

Tourist Adventure

The Adventures of A Tourist in Ireland

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Dogged By A Detective.

NEXT morning we breakfasted with an Irish-English clergyman from Norfolk, who told us a story, which had been in the English papers, of a man called Adair, who had bought one of the encumbered estates, and, when a tenant asked for a reduction of rent, presented a pistol at his head, and threatened to shoot him if he did not pay in full. This 'firm attitude' had been highly praised in a London Conservative paper.

After breakfast we went to look at the Claddagh, a strange, disorderly collection of miserable fishing huts, and, on talking to the people about emigration, were mobbed by girls who wanted to be sent to America, and entreated us to take their names down for that purpose. Then we went to the gaol, and paid a visit to a suspect who had been taken up at Athenry on the usual charge of intimidation, and inciting to the non-payment of rent. He came into the visitors' cage straight from 'a game of ball,' and seemed to be having a very good time of it, and only to regret that he was very much missed at home just now, when they wanted his work for the harvest. But he said that the neighbours were very kind, and that they would manage to get it in for him. He had been first arrested for intimidation, been tried, and acquitted; and then, as he stepped out of the gates of the gaol, he had been taken up again as a suspect and detained for an indefinite time. This struck me as an arbitrary method of proceeding, as I did not perceive the use of having a trial if the man was to be imprisoned in any case; but it was explained to me that the object of the trial was to get him sentenced to hard labour; and that, when that failed, the authorities had to content themselves with simple imprisonment. This rearresting at the moment of acquittal has been very widely practised, and seems a very neat application of the principle embodied in the simple phrase, 'Heads I win, tails you lose.'

In the afternoon we hired a car, and drove to a large draper's shop to buy an overcoat, for we were going for a short tour in Connemara, and, as there had been no rain for three weeks, we thought it must come down before long. We noticed as usual that the police watched the door of the shop as long as we were inside it. Indifferent to this petty annoyance, we drove out of the town, with the village of Spiddal for our destination, at which place we intended to get another car, as our horse did not seem fit for a long journey. Before we had left the town of Galway far behind, we became aware of another car with a single occupant besides the driver, which was hurrying after us and nearing fast. It advanced to within twenty yards of us, and then steadily maintained that distance, trotting when ours trotted, walking when our tired horse insisted for his part on that mode of progression, and stopping entirely whenever we stopped, either to look at an object of interest, or to ask a question of the people of the place. To such an extent did its occupant insist on copying our movements, that when we preferred

to walk ourselves he instantly jumped out of his car and walked too ; and we could only conjecture that if we had chosen to stand on our heads, he would have pretended to find that position the most agreeable. Now imitation is often the sincerest form of flattery, and it is conceivable that this was our imitator's only object ; but we did not see it in this light, and began to be seriously annoyed at the persecution. The mere fact of our being dogged by a detective would be a passport to the friendship of the people, but we began to be afraid that, if we conversed with any of them on our way, we should expose them to suspicion, and the same sort of persecution would be practised on them.

While we were walking a little in advance of our car, the detective took the opportunity to ask our driver what was our destination. I turned and asked him where he was going to, and he gave me the same answer which our driver had given him. For the rest of the way he never let us out of his sight for a moment, and on our arrival at Spiddal drew up at the door of the same inn. The reason of this special form of annoyance was that we had now passed beyond the range of the telegraph wire. Hitherto the police had easily kept themselves informed of our movements by its aid, but now they were obliged to have recourse to the more expensive method of a man in a car. We saw that we should furnish occasion to several detectives during our trip for pleasant drives through interesting scenery, but I was sorry to think that the tax-payers' money was being wasted in so useless a manner, as of course all the pay for the hire of the cars would have to come out of the pockets of the people. This, however, we could not help, and it was evident that the authorities were equally powerless to prevent it, for we knew that Mr. Trevelyan had sent orders to the police to leave us alone, orders which they were systematically disobeying, as the local inspectors have a habit of managing these things according to their own ideas, and entirely without reference to those of the central Government ; and it is to their irresponsible action that so much of the odium which the police have to incur is chiefly due.

At Spiddal we met with an unexpected delay. It was market day in Galway, and all the cars had gone into town to market, so that there was no chance of our getting one for another hour or two. The detective was waiting and watching to see what we were going to do. I noticed a bad sore on the horse which had brought him so far, so I went up to him and informed him that I should be back in Galway in a day or two, and should then prosecute the owner of the horse for cruelty to animals if it was driven any more in that condition. He replied that he was returning to Galway at once, and would not allow it to be used again. Meanwhile, to fill up the time, we went down to the sea and bathed, borrowing in the village what they called towels, but what turned out to be a tablecloth and a dinner napkin, which made an unfair division between two.

After bathing we came back to the village, and were informed by a friendly shopkeeper, who had promised to get us a car, that the detective had gone back to Galway, but that another had been already sent on before us from the police station to Carraroe, having found out that this was our destination for the night. This arrangement was much less annoying than being kept in sight all the way, and we were pleased to hear it, being grateful for small mercies from our enemies the police.

However, as it happened, we threw them off the scent for a time, for we had many miles between us and Carraroe, and we wanted to pay a visit to a man who lived more than a mile off the road, whose cottage could only be reached by walking along a stony path, which had been built up by the cottagers through the midst of the immense bog that stretched away on every side of us. All this would take time, and it was doubtful if we could reach Carraroe that night, if we persisted in the visit. But we did not like to give it up, and determined to trust to the chapter of accidents.

Accordingly we drove through the most hopeless-looking country for tillage that I have ever seen. The bog seemed deeper and wetter than ever, and its crop of stones more plentiful. Yet here on this land, which looked so utterly miserable, we found what we had not as yet seen on the good land through which we had travelled, and that was a population. Here at last we came upon plenty of houses, and round each house the tenant had drained the bog, cleared off the stones, and piled them up in vast heaps, after using as many as were wanted for building walls round his property. Here the tenant had done everything, the landlord nothing ; but it was the landlord who reaped the benefit, by raising the rents to keep pace with the improvements. Evidence of industry abounded on all sides, industry which had profited nothing to the tenant, everything to the landlord. It was comical as well as pitiful to see the scanty crops of oats, which, after clearing away the smaller stones, the people had managed to raise on all the odds and ends of fertile soil, which lay in between the massive boulders that no human efforts could dislodge. The houses were poor and mean and weather-beaten, but they were not so miserable as I had been led to imagine ; nor were they dirty, in spite of the occasional incursions of the pig that helped to pay the rent I had seen worse human habitations in the Isle of Skye, and quite as widespread poverty. For instance, in Skye I have again and again seen hovels entirely destitute of a chimney or even a hole in the roof; but the worst of these Irish huts had some exit for the peat smoke apart from the door and the window. Two or three houses had no window, however, but not more than two or three.

After driving on through this wild country for many miles, and just as it was beginning to grow dark, we turned aside from the main road and drove over stones and ruts along a track leading in the direction of the sea, which was not two miles distant from us. After a certain amount of bone-shaking over this apology for a road, we found it impossible to proceed any farther in the car, so dismounted and asked some cottagers the way to the house of the man we wanted to see. This man, one of the ordinary poor tenants of the district, had made himself conspicuous as a Land Leaguer in the struggle between landlord and tenant, which was still going on round Carraroe.

Several young fellows eagerly volunteered to guide us, though there was no possibility of missing the way ; but they accompanied us for about a mile along a road which the neighbouring tenants had raised above the surrounding morass, a track which they had made without assistance from the landlord, and without any compensation for this very decided improvement. It was rapidly growing dark, and we could hardly see the curlews which we still heard piping in the distance, disturbed by our approach. It was a perfectly still night, and the sense of loneliness and desolation seemed complete, when suddenly we came upon a few cottages clustered near the track. This was our destination, and at one of these we knocked. We were told that the tenant was still working at his hay in a field hard by, which he had reclaimed by drainage from the boundless bog that surrounded us ; but two or three bright-eyed little children rushed off to summon him home. In a very short time he arrived, and gave us a most hearty welcome. He was one of the best specimens of the best type of that much-maligned class, the poorer tenant-farmers of Ireland. Industrious and intelligent, and altogether superior to his English representative, he had, unassisted by any landlord, reclaimed a large part of the neighbouring swamp, cleared away the stones, and turned it into valuable ground, on which he managed to raise very successful results in the way of harvest. He invited us into his house, where we sat and talked to him for some time in the glow of the peat fire, which cast upon the rafters above fantastic shadows of a swarm of small children who were sitting round the hearth, and gazing with inimitable gravity upon our unaccustomed appearance. His wife left off rocking the baby's cradle, and entreated us to partake of a brimming bowl of milk, which, after our long drive, we were not at all inclined to refuse.

We learned that in the immediate neighbourhood of Carraroe there had lately taken place 130 evictions, but that every one of the evicted tenants had re-entered their homes, and were still in possession. It remained to be seen what would be the next move of the landlords. The soil was, as we might see for ourselves, almost worthless until improved by the tenants ; but after improvement the rents had gradually been raised to a kind of high-water mark during the fat years of plenty and prosperous harvests, and, when bad seasons became the rule and a good harvest the exception, the landlords had attempted to maintain the abnormally high rents, with an obstinacy that refused to meet the inevitable, or to recognise undoubted facts, until they had driven the tenants to sell their cattle in order to satisfy the demands of the agent, so that they were now left without means either to pay the rents presently due, or to recover their old position. Thus they had fallen into arrears ; and then their landlords, having successfully killed the goose that laid the golden eggs, proceeded to evict them, with the intention of repeating the same process with another equally submissive goose. Since the agitation, however, the supply of these useful and profitable birds had unexpectedly run short, and the situation was more complicated than they had formerly been led to anticipate. No new tenants were willing to take the farms ; but, instead of this, their former occupants had forcibly returned, and considered that they had a moral right to their own improvements, and, what was still worse, to a reduction of rent. Such were the lamentable results of the Land Agitation and Mr. Parnell.

After an interesting talk we said good -bye to our hospitable friends, first inspecting their spinning-wheel, and the rough Irish frieze which they make ; the women spinning the wool, and then getting the cloth woven by the weaver, who is always to be found even in the smallest towns in Ireland.

We retraced our steps with some difficulty along the rough road, now lighted only by the keen stars above, found our car waiting for us, and consulted what to do. It was already so late that we could not possibly reach Carraroe until long after midnight, and we were very doubtful whether there was any sleeping accommodation to be had even there ; for, although our driver assured us that we should find it excellent, we were afraid that his promises might be chiefly due to the inveterate habit of the Irish of saying what they think you are hoping to hear, without the smallest reference to the actual state of the facts. Besides, a midnight drive gives a very poor opportunity of seeing the country, and still less of interviewing its inhabitants. Another point, which I am ashamed to say had some weight with us, was that the police at Carraroe were awaiting our arrival, and would be expecting all sorts of outrages to occur in the district, if we did not arrive at a reasonable time. Finally, we were very tired and very hungry, and so decided to stop at the nearest place where refreshment could be had.

Our driver undertook to land us within a quarter of an hour at the house of some people who kept a small shop, where he was confident we should find the most excellent entertainment. So we resigned ourselves to his direction, and within the stipulated time he did actually bring us to a house which, as well as we could judge in the darkness, seemed rather above the average of the habitations in the district. We presented ourselves at the door, and asked for food and lodging. A woman came forward from a silent, sleepy circle of people round the peat fire, and asked us in. She told us that if it had not been market day the house would have been shut up, but they had not long come back from Galway. They were people who had lived some time in America, and had preferred to come back to the old country, and build the house with the money they had earned on the other side of the sea. The house was larger than the usual peasant's dwelling. There was a partition which separated the part used as the shop from the kitchen, and there was a loft which served as a bedroom over the shop ; though shop, loft, and kitchen were practically one large room. Besides this there was another room with a bed in it, which they said we were welcome to have, as their two girls who slept in it

were away on a visit in Galway. The bedding, they informed us, they had brought with them across the Atlantic. All this was better than we had expected, for the people seemed nice and the place clean, so we joined the silent circle round the fire, and watched the cradle rocking, and the eggs and the water boiling for our tea. We had a good supper and a comfortable bed, and at six the next morning the same fare was prepared for us, and we again took up our carriages for Carraroe.

The country presented the same dreary, monotonous appearance, and if possible was boggier than before and stonier than ever. We were now in the midst of the evicted families who had forcibly resumed occupation, so we stopped at one of the cottages in order to find out the present state of things. The tenant was a little distance off, working in a field, but when he saw strangers stopping at the door of his house he came hurrying up to protect his wife and property. Finding that no danger was to be apprehended from us, he was very willing to give information. He said he had been evicted like everybody else in the neighbourhood, and was daily expecting to be sent to gaol, where several of his neighbours were already lodged, for the crime of coming back into his house. He was three years in arrears of rent, as were all the people in the district. I told him that the Arrears Bill would soon be law, and asked if he would be able to pay one year's rent, to which he replied that he thought he might manage to do that. He also told us that some months ago, when the process-servers had first come among them, they had assembled in hundreds and driven them away. I asked how. 'With sticks and stones, sir,' he replied. Certainly the land is so incumbered with stones that there is a plentiful supply of this sort of ammunition, ready to be used upon any number of process-servers who may present themselves for attack. Meanwhile a little crowd had assembled, and, after distributing some coppers among the children, we drove off, amid three cheers for the Land League, which were apparently intended as a personal compliment to us.

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From Carraroe To Cong.

IN the last chapter I described our approach to the village of Carraroe. We drove up to the shop in which, according to our driver, everything could be obtained which was obtainable in Galway, and found that, if this was indeed the case, the Galway trade must be limited to tea, sugar, and tobacco, and some few necessaries of life. The police again watched our movements, and the people were as hospitable as before. They insisted on giving us some lunch, and making tea for us. With this tea a most comical incident is connected. Miss Yates, a lady from the Land League, had been staying at Carraroe, and instructing the girls of the place in the arts of spinning, needle-work, and all kinds of embroidery. She had just left her sphere of labour, and gone to Dublin to place in the National Exhibition some of its results, and had left with our entertainers a small sheaf of one-pound notes, being part of the earnings of the busy workers. The tea-pot, as is often the case, appeared to the people the best available money-box, and in this they accordingly deposited the notes ; but unfortunately they had neglected to see that the tea-pot was empty, and in fact it was half full of tea. Consequently, when they attempted to make tea for us, they found the notes and the ancient tea-leaves reduced to much the same appearance and consistency by long soaking in the same solution. Loud were the lamentations, and pitiable the aspect of the sodden bank-notes ; but we comforted the luckless owners by assuring them that if the notes were carefully spread out to dry they would be just as good as new, and that their tawny tinge would not detract from their money value.

After lunch we went down to the bay and hired a boat, passing a soldier on our way, whom we asked what he had to do in this part of the country. He replied, 'To protect an old fellow up here,' and pointed out to us the house in which the agent lived whose difficult duty it was

to collect rents from the impoverished tenants around. We were then rowed across the bay to the village of Rossmuck, where we called upon the priest, as the person most likely to be able to inform us as to the state of his parish.

He was extremely courteous, and gave us some most interesting details. The poverty of a large portion of his parishioners was desperate. He knew families where the children were naked until seven or eight years old from this cause. Having himself been present at the eviction of more than a hundred households, he had seen the amount of their portable property ; and the sheriff who was superintending the work of ejecting it from the houses told him that he had not found one bed or one pound's worth of food among the whole lot. This seemed to me incredible, but he assured me that it accorded with his own experience. I asked him if any cases of especially harsh evictions had occurred in his parish, and he told me of a man who had paid his own rent in full, but was evicted because the copartner in his lease could not pay his share ; and then, for re-entering his house after the eviction, he had been at once sent to gaol. I failed at first to understand what legal power the landlord could have to evict a tenant who had paid his own rent, on account of the shortcomings of his neighbours ; but the priest explained to me that, with a view to the extra security of their rents, the land-lords often insist on a system of partnership in leases, in accordance with which several men sign the same lease, and then, if any one of them fails to pay his own particular rent, the landlord has the power to evict them all. Thus each individual has a motive for keeping his neighbour up to the mark in the way of being ready with his money on rent-day.

I further inquired whether the rents were generally fair in the parish, and whether the landlords had taken any share in the improving and reclamation of the land, which had evidently been going on to a very large extent. He replied that they had taken no share whatever in the improvements beyond raising the rents, often more than 100 per cent, in consequence of them. I thought this must be an exaggeration, and asked for some facts, and he at once supplied me with plenty. These facts he vouched for as absolutely exact, and he showed me many more of the same kind, but these are enough to show that, whether the holding is large or small, the increase of rent is enormous, and amounts to a practical confiscation of the tenants' improvements.

He gave the same high praise to the morality of the people which I had already heard in other quarters, and told some interesting anecdotes calculated to show to what an extent the priest is bound up with his people, and how he can help them in many ways when they are in trouble, or refuse to help them if they are bad characters. Nothing had hitherto surprised me more than the way in which the majority of the priests sympathise with the Land Agitation, as I had expected to find that the discipline of the Church of Rome would discountenance all efforts directed against the constituted authorities ; but, on the contrary, most of the clergy are Land Leaguers heart and soul. They reply to this that, when they see their flock suffering from harsh treatment and unjust laws, it is their duty to do all they can to help them towards getting the laws altered ; and there is another reason, which appeals to their pockets as well as to their sympathy, for if the people are driven to emigrate to any great extent the fees for baptisms, marriages, and burials suffer a sad diminution. From what I have seen of them, however, I believe that the first motive is quite as powerful as the last, and, indeed, would be sufficient without it.

But whatever may be the reason, the fact cannot be doubted that in most cases of harsh landlordism the priest and the people have been united against it ; and that, considering the power and influence of the clergy, if this had not been the case, there would have been little to alleviate the lot of the people ground down between the upper and nether millstones of a rapacious landlord and a hostile priest. There can be no doubt that the effect of the penal

laws, which has outlasted the abolition of its cause, has been to weld the priest and the people together in the sympathy produced by a common persecution. In England the case has been different, for the clergy, instead of being sprung from the people, have been chiefly taken from the upper classes ; the wedge of class-distinction has been driven in between them and their flock, and their cue has been to preach submission to the powers that be, as ordained of God. This would account for the absence in them of that democratic sentiment which is conspicuously present in the majority of Irish priests.

But this is a digression from the details of my tour. We hired another car, and drove away to Maam, a pretty little village beautifully situated in a valley between some of the highest of the Joyce country mountains, and obtained rooms for the night in the quaint circular-shaped inn. In this we were more fortunate than a former representative of the Queen, for there is an authentic story that when the Earl of Carlisle was travelling through the country years ago as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and purposed to pass the night at this same hotel at Maam, the landlord, who owned all this part of the country, being bitterly hostile to the English connection, and delighted with the opportunity to put a slight on the highest Government official, himself pre-engaged every available room in the place. This scurvy trick was successful in its object of annoyance, for when the weary Lord-Lieutenant arrived in the evening at Maam, he found himself obliged to proceed another dozen miles to the hotel at Cong, which was rechristened the Carlisle Arms in consequence.

Having secured our rooms we were free to admire the beauties of the Maam scenery. It is a wild place, and well worth a visit, being situated at the mouth of a pass which rivals those of North Wales for grandeur ; but, like other beautiful places, it is not without its drawback, for the midges of Maam equal in venom the most virulent Scotch representatives of their class. But it was more the people than either the scenery or the midges that I wished to study, and I learned that the sheriff was coming next day to sell some cattle belonging to a person in the place. To my surprise, I was also told that he would for once have no difficulty in finding buyers, and that the people looked upon the seizure as perfectly just. Having before imagined that all seizures of cattle by the sheriff appeared unjust to the people, I further inquired into the details of this particular affair. It seemed that the owner of the cattle had inherited some property with the express condition attached that he should provide for some children who were left orphans. This provision he had neglected to make, although he had entered upon possession of the property ; and accordingly his cattle had been seized for the benefit of the orphans, and for once the sentiment of the people was on the side of the sheriff, and in favour of the execution of the law.

We went indoors early to escape the ravenous midges, and retired to rest at a reasonable time ; but our rest was destined to be broken, for in the ‘ wee sma’ hours ayont the twal’ we were suddenly aroused by a loud knocking at the door of the inn. Awaking in some trepidation, I attempted to conjecture the cause of the noise. Could it be that the police, ever on the alert, and suspecting suspicious strangers, had organised a midnight inquisition for arms ? On the other hand, could it be that the Fenians, aware of the presence of inquisitive visitors in the inn, had resolved by violent methods to put a summary end to the curiosity of possible detectives travelling about in tourists’ clothing ? We were in a distracted country, and either event seemed within the bounds of possibility, but we were soon reassured by the parley that took place between those within and without the door. Nothing more dangerous was applying for admission than a benighted traveller, who had dined late, and had already been twice stopped by the police patrols as he was driving along, and then, on being recognised by them, suffered to proceed. He and a couple of fine dogs that were with him were accordingly admitted, and peace and quiet resumed their reign over the household.

Next morning we breakfasted with this gentleman and his dogs, which latter, an Irish setter and a retriever, enjoyed the remains of the ‘ stir-about ’ or porridge which had been provided for our meal. From him we learned that he had lately become tenant of a boycotted mountain in the neighbourhood, that is, of a large grazing farm on the hills from which the former farmer had been evicted by the landlord. He had just been grouse-shooting among the heather (for the twelfth of August had now gone by), and was very kind and courteous, giving me an introduction to the famous Captain Boycott, whose name has lately added a verb to the vocabulary wherever the English language is spoken throughout the world. Here was a capital opportunity of hearing something on the anti-popular side of the question, and I gladly promised to call on the distinguished Captain.

Asking about the state of the surrounding country, I was told that it was a bad neighbourhood, and that not far distant was the scene of the murders on Lord Ardilaun’s land, when two process-servers had been drowned in the waters of Lough Mask. On this account a kind of blood-tax had been imposed on all the tenants of the neighbouring district, in order to raise a fund for the compensation of the families of the murdered men. This tax, it was hoped, would have some effect in preventing future murders ; though it seemed to me at least doubtful whether, considering that the prospect of large rewards had hitherto failed to induce the people to give evidence against the murderers, the certainty of incurring a slight fine would for the future prevent the commission of such crimes ; and in fact the revolting massacre which has since occurred on the very same spot has already disappointed the hopeful anticipations of the efficacy of the blood-tax. Fearing that the tax would fall very heavily on my acquaintance, as the tenant of a whole mountain in the district, I asked him if he would not be a great sufferer from its assessment ; but this he denied, saying that, as being a person above suspicion, he should be able, though with some difficulty, to obtain exemption from the tax, which would consequently fall with greater weight upon tenants who were poorer, less respectable, and more open to suspicion on the part of the police. He also stated, as a fact in his favour in claiming this exemption, that he lived at some distance from the place ; but I ventured to point out to him that this fact told against him rather than on his behalf, according to the received theory that the murders are committed by persons imported from a distance into the district. He was good-humoured enough to admit this point, but nevertheless it did not shake his confidence that he should be exempted from the incidence of the tax.

At this place I had to part with my American fellow-traveller, who was going on to Westport, and thence back to Dublin ; while I wished to prolong my tour until I had seen something of the cliff scenery of Clare and the mountains and lakes of Killarney. Accordingly he drove off with my new acquaintance on the Westport road, and I was left to hire a boat to row me down the stream to Lough Corrib and across the head of the lake itself to Cong. Thenceforward, although I had always seen the facts and talked to the people on my own account, I should no longer be exposed to the danger of hearing the facts commented on from an American point of view, which my kindly critics seem to think has so far poisoned all my sources of information.

I started down Lough Corrib in a small boat with two rowers for a four hours’ pull to Cong, leaving the mountains gradually in our rear. Numerous wild duck and cormorants flapped past overhead, to which latter the boatmen gave the expressive name of black hags, cursing them for their mischievous propensity for fishing without a licence. High up in the hills I noticed a small white cottage, and was told by the men that it was that of a herd who had applied for police protection, ‘ to bring a bad name on the district,’ in the opinion of my informants ; but they may have been prejudiced witnesses, and I could hardly believe that this was his sole motive in making the application when I heard that he had issued summonses against his neighbours for the crime of cutting heath on the hills to make beds for themselves,

whereas the landlord was very particular that it should all be reserved for his grouse. This fact may, perhaps, have made him unpopular ; and the district is wild, and his locality lonely, so that altogether I could hardly be surprised at his wishing for the society even of the police. We passed also a substantial schoolhouse on the right shore of the lake, and not a single house within miles of it in any direction. This I took for granted was a peculiarly Irish arrangement, and so expressed no surprise ; but the rowers were ready with a reason for it, and told me that there was once a large village clustering round the school, but the landlord had exterminated the people, preferring to reign over sheep as a more docile sort of tenants. Until the last few years children were ferried across from the other side of the lake for their daily school, but now the school had been turned into a herd's house, and a new one built on the opposite shore. In the distance a larger white house stood out prominently on the hillside, and I was told it was the abode of the late Lord Mountmorres, who had been murdered in the neighbourhood, and whose house had been turned into a headquarters for the police. I perceived that I was again approaching a district of outrages, where a murderous spirit was abroad among the people, which the presence of large bodies of police was ineffectual to check.

I landed at Cong, and went up to the Carlisle Arms, ordering a car to drive over to Captain Boycott's house on Lough Mask, but the account of my interview with him must be reserved for another chapter.

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Captain Boycott—Potheen.

MY last chapter brought me as far as Cong, about five miles from Captain Boycott's famous farm. I drove over to his house only to find that he was absent and had gone to a lawn-tennis party in the neighbourhood. This was disappointing, but I was told I might call again about nine o'clock in the evening, which I promised to do. At eight o'clock I paid a visit to a priest, having always found them able and willing to give information about the state of their district. I was shown into his drawing-room, and he shortly appeared, but on his appearance I divined without much difficulty that I was disturbing him at a meal, and expressed a hope that I had not interrupted his dinner. He replied with some indignation that he was not at dinner, which in fact he had enjoyed in the middle of the day, but that he had just finished his tea, and was very glad to see a visitor. Doubtless the tea is strong in Connemara, and to this I ascribed a certain exhilaration that was noticeable in the clerical demeanour, but *honi soit qui mal y pense*. He told me at once that I had come to the right quarter for information, as he had himself written a book on the land question, which he would instantly fetch and present for my perusal. From this course I vainly tried to dissuade him, and, disregarding my remonstrances, he made for the door ; but, unfortunately, in his hurried efforts to open it he contrived to hitch the lock, which was rather shaky in its constitution, in such a way that nothing could prevail upon it to yield to his attempts. After a fruitless struggle he accepted my assistance, which proved equally unavailing, as the door was firmly fastened, and help from the outside was evidently our only chance of escaping from our somewhat ridiculous position. So for this he began loudly to call, at the same time keeping up a tremendous battery upon the door to attract the attention of his servant. I began to be seriously alarmed at the result of my intrusion, and to think that my evening's expedition would be more likely to end in a visit to the police barracks than to Captain Boycott. To be taken up as a moonlighting marauder, who, visiting after dark the domicile of a priest, obliged him to shout for assistance in his own drawing-room, would have a disreputable flavour about it which had not attached to my former arrest, and I could only hope that the maid-servant would have the courage to open the door before she summoned the police.

Very fortunately for me she was not afraid to open the door, though startled at the unaccountable noise proceeding from within, and we both simultaneously emerged into the passage, where I tendered the most profuse thanks and apologies to the priest, and, promising to buy his book at the very first bookseller's I should see on my return to Galway, I declared that my appointment with Captain Boycott would not permit of another instant's delay, and effected my escape from the scene of the funniest adventure I had yet met with in Ireland.

It was getting very dark as I approached the Captain's house ; and I felt a little nervous as I drove through gloomy lanes in his direction, lest a shot intended for a landlord might ' find mark the shooter little meant,' and put an effectual stop to my intended visit. However, I learned from my driver that since the Captain had given up the agency for Lord Ardilaun, which had made him so unpopular and linked such an unenviable notoriety to his name, the *popularis aura* had veered round again, he had given up police protection as well as the agency, and was in no more danger of death than I was.

We drew near to his domain, and on turning out of the high road at his lodge could descry the lights from the windows of a police hut a little higher up the hill. I knocked at the door, which was opened by Captain Boycott himself, who was most courteous and friendly, and invited me in to have a long and agreeable conversation about Irish affairs. I will set down some of his most important opinions, but will refrain from criticising them ; for, dreading the wrath of my own critics, I do not dare to comment on the sentiments of a landlord. Besides, they speak for themselves. He said that just on the eve of the opening of the National Exhibition he had heard of soldiers marching and counter-marching at Dublin, as if they expected an imminent rising of the people, but for his part he was sorry to say that he anticipated nothing of the sort ; though if it did come, it was to be welcomed, as a little phlebotomy would be a grand thing for the country, far better than the smouldering sedition which was now going on. How the phlebotomy would cure the sedition he unfortunately omitted to explain, and one has sometimes heard of remedies that aggravate a disease, but confidence in the physician is of course a great point in his favour.

But I am forgetting my resolve to refrain from comment, and will resume the record of his opinions. He was very severe on the Land League, and maintained that it was not its summary suppression which had brought forward the secret societies, but simply its organisation which had lent them a helping hand. The Land League had made use of Nationalist organisation, and then suppressed Nationalist ideas, because the leaders found that the prominence of the Land Question alone would win them most adherents, and then the Nationalists in dudgeon had recourse to secret societies outside the League. He said that there could be no doubt that the Land Commissioners were making a system of reducing all the rents brought before them to about ten per cent, above Griffith's valuation ; and that it would have been much better, and saved much expense and delay, if the Government had settled it in this way at once, and not appointed any Commission at all. The Arrears Bill he considered very unfair, as those who had struggled to pay their rents and succeeded in their struggle would now get no advantage, while those who had been idle and thriftless were going to be helped. He declared that the peasants were all utterly idle, and, when I remarked that they are found to work very fairly in England at the harvesting, he replied that they only worked there because they were obliged to do so, being kept up to the mark by the example of their fellow-labourers and by the eye of their employer ; but he apparently forgot that if they did not want to work they might stay at home, where their opportunities for idleness would presumably be unlimited either by example or precept

After an interesting interview I returned to the hotel, and by a curious coincidence found the magistrate with whom we had breakfasted at Athenry before the arrest now dining at Cong, whither he had come on his usual errand of trying prisoners under the Coercion Act

While driving in the afternoon towards Captain Boycott's house at Lough Mask, I had been shown in the distance a picturesque spot on the shore of the lake and in the shadow of the mountains, where the two process-servers had been drowned ; Maamtrasna, a place of evil fame, whose name has since become notorious in the annals of Irish crime for the awful massacre of the Joyce family. The police had kept an eye on me as I left the village of Cong ; and a constable had asked my driver what was our destination, and, on being told Lough Mask and Captain Boycott's, said that he had wished to send a letter by the driver, if I had been going in a different direction, and apologised for the interruption. This dodge of a letter showed considerable ingenuity, and was more polite a method of discovering my destination than following me with a detective, and I began to hope better things of the Irish Constabulary. Unfortunately, all such hopes of their efficiency were shortly afterwards disappointed at Maamtrasna. The people in the neighbourhood of this ill-famed place, which must be more than forty miles from a railway station, are perhaps the least civilised of any in Ireland ; but there is one bright spot about this hideous event, and that is that the inhabitants of the district seemed to have identified and surrendered to justice the perpetrators of the crime.

The rest of the afternoon I had spent in inspecting the ruins of another beautiful abbey, though not unmindful of the suspicions aroused in the minds of the police by such conduct on a former occasion, but this time I was unaccompanied by any priest.

Next morning I took the steamer down Lough Corrib to Galway, where I was expecting letters. Major Bond was on board, travelling home to Birmingham ; the man who had been supposed to be of the Clifford Lloyd stamp when he was first appointed, but had since given evidence of better things.

I arrived in Galway, and so ended my excursion into Connemara ; but I must not forget to mention the ' potheen' (pronounced potcheen), which is extensively made there by the natives, and constitutes their only industry, apart from the culture of the soil. ' Potheen' is untaxed Irish whisky, and is to be distinguished from ' parliament,' which has paid its appointed tribute to the Government exchequer. I omitted to describe our discovery of it at any particular place in Connemara, for fear of inciting the police to make a raid upon the premises, though it is not likely that they would have much success. But at various points in our tour we enjoyed opportunities of tasting the aforesaid ' potheen,' though sometimes its owner stoutly denied that he had anything but ' parliament,' until quite convinced that his visitors were not emissaries of the police. At one place, when we called on the priest, we informed him of the sins of his parishioners in thus defrauding the authorities of their due, but he did not seem to take the matter much to heart ; and presently producing a key, and opening a cunningly devised hiding-place, he disclosed to our wondering gaze a neat row of bottles upon which no exciseman had as yet set his eyes. Inviting us to partake of their contents, he informed us that the private distilling went on everywhere, and that the police were very well aware of the fact, but, even if they had been able, were unwilling to put a complete stop to it, as it was a source of considerable revenue to themselves ; for the people occasionally presented them with a bottle, and sometimes they made a sudden raid on those against whom they had a private enmity, confiscating their stock of liquor, and getting a share of the fines inflicted on them by the magistrates. The fine for this offence was nominally 100*l.*, but the minimum of 6*l.* was always imposed.

At the Galway station I took a ticket for the town of Gort, in county Clare, and while waiting on the platform suddenly recognised my old friend the detective, who had formerly followed us in a car, busy at his usual occupation of spying for suspicious strangers. Not wishing to cut any of my acquaintances, and reflecting that his present obnoxious task might be rather his misfortune than his fault, I went up and addressed to him a condescending remark ; but to my great disgust I found that he had decided to cut me, and pretended not to know who I was. My pride had a fall, but when I refreshed his memory he changed his tactics, and asked in what direction I was going now. This I did not feel inclined to tell him, as it was his special business to find it out without my assistance, so I replied that I was going all over the country, unless I was taken up again ; but he was too many for me, for he waited until the ticket collector had snipped off a piece of my ticket, and then obtained the required information from him.

To get to Gort it was necessary to change carriages at Athenry, at which place I found that for the time confusion reigned supreme. The police were present in greater force than ever, but for once seemed quite unable to control the population ; for there had been a festival at Athenry, and its real inhabitants had been reinforced for the day by immense crowds from all the towns in the neighbourhood, who had come to perform ‘ stations’ at a certain holy well. This being their last train home, the people were surging about the platform in numbers with which the police were unequal to cope, though they did their best in the way of irritating them by interference. The railway company’s arrangements for their accommodation had apparently suffered a complete collapse, and all distinctions between first, second, and third class were obliterated for the time being. I managed to get a corner seat in an empty carriage, into which fifteen other people immediately entered, and other compartments were even better filled. All was going on well, when suddenly the police on the platform, with the idea of making them selves generally useful, arrested a man who would insist on forcing his way into a carriage that was packed with twenty occupants already, at which sufficient number they drew the line. The lamentations that arose from the people who were installed in their seats were most pitiful. There was a general consensus of opinion among them that with so many police about, it was impossible for a person when he started from his home in the morning to say with any degree of certainty at what time he should return ; and this I could corroborate from my own personal experience. However, the police thought better of it, and, just as the train was starting, they released their victim, and thrust him into a compartment where only sixteen travellers were stewing with heat. There was a good deal of singing and noise as the train moved slowly along, but I heard no vulgar language, and nothing more seditious than three cheers for the Land League, and then for the Suspects ; and then, as a sort of anti-climax which caused immense amusement, for Mr. Forster. This last was given with enthusiasm.

At the first few stations on the line the train disgorged its abnormal cargo, and I arrived at Gort without any further adventure. At this place I paid a visit to a man who had been evicted from a farm and was now living in a hovel. He told me that until nine years ago he had been paying a rent of 21*l.* for 20 acres, but that the landlord had then raised it to 40*l.* This he paid until the bad years came, and then he was evicted with his wife and children. As they had no shelter for the night, his wife had the audacity to break the locks which the police had put on the door of the house, and they forthwith re-entered their old home. For this offence the man was sent to gaol for four months, and they were evicted again ; but the woman remained refractory, and again broke the locks, and reimported her children ; so as a last resource she was sent to gaol for a fortnight, and the children were left to shift for themselves ; but she said that the neighbours were very kind to them, and that for herself she had finer times in the way of food in prison than she had ever had before. Finally, they were driven away, and now

live in Gort in a miserable little hut, and are partly supported by the Ladies' Land League. No one has taken their farm, and it is not likely to find a tenant, the landlord being the notorious Mr. Lambert, who has for some time been boycotted himself.

Afterwards I heard these facts confirmed in every detail by one of the curates of the parish, who told me several stories of the rapacity of the landlords in the neighbourhood. He denounced the Land Court as utterly useless, partly from the delay in its operation, and partly from the firm belief among the tenants that the landlords had bribed the Commissioners not to reduce the rents to a fair level. He said that the agents were paid a percentage on the amount of the rents they collected, and that therefore they did all in their power to prevent reductions, which thus entailed a loss to their own pockets. There had not been many evictions near Gort, or nothing could have saved the evictors, but they had found many ways of extortion by raising rents, and making the people pay for cutting turf on their own land. One landlord made any tenant who kept either a dog or a gun pay a pound each to him besides the licences. He said that the people were cowardly after years of oppression, and would not stand by one another when they had promised, and then came outrages to punish them for breaking faith with the others, and paying their rents.

It was now late, and I ordered a car to be ready for me in the morning to drive to Lisdoonvarna, the nearest place to the famous Moher cliffs.

The adventures of a tourist in Ireland (1882)

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