to take on the figure of the pike !—Now these circumstances may give some idea of the sentiments and feelings that pervade the masses of the peasantry, tradesmen, and artizans of Ireland.

On making my way out of this detached station of Repealers, I went in search of the platform, which, to my surprise, was placed nearly a quarter of a mile from the Croppies' Grave and the Coronation Stone. These hustings (for there were several) were erected near the northern base of the hill, and actually out of sight of the LIA FAIL. I thought, at first, that the Croppies' Grave was purposely shunned by the LIBERATOR ; but, on reflection, I ascertained that the situation chosen was the best, as the orators could see and address a huge multitude rising tier over tier to the summit of that part of Tara.

Numerous booths were now being erected on the crest of the hill, and soda-water carts were taking their stands in all directions. Selecting one of these, pitched on an eminence, and commanding a complete view of the platforms and the various roads that approached or passed near the scene of action, I bribed the proprietor for a good seat during the day, and here erected my OBSERVATORY for watching the motions of the terrestrial, rather than of the celestial bodies.

TARA commands a magnificent panoramic view, almost equal to that which is enjoyed from the rock of Cashel. But interesting as was this scene, my attention was irresistibly drawn to one of a very different character from that of still Nature—namely, the endless streams of human beings converging from every point of the compass to the spot on which I stood ! The highways and bye-ways, ancient and modern, that concentrate on TARA, are remarkably numerous ; but the beaten paths were insufficient for the moving columns who approached—especially the pedestrians—without regard to roads.

“ From winding glen, and upland brown,  
They poured their hardy tenants down.”

But the “ gatherings” of the Clan Alpines, collected by the fiery symbol of Roderick Dhu's henchman, presented a poor epitome of the “ monster-meeting” that was now forming on the Hill of TARA, attracted thither by the magic influence of one man, whose master-mind diffused itself through the hearts of countless thousands, rendering the whole multitude as manageable as a single machine !

“ Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet.”

Between eleven and twelve o'clock, the sounds of music burst on our ears, and temperance bands, mostly mounted on caravans or carriages, were seen, winding slowly along all the principal roads, decorated with flags, banners, and devices, and accompanied by huzzaing multitudes. As there were now some fifty or sixty thousand people on the hill, the approach of

each band was greeted by shouts of the most deafening and thrilling character, and, as they wound their way along the declivities of TARA, to take their stations, the wavings of hats, handkerchiefs, and flags, accompanied by cheers and welcomes from countless throats, was perfectly electrifying ! Nay, it was contagious : for, in spite of the serious reflections and meditations that were constantly intruding themselves on my mind, I often found myself involuntarily imitating the example of all around me, and raising my voice in the general chorus !

As the mass accumulated, and as the expected period of the ADVENT approached, the distant sound of each band was hailed as that which was to herald the LIBERATOR to the Hill of Tara. At such moments, there was seen a mighty wave, or gigantic ground-swell of the multitude rolling towards the point from whence the music came : but when the mistake was ascertained, (and it occurred twenty times at least) then the mighty surge recoiled slowly to its original position. [3] Once or twice I ventured to descend from my eyrie, and, penetrating to the centre of the mass, found myself carried irresistibly to and fro on the tide of this “ MONSTER-MOVEMENT.” In some places the press was so tremendous, that I expected my ribs would be crushed in, and my breath entirely driven out of my body, before the retreat of the wave gave a respite for respiration !

There was a total want of caution, an entire absence of arrangement at this mighty congregation, and had it not been for the instinctive quietude, and the universal sobriety of man and beast, many dreadful accidents must have occurred. Waggons, carts, carriages, and vans, some with horses, some without ; but all more or less crowded with people, were scattered about in all directions, while numerous horses and their riders pervaded this huge aggregation—some of them within a few yards of the hustings ! The horses themselves had evidently taken the pledge, for they were more sober, if that were possible, than their masters, patiently permitting men, women, and children to jostle them about—run under their bellies—and even climb over their backs, with the most Christian forbearance, passive obedience, and non-resistance ! It was curious to observe, during the ebbings and flowings of this human tide, the waggons, caravans, and carriages standing out, like rocks in an agitated ocean, resisting, repelling, or arresting the stream of living beings that rushed against or past them.

After numerous false alarms and baulked expectations, a very prolonged huzza was heard in the direction of the Dublin road, that seemed to portend the real advent. The cheering became louder and louder ; but the mass was now too densely wedged, to admit of more than an oscillatory or vibratory motion, communicating a strange sensation, probably resembling that which is said to be produced by the slight shock of an earthquake.

It was nearly half an hour, however, before the “ cortege” made its appearance at the summit of the hill, and exactly at half-past one o’clock. It had passed under a kind of triumphal arch, bearing the following inscription, both in Irish and English—“ TARA of the KINGS hails the LIBERATOR, with a hundred thousand welcomes.” O’Connell, as usual, was seated on the front dickey of his carriage, with cap and gold band, and accompanied by his son and the Pacificator. The mass, except at the circumference, was now incapable of moving, but their lungs and tongues made up for the immobility of their limbs. The roar that ascended from 300,000 throats, united with the music of forty bands, was perfectly astounding—it was actually painful to the ear, like the deafening sounds of Niagara, when we are behind and beneath the overwhelming cataract ! !

The Liberator stumbled in his ascent to the platform ; but it was hardly necessary to say to *him*—

“ Cave ne titubes mandataque frangas.”

For he is not the man to forget his lesson ! It was long before the tumultuous cheering subsided ; but when it had sunk to an audible point, the LIBERATOR commenced.

He acknowledged, as well he might, the awful responsibility under which he laboured in this majestic movement. He averred, however, that the multitudinous population had but one expression—one wish—the extinction of the Union, and the restoration of their nationality ! After allusion to the historical associations connected with “ TARA of the KINGS” the LIBERATOR exclaimed—“ I here protest, in the face of my country, in the face of my Creator—in the face of Ireland and our GOD— against the continuance of the unjust Union.” He maintained that the Union was void, because there was no authority vested in any person to pass the Act. The people of Ireland alone could consent to such a compact ; but they were never consulted. He alluded to the celebrated expression of the Lord Chancellor respecting the Irish aliens in blood, religion, and language, and thanked him for the honesty of the declaration.

But the incompetency of the Irish legislature to sell the rights and independence of Ireland, with the consequent illegality of the Act of Union itself, formed what might be termed the “ GREAT GUN” of Mr. O’Connell on TEMORA of the KINGS ; and it must be acknowledged that no crack artilleryman on Woolwich Common ever worked his field-piece with greater dexterity, or pointed it with more precision, than did the Liberator his twenty-four pounder on this occasion —“ The Union was carried into operation by measures the most iniquitous, atrocious, and illegal. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended—torture, flogging, pitch-caps, and imprisonment were the congenial agencies whereby England endeavoured to carry her infamous designs, and executions upon the gallows, for no other crime than that of being *suspected—to be suspicious*, were of daily occurrence in every part of the kingdom.” The shades of Pitt and Castlereagh did not escape the fire of this modern BRIAREUS. Castlereagh, indeed, was a tangible mark ; but Pitt, who was so thin that Tierney said he might as well fire at the edge of a knife, could not elude the double-headed shot of the Irish giant.

The diminution of commerce and manufactures—the increase of pauperism—the plunderings of absentees, &c. were eloquently delineated, while grape, cannister, and shot were hurled against the grievances of Ireland—the tithes, the landlords, and the poorlaws of his devoted country !

The least happy and successful of the LIBERATOR’S hits was against ESPARTERO—the only honest man in Spain—whom he reviled and abused because he had appropriated some of the revenues of useless monasteries to the exigencies of the State. Long ere this, Mr. O’Connell has seen the danger of venturing on Spanish prophecies. The eloquent oration was concluded thus :—

“ I delight at having this day presided over such an assemblage on Tara Hill (cheers). Those shouts that burst from you were enough to recall to life the Kings and Chiefs of Ireland. I almost fancy that the spirit of the mighty dead are hovering over us—that the ancient Kings and Chiefs of Ireland are from yonder clouds listening to us. Oh, what a joyous

and cheering sound is conveyed in the chirrup for Old Ireland ! It is the most beautiful—the most fertile—the most abundant—the most productive country on the face of the earth. It is a lovely land, indented with noble harbours—intersected with transcendant translucent streams—divided by mighty estuaries. Its harbours are open at every hour for every tide, and are sheltered from every storm that can blow from any quarter of Heaven. Oh, yes, it is a lovely land, and where is the coward that would not dare to die for it ! Yes, our country exhibits the extreme of civilization, and your majestic movement is already the admiration of the civilized world. No other country could produce such an amount of physical force, coupled with so much decorum and propriety of conduct. Many thousands of persons assembled together, and, though they have force sufficient to carry any battle that ever was fought, they separate with the tranquillity of schoolboys breaking up in the afternoon (hear, hear). I wish you could read my heart, to see how deeply the love of Ireland is engraven upon it, and let the people of Ireland, who stood by me so long, stand by me a little longer, and Ireland shall be a nation again (cheers).”

When the Liberator first came in view I quitted my eyrie, and, with incredible difficulty and exertion, penetrated to within ten paces of the platform. This, however, I never could have effected, had it not been for the civility and assistance of the peasantry, who, seeing a stranger pressing forward, rendered me every facility in their power. More than once or twice I was actually lifted up by the brawny arms of a frieze-coat, and passed over his own and his neighbours’ head ! No people on the face of this earth would have done these things, except the kind-hearted peasantry of Ireland !

When the last great gun was fired off by the JUBITER TONANS of the day, I prepared for another struggle at extrication from the dense central mass by which I was hemmed-in on every side. I was dreadfully exhausted by the circumambient pressure and the contaminated air—and deeply did I repent the experiment which curiosity had impelled me to make on my physical powers. In my retreat I equally experienced the kindness of the hardy peasants as in my advance, and several times, when on the point of fainting, I was assisted by their vigorous arms.

At length I reached my favourite soda-water cart, where my seat had been carefully preserved, and stretching myself on the straw where the bottles had been packed, I fell fast asleep ! Half an hour’s balmy repose amid the cheerings and huzzas of countless multitudes, infused vigour into my limbs, and I then descended, in order to make my observations among the less dense masses of this stupendous congregation.

I found that not a fiftieth part of the assemblage was within hearing, or even sight of the hustings. Numerous booths and tents had consequently been erected in various directions along the crest of the hill, and also along its eastern declivity, where dancing, soda-water, ginger-beer, fruit, and different kinds of refreshments, were relished by many thousands, instead of oratory on the hustings. But there was not a single instance of drunkenness within the whole range of my perambulations, nor did I hear an angry word spoken during the whole day. Indeed, there was scarcely any whiskey drunk in the booths. Ginger-beer and soda-water bottles kept up a continual discharge, like musketry, in every direction. Meantime, the ballad-singers were most industrious in their vocations, and attracted the attention, as well as called forth the plaudits, of thousands and tens of thousands.



GRANUAILE.

1.

Come all you sons of GRANUAILE  
And join with Dan to gain Repeal,  
He is the man that will not fail,  
If we act true and legal.

2.

Keep peace all round Old Erin's shore.  
By *that* REPEAL will soon come o'er,  
And trade will flourish as before,  
All round our sainted Island.

3.

It's forty years, and something more.  
Since Parliament did leave our shore—  
By *that* our tradesmen suffer'd sore.  
Through ey'ry town in Erin !

4.

But now we'll muster without fail—  
Cheer up, my boys, we'll have REPEAL,  
We'll gain for poor Old GRANUAILE  
Her native legislation !

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None but those who have witnessed such scenes, can conceive the enthusiasm kindled up even by these rude effusions of the popular muse. This enthusiasm is not a sudden flash, elicited by a temporary excitant, and then as suddenly annihilated. It is the explosion of a deep-seated internal fire, that glows constantly in the Irish breast, and is, with difficulty, suppressed at anytime.

The various degrees of density in the Tara assemblage, and the numerous detachments scattered over a large and very uneven space, offer almost insuperable obstacles to an accurate calculation of the number present. A military acquaintance whom I met, and who had measured the ground, estimated the multitude at three hundred thousand. My own impression was that this number would not be far from the truth—and let me say that even this low estimate presents a huge aggregate of human beings, drawn together by intense political feeling, and not by curiosity or pleasure.

As soon as the *DI MINORES* had discharged their “thunders,” the multitude began to recede from the hill, and, as usual, the ebb was much more rapid than the flood tide. There was now, undoubtedly *confusion*—though I would not call it *disorder*. The innumerable carts, cars, carriages, and vans congregated round the base of the hill, and choking up all the roads, appeared to render an extrication hopeless ; but good humour and activity did wonders. The horses, as well as their drivers, seemed not only to have taken Father Mathew's pledge, but to have sworn allegiance to O'Connell's precept—“PEACEFUL AGITATION” Although

several miles of our homeward course lay along the great Dublin road, not a quarrel—or even angry expression, did I perceive during the whole of the retreat ! !

It was ten o'clock at night before I reached the hospitable mansion of Newbury Hall, where a hearty dinner, or rather supper, proved a welcome—indeed necessary restorative, after a day of the most intense excitement and physical exertion I had ever experienced during a long and a very chequered life on the great theatre of human action. I expected that a night of profound repose and oblivious slumber would have followed this exhaustion of mind and body ; but I was greatly disappointed. Distinct as were the images impinged on the intellectual mirror during the day, the chaotic impressions of my dreams were still more vivid that night. Whether dreams be the disjointed and fragmentary iterations of former impressions, or the shadowy forebodings of coming events, I will not pretend to decide, for both theories have their supporters. Walter Scott was evidently inclined to the later hypothesis, when he described the dream of a far less powerful chieftain than the great LIBERATOR.

“ In troubled dreams the image rose  
Of varied perils, pains, and woes—  
His steed now flounders in the brake—  
Now sinks his barge upon the lake :—  
Now leader of a broken host—  
His banners fall—his honour's lost !”

Be this as it may, my head had not been long on my pillow, when imagination transported me back to TEMORA ; where the shouts of myriads again assailed my ears. Oh looking for the LIA FAIL, I found it had shot up into a high and giddy mast, from which there waved gaily in the air a broad green ensign, portraying the Harp in its centre, and underneath that national symbol, the single word “ INDEPENDENCE.” Acclamations of joy rent the skies. The multitude seemed intoxicated with their newly-acquired power, and exhibited that intoxication by the most extravagant gestures and congratulations. On looking to the South, the country appeared to be almost covered with peasantry advancing to TARA ; but to the South-east, and afar off, I saw columns of soldiers with the tri-coloured flag—while, on the western horizon, I discovered transatlantic banners, with stripes and stars, floating in the setting sun-beams. Northward, the ensign and cross of St. George waved over many a battalion, approaching rapidly with glittering helmets and nodding plumes. Meanwhile, the popular phrenzy and enthusiasm continued on TARA, and the LIBERATOR, with thoughtful countenance, and surrounded by a large staff of clergy and laity, seemed bewildered and irresolute.

Suddenly, as if by the magician's wand, the scene was totally metamorphosed. The atmosphere was alternately darkened with sulphureous smoke, and illumined by flashes of light from a hundred pieces of artillery. The roar of the cannon was often drowned in the huzzas of the myriads assembled on the hill. All was confusion. Hundreds of human beings were mowed down by grape and cannister—whole battalions came into conflict with pike and bayonet—the groans of the dying commingled with the shouts of the assailed and assailants—crosses and croziers were hoisted in the air—and the air itself seemed tenanted by strange spectres of kings, princes and warriors—of heathen, gothic, and barbarian daemons and deities,—of blood-stained Druids and Christian martyrs—all commingled in fierce contention, like the more substantial combatants beneath them ! Wild shrieks, wailings, and lamentations came floating on the gale, in the intervals of the artillery's thunder and the dash of arms.

In the midst of this terrific scene of human carnage and elemental war, I was hurried away in my dream by some invisible power, and carried through various scenes in foreign climes, which I had visited in the course of my wanderings. I seemed at liberty to roam in all directions except the one I desired—towards my natal soil. Centuries appeared to roll away in this strange state of free captivity ; but at length the period of my erratic bondage came to an end, and I flew back to the spot from whence I had been torn.

All was silent as the grave ! In the place where the LIA FAIL once stood, a tall funereal cypress—emblem, at once, of death and immortality—reared its sable pyramidal form. No mounds or. raths, the sepulchres of kings, appeared on TARA ; but the summit of the hill was covered with lowly graves on which the grass had long grown. Over these graves, innumerable small blade wooden crosses were planted—and on several of these I could, though with difficulty, decypher the names of some who had figured on Tara Hill, 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1843 !

It was late in the morning when I was roused from my turbulent slumbers by the break&st bell in the hospitable mansion of NEWBUBY HALL, when I—

—————“ found the theme  
But the substance of a dream.”

•

#### Bog of Allen.

RE-EMBARKING in the Fly-boat we were soon galloping along through the famous Bog of Allen, the largest of the kind in Ireland. We had several very pleasant and intelligent passengers this day. A sleek and slender young priest—a fat and portly parson—two physicians—a brace of barristers, and three or four gentlemen whose avocations did not reveal themselves. The Bog of Allen extends from Edenderry, twenty miles from Dublin, to the Shannon, and even beyond that noble river. It was of much greater extent formerly than now—cultivation having made, and is still making, vast encroachments on the dreary domination of turf. From nearly three million of acres, it is now reduced to about three hundred thousand. It is a great flat table-land, on the summit, 270 feet above the level of the sea, giving some idea of the number of locks necessary to gain the level, and go down afterwards to the Shannon. But this elevation proves the facility of draining the mighty morass ; and there is little doubt that fields of corn, hay, and potatoes will, ere half a century, wave over the greater portion of the Bog of Allen. Even now you seldom pass five miles, without seeing farms of excellent land snatched from the black plain, by sheer industry. There are two Oases, also, in the line of the canal, which, like Portuguese towns, look well at a distance ; but disappoint us exceedingly when we enter them. These are Phillipstown and Tullamore. Here the boat stops for a few minutes, and the passengers have time to stretch their legs, and spy the nakedness, or rather the filth of the land.

Great Bog of Allen, swallow down  
That odious heap called Phillipstown ;  
And if thy maw can swallow more,  
Pray take, and welcome, Tullamore.

The conversation having turned on the monster-meeting of Tara, the company were a little surprized, to find that I had spent the preceding day on the Hill of Kings, and were very eager to know the result. The priest pricked up his ears, and listened attentively to my account of the meeting ; but the parson drew himself up outside of the cabin-door, and looked as black as a thunder-cloud !

Having reached the highest level of the great table-land, we traversed a space of fifteen miles without a lock ; and here a curious phenomenon, illustrating the incompressibility of water, arrested our attention. About every twenty or thirty minutes, the horses are obliged to stop for five or six minutes, to take breath, the cause of which was this :—The velocity of the boat impelled the water in the canal with such force that it gradually rose so as to approach the summits of the banks, when it began to recoil, so as actually to form a back-water or stream, when the horses were unable to make head, and therefore stopped till the equilibrium of the canal was restored.

The Grand Canal not only drains the water from the adjacent bog, but drains away the bog itself. In all directions, we see the black reeks (stacks) of peat standing up as high as ordinary houses ; and we meet them and pass them, also, floating along the canal in huge barges, to warm and light the hearths of the people for twenty or thirty miles round.

#### Troglodyte Hibernicæ

The Ancient Troglodytes domiciliated in caves and caverns—had peculiar laws and regulations (some of them not very praiseworthy)—and even sported a king ! But the Irish Troglodytes take rank only with moles, badgers, rats, rabbits, and other burrowers in Mother Earth ! THEY merely dig a hole in the ground—generally the bog—and covering it with sods and brush-wood, leave an aperture at one end for their own entrance, and a smaller one at the other, for the exit of the smoke. These wretched habitations are to be seen in all the southern and western portions of Ireland—especially in the bogs. Strange to say, the inhabitants of the *latter* localities are proverbially healthy—the antiseptic qualities of the peat preventing fevers and various complaints so prevalent in the squalid huts of poverty in other kinds of soil.

A grade above the Troglodyte cave in the bog, is the mud or stone cabin above ground. Having observed that a considerable number of these had no chimney, the smoke making its way out of the common entrance, I was curious to learn what sort of eyes these poor wretches had, that seemed to defy the pungency of the peat-smoke. On entering one of these huts, I was surprized to find the family squatted round their fire, eating their potatoes and salt in a clear atmosphere! The explanation was easy. The rarefied smoke from the fire ascended, and impinging against the roof, crept along that surface till it reached the upper part of the door, whence it escaped, while an under-current of pure air crept into the hovel through the lower portion of the same aperture—thus restoring the equilibrium, and keeping a canopy of warm smoke above the heads of the inhabitants.

The chief inconvenience attending the no-chimney system is, that while the fire is kept burning, the door must be left open. On the other hand, the entrance of rain through a chimney on the fire-place is effectually prevented.

## The Black Man of The Bogs.

Some of my readers are aware of the black skeleton at Scarborough. He was found in a tumulus there, entombed in the trunk of a huge oak tree, with implements and arms, proving that he was one of the Ancient Britons, and consequently had lain in his sarcophagus for two thousand years at least. He measures upwards of six feet—may have been about 50 years of age—and with a complete set of teeth in his mouth. His coffin having been an oak tree, and the ground of the tumulus being impregnated with iron, a kind of ink was formed which left the bones as black as ebony, when the skin and flesh had dissolved and disappeared. Here, then, iron and oak could not preserve the flesh of the Ancient Briton ; but had he been buried in an Irish bog, the anti-putrescent properties of the grave would probably have preserved both his skin and clothes (if he wore any) from corruption.

Some years ago an old Milesian was found in a bog, so well preserved that his vestments, and even the seams in his coat, were distinct. It was found that these were sewed, not with thread, but with a kind of cat-gut, composed of the entrails—perhaps the nerves of animals. The antiquarians have determined that the Milesian must have lain in the bog at least five hundred years, since the kind of dress which he wore was prohibited by royal proclamation, in the 13th century ! Here, then we see a first-rate specimen of the conservative character of the Irish bog. The remains of the Milesian may be seen in one of the Museums (I have forgotten which) of Dublin, and part of the clothes is still in a state of comparative preservation.

The antiseptic qualities of the Irish bogs have long been known. The huge trees found in these places from twelve to twenty feet beneath the surface, and well preserved, are unquestionable proofs ; but many others are corroborative. A woman was missed many years ago, and no tidings were heard of her for 30 years, when her body was found in a bog, with her features so little altered, that she was recognised by her friends, without any difficulty ! It is remarkable that fevers are hardly ever observed among those who reside in the very midst of the bogs of Ireland.

The skeletons of animals—especially those of the Irish deer or—are objects of great curiosity. One of them, in Dublin, is as large as a good-sized elephant—and his horns measure some twelve feet ! How these animals could have made their way through the dense forests of the island, is astonishing.

The numerous gold chains and personal ornaments dug out of the ground, prove that, even in those remote periods, the Lord-mayors were as fond of gew-gaws as they are now. It is not a little curious too, that the generality of the arms found in Ireland bear a considerable resemblance to the pikes and daggers of the present day. Thus it would appear that pikes and potatoes are as natural and congenial to the Irish character and constitution, as whiskey once was, and bogs still are, to the physical geography of the country. The pike, indeed, is a weapon extremely easy of construction, and whose use, or rather abuse, is very easily learnt. It is readily concealed—is little injured by burial—and is the more deadly and dangerous in proportion to its rust.

But, fortunately, a new æra, seems approaching, when pikes, muskets, and daggers will lose their occupation, and give way to *moral* force, more worthy of the human intellect and of man's high destiny, than the brutal recourse which is now had to blood-stained arms and physical violence ! Should such a problem be worked out with success in Ireland, it will be

superior even to the miracle (for the term revolution is inadequate) effected by Father Mathew ;—and inferior only to those recorded in Holy Writ.

Among the numerous patches of cultivation scattered throughout this huge track of bog, we passed a little Scotch colony on the night, shewing what industry and economy may effect even in these solitudes and wilds. Everything was as neat and comfortable as in a large farmhouse and offices in the midst of England ! It will be long, I fear, before the Milesian imitates the steady and “ *improbis labor*” of the hardy and canny Scot ! The sad and hopeless lot of the Irish peasant seems to sap the springs of ambition and leave him as listless and resigned to rags and hunger as a Mahomedan fatalist !

But the run is over—the fly-boat has folded her wings—peat has given way to pasture and potatoes—and we are ushered into a large hotel at Shannon Harbour, where we see nothing of the Shannon, unless it be the dark-water of the river conducted through a canal.

### Shannon.

This is considered by Inglis as by far the noblest river in the British European dominions. I have a great respect for Mr. Inglis ; but a greater for truth. The Shannon, as a river, is about one of the ugliest and most useless streams I have met with in any country. It is, in fact, a series of loughs or lakes, ending in a great marine arm, or estuary of the sea, connected by innavigable rapids, black bog-drains, or navigable canals. Thus we have Lough Allen—Lough Bodarrig—Lough Roffin—Lough Forbes—Lough Ree—Lough Derg—and, finally, the grand estuary, from Limerick to the ocean. Between all these, there are either rapids or canals—and to call Lough Derg, for instance, the Shannon, is the same as to call the Lake of Geneva the Rhone—the Bristol Channel the Severn—Lough Neagh the Bann—Belfast Lough the Laggan—or the Firth of Forth the little river that winds past Stirling. But, although the Shannon presents numerous and provoking obstacles to the navigator and merchant, it offers innumerable traits of variegated beauty in its lakes, its rapids, and its surrounding mountains.

We embarked at Shannon harbour, in a nondescript steamer rejoicing in the name of the *GAZELLE* ; but possessing none of the bright eyes of that animal—unless her dead-lights claimed that distinction. One paddle, and that in the centre of her stern, propelled the boat, at a very slow rate, along a dull canal, and through flat meadows ; but, to make up for the deficiency of paddles, she sported a couple of rudders worked by one rope. The steamer, in fact, is composed of two boats, joined side by side, the quarter-deck being a platform in the place of a fore-castle, which was hoisted up perpendicularly, in front of the best cabin, while passing through the locks. In this unsightly and clumsy ark we floated slowly along, and at length entered Lough Derg, opposite Portumna ; and, after a good deal of delay, were bundled, bag and baggage, into another and larger steamer, destined to transport us to the opposite extremity of the lake at *KILLALOE*. Here the Shannon, having changed its name, as well as its nature, expands into one of the finest lakes of Ireland—some twenty miles in length, and varying from one to four or five miles in breadth. Description being quite out of my line, I shall only say, that *LOUGH DERG* presents much finer scenery than any part of the Rhine between Cologne and Schaffhouse. This is enough and not too much to say. Towards the western extremity, the lake contracts in breadth, and increases in beauty, till it suddenly terminates in a rapid at Killaloe, where a bridge crosses the stream. The town, containing only about a thousand inhabitants, is “ old, poor, small, irregular, and neglected.” Never-

theless, it sports two cathedrals—one Protestant, one Catholic. It was destroyed and resuscitated many times during the last seven hundred years, and its greatest honour is that of being once the residence of the King of Munster—afterwards, of all Ireland—BRIAN BORU—and his PIPER ! Here we were once more turned out of the steamer, and tumbled into a small track-boat, in which we descended through several locks so narrow that a gentleman got his skull completely smashed, a few days before, while looking out of one of the windows !

[1] Moore's History of Ireland, Vol. 1, p. 113.

[2] The "Holy Sacrifice of the Mass" was offered by the Rev. Francis Flinn—on the spot where the Patron Saint of Ireland first preached the Gospel of Salvation before the assembled princes of the land ; and where the idols of paganism crumbled before the blaze of truth that burst from the uplifted cross !—Several Masses were afterwards celebrated by different priests, and, at one of these solemnities, Father Coghlan, after inculcating temperance as a moral assistance to their spiritual advisers, and political leader, called on the multitude to kneel and offer up a prayer to the Mercy Seat for the prolongation of the life of him who was leading them to a bloodless and stainless victory. The countless mass joined in this prayer, And, with uplifted hands, implored a blessing on their leader, and freedom for their country !

[3] I counted 35 bands of music, as they arrived on the hill ; but there were some which I could not see while mixing with the multitude.

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