

The Stranger in Ireland 1806

John Carr

Lyric quality of Irish Language—Extracts from Ancient Irish Bards.

THE Irish language is remarkable for flowing off in vowels upon the ear, and for the smoothness and harmony of its cadences, and is finely adapted to lyric poetry. I have made the following extracts from some beautiful poems of the ancient Irish poets, as a favourable specimen of their genius ; all except one of them are contained in a book, which is now very scarce, Miss Brook's Reliques of Irish Poetry.

ODE, BY FITZGERALD.

*Written by an Irish Poet in the Reign of Elizabeth
On his setting out on a voyage to Spain.*

Bless my good ship, protecting pow'r of grace !
And o'er the winds, the waves, the destin'd coast,
Breathe benign Spirit ! Let thy radiant host
 Spread their angelic shields !
Before us, the bright bulwark let them place,
And fly before us, through their azure fields !

 O calm the voice of Winter's storm !
 Rule the wrath of angry seas,
The fury of the rending blast appease,
 Nor let its rage fair Ocean's face deform !
 O check the biting wind of spring,
 And from before our course,
 Arrest the fury of its wing,
 And terrors of its force !
So may we safely pass the dang'rous cape.
And from the perils of the deep escape !

I grieve to leave the splendid seats
 Of Teamor's ancient fame !
Mansion of heroes, now farewell !
 Adieu ye sweet retreats,
Where the fam'd hunters of your ancient vale,
 Who swell'd the high heroic tale,
 Were wont of old to dwell :
And you, *bright tribes of sunny streams adieu !*
 While my sad feet their mournful path pursue,
Ah, well their lingering steps my grieving soul proclaim !

Receive me now, my ship ! hoist now thy sails,
 To catch the favouring gales.
O Heaven ! before thine awful throne I bend !
O let thy power thy servant now protect !
Increase of knowledge and of wisdom, lend,
Our course through ev'ry peril to direct ;

To steer us safe through ocean's rage,
Where angry storms their dreadful strife maintain :
O may thy pow'r their wrath assuage !
May smiling suns, and gentle breezes reign !

Stout is my well-built ship, the storm to brave,
Majestic in its might,
Her bulk, tremendous on the wave,
Erects its stately height !
From her strong bottom, *tall in air*
Her branching masts aspiring rise ;
Aloft their cords, and curling heads they bear,
And give their sheeted ensigns to the skies ;
While her proud bulk frowns awful on the main,
And seems the fortress of the liquid plain !

Dreadful in the shock of fight,
She goes,—she cleaves the storm !
Where ruin wears its most tremendous form
She sails, exulting in her might ;
On the fierce necks of foaming billows rides.
And through the roar
Of angry ocean to the destin'd shore
Her course triumphant guides :
As though beneath her frown the winds were dead,
And each blue valley was their silent bed !

Through all the perils of the main
She knows her dauntless progress to maintain !
Through quicksands, flats, and breaking waves,
Her dangerous path she dares explore ;
Wrecks, storms, and calms, alike she braves,
And gains, with scarce a breeze, the wish'd for shore !
Or in the hour of war,
Fierce on she bounds ; in conscious might.
To meet the promis'd fight !
While distant far,
The fleets of wondering nations gaze,
And view her course with emulous amaze,
As like some champion son of fame,
She rushes on the shock of arms.
And joy's to mingle in the loud alarms,
Impell'd by rage, and fir'd with glory's flame.

Sailing with pomp upon the watery plain,
Like some huge monster of the main,
My ship her speckled bosom laves,
And high in air her curling ensign waves ;
Her stately sides, with polish'd beauty gay,
And gunnel, bright with gold's effulgent ray.

God of the winds ! O hear my pray'r !

Safe passage now bestow !
Soft, o'er the slumbering deep, may fair
And prosperous breezes blow !
O'er the rough rock, and swelling wave,
Do thou our progress guide !
Do thou from angry ocean save,
And o'er its rage preside.

The following extracts from a poem called the Lamentation of Cucullin over the body of his son Conloch are very affecting : neither the name of the poet, nor the era in which it was written, are known. Cucullin, who was one of the celebrated “ heroes of the Western Isle,” fell in love with the beautiful Aife in Scotland, whom leaving pregnant upon his being suddenly recalled to Ireland, he directed, if the child should be a son, to send him to Ulster as soon as his military studies were completed, and gave her a chain of gold to put round his neck that he might know him. In time the youth came to Ireland, clothed in armour, to seek his father, who, mistaking him for an hostile knight, slew him, when the dying youth acknowledged himself to be his son.

Alas ! alas ! for thee,
O Aife's hapless son !
And oh, of sires the most undone,
My child ! my child ! woe, tenfold woe to me !

Alas ! that e'er these fatal plains
Thy valiant steps receiv'd !
And oh, for Cualma's wretched chief.
What now, alas ! remains ?
What, but to *gaze upon his grief* ?
Of his sole son, by his own arm bereav'd !

O! had I died before this hour !—
My lost, my lovely child !
Before this arm my Conloch's arm oppos'd ;
Before this spear against him was address'd ;
Before these eyes beheld his eye-lids clos'd,
And life's warm stream thus issuing from his breast !
Then, Death, how calmly had I met thy power !
Then, at thy worst of terrors, had I smil'd !

Could Fate no other grief devise ?
No other foe provide ?
Oh ! could no aim but mine suffice
To pierce my darling's side ?
My Conloch ! 'tis denied thy father's woe.
Even the sad comfort of revenge to know !
To rush upon thy murderer's cruel breast.
Scatter his limbs, and rend his haughty crest !
While his whole tribe in blood should quench my rage,
And the dire fever of my soul assuage !
The debt of vengeance then should well be paid.
And thousands fall the victims of thy shade !

But what for me—for me is left !
 Of more, and dearer far than life bereft !
 Doom'd to yet unheard of woe !
 A father, doom'd to pierce his darling's side.
 And, oh ! with blasted eyes abide
To see the last dear drops of filial crimson flow !

Alas !—my trembling limbs—my fainting frame !—
 Grief !—is it thou ?—
 O, conquering grief.—I know thee now !
 Well do thy sad effects my woes proclaim !
 Poor victor !—See thy trophies where they lie !—
 Wash them with tears ! then lay thee down and die !

Lo ! the sad remnant of my slaughter'd race,
Like some lone trunk, I wither in my place !
 No more the sons of Usnoth to my sight
 Give manly charms, and to my soul delight !

MOIRA BORB : A POEM.

SUPPOSED TO BE BY OISIN.

As morn from ocean lifts her lovely light.
 Fresh from the wave, with gentle splendours bright ;
 So rose the maid as she approach'd the shore.
 And her light bark to land its burden bore.

Deck'd by soft love with sweet attractive grace.
 And all the charms of mind-illumin'd face ;
 Before our host the beauteous stranger bow'd,
 And, thrown to earth, her eyes their glories shroud.

Her soft salute return'd, with courteous air,
 Finn, *by the hand of snow*, conducts the fair.
 Upon his left, the valiant Gaul was plac'd ;
 And on his right, her seat the stranger grac'd.

A Travelling Hint—Country Banks—Adair : Its monastic Ruins—Taste and Veneration of
 The Lower Orders for Them—Provincial Idiom—The Palatines—The Social Tobacco-Pipe
 —Figurative Expressions—Whimsical Exchange— A Pair of Breeches—The Mountaineer
 and His Dog—Approach Killarney—Opinion of The Low Irish of The English—Killarney
 —Irish fond of Law—The Epitaph—Mucrus—Prompt Drollery—A Caution—Singular
 Pre-dilection Resolution—Anecdotes of Carolan—Specimens of His Poetic Genius.

THERE are no stages or regular posting to Killarney. I was obliged to hire a chaise to go all
 the way for four guineas : the owner of it paying for the feeding of the post-boy and horses.
 The traveller will now, more than ever, be distressed for want of an uniform circulating
 medium : I therefore advise him to change his notes for those of Roches, bankers in this
 place, which will be taken at Cork and Killarney, and on the road. A lady at the inn where I
 was, assured me, that she had been detained a whole day in the the country, because, having
 no money, and no other than local notes, the keeper of the turnpike refused to let her pass.

Notes for eighteen-pence are abundant. Bankers are almost as common as potatoes in the counties of Limerick, Kerry, and Cork. At a village not far from Limerick, a blacksmith issues sixpenny notes, which circulate in the village, and no farther.

In the band of one of the militia regiments I saw a banker who had *failed for five pounds !* and, trifling as this sum is, no doubt several suffered by the petty defaulter. In short, were not the inconveniences of such a system greatly oppressive, and the temptation to fraud shocking, these *musquito* bankers would furnish many a smile to the traveller as he wanders through the west and south-west of Ireland ; but, as he values comfort and progressive motion, let him be careful how he receives in payment the notes which will be offered to him.

About seven o'clock in the morning, under a tolerable specimen of the humidity of the atmosphere of this part of Ireland, I bade adieu to Limerick, so famous for its pretty women, its river, its gloves, and its depots of beef and pork. I saw nothing worthy of notice till I approached Adair, the town where we first halted, which presented a very picturesque and beautiful appearance. This village, which is situated in the barony of Kennery, and on the Maig which communicates with the Shannon, abounds with ruins of churches and convents, which in distant times belonged to the Franciscan friars. Every spot is holy ground. The ruins which are in the highest preservation, are those of a religious house in the south side of the town, built in the reign of king Edward I, by John earl of Kildare, for friars of the order of the Holy Trinity, for the redemption of christian captives : its steeple is supported by a plain arch, with four diagonal ogives meeting in the centre, and stairs which rise to the battlements. The nave and choir are small and plain. On the south side of the river there is another friary in high preservation, founded by John earl of Kildare, who died 1315. In the choir, which is large, are stalls, and a corresponding nave, with a lateral aisle on the south side. To the north of the steeple are some beautiful cloisters, with Gothic windows, within which, on three sides of the square, are corridors ; and on most of these windows are escutcheons with the English and saltier crosses, in general ranged alternately. The principal parts are of hewn limestone, which appears fresh, and the workmanship is simply elegant. Near the cloisters are several apartments, which appear to be much more ancient than the other parts of the building. In the east part of the town a grey friary was founded by Thomas earl of Kildare, and Joan his wife, daughter of James earl of Desmond, in 1465.

All these ruins are delightfully situated, and time has finely coloured those parts which the ivy has not covered. The moralist, the painter, and the antiquarian, will not pass Adair without heaving a sigh for poor mortality, without borrowing some venerable grace from the hoary pile, or tracing, amid the mouldering ruins, the skill and taste of distant ages. My driver was a very good-humoured fellow, who stuttered most unintelligibly till I became a little accustomed to him ; and although wet to the skin, and a glass of whisky lay before him, he would first conduct me to these monastic remains which, if I might judge by the brightness of his eyes, and the vivacity of his gestures, and by putting the heads and tails and scattered limbs of his words together as well as I could, he seemed to enjoy in a manner very creditable to his feelings. I was surprised to find, not only here, but in every other part of Ireland which I visited, that the Anglo-hibernian language spoken was free from provincial idiom ; the only difference which I found arose from the pronunciation of a few words being more or less broad.

Upon the road I met horses laden with goods fastened by ropes of hay, horses drawing in hay harness, and pigs checked in their erratic disposition, by having one of their front and hinder legs agreeably attached to each other by the same simple material ; and the female peasants looked neat and clean, and poised their milk-pails with admirable dexterity.

As I passed the race-course, about a mile before I reached the town of Rathkeale, for the first time I heard the Irish funeral howl issuing from a cottage, where, by an oblique peep, I saw several persons assembled, who, without any appearance of grief, produced the most dismal sounds. In this part of the country, and particularly in the neighbourhood of Rathkeale, the descendants of the Palatines, who came over to this country in 1709, reside. In the benignity of the British nation, these Germans found a refuge from the oppression of their own prince, and of the French, on account of their religious faith. They were recommended by queen Anne to the protection of the Irish parliament, which, from a belief that their residence would strengthen the protestant religion, voted five thousand a year to her majesty for three years, to defray the expense attending their settlement. Their descendants are a loyal, laborious, and respectable race of men. In the rebellion they formed themselves into volunteer corps, and, by essential services, requited the protection which the nation had afforded to them. The county which they inhabit has experienced great advantages from their skill and industry. Their cottages are built after the fashion of their own country, and are remarkably neat and clean. The women frequently wear the large straw hat and short petticoat of the Palatinate. They never marry out of their own community. They use a plough peculiar to themselves, and retain many other of their original customs. The native peasantry have been much improved by their society and example. Several of these people reside on Sir William Barker's estate, in the county of Tipperary, and are much respected. In their emigration, settlement, and deportment, they resemble the Dutch colony established within two or three miles of Copenhagen, which supplies that city with milk, butter, and its best vegetables.

Rathkeale (from rath, a fort ; and ciel, a wood) fourteen miles from Adair, is situated on the river Deel, within four miles of the Shannon : the country leading to it is agreeable. The remains of several castles are to be found in the town, which sustained an attack from the English in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. There are also the remains of a priory dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In the window of one of the ruins, the effigy of an old man, like that of peeping Tom of Coventry, has been ridiculously introduced. All the inns, as usual, have little shops ; and I rejoiced to find that whisky was rapidly giving way to Cork porter. The present lord viscount Courteney has vast possessions in this part of the country.

When I ascended those great mountains which rise between Rathkeale and Abbeyfeale, I found the road for the first time very bad, and neglected, in consequence, as I was informed, of this route to Killarney being very little frequented. The country assumed a barren and gloomy appearance ; the thinly scattered peasantry, attracted by the novel appearance of a chaise in these gloomy regions, stood half-enveloped in smoke at the doors of their miserable hovels, and displayed all the marks of extreme penury. The summit of one mountain proved, when we had reached it, to be only the base of another : the evening, shrouded in black clouds, charged with rain, rapidly set in, the wind roared, and only the light-blue smoke of the cabin relieved the universally deep-embrowned sterility of the scene. In these, and most other mountainous districts, the milk of sheep is used.

At Abbeyfeale, so called from the river that runs through it, and celebrated for a monastery which was formerly founded there, I put up for the night, which I expected to have passed in a wretched mud hovel, but was agreeably disappointed in finding the chaise stop before a neat inn which had just been opened. A fowl, who lost his head by my arrival, and who was not the tenderest of his kind ; some excellent potatoes, a pyramid of fried pork, and a pint of excellent port-wine, introduced in a mug, formed the blended meals of dinner and supper, to which let me add the comfort of a most excellent turf-fire, and a good bed.

In the morning a bank-note of a neighbouring blacksmith was offered to me in exchange, which I only detained whilst I copied it as follows : “ No. 18. *One British Shilling* : for twenty-one of these, I will give the bearer a guinea note.” The name signed I could not make out. The road to Castle Island, our next stage, distant ten miles, was a continuation of the same gloomy and mountainous scenery of black bog and barren heath, enlivened only by a few scattered goats : for miles not a cabin was to be seen ; and the only animated being in the shape of man, a ragged peasant, upon a lean horse, drawing a hurdle with shafts without any wheels. When I looked out, I could scarcely believe that such a scene of desolation could conduct to the far-famed beauties of Killarney.

I found Castle Island a large town, in a state of rapid decay, owing, as I was informed, to a dispute amongst the proprietors regarding the division of their respective interests. The place was formerly called the Castle of the Island of Kerry. The castle was erected in 1226 ; but the ruins want wood and verdure to make them interesting. Immense masses of this building broken off, as solid and compact as rock, lie in the field in which it stands. Only the shell of the market-house and assembly-rooms remains. The charter-school established here, I was informed, was wholly neglected : upon this subject I shall remark hereafter. It being cold, whilst the horses were feeding, I went into the kitchen to drink some wine and water ; here I met with two old women who were smoking a single and very short pipe between them, each alternately taking a social puff. Upon my asking one of them whether the rebellion had raged here much, she replied : “ No, your honour, we had only a *little blast* of it :” this figurative strength of expression is very common amongst the low Irish. Upon a rain having fallen after a severe frost, and the weather becoming softer, a fellow said, “ that the rain had taken the *venom* out of it.” Another said to a magistrate, before whom he brought a complaint against one of his neighbours, after describing what malice the latter bore him : “ By my shoul, your honour, he would *poison the very earth* under me if he could.” One of my old ladies, with natural politeness, offered to extinguish their joint pipe, if smoking were unpleasant to me. At the Castle Island, the innkeeper insisted upon it that all my shillings were bad, for the purpose of forcing upon me his shilling and sixpenny notes. Such perfect strangers are the people of this county (Kerry) to coin, that when the new penny-pieces were first circulated, the following singular and whimsical circumstance occurred : a militia soldier offered one of them in market to a salesman for a pair of stockings, the latter returned a tester in exchange with the stockings.

Turning round the road as I left this town, which I did with infinite pleasure, I met an Irish funeral : the corpse was in a plain deal coffin, and the population of two or three villages followed it, amongst whom about four or five men and women kept up a constant mournful cry, without any other indication of affliction : not one of them was in mourning, and I found my approach increased the chorus of the funeral yell. The country still continued very wild and dreary. In these mountainous regions, a stranger, moving in a *pair of breeches*, attracts even the attention of the dogs, the constant inmates of the cabins, who, upon seeing so great a novelty approach, naturally regard it as a phenomenon portending no good, and accordingly set up the faithful howl of alarm. One of these vigilant guardians, after contemplating me for some time as I walked forward, gave the usual public notice of my arrival ; upon which one of these mountaineers threw, *not a stone*, but a bit of turf, at him, and pulling off his hat, apologized for his dog wanting better manners. In one cabin I saw a pretty obstinate contest between a pig and his mistress ; the latter wanted him to go out, and the former was resolved to stay in, and gained his point. The low Irish are very fond of giving fine names to these animals. A woman was overheard to say to a great sow : “ Ah, Juliana ! get out, what do you do here ?” This reminds me of a celebrated pig-feeder and agriculturist in England, who, after dinner, at a show of cattle meeting gave a toast, Virginian his sow, and Horatio his boar.

A few miles before we reached Killarney, the face of the country very rapidly changed to fertility and beauty. The blue and purple sides of those vast mountains which inclose the lakes appeared full in my view : they rose majestically from a sea of vapour, and their heads were lost in the clouds. As we descended into the vale which led to the town, my driver, who by this time was quite intelligible to me, and who I found had impregnated me with a little of his stuttering, the natural effect of sympathy and association, observed : “ Ah, your honour ! here are glens and mountains ! if you had them in your country, what a fine thing it would be for the robbers and murderers there : by my shoul, they are here of no use.” I could not help smiling at his opinion of England : in vain did I tell him, that we had glens and mountains too, which were not infested with robbers and murderers. He shook his head to all I said. In many parts of Ireland I found the same unfortunate and unpleasant prejudice.

Instead of finding Killarney a little romantic place, as I had previously penciled it in my imagination, I entered a large town resembling Newport in the Isle of Wight ; its streets were crowded with people : it is the principal town in the county of Kerry. To my great disgust, I found the quarter-sessions were holding. Every Irishman thinks himself somewhat of a lawyer, and is from the little vanity of displaying his logical skill, more than from a spirit of litigation, uncommonly fond of being a party to a cause, or forming one of the auditory of a court of justice ; hence in Ireland the quarter-sessions never fail to bring an uncommon number of people together.

I arrived late, and found a very respectable hotel so crowded, that I could scarcely make my way to the landlord to learn that he had not even a vacant chair in his house ; so I drove, by his recommendation, to an inn kept by a Mrs. Murphy, which I found to be more quiet and very comfortably, and with which I had no fault to find, but that I was obliged at night to fasten my room door with a pair of old snuffers. After a late dinner the weather cleared up, and the lustre of a new moon, occasionally obscured by light clouds, induced me to walk to Ross Castle, about two miles distant, to the shores of the lower lake. As I stood by this hoary pile, the stupendous mountains and dusky islands finely reflected in the water, which resembled a dark mirror, the soft brightness of the lunar light, the sound of distant cascades, and of a boat moving as if by magic to the shore, formed a sublime and solemn scene too powerful and impressive for the pen to convey. Before breakfast the next day, I strolled through the town, which contains several handsome houses. Behind a screen of arbutus, laurels, and jessamines, raised upon the external wall of the Roman catholic chapel, a monument attracted my notice ; it was a marble urn, half covered with a pall, resting upon a sarcophagus, under which the following elegant and affecting epitaph was written,

“ Entombed
near this Monument, lie the remains
of the Right Reverend GERALD TRAHAN,
Doctor of the Sorbonne, and R. C. Bishop of Kerry.
His doctrine and his life reflected credit on each other
In him were blended
the easy politeness of a gentleman
with the purest principles of a Christian.
Given to hospitality, gentle, sober, just, holy, continent
his charity was diffusive and exemplary. ;
the patron and protector of honourable merit
He was learned without Ostentation,
and religious without intolerance :
his affable manners and instructive conversation
charmed every ear, and vanquished every heart.

To perpetuate the memory of so beloved a character
his mourning friends have erected this monument
a frail memorial of the veneration for his virtues,
and a faint testimony of their grief for a misfortune
alas ! indelibly engraved on their hearts.
He died on the 4th day of July, 1797 aged 54 years,”

If I were charmed with the epitaph, I was doubly so upon finding that it was the composition of a *protestant clergyman*. Whilst I was puzzling myself to think how I could reach major Mahony, of Dunloe Castle, six miles distant, to whom I had a letter of introduction, he was pointed out to me in the street ; and, after a very kind reception, he introduced me to major, now lieutenant colonel Heyland, the commanding officer of the Londonderry militia, who, with the characteristic politeness and warmth of an Irish gentleman, improved by having visited the most polished courts of Europe, made an immediate arrangement for my seeing every thing worthy of attention at Killarney. In half an hour after this introduction, I was on my road to Mucruss, well mounted, with my Killarney friend. We passed by the house and grounds of lord Kenmare : the former is large and somewhat aged, and possesses nothing worthy of notice ; the latter are very beautiful. As we turned into Mucruss, the estate of H. A. Herbert, Esq., the richest scenery opened upon us : the ground, gently undulating, clothed with vivid green verdure, the effect of the great humidity of the climate here, was adorned with almost every variety of shrubs, flourishing in the highest beauty. and perfection. The graceful nuns of Mucruss abbey on our right, half embosomed in a group of luxuriant and stately trees influenced as soon as seen the bridle of our horses. I contemplated, with reverence, a very ancient and prodigious yew, the trunk of which is between seven and eight feet in circumference, which grows in the centre of a cloistered court, and covers it with a roof of branches and leaves, whilst some ash-trees of a prodigious size overshadow it without. This yew-tree is the object of superstitious veneration amongst the low people, who also exhibit their devotion to the saint of the place, by going round the building a certain number of times, during which they recite prayers. Pilgrims come from a considerable distance to do penance here. According to tradition, many Irish kings and chiefs are buried in the abbey, a favourite place of sepulture, where the dead are buried only on the south and east sides : the north is looked upon, I was told, as the Devil's side, and the west is preserved for unbaptized children, for soldiers, and strangers. In this court are windows of unequal sizes : to try the prompt drollery of an Irishman whom I met afterwards, I asked him the cause of the inequality. “ By my shoul !” said he, “ and the great windows were for the fat friars to look through, and the smaller ones for the little friars.” Whilst I was reading a pathetic epitaph upon one of the monuments in the abbey, I felt myself affected by putrid effluvia ; and upon looking on each side, I observed, for the first time, some bodies, which might have been interred two or three months, in coffins, the planks of which had started, not half covered with mould. Upon quitting the spot, a great collection of skulls and bones, promiscuously heaped up, in niches in the walls, excited melancholy observation.

I would recommend to the good people of Killarney in their arrangement of these wretched relics of our frail existence, the mode adopted in the chapel of All Souls, commonly called the *Skull Chapel*, at the Franciscan convent on the Tereira da Cea in Funchal, in the island of Madeira, the roof and sides of which are entirely composed of the skulls and thigh-bones of deceased monks, which are arranged with ghastly taste and horrible regularity. The soil of the abbey is very thin, and every effort has been made to dissuade the lower classes from bringing their dead here, but in vain. It is a fact that those who have been buried six months or a year before, are raised and placed on one side to make room for those who are brought for interment afterwards.

So loaded with contagion is the air of this spot, that every principle of humanity imperiously calls upon the indulgent owner to exercise his right of closing it up as a place of sepulture in future. I warn every one who visits Killarney as he values life, not to enter this abbey. Contrast renders doubly horrible the ghastly contemplation of human dissolution, tainting the surrounding air with pestilence, in a spot which nature has enriched with a profusion of romantic beauty. The superstition of the people in the neighbourhood of Adair, which I have mentioned, crowded one of the abbeys there with their dead, until the spot became the seat of infection ; upon which, lord Adair, owner of the place, with equal prudence and resolution, sent for some of the soldiers of a militia regiment quartered in the neighbourhood, and having taken every proper precaution against infection, prevailed upon them, by a liberal remuneration, in one night to remove every vestige of corruption from the favourite abbey into the river, and never afterwards permitted another corpse to be buried in his grounds. His lordship lost his popularity for a short period, and more serious consequences were apprehended by his friends, but a little time and reflection restored him to the good opinion of those whom his good sense and firmness had offended.

Some years since an Englishman of handsome appearance and in the prime of life, from what cause I could not learn, selected this abbey for the place of his retirement, and covered an open cell in one of the upper apartments, with fragments of tombs and coffins to protect himself against the inclemencies of the weather. He sometimes associated with the neighbours, and obtained such a reputation for sanctity, that the surrounding peasants used to supply him with food, till at last it was discovered that the holy man was given to solitary whisky indulgences, and that he was seen reeling amongst the graves, and apostrophizing the bones that lay scattered in the aisles ; in consequence of which the superstitious veneration of the good people of Killarney diminished, and in one night the eremite disappeared, having previously declared his intention of retiring to a cell upon the rock of Lisbon. I remember in Devonshire a letter-carrier, who, in consequence of a disappointment of the heart in early life never shaved, and always lived upon raw meat.

The mansion of Mr. Herbert is a comfortable one ; he was from home, but his housekeeper insisted upon tempting us with a sandwich of exquisite Killarney mutton : the house is in a bad situation. We visited a cottage which he built, called Turk-forest Lodge ; the view from one side of it is fine, the situation is singular, and it seems to shiver in the vast shadow of the Turk mountain, at the base of which it stands.

Mucruss lake lies expanded below the garden very beautifully. From the cottage we proceeded to the Turk cascade, which falls from the Devil's Punch-bowl, a supposed volcanic crater, upon the summit of Mangerton mountain. Of the beauty of this fall I could not judge, as it was supplied with but little water when I saw it. The visitor of Killarney will be applied to by the people who belong to the boats, which are kept for visiting the lakes : the expense of hiring them, the charge of the boatmen, French-horns, victualling them, powder for the petteraro, generally amounts to about nine guineas, by the time all the lakes are visited. I speak only from information, for the polite attention I received prevented me from stating it with the certainty of experience. All the boats belong to Lord Kenmare, as lord of the lakes. In consequence of the sudden squalls that frequently blow, no sails are permitted.

The next morning being very rainy, we were prevented from going on the lakes, but were gratified by hearing the band of the Londonderry militia, which is a remarkably fine one, play some beautiful airs, composed by lady Steward, sister of lord Castlereagh, and others of the justly celebrated Irish bard, Carolan. I have taken a brief account of this extraordinary genius, from the Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards, by Joseph Cooper Walker, Esq. This poet was born in the year 1670, in the village of Nobber, in the county of Westmeath ; he was deprived

of sight at an early period : “ My eyes” he used pleasantly to say, “ are transplanted into my ears.” Several years after he had lost his sight he fell in love with a Miss Bridget Cruise, who refused him her hand : he made sweet verses upon her, upon which Mr. Walker elegantly compares him to Apollo, who, when he caught at the nymph filled his arms with bays. A very extraordinary effect of his passion for this lady is mentioned by Mr. O’Conner. Upon his return from shore from St. Patrick’s Purgatory, a cave in an island in Lough Dearg, in the county of Donnegal, where he had been on a pilgrimage, he found several pilgrims waiting the arrival of the boat which had conveyed him to the object of his devotion : in assisting some of these travellers to get on board, he chanced to take a lady’s hand, and instantly exclaimed, “ By the hand of my gossip, this is the hand of Bridget Cruise :” his feeling was faithful ; the being whom he touched was the object of his earliest love. He was said to have been a genuine representative of the ancient bard, with a great share of Anacreontic spirit in his compositions. In his wanderings from house to house, where he always received a cordial welcome, he composed those airs, which are justly the delight of his countrymen. Carolan, at an early period of life, contracted a fondness for Irish wine, that is, whisky and other spirituous liquors, from which being interdicted by his physician, he sunk into a profound melancholy. Passing one day a grocer’s shop, where whisky was sold, after six weeks’ abstinence from his favourite indulgence, he told the young man who stood behind the counter to bring a measure of his favourite liquor, and declared that he only wished to smell it : the fumes ascended to his brain, and all his genius and animal spirits revived. He again drank the forbidden draught, and composed one of the sweetest of his songs, in that state, which he has so finely described in his “ Receipt,” when

“ Sense feels no pain, and mind no care.”

His wit was very ready and forcible. Being upon a visit with a parsimonious lady, as he sat one day playing upon his harp, he heard the butler, whose name was O’Flinn, unlock the cellar door, upon which he followed him, and requested a cup of beer ; the fellow refused, and thrust him rudely from the cellar, upon which he composed the following severe epigram :

What pity hell’s gates are not kept by O’Flinn !
So surly a dog would let nobody in.

So exquisite was the ear of Carolan, that he laid a wager with a celebrated Italian performer, upon a visit to lord Mayo, that he would follow him in any piece he played, and that he would afterwards play a voluntary, in which the foreigner should not be able to follow him ; the offer was accepted, and Carolan was victorious. The celebrated Geminiani pronounced Carolan to be a wonderful musical genius. Soon after the death of his wife, to whom he was ardently attached, he followed her to the grave in March 1738, in the sixty-eighth year of his age. The following exquisite lines, from a translation by Miss Brookes, in her *Reliques of Irish Poetry*, will prove how sweet a poet Carolan was.

SONG FOR MABLE KELLY

BY CAROLAN.

The youth whom fav’ring Heavens decree
To join his fate, my fair ! with thee.
And see that lovely head of thine
With fondness on his arm recline ;

No thought but Joy can fill his mind.
Nor any care can entrance find ;
Nor sickness hurt, nor terror shake.
And Death will spare him for thy sake !

For the bright flowing of thy hair,
That decks a face so heavenly fair ;
And a fair form to match that face.
The rival of the cygnet's grace.

When with calm dignity she moves,
Where the clear stream her hue improves ;
Where she her snowy bosom laves.
And floats majestic on the waves.

Grace gave thy form, in beauty gay,
And rang'd thy teeth in bright array ;
All tongues with joy thy praises tell,
And love delights with thee to dwell.

To thee harmonious powers belong,
That add to verse the charms of song ;
Soft melody to numbers join,
And make the poet half-divine.

As when the softly blushing rose,
Close by some neighbouring lily grows ;
Such is the glow thy cheeks diffuse,
And such their bright and blended hues ?

The timid lustre of thine eye.
With nature's purest tints can vie ;
With the sweet blue-bell's azure gem,
That droops upon its modest stem !

How blest the bard, O lovely maid !
To find thee in thy charms array'd ;
Thy pearly teeth, thy flowing hair,
Thy neck beyond the cygnet fair !

As when the simple birds at night
Fly round the torch's fatal light,
Wild, and with ecstasy elate,
Unconscious of approaching fate :

So the soft splendours of thy face,
And thy fair form's enchanting grace,
Allure to death unwary love,
And thousands the bright ruin prove !

Ev'n he whose hapless eyes no ray
Admit from beauty's cheering day ;

Yet, though he cannot see the light.
He feels it warm, and knows it bright.

In beauty, talents, taste refin'd,
And all the graces of the mind ;
In *all* unmatch'd thy charms remain,
Nor meet a rival on the plain.

Thy slender foot, thine azure eye.
Thy smiling lip of scarlet dye ;
Thy tapering hand, so soft and fair,
The bright redundance of thy hair!

Oh, blest be the auspicious day
That gave them to thy poet's lay !
O'er rival bards to lift his name.
Inspire his verse, and swell his fame.

CAROLAN TO GRACY NUGENT

BY CHARLES WILSON, ESQ.

The fairest flow'r of beauty's spring,
Now softly prompts the swelling string ;
Oh ! Gracy, born of generous race, [1]
Too happy in each nameless grace :

Who meets thy presence sure is blest,
No more by anxious sorrow prest ;
If fortune frowns, one single ray
From thy bright eyes effuses day.

Thy hair by Beauty's fingers spun.
Dipt in the *gleam of setting sun*,
Sheds on thy neck, in wanton play,
The mimic drops and pearls of day.

[1] She was related to the Nugent family.

The Stranger in Ireland, Or, A Tour in the Southern and Western Parts of that Country in
the ... (1806)

Author : John Carr

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