

Some Time in Galway

The Adventures of A Tourist in Ireland

J. L. Joynes, B.A.

Assistant-Master at Eton College London

Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1 Paternoster Square

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PREFACE.

HAVING lately had a month's tour in Ireland, with a view of seeing something of the people, and especially of the working of the Coercion Act, I have put down on paper an account of my experiences, and venture to think that it may be not uninteresting to English readers, as giving some picture of a system of society and government differing considerably from anything which either Conservatives or Liberals approve of in England.

My first chapter has already appeared in the columns of the *Times* under the somewhat pretentious heading (for which I am not responsible) of a 'Political Tour in Ireland'; but the point of view taken in the account, and the criticisms on the system of government by means of sub-inspectors of police, seem to have alarmed the editor, who refused to insert the rest of my contributions, leaving my first letter in the absurd position of a beginning without middle or end.

I have been sharply criticised in several Conservative papers as 'a pretentious prig,' for having had the impudence to imagine that these jottings from my diary while in Ireland could have any possible interest for English readers. I am described as a 'shallow globe-trotter,' who has unfortunately had the chance of airing his 'secondhand views,' while pretending that he went to Ireland with an unprejudiced mind; and the public is seriously warned against accepting either his fallacious facts or his foolish opinions. In spite, however, of the indignation my impertinence has already aroused, I venture to print the rest of my experiences, and to present to the public the genuine account of a very interesting tour, but one which nobody is bound either to buy or to believe. I lay no claim to an impossible impartiality, but I have put down the things that I heard and saw in Ireland, whether they told for the landlords or for the Land-leaguers, against the police or against the people. Having travelled for one week with Mr. George, the celebrated author of *Progress and Poverty*, I naturally heard during that time more of the popular than of the anti-popular side of the question; and it is open to my critics to account in this way for my opinion that the Royal Irish Constabulary occasionally act on insufficient evidence, and work upon different principles from those which guide the English police. Some allowance may also be made for a victim of their excessive zeal. But when these causes of prejudice and partiality have all been discounted, it will hardly be denied that a considerable number of the landlords, while keeping within the limits of the law, have acted tyrannically towards their tenants; that this tyranny has had its usual result in agitation; and that without agitation the grievances of Irish tenants are never either noticed or redressed.

The results of British rule in Ireland are very sad for an Englishman to see.

October, 1882.

ADVENTURES
OF A
TOURIST IN IRELAND

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Visit To The Ladies' Land League, and Arrest at Loughrea.

HAVING come over to Ireland with the object of seeing something of the working of the Coercion Act, I had not expected that the police would gratify my wishes in such a speedy and practical manner as has actually been the case. So extremely ready to assist me in my object did I find them, that I had not been three days on Irish soil before they arrested me as a suspicious stranger, and enabled me to judge by practical experience of the feelings of those who can only 'look on the sweet heavens' through a fret-work setting of iron bars. A short account of my first experience of Irish adventures and of government as administered by sub-inspectors of police may, perhaps, be interesting to English readers.

I landed in Dublin with that large amount of ignorance of things Irish which is usual among educated Englishmen, and a receptivity of mind which was ready for a complete saturation of knowledge. It so happened that the first persons I fell in with were of the landlord class and persuasion, and in my thirst for information I asked them for their honest opinion on the working of the Land Act. A torrent of abuse, divided fairly between Mr. Gladstone and the Commissioners, was the reply. The incompetence of the Commissioners was said to be only equalled by their partiality. They made it their sole business to reduce all the rents which came before them, without any reference to the value of the holdings. This was a serious charge, and I began to be very indignant with such unfair Commissioners; but the next complaint of the landlords rather staggered me, for it was to the effect that Mr. Gladstone had given secret instructions to the Commission that whatever else they did they were in all cases to reduce rents. This was a little too strong, and I suggested that even Mr. Gladstone had some conscience and some regard for justice, and, having established an independent Court, would be unlikely to attempt to bias all its decisions. In answer to this, I was told that if he had not done this, and really wished to be fair, he would have given the Commissioners a hint that they were going too far when he saw the extent of their reductions. This was such an original view of fairness in a legislator that I did not feel equal to attacking it, not knowing any arguments for impartiality which could not be turned by such a very eccentric flank movement. So I listened in silence to an amount of abuse of the idleness and general wickedness of the Irish tenant, which showed me that I had come into a country in which, however fair the prospect, man at any rate was exceedingly vile.

Thus much had I already learned within the walls of my first Irish hotel, and even before I had well recovered from the effects of my voyage across the troubled waters of the Irish Sea. I had come for information, and, seemed in a fair way of getting supplied with it without any great expenditure of trouble; but it occurred to me that it might be as well to verify it by visiting some people to whom I had introductions, who could not be suspected of prejudice in favour of landlordism. Accordingly I called on an American, then staying in Ireland as correspondent of an American paper of extreme views, and asked him to help me towards finding out something of the state of the country, and the real sentiments of the people. He told me that he was shortly going with that very object to travel for some time in Galway, and invited me to accompany him, an offer which I gladly accepted. His point of view seemed decidedly Radical, but he said with some contempt that people called Gladstone a Radical now, so that the word had very little significance. Pending our travels, he would introduce me

to some people in Dublin who could tell me more about the state of any definite district in Ireland than any one else, and would be able to say in what part evictions were most likely to take place. Accordingly he took me to the office of the Ladies' Land League, and introduced me to several of the ladies. They seemed to be very busy, and to be carrying on an immense correspondence with all parts of Ireland, but they were kind enough to show me the system on which they worked, and the forms which evicted tenants filled up when they made application for Land League huts and relief. I saw also designs and drawings of these huts, and whole volumes of copies of writs, processes, ejectments, &c, until I hardly expected to find a single inhabitant of the country who had not been 'dis-homed' by some absentee landlord. I was introduced especially to Miss Reynolds, a young lady who had twice been imprisoned under the Coercion Act in default of bail. I asked her of what crime she had been accused, and she said the charge was intimidation of the police. I further inquired in what way she had intimidated a body of public servants not usually supposed to be timorous, and she informed me that on the first occasion she had told them that, although they might seize upon a man's car if they wanted a drive, they could not compel him to drive it for them ; while on the second she had been present at an eviction, and had shaken her head at the police. I felt inclined to ask, with the clown in *Hamlet*, 'Is this law ?' but refrained, foreseeing the obvious answer, 'Ay, marry, is't ; Coercion Act law.' Nevertheless, I could not but pity the condition of the intimidated constables, whose nerves must have been terribly shattered by the first offence, or they would scarcely have arrested a lady for the second

They told me that there had been an enormous number of evictions, and that they had seen evicted tenants sleeping in ditches by the roadside even in winter, but that this could not happen now, as the League is always ready to supply them with huts. There had lately been a lull in the camp of the evictors, but they were afraid it would not last long. The fight was being kept up most vigorously on the estate of Lord Cloncurry, who seemed to be put forward as the especial champion of the landlords. Outrages, they feared, were to be expected to continue as long as eviction for non-payment of exorbitant rents went on. The Land League had always denounced them, but the Government, by suppressing their organisation, had taken all responsibility away from them, and must now put them down as best they could with the help of their Coercion Acts. They told us that two educated girls, farmers' daughters, had the other day been sentenced to a fortnight's hard labour by a magistrate under the new Act for groaning when some 'emergency men' passed by. The hard labour had been remitted, but the imprisonment remained, and one lady remarked that the hardest part of the imprisonment was the wearing the convict dress. A lady's opinion on a question of dress is, of course, always valuable. She went on to remark that outrages were to be expected in that district after such tyranny as that, but I am glad to say that as yet none have taken place there. They agreed that there could be no end to the agitation as long as the lease-holders were kept out of the benefits of the Land Act, as many of them had only signed their leases under threat of eviction, although they could not prove this in Court, as naturally the threat had not been reduced to writing ; and they highly praised the conduct of the Duke of Leinster in tearing up his famous leases, which debarred his tenants from all access to any of the Courts, saying that the FitzGerald's would never be boycotted in Ireland.

After a long and interesting talk I retired, and on shutting the door noticed that it was placarded with the sentence : 'Everybody closes this door gently but you.' Rather humiliated by this personal remark, I went back to my hotel, and there, as a kind of antidote to the poisonous effects of the conversation I had lately been hearing, I had an interview with a Protestant Bishop. He told me that the Protestant Church in Ireland depends chiefly on the landowners, and that it cannot with unconcern see them deprived of a quarter of their income by the Commissioners under the Land Act. I suggested that, as the Commissioners were fixing fair rents, the inference was that the quarter of their income of which the Protestant land-

owners were being deprived was an unfair exaction to which they had no moral right, but this he would not allow, maintaining that the Commissioners were making it their business not to fix fair rents, but to reduce them in every case without any reference to their fairness or unfairness. I could only deplore, if this were, indeed, the case, the lamentable appointment of such an unrighteous set of Commissioners.

Next day I was introduced to Mr. Davitt, and heard a little from him about his scheme for the nationalisation of the land. He said that when the time came, a practical scheme of compensation for Irish landowners could be proposed which would satisfy all parties ; and he expected that the resistance to the plan would not be so much on account of the money value of the land, as because the aristocracy depend upon it for their prestige and position, and would cling to it even if it brought no rents at all. He said that he distinguished between the English Government and Dublin Castle, that he respected Mr. Trevelyan, and was very glad that Brackenbury's successor was not Clifford Lloyd, as had been rumoured would be the case.

During another day or two in Dublin I met several landlords, who generally concurred in condemning the Land Act, and denouncing the idleness of the Irish as the *fons et origo mali*. The panacea, on the other hand, was a system of smart rents to prevent this unfortunate idleness, and a strict keeping of all tenants to the letter of their engagements, in spite of wild and whirling words which were going about of bringing even the lease-holders within the jurisdiction of the Land Court. I also saw several Land Leaguers, who told me that I should find that many evictions had taken place with the view of preventing the tenants from going into the Court, and that the landlords now refused to accept the full amount of the arrears, rather than allow their formerly recusant tenants to get the benefit of the Land Act. However, the general opinion was that they would be obliged to reinstate them at last, as no other tenants would take the farms ; and, besides the loss of rent, there was great expense in keeping the police-protected emergency men in occupation to prevent the former tenants from gathering their crops. Kavanagh's company was predicted to be an inevitable failure, not only monetarily, but absolutely, from the impossibility of getting tenants to work the farms after the eviction of their former occupants.

So far, all my evidence had been hearsay, but by travelling among the people and seeing their actual condition I hoped to arrive at a more accurate knowledge. Accordingly, I started with my friend Mr. George for the interior of the country, and we chose as our destination for the first night a place of ill-repute for order, where the war between landlord and tenant had been at its bitterest, and had been waged by means of many cruel evictions on the one side and some cruel murders on the other. This place was Loughrea, where, besides other outrages, Mr. Blake had met with a violent death, and Mr. Bourke and the soldier who was with him had been shot in open day as they were driving into the town. However, for the present, as once in Warsaw, peace reigned in Loughrea ; peace, with Clifford Lloyd for her administrator, and almost as many policemen as inhabitants to maintain her undisturbed dominion. So with Loughrea as the goal of our day's journey we took tickets for Ballinasloe, intending there to leave the train and drive across the country. We travelled with a labouring man, who had gone over to England for the harvest, as he could there earn 4s. a day, in place of the 1s. which was the remuneration for his day's work (that is, when he could get any employment) at home. I wondered whether this could be called idleness, yet the landlords say that the labourers are idle, and the landlords are honourable men. This particular labourer, whose fine, intelligent face struck me very much, had been obliged to return to his home before the end of the harvest, having unfortunately fallen over a scythe and inflicted a terrible wound on his leg. It was a mystery to me how he could walk at all, and he was evidently in great pain ; but he had tied up his wound with a handkerchief in a miserably clumsy fashion, and to my

horror said that he had seen no doctor, and would not so until he reached home, miles beyond Westport, the last station on the line. His foot and leg were a dreadful sight, but he had wished not to waste on himself the money earned in harvesting, which he had intended for his wife and children on the other side of Westport. This did not look like wastefulness or extravagance ; yet the landlords say the tenants are wasteful, and the landlords are all honourable men. I wished that I had gone through a course of ambulance lectures, and learned something of surgery ; but I could do nothing beyond making the man promise to have his leg bandaged at Westport, and presenting him with a fee for the doctor there. He was not even smoking to divert his thoughts from his pain, for tobacco cost money, and that he wanted for his wife ; so George gave him a cigar, which puzzled and amused him considerably, as he made vain attempts to smoke it without cutting off the end, his former experiences of smoking not having gone beyond a pipe.

The train stopped at a great many stations, and at every station there were a great many police on the platform, assisting, as far as their presence went, at the arrival and departure of every train. This they always seem to do at the smallest stations in the most peaceable districts ; in fact, they are an all-pervading presence, and no picture of Irish scenery gives at all a correct impression unless the finest house in the foreground is a police barrack and the landscape is well peopled with constables. The only occasions on which they are conspicuous by their absence are those on which the long-suffering peasants retaliate on their oppressors by some dreadful agrarian outrage. With these unfortunate exceptions they may be said to be always on the spot ; but as with these identical exceptions Ireland is practically free from crime, it would seem to an outside observer that the large sums spent in maintaining in idleness this army of able-bodied policemen are rather more uselessly wasted than if they were thrown into the sea, where they would not serve to irritate the people against the Government by keeping up a perpetual system of petty tyranny in their midst

Be this as it may, however, we were carefully scanned by several members of the Royal Irish Constabulary as we alighted from the train at Ballinasloe, and proceeded to order a car to drive over to Loughrea. Indeed, extra vigilance in connection with railway passengers had lately been instilled into their ranks, for there was an exhibition of Irish manufactures shortly to be opened in Dublin, and no one could tell what desperate characters might be enticed from the country to the capital by an exhibition which was patronised rather by the Land League than by the lawful authorities. So the lawful authorities, by a judicious exercise of their characteristic tact, had issued an order to the police in all the country districts to furnish them with the number, the names, and the political opinions of all persons about to visit Dublin ; and hence a specially eager inspection of trains on their part, extending even to those passengers who were outward bound.

Ignorant, however, of the suspicion our appearance was exciting, we ordered some lunch at Ballinasloe (although it was obvious to the police that, if we had been really bent on any honest business, we might have brought it in our pockets from Dublin, and eaten it, without delay, in the train), and while the car was being got ready and the horse fed, we went, under the very noses of the watchful police, to call on Mr. Matthew Harris, then residing in the aforesaid village of Ballinasloe. Now this Mr. Harris was well known to the police as one of the traversers in the famous State trial along with Mr. Parnell and other bad characters of that description, so that any doubt which the police might at first have had of our object in visiting these dangerous districts was finally dispelled ; but, as they had no inspector at hand to direct their movements, they decided that it would be as well to throw all responsibility on the authorities at Loughrea, and accordingly telegraphed the news that a couple of desperate ruffians were coming, and that the Loughrea police must assemble in force and play the men on their arrival.

We, meanwhile, were having a most interesting talk with Mr. Harris, who held strong opinions about the state of the country and the responsibility of the landlords for its disturbed condition. He told us that in our drive of nearly twenty miles to Loughrea we should hardly pass a single house, for grazing was now more profitable to the landlords than agriculture, and they had therefore exterminated the inhabitants in order to add a few pounds to their rents. This had happened more than once in the history of the country, and the culture had been changed from corn to grass, and *vice versâ*, whenever a profit might be expected from the alteration, and without any reference to the rights of the unfortunate tenants. He was enthusiastic about the good qualities of the Irish people, who would make a splendid nation, and he was most anxious that they should think for themselves, and not follow their leaders blindly in anything. As to the charge of idleness, he utterly denied it, and, on the other hand, charged the English with undervaluing intellectual recreation, and admiring nothing but physical capacity for work—a quality in which they were easily surpassed by that patient animal the ass.

We parted on excellent terms, and started on our drive entirely ignorant of the reception which the fates and the police were preparing for us at the other end of our journey. We drove through a rich tract of country, and saw, as had been predicted, scarcely a single house. The district had formerly been full of people, and was now inhabited by sheep. Ruins of houses we occasionally saw, but these had been almost entirely obliterated, and the stones used for the walls which intersect the country. Reddish-brown stains in these stones would sometimes indicate that they had once formed the chimney of a cottage, in which a farmer's family had maintained the peat-fire on the hearth till its smoke had left a lasting mark which the weather had as yet been unable to destroy. Few and far between, we now and then saw the cottages of the herdsmen, and at one of these we stopped and inquired of its occupant concerning his condition and livelihood. He was one of those courteous and gentlemanly peasants of whom there seem to be so many specimens in Ireland, and he readily told us the terms on which he worked for his bread. The work which he gave to his landlord was the supervision of 180 acres of grass land, with the care of 100 sheep and 50 cattle. The wages he received in return consisted of a cottage and three acres of land rent free. Out of these three acres he managed to make a fair livelihood by cultivating them in the time which he could spare from the management of the 100 sheep and the 50 cattle on the 180 acres of grazing land. We asked after his crop of potatoes, and he said that the blight was in them, but not so bad as it might be.

About this time our driver, who had taken the opportunity to refresh himself as well as his horse during the interval of our lunch and talk with Mr. Harris, became very 'sleepy'—a fact of which we were made aware by the eccentric conduct of the horse, which twice preferred to turn aside into grassy lanes that led nowhere rather than keep steadily along the hard high road. So we deposed him from his seat as driver, and put him to sleep comfortably on the cushions, warning him at the same time to hold on well, for an Irish car is not well adapted to give safe accommodation to sleepers. But, alas ! our warnings were unheeded, and before long a heavy thud was heard, and the driver was seen sprawling on his back in the dust in the middle of the road, groaning sadly. However, he was more frightened than hurt, and after this rude awakening took more care to hold on for the rest of the way. We saw nothing remarkable by the way, except a police hut erected at the roadside for the better protection of those who go out from and come into Loughrea. These police huts on the one side and the Land League huts on the other make quite a new feature in the scenery, partly resembling the cab-men's shelters which may be seen in the streets of London.

Moralising on these huts and their causes and objects, we drove into the village of Loughrea, and immediately noticed that here the police were even more plentiful than at the

railway stations. Not for an instant supposing this fact had any connection with our arrival, we drove up to the door of the hotel and dismounted from our car. To our horror we then discovered that these numerous police were all converging upon one common centre, and that we ourselves were occupying that unenviable position. A sub-inspector in plain clothes suddenly advanced and informed us that we were arrested under the Prevention of Crime Act, and must instantly resume our seats on the car, in order to drive to a very different destination from that which we had proposed to ourselves when we started. It was useless to protest, and to ask at least to be told on what charge we were arrested. The only answer vouchsafed was, 'Get up instantly into the car.' There was nothing for it but to comply, so we climbed into our seats again. Two policemen with loaded rifles took their seats beside us; a procession of similarly armed constables walked before, behind, and on each side of us; and at the slow pace of a military funeral we proceeded through the main street of the village, a sight for all beholders. The people of the place, however, were too well accustomed to such sights to display much emotion, although they sympathised with any new victim who had the misfortune to fall into the clutch of their oppressors. We arrived at the police barracks and were placed in a small room, furnished with a table and a form, and with strong iron bars to its window. Here our pockets were carefully searched for papers and a minute examination of our luggage was made. In mine, besides the 'flannels,' they made the discovery of six clean white linen shirts, and this at once aroused their strongest suspicion. They asked me if I had supposed that it would be impossible to get a shirt washed in Ireland, and the question was certainly most apposite to the occasion, for in their zealous search for treasonable documents they thrust their dirty fingers into every fold of the aforesaid shirts, and made their speedy washing a thing of primary necessity. Having collected every scrap of paper that was to be found, they proceeded to examine their spoils. I was asked if I denied the authorship of a pamphlet on the land question which had been put into my hands in Dublin, and which I had not yet had time to read. This I accordingly did, and the statement was duly recorded. The sub-inspector and a constable, one after the other, read through every one of our private letters and diaries and note-books, and with some difficulty and much solemnity managed to spell out between them the only thing I was ashamed of—viz. some verses I had jotted down on a scrap of paper in imitation of the Irish national songs. When this was over, the sub-inspector departed, taking all our documents with him, and leaving us in the charge of a couple of constables. We were informed that as soon as a magistrate could be obtained our case should be tried before him, but when this would be was problematical.

It was now eight o'clock, and we had already been in custody for two hours and were getting hungry as well as tired. We asked if we might be guarded to the hotel, eat some dinner under police supervision, and return to the barracks in a less famished condition to defend our case before the magistrate when he should arrive. This was refused, so we modified our demands, and asked to be supplied with some bread and water, thinking that this, at least, was orthodox prison fare. Even this, however, could not be allowed, and our only resource was to try to forget our hunger, and to amuse ourselves as best we might by alternately sitting on our form and looking through the bars of our window into the court-yard. At last a policeman, whom I wish to take this opportunity of thanking, took pity on us, and procured at his own expense a glass of milk for each of us, and thus refreshed we hoped to be able shortly to face the magistrate. He was a long time coming, however—and time passes slowly to prisoners—but before he came we were allowed an interview with our late driver, who had come to the police-station with the double object of getting his pay and expressing his sympathy. He lamented over our misfortune, and earnestly hoped that we should soon be released; but there was no saying what the police might or might not do. This was cheering, but we could only wait. At nine o'clock Mr. Byrne arrived, the resident magistrate for the district, and informed us that it was by the merest chance that he was in the neighbourhood, and that otherwise we should have been necessarily locked up all night. Here was a great subject of

congratulation. Meanwhile preparations were made for our formal trial, for everything must be done regularly even under Coercion Acts, and all the evidence must be taken down in full on regular printed forms, of which there were none at hand, but which could not be replaced by ordinary foolscap paper, While these forms were being sent for, I made an informal statement of my aim and object in travelling through the country, and disclaimed all intention of committing an outrage at Loughrea, giving references to persons in authority which could be verified by the letters which the police had abstracted from me. Mr. Byrne was evidently anxious to get rid of us, and when the forms at last arrived he asked of the sub-inspector if, after having read our letters and listened to my statement, he still entertained suspicions of our criminal intent. To this he replied in the negative, and the magistrate had nothing more to do than to discharge us and express his regret for our arrest, after which we were free to return to our hotel. I asked Mr. Byrne to give me a letter to prevent the recurrence of such an unpleasant episode, and this he said he would do ; but when I received a letter from him later in the evening it only stated that he thought this sort of safe-conduct would be unnecessary. So the prospect was not very pleasant

The next day we visited a convent of Carmelites, a brotherhood of barefooted friars, who trace their origin from the schools of the prophets instituted by Elijah on Mount Carmel. We were shown over the place and its beautiful ivy-covered ruins by a most courteous friar dressed in the regular long flowing dark-brown robe. He was much interested in our experience of the police, and invited us to a vegetarian dinner, for by the rules of their Order they may not touch meat, and we dined with him and six other Carmelites, enjoying a most savoury feast, of which the chief dish was a stew of Spanish beans. In the evening we strolled about the town, and visited several shops from which ‘ suspects’ had been arrested after the murder of Mr. Blake, There were still about two dozen shopkeepers detained in prison on suspicion for this murder, although the priests assured us that most of them had been at Mass at the time.

At eight o’clock in the evening, when it was getting cool after a very hot day, we started on a car for Athenry, passing in the twilight several police huts loopholed for firing on the people if attacked, and the scenes of some very recent murders. It was getting dark when we came suddenly upon some police patrols, who were guarding the house of the widow of a man who was murdered for taking another man’s land. It was a beautiful night for driving, but the associations of the scenes that had been enacted there fastened on the fancy and spoilt the enjoyment. I could hardly consider that system of law and government satisfactory which had made it possible for the present state of things to arise. We talked to the driver about the murders, and could easily see that he regarded them as just executions for cruelty, tyranny, or the violation of unwritten but well-known laws. He said that if a man was notorious for harshness and cruelty, he was solemnly warned by a message from a secret assembly. If he would not amend his ways, he was warned again, and, if he still persisted, he received his final notice, and after that his sudden death might at any time ensue. He evidently considered that these three notices, which are always delivered to a man before his death is determined on, regularised the proceedings, and took away from them any imputation of lawlessness to which they might otherwise have been open.

Arrest and Trial of Mr. George at Athenry.

WE drove into the village of Athenry, where, finding the atmosphere close after the heat of the day, we strolled up and down in front of the hotel, and were carefully followed and watched by our old friends the police, who at once began to suspect an opportunity for distinguishing themselves. We knew, however, that telegraphic information of the circumstances of our previous arrest had already been supplied to them, and accordingly felt secure from a repetition of the annoyance, though it was impossible to discover the exact nature of the information, as the magistrate who had discharged us at Loughrea had expressly told us, when we asked on what grounds we had been arrested, that the police would not give any answer to this question, and that he was not even at liberty to ask it.

Next morning we breakfasted with a magistrate, who told us that he was going about the country to try cases under the Coercion Act. He had been a barrister, and it seems necessary that in pronouncing sentences of hard labour one of the magistrates present should have legal knowledge. He justified the wholesale arrest of respectable shopkeepers at Loughrea after the murder of Mr. Blake, although they were at Mass at the time, on the somewhat unsatisfactory grounds that those who ordered their arrest knew more about the matter than we did. Our own experience of the 'reliable information' of inspectors of the police did not lead to a similar conclusion ; and it is a well-known fact that some constables, eager for promotion, and unscrupulous in their methods of attaining it, have dictated to their private friends the reliable information with which they wish to be furnished by them.

After breakfast I went out into the town to look at its interesting old walls and ruins, and had a talk with the head constable of the place ; and it is to this conversation that I ascribed my immunity from arrest at Athenry. On returning to the hotel I found Mr. George talking to the curate, who declared that I had already been taken for a detective, and that my talk and walk with the constable would strengthen this idea, and effectually prevent my obtaining information from the people. We went out together, and strolled about the town, passing on our way some houses in course of erection. I had seen a great many houses in ruins, but no building as yet, so I stopped and asked the contractor for whom they were intended. He replied shortly, and we passed on ; but this short conversation had been carefully noted by the police, who were following us as usual at some little distance, and gathering grounds of suspicion which might be described as reasonable and culminate in an arrest. For this contractor was a man of the name of Brodrick, who had been imprisoned for some time in Galway Gaol as a suspect, and lately released, because an influential person in Athenry wanted to get these houses built, and there was no one else in the place who was competent to undertake the job. In happy ignorance that we had been speaking to a suspicious character, we went on to the house of a man named Madden, who had been boycotted by the local branch of the Land League for having taken some land from which the previous tenant had been evicted.

Having as yet seen nothing of this system of boycotting obnoxious individuals, I was glad to talk with the man, thus confirming the previous suspicions of the police ; though, as no one else in the place would speak to the man at all, this conversation ought to have counted as a point in our favour, but the police are not bound to be logical. I compared this man's account with that of Kinneen, the former tenant, and the facts seem to have been as follows : Kinneen had held a farm for twenty-one years at 70*l.* rent, but the landlord now asked 100*l.* for it. This increase of rent Kinneen refused to pay, as the higher value of the land was owing to his own improvements, and he was accordingly evicted. Upon this Madden had taken a portion of the farm, and this is just the proceeding which has so often led to the commission of outrages in Ireland before the existence of the Land League, when its powerful organisation could not be

brought to bear upon the offenders against its unwritten laws. It is obvious that, if new tenants could always be found when the old are evicted, there would be no security whatever against rack-renting in its worst forms ; and it seems manifest that the lesser penalty of boycotting has saved many a man from becoming the victim of an outrage. Accordingly the local Land League determined to boycott the man Madden ; and, as he was a blacksmith, they erected a new forge, to which all the village went to have their horses shod. He told me that he had lost 200*l.* by it, and ‘ had such a bother, that he was afeared, and applied for police protection,’ and after being guarded for some time was finally driven to give up the land again, and now no longer needed protection. Four young men who had been active for the League had been arrested as suspects when this new forge was put up, and were still in Galway Prison.

While talking to the man I happened to cast my eyes on his cow, and noticed that it was in the same condition as the Manx cats. Considerably horrified, I inquired if it had been the victim of an outrage, for I had been told in England that I should find almost all the Irish cattle tailless, but had as yet seen nothing of this grotesque and cruel form of retaliation on their owners. However, he hastened to assure me that his cow’s condition was the result of accident, not of outrage, and that it had no connection with his present trouble ; and during the remainder of my tour I never once saw any animal that had been maltreated in this or any other way. Horrible outrages there have certainly been, but they have been much less frequent than is commonly supposed in England.

While talking to this man I noticed a cavalcade of policemen armed with rifles on the road to Loughrea. In the midst of it was a car in which I recognised our two magisterial acquaintances—Mr. Byrne, who had discharged us at Loughrea, and Mr. Lyster, who had talked to us that morning. We proceeded with the curate to pay a visit to a ruined abbey which is now only used as a burial ground ; and, finding the ruins extremely interesting, we stayed a considerable time in the grateful shade of its ivy-coloured arches, for the day was one of the hottest in August. But an eye was upon us when we entered its walls, and the ever-vigilant police made due record of the fact that we had spent a considerable time in a graveyard without any ostensible object, and unaccompanied by any one whose condition required the performance of the funeral service. Here, if anywhere, were reasonable grounds for strong suspicion, but the police were wary and still preferred to bide their time, hoping finally to confront us with the overwhelming evidence which they had diligently amassed.

At mid-day we retired to our inn, and were regaled by the curate on a repast of bread and butter and a cooling beverage compounded of innocent ingredients, soda water and raspberry wine. We purposed to take the train at one to Galway, and just before we started for the station Mr. George, in want of a shirt-stud, went rapidly into three shops in succession to buy one, succeeding in his object at the third shop. Now these three identical shops happened to belong to three people whom the police considered suspicious characters, and this unfortunate hunt after a button added the last link to their chain of evidence, which was now complete. However, with such a notable prisoner as Mr. George things must not be done in a corner, and they decided that the greatest glory would redound to themselves, and the maximum of inconvenience be inflicted on their victim, if they arrested him among the crowds at the station after he had actually taken his ticket for Galway. They knew how to bide their time, and could sympathise with the feelings of a cat that plays with its mouse. So in all ignorance we drove to the station and took our tickets, though we noticed that the presence of the police seemed even more pervading than before. The train arrived, and I had already put in our luggage and taken our places, when I observed that my friend was not on the platform, and in fact I could see nothing but police. Just as the train was starting he reappeared, and told me that he had been again arrested, and that his captor, a youth of about twenty-one

years of age, had permitted him to come and inform me of the fact. This young sub-inspector also advanced, and told me very politely that he must detain my friend, but that I was free to continue my journey ; or, in case I preferred to remain, he could offer me a seat on the police car to drive back to the barracks. I accepted this kind proposal, and hurriedly saved the luggage from going on alone to Galway ; and for the second time we drove through gazing crowds, guarded on all sides by armed police.

On arriving at the police barracks Mr. George was shut up, while the usual search for treasonable documents began, although the inspector was well aware that this had already been done most minutely at Loughrea less than forty-eight hours ago. However, he read all his papers and note-books, and gathered evidence from the latter which he could present with pride before any magistrate. Meanwhile there was no magistrate to be had, for Mr. Byrne had departed to Loughrea, and telegraphed that he could not be back before seven o'clock. There was nothing to be done but to wait, my friend in the guard-room, and myself at the inn. I was allowed to pay him occasional visits, and I occupied the intervals in strolling about and conversing with the people, who had immense sympathy for any one who was in difficulties with the police. Exactly in front of the barracks stands the only pump in the whole village, and to this pump the barefooted women and girls were continually coming to fill their various pails and pans. The pump was worked by a huge wheel, which it taxed all their energies to turn ; and I was rather indignant with the group of stalwart policemen who were always lounging at the door of their station with nothing on earth to do, while the women and children struggled with the wheel. So thinking that example was better than precept, I offered to turn it for an old woman who was waiting with her pail ; but I soon found that I was in for a harder task than I had expected, for as fast as one pail was full another was presented, and I could not refuse to fill it ; and the succession of empty pails was kept up by the women until I had worked for nearly half an hour, earning showers of blessings, and causing huge amusement, especially among the police.

About five o'clock the inspector announced that he would take my friend before Major Lopdell, J. P., who might perhaps be persuaded to hear the case ; although the ordinary magistrates generally refuse to do anything under the Coercion Act, from a wholesome fear of burning their fingers with it, and getting into hot water either with the Government or the people. Accordingly we drove off to his residence outside the town, entered some beautiful grounds, and ascertained to our annoyance that the Major was out. However, just at the nick of time he was seen returning, and the inspector informed him of the state of the case. To our astonishment he declared that he had business of his own which would occupy him until seven o'clock, the precise time when he knew Mr. Byrne would be back from Loughrea, a most curious coincidence. I ventured to tell him that as he was a magistrate his business was to attend to us ; but, without stopping to argue the point, he turned and went off rapidly across his fields. There was no help for it, so we drove back again, though the inspector admitted that it was his duty to hear the case ; and, on arriving again at the barracks, he stretched a point of discipline, and allowed my friend to accompany me to the inn under police supervision, and there partake of any refreshment he might prefer. After this interlude he was again locked up, and the time wore slowly away until past eight o'clock, when Mr. Byrne returned with his escort of police, and soon after arrived at the barracks. Preparations were made for hearing and recording evidence, but the accommodation was miserably limited, and the trial was adjourned by consent to a private room in the hotel, whither we all proceeded.

The trial was opened by Inspector Bell, who brought forward his suspicions, and confirmed them by the sworn testimony of various constables. All the proceedings were formally taken down by a policeman, and this caused considerable delay, for he was not a quick writer.

The inspector produced a pamphlet on the Land Question, written by Mr. George, and containing some scandalous statements which tended to show that rent was only another form of robbery, and that the State was the true owner of the soil, which private individuals ought not to be allowed to monopolise. He had busily marked special passages in this treasonable pamphlet, which he put in evidence as a whole, although parts were particularly objectionable. Evidence was given that the prisoner had spoken to Brodrick, the builder, and Madden, the blacksmith, though neither of these facts was correct, as I was the culprit in both cases. Evidence was given that his note-book contained suspicious names and addresses, and that there was a most suspicious F. C. appended to some names not otherwise objectionable, letters which could surely mean nothing more or less than Fenian Centre. Evidence was also given that he had visited the abbey graveyard, and stayed a long time there without ostensible reason in company with suspicious characters, viz. Father MacPhilpin, the curate, and myself ; and, finally, that he had entered the shops of three more suspicious persons, and had entries in his note-book referring to the late murders at Loughrea. This closed the inspector's case, and it was now Mr. George's turn to reply to it as best he could.

He began by asking the magistrate to dismiss it at once as a frivolous and foolish charge. But this he refused to do, saying that there seemed to be some ground for the inspector's suspicions. So Mr. George made a detailed statement, saying that he was the correspondent of an American paper, and that the note-book was simply used to found his letters upon ; that his acquaintance was wide, and included men who might be called suspicious, whose names the inspector had picked out from several hundred others ; that the suspicious letters were not F. C, but T. C, and were intended for Town Councillor instead of Fenian Centre ; that he had visited the ruined abbey for the purpose of inspecting the ruins, and without knowing that the curate was a suspicious character ; that he had not spoken either to Brodrick or Madden ; that he had gone into suspicious shops with the harmless intention of buying a button, which button he bought at the last of the three, and now produced for the magistrate's inspection ; that the entry in his note-book about the murders was for the same purpose as the very next entry about the bees and the vegetarians of the Carmelite Convent at Loughrea ; and, finally, that his pamphlet could not be judged by excerpted passages torn from their context, but that he would be happy to present every one in the room with a copy for perusal at their own leisure, which copies he accordingly handed round at once. This was his answer to the charge, and the magistrate was about to give his decision, when Inspector Bell, who had been looking very much annoyed at the prospect of his prisoner's release, suggested that the entry in the note-book about bees, &c, might have been added after our first arrest, to give the book a more peaceable character, and that the prisoner might have known that one of the shops did not sell buttons. However, to his great chagrin the magistrate decided that, although there were grounds for his suspicion, the prisoner had cleared himself, and was accordingly discharged ; and at precisely eleven o'clock we returned to our hotel, after Mr. George had been in custody for ten hours.

The next morning we made a more successful start for Galway, travelling with the parish priest of Athenry. He told us that we ought to have come to him for information instead of to his curate, as any friends of his were quite safe from the police, and that ' he cared no more for the peelers than he did for Queen Victoria of England.' He was very hard on the police as a body, declaring that they had all the vices of the military and none of their virtues. I said that I had seen some good fellows among them, but to this he replied, ' Sir, if you go down below, and shake the place well, you will find *some* good fellows, but as a class they are bad.' He was very indignant at the bad name which had been given to his parish, saying it was only owing to its proximity to Loughrea ; as correspondents come to the hotel at Athenry, and with that as their head-quarters send descriptions to the papers of the state of the neighbouring district. As to his own parish, he asserted with great emphasis, ' Sorra an outrage has taken

place in all Athenry since the creation of cats, and we all know they were made before Irishmen.’

We travelled through a stony, depopulated country, and at last arrived at Galway. In the afternoon we took a car and drove to a village in the neighbourhood, first watching the salmon waiting in numbers beneath the bridge to leap the falls and go up Lough Corrib. Just as we were driving out of the town, the young fellow who had called the car for us ran up and informed us in an impressive whisper that a man had just been at our hotel asking in what direction we had gone, and that that man was—a policeman. However, we did not disquiet ourselves for the matter, but drove on to our destination, where, while Mr. George went to see some people whose friends he had known in America, I had an interview with the priest. He was, as usual, very courteous, and glad to give any information about the state of his parishioners. He said that, so far from being idle, they worked like slaves, especially at this season of the year, beginning at 4 A.M. and going on till late in the evening. They were a very good set of people, and in all his large parish there had not been a case of immorality for the last forty years. They were poor, and some of them had to pay very high rents, though only one had been evicted, and he had been a tenant of the notorious Blake, who was murdered at Loughrea. His rent had been 17*l.*, though the valuation was only 4*l.*, and his land was too wet to feed sheep. He had kept a few cattle, but these he had sold one by one to pay the rent when the bad seasons came ; and then he could pay nothing, and was promptly evicted. There were many tenants in this parish who owed several years’ rent, and were quite unable to pay. The Arrears Bill would help most of them, but he knew one or two who could not take advantage of this, having nothing whatever; but to these he intended to lend a year’s rent, and so give them a fresh start.

The adventures of a tourist in Ireland (1882)

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