

Ireland Ramble 1842

*Irish sketch book of 1842*

William Makepeace Thackeray

It was Sunday morning when we left the little inn at Roundwood : the people were flocking in numbers to church, on cars and pillions, neat, comfortable, and well dressed. We saw in this country more health, more beauty, and more shoes than I have remarked in any quarter. That famous resort of sightseers, the Devil's Glen, lies at a few miles' distance from the little village ; and, having gone on the car as near to the spot as the road permitted, we made across the fields—boggy, stony, ill-tilled fields they were—for about a mile, at the end of which walk we found ourselves on the brow of the ravine that has received so ugly a name.

Is there a legend about the place ? No doubt for this, as for almost every other natural curiosity in Ireland, there is some tale of monk, saint, fairy, or devil ; but our guide on the present day was a barrister from Dublin, who did not deal in fictions by any means so romantic, and the history, whatever it was, remained untold. Perhaps the little breechesless cicerone who offered himself would have given us the story, but we dismissed the urchin with scorn, and had to find our own way through bush and bramble down to the entrance of the gully.

Here we came on a cataract, which looks very big in Messrs. Curry's pretty little Guide-book (that every traveller to Wicklow will be sure to have in his pocket) ; but the waterfall, on this shining Sabbath morning, was disposed to labour as little as possible, and indeed is a spirit of a very humble, ordinary sort.

But there is a ravine of a mile and a half, through which a river runs roaring (a lady who keeps the gate will not object to receive a gratuity)—there is a ravine, or Devil's glen, which forms a delightful wild walk, and where a Methuselah of a landscape-painter might find studies for all his life long. All sorts of foliage and colour, all sorts of delightful caprices of light and shadow—the river tumbling and frothing amidst the boulders—" raucum per lævia murmur saxa ciens," and a chorus of 150,000 birds (there might be more), hopping, twittering, singing under the clear cloudless Sabbath scene, make this walk one of the most delightful that can be taken ; and indeed I hope there is no harm in saying that you may get as much out of an hour's walk there as out of the best hour's extempore preaching. But this was as a salvo to our conscience for not being at church.

Here, however, was a long aisle, arched gothically overhead, in a much better taste than is seen in some of those dismal new churches ; and, by way of painted glass, the sun lighting up multitudes of various-coloured leaves, and the birds for choristers, and the river by way of organ, and in it stoned enough to make a whole library of sermons. No man can walk in such a place without feeling grateful, and grave, and humble ; and without thanking heaven for it as he comes away. And, walking and musing in this free, happy place, one could not help thinking of a million and a half of brother cockneys shut up in their huge prison (the treadmill for the day being idle), and told by some legislators that relaxation is sinful, that works of art are abominations except on week-days, and that their proper place of resort is a dingy tabernacle, where a loud-voiced man is howling about hell-fire in bad grammar. Is not this beautiful world, too, a part-of our religion ? Yes, truly, in whatever way my Lord John Russell may vote ; and it is to be learned without having recourse to any professor at any Bethesda, Ebenezer, or Jerusalem : there can be no mistake about it ; no terror, no bigoted

dealing of damnation to one's neighbour : it is taught without false emphasis or vain spouting on the preacher's part—how should there be such with such a preacher ?

This wild onslaught upon sermons and preachers needs perhaps an explanation : for which purpose we must whisk back out of the Devil's Glen (improperly so named ) to Dublin, and to this day week, when, at this very time, I heard one of the first preachers of the city deliver a sermon that lasted for an hour and twenty minutes—time enough to walk up the Glen and back, and remark a thousand delightful things by the way.

Mr. G——'s church (though there would be no harm in mentioning the gentleman's name, for a more conscientious and excellent man, as it is said, cannot be) is close by the Custom House in Dublin, and crowded morning and evening with his admirers. The service was beautifully read by him, and the audience joined in the responses, and in the psalms and hymns, [1] with a fervour which is very unusual in England. Then came the sermon ; and what more can be said of it than that it was extempore, and lasted for an hour and twenty minutes ? The orator never failed once for a word, so amazing is his practice ; though, as a stranger to this kind of exercise, I could not help trembling for the performer, as one has for Madame Saqui on the slack-rope, in the midst of a blaze of rockets and squibs, expecting every minute she must go over. But the artist was too skilled for that ; and after some tremendous bound of a metaphor, in the midst of which you expect he must tumble neck and heels, and be engulfed in the dark abyss of nonsense, down he was sure to come in a most graceful attitude too, in the midst of a fluttering “ Ah !” from a thousand wondering people.

But I declare solemnly that when I came to try and recollect of what the exhibition consisted, and give an account of the sermon at dinner that evening, it was quite impossible to remember a word of it ; although, to do the orator justice, he repeated many of his opinions a great number of times over. Thus, if he had to discourse of death to us, it was, “ At the approach of the Dark Angel of the Grave,” “ At the coming of the grim King of Terrors,” “ At the warning of that awful Power to whom all of us must bow down,” “ At the summons of that Pallid Spectre whose equal foot knocks at the monarch's tower or the poor man's cabin” —and so forth. There is an examiner of plays, and indeed there ought to be an examiner of sermons, by which audiences are to be fully as much injured or misguided as by the other named exhibitions. What call have reverend gentlemen to repeat their dicta half-a-dozen times over, like Sir Robert Peel when he says anything that he fancies to be witty ? Why are men to be kept for an hour and twenty minutes listening to that which may be more effectually said in twenty ?

And it need not be said here that a church is not a sermon-house—that it is devoted to a purpose much more lofty and sacred, for which has been set apart the noblest service, every single word of which latter has been previously weighed with the most scrupulous and thoughtful reverence. And after this sublime work of genius, learning, and piety is concluded, is it not a shame that a man should mount a desk, who has not taken the trouble to arrange his words beforehand, and speak thence his crude opinions in his doubtful grammar ? It will be answered that the extempore preacher does not deliver crude opinions, but that he arranges his discourse beforehand : to all which it may be replied that Mr.—— contradicted himself more than once in the course of the above oration, and repeated himself a half-dozen of times. A man in that place has no right to say a word too much or too little.

And it comes to this,—it is the preacher the people follow, not the prayers ; or why is this church more frequented than any other ? It is that warm emphasis, and word-mouthing, and vulgar imagery, and glib rotundity of phrase, which brings them together and keeps them

happy and breathless. Some of this class call the Cathedral Service *Paddy's Opera* ; they say it is Popish—downright scarlet—they won't go to it. They will have none but their own hymns—and pretty they are—no ornaments but those of their own minister, his rank incense and tawdry rhetoric. Coming out of the church, on the Custom House steps hard by, there was a fellow with a bald large forehead, a new black coat, a little Bible, spouting—spouting “ in omne volubilis ævum ”—the very counterpart of the reverend gentleman hard by. It was just the same thing, just as well done : the eloquence quite as easy and round, the amplifications as ready, the big words rolling round the tongue just as within doors. But we are out of the Devil's Glen by this time ; and perhaps, instead of delivering a sermon there, we had better have been at church hearing one.

The country people, however, are far more pious ; and the road along which we went to Glendalough was thronged with happy figures of people plodding to or from mass. A chapel-yard was covered with grey cloaks ; and at a little inn hard by, stood numerous carts, cars, shandrydans, and pillioned horses, awaiting the end of the prayers. The aspect of the country is wild, and beautiful of course ; but why try to describe it ? I think the Irish scenery just like the Irish melodies—sweet, wild, and sad even in the sunshine. You can neither represent one nor the other by words ; but I am sure if one could translate “ The Meeting of the Waters ” into form and colours, it would fall into the exact shape of a tender Irish landscape. So take and play that tune upon your fiddle, and shut your eyes, and muse a little, and you have the whole scene before you.

I don't know if there is any tune about Glendalough ; but if there be, it must be the most delicate, fantastic, fairy melody that ever was played. Only fancy can describe the charms of that delightful place. Directly you see it, it smiles at you as innocent and friendly as a little child ; and once seen, it becomes your friend for ever, and you are always happy when you think of it. Here is a little lake, and little fords across it, surrounded by little mountains, and which lead you now to little islands where there are all sorts of fantastic little old chapels and graveyards ; or, again, into little brakes and shrubberies where small rivers are crossing over little rocks, plashing and jumping, and singing as loud as ever they can. Thomas Moore has written rather an awful description of it ; and it may indeed appear big to *him* and to the fairies who must have inhabited the place in old days, that's clear. For who could be accommodated in it except the little people ?

There are seven churches, whereof the clergy must have been the smallest persons, and have had the smallest benefices and the littlest congregations ever known. As for the cathedral, what a bishoplet it must have been that presided there ! The place would hardly hold the Bishop of London, or Mr. Sydney Smith—two full-sized clergymen of these days—who would be sure to quarrel there for want of room, or for any other reason. There must have been a dean no bigger than Mr. Moore before mentioned, and a chapter no bigger than that chapter in “ Tristram Shandy ” which does not contain a single word, and mere popguns of canons, and a beadle about as tall as Crofton Croker, to whip the little boys who were playing at taw (with peas) in the yard.

They say there was a university, too, in the place, with I don't know how many thousand scholars ; but for accounts of this there is an excellent guide on the spot, who, for a shilling or two, will tell all he knows, and a great deal more too.

There are numerous legends too, concerning St. Kevin, and Fin MacCoul and the Devil, and the deuce knows what. But these stories are, I am bound to say, abominably stupid and stale ; and some guide [2] ought to be seized upon and choked and flung into the lake, by way of warning to the others to stop their interminable prate. This is the curse attending curiosity,

for visitors to almost all the show-places in the country : you have not only the guide—who himself talks too much—but a string of ragged amateurs, starting from bush and briar, ready to carry his honour’s umbrella or my lady’s cloak, or to help either up a bank or across a stream. And all the while they look wistfully in your face, saying, “ Give me sixpence !” as clear as looks can speak. The unconscionable rogues ! how dare they, for the sake of a little starvation or so, interrupt gentlefolks in their pleasure !

A long tract of wild country, with a park or two here and there, a police-barrack perched on a hill, a half-starved-looking church stretching its long scraggy steeple over a wide plain, mountains whose base is richly cultivated while their tops are purple and lonely, warm cottages and farms nestling at the foot of the hills, and humble cabins here and there on the wayside, accompany the car, that jingles back over fifteen miles of ground through Inniskerry to Bray. You pass by wild gaps and Greater and Lesser Sugar Loaves ; and about eight o’clock, when the sky is quite red with sunset, and the long shadows are of such a purple as (they may say what they like) Claude could no more paint than I can, you catch a glimpse of the sea beyond Bray, and crying out, “ Θάλασσα, Θάλασσα !” affect to be wondrously delighted by the sight of that element.

The fact is, however, that at Bray is one of the best inns in Ireland ; and there you may be perfectly sure is a good dinner ready, five minutes after the honest carboy, with innumerable hurroos and smacks of his whip, has brought it up his passengers to the door with a gallop. As for the Vale of Avoca, I have not described that : because (as has been before occasionally remarked) it is vain to attempt to describe natural beauties ; and because, secondly (though this is a minor consideration), we did not go thither. But we went on another day to the Dargle, and to Shanganah, and the city of Cabinteely, and to the Scalp—that wild pass : and I have no more to say about them than about the Vale of Avoca. The Dublin Cockney, who has these places at his door, knows them quite well ; and as for the Londoner, who is meditating a trip to the Rhine for the summer, or to Brittany or Normandy, let us beseech him to see his *own country first* (if Lord Lyndhurst will allow us to call this a part of it) ; and if, after twenty-four hours of an easy journey from London, the Cockney be not placed in the midst of a country as beautiful, as strange to him, as romantic as the most imaginative man on ’Change can desire,—may this work be praised by the critics all round and never reach a second edition !

#### County Meetings in Kildare—Meath—Drogheda

AN agricultural show was to be held at the town of Naas, and I was glad, after having seen the grand exhibition at Cork, to be present at a more homely, unpretending country festival, where the eyes of Europe, as the orators say, did not happen to be looking on. Perhaps men are apt, under the idea of this sort of inspection, to assume an air somewhat more pompous and magnificent than that which they wear every day. The Naas meeting was conducted without the slightest attempt at splendour or display—a hearty, modest, matter-of-fact country meeting.

Market-day was fixed upon of course, and the town, as we drove into it, was thronged with frieze-coats, the market-place bright with a great number of apple-stalls, and the street filled with carts and vans of numerous small tradesmen, vending cheeses, or cheap crockeries, or ready-made clothes and such goods. A clothier, with a great crowd round him, had arrayed himself in a staring new waistcoat of his stock, and was turning slowly round to exhibit the garment, spouting all the while to his audience, and informing them that he could fit out any person, in one minute, “ in a complete new shuit from head to fut.” There seemed to be a crowd of gossips at every shop-door, and, of course, a number of gentlemen waiting at

the inn-steps, criticizing the cars and carriages as they drove up. Only those who live in small towns know what an object of interest the street becomes, and the carriages and horses which pass therein. Most of the gentlemen had sent stock to compete for the prizes. The shepherds were tending the stock. The judges were making their award, and until their sentence was given, no competitors could enter the show-yard. The entrance to that, meanwhile, was thronged by a great posse of people, and as the gate abutted upon an old grey tower, a number of people had scaled that, and were looking at the beasts in the court below. Likewise, there was a tall haystack, which possessed similar advantages of situation, and was equally thronged with men and boys. The rain had fallen heavily all night, the heavens were still black with it, and the coats of the men, and the red feet of many ragged female spectators, were liberally spattered with mud.

The first object of interest we were called upon to see was a famous stallion ; and passing through the little bystreets (dirty and small, but not so small and dirty as other by-streets to be seen in Irish towns,) we came to a porte-cochère, leading into a yard filled with wet fresh hay, sinking juicily under the feet ; and here in a shed was the famous stallion. His sire must have been a French diligence-horse ; he was of a roan colour, with a broad chest, and short clean legs. His forehead was ornamented with a blue ribbon, on which his name and prizes were painted, and on his chest hung a couple of medals by a chain—a silver one awarded to him at Cork, a gold one carried off by superior merit from other stallions assembled to contend at Dublin. When the points of the animal were sufficiently discussed, a mare, his sister, was produced, and admired still more than himself. Any man who has witnessed the performance of the French horses in the Havre diligence, must admire the vast strength and the extraordinary swiftness of the breed ; and it was agreed on all hands, that such horses would prove valuable in this country, where it is hard now to get a stout horse for the road, so much has the fashion for blood, and nothing but blood, prevailed of late.

By the time the stallion was seen, the judges had done their arbitration ; and we went to the yard, where broad-backed sheep were resting peaceably in their pens ; bulls were led about by the nose ; enormous turnips, both Swedes and Aberdeens, reposed in the mud ; little cribs of geese, hens, and peafowl were come to try for the prize ; and pigs might be seen—some encumbered with enormous families, others with fat merely. They poked up one brute to walk for us : he made, after many futile attempts, a desperate rush forward, his leg almost lost in fat, his immense sides quivering and shaking with the exercise ; he was then allowed to return to his straw, into which he sank panting. Let us hope that he went home with a pink ribbon round his tail that night, and got a prize for his obesity.

I think the pink ribbon was, at least to a Cockney, the pleasantest sight of all : for on the evening after the show we saw many carts going away so adorned, having carried off prizes on the occasion. First came a great bull stepping along, he and his driver having each a bit of pink on their heads ; then a cart full of sheep ; then a car of good-natured looking people, having a churn in the midst of them that sported a pink favour. When all the prizes were distributed, a select company sat down to dinner at Macavoy's Hotel ; and no doubt a reporter who was present has given in the county paper an account of all the good things eaten and said. At our end of the table we had saddle-of-mutton, and I remarked a boiled leg of the same delicacy, with turnips, at the opposite extremity. Before the vice I observed a large piece of roast-beef, which I could not observe at the end of dinner, because it was all swallowed. After the mutton we had cheese, and were just beginning to think that we had dined very sufficiently, when a squadron of apple-pies came smoking in, and convinced us that, in such a glorious cause, Britons are never at fault. We ate up the apple-pies, and then the punch was called for by those who preferred that beverage to wine, and the speeches began.

The chairman gave “The Queen,” nine times nine and one cheer more ; “Prince Albert and the rest of the Royal Family,” great cheering ; “The Lord-Lieutenant”—his Excellency’s health was received rather coolly, I thought. And then began the real business of the night : health of the Naas Society, health of the Agricultural Society, and healths all round ; not forgetting the Sallymount Beagles and the Kildare Foxhounds—which toasts were received with loud cheers and halloos by most of the gentlemen present, and elicited brief speeches from the masters of the respective hounds, promising good sport next season. After the Kildare Foxhounds, an old farmer in a grey coat got gravely up, and without being requested to do so in the least, sang a song, stating that—

“At seven in the morning by most of the clocks  
We rode to Kilruddery in search of a fox ;”

and at the conclusion of his song challenged a friend to give another song. Another old farmer, on this, rose and sang one of Morris’s songs with a great deal of queer humour ; and no doubt many more songs were sung during the evening, for plenty of hot-water jugs were blocking the door as we went out.

The jolly frieze-coated songster who celebrated the Kilruddery fox, sang, it must be confessed, most wofully out of tune ; but still it was pleasant to hear him, and I think the meeting was the most agreeable one I have seen in Ireland : there was more good-humour, more cordial union of classes, more frankness and manliness, than one is accustomed to find in Irish meetings. All the speeches were kind-hearted, straightforward speeches, without a word of politics or an attempt at oratory : it was impossible to say whether the gentlemen present were Protestant or Catholic,—each one had a hearty word of encouragement for his tenant, and a kind welcome for his neighbour. There were forty stout, well-to-do farmers in the room, renters of fifty, seventy, a hundred acres of land. There were no clergymen present ; though it would have been pleasant to have seen one of each persuasion to say grace for the meeting and the meat.

At a similar meeting at Ballytore the next day, I had an opportunity of seeing a still finer collection of stock than had been brought to Naas, and at the same time one of the most beautiful flourishing villages in Ireland.

The road to it from H—— town, if not remarkable for its rural beauty, is pleasant to travel, for evidences of neat and prosperous husbandry are around you everywhere : rich crops in the fields, and neat cottages by the roadside, accompanying us as far as Ballytore—a white, straggling village, surrounding green fields of some five furlongs square, with a river running in the midst of them, and numerous fine cattle in the green. Here is a large windmill, fitted up like a castle, with battlements and towers : the castellan thereof is a good-natured old Quaker gentleman, and numbers more of his following inhabit the town.

The consequence was that the shops of the village were the neatest possible, though by no means grand or portentous. Why should Quaker shops be neater than other shops ? They suffer to the full as much oppression as the rest of the hereditary bondsmen ; and yet, in spite of their tyrants, they prosper.

I must not attempt to pass an opinion upon the stock exhibited at Ballytore ; but, in the opinion of some large agricultural proprietors present, it might have figured with advantage in any show in England, and certainly was finer than the exhibition at Naas ; which, however, is a very young society. The best part of the show, however, to everybody’s thinking, (and it is pleasant to observe the manly fair-play spirit which characterizes the society,) was, that the

prizes of the Irish Agricultural Society were awarded to two men—one a labourer, the other a very small holder, both having reared the best stock exhibited on the occasion. At the dinner, which took place in a barn of the inn, smartly decorated with laurels for the purpose, there was as good and stout a body of yeomen as at Naas the day previous, but only two landlords ; and here, too, as at Naas, neither priest nor parson. Cattle-feeding of course formed the principal-theme of the after-dinner discourse—not, however, altogether to the exclusion of tillage ; and there was a good and useful prize for those who could not afford to rear fat oxen—for the best kept cottage and garden, namely—which was won by a poor man with a large family and scanty, precarious earnings, but who yet found means to make the most of his small resources and to keep his little cottage neat and cleanly. The tariff and the plentiful harvest together had helped to bring down prices severely ; and we heard from the farmers much desponding talk. I saw hay sold for 2*l.* the ton, and oats for 8*s.* 3*d.* the barrel.

In the little village I remarked scarcely a single beggar, and very few bare feet indeed among the crowds who came to see the show. Here the Quaker village had the advantage of the town of Naas, in spite of its poor-house, which was only half full when we went to see it ; but the people prefer beggary and starvation abroad to comfort and neatness in the union-house.

A neater establishment cannot be seen than this ; and liberty must be very sweet indeed, when people prefer it and starvation to the certainty of comfort in the union-house. We went to see it after the show at Naas,

The first persons we saw at the gate of the place were four buxom lasses in blue jackets and petticoats, who were giggling and laughing as gaily as so many young heiresses of a thousand a year, and who had a colour in their cheeks that any lady of Almack's might envy. They were cleaning pails and carrying in water from a green court or playground in front of the house, which some of the able-bodied men of the place were busy in inclosing. Passing through the large entrance of the house, a nondescript Gothic building, we came to a court divided by a road and two low walls : the right inclosure is devoted to the boys of the establishment, of whom there were about fifty at play : boys more healthy or happy it is impossible to see. Separated from them is the nursery ; and here were seventy or eighty young children, a shrill clack of happy voices leading the way to the door where they were to be found. Boys and children had a comfortable little uniform, and shoes were furnished for all ; though the authorities did not seem particularly severe in enforcing the wearing of the shoes, which most of the young persons left behind them.

In spite of all *The Times's* in the world, the place was a happy one. It is kept with a neatness and comfort to which, until his entrance into the union-house, the Irish peasant must perforce have been a stranger. All the rooms and passages are white, well scoured, and airy ; all the windows are glazed ; all the beds have a good store of blankets and sheets. In the women's dormitories there lay several infirm persons, not ill enough for the infirmary, and glad of the society of the common room : in one of the men's sleeping-rooms we found a score of old grey-coated men sitting round another who was reading prayers to them. And outside the place we found a woman starving in rags, as she had been ragged and starving for years : her husband was wounded, and lay in his house upon straw ; her children were ill with a fever ; she had neither meat, nor physic, nor clothing, nor fresh air, nor warmth for them ;—and she preferred to starve on rather than enter the house !

The last of our agricultural excursions was to the fair of Castledermot, celebrated for the show of cattle to be seen there, and attended by the farmers and gentry of the neighbouring

counties. Long before reaching the place we met troops of cattle coming from it—stock of a beautiful kind, for the most part large, sleek, white, long-backed, most of the larger animals being bound for England. There was very near as fine a show in the pastures along the road—which lies across a light green country with plenty of trees to ornament the landscape, and some neat cottages along the roadside.

At the turnpike of Castledermot the droves of cattle met us by scores no longer, but by hundreds, and the long street of the place was thronged with oxen, sheep, and horses, and with those who wished to see, to sell, or to buy. The squires were all together in a cluster at the police-house ; the owners of the horses rode up and down, showing the best paces of their brutes : among whom you might see Paddy, in his ragged frieze-coat, seated on his donkey's bare rump, and proposing him for sale. I think I saw a score of this humble though useful breed that were brought for sale to the fair. " I can sell him," says one fellow, with a pompous air, " wid his tackle or widout." He was looking as grave over the negotiation as if it had been for a thousand pounds. Besides the donkeys, of course there was plenty of poultry, and there were pigs without number, shrieking and struggling and pushing hither and thither among the crowd, rebellious to the straw-rope. It was a fine thing to see one huge grunter and the manner in which he was landed into a cart. The cart was let down on an easy inclined plane to tempt him : two men ascending, urged him by the forelegs, other two entreated him by the tail. At length, when more than half of his body had been coaxed upon the cart, it was suddenly whisked up, causing the animal thereby to fall forward ; a parting shove sent him altogether into the cart; the two gentlemen inside jumped out, and the monster was left to ride home.

The farmers, as usual, were talking of the tariff, predicting ruin to themselves, as farmers will, on account of the decreasing price of stock and the consequent fall of grain. Perhaps the person most to be pitied is the poor pig-proprietor yonder : it is his rent which he is carrying through the market squeaking at the end of the straw-rope, and Sir Robert's bill adds insolvency to that poor fellow's misery.

This was the last of the sights which the kind owner of H—— town had invited me into his country to see ; and I think they were among the most pleasing I witnessed in Ireland. Rich and poor were working friendlily together ; priest and parson were alike interested in these honest, homely, agricultural festivals ; not a word was said about hereditary bondage and English tyranny ; and one did not much regret the absence of those patriotic topics of conversation. If but for the sake of the change, it was pleasant to pass a few days with people among whom there was no quarrelling : no furious denunciations against Popery on the part of the Protestants, and no tirades against the parsons from their bitter and scornful opponents of the other creed.

Next Sunday, in the county Meath, in a quiet old church lying amongst meadows and fine old stately avenues of trees, and for the benefit of a congregation of some thirty persons, I heard for the space of an hour and twenty minutes some thorough Protestant doctrine, and the Popish superstitions properly belaboured. Does it strengthen a man in his own creed to hear his neighbour's belief abused ? One would imagine so : for though abuse converts nobody, yet many of our pastors think they are not doing their duty by their own fold unless they fling stones at the flock in the next field, and have, for the honour of the service, a match at cudgelling with the shepherd. Our shepherd to-day was of this pugnacious sort.

The Meath landscape, if not varied and picturesque, is extremely rich and pleasant ; and we took some drives along the banks of the Boyne—to the noble park of Slane (still sacred to the memory of George IV., who actually condescended to pass some days there ), and to Trim

—of which the name occurs so often in Swift's Journals, and where stands an enormous old castle that was inhabited by Prince John. It was taken from him by an Irish chief, our guide said ; and from the Irish chief it was taken by Oliver Cromwell. O'Thuselah was the Irish chief's name, no doubt.

Here too stands, in the midst of one of the most wretched towns in Ireland, a pillar erected in honour of the Duke of Wellington by the gentry of his native county. His birthplace, Dangan, lies not far off. And as we saw the hero's statue, a flight of birds had hovered about it : there was one on each epaulette and two on his marshal's staff. Besides these wonders, we saw a certain number of beggars ; and a madman, who was walking round a mound and preaching a sermon on grace ; and a little child's funeral came passing through the dismal town, the only stirring thing in it (the coffin was laid on a one-horse country car—a little deal box, in which the poor child lay—and a great troop of people followed the humble procession) ; and the inn-keeper, who had caught a few stray gentlefolk in a town where travellers must be rare ; and in his inn—which is more gaunt and miserable than the town itself, and which is by no means rendered more cheerful because sundry theological works are left for the rare frequenters in the coffee-room—the inn-keeper brought in a bill which would have been worthy of Long's, and which was paid with much grumbling on both sides.

It would not be a bad rule for the traveller in Ireland to avoid those inns where theological works are left in the coffee-room. He is pretty sure to be made to pay very dearly for these religious privileges.

We waited for the coach at the beautiful lodge and gate of Annsbrook ; and one of the sons of the house coming up, invited us to look at the domain, which is as pretty and neatly ordered as—as any in England. It is hard to use this comparison so often, and must make Irish hearers angry. Can't one see a neat house and grounds without instantly thinking that they are worthy of the sister country ; and implying, in our cool way, its superiority to everywhere else ? Walking in this gentleman's grounds, I told him, in the simplicity of my heart, that the neighbouring country was like Warwickshire, and the grounds as good as any English park. Is it the fact that English grounds *are* superior, or only that Englishmen are disposed to consider them so?

A pretty little twining river, called the Nanny's Water, runs through the park : there is a legend about that, as about other places. Once upon a time (ten thousand years ago) , Saint Patrick being thirsty as he passed by this country, came to the house of an old woman, of whom he asked a drink of milk. The old woman brought it to his reverence with the best of welcomes, and .... here it is a great mercy that the Belfast mail comes up, whereby the reader is spared the rest of the history.

The Belfast mail had only to carry us five miles to Drogheda, but, in revenge, it made us pay three shillings for the five miles ; and again, by way of compensation, it carried us over five miles of a country that was worth at least five shillings to see—not romantic or especially beautiful, but having the best of all beauty—a quiet, smiling, prosperous, unassuming *work-day* look, that in views and landscapes most good judges admire. Hard by Nanny's Water, we came to Duleek Bridge, where, I was told, stands an old residence of the De Dath family, who were, moreover, builders of the picturesque old bridge.

The road leads over a wide green common, which puts one in mind of Eng—(a plague on it, there is the comparison again !), and at the end of the common lies the village among trees : a beautiful and peaceful sight. In the background there was a tall ivy-covered old tower, looking noble and imposing, but a ruin and useless ; then there was a church, and next

to it a chapel—the very same sun was shining upon both. The chapel and church were connected by a farm-yard, and a score of golden ricks were in the background, the churches in unison, and the people (typified by the corn-ricks) flourishing at the feet of both. May one ever hope to see the day in Ireland when this little landscape allegory shall find a general application ?

For some way after leaving Duleek the road and the country round continue to wear the agreeable, cheerful look just now lauded. You pass by a house where James II. is said to have slept the night before the battle of the Boyne (he took care to sleep far enough off on the night after), and also by an old red-brick hall standing at the end of an old chace or terrace-avenue, that runs for about a mile down to the house, and finishes at a moat towards the road. But as the coach arrives near Drogheda, and in the boulevards of that town, all resemblance to England is lost. Up hill and down, we pass low rows of filthy cabins in dirty undulations. Parents are at the cabin-doors dressing the hair of ragged children ; shock-heads of girls peer out from the black circumference of smoke, and children inconceivably filthy yell wildly and vociferously as the coach passes by. One little ragged savage rushed furiously up the hill, speculating upon permission to put on the drag-chain at descending, and hoping for a half-penny reward. He put on the chain, but the guard did not give a halfpenny. I flung him one, and the boy rushed wildly after the carriage, holding it up with joy. “ The man inside has given me one,” says he, holding it up exultingly to the guard. I flung out another (by-the-by, and without any prejudice, the halfpence in Ireland *are* smaller than those of England), but when the child got this halfpenny, small as it was, it seemed to overpower him : the little man’s look of gratitude was worth a great deal more than the biggest penny ever struck.

The town itself, which I had three-quarters of an hour to ramble through, is smoky, dirty, and lively. There was a great bustle in the black Main Street, and several good shops, though some of the houses were in a half state of ruin, and battered shutters closed many of the windows where formerly had been “ emporiums,” “ repositories,” and other grandly-titled abodes of small commerce. Exhortations to “ repeal” were liberally plastered on the blackened walls, proclaiming some past or promised visit of the “ great agitator.” From the bridge is a good bustling spectacle of the river and the craft ; the quays were grimy with the discharge of the coal-vessels that lay alongside them ; the warehouses were not less black; the seamen and porters loitering on the quay were as swarthy as those of Puddledock ; numerous factories and chimneys were vomiting huge clouds of black smoke : the commerce of the town is stated by the Guide-book to be considerable, and increasing of late years. Of one part of its manufactures every traveller must speak with gratitude—of the ale namely, which is as good as the best brewed in the sister kingdom. Drogheda ale is to be drunk all over Ireland in the bottled state : candour calls for the acknowledgment that it is equally praiseworthy in draught. And while satisfying himself of this fact, the philosophic observer cannot but ask why ale should not be as good elsewhere as at Drogheda : is the water of the Boyne the only water in Ireland whereof ale can be made ?

Above the river and craft, and the smoky quays of the town, the hills rise abruptly, up which innumerable cabins clamber. On one of them, by a church, is a round tower, or fort, with a flag : the church is the successor of one battered down by Cromwell in 1649, in his frightful siege of the place. The place of one of his batteries is still marked outside the town, and known as “ Cromwell’s Mount :” here he “ made the breach assaultable, and, by the help of God, stormed it.” He chose the strongest point of the defence for his attack.

After being twice beaten back, by the divine assistance he was enabled to succeed in a third assault : he “ knocked on the head” all the officers of the garrison ; he gave orders that none of the men should be spared. “ I think,” says he, “ that night we put to the sword two thousand men ; and one hundred of them having taken possession of St. Peter’s steeple and a

round tower next the gate, called St. Sunday's, I ordered the steeple of St. Peter's to be fired, when one in the flames was heard to say, ' God confound me, I burn, I burn ! ' ” The Lord General's history of “ this great mercy vouchsafed to us ” concludes with appropriate religious reflections: and prays Mr. Speaker of the House of Commons to remember that “ it is good that God alone have all the glory. ” Is not the recollection of this butchery almost enough to make an Irishman turn rebel ?

When troops marched over the bridge, a young friend of mine (whom I shrewdly suspected to be an Orangeman in his heart) told me that their bands played the “ Boyne Water. ” Here is another legend of defeat for the Irishman to muse upon ; and here it was, too, that King Richard II. received the homage of four Irish kings, who flung their skenes or daggers at his feet and knelt to him, and were wonder-stricken by the riches of his tents and the garments of his knights and ladies. I think it is in Lingard that the story is told ; and the antiquarian has no doubt seen that beautiful old manuscript at the British Museum where these yellow-mantled warriors are seen riding down to the King, splendid in his forked beard, and peaked shoes, and long dangling scolloped sleeves and embroidered gown.

The Boyne winds picturesquely round two sides of the town, and following it, we came to the Linen Hall,—in the days of the linen manufacture a place of note, now the place where Mr. O'Connell harangues the people ; but all the windows of the house were barricaded when we passed it, and of linen or any other sort of merchandise there seemed to be none. Three boys were running past it with a mouse tied to a string and a dog galloping after ; two little children were paddling down the street, one saying to the other, “ *Once I had a halfpenny,* and bought apples with it. ” The barges were lying lazily on the river, on the opposite side of which was a wood of a gentleman's domain, over which the rooks were cawing ; and by the shore were some ruins—“ where Mr. Ball once had his kennel of hounds ”—touching reminiscence of former prosperity !

There is a very large and ugly Roman Catholic chapel in the town, and a smaller one of better construction : it was so crowded, however, although on a week-day, that we could not pass beyond the chapel-yard—where were great crowds of people, some praying, some talking, some buying and selling. There were two or three stalls in the yard, such as one sees near continental churches, presided over by old women, with a store of little brass crucifixes, beads, books, and bénitiers for the faithful to purchase. The church is large and commodious within, and looks (not like all other churches in Ireland) as if it were frequented. There is a hideous stone monument in the churchyard representing two corpses half rotted away : time or neglect had battered away the inscription, nor could we see the dates of some older tombstones in the ground, which were mouldering away in the midst of nettles and rank grass on the wall.

By a large public school of some reputation, where a hundred boys were educated (my young guide the Orangeman was one of them : he related with much glee how, on one of the Liberator's visits, a schoolfellow had waved a blue and orange flag from the window and cried, “ King William for ever, and to hell with the Pope ! ”), there is a fine old gate leading to the river, and in excellent preservation, in spite of time and Oliver Cromwell. It is a good specimen of Irish architecture. By this time that exceedingly slow coach the “ Newry Lark ” had arrived at that exceedingly filthy inn where the mail had dropped us an hour before. An enormous Englishman was holding a vain combat of wit with a brawny, grinning beggar-woman at the door. “ There's a *clever* gentleman, ” says the beggar-woman. “ Sure he'll give me something. ” “ How much should you like ? ” says the Englishman, with playful jocularly.

“Musha,” says she, “many a *littler* man nor you has given me a shilling.” The coach drives away ; the lady had clearly the best of the joking-match ; but I did not see, for all that, that the Englishman gave her a single farthing.

From Castle Bellingham—as famous for ale as Drogheda, and remarkable likewise for a still better thing than ale, an excellent resident proprietress, whose fine park lies by the road, and by whose care and taste the village has been rendered one of the most neat and elegant I have yet seen in Ireland—the road to Dundalk is exceedingly picturesque, and the traveller has the pleasure of feasting his eyes with the noble line of Mourne Mountains, which rise before him while he journeys over a level country for several miles. The “Newry Lark,” to be sure, disdained to take advantage of the easy roads to accelerate its movements in any way ; but the aspect of the country is so pleasant that one can afford to loiter over it. The fields were yellow with the stubble of the corn—which in this, one of the chief corn counties of Ireland, had just been cut down ; and a long straggling line of neat farm-houses and cottages runs almost the whole way from Castle Bellingham to Dundalk. For nearly a couple of miles of the distance, the road runs along the picturesque flat called Lurgan Green ; and gentlemen’s residences and parks are numerous along the road, and one seems to have come amongst a new race of people, so trim are the cottages, so neat the gates and hedges, in this peaceful, smiling district. The people, too, show signs of the general prosperity. A national-school had just dismissed its female scholars as we passed through Dunlar ; and though the children had most of them bare feet, their clothes were good and clean, their faces rosy and bright, and their long hair as shiny and as nicely combed as young ladies’ need to be. Numerous old castles and towers stand on the road here and there ; and long before we entered Dundalk we had a sight of a huge factory-chimney in the town, and of the dazzling white walls of the Roman Catholic church lately erected there. The cabin-suburb is not great, and the entrance to the town is much adorned by the hospital—a handsome Elizabethan building—and a row of houses of a similar architectural style which lie on the left of the traveller.

### Dundalk

THE stranger can’t fail to be struck with the look of Dundalk, as he has been with the villages and country leading to it, when contrasted with places in the South and West of Ireland. The coach stopped at a cheerful-looking *Place*, of which almost the only dilapidated mansion was the old inn at which it discharged us, and which did not hold out much prospect of comfort. But in justice to the “King’s Arms” it must be said that good beds and dinners are to be obtained there by voyagers ; and if they choose to arrive on days when his Grace the Most Reverend the Lord Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland is dining with his clergy, the house of course is crowded, and the waiters, and the boy who carries in the potatoes, a little hurried and flustered. When their reverences were gone, the laity were served ; and I have no doubt, from the leg of a duck which I got, that the breast and wings must have been very tender.

Meanwhile the walk was pleasant through the bustling little town. A grave old church with a tall copper spire defends one end of the Main Street ; and a little way from the inn is the superb new chapel, which the architect, Mr. Duff, has copied from King’s College Chapel in Cambridge. The ornamental part of the interior is not yet completed ; but the area of the chapel is spacious and noble, and three handsome altars of scagliola (or some composition resembling marble) have been erected, of handsome and suitable form. When by the aid of further subscriptions the church shall be completed, it will be one of the handsomest places of worship the Roman Catholics possess in this country. Opposite the chapel stands a neat low black building—the gaol : in the middle of the building, and over the doorway, is an ominous

balcony and window, with an iron beam overhead. Each end of the beam is ornamented with a grinning iron skull ! Is this the hanging-place ? and do these grinning cast-iron skulls facetiously explain the business for which the beam is there ? For shame ! for shame ! Such disgusting emblems ought no longer to disgrace a Christian land. If kill we must, let us do so with as much despatch and decency as possible,—not brazen out our misdeeds and perpetuate them in this frightful satiric way.

A far better cast-iron emblem stands over a handsome shop in the “ Place” hard by—a plough namely, which figures over the factory of Mr. Shekelton, whose industry and skill seem to have brought the greatest benefit to his fellow-townsmen—of whom he employs numbers in his foundries and workshops. This gentleman was kind enough to show me through his manufactories, where all sorts of iron-works are made, from a steam-engine to a door-key ; and I saw everything to admire, and a vast deal more than I could understand, in the busy, cheerful, orderly, bustling, clanging place. Steam-boilers were hammered here, and pins made by a hundred busy hands in a manufactory above. There was the engine-room, where the monster was whirring his ceaseless wheels and directing the whole operations of the factory, fanning the forges, turning the drills, blasting into the pipes of the smelting-houses : he had a house to himself from which his orders issued to the different establishments round about. One machine was quite awful to me, a gentle cockney, not used to such things : it was an iron-devourer, a wretch with huge jaws and a narrow mouth, ever opening and shutting—opening and shutting. You put a half-inch iron plate between his jaws, and they shut not a whit slower or quicker than before, and bit through the iron as if it were a sheet of paper. Below the monster’s mouth was a punch that performed its duties with similar dreadful calmness, going on its rising and falling.

[1] Here is an extract from one of the latter—

“ Hasten to some distant isle.  
In the bosom of the deep.  
Where the skies for ever smile.  
*And the blacks for ever weep.*”

Is it not a shame that such nonsensical false twaddle should be sung in a house of the Church of England, and by people assembled for grave and decent worship ?

[2] It must be said, for the worthy fellow who accompanied us, and who acted as cicerone previously to the great Willis, the great Hall, the great Barrow, that though he wears a ragged coat his manners are those of a gentleman, and his conversation evinces no small talent, taste, and scholarship.

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