

In O'Connells Territory 1825

Henry Crabb Robinson

Diary, reminiscences, and correspondence. Selected and edited by Thomas Sadler

Irish Tour. [1]

July 30th.—I left London early by coach, and the journey was rendered pleasant by an agreeable companion, the son of an old and valued friend. On passing through Devizes, I had a mortifying sense of my own forgetfulness, as well as of the transiency of human things. There I spent three years at school. But I could not without difficulty find an individual in the place who knows me now. Not a school-fellow have I any recollection of. The very houses had nearly grown out of knowledge ; and an air of meanness in the streets was very unpleasant to me. Yet, had I not been expected elsewhere, I should have stayed a night at the Bear. [2] I could, perhaps, have found out some once familiar walk.

We were set down at Melksham, twelve miles before Bath, at the house of the mother of my companion, Mrs. Evans, a widow. [3] Her sister-in-law and a cousin were there, one daughter and three sons, besides my companion. They seemed to have one heart between them all, and to be as affectionate a knot of worthy people as I ever saw. Mrs. Evans and her sister were glad to see an old acquaintance, who enabled them to live over again some hours they might otherwise have forgotten for ever.

August 4th. — I proceeded to the Hot Wells, Bristol.

Rem.[4]—My journal expresses disgust at the sight of the river Avon, “ a deep bank of solid dirty clay on each side with a streamlet of liquid mud in the centre.” I should not think it worth while to mention this, were it not to add that a few years since I found this Western port vastly improved by the formation of a wet dock, so that the city is in a degree relieved from the nuisance of a tidal river. I had the company of a younger son of Mrs. Evans. [5]

August 5th.—I embarked in a steamer for Cork. The cabin passengers paid £1 each ; the steerage passengers 2s. A pleasant voyage, with pleasant companions, whom I have never heard of since.

August 6th.—Landed early in the Cove of Cork. And four of us were put on a jaunting-car or jingle. I was amused and surprised by the efficiency of man and beast. The animal, small and rough, but vigorous ; the driver all rags and vivacity. He managed—how I could not conceive—to pack us all on his car, and vast quantities of luggage too, with the oddest tackle imaginable—pack-thread, handkerchiefs, &c., &c.

Rem.[6]— My first impression of the Irish poor was never altered. The men were all rags. Those who did not beg or look beggingly (and many such I saw) were worse dressed than an English beggar. The women, though it was summer, had on dark cloth cloaks. Yet, except the whining or howling beggars, the gaiety of these poverty-stricken creatures seemed quite invincible.

“ And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement.”

O'Connell one day, pointing to a wretched house, said to me, " Had you any idea of so much wretchedness ?" I answered, " I had no idea of so little wretchedness with such destitution."

August 7th.—I rose early and took a walk in the city. After breakfast, seeing in the coffee-room two gentlemen who appeared to be barristers ; I presented my card to them, told them I was an English barrister, and requested them to take me into court. They complied with great politeness. The name of one was Thwaites. The courts, two wretched buildings in the shape of meeting-houses ; the jury sitting aloft in the gallery, and the counsel, on one side, sitting so near the gallery that they were obliged to lift up their heads ludicrously to catch a glimpse of the foreman.

I went first into the Nisi Prius Court. Mr. Justice Torrens was sitting. A very young-looking, fair-complexioned, mild and gentlemanly man. A point of law was being argued. The prominent man at the Bar was a thick-set, broad-faced, good-humoured, middle-aged person, who spoke with the air of one conscious of superiority. It was Daniel O'Connell. He began to talk over with Mr. Thwaites the point under discussion. I could not help putting in a word. " You seem, sir, to be of our profession," said O'Connell. " I am an English barrister." He asked my name, and from that moment commenced a series of civilities which seem likely to be continued, and may greatly modify this journey. He took me by the arm, led me from court to court, as he had business in most cases, and yet found time to chat with me at intervals all the day. He made much of me, and, as I have no doubt, from a mere exuberance of good-nature.

In the other court was Baron Pennefather, a man whom all the Bar praised for his manners as well as for his abilities. He had nevertheless a droll air, with a simplicity somewhat quizzical.

With the judges as well as the Bar and the people O'Connell seemed to be a sort of pet ; his good-humour probably atoning for his political perversities, and, what must have been to his colleagues more objectionable, his great success. Bennett, K.C., was his chief opponent—a complete contrast. Wagget, Recorder of Cork, is a man of ingratiating sweetness of manner. Among the juniors is O'Loghlen, a rising man with a good face. [7]

I found that business was transacted with more gravity and politeness than I had expected. An Insurance cause was tried, in which both judges and counsel seemed to be at fault. It is only recently that insurances have been effected here. On questions of evidence greater latitude was allowed than in our English courts. That is, there was more common sense, with fewer technicalities. I amused myself attending to the business, with one incident to divert my mind, and that is worth mentioning.

I recollected that among my school-fellows at Devizes was a Cork boy, named Johnson. I had heard of his being an attorney. I recalled his countenance to my mind—red hair, reddish eyes, very large nose, and fair complexion. I looked about, and actually discovered my old school-fellow in the Under Sheriff. On inquiry, I found I was right in my guess. When the judge retired I went up to the Under Sheriff and said, " Will you allow me to ask you an impertinent question ?" His look implied, " Any question that is *not* impertinent."—" Were you at school at Devizes ?"—" Yes, I was. Why, you are not an old school-fellow ?"—" Yes, I am."—" I shall be glad to talk with you." Our conversation ended in my engaging to dine with him tomorrow.

August 8th.—The morning was spent in lounging about the environs of Cork, about which I shall say nothing here. In the afternoon I went to my old school-fellow, Johnson, whom I

found handsomely housed in the Parade. Accompanied him and two strangers in a jingle to his residence at our landing-place. Passage. From first to last I could not bring myself bad to his recollection ; but I had no difficulty in satisfying him that I had been his school-fellow, so many were the recollections we had in common. Johnson has a wife, an agreeable woman, and a large fine family. He gave me an account of himself. He began the world with guinea, and by close attention to business is now at the head of his profession. For many years he has been Solicitor to the Admiralty, Excise, Customs, and Stamp Office, He is a zealous Protestant—I fear an Orangeman. I therefore avoided politics, for, had we quarrelled, we could not, as formerly, have settled our difference by a harmless boxing-match. But our old school was subject on which we both had great pleasure in talking. Our recollections were not always of the same circumstances, and so we could assist each other. “ Do you remember, Cuthbert .!” said his daughter. “ What,” said I, “ a shy, blushing lad, very gentle and amiable ?” She turned to her father, and said, “ If we could have doubted that this gentleman was your school-fellow, this would be enough to convince us. He has described Cuthbert as he was to the last.” She said this with tears in her eyes. He was the friend of the family, and but lately dead, Johnson promised that if I would visit him on my return, he would invite three or four school-fellows to meet me.

The drive to Passage was very beautiful ; but the boy who drove me did not keep his promise, to call for me before nine, to take me back, and so I had to walk.

August 9th.—This, too, a very interesting day, I rose early, strolled on the fine Quay, and breakfasted. After eight I was packed upon the Killarney Mail, with a crowded mass of passengers and luggage, heaped up in defiance of all regulations of Parliament or prudence. The good humour with which every one submitted to inconveniences was very *national*. I was wedged in behind when I heard a voice exclaim, “ You must get down, Mr, Robinson, and sit by O’Connell in front. He insists on it.” The voice was that of a barrister whom I had seen in court, and who, by pressing me to change places with him, led to my having as interesting a ride as can be imagined ; for “ the glorious Counsellor,” as I he was hailed by the natives on the road, is a capital companion, with high animal spirits, infinite good temper, great earnestness in discussion, and replete with intelligence on all the subjects we talked upon. There was sufficient difference between us to produce incessant controversy, and sufficient agreement to generate kindness and respect. Perceiving, at first, that he meant to have a long talk on the stirring topics of the day, I took an early opportunity of saying, “ In order that we should be on fair terms, as I know a great deal about you, and you know nothing about me, it is right that I should tell you that I am by education a Dissenter, that I have been brought up to think, and do think, the Roman Catholic Church the greatest enemy to civil and religious liberty, and that from a religious point of view it is the object of my abhorrence. But, at the same time, you cannot have, politically, a warmer friend. I think emancipation your right. I do not allow myself to ask whether in like circumstances you would grant us what you demand. Emancipation is your right. And were I a Roman Catholic, there is no extremity I would not risk in order to get it.”

These, as nearly as possible, were my words. On my ending, he seized me by the hand very cordially, and said, “ I would a thousand times rather talk with one of your way of thinking than with one of my own.” Of course the question of the truth or falsehood of the several schemes of religion was not once adverted to, but merely the collateral questions of a historical or judicial bearing. And on all these O’Connell had an infinite advantage over me, in his much greater acquaintance with the subject. He maintained stoutly that intolerance is no essential principle of the Roman Catholic Church, but is unhappily introduced by politicians for secular interests, the priests of all religions having yielded on this point to kings and magistrates. Of this he did not convince me. He also affirmed—and this may be

true—that during the reign of Queen Mary not a single Protestant was put to death in Ireland. Nor was there any reaction against the Protestants during the reign of James II.

Our conversation was now and then amusingly diversified by incidents. It was known on the road that “the glorious Counsellor” was to be on the coach, and therefore at every village, and wherever we changed horses, there was a knot of people assembled to cheer him. The country we traversed was for the most part wild, naked, and comfortless.

I will mention only the little town of Macroom, because I here alighted, and was shown the interior of a gentleman’s seat (Hedges Eyre, Esq.),—a violent Orangeman, I was told. However, in spite of the squire, there was in the town a signboard on which was the very “Counsellor” himself, with a visage as fierce as the Saracen’s head. He would not confess to having sat for the picture, and promised us one still finer on the road.

On a very wild plain he directed my attention to a solitary tree, at a distance so great that it was difficult to believe a rifle would carry a ball so far. Yet here a great-uncle of O’Connell’s was shot. He had declared that he would shoot a man who refused to fight him on account of his being a Catholic. For this he was proclaimed under a law passed after the Revolution, authorizing the Government to declare it lawful to put to death the proclaimed individuals. He never left his house unarmed, and he kept at a distance from houses and places where his enemies might lie in wait for him ; but he had miscalculated the power of the rifle.

At one of the posting-houses there was with the crowd a very, very old woman, with grey eyes, far apart, and an expression that reminded me of that excellent woman, D. W. As soon as we stopped she exclaimed, with a piercing voice, “Oh, that I should live to see your noble honour again ! Do give me something, your honour, to ——.” —“Why, you are an old cheat,” cried the Counsellor. “Did you not ask me for a sixpence last time, to buy a nail for your coffin.”—“I believe I did, your honour, and I thought it.”—“Well, then, there’s a shilling for you, but only on condition that you are dead before I come this way again.” She caught the shilling, and gave a scream of joy that quite startled me. She set up a caper, and cried out, “I’ll buy a new cloak—I’ll buy a new cloak !” —“You foolish old woman, nobody will give you a shilling if you have a new cloak on.”—“Oh, but I won’t wear it here, I won’t wear it here !” And, when the horses started, we left her still capering, and the collected mob shouting the praises of “the glorious Counsellor.” Everywhere he seemed to be the object of warm attachment on the part of the people. And even from Protestants I heard a very high character of him as a private gentleman.

To recur once more to our conversation. On my telling him that if he could prove his assertion that intolerance is not inherent in Roman Catholicism, he would do more than by any other means to reconcile Protestants to Roman Catholics,—that the fires of Smithfield are oftener thought of than the seven sacraments or the mass, he recommended Milner’s “Letters to a Prebendary,” [8] and a pamphlet on the Catholic claims by Dr. Troy.[9] He said, “Of all the powerful intellects I have ever encountered, Dr. Troy’s is the most powerful.”

He related a very important occurrence, which, if true, ought by this time to be one of the acknowledged facts of history. [10] During the famous rising of the Irish volunteers, in 1786, the leaders of the party, the Bishop of Bristol, Lord Charlemont, and Mr. Flood, had resolved on declaring the independence of Ireland. At a meeting held for the purpose of drawing up the proclamation, Grattan made his appearance, and confounded them all by his determined opposition. “Unless you put me to death this instant, or pledge your honour that you will abandon the project, I will go instantly to the Castle, and denounce you all as traitors.” His resolution and courage prevailed. This was known to the Government, and therefore it was that the Government assented to the grant of a pension by the Irish Parliament.

We arrived, about four o'clock, at the mean and uncomfortable little town of Killarney. On our arrival O'Connell said, just as I was about to alight, "You are aware by this time that I am king of this part of Ireland. Now, as I have the power, I tell you that I will not suffer you to alight until you give me your word of honour that on Monday next you will be at the house of my brother-in-law, Mr. M'Swiney, at Cahir. There I shall be with my family, and you must then accompany me to Derrynane, my residence. Now, promise me that instantly."—"I am too well aware of your power to resist you; and therefore I do promise." He took me to the Kenmare Arms, and introduced me as a particular friend; and I have no doubt that the attentions I received were greatly owing to the recommendation of so powerful a patron. A glance shows me that this spot deserves all its fame for the beauty of its environs.

August 10th.—Having risen early and begun my breakfast, I was informed by my landlord, that four gentlemen would be glad if I would join them in an excursion to the Lower Lake. Two were a father and son, by no means companionable, but perfectly innocuous. The other two were very good society; one Mr. J. White, of Glengariff, a nephew of Lord Bantry; the other a Mr. Smith, the son of a magistrate, whose family came into Ireland under Cromwell. We walked to Ross Castle, and there embarked on the lake for Muckruss Abbey, where we saw bones and fragments of coffins lying about most offensively. We next proceeded to the Torc Lake, landed at Torc Cottage, and saw a cascade. At Innisfallen Island we had the usual meal of roasted salmon. The beauties of these places—are they not written in the guide-books? Our coxswain was an intelligent man, and not the worse for believing in the O'Donoghue and his spectral appearances.

August 11th.—Walked up the mountain Mangerton. Had a little boy for our guide. He took us by a glen from Mr. Coltman's new house. On our way we saw a number of cows, where the pasture is said to be rich, and our little guide pointed out a ledge of stone where, he said, "a man goes a-summering." He attends to the cows, and lives under the shelter of the ledge of stone. We saw, of course, the famous Devil's Punch-bowl. On the summit a magnificent mountain scene presented itself. Three gentlemen as well as ourselves were there, and one of them, a handsome young man, with the air of an officer, accosted me with the question whether I was not at Munich three years ago, when a German student fought a duel. That incident I well recollect.

August 12th.—A drive to the Gap of Dunloe. Near the entrance I observed a hedge-school—some eight or ten ragged urchins sitting literally in a ditch. The boatman said the master is "a man of bright learning as any in Kerry." A remarkable feature in the rocks of this pass is that they take a dark colour from the action of water on them. The charm of the Gap was the echo called forth in several places by a bugleman, a well-behaved man, and an admirable player. He played the huntsman's chorus in "Der Freischütz." I think he would, without the echo, make his fortune in London.

At the middle of the Gap sat a forlorn, cowering object, a woman aged 105. She is said to have survived all her kin. She spoke Irish only. Her face all wrinkles; her skin like that of a dried fish. I never saw so frightful a creature in the human form. Swift must have seen such a one when he described his Goldrums. [11]

August 14th.—Took my place on an outside car—(a Russian drosky, in fact)—a by no means inconvenient vehicle on good roads. At five, reached the house of Mr. M'Swiney, at Cahir. It would have been thought forlorn in England. In Ireland, it placed the occupier among the *honoratiore*s. Here I found a numerous family of O'Connells. Mrs. O'Connell an invalid, very lady-like and agreeable. There were six or seven other ladies, well-bred, some young and handsome. It was a strict fast day. The dinner, however, was a very good one, and no mortification to me. Salmon, trout, various vegetables, sweet puddings, pie, cream,

custards, &c., &c. There was for the invalid a single dish of meat, of which I was invited to partake. On arriving at the table, O'Connell knocked it with the handle of his knife—every one put his hand to his face—and O'Connell begged a blessing in the usual way, adding something in an inaudible whisper. At the end every one crossed himself. I was told that O'Connell had not tasted food all day. He is rigid in the discharge of all the formalities of his Church, but with the utmost conceivable liberality towards others ; and there is great hilarity in his ordinary manners.

After tea I was taken to the house of another connection of the O'Connells, named Primrose, and there I slept.

August 15th.—I did not rise till late. Bad weather all day. The morning spent in writing. In the afternoon a large dinner-party from Mr. M'Swiney's. Before dinner was over the piper was called in. He was treated with kind familiarity by every one. The Irish bagpipe is a more complex instrument than the Scotch, and the sound is less offensive. The young people danced reels, and we did not break up till late. O'Connell very lively—the soul of the party.

August 16th.—A memorable day. I never before was of a party which travelled in a way resembling a royal progress. A chariot for the ladies. A car for the luggage. Some half-dozen horsemen, of whom I was one. I was mounted on a safe old horse, and soon forgot that I had not been on horseback three times within the last thirty years. The natural scenery little attractive. Bog and ocean, mountain and rock, had ceased to be novelties. We passed a few mud huts, with ragged women and naked urchins ; but all was redolent of life and interest. At the door of every hut were the inhabitants, eager to greet their landlord, for we were now in O'Connell's territory. And their tones and gesticulations manifested unaffected attachment. The women have a graceful mode of salutation. They do not courtesy, but bend their bodies forward. They join their hands, and then, turning the palms outward, spread them, making a sort of figure of a bell in the air. And at the same time they utter unintelligible Irish sounds.

At several places parties of men were standing in lanes. Some of these parties joined us, and accompanied us several miles. I was surprised by remarking that some of the men ran by the side of O'Connell's horse, and were vehement in their gesticulations and loud in their talk. First one spoke, then another. O'Connell seemed desirous of shortening their clamour by whispering me to trot a little faster. Asking afterwards what all this meant, I learnt from him that all these men were his tenants, and that one of the conditions of their holding under him was, that they should never go to law, but submit all their disputes to him. In fact, he was trying causes all the morning. [12] We were driven into a hut by a shower. The orators did not cease. Whether we rested under cover or trotted forward, the eloquence went on. The hut in which we took shelter was, I was told, of the better-most kind. It had a sort of chimney, not a mere hole in the roof, a long wooden seat like a garden chair, and a recess which I did not explore. The hovels I afterwards saw seemed to me not enviable even as pigsties.

At the end of ten miles we entered a neat house, the only one we saw. Before the door was the weir of a salmon fishery. Here Mrs. O'Connell alighted, and was placed on a pillion, as the carriage could not cross the mountain. As the road did not suit my horsemanship, I preferred walking. The rest of the gentlemen kept their horses. From the highest point was a scene, not Alpine, but as wild as any I ever saw in Scotland. A grand view of the ocean, with rocky islands, bays, and promontories. The mouth of the Kenmare river on one side, and Valentia bay and island on the other, forming the abutments of O'Connell's country, Derrynane. In the centre, immediately behind a small nook of land, with a delicious sea-beach, is the mansion of the O'Connells—the wreck, as he remarked, of the family fortune, which has suffered by confiscations in every reign. The last owner, he told me, Maurice, died two years ago, aged ninety-nine. He left the estate to his eldest nephew, the Counsellor. The house is of plain

stone. It was humble when Maurice died, but Daniel has already added some loftier and more spacious rooms, wishing to render the abode more suitable to his rank, as the great leader of the Roman Catholics.

I was delighted by his demeanour towards those who welcomed him on his arrival. I remarked (myself unnoticed) the eagerness with which he sprang from his horse and kissed a toothless old woman, his nurse.

While the ladies were dressing for dinner, he took me a short walk on the sea-shore, and led me to a peninsula, where were the remains of a monastery—a sacred spot, the cemetery of the O’Connell family. He showed me inscriptions to the memory of some of his ancestors. It is recorded of the Uncle Maurice, that he lived a long and prosperous life, rejoicing in the acquisition of wealth as the means of raising an ancient family from unjust depression. His loyalty to his king was eulogized.

O’Connell has an uncle now living in France in high favour with Charles X., having continued with him during his emigration. Circumstances may have *radicalized* the Counsellor, but his uncle was made by the Revolution a violent Royalist and anti-Gallican, as their ancestors had always been stanch Jacobites. O’Connell remarked that, with a little management, the English Government might have secured the Irish Catholics as their steadiest friends—at least, said he, significantly, “but for the Union.” He represented the priests as stanch friends to the Bourbons. They inflexibly hated Buonaparte, and that is the chief reason why an invasion in his day was never seriously thought of “But,” said he, “if the present oppression of the Catholics continues, and a war should arise between France and England, with a Bourbon on the throne, there is no knowing what the consequences might be.” [13]

We had an excellent dinner—the piper there, of course, and the family chaplain. Tea at night. I slept in a very low old-fashioned room, which showed how little the former lords of this remote district regarded the comforts and decorations of domestic life.

August 17th.—Rain all day. I scarcely left the house. During the day chatted occasionally with O’Connell and various members of the family. Each did as he liked. Some played backgammon, some sang to music, many read. I was greatly interested in the “Tales of the O’Hara Family.”

August 18th.—Fortunately the weather better. I took a walk with O’Connell. The family priest accompanied us, but left abruptly. In reply to something I said, O’Connell remarked, “There can be no doubt that there were great corruptions in our Church at the time what you call the Reformation took place, and a real reform did take place in our Church.” On this the priest bolted. I pointed this out to O’Connell.

“Oh,” said he, “I forgot he was present, or I would not have given offence to the good man. . . . He is an excellent parish priest. His whole life is devoted to acts of charity. He is always with the poor.”

We walked to a small fort, an intrenchment of loose stones, called a rath, and ascribed to the Danes. He considered it a place of refuge for the natives against plundering pirates, Danes or Normans, who landed and stayed but a short time, ravaging the country.

“Our next parish in that direction,” said O’Connell, pointing sea-ward, “is Newfoundland.”

The eldest son, Maurice, has talents and high spirits. He is coming to the Bar, but will do nothing there. He is aware that he will be one day rich. He is fit to the chieftain of his race. He has the fair eye which the name O'Connell imports.

I believe mass was performed every morning before I rose. Nothing, however, was said to me about it.

With feelings of great respect and thankfulness for personal kindness, I left Derrynane between twelve and one. I believe my host to be a perfectly sincere man. I could not wonder at his feeling strongly the injuries his country has sustained from the English. My fear is that this sentiment may in the breasts of many have degenerated into hatred. I did not conceal my decided approbation of the Union ; on which he spoke gently. Something having been said about insurrection, he said, " I never allow myself to ask whether an insurrection would be right, if it could be successful, for I am sure it would fail." I had for my journey Maurice O'Connell's horse, named Captain Rock. Luckily for me, he did not partake of the qualities of his famed namesake. I did not, however, mount till we had passed the high ground before the fishery.

Slept at Mr. Primrose's.

August 19th.—Returned to Killarney. A ride through a dreary country, which wanted even the charm of novelty.

August 21st.—Before eight o'clock I left my friendly landlord. I was jammed in a covered jingle, which took us to Tralee in three hours. Cheerful companions in the car, who were full of jokes I could not share in. The country a wild bog-scene, with no other beauty than the line of the Killarney hills. Tralee is the capital of Kerry, and bears marks of prosperity. After looking round the neighbourhood a little, I walked on to Ardfert, where were the ruins of a cathedral. I learned, from the intelligent Protestant family at the inn, that book-clubs had been established, and that efforts were being made to get up a mechanic's institution.

August 23rd.—Having slept at Adare, I proceeded to Limerick, the third city of Ireland. My impression not pleasing. The cathedral seemed to me gaol-like without, and squalid within. One noble street, George Street. While at dinner I heard of a return chaise to Bruff. My plan was at once formed, and before six I was off.

August 24th.—Rose early, and at eight was on the road towards the object of this excursion, the Baalbec of Ireland, the town of Kilmallock, which lies four miles from Bruff. "*Etiam periere ruinae.*" This fanciful epithet is intelligible. Though there are only two remarkable ruins, there are numerous fragments along the single street of the town. And the man who was my cicerone, the constable of the place, told me that within twenty years a large number of old buildings had been pulled down, and the materials used for houses. He also told me that there were in Kilmallock fifty families who would gladly go to America, if they had a free passage. Many could get no work, though they would accept sixpence per day as wages. I returned to Limerick, visiting on the way some Druidical remains near a lake, Loughgur. During the day I chatted with several peasant children, and found that they had nearly all been at school. The schools, though not favoured by the priests, are frequented by Catholics as well as Protestants.

August 26th.—(At Waterford.) Waterford has the peculiarity, that being really like a very pretty village, it has nevertheless a long and handsome quay. Ships of large burthen are in the river, and near are a village church, and gentlemen's country houses. I with difficulty

obtained a bed at the Commercial Hotel, as a great assemblage of Catholics was about to take place. This I learned by accident at Limerick, and I changed my travelling plan accordingly.

August 27th.—(Sunday). I rose early and strolled into a large Catholic cathedral, where were a crowd of the lowest of the people. There was one gentleman in the gallery, almost concealed behind a pillar, and seemingly fervent in his devotions. I recognized Daniel O'Connell, my late hospitable host. He slipped away at a side door, and I could not say a word to him, as I wished to do. I afterwards went into the handsome Protestant church. It is here the custom to make the churches attractive,—not the worst feature of the Government system, when the Protestants themselves defray the cost ; which, however, is seldom the case.

August 28th.—I was called from my bed by the waiter. “ Sir, Counsellor O'Connell wants you,” He came to present me with a ticket for the forthcoming public dinner, and refused to take the price, which was £2. No Protestant was allowed to pay. He promised to take me to the private committee meetings, &c. The first general meeting was held in the chapel, which contains some thousands, and was crowded, The speeches were of the usual stamp. Mr. Wyse, Lucien Buonaparte's son-in-law, was the first who attracted any attention ; but O'Connell himself was the orator of the day. He spoke with great power and effect. He is the idol of the people, and was loudly applauded when he entered the room, and at all the prominent parts of his speech. His manner is colloquial, his voice very sweet, his style varied. He seems capable of suiting his tone to every class of persons, and to every kind of subject. His language vehement—all but seditious. He spoke two hours, and then there was an adjournment. [14]

August 29th.—In the forenoon I was taken by O'Connell to the sacristy, where a committee arranged what was to be done at the public meeting. As usual in such cases, whatever difference of opinion there may be is adjusted in private by the leaders. Here I remarked that O'Connell always spoke last, and his opinion invariably prevailed. At this meeting a subscription was opened for the relief of the forty-shilling freeholders, who had been persecuted by the landlords for voting with the priests rather than with themselves. I was glad to pay for my ticket in this way, and put down £5 by “ a Protestant English Barrister.” The public meeting was held at half-past two. Two speeches by priests especially pleased me. A violent and ludicrous speech was made by a man who designated O'Connell as “ the buttress of liberty in Ireland, who rules in the wilderness of free minds.” O'Connell spoke with no less energy and point than yesterday.

The dinner was fixed for seven, but was not on the table till past eight. There were present more than 200. The walls of the room were not finished ; but it was well lighted, and ornamented with transparencies, on which were the names Curran, Burke, Grattan, &c. The chair was taken by O'Brien. My memory would have said Sir Thomas Esmond. O'Gorman, by whom I sat, was pressing that I should take wine, but I resisted, and drew a laugh on him by calling him an intolerant persecutor, even in matters of drink. What must he be in religion ?

The usual patriotic and popular sentiments were given. The first personal toast was Lord Fitzwilliam, the former Lord-Lieutenant, who had not been in Ireland till now since he gave up his office because he could not carry emancipation. The venerable Earl returned thanks in a voice scarcely audible. With his eyes fixed on the ground, and with no emphasis, he muttered a few words about his wish to serve Ireland. I recollected that this was the once-honoured friend of Burke, and it was painful to behold the wreck of a good, if not a great man. Another old man appeared to much greater advantage, being in full possession of his faculties—Sir John Newport ; his countenance sharp, even somewhat quizzical. Lord Ebrington, too, returned thanks—a fine spirited young man. The only remarkable speech was

O'Connell's, and that was short. When the toast, "the Liberal Protestants," was given, O'Connell introduced an Englishman, who spoke so prosily that he was set down by acclamation. It was after twelve, and after the magnates had retired, that a toast was given to which I was called upon to respond,—“Mr. Scarlett and the Liberal members of the English Bar.” My speech was frequently interrupted by applause, which was quite vociferous at the end. This is easily accounted for, without supposing more than very ordinary merit in the speaker. I began by the usual apology, that I felt myself warranted in rising, from the fact that I was the only English Protestant barrister who had signed the late petition for Catholic emancipation. This secured me a favourable reception. “I now solicit permission to make a few remarks, in the two distinct characters of Englishman and Protestant. As an Englishman, I am well aware that I ought not to be an object of kindness in the eyes of an Irishman. I know that for some centuries the relation between the two countries has been characterized by the infliction of injustice and wrong on the part of the English. If, therefore, I considered myself the representative of my countrymen, and any individual before me the representative of Irishmen, I should not dare to look him in the face.” (Vehement applause.) “Sir, I own to you I do not feel flattered by this applause. But I should have been ashamed to utter this sentence, which might seem flattery, if I had not meant to repeat it in another application. And I rely on the good-nature and liberality of Irishmen to bear with me while I make it. I am Protestant as well as Englishman. And were I to imagine myself to be the single Protestant, and any one before me the single Catholic, I should expect him to hang down his head while I looked him boldly in the face.” There was an appalling silence—not a sound, and I was glad to escape from a dangerous position, by adding, “I am aware that, in these frightful acts of religious zeal, the guilt is not all on one side. And I am not one of those who would anxiously strike a balance in the account current of blood. Least of all would I encourage a pharisaic memory. On the contrary, I would rather, were it possible, that, for the sake of universal charity, we should all recollect the wrongs we have committed, and forget those we have sustained,—but not too soon. Irishmen ought not to forget past injustice, till injustice has entirely ceased.” I then went on to safer topics. I confessed myself brought up an enemy to the Roman Catholic Church, and would frankly state why I especially feared it. “I speak with confidence, and beg to be believed in what I know. The Catholic religion is obnoxious to thousands in England, not because of the number of its sacraments, or because it has retained a few more mysteries than the Anglican acknowledges, but because it is thought—and I own I cannot get rid of the apprehension—that there is in the maxims of your Church something inconsistent with civil and religious liberty.” On this there was a cry from different parts of the room, “That's no longer so,”—“Not so now.” I then expressed my satisfaction at the liberal sentiments I had heard that morning from two reverend gentlemen, “Did I think that such sentiments would be echoed were the Roman Catholic Church not suffering, but triumphant,—could they be published as a papal bull, I do not say I could become altogether a member of your Church, but it would be the object of my affection. Nay, if such sentiments constitute your religion, then I am of your Church, whether you will receive me or no.” After I sat down my health was given, and I had a few words more to say. There was a transparency on the wall representing the genius of Liberty introducing Ireland to the Temple of British Freedom. I said, “Your worthy artist is better versed in Church than in State painting, for, look at the keys which Liberty holds,—they are the keys of St. Peter!” A general laugh confessed that I had hit the mark.

September 13th.—(Dublin.) I mention St. Patrick's Cathedral for the sake of noticing the common blunder in the inscribed monument to Swift. He is praised as the friend to liberty. He was not that; he was the enemy of injustice. He resisted certain flagrant acts of oppression, and tried to redress his country's wrongs, but he never thought of the liberties of his country.

I prolonged my stay at Dublin in order to spend the day with Cuthbert, a Protestant barrister. There dined with him my old acquaintance, Curran, son of the orator. His tone of

conversation excellent. I will write down a few Irish anecdotes. Lord Chancellor Redesdale [15] was slow at taking a joke. In a bill case before him, he said, "The learned counsellor talks of flying kites. What does that mean? I recollect flying kites when I was a boy, in England."—"Oh, my Lord," said Plunkett, "the difference is very great. The wind raised those kites your Lordship speaks of—ours raise the wind." Every one laughed but the Chancellor, who did not comprehend the illustration. It was Plunkett, also, who said, "If a cause were tried before Day (the Justice), it would be tried in the dark." Cuthbert related, in very interesting detail, a memorable incident of which he was a witness. On the discussion of the Union question, Grattan had obtained his election, and came into the House while the debate was going on. He made a famous speech, which so provoked Corry, that in his reply he called Grattan a traitor, and left the House. Grattan followed him. They fought a duel in the presence of a crowd. And before the speaker whom they left on his legs had finished, Grattan returned, having shot his adversary. [16]

September 14th.—Though not perfectly well, I determined to leave Dublin this day, and had taken my place on the Longford stage, when I saw Sheil get inside. I at once alighted, and paid 4s. 6d. additional for an inside seat to Mullingar, whither I learned he was going. It was a fortunate speculation, for he was both communicative and friendly. We had, as companions, a woman, who was silent, and a priest, who proved to be a character. We talked immediately on the stirring topics of the day. Sheil did not appear to me a profound or original thinker, but he was lively and amusing. Our priest took a leading part in the conversation. He was a very handsome man, with most prepossessing manners. He told us he had had the happiness to be educated under Professor P—— at Salamanca. "No one," said he, "could possibly go through a course of study under him, without being convinced that Protestantism is no Christianity, and that Roman Catholicism is the only true religion. Any one who was not convinced must be a knave, a fool, or a madman." To do justice to Shell, he joined me in a hearty laugh at this. And we forced the priest at last to make a sort of apology, and acknowledge that invincible ignorance is pardonable. I told him drily, that I was a friend to emancipation, but if it should be proposed in Parliament, and I should be there, I should certainly move to except from its benefits all who had studied under Father P—— at Salamanca. At Mullingar, a crowd were waiting for the orator, and received him with cheers.

September 15th.—Proceeded to Sligo on the mail, and had a very pleasant companion in a clergyman, a Mr. Dawson. He asserted anti-Catholic principles with a mildness and liberality, and at the same time with an address and knowledge, I have seldom witnessed. We went over most of the theologico-political questions of the day, and if we did not convince we did not offend each other. Of the journey I shall say nothing, but that I passed through one town I should wish to see again—Boyle, lying very beautifully, with picturesque ruins of an abbey. As we approached Sligo the scenery became more wild and romantic. There I was seriously indisposed, and Mr. Dawson recommended me to a medical man, a Dr. Bell, a full-faced, jovial man, who was remarkably kind. When I had opened my case, the only answer I could get for some time was, "You must dine with me to-day." This I refused to do, but I promised to join the party in the evening, and was gratified by the geniality of all whom I met at his house, and especially by his own hospitality.

September 16th.—Dr. Bell again asked me to dine with him, but excused me on my expressing a desire to be free. I enjoyed, however, another evening at his house, where Mr. Dawson was the *ami de la maison*.

September 17th.—After a very hospitable breakfast with Dr. Bell, availed myself of the opportunity of proceeding on my journey in my landlord's car. I noticed some buildings, which a very meanly dressed man, one who in England would be supposed to belong to the lowest class, told me were Church school buildings, erected by Lord Palmerston, whom he

praised as a generous landlord to the Catholic poor. He said that, formerly, the peasants were so poor, that having no building, a priest would come and consecrate some temporary chapel, and then take away the altar, which alone makes the place holy. On my expressing myself strongly at this, the man said, in a style that quite startled me, "I thank you, sir, for that sentiment." At nine o'clock, we entered the romantically situated little town of Ballyshannon. My host and driver took me to the chief inn, but no bed was to be had. He said, however, that he would not rest till he had lodged me somewhere, and he succeeded admirably, for he took me to the house of a character,—a man who, if he had not been so merry, might have sat for a picture of Romeo's apothecary. I had before taken a supper with a genuine Irish party at the inn,—an Orange solicitor, who insolently browbeat the others ; a Papist manager of a company of strolling players ; and a Quaker so *wet* as to be—like the others—on the verge of intoxication, I had to fight against all the endeavours to find out who I was ; but neither they, nor the apothecary, Mr. Lees, nor my former host, Mr. Boyle, knew me, till I avowed myself I found I could not escape drinking a little whisky with Mr. Lees, who would first drink with me and then talk with me. On my saying, in the course of our conversation, that I had been in Waterford, he sprang up and exclaimed, "May be you are Counsellor Robinson?"—"My name is Robinson." On this he lifted up his hands, "That I should have so great a man in my house!" And I had some difficulty in making him sit down in the presence of the great man. Here I may say that, at Dublin, I found a report of my speech at Waterford, in an Irish paper, containing not a thought or sentiment I actually uttered, but a mere series of the most vulgar and violent commonplaces.

September 24th.—The journey to Belfast on a stage-coach was diversified by my having as companions two reverend gentlemen, whom I suspected to be Scotch seceders,—amusingly, I should say instructively, ignorant even on points very nearly connected with their own professional pursuits. They were good-natured, if not liberal, and with no violent grief lamented the heretical tendencies in the Academical Institution at Belfast. "It has," said they, "two notorious Arians among the professors, Montgomery and Bruce, but they do not teach theology, and are believed honourably to abstain from propagating heresy." Arianism, I heard, had infected the Synod of Ulster, and the Presbytery of Antrim consists wholly of Arians. On my mentioning Jeremy Taylor, these two good men shook their heads over "the Arian." I stared, "Why, sir, you know his very unsound work on original sin?"—"I know that he has been thought not quite up to the orthodox mark on that point."—"Not up to the mark! He is the oracle of the English Presbyterians of the last century." This was puzzling. At length, however, the mist cleared up. They were thinking of Dr. John Taylor, of Norwich, the ancestor of a family of my friends. And as to Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down and Connor, they had never heard of such a man. Yet these were teachers. They were mild enemies of emancipation, and seemed half-ashamed of being so, for they had more fear of Arianism than of Popery.

September 26th.—Strolled on the shore of the Lough that adjoins the town. Then began my homeward journey, and was not long before I landed at Port Patrick. I was now in Scotland. That I felt, but I had been gradually and almost unconsciously losing all sense of being in Ireland. The squalid poverty of the people had been vanishing ; and, though a poor observer of national physiognomies, I had missed the swarthy complexion, the black eyes, and the long haggard faces. The signs of Romanism had worn out. The ear was struck with the Puritan language. The descendants of Scottish settlers under the Stuarts and Cromwells, I have always considered as Englishmen born in Ireland, and the northern counties as a Scotch colony. And yet I am told that this is not the true state of things.

[1] This tour is even more at length than usual, as one in which Mr. Robinson himself felt especial interest. He says of it : "My Reminiscences of this journey were written nearly eight years ago (*i.e.* in 1843), when I by no means thought I should write so much as I

have done, and when I hoped merely that I might be able to produce something worth preserving for friends after my death. I had already written an account of my adventures in Holstein in 1807, and what I wrote next is contained in the following pages.”

- [2] The inn formerly kept by the father of Sir T. Lawrence.
- [3] The widow of my excellent friend Joseph Evans, who died in 1812, and who was a son of Dr. Evans of Bristol, Principal of a Baptist College there.—H. C. R.
- [4] Written in 1843.
- [5] Either he or his brother is now the printer and part proprietor of Punch.—H. C. R. 1843.
- [6] Written in 1843.
- [7] I have since met him at Rolfe’s, when he, the Solicitor-General of Ireland, was visiting the Solicitor-General of England. He died, lamented, as Master of the Rolls.—H. C. R.
- [8] “ Letters to a Prebendary : being an Answer to Reflections on Popery. By the Rev. J. Sturges, LL.D. With Remarks on the Opposition of Hoadlyism to the Doctrines of the Church of England, &c. By the Rev. John Milner.” Winchester, 1800. 4to.
- [9] Archbishop of Dublin. An Irish friend to whom I have shown this passage, thinks that H. C. R. must have confounded names, and that it was of Father Arthur O’Leary. O’Connell spoke as having produced a powerful pamphlet on the Catholic claims. O’Learys “ Loyalty Asserted “ appeared in 1777. His “ Essay on Toleration ; or, Plea for Liberty of Conscience,” appeared in 1780 or 1781.
- [10] This anecdote does not seem to be correct as it stands. There was no rising of volunteers in 1786 ; only a weak and ineffectual convention of delegates. Their power had been already long on the wane. Flood and Grattan were then bitter enemies. Moreover, the grant (not pension) to Grattan was in 1783.
- [11] Struldrugs. The Editor fears it is impossible to correct all H. C. R.’s’ mistakes as to names.
- [12] This is worthy of note, especially for its bearing on one of the charge brought against the agitator on the recent monster trial. He is accused conspiring to supersede the law of the land and its tribunals by introducing arbitrations. I could have borne witness that he had adopted this practice seventeen years ago, but it would have been exculpatory rather than criminating testimony.—H. C. R., 1844.
- [13] I cannot help adverting to one or two late acts of O’Connell, which seem inconsistent with his Radical professions on other occasions. His uniform declaration in favour of Don Carlos of Spain against the Queen and her Liberal adherents ; his violent declamations against Espartero, and the Spanish Liberals in general ; and, not long since, his abuse of the Government of Louis Philippe, and his assertion of the right of the Pretender, the Duke of Bordeaux, to the throne.—H. C. R., 1844.
- [14] My journal does not mention the subject ; but in those days *emancipation*, and not *repeal*, was the cry.—H. C. R.
- [15] Lord Redesdale was Lord Chancellor of Ireland from 1802 to 1806.
- [16] The Right Honourable Isaac Corry, Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer. Although in this duel Grattan shot his antagonist, the wound was not fatal.

Diary, reminiscences, and correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson .. (1869)

Author : Robinson, Henry Crabb, 1775-1867 ; Sadler, Thomas, 1822-1891

Volume : 2

Subject : Authors ; Authors

Publisher : London : Macmillan and Co.

Language : English Digitizing sponsor : MSN

Book contributor : University of California Libraries

Collection : cdl ; americana

<http://archive.org/details/diaryreminiscenc02robiiala>

Edited and uploaded to www.augty.org

January 21 2013