

## Natural History of Ireland.

*The history of Ireland : ancient and modern, taken from the most authentic records, and dedicated to the Irish Brigade*

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IRELAND, one of the most considerable islands of Europe, is situated in the Atlantic Ocean to the west of England, and extends from the 50th to the 55th degree of north latitude, and from the eighth to the twelfth degree of west longitude. Its form is nearly oval ; from Fair-head in the north to Mizen-head in the south, its length is about three hundred miles ; [1] in breadth from east to west, it is one hundred and sixty miles, and about 1400 in circumference ; it contains about eighteen millions of acres, English measure. The distance of Ireland from Great Britain varies according to the inequality of the coasts of the two countries : some of the northern parts are but fifteen miles from Scotland ; however, the general distance from England is forty-five miles, more or less, according to the different position of the coasts. Ireland is two hundred and twenty miles distant from France, four hundred and forty from Spain, and about fourteen hundred and forty from New France in America. In the northern parts, the longest day is seventeen hours twelve minutes, and in the most southern, sixteen hours twenty-five minutes. From its being situated in one of the temperate zones, the climate is mild and agreeable. Although less extended than Britain, says Orosius, “ Ireland is, from the temperature of its climate, better supplied with useful resources.” [2] Isidore says, “ It is smaller than Britain, but more fertile, from its situation.” [3] The venerable Bede confirms the opinions of these writers : he observes, that “ Ireland greatly surpasses Britain in the healthfulness and serenity of its air.” [4] Cambrensis adds, that “ of all climates Ireland is the most temperate.” “ Neither extraordinary heat in summer is felt there, nor excessive cold in winter. [5] That country,” he adds, “ is so blessed in these particulars, that it seems as if nature looked upon it with a more favorable eye than on any other.” [6]

The testimony, however, of Cambrensis appears somewhat doubtful and exaggerated. Rain, snow, and frost, are not unfrequent during the winters in Ireland ; from its exposure to the exhalations of an immense ocean, and those which the westerly winds from America bear to it, and which are not interrupted in their course by any other land, nor opposed by the contrary action of the continental winds, it must naturally be subject to such vicissitudes of climate. It must be observed, that the English writers have always endeavored to heighten the excellence of the climate of Ireland, and fertility of its soil, not forgetting at the same time to lower the merit of the inhabitants, and to render them contemptible. We shall have an opportunity to discuss hereafter their motives for this two-fold exaggeration. Cambrensis, who extols so much the fertility of that island, represents the inhabitants as a people without morals, comparing them to undisciplined savages, that will not submit to be governed by laws. Camden, another English author, says, that “ if that country had sometimes a bad character, it arose from the rudeness of its inhabitants.” We shall not at present reply to the invectives of these writers ; we will have an opportunity of doing it in another place. If ferocity and rudeness go generally hand in hand, does it become the English to disparage their neighbors with such epithets of abuse ?

The moisture of the Irish climate, together with the great number of lakes and bogs that are to be found throughout that country, caused by the stagnation of the waters after the tillage and culture of its lands had been interrupted, in the ninth and tenth centuries, by the frequent invasion of the northern barbarians, must, it would appear, render that country unwholesome, and be the cause of rheumatism, dysentery, and other distempers : they are only strangers, however, that are subject to be attacked by these disorders, the natives

generally escape, and live to an advanced age. Men have been often discovered to have lived to a great age in that country, whom sickness had seldom visited before death. “ The climate of that country,” says Cambrensis, “ is so temperate, that neither infectious fogs, nor pestilential winds are felt, so that the aid of doctors is seldom looked for, and sickness rarely appears, except among the dying.” [7]

Ireland is intersected by a great number of rivers and lakes. In the province of Leinster we find the Barrow, which takes its rise in the mountains called Slieve-Bloemy, in the Queen’s county, formerly Leix : it runs through part of the county of Kildare and Carlow, and empties itself into the sea at Waterford, with the Nore and the Suire.

The Nore has its rise in the Queen’s county, waters that of Kilkenny, and then loses itself in the Barrow, some miles above Ross.

The Boyne, which rises in the King’s county, runs through Castlejordon, Ballybogan, Clonard, Trim, and Navan, in East Meath : its waters are increased by many other small rivers, and it falls into the sea at Drogheda.

The Liffey has its rise in the county of Wicklow, and makes a circuitous course through the county of Kildare, where many small rivers unite their streams with it. At Leixlip, within seven miles of Dublin, a very high cascade is formed, where the waters tumble from the top of a sharp rock ; in the language of the country it is called “ Leim-en-Uradane,” in English “ The Salmon’s Leap.” The country people say, that when the salmon strives to reascend the river in that place, it leaps holding its tail between its teeth, in order to pass the rock : but if it fail in the attempt, which frequently happens from the height of the rock and rapidity of the water, it is caught in baskets, which the fishermen are careful to place at the bottom to take them. The Liffey passes through Lucan and Palmerstown, and, after forming some smaller cascades in its course, empties itself into the sea at Dublin.

The Slaney takes its rise in the county of Wicklow, and, after running through Baltingglass and Enniscorthy, falls into the sea at Wexford.

Lastly, the Iny and the Brosnagh, the first of which rises in Lake Ennil, the latter in the King’s county, lose themselves in the Shannon, one in the lake called Lough Ree, the other near Banagher.

The chief rivers of Ulster are : the Bann which rises in the county of Down, and together with the river Tonwagee, runs through the great lake called Lough Neagh ; having then the county of Antrim to the right, and Derry on the left, it forms in its course a more considerable cataract than the Liffey at Leixlip : it passes then through Coleraine, and falls into the ocean. This river is considered to be one of the best in Europe for its fishery of salmon, eel, and other fish. [8]

The Morne flows from the county of Tyrone, and being joined by the Derg and the Finn, which have their sources from two lakes of the same name in the county of Donegal, they run in the same channel, and after crossing Strabane and Derry, fall into Lough Foyle, and from thence into the ocean.

The Earn, the source of which is on the borders of the counties of Longford and Cavan, crosses the latter, and falls into a lake of the same name, in the county of Fermanagh, and from thence passes, by Ballyshannon, into the ocean.

The Swilly, in the county Donegal, falls into a lake of the same name, which communicates with the ocean.

The river Laggan, in the county Down, passes through Dromore, Lisburn, and Belfast, and falls into Carrickfergus Bay.

The Newry, after having served for limits to the counties of Armagh and Down, falls into the sea at Carlingford.

The Shannon, which can by a fair title be termed a river, is the chief one not only of Connaught, but of all Ireland, and deserves to be classed among the first rivers of Europe. It is called Senna by Orosius, and has its source in a mountain of the county of Leitrim, called Sliew-Nierin, which is so named from the mines of iron that are found in it. Its course from where it rises to its mouth is nearly one hundred and forty miles : many other rivers fall into it, and it forms several very considerable lakes. It waters Lanesborough, Athlone, and Banagher, separating West Meath and Leinster from Connaught. From Banagher it flows to Limerick, from whence it bears ships of the greatest burden into the Western Ocean, a distance of about fifty miles.

The other rivers of Connaught are not considerable. The Moy, in the county of Mayo, falls into the ocean at Killala, having Tirfiacria in the county of Sligo, on its right bank, and Tiramalgad in the county Mayo, upon the left. [9] The Suck runs between the counties of Roscommon and Galway, and loses itself in the Shannon near Clonfert. The Gill, a little river in the county Galway, discharges itself into the bay of Galway.

The rivers in the province of Munster are : the Suir, which, taking its rise in the county of Tipperary, on the borders of Ossory, passes through Thurles, Cashel, Clonmel, Carrick, and Waterford, and from thence flows with the Barrow into the sea.

Avoine Duff or Avoine More, in English “ Black water,” has its source in the county of Kerry, and after watering Mallow and Lismore, falls into the sea at Youghal.

The rivers Lee and Bandon, in the county of Cork, discharge themselves into the sea, the one below Cork, the other at Kinsale.

The Leane and the Cashion, in the county of Kerry, empty themselves into the ocean, the first in the bay of Dingle, the other at the mouth of the Shannon.

The most considerable lakes of Ireland are the following : Lough Neagh ; (lough signifies lake.) It is thirty miles long and fifteen broad ; its waters are celebrated for the quality they possess of changing wood into iron and stone. [10] Lough Foile, and Lough Earne ; these being joined by a canal, form two lakes. Lough Swilly, and Lough Cone, at present Strangford, [11] in the province of Ulster. There are also some other lakes less considerable in this province, viz : Lough Finn, Lough Sillin, Lough Ramor, Lough Reagh, Lough Eask, and Lough Dearg ; the last is famed for the devotion of the faithful, who resort there to perform a pilgrimage.

The most considerable lakes of Connaught are : Lough Corrib, Lough Mask, Lough Conn, Lough Ree, Lough Boffin, and Lough Allen, in the Shannon ; Lough Gara, Lough Aarow, and Lough Rea.

The lakes to be met with in Munster are called : Lough Ogram, Lough Oulan, Lough Kerry, Lough Lene, and Lough Derg.

There are in West Meath, Lough Ennil, Lough Hoyle, Lough Derrevarragh, &c.

In Ireland we meet likewise with mountains, promontories, and capes. The highest mountains, generally called the Curlew Hills, are in the county of Wicklow ; those in the Queen's county are Slieve Bloema, and in the county of Mayo, the mountains of Cruachan.

There are many bogs in that country, [12] where the people cut turf with narrow spades for fuel ; it abounds with all kinds of grain—wheat, rye, barley, oats, peas, &c., [13] every thing grows there in abundance ; its pastures are considered the best in Europe, both for the quality and quantity of their grass, which caused Bede to say, that it was “ an island rich in milk and honey” *dives lactis et mollis insula.* [14] It appears too, that in his time the vine was cultivated there ; “ *nee vinearum expers.*”

Fruit-trees thrive well in Ireland, such as pear, apple, peach, apricot, cherry, plum, gooseberry, and nut trees. [15] It is true, they are not met with in the fields and on the roads, as in France, Flanders, and other countries, being generally planted within enclosures, and in gardens.

Ireland is rich in her herds of oxen, and flocks of sheep, goats, and swine : it is said, that the cows will not give their milk without the calves, and that to succeed in getting it, it is necessary to deceive them by showing a skin filled with hay or straw. The sheep are shorn twice a year. [16] They yield a great quantity of wool, [17] but it is not so good nor so fine as in other countries. [18] The horses called hobbies by the English, [19] which were first brought from the Asturias, are bred in Ireland ; they are excellent both for the saddle and the draught. Their saddle-horses have a certain gentle and regular movement, called “ amble,” but are very quick at the same time. [20] The rider might, while seated upon his horse, when walking, bear a full glass of liquor in his hand without spilling it. [21]

Paulus Jovius, according to the account given by Ware, saw twelve Irish hobbies, of a dazzling whiteness, caparisoned in purple, with silver bridles and reins : they were led in parade with the trains attendant upon the Sovereign Pontiffs.

Eagles, falcons, and other birds of prey are likewise in Ireland ; greyhounds, and other hunting-dogs, are there in common. Bees are so plenty that swarms are found even in the trunks of trees.

The woods with which that country was formerly covered, fed great numbers of fallow-deer ; there are stags, boars, foxes, badgers, otters. Wolves were likewise in Ireland, but have been entirely destroyed within the last century. [22]

The plains and bogs of Ireland are full of all kinds of game ; hares, rabbits, pheasants, partridges, woodcocks, snipes, plovers, quails, water-hens, ducks, and wild geese, are in abundance, as well as every other species of fowl. There is a particular wild bird in it that resembles the pheasant ; it is called in the Irish language “ *Keark-Frihy.*” Some think that it is the same as the heath-cock ; there is indeed an analogy from the name, as *Keark-Frihy* signifies heath-hen ; however that be, this bird is not known, or at least very rare in France. Marshal Saxe had some brought from Ireland, to stock the plains of Chambord ; he sent also to that country for horses and mares, and had them brought to supply his stud. The rivers and lakes of this country [23] are filled with fish of all kinds ; salmon, trout, pike, tench, perch,

eel, carp, and shad, are very common, without mentioning the sea-fish, which are taken in great quantities.

If we search into the bowels of the earth, treasures will be found in Ireland. [24] According to the historians of the country, [25] the first gold mine was discovered near the river Liffey, in the time of Tighernmas, the monarch ; [26] afterwards one of silver was found at Airgiodross, [27] and a foundry established on the borders of the river Barrow, [28] in which coats of mail, bucklers, and other armor were made, [29] and given by the kings to such warlike men as distinguished themselves in battle. A mint was also founded for manufacturing gold chains, [30] which the kings and other nobles wore upon their necks as marks of distinction ; rings, likewise, which were presented to those who distinguished themselves in the arts and sciences.

Thus it can be said that gold and silver were in general use in Ireland, even in the most remote ages of paganism. This abundance of wealth was increased, in the early periods of Christianity, by the riches the inhabitants gained from the frequent voyages they made into Britain and other countries.

The immense treasures that the Norman plundered from the churches and monasteries of this country, as well as the annual tribute of an ounce of gold, called “ airgiod-froin,” exacted from the natives by the barbarians, during their dominion over them furnish incontestable proofs of its wealth at that time.

We know, that in the time of Denis, Christian, and Gregory, who were abbots successively in the abbey of St. Benedict, established at Regensburgh (called also Ratisbon) for the Scoto-Milesians, (which was the old name of the Irish,) the kings and princes of Ireland, particularly Conchobar O’Brien, king of Munster, had sent by three remittances, about the beginning of the twelfth century, considerable sums of gold and silver, to rebuild their houses, then falling into ruins. After the abbey had been entirely rebuilt, and property purchased in the city and neighborhood for the support of the monks, there was a sum still remaining. [31] I shall not speak of the rich presents from the same king of Munster to the Emperor Lothaire II. to assist in the holy wars. [32] Cambrensis himself bears testimony to the wealth of that island, in the age which succeeded the devastations of the Normans : “ Aurum quoque quo abundat insula.” [33] Mines of quicksilver, tin, lead, copper, alum, vitriol, sulphur, antimony, and iron, are discovered there in great quantities ; this last metal is manufactured in the country, and found to be not inferior in quality to that of Spain. However, the English government having made it a part of her policy to keep the Irish in subjection and dependence, [34] have been always opposed to the increase of their wealth and the working of their mines. Quarries of stone, resembling a hard free-stone, are also found, besides coal mines, alabaster, and marble of several kinds, such as red, black, striped, and some mixed with white ; there is another likewise of a grayish color, which becomes azure when polished : the houses in Kilkenny are built with this last kind, and the streets paved with it.

The produce and growth of the island, [34] and those articles which form its chief trade and export, are oxen, sheep, swine, leather, tallow, butter, cheese, salt, honey, wax, furs, hemp, wool, linen-cloths, stuffs, fish, wild-fowl, lead, tin, copper, and iron. Ireland produces every thing necessary and useful, and could do well, without the aid or intercourse of any other country.

Its situation for trade with other nations is peculiarly favorable ; [35] her harbors are more numerous and more convenient than those of England. [36] They were formerly frequented by

the Phœnicians, [37] the Greeks, and the Gauls. “Ireland,” says Camden, “is to be admired both for its fertility, and the advantageous situation of its sea-ports.” [37] Still the commerce of that country is inconsiderable, owing to the restrictions and narrow limits imposed upon it by a neighboring nation, which has tyrannized over it for some centuries, and prevents its wealth to prosper and increase. [38]

In that happy country, the works of nature which are seen, excite our wonder ; few examples of the same kind are in any other country of Europe. By a peculiar blessing to Ireland, [39] its land is entirely exempt from all venomous reptiles ; some serpents, adders, lizards, and spiders are indeed to be seen there, as in other places ; but by a strange singularity, they have not the poisonous quality inseparable from their nature in other countries, [40] except in the island of Crete. When they are brought from other places, says Bede, they die when approaching that sacred land. [41] “Nullus ibi serpens vivere valeat.” “Neither serpents, nor any venomous things,” says Camden, “are to be met with.” “Nullus hic anguis, nec venenatum quicquam.” This happy exemption from poisonous insects is again expressed in some verses of Adriamis Junius, wherein the island is introduced as speaking of its own advantages. [42]

The wonders of two celebrated lakes in Ireland, Lough Neagh and Lough Lene, are well known to the learned by the different dissertations published upon them ; among others, the philosophical lectures of Richard Barton, printed at Dublin in 1751. [43]

Lough Neagh, situated in the north of Ireland, is bordered on the northeast by the county of Antrim, by Tyrone upon the west, and Armagh upon the south ; is thirty miles long, and fifteen broad ; its waters possess a petrifying quality, which changes wood into iron or stone. Nennius, an English author, makes mention of it, [44] and it has been celebrated in some beautiful lines, by the author of the Ogygia. [45] “Every thing which is thrown into a certain lake in Ireland,” says Tollius, “is changed into iron or stone, if it fall to the bottom.” [46]

M. de Buffon mentions that “a lake is said to be in Iceland, which petrifies.” [47] “The lake Neagh in Ireland,” continues he, “possesses the same quality ; but these petrifications caused by the waters of the lakes are certainly nothing more than incrustations, such as the waters of Arcueil produce.” Experience does not accord with the opinion of that celebrated naturalist. Incrustation is caused by concretion, and the application of a strange body on the surface of another, without altering its substance. In the petrification attributed to Lough Neagh, the changing of a piece of wood into stone is effected by the total change of the inner part, and in that the difference of bodies consists, as the matter is alike in all. Pieces of wood, after having lain a certain time in that lake, are taken out either partly or entirely petrified ; some possess the properties of the stone, its heaviness, hardness, and solid cohesion of the parts, which make their separation difficult ; while another retains the quality of wood, which is that of being fibrous and combustible.

There are two sorts of petrified wood : one is white ; it appears on the outside to be wood, but is in reality a stone without any mixture. This kind being porous, is incomparably lighter than the common stone ; it is susceptible of being cut, and is useful for whetting edged tools. The other, being less porous, is black, harder, and more weighty : a mixture in it is sometimes discovered, either on the surface or in the interior of the stone. The two kinds are alike in this, that they split like wood, and strike fire like the flint-stone ; they will resist the strongest fire without being calcined or vitrified. It has been likewise remarked, that the second sort, after passing through the fire, becomes also white and light, as there will be voids remaining after

the particles of wood which composed part of it are consumed. In those mixed bodies a matter is discovered, which is solid and transparent, resembling crystal. The celebrated Boyle makes mention of them in his essay on the origin and virtue of precious stones. He says, “ There is a lake in the north of Ireland, which, like any other, abounds with fish. At the bottom, rocks are discovered with masses attached to them, which are clear and transparent as crystal. They are of several colors, some white, brown, and amber.”

It is not well known, what kind of wood it is that petrifies in Lough Neagh ; according to the general opinion, it is the holly ; but it has been observed, that the grain of the petrified wood, after being polished, becomes variegated, whereas the holly does not. It would be more reasonable, in my opinion, to say, that petrification operates upon the wood (which is the oak, broom, and yew tree) that grows on the borders of the lake, or its vicinity ; the agreeable smell which it produces would make one think it to be cedar. As to the time requisite for this petrification, it has not been ascertained ; some branches of holly are seen, which, it is said, were petrified in seven years : as to the precise time which might be necessary, it matters not, but the truth of the phenomenon is incontestable.

It is observed, that petrification is produced, not only in Lough Neagh, but also within its environs, to the distance of eight miles, even upon high and sandy soil to which the waters of the lake do not appear to have access. This discovery, by destroying the system which attributed the virtue of it to the water exclusively, seems to affix it to the soil, or at least to supply it with that quality by the power of the rain, or vapors which arise from the lake.

Although the phenomenon of petrification, like many others which we perceive in nature, be extraordinary, it is not supernatural ; however, as it is not allowed man to fathom into all things, the cause of it is perhaps sought for in vain. The learned attribute it to the water or to the air. Water being fluid, is capable from its condensed gravity, of conveying strong particles in its current. The same may be said of the vapors which come forth from the earth. It is easy to conceive that pieces of wood which have lain for some time horizontally under the earth, having preserved the pores and tubes which served as conduits to the juice that nourished them during vegetation, easily admit into these tubes the fluid bodies, and that the particles of stony matter with which they are loaded being of a sulphureous and saline nature, separate themselves in their course, and penetrate into the sides of the tubes when the movement of the liquids is gentle, whereas too rapid a motion is injurious to petrification. In the course of time, a more abundant concretion of these particles is formed into a solid body, which by its corrosive quality is substituted for an equal quantity of wood, by changing the form of those bodies, and introducing that of stone. It is nearly thus that the changing of iron into copper is accounted for, which a fountain of running water, near the copper-mines of Hemgrunt in Hungary, and at Newsohl in Germany, produces. Great advantages arise at present to Ireland from this phenomenon ; bars of iron, that lie in a stream of water which flows from the copper-mines in the county of Wicklow, become changed after seven weeks into copper, which is caused by the great quantity of vitriol accompanying the particles of copper, and prepares a receptacle for them by consuming the iron.

To be able to judge of the influence of the air as it regards petrification, we must consider the different circumstances of that element. The phenomenon cannot be attributed to the exterior air which forms the atmosphere of the globe ; it being a much lighter fluid than water, its degree of rarefaction and motion is therefore too great to support the particles of petrifying matter, and conduct them to the equilibrium necessary for petrification.[48] Petrification is produced in the earth, consequently it is more the effect of the interior than the exterior air ; the earth, like the animal body, receives much matter, and is purified in pro-

portion, which, according to the season or climate, causes the different phenomena of thunder, rain, fever, plague, and other epidemic disorders. It receives likewise into its cavities much of the same kind of air which surrounds the globe ; but as the situation of the interior air is different from that of the exterior, in regard to the variety of matter which it generates, and the causes which sometimes rarefy, sometimes condense it, without being subject to the violent agitations produced by storms and hurricanes, to which the exterior air is exposed, it must naturally produce different effects. Thus, without offending against the laws of physics, we may imagine it to be capable of bearing particles of stone or other petrifying matter into the pores and tubes of wood which it meets in its course. This is sufficient to account for the phenomenon of petrification.

The waters of Lough Neagh are also considered to be very salutary for such as are attacked by scrofula, and other like distempers.

In the bogs of Ireland, whole trees are often found lying horizontally some feet under the earth, without being petrified. These have fallen, either by the violence of the waters of the deluge, which had torn them from their roots, or more probably which the Normans had felled in the valleys that were then covered with wood, in order to impede the efforts of the Irish coming to attack them ; it is a stratagem of war, practised even to this day. Those trees are sometimes seen burned at the thick end, no doubt because the barbarians not having sufficient axes, made use of fire to fell them. It is easy to suppose, that trees covered with branches and leaves, and heaped one upon another, might have stopped the mire, which the waters that ran in the valleys carried along with them, and in succession of time have formed banks sufficient to prevent the running of the waters, and cause them to overflow the neighboring lands. Lakes and bogs are of course formed by the stagnation of those waters loaded more or less with strange bodies ; the matter whereof they are composed is an accumulation of dried herbs, hay, heath, roots, and other things produced by stagnant waters, and forms in its mixed state but one spongy substance, which easily admits the water, and covered in course of time those trees altogether, that had contributed to its growth. Some of the bogs in Ireland are twenty feet deep from their surface to the bottom, which is a kind of potter's clay or sand. Thousands of acres are seen in different districts of that country, which considerably deduct from the produce of the island ; otherwise it is extremely fertile. The only benefit to be derived at present from the bogs in Ireland, is the turf which is cut for fuel.

Lake Lene is not less remarkable than lake Neagh : it lies to the southern extremity of the island, in the county of Kerry. It is divided into the upper and lower lake, and contains in the whole about three thousand square acres : it is bounded south and east by the mountains Mangerton and Turk, west by Glona ; to the north of it is a beautiful plain, ornamented with fine country-seats, and on the northeast is the town of Killarney. These mountains are covered from the base to their top with the oak, yew-tree, holly, and the arbutus, [49] which represent in their different degrees of vegetation an agreeable variety of colors, green, yellow, red, and white, forming an amphitheatre, which recalls in winter the charms of the spring. Some cascades are formed by the falling of the waters from the summit of these mountains, particularly from Mangerton, whose murmurs being repeated by echoes, add still more to the charms of this spot. On the top of this mountain is a lake, the depth of which is not known ; in the language of the country it is called " Poulle-i-feron," which signifies " Hell's hole." It frequently overflows, and rolls down in frightful torrents. [50] Lake Lene contains several islands, which resemble so many gardens ; the arbutus takes root among the rocks of marble in the midst of its waters. Nennius says, in his treatise upon the wonders of Ireland, that " there are four mines, namely, tin, lead, iron, and copper, which form four circles around the lake." He adds, that " pearls are found in it, which kings wear for ear-rings." [51] There are



indeed some precious stones in this lake, and in its neighborhood mines of silver and copper, more especially the latter, which at present makes of itself a great branch of trade.

The Giant's Causeway in the county of Antrim, in the north of Ireland, where the coast is elevated above the level of the sea, is another wonder, that merits the attention of the curious. This causeway, which is in the form of a triangle, extends from the foot of a mountain into the sea, to a considerable distance ; its apparent length, when the waters retire, is about six hundred feet. It consists of many thousand pillars, which are pentagonal, hexagonal, and heptagonal, but irregular, as there are few of them of which the sides are equally broad ; their size is not uniformly the same, varying from 15 to 26 inches in diameter, and in general not more than twenty. All these pillars touch one another with equal sides, which are so close, that the joints can be scarcely perceived ; they are not all equally high ; they sometimes form a smooth surface, and sometimes are unequal. These pillars, none of which are of a single piece, are composed of many unequal ones, from one to two feet high ; and what is still more singular, these pieces are not joined by plain surfaces, being set one into the other, by concave and convex outsides, highly polished, the same as the sides of the adjoining pillars. There are some places where this colonnade is elevated above the earth thirty-two, and even thirty-six feet, but we are ignorant of its depth. People have dug at the foot of one of the columns, to the depth of eight feet, and it was found to be the same all through.

The stone, as to the substance, is a homogeneous body, which admits of no mixture, and is extremely hard ; when broken, it is found to have a fine and shining grain ; it is heavier than other kinds of stone, resists tools of the best temper, and of course, cannot be cut ; still it dissolves in the fire.

Besides the Giant's Causeway, some other colonnades of the same kind are discovered on the land side ; the most considerable is composed of fifty pillars, whereof the middle one is forty feet high, and the others, on the right and left, diminish like the pipes of an organ ; it is on that account the inhabitants have given them the name of " The Organ."

Is the Giant's Causeway a work of nature or of art ? That is a question of controversy, among the learned of England and of Ireland. Those who maintain that it is the effect of nature, prove it according to the rules of geometry ; they cite a proposition out of Euclid, according to which " there are but three figures which can form a plain and continued surface, viz., six equilateral triangles, four squares, and three hexagons. But they say these rules of art have not been observed in the Giant's Causeway, which is composed of polygons having unequal sides, although they are very well adapted to the opposite side of the adjoining pillars, which cannot be attributed but to a superior Intelligence." It is added, " the joining of those pieces which compose the pillars appears to be a work of nature ; whereas in all other columns, both ancient and modern, the pieces are joined by flat surfaces, and it cannot be conceived how the joining of the stones that form this causeway, could have been made without an infinite number of instruments which are not known to us."

This system of reasoning, though plausible, is not satisfactory ; for besides our not being able to deny a thing because we cannot conceive it, it is certain the arts have had their revolutions, and that there have been many which formerly prevailed that have not come down to us.

The inhabitants of Ireland are tall and well made : [52] the strong exercises which tend to fortify the nerves, and render the body vigorous, were at all times practised among them. Hunting, horse-racing, foot-racing, wrestling, and other like exercises, form still their usual amusements. We attribute to Lugh Lam Fada, [53] one of their ancient kings, the institution

of military exercises, at Tailton in Meath : [54] those exercises consisted in wrestling, the combats of gladiators, tournaments, races on foot and on horseback, as we have seen them instituted at Rome a long time after by Romulus in honor of Mars, which were called “ Equiria.” Those games at Tailton, which Gratianus Lucius and O’Flaherty call “ Ludi Taltini,” [55] were celebrated every year, during thirty days, that is, fifteen days before and fifteen days after the first of our month of August. On that account, the first of August has been and is still called in Ireland, “ Lah Lugh-Nasa,” which signifies a day in memory of Lugh. These olympiads always continued among the Milesians until the arrival of the English. [56] We discover to this day some vestiges of them, without any other change than that of time and place. Wrestling, which we call in France, “ le tour du Breton,” the exercises of gladiators, and races on foot, are still on festival-days their common diversion in various districts of Ireland, and the conquerors generally receive a prize. The plains of Kildare are celebrated for the great concourse of nobility who assemble there every year. Race-horses are brought there from every province in the kingdom, likewise from England and other countries ; considerable wagers are bet on these occasions, and more noblemen are ruined by them than by any other mode of gaming.

“ The Irish,” says Camden, “ are warlike, witty, and remarkable for the just proportion of their limbs. Their flesh and muscles are so supple, that the agility which they possess is incredible.” [57] Good, an English priest who wrote in the sixteenth century, after having been for many years in Ireland, a professor of humanity, gives the following description of its inhabitants : “ They are a nation,” he says, “ to be praised for their strength, and particularly for the activity of their bodies ; for a greatness of soul : they are witty and warlike, prodigal of life, hardy in bearing fatigues, cold, and hunger ; prone to loose pleasures, courteous and kind to strangers, constant in their love, hating also, seldom forgiving, too credulous, greedy of glory, and quick to resist injuries and insults.” [58]

“ Of all men,” says Stanihurst, “ the Irish are the most patient in fatigue, the most warlike ; rarely do they sullen themselves to be cast down even in their heaviest afflictions. ” [59]

[1] Stanihurst, de reb. in Hib. gest. 1. p. 15.

[2] “ This is more peculiar to Britain : in its extent of land it is narrower, but in heat and climate it takes precedence.”—*Orosius Hist*, book 1, c. 2.

[3] “ It is narrower in extent, but more fruitful, from its situation.”—*Isidorus in his Book of Origins*, c. 6, book 14.

[4] “ Ireland is, by far, superior to Britain, from its serenity and salubrity of climate.”—*Bede’s Church Hist*, book 1, c.1.

[5] “ Of all countries it is the most temperate. Neither the burning heat of summer impels to the shade, nor the rigor of the winter invites man to the fire. At all seasons a peculiar mildness of climate prevails.”—*Topography of Ireland*, c. 25.

[6] “ Nature has bestowed on Ireland a mildness of look and climate.”—*Cambrensis*, p. 727.

[7] “ So great is its temperature of climate, that neither the infectious cloud, nor pestilential air, nor noxious blast, requires the aid of the physician ; few men, except the dying, will be found infected with disease.”—*Topography of Ireland*, 1, c. 27.

[8] Ogyg part 3, cap. 3.

[9] Ogyg. part 3, cap. 3.

[10] Wareus, Antiq. Hib. cap. 7.

[11] Ogyg. part 3, cap. 49, 50.

[12] O’Sullivan. Hist. Cathol. Hibern. Compend. lib. 1, cap. 6.

[13] Petr. Lombardus de regno Hib. Comment, cap. 8.

[14] Lib. 1, cap. 1.

[15] Grat. Luc. cap, 10, page 104.

- [16] “ Here the snowy fleece is shorn twice a year ; and twice each day the flocks bring back their udders distended.”—*S. John*.
- [17] Pet. Lombard. Comment, cap. 8.
- [18] Idem. cap. 10.
- [19] War. Antiq. Hib. cap. 7.
- [20] “ Their pacing is gentle, by the alternate extension of their legs.”—*Plin*.
- [21] Camd. Brit. p. 727.
- [22] Petrus Lombard. cap. 10.
- [23] Pet. Lomb. Comment, cap. 7.
- [24] Idem. cap. 9.
- [25] Keating, page 64, 66, 74.
- [26] Anno. M. 3085. Ante C. 915.
- [27] Ogyg. part 3, cap. 21.
- [28] Grat. Luc. cap. 8, page 59, 02
- [29] Ogyg. part 3, cap. 28, and 33.
- [30] Keating on the reign of Eadna Dearg.
- [31] “ Isaac and Gervasius, who were descended from noble parentage in Ireland, being endowed with piety, learning, and eloquence, were joined by two others of Irish descent, viz., Conradus Carpentarius, and Gulielmus ; they came to Ireland, where, after paying their respects to Conchur O’Brien, the king, they explained to him the objects of their coming. He received them hospitably, and after a few days sent them back to Germany, laden with gold, silver, and other precious gifts. With this wealth the abbot purchased several farms, towns, and country-seats ; and in the city of Ratisbon, bought many lots, houses, and sumptuous buildings. After all this, there remained a large sum of that which was given by the king of Ireland ; this the abbot Gregory resolved to apply to the sacred utensils of the temple, and with it he also built a new one ornamented and finished with carved, stone ; likewise a monastery of great extent, after taking down the old one which was falling into ruins.”—*Chronicles of Ratisbon, by Gratianus Lucius, c. 21, p. 162*.
- [32] Walsh, Prospect of Ireland, sect. 6, p. 447.
- [33] Hib. expug. lib. 2, cap. 15.
- [34] Pet. Lomb. ibid. cap. 9.
- [34] War. de Antiq. Hib. cap. 7.
- [35] Petr. Lombard, cap. 2.
- [36] “ The harbors of Ireland are better known for their commerce and traders, than those of Britain.”—*Tacitus in his Life of Agricola*.
- [37] War. de Antiq. Hib. cap. 1.
- [38] “ Whether you consider the convenience of its sea-ports, or fertility of the soil, the country is blessed with many advantages.”—*Camden, p. 680*.
- [39] “ If thou hadst not been too near to a faithless nation, there would not be upon the globe a more happy people.”—*S. John, in his ancient poem on Ireland*.
- [40] Pet. Lombard, Comment, cap. 6.
- [41] War. de Antiq. Hib. cap. 7. U Lib. 1, cap. 7.
- [42] “ I am that icy Ierne formerly so called by the Greeks, and well known to the mariners of Jason’s ship. To me God, the benign source of things created, has given the same privilege as to Crete, where the thundering and mighty Jove was brought up : there, if the terrific serpent were brought, lest it should pour from its hissing tongue the black poison of Medusa, daughter of Phorcus, the chops become compressed, and life together with its poisoned blood becomes extinct.”—*Barton’s Philosophical Lectures. p. 85*.
- [43] Barton, Philosophical Lectures, p. 85.
- [44] “ There is another lake, named Lough Eachac, which changes wood into stone after a year. Men cleave the wood and shape it when put in.”—*Ogyg. Wonders of Ireland*.
- [45] “ In Ulster there is a lake called Lough Neagh. If wood be affixed in it to the bottom,

after seven years that which is at bottom is changed into iron, in the water it becomes a whet-stone, and above the surface a tree.”—*Ogygia*, part 3, c. 50.

[46] “ In a lake in Ireland, every thing which is thrown into it is changed into iron, or becomes a stone.”—*Tollius, Hist, of gems and stones*.

[47] Barton, *ibidem*.

[48] “ According to the laws of hydrostatics, heavy bodies do not swim in fluids which are less weighty ; that is to say, the bodies whose surface contains more matter than an equal surface of fluid, must verge to the bottom, so that these bodies become diminished, according to the greater proportion between the surface and matter which it encloses.”

[49] “ The strawberry-tree, in Latin the arbutus, is a shrub which in some countries becomes a tree. In the mountains of Lough Lene it grows to the height of 20 feet ; its leaves, like the laurel, are always green, and at the end of a purple color ; its flowers hang like grapes, are white, and of an agreeable smell, resembling the lily ; its fruit resembles the strawberry in shape, but much larger ; it is round, sour, and yellow, before ripe, it then becomes red ; exquisite in taste, the inhabitants eat it as they would apples, but it is fit to drink water after it, otherwise it would be unwholesome.”

[50] “ It is usual to see some lakes on the tops of mountains, in Ireland, the waters of which fall precipitately into the valleys, where rivers are formed. On Slieve Donart, in the territory of Mourn, and the county of Down, this is met with ; also at Bantry, in the county of Cork, and at Powerscourt, in the county of Wicklow.”

[51] “ There is a lake called Lough Lene, surrounded by four circles ; in it many gems are found, which kings wear in their ears.”—*Nennius, his Wonders on Ireland, Ogyg. c. 5*.

[52] Petrus Lombardus, cap. 12.

[53] Keating on the reign of Lugh.

[54] *Ogyg. par. 3, cap. 13*.

[55] Gratianus Lucius, cap. 9, p. 85.

[56] *Ibidem*, cap. 8, p. 58.

[57] “ They are warlike, witty, and remarkable for the just proportion of their limbs. Their flesh and muscles are so supple, that the agility which they incredible.”—*Camden Brit.*, p. 680.

[58] The whole nation of the Irish are strong in their persons, peculiarly active, possessing a brave and elevated mind ; sharp in their intellects and warlike. Life is not regarded in their propensities ; labor, cold, and hunger are overlooked ; their passions are strong in love ; they are hospitable to strangers, sincere in their attachments, and in their quarrels implacable : too credulous, greedy of glory, they will resist insult and injustice, and most ardent in all their acts.”—*Camden*, p. 789

[59] “ As has been already remarked, the Irish are extremely hospitable, good-natured, and beneficent. Of all men they are the most patient in suffering, and rarely overcome by difficulties.”—*Stanihurst*, b. 1, p.48.

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