

This Titanic Coast 1891

Three Months' Tour in Ireland

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Translated and condensed by Mrs. Arthur Walter

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I WISHED to go to the Giant's Causeway, because I had heard it much praised. Its drawbacks, which had been well dinned into my ears during my stay in Ireland, had not lessened my desire in the least. Accustomed as I am to fall into ecstasy at those aspects of Nature which have no effect upon more reasonable persons, it was impossible for me not to find some beauties in one of the wonders of the world.

At Portrush, a pretty trading port and seaside place, frequented by the aristocracy of Londonderry and Belfast, we took our places in an electric tramway, much admired by people who understand it, which has been working for some years with considerable success. According to the custom of the country the cars are uncovered, so that in showery weather the traveller gets a bath as he sits ; however, he is enabled to see and admire all the better. Nothing is more interesting than to glide like this across fields, without noise, or smoke, or dust, propelled by an invisible and almost miraculous force by the side of a T-shaped rail, which would seem nothing more than an innocent railing were it not for the light blue sparks that fly out as it is rubbed by the steel brushes mounted upon the side of the cars.

At first we go along the edge of the coast, bordered with chalk walls of dazzling whiteness. Below us breaks the glorious sea, marbled with violet patches from the shadows of the clouds, and towards the shore marked with long green bands, which tell of reefs carpeted with seaweed. The cliffs are eaten away into great caves, which give them the appearance of gigantic sponges. Lumps of rock thrown down during some tempest by the dashing waves form a chain of islets that look like the grey heads of giants. One might say they are the petrified bodies of the Titans, the former sovereigns of these waves and lands ; even the fantastic formations with which, owing to the constant action of the surf, the coast bristles, are the remains of their palaces. There, below, however, are the remains of human constructions—ruined towers, broken arches, mouldering walls. Yet you doubt, so closely does the massive masonry blend with the rock. It is the castle of Dunluce ; a pile so formidable that it seems to have been built to defy the ocean. It entirely covers an immense block of basalt, which rises almost perpendicularly for a hundred feet above the sea, separated from the land by a deep chasm, though connected below by a tongue of stone, scarcely wide enough to let the man pass who is bold enough to trust himself upon it. The building, which is fairly large, must have been cramped for room ; not only do the outside walls rise sheer in a line with the precipice, but in some places actually overhang the water. There is one room entirely hung over the abyss, like a ship's boat from its davits.

Nor, indeed, is this pirates' nest without resemblance to a huge man-of-war ; it has even a hold, which is represented by a cave excavated in the rock, and communicating with the mainland by a narrow passage under the sea. The fortress was quite impregnable, as access to it was, humanly speaking, only possible by the bridge spanning the yawning chasm. The builder knew his business. In some places the rock has crumbled away and taken the masonry intact with it. It is not easy to assign a date to this medley of irregular buildings ; the big round towers seem to go back to the Norman period, while most of the habitable portions

bear signs of the sixteenth and even of the seventeenth century. This indicates the troubled condition of Ireland in comparatively recent times, when the great peers of the realm still felt the necessity of shutting themselves up in such places of refuge.

Past Dunluce the sea is lost to sight, and the line turns inland to serve the borough of Bushmills, which stands at the mouth of a verdant valley in the middle of an arid and wind-swept plain. The power of the River Bush, transformed into electricity, works the tramway, the pride of Ireland. Thence the railway again takes a north-easterly direction, and soon reaches its terminus. In the midst of a bare grassy heath stand two hotels, one splendid, the other very respectable. We are at the Giant's Causeway.

If people who like to trouble themselves with preconceived ideas get an entirely wrong notion of the Giant's Causeway, the fault is due to the name given to the thing. Not, indeed, that it is wrong, but it particularizes too much. The north-east coast of Ireland abounds in these strange geological formations, no less interesting to the scientific observer than to the visitor in search of the picturesque. Within an area of three miles, between Cape Bengor and the Black Rocks, there is a complete and varied collection of natural wonders, one of which is what is properly called the Causeway. The huge dimensions of the whole dwarf those of the part, which is not clearly made out at the first glance ; so much so, that the tourist who descends the slope to the beach is very likely to ask, as he puts away his spy-glass, " Where is your Causeway ?" Thence it is but a step to exclaim, " What, is that all ?" But if, instead of only being told of this Causeway he had been promised a marvellous piece of coast, with giddy heights and a supremely beautiful sea, he would simply admire, without trying to find fault.

We have scarcely got into a boat in the little creek of Port-na-bo, where half a dozen vessels are drawn up on the black shingle, when the stories begin. This is the cavern of Port-Coon. A hermit giant retired there, with the vow of no longer eating food soiled by the impure touch of mortal hands. Heaven took pity upon the poor anchorite, condemned to an exclusive diet of oysters, mussels, and sea-weed, and sent him some seals by way of a more grateful viand, while the devil tempted him with sirens. To-day Port-Coon is only the habitation of gulls, which fly out with harsh cries and great beating of wings whenever a boat disturbs the peace of their retreat.

This visit has an appearance of danger, just enough to cause a slight nervous shudder and to inspire an innocent pride in our boldness. Vigorously propelled by four rowers between two reefs, the vessel sails quickly along the narrow channel, and clears with a bound the wide bar. We are beneath a high-sounding vault, where we instinctively subdue our voices to a religious tone, and throw vague glances of apprehension towards the unfathomed recesses that are smothered in darkness. The mysterious voices of the smooth, inky sea mutter low ; we become solemn, then quite frightened. In this sinister cavern one feels so timid that all admiration is paralyzed, and it is with a sigh of relief that we recross the bar—not without danger to our stomachs, not very accustomed to the sea—and find ourselves face to face with the sun again.

At a short distance is another cavern, whose mouth is an exact arch. It is Dunkerry, and it seems that honour requires us to enter it. Then we will go. But when we are there it is another thing. The swell, always strong on these shores, makes itself so much felt, that at every movement of the waves the boat seems to be going to be dashed against the roof, or to be sinking into the entrails of the world. It is no use saying that the stalactites on the roof are twenty yards above the level of the spring tides ; the sensation is very unpleasant. It seems that the weather was kind to us in allowing us to visit these two caves ; even in the fine season it is not possible every day, so we felt bound to regard ourselves as heroes.

Turning now our bow to the east, we sail quite close to the wonderful coast, which is indented with a series of rounded bays, cut out of the solid rock. Passing Port-na-bo, the Stooceans, two peaks of extraordinary shape. Port Ganniay, and Portnoffer, we come to the amphitheatre of the giants, a semicircle of geometrical regularity. At the top of the wall which encloses this great coliseum there is a row of basaltic columns eighty feet high ; then comes a broad band of moss-grown rock ; then another row of pillars about sixty feet high ; then a second band of stone, and so on, with a regularity that gives the impression of some huge building, as far as the beach, where great blocks of black rock lying in a semicircle seem to mark the bounds of the arena. The high promontory to the west is surmounted by three unequal peaks called the Chimney Stacks, which resemble petrified sentinels.

Bound the point is the bay of Port-na-Spania, thus named in remembrance of the vessels of the Armada that were wrecked in it. Driven on by the storm, the Spaniards mistook the points of rock for the turrets of a fortress, and cannonaded them. Dawn dispelled the illusion, and the petrified giants, in revenge for the outrage, shattered their ships like glass. At the other end of this fatal bay is the Pleaskin, the most peculiar headland of this strange coast. It rises 870 feet perpendicularly above sea level, with alternating layers of rock and rows of basaltic columns, like the amphitheatre. Past this comes Horse-shoe Bay and Cape Bengor, which has the same appearance, and is the usual limit to these excursions upon a very rough sea, that rudely buffets the cockle-shell boats.

And the Causeway, the famous Causeway—is it only a myth ? Patience ; we are coming to it, or, rather, returning to it, for the custom is to land when returning from the sail. There is some difficulty in getting close to the land in the middle of the breakers, and, in order to disembark, you must jump upon a rock that is washed by the sea, choosing the moment between the approaching and receding waves. The end of this gymnastic exercise is that you come down on your knees upon a very rough rock after more or less hesitation, thankful that you have not slipped into the water—a thing you may do without danger, as the boatmen are ready to fish you out again by your skirts. But people who are not fond of bruises and foot-baths, and, above all, are not partial to making themselves ridiculous, have themselves rowed quietly to the little landing-place of Port-na-bo, and thence reach the Causeway by the beach, the more so as it gains by being approached from that side.

The Giant's Causeway, properly so called—in Gaelic *Clochan-nabh-Fomharaigh*—is made up of three distinct tongues of rock running out into the sea, with a distinct slope. The largest is about 120 yards wide at its base, with a length of about 230 ; it gradually narrows till it is lost beneath the sea. The appearance of the next, which is nearly as wide but much shorter, gives it the name of the Honeycomb. The smallest is relatively insignificant.

Without being very deeply versed in geology, one knows that rock is usually formed of horizontal stratifications ; here it is made of a collection of vertical columns, cut into prism-like shapes, all separate, yet so well fitted together that a sheet of paper cannot be inserted between them. The columns we have just seen on the side of the cliffs, and the strange pavement under our feet, are of the same character ; below they are seen in their elevation ; here we are walking upon their tops, while their bases are under water. These are more or less elevated above the sea-level—about ten yards at the head of the Causeway, while at the point they crop out at the surface.

Presumably in the interests of science, some painstaking persons have counted the number of the pillars in the Causeway ; it is easy to make a slip, and they have not agreed in their total, which varies between 37,000 and 40,000, without reckoning those that are broken, and lie scattered about the shore half buried in sand and shingle. If men would only consent to

leave nature alone, the Giant's Causeway would be greater. But during the two centuries that people have been aware that it is a wonderful sight, goodness knows how many crimes visitors have been guilty of in their desire to carry off fragments to decorate their gardens ; not to mention the natives, who from all eternity have worked it like a common quarry. Some restraint is now put upon this vandalism.

As I have said, the columns are polygonal, each face being about nine or ten inches wide. Pentagons and hexagons are the commonest figures : there are some with seven sides ; octagons are rare, squares still rarer. Those laborious investigators I have just spoken of have duly found three with nine faces and one with three. The idea of people going to such enchanting places for the sake of applying themselves to such a task ! And yet one ought to be grateful to them, for without them I should have known nothing about the subject. What one does perceive at the first glance is, that these irregular columns fit exactly into each other, like the pieces of a Chinese puzzle. They are not made of a single piece, but of several, which are arranged with opposing convex and concave faces. In the same way their tops are sometimes rounded, sometimes hollow ; in the latter case they form little basins full of sea-water.

I wish there were some way of suppressing those wretched guides and boatmen, vendors of photographs and sham collections of minerals, and all the rest of the more or less open mendicants that infest the Causeway. The unhappy tourist is not subjected to equal inflictions in any other part of Ireland. But here, as soon as he has got rid of his travelling companions, and has an opportunity of dreaming in peace without the absurd social necessity of exchanging commonplace exclamations of delight, he is beset by these vermin. It is impossible to move a step without them. They are a nightmare. It is no use to empty your pockets ; they surge up in greater numbers. Nor is it any good pretending to be ignorant of the language, and speaking every tongue, including Arabic and Japanese, of which you know a couple of words ; they think it superfluous to understand, when all that is to be done is to exchange for some pieces of silver an album of ghastly photographic views or a box of pebbles of many colours.

One old man, whom I would have strangled had it not been for fear of the police, pestered me for a whole hour with his company, which was made the less endurable by his monotonous explanations, heard, alas ! only too well by me, though to drive him off I told him the opposite by gestures, accompanied with abusive words in French, German, and Italian ; I even swore at him, I am afraid, so exasperated was I, But who would be so severe as not to forgive me when he considers that when I bent down to look at some little flower growing in a crack in the basalt^ this wretch would come up with the information that I was " at the Fan, five pentagons symmetrically arranged, with a heptagon for handle" ? I don't know what would have happened had not his persecution been transferred to another party. These people seemed delighted to have such a conductor. It is almost incredible, but there are guides belonging to the hotels, and there are plenty of idiots who employ them. I do not mean aged or infirm persons who require the help of an arm to walk among the stones, but people with good eyes and feet and with all their teeth. Fancy guides to lead you on the beach or along the beaten paths that scale the cliff, guides for a stroll on this great, paved causeway, like the sacred way of some mighty city ! It is no doubt done to produce an illusive idea of the dangers run—unless it is for the pleasure of hearing the inane stories chattered by these wretches, stories that affect the ear like the irritating screams of a parrot.

Since I am on this subject, I may be allowed to make a modest proposal. These poor folk, say those with feeling hearts, require the generosity of tourists to make up their scanty incomes. So be it. But would it not be better to pay for being released from their services than for being done to death by them ? Tourists of irascible disposition would willingly pay double, and each party would gain. And I have conceived the idea, which seems to me very

reasonable, of an insurance against these importunities, to be taken out upon landing in Ireland, with a badge worn in the hat implying, "I have paid my footing: leave me alone."

It is true that, even were these unendurable guides disposed of, there would still remain the public. If I had the luck to be proprietor of the Causeway, I should close it to the vulgar herd—London cockneys. Limerick pork-butchers, Belfast hosiers, Philadelphia oil merchants, shopkeepers escaped from their counters, imbecile *bourgeois*—who even more than the guides poison the enjoyment of the tourist who is really fond of nature.

References would then be required for admission into the enchanted land, and whole families would not be seen having themselves photographed on the Giant's Causeway. The mother-in-law, with a large feather in her hat, a mantle trimmed with jet beads, and a dress of green cashmere with flounces; the father-in-law, in a shiny frock coat, with a tall hat and dog-skin gloves; the young father, in a mustard-coloured check suit of dittoes and brown felt hat; the young mother, in pink calico, holding the beribboned baby—poor little thing, so young, and with such parents!—then a bevy of young sisters with their hair flying in the wind, and little brothers in sailor suits, under the charge of a maiden aunt showing off a belt of sky-blue on a grey skirt, in the latest fashion of Ballybrophy or Carrickmacross, all grouped together in a niche in the high columns at the beginning of the Causeway. It often serves this function, for the photographer keeps his machine fixed up here permanently during the fine season.

I regret to add that an eminent English politician has been guilty of this breach of good taste, unpardonable in a man of such breeding. In the window of the photographer's hut is spread out a large-sized proof, labelled, "Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and suite," representing the eloquent tribune of the Radical party, proud and triumphant, with cheeks shaved like a Roman Emperor's, surrounded by a score of important personages whose black outline is thrown sideways upon the basaltic columns. All seem very pleased with themselves, and extremely proud of their happy thought.

I have tried to depict this Titanic coast as it appears on one of the lovely days of an Irish summer, when the sky is bright and cloudy by turns, and the changing shadows have so deep a charm. Grand without being austere, Nature here smiles gravely with a benevolent majesty, like that of those good giants who inspire a feeling of strength tempered with calm gentleness.

How far the Causeway extends beneath the water is not known, but it is certain that though the sea here is more than ten fathoms deep, unseen rocks shatter the ocean rollers, which, big enough in fine weather, under the blast of the storm rush madly against the ramparts of basalt. The surf roars in the caverns like thunder, and, when it breaks upon a reef, reports like a salvo of musketry burst forth from a cloud of spray that resembles the smoke of gunpowder.

In Gaelic, Antrim means "land of caverns." All the seaboard of the county is a formidable mass of rock, partly chalky, partly basaltic, covered with a more or less thick bed of earth. When this is scraped away the rock may be seen, in many cases crystallized in the same prism-like shapes as the Giant's Causeway. To drive along this coast from the Causeway to Belfast—a distance of about sixty miles—is one of the most beautiful excursions that can be made in Ireland or anywhere else. We must thank the engineers who, to the great enjoyment of tourists, have cut a splendid road in the chalk cliffs. The slopes are very steep in places, and not the least of the difficulties encountered was to keep the roadway out of the reach of the spray. The sight of the old path, now given up to the goats, winding along a hundred yards overhead (a short time ago it was the only means of communication between

the villages on the coast), makes the traveller bless the advance of civilization. It only cost about 40,000*l.* for the ten miles between Glenarm and Larne. The scenery, has lost nothing by it ; and what travellers have gained will be understood when I say that at the steepest points of the old road the horses had to be taken out, and the “ quality” were obliged to walk, while gangs of rustics somehow managed to drag the coach over.

Seen from a distance, the peculiar islet of Carrick-a-rede looks like a fortress, but, as its name indicates, it is only a “ rock in the way.” It is a huge block of basalt, which stops the salmon that are going along the coast, and catches them in a sort of natural trap, whence they are taken in considerable numbers. The bold traveller makes it a point of honour to cross the swinging bridge, made of two parallel ropes bound together by light cross-pieces, and with a third rope for hand-rail. The bridge connects the islet with the land, and is thrown over a chasm twenty yards wide by thirty deep. All who have tried it have repented of their temerity before reaching the middle. If sensation is all that is required, it is only necessary to look at the women and boys engaged in the fishery almost running across it, and that, too, while laden with a big basket, and with the bridge swaying in the wind like a swing.

Ballycastle is a small town, uninteresting except for its proximity to Benmore or Fairhead, the extreme north-east point of Ireland. This is a promontory of carboniferous sandstone, mixed with schistous clay and chalk. On the landward side it sinks in gentle slopes covered with luxuriant pasturage, while to the sea it presents a sheer rampart of rock. It has a quadrangular column measuring thirty-three feet by thirty-six, and over two hundred in height. At the top of the plateau Lough Dhu and Lough na Cranagh sleep in their little hollows. The oval island of black basalt in the middle of the latter is thought to be an old place of Druidical sacrifices. The view from this point embraces the sea on three sides, with Rathlin Island in the west ; the blue outline of the coast of Scotland can be made out through the light haze of the northern horizon.

Naturally coal was looked for in the district. In 1763 the Earl of Antrim granted Hugh Boyd a perpetual concession over all the coal-measures in his domains. In the course of their work the miners discovered galleries perfectly timbered and ventilated, in which were lying picks, lamps, and other instruments as good as those of our own time. Besides his mines Hugh Boyd established blast-furnaces, a foundry, glass works, a tannery, a brewery, and salt works ; he created the town of Ballycastle, and built a quay there at a cost of 30,000*l.* ; he founded churches for each of the sects of the country ; he was buried the same day that the episcopal one was consecrated. After his death all these industries failed. The mines were taken over by a company, and have alone survived, but are not very flourishing. The ruined abbey of Bon-a-Margy, at the gates of Ballycastle, contains the tombs of the MacDonnells of Antrim. Upon the leaden coffin of one of them, Randal, the first Marquis, may be read this inscription in Gaelic : “ From all time some calamity has smitten the Irish every seventh year. Now that the Marquis is dead, there will be one every year.”

Between Ballycastle and Cashendall the coast is sown with natural curiosities ; arches cut in the rock, and strange caves where pagan altars stood. The district is called the Glynnns of Antrim because of the nine deep valleys that cut into the basalt, following the course of the streams that run down from the plain above. The charming village of Cashendall, that nestles in the midst of fuchsias on the north bank of the Red Bay, is the best centre from which to visit them. The most remarkable is Glenariffe, which is jammed in between two high walls of bare rock furrowed by cascades. At the bottom a stream trickles in a narrow ravine, so thickly grown with trees that the sun never penetrates.

Red is here Nature’s livery. It is hard to realize the effect of this bay, so appropriately named, where the cliffs are hollowed into numberless caves, which in inhabited districts are

used as stables, or even as houses. The rock is red sandstone, with veins of marble : the earth is saturated with oxide of iron. The road that runs round the bay is crossed by a natural arch called the Bloody Bridge. The name is due to the colour ; no tragic memory is attached to it.

After Cashendall the road becomes more and more lovely. Another Bloody Bridge, this time the handiwork of man, takes its name from a massacre of Protestant prisoners made one day by a Catholic general ; he had to escort them to a fortress on the coast, and thought of this ingenious procedure to lessen the trouble. On thinking it over, I cannot remember distinctly whether the Protestants did not cut the Catholics' throats : it does not matter much ; neither sect has much right to reproach the other on this subject.

Farther on, Garron Tower, the modern castle, with battlements and machicolations, of the Marquis of Lansdowne, rises in the midst of pines and beeches on the top of a steep rock, behind which the park slopes gently down away from the sea. At Glenarm, a picturesque little port whose sands are frequented by the Belfast people, is the castle of Lord Antrim, a splendid building of the seventeenth century, surrounded by old trees and a verdant deer-park. Above this oasis the village of Straidkilly hangs on the bare side of the hill, where it slopes gently to the sea. Tear by year bits of earth crumble away under the autumnal rains, and the inhabitants rebuild their houses close to the old sites, hoping no doubt to thwart the evil designs of Nature by their obstinate perseverance.

I feel that the reader is sick of descriptions. Shall I tell him of the flashing variety of hue along this coast ? I should bore him, and would perhaps scarcely be believed, if I were to tell him that the richness of the colouring in this corner of a northern land is all but brutal ! The cliffs, dazzling white at their bases, show next a bed of red sandstone crowned with black basalt. On the beach low tide uncovers a band of rounded pebbles, white and polished like marble, beyond which the flat brown rocks spread a carpet of seaweed with every shade of green and yellow. The sight rejoices the eyes. The people have a contented appearance. Their life is easy, thanks no less to the trade carried on by this coast with Scotland than to the fertility of the valleys. Our driver told us that it is no uncommon thing for a farmer here to give his daughters dowries of 200*l.* each—and daughters are not few in prolific Ireland.

With some regret we come again to the railway at Larne, a fair-sized port of a lively and prosperous appearance, prettily situated at the mouth of the sea lough that bears its name. Here everything is white, because of the chalk and salt that are exported. This inland sea is closed by a peninsula, improperly called Magee Island, a long strip of fertile land, inhabited entirely by a Presbyterian population of Scotch descent. The line follows the coast to Belfast, affording sea views that would have seemed more beautiful had not our eyes been dazzled by the glowing visions of beauty we had seen previously. We scarcely notice as we pass the historic fortress of Carrickfergus, a massive Norman building of the twelfth century in a perfect state of preservation. At high tide it is surrounded by water on three sides, and commands all Belfast Bay. It was captured by Schomberg, on behalf of William of Orange, in spite of the stubborn resistance of the Irish general, Mac-Carthy More, who held it for James II.

In St. Nicholas, the chief church of the town, are buried the members of the Chichester family. One of them was beheaded in 1597, by the orders of James MacSorley MacDonnell, son of the Scotch adventurer whom I mentioned in connection with Dunluce. A few years later he became first Earl of Antrim, and, after he had made his peace with James I., happened to be in St. Nicholas. Seeing the effigy of his enemy on his tomb, he exclaimed, "How the devil has he got a head ? I remember his own was carried off." These things had no particular results ; they were only the amusements of noblemen who risked their lives on a throw of the dice.

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From Belfast To Dublin.

THE second town in Ireland is commercial, Protestant and wealthy ; that is to say, profoundly uninteresting. People who admire wide streets, well laid out and clean, with tramways in the middle, bordered by brick houses covered with stucco, and shops blazing with gas, will be delighted with Belfast. One feels that these large windows with their Venetian blinds belong to wealthy dwellings where people eat off massive plate, drink claret of the best brands, use fine solid furniture, and bore themselves horribly. Down to the hospitals and the prison everything is magnificent. Everything is also new. In 1612 the town consisted of about a hundred huts grouped round a castle of wood. English and Scottish colonists settled there, and a hundred years later it counted rather less than 8000 inhabitants. At the beginning of this century there were not more than 40,000, and to-day there are over 200,000. It is the least Irish of all Irish towns. One might fancy oneself at Glasgow or Bristol. Bare feet are rare even in the lower quarters, and there are few loungers, except on Sunday, when the men group themselves, pipe in mouth, around the taverns. Sunday is no joke in Belfast. As the hotels generally have a public bar, the door is locked during the hours of Divine service, and travellers are obliged to have it opened for each entry. Needless to say that every kind of spirituous liquor is freely supplied in the dining-room, or that drunkenness goes on at a great rate in the suburbs all Sunday evening. But the moral discipline of this very religious town forbids all entry into public-houses during service ; I say entry, because those who are in can remain behind drawn blinds all the time of mass or sermon. This exterior rigidity of Sunday manners hardly exists to-day save under Protestant auspices. But Belfast, I repeat, is a Protestant town. The Episcopalians are in a minority, but the Presbyterians and the Methodists are prosperous. The third of the population which professes the Catholic faith is composed almost exclusively of the working classes and small shopkeepers. Belfast is the battle-ground of religions, a Protestant stronghold in the midst of Catholic and apostolic Erin, and the zeal of both sides is quickened by contact. This town is the headquarters of the Orangemen, bound together by a sort of Protestant freemasonry intended to counteract the action of the United Ireland associations. It is not easy to say whether political or religious animosity plays the greater part in the strife of these two factions. Five years ago, when Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill was rejected by the House of Commons, the Protestants of Belfast were loud in their demonstrations of delight, and the enraged Catholics fell upon them tooth and nail. The Protestants drowned a Catholic youth ; the Catholics replied by killing some Protestants ; and for three weeks there were riots in the streets. Might not the Catholic priests have repressed the zeal of the faithful ? It would seem so in a country where ninety per cent, are regular in their attendance at the confessional.

I have sought vainly for a picturesque corner in Belfast. Outside the finer streets there is nothing but interminable ranges of brown brick buildings, mean and vulgar, afflicting the eye like the suburbs of London. The busy harbour is a thing to rejoice the economist, but is without interest for the artist ; large quays of dressed stone and vast docks line the river Lagan almost to its mouth. The greater part of the town has been built upon alluvial soil not more than six feet above the level of the sea, consequently it is subject to inundation, and liable to epidemics. But it is clean, and the lamentable poverty seen in other parts of Ireland does not exist. As to the linen industry, to which Belfast mainly owes its prosperity, I have already had occasion to say that it is of British and Protestant origin. The Irish, indeed, pretend that they practised it from a remote antiquity, but they had long lost the art when the Earl of Strafford, Lord-Lieutenant under Charles I., revived it by importing English and Flemish weavers. One can scarcely believe, that a sovereign so enlightened as William of Orange, could say to a Parliament complaining of the competition of Irish goods, " I will do all that is in my power

to discourage this industry.” Strange political economy, which doubtless has something to do with the industrial stagnation of Ireland. The manufacture of linen has indeed attained large proportions, but only in Protestant Ulster.

The environs of Belfast, smiling, well-wooded, and studded with pleasant villas and superb parks, have no other interest than that belonging to agreeable promenades. Here there are no rushes and heather, peat-bogs and ruins ; we are in the garden of Ireland. Three miles to the north, the mountain of Cavehill rises abruptly from the plain to a height of 1200 feet, which appears to the eye much more considerable. It is a mass half calcareous, half basaltic, the name of which comes from three vast caverns. The people of the country affirm that the outline of the summit gives the recumbent profile of Napoleon, and when it is pointed out one can see the likeness. The only excursion worth making from Belfast is to the curious antique monument called the Giant’s Ring. On the top of one of the eminences, which diversify a beautiful and fertile valley, imagine a circle, of five or six hundred yards in circumference, formed by a high embankment of grass-covered earth twenty-five yards broad. Seven bays, symmetrically placed, cut it like the vomitories of an ancient circus. In the middle is a cromlech, and the only inhabitants are thousands of crows, who take to flight with lugubrious croaking ; even in daylight the place is gloomy. From Belfast, those who are not tired of the innumerable Irish lakes, can visit Lough Neagh, the largest in the British Islands, and one of the largest in Europe. It is by no means the most beautiful in the island ; indeed its sole attraction is its vast extent. A submerged city is said to sleep in its depths, and tradition states with satisfying precision that the catastrophe occurred in A.D. 65.

When after making the tour of the green isle round the coast the traveller finds himself so near to Dublin, his point of departure, he doubts whether anything remains to stir his jaded faculty of admiration ; he is wrong. Though less rugged than those of the west coast, the mountains of Mourne, situated between the bays of Dundrum and Carlingford to the south of Belfast, are none the less picturesque. They are not to be despised, for their highest peak rises to 2800 feet, only 600 less than Carntual in Kerry, the highest mountain in Ireland. The Bann, one of the largest rivers in Ireland, has its source in these hills, and pours its water into the Atlantic, not far from the Giant’s Causeway. To reach this charming country you take the railway from Belfast, leaving to the left Lough Strangford, a long arm of the sea strewn with islets. The inhabitants of this district occupy themselves, under the direction of the Society of Friends, with the manufacture of embroidered muslin. At the southern end of Lough Strangford is Downpatrick, a little town of 4000 souls, which, by some administrative freak, is the county town of the county that contains the city of Belfast. Not far from there are the miraculous springs of Struell, consecrated by Saint Patrick, and, till recently, much frequented on the night of St. John by the lame and the blind. This pilgrimage, like many more of the same kind, in pious but intemperate Ireland, was the occasion of many disorders and scandals, and it has accordingly been abolished by the Catholic clergy.

The line stops at the foot of Slieve Donard, the chief peak of the Mourne range. Like very many Irish mountains it is conical in shape, and rises sharply from the bosom of the sea, behind a little chain of sand-hills. The pretty little sea-side village of Newcastle at its foot offers no attraction, beyond the splendid park of Lord Annesley. The rounded ridge of the mountain is covered with high forest trees, intersected by lawns and masses of fuchsias, and large rhododendrons. The plantations only date from 1821—a fact which says a good deal for the vigour of the vegetation in the Emerald Isle. Quite close, Tollymore Park, the seat of Lord Roden, is equally accessible to the public, who come to gaze at an avenue of oaks and silver firs two miles long. Upon the carriage road, between Newcastle and Rostrevor, is the no less splendidly-wooded property of Lord Kilmorey. Happy indeed would be the lot of an Irish landlord if only there were no tenants to poison his good fortune.

Rostrevor is one of those places where one would like to die—of course, after living in it for some time. The natives, who are justly proud of it, call it the Montpellier of Ireland. It is a real winter garden, a village nestling in a ravine, clothed with evergreen oaks, tamarisks, gum-trees, enormous laurels, gigantic ashes, and the rarest kinds of conifers. Lough Carlingford, at the bottom of which it stands, lengthens out like a fjord between the chains of mountains, clothed with trees and purple with heather ; its many-tinted waters would resemble a lake were it not for the rhythmical wash of the sea. The cemetery, with its ruined chapel and fine Celtic cross, looks like a pleasure villa buried in the blossoms of fuchsia and tulip-trees.

Conscientious travellers usually climb half-way up Slieve Bân, which overlooks the town, in order to see the big stone called Clough More, over which the local antiquaries are ever disputing. Some say it is a megalithic monument, others that it is nothing but a block detached from the hill-top. We have no desire to give any personal opinion upon this important point. We were not even tempted by the view we were promised : it embraces the promontory of Howth, the Isle of Man, and in clear weather the Cumberland Mountains, with the coast of Scotland. Lounging idly beneath the ash-trees, we spent our days watching the waves break gently at our feet, filling with their grey transparency the lough amid its smiling hills.

When you have spent three months in rushing about a country at the cost of endless fatigue, innumerable bad beds and worse dinners, without counting the rain, how disgusting it is to come across people who say, with indignation, “ What, you did not go there ? You were only two paces from it, yet you did not push on ? Why, it is the very thing that you ought to have seen. You have seen nothing.” But, you foolish and perverse persons, who talk on behalf of your favourite nook of land, your natal valley, of some picturesque site or historical monument that has taken your fancy, do consider that, though we have not seen that, still we have seen something else that perhaps you have never heard of. Do you know any one who has seen every thing in a country, however small it be ?—and Ireland is not a small place. Besides, ought not something to be left for those to discover who I hope in great number will go over the ground again ? You are intolerable, however good your intentions ; let us alone, and do not try to mingle the bitterness of regret with the sweetness of our content. We are not going to listen to you.

Holding these sentiments, I have no difficulty in confessing that, after Rostrevor, I have seen nothing. I had seen plenty of ruins, so I neglected those of Monasterboice, “ the monastery of Boetius,” in Gaelic, St. Bute, who was a learned abbé of the sixth century. They comprise, besides a tower dismantled by lightning, three Celtic crosses, one of which is the most richly sculptured in Ireland. My laziness was less pardonable, perhaps, when I did not go out of my way to make a pilgrimage to the most venerable place in this little county of Meath, the ancient hill of Tara. This, from time immemorial the capital of the old Celtic federation, was the residence of a hundred and thirty-six successive Pagan kings and six Christians, until the year 563, when, being put under an interdict by St. Ruadan on account of some squabble with King Dermot, son of Fergus, it was abandoned. In these thirteen centuries it can be understood that the ancient city has crumbled into dust : the reverent student of history who comes to Tara can distinguish nothing but a row of grassy mounds of slight elevation, the biggest of which has a menhir on its top. The non-professional eye can only see some uninteresting undulations of the ground : antiquaries recognize the circular mounds or *raths* that were the foundations of the palaces and temples. Tradition has it that the palaces of Tara were very splendid, and this is quite credible. It is true that no buried remains have been discovered as at Pompeii or in Assyria or Chaldea ; but everything points to the belief that the buildings were of wood, and thirteen centuries is a hard ordeal for planks and beams. Excavations made in the neighbourhood have brought to light quantities of bones of

oxen, horses, asses, goats, sheep, deer, elks and enormous dogs (was it a slaughter-house or a place of sacrifice?), besides numerous ornaments and jewels of gold enamel and mosaic, mixed with pottery of elegant shapes, and domestic and warlike implements—combs and pins in bone, iron, and yew, bronze chisels, daggers, knives, bucklers, javelins, and triangular swords. It is known that the sailors of Tyre and Sidon carried on extensive trade with their cousins of Erin : no doubt they carried there the rich fabrics of Syria. Certainly, too, the merchants of Spain had relations with the Irish ; and as a great deal is said about wine in the old national annals, we have a right to infer that the port and sherry of the time flowed freely on the tables of the Irish aristocracy.

The town of Drogheda on the Boyne, a few miles from its mouth, is passed by the beautiful Northern railway that runs along the coast to Dublin. Beneath its walls, of which considerable portions still remain, Cromwell accomplished his first exploits against the Roman Catholic rebels. He landed at Dublin in August, 1649, with 12,000 veterans and a strong force of artillery, and immediately laid siege to Drogheda, which fell at the third assault. The population was put to the sword—"a bitterness," as he said to speaker Lenthall, "to which he brought himself in order to avoid further bloodshed." Massacre, arson and plunder occupied three days. The governor was one of the victims : the austere Puritans tore off his wooden-leg, which report said was of gold. A hundred men were burnt alive in St. Peter's Church. The sight of a woman's corpse, on the cold breast of which a newly-born infant was vainly searching for nourishment, was for the Protector a sign from above to put a limit to this throat'-cutting. Satiated with blood, he took the rest prisoners and transported them to Barbados.

I have mentioned the Boyne, a name which in part belongs to French military history. From the railway a rich marshy valley can be seen, with a broad, deep sinuous and swift stream at its bottom. This is the field of battle where James the Second played for and lost for ever the throne of the Stuarts, in that supreme struggle which candid pedants have declared to be the keystone in the arch of civil and religious liberty in the three kingdoms ; and it was after this victory that in flagrant violation of the Treaty of Limerick, those penal enactments were promulgated which, had they been enforced in all their severity, would have deprived Catholics even of the right of existence.

"Let us change generals and begin the fight again," said an Irish officer after the rout. The proposal is not flattering to our compatriot Lauzun and the other French captains that served with him, to the national hero Sarsfield, to the brave Scotchman Hamilton, to Berwick, future Marshal of France. But it passed over their heads, and struck the king, who from the height of Donore, watched without emotion the overthrow of his faithful subjects and the destruction of his own hopes, without exposing his own person, without, in spite of Hamilton's remonstrances, allowing the French reserve to engage.

Jupiter blinds those he wishes to destroy. There was something supernatural in the fatalistic apathy with which this prince, who had in other things shown some signs of intelligence and courage, allowed the kingdom that was offered him to slip through his fingers. "If your Majesty had ten, you would find some way to lose them," said the Marshal de Rosen to him when, before the landing of William, he obstinately refused battle to the Orange army, which was feebly commanded by old Schomberg. Unpleasant remarks were not spared by the subjects whose loyalty he snubbed. When he arrived in Dublin after the battle on the 1st of July, 1690, without danger and without glory, and ironically congratulated the Duchess of Tyrconnell, wife of the Lord-Lieutenant, upon the agility her compatriots displayed in flight, she sharply retorted, "And yet your Majesty had the advantage over them in that as in everything : it is you that won the race."

It was a pitiable return to the capital, which eighteen months before he had entered in triumph, beneath awnings of silk, preceded by young girls dressed in white, who scattered flowers under his feet, amid an enthusiastic throng madly shouting, " God save the King," And yet he was a king of the hated race of the Sacsannachs, biit a Catholic king in whom the Irish put their last hope for their persecuted faith.

Such was the father-in-law, but not such the son-in-law. From the day of his landing in Ireland till the hour of the battle William scarcely left the saddle. Against his untiring activity, his military science, his unconquerable valour, and the stern cold fixity of the ambition he had inherited from his grandfather William the Silent, the struggle was hopeless. How strange are the effects of religious feuds ! The troops that fought under his flag were composed of Dutch guardsmen, French Huguenots, Brandenburg infantry, with a sprinkling of Englishmen and Danish and Irish cavalry. His men, in order to distinguish themselves, twined a green bough round their hats, while the Jacobites wore white scarves as a rallying-sign. At Fontenoy the Irish brigade charged the English Protestants with the cry, " Remember Limerick and Saxon treachery !" At the Boyne it was by shouting, " Come, here are your persecutors !" that Schomberg rallied against Lauzun's troops the Huguenot regiment of Caillemotte, whose chief, struck by a ball in the head, and hoisted upon the shoulders of four soldiers, fell, vainly trying to allay the confusion.

All these things should now be forgotten, as indeed they seem to be. But except that the war is no longer fought on religious grounds (though religious tolerance and liberty of conscience are less in men's minds than in the laws), it is not less bitter because it has assumed a social even more than a national character. The dispute, too, is greatly complicated by the hateful interference of politics, by which it is made in the Imperial Parliament a two-edged tool. It is not so difficult as is believed to see clear in the chaos of the Irish question, when it is approached in a perfectly disinterested spirit. It only requires ordinary sagacity to diagnose the evil and establish its origin, by attributing to each side its share in the wrongs, and holding the balance between the fatal effects of their temperaments. But to find a remedy is another thing. If the union of the two kingdoms be taken as the starting-point for the era of goodwill on the side of the conquerors, for nearly a century the most eminent statesmen have broken their necks at this Irish fence. It is not the part of strangers to presume to intermeddle. But what we can do is to sho\lf to this charming and unfortunate country the sympathy deserved no less by its attractions than by its woes. What has been most wanting to the Irish people during its seven centuries of conquest has been sympathy to warm its heart, and, like all amiable but weak natures, sympathy is what it needs most. That depends upon individuals. Let people go to Ireland. I hope I have shown that pleasure is to be found there : I affirm that in going, people will place a good action to their credit.

Three months' tour in Ireland (1891)

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