

Speaking of Cork 1814

Narrative of A Residence in Ireland

During The Summer of 1814, And that of 1815.

Author of

Narrative of A Three Years' residence in France, etc.

Anne Plumptre

1814

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Antiquity of the City of Cork.—Origin of the Name.—Ancient and present State of the Town.—The Buildings.—The Bridges.—St. Finbarr.—The Cork Institution.—Articles of Commerce.—New Mode of preparing Flax.—Beauty of the Environs of Cork.—Urbanity of the Inhabitants.—Mr. Kean much admired there.—Anecdote of a Sailor at Drury Lane Theatre.

IN speaking of Cork it would perhaps be wrong to call it a very ancient city, since it exhibits scarcely any remains of antiquity, but in its present appearance gives exactly the idea of what it is, a very prosperous and flourishing commercial town. Yet in very remote times there was a settlement here ; if not before the Danish inroads, certainly during the time of their usurpation. Like many other places, the ground on which the city stands was entirely a marsh ; and such spots being called in the ancient Irish language *corcass grounds*, hence it is believed the town derives its name of *Cork*. To this day among the lower classes in those parts of Ireland where the original language prevails, marshes have the same appellation of *corcass grounds*. Some, however, believe the name is derived from *corcach*, as the ancient boats made of wattles covered with hides were called ; and this town being probably at first a settlement of fishers, they called their town after their boats. In some ancient documents it is called *Corcach*.

The principal part of the city stands on an island formed by the river Lee, which separates into two branches more than a mile above the town, and unites again below it. Formerly the town was intersected by a number of canals ; cut, as some say, to drain the land, according to others, for purposes of commerce : whatever was the intent of them, they were found, instead of a convenience, a nuisance to the town ; the filth from the houses being thrown into them, and occasioning terrible putrid exhalations. They have, in consequence, through the interposition of the magistrates, been all filled up. It is generally believed that the Danish city was confined entirely to the island ; that it was walled round, and well fortified ; but since Cork has risen into note as a place of commerce, it has been extended every way much beyond the limits of the island. Nor does any trace of the ancient walls remain ; one gate-way only is standing upon the north or main branch of the river ; it is used now as the city gaol.

In the time of Queen Elizabeth Cork was considered as only the fourth city in Ireland. It is thus described by Cambden :—“ This city is of an oval form, inclosed with walls, and encompassed by the channel of the river, which also crosses it, and is not accessible but by bridges, lying along, as it were, in one direct street, with a bridge over it. It is a *populous little trading town*, and much resorted to ; but so beset with rebel enemies on all sides, that they are obliged to keep constant watch, as if the town was continually besieged : and they dare not marry out their daughters into the country, but contract one with another among

themselves, whereby all the citizens are related in some degree or other." At that time Limerick and Waterford were considered as the second and third cities in Ireland ; but the *little populous trading town* has so much increased since the time it was thus described, that it now ranks as the second city, and is called the Bristol of Ireland, while Limerick and Waterford are thrown each a step lower in the ladder, and become the third and fourth.

From the gate now standing a street called the *Main-street* runs directly through the town to the south channel, where was another gate. At each gate was a bridge ; and these were the only accesses to the town. In 1633 great part of the bridge over the north channel was carried away by a flood. It was replaced by a wooden bridge ; and this again was taken down in 1712, when the present, a handsome stone bridge, was erected in its place. Since that a draw-bridge has also been built over the main channel, more at the east end of the town. This is now the principal entrance from Dublin. Two additional bridges have also been built over the south channel. To the east of the main street, where one of the canals from the south channel ran up, is a handsome wide street called the *Grand Parade* ; at the end of which runs a stone balustrade along the river-side. Just at the centre of the balustrade stands an equestrian statue of King George the Second, but it is a very poor one.

There is not much to be said for the architectural beauty of any of the public buildings. The Exchange is in a dirty bad part of the town, but has little to display if it were in a better. The old Custom-house is ugly ; a red-brick building, with white pilasters : but a new one which was begun, is expected to be very handsome. The churches have little to boast of, not even the cathedral—half modern, half antique, they have neither the grandeur of the one, nor the neatness and prettiness of the other. The town is upon the whole recommendable to the eye only as having a general appearance of comfort and prosperity, not as offering any particular subjects to dwell upon.

The first extension of the city was on the north side of the river. The rocks here are steep ; but just opposite to the old bridge a sort of dell runs up for some way, where lie the principal part of the suburbs on this side. Lately, however, extensive barracks have been erected on the heights directly opposite the drawbridge, where indeed the ascent is so steep, particularly towards the top, that a carriage could with difficulty get up; it should seem as if the idea was, that the barracks were to be frequented principally by asses and mules. A handsome street is begun, running along the side of the declivity about a third of the way up. It is somewhat extraordinary, considering the city is doubled in magnitude within a century and a half, that the number of churches should be diminished: there were once eleven; there are now only seven, six parish churches and the cathedral. This does indeed seem a scanty provision for a population estimated upon the lowest computation at a hundred thousand : some carry it to a hundred and twenty thousand, but that seems generally thought an exaggeration. The old cathedral was dedicated to St Finbarr, a saint who flourished, according to tradition, in the seventh century, and by him the church was founded. A life of him in manuscript, written in Latin, is to be seen in the library of Trinity-college at Dublin, which says that his real name was Lachan ; that he was so baptized, and that he was a native of Connaught. Finbarr signifies *white-or gray-headed* and there are no less than seven of the name enumerated among the saints of Ireland ; but he of Cork was the chief of them. As a saint is nothing without a miracle, the following is recorded of him :—A knight having seized some lands belonging to his see of Cork, and sowed them with barley, he went to him, and adjured him in the name of God and all the saints to surrender them again. This being refused, he prayed with tears and uplifted hands that the seed sown in them might never come to harvest. So it happened, for not a grain of the corn was seen to shoot from the earth. The knight perceiving this, and finding he could not turn his theft to any account, was in a proper situation to repent, which he did, and restored the land. The saint then had it sown with wheat, but instead of the wheat a barley crop appeared ; upon which, not doubting but if the land was left unsown the next year the wheat would come up, he ordered that it should be so ; and the event proved

him not mistaken—a very fine crop of wheat came forth at the proper season. The old cathedral had fallen so entirely to decay, that about a century ago it was pulled down, and the present one in the modern taste built. There are many charitable institutions in the city, as hospitals, endowed schools and others.

A Society has been formed within a few years, called the Cork Institution, which is now incorporated by charter, for the purpose of directing the application of the sciences to all the most important uses of common life. Having among several letters of introduction here, one to Dr. Willes, an eminent physician of the town, he obligingly recommended me to Mr. Davy, cousin to Sir Humphry Davy, who is at the head of the chemical department, and he showed me over the whole Institution. Considering that it has not been established more than eight or nine years, a great deal has been done : there is a very well selected library, to which additions are constantly made ; and a museum, at present consisting principally of a good collection of minerals, but where any thing rare that circumstances allow of being added is to be deposited. There are also a philosophical apparatus, and a very excellent laboratory. Lectures are given at certain times of the year in chemistry, experimental philosophy, agriculture, and botany. Just without the town is a botanic garden, which promises in a few years to be a very good one.

The great staple article of commerce in this place is the salting provisions for sea-stores. The curing, season commences about October, and lasts for three months, in which about a hundred thousand head of black-cattle are annually sacrificed, besides a proportionate quantity of hogs. Raw and prepared hides are in consequence a considerable article of trade. Butter and candles for the navy are also supplied. There are in the town large manufactories of sail-cloth, coarse woollen cloths, paper, glass, and glue, all which articles are also exported. A good deal of flax is grown in these parts, and linen manufactories are carried on, but not to the extent they might be. A new discovery had just been made in preparing flax, which promised to be of very great importance. It was to clear the fibres used for the linen without the process of steeping the flax. This was performed by means of machinery. A small piece of the flax thus prepared, ready to be spun, was given to me. It is of the most beautiful texture imaginable ; the fibres delicately fine, and so nearly white, that scarcely any bleaching would be required. In delicacy it is indeed almost equal to the raw silk, as wound from the cots of the worms. The advantages of this mode of preparing the flax, if it can be brought into general use, will be incalculable. By avoiding the steeping it in the ditches till it becomes putrid, the flax-countries will be relieved from an almost insupportable nuisance. It is impossible to conceive any thing more horrible than the effluvia emitted by it when taken from the ditches and spread out to be dried. The year before when I was in the county of Antrim, one of the great linen countries, it happening to be the time of preparing the flax, I was sometimes almost made ill with the stench ; no one who has not been in the way of it can have an idea how offensive it is. Besides the removal of so great an evil by the new process, the fibres never having been reduced to this putrid state are much stronger, and the linen, instead of being of the dark hue which requires such excessive time and labour to bleach it, thereby still further weakening the cloth, would scarcely demand the bleaching process at all ; one which of late years, from the chemical applications used, has spoiled many a web.

What progress has been made in bringing this discovery to perfection, or whether any, I have not heard ; probably, if ever perfected, great difficulty will be experienced in bringing it into general use ;—a new discovery, how manifest soever may be the advantages, always has an immense mass of prejudice to overcome before it can be finally established ; and here the interests of two classes of people will be so materially affected, that they will be sure to raise every possible obstacle to its success. Imprimis ; the linen manufacturers, whose market will be lessened by the superior wear of the linen : and secondly, the bleachers, whose trade will be reduced almost to nothing. Since the consumer is to be the person principally benefited, he will be prevented enjoying the benefit as long as it shall be possible.

If much cannot be said of the beauty of Cork, as the eye alone is concerned, a great deal may be said as to the beauty of the environs, and the hospitality and urbanity of the inhabitants. The river to the east of the town, going down towards the harbour, is bordered on both sides with beautiful villas, each of which, in enjoying so many charms of situation itself, contributes to render that of their neighbours more charming. The whole way along the north side of the river to the village of Glanmire already mentioned, is a succession of villas ranged along a rapid slope ; the slope coming so nearly to the river that there is only the breadth of the road at its foot. This is undoubtedly the most beautiful quarter ; standing on such an eminence, the houses command a noble prospect over to the opposite shore, and down the river to the islands going towards the harbour, while at the same time the slopes furnish a prodigious advantage in laying out and embellishing the grounds. To a family living at one of these villas, that of Mr. Callaghan at Lota-beg, about two miles from the town, I was favoured with a letter of introduction by my friend Mr. Walker. They have, indeed, a most charming house and sweet place, where I was very obligingly entertained. With another letter of introduction I was less fortunate, to Dr. Gibbon, a physician, celebrated for his hospitality to strangers ; unfortunately he was at this time absent. But, indeed, wherever I went in Ireland I did not find that many recommendations were necessary ; one was sufficient to procure so many acquaintance as to leave only a single subject of regret,—that it was often impossible to accept all the civilities offered.

Again here I met Mr. and Mrs. Kean. Mr. Kean had been enchanting the society at Cork, as much as he had twice enchanted that of Dublin, for a fortnight before I arrived. This city from very early times has been noted for its love of theatrical amusements, and has been accustomed to them in a style superior to most country towns. The theatre is only open in summer, when that at Dublin is closed ; the best of the Dublin company are then engaged, with the addition, commonly, of some of the most distinguished performers from the London theatres. Thus, accustomed to the best exhibitions of the kind which can be procured, the frequenters of the theatre are become remarkably good judges of dramatic merit, nor have I any where seen such judicious criticisms upon Mr. Kean's acting as in the Cork papers. But here, as at Dublin and in London, he had a formidable task to encounter ; in combating, by his natural style of acting, the prejudice long created in favour of the artificial style from seeing it carried to so much perfection by Mr. Kemble. Yet *Nature* restored, did triumph, and was acknowledged to be superior to *Art*, how finely soever that art was touched. It was difficult to say whether the theatre was most crowded at night to witness Mr. Kean's performances, or his own house in the mornings to compliment him upon them. At his benefit the house was so crowded that the treasurer, when he came to give in his account of the receipts, said that it was *fuller than it could hold*. This may be thought to savour a little of the country in which it was said ; it was nevertheless so true, that people crowded themselves together, and put many more into a box than the number for which it is usually let

Yet though a fondness for the drama has always prevailed at Cork, there was no regular theatre till the year 1736. What was then built was soon found to be upon too small a scale, so that in about five-and-twenty years a second was established, the same that now exists, and the original one was converted to other purposes. In time of war, when the harbour is commonly full of vessels, the present theatre is sometimes found too small. Sailors are generally observed to be exceedingly fond of theatrical amusements, partly perhaps that they are always somewhat at a loss how to kill time when they are ashore. However, of the modes of killing it offered to their choice, this seems to be one for which they have a decided preference.— Once in the pit of Drury-lane theatre, when Mr. Kean was performing his favourite character of Richard the Third, I observed a sailor not far from me uncommonly attentive ; every look, every word, was eagerly devoured by him, till at last he could contain himself no longer, and exclaimed aloud, “ *God bless the man, I declare he deserves a whole pint of grog.* ” A higher compliment I believe the son of Neptune did not think could be paid, and I never witnessed one that seemed to come more truly from the heart.

At Mr. Kean's house, two or three days after my arrival, I oddly enough met with, and was introduced to a gentleman, Mr. Harrison, to whom and his family, but for an accidental circumstance, I should have had a regular letter of recommendation. Mrs. Harrison is sister to Mrs. William Monk Mason, mentioned in the former part of my Narrative ; and when I then talked of following my tour to the North by one to the South, Mrs. Mason obligingly wrote to her sister mentioning me, and recommending me to her notice. Mr. and Mrs. Mason were, however, absent from Dublin this year when I was there, so that nothing more could pass between us upon the subject, and I failed of my letter to Mrs. Harrison. But Mr. Harrison recollecting, the moment he heard my name, that I had talked of coming the year before, introduced himself to me, and carried me to his house to present me to his family. I found them all most pleasant people ; two young ladies were among Mr. Kean's most enthusiastic admirers. I could not trace any likeness in Mrs. Harrison to her sister, though not less handsome.

Mr. Harrison's house is just without the town, on an eminence called Sandyswell Hill, commanding a fine view over the city. He conducted me to it by the great mall of the place, the Mardyke walk : it is an avenue of elm-trees, an English mile in length, running between the two branches of the river, terminating near a weir, where they separate. This weir is formed by a vast bank of stones, the water pouring down only in two places, where there are bridges of planks ; here we crossed to ascend the hill.

On inquiry into what among the sights of Cork I had and what I had not seen, Blarney-castle was mentioned ; and as I had not been there, the family said that we must make a party thither, and we went accordingly a few days after. The term *All Blarney*, for *all bounce and rhodomontade*, is so familiar in Ireland, nay, even in England, that I should have thought scarcely any one could be unacquainted with the name at least of Blarney ; yet thus it is mentioned by Sir John Carr : " About four miles before we reached Cork, my *compagnon-de-voyage* pointed out to me Blarney-castle, upon a turret of which there is a stone nearly inaccessible, which possesses, it is said, the rare virtue of making those for ever happy who touch it." Indeed I believe such a *virtue* was never before or since ascribed to the celebrated *Blarney stone*. The virtue I have always heard ascribed to it is, that whoever kisses it may allow himself to run into fiction as much as he pleases, (though Fielding would perhaps say that the term *run into fiction* would be better expressed by a *monosyllable of three* letters,)—no matter, whichever term is to be used, the virtue of the Blarney Stone is, that after kissing it, how much soever the *kisser* may indulge in fiction he is certain of being believed ; and if afterwards he should plunge into the Shannon, all may be done without danger of a blush.

To Blarney then : we went. This was formerly-a very strong castle, the seat of the Earls of Clancarty, but forfeited by them with a great deal of other property, for their adherence to James the Second. It was afterwards purchased of the crown by Sir James Jefferys, in whose family it still, remains, though the present possessor was at this time endeavouring to dispose of the estate. It is described in old writings as having been in Queen Elizabeth's time one of the strongest fortresses in Munster, being composed of four large piles joined in one. Of the ancient building only one tower remains, a square of perhaps twenty or five-and-twenty feet. To this a modern building has been added as a dwelling-house ; but the place, has been entirely deserted for many years and is falling miserably to decay ; indeed, the more modern part seems very likely to fall before the ancient : Readers, beware! I did not find the *Blarney stone* by any means *inaccessible*, but perfectly easy of access. It is at the highest pinnacle of the old tower, with a very good winding stone staircase up to it. I ascended and. kissed it ; I have warned, you of the consequence and again I say, *Reader's beware !* In the house is a fine original whole-length picture of Charles the Twelfth King of Sweden, brought over by James Jefferys, Esq. son to: Sir. William Jefferys, the purchaser of the estate, who was envoy at the court of Sweden. This extraordinary character appears exactly such as he is described by i Voltaire in his most entertaining Life of him ; the countenance full of fire, but extremely

wild ; truly characteristic of the man. Alas! this valuable picture is suffering with every thing else from damp and neglect.

No place has greater capabilities of being rendered one of the most enchanting spots in the world. Were the old castle fitted up, and it has walls of a thickness which Time itself would with difficulty destroy ; between that and what has been added, an excellent house might be made ; and such are the natural advantages of the grounds, that very little would be wanting to render them truly beautiful. There have been delightful shrubberies, which might easily be restored. The castle stands on a rock, not very high, and below are fine meadows, with an ample stream flowing through them : there is plenty of wood, and a considerable lake at a short distance from the house, which furnishes excellent trout :—in short, Nature has left little for Art to supply ; and yet this charming spot is deserted, abandoned, looking wholly neglected and forlorn. Though I kissed the Blarney stone, I am not here exaggerating. The country beyond the immediate precincts of the castle is not very good ; the slopes are pretty, but they are destitute of the greatest ornament to them,—wood. This place lies to the north-west of Cork.

The ground on the south side of the Lee is not so high as on the north side, but abounds alike with beautiful villas. Between two and three miles to the east, along this side, is Black-Rock, a point running down into the river, whence there is a very good view of the city. The rock is not lofty. A strong castle or fort was built here by the Lord Mountjoy in the reign of James the First, for the defence of the city : at present, the harbour being so fortified as to preclude any necessity of fortifications up the river, this is only used as a place of entertainment for parties. The mayor of Cork is by his office admiral of the harbour, and his courts of admiralty are held here ; for which purpose, about seventy or eighty years ago, the sum of three hundred pounds was expended by the city in repairing the tower and making a handsome room for his use. On the first of August a grand entertainment is given at the Black-Rock by the city to the whole corporation. At a very pretty villa near this spot live Lady Chatterton and her daughters : she is the widow of Sir William Chatterton, a name much distinguished in his profession, the law. With this lady I had the pleasure of becoming acquainted by meeting her at Mr. Keans house, and from her I received, in conjunction with Mr. and Mrs. Kean, great civilities : she is indeed a most pleasing amiable woman, truly a gentlewoman, and has three charming daughters, one married and two single. Her house stands very pleasantly, looking directly over the river to the *Small island* as it is called, formed by the river in going down to the harbour. In short, I have seldom in the space of ten days, which was the time I stayed at Cork, seen a greater variety of pleasant society.

One of these days was spent in a visit to the harbour, in which I accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Kean. We went by land to Monkstown upon the inner part of the harbour, where is a fine old castle standing at the summit of a wooded height above the village of Monkstown ;—that lies directly upon the shore. Mr. and Mrs. Hewett, to whose house we went, had procured for the day a very nice schooner belonging to a gentleman at Monkstown, in which we had a delightful sail all over the harbour. It is indeed a most noble one, capable of stowing the whole British navy, large as it is. The entrance is narrow not a mile over, lying between Spike Island and a point of the main, but beyond this narrow entrance a most magnificent basin soon expands itself.

From the mouth of the harbour till past the city of Cork, a distance of full twelve miles, there is a continuity of islands. Spike Island, at the entrance of the harbour, is a rock of considerable extent, which has for a long time been fortified, but where immense additional works are now carrying on ; some of them I could not help conceiving to be *works of super-erogation*. A little town almost is made at the top of the rock ; there are barracks for soldiers and officers, batteries mounted with cannon, vast magazines for military stores, immense reservoirs for water, &c. &c., and all inclosed within a deep ditch excavated in the solid

rock ; but lest the rock should happen to fall, a wall of very strong masonry is built up against it. This really does seem *Irish*, quite a work of supererogation for an Irish Catholic. Near this island is another, Hawlbowlin, which assists in breaking any force of winds and waves at the entrance of the harbour ; and a little further to the west a third very small island or mere rock called Rocky Island. North of the harbour is a very considerable island five miles over, on which stands the town of Cove, running picturesquely along the declivity of the heights that rise directly from the water. This was formerly a poor little fishing-village ; but since the great resort which the late wars have occasioned to Cork harbour, it has grown into a considerable town. The island is extremely fertile and well cultivated. It formerly went by the name of Barrymore's Island, from being the property of the Barrymore family. It is now called the *Great Island*, or *Cove Island*, but more commonly by the former name. It is not accessible by land from the western side, there is a ferry to it at a place called Passage ; on the east side, where the channel is much narrower, there is a bridge. Further on is the *Small Island* ; and some way further still, the island on which stands the city of Cork.

At the east end of the harbour, directly at the edge of it, is Rostellan the seat of the Marquis of Thomond : we sailed very near it. A conspicuous object in the grounds is a little temple in the Grecian style, dedicated to Mrs. Siddons. It will be remembered that the late Marquis of Thomond, then Earl of Inchiquin, married Miss Palmer, niece to Sir Joshua Reynolds, and that the uncle and niece were both among the very great admirers of that great actress. The Marchioness seems to have inspired her Lord with all her own enthusiasm. There are several other noblemen's and gentlemen's seats round the harbour. At the south-west corner is a small creek called Crosshaven, with good anchorage for vessels ; it runs behind a hill, which prevents its course being seen from the harbour. In the year 1589 Sir Francis Drake with five ships of war was chased by a very superior Spanish force, when he ran into Cork harbour, and took refuge in Crosshaven creek. The Spaniards sailed up the harbour as far as the vessels could go, but to the admiral's great astonishment nothing was to be seen of the ships which he had just chased in, and he went away utterly at a loss to account for a circumstance so extraordinary. At the head of the creek stood the castle of Carigoline, which in Queen Elizabeth's time was considered as impregnable; it is now entirely demolished.

The whole of this day was passed most pleasantly. We had a large company on board ; Mr. Kean delighted the present audience with his singing, scarcely less than he had repeatedly charmed audiences with his acting. Major Hunter, a Scotch officer in garrison at Cork, amused us rather at the expense of his own countrymen, by many stories of them, and by acting the part of Sir Archy M'Sarcasm, which he did incomparably ; he had not unfrequently been upon the stage as an amateur performer. We had besides several other very pleasant men of the party. The ladies were only Mrs. Kean, Miss Hewet, and myself.

The ships of war moor immediately before the town of Cove, where is deep water at a very little distance from the shore. From the shoaly nature of the river no vessels of any considerable size can get up to Cork, they unload at Passage, whence the cargoes are conveyed by small craft to the city. Lately a steam-boat has been set up which goes daily from Cork to Cove, and is found to answer extremely well. A scheme was at this time in agitation to work the packets which sail regularly between this place and Bristol by steam ; but I have been told by those who have made the experiment, that though the steam-vessels answer very well upon the smooth surface of a river, they are extremely disagreeable upon the rough ocean.

The whole of this region appears to be limestone ; the rocks on the north side of the river are so ; they abound with small particles of iron, and where the iron is much oxydated a dull red hue is imparted to the stone. Spike Island is a gray limestone intermingled profusely with opaque white crystallizations of carbonate of lime. Rocky Island is a limestone mass, very much variegated with different shades of brown and yellow, according to the greater or less quantity of iron which it contains. The veins of crystalline matter occasionally exhibit an

efflorescent character. Gems are sometimes found, but the occasions are not frequent. I saw in the possession of Lady Chatterton an amethyst set as a brooch, picked up very near the Black-Rock eight years before ; nothing equal to it had been found since. It was scarcely to be distinguished from a foreign gem. But pebbles from the sea-shore may easily lead an inexperienced person astray ; they are often quite foreign to the parts where they are found. I have one somewhat of the nature of blood-stone, picked up on the beach at Cromer in Norfolk ; so different from any of the productions of that country, that it must have been brought by the waves from some very remote quarter. I found no organic remains in any of the rocks I examined hereabouts, nor could I learn that they ever exhibit any. Dr. Smith, in his *History of Cork*, says that there are marbles at Middleton, which is at the north-eastern point of a bay running up to the north-east of the great harbour. The county of Cork is the largest in Ireland.

The city of Cork has to boast of having been the birth-place of a very extraordinary genius and most eccentric character, the late Barry the painter ; a man of whom it is eternally to be regretted that he suffered notions of independence pushed beyond what is compatible with the situation of man in this world, and a too tenacious adherence to certain eccentricities, to throw a cloud over genius destined, if it had been properly tempered, to carry his art far very beyond what it was ever carried in this country. With this extraordinary man I had the pleasure of being much acquainted during the latter years of his life, and I can truly say that I never was in his company without retiring from it not less instructed than entertained. Never was mind more richly stored, never had tongue greater powers of eloquence in pouring forth his knowledge. The series of pictures painted by him for the Chamber of Arts, Commerce and Manufactures, in the Adelphi, will live for ages a lasting memorial of his genius to those who see them ;—it is much to be regretted that they are not in a more public situation, where they would be more seen and their excellence consequently more justly appreciated. Inshrined in a place scarcely ever visited but by the members of the Society, their existence is little known to the public at large. If many objections may be made to them, and no one can deny that there is much room for objection, the defects are amply compensated by the genius they display. The Olympic Games in particular shows a grandeur of conception which could only be the result of real greatness of mind. But Barry was impetuous in his temper, impatient of opposition, and indignant when he found others not carrying their ideas of the sublime nature of his art to an equal degree of elevation with his own. Hence arose the unfortunate differences with his brethren of that Academy which clouded his latter days. Could he but have bent a little to circumstances, not bowed so low as to degrade his talents, how much higher in public estimation would the productions of those talents have risen ! for, with the public, the estimation of a man's talents will always depend to a certain degree upon the general suavity and urbanity of his manners. All cannot persuade themselves to take genius such as it is with the eccentricities usually attendant upon it ; if it cannot conform partially with the ordinary usages of society, it is too much in danger of being ultimately neglected by society. It were perhaps to be wished that this were otherwise ; but thus it ever has been, thus it probably ever will be.

In the *Life and Works of Barry*, published after his death, is a letter from Mr. Burke to him while he was in Italy, on the subject of regulating his temper. It is as fine a piece of writing as ever flowed from his pen, full of the most sound sense and excellent advice. Happy had it been, could the writer have applied his forcible precepts to himself, and set the example of what he so ably recommended.

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Doubts about the Route on leaving Cork.—Googanebarra.—Visit to it abandoned.—
Inishonan.—Valley from thence to Bandon.—Town of Bandon.—Castle Bernard.—

Cloghnikelty.—Irish Funeral.—Sluggish Horse and talkative Driver.—Ross-Carbery. —
Adventures there.—Talkative Girl at the Inn.—Offerings to Bacchus, and their Effects.

WHEN I was to leave Cork, the question was, which route among numerous ones offered to my choice I should pursue. My two great objects were now to see Glengariff, the seat of Captain White, brother to Lord Bantry, upon Bantry-Bay, and to visit the Lakes of Killarney. Several people at Cork had talked to me of the lake of Googanebarra, the head of the river Lee, as a place extremely worth seeing, a romantic solitude in the midst of wild mountains ; earnestly recommending my taking it in the way to Killarney, which might be done with little deviation from the direct road. I revolved this very much in my mind ;—the description of the place awakened my curiosity, and I began to make more minute inquiries about both that and the access to it. In the course of these inquiries I was extremely perplexed, as I had often been before, with the contradictory accounts I heard :—of one thing only I could fully assure myself, that though talked of by every body, it had scarcely been seen by any body. Still further, I found that it lay wide of any high-road, or of any town or village where an inn was to be found. At length applying to Dr. Willes, he said he had never been there himself, but he showed me a painting of the spot done by a brother of his now resident in London, which he said would give me an idea of what was to be seen. It was indeed the representation of a fine, wild, romantic spot ; a lake inclosed by lofty mountains, with a woody island in the midst, on which is a hermitage where St. Finbar for many years lived a recluse. It is now the not unfrequent resort of devotees, from an idea of its sanctity. As to the access to it. Dr. Willes told me that from his brother's report he conceived it to be very bad indeed ; that no carriage, or even horse, could get nearer than within two miles, from whence the walk was over the sides of boggy mountains. This account settled my determination : I had had some experience of walking over boggy mountains, in going up Knock-Laid ; and content with that, I was not very much inclined to repeat the walk. Climbing hard rocks, where the footing is firm, is an easy task in comparison with wading over bog ; my courage was not equal to the undertaking, and I abandoned the idea of visiting Googanebarra.

What route then should I take ?—Should I go first to Killarney, and thence to Bantry-Bay, or *vice versa* ? At length I resolved upon going by Ross-Carbery and Skibbereen to Bantry and Glengariff, and afterwards to Killarney. Accordingly, I departed from Cork on the sixth of September, early in the morning, intending to get that night to Skibbereen. I stopped to breakfast at Inishonan on the Bandon river. This was formerly a walled town of considerable note, but is now reduced to a village, having, however, several very pretty houses. An extensive linen manufactory is carried on here, and there are large bleach-grounds by the river-side. Above the river and meadows is a fine wood, on the declivity of a steep slope, through which are cut many pretty walks. It belongs to Mr. Travers. Soon after quitting the village is a remarkably pretty view, looking back to it along the dell in which it stands. In the foreground is a very good bridge over the river, beyond which are the steep wooded slopes ; and in the back the village church, with a handsome tower rising above the trees. The road continues along the dell, by the riverside, winding with the dell and river, all the way to Bandon, three miles. In one spot is a venerable ruin of an old castle at the edge of the river, with a bridge close by, forming an extremely good picture.

Bandon is a large town, consisting of a very long street running through it, but scarcely containing one tolerable house. The first Earl of Cork was the great founder of this town : it appears at that time to have been walled, and a place of considerable strength, since he writes thus of it to Secretary Cook in the year 1632 : “ Upon conference with the commissioners, I have been desirous to satisfy myself whether the works done by the Londoners at Derry, or mine at Bandon-Bridge, exceed each other. All that are judicial, and have carefully viewed them both, and compared every part of them together, do confidently assert, that the circuit of my new town of Bandon Bridge is more in compass than that of Londonderry ; that my walls are stronger, thicker, and higher than theirs, only they have a strong rampier within, which

Bandon-Bridge wanteth ; that there is no comparison between their forts and mine, there being in my town three, each containing twenty-six rooms, the castles with the turrets and flankers being all platformed with lead and prepared with ordinance, and the buildings of my town, both for the number of the houses and goodness of building, far beyond theirs. In my town there is built a strong bridge over the river, two large session-houses, two market-houses, with two fair churches ; which churches are so filled every Sabbath day with neat, orderly, and religious people, as it would comfort any good heart to see the change, and behold such assemblies ; no popish recusant or unconforming novelist being admitted to live in all the town. The place where Bandon-Bridge is situated is upon a great district of the country, and was within the last twenty-four years a mere waste bog and wood, serving for a retreat and harbour to wood-kernes, rebels, thieves, and wolves ; and yet now, God be ever praised ! is as civil a plantation as most in England, being for five miles round all in effect planted with English protestants. I write not this out of any vain-glory ; yet as I, who am but a single man, have erected such works, why should not the rich and, magnificent city of London rather exceed than fall short of such performances ?”

Assuredly there is no appearance remaining of a place of so much consideration, excepting the bridge. For a long succession of years not a Catholic was suffered to live in this town, nor were the bagpipes allowed to be played in it, that having been the music in use among the rebels of those times. About a quarter of a mile westward of the town is Castle Bernard, originally the residence of the O’Mahony family, and called Castle Mahony. From them it passed into the family of Bernard, since created barons of Bandon. By them a new house was built in the year 1715. The park is spacious. Between this place and Cloghnikelty there are some very good points of view.

Cloghnikelty, twenty-two miles from Cork, is a small town standing at the head of a little bay of the same name. This bay is, however, so choked with sand and mud, that it affords no advantages of navigation to the town. On the shore of the bay, near the sea, was once a castle called Arundel-castle. The town is built in the form of a cross, and has a good church standing on a rising ground, but it is altogether a dirty poor-looking place. It was a flourishing and commercial town, carrying on a great linen-trade before the civil-wars of 1641, but during that period was burnt down, and has never recovered the catastrophe. As I was sauntering about here while the horse was taking his refreshment, I heard a very strange noise, which I did not understand, and saw a great concourse of people coming along the road towards where I was. I could not imagine what this meant ; and inquiring, I was told that it was a funeral. I had often *heard of* the noise, the sort of yell used by the poorer sort of Catholics on these occasions, but had never till now *heard it*. Indeed it is impossible, without hearing it, to form an idea of any thing so dreadfully discordant. It is to be presumed that, intended by those who utter it as an expression of grief, it is considered by them as extremely plaintive and affecting ; but to ears unseasoned to it, nothing could appear less so. The coffin was laid upon one of the common Irish cars, drawn by one horse, and around was a prodigious concourse of people, more women than men, and they seemed very much to out-vociferate the men ; they were all in long blue cloth cloaks. As the funeral proceeds on its way, it is commonly joined by still increasing numbers, and in going through a town or village the noise is redoubled, so that I, being in a town, heard it to perfection. I could not perceive any sign of tears, or the least symptom of real grief upon the countenance of any person attending.

I found from my first setting out in the morning that my horse, which I had hired at Cork, was not at all of a high-mettled breed ; in truth, I never saw a more sluggish animal. The driver was a true specimen of his country ; he had something to say to every body we met, but being commonly in Irish, I could not understand his witticisms : when he had nobody else to speak to, he addressed his horse with an incessant exhortation of “ *Come along my man !*” but his exhortations were vain ; it was impossible to inspire the animal with any greater

celerity of motion. Indeed, he appeared so wearied by the time we got to Cloghnikelty, that if I had seen any thing like a tolerable appearing inn, I should have stopped there for the night ; but the *houses of entertainment for travellers* carried with them so little appearance of affording even tolerable comfort, that I determined to go on to Ross, six miles further, which I knew to be a city and a bishop's see, and concluded must therefore afford something better.

To Ross then we proceeded, though I was more than once in doubt whether our miserable animal would have got on so far. The approach to this town is extremely pretty ; the whole coast is broken into innumerable little bays, and upon a slope above one of them stands the town with its very very small cathedral, looking like a little village church, the spire rising prettily above all the surrounding objects. Ross Bay, like the bay of Cloghnikelty, is extremely choked with sand and mud, so that a causeway has been raised across it, not far from the head, leaving only a channel for the water to come up, over which there is a bridge ; at low water the whole is a muddy strand. Along this causeway the town is approached. When we entered the *city*, and inquired for the best inn, our attention was directed to a miserable-looking place, at the distance of only a few doors from us, looking many degrees worse than those I had despised at Cloghnikelty ; indeed, it made me think most truly, that it is commonly far better

“——— to bear the ills we have.
Than fly to others that we know not of.”

But there was no remedy ; here we must stay for the night : and alighting from my car, I walked into the inn. A parlour I quickly saw was a thing entirely out of the question ; but I asked whether I could have a bed. The landlady hesitated ; and at length said, she was afraid none that I should like, their best bed-chamber was engaged for the night, and the other was but a sorry one ; if I would like, however, she would show it to me. There was nothing left but to take such as I could get, and I desired to see it : truly it was a sorry one ; but the landlady began to lay her plans how it could be rendered a little decent and comfortable, when up came the landlord. He said, that he thought the lady might have the best bed-chamber, for the gentleman who had it the night before, only said when he went away, that he might, perhaps, want it again, and he did not therefore think they were bound to keep it for him ; to be sure he had left his portmanteau, as if he-thought of coming, but then he could never be angry at being put into another room to accommodate a lady. To all this the landlady assented ; and it was agreed between them that I might be shown to this chamber. Thither then I went ; and found it much cleaner and more comfortable than the general physiognomy of the house and the wretchedness of the staircase up to it gave reason to expect.

I took possession, rejoiced at this amendment in my prospect for the night, consoling myself with the idea that in case of the other claimant to the room making his appearance, *possession was nine points of the law*. I ordered tea and eggs, my usual meal at the end of a day's journey, which were served very neatly, with excellent bread and butter, the daughter of the house, a girl about twelve years of age, officiating as waiter. When she had arranged every thing in nice order, I perceived that she still lingered in the room as if more disposed to stay than to retire, and I said that she need not wait. Oh, she said, she must stop and fill the teapot, that would be too much trouble for me ; and drawing nearer she sat herself down on the edge of the bed, and entered into conversation. She supposed I had come along the new road made over the strand. I answered that I had.—Wasn't it a very curious thing ? 'Twas quite admired by every body in the neighbourhood ; a great deal more quality came that way than used to do ; and she supposed there was going to be quite a great inn set up just at the end of the road, such as the quality would like to stop at. I always found that among the lower classes of the Irish all gentry were *quality*. At this time a number of new roads were made, or in making, over various parts of the country, which had been previously very ill provided in this respect, and they were the great subject of conversation and admiration with every body.

My companion was so extremely full of them that shew as not able to refrain from talking upon the favourite theme, and was brimfull with visions of the extraordinary effects that were to be produced by them. I had been told of two remarkable cavities in the rocks upon the sea-shore here, and I next asked her about them. Her eloquence had now a new direction, and she poured out a number of wonderful stories concerning these caves. They resemble the craters of volcanos, but have a communication with the sea below at the foot of the rocks, which dashes in with a great noise, while the sound is finely reverberated by the echo of the deep cavern. In calm weather a boat may row into them, and parties of pleasure are sometimes made for the purpose ; but I should conceive it always rather a dangerous experiment. A great deal of quality, my lassie said, came to see them, but for her part she wondered at them very much. Why now, once there was a poor girl fell into one, and though a boat was sent in directly to search for her, she was never to be found ; people had very odd thoughts about it —“ What, do they think ?” I inquired. “ Why it was very odd that not a bit of her should ever be found, something must have had her.”—I could not, however, make out what that something was supposed to be. Any where else I should have, had no doubt who, or what, the suspected *something* was ; in Ireland, far from bang the *parent of sin*, it might not improbably be a *saint*.

Ten o'clock having arrived without hearing any thing of the apprehended claimant to the room, I thought myself perfectly secure, and went quietly to bed. And here I must observe, that wherever I went in Ireland, let the appearance of the inn be ever so poor, there were always nice sheets to the bed, perfectly clean and white ; so it was here : indeed I must say that my accommodations were in every way superior to what could be expected from the first appearance of the house. About twelve o'clock I was awakened first by a violent noise below, which gradually ascended the staircase, and then by a lump against the chamber door, which I was a little apprehensive must have broken it open ; but immediately I heard half a dozen voices endeavouring to soothe and pacify the invader ; some, as I found from what passed, having got hold of him to prevent any further manual attacks. It was *the gentleman* returned ; and having been taking in *potations pottle deep*, instead of being inspired with the excess of gallantry, so often consequent upon such sacrifices to Bacchus, the very reverse was the case in the present instance, since I more than once heard, “ *I don't care for the lady—I will have my room.*” At length, however, partly by soothing, but rather more I believe by main force, he was carried away, and I heard no more of him ; only the land-lady came in the morning with a great many apologies for the disturbance.

Narrative of a residence in Ireland during the summer of 1814, and that of 1815 (1817)

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