

The Scattered Stones

The Letters of "Norah" in her Tour Through Ireland

Margaret Dixon McDougall

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Irish Cold and Canadian Cold—Evidences of The Famine—preparing for The Irish Land Bill—The Bad People of Donegal—Influence of the Ballot on Landlords—A Mountain Storm—A "BETTER CLASS" Farmer's Home.

To make excursions to a short distance from this pretty town of Ramelton and to return again has been my occupation for the last week. It was arranged that on Monday, March 21st, I was to go with some kind friends to see life up among the mountains of Donegal, but down came another storm. Snow, hail, sleet, rain, hail, sleet and rain again. Storms rule and reign among these hills this March, destroying all prospect of March dust. I am afraid. Nothing could be done but wait till the storm was over, going to the windows once in a while to watch the snow driving past, or to notice that it had changed to sleet or rain.

The mountain tops are white again, and look wild and wintry. To-day it rains with a will. The cold here at present is more chill and penetrating than Canadian cold. I have put on more, and yet more clothing, and I am cold. Many, very many, people during the past dreary winter have had no bed-clothes at all.

I am afraid from what I see and hear that the famine was more dreadful here in Donegal than we in Canada imagined. Plenty of people even now are living on Indian meal stirabout, without milk or anything else to take with it. This, three times a day, and thankful to have enough of it to satisfy hunger. It was pitiful to see little children and aged women, with but thin clothes on, walking barefoot through the snowy slush of yesterday.

My attention was drawn to a ballad singer, almost blind, "whose looped and windowed raggedness" was picturesque. His dreary attempts at singing with his teeth chattering, the rain and sleet searching out every corner of his rags, was pitiful. He was hardly able to stand against the cutting wind. I sent out and bought his ballad as an excuse to give him the Queen's picture. The songs were clever for local poetry. They were treasonous too, but then loyalty is the song of the well fed, well clad, well-to-do citizen. Treason and wretchedness fit well together, in a helpless, harmless way.

Your London correspondent of February 11th remarks, "Even Ireland has nothing left but to settle down and attend to putting in the crops." This is an English and comfortable view—the remark of a man who was not there to see. It is far otherwise here in County Donegal. Evictions are flying about as thick as "the leaves of the forest when autumn hath flown." This wild second winter is the time selected for these evictions. Every local paper has notices of evictions here and there.

They tell me that the reason of the great number of evictions at present is to prevent the wretched tenants from having any benefit under the promised Land Bill. If they are evicted

now and readmitted as caretakers, they can be sent off again at a week's notice and have no claim under the Ulster custom for past improvements. I think any candid person can see that these people are not in a position to pay back rent, or even present rent at the high rate to which it is raised. In some instances they are not able to pay any rent at all. There had been some years of bad seasons ending in one of absolute famine.

The report of the Relief Committee for northern Donegal was published on 28th of October, 1880. I met with a member of that Committee, which was composed of sixteen Protestants and eleven Catholics, including the Catholic Bishop of Raphoe and the Presbyterian member of Parliament. This gentleman informed me that food was given in such quantities as to preserve life only. Seed was also given. Many people of respectable standing, whose need was urgent, applied for relief secretly, not wishing their want to be known. Helped in this careful way the amount given, exclusive of expenses, in North Donegal was £33, 660. 17. 1, of which amount the *New York Herald* gave £2,000, besides £203 to an emigration fund enabling 115 persons to leave the country. Surely we must think that before these people applied for public charity—and every case was examined into by some of the Committee or their agents—they had exhausted all their means, and sold all they had to sell. How, then, could they possibly be able to pay back rent in March, 1881?

In the middle of my letter I got the long-awaited-for opportunity to leave Ramelton behind and go up into the Donegal Hills.

The environs of Ramelton are wonderfully beautiful, sudden hills, green vales, lovely nooks in unexpected places, waters that sparkle and dash, or that flow softly like the waters of Shiloh, great aristocratic trees in clumps, standing singly, grouped by the water's edge, as if they had sauntered down to look about them, or drawn up on the hill-side many deep, stretching far away like the ranks of a grand army. All that these can do to make Ramelton a place of beauty has been done. It is hemmed in by hills that lie up against the sky, marked off into fields by whin hedges, till they look like sloping chequer-boards. Beyond them, in places, tower up the mountain-tops of dark Donegal, crusted over with black heather, seamed by rift and ravine, bare in places where these rocks, those bones of the mountains, have pushed themselves through the heather, till it looks like a ragged cloak. The sun shines, the rocks flap busily about, as noisy as a parliament, the air is keen, and so we drive out of Ramelton.

The sky was blue, although the wind was cold, and it was blowing quite a gale. We had not left the town far behind when the storm recommenced in all its fury. The hail beat in our faces until we were obliged to cover up our heads. Finally the pony refused to go a step farther, but turned his obstinate shoulder to the storm and stood there, where there was no shelter of any kind, and there he stood till the storm moderated a little, only to recommence again. Up one hill, down another, along a bleak road through a bog, past the waters of Lough Fern, up more hills, round other hills, across other bleak bogs, the little town of Kilmacrennan, up other hills, the storm meanwhile raging in all its fury until we drew up on the lee side of a little mountain chapel.

The clergyman, who happened to be there, received us most courteously, and conducted us to his house. We were offered refreshments, and treated with the greatest kindness. Owing to this priest's courtesy and kindness I was provided with a room in the house of one of his parishioners, a mountain side farmer.

I parted with my friends with great regret. They returned to Ramelton through the storm, which increased in fury every moment. I, in the safe shelter of the farmhouse, looked out of the window, hoping the storm would moderate, but it increased until every thing a few yards from the house, every mountain top and hill side were blotted out, and nothing could be seen but the flurrying snow driven past by the winds.

I have now left the Presbyterians of the rich, low lying lands behind, and am up among the Catholic people of the hills. I have felt quite at home with these kindly folk. They remind me of the kindness of the Celtic population of another and far-off land. I like the sound of the Irish tongue, which is spoken all around me. I feel quite at home by the peat fire piled up on the hearth. The house where I am staying is that of a farmer of the better class. A low thatched house divided into a but and a ben. The kitchen end has the bare rafters, black and shining with concentrated smoke. The parlor end is floored above and has a board floor. Among the colored prints of the Saviour which adorn the wall are two engraving, in gilt frames, of Bright and Gladstone, bought when the Land Bill of 1870 was passed.

This Bill, by the way, has been evaded with great ease, for the law breakers were the great who knew the law, and the wronged were the poor who were ignorant of it. The farmer's wife could not do enough to make me welcome. She had the kind and comely face and pleasant tongue that reminded me of Highland friends in the long ago. Their name of Murray, which is a prevalent name on these hills, had a Highland sound. Feeling welcome, and safe under the care that has led me thus far, I fell asleep in the best bed, with its ancient blue and white hangings, and slept soundly.

These people are very thrifty. The blankets of the bed were homespun the fine linen towel was the same. The mistress's dress was home made, and so was the cloth of her husband's clothes. In noticing this I was told that where they could keep a few sheep the people were better off, but it was harder now to keep sheep than formerly.

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The hill country of Donegal—On the square—Office Rules.

Left up among my country people in this hill country of Donegal, I set myself to see and to hear what they had to say for themselves or against their landlords. In the pauses of storm I walked up the mountains to see the people in their homes. I seem to have lost the power of description. I will never think of scenes I saw there without tears. I never, in Canada, saw pigs housed as I saw human beings here. Sickness, old age, childhood penned up in such places that one shuddered to go into them. Now, mark me ! every hovel paid rent, or was under eviction for failing to pay.

The landlord has no duties in the way of repairing a roof or making a house comfortable. Such a thing is utterly unknown here. To fix the rent, to collect the rent, to make office rules as whim or cupidity dictates, to enforce them, in many instances with great brutality, is the sole business of the landlord ; and the whole power of the Executive of England is at his back. This is not a good school in which to learn loyalty. Submission to absolute decrees or eviction are the only alternative.

The tenant has no voice in the bargain. He has no power to be one party to a contract. This irresponsible power of an autocrat over serfs of the soil is bad for both parties. I will try to tell these people's side of the question as nearly in their own words as I can.

When the native population was driven off the good valley lands to the hills of Donegal during the confiscation times, they built their cabins in groups, like the Scotch *clachans*, for company, perhaps even for protection. Each man broke up, clearing off stones and rooting up whins, the best patch within his reach. He ditched and drained pieces of low-lying bog, and paid for what he cultivated, all the rest being common.

By what title the Clemens of Leitrim got lordship over the wild hills as well as the fat lowlands I cannot tell ; but all the country here, for miles and miles, up hill and down vale, is his. The people have absolutely no rights, as far as the land is concerned.

The first move towards this dreadful state of things was called “ Squaring the farms.” This was done to compel the people to pay for the wild as well as the cultivated lands. Under the old system a man might have a few goats or sheep, or a heifer, on the hills, and, if his crop was not good, or a hail storm threshed out his oats, he could sacrifice these to pay the rent. When the farms were squared each man drew lots for his new holding, I am speaking of Lord Leitrim’s estate. This was a hard decree, but the tenant had no alternative but to submit. A man often found himself squared out of the best of his clearing, squared out of his cabin and all accommodation for his cow or horse, and squared on to a new place without any house on it at all.

I made particular enquiry if Lord Leitrim had ever made any allowance or compensation to a man deprived of the house, which he or his fathers had built, after this summary fashion. No compensation. Every fixture put upon the land belonged to the landlord absolutely.

“ Was there ever any help allowed to a man in building a new house ?”

“ In a very few instances a man got a door and a couple of window-sashes as a charitable assistance, not by any means as a compensation.”

After some time the wild mountains, where there was nothing but rocks and heather, were fenced off. Before this the goats and sheep grazed up there. A new office rule made the price for a sheep or goat picking a living among the heather. It was one shilling and sixpence for a sheep with a lamb at her foot, and other animals in proportion. Still the wretched men of the hills struggled to live on in the only homes they had, or had ever known. Then the rents were raised. In one instance from £3. 11s. 4d. to £6 5s. for 6 Irish acres, the increased value being the result of the man’s own hard labor. In another instance from £1, 9s, 4d. to £13. Another office rule charges five shillings for the privilege of cutting turf for fuel even if cut on the little holding for which he is paying rent.

Now, when every nerve was strained to pay this rack rent, and cattle were high in price, if the unfortunate tenant failed, why, he was evicted. He might go where he liked, to the work-house or the asylum, or the roadside, his little clearing would make pasture, and this, at the price of beef cattle, would be still more profitable. For any landlord in this part of Donegal to speak of freedom of contract is a fallacy. It does not exist.

The oppression at present exercised by Captain Dopping on the Leitrim estate, which he can carry out safely under the protection of bayonets, would raise up Judge Lynch in America before three months. Lately, the people told me, he visited the farm-houses in person, pulled open the doors of the little room that the better class strive to have, without permission asked, and walked in to inspect if there were any signs of prosperity hidden from the eye that might warrant further extortion. This act was resented with a feeling that found no relief in words. I

noticed that there was no word of complaint or denunciation anywhere. Facts were stated, and you understood by glance and tone that the time for mere complaint was past.

I was taken to see a paralytic schoolmaster who had dared to build a room next to the school-house out of which he was helped into school every morning, for he could teach, though he had lost the use of his limbs. No sooner did Lord Leitrim know this than he had the paralytic carried out and laid on the road, and the room which he had built with his earnings and the help of his neighbors, was pulled down—not one stone was left upon another. He then lost his situation which was his living. I can hardly bear to describe this man's dwelling in which I found himself, his wife, four children and the cow. The winds of the mountain and the rains of heaven equally found their way in. His wife teaches sewing in the school at a salary of £8 per annum. This, with other help from the Rev. Mr. Martin, formerly Episcopal Rector of Kilmacrennan, who got the wife the post of schoolmistress, has kept these people alive. The father has not seen the sky since he was evicted in 1870. At present there is a writ of ejection on the house for £9 of back rent, and he is sued for seed, got in the time of scarcity.

The house is horrible—there are boards with some straw on them over the beds. The children are very pretty, and as hardy as mountain goats. The father was quite an educated man, to judge from his speech. I, who was well clothed, shivered at the hearth, but want and nakedness stayed there constantly. If this poor man were put in the poor-house, he would have to part from the faithful wife and sweet children, but that is the doom that stares him in the face.

The longer I stayed among the hills the more I became convinced that the people had strained every nerve to pay what they considered unjust and extortionate rents. They worked hard ; they farmed hard ; they wore poor clothing ; they left their hill and went over to Scotland or England, at harvest time, to earn money to pay the rent. “ And we were not considered as kindly, or as much respected, as their hogs or dogs,” said a farmer to me. There was nothing left after the rent for comfort, or to use in case of sickness ; they always lived on the brink of starvation.

“ Why did you not refuse to pay these increased rents when they were put upon you first. You should have refused in a body, and stood out,” I said to one man. “ Some could do that, my lady, but most could not. At first I had the old people depending on me, and I could not see them on the hillside ; now I have little children, and the wife is weakly. And there were many like me, or even worse.”

Now consider some of the office rules. My lord had a pound of his own : for a stray beast, so much ; for a beast caught up the mountain without leave, eviction ; for burning the limestone on your own place instead of buying it at the lord's kiln, eviction ; for burning some parings of the peat land, the ashes of which made the potatoes grow bigger and drier, eviction. Not only did the man who did not doff his hat to the landlord stand in danger, but the man who did not uncover to his lowest under-bailiff. One exaction after another, one tyranny after another has dug a gulf between landlord and tenant that will be hard to bridge. I saw a stone house used as a barn. Lord Leitrim made the man who built it, who had got permission to build from the good Earl, tear down the chimney and make an office-house of it, on pain of eviction. He must continue to live himself in the hovel. Another widow woman, evicted for not being able to pay her rent, had the roof torn off her house, but has a place like a goose pen among the ruins, and here she stays. Every day rides out Capt. Dopping with his escort of police, paid for by the county, and evicts without mercy. Since the eyes of the world have been drawn to Ireland by the proceedings of the Land League none have been left to die out-

side. The tenants are admitted as caretakers by the week, but the eviction, I am told, extinguishes any claim the poor people might have under the Ulster Custom.

I have seen nothing yet to make me think I was in a disturbed country except meeting Captain Dopping and his escort, and seeing white police barracks and dandy policemen, who literally overrun the country. It carries one's mind back to the days of bloody Claverhouse or wicked Judge Jeffries to hear and see the feelings which the country people—Catholic as well as Protestant—have towards the memory of the late Earl. "Dear, the cup of his iniquity was full, the day of vengeance was come, and the earth could hold him no longer," said a Protestant to me.

"It was bad for the people, whoever they were, that took vengeance out of the hands of the Almighty, but many a poor creature he had sent out of the world before he lay helpless at the mercy of his enemies," said many an orthodox person to me. One poor girl on that dreadful day thanked God that the oppressor was laid low. Her mother evicted, had died on the roadside exposed to the weather of the hills, her brother went mad at the sight of misery he would almost have died to relieve but could not, and is now in the asylum at Letterkenny. One can imagine with what feeling this desolate girl lifted her hands when she heard of the murder, and said, "I thank Thee, O Lord."

What kind of a system is it that produces such scenes, and such feelings? It is a noticeable fact how many there are in the asylum in Letterkenny whose madness they blame on the horrors of these evictions. Wise legislation may find a remedy for these evils, but the memory of them will never die out. It is graven on the mountains, it is stamped on the valleys, it is recorded on the rocks forever.

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Along A Mountain Road—Why The Rent Was Raised—Turning Farms into Pastures—St. Colomkill—Irish Hospitality— A notable Ballad.

The twenty-sixth of March rose sunny and cold, and I decided to hire a horse and guide to go to Derryveigh, made memorable by Mr. John George Adair. The road lay through wild mountain scenery. Patches of cultivated fields lay on the slopes; hungry whin-covered hills rose all round them, steep mountains rank upon rank behind; deep bog lands, full of treacherous holes, lay along at the foot of the mountain here and there. The scenery is wild beyond description, not a tree for miles in all the landscape.

On some of the lower hills men were ploughing with wretched-looking horses. Men were delving with spades where horses could not keep their footing. The houses were wretched, some only partly roofed, some with the roof altogether gone and a shed erected inside, but for the most wretched of all the hovels rent is exacted.

Every bit of clearing was well and carefully labored. The high, broad stone fences round hillside fields were all gathered from the soil.

At one place, I was told that the brother of the occupant had sent him, from America, money to make the house a little more comfortable. He roofed it with slate. The rent was raised from £2 9s. 4d. to £13 10s. I may remark here that the tenants complain that the present Earl, through his agent, Capt. Dopping, is even more oppressive in a steady, cruel manner than the late Earl.

The late hard times—the cruel famine—has led to the sacrifice of all stock, so that some of these people have not a four-footed beast on their holding.

As we wound along among the hills my guide spoke of getting another man to accompany us, who was well acquainted with the way to Derryveigh, and we stopped at his place accordingly. He came to the car to explain that he was busy fanning up corn, or he would be only too glad to come. In a subdued whisper he told my guide of Capt. Dopping having been at his house, with his bailiffs and body-guard of police—threatening the wife, he said. He then told of the sacrifices he had made of one thing and another to gather up one year's rent. He had to pay five shillings for cutting turf on his own land, and one shilling for a notice served on him. Poor little man, he had a face that was cut for mirthfulness, and his woefulness was both touching and amusing. So we left him and went our way.

Along the road, winding up and down among the hills, by sudden bogs and rocky crags still more desolate and lonely looking, we came upon a cultured spot, now and then, where a solitary man would be digging round the edges of the rocks. Again we were among wild mountains heaving up their round heads to the sky and looking down at us over one another's shoulders. It brought to my mind the Atlantic billows during the last stormy February. It is as if the awful rolling billows mounting to the sky were turned into stone and fixed there, and the white foam changed into dark heather. After driving some time the landscape softened down into rolling hills beautifully cultivated, and sprinkled here and there with grazing cattle.

We are coming to Gartan Lake, and where there is a belt of trees by the lake shore stands the residence of Mr. Stewart, another landlord. He, when cattle became high-priced, thought that cattle were much preferable to human beings, so he evicted gradually the dwellers who had broken in the hills, and entered into possession, without compensation, of the fields, the produce of others' toil and sweat. His dwelling is in a lonely, lovely spot, and it stands alone, for no cottage home is at all near. He has wiped out from the hill sides every trace of the homes of those who labored on these pleasant fields and brought them under cultivation. Since the Land League agitation began he has given a reduction of rents, and the whole country side feel grateful and thankful.

There's no solitude so great that we do not meet bailiffs at their duty, or policemen on the prowl.

We are now nearing Derryveigh. There are two lakes lying along the valley connected with a small stream. My guide informed me that both lakes once abounded with salmon. The celebrated St. Colombkill was born on the shores of the Gartan Lake. Being along the lake one day he asked some fishermen on the lower lake to share with him of the salmon they had caught. They churlishly refused, and the saint laid a spell on the waters, and no salmon come there from that day to this. They are plentiful in Upper Gartan Lake, and come along the stream to the dividing line, where the stream is spanned by a little rustic bridge; here they meet an invisible barrier, which they cannot pass. I told my guide in return the story of the Well of St. Keyne, but he thought it unlikely. So there is a limit to belief.

Since Mr. Adair depopulated Derryveigh, and gave it over to silence, the roads have been neglected, and have become rather difficult for a car. The relief works in famine time have been mainly road-making, and there are smooth hard roads through the hills in all directions, so the people complain of roads that would not be counted so very bad in the Canadian backwoods. However, the difficulty being of a rocky nature, we left the car at the house of a dumb man, the only one of the inhabitants spared by Adair. He and his sister, also dumb, lived together on the mountain solitudes. She is dead, and a relative, the daughter of one of the

evicted people, has come to keep house for him. He made us very welcome, seeing to it that the horse was put up and fed with sheaf oats. I and my guides, for we were now joined by the man who had had the oats to fan—he had got his brother to take his place and came a short cut across the hills to meet us—so we all three set out to walk over Derryveigh.

It was a trying walk, a walk to be measured by ups and downs, for the Derryveigh hamlets were widely scattered. There they were—roofless homes, levelled walls, desolation and silence. And it is a desolation, indeed. Broken down walls here and there, singly and in groups, mark the place where there was a contented population when Mr. Adair bought the estate. He had made plans for turning his purchase into a veritable El Dorado. The barren mountains are fenced oft, surely at a great expense, that no sheep or lamb might bite a heather bell without pay. It was to be a great pasture for black-faced sheep. The sides of the mountains, which are bog in many places, are scored with drains to dry up the bog holes and give the sheep a sure footing. I did not see many sheep on the hill or many cattle on the deserted farms. It is an awfully lonesome place ; desolation sits brooding among the broken-down walls. My guide, a lonesome-looking man, enlivened our way by remarks like these : “ This was a widdy’s house. She was a well-doin’ body.” “ Here was a snug place. See, there’s the remains of a stone porch that they built to break off the wind.” “ That was Jamie Doherty’s, he that died on the road-side after he was evicted. You see, nobody dare lift the latch or open the door to any of the poor creatures that were put out.”

And this has been done ; human beings have died outside under the sky for no crime, and this under the protection of English law. Many of these people lost their reason, and are in the asylum at Letterkenny. Some are still *coshering* here and there among their charitable neighbors, while many are bitter hearted exiles across the sea. After walking up and down amid this pitiful desolation, and hearing many a heart-rending incident connected with the eviction, a sudden squall of hail came on, and we were obliged to take shelter on the lee side of a ruined wall till it blew over. To while away the time one of the guides told me of a local song made on the eviction, the refrain being, “ Five hundred thousand curses on cruel John Adair.”

Across the Garten Lake we could see from our partial shelter the point to which Mr. Stewart wasted the people off his estate. Mr. Stewart’s is a handsome lonely place, but when one hears all these tales of spoliation it prevents one from admiring a fine prospect. “ He is dealing kindly with the people now,” said my guides, “ whatever changed his heart God knows.”

The shower being over we returned to the house of the dummy. In our absence dinner had been prepared for us. She had no plates, but the table on which she laid oat cakes was as white as snow. She gave us a little butter, which, by the signs and tokens, I knew to be all she had, boiled eggs, made tea of fearful strength, and told us to eat. My guides enjoyed the mountain fare with mountain appetites. I tried to eat, but somehow my throat was full of feelings. I had great difficulty to make this mountain maid accept of a two shilling piece for her trouble. We returned by the way we came to a point where we had a view of a rectory which was pointed out to me as the abode of another good rector. These people do seem to feel kindness very much Here we took another road to visit Glenveigh and see Adair’s castle. On the way we were informed by a woman, speaking in Irish, that a process-server near Creeslach was fired at through the window of his house. He had been out serving processes, and was at home sitting with his head resting on his hand. Three shots were fired, two going over his head and one going through the hand on which his head was resting. Two men are taken up to-day.

I have secured a copy of the ballad referred to by our guide, which records the desolation of Derryveigh. All such actions are celebrated in local poetry ; but this is one of the fiercest ; you can publish it if you think best :—

Derryveigh.

- “ The cold snow rests on levelled walls, where was a happy home,
The wintry sky looks down upon a desolate hearthstone.
The hearth by which the cradle song has lulled our infant’s sleep,
Is open to the pitying skies that nightly o’er it weep.
There is rippling in the waters, there is rustling through the air.
Five hundred thousand curses upon cruel John Adair.
- “ It is not we that curse him, though in woe our sad heart bleeds,
The curse that’s on him is the curse that follows wicked deeds.
He suspected and he punished, he judged, and then he drew
The besom of destruction our quiet homesteads through ;
So it’s rippling in the waters, it is rustling through the air,
Five hundred thousand curses upon cruel John Adair.
- “ We little dreamed upon our hills destruction’s hour was nigh,
Woe ! Woe the day our quiet glens first met his cruel eye !
He coveted our mountains all in an evil hour.
We have tasted of his mercy, and felt his grasp of power ;
Through years to come of summer sun, of wintry sleet and snow,
His name shall live in Derryveigh as Campbell’s in Glencoe.
- “ A tear is on each heather bell where heaven’s dew distils,
And weeping down the mountain side flows on a thousand rills ;
The winds rush down the empty glens with many a sigh and moan,
Where little children played and sang is desolate and lone.
The scattered stones of many homes have witnessed our despair,
And every stone’s a monument to cruel John Adair.
- “ Where are the hapless people, doomed by John Adair’s decree ?
Some linger in the drear poorhouse—some are beyond the sea ;
One died behind the cold ditch—back beneath the open sky,
And every star in heaven was a witness from on high.
None dared to ope a friendly door, or lift a neighbor’s latch,
Or shelter by a warm hearthstone beneath the homely thatch.
- “ Beside the lake in sweet Genveigh, his tall white castle stands,
With battlement and tower high, fresh from the mason’s hands ;
It’s built of ruined hearth stones, its cement is bitter tears,
It’s a monument of infamy to all the future years,
He is written childless, for of his blood no heir
Shall inherit land or lordship from cruel John Adair.
- “ His cognizance the bloody hand has a wild meaning now.
It is pointing up for vengeance to Cain-like mark his brow.
It speaks of frantic hands that clasped the side posts of the door ;
Pale lips that kissed the threshold they would cross, oh, never more.

The scattered stones of many homes, the desolated farms.
Shall mark with deeper red the hand upon his coat of arms.
The silver birches of Glenveigh when stirred by summer air
Shall whisper of the curse that hangs o'er cruel John Adair."

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Why The Rent is Raised—The History of an Eviction from one of the Evicted—A Donegal Congregation—A climb to the top of Doon Hill—Doon Holy Well—Making The Best of A Stranger.

IN the silence of the night when sleep would not come, and when my imagination rehearsed over and over again sights I had seen and tales I had heard, I made an almost cast-iron resolution to escape to the estate of Stewart of Ards and have one letter filled up with the good deeds of a landlord. Alas for me ! another storm, a rain storm, and a touch of neuralgia conspired to keep me " ben the house" in the little room upon the mountain side. One can weather snow or hail easier than a mountain rain storm. The rain is laden with half-melted snow, and the wind that drives it is terribly in earnest.

It is one queer feature of this mountain scenery, the entire absence of trees. The hills look as if the face of the country had been shaved. Up the hill sides the little fields are divided off by high, broad stone fences, the result of gathering the stones out of the fields. The bog land to be reclaimed requires drains three feet deep every six feet of land.

To trench up a little field into ridges six feet apart, to gather stones out of a little field sufficient to surround it with a four feet high stone fence, to grub out and burn whins, to make all the improvements with your own labor, and then to have your landlord come along with his valuator and say, " Your farm is worth double what you pay for it ; I can get thirty shillings an acre for it," and to raise the rent to its full value, which you must pay or go out. This sort of thing is repeated, and repeated, in every variation of circumstances and of hardship, and the people submit and are, as a whole, quiet and law-abiding.

I was called out of my little den to see a woman, one of the evicted tenants of Mr. Adair. She was on her way to Letterkenny to see her son, who is in the asylum since the eviction. It was hard enough to wander through the ruins and hear of the eviction scenes from others, but to sit by the turf fire and listen to one who had suffered and was suffering from this dreadful act, to see the recollection of it expressed in look and tone was different. This woman—husband dead, son in the asylum—was a decent-looking body in cloak and cap, with a bleached face and quiet voice.

" We were all under sentence of eviction, but it was told to us that it was for squaring the farms. Then we were warned to pay in the half-year's rent. It was not due till May, and we had never been asked to pay the rent ahead of us before. But the landlord was a new one, and if he made a rule, why, we must obey him ; so we scraped up and sold this and that and paid it. If we had known what was coming we might have kept it, and had a penny to turn to when we were out under the sky. It was to get the rent before he turned us out that he made that plan. We were put out in the beginning of April ; our rent was paid up to May. Oh, I wish, I wish that he had driven us into the lake the day he put us out. A few minutes would have ended our trouble, but now when will it end ! I have been through , the country, my lady, and my boy in the asylum ever since."

Went to the Catholic chapel up here in the mountains. It was quite convenient to my lodging. It is a very nice building with a new look. I was surprised to see such a fine building in the mountains, for, owing to the poverty of the people, there were no chapels at all in some places a little time ago. Mass was celebrated in *scalans*, a kind of open sheds, covered over head to protect the officiating priest from the weather, while the people clustered in the open air. When I spoke of the nice appearance of the chapel I was told that the children of these hills scattered through the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, had helped in its building. There were between seven and eight hundred people present. There were no seats on the floor of the chapel. I could not help admiring the patient, untiring devotion of these people, and the endurance that enabled them to kneel so long. The prevailing type of face is eminently Scottish, so is the tone of voice, and the names, Murrays, Andersons, and the like.

Were it not for the altar...I could have imagined myself in a Glenelg Presbyterian congregation. The Irish spoken here, and it is spoken universally, has a good deal of resemblance to Glenelg Gaelic. I was surprised at how much I understood of the conversations carried on around me. The women, too, in their white caps, with their serious, devotional comely faces, reminded me of faces I have seen in dear old Glengarry.

There were not half a dozen bonnets in the whole congregation—snow-white caps covered with a handkerchief for the matrons. They wore cloaks and shawls, and looked comfortable enough. I saw some decent blue cloth cloaks of a fashion that made me think they had served four generations at least. The lasses wore their own shining hair “streeled” down their backs or neatly braided up; abundant locks they had, brown color prevailing. Fresher, rosier, comelier girls than these mountain maidens it would be hard to find.

The men’s clothing, though poor, and in some instances patched in an artistic fashion, was scrupulously clean. In the congregation were some young men well dressed, bold and upright, whose bearing, cut of whiskers, and watch chains, showed that they had lived among our trans-Atlantic cousins of the great Republic.

The priest of the hills is the one man whom these people trust. The prevailing type of landlord has been their enemy and oppressor. The priest has been friend, counsellor, sympathizer, helper, as well as clergyman, and so he is *soggarth aroon*.

The storm continues at intervals. I get one clear, cold bit of fair weather to climb to the top of Doune hill, where the Ulster kings used to be crowned, a sugar loaf shaped hill with the top broken off, rising in isolated grandeur up high enough to give one a breather to get to the top

The weather returned to its normal condition of storm, and I was shut up again. I became a little homesick, had the priest to tea, and enjoyed his conversation very much, but he had to go off in the storm on a sick call. A priest in these mountains has not the easiest kind of life in the world.

Illusions took possession of my brain. I fancied myself a great queen, to say the least of it. A whisper got among the hills that a great American lady with unlimited power had come seeking the welfare of the country, and so any amount of deputations waited on me. I will give a few specimens.

Two men to see my lady in reference to a small still that had been misfortunately found on the place of an old man upward of eighty. He was fined £12, and would my lady do anything ?

Two women under sentence of eviction, my lady (I saw the place of one of these, the roof was on the floor, and a little shelter was in one corner like the lair of a wild beast, and here she kept possession in spite of the dreadful Captain Dopping, the agent). Would my lady send out their two daughters to America and phice them in decent places ?

And here was old Roseen, old and miserable, without chick or child, or drop's blood belonging to her in the wide world, and would my lady remember her ?

Here's the crature of a widow from the mountain with four small children, and no man body to help her with the place, and not a four-footed beast on it belonging to her ; all went in the scarcity ; would my lady look to her a little, sure she was the neediest of all ?

And here was the poor cripple boy that his reverence was so good to, &c., &c, &c., in endless file.

Nothing kept this over-dose of " my lady" from going to my head like Innishowen poteen, but the slenderness of my purse. Determined at last, warned by my fast-collapsing *port-monnaie*, to refuse to see any more deputations and keep ben-the-house strictly. A cry arose that Captain Dopping and his body-guard, on evictions bent, were coming up the hill. I rushed out, mounted a ditch of sods for one more look at the little tyrant of their fields. As I stood shading my eyes with my hand and looked across at the dreaded agent, a plaintive " my lady," bleated out at my side, drew my eyes down. It was a woman ; she did not speak any more, but looked, and that look drew out my fast collapsing purse. I walked slowly into the house, determined to escape from the hills while I had the means left of escaping.

The Letters of " Norah" on Her Tour Through Ireland: Being a Series of Letters to the Montreal ... (1882)

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