

Plain & Pleasure Grounds 1834

Ireland in 1834. A journey throughout Ireland, during the spring, summer, and autumn of 1834

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There is nothing interesting in the country between Waterford and Thomastown. The land is generally under cultivation ; but there is also some waste land, susceptible of all improvement ; and the land that is under tillage, is by no means in the condition of which it is susceptible. The road from Waterford to Thomastown, runs the whole way through the county of Kilkenny, which it enters, immediately on crossing the bridge ; and Thomastown is situated not very far from the centre of the county. The only bad inn I had yet seen in Ireland, I found at Thomastown.

I remained longer in Thomastown than the importance of the place itself demanded ; but being a central point in Kilkenny, and having introductions in the neighbourhood, I availed myself of my position, to add to my own personal observations, the results of others' experience. I particularly inquired, of persons of all conditions and opinions, as to whether any improvement was discernible in the condition of the people, within the last twelve or fifteen years ; and I regret to say, that I heard but one opinion : that a visible deterioration had taken place in the condition of the labouring classes and of the small farmers. How often do we hear the question mooted. Is Ireland an improving country ? The reply ought to depend altogether on the meaning we affix to the word improvement. If by improvement, be meant more extended tillage, and improved modes of husbandry,—more commercial importance, evinced in larger exports,—better roads,—better modes of communication,—increase of buildings,—then Ireland is a highly improving country ; but, up to the point at which I have arrived, I have found nothing to warrant the belief, that any improvement has taken place in the condition of the people.

I passed a Sunday in Thomastown ; and had of course an opportunity of seeing the population of a Kilkenny country parish, thronging to the Catholic chapel. Every woman wears a cloak, and the hood of every cloak is thrown over the head, unless the cap underneath be an extremely smart one ; in which case, the hood is allowed to fall a little back ; or if the cap be a none-such, it is altogether exposed. The habit of covering the head appears to be universal. If a girl is not possessed of a cloak, she will borrow the shelter of an apron, or even of a petticoat,—like the women of La Mancha : and in the dress of the men, I remarked also a resemblance to Spanish costume : notwithstanding that the weather was dry and mild, almost every man wore a great coat. The shops were crowded, after mass. All the country people who had money, flocked into the “ stores,” to buy some little thing,—the village dealers, to supply their retail trade ; and others, to buy a little tea, sugar, or any thing else that domestic use required.

A considerable part of the land about this part of Kilkenny is in the hands of middle-men. I know of a large tract on lease for ninety-nine years, for which the landlord gets but 7s. per acre ; but which is let by the middle-man at 2l. I know of other property let at 6l., for which the landlord receives only 10s. I would not, however, from what I have said, be understood to pass any general censure upon middle-men. Many middle-men are excellent landlords ; and middle-men, like those from whom they hold, ought to be judged by their individual character. So long, indeed, as the want of capital in Ireland presents insurmountable obstacles to the improvement of land, and the occupation of larger farms, by which a more respectable tenantry would come in the place of middle-men, I scarcely think the utter extinguishment of middle-men would be an advantage : for the respectable portion of them are, in fact, the only

body that at present forms any class separate from the aristocracy, and from the labouring, or at least, the industrious classes.

Some of the best landlords in this neighbourhood are averse from granting leases : and although the reason for this assigned by them—viz., that leases destroy the influence of the landlord,—will scarcely be admitted in these days to be a valid one, there are other reasons which may be alleged in favour of the practice. If leases were not granted, there would be a less competition for land ; and consequently, lower rents ; and where there is a lease, ejection is a more easy engine of despotism. Such a system, however, could only be successfully pursued by a landlord of the highest character, and by one who would, besides, lay out some money on a farm, as an earnest of his intentions ; but would be quite unsuitable to a country where farmers possessed capital themselves, which they could not be expected to lay out, without a security for enjoying its return.

Before leaving Thomastown, I made an excursion to the village of Innistioge, and to Woodstock, the seat of Mr. and Lady Louisa Tighe ; and which enjoys the just reputation of being one of the most beautiful domains in the south of Ireland. I could not but observe the ragged condition of the post-chaise that carried me there : the windows and window frames were broken ; the lining in tatters ; and in place of a bit of carpet, the bottom of the vehicle was filled with straw ; and yet, I believe ten shillings would have put all to rights. The road runs all the way by the river side ; and the country, I found varied and beautiful. Innistioge itself is most picturesquely situated ; and a quarter of a mile farther, is the entrance to Woodstock.

Having the advantage of an introduction to the family, I had of course, more than the ordinary facilities for seeing the beauties of the place ; and I found it every way worthy of its character. I was particularly struck with the extraordinary growth of the laurels, which are here great trees, affording depth and “ continuity of shade ;” and throughout the domain, the gifts of nature, which has been most bountiful, have not been thrown away ; for they have all been consigned to the hands of taste.

Much might be effected, if resident Irish landlords would more identify themselves with the people. This, the proprietors of Woodstock have done ; and as one proof of the influence of character, I may mention, that the Catholic children of the village attend, without exception, the school under the superintendence of Lady Louisa Tighe ; and which is taught by a Protestant. It is not enough that landlords be resident : absenteeism would be imperfectly cured, unless they were philanthropic also.

Journey to Kilkenny—Our Ignorance respecting Irish Towns—The Antiquities of Kilkenny—Its Cathedral and Round Tower—Picturesque Ruins—the Castle—Condition of the People—Kilkenny Manufactures, and Misstatements—The Repeal Question—Pigs and dung-heaps—Kilkenny “ Boys”—The Town of Callen, and its Proprietor, Lord Clifden—Some facts and Opinions—The Aristocracy of Ireland—Journey to Thurles—Freshford and Johnstown—The Bog of Allen—Thurles, and its inhabitants—The Ruins of Holy Cross—Journey to Cashel—Cashel, and the Rock of Cashel—The Archbishop—his Gardens—Another Round Tower—Market-day in Cashel—Pig-selling and buying, and Irish Bargaining—Miserable Objects in Cashel—Country between Cashel and Tipperary—Outrage and its Origin—Tithes—Competition for Land—Abduction—The Town of Tipperary, and Condition of the People—Lord Stanley’s Estates—Correction of an Error.

Kilkenny lies nine miles from Thomastown, and I hired a car to carry me thither to breakfast. In paying the hire of the car, before starting, I was obliged to request change of a 5*l.* note.

The town was ransacked for five small notes in vain. Nobody had so much money : at length some one thought of the parish priest, and the thing was done. A cultivated, but not an interesting country, lies between Thomastown and Kilkenny ; but a mile or two before entering the city, the country improves, and exhibits the appearances which usually indicate the approach to a place of some consequence. The entrance to Kilkenny is extremely imposing : one traverses no miserable suburb ; but passes at once into a broad street, by a still broader highway, adorned by a double row of lofty trees, over which appear the towers of Kilkenny Castle, the residence of the Ormonde family.

Judging by myself, our ignorance about the second and third-rate Irish towns is extreme. There are only some few we ever hear of. Leaving Cork, Waterford, Limerick, and Belfast out of the list, less I think is known of the other towns, unless by the gentlemen of the army, than of the same class of towns on the continent. Before the introduction of the Reform Bill, which somewhat enlightened us as to the size of towns, less was known of the Irish towns than now ; but even yet, our ideas of Kilkenny, Clonmel, Athlone, Mullingar, Mallow, Fermoy, Cashel, Thurles, Tipperary, Ennis, Galway, Sligo, and a host of others, are of the vaguest description.

I found the city of Kilkenny, a large well-built, beautifully situated, and very interesting town. In fact, I scarcely know any town more interesting or more picturesque. There are many streets in Kilkenny, though only one principal one, where the best shops are situated ; and although Kilkenny is not what it has been, it is still a little capital for this part of Ireland, and supplies both the surrounding gentry and the country dealers.

Kilkenny is full of interesting objects, and remains. In my first walk through the town, I saw for the first time, in perfection, one of the “ round towers.” It is close to, and almost forms a part of the cathedral, a large ancient pile, surrounded by venerable trees. One must be an antiquarian, in order to be a thorough enthusiast in round towers ; at the same time, the singular form, and great height, and dark hue, and known antiquity, and mystery too, attached to these pillars, must be striking to any one, however little of an antiquary. The dusky antiquity of the cathedral, and its mysterious companion—unknown centuries older than all around it—were in striking contrast with the young green of the sycamore and beech trees, which were covered with their spring buds. The cathedral is inferior in size only to St. Patrick’s, and Christ Church in Dublin ; and the antiquarian will find inside, a good deal that is worthy of his attention, particularly the stone chair of St. Kievan, who is said to have preceded St. Patrick by twenty or thirty years, in his holy mission to christianize Ireland. There are also several sepulchral honours erected to the memory of members of the Butler family.

Nor are these the only interesting remains in Kilkenny : the ruins of the Franciscan Abbey exhibit some fine traces of the past : and the Dominican, or Black Abbey, still retains in good preservation its tower, some of the aisles, and other less perfect relics of its ancient perfect-ions : another, the Augustinian monastery, constructed on a light and beautiful design, has been attempted to be converted into a place of worship, and although spoiled, yet shows some fine remains. But above all, the view from the uppermost of the bridges over the Nore is interesting ; for it comprises all these objects—the town itself, interspersed with trees and with the spires of the churches ; the cathedral, and its tall, dark companion ; the ruins of the two abbeys ; the river, and lower bridge ; and, bounding the prospect in that direction, that fine structure, Kilkenny Castle,—its gothic towers rising above the surrounding wood. This baronial castle is full of historic associations. It was built by Strongbow, in the twelfth century ; and two centuries afterwards came into the possession of the Earl of Ormonde, in whose family it has remained ever since. Little of the ancient edifice remains ; and the present marquis is almost rebuilding it, preserving only the ancient towers. The family, to

whom I carried letters of introduction, being unfortunately absent, I had only the privileges of a stranger in my visit to the castle.

But let me leave externals, and ask, in what state are the people of Kilkenny ? I wish I could have contemplated their situation, with as much complacency and pleasure as I did the city itself, and the natural beauties that surround it : but I am compelled to say, that I found the most widespread, and most aggravated misery. The population of Kilkenny is about 25,000 ; and I am enabled to state, after the most anxious inquiry, and close personal observation, that there were, at the time I visited Kilkenny, upwards of 2000 persons totally without employment. It chanced that I was at Kilkenny just after the debate on the repeal question ; in which the prosperity of Ireland was illustrated, by reference to that of Kilkenny, of whose prosperous manufactures honourable mention was made, condescending even upon the number of water-wheels at work, which were said to be eleven in number ; and the carpet manufactory, too, was spoken of in such terms, that it was said to be owing to its success, that the weavers of Kidderminster had petitioned for repeal. I visited these prosperous factories, immediately after the account I have mentioned was received ; the principal of these factories used to support two hundred men with their families ; it was at eleven o'clock, a fair working hour, that I visited these mills, and how many men did I find at work ? One Man ! And how many of the eleven-wheels did I find going ?—One ; and that one, not for the purpose of driving machinery, but to prevent it from rotting. In place of finding men occupied, I saw them in scores, like spectres, walking about, and lying about the mill. I saw immense piles of goods completed, but for which there was no sale ;—I saw piles of cloth at 2s. a yard, with which a man might clothe himself from head to foot for 10s. ; but there were no buyers : the poor of Kilkenny are clothed from Monmouth-street :—I saw heaps of blankets, enough to furnish every cabin in the county ; and I saw every loom idle. As for the carpets which had excited the jealousy and fears of Kidderminster, not one had been made for seven months ; it was but an experiment, and had utterly failed : and just to convey some idea of the destitution of these people—when an order recently arrived, for the manufacture of as many blankets for the police, as would have kept the men at work a few weeks, bonfires were lighted about the country—not bonfires to communicate insurrection, but to evince joy, that a few starving men were about to earn bread to support their families. I speak warmly on this subject : but how can I speak otherwise than with warmth. Surely I need not say that I do not accuse any one of false invention, or wilful misrepresentation : but I accuse some one of having furnished to the advocates of the Union, *lies*, in place of truth. Their views require no such props : and I, who am no repealer, regret that an argument should be thus furnished to the repealers. The supporters of the Union advance as an argument against the repeal of the Union, the prosperity of Ireland ; and Kilkenny is quoted as an illustration of that prosperity. The statement turned out to be utterly false : and thus, the repealers boast, that they have a stronger case.

Having mentioned repeal, I may state, that as far as I have yet gone through the south of Ireland, I have found the whole of the lower, and a great proportion of the middle classes, repealers. By the middle classes, I mean the shopkeepers and farmers : I found Protestants of that class, who are indeed few in number, quite as much repealers as Catholics. I have generally found, however, a readiness to admit, that if employment were provided for the people, and any measure devised, which should have the effect of enticing, or forcing back absentees, repeal would lose its value.

Independently of the pauperism occasioned by the non-prosperous condition of the manufactures of Kilkenny, the whole working population I found in a miserable condition : hundreds subsisting on the chance contributions, which were levied on the farmers round the country ; and hundreds more, subsisting at the very lowest point at which life can be sustained. The suburbs I found more wretched than any I had yet seen in any town ; pigs were by no means a universal possession ; and the chief wealth of the poor, seemed to be dung-heaps before their door. I do not speak in jest—the dung-heap insures a certain quantum of

subsistence, in this way : The con-acre system prevails here : and it is usual for the possessor of the land, to let it out in small patches, rent free for one season, on condition of the patch being manured by the person who takes it. Thus a poor man may insure to his family the produce, for a season, of as much land as he is able to put a sufficiency of manure into ; so that I had now advanced a step farther, and was not only gratified by seeing a pig in a cabin, but also by the spectacle of a large dung-heap close to the door.

I ought not to have omitted to state, when speaking of the unprosperous state of the manufactures of Kilkenny, and of the assertion to the contrary ; that while I write this, I have before me the original minute of a meeting held on the 6th of February, for the purpose of alleviating the condition of the poor, in which the population is spoken of as “ wholly unemployed,”—so that the destitution of the people had existed months before the assertion as to the flourishing state of Kilkenny. The minute I allude to, is signed by the Mayor, by Dr. Kinsella, the Roman Catholic Bishop, and by the Protestant Dean, the Honourable and Rev. Joseph Bourke.

I spent part of a day on a race-ground, about four miles from Kilkenny, where some steeple races took place, and where a large concourse of persons was assembled. I was particularly struck with the difference in the display of luxuries, at an Irish and an English merry-making. Ginger-bread and other dainties, are exhibited at a race or fair in England ; here, I observed carts filled with good common household bread. This was deemed a luxury.

This being an assemblage of “ Kilkenny boys,” who, next to Tipperary boys, bear the best fighting character—I thought to have had it to say, “ it’s there where one’ll see the fightin’ that’ll do his heart good ;” but several things prevented this exhibition. There was but little money among the lower orders, to buy whiskey ; and torrents of rain had the effect of thinning the field. I saw plenty of “ boys” with their shillelahs ; but the fighting was only desultory. There were abundance of booths, and Irish pipes, and Irish jigs ; and “ boys” who appeared to have hired a fiddler for their own exclusive use, dancing a *pas seul* within a circle of admirers.

I must not omit to make mention of the beautiful black marble of Kilkenny, and of the better known “ Kilkenny coal.” The marble quarry is situated about a mile from the city ; and there is a sawing and polishing mill also. The marble is extremely beautiful : it has a black ground, curiously variegated with madrepore, bivalve, and other organic impressions, and is used for chimney-pieces all over this part of the country. Kilkenny coal is well known by its qualities ; the chief of which are, that it does not flame, or emit any smoke. Its sulphureous exhalation, however, renders it utterly unfit for domestic use.

I had heard, even in England, of the wretched condition of a town in the county of Kilkenny, called Callen ; and finding that this town was but eight miles from Kilkenny, I devoted a day to Callen. I never travelled through a more pleasing and smiling country, than that which lies between Kilkenny and Callen ; and I never entered a town reflecting so much disgrace upon the owner of it, as this. In so execrable a condition are the streets of this town, that the mail-coach, in passing through it, is allowed twelve minutes extra ; an indulgence which can surprise no one who drives, or rather attempts to drive through the street ; for no one who has the use of his limbs, would consent to be driven. And yet, will it be credited, that a toll is levied on the entrance into the town of every article of consumption ; and that not one shilling of the money so received, is laid out for the benefit of the town. The potatoes, coal, butter-milk, with which the poor wretches who inhabit this place supply their necessities, are subject to a toll, which used to produce 250*l.* per annum ; but which having been resisted by some spirited and prying person, who questioned the right of toll, the receipts have been since considerably diminished. It was with some difficulty that I obtained a sight of the table

of tolls ; but I insisted on my right to see it ; and satisfied myself, that potatoes and buttermilk, the food of the poor, pay a toll to Lord Clifden, who, from a revenue of about 10 or 12,000*l.* per annum, which he draws out of this county—a considerable part from the immediate neighbourhood—lays out not one farthing for the benefit of his people.

I had not yet seen in Ireland, any town in so wretched a condition as this. I arrived in it very early in the morning ; and having been promised breakfast at a grocer's shop (for there is no inn in Callen), I walked through the outskirts of the town, and round a little common which lies close to it, and there I saw the people crawling out of their hovels,—they and their hovels not one shade better than I have seen in the sierras of Granada, where the people live in holes excavated in the banks. Their cabins were mere holes, with nothing within them (I speak of two which I entered) excepting a little straw, and one or two broken stools. And all the other outskirts of the town, are in nearly a similar condition :—ranges of hovels, without a ray of comfort or a trace of civilization about them : and people either in a state of actual starvation, or barely keeping body and soul together. All this I saw, and cannot be deceived ; and from the inquiries which I made of intelligent persons, the Protestant clergyman among the number, I may state, that in this town, containing between four and five thousand inhabitants, at least one thousand are without regular employment ; six or seven hundred entirely destitute ; and that there are upwards of two hundred actual mendicants in the town—persons incapable of work. Is there any one so blind as to contend, that this is a state of things which ought to continue ; and that an absentee nobleman should be permitted to draw, without deduction for the support of the infirm poor, the splendid income which he wrings out of a people left to starvation or crime ? An attempt was made by some philanthropic persons, to have the common enclosed and cultivated, which would have given some employment ; but the project was unsuccessful. The great resisted it ;—and again, will any one say, that Lord Clifden, or others situated like his lordship, ought not to be *forced* to consent to a proposal tending to give employment to those of whom his own rack-rents and ejections have made paupers ? Let any one who desires to see a specimen of an absentee town, visit Callen. And Lord Clifden is the more reprehensible, since he occasionally visits the country, and is not ignorant of its condition. It is true, that his lordship drives as rapidly through his town as the state of the street will admit ; but it is said, that upon one occasion, the carriage broke down ; and that this patriotic and tender-hearted nobleman, was forced to hear the execrations of the crowd of naked and starving wretches who thronged around him.

Nor is the country around Callen fortunate in its other landlords. The land of Lord Dysart, another large proprietor, is frightfully rack-rented. Land, at a distance from any market, is let at 4*l.* and 4*l.* 10*s.* per acre : and I know of five acres let at a rent, the whole produce of which would barely pay the rent of one acre. The Marquis of Ormonde is another proprietor ; but his land is not so much over-set ; and the general opinion appears to be, that he is anxious to do right.

I greatly fear that an angry feeling towards the lower classes, has been engendered amongst the aristocracy, by the result of the last elections, when old members were unseated, and repealers brought in. Some have been irritated by the conduct of their tenantry ; and others have been hurt by what they conceive to be ingratitude. In some instances, there has been ingratitude, no doubt ; and that some irritation should have been produced, is only natural ; but these are feelings which ought to be conquered. As a body, the landlords of Ireland have not been towards their tenantry what they ought to have been ; and have long stood in need of much broader “ hints ” than those which *Blackwood* addressed to the aristocracy of England : and if, as the gentry of Ireland generally assert, the people were incited by their priests,—then it is unreasonable that anger should be excited against those whom they imagine to have been deluded. But I confess, that from all I have heard and seen, I have my doubts whether it be in most cases the priests that incite the people, or whether it be not

rather the people that take the lead. I believe it will be admitted by all who have had the best opportunities of judging, that unless the instigations of the priest fall in with the wishes of the people, his influence is powerless ; and instances have actually occurred, in which a priest, after having opposed himself to O'Connell and the repeal candidate, was scoffed at by his flock, and refused his accustomed dues. And for my own part, I am not at all surprised that a people suffering all the extremities of human privation, should catch at straws ; and that Mr. O'Connell should find it an easy matter to raise a cry in favour of any thing which he asserts to be for the benefit of the people ; so that on no ground are the aristocracy justified in visiting upon the people, the errors which have originated in ignorance, or delusion.

I walked back to Kilkenny from Callen in the evening, without any fear of robbery, in a country where half the people are starving. Robbery, singular to tell, is a crime of unfrequent occurrence ; and I look upon it, that a traveller is in less danger on the highways of Ireland, than in any other part of the British dominions.

Before leaving Kilkenny, I inquired the prices of provisions, and found beef to be fourpence, mutton sixpence, bacon and pork twopence, fowls 1s, a couple. A turkey in the season costs 2s, 6d., a goose 1s, 10d. The club-house, or Hibernian Hotel, Kilkenny, is one of the very best I ever found in any country, London not excepted ; and in order that the traveller may have some idea of the expenses of travelling in the south of Ireland, I shall state the prices of this hotel, which are much the same as those charged elsewhere. Accommodation, which consisted of a large and excellent bed-room and a well furnished private sitting-room fronting the street, 2s. Dinner, 2s. 6d. ; tea. 1s. 1d. ; breakfast, 1s. 8d. Wine and foreign spirits, the same price as in England ; but the wine is generally better. A glass of whiskey-punch, five pence. These prices vary but little over the south.

My object now was, to traverse the county of Tipperary, passing through that part of Kilkenny county which I had not yet seen. I accordingly left Kilkenny, on Bianconi's car, for Thurles, in the north of Tipperary.

A charming country lies between Kilkenny and Freshford, the first town on the road. The views, looking back on Kilkenny, are very striking ; and the banks of the Nore, near to which our road lay, are finely wooded, and are adorned by several handsome country seats. I was every where delighted with the magnificent thorns, which, both in the hedges by the way side, and as single trees in the neighbouring parks, were entirely covered with their white, pink, and fragrant blossoms. Freshford is a poor little place ; but I saw multitudes of pigs, and mountains of manure about the doors. Driving out of Freshford, I was surprised to see so much manure lying uncollected on the high-road. In England it would have been all scraped up ; and it is from such little things as this, that one is forced to admit the less industrious habits of the people ; and that, bad as their condition is, they do not make the best of it.

From Freshford to Johnstown, where we stopped to breakfast, the country is less interesting ; the fields were so completely covered with daisies, that they appeared as if spread over with lime ; and I observed a greater quantity of pasture land than I had usually seen. Beyond Johnstown to Urlingford, three miles farther, the country gets poorer ; and Urlingford stands almost on the skirts of the Bog of Allen,—a branch of which we soon after entered.

Of all the bogs of Ireland, we hear most in England of the Bog of Allen ; the reason of which is, that it is the largest,—extending through a great part of the centre of Ireland ; and although separated and intersected by belts of arable land, by gravel hills, and by reclaimed portions of land, is, with all its branches, one bog—the Bog of Allen. The branch which we crossed, extended about twelve miles to the left ; and to the right it broke into several

branches, extending to a much greater distance. It presented a dreary expanse of dark brown herbage, here and there broken by heaps of dry turf ; here and there too, little patches had been reclaimed ; and wherever there was an elevation, it was covered with the finest green, agreeably relieving the monotony of the reddish brown level around. The houses erected on the skirts of the bog, were wretched in the extreme, and the people in the lowest scale of humanity.

I am not competent to write on the reclamation of the bogs of Ireland ; but I believe it has been fearlessly asserted, by those fully competent to give a sound opinion, that a very large part of these bogs is reclaimable, at an expense of 7*l.* per acre. Twenty millions have lately been given to the West Indian planters ; some say to extinguish a name, and make good a theory. At all events it is undeniable, that the condition of the Irish poor is immeasurably worse than that of the West India slave : and if but seven millions were thrown upon the bogs of Ireland, a million of acres might be reclaimed ; and employment and food afforded to the hundreds of thousands who now, for want of employment and bread, disorganize the country, force absenteeism, tax the people of England for the preservation of law and order, and peril the very existence of the empire.

We were now in the county of Tipperary, which in approaching Thurles, is an uninteresting country. Thurles cuts some figure at a distance, owing to the new and very handsome Roman Catholic chapel, and the unfinished Roman Catholic college. The town stands on a wide, scantily wooded, and uninteresting plain. It contains about eight thousand inhabitants, and is a tolerably prosperous town ; for having no larger town nearer to it than forty or fifty miles, it supplies an extensive interior district, and is besides an important market for country produce. There are no fewer than fifteen fairs, and two weekly markets, held at Thurles. I saw scarcely any beggars in this place ; and the cabins in the outskirts were not of the worst kind. There are two nunneries in this town ; in one of them there are twenty nuns and sixty boarders. I also found here, one of the schools belonging to the Roman Catholic institution, of which I have already spoken.

Beside the absence of beggars, I saw several other indications of an improving town. I observed no shops to be let, and I saw several houses in course of being built. Land is high let about Thurles, but it is good land ; and farmers paying 3*l.*, 4*l.*, 5*l.*, and even more per acre, admitted that they could live, and pay their rents, unless in unfavourable seasons. When we speak of land in Ireland being high set, we speak of course with reference to the capital and skill brought to bear upon it. If more skill or capital were, or could be thrown upon much of the land in Ireland, it could well bear the rents now exacted ; and if the means of communication were multiplied and improved : and if, by the more general employment of the people, agitation were, as it necessarily would be, diminished, absenteeism checked, and capital attracted to Ireland, there can be no doubt that the present just complaint of high rents would be less frequent ; because the skill and capital thrown upon the land, would increase its value to the occupier. And it need scarcely be added, that the employment of the agricultural population, and the investment of capital in other speculations, would operate in diminishing the rent of land, by diminishing the competition for it.

I found the price of labour a shade higher in this part of Tipperary than in Kilkenny : as much as eight-pence was given with diet, and one shilling without diet : but I do not speak of constant employment; and it must not be forgotten, that this was the season of potato planting. Prices of provisions here, I found precisely the same as at Kilkenny.

A fire broke out in Thurles, the night before I left it, and several houses were consumed. An immense concourse of persons was present ; and there was more noise than work ; and strange to tell, the town was unprovided with a fire engine. The lower orders of Irish have

much feeling for each other. It is a rare thing to hear an angry, or contemptuous expression, addressed to any one who is poor : commiseration of the destitute condition of others, is largely mingled in their complaints of their own poverty ; and it is a fact, that they are most exemplary in the care which they take of their destitute relatives, and in the sacrifices which they willingly make for them. In the crowds which thronged the streets of Thurles, during the conflagration, loud and general were the lamentations for the poor “ crathurs” who lost their little all.

About three miles from Thurles, is to be seen one of the finest abbey remains in Ireland. It is called Holycross ; and as it lay on my road to Cashel, the next point at which I purposed halting, I left Thurles in the afternoon, to be taken up by the car to Cashel in the morning, and spent the evening at Holycross, in and about the ruins. They are very extensive : and even to one not an antiquarian, highly interesting, both from the general outline of the ruins, their towers, chapels, and arches ; and from the beauty of some of the architectural remains within, particularly two monumental relics which adorn the choir—one conjectured to be intended as a receptacle for the fragment of the true cross, originally presented to this abbey ; the other—very beautiful in its design—supposed to be a mausoleum of one of the Ormonde family.

Next morning I proceeded on my journey. From Holycross to Cashel, I passed through as fine and fertile a country as it has ever been my fortune to see ; thickly peopled, and abounding in hamlets and cottages. The celebrated rock of Cashel, crowned with its magnificent ruins, is seen many miles distant ; but the city (for Cashel is a city) is not seen until one is just entering it.

Cashel is rather a pretty town : the principal street is wide and well built ; but the place is far from being in a flourishing condition. It was formerly a place of much resort, and consequent prosperity ; but it is now almost entirely an absentee town ; and I found every thing extremely dull, and things getting daily worse. Wages were here only eight-pence a day without diet, and numbers were altogether without employment. The population of Cashel is, at present, about 7000 ; and the number of Protestant communicants about 150. I was sorry to hear bad accounts of the Protestant archbishop. I found him universally disliked, even by those dependent upon him, and of the same religious persuasion. He does no good ; and by all accounts, is a close, hard man, in every sense far overpaid by 7 or 8,000*l.* a year which he enjoys. He has the disadvantage, indeed, of being compared with his predecessor, whom all, Protestant and Catholic, unite in praising.

Notwithstanding the just dislike which I imbibed of this high dignitary, I did not deny myself the enjoyment of his lordship’s gardens, in which I spent a charming morning. All that can delight the senses, is here. Parterres of lovely flowers, and rare shrubs ; velvet lawns ; secluded walks rich in odours ; and above the fine screen of holly and laburnum, and lilac, and copper-beech, and laurel, towers the rock, and the magnificent ruin that covers it. There is a private way through his lordship’s grounds, communicating with the rock ; in order that, unobserved by his numerous flock, he may retire to this solemn spot, and meditate on the insufficiency of earthly enjoyments. The archbishop has a palace, as well as a garden : but it is reported that he means to reside in Waterford in future, where his flock will be larger, and his range of usefulness, therefore, more extensive.

The rock of Cashel is generally considered to be the finest assemblage of ruins which Ireland contains. The height itself, on which the ruins stand, is a rocky elevation ; covered however with the most beautiful grass, rising abruptly out of the plain, and standing close to the town. The ruins cover the greater part of the elevation ; and, whether to the antiquary, or to the mere lover of the curious and the picturesque, exhibit in their varied architecture, and various antiquity—in their Saxon arches, and Norman arches—and in the “ round tower,”

which is also a part of them, one of the most interesting objects of contemplation that is anywhere to be found. The round tower, though forming a part of these ruins, differs from all that surrounds it ; not merely in its form, but even in the material of which it is built—the other ruins being of limestone, but freestone being the material of the tower.

The view from the summit of these ruins, or even from the elevation on which they stand, is equally beautiful and extensive. The whole county of Tipperary is spread out below—one beautifully variegated plain, richly cultivated, and bounded by the Galtee and other mountain ranges ; while immediately below, the beautiful pleasure grounds of the bishop—their lawns, parterres, borders, clumps, and shrubberies, in all their varied livery of green, lie like a piece of mosaic work.

The second day I spent at Cashel, was market day ; and among other sights, I was greatly amused by the country people driving bargains for pigs. A man, a pig dealer, would come to a countryman who held a pig by a string. “ How much do you ask ? ”—“ 28s. ” the answer might be. “ Hold out your hand, ” says the buyer ; and the proprietor of the pig holds out his hand accordingly : the buyer places a penny in it, and then strikes it with a force that might break the back of an ox : “ Will ye take 20s. ? ” The other shakes his head—“ Ask 24s. and see if I’ll give it ye, ” says the pig-merchant. The owner again shakes his head. It is probable that by this time, some one among the bystanders—for there is always a circle formed round a bargain-making,—endeavours to accommodate matters ; for it is another instance of the kindly feeling towards each other, that all around are anxious that the bargain should be concluded. Again, the merchant says, “ Hold out your hand, ” and again a tremendous blow is struck, and a new offer made, till at last they come within a shilling perhaps of each other’s terms ; when the bargain is struck ; and the shilling about which they differed, and probably two or three others, are spent in whiskey punch “ screeching hot. ”

Sitting in the evening at the window of the inn, I saw a sight such as I never saw in any other part of the world—a lad twelve years of age, and upwards, naked in the street. I say naked : I do not mean without a rag : but I mean so entirely in rags, that he might as well have been stark naked. All he had on him was a jacket, and a few tatters of a shirt, hanging in strips here and there. Public decency would not permit such a sight in England ; and viewing such a spectacle, one is tempted to ask, is there no clergyman, no magistrate, no decent man in Cashel, who, for the sake of sheer modesty, would throw a pair of trowsers to the ragamuffin ?

When I was at Cashel, potatoes had become so dear, that bread was partly substituted for them by the poor. A baker’s shop chanced to be situated precisely opposite to the inn ; and I saw very many children buy a halfpenny worth of bread, and divide it into two or three pieces, for the supper of as many. Neither here, nor in many other parts of Ireland, is bread sold by weight. There are loaves at 3*d.*, 4*d.*, &c. : and these are cut into two or four pieces. The large loaves are not weighed ; and as the size of the loaf is no criterion of the quantity of flour put into it, great imposition is doubtless practised.

I now left Cashel, for the town of Tipperary. Tipperary county, with the exception, I believe, of some parts of Limerick, is considered to contain the finest land in Ireland ; and, certainly, nothing can exceed the fertility and abundance which are spread over the fields. Golden Bridge, which lies about four miles on the Tipperary road, from Cashel, is reputed to be one of the most disturbed spots in Ireland ; and here have been perpetrated some of those inhuman acts at which humanity shudders. It was here that the Rev. Mr. Whitty was barbarously murdered ; and here, where, in open day, two men, with blunderbusses, entered a field, where many were at work, and asked for Jack Sullivan ; and, having found the individual

they were in search of, placed him on his knees—shot him stone dead, and walked away unmolested.

This, I think, is the first time I have mentioned the subject of outrage. I might have mentioned it twenty times, if I had given ear to all the stories and reports which are circulated. That there is much exaggeration, no one who travels through Ireland, and inquires upon the spot, can doubt : but that frightful examples of ferocity, hatred, and revenge have occurred, and do occasionally occur, is but too certain : and, from every respectable quarter, I heard but one opinion as to the necessity of a Coercion Bill. Almost every outrage and murder that has disgraced Ireland, has arisen out of one of two causes—either competition for land, or tithes ; and, until means be found for reducing the former, and till the latter be finally and justly settled, it will be in the power of any restless, wrongheaded, or interested man to agitate Ireland. Competition for land can only be diminished by employing the people ; but I greatly fear, that no scrutiny, however strict and impartial, into the revenues of the Protestant church, and that even no application of the surplus, will be satisfactory to the land occupiers of Ireland. Here, as every where else in the south, I heard the strongest objections to tithe in any shape ; and a curious instance came to my knowledge, of the determination of farmers to get rid of tithe. A farmer agreed to pay 30s. an acre for a certain quantity of land ; the landlord being bound to pay tithe and all other dues. On rent day the tenant arrives, and, before paying his rent, asks what tithe the landlord pays ? “ Why do you wish to know that,” says the landlord, “ what is it to you what tithe I pay ? you pay me 30s., and I take tithe and every burden off your hand.” “ I know that,” says the farmer ; “ but I’ll not only not pay tithe myself, but your honour sha’n’t pay it either.” The tenant offered the landlord his rent, deducting whatever tithe he, the landlord, paid ; and the rent is, at this moment, unpaid.

I said, that all acts of outrage, or atrocity, were to be traced to competition for land, or the aversion to tithes. There are, however, in this county of Tipperary, some few other causes of less frequent occurrence. Abduction is one of these ; and this is always a cause of deadly feud : and there are also factions, which are of long standing—existing without any intelligible cause ; but which are even inheritances : and although these are not the origin of deliberate murder, they are the occasion of those fights, which almost invariably take place at fairs, when persons of different factions meet ; and which too often terminate in bloodshed.

All the way to Tipperary, the same rich country is seen on both sides of the road ; and about half way, I passed by the fine domain and seat of the late Lord Landaff ; which I did not stop to walk over ; but which, next to the domain of the Marquis of Waterford, is said to contain the greatest quantity of valuable timber.

Tipperary is most agreeably situated, in a fine undulating, smiling country ; and within a few miles of a beautiful range of hills, which divides the counties of Tipperary and Limerick. Tipperary, though inconsiderable in size, to bear the name of the county, is rather a flourishing town ; and is what a mercantile traveller would call, “ a good little town.” There is no town westward, nearer than Limerick ; and there is consequently a busy retail trade, the result of country wants. There is also a good weekly market, which makes Tipperary the depôt of agricultural produce, for a range of twelve or fifteen miles round. Owing to the low price of agricultural produce, the retail trade was somewhat dull when I visited Tipperary ; but it was supposed it would revive the ensuing winter. Notwithstanding the better circumstances of the tradesmen, the condition of the labouring classes I found little better than elsewhere. Not so large a proportion of the people were out of employment here as in some other places ; but wages were only eight-pence a day, without diet ; And I ascertained that there is no constant employment for all, or any thing approaching to all, the population. I certainly observed fewer ragged people, and fewer beggars, in Tipperary, than in Cashel, and many other towns ;

but in searching the suburbs, I found many cabins wretched enough, and enormous rents paid for them. Some paid 4*l.*, none less than 2*l.* 10*s.*, and the average rent might be 3*l.*

The con-acre system is very general in the neighbourhood of Tipperary, and very popular. They looked upon it as the only refuge which many a man had against starvation. The rents paid, were at the rate of from 10*l.* to 12*l.* an acre ; and a guinea per quarter was generally paid in advance. Here, therefore, the system is on a more unfavourable footing for the renter of the con-acre ; for before he can avail himself of it, he must be possessed of a little capital ; and the farmer has security against his tenant relinquishing his possession.

The number of resident gentry about Tipperary is considerable ; though some of the largest proprietors are absent,—I will not say absentees,—for that, I think, is not the term to apply to those who have their chief possessions in England. All that can be expected from such individuals, is to have proper resident agents ; and occasionally to visit their properties. Many absentee properties are quite as well managed, as if the proprietors were resident : and as one example of this, I may name the large estates of Lord Stanley, in this neighbourhood. I found only one opinion as to the excellent management of these estates ;—rents are moderate, and the tenantry well treated ; and from my own observation, I can speak to the generally comfortable condition of things upon this property. A reading society, of which I believe the agent upon the property is librarian, has been instituted for the benefit of Lord Stanley's tenantry ; and the project I understood to be perfectly successful.

I found every thing perfectly quiet and orderly in the neighbourhood of Tipperary. The very name forces to our recollection, images of shillelahs, and broken heads, and turbulence of every kind ; and I found it readily admitted, that the fighting propensities of the Tipperary boys are somewhat remarkable. I recollect dining in Dublin, with a large party, at which were present some grand jurors of what are called the disturbed counties ; and the conversation turning upon employment for the poor, as the means of lessening agitation, it was objected that in the counties of Tipperary and Kilkenny, where it was asserted there is the most employment for the people, there is also the most disturbance. In the first place, it is utterly false, that in these counties there is employment for the people ; the fact rather is, that the more frequent disturbance in Tipperary than elsewhere, arises rather from the opposite cause,—as it is natural it should. The soil is so fine in this county, that less industry is required, in order to obtain a return for land ; and the holders of small bits of land, have, therefore, more time upon their hands. Another reason is, that the population is more concentrated : and it may also be stated, that illicit whiskey—one fruitful source of outrage—is cheaper here than elsewhere, owing to the low price of grain in this grain county ; which has unfortunately induced producers of grain to turn their attention to illicit distillation, by which they can make larger profits than in the grain market.

The population of the town of Tipperary is about 8000 ; of whom about 700 are Protestants.

Ireland in 1834. A journey throughout Ireland, during the spring, summer, and autumn of 1834 (1835)

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