

The sportsman in Ireland

By A Cosmopolite

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WHO that has heard of the resources and beauties of the Emerald Isle—who that has listened to the torrents of abuse levelled against those who are at once termed her patriots and her destroyers, her liberators and enslavers—who that has heard of the trackless mountains, the rushing torrents, the splendid rivers unsullied by a line, or of the wild birds that are undisturbed on her desolate coasts ; the honest generosity of character, the hospitable feelings, yet, albeit, the murderous villany, the bloodthirsty relentlessness of her children—who that has only *heard* of all these, but will determine at once to be convinced of the truth or falsehood of the accounts put forth—will at once seize his rod and his gun, and, delivering himself up to fortune, make his journey unite the pleasure of wild sports with the philosophy of statistical observation ?

I, at all events, will for one ; and, ere I revisit the artificial shore of my birth, the Irish as they are, and not as political partisans would paint them, shall be known to me.

My preparations were simple ; and let me entreat all those who follow me to make their own so.

In the first place, let no London fly or rod maker impose on them by the delicate manufacture of their wares, but by all means let the gun-maker have his chance ; take a good double-barrel, powder, and casts for bullets, and leave the rest to fortune and my direction ; also a good woollen suit, one change for dress, a mackintosh, a well-strapped wallet—for there is much in its being well strapped.

These are all that can be required by or desirable to those who would really make the tour of a sportsman through Ireland. Every desirable comfort will follow in its proper place ; and it should not be forgotten that the greatest inconvenience of travelling is the travelling with too many conveniences. But, as I hate people who would have to make their arrangements all tending inevitably to embarrass their progress and restrict their independence, we will suppose the usual horn-blowing has taken place, the usual number of now despised coachmen have been *feed*, and that we find ourselves half asleep and half awake at Bristol.

We judge of the distance of places by the time consumed in reaching them ; in fact, time is distance, and Bristol is a heavy journey. Bristol itself is a sort of a *slow coach*. It has, by its paltry efforts at inordinate gain in the harbour dues, wrapped itself up in a dignified independence, while all other ports have surpassed its accommodations, and withdrawn its trade. Even the Great Western does not help it : we must still be bugled down, and cramped in four insides. But we are there.

And this is the Irish packet ? you need not answer—I perceive it is. Those shoeless wretches, shivering under the March blasts, and crouching midst the packages for a momentary protection—the surly officers who have just presented them with their *free* passage to their native land ; the hopeless gaze of that suffering mother, who deprives herself of her ragged shawl that she may shelter her still more suffering infant ; all these proclaim the

destination of the vessel. Midst the hoarse orders of the bluff commander she moves in stately grandeur down the river, and carries with her the farewells, the hopes, the happiness of many !

It is needless to describe the Clifton Rocks. I perceive the pencils of the lady passengers are at work, while the obsequious gentlemen surrounding them gaze on the performances, and admire the wonders of nature, but more those of art.

The massive rocks of the extended scene give rise to general hilarity, and the ever-varying range on each side calls forth the admiration of the Creator's works.

But the sea-breeze now breaks on us. The hitherto stately vessel yields to the coming tide. Now shawls and cloaks are in requisition, and the sketches are left for future finishing and future encomiums. Less is heard of the beauty of surrounding objects, and more of personal comfort. The cabin is sought by some, where fires, books, and all the comforts which the gaudy packet can afford, are at hand. The sea rises—the scudding squalls dash over the angry spray—there is more silence and more self among the previously gay and joyous crowd on the front deck ; each looks to himself ; while the storm increases, and the rains descend.

Let us survey the deck. Not one of the many, now wrapped in all the comforts which art can supply, has condescended to do so. Each passenger has selected his bed, and made his inquiries for dinner ; but where is to be *your* bed—where *your* dinner, ye homeless, hapless wanderers—cursed in your birth-place—whose crime is that you are the offspring of a doomed land ! a land, beauteous to the eye, fertile in its resources, yet whose shipless harbours yawn in hospitality without a guest—upon whose shores the wild sea howls, and the angry billows alone unite to break the silence of a gloomy solitude !

See that father and mother, with their helpless race of children; behold them shivering in the bleak March blast, and now and then submitting to the spray which dashes over their half-covered limbs ! That child, squalid and bare, crouching beneath the mother's scanty rags ; behold her ! She is human—those blue eyes seem to speak intelligence ; she looks wistfully, beseechingly, yet modestly. It is for food she asks. Inquire their little history : it is the history of all. That father is strong, active, and not deficient in intelligence. You see he does not want feeling for those dependant on him ; he has covered the children with his grey frieze coat, and bears the falling rain with a manly defiance. Unable to discharge the heavy imposts of his landlord and the tithes he has been expatriated ; he has sought what he imagined was the golden land ; he has sought the English coast. Prejudice and the poor-laws have been his unconquerable foes. Employment was nowhere to be found ; and, after a year's travelling from place to place, during which the hedge and the sheep hovel have been his only covering, and the covering of his wife and little ones, he has at length been found guilty of being destitute, and condemned to—his native country. The surly officer, whom you saw speaking to him at Bristol, was employed to ship him and his family safely off by the packet. Their sea-store was supplied, their passage was paid. The bundle, which the enduring woman has hanging from her arm, contains potatoes ; they have been already cooked, and you will see the father frequently distributing a portion among his trembling children—God help them ! But their native land is now in sight. A joyous exclamation is heard among some—it is among the cabin passengers. Each runs to gain a glimpse of land—of Ireland—the place of our destination.

All are pleased, except only the miserable family whose patient endurance of the long sea passage, whose hunger the lowest of human food has barely appeased ;—from them, and those who surround them, no sound of delight is heard. The countenance of the oppressed

father, as he shiveringly looks down upon his children, is marked by a stern misery ;—his native land is indifferent to his view ; it almost excites horror. For him, alas! and his, no home is there prepared ;—he has no spot whereon to lie ! no store, from which the wants of his little ones shall be supplied ! To him, his native shores present only the barren rocks of desolation and despair. This is strange, and its cause is worth inquiry ; for a cause there must be, why the child of a free country, able and willing to labour-asking only the meanest reward for his toil and zealous exertions—stained by no crime—should look to that free country, and demand but bread, yet be refused. There is a cause—a deep and damning one— “ if philosophy could find it out.”

The morning broke ; and who that has voyaged by steam or coach does not shrink at the remembrance of the peeping morn of March ? The face of the ocean presents a cold cheerlessness, which even the sluggish sunrise does not dispel ; its rays seem rather to render still more visible the ravages of watchfulness or inebriety. Every face is without a smile ; the features are paralysed ; even the mind is benumbed and depressed, and misery looks still more miserable.

The lower deck of the steamer was the parade of those who had known no other couch during the night. The wretched family I had before observed were still crouching under the packages ; the father standings in silent sufferings over them !

With the advance of day came the splendid views of coast scenery which everywhere distinguish Ireland, and especially the entrance to the Cove of Cork. Iron-bound as this coast is, yet the avenues which here and there are observable between the abrupt and occasionally terrific rocks of varied hues, heightened by the glare of the sun, present patches of that deeply verdant surface, the characteristic of the beauteous isle ; and as the rapid movement of the well-appointed vessel continues to vary the position, new beauties are as continually opening.

The dashing and roaring of the sea, against the dark and hollow masses that form the entrance to the Cove, are distinctly heard ; and now, the suddenly smooth water informs us that we have entered the haven ; while the banks on each side, and the rock itself which opposes its noble front to the angry ocean, becomes speckled with habitations as it were of a fairy land, each spot tipped with the brilliancy of the sun.

Hundreds of boats are seen pressing all canvas towards the vessel. The coast is lined with inhabitants, all anxious to know what the majestic mass now slowly forcing her way up the shallow river contains. Fathers for their children—children for their homes—are panting with expectation and long-anticipated happiness ; and I must add, there are the multiplied sighs of wretches who have nought but the dreary prospect of ending their few remaining days in the land which gave birth to them and their uninterrupted sorrows.

II.

Cork—The Harbour—Splendour and Misery—Imperial Hotel—High Charges—The Assizes—Irish Eloquence—Want of Dignity and Decorum—Irish Judges and Counsel—An Irish Case—Mike and the Cows—Theatre at Cork—The Castle Spectre—An Acting Manager—An Evening Party—Punch-drinking—Three-Card Loo and the Ladies—Female Talent and Accomplishments—Beauty of the Women—Advice to Sportsmen—Departure from Cork.

“ Car, your honour, car ? here ! here is a car, your honour. Oh, don’t be after listening to Murdock, there ! Out of the way, ye Spalpeen—sure, didn’t the gentleman spake to me first ? that’s my fare, any how.”

Fifty voices at once, from as many ragged good-tempered fellows who surround the passage leading from the steamer's side, sufficiently prove that we have changed the country.

The cars thus numerous offered bear all the marks of a people who are not impeded in their progress by any unnecessary attention to outward show. The accumulated dust and filth of years cover the vehicle ; and lest there should be any discrepancy of appearance, the harness, horse, and man, are all of a colour, and *that* the natural one—I mean the colour of the earth, in its most palpable form. A sportsman, however, suffers no annoyance from these accidental changes ; and I was not long in reaching the hotel at Cork.

It would be unjust not to say any thing of this splendid city—for splendid it is ; though I cannot spare much space for the topography of those places which afford nothing more than the amusements to be derived from other well-populated and extensive towns.

The harbour is excellent, and is formed by the embouchure of the river Lee. At first view of the magnificent range of buildings, one is tempted to ask if this be the misery of Ireland ? Shops fitted up in the most attractive style ; abundant population, and all bearing the appearance of the utmost prosperity—the appearance, I say, and that is the drawback ; for, though affectedly fine, the eye cannot fail to rest on the crowds of desolate creatures, worn by disease or age, who, at every corner, assail the passer-by for charity.

The Imperial is a good hotel, but partakes of the characteristics to which I have elsewhere referred. Indeed, generally, the traveller will find that, amidst other things which have been adopted from England, inn-charges have not been forgotten ; and, if we doubted the extent of any acquaintance a “ maître d'hôtel,” in Ireland, may have with English civility and attention, it would be at once conceded, when the bill is presented, that he was on intimate terms with the book department of the Clarendon. To be well treated, and charged unreasonably, may be forgiven, but it is execrable to be starved and fleeced ; and, although “ marble chimney-pieces, not expressly mentioned in the bill, inflame it most confoundedly”—it is mortifying to find the swelling exist, where the marble chimney-piece does not.

Cork, on my arrival, was in an excited state ; the assizes had just commenced, and I lost no time in making my way to the court-house, anxious to hear some of that extravagant eloquence, for which the Irish bar is so celebrated.

On my entrance, I was at once struck by the apparent want of decorum of the scene. Nothing can be more offensive to an English lawyer, than that absence of dignity and order, which is every where observable in a court of justice in Ireland. The counsel, wigless, gownless—without any mark whereby they could be distinguished from attorneys, visitors, witnesses, or thieves ; but all appeared huddled together round the judge, who, in a plain scratchy looks common-place enough. There is a familiarity among all parties that would startle the pride of an English lawyer, and may have led to the Milesian joke, of a suitor stopping the judge, on his way to the court-house, and imploring him “ to do justice in *his* favour.”

Something has been said of Irish eloquence. I had an opportunity, here, of judging of the style which seems to have been universally adopted by the bar of this country. There is no difficulty in perceiving that it differs from that which the calmer feelings of the English, and the phlegmatic constitution of our juries, have fostered. The mercurial temperament, and naturally romantic tone, which are generally ascribed to the Irish character, pervade even the common-place matters of mere legal considerations. It is not impossible that the ornamental flourishes, adopted in such disquisitions, may be designed to cover ignorance of the abstract question, or to hide errors in practice. Nor are the Irish alone in that.

I believe no persons in the world are more constitutionally addicted to ideality than the Irish ; and, when the superiority of their country is the subject, the warmth of conviction which they evince shows how little they stop to examine, how little disposed they are, to let reason have her influence. It has been said, that this devotion to the imaginative produces, not unfrequently, great errors among gentlemen who have been induced to leave their native isle. So far, indeed, has the power of fancy not unfrequently carried them, that they at last have arrived at the conviction of their being possessed of estates, the fee simple of which existed nowhere but in their own productive minds.

However the imagination may be cultivated by the bar in Ireland, it is quite certain that among the laity nothing seems to excite more ingenuity than litigation ; nor is it uncommon to find, among the lower orders, although utterly ignorant of all other things, some who are adepts in the art of legal quibbling. It was my lot to hear one case tried at the assizes, at Cork. The corollary I afterwards learned. Patrick O'Sullivan sued Mike Moriarty for the value of three cows, sold to Mike during the lifetime of the plaintiff's (O'Sullivan's) father. To the declaration, stating that Mike had had the cows, Mike could offer no plea. True it was that Mike had had the cows—true he had killed them, or sold them, or eaten them—but by no means under contract of debt ; and yet a defence, under the circumstances, would have been impossible.

Mike took advice, and let the action go by default. But the facts were amusing, if not quite creditable to the plaintiff's morality. O'Sullivan, during his father's life, had stolen the cows, and bartered with Mike to kill and sell them, allowing him (the stealer) certain profits and certain portions. These were paid. Lamentations, deep and loud, were made by the elder O'Sullivan, for the loss of his cows, which had been his chief fortune and support. He published hand-bills for their recovery, but no cows came back.

None joined in the pursuit of the culprit with more apparent ardour than the son of the loser. The old man died. He bore his loss hardly, and perhaps his death was hastened by the grief arising from it. Whereupon the son, now heir, brought his action for the recovery of the value of the cows, well knowing that recrimination was impossible on the part of the defendant, who paid the money, and who declareth on the oath of an honest Irishman, that Patrick O'Sullivan is the greatest rogue 'tween Donaghadee and Tig na Vauria.

Cork has a theatre, which, being open during the assizes, led me to contemplate the state of the histrionic art in the sister isle. The play was the *Castle Spectre*, and it was somewhat droll to hear the broad Irish accent with which the old English Baron expressed his loves and his dream. He was a man of about four feet, either way ; and if you had put him on his side, he would have acted with as much locomotion and agility.

I inquired who the Roscius was, and by what accident he was pressed into the service of the first Tragedy. The answer was satisfactory—the same vanity exists here as in other places.—The old English Baron was enacted by the Manager !

Let me do justice to the hospitality of my Cork friends, to whom I had letters of introduction. One whom I had not the pleasure to find at home, but for whom I left my letter, sent down to my inn a warm request that I would join the evening party, which he expected that day at his house.

The invitation was so warm and unaffected that I accepted it, and was introduced to about forty gentlemen, who were not, as would be said at Oxford, *wining*, but *punching*. It was true

I had greatly the advantage of this party, in having temperately taken my quiet dinner alone. The sudden transition from the ennui and gloomy loneliness in which an Englishman “abroad” is inclined to indulge, to a noisy, joyous party, who had advanced already to the fourth tumbler, will be supposed to have been productive of some impression ; and, when I entered, I found the glasses jingling from violent blows on the table : the party, one and all, having arrived at that method of expressing their approbation of a speech which had just been delivered.

“ Hurra ! bravo ! sir—glorious country where the whiskey is the only drink !—let me entreat you—not a headache in a hogshead—most happy to see English gentlemen in Ireland—we want but free intercourse to set aside all prejudices.”

“ Who says we stand in need of intercourse ? Sir, no offence to you—you are an Englishman, proud of your country—we are Irishmen, and, till the English learn to drink whiskey instead of the miserably washy wine, there can be no intercourse, and the union must be dissolved.”

“ Union dissolved !” exclaimed another voice.

“ By the powers, when I see that day I’ll not be alive !”

“ Alive or dead, you’ll soon see the day ! O’Connell for ever ! who says no ?”

“ O’Connell for ever !” was re-echoed through the room. The very name was sufficient to set all in an uproar. Our host now proposed an adjournment ; but the subject was not to be so passed ; agitation had begun, and this was the signal. Every man had his opinion on the subject, and every man thought he had a right to express it, and exhibited the utmost impatience to do so.

The whiskey was now mixed, and disposed of in greater haste ; it was evident the row would begin ; five or six gentlemen were at once on their legs, all speaking at the extent of their voices, and each appearing impressed with the notion that he was the only party commanding attention. Glasses began to dance, chairs to slip from under their disputants, and, amid the complete uproar, I could only distinguish these facts—that O’Connell was the greatest villain alive, and the only prop and stay of his country !

Cards were handed across,—till our host opened the door, and in the loudest tone invited the gentlemen to the drawing-room. Many followed : and there we found the ladies, deeply engaged in the mysteries of three-card loo, and indeed with tolerable stakes. There were no introductions or ceremonies, nor did the gentle part of the audience feel at all disturbed by the riot which occasionally, as the door was opened, burst on our ears.

I was seriously alarmed, and expressed my feelings to my host, who assured me that twenty gentlemen would in all probability exchange cards, yet that was a ceremony which was too common to be alarming, and too harmless to be fraught with any considerable consequences. “ In fact,” said he, “ out of a hundred challenges we find few duels ; the gentlemen are only desirous of proving the truth of their positions, and nothing can tend so satisfactorily to do so as the passing of a card. With the whiskey the ardour will evaporate, and the same parties will meet again to-morrow, in all probability with a like result.”

On our entrance into the drawing-room there was no appearance of alarm among the ladies. Every accomplishment was there in requisition, which the riotousness of the party

from the dining-room did not interrupt or disturb. We are deceived by the representation of those who have attempted to depict the manners of the Irish fair. Although my rambles did not afford me many opportunities of testing my opinion, yet those that did occur to me confirm me in the belief that Irish ladies are generally more accomplished, and exhibit more talent in acquirement than may generally be found among the English higher classes. Their manners are gentle and unaffected, with a dash of hilarity which renders them infinitely more fascinating. They are beautiful to a proverb ; and it is not true that the moment your eye rests on a lady, she immediately responds —“ port, if you please”—nor that the second look induces the declaration that “ she will ask papa.”

Cork must be set down, upon the whole, as the most flourishing town in Ireland. Its buildings, especially those residences on the banks of the river towards the island called the Cove, are in English taste, and bespeak close connection with the sister country. The continual intercourse, now established by means of steam-packets, has tended greatly to improve the taste and manners of the inhabitants of all those towns situated on the English side ; and although much may be found to admire in this city, it must be observed that it still exhibits all the prosperity and wretchedness, all the elegance and the squalid poverty, which seem every where associated in Irish towns.

I here purchased my tackle. I recommend the angler to choose a good *tie rod*, and a large reel that will contain 160 yards of stout hemp line, well twisted. It should be soaked in oil and bees' wax, well melted ; then stretched and reeled. The cost of this, which is the only line fit for use among the rocky rivers he will have to traverse, will be one shilling. Select, also, in Cork, a few flies of various sizes and colours, which will be found well made and of the right kind. With these, a good gun, a pound of the best tobacco (the most acceptable return that can be made for the civility of a mountaineer), I took coach to Macroom, a distance of thirty miles.

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Start from Cork—Wild Character of the Country—An Irish Coachman—Sporting Prospects—Warning to Improvers—Pike *versus* Salmon—Arrival at Macroom—Ominous Demonstrations—A False Alarm—Inn Accommodations—An Irish Waiter—Extravagant Charges—Poverty and Desolation—Taste for Mud—Commencement of Operations—A Native Sportsman—Irish Blarney—Directions for Trolling—Incomparable Bait.

From Cork, 27 miles ; from Killarney, 28 miles ; from Mill Street, 11 miles.

Fishing stations, Lake Inchgeelab, 5 miles; and the rivers Toom, Lee — the latter mning close by the town.

Armed with all the appliances of sport, I mounted the coach from Cork to Macroom, The ride presented a desolate country, composed alternately of bog and rocky mountain, with little wood, which becomes less and less as the journey is pursued into the interior of the country. Even one mile from Cork, no trace appears of the neighbouring refinement. Poverty of the extremest kind is exhibited in habitations scarcely one degree above the damp cave of the wild beast ; furze being used for doors, and turf for the roof. Here and there a solitary and staring creature, half of whose body is covered with a mass of rags, which are blown about by the wind—the other half perfectly uncovered—leads the traveller to imagine that he has taken some sudden leap from all that is civilized into a new and hitherto undiscovered country. No inn on the road breaks the monotony of the scene, or relieves the gloominess of the way. The coachman, with a large glazed hat, a homemade whip, and blue sailor's jacket, is the only person who interrupts the depressed tone which the mind is apt, under such cir-

cumstances, to assume. He indeed keeps up a continual conversation with his horses—reasons with them—threatens them. “ Ah, by the powers !—come up there now—d’ye start at that !— faith you’ve seen it before, many a-day.—Ah ! ah ! there I caught you—don’t be too forgiving now—bear malice agin me, and remember it.—Ah ! you’re too forgiving, any way—catch a glimpse o’ that, ye spalpeens—come along here now—faith you’ll have a stop at the rise.”

The road follows the river Lee for some miles, and then crosses the river Bride, a tributary to the Lee. Although the latter river does not present any chance of good trout-fishing, the Bride, which is of a more declivous character, will repay the angler, especially if he watches the opportunity of rainy weather.

Owen’s Inn will be found a tolerable station for the Bride ; though I should not advise any lengthened stay at any place short of Killarney, as all the streams are of an uncertain character, and require to be visited at the exact moment to ensure success—I mean the subsiding of a flood. The beauty of this river consists in its varied falls—some of ten or fifteen feet ; but the country through which it flows has the air of terrible desolation. Here and there may be observed patches of corn ; but the general view presents little but bog and mountain. But, to the sportsman, the wildness of the mountains—the unhedged expanse, on which nothing appears but the thinly scattered cots of the humble labourer—the sparkling and rapid river, now sullenly smooth, now dashing down precipices and dividing its streams into deep and gurgling eddies—inspire feelings of delightful anticipation.

The river Lee, into which the Bride falls, was once highly celebrated for its fine trout and salmon. Now, alas ! it swarms with pike ; the salmon have greatly diminished, and trout have become almost extinct.

It is remarkable that, as yet, the whole county of Kerry, to which we are progressing, does not contain a single pike ; and, till within these twenty years, there was not one known in the noble river Lee. Its source, the Lake Inchgeelah, is a noble expanse of water, and was once the resting-place of immense shoals of salmon, and white trout. Latterly they have disappeared, and from a cause which should, and I trust will, operate as a warning to all who live in the neighbourhood of rivers not yet infested with the destructive pike. The injury done to the inhabitants of this part of the country,—through whose property flows the river Lee, once so prolific in excellent food, and from whose wild waters even the poorest could once make an easy addition to their humble meal,—is irreparable. It appears that a gentleman who had built a house on its banks, not far from Cork, among other ornaments sunk a pool, which discharged itself into the river. Not content with the abundant supply of salmon and trout which the stream afforded, he was desirous of surprising his neighbours by the possession of a fish until then unknown in this part of the country. With a view of obtaining this distinction, he sent for some pike, which with great difficulty were brought fifty miles, and placed in his despicable pond. The natural consequence ensued : the banks, during a flood, gave way, and the pike were at once precipitated into the river. Here food was so abundant amidst the trout and young salmon, that, since this accident, such has been the increase of pike, that they now occupy every hole in the Lee. The troller, however, may find good sport, and it is not the least recommendation of this river that its banks are open to all comers ; so that, from Lake Inchgeelah, a distance by the river of fifty-six miles, there will be found no obstruction to the humblest sportsman.

In following this river down, the only difficulty would be the want of accommodation, which could only be procured in the wretched cabins of the peasantry near the road, which crosses and re-crosses the river many times between Cork and Macroom. It is not now

unusual to find pike of from thirty to forty pounds weight in the least frequented parts,—in the long reaches, or wherever the fall of the stream is sluggish.

The rising smoke in that low corner of the opening valley now warns us of our approach to our station, Macroom. The cabins become more numerous along the side of the road, though not better in their construction. On approaching the town, we had attracted one or more of the inmates of every cabin ; and, by the time we had entered the town, we had an escort of at least two thousand persons, men, women, and children, who had collected by degrees as the coach passed. I was somewhat alarmed at the assembly, which increased at every yard of our progress. The moment the sound of the coach was heard, out poured the inhabitants of every cabin.

On our entering the broad, open space, in the middle of the town, the crowd closed on us, and nothing could be seen but a sea of heads. English and Irish exclamations were heard in a confused yell.—“ Come out, ye spalpeen—oh, the devil’s luck to ye, and we got ye any how.” Hundreds of ragged, though strong and handsome fellows pressed forward, through the screaming crowd, to the coach doors, and threw them open, with an apparent determination of violence that could not but alarm an English traveller. Luckily, I was outside, or I should have imagined myself the object of the pursuit. When I crept from the roof, and forced my way into the inn, which I accomplished with some difficulty, I was soon informed of the cause of the uproar. There had been a murder committed some time before, from that exhaustless source of blood and violence, in this unhappy country, the collection of tithes. A policeman had deliberately shot one of the mob, which had assembled to watch the proceedings of the proctor’s constables. He had been arraigned at the assizes at Cork, the day before, and acquitted. It was expected by the populace that he would return this day to Macroom, by the coach ; and had he done so, it is not difficult to imagine the fate that would have awaited him. Peaceable as the crowd was, had the object of their assembling appeared flushed with the victory of an acquittal, the market-place of Macroom would have been strewed with his limbs. When, however, the crowd was satisfied that the delinquent was not on the coach, they gradually dispersed, without any disposition to riot. I was assured that there was no apprehension on the part of the inhabitants of the town, notwithstanding the extraordinary assemblage of so many, and so apparently lawless a mob. In the madness of their revenge, the Irish seldom commit wanton mischief ; and their most violent and lawless assemblages are always unaccompanied by the uncalled-for injuries which too often are the result of English crowds. They have a wild love of justice, which pervades even their acts of greatest intemperance.

I was not at first aware that in this town very tolerable private lodgings might have been procured, and, unluckily, I established my quarters at the inn—I say, unluckily ; for, though I found some accommodation, it was not of an order which kept pace with the magnificence of the charges. The traveller must not expect to find at any of the inns, out of the principal towns, such inordinate luxuries as carpets ; he may, however, reckon pretty confidently on finding a red-headed monster, shoeless, stockingless, and capless, acting the part of a waiter—one who will hold back her matted locks to give her eyes a chance with one hand, while she hands you, between her thumb and finger, whatever edible you may demand, perfectly good-tempered, and wondering what can possibly ail the stranger who is surrounded, as she conceives, by every earthly luxury.

In consequence of the frequent visits of regiments, especially during the war, there happened to have been provided for the officers some decent apartments. These, the sportsman who determines to take a week on this station, should secure ; though he must take care to do here what he should do throughout Ireland—drive a *good bargain* ; for so impressed are

all the “ parvi mercatores ” of this country with a belief in the exhaustless wealth of the English, that no scruples restrain the violence of their inordinate expectations.

The appearance of poverty and desertion which the town presents is much heightened by the neglect of those whose means are not doubtful. It will be found the characteristic of almost every Irish town, nay, of almost every mansion, that time and mischief are suffered to do their worst ; nothing is ever repaired. Even in well and substantially built houses, every second pane of glass has given way to a board nailed across the window, or a still more offensive paper patching. Bricks, or stones, or tiles, as they fall from the piles of buildings, which really would constitute a handsome range, if in repair, are suffered to remain where fortune may place them, till the wheels of the heavy carts crush them into the dust and mud which no municipal law controls. This latter is not offensive to the inhabitants ; on the contrary, they seem to enjoy the softness of it, as all the female part of the population and the children are shoeless ; and it is observable that they always choose the softest and deepest mass of mud, in which to crowd together for their mutual salutations or disquisitions. The smoke, which many years of turf-fire has supplied, has contributed greatly to the dingy desolation of the general appearance. Whitewash would set all right ; but, though the lime-stone may be had for the fetching, the habits of the people appear inveterate, and the suggestion of the improvement it would make is met by a stare of happy independence.

These particulars are stated more in the way of description than complaint. I would give nothing for the society of that sportsman who could view the wild freedom of this country, and complain of the coarseness of his fare.

While thus attended by the red-headed girl, who understands not a word of English, and while the bacon and potatoes, unaccompanied, smoke on the boards let the remembrance of the wild rivers and mountains come to the sportsman, and furnish the rest. In traversing them, he will find no “ *Take Notice,* ” in a walk of three hundred miles !

My host informed me that there was but one man in the town who knew any thing of fishing ; and at my request he was sent for, as I had resolved to begin operations forthwith.

By the time I had finished my humble repast, the native sportsman was announced. One glance was enough to show that Owen was a character—a mild, humble, and amiable one—of intelligence beyond his station, and in which much of native independence of spirit was blended. His form was singularly emaciated ; and I at once learned that he lived in a secluded manner, with a bed-ridden mother, whom nothing could induce him to desert. He had never been known to submit to any kind of employment ; though, during the cold months, it had been frequently a matter of surprise that he continued to support himself by the rod. Sometimes, indeed, in the depth of winter, he has been known to take salmon from the river Lee ; and although his frame had little more of substantiality than the coarse rod which was his companion, he often walks from thirty to forty miles a day ; and a happy day for him is that which brings to his companionship a fellow-sportsman.

Of Owen I inquired the locale. His history of the river Lee was much that which I have given it. He shed tears, after a glass or two of whiskey, over the failing salmon, in consequence of the increase of pike ; and we settled to commence operations the next morning at an early hour. Our plan was to be provided with pike tackle, as well as for trout and salmon, and to take with us a boy who should carry the gun, and accompany us to the Lake Inchgeelah. I kept him with me the whole evening, while he produced for my inspection what he called his *colours*, which were bundles of feathers. These were his treasures—the mine,

whence he drew all that he enjoyed—and nothing could exceed the dexterity with which he manufactured a singularly coarse, but, upon the whole, effective imitation of large flies.

After having listened to his instructions as to the colour, if the day was dark—the falls, in which we might expect to find fish—and the best way of meeting the river across the Toom Bridge (about three miles from the town)—I astonished him by my declaration that I held all his apparatus in the most supreme contempt : that if there were salmon and trout in the river, I would undertake to offer him any *bet* that I would exceed his skill, either measuring by number or weight, provided he adhered to his flies ;—nay, that he should choose his ground, and I would follow him up the river.

His astonishment soon gave way to an incredulous smile. Yet the mildness of his character, and the natural genius for flattery (which requires not the aid of the *blarney-stone* to develop) inherent in Milesian constitutions—and which especially pervades the lower classes—restrained him from any contradiction. “ To be sure and it is not for the likes of me to doubt your honour—your honour knows right well how to catch fish—and I’d be sorry and grieved to think I’d do more than your honour’s honour—but, may be, I know the river where the fish lie ; and perhaps, by chance, I’d bate your honour any how without intending it at all at all—but your honour knows best.”

I now told him I relied not on flies, and at once produced my trolling apparatus.

The rod should be about twenty feet, running tackle ; and, at the end of the line, use eight or ten feet of fine gut—Hook No. 3 or 4. Load the gut with split shot, according to the power of the stream, always remembering that the bait must be carried down at the bottom of the stream—that bait is the roe of the salmon. It is prepared by Scotsmen^ who take the salmon in November, for the purpose of securing the spawn. The receipt for preserving it is as follows : —

Take the full roe of a salmon, wash it carefully from all particles of blood, and then separate the grains : when this has been carefully done, pour over the whole a strong brine, made of common salt and salt petre, equal parts, and let it remain six hours ; then drain it thoroughly, and place the whole in a slow oven, till it assumes a toughness. Then pot the whole down, so as to exclude the air, and it is fit for use.

The sportsman in Ireland, with his summer route through the Highlands of Scotland (1840)

Author : Allan, Robert, supposed author; Dix, John, 1800?-1865, supposed author

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