# THE WEST OF IRELAND.

Forster & Co. lith.

Round Tower of Kilmacduagh,
near Gort

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## [illegible]

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BY [illegible]

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WALTER THOMAS SONS, [illegible] LONDON
1862.

# THE WEST OF IRELAND:

ITS

# EXISTING CONDITION,

AND

# PROSPECTS.

BY HENRY COULTER,

CORRESPONDENT OF SAUNDERS'S NEWS-LETTER.

(BY PERMISSION.)

DUBLIN:
HODGES & SMITH, 104 GRAFTON STREET,
Booksellers to the University.
LONDON: HURST & BLACKETT, GT. MARLBOROUGH ST.
WM. BLACKWOOD & SONS, EDINBURGH & LONDON.
1862.

J. F. FOWLER, PRINTER,
3 CROW STREET, DAME STREET,
DUBLIN.

# NOTICE TO THE READER.

The pages which form this work, contain the Letters of the Special Correspondent of SAUNDERS'S NEWS-LETTER from the West of Ireland, in relation to the condition and prospects of the people, consequent upon the partial failure of agricultural produce, caused by unfavourable harvests during the last two years.

These Letters are now published as they appeared in SAUNDERS'S NEWS-LETTER in the latter part of 1861 and the beginning of 1862, without any material alteration. The reader must not expect to find a complete narrative of travel, but a careful compilation of facts referring mainly to the subject that called for the Commission.

Some omissions may therefore occur, which a more extended examination of the several districts would have supplied, and for which the indulgence of the reader is solicited. The great object of the writer has been to ascertain the truth, and to represent the state of the country as the several circumstances came under his personal observation during an inquiry which extended over a period of four months, and embraced the greater portion of seven counties.

Some of the illustrations, though not specially referred to in the text, have been introduced as characteristic of the country and the people.

THE EDITOR.

April, 1862.

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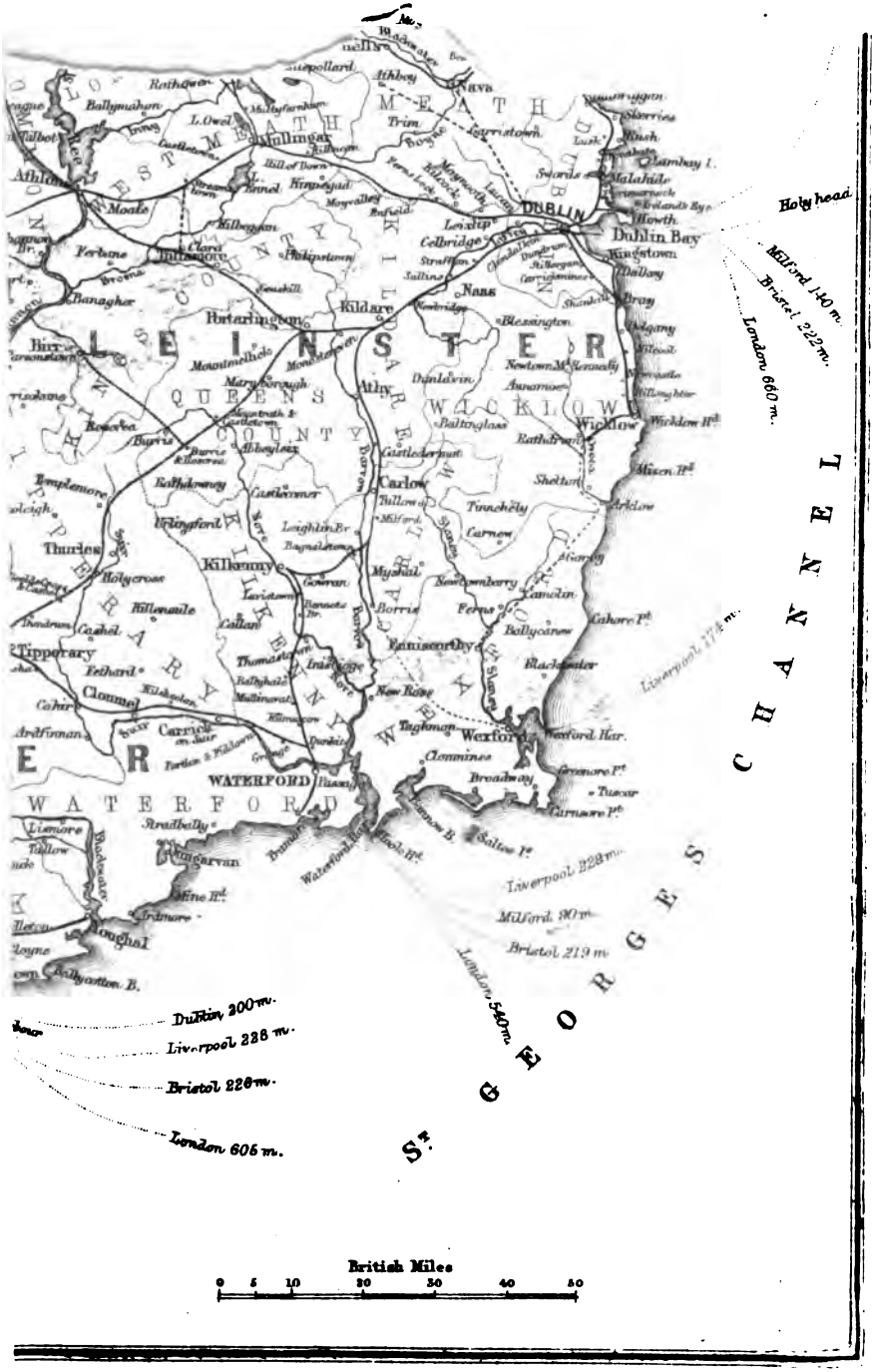
## ERRATA.

In page 33, line 19, for "The return was, however, a bad one", read, "The return of the oat crop was a bad one".

In Chapter XI., for the heading "The Joyce Country", read "Tuam County Galway".


LEINSTER
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MEATH
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Callan
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Saltee Is.
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Tramore
WATERFORD
Passage
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Mine Hd.
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Ballycotton B.
Lismore
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CHANNEL
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# THE WEST OF IRELAND.

## CHAPTER I.

**The object of inquiry.—Athlone.—Ballinasloe.—State of the country.—Workhouses.—Inundations of the rivers Shannon and Suck.—The Marquess of Clanricarde's property.—Allan Pollok, Esq.—Lismany.—Scarcity of Fuel.—Portumna.**

THE gloomy accounts which have been in circulation for some time past relative to the state of the western districts of Ireland, and of the harvest generally throughout this part of the country, render it desirable that more accurate information than that of mere rumour should be obtained on a subject of so much interest and importance. The real condition of affairs also requires a publicity more extensive than occasional communications to the press of this country, which, though possibly correct, cannot supply that general information which a careful examination of the several districts supposed likely to be affected by unusual distress can afford. It has therefore become my duty to visit the West, South, and North-west counties in Ireland, west of the river Shannon, and to state accurately and freely the present condition of the people in those parts of the country where distress now exists, or where it is expected to be most severely felt during the ensuing winter and spring.

I am not to be a writer on hearsay evidence, but am bound to be a personal observer of the facts which I state. I enter on the discharge of this duty without bias or prejudice of any kind; I have no party purpose to serve, and no preconceived opinions to support, but am animated by an earnest desire to elicit the truth, and to place it clearly and without exaggeration before the public. I may add, that the character of the journal which I represent is a guarantee for my reporting truthfully all matters relating to this subject, of such vital importance to the whole community, and more especially to those likely to be immediately affected by the deficiency of this year's harvest. In the prosecution of the inquiries which I have undertaken, I feel that I can confidently rely on receiving from all classes in the West of Ireland every assistance that it is in their power to afford me; and I am prepared to visit any portions of the country within the track marked out for me, to which my attention may be directed as deserving of a special examination.

On my way to Portumna I visited Athlone and Ballinasloe, and from the information acquired in those localities from trustworthy sources, I am in a position to state that the failure of the potato crop, the deficiency of the harvest generally, and above all the want of fuel, are of sufficient extent to justify the prevalent opinion, that this winter will be one of severe distress and privation to the poorer classes. Famine, such as the appalling visitation of 1847, is not to be apprehended; but, between that extreme and the ordinary condition of the small farmers and the peasantry of the West of Ireland, there are many degrees of misery through which a large number of the people of this province are, I fear, destined

to pass. The landed proprietors, however, may do much to mitigate the evil, by indulgence towards those tenants who have suffered severe losses, and by employing them in the drainage and other improvement of their estates—a measure which will be not only one of charity and benevolence to the labouring classes, but must ultimately prove highly remunerative to themselves.

In neither of the towns to which I have alluded, nor in their immediate vicinity, has distress manifested itself to any considerable extent. The inmates of the workhouses are not numerous, the rates are low, food is to be obtained at a reasonable price, and in Athlone, at all events, there is no lack of employment. The very large importations of foreign corn have had the effect of keeping down the price of oats, which are now selling in the Athlone market at from 10s. to 12s. per barrel of 14 stones, for grain of good quality. There are several large millers in this town, who carry on an extensive inland trade, sending immense quantities of flour to Clonmel, Rathkeale, Limerick, and other places.

The Athlone union contains 31 rural divisions, of which 16 are situated in the county of Roscommon. The number of paupers in the workhouse on Tuesday last was 313, being an increase of about 60 over that of the corresponding period of last year, when the number was 256. In November, 1849, the inmates amounted to 1,200, and the rate that year was 8s. in the pound, in two rates of 5s. and 3s. During that period of universal distress outdoor relief was largely bestowed, but at present there is no aid of that description given, nor will the guardians resort to it except under circumstances of extraordinary pressure, which they do not anticipate.

Last month a rate was struck intended to provide for the year, the highest rate being 1s. 4d. for the town division, and the same for the electoral division of Dysart —the poorest in the union—whilst in other districts the rate is as low as 6d. in the pound. It is not at all likely that this rate will suffice for the year, and in all probability a supplemental rate will have to be struck in July. The people will endeavour to keep out of the workhouse as long as they can, and will endure the direst suffering rather than enter it, so intense and deep-seated is their dislike to the system; but there are too many whose scanty store of potatoes, their only food, will be entirely exhausted in two or three months, and who must therefore seek for relief under the poor laws.

The contracts for the supply of provisions to the workhouse are very low, oatmeal being supplied at £13 17s. 6d. per ton, which is under the price of last year, and meat at 5d. per pound. The price of the latter in the town for the best quality is 8d. Hitherto turf has been invariably used in the workhouse, but it is not now to be had, and the guardians for the first time have been obliged to contract for coal, which is delivered to them at £1 0s. 6d. per ton.

In the southern district of the barony of Athlone, the failure of the potato crop has been universal in the low undrained lands and in reclaimed bog. In such soils the tubers appear to have ceased growing at an early stage; so that potatoes which remain untainted with the disease are of little value as food; for they never attained the usual size nor maturity. Of this immature crop nearly one-half is tainted, and the entire produce may therefore be considered to be a miserable failure. In dry gravelly

upland, where the soil has been worked deeply and well manured, potatoes present a better appearance, the plant grew to a more advanced stage, but is still very inferior in quality, and as to quantity, the entire crop in the ground is not nearly the usual weight or bulk, and there is at least one-third diseased. The accounts from one or two places are not so unfavourable. For example, in the Parish of Kiltoom, about five miles from Athlone, where the soil is of a gravelly character, the potatoes are good and not much affected by the disease. This, however, is an exceptional case.

During the last two years, great mortality prevailed among pigs, large numbers having died from distemper. Many of the small farmers have now no pigs, and consequently are unable to make any profitable use of the diseased and half-grown potatoes. The oats are very in different in quantity, and a large portion of them will be malty. All crops which were sown late (which was generally the case with the small farmers), and in cold undrained land, were unripe and uncut till a late period, and are now yielding a very poor return. The raising of green crops (turnips and mangolds) has increased considerably within the last few years, particularly in the direction of the Seven Churches, where there are extensive tracts of reclaimed bog, well suited for the growth of green crops, and dairy farming has been introduced to some extent. This district appears to be improving, but the want of a good leading road into the town of Athlone is a serious inconvenience to the farmers.

In addition to the failure of the potato crop, loss of pigs, and a scanty return of oats, the landholders have suffered dreadfully this year from continued overflowings

of the Shannon. As I shall have occasion to refer to this subject again, it may be here passed over with the remark, that the statements already published certainly do not overrate the amount of damage sustained. The crops of hay carried off by the floods, or rendered utterly valueless, were not the only losses sustained by the landholders. The extensive callows upon which they grazed their cattle during the autumn and early winter, were unavailable this season. Many of the small farmers declare that they might have borne up under the loss of their potatoes, but that the destruction of their cattle, arising from want of pasture and hay, will ruin them. With few exceptions, there will, it is said, be no default in the payment of rents this year. The farmers generally will pay their rents (to May) in full, but a large proportion of them will be unable to meet the November gale in April next. Landlords will doubtless consider the extreme circumstances of the present year, and deal liberally and justly with their tenants. Among a large portion of the tenant-farmers a feeling of confidence exists towards their landlords, and on many properties the tenants have expressed themselves very favourably of the treatment they have experienced from them. Notwithstanding that this district abounds with bogs, there will be great suffering from want of fuel. Large quantities of turf were cut in the spring and early summer, but the process of drying was prevented by continued wet. In many places the bogs are inaccessible to carts and horses, owing to the main drains being so much swollen by the rise of the Shannon. Several farmers assert that their turf is now in as bad or even a worse condition than when it was cut in the beginning of summer. There was a

miserably small supply in the market of Athlone, and though of very inferior quality, it brought fully double last year's price, and it will become dearer every day. I saw some loads of turf purchased in the market by persons who live in localities surrounded by bogs, but who have been unable, from the cause already assigned, to save the fuel lying almost at their very doors. I remarked particularly that there is scarcely any turf stacked at the houses of the farmers, and the labouring population may be said to have none at all. Whatever may be the difference of opinion as to the prospects of the people in other respects, on this subject there can be no question. The want of fuel will press sorely on the poorer classes of all the towns throughout Connaught, and will be a most grievous addition to the difficulties and sufferings of the small holders.

The observations which I have made with respect to Athlone, will to a considerable extent apply to Ballinasloe and its neighbourhood. In the immediate vicinity of the town, the potato crop has not suffered much from the disease, but in the surrounding districts, within a radius of six or eight miles, only half the crop has been saved, and the quality is inferior to that of the previous year. The wheat crop is about one-third deficient. Oats were sown much more extensively than last year. This circumstance sustained the hopes of the farmers when the first indications of the potato blight appeared in August, and gave them confidence that they would have a sufficiency of bread stuffs even if the disease were more violent than it has proved to be; but when the oats came to be threshed, the yield was found to be much less than was anticipated. The deficiency in quantity is fully one-fifth,

and the grain is husky and bad, particularly that which was grown upon poor soils. The inequality of the crop, and the inferior character of some portions of it, may be judged from the fact that the prices of oats in Ballinasloe markets range from 7s. to 12s. per barrel of 14 stones. The barley is scarcely an average crop, and great complaints are made of the shortness of the green crops, which were largely cultivated this year in the neighbourhood.

The destruction of hay in this locality, caused by the overflowing of the river Suck, is a serious item in the catalogue of the farmers' grievances. An immense quantity was wholly destroyed by the flooding of the meadows, and the portion subsequently saved was so bad that the farmers hesitated to give it to their cattle. The extensive callows lying along the banks of the Suck were let in the early part of the season at prices very little less than last year—viz., from £5 to £9 an acre. However, when the floods set in, towards the end of August and in the beginning of September, it became evident that a large proportion of the hay must be lost, and the callows were then re-let at about half the original price.

The scarcity of fuel is felt very much here as well as in all other parts of Connaught. Turf is selling for double the price it brought last year: a box which formerly was sold for 1s. now brings 2s. and 2s. 6d. Coals (which are supplied to this town at from 23s. to 25s. per ton) would be found much cheaper and more economical than bad wet turf at the rates I have stated; but unfortunately there are few houses in the country—I speak of course of the houses of the shopkeepers and better class of farmers—fitted with grates suitable for the burning of

coals. If the people had commenced to cut their turf early in the spring, they could have saved considerable quantities, and thus have averted the serious calamity that has now befallen them. The wisdom of doing this has been urged on the people here, but all to no effect. They adhere to their traditional custom of beginning to cut turf in June, after all their agricultural operations have been completed, notwithstanding the warnings of past experience, and the advice of those interested in their welfare.

The Irish peasant, or small farmer, is proverbial for his obstinate attachment to his old habits, and scarcely any amount of argument or persuasion will induce him to break through the thraldom of custom, or venture on the path of improvement. With many good and admirable traits of character, he is very suspicious, and too often conceives that advice to adopt a course different from his habitual practice is tendered not with a motive to serve him, but to promote the advantage of the person who offers it.

As yet there has been no material increase in the number of paupers admitted into the workhouse of Ballinasloe. The area of the union contains 160,000 statute acres. The highest rate struck for the year is 1s. 10d., and the lowest 5d. in the pound on the poor law valuation. This rate will scarcely suffice to carry the union over July, if the anticipated increase in the number of inmates takes place during the winter. The number of paupers in the workhouse on Saturday, the 9th November, was 233, almost all infirm and aged persons. At the corresponding date in 1860 and 1859, the members were 211 and 201 respectively. The numbers in hospital on the same day in the three years were, in

1861, 103; in 1860, 88; and in 1859, 80. In the year 1847-48 the workhouse was crowded to excess, and at one time the number of inmates rose to 4,400. The contracts for provisions have been taken at very low rates. Oatmeal is supplied at £13 10s. a ton, and Indian meal at £9 10s. Last year the prices were: Oatmeal, £13 18s. 3d., and Indian meal £9 10s. per ton. The contract for coals, with which the grates of the Ballinasloe workhouse make acquaintance this year for the first time, has been taken at 22s. 3d. per ton.

From Portumna to Mount-Shannon, a distance of about fifteen miles, and from thence to Gort, embracing a great portion of the southern division of the county of Galway, the complaint is universal respecting the general failure of the crops and the prospect of very sad and severe distress amongst the small farmers and the labouring population during the coming winter. I have conversed with all ranks and classes of people, from the highest to the lowest; I have had the benefit of the opinions of men of great experience and intelligence, in whose judgment and veracity I can place implicit confidence; and I have myself seen the condition of a very large district of the country, which I have examined with the utmost care. Notwithstanding all these circumstances, however, I find it difficult to arrive at a correct estimate of the actual state of the country or to venture with any degree of certainty to anticipate what will be the position of the poorer classes in a couple of months later in the season. On this point there is a considerable difference of opinion. Those who are accustomed to take a desponding view, and who always look at the dark side of the picture, think that in less than two months a large number of the small farmers

will have exhausted their scanty resources, and will have no prospect before them save starvation or the workhouse. Others consider that matters are not altogether so bad; and although admitting that the people must endure much suffering and privation, they still maintain that famine in its more extreme forms is out of the question, and that the great mass of the population will contrive to pull through the winter and the spring without the necessity of having recourse to public alms; and in this view I am disposed to concur to a considerable extent.

When we speak of "famine in Ireland", the mind naturally reverts to those terrible years of national disaster when the inhabitants of whole districts were reduced to one dead level of pauperism, when the workhouses were crowded to suffocation, and the people in the remote parts of the country perished from actual starvation on the highways, whilst pestilence swept them away by thousands. Scenes such as those we may never witness again. The diminution of the population, the improved condition of those who remain, and the increased resources of the country at large, would enable us to deal effectually with distress of a more aggravated character than any which we are likely to encounter. I therefore agree with those who do not apprehend a famine in this district; but I fear that the failure of the crops, together with the almost total want of fuel, will pauperize and ruin a great many of the small farmers.

It is difficult to obtain the average results of the present harvest; and moreover, the average results do not afford satisfactory means of judging of the amount or intensity of the distress that is likely to prevail. The returns vary considerably, according to circumstances;

some of the farmers not having suffered nearly so much as others, either from the potato blight or the deficiency in their other crops, which was mainly owing to greater skill, the adoption of improved methods of cultivation, and, above all, by having their crops planted early, so that they were well advanced when the unfavourable weather set in.

Comparing the various accounts which I have received, and testing them by my own observation, I may safely state that above one-half of the potato crop in this neighbourhood has been lost, and those which have been saved are very inferior in quality, being soft, wet, and, generally speaking, small. In many instances, potatoes, which, when dry, were apparently sound, have rotted in the pits; so that there will be a great loss in consequence.

It is the general experience of the farmers that the crops which were planted early have yielded, comparatively speaking, a fair return, which was especially the case where the potato was planted in moorland, or even in deep bog, when properly prepared and manured. On the contrary, in heavy moorlands, which retained the wet, the disease proved much more virulent. The light porous character of the peaty soil allows the rain to drain off quickly, besides which it would appear as if land of this description possesses some specific properties antagonistic to the development of the blight. Unfortunately, potatoes were not extensively planted in bog-land in this locality.

I may mention two instances which came under my own observation, which illustrate the different character of the results obtained under nearly similar circumstances. About six miles from Portumna, I saw a field of potatoes

being dug, the produce of which was one-third short, and the general run of the potatoes small, but, as I did not observe any black or diseased tubers amongst them, I called the attention of the farmer to this circumstance, who told me that the diseased potatoes had melted away in the ground; at all events there was no vestige of them visible. Some three miles further on I saw another field in which several persons were engaged in the same occupation; in this case the produce was scarcely one-fourth of an average; the sound potatoes were very small, a great many being only as large as a small sized plum; and quantities of them in every stage of decomposition were heaped together in different parts of the field. The quality of the soil was about equal in both cases, the potatoes were planted at the same time, and the only difference in the mode of cultivation which I could discover was, that in the first instance, the field was manured with a mixture of turf mould and stable manure, whilst in the latter the ordinary manure only was used.

The immediate neighbourhood of Portumna is generally a good wheat country, but this year the return has been very small, and the quality of the grain inferior. The yield is not one-half what it ought to have been, though I have been informed of a few instances in which it turned out better than was expected. The top price of wheat at present is 33s. 6d. per barrel; the price this time last year being 27s. 6d. The oat crop is scarcely an average one, and rather short in the straw. At one period it promised well, but the continuous wet weather affected it most injuriously. The barley was deficient in ear, the produce being under ten barrels of 16 stones per Irish acre; and there is a very general

complaint of the unproductiveness of the turnip crop, which, although not planted in any considerable quantity, failed remarkably when manured with guano.

Almost all the small farmers have a cow or two, according to the size of their holdings, and the pig is an important item of their property. The cattle are generally of an inferior quality, and in poor condition. The price of stock is rising at present, whilst that of pigs has been rather on the decline during the last two months, though ranging higher than last year, although their number rather exceeds that of former years. There was a good supply at the fair of Portumna on the 15th instant; and the decrease observable in prices on that occasion may be accounted for to some extent, by the difficulty which the farmers experience in providing food for them, owing to the loss of the potatoes.

The universal complaint, and the greatest privation which the poor will have to undergo, is the want of fuel; for the turf, though cut and dry, remained in the bogs almost impossible of access by carts and horses, and the little which has been saved has been brought out on men's backs at a great expenditure of time and labour. Turf brings more than double its usual price at Portumna, what formerly cost 1s. being now sold for 2s. 6d.; and the supply is rendered still scarcer by the fact that those who have turf prefer sending it by boat down the Shannon for sale at Nenagh, where 5s. is freely given for the same quantity.

In consequence of the poor not possessing sufficient fuel to cook their food properly, and to supply that artificial warmth which they require during the winter, they can hardly fail to suffer from a considerable amount

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*Lismany.*

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cultivation of the soil and of the hig[illegible]

of sickness, especially the small farmers, whose holdings range from five to ten acres, and who will be worse off than the labouring population, provided that the latter obtain employment. In the neighbourhood of this town distress will not be so severely felt amongst this class as in some other districts, for the Marquess of Clanricarde, who resides here, gives constant employment at a fair rate of wages to over a hundred persons; and I have no doubt that his lordship will do what he can to prevent the pressure of distress in a district in which he has so deep an interest. If the works on the intended railway from Portumna to Birr, which has been promoted by the Marquess, were now commenced, ample employment would be afforded to all the labouring population of this locality.

The condition of the farmers is worse than that of the labourers, because the potatoes on which they depend for food will scarcely suffice them beyond January, and they will be obliged to sell the entire of their other produce to make up the November rent. Few of this class will have anything to spare for the purchase of Indian meal, and during the remaining six or seven months many will be forced to sell their cows and their pigs to preserve themselves from starvation.

It is important to contrast the general results of the harvest in the localities I have referred to, with those obtained on the estate of Mr. Allan Pollok, Lismany, situate four miles from the town of Ballinasloe. I visited the scene of Mr. Pollok's extensive agricultural operations, and was much interested and gratified by the spectacle there presented of the successful application of science to the cultivation of the soil, and of the high intelligence,

practised skill, and liberal enterprise which preside over and are exhibited in every department of his gigantic establishment.

It is instructive to note the difference between the results of Mr. Pollok's high farming, where capital directed by knowledge is liberally applied to the improvement of the land and the carrying out of the most approved system of agriculture, and those arising from the careless and imperfect manner in which the soil is cultivated by persons alike deficient in capital and in skill. Thus, in the extraordinarily wet and inclement season which we have just passed through, the crops on Mr. Pollok's farm at Lismany have in many instances yielded a good return in comparison with those of his neighbours —a result attributable, amongst other things, to the thorough drainage of his land, the early sowing of his crops, and the consequently early in-gathering of his harvest. It is true that the produce of the wheat crop was under the average; but the oats, which have turned out so badly in other portions of this country, were over the average in quantity, and the quality of the grain was good. The turnips also produced beyond the average return. Potatoes failed, and were the worst crop grown on Mr. Pollok's farm, which, probably, was occasioned by their being planted in rich land and highly manured, for experience shows that the better the land and the more highly manured, the greater probability is there of a failure of the potato. The hay was a fine average crop, having been saved comparatively early in the season.

Mr. Pollok has a very large stock of cattle, highly bred and in the best condition. A visit to his farm steading

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Ganarew — Farm Steading.

will well repay those who are interested in the practical development of scientific agriculture, which will be seen in operation there on a scale of magnitude and with a minute attention to details unknown elsewhere in Ireland.

I cannot avoid a brief reference to the benefits conferred on the labouring population of the district by the system which Mr. Pollok has pursued. It will be remembered how loud and fierce was the outcry raised against him when he commenced to consolidate the small farms on his estate; to get rid of an insolvent tenantry, scarcely one degree removed from the position of labourers, and almost always on the verge of destitution; to throw down the wretched hovels, level the unsightly walls that divided field from field, and bring the land, exhausted by bad tillage, into a good and productive condition. Mr. Pollok did not, however, ruthlessly evict any of these poor tenants. He paid them all most liberally, and thus obtained possession of the land without incurring their ill will. What has been the consequence? Many of those people are now enjoying as labourers on Mr. Pollok's estate a degree of comfort to which they were previously strangers; they live in comfortable cottages, and receive good wages; they have a sufficiency of wholesome food, and are beginning to understand and appreciate the decencies and comforts of civilized life. In this district, comprising an area of upwards of fifteen thousand acres, there is scarcely a single pauper to be found, and with respect to fuel, Mr. Pollok's labourers have been fortunate in saving a large quantity of turf of a good description. The amount of employment given on this property is enormous, when we consider that at least 400 people are kept constantly at work, and Mr. Pollok's monthly pay-

rick. It is doubtful whether, if any effort were made to improve the works already completed, it would materially affect the course of the river, so far as to secure the adjoining lands from being flooded in such wet seasons as we have had lately. The water would probably run off more rapidly; but once the meadow land has been flooded in summer time, the crop is so materially impaired by the deposit carried down that the injury done is irreparable. Should any attempt be made to better the present condition of the Shannon, one of the most important would be to make a weir at Killaloe, so as to keep Lough Derg low at all seasons, and thus hinder its rise from backing up the river, and thereby flooding the districts above it. This subject will be so fully discussed at the meeting to be held in Athlone on the 27th instant, that I need not say any more in reference to it.

The total sum voted by Parliament for the improvement of the navigation of the river Shannon was £584,000, of which £290,700 was a free grant from Parliament. A sum of £266,334 was paid by the counties and baronies adjoining; and the proprietors and districts paid for piers on the Shannon below Limerick, £27,775. The counties which contributed were Limerick, Clare, Tipperary, Galway, Roscommon, King's County, Westmeath, Longford, Leitrim, Mayo, and Sligo.

Tiraff Bay

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] 2,[illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] population by negro [illegible]

[illegible] of the [illegible] in [illegible]

[illegible] year 18[illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] which is [illegible] and [illegible] both [illegible]

[illegible] 1841, 439 [illegible], [illegible]

[illegible] numbers were [illegible]

[illegible] 1851, 501 [illegible], and [illegible]

[illegible] 231 [illegible], and 1,264 [illegible] and [illegible]

[illegible] numbering 1,181 in [illegible]

[illegible] in twelve years [illegible]

[illegible] emigration; for I understand [illegible] this [illegible] were [illegible] [illegible]

census shows a further decrease, but the results have

## CHAPTER II.

**Scariff.—Improved condition of the farmers.—Extortions of the usurers.—Philip Reade, Esq.—Condition of the people.—State of Feakle.—Tulla.**

THE union of Scariff, which includes parts of the baronies of Upper and Lower Tulla in the county of Clare, and the barony of Leitrim in the county of Galway, was one of those that obtained an unenviable notoriety in the famine years. It ranked next to Skibbereen in the extent and intensity of the distress which then prevailed, and which reduced the entire population to pauperism; for at one time there were no fewer than 21,000 persons receiving outdoor relief, besides 4,000 who were inmates of the workhouse. The unparalleled nature of that calamity had the effect of diminishing the population by death and emigration, and, taking the whole of the union, it is not too much to say that the number of its inhabitants has decreased one-third since the year 1845. For instance, the parish of Iniscalthra, which is partly situated in both counties, contained in 1841, 449 families, numbering 2,198 persons; in 1845, the numbers were 460 families, and 2,546 persons; in 1851, 301 families, and 1,533 persons; in 1854, 234 families, and 1,264 persons; and in 1857, 226 families, numbering 1,181 individuals—thus showing a diminution in twelve years of 1,365 persons, arising chiefly from emigration; for I understand that in this district of the country there were no evictions. The last census shows a further decrease, but the results have

not yet been made public. Distress has not yet manifested itself to any sensible degree; but it is to be feared that many of the small farmers will not have any potatoes left by the end of January, and that they will find much difficulty in making out a subsistence for the next six months, for few persons of this class, whose holdings range from five to fifteen acres, have put by anything as a resource upon which they can draw in a bad season such as we have just had. During the previous four or five years they were able to pay their rents punctually, and could have saved a little, had they acted with proper economy and prudence; but, relying on a continuance of favourable harvests, very many spent all, and even ran in debt to the shopkeepers, whose claims are now pressing heavily upon them. A shrewd and intelligent old man, who cultivates about ten acres, when speaking to me relative to the condition of his own class, observed: "They riz above themselves entirely, and that's why they are so pinched now". I did not at first catch his meaning, and when I asked him to explain what he meant, he replied: "Nothing would do them but they should buy fine clothes for their wives and daughters, and now they find it hard to pay for them". I believe this to be literally true, and that it applies to a large class both in Clare and Galway, for I have it on reliable authority that there are instances of young girls, the daughters of small farmers, who some years ago made their appearance at fairs and markets in bare feet and clothed in tattered garments, now flaunting about in handsome gowns, with hoops of the most fashionable amplitude, and turban hats and feathers of the newest style. Ridiculous as such illustrations of female vanity in persons of a rank so

humble undoubtedly are, they afford no slight proof of the prosperous condition of the farming classes during the last few years, and are gratifying as indications of an improved taste and better notions on the subject of personal neatness and cleanliness than formerly prevailed, for it is better that the women should be overdressed, than slovenly and unclean.

I am glad to be able to state that I have seen very few beggars since I have come to the West, and that the labouring people are, generally speaking, respectably and comfortably clad. The battered hat and coat of shreds and patches, which used formerly to characterize the poor Irishman, seem to have disappeared. However, as I have said, many of the small farmers have become indebted to the shopkeepers for articles of dress and other things, and now find much difficulty in meeting liabilities, which is proved by the great increase in the number of processes entered and the decrees issued at the quarter sessions throughout the country.

The extortions of the usurers, who are to be found in almost every country town, also press very severely on the unfortunate people whose necessities force them to have recourse to those harpies, for the mass of the people are absolutely ignorant of the commercial value of money, and though they feel the burden, and sometimes sink under it, they do not really know how atrociously they have been "fleeced". Fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, and one hundred per cent., are frequently charged by these money-lenders. Here are two illustrations of the system: —A farmer applies for the loan of £5; he receives only £4 15s., and has to repay the sum nominally borrowed at the rate of £1 1s. per month for five months. In other

cases a shilling in the pound is deducted in the first instance on lending the money, and interest is charged afterwards at the rate of six pence per pound per month until the loan is repaid.

I leave it to your readers to calculate for themselves the rate of interest which is charged in these cases; but there are several instances in which the interest levied exceeds cent. per cent. The money is advanced generally without risk to the lender, for he always takes care to have two or three names on the I O U, and is able to recover the amount at any time he pleases. If the debtor appears to be in embarrassed circumstances before the half-year's rent becomes payable, the usurer runs at once to the quarter sessions, takes out a decree, and thus anticipates the landlord in demanding payment of his rent. A large number of the decrees which have been issued at the last quarter sessions in the counties of Galway and Clare are of this description.

I shall now proceed to state the result of my observations, and of the information which I have gleaned from different sources, respecting the condition of the district of the country between Woodford and the county of Clare, lying along the borders of Lough Derg, and bounded on the north by the mountains of Derrygoolin and Bohatch, and which comprises an area of about twenty-two square miles.

The soil is for the most part a stiff clay, overlaying clay slate, except in a few places where the limestone crops out; it is consequently cold and tenacious, and does not permit the free percolation of the rain. In the year 1849, the population of this district was represented by 665 families, numbering 5,713 persons; in the present

year the number of families is 576, and the inhabitants 3,036. Comparing the breadth of land under tillage in 1849 with that of the present year, we find that there has been no sensible decrease commensurate with the diminution of the population. In the months of May and June the crops presented a most favourable appearance, but the farmers were disappointed in their expectations by the very severe weather of July and August. The rain fell in torrents, so that the waters of the lake rose to the height of the average winter floods, and were not so high during any preceding summer since the year 1821. The consequence was, that all the low lands were perfectly saturated; in many instances the meadow lands were completely flooded, and that crop which should have been cut down and saved in August, was, of necessity, left standing until the middle and end of September. The hay, which, had it been preserved in time, would have been excellent, has yielded a most wretched return; for although a good deal of it has been cut, there is scarcely any of good quality. There was not much wheat grown in this district, but what has been sown turned out badly, as the rain, which came on when the ear was filling, caused the grain to be of inferior quality. There is no such thing as a first-class article in the market, and the average produce is said to be about one-half the yield of a good year. The oat crop is much better, but it is also short in quantity and inferior in quality. The potato crop suffered more than any other, for, generally speaking, potatoes were not planted early, and consequently when the blight appeared in August, the tubers were soft, and therefore susceptible of injury. In mountainous and boggy districts, and when

planted in March, the produce is good, and the loss from disease not more than one-fifth; but, as early planting was not generally adopted, the loss to the farmers has been immense. The yield of sound potatoes has been fully one-half under the average return of tolerably good years; and I regret to say that potatoes which, when pitted, about three weeks since, appeared to be in sound condition, have been found, on the opening of the pit, to have suffered a further diminution to the extent of about one-tenth.

Turf, which is so necessary to the comfort of the Irish cabin, will be extremely scarce with the poor—namely, the small farmer holding five or six acres, and the labouring man. The bogs are plentiful about here, but in some instances the people are not allowed to cut the turf until it suits the whim of the proprietors to apportion the banks—in fact, until their own has been cut and saved. Thus the season is often far advanced before they can cut their fuel, and then, if rainy weather sets in, they cannot save it. The Marquess of Clanricarde, who owns a great portion of the bogs, places no restriction on his tenants; therefore, some of them have been able to save their turf, and those who have done so are now supplying Nenagh and Killaloe. Indeed, there are not many proprietors who place any restriction on their tenants in respect to the cutting of turf. Mr. Philip Reade, of Wood Park, in the neighbourhood of the little village of Mount Shannon, with his accustomed liberality, allows all parties, wholly irrespective of whose tenants they are, to take away the underwood in his extensive plantations, and I need hardly say what a boon he has conferred on the poor thereby. Mr. Reade and Mrs. Tandy, who are the

owners of the parish of Iniscalthra, also give a large amount of employment throughout the year, at good wages; and if their example were more generally followed by the resident gentry, there would be but little fear of destitution amongst the labouring population during the coming winter and spring.

As I have mentioned the name of Mr. Reade, it may not be out of place to quote a passage from a work published in 1842 by Mr. Stokes, C.E., in which he refers in terms of well-merited eulogy to the improvements effected by the energy and enterprise of that gentleman:

"The parish of Iniscalthra is situated partly in the barony of Tulla, county Clare, but chiefly in the barony of Leitrim, county Galway. It is four miles from Scariff, and in 1842 contained 2,198 inhabitants. It takes its name from the celebrated island in Lough Derg, by which it is bounded, and comprises 9,000 statute acres, including bogs, waste, etc., much of which has been reclaimed and improved since 1820, through the exertions of Philip Reade, Esq., of Wood Park. By his means bridges have been built and roads made, intersecting and opening the district in every direction, and enabling the industrious farmers to carry the produce of their lands to the neighbouring markets. The signal improvement of this part of the country has come so much under my notice, that I may with reason remark the change, and point it out to the landlords as an example well worthy of imitation. While making a survey of the parish in the year 1820—then the joint estate of Mr. Reade and Mr. Tandy—it was a wild and, generally speaking, an uncultivated tract; but having lately visited that country, I was astonished to find, on

examination, that in the space of twenty years such extensive improvements could be effected. What formerly was heathy barren mountain, interspersed with sandstone rock, has become highly cultivated, yielding fine crops of wheat, oats, potatoes, etc. Even the red bogs, which absorb the mountain floods like a sponge, are yielding to its efforts and fast assuming the appearance of vegetation. Snug cottages have also been built, giving every appearance of comfort to the numerous tenantry of this truly spirited landlord".

During the time of the famine Mr. Reade gave an immensity of employment in carrying out drainage operations under the Land Improvement Act, and in otherwise improving his property, and by these means he has rendered his estate, which for natural beauty of situation has few equals, one of the most picturesque and prosperous in the whole country.

From the facts which I have hitherto been able to communicate, and by further personal observation, I am led to the conclusion that, so far as the northern and eastern portions of this county are concerned, there exist no sufficient grounds for the fears that have been expressed of a famine. Distress there must necessarily be, owing to the failure of potatoes and the cereal crops; and all the small farmers will have to pass through an ordeal of a severe and trying nature, under which some of them may sink.

The labouring population, too, will be sorely pressed by the loss of their staple food and the extreme scarcity of fuel, unless they obtain abundant employment, of which at present I see no immediate prospect. But there need be no starvation, if those whose own resources have

absolutely failed them, will take shelter within the walls of the poorhouse; for the property of the county can easily bear any additional burden which may be thrown on it by an increase of the recipients of the poor law relief. The great decrease of the population, which has suffered a diminution in this county since 1841 of 120,000 persons, in round numbers, and since 1851 of over 46,000, would alone be a sufficient reason not to apprehend an undue pressure on the rates. The small farmers, who by universal consent will be the severest sufferers by the bad harvest, will cling with desperate tenacity to their little holdings, and so long as they can manage to keep themselves and their families alive by partaking sparingly of the coarsest food, they will not throw themselves on the union for support.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact condition of this class in the county of Clare. In some districts they are comparatively few in number, the land being divided into large grazing farms, Whilst in other localities they are very numerous. Some have a little money saved, which will enable them to pay their rent and buy a sufficiency of oatmeal or Indian meal, at the present low prices of both these articles, to last them until next August; whilst others will find it difficult to meet the demands of their landlords, and must dispose of their scanty stock to enable them to purchase food. The latter class will, in many cases, be utterly unable to make up the November gale, even if they can pay the May gale, which, on most of the properties in this district, becomes payable in the present month.

This is the time for landlords to act with judicious liberality and kindness, as these gentlemen know, or

ought to know, the true position of their tenantry, and they will find forbearance and generosity towards those who really require it, the wisest, and in the end the most profitable policy they can pursue. From what I know of the landlords of this county, the great majority of them will not be found wanting in the discharge of their duty during the present emergency. The decrease of the population is, indeed, greatly to be deplored, though, perhaps, one of the causes which have led to the prosperity of the farming classes during the last six or seven years. A great many of the miserable two, three, and four-acre farms have disappeared, and have been united into holdings of sufficient size to call forth the exercise of greater skill and capital on the part of the occupant. The minute sub-division of land is, however, still carried out here to such an extent as to interfere materially with the full development of the agricultural resources of the country; but, notwithstanding this, it is easy to perceive that the land is better cultivated now than formerly, and that the condition of the people generally speaking has been much ameliorated.

The little town from which I write, affords a striking illustration of the prosperous state of the country for some years past. The population of Scariff has suffered a great diminution since the famine year; but the town, which in 1846 had only one little shop of the meanest description, now contains several thriving and wealthy shopkeepers, who have set up establishments and made their fortunes within a period of ten or twelve years. One of these enterprising traders possesses a very large concern, a sort of general miscellaneous "store", containing all kinds and descriptions of goods, not omitting

crinoline, hoops, and other articles of fashionable female attire for the farmers' wives and daughters. The proprietor of this shop is worth several thousand pounds, all realized within a few years in a poor-looking little town—a conclusive proof that the farmers of the surrounding districts had plenty of money to spend. Scariff, too, has its local "banker", who drives a flourishing business, but whose operations would be very much circumscribed if the usury laws were still in existence.

At the same time I should remark that Scariff contains a great many poor persons of the labouring class, who, if they do not obtain employment, will find it hard to live in their cold and miserable habitations during the winter. I have never seen more wretched-looking hovels than those which are clustered together at the outskirts of the town. The rotting thatch, the fermenting manure-heap before the door, the holes in the mud-walls intended for windows, without glass, but stuffed with rags or straw, excluding both light and air—these, and other features of a repulsive character, constitute a picture of wretchedness and poverty which it is not pleasant to contemplate. Occasionally a couple of families live in one of these huts, where they fully realize the condition of the Irish labourer as described in the Devon Commission Report, being "badly fed, badly clothed, and badly housed". In 1846 a row of such like squalid abodes extended for more than half a mile on either side of the road from Scariff to Mount Shannon; but death, emigration, and the workhouse have taken away their inhabitants, and they have almost entirely disappeared.

It is from the people who live in these cabins that the applications for admission to the workhouse will come.

An increase in the number of paupers is anticipated in January and February, but up to the present period there have not been many calls for relief, and the number in the house now is nearly the same as at the corresponding period last year. On the 9th of November last, the number of paupers in the Scariff workhouse was 186, as compared with 185 on the 10th of November 1860. There are 25 persons classed as able-bodied men, the greater number of these being boys over fifteen years of age; but, in reality, there is not in the house one strong, healthy man, capable of doing a good day's work. There were at the above date (the 9th instant) nine cases of fever in hospital, which had come in from the country during the previous fortnight. On the 25th of March and the 29th of September, 1861, the respective numbers of the inmates were 205 and 154, nearly all infirm, aged, or sick persons, or young children. The rate struck for the year amounts to 4s. 10½d. on the Scariff electoral division, to 4s. 5d. on Clonusker, to 2s. 2d. on Iniscalthra, and to 1s. 2d. on the Carrawbane electoral division, which is the lowest. The contracts for the half year entered into on the 29th of September, are as follows:—Brown bread, 6d. the 4lb loaf; good white bread, 7d. the 4lb loaf; meat, 5¾d. per pound; Indian meal, £8 10s. per ton; oatmeal, £14 16s. per ton. Last year, on the 25th of March, the contract prices were: Brown bread, 5¾d., and white bread, 7½d. the 4lb. loaf; meat, 6d. per lb.; Indian meal, £10 15s. 6d., and oatmeal, £14 10s. per ton. The average cost of maintenance of all the paupers in the house is 2s. 7½d. per head per week, and about 3d. per head per week for clothing them; and in hospital, 3s. 10¾d. per head per week.

In former years, the inmates of the Scariff workhouse and its auxiliaries amounted to 4,000; and no less than 21,000 persons in the union were at one time employed on public works and receiving public relief. The area of the union is 82,289 statute acres, and the poor law valuation £25,952 17s.

I have traversed the parishes of Feakle, Kilnoe, Tomgraney, and others in the barony of Upper Tulla, forming portions of the Scariff union. The same observations are applicable to all these districts, the potatoes and the corn crops having suffered everywhere in nearly equal proportions. The parish of Feakle is probably the poorest in the union. It is an extensive mountainous district, with, for the most part, a cold unproductive soil.

The following may be taken as a tolerably close estimate of the results of the harvest in this locality. The potato crop is almost a total failure; of those raised some are rotting in the pits, whilst the remainder does not form a wholesome and nutritious food. The return was, however, a bad one, one-third being the average loss, and in some places much more. The quality of the grain is most inferior. There was not much wheat grown, and the yield is at most only one-half of a good average crop. The extent of land under barley this year was very limited, and the produce greatly deficient.

As a general rule, the farmers have but few cattle, and those are of an inferior description, and in poor condition. The loss of pigs in the spring and summer by distemper was a serious addition to the other misfortunes of this season, which has been almost unprecedentedly severe. The rents vary from 15s. to 30s. per acre, according to the quality of the soil; and so far as I can judge, the land is not generally let at too low a figure.

A clergyman, who resides in this parish and is intimately acquainted with the condition of the people, gave me the following description of the present state of Feakle. I give his statement as nearly as possible in his own words, because I think it candid and truthful, and applicable to many other parts of the country:—

"There are comparatively but few persons of the labouring class in this parish—that is, of people living, so to speak, from hand to mouth, and depending upon their daily hire for their daily food. These persons do not hold any land except a rood or two in which they grow potatoes, and they will be badly off during the coming winter, because there is no employment going on at present, and no one to give employment. There are several comfortable farmers holding from twenty to thirty acres and upwards; they are independent, and will not find their resources seriously impaired by the failure of the crops. The remainder of the population consists of small farmers, holding five or six acres, many of whom have saved a little capital, and will be able to get through the winter and pay the May rent, which becomes payable this November; but it will distress them sorely to pay the November gale next April, and some will not be able to meet it. The want of fuel will be their greatest privation. Speaking generally, they have scarcely any turf saved; but they will gather underwood, brambles, furze, and heath, to supply its place for the winter consumption. Somehow they will contrive to struggle through; and living constantly, as so many of them do, on the verge of poverty, hardships and sufferings which would appal others have but little terrors for them. There are some aged, infirm, and diseased

persons, whose relatives cannot support them during the winter, and who must therefore seek relief in the workhouse, and from this cause there will be an increase, but not a large one, of paupers. There are no resident gentry in this parish. The small farmers till their lands themselves, and employ as few labourers as possible, and do not exert themselves much to improve their holdings. They are generally tenants at will, and are afraid to improve because of the insecurity of their tenure. There will be no starvation in this neighbourhood, and if the people could get employment, there would be no severe suffering from want of food".

The parishes of Kilnoe, Moynoe, and Tomgraney, also in the barony of Upper Tulla, present in the main similar features to those of Feakle. The land is somewhat better, but the loss of potatoes is equally great, and the other crops are equally deficient in quantity and quality. Here is the return, per Irish acre, of the produce of a small farm in the townland of Caherhurley, in the parish of Kilnoe: Wheat, 4 barrels of 20 stones; oats, 9 barrels of 14 stones; barley, 8 barrels of 16 stones; turnips, 5 tons; potatoes, 200 stones. In an average good year, the produce would be from ten to twelve barrels of wheat, twelve barrels of oats, and 1,500 stones of potatoes, per Irish acre. The deficiency of the potato crop on this particular holding is therefore something enormous.

I have to repeat the observations which I have already made with respect to the more favourable return of the patato crop when planted on moorland or bog. This is the concurrent testimony of all with whom I have conversed on the subject; and I have verified it so far a

I have been able to do. For instance, on the way from Scariff to Feakle there are several bogs on which the potato has been grown, situated on the left hand side and nearly on a level with the roadway; and at the opposite side of the road the ground gradually rises to a considerable elevation, and the soil is of a tolerably good description. In the potato fields in the bog I saw from three to four large-sized "pits" of potatoes, whilst on the other side of the road, in fields of the same size, there were generally only one or two.

The union of Tulla comprises parts of the baronies of Bunratty Lower and Bunratty Upper, and of Upper and Lower Tulla. Its area contains 85,809 statute acres, and the total annual valuation of rateable property is £32,559 10s. I shall not enter minutely into the condition of the people in this union, because it would be merely a repetition of what I have already stated in reference to other parts of the county.

The number of paupers in the Tulla workhouse on Saturday, the 16th November, was 254; of whom 97 were in hospital, and 26 classed as able-bodied men, though none of these can be so described in the ordinary acceptation of the word. At the corresponding period of last year, viz., in the week ending 17th of November, 1860, the number of inmates was 190, of whom 100 were in hospital. This shows an increase in the present year of 64. The number in the house on the 29th of September 1861, was 191, and at the close of each succeeding week, the numbers were 203, 213, 219, 222, 242, and on Saturday the 16th instant, 254. An increase to over 300 is anticipated during the winter and spring. The average cost of supporting the paupers at present is

2s. 6d. per head per week, as compared with 2s. 8d., the corresponding period of last year. The last rate for the half-year struck for this union was 2s. 6d. in the pound on the electoral division of Tulla, 1s. 4d. on the divisions of Ballyblood and New Grove, and the lowest, 8d., on the division of Dangan.

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## CHAPTER III.

**Ennis.—Tramways.—Professional mendicants.—Land Improvement Act.—The great Thomond Estates.—Condition of the purchasers.**

THIS is the capital of the county Clare, and is a thriving, active, busy town, containing at present, according to the last census returns, 7,127 inhabitants. The decrease of the population during the last decade amounts to no less than 3,392 persons, the number of inhabitants in the year 1851 being estimated at 10,518. Although the population has suffered so large a diminution, the business of Ennis appears to have increased. The aspect of the town has evidently undergone a vast improvement, and the better appearance of the shops and houses in the leading thoroughfares denotes a considerable degree of prosperity amongst the enterprising traders of this community. Within a very few years a railway has been opened to Limerick, and two new streets, containing good substantial houses, have been constructed at the western side of the town, for the purpose of bringing it into more direct communication with the market-place. A handsome court-house and Roman Catholic church, and a

monument to the memory of the late Daniel O'Connell, erected on the site of the old court-house, and now fast approaching completion, constitute the most remarkable architectural features of Ennis. Two fine edifices are in progress of erection by the National and Provincial Banking Companies of Ireland, and, when finished, will add much to the adornment of the town.

The observation respecting the prosperity of the traders refers to a recent period, and is not properly applicable to the present, for, in truth, business is now remarkably dull here as in other towns in the West of Ireland. The shopkeepers of Ennis must therefore look forward, for some time to come, to greatly diminished receipts, and they will require the liberal aid of the banks to enable them to maintain their position satisfactorily.

There is a large and poor labouring population in the town, amongst whom severe distress prevails during the winter and spring of almost every year; but in the present year their sufferings will commence earlier, and be of greater intensity, than any of which they have had previous experience. These people depend almost entirely on the potato, which they cultivate in small patches of a quarter of an acre; but, as the failure of the crops has been universal in the uplands, and as there is not much bog land in the immediate neighbourhood of Ennis, on which the potato is grown, they find themselves deprived of the means of subsistence, with no prospect before them but the workhouse. If they could obtain employment all would go well; for the low prices of Indian corn and oatmeal would enable a working man who earned a shilling a day to feed his family even better than he could possibly do with an average crop of potatoes. But

beyond the small amount of labour required to carry on the buildings to which I have spoken, there is no employment here for the labouring class, who must remain in idleness, seeing their scanty stock of provisions disappear daily, until actual starvation compels them to throw themselves and their families on the union for support, from which wretched fate very few of the miserably poor population of Ennis can hope to escape.

People here speak of the necessity of some system of public works, with a view to relieve the destitution, which is certain to prevail from February at least until agricultural operations are again actively begun; but it is scarcely possible that the Government will yield to any application of that nature, and it is certainly not desirable that the public money should be squandered on useless works, such as those which were undertaken in the famine years, when our roads were destroyed, our people demoralized, and a weighty burden placed on the property of the country, by the gross mismanagement of those entrusted with the administration of the fund voted by Parliament for the relief of Irish distress.

At the same time, if any work of acknowledged public utility be projected, it would be the duty of the Government to advance the funds requisite to carry it out, even though by doing so they might run counter to some of the favourite theories of the new school of political economists. I believe there are some instances in which such assistance can be rendered by the Government under legislative sanction. It is possible a project might be attempted for the making of tramways in districts where distress is likely to occur, and that the Government would support the movement by a loan, thereby

enabling the projectors to avail themselves of the facilities of the Act of the 23rd and 24th of the Queen, chapter 152, which received the royal assent on the 28th of August, 1860, and was passed for the purpose, and with the express design, of facilitating internal communication in this country by means of tramways. The promoters of such undertakings were required to give notice to the owners of all land which would be required, after depositing on or before the 1st of May in any year, the plans, sections, etc., with the secretary of the grand jury of any county within which a tramway was proposed to be made, and with the county surveyor, and the clerk of each union. By the fifth section a preliminary inquiry was to be instituted by the grand jury at the summer assizes, and in the event of approval by that body, the Board of Works, being furnished with duplicates of all the plans, was to make a public inquiry into the merits of the undertaking, and report its opinion, with any modifications of an engineering or financial character for the public advantage. The definitive approval or disapproval was to take place at the following spring assizes; and in the former event, the Lord Lieutenant in council was empowered by an order to authorise the making and maintaining of the tramway, the order being subsequently confirmed by an act of parliament. The act also regulated the amount of the share capital of the new company—empowered the borrowing of money on mortgage to the extent of one-third of their share capital; every tramway to be worked by animal power only, and to be constructed on the guage of five feet three inches. The legislature also provided that, where the promoters are not an exist-

ing company, they should, within forty-eight hours after the making of the order in council, deposit one-twentieth of the estimated cost of the undertaking in the Bank of Ireland.

The act in question was amended by the 24th and 25th Victoria, chap. 102, as some of its provisions were found to cause unnecessary delay, and now it is not necessary for the grand jury to make a provisional approval of any undertaking for a tramway, but they may definitively approve or disapprove of the project at the first assizes at which the same shall be brought before them, the application to be made either at the spring or summer assizes. There has also been this judicious modification made by the latter statute, that the inquiry by the Board of Works is to take place before any application to the grand jury, and to be confined to engineering questions. The order in council is also made valid without any further confirmation by act of parliament. The instance of the railway to Galway, which was made with money advanced by the Government, ought to render them favourably disposed to aid any similar enterprise during a time of emergency like the present. The receipts of the line from Athlone to Galway have been sufficient, not only to pay the interest on the loan, but to yield a profit to the proprietors; and there are numerous cases in which a line of railway, if constructed chiefly for ready money, would turn out a paying concern; whereas if carried out on the ruinous system, now too often adopted, of paying the contractors with stock, it would be profitless to those who originally embarked their capital in it.

An act of parliament has been obtained, authorising

the construction of a railway from Ennis to Athenry, but as yet no steps appear to have been taken to carry out the project, though, if the line is to be made at all, it would be desirable, for the sake of the poor labouring population of Ennis, that the works should be commenced as speedily as possible. Although there must be many persons in this town and its locality who are even now short of food, the anticipated distress will not begin to manifest itself until the beginning of the new year. The potatoes that the labouring class have saved, will hardly suffice until Christmas, but many will contrive to make out a precarious and scanty subsistence for a few weeks longer, after which I fear the workhouse roll will tell a sad tale of want and suffering.

The Ennis union comprises an area of 112,504 statute acres, containing in 1851 a population of 40,345; and the poor law valuation in 1859, was something over £72,000. In the week ending the 16th November, 1861, the number of inmates was 435, as compared with 378 in the corresponding week of the previous year—showing an increase of 57. Of those in the house on the 16th, 217 were classed as healthy, and 218 were under medical treatment in the workhouse infirmary and the fever hospital. There were a few persons classed as able-bodied, but in reality there was no man of that description in the house, and the women entitled to be so designated, were persons who were unmarried and had children. The number in the house in the week ending on the 29th September was 370; and in the succeeding weeks up to the 16th of November, the numbers respectively were 394, 406, 407, 409, and 418. The average cost of maintaining a healthy pauper at present

is 1s. 8¾d. per week, the cost in the infirmary being 2s. 7¼d., and in the fever hospital, 3s. 3d. per head. The contract prices for provisions are as follows:—White bread, 6¼d. per 4lb. loaf; wholemeal flour, £14 5s.; oatmeal, £15 7s. 6d., and Indian meal, £10 5s. per ton. New milk is supplied at 6¾d. per gallon, and coals at 21s. 6d. per ton. Two rates have been struck for the present year, one in June, the other in November. The higher rate, struck in June, was 1s. 9d. in the pound for the electoral division of Ennis, and the lowest 5d., for the division of Urlan. The last rate amounted to 1s. 4d. in the pound for the Ennis, and 4d. for the Urlan division. It is probable that the new rate will be considerably higher than either of these, as the relieving officers anticipate a large increase of paupers very soon. The almost complete want of fuel amongst the poorest class will drive the aged and infirm into the workhouse, even although their relatives might be able to supply them with food for a short time longer.

There are instances of the relieving officers being imposed on by professional mendicants simulating the direst extremity of distress, whilst they are really possessed of what would be considered a handsome fortune by many of the industrious people upon whose charitable feelings they practise so dexterously. A remarkable case occurred a few weeks ago in this locality. A beggar woman named Freele, and her three children, all artistically made up to counterfeit the most abject destitution, were admitted into the Ennis workhouse. When searched by the matron, however, a bank receipt for £60 was found concealed on the person of this impostor, together with notes, silver, and copper, amounting in

all to £70. The sturdy beggarwoman, when detected, at once claimed her discharge, and left the house in no very amiable frame of mind at the unexpected defeat of her attempt at deception.

In the immediate neighbourhood of Ennis there are several large grazing farms, the owners of which are independent, and will not be much affected by the deficient harvest, and who employ nobody but a few herdsmen to attend to their stock of cattle and sheep. A limestone formation extends for some miles around the town, and the soil is therefore admirably suited for pasturage. Indeed, in Clare many districts may be found where tillage is impossible, great sheets of limestone spreading over the ground, and huge masses of rock being scattered in chaotic confusion over the fields —so that in many places an area comprising several acres does not contain one of productive soil. Nevertheless, this apparently barren land is better than it appears to be, and is eagerly sought for at a high rent; for the grass growing in the spaces between these masses of limestone is of the best and sweetest kind, and sheep thrive on it amazingly.

This year was a favourable one for grass in this part of the country; and the high prices obtained for young cattle enabled the "strong farmers", who have given their attention to the rearing of stock, to do very well. Here, as elsewhere, the sufferers will be the small farmers, who depend on tillage, and have not put anything by to meet such a crisis as the present; and in the parishes of Kilmaley, Killone, and Clondegad, lying to the south of Ennis, there are many farmers of this class. Their potatoes have proved a failure, and all the other crops

are equally deficient, with the exception of oats, which did not yield quite an average return, and the quality of which is very inferior. In the Ennis market oats are now sold at prices ranging from 5d. to 11½d. per stone, and wheat brings from £1 5s. to £1 13s. 4d. per barrel. The price of hay is from 30s. to £2 a ton, but it is expected that it will be much dearer.

It will be seen that food still continues to be cheap. Fuel is the only article in which there has been a great advance of price. Turf is sold here by the creel, which now brings six or seven shillings, but which was sold formerly for half-a-crown and eighteen pence. I have seen the formers disposing of their oats in the market, and every one of them brought with him on his return home two or more sacks of meal, clearly indicating that their potatoes have been nearly exhausted.

The river Fergus, which runs through Ennis, and falls into the Shannon midway between Kilrush and Limerick, also contributed its quota to the disasters of the year. The continuous rains during July and August caused the river to overflow its banks, inundating meadows, potato gardens, and oat fields on either side, and doing a large amount of damage. For some time previously, an occurrence of this kind had become very rare. in consequence of the drainage operations carried on by the Board of Works, but it would appear that enough has not yet been done to provide against the consequences of an unusually wet season.

I could not avoid observing the great want of thorough drainage in various parts of the country through which I have passed. Much as has been done under the Land Improvement Act in this direction, a great deal more

remains to be effected before it can be said that the resources of the land have been fully developed, as striking instances of carelessness and neglect met the eye in every quarter. Places where there is a good fall and every facility for carrying off the water, are allowed to remain wet and swampy, when a comparatively trifling expenditure would render the soil rich and fertile, and repay the owner fourfold for his outlay.

It is singular that the gentry of this country have not more generally availed themselves of the provisions of that very useful statute, the Land Improvement Act. The sum borrowed under the act averaged a few years ago £35,000 per annum. It has now fallen to £27,000 a year. As some of your readers may not be acquainted with the manner in which the act is carried out, I will briefly state the *modus operandi.* The owner of an estate, who wishes to borrow money for the purpose of draining and otherwise improving his land, applies to the local inspector of the Board of Works, who inquires into and examines the proposed scheme, and approves of it, or suggests such alterations as seem to him most advisable. The plan having been approved of by the proper officer, the Board advances, by instalments, the sum fixed upon, due security being taken for the payment of the interest and principal. The interest is 6½ per cent. per annum, the payment of which for twenty-two years cancels the debt. The interest charged is, in reality, only 3½ per cent., the additional 3 per cent., being applied to the repayment of the principal, which can be paid off sooner if the borrower wishes, and there are regulated tables for that purpose. In every instance where money has been borrowed under this act, and properly expended on a

well devised system of drainage, the result has been of considerable benefit to the land, and an increase of income to the owner..

By the amended act of 1854 the sum which any one individual is entitled to borrow is strictly limited to £5,000, without reference to the value of the estate, the necessity for improvement, the age of the tenant for life, or the repayment of the loan. This stringent clause operates occasionally in a most anomalous manner. Thus, theo wner of an estate worth £20,000 a year, who, on coming of age, has borrowed £5,000 for drainage purposes, cannot obtain a further advance, though he should be fortunate enough to attain the age of eighty, and have repaid the original loan. The moment he dies, his successor can apply for and obtain a similar advance; and thus the successive owners of a property worth £10,000 a year, may obtain a sum equal to their annual rental within twenty-three years, whilst the proprietor of a vastly more extensive property will, during a long life, be strictly limited to £5,000.

I know an instance of a gentleman, the owner of a large estate in the county of Galway, who borrowed £5,000 under the Land Improvement Act, a considerable portion of which he has repaid. Being anxious to carry out the drainage system on other parts of his property, he applied to the Board for an additional loan, but was met by the reply: "The sum already advanced to you has reached the extreme limit fixed by the act; and though you have repaid the greater portion of that loan,

advance you more". It was quite

mit on the amount of the loans, but

I am satisfied the legislature never intended to sanction such an anomaly as that produced by the strict interpretation of the statute.

There is another matter connected with this subject which is worthy of special remark, and which possibly may be considered deserving the consideration of the legislature, which is, that the Board of Public Works are not empowered by this act of parliament to lend money for the building of dwelling-houses, except for labourers; though they may advance money for farm offices, on the condition that such offices are attached to establishments intended solely for agricultural purposes. This stringency of the statute is a decided drawback to the advancement of the country, as there are landlords in Ireland who, if they could procure money by these means, would build suitable houses for themselves as well as their tenantry. Such a facility would be the means of conferring a lasting benefit on their estates, and offer an inducement to them to spend their incomes at home, instead of becoming absentees.

I wish to refer briefly to the position of a class of farmers, some of whom are to be found near this town, whilst others are settled in various parts of the county. I speak of a peculiar class, very rare, I think I may say unique, in Ireland, viz., farmers of humble rank, who have attained to the dignity of being owners in fee. It will be remembered, that a few years ago the great Thomond Estates, including land in every part of the county, but chiefly situate in the baronies of Islands, Inchiquin, and Burren, were sold in the Landed Estates Court. The property was disposed of in small lots, by which a larger sum was realized than would otherwise have been

obtained, and nearly the whole of which were purchased by farmers, some buying their own holdings, and others the farms of their neighbours. In several instances the purchaser had accumulated sufficient means at once to pay off the purchase money; but in the majority of cases they were able to make up a portion only of the required sum, and were obliged to borrow the remainder on mortgage. They have since been making strenuous efforts to pay off the loans, but the deficient harvests of the last two years have crippled them considerably, and they now occupy a very critical position. Another season like the last would reduce many to the verge of insolvency, and a fourth bad year would ruin them completely, and throw the Thomond property, or a great part of it, again into the market. It is to be hoped, for many reasons, that these people will be able to struggle through, and to hold permanently the lands which they have thus acquired; since the establishment of a class of independent yeoman farmers amongst us would be an important circumstance, calculated to have no small influence on the social condition of the country. It is wonderful how conservative in their ideas some of these farmers have become under the magic influence of a real estate in the land, and how absolute are their notions of a landlord's rights to do what he likes with his own; for in several instances the new proprietor did not scruple to turn out the occupier of the holding he had purchased, in a summary fashion, and under circumstances which would have formed the theme for much indignant denunciation, had the act been committed by one of the old landlords of the country.

## CHAPTER IV

**Scenery between Kilrush and Ballyvaghan.—Carrigaholt.—Gathering seaweed.—Emigration.—Kilrush.—State of its inhabitants.—The crops.**

HAVING given as much time as I considered necessary to an examination of the north-eastern and central portions of the county of Clare, and endeavoured to describe as accurately as possible the condition and prospects of the people in those districts, I determined to visit and inspect the western coast, where I was led to believe distress was likely to be felt more severely than in other parts of Clare. I therefore proceeded from Ennis to Kilrush, and from thence along the shores of the Atlantic to Kilkee, Miltown Malbay, Ennistymon, and Ballyvaghan—a village about twelve miles distant, across the bay, from the town of Galway.

The country which I thus traversed, from Kilrush to Ballyvaghan, presents during the winter season a bleak and desolate appearance. Vast tracts of bog, poor undrained lands, wretched-looking cabins, and bare mountain sides, are the general features which strike the eye and remain impressed upon the memory. Scarcely a tree or shrub is visible, and even in those few comparatively sheltered spots, where some gentlemen have with considerable care and labour succeeded in surrounding their houses with miniature groves, the fierce blast from the Atlantic stunts the growth of the trees, and nips off their topmost branches as if they were regularly trimmed like a hedge.

Ferguson & Co. Lith.

Gap of Ballard, Killee.

The coast scenery, however, is extremely fine, and presents almost every variety which the lover of nature in her most picturesque and wildest aspects can desire. The stupendous cliffs of Moher would alone repay a visit from the remotest part of these islands; and scarcely less attractive is the pretty watering place of Kilkee, with its bold projecting headlands, worn into a thousand fantastic forms by the action of the sea, whose waves ceaselessly dash and foam against their rocky boundaries, and, when the wind is high, send clouds of spray flying over the loftiest cliffs. In summer the coast of Clare is a delightful place of resort for those in search of health and recreation: in winter it is sometimes awfully grand and sublime.

Under other circumstances my visit to these scenes would have been one of great personal enjoyment, but the pleasure with which I viewed their beauties was painfully mingled with the knowledge that many of the poor people are even now suffering from want of food and fuel, and that before the end of January their distress will have reached the utmost limit of endurance. This observation, though generally applicable to the entire country, does not apply with equal force to every part of the west coast of Clare, for there are some localities where the failure of all the crops has been complete; and there are others where the loss has not been so great, and where peculiar local circumstances have given the inhabitants resources which will enable them to struggle better against the calamity of a deficient harvest.

Speaking on the authority of those acquainted with this county, I believe that the population of the narrow

peninsula which extends from Kilkee to Loophead will be most severely tried during the ensuing winter and spring. This neck of land is about twenty miles in length, and varies in breadth from eight to three miles, and being almost completely surrounded by water, the humidity of the climate is greater than in other parts of the county, whilst the billows of the Atlantic, for ever dashing against the cliffs, cause a cloud of surf to hang perpetually over the land, contributing to that excessive saturation of the soil so destructive to tillage.

The district of which I now speak includes two parishes—Moyarta and Kilbarryowen; the latter of which is about six miles long, extending from Loophead to within a mile of the village of Carrigaholt; and it is here especially that the greatest apprehension of scarcity and want prevails, for it consists chiefly of arable land, and includes within its boundaries very little *fresh* bog, which is tantamount to saying that the people have no potatoes. Moreover, the oats are said to have been a total failure, as the continuous rain and the unusual coldness of the season did not allow the grain to ripen, and in some instances the cattle were turned into the fields to eat the unripe corn, or else it was cut merely for the sake of the straw.

Notwithstanding the decrease of population throughout the county, the two parishes are thickly inhabited, chiefly by small farmers, labourers, and fishermen. The sea abounds with fish: mackerel and herrings are often taken in large quantities near the shore, and cod, haddock, soles, and ling are caught at a greater distance. The people, however, do not possess the means of carrying on the fishery in a proper manner.

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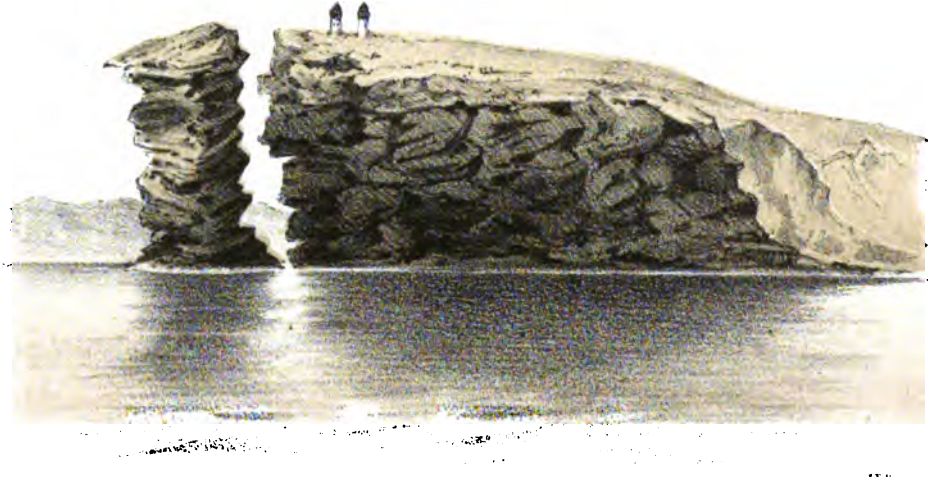

R. M. Ponti

Lith. Gaber de la Table

LFF

Loöp Naar

They fish from "corraghs" or canoes, consisting of a light framework of wood covered with tarred canvas, and which, from their extreme buoyancy, dance lightly over the waves, and are quite safe, even in rough weather, when dexterously managed by an experienced boatman; but it is obvious that these frail structures are not suitable for deep sea fishing, and that to a great extent the teeming waters must remain unproductive so far as these humble fishermen are concerned. Bream and other coarse fish are obtained along the rocky shore, which, together with the shell-fish gathered by the women and children, contribute greatly to the support of many poor families.

Those who have no land rent a small patch for the cultivation of potatoes. This is generally called "mock" by the people of the West, and in other parts of Ireland it is termed "conacre". In the district of which I am now speaking the average rent charged for "conacre" is £4 an acre, but in other places along the coast it rises so high as £6, £8, and even £10 an acre for bog land which the tenant has to manure at great labour and expense. Persons living near the sea can easily obtain seaweed, sand, and shells for manure, and this fact will account for the comparative density of the population along the coast. Farms which border on the sea are much coveted, because of the privilege given to the tenant of collecting seaweed—a right really belonging to the public, but exclusively assumed by the proprietors of the soil. When a small farmer has collected a sufficient quantity of seaweed to manure his own land, he gathers as much more as he can, and carries it to Ennis or some other inland place, where he finds a ready sale for all he brings to market, and thus obtains a few pounds, which

enable him to pay his rent or to procure food for his family.

The industry which the poor labourer displays, and the hardships which he undergoes, to gain a scanty subsistence for himself and those dependent on him, are perhaps unparalleled in any other quarter of the globe. When a storm rages, the residents near the coast assemble in hundreds at the water's edge, to collect the seaweed which the waves cast on the beach. Men, women, and even children, are often engaged in this toilsome occupation during the whole night, exposed to wind and rain, and drenched by the spray; and the labour thus commenced is not unfrequently prolonged throughout the day with a vigour and perseverance which refute the imputation so often levelled against our countrymen, that they are indolent and idle. Ignorant they may be, and obstinately attached to their own customs they too often are; but it must not be forgotten, that few persons have taken the trouble to win their confidence, to remove their prejudices, and set them a good example.

I believe that more peaceable, tractable, and well-disposed people than the inhabitants of this county do not exist. Crime is almost unknown amongst them, their honesty is proverbial, and drunkenness, so long the bane of Ireland, is greatly on the decrease—a result which, is mainly attributable to the zealous exertions of the Roman Catholic clergy.

As to the industry of the people, I have said enough on that subject. There can be no doubt of their willingness to work hard; but unfortunately there is no opportunity afforded them after the harvest operations have been concluded: and the loss of the potato, which was

their main dependence, must therefore, in very many cases, result in extreme destitution.

I have spoken to a great many persons of intelligence, who are intimately acquainted with the habits and modes of life of these people, and they all concur in the opinion that the dearth of food and fuel must ruin many of the small farmers, and send vast numbers of the labouring class to the poorhouse, if employment of some description be not provided for them. Of course, no one need starve. The workhouses are empty, the rates are low, the population greatly reduced; and all who are absolutely in want, can obtain food and shelter without very seriously impairing the resources of the ratepayers; but it is melancholy to contemplate the breaking up and pauperization of whole families, and every effort should be made to avert such a contingency.

It would also be most injurious to the country at large if the drain of emigration, which has partially ceased, should be again renewed, for it is always the flower of our population, the young, the healthy, and the strong, who quit this country to seek their fortunes in other lands, leaving behind them the aged and infirm. Emigration has already caused a great scarcity of good labour in many parts of Ireland, and I fear the bad results of the last two seasons will turn the attention of many to Australia or the British colonies, if landlords do not act with judicious forbearance, and if some assistance be not given to enable the people to struggle through their present difficulties.

This reference to emigration leads me to mention a resource possessed by the poor of this country, which ought not to be overlooked in considering their present

position. There is scarcely a family in Clare which has not some member or members in America or Australia, and remittances are constantly being sent by these exiles to their relatives at home. Sometimes the old couple receive five or six pounds from their son, whose horny hand need never lie idle in his bosom in the new world. Sometimes, as in a case which was lately mentioned to me, a young girl earning good wages in America, sends several pounds to her brother, who is willing to work, but can find no employment in his own country. The large sums thus sent home by Irish emigrants have often excited surprise and elicited the warmest admiration, as proofs of the deep-seated feelings of family affection which characterise our people. Latterly the remittances from America have decreased, in consequence of the fratricidal war now raging in that country; but money is still coming from Australia, and were it not for this timely help many families would have no prospect before them save the workhouse.

Kilrush is a smart and good business town, situate near the mouth of the Shannon, and distant about thirty miles from Limerick, with which it has, in the present season, steam communication every second day; that is to say, a boat belonging to the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company goes from Limerick to Kilrush on one day, and returns from Kilrush to Limerick on the next. The population of Kilrush is now 4,565, being an increase of ninety-four since the last census in 1851.

This town is a remarkable instance of the improvement which has taken place in so many country towns throughout Ireland since 1846. During the interval that

has elapsed, the shops in Kilrush have doubled in number, and greatly increased in size. For example, in 1846 there was scarcely a shop in the town more than 24 feet in length, and there was not one having a plate-glass window; whereas now there are twelve shops with plate-glass windows, some of 30 feet in front, and over 80 feet from front to rear. These shops are well-stocked with goods, varying in value from £1,000 to £7,000, but they are now almost deserted in consequence of the distressed state of the country; and traders whose daily receipts in prosperous years used to average £30, are now not receiving more than £6 or £7 a day. I was assured by a respectable shopkeeper that in the year 1860 he received for debts due to him for goods sold on credit £1,700. This year he has not received half that amount, and the falling off both in purchases and the payment of bills dates from the 1st of September. Up to that time bills were punctually paid by the farmers, but now it is almost impossible to obtain money from them except by legal process, and in numerous instances the traders who endorsed their bills to the banks, have been obliged to meet them, to their serious embarrassment.

There are branches of the National and Provincial Banks here, but there are complaints that they are restricting the accommodation which they were in the habit of giving, and have refused to renew many of the bills of the small farmers, even though a reduction on them was proposed to be made. Of course the managers are right to guard themselves against incurring bad debts; but it cannot be denied that the illiberality of Irish banks has often been the subject of censure by the mercantile community, and I believe that nothing

would please the shopkeepers of Kilrush better than the establishment in their town of a branch either of the Bank of Ireland or one of the Northern banking companies.

There can be no stronger proof of the distress under which the farming classes are now suffering, than the enormous increase in the number of processes issued and entered at all the quarter sessions throughout the county. At the sessions of Kilrush, held on the 9th October, there were no less than 600 entries, and since 1847 they never exceeded half that number, and were often much less. The number of processes which were issued on this occasion from the Stamp-office were about 6,000, the debts claimed being due for money lent and shop goods, meal, and other articles sold to the small farmers. I was informed that horses and cattle have been sold in the market-place under decrees obtained at the last sessions; and with regard to the large labouring population living in and about the outskirts of the town, the want of employment has reduced them already to a miserable condition, and they are in many instances now living on the money raised at the pawn offices, which are the only establishments at present flourishing in Kilrush.

The land for several miles around Kilrush is very poor, having a light surface with a very retentive subsoil: to use the expression in common use amongst the people it is "cold, spewy land". The wetness of the spring and summer was therefore peculiarly unfavourable to tillage in this locality: the loss fell almost entirely on the small farmer, to whom that species of agriculture is confined, and on the labouring man, who cultivates his quarter

or half an acre of "mock". The large farmers have converted all their arable land into grazing ground, to feed stock and make butter, instead of growing corn as they used formerly to do. For instance, previously to 1846, more than 100,000 barrels of oats were annually exported from Kilrush; but the quantity now exported does not amount to 50,000 barrels a-year; cattle, pigs, and butter having taken the place of corn.

Those who have large grazing farms have latterly been so prosperous, that their position will not be affected by the present unfavourable harvest; but with respect to the farmers of a lower class, who depend partly on tillage and the produce of their dairies, it must be remembered that they are now suffering under the combined effects of two bad years In 1859 and 1860 fodder was exceedingly scarce, and the price of hay rose to £7, £10, and even £12 a ton. The consequence was, that the farmer of limited means had to dispose of his stock at a great sacrifice, and instances were not uncommon of the young cattle dying from want of food. The loss from this source was considerable, and before the farmers had recovered from the embarrassments caused thereby, a calamity of a still more aggravated character has befallen them. The potato was sown extensively in the neighbourhood of Kilrush, but in all the uplands the crop has proved utterly valueless. There are a few exceptional instances in which the produce has been comparatively large and good in quality, but in all these cases the sowing took place in February, and the tuber had acquired size and stamina before the blight set in. Potatoes grown in fresh bog only have escaped the disease. The second crop from bog land is rarely so good as the first, and when three or four crops have been

taken from it in succession, the peaty soil seems to lose its antiseptic properties, and the potatoes rot in it as freely as in rich heavy land.

I must observe that I have never seen a really good meally potato which had been grown in a bog. Under the most favourable circumstances the produce from bog land is tolerably large, and there is no appearance of the blight; but the quality is very poor—the potatoes being soft and wet, deficient in farina, and consequently wanting in nutriment.

The great secret of success in the cultivation of the potato is to sow early, in February if possible, but not later than March. Even then, long-continued rain may disappoint the most reasonable hopes of the farmer; but there can be no doubt that the man who has taken time by the forelock in the sowing of his crop, has the best chance of obtaining a favourable return.

The oat crop, which was formerly the staple produce of this district, was the worst that has ever been recollected. The extent of the failure may be estimated from the fact that in the townland of Movene ten men threshed only £2 worth of oats in an entire day. The failure in wheat and turnips, neither of which, however, was sown to any extent, was equally great: in fact, with the single exception of grass, failure was the universal rule.

With respect to fuel, Kilrush is not so badly off as other places where I have been. Extensive bogs encompass it almost on every side, and considerable quantities of turf are brought into the town, and sent from thence by boat into the city and county of Limerick, where high prices are readily obtained. But, though there is not an absolute dearth of fuel here, yet it is

nearly double its former price; the kish of turf, which used to bring 1s. 6d., is now selling at 2s. 6d., and occasionally for 3s. There is an abundance of turf still lying on the bogs, which the people were unable to save. Of course the present high price places this most necessary article out of the poor man's reach, and the suffering from this cause is now most pressing, and demands immediate relief.

I perceive that "fuel funds" have been formed in Limerick, Ennis, Galway, and elsewhere, and I hope this example will be followed in Kilrush and every other locality where the scarcity is most severely felt. In March and April turf will be again abundant, but in the meantime how are the poor to survive through three cold and dreary months, without a sod of turf to cook their food, or to afford that warmth which is essential to existence?

The number of inmates in the Kilrush workhouse shows an increase over that of the previous year. Thus, on Saturday, the 16th of November last, the number was 298; and at the same date in the previous year, 259. There are no able-bodied men in the house, although a few are enumerated under that head; and the forty-four women classed as able-bodied, are persons who have availed themselves of the workhouse as a lying-in hospital. On the 16th ult. there were only two cases of fever in the house, and the number of persons in the infirmary was 114. The average cost of maintaining a pauper at present is 2s. 7³d. per week, and at the corresponding period of the two previous years it was 2s. 7¼d. in 1860, and 2s. 2d. in 1859. The contract prices for the supply of provisions are low, viz., beef and mutton, 4½d., and coarse meat, 3½d. per lb.; oatmeal, £14 15s.; and Indian

meal, £9 5s. per ton; brown bread, 5½d., and white bread, 6¼d. per four pound loaf. In 1860 there were two contracts for provisioning the house, viz., oatmeal, £14 17s. 6d. and £16 8s. per ton; Indian meal, £9 7s. 6d. and £8 19s. 9d. per ton; best meat, 5d. per lb.; brown bread, 5¼d., and white bread, 5⅞d. per four pound loaf. Two rates were struck in 1861—the first on the 25th of May, and the second on the 9th of November. The highest rate was that for the Kilrush electoral division, and the lowest that for Tulig, viz., 1s. 3d. and 1s. 8d., and 5d. and 6d. respectively.

It would be a serious omission to finish my description of Kilrush without some reference to the largest proprietor and the best landlord in the district: I allude to Colonel Vandeleur, one of the members for Clare, who is one of the most popular men in the county, and will continue to represent it in parliament as long as he desires to enjoy that honour. In every part of the county which I have visited, but especially in the western portions, where his extensive estates are situated, I have heard Colonel Vandeleur praised as one of the kindest and most considerate of landlords. With the exception of a few town fields, which are set at reasonable rents, all his lands are let at Griffith's valuation. As a natural consequence, his tenantry are comfortably off, and can bear up successfully against a bad season; whilst the rack-rented tenants of other proprietors—and there are many such in Clare—must sink under the losses they have sustained. Colonel Vandeleur recognizes a *quasi* tenant-right on his property, and an instance was mentioned to me in which one of his tenants, holding 44 acres without a lease, sold his good will, or "tenant-right", for £500.

The agents of the Marquess of Conyngham, Mr. Westrop and Captain William Stackpoole, have been recently receiving the rents in this town; but as yet Colonel Vandeleur has not made any such demand. From the universal opinion expressed as to the mode in which his property is managed, there can be no doubt but that his tenants will receive every reasonable indulgence; but I may observe, that abatements and remissions cannot be fairly expected from landlords like Colonel Vandeleur, whose lands are let at so low a figure. There is another large proprietor in Clare who is justly regarded as a model landlord—I mean Lord Leconfield—who has property in every part of the county, and whose tenantry, owing to the cheapness of their lands, are still in a very comfortable and prosperous condition. Lord Leconfield does not give leases, but he never removes a tenant without cause, and he pays his tenantry most liberally for their improvements.

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## CHAPTER V.

**Kilkee.—State of the crops.—Scarcity of fuel.—High rents.—Evictions in Killard.**

THIS beautiful little watering-place, which is much frequented by visitors from all parts of Ireland, but especially from the counties of Limerick and Tipperary, is situated on the margin of the Atlantic, about six miles distant from Kilrush, and in natural beauty of position has few superiors. The little bay or inlet is nearly landlocked, giant rocks guarding the entrance to it at either

side, whilst magnificent cliffs extend for miles to the westward, presenting from every point of view scenes of the grandest and most varied character.

According to the census returns, the population of Kilkee at present is 2,031; but in the height of the summer season, when every house is crowded, the number of inhabitants must be much greater. There is scarcely any trade in the town during the winter months, and the people mainly depend on what they make by letting lodgings during the bathing season. The past season was an exceedingly bad one. The unfavourable weather diminished the number of pleasure seekers considerably, and the owners of the numerous lodges, built solely for the accommodation of this class, find themselves therefore in a position of great embarrassment, from, on one hand, the decrease of their expected gains, and on the other the failure of the potatoes.

The parish of Kilferagh, in which Kilkee is situate, and the adjoining parishes of Killard and Kilmacduane, stand nearly in the same position as regards the failure of the crops. In the uplands the potato has suffered greatly, and the produce of the bog lands is scarcely more than half an average crop. In this neighbourhood very little was sown in February, in consequence of the wet weather, and the result has been in many instances that, even where the crop is comparatively sound, the general run of the potatoes is so small as to be only fit for seed. The oats were destroyed by the continuous rains of July, August, and September, and barley was equally unproductive. Good malting barley is worth 16d. a stone, but that produced in this locality does not sell for more than 7d. Some fields of oats

Bishops Island Tellico

and barley in Killard were only cut a few weeks ago, and some have not been thought worth reaping at all. Wheat is not much cultivated in this part of the country, and what was grown has proved altogether worthless.

It has been established by experiment that grass of a particular kind can, by a process of careful cultivation, be converted into wheat: and the converse of this is equally true; for wheat, if neglected, will degenerate into grass. Something very like this has occurred at a place not far from Kilkee, where a farmer had a field of wheat, which could scarely be recognized as wheat at all, the grain being badly developed and covered with an unusual husk, which was, doubtless, owing to the extraordinary humidity and coldness of the season. Many of the farmers here have been adopting improved methods of agriculture, and the rotation of crops, which was formerly unknown, is now better understood. Turnips, mangolds, and beans are now often cultivated, but this year the result has been most discouraging. Beans have proved nearly a total failure: the stalks flourished luxuriantly, but the pods did not fill properly. As for the turnip crop, it could scarcely have been worse, for I have seen field after field in which the turnips were not larger than a middling sized potato. One farmer in the parish of Kilferagh, a careful and skilful agriculturist, has a turnip field of three English acres. He manured the land well with farm-yard manure and guano, and put down the seed in the most approved manner; but the produce is of little value, for although there was no failure of the seed, the incessant rains checked the growth of the bulbs. In the parish of Kilmacduane, which lies to the east of

Kilkee, the land is drier than in Kilferagh, and the cereal crops and turnips are better, though the loss on all will be considerable. Killard, an extensive parish, situate between Kilferagh and Kilmacduane, and bordering on the sea, is similary circumstanced; the land is poor, undrained, and badly tilled, the produce of every crop scanty in amount and inferior in quality. There are of course exceptions, but, speaking generally, the loss of the potatoes may be safely estimated at two-thirds of the whole crop, and those saved are hardly fit for human consumption, being soft, wet, and soapy. The people appear to be satisfied as long as the potato is white and untainted; but, for my part, I have not seen what I can call a good potato since I have come to the West, except at the tables of some gentlemen, who are able to cultivate this esculent in a superior manner, and can afford to pick and choose. At every hotel I have found the potatoes uneatable, except in two instances, where the supply was obtained from Ballyvaghan, and even then there was but a slight improvement in the quality.

The farms vary considerably in size throughout the district of the country to which I am now referring. A few are over 200 acres, and a large number between 50 and 100, although they generally range from 10 to 30 acres; but there is a large number of small farmers whose holdings vary from three to six acres, and who are now in a most pitiable condition, owing to the want of both potatoes and fuel, which latter was never known to be so scarce and dear as at present. There are hundreds of acres of bog lying in every direction, from which an ample supply of turf could be obtained at a very small expenditure of labour, if the season were in

any degree favourable, or even if the people had made an effort to save it early. They are not much to blame, however, for not providing against such an extraordinary continuance of rainy weather as that with which they have been afflicted from July up to the present time. No matter how wet previous years may have been, the people have always contrived to save a sufficient quantity of fuel for their use during the winter, and they anticipated, not unreasonably, a similar result on this occasion. The event has falsified all their calculations. A few—very few—persons have succeeded in saving as much will suffice with the strictest economy to put them over the winter, but the majority are at this moment reduced to the greatest extremity, and are eking out the few sods of turf that they have been able to buy or beg, with furze, ferns, bogwood, brambles, and anything that will burn, upon which they can lay their hands. It was painful to see everywhere I went, stacks of wet turf standing in the bogs, and vast quantities of sods lying on the surface "unfooted" and in a worse state than the day they were cut. In some cases, even where the turf is comparatively dry, it cannot be got out of the bogs. The expense of carrying it from places to which a cart and horse cannot now have access, is a heavy item which few of the small farmers can afford to pay. One gentleman living in the neighbourhood of Kilkee was obliged to pay £5 in wages to a number of women, who were employed by him to carry out the turf in baskets slung over their backs, while in ordinary seasons he would have been able to draw home his turf without any cost whatever; but he considers himself extremely fortunate to have secured it at all under the circumstances,

and his case is a rare one in this part of the country. Another gentleman living near Miltown Malbay informed me that this year the turf consumed in his house will cost him at least £40, whilst the usual price for the same quantity was £12.

Instances such as these will serve to give some idea of the extent to which the scarcity of fuel prevails; but words fail to describe the suffering which it has inflicted on the humbler classes. At this moment they are able to make out by shifts and contrivances, which dire necessity suggests, enough of fuel of some kind or other to cook their meals, but that is all. With warmth and comfort they must dispense; and one cannot fancy a sadder picture than that of the labouring man, coming home to his scanty meal, cold and weary after a hard day's work, and not finding a spark of fire to warm his exhausted and shivering frame. Miserable as is the condition of the people here with regard to fuel, there are other parts of the country where they are even worse off; and this therefore is the subject of immediate and pressing importance, to which the attention of the benevolent public ought to be directed without a moment's delay. It is for the local authorities, the magistrates, the clergy, and others interested in the welfare of the people, to devise and suggest measures for the relief of the distress which they see around them. My duty is to report faithfully what I have heard, and verified by personal observation; and I do not hesitate to declare emphatically, that, as regards the greater part of the coast of Clare, the reports which have already reached you with reference to the dearth of fuel have not been exaggerated.

The land in the neighbourhood of Kilkee is let at a very high rate, the rents varying from 25s. to £2 per acre, being double, and in some instances treble, the Ordnance valuation. The competition for land is so great that the people offer to pay the most exorbitant rents in order to obtain possession of it, and a great temptation is thus presented to the agents to increase the rental of their employers and their own profits by accepting the highest tender. The tenant who thus holds at a rack-rent is always needy, even in the most favourable seasons; but now he is barely able to live, and will find it impossible to pay the whole of this year's rent.

The cottier population is very small throughout the country extending from Kilrush to Ballyvaghan, except in the little villages along the coast. The decrease in the population of the county since 1851 is something over 46,000, the diminution being confined to the small farmers and the labouring class. The parish of Killard, which is now in a very poor condition, suffered most severely during the famine years. The poor rates in the years 1848–9 exceeded the valuation of the land; and the destruction of human life by famine and pestilence was enormous. As an illustration of the terrible condition of this country during that period, I may state the fact, communicated to me by the clergyman of this parish, that within the short space of six weeks the clerk of his church assisted in removing out of two houses no less than twenty-six bodies, the victims of cholera and starvation. Killard, too, was the scene of evictions on a scale of magnitude and under circumstances of cruelty, which called for the interference of parliament, with a

to live. The other persons of his class whose potatoes have equally failed, and who have no employment, must endure a hard struggle during the ensuing winter, for, although scarcity of food has not begun to make itself felt yet, the dearth of fuel is already productive of much suffering. A few facts will convey more forcibly than any general statement the condition of the country. A first-rate farmer, whose holding is situate within a short distance of Ennistymon, employed a number of men to dig a large field of potatoes. They did not dig as much in the day as would feed themselves, and the farmer expressed his intention of ploughing the rest of the field, and getting two or three girls to follow the plough and collect the potatoes that were turned up in the process. In the little village of Miltown Malbay the receipts of one meal factor at present average £90 a week, showing too clearly that the potatoes have been nearly exhausted, with the exception of the small quantity which the people are striving to preserve for seed. The loan fund offices are also thronged. I have seen crowds collected in and around a house near Miltown, where the agent of the loan office was lending small sums to the farmers of the neighbourhood. A miller in Ennistymon informed me that, whereas in ordinary years his daily receipts for grinding corn for the farmers averaged from 30s. to £2, they do not amount at present to more than 2s. 6d. and 3s. a day. The rents in the neighbourhood of Ennistymon are very high, being, in most cases, double the Ordnance valuation. This is the case in many parts of Clare. Some, who have given much attention to the condition of the tenantry on various properties, go so far as to declare, that they think

the operations of the Incumbered Estates Court have, in numerous instances, proved rather a curse than a blessing to that class. Instead of capitalists looking for a fair profit on their investments and encouraging improvements in tillage, to the mutual advantage of themselves and their tenants, land speculators have stepped in—individuals who have no thought but how they may increase the dividend on their capital.

Lord Leconfield, Colonel Vandeleur, Mr. Lucas (Mount Lucas, King's County), Mr. Henry Goold Moroney (Miltown), Colonel Wingfield, Sir Edward Fitzgerald, Lord Inchiquin, Mr. Westby, Mr. Gore, and Mr. Blood, are among the proprietors whose lands are fairly let, and whose tenants are consequently in a prosperous condition. The number of paupers in the Ennistymon workhouse on the 23rd of November last exhibits an increase of 37 over that of the corresponding period in the previous year. The figures stand thus:—November 23rd, 1861, 275; corresponding week 1860, 238. The contract prices for provisions are as follows:—Wholemeal, £14 10s.; oatmeal, £14 17s. 6d.; and Indian meal, £9 2s. 6d. per ton; white bread, per 2lb. loaf, 3⅝d.; beef and mutton, 5d. per lb. Last year the prices were: Wholemeal, £14 10s.; oatmeal, £16; Indian meal, £8 19s. a ton; white bread, 3½d. per 2lb. loaf; beef and mutton, 5¾d. per lb. A rate was struck on the 14th of November to carry on until the 25th of March. The highest rate is 1s. 6d., for the Ennistymon, the Ballysteen, and another electoral division; and the lowest 8d. in the pound for the division of Lurraga.

It is at the village of Ballyvaghan, which is situate in

the barony of Burren, at the north-western extremity of the county, and along the adjacent coast, that the famous Burren oysters, so highly prized by the lovers of that delicate bivalve, are obtained. Almost the whole barony consists of a mass of limestone rock, interspersed here and there with small patches of arable land, but affording, even in those spots that are apparently most barren, pasturage of the best description, which renders the fat sheep and cattle of Burren proverbial amongst Irish agriculturists.

The scenery is very peculiar, and bears no resemblance to anything that I have seen elsewhere. An excellent road runs along the coast round the bold promontory of Blackhead, and on a fine day this drive is one of the most interesting to the admirer of wild scenery that can well be conceived. Below, the Atlantic ocean dashes with a roar against the iron-bound coast, fringing the black rocks with snowy foam and throwing jets of spray high into the air. Above, sometimes sloping far away, sometimes springing abruptly from the road, are singularly-formed limestone hills, rising tier over tier, like a flight of gigantic stairs; whilst far to seaward appear the Arran Islands—home of a primitive and unsophisticated race—and the blue peaks of the Connemara mountains. Not a tree or shrub or blade of grass, or vegetation of any kind, is perceptible at a short distance on the rugged sides of the mountains, and yet, notwithstanding these sterile features, there is something about the aspect of the place that is wonderfully cheerful and attractive, and I was so much impressed with the novelty and striking grandeur of the scene, that I cannot forbear from this passing allusion to it.

I find that the potatoes in Burren have been better than in any other part of the county, the light, friable limestone soil being peculiarly favourable to their growth and development. The produce, however, is by no means a large one, and the proportion of black potatoes is considerable. The great and pressing want of the people in this district is FUEL, as there are no bogs in the immediate neighbourhood of Ballyvaghan; and Connemara, from which in former years the people derived their supply, is now suffering from the universal scarcity of turf. The price at Ballyvaghan of this most necessary article, is treble the ordinary rate, and those who can afford to buy it cannot get enough for their purposes. In fact, a "fuel famine" has already commenced. The people are literally cooking their food with dried fern, heath, brambles, and branches of hazel, of which there is a scanty growth here and there amongst the stone walls which divide field from field. Men, women, and children may be seen everywhere laboriously collecting these sorry substitutes for turf. I have not seen a stack of peat at any farm-house or cottage in this district, but occasionally its place is supplied by a rick of dried ferns and brushwood, though more frequently the poor man has only as much as will supply his wants for the day. You may travel the whole country side without once seeing the smoke curling from a single chimney. In one cottage I found three little children trying to warm themselves at a fire literally composed of three sods of turf, over which a small pot of potatoes hung suspended; in another, some fern leaves were smouldering in the fire-place; in a third, the hearth-stone was cold. After the last meal has been with difficulty

prepared, the miserable fire is extinguished, and the whole family often go to bed before nightfall, to endeavour to keep themselves warm.

The necessity for relieving this distress is urgent. I have a list before me of eight families living within a very limited compass, who at this moment are absolutely dependent for firing on the kindness of Mr. Gregory Martin, a gentleman residing a few miles from Ballyvaghan, who permits them to collect everything they can get in his fields and small plantations that will serve for fuel. In other parts of the country which I have visited, where the scarcity is not so great, many gentlemen have conferred an immense boon on the poor by thinning their plantations for the purpose of distribution amongst the most needy, and allowing them to carry away the underwood. Of these I may mention the Marquess of Clanricarde, Sir Thomas Burke, M.P., Mr. Philip Reade, of Wood Park, and Captain O'Callaghan, who has a large property in the barony of Upper Tulla, county of Clare. If the labouring population of Ballyvaghan and the rural districts could only obtain employment during the winter, and be provided with fuel at a reasonable price, there would be no apprehension of scarcity and distress amongst them. But there are no resident gentry to give employment on the scale which the necessity of the case demands. Colonel White, M.P., recently purchased an estate here, and a few years ago gave an immensity of work in draining, fencing, and reclaiming the land, making new roads, and building comfortable farm-houses and offices. There is still much remaining to be done on other portions of the colonel's estate, and if these improvements are ever to be carried out, it would

be a charity to the people to commence them now. The population of Ballyvaghan may be roughly estimated at 550 persons, of whom about 100 belong to the labouring class, the majority of them being young, strong, and able men. There is a fishing village in the parish of Glen-inagh, near Blackhead; and if the weather does not prove unusually stormy, the inhabitants will not be badly off for food; but, like all others in this locality, they are now enduring much privation from the want of fuel. Whatever may be said of the neglect of the people in other places in not saving their turf earlier, no blame can be imputed to the inhabitants of Burren, for they have no bogs to which they can resort, and they have always been obliged to depend on Connemara for their supply.

The Ballyvaghan union comprises in round numbers 71,000 statute acres; the total annual valuation of property is £19,272; and the population in 1851 numbered 8,148, being the smallest of any poor law union in Ireland. The paucity of inhabitants in this part of Clare may be judged from a comparison of this union with that of Balrothery, county of Dublin, which, with an area of 75,000 statute acres, had a population in 1851 of 24,744. The number of paupers in the Ballyvaghan workhouse on 30th November ultimo was 156, as compared with 120 in the corresponding period of the previous year 1860, and 103 in 1859. The price of provisions is low, the contracts being taken at the following rates, viz.: Wholemeal, £14 19s.; oatmeal, £15 10s.; Indian meal, £9 15s. per ton; white bread, 7¼d. per the four pound loaf; beef and mutton, 5½d. per lb. Last year the prices were: Wholemeal, £14 5s.; oatmeal,

£14 15s.; Indian meal, £9 5s. per ton; white bread, 5¾d. per the four pound loaf; and beef and mutton, 6½d. per lb. The last rate, struck in November, for the ensuing half-year, averages 11d. for the whole union, the highest being 1s. 8d. in the pound for the Abbey electoral division—a poor district, including New Quay and other small villages—and the two lowest 6d. and 5d. in the pound respectively, for the divisions of Lisdoonvarna and Mount Elva, where the population is very thin.

In closing my observations respecting the county of Clare, I am glad to say, that, although the state of things I have been obliged to depict is for the most part dark and gloomy, there is a bright side to the picture. I have already spoken of the signs of progress which are everywhere visible, and no rational man can doubt but that, when the present temporary pressure has passed away, the country will resume that march of improvement in which it has made such rapid strides during the last eight or ten years. Much, very much, will depend on the exertions of the resident gentry, who, by precept and example, can instruct and encourage their tenantry; and this is a matter of duty and of self-interest, to which the great majority of the landed proprietors of Ireland are becoming more keenly alive than were their pleasure-loving, generous, and hospitable, but thoughtless, predecessors. The better cultivation of the land, the improved habits of the people, both in respect to their dress and their dwellings, are cheering facts which cannot escape the observation of any one who compares the Ireland of to-day with the Ireland of thirty or even twenty years ago. To take a single instance. A quarter of a century back,

Forster & Co. Lith.

Scene in the Claddagh
(Galway)

Forster & Co. Lith.

*Fish Market, Claddagh*
*(Galway)*

almost every farmer's house in the county of Clare was built of mud, and presented a most squalid appearance. Now, snug farm-houses and neat stone-wall cottages are to be seen in every direction, and other indications are not wanting of the general prosperity and improved social condition of the farming classes in Ireland.

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## CHAPTER VII.

**County Galway.—Clifden.—Apparent poverty of the inhabitants.—Their low state of civilization.—Absence of resident landlords.—Erriamore.—Test of the potato failure.—Kelp.—Interior of a hovel.—Plan for drying turf.**

CLIFDEN, December 12.

HAVING completed my investigation of those parts of the county of Clare which have suffered most severely from the failure of the crops, and travelled along the coast very nearly from its southern to its northern extremity, I determined to proceed direct to Connemara, in consequence of the rumours which had reached me that the inhabitants were at present in a distressed condition, with the prospect before them of encountering still greater hardships and privations during the close of this and the first four or five months of next year. I accordingly crossed from Ballyvaghan to the town of Galway in a hooker, making the run in an hour and a-half; and from thence went on by one of Bianconi's excellent cars to Clifden, the capital of Connemara and the Joyce Country. The journey, in wet and stormy weather, is

rather tedious; but in summer or autumn, when the air is warm and the clouds that are for ever floating over the tops of the Connemara mountains are not discharging their superfluous moisture in those torrents with which the people are but too familiar, the scenery from Oughterard to Clifden is so varied and attractive that the fatigues of travelling are forgotten, and the succession of picturesque objects presented at every turn of the road keeps the eye and mind of the spectator in a state of pleasant excitement, until he closes his journey in the beautifully situated and improved town from which I now write. I have spent several days in Clifden and its neighbourhood, including the thickly inhabited coast line on both sides, extending as far as Bunowen and Aldbrack on the south, and Cleggan and Ballinakill on the north. I have consulted people of all classes—clergymen, magistrates, officers of constabulary, traders, and farmers, who are familiar with the country and acquainted with the condition of its population; I have gone into the houses of the people, conversed with them, and compared and collated their statements; in short, I have spared no exertions to arrive at a true estimate of their present position and future prospects; but, so various were the accounts which I received on some points, where personal observation was impossible, that I am unable to arrive at any very decided conclusion respecting them.

There are some matters as to which no one can have a moment's doubt: such as the scarcity of fuel and the general failure of the potato. It is in the capacity of the people to bear up against these difficulties, and, with a little judicious assistance, to struggle successfully through them, upon which I have heard so many conflicting

Houses on Connaught

opinions expressed. That some are now suffering, and that more will suffer, great distress and privation, no one ventures to deny; but well-informed persons, who have had ample opportunity of becoming acquainted with the habits and modes of life of the small farmers of Connemara, assure me that there are few, even of the poorest amongst them, who have not some money saved, which will enable them, after their potatoes shall have been exhausted, to feed their families, provided the prices of breadstuffs remain at their present low rates. I am inclined to agree with those who hold this opinion, and to say that there will be no FAMINE in this part of the country, no general default in the payment of rents, and no very large increase in the number of paupers—on one condition, namely, that IMMEDIATE measures be taken to provide a sufficiency of fuel at a cheap rate for those who are destitute of it.

A stranger visiting Connemara, and judging merely from his personal observation, would, in all probability, form an erroneous conclusion as to the poverty of the people. The appearance of their wretched hovels—the worst I have ever seen—would naturally lead one to suppose that they are all steeped to the lips in misery. But this would be a great mistake. As a body, the farmers are poor, because their holdings are small, and it is therefore impossible for them to accumulate much. But they are parsimonious to a degree; they live in the most frugal manner, rarely eating anything more expensive than potatoes, or porridge of Indian meal and oatmeal mixed, and after paying their rent by the sale of their corn and their pigs, they generally have a few pounds to add to the little hoard, which is wrapped up in an old

stocking, and concealed in the thatch or some other convenient hiding place. This year they can save nothing; but it is believed that the reserve to which I allude will, in the majority of cases, render recourse to the workhouse unnecessary, so far as food is concerned.

I read a letter lately in one of your contemporaries, in which the writer speaks of the "emaciated" creatures who ran after his car on the road from Oughterard to Clifden. I saw exactly the reverse. I did not see a single beggar in Connemara, unless I include in that class a few children who ran after Bianconi's car, and although they were barefooted, and not very warmly clad, there was nothing in their appearance that betokened a want of food. On the contrary, they were all plump, rosy-cheeked, and bright-eyed, presenting the aspect of perfect health, which is the case with the inhabitants of every part of Connemara that I have visited. I have seen them in their houses, in the fields, on the roads; and, with the exception of their dress, I believe they may safely challenge comparison with the peasantry of any other county of Ireland as regards personal comeliness. The men are for the most part tall, broad-shouldered, well-made fellows; the young women good-looking and often very handsome; the children merry, active, intelligent little creatures. The middle-aged women do not retain their good looks so long as in other parts of the country, probably because of the severe physical labours and the constant exposure to the weather which they are obliged to endure; for I am sorry to say, the Connemara man imposes the hardest labour on his wife—an indication of the low state of civilization in which these people yet remain, and which has its parallel among the

savage tribes of Africa or America, where the men occupy themselves in fighting and hunting, and leave the burden and responsibility of providing for the families to be undertaken by the women. The practice does not go quite so far in Connemara; but I have seen more than one poor woman labouring like a horse, toiling backward and forward from the sea shore to the field with a heavy load of seaweed, which she had to spread upon the land, whilst her husband performed the much easier task of filling her basket when she returned.

Let me not be understood as imputing any want of proper feeling to the people of Connemara. Family affection exists as strongly amongst them as amongst any other people in the world, and they are particularly remarkable for their peaceful disposition, their honesty, and their obedience; but the truth must be confessed, that they are lamentably deficient in that practical common sense, patient persevering industry, and taste for the decencies and comforts of life, which constitute what I intend to express by the word "civilization". There is no lack of intelligence amongst them: quite the contrary, for they are exceedingly quick, acute, and penetrating—more so perhaps than the peasantry of any other part of Ireland; and the subtlety, ingenuity, and talent which they display in their disputes before the petty sessions court, are perfectly astonishing. They seem to delight in the exhibition of their powers, and never weary of raising points of law that would do credit to a special pleader, just as the Hindoos of the humblest class will sit for hours together absorbed in the discussion of some abstruse metaphysical problem.

These rare gifts of intelligence which the people of

Connemara possess are warped and perverted by ignorance and prejudice of the grossest kind. They can comprehend a legal quibble, but they cannot be brought to understand the importance of steady industry in the cultivation of their land, or the disgrace of herding together like pigs in their squalid and filthy abodes, which they could easily improve. Are they solely to blame for this? No. Like their own beautiful country, they have been sadly neglected; they have been wilfully deprived hitherto of education by their superiors; whilst in practical matters no one has ever taken the trouble to teach them what is right, and they have had no example placed before their eyes by which they might profit, for Connemara is, *par excellence*, the land of absentees. With the exception of a few persons, who can exercise influence only within a limited sphere, there are no resident gentry in this extensive district, which is annually drained of large sums in the shape of rents, without receiving any return whatever.

If the owners of the soil, or even a small proportion of them, resided for a part of the year on their estates, expended money on their land, and gave their tenantry encouragement to do likewise, this intelligent people would see the advantage of following that example, and would soon better their condition. There can be no doubt that the insecurity of their tenure is a strong obstacle to improvement on the part of the tenant. When any one of the small farmers is asked why he does not fence or surface-drain his land, or do something to make his cottage neat-looking and comfortable, his invariable reply is: "Ah, why should I trouble myself about it? Sure would n't the rent be raised on me, or

how do I know that I 'd be there to-morrow?" Considering what these people have already suffered from the caprice and injustice of landlords, it is impossible not to recognize the force of this objection; and it is only fair, when commenting on their faults and weaknesses, not to overlook the causes from which they have sprung.

The district called Errismore, lying along the coast to the south of Clifden, was one of the first which I visited. Poor as the land appears to be, consisting for the most part of bog and stony soil, it was formerly remarkable for its productiveness, and used to supply Clifden and other places with potatoes and corn. This year the loss of the potato crop is estimated at two-thirds on an average; in some places less, and in some more. The people were not able to sow their potatoes as soon as they would otherwise have done, in consequence of the early part of the season being unusually stormy, which prevented them cutting the seaweed on the rocks. When they obtained the manure, they made great efforts to get in the seed; but some are of opinion that, whilst the sowing was late, the disease made its appearance early, and the result of this unfortunate combination of adverse circumstances was, that a great part of the crop was cut off in full bloom. In some places the plant did not come to maturity, and the potatoes, though untainted, are so small as to be scarcely fit for use.

The results, however, in some cases where the circumstances were apparently identical, have been so different, that it is unsafe to hazard any dogmatic opinion as to the causes of this mysterious blight. One farmer in the townland of Manninmore told me that he had a very good return in point of quantity, whilst the crop of his

neighbour, although sowed at the same time, in land of the same description, manured in the same way, and the seed being also the same, has proved a complete failure. Some circumstances of difference there must have been between the two cases, which escaped the observation of my informant. It is impossible that such varying results should have been obtained without causes which may yet be discovered by acute and competent inquirers; but nevertheless intelligent, educated, and keenly-observant men, who have carefully studied the subject, assure me that all their theories have been upset one after the other by the most contrary and unexpected results. The mode of cultivation which was eminently successful one season, has proved a failure the next, and they have been unable to find any adequate way of accounting for it.

When potato digging commenced this year, the reports of the losses sustained were so conflicting that a gentleman residing at Clifden resolved to test the matter accurately in his own case. He accordingly measured his potato ground, and had the sound tubers carefully separated from the black ones, and weighed. He found that forty-four perches of tolerably good land, which he had thoroughly drained, manured with farm-yard manure, and sown in the latter end of March, yielded only 120 stones of untainted potatoes, and these of very inferior quality. I mention this fact because, having been ascertained by careful measurement, it assists us in forming some idea as to the extent of the failure in this part of the country.

Barley was the cereal chiefly grown in Errismore—including under that designation the districts of Mannin-

more, Manninbeg, Bunowen, and Aldbrack. The produce is of the worst description, being deficient in amount and bad in quality. The oat crop turned out somewhat more favourably, but it was not much sown.

The holdings are all very small, ranging from five, or even less, to twelve and fifteen acres, and the rents are high. Each farmer has a cow or two, a pig, and a couple of sheep, or more, according to the size of his holding. The unfavourable return of the corn crop, which is generally relied on for the payment of the rent, must have caused these people to draw upon their savings for that purpose; and those who have nothing left after that pull on their slender purses, will be in a bad way when their potatoes have run out, unless they obtain employment. However, it must not be forgotten that those who are known to be respectable and industrious men, will obtain credit from the shopkeepers for provisions; and therefore I do not think very great distress will be general, although in individual cases it may be very intense.

Immediately at the shores of Mannion Bay, and along the coast to Bunowen and Slynehead, there is a large and poor population, half farmers, half fishermen, and there can be no doubt but that some destitution will prevail amongst them. In addition to what they realise by fishing, and the prices obtained for their oats and barley and their pigs, many of these people make a few pounds by the manufacture of kelp from the seaweed, which is collected in vast quantities, carefully dried, and then burnt in heaps, the residuum or cinders constituting the kelp, and forming a valuable article of commerce, for which there is always a market. The manufacture of the

kelp is almost entirely carried on by the women, and a large quantity of it is annually made along these shores, and disposed of to Mr. Martin Hart, of Clifden, at prices varying from £2 2s. 6d. to £2 15s. a ton. Mr. Hart has a large storehouse for kelp near Bunowen pier, and ships all he purchases from thence to Glasgow. He deserves credit for his enterprise in this branch of business, and he has done some good by affording a means of remunerative employment, however small, to the residents along this wild and barren coast.

The sea abounds with fish of the finest description, but the people have not the means and appliances necessary to catch them in abundance. They fish from small row-boats, and have no hookers of sufficient size to enable them to proceed into the deep sea; or, if they had, it would be impossible to do so in consequence of the total want of any harbour of refuge sufficiently near the fishing ground in which the boats could seek shelter in violent storms. This is a subject of great practical importance, which ought to engage the earnest attention of any government that really wishes to develop the material resources of this much neglected portion of Ireland.

The Clifden union comprises an area of 192,966 statute acres, and the poverty of the district is shown by the fact that the poor law valuation is only £16,144. The union of Ardee, with an area of only 96,000 statute acres, is valued at £92,000. The population of the Clifden union, in 1851, was 25,396. As yet there has been no increase worth speaking of in the number of paupers in the workhouse—the number at the close of the week ending Dec. 7th being 109, as compared with 98 at the corresponding period of the previous year.


Glyndon Castle

The contract prices of provisions exceed those of the two previous years, and the rates lately struck are rather high, viz., 4s. 7d. in the pound for the electoral division of Clifden, 3s. 6d. for Illion, 3s. for Moyrus, 2s. 6d. for Doonlongham, the lowest being 1s. 2d., for Derrylea. The large number of very poor people in the town of Clifden will account for the high rate struck for that electoral division.

Under the late proprietor, Mr. Darcy, who gave long building leases, Clifden rapidly improved; and it is even now advancing, though no encouragement is given by the English absentee who became the purchaser of the Clifden Castle estate. Being the capital of a large district, the town might be made a very flourishing one, if the proprietor of it exerted himself to carry out the obvious improvements which are required, or encouraged the inhabitants to do so themselves.

Clifden contains hovels which are a disgrace to any civilized community. I examined one of these the other day, and left it with a feeling of amazement how it was possible for any man to exist in such a wretched place. There were only two rooms; the rotten thatch admitted the rain, which was falling in torrents and streamed down the walls, rendering the clay floor a mass of greasy mud; in the back-yard there was a great pool of water, which, from the want of drainage, trickled under the door and formed small pools on the floor of the bedroom; while only a spark of are glimmered on the hearth. The occupants of this dwelling are an old man seventy-six years of age, and his wife. The man is a tinker by trade, and a very sharp intelligent person. He complained bitterly of the state of his cabin, and said he had re-

peatedly urged the middleman, to whom he paid 1s. 6d. a week, to repair the thatch and render the place habitable. I asked him why he continued to live there, and he replied that it was impossible for him to obtain any other lodging in the town unless he paid a much higher rent, which he was unable to do.

There are other cabins in Clifden of a similar description, though perhaps not just so bad as the one referred to, and it will be for the guardians to consider whether, when the pressure comes upon the inmates in February or March, they will not act judiciously by administering out-door relief. The gross abuses which existed when that system was originally introduced into Ireland ought not to deter the guardians from endeavouring to carry it out more efficiently now, if they should find that by relieving people in their homes, they will prevent them and their families becoming paupers.

I have reserved the fuel topic for the last, though that is really the subject of immediate and pressing importance, which ought to engage the attention of every one interested in relieving the distress of the people. The scarcity of turf is universal throughout the country, and in some districts the dearth of it is absolute. In Errismore, to the south of Clifden, the people are in a shocking condition for want of fuel, as there are no bogs here, the land being nearly all rocky, and the moory portions of it having been reclaimed and tilled. There is, consequently, not a sod of turf to be seen in the houses of the small farmers, and they are now cooking their food with straw, dried furze, brambles, and everything they can pick up, which will serve, however imperfectly, for that purpose. They are not always allowed to collect

Clifden, Connemara.

even the furze, so worthless to the owner of the land, but now so valuable to the poor man. Several persons have been prosecuted and fined for pulling furze on the property of a Mr. Burke, of Galway, situate in Manninmore. The summonses were issued by Mr. Burke's herd, probably without his instructions, and contrary to what would have been his wish had he heard of the matter.

Even in the districts to the north of Clifden, where turbary is abundant, the scarcity is felt with the utmost severity; for the turf, though cut, is lying wet and worthless in the bogs; and I have seen the people in every direction looking for "bogdeal", sounding for it with long iron rods, and digging it up, when found, with great difficulty and labour. I have also met troops of boys and girls literally carrying away the road fences on their backs. In this locality, where the roads are not fenced with stone walls, the ditches are made of turf, and these have now been broken up, and the best part of them carried away for fuel. In a short time there will not be a turf wall left in the country. If evidence on the subject were needed, these facts would be sufficient to prove the fearful state to which the poor have been reduced with respect to fuel.

The necessity for immediate action has been recognized in every quarter, and "fuel funds" have been organized in order to meet the emergency. In Clifden a committee has been formed, owing to the exertions of Mr. Fitzgerald, R.M., Mr. Bodkin, late M.P. for Galway, and a few others, and Mr. Martin Hart, the proprietor of one of the hotels, has undertaken the duties of secretary. They are collecting funds, and appeal to all who have property in the neighbourhood to assist them in carrying

out their charitable purpose. They have ordered a cargo of coal, and will retail it to the people at a reduced price that will place it within their reach. It is also proposed to supply small grates at 10d. a piece, in which the coals can be economically burned.* No gratuitous relief is intended at present, except in a few cases of extreme distress, where a little timely assistance may save a whole family from the workhouse. The duty of making provision for the wants of each district primarily devolves on the landlords; but in Clifden there are no resident proprietors, and the committee are therefore obliged to appeal generally to the benevolent public.

Considering the immense quantity of wet turf in the country, it seems to be a pity that some attempt should not be made to dry it by artificial means. It has been suggested that if wet turf were built up in the fireplace, and the coals burned against the mass, some portion of it might be rendered available by this means.

The following plan for drying turf has been communicated to me, and the circulation of it through your columns may not be without use:—"Round a pole of five or six inches in diameter, slightly fastened in the ground, so as to be easily drawn out when the pile is completed, let a conical pile of dry turf be built as if for a pretty large fire, say about three feet in diameter, and about the same in height; around and over this heart

* Mr. Sheridan, the clebrated implement manufacturer, Bridgefoot Street, has just designed a most appropriate cheap and useful moveable coal grate for country cottages, to be placed on the hearth. It is about 18 inches long by 8 inches wide, trough-shaped, with a grated bottom. This simple apparatus will be found useful in many ways. Wet turf can be piled at the back, which will dry rapidly, and make a considerable quantity of otherwise useless fuel available.

or core of dry turf let the wet turf be built, forming a conical pile of about six feet at the base, and six, seven, or eight feet high, gradually tapering to about eighteen inches at the apex—the whole to be plastered over with a coat of well-mixed mud of the bog, and laid on one and a-half or two inches thick, something in the same manner in which a brick kiln is prepared with clay. No crack or opening should be left in this outer coat, save a small opening at the bottom, through the wet turf, to admit air to the fire of dry turf, and the opening at the top when the pole is withdrawn on the completion of the pile, leaving a kind of funnel to promote combustion. A pretty wide opening at the bottom of the pile should be made at first, until the fire in the centre is fairly kindled, and not likely to go out. I am not certain but that three or more openings might be required at the bottom, or that the outside coating might not be dispensed with, but this can only be ascertained by experiment and repeated trials both ways. If charcoal were the object, the coating of mud would be indispensable, but it might be different when desiccation only is required; and in this case desiccation might be facilitated by allowing the heated air and vapour through the wet mass, and the pile might be built with interstices communicating with each other through the mass, the same as is practised with brick kilns. The pile being conical and sloping inward, there would be no danger of this loose building falling down; the dry turf in the centre would be all turned to charcoal, which would not be without its use; for, although greatly reduced in bulk, the peat converted into charcoal retains the elements of much caloric, and, in a proper apparatus or furnace of very simple construction,

would answer well for cooking purposes. I do not say that in acting on these hints there might not be some disappointment at first; but the experiments should be persevered in by repeated trials, which a clever, intelligent person could easily carry out. I am persuaded that it is practicable to effect the desiccation of wet turf by artificial means".

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Clifden continued.—The Law Life Insurance Company.—Trespassing.—Duty of Government to construct Harbours.—Experiment of Rev. Mr. Darcy and Captain Stoll.—Curious antique relics.—The geology and botany of Errisbeg.—The Doohulla fishery.

CLIFDEN, December 19.

THE owner of the largest tract of land in Connemara is the Law Life Insurance Company, which, it is expected, will act upon the maxim that "property has its duties as well as its rights", in this important juncture, when the prospect of severe distress is impending over the people. If I am to accept as accurate the generally expressed opinion of the inhabitants of Clifden, I must come to the conclusion that hitherto the directors of this wealthy and influential company have not fulfilled the duties which devolved on them when they purchased in the Incumbered Estates Court the vast property which belonged for generations to the Martin family, and thereby became arbiters of the destiny of a numerous

Forster & Co Lith.

Ben Lettery, Ballinahinch House & River

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and impoverished tenantry. In fact, they are rather land speculators than landlords, and by all accounts they have made well of their Irish investment. They purchased the estate for £180,000, and having realized £70,000 by the sale of portions of it, they draw from the residue an annual income, paid punctually, of over £10,000, a sum considerably in excess of the rental of the late Mr. Martin for the whole of the property. Up to the present time not a shilling of this large annual drain has ever found its way back from the coffers of the company to the country from which it has been extracted. The land remains in exactly the same state as when it came into their hands, undrained, unfenced, unimproved in any respect, although there are large districts on the reclamation and improvement of which money could be advantageously expended. The sole object of the directors seems to be, to get as much as possible from the property, and to spend as little on it in return as they can. This is not unnatural on the part of a joint stock trading association, such as the Law Life Insurance Company, and I fear it would be idle to expect them to act on more enlightened principles.

Since the Martin estate came into the hands of the company, they have gradually raised the rents, so that their land is now set at a high, if not an exorbitant rate. It may be inferred, however, that they are not rack-renting landlords, if it be true, as I am informed, that the rents have been doubled on some portions of the estate which they have sold. It is but justice to state this, and to add that the chief fault which I impute to these gentlemen is their want of spirit and enterprise in not employing the people in the improvement of the land and

the development of its great natural resources. In consequence of the representations of Mr. Robinson, the very efficient agent, to whose energetic and judicious management their present handsome income from this estate is attributable, the company have authorized him to spend £100 in the purchase of coals, which will be stored at Roundstone and distributed as he thinks most desirable; they have also commenced the construction of fences, with a view of giving employment to those of their tenantry likely to suffer from the loss of their crops or fuel; but this scheme has for the present proved abortive. The persons who were employed have "struck", on the ground that the prices fixed for their work, viz., 2s. 6d. a perch for stone walls, and 18d. a perch for turf fences of certain dimensions, are not sufficiently remunerative. They say that it requires four men to complete a perch of the latter description of fence in one day, which, at 18d., would give each man only 4½d. for his day's labour.

On the other hand, the truth of this statement is denied, for it is alleged that if the men worked properly, they could earn fair wages at the rates allowed, and their refusal to continue the construction of the fences is ascribed to an organized scheme to resist task work, a species of labour against which the soul of the Irish peasant revolts. I fear there is some truth in this view of the case; but, if not, it shows that up to the present distress does not press heavily on these people, otherwise they could not afford to reject the employment offered to them, even though the wages amounted to only 4½d. or 5d. a-day.

The company ought not to act in a niggardly spirit at such a time as the present, but, on the contrary, should

strain a point, and give liberal wages to all whom they employ, more particularly as the work in question is much required, and will be a vast improvement to their property. The want of proper fences throughout the entire of Connemara is a serious obstacle to advancement, and until this deficiency be supplied, it is hopeless to expect any progress on the part of the small farmers. At present the tenants on the various estates have their holdings very badly defined, and an effort is being made by the Law Life Insurance Company and other large proprietors to remedy this evil, by having the land properly "striped" and divided, which, however, cannot be effectually carried out without the erection of fences on a large scale—a duty that devolves on the landlord and not on the tenant-at-will.

In the present condition of this district it is impossible for any man to improve, because his neighbours' sheep will trespass on his land and destroy his green crops. Connemara, with very few exceptions, may be described as a monster common, over which sheep and cattle graze indiscriminately, thus giving rise to continual litigation and ill will amongst the people. The only way in which the mountain grazing ground is divided amongst the tenants is by being lock-spitted; and the occupation of the children is, to sit all day long at their respective lock-spits to prevent trespass on their ground by the sheep and cattle of their neighbours, and to take care that their own stock does not bring them into trouble by straying into the adjacent lands. Thus the young, being constantly engaged in this manner, are allowed to remain in ignorance, not only of book-learning, but of useful practical knowledge suited to their station in life. It is

a sad thing to see these quick-witted, intelligent children thus deprived of the benefits of education, and allowed to grow up in a state of ignorance, to which much of the backwardness of their fathers is attributable.

The magistrates at petty sessions would have nothing to do were it not for the cases of trespass, and assaults arising out of trespass, which are continually brought before them. It has generally been the practice to strain the law in such cases, and to fine for trespass where there was no legal offence; for the act of parliament states, that if there are not "sufficient fences" on the land of the complainant, his summons cannot be entertained. It would be advisable in future to administer the law strictly in all these cases, and dismiss every charge in which the person complaining of trespass does not show that he had erected sufficient fences. I believe that the adoption of this course by the magistrates would not only diminish litigation, but would force the necessity of having the land properly fenced upon the attention both of landlord and tenant.

There is as much work to be done here in the fencing and draining of the land as would employ all its labouring population for many years; but nearly all the landlords being absentees, they do not appear to take much interest in their properties, and year after year passes by without anything being done to develop the resources of the country and better the condition of the people. Mr. John C. Lyons, who purchased property in the neighbourhood of Roundstone and Clifden some years ago, is an exception to the other landed proprietors in that district. He expended a very large sum on his estate, in fencing, draining, and planting, and he is at

present giving remunerative wages to a large number of labourers. If his example were more generally followed, the distress which is apprehended in the coming spring would be much mitigated; but I confess I do not see any probability of employment being given on a sufficient scale by private individuals to meet the present emergency.

The question then arises, can any assistance be expected from the government? The habit of trusting to government aid is one of the worst features of the Irish character. It is destructive of that spirit of self-reliance and independence without which we cannot hope to see Ireland permanently prosperous. The people must be taught to have confidence in themselves, and if this lesson be thoroughly impressed upon them, it will be of incalculable service to the community at large. From what I know to be the general opinion on this subject, I do not think it probable that any assistance will be given by the government either in the shape of direct grants for the relief of the destitute, or by the establishment of a system of public works.

The opinions of some of our leading statesmen are: "Let the sick and infirm who are unable to work, and are in want of food, go to the workhouse; let the guardians of the several unions, who know the actual condition of the people, give outdoor relief to those who by a little temporary assistance may be kept from becoming permanent burdens on the ratepayers; let the landed proprietors give employment to the labourers in those districts with which they are connected; and let private charity be called in aid of the law, to mitigate and relieve destitution wherever it is found to be excessive: let all

these methods of relief be exhausted before you call on us to apply the public funds to such purposes".

Now, so far as I have been able to form an opinion, the workhouses are not likely to receive a large accession of paupers next spring. This, however, will be no criterion whereby to judge of the extent of the prevailing distress; for actual starvation alone will drive the people to the workhouses, and I do not apprehend that result in many cases, although the privations to be endured will be widely extended and most severe. What is most to be feared is the prevalence of disease resulting from a deficiency of food and a total want of fuel.

To avert this evil the greatest efforts should be made, and much will necessarily depend on the energy and judicious management of the local committees that have been formed to collect funds for the distribution of coals and food. But although the government should not be called on to establish a system of public works, as in former years, yet they may do much good by promoting and carrying out works of public utility, which are more immediately required for the accommodation of the public and the traffic of the country. Such are roads that may be necessary to open up localities now shut off from the main thoroughfares of the districts in which they lie, tramways presented for by the grand juries, and the improvement of exisiting harbours, or the construction of new harbours of refuge along the coast where they are needed. In the case of roads and tramways, the government might advance the money for their construction at a low rate of interest, and make it repayable by instalments at long intervals, thus causing it to fall lightly on the ratepayers.

Forster & Co Lith.

Salmon Weir Buttonakinch

[illegible]

There are several roads in Connemara which were commenced during the famine year, and left in an incomplete state, the most useful of which might now be finished if the government would advance the necessary funds. One of these roads, the completion of which would be a great public benefit, is a road leading from the Recess near Ballynahinch to Kylemore. This new line would be an immense boon to tourists, as it would shorten considerably the distance between two of the most attractive places in Connemara, and would prove highly serviceable to the inhabitants of the intermediate mountainous district, who are at present without proper means of communication with either of the localities referred to. If the government be disposed to facilitate such works, nothing can be more easy than to ascertain what are the works that are calculated to be of real use to the public.

With respect to the improvement of quays and harbours, there is no place where the necessity for such works is more apparent than along the coast of Connemara. The harbour of Clifden is exceedingly dangerous, and it is only when the wind is in a particular quarter that vessels can enter it with safety. The mouth of the harbour is almost closed by a reef of rocks, and similar obstructions to navigation exist along the coast from Roundstone, rendering the voyage always difficult and often extremely dangerous. For the last six weeks—from the beginning of November to the middle of December—vessels chartered with coals and other articles from Westport and Galway have been unable to make this harbour, so formidable are the perils with which the voyage is accompanied.

Clifden can never be made a safe harbour; but much could be effected with a comparatively small outlay, such as deepening the river, clearing away rocks in the harbour, and extending the present pier, which would be a great benefit to the town, and a matter of importance to the fishermen of the neighbourhood.

The government have the power of expending money on such works under an existing act, authorising the construction of fishing piers. Quays were built at Ballinakill and Bunowen under this act; but the latter, which is now in excellent order, is not of much advantage to fishermen, owing to its locality, and the former is open to the same objection. The work which above all others is most essential for the encouragement of the fishing along the coast, is the construction of a harbour of refuge at Cleggan, which is situated within a convenient distance of the finest fishing ground on the west coast of Ireland, where cod, haddock, turbot, soles, and other fish are to be caught in the greatest abundance, if the fishing could be carried on with safety and efficiency. Cleggan is a fine open bay with excellent anchorage, and was formerly much frequented by men-of-war; but whenever a north-westerly wind prevails, although it is partly sheltered by the island of Buffin, a tremendous sea rolls in, against which the little quay, built by Nimmo many years ago, affords no protection. In bad weather the boats have to run for Ballinakill, which is at a great distance from the fishing ground, and in winter the fishing cannot be profitably carried on from the loss of time thus occasioned.

The result of an experiment made in 1849, by the Rev. Mr. Darcy, of Clifden, and Captain Stoll, the com-

mander of the Coast Guards, will show how necessary for the development of the fishery is the construction of a secure harbour of refuge at Cleggan. These gentlemen were much interested in the condition of the people, and knowing the abundance of fish to be obtained on this coast, they endeavoured to introduce a proper method of taking them, hoping that, if the experiment proved a pecuniary success, the fishermen who now carry on their operations so irregularly, would be encouraged to pursue their occupation with greater steadiness and on a better system. They accordingly raised a subscription amongst their friends for this purpose, and purchased two excellent hookers, decked, and fitted out in the most complete and comfortable manner. They even provided the boats with compasses, and left nothing undone that was necessary to render them suitable in every respect for the business in which they were to be employed.

An experienced fisherman and his family were brought over from Aberdeen—the father being placed in charge of one, and his son in charge of the other boat, each of them having a crew of five men, selected from amongst the fishermen of the district. The men were supplied with food, lines, etc., and the enterprise had the advantage of being conducted under the constant personal supervision of Captain Stoll, who, through the medium of the Coast Guards, was enabled at all times to keep a watch over the movements of the men employed in this interesting experiment. The first boat was launched on the 1st of February, 1849. She was sent round to Cleggan, but a storm arose that very night; and were it not for the efforts of the Coast Guards, assisting the crew, she would have been dashed to pieces at the quay. As

it was, they succeeded in hauling her up on the beach; and so effectually did they do their work, that it was found necessary to wait until the spring tides to get her into the water.

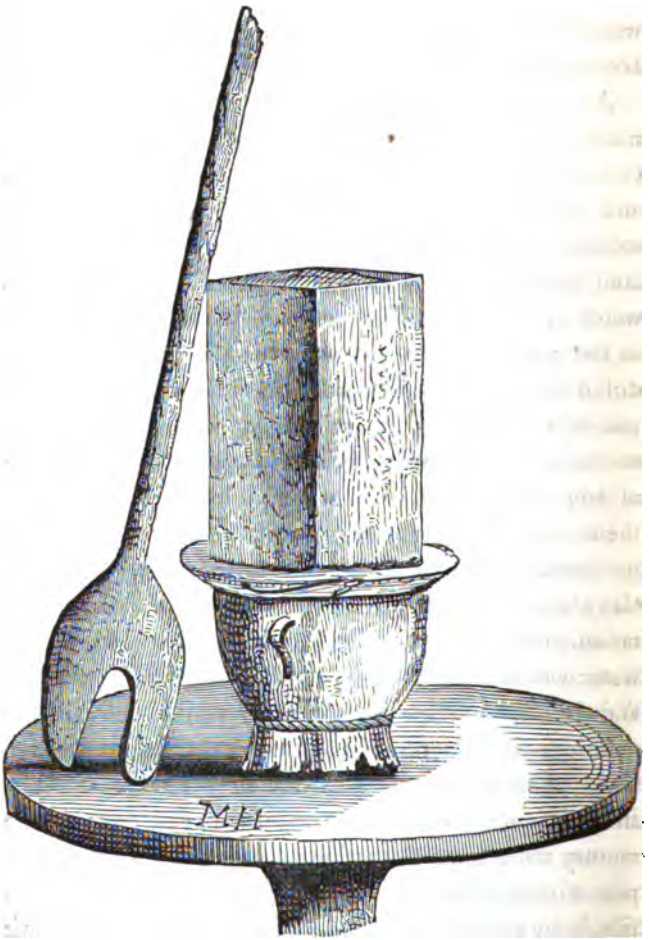
The other boat had to go to Ballinakill harbour; but so much time was lost in going from thence to the fishing-ground off Buffin Island, where the long lines could be used, that the fishing was carried on with an expenditure of time and labour enormously disproportioned to the result. However, in March and April large quantities of fish were taken. The cod and ling were well cured at Sellerney, and sent to the Dublin market, where they brought a good price. The speculation was found to pay very well, and the promoters were quite satisfied with the success of the experiment, expecting, however, that the fishermen would do better the next year, as they became more familiar with the system of fishing which was thus newly introduced amongst them. They were kept well at work during the summer, and everything was going on satisfactorily, when, in October, a gale set in from the north-west, and the boats, when lying under the so-called shelter of the quay, were dashed against the rocks and smashed to pieces before anything could be done to save them. This unfortunate occurrence caused the gentlemen who had made this laudable effort to develop the fishery on the Connemara coast, to abandon the attempt, as they felt that, until a refuge harbour was constructed near the fishing ground, so that the boats could reach it without loss of time, any movement to introduce a better system was fruitless.

Cleggan is admirably adapted for a harbour of this description. It is most conveniently situated, and the

expense of building a proper breakwater and pier would be trifling, compared with the great public benefit which those acquainted with the subject maintain would be effected by such a work. This is a measure of practical utility, affording a direct encouragement to industry, within the power of the government, and to carry out which is their bounden duty. I fear it would be hopeless to expect the construction of any works of this character in time to afford relief to the people during the present period of distress; but there can be no doubt that the providing of suitable piers and harbours for the accommodation of fishing craft is a work of national importance, and that the existence of such harbours would render the inhabitants of the Connemara coast, and of other places in Ireland, more prosperous, and would in a great measure alleviate the privations now occasioned by a deficient harvest.

Parts of Connemara are extremely interesting to the geologist, having, at various epochs of time, undergone many changes from the effects of aqueous and igneous action, causing earthquakes and deluges. The last of these convulsions probably sunk a large portion of the West of Ireland into the Atlantic, which fact is ascertained by the presence of bogs and vegetable production many miles under the sea. At some remote epoch a diluvial wave washed over the land, and gave to the country its present formation of lakes, deep bogs, and hills of conglomerate. In cutting through one of these hills, large pieces of oak have been found bearing the mark of a rude hatchet, also a quantity of nuts. The drawing on the next page represents a vase one foot high, four inches wide, hollowed from a solid piece of oak, and bound

with a hoop of hazle, most artistically joined. The vase, when found, was full of adipocere, and was discovered



with the wooden-pronged spade, and one-half of a stone hatchet, 11 feet under the bed of a small stream, beneath gravel, stone, and bog, while an excavation was being

made for the purpose of connecting a number of upper lakes with the lake Mawmeen and the sea. The spot where the articles were found was six feet under high water mark, so that when the detritus was dug out it became, and now is, a deep pool in the river.

Any supposition that the articles were buried by the hand of a man, is refuted by the fact that this stream (which flows between two hills of gravel and boulders, and over alluvial gravel and bog) must have been co-existent with the formation of the lake and adjoining land, there being no other possible outlet for the surplus water of the lake. The articles could not have sunk in the gravel and bog, the specific gravity of each being different, and the admixture of the gravel precluding the possibility of any of them sinking in it; nor was the stream or body of water able to carry down the detritus of bog, gravel, or boulders, which might have buried them, Mawmeen Lake itself being quite free from such, its bottom being composed of basaltic and micaceous clay-slate. The bog could not have grown over them, because if the peat and gravel be removed, the sea at high water would flow in, and make a lake eleven feet deep, and thus the articles would soon have perished, the fish and vermin consuming the adipocere, and the water rotting the timber, which when taken up, weighed like a stone; the state of preservation of the vase and adipose matter, must be attributed to the presence of a portion of peat mixed with gravel and stones, all simultaneously buried by this diluvial wave. The stone hatchet or hammer is indicative of an age long anterior to the race denominated Celtic. The stone of which it is composed is quite foreign to the locality; it is a sort of concrete,

like that found in a coal formation, and on examination will appear to have been broken in two; its edges are splintered as if shattered by blows. The site from whence these remarkable relics of antiquity were exhumed, is on the Doohulla fishery, in the barony of Ballinahinch. They are in the possession of Mr. John Knight Boswell, of Monkstown, county Dublin, who kindly furnished me with the above particulars.

Very remarkable effects may be observed within four miles of the site where the vase was found, namely, the mountain of Errisbeg, a recent trap and basaltic formation, which rises from a granite bed. A dike of a foot in width runs from the summit into the sea, apparently parting the mountain, and immense boulders of granite, thousands of tons in weight, are strewed on its side, its base, and in the sea. These enormous masses of granite must either have been rolled down from the mountain when the basalt and trap in a state of fusion burst the overlying granite, or have been conveyed there on icebergs. The first is the more probable solution. Close to this mountain, on the townland of Murvey, the granite formation unites with the clay slate, etc., and throughout the whole district the trap and basalt is found protruding.

Errisbeg, besides its claims upon the attention of the geologist, affords a wide field to the botanist, who there finds amongst its flora the Mediterranean heath. This mountain overhangs the village of Roundstone, once the abode of Nimmo, the pioneer of civilization, and also once the seat of industry, arising from the herring fishery, but now crumbling into ruins. The adjoining sea coast gives ample scope to the labours of the conchologist, who yearly makes his abode here, dredging for rare and

Forster & Co Lith.

*School House at Dochulla*

valuable specimens of shells. A short distance from the townland of Murvey, the property of Mr. John C. Lyons, to whom I have already referred, are the Doohulla fishery and lodge—the latter now converted into an hotel for the accommodation of anglers. The comparative prosperity of this portion of the country is in no small degree attributable to the enterprise of Mr. John Knight Boswell, whose capital and energy have converted a desert into a charming abode, and considerably improved the condition of the people. This gentleman not only made a river conducting the waters of upper lakes to the sea, but also stocked it by means of artificial propagation; and I believe he is the only person who has carried out such an undertaking in Ireland.

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## CHAPTER IX.

Cleggan district.—Wretchedness of the dwellings.—Sir Christopher Leighton's improvements.—Scarcity of turf.—Letter of *Morning Post*.

CLIFDEN, December 23rd.

IN describing one portion of the Connemara sea coast, I have described nearly all; for the nature of the soil, the appearance of the country, the character and habits of the people, are almost identical; the only points of variance being, that in some places the land may be more rocky, and in others more boggy, and that some of the inhabitants derive a portion of their subsistence from fishing, whilst others depend solely upon tillage and grazing.

The Sellerney or Cleggan district, extending from Aughrim Point to Ballinakill on the north of Clifden—a distance of about eight miles in a straight line, but

fully twenty miles if we follow the windings of the shore—is one of those whose inhabitants depend to a great extent for support on the produce of their fishing. Little hamlets or clusters of cabins of the most miserable kind are scattered at various places along the coast, and it would be impossible to convey by any written description an adequate idea of the appearance of wretchedness, destitution, and neglect which these hovels present. The walls are all made of stones, not cemented together, but placed loosely on the top of each other, and the interstices inside filled with clay or turf mould to keep out the wind, which, however, cannot fail to penetrate through so frail a barrier. The thatch is always rotten, and often broken, so as to admit the rain, which renders the clay floor muddy and slippery, while invariably the dung heap lies in front of the house, and frequently encroaches on the door step.

The inside of these cottages is in keeping with their external appearance. A bed of straw covered with a patched and tattered quilt, a ricketty table, a few stools, perhaps a rude dresser containing some articles of delf, and an iron pot for the cooking of the potatoes or the porridge, constitute the entire furniture of the ordinary Connemara peasant's house. The degrees of poverty do not appear to make any difference between the people in this respect, for the man who has six or eight acres, and has been able not only to live well according to his notions, but to save a little money, does not possess a better or neater cottage than his poorer neighbour who is always on the verge of starvation or the workhouse. The idea of neatness and cleanliness in their household arrangements does not seem ever to

enter into their minds; for the women being always working in the fields or at the sea shore, have not the time, even if they had the disposition, to do anything towards the improvement of their abodes; whilst their children, male and female, are kept constantly employed out of doors from the moment they are able to contribute anything to the support of the family.

In the Sellerney district, the fishing, on which the people depended so much, has proved this season very unproductive, in consequence of the unfavourable weather; and the potato crop has turned out as badly as in other parts of the country. The instances in which a large and sound crop has been obtained are rare, and on an average it may be safely estimated that one-half of the crop has been lost, and that after the month of February there will be very few potatoes left in this locality. The produce of the oats was not by any means so bad here as in other places, judging from what I have been told by intelligent and observant persons resident in the district, and also from my own personal observation. The haggards of those who cultivated oats were much better stocked than they would have been if there had been that general failure alleged by some persons. The crop was rather a light one, but not much below the average. The barley sown in this part of the country yielded a moderate return. Taking, then, every circumstance into consideration—the frugal and parsimonious habits of the people, the fact that, however poverty stricken the aspect of their hovels would lead one to suppose them to be, many of them have money saved, and also that up to the present they have been able to pay their rents with great regularity, I do not anticipate that for some months to come there

will be any very general distresss arising from want of food. There will always be exceptional cases, but it cannot be truthfully stated that at present there is any dearth of provisions in Connemara. I have no doubt, however, that from April—if not sooner—up to the month of August, there will be very severe pressure and much privation and suffering amongst the very small farmers, who have not been able during former years to put anything by to meet such an emergency as the present. In a couple of months these people will have no potatoes, and no means of purchasing meal, however low the price of that article may be.

If the owners of the soil could be brought to see their own interests, they would employ their tenants in the making of proper fences, and in carrying out those drainage works which are everywhere so necessary; and if this were done to any considerable extent, no reasonable apprehension could be entertained of the existence of any distress which the operation of the poor law system, aided by private benevolence, would not be perfectly adequate to meet. There can be no doubt that, if the landlords of Connemara expended money judiciously on their properties, they would have no reason, in a pecuniary point of view, to regret having done so, as the letting value of the land might be greatly increased by a comparatively small outlay in the carrying out of works which could be easily and cheaply effected. A gentleman who resides in another part of the county told me that, during the famine years he employed every labouring man in his immediate neighbourhood, both from the desire to benefit his property, and to afford the people a means of earning their bread. The improve-

ments he carried out in fencing, draining, planting, etc., were so extensive, and his weekly labour-bill so large, that many of his friends remonstrated with him on his imprudence, and predicted his ruin. How different was the result! "I never", said my informant, "spent money so profitably, for the expenses which I then incurred have added largely to my income". I have seen this gentleman's estate, and have been able to judge of the extraordinary transformation which his taste and enterprise have effected in the aspect of the place, by comparing his thriving plantations, fine pastures, and well-tilled fields, with the swampy land and barren mountains immediately adjoining his property, which have been left by their owners in all their original wildness.

The field for improvement in Connemara is a wide one, and here and there we come upon exquisite little spots, which show what might be done on a larger scale by the judicious expenditure of capital. In the Sellerney district, of which I am now speaking, the landlord who has done most to advance the condition of his tenantry is Sir Christopher Leighton. This gentleman has no residence here, but he has shown a laudable desire to introduce better habits amongst the tenantry on his estate. He has encouraged them to fence their holdings, to make gates, and to effect other improvements, They have shown themselves capable of profiting by his advice, and are making considerable progress, compared with the tenants on other properties where no encouragement or facilities for bettering their condition are given. Their land is much better cultivated, their cottages neater, and the rents not being too high, they are able to live very well The only persons over whom Sir Christopher

*Connemara Pedlar.*

exercise no influence are some tenants who hold under ancient leases, and they pursue the old slovenly system in which they were brought up. Example is absolutely necessary to rouse these people from their apathy and stimulate them to exertion. The tenants from year to year take advantage of the opportunities afforded them by a landlord who gives them encouragement, because they are anxious to secure his favour. The tenantry who have leases, being independent of the landlord, go on in the old lazy, thriftless fashion, and will continue to do so until they see their neighbours rising above them, and reaping the fruits of industry directed by skill and experience. Progress must be slow amongst a people who have been so utterly neglected; and so long as the miserable two and three acre farms are allowed to exist, agriculture will be badly carried on, and the small holders will always be liable to suffer great distress whenever the country is afflicted with a bad harvest.

In the Sellerney district, as in the neighbourhood of Clifden, Manninmore, Bunowen, and every other place in which I have been, the inhabitants have been reduced to great distress from the want of turf. They might have saved an abundance of it had they taken advantage of the fine weather in April and May; but there is not one man in a hundred throughout the whole of the west of Ireland, who has had the forethought or the wisdom to do so. According to the custom of the country, turf-cutting is always deferred until St. John's Day; and as the rain has been falling continuously from the middle of June nearly up to the present time, it is obvious that the turf cut in the beginning of June has had no chance of drying. The people are endeavouring to burn

the wet turf, together with heath, brambles, furze, and straw; but they are not able to do much good in this way. I have seen turf purchased at double the ordinary price, which was almost useless, and could not be made available unless burned with coals, for every sod was thoroughly saturated with moisture, and resembled a wet sponge more than anything else.

Connemara, like the coast of Clare, suffers from the want of turf the more intensely because of the absence of trees. The country is perfectly bare of wood, except the small plantations that surround a few houses in sheltered places; and this is the more extraordinary when we find, from the abundance of fir trees in the bogs, that the whole of the land must at one time have been a vast forest.

The Clifden Relief Committee are awaiting a favourable change in the weather to obtain a cargo of coals for the supply of the town and its neighbourhood. Their funds must, however, be greatly increased by subscriptions from the public at large, before they can expect to deal effectually with the immense amount of distress occasioned by the unprecedented scarcity of fuel.

I have read a letter in the London *Morning Post*, in which the writer notices my correspondence from the west of Ireland as being likely to do some good, but also likely to mislead the half-educated and selfish parish politicians, who lay the blame on the clouds of the Atlantic, or anything rather than the real cause. I hope nothing I have written is calculated to produce that effect. The object of my mission is to ascertain the amount and intensity of the distress occasioned by what is acknowledged on all hands to be a deficient harvest. The causes of this distress, and the means whereby such results are

to be averted in future, are not subjects which I am called on to investigate very deeply. Nevertheless, I have not hesitated to attribute much of the calamities that have befallen the farmers of the west this year to their own bad methods of cultivation, and to the want of drainage which I perceived in every part of the country through which I passed.

I stated in one of my earlier letters, that Mr. Allan Pollok, of Lismany, Ballinasloe, has succeeded in growing good crops, notwithstanding the extraordinary wetness of the season, because his land was thoroughly drained and skilfully cultivated; and I have frequently mentioned instances in which earlier and better culture has been rewarded with success when failure was the general rule, arising from ignorance of the principles and practice of scientific agriculture. I have therefore shown no disposition to slur over the defects which are but too observable in the cultivation of the soil throughout the west of Ireland.

Dealing with matters as I found them, I attributed the admittedly bad crops of the present year to the inclemency of the season; but I did not suggest that, if the land were properly drained and better cultivated (as it would have been if it formed a portion of England or Scotland), the result would have been so unfavourable as it has unfortunately proved. Considering the present state of Irish agriculture, to what other cause can we attribute the total loss of the turf, the aggravation of the potato blight, and the deterioration of the cereal crops, than to the "clouds of the Atlantic" obstructing the vivifying influence of the sun, chilling the atmosphere, and deluging the land with rain?

It is true, more forethought and less indolence of thought and action on the part of the people might have diminished the intensity of the evil; but so long as the present minute subdivision of land prevails in Ireland, no human ingenuity or labour can avert from the poorer classes a great amount of privation consequent on the recurrence of such a spring and summer as we have had. I agree with the correspondent of the *Morning Post* in some of his assertions, the force of which I fully recognize, whilst I dissent from others. Whether seaweed be good for land is an open question, but where there is nothing else, it must still be resorted to. It promotes the growth of the first crop when judiciously applied, but it is said that it makes the land thin and poor—in fact, eats away the soil. However, the people living along the coast of Connemara and Clare, have no other manure. Seaweed, however objectionable in some respects, is within their reach, whilst they have no means of procuring farm-yard and artificial manures. There cannot be any doubt that seaweed is bad for potatoes; it makes them wet and ill-tasted. The people of Connemara, as already stated, deferred the planting of their potatoes until a later period than usual, in consequence of the stormy weather, which prevented them from cutting the seaweed on the rocks. I have been told by persons who have had some experience on this subject, that it was not necessary to defer the planting until the coming in of the seaweed. They should have planted them in ridges without it, not deeply covered, and when they obtained the seaweed, have spread it over the ridges, and covered it up at the second earthing or moulding, when the plant was making its first appearance through

the ground. I understand this system has been practised with success in Mourne, in the county of Down; and by adopting it an additional month or six weeks will be gained for collecting and applying the manure.

The correspondent of the *Morning Post* speaks of bogwood as a substitute for turf. It is used in that way at present throughout every part of the country I have visited, but it is exceedingly scarce and dear. Perhaps the writer of the letter to which I have referred is not aware of the labour and difficulty of procuring this article, sunk six or seven feet below the surface of the wet bog, which must be cleared away so as to allow a sufficient space around the block to admit the man with his hatchet (made purposely for this work) to chip it away, for otherwise it could not be removed out of its bed without an enormous expenditure of labour.

Formerly bogdeal was used for lighting fires, assisting wet turf to burn, or giving light; and in many parts of Ireland the small farmers and poorer classes depend altogether on bogwood for giving light to the household during the long winter evenings, and the price it brings in towns for lighting fires is far above that of coals imported into Dublin. The wood which the correspondent of the *Post* saw at Kilkee, was, in all probability, found on the bog after the peat had been stripped off it by the cutting out of the turf; and nothing more was necessary than to chip it up and dry it. Many years ago in the north of Ireland, the chipping of fir blocks in the bogs was quite a profession, requiring much skill and dexterity; so much so, that some individuals could earn 2s. and 2s. 6d. per day at this work, whilst others equally strong, but not so skilful, could not earn 6d. a day.

Lough Corrib, Connemara.

## CHAPTER X.

I question whether, when the writer of that letter was in Kilkee, if he wanted to buy the bogwood he saw about the streets and houses, he would have found it so cheap as he appears to suppose. The people had it exposed to dry to be treasured up for the winter evenings' light, or to dispose of it for lighting fires in the neighbouring towns. Just at this moment it is very precious in the west of Ireland, and there are many people living in the immediate vicinity of the bogs who are making a livelihood by raising and selling it throughout the country.

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## CHAPTER X.

Climate of Connemara.—Scenery.—The Twelve Pins.—Letterfrack.—Killery Harbour.—Maam.—Joyce's Country.—A Connemara farmer.—Distress of the small holders.—Oughterard.

MAAM, December 26th.

HAVING fully reported the present state of the districts immediately adjoining Clifden, I proceeded from that town through Letterfrack, Kylemore, and Leenane, passing along the shore of Killery Bay to Maam, which is situate at the head of Lough Corrib, and on the border of the territory known as the Joyce Country. This route, which is usually followed by tourists, brings the traveller into the midst of the wildest and most picturesque scenery of this wonderful region of mountain, moor, and lake.

In expatiating on the delights of driving on a bright autumn evening among the mountains and lakes of

Connemara, Miss Martineau says that the air is like "breathing champagne or breathing cream", having the best qualities of the sea and land breeze at once. I can fully believe in the truthfulness of the eulogy thus enthusiastically expressed; for although my visit was made at a season when travelling, except by railway, is generally accompanied by much hardship and discomfort, I found the atmosphere of Connemara warm and agreeable, compared to that of other places in Ireland, and experienced but little inconvenience, save that arising from the too copious fall of rain, with which this locality, in common with the entire of the western coast, has been visited during the latter half of the present year. We have had some sharp and fierce hail-storms within the last three weeks, but these were exceptions to the usual mildness of the climate which prevails in this portion of the country.

From Clifden to Letterfrack we pass through a district of mountain and bog, with the sea ever in view, giving variety and animation to scenes that would otherwise present too sterile and desolate an appearance. After proceeding thus for several miles, the road suddenly sweeps round the base of a hill, and a landscape of surpassing beauty bursts like magic on the sight. To the east of the spectator the bronzed moorland extends as far as the eye can reach; to the west is Ballinakill Bay, bounded by a chain of hills, and looking like an inland lake, whilst immediately in front lies a broad and lovely valley, with green fields scattered here and there, relieving and softening, without detracting from, the natural wildness of the scene; and above all towers the magnificent range of mountains popularly known as the

F. [illegible] & Co. Lith.

*The twelve Pins from Lough Ower, Connemara.*

Twelve Pins, unrivalled in variety of outline and striking effect. I was peculiarly fortunate in the day on which I viewed this remarkable scene. The atmosphere was mild and balmy, the sea was smooth as glass, and reflected the deep blue of the sky above, some light fleecy clouds floated lazily in the air, throwing their shadows on the lofty peaks and rugged sides of the Twelve Pins, and the summits of the northern hills were covered with snow. In short, everything was present that was requisite to constitute a perfect picture; and so exquisitely did every feature harmonize, that the absence of trees, which in general contribute so greatly to the charm of landscape scenery, was not perceptible.

A mile or two further on brings us to one of the gems of Connemara—the pretty little village of Letterfrack, with its handsome houses and neat cottages, forming a perfect oasis in the surrounding waste of mountain and of moor. Letterfrack is admirably situated near Ballinakill Harbour, with high hills encompassing it on almost every side; but its great attraction is that which it derives from the taste and industry of man. Some years ago several members of the Society of Friends settled here on a spot which was previously a solitude, and by their energy they have transformed the red bogs and bare rocks, which are the natural features of the place, into a scene of cultivated beauty, resembling a model English village, in the order, neatness, and cleanliness which are everywhere apparent. One gentleman, Mr. Butler, whose house is situated at a short distance from the village, has accomplished a great deal, and expended a large sum in fencing, draining, and planting.

Whilst I admire the enterprise and taste which have

made Letterfrack what it is, I am bound to say that I believe the outlay has not proved remunerative; the expense incurred in thoroughly reclaiming the bogs has been so great, that, in a pecuniary point of view, a serious loss has been unquestionably sustained. This, however, is no just cause of discouragement in the work of reclamation and improvement which remains to be effected throughout Connemara. Without going so expensively to work as the founders of Letterfrack have done, the landowners of this district, profiting by the example which has been set them, might largely increase the value of their property by a judicious outlay of capital on certain obvious improvements which could be easily carried out. About three miles from Letterfrack we enter the Pass of Kylemore, resembling in some measure the Gap of Dunloe, and drive along the margin of the lake—a fine sheet of water, embosomed amongst lofty hills, whose sides are in some places thickly clothed with the natural wood, showing that they might be planted with success. The lake abounds with salmon and white trout; and in the summer season Mr. Duncan's hotel, built within a few yards of the water's edge, is a favourite resort of anglers, who rarely fail to carry away with them pleasing recollections of excellent sport and of some agreeable hours spent in the society of their genial and accomplished host.

After leaving the hotel, a drive of a few minutes brings us to a scene which presents to our view nothing but the brown moor sprinkled with tufts of heath, two or three small lakes, and the chain of gloomy mountains that encompasses the whole, and seems to shut it off completely from the outer world. As we proceed we catch a glimpse

of a substantial lodge built on a rock projecting into a large sized lake; and this is the romantic retreat where one of our distinguished surgeons, antiquaries, and men of letters, Dr. Wilde, snatches a brief interval of rest from the engrossing labours of his profession.

Shortly after losing sight of Dr. Wilde's lodge, Killery Harbour, with its grand mountain range, breaks upon the sight. The scenery here is sublime from its solitude and vastness. The bay runs fully ten miles inland, and seems in many places to be scarcely half a mile wide; the mountains, which are the highest in the west of Ireland, spring almost precipitously from the water's edge; no human habitation is visible, and on the occasion of my last visit to this locality, the only indications of life for some time perceptible, were the cormorants winging their swift flight along the surface of the sea, or darting beneath it in pursuit of their prey. As I progressed a little further, I saw a revenue steamboat at anchor in the bay, on the look out for smugglers, and afterwards observed several fishing boats which had come from Leenane in pursuit of the herrings for which these waters are celebrated. Leenane is a miserable looking village, situated near the northern extremity of Killery Harbour at the point where the road branches off on the right to Maam and on the left to Westport. Before reaching Leenane, we leave Connemara behind, and enter into the region known as Joyce Country.

Inglis, in his journey through Ireland, says: "The scenery of Maam, at the head of Lough Corrib, is fine—very fine. If a lake filled the hollow of the mountains, Killarney might tremble for its supremacy, for the outline of the mountain range surpasses in picturesque form

any of the ranges that bound the Lakes of Killarney". This praise is by no means exaggerated. I reached Maam late at night, so that when I arose next morning, and stepped out of the little hotel, built at the base of a high hill, and within a short distance of Lough Corrib, the scene burst upon me quite unexpectedly, and struck me as one of the grandest that I had ever witnessed. The hotel was originally built by the celebrated Nimmo as a fishing lodge. Immediately in front of it, a neat bridge spans the river that flows into the lake, and from this bridge an excellent road runs directly through the heart of the mountains to the Recess and Ballinahinch. There are only two or three houses visible from the hotel, and the plain, which is set in so magnificent a framework of hills, consists of a vast expanse of unreclaimed bog, having a gradual inclination towards the lake, so as to afford facilities for draining at a cost that would prove remunerative. The hotel has but one sitting-room, and is utterly inadequate for the accommodation of the crowds of tourists who visit it in the summer season. The proprietor of it, however, has no lease, and, of course, will not expend money on improvements without having some security that he will be permitted to enjoy them; and it is rumoured that Lord Leitrim, the owner of the soil, intends converting the building into a fishing lodge or summer residence for his own use.

On a small island in the lake, at the distance of about a mile and a half from the hotel, are the picturesque ruins of the Hen's Castle, which, some centuries ago, was one of the chief places of strength in Connaught. When destroyed during Cromwell's protectorate, it was in the possession of the O'Flahertys. It derives its name from

[illegible] Nina [illegible] lake, and from [illegible] through the [illegible] and Ballinrahin [illegible] lake from the [illegible] of our chained [illegible] the lake, so [illegible] then would [illegible] one sitting-room, [illegible] dation of the [illegible] The [illegible] of course [illegible] without having [illegible] enjoyment [illegible] the owner of [illegible] fishing [illegible] [illegible] distance of [illegible] [illegible] pictures [illegible] [illegible] centuries ago [illegible] [illegible] Wheel [illegible] it was in the [illegible] It derives its [illegible]

Pl. 1.

Ein Felsenthal in Sicilien. — Gemälde von Ph. Otto Runge.

a curious legend, that it was built in one night by a hen and her chickens.

I have ventured to dwell on the physical features of the country through which I passed on my way from Clifden to Leenane, because the greater portion of it is altogether without inhabitants. Shortly after leaving Clifden the miserable hovels become fewer and fewer, until they completely disappear; and the same observation is applicable to the district lying between Letterfrack and Leenane, the houses that one meets with belonging to gentlemen who have recently settled there, and not to the farmers or peasantry of the country. Indeed, with the exception of a few small villages situate far back in the recesses of the mountain valleys, the interior of Connemara is little better than a desert waste. From Leenane to Maam, a distance of eight miles, the country is more thickly inhabited. On a rough estimate there are about 400 families living in this district, which, at an average of five each, would give a population of 2,000 persons. There are no mere cottiers or labouring men living here; all are holders of land, some to a large and others to a very small extent. The latter of course greatly predominate, and include a considerable number whose yearly rent does not exceed five or six pounds. There are some half-dozen or so paying from £150 to £200 a-year. These are all large grazing farmers, and in consequence of the high prices of stock at present and for some time past, they are in a very prosperous condition, and many of them are wealthy men. I saw one old man reputed to be worth several thousand pounds, trotting home on his stout Connemara pony from one of his

farms near Clifden, to which he had been paying his regular visit of inspection. He wore the ordinary frieze coat, and his appearance was in no respect different from that of a small farmer of the humblest class, although he is the owner of several farms, including large tracts of mountain pasturage on which he rears numerous herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. He owes his success to his own active industry, sagacity, and knowledge of business, there being no more competent judge of stock in the country, and no one who knows better the exact time when to buy and when to sell. Notwithstanding his large means and the comfortable position he has always occupied, this shrewd and clever old gentleman does not speak English, and rather prides himself on his ignorance of the language of the Sassenach. A short time ago some hotly-disputed question arose at a local board of which he is a member, and when the votes came to be taken, it was insisted, with much show of reason, that he was not entitled to vote inasmuch as he did not understand the language in which the discussion had been carried on. It was decided, however, that his vote should be taken, the question at issue having been explained to him in Irish; and Paddy (this is his real Christian name, his patronymic is that of one of the most illustrious of Irish chieftains), could only signify the side which he wished to espouse by pointing to the chairman, and saying: "I 'll go with hur". The man to whom I refer is, perhaps, the richest farmer in the whole of Connemara and Joyce's Country, but there are others who are very well off, such as the sons of old John Joyce, lately deceased, who was celebrated for his

rea[illegible] not un[illegible] been ca[illegible] should [illegible] plained [illegible] Christian [illegible] most illus[illegible] the side wl[illegible] chairman, a[illegible] whom I [illegible] whole of [illegible] other [illegible] I [illegible] deceased, who [illegible]

Bison at Lake

gigantic size and strength, and the family of the Kings, all intelligent and industrious men, knowing not only how to make money, but how to keep it.

The class below these—namely, the farmers paying from £25 to £50 a-year for their holdings, include but few persons who have not accumulated sufficient means to enable them to meet, without difficulty, any losses they may have sustained by the failure of their potato crop. The small holders here, as elsewhere, are the persons by whom the pressure will be most severely felt. They depend almost entirely on the potato for food, and, in ordinary years, would have enough of money left after the payment of the rent to purchase meal or other provisions for the month or six weeks previous to the coming in of the new crop. The potato is cultivated here solely for home use. Scarcely any corn is grown; and the small farmer generally pays his rent with the sum realized by the sale of a few sheep, a pig, a foal, a calf, or a two-year old beast. Some of them have two or three milch cows, sufficient to keep the family in milk and to make a little butter; many also possess one of those hardy little horses, the Connemara pony, which need but little care, and will thrive on the coarsest pasturage.

Comparing the return of the potato crop with that of former years, there is a deficiency of over one-third in this district, and the remainder is of inferior quality, and can only be used by mashing the potatoes with cabbage or other vegetables, and making colcannon. The small farmers who have suffered so severe a loss by the failure of their staple food will have to commence purchasing meal before the time calculated on in ordinary seasons,

and many of them will not have the means to do this except by selling their stock at a great sacrifice, which is always of a poor description even in summer, and of course the condition of their cattle in winter is much lower and their value necessarily diminished. Besides, they will find it difficult to dispose of their stock at all; inasmuch as most of the extensive farmers are already fully supplied, and are not likely to overstock themselves.

The pinch will begin to be felt in March or April, after which time much distress and privation may be anticipated amongst the class of whom I now speak. That potatoes in the neighbourhood of Leenane are not nearly exhausted yet, may be inferred from the fact, that up to the present time very few persons have purchased any meal at the store kept by Dr. Foreman, the proprietor of the neat little hotel there. The price of potatoes in the market is also a good criterion of their scarcity or otherwise; and the prices just now are not very high, viz., 4½d. per stone of 14lbs. in Clifden, 4½d. and 5d. in Oughterard, 5d. in Cong, and 4½d. in Westport—the two latter places being in the county of Mayo. Indian meal can now be had for 9s. or 10s. per cwt.; and as long as the price of this article remains at its present rate, I cannot look forward to any very general or intense distress amongst the inhabitants. A war with America, so much to be deplored on every account, would be most disastrous to these people, as it would probably have the effect of doubling or largely increasing the price of Indian meal.

Under the most favourable circumstances, the poorer class of farmers, who, I trust, will be able to struggle through the year, will have their resources so much

exhausted that another bad season must ruin them outright; but the buoyant spirit and recuperative power of the Irish race is so great, that if we are blessed with a favourable harvest next year, they will recover from their present state of depression with marvellous rapidity, and the country will resume that career of prosperity to which the last two seasons have given a temporary check.

With respect to fuel, there is no turf saved, and none within reasonable distance to be purchased. Everywhere, within a few minutes' walk of every cottage, abundance of turf could have been obtained, if the people had cut and secured it before June, but afterwards the removal of it from the bogs became impossible. At Leenane I entered a cottage where a good turf fire burned upon the hearth—the only really good fire that I had seen in any similar habitation during my tour through the west. One of the women who sat warming themselves at the cheerful glow, said rather querulously, in reply to my questions, that "the Joyces had enough of turf to supply the parish"; and it was strongly suspected that she had laid their store under contribution to supply her wants. The Joyces are the family that I have mentioned above, and like prudent men as they are, they not only got home their turf early in the season, but had a reserve from the previous year. This, however, is an exceptional case. The mass of the people have no turf at all, and the women and children are at present constantly employed in collecting heather, brambles, rushes, coarse grass, and anything they can procure to cook their food.

Having been informed when at Maam that distress in

Oughterard had become very intense, and that a woman had actually died there from destitution, I determined to pay a brief visit to that place for the purpose of ascertaining the facts. I accordingly proceeded to Cong, and crossed Lough Corrib in a turf boat—the distance from Cong to Oughterard by water being about ten miles, whilst by the road it is nearly forty. Almost the first thing the careless boatmen did was to run the boat against a rock, and during the remainder of the passage, which was rough and disagreeable, as heavy showers accompanied by strong gusts of wind came down frequently from the mountains at the head of the lake, they kept continually assuring me that only for the "wakeness" of the boat, which had seen much service and stood badly in need of repairs, they would shake out the reefs and take me across in an incredibly short space of time. However, we arrived safely at Oughterard, and I commenced making inquiries as to the state of matters in that district, and soon found that the rumours which I had heard were much exaggerated.

The population of Oughterard is about five hundred, and includes a large proportion of very poor labouring men, who are suffering from the want of fuel at present, and apprehend a scarcity of food in the course of a month or two. There was no foundation, however, for the reported death from the effects of deficient nutriment and warmth. A coroner's inquest was held upon a woman who had died rather suddenly; but it was clearly proved that her death was caused by disease in the ordinary course of nature. She was a professional beggar, who could have obtained relief in the workhouse if she had applied for it, and she was not altogether

Forster & Co Ldn.

*The Passage from Cong to Cughlennaght*

without the means of procuring food, for some pence were found in her pocket.

There can be no doubt that in the mountain district of Lettermore, Glantrasna, and towards Rossmuck, where there are little villages of fifteen or twenty houses each, the people feel intensely the want of fuel; and if the coming season should prove a wet one, there will be extreme distress in all these places. Coals might be sent from Galway to Camus Bay, which would bring relief within six, four, and three miles of the localities to which I allude. In the village of Oughterard and its neighbourhood a few gentlemen, including Mr. G. F. O'Flaherty, J.P., and Mr. Martin, J.P., are giving employment with a view to help the poor; and a relief committee has been formed, who have already distributed a considerable quantity of coals at 1s. per cwt., and some meal at 1s. per stone—in both cases much under the cost price. There is a large growth of hazel and brushwood on the property of Mr. Martin, who allows the people to carry it away for firing. I may mention that a railway has been projected from Galway to Oughterard, and the residents are, of course, most anxious to have it carried out. The Law Life Insurance Company has been asked to subscribe to the undertaking, because the line would pass through and benefit their property; but the directors here refused to encourage the project, believing that it could not pay under any circumstances. This refusal, which appears to me to be perfectly justifiable, has increased the dislike with which the company is regarded, and was probably the immediate cause of a series of denunciatory resolutions, which were passed respecting that body at the recent road sessions at Oughterard.

## CHAPTER XI.

**Tuam.—Its Suburbs.—Poverty and misery of the inhabitants.—The Fuel Fund.—The two Committees.—Village of Carrowpeter.—Condition of the people of Headford.—The Quarter-acre clause.—The Rev. Peter Conway.**

TUAM, January 4, 1862.

THIS town, the second largest in the county Galway, contains a population numbering close upon 4,600 persons, and derives its importance from its central position with respect to the counties of Galway, Mayo, and Roscommon. Hitherto it may be said to have been the key to the county of Mayo, the traffic from the south and east of Ireland to the north-west of Connaught having always passed through it, as offering the shortest and most convenient route. The line of railway from Athlone to Roscommon, and from thence by Castlerea, Ballyhaunis, and Claremorris, to Castlebar and Westport, will necessarily, when completed, produce a considerable change in this respect; but Tuam will always retain, by virtue of its geographical position, a prominent place amongst the towns in the West of Ireland. The great annual three-day fair, held here in October, is second only to that of Ballinasloe, and affords the stockmasters and graziers of Mayo, Galway, and Roscommon, a more central and convenient market for the sale and purchase of stock than they can obtain elsewhere. Tuam is also a corporate town, governed by town commissioners; and it is honoured by the residence of two well known prelates, the Right Rev. Lord Plunket, Bishop of Tuam, and the Roman Catholic Archbishop, the

Most Rev. Dr. MacHale. Although a good business town, the houses, generally speaking, present rather a shabby appearance. To my eye a want of neatness and cleanliness was apparent in many directions; though, at the same time, much improvement has been effected within the last five or six years. Footpaths have been made, flagways laid down, many neat houses erected by Lord Plunket, and the town has been recently lighted with gas.

In an architectural and artistic point of view, the Roman Catholic cathedral, a really handsome Gothic structure, is the only building in Tuam which possesses the slightest merit, and it reflects much credit on those by whom it was erected. The Protestant cathedral of St. Mary's is a small unattractive building, but through the zealous exertions of the vicar, the Rev. Charles Seymour, it is about to be replaced by a beautiful new church, designed by Sir Thomas Deane and Son, the estimated cost of which will be £10,000; of which over £3,000 has been already obtained, including a grant of £2,000 from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of Ireland, and donations of £500 from the Bishop, £100 from His Grace the Lord Primate, and £100 from the Vicar of Tuam. It is proposed to raise the remaining £7,000 by a general public subscription.

An interesting feature in the present church is the beautiful porch and door-way by which the building is now entered. Dr. Petrie, in his work on the Round Towers of Ireland, remarks that the arch which forms this door-way is, perhaps, "the most magnificent specimen of its kind remaining in Ireland". It has been ascertained by means of an inscription upon an ancient

Irish cross, that this porch and door-way once formed the chancel and chancel-arch of a church built in the year 1130; and in the design of the new cathedral, it has been made an essential point to preserve in all its remaining entirety, this most interesting antiquarian and ecclesiastical relic.

Writing to the architect on this subject, Dr. Petrie says: "You appear to me to have accomplished this (the preservation of the chancel of the ancient church) with the greatest judgment, in the proposed mode of incorporation with the new structure. The destruction, or even the partial preservation, or the want of judgment in the mode of preservation, of such an interesting, and, as I may truly say, unique historical relic of ancient Irish architectural art, would give deep pain to all existing cultivated and patriotic minds, and would surely be regarded by future generations as a barbarism disgraceful to our times. Nor, in my opinion, would the application of such an epithet be undeserved; for, however truly our predecessors might have pleaded ignorance as an excuse for similar Vandalic acts, we can offer no such excuse. For we know the history of this interesting remain—that its highly ornamental arch, which not many years since was believed to be a mere doorway, was truly the *arcus triumphalis*, or triumphal arch, which led into the chancel of a church erected at a period when Ireland was generally supposed to have been ignorant of the finer arts of civilization, known to and practised by its neighbouring nations; that this church was beyond doubt a structure of the early part of the twelfth century, and erected by Turlogh O'Conor, the last but one of the native monarchs of Ireland—a

vigorous and able prince, who was distinguished eminently for his munificent patronage of the fine arts, as shown by the beautiful processional cross of Tuam, now preserved in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, as well as by the great stone cross of Tuam, and this remaining fragment of this beautiful church. And yet further we know that the great feature of this remaining fragment—its chancel arch—though it exhibits in a general way the characteristics of the Romanesque or Anglo-Norman style, its ornamentation is essentially native, or that designated by antiquaries by the term *Opus Hibernicum*, and I know of no other architectural specimen of that style of ornamentation now remaining in Ireland". The building of the new cathedral, which is designed in the earliest style of our Gothic or pointed architecture, will probably be commenced in February, and a good deal of employment will thus be afforded to the people at a time when it will be much needed.

Tuam is remarkable for the extent of its suburbs, which are larger in proportion than those of any other place that I have visited; and I regret to say that much poverty exists among the people who inhabit them. Rows of mud cabins extend in various directions, some to a distance of fully one mile from the town, and the aspect which they present is miserable in the extreme. Occasionally we meet with one that has a good thatch, whitewashed walls, and decent windows, contrasting vividly with the squalor, dirt, and discomfort of the adjoining hovels; but these exceptional cases are very few. The mass—I may say the whole of the cottages constituting the extensive suburbs of Tuam—are neither

water-tight nor air-tight, and are unfit for the habitation of human beings, more especially in a season of severity like the present. The back lanes and streets within the town are occupied by artizans and labourers of the poorest class; the houses are of the most inferior description, and in many of them two or three families are congregated together, where they "suffer in foulest rags each dire disease", and drain the bitter cup of poverty to its dregs.

Several instances have been mentioned to me of persons who have not attended divine worship for weeks, or crossed the threshold of their homes, except at night, in consequence of having been obliged to pawn their clothes in order to procure food. I visited one poor hut, in company with an active member of one of the committees which have been formed here for the purpose of providing fuel for the people at a reduced price. In this place there were but two small rooms occupied by four families. In the outer one a shoemaker was working at his trade. I noticed that his dress was peculiar, and not such as would usually be worn by a person in his class of life. The explanation given was, that this man had been almost naked, having had nothing to cover him but an old wrapper of some kind, until he was supplied with several articles of cast-off clothing by the charity of the gentleman who accompanied me. The other occupants of the rooms were women and children, and their neglected, ragged, dirty appearance denoted a condition of much wretchedness. With reference to two of these women, it is right to say that they owed some of their misery to their own improvidence, having squandered the allowance granted to them by a relative who is in

comfortable circumstances and resides in a distant part of the country.

Other instances of destitution which came under my observation were obviously cases for the workhouse, such as widows with no ostensible means of obtaining a livelihood. But there are numerous persons of a different class, able-bodied men, who with their families would have been obliged to resort to that last refuge for the destitute, but for the assistance afforded them by the relief committee, which has now been in active operation for a period of five weeks. I refer to the "fuel fund", which was established at a public meeting held in this town, when the distress arising from the want of fuel became so urgent as to call for immediate action on the part of the wealthier classes of the community, with a view to alleviate the condition of the poor, who are suffering under this terrible privation. The committee then constituted consists of Mr. Charles Blake, chairman of the town commissioners; Mr. John F. Browne, J.P.; Mr. Thomas Higgins; the three Roman Catholic clergymen of the parish; and several of the principal shopkeepers of the town; who distribute coals at reduced rates to all persons who are deserving objects of such charity. The town is divided into seven districts for this purpose; and coals are distributed once a week to the inhabitants of each district, under the superintendence of two members of the committee connected with the locality.

There are over 600 families, numbering at least 2,000 persons, at present receiving relief from the committee, who sell coals at the rate of 6d. per cwt. to widows, and 9d. per cwt. to others who are better able to pay, being in the latter case about one-half of the cost price. The

committee by whom the town and suburbs are thus relieved may be termed by way of distinction the Roman Catholic committee, although Protestants have subscribed to it, and although they distribute fuel without any sectarian distinction. Unfortunately, in consequence of the very active spirit of religious antagonism which has prevailed for some time past in Tuam, there has not been that amalgamation and cordial union of the two religious sections which I have found to exist in other places, where the Protestant and Roman Catholic clergymen are working side by side in the cause of charity. This is a circumstance much to be regretted, but I cannot undertake to say on which side the blame lies. In all probability there may have been faults on both sides; but, however this may be, the fact is unquestionable that there exists a most decided state of mutual repulsion and want of confidence between the Roman Catholic and Protestant parties in this town. It is not to be wondered at, however, that Lord Plunket should feel reluctant to connect himself in any way with a party by whom he may consider, whether rightly or wrongly, that he has been badly treated. There can be no doubt that latterly his lordship has enjoyed the unenviable distinction of being the best abused man in Ireland; but, from what I have learned of his character, I believe he is not a man who can be induced to swerve from any course he may think right, by any amount of popular excitement. In saying this, I offer no opinion as to the religious feuds which have prevailed in Tuam. With sectarian or party differences I have nothing to do; but I could not avoid referring to these matters, which are notorious, in expla-

nation of the fact that in Tuam, and in Tuam alone, there are two separate and distinct committees engaged in providing fuel for the poor.

The Roman Catholic committee confines its operations to the town and the suburbs. The other committee, to which Lord Plunket and his family have subscribed, and which is principally managed by Mr. Day, J.P., and Mr. Arthur Netterville Blake, J.P., in addition to relieving some of the towns-people, has undertaken to supply the poor in the country parts who are equally destitute of the essential article of fuel. This committee, I understand, was first in the field, and had commenced the distribution of coals before the public meeting was held at which the other body was constituted. Both committees are doing good, and I only regret that circumstances have occurred to prevent that united action of all parties in this benevolent work which would insure the most effectual relief of the distress which unhappily exists. Mr. Denis Kirwan, of Castle-Hacket, a Protestant and conservative gentleman, who deservedly occupies a high place in the estimation of all classes and sects in this county, together with Mr. John Dennis, J.P., of Birmingham, who is most popular in this neighbourhood from his many excellent qualities, and Mr. David Rutledge, J.P., Barbersford, are contributors to the funds of both committees.

I may mention that some of the gentry in this neighbourhood are assisting the people, by thinning their plantations, and selling the timber at a reduced price. Mr. Denis Kirwan was in the habit of giving away the loppings of his woods gratuitously every year, and he has now four men constantly employed felling timber, which he sells at

from 9d. to 2s. 6d. per load, which is about one-third of its real value. He has also given his tenants orders on a coal merchant for coals, at the rate of 1s. 4d. per cwt., advising them to purchase five cwt. at a time, and allowing them long credit for the amount; but only two or three of his tenants have as yet availed themselves of the privilege, though they are all well able to pay for any amount they may require.

In speculating upon the prospects of the people for the next five months, the state of the weather forms a most material element for our consideration. In any case, there will be more than usual distress in the winter and spring months; but in the event of a wet season, there will be extreme destitution amongst a very large class. As a general rule, the greatest destitution will prevail in the small towns and villages, where a vast amount of poverty is concentrated, and where the people depended chiefly or altogether on their conacre crop of potatoes. Tuam is surrounded by villages containing a very poor population, such as Ballinaphuil, Ballynastuckan, Cloonascragh, Cloontoo, Cloonfush, and Carrowpeter. The last named village, which is a type of the others, is situated about a mile from the town. It contains about fifty small houses with little gardens attached, each house and garden being valued at a few shillings a year by the Ordnance valuation; but the rent actually paid is much higher, although they are all of the most miserable kind. Their occupants are labouring men, some of whom sowed conacre in a field belonging to a Mr. Mullins. They were to pay £5 an acre per year, and to have the land for two years. They manured it with guano last year and sowed potatoes, which, if the crop had yielded

an average return, would have kept their families in food up to the middle of June or July at all events. The second year, they would have sowed oats, and the sum realized by the sale of this crop would, in ordinary circumstances, enable them to purchase a sufficiency of potatoes or other provisions. The potatoes, however, turned out very badly, and Mr. Mullins allowed them to be dug out without charging any rent. This was a liberal act; but, on the other hand, he has the benefit of the manure which was put into the land, whilst the unfortunate tenant loses altogether the price of the guano. In the majority of cases the guano used by conacre tenants was obtained on credit, and this debt is now hanging over their heads.

In many places fields of potatoes are yet undug, and I have been told of some instances in which they have become better by having been allowed to remain in the ground until very lately. The danger of late digging is that a heavy frost would in all probability destroy the potatoes which had not been dug out and properly pitted; and were it not for the risk thus involved, I think it would be advisable in all cases where the tubers are found to be soft and watery in the months of September and October, to allow them to remain undug a month or two longer. Considering the unquestionable failure of the potatoes, the wonder is that, up to the present, there have been no marked indications of a deficiency of food amongst the labourers and small farmers. I speak generally, for the returns were as usual most various, depending on the character of the soil, and the lateness or earliness of the sowing. The failure, however, was universal; and I have heard the fact that the potatoes are not yet ex-

hausted, accounted for by the circumstance that the quantity sown last year was much greater than usual, in consequence of the favourable season of 1860, when the crop was most abundant, and large sums were made by sending them by railway to Dublin. Thus the half or three-quarter crop of the last season was larger than it would have been if there had been a similar loss sustained during any of the three or four preceding years. It is not always safe to rely on the popular estimate in these matters, for the people of Ireland have suffered so terribly from famine that the dread of it is always before their eyes, and sometimes causes them to cry out before they are hurt. Thus in October, 1860, it was currently stated in Headford that the ravages of the blight had been so destructive that there would not be a potato in the town or district at Christmas. The fact, however, turned out to be, that up to May and June the people were sending tons of potatoes every week to Dublin by the Tuam railway. This time the cry of distress is but too well founded. The land about Headford, bordering on Lough Corrib, is a light limestone soil, well suited for the growth of wheat and potatoes. The deficiency in both of these crops has been very great; and with respect to fuel, the people are most unfortunately circumstanced, because they always depended in previous years on obtaining their turf across the lake from Connemara—a source of supply that has now completely failed them.

The country immediately surrounding Tuam is inhabited by a number of small farmers, whose rents are, generally speaking, fully equal to the value of the land. There are some instances in which the rents are

exorbitant, and where the severest pressure is put on the tenants. The latter have made great efforts to pay the May gale, which is usually paid in November, and the information I have received leads me to believe that there will be no deficiency worth mentioning in the liquidation of that gale. When the November gale becomes payable the distress now apprehended will have fully developed itself; and I think the landlord in this part of the country who succeeds in obtaining full payment from all his tenants may esteem himself particularly fortunate. I was told by a gentleman who is himself a proprietor of land, and has some agencies in this county, that when paying the May rent many of the tenants assured him that they would not be able to meet the November gale, which is payable in March or April. My informant is a gentleman of high character and intelligence, whose position has afforded him an opportunity of making himself acquainted with the actual condition of the people, and he is of opinion that the fears thus expressed by the tenants of their inability to meet the next gale day are *bona fide*, and not assumed to deceive their landlords and obtain remissions or abatements to which they are not fairly entitled.

In endeavouring to ascertain the actual condition of the country, I have sometimes found considerable difficulty in deciding between the opinions expressed by two classes of persons—one taking the sanguine and the other the gloomy view of affairs. I incline to the former, and believe that if we are blessed with a favourable spring, and the "cloud in the West" blows over, the farming classes will be encouraged to exert themselves to make up the losses of the past two seasons, and

will give such an amount of employment as will greatly mitigate the anticipated distress. There will be ample scope for private benevolence, and it is to be hoped that the committees which have been formed in this and other places will not relax their exertions as long as suffering of any kind—whether from want of fuel or of food—remains to be alleviated. I confess I cannot see how government assistance, which is so loudly invoked, could at present be given here, since there are no works of a reproductive character to be carried out, and the old system of relief, which was so frightfully jobbed and exercised so demoralising an influence on our people, is not to be thought of for a moment. The reply given by the Lord Lieutenant to the memorial from the Corporation of Dublin (which appears to be a very proper answer to a general statement unaccompanied by any definite suggestions) does not preclude the government from affording aid if a case of urgent necessity should hereafter arise.

The Tuam union is the largest in Galway, and comprises an area of 190,649 statute acres. The population in 1851 was 51,194, and the poor law valuation £75,433. The number of paupers in the workhouse on Saturday, the 28th December, was 240, as compared with 205 in the corresponding week of the previous year, showing an increase of 35. The contract prices of provisions for the next three months are: First flour, £18 12s.; Indian meal, £9 7s.; and oatmeal, £14 10s. per ton. In 1860 the prices were: Flour, £16 5s.; Indian meal, £9 8s. 6d.; and oatmeal, £16 10s. per ton. The highest rate struck is 2s. in the pound, for the electoral division of Tuam, and the lowest 5d., for the division of Abbey East. I was present at the last meeting of the guardians, and had

an opportunity of hearing a discussion on the cases presented for admission to the house, and for outdoor relief by the relieving officer of the Headford electoral division. The condition of the inhabitants of Headford has been for some weeks past a subject of controversy at the Tuam board of guardians; the Roman Catholic clergyman of the parish having made the most strenuous exertions to introduce the system of outdoor relief amongst his parishioners, insisting that the destitution is very great, and that the people ought to be relieved at their homes instead of being forced into the workhouse. By the law, as it stands at present, the guardians have no power to give outdoor relief except to sick and infirm persons, whose removal to the workhouse would be attended with danger; and this fact must be satisfactorily established by a medical certificate. This state of the law is very well known; nevertheless, week after week the same parties apply to the relieving officer at Headford, and when he submits their application to the board, with the recommendation of the local committee of guardians that they should be admitted to the workhouse, they do not attend; showing that their condition is not so bad as it has been represented.

The last report presented by the relieving officer of the Headford division contained twenty-eight applications for relief. Of these the local committee recommended outdoor relief to nine; eight of the applicants refused to go to the workhouse; nine did not appear at the Board to claim admission; and the consideration of the remaining two cases was deferred. In the case of John Reany, the officer reported: "This man's wife and three children are in fever. He has two acres of land, but has no

means to support his family, except 8d. per day which he gets from Mrs. Kilkelly for labour". The local committee recommended that 5s. per week should be given to this man, and Mr. Higgins moved that the recommendation be confirmed by the board. In the course of the discussion which ensued, Dr. Brodie, poor law inspector, called attention to a circular issued by the commissioners in May, 1848, in reference to the quarter-acre clause, by which it appears that the fact of the head of a family holding land does not preclude the members of his family, if destitute, from receiving relief. Mr. Higgins, however, was of opinion that this case did not come within the operation of the circular; the words of which are, that the members of the family of a man occupying more than a quarter of an acre of land can be legally relieved in the workhouse of the union, or if the workhouse be full, the guardians may relieve them out of the house. In the present case, the house is not full, and the persons requiring relief being in fever, cannot be safely removed. This is an extreme case, and yet it is doubtful whether the guardians can legally give the relief so urgently required. Mr. Higgins, however, with the view of bringing the question before the commissioners and the public, moved that the sum ordered by the local committee should be affirmed, which was done in this particular instance by the board, and the clerk was directed to write to the commissioners on the subject. Another case was that of Edward Flaherty, respecting whom the officer reports: "This man cannot get sufficient employment to support his family, and is very destitute. He is a labouring man, forty years of age, with a wife and six children, of whom the eldest is four-

teen, and the youngest three years of age". The local committee ordered him 2s. 6d. per week, but this was refused by the board, on the ground that it was illegal. A third case was that of a pensioner named James Smith, aged sixty years, married, but without children. He has a pension of 6d. a day, and pays 1s. a week for his room; he is a weaver by trade, but, in consequence of being both infirm and blind, is unable to work. The local committee ordered him 1s. a week for one month, but this also was disallowed by the board, the case not coming within the class to which they are authorized to give outdoor relief, whilst the workhouse remains comparatively empty.

The Rev. Peter Conway, who is supposed to have something to do with these numerous applications from the Headford district, and the refusals of the applicants to enter the workhouse, is well known to be an active, zealous, and benevolent man. His charity is unbounded, but his best friends are of opinion that his zeal sometimes outruns his discretion. His strong feeling and fervid imagination have led him to make statements as to the extent of the distress in Headford, which he doubtless believes to be accurate, but which persons equally well informed and equally truthful regard as exaggerated. The minute book of the Tuam workhouse contains the following letter from the reverend gentleman, and the reply of the relieving officer, which I leave to speak for themselves:—

St. Mary's, Headford, Saturday night, Dec. 21, 1861.

*To Mr. Curran, Relieving Officer of the Headford Electoral Division of the Tuam Union.*

SIR—I send you by a special messenger this official note to your own house, at this late hour of the night, a distance

of six miles, to acquaint you that I am just after administering the last rites of our holy religion to a poor woman, dying on the road side under the canopy of Heaven, in the townland of Shiveroe, sixteen miles from the Tuam workhouse. On receipt of it you will judge whether it is your duty or not to come at once and take with you a spring cart, such as the poor-law commissioners have ordered, and which I have no doubt you have ready, so as to convey her in it to the Tuam workhouse, or give her whatever other relief the law allows her; and thus "allow outdoor relief to creep amongst the poor, despite the opposition of any unchristian guardian". Should she die here, or on the way to Tuam, or in the workhouse, I have no doubt you will consider it your duty to the community to get the coroner to hold an inquest on her body.

Yours truly,

PETER CONWAY, P.P.

The relieving officer in his report, dated 1st January, says:—" On the receipt of the Rev. Mr. Conway's letter, in reference to the woman he anointed at Shiveroe, I proceeded at once to the house. I gave her provisional relief at that time, and on the 23rd December the relief committee ordered 2s. 6d. for a week. On Saturday last I went to visit her, and found she had removed to the Ballinrobe union".

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## CHAPTER XII.

**Cong, Co. Mayo.—Its Traffic.—The "Pigeon Hole".—The Abbey.—Benjamin Lee Guinness, Esq.—The Relief Committee.—Lord Plunket's Circular.**

CONG, January 4, 1862.

THIS village, inhabited by between four and five hundred persons, is situate in the county of Mayo, just within the boundary line between that and the adjoining county of Galway. Mr. Burke's hotel, and one or two other houses, are the only respectable ones in the place, all the others being miserably poor and mean; but, as the proprietor of of the town, Captain Elwood, is now in a position to give long building leases, we may soon expect to see much improvement effected. The distance from Tuam to Cong is about eighteen miles, and the intervening country presents the greatest variety in the character of the soil. Sometimes we meet with pasturage of extraordinary richness, and close beside it, land of inferior quality, covered with rocks and stones, and apparently of the most barren nature. With the exception of the demesnes of Castle Hacket, the residence of Mr. Denis Kirwan, and of Dalgan House, near Shrule, the property, by recent purchase, of Lady De Clifford, the country is almost destitute of trees, which, combined with the scarcity of the houses and wretched cultivation of the land, gives the scene rather a bare and desolate appearance. The village of Shrule, nearly midway between Tuam and Cong, is, like the latter, just within the boundary of the county Mayo. There is some land of excel-

lent quality surrounding it, but as we proceed we enter on a tract of country that, in appearance at least, is poor and unproductive. However, as the geological formation is principally limestone, the soil is better than it looks; and though tillage is carried on with difficulty in some places, the return in ordinary years is sufficiently ample to reward the labours of the husbandman.

Cong is beautifully situated on the borders of the giant Lough Corrib, and is the key on the Mayo side to Joyce's Country, as Oughterard, on the opposite side of the lake, is the key to Connemara from Galway. From Maam, where Joyce's Country begins, the distance to Cong is twelve miles. The road runs for a great part of the way along the margin of the lake, which affords admirable facilities for water carriage to Galway. In the summer season the traffic is considerable, and the steamer plies constantly during that period of the year from Galway to Cong and Maam for the accommodation of tourists, who find this a most convenient way of entering on their tour through Joyce's Country and Connemara. The steamboat Father Daly (whose reverend sponsor, director, and chief manager is now under so heavy an ecclesiastial cloud) at present plies twice a-week between Cong and Galway; but it has been found so inadequate for the increased goods traffic, that Mr. Thomas Persse, of Galway, Mr. Benjamin Lee Guinness (who is the proprietor of large estates in the vicinity of Cong), and some other gentlemen, have made arrangements for placing another steamer on the lake on the 1st of March next.

The imports consist of corn for the supply of three arge mills that are in constant work here; guano, which

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Turf boat -- Connemara.

is extensively used by the farmers; coals, iron, timber, slates, and seaweed, also much used as manure by the small farmers in the interior of the country; while the exports consist of oats, potatoes, and cattle. Mr. Guinness, Mr. Simson, of Cloonagh Castle, near Ballinrobe—the largest and best agriculturist in the county—and other gentlemen, send large numbers of cattle by this route to the Dublin market.

The facilities that Lough Corrib affords as a means of inland navigation have not, however, been taken advantage of by the people of this country to the full extent to which they might be made available. The opening of the Eglinton Canal from the harbour of Galway through the town to the lake, was an important step, and has been productive of many beneficial results: still, the capabilities of this fine sheet of water are, comparatively speaking, as yet undeveloped. Lough Corrib comprises an area of 50,700 statute acres. Its length from Galway to Maam by Cong, is about twenty-five, and its greatest breadth about fourteen miles. A ridge of land three miles broad, separates it from Lough Mask, the waters of which, having a level at least twenty-two feet higher, are poured into Corrib by subterraneous channels, constituting one of the most remarkable features of this locality. The area of Lough Mask and of Carra, which is an offset from it, is 26,265 acres, and its height is eighty feet above the level of the sea. To bring these three lakes into navigable communication with each other and with the sea, there would only be required about three miles of canal. "The direct length of navigation opened", says Sir Robert Kane, "would be about fifty miles, and a coast of nearly two hundred miles would have a cheap

and ready outlet for its agricultural produce". In the famine years this project was actually commenced, and the canal was cut from Lough Corrib to Lough Mask, and also from the latter to the town of Ballinrobe. Hastily undertaken, it was abandoned with equal precipitation, and remains in its unfinished state, a melancholy memento of the many abortive schemes begun in that period of terrible distress.

In the existing circumstances of the country it is impossible that the large sum of money requisite for the completion of this canal could be obtained; but it would be highly desirable if the cut were deepened for the length of a furlong, so as to be navigable from the quay where the steamer now stops, to the bridge of Cong, on the Ballinrobe road. At present there are no stores at the quay, nor is there any space available at that point for the erection of stores or shedding sufficient for the traffic. It would obviously be a matter of great convenience to passengers to and from Galway, as well as most important for the development of the goods traffic, that boats should come up to the town, where ample storage accommodation can be provided. The mere deepening of this small portion of the canal, which would serve all purposes at present, would not cost more than £1,500 or £2,000. If this work were carried out, it would supply the wants of the barony of Kilmaine and the southern part of the county, whilst the railway in progress by Claremorris to Castlebar will be available for the accommodation of the northern baronies of this part of the county Mayo. The inhabitants of the north-western shores of Lough Mask, including the people of Joyce's Country, would derive


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great benefit from the improvement of the navigation to Cong, and already, even in its imperfect state, they are taking advantage of it. They cross Lough Mask in boats, and are then within three miles of Lough Corrib, from which the steamer brings them in a few hours to the "City of the Tribes".

I understand that the steamboat Father Daly, notwithstanding the rather irregular and capricious way in which it has been managed, has proved a profitable speculation, yielding a dividend of not less than fourteen per cent. on the capital invested in it. There is reason to believe that the new boat, shortly about to be placed on the lake, will prove even more successful, and in all probability there will be ample traffic for both.

Cong is a place possessing many features of interest to the antiquary, the man of science, and the simple pleasure seeker, who can content himself merely with enjoying the beautiful scenery and inspecting the strange natural phenomena which are here presented to him The ground on which the village is built is completely cavernous. The waters of Lough Mask find their way into Corrib by several subterranean channels, some of which spring up to the surface near the village, whilst others pursue their underground course the entire way. These subterranean rivers may be seen in several places where some convulsion of nature has caused an opening in the ground. The most remarkable of these, called "the Pigeon-hole", from the number of wild pigeons that formerly frequented it, is about a mile from the village. You descend a flight of steps some forty or fifty feet deep, and on reaching the bottom, find yourself on the brink of a pool of clear brown water, issuing from

underneath the limestone rock, and flowing quickly away through a cavern, which the old woman, who generally acts as a guide, can penetrate when the water is low, nearly as far as Cong. The sides of the pit or shaft are picturesquely clothed with many-coloured lichens, moss, ivy, and other creeping plants; whilst the cavern through which the water flows with a gentle murmuring sound is lost in impenetrable gloom, until the guide, waving a torch of wheaten straw, illuminates its rugged sides and deep recesses with a fitful glare, producing a singularly wierd-like and striking effect. Another cavern of similar formation is interesting from the large number of stalactites depending from its roof; and attached to all these curious places are numerous romantic legends with which the guides entertain or bore the visitor, as the case may be.

The old abbey of Cong, situate in the village, is one of the most interesting remains of the ancient ecclesiastical architecture of Ireland. This venerable ruin, with which many historic associations are connected, has suffered sadly from Time's "effacing fingers". When Dr. Petrie first saw the abbey, its cloisters were in existence, though hastening to decay: they are now almost obliterated. Other portions of the building have also sustained great injury from the corroding influence of the weather, neglect, and, I fear, the damage thoughtlessly done from time to time by some of the people in the neighbourhood. A few years more of such neglect would have irreparably injured this now most picturesque and interesting relic of antiquity; but fortunately the ground on which the abbey stands has recently passed into the possession of Mr. Guinness, who, with that

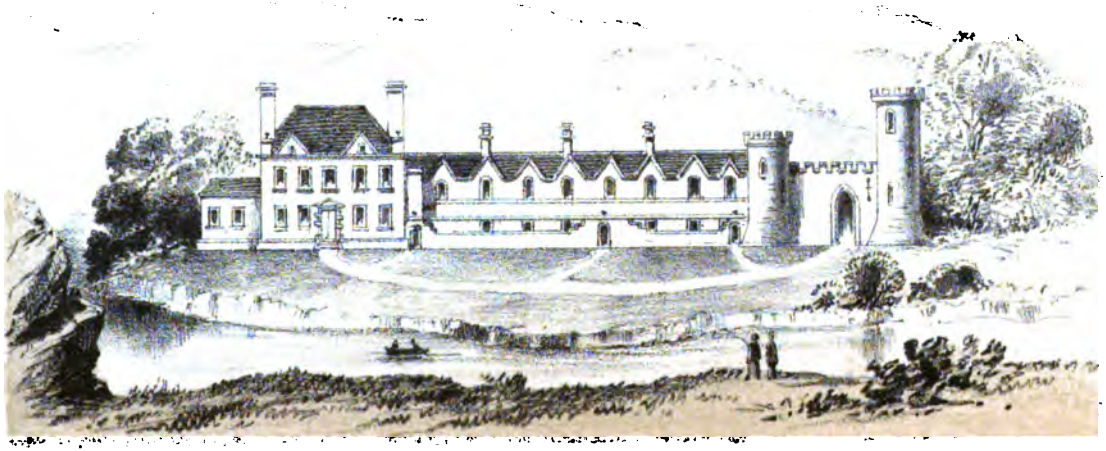
taste and public spirit which have received so splendid an illustration in the restoration of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, has commenced a similar work here, and rescued the Abbey of Cong from all risk of further dilapidation.

A former proprietor had blocked up the entrance doors and some of the windows with unsightly masses of masonry; these will be removed, and the parts that threatened to give way supported by light iron bars, which will effectually sustain the ancient stonework without impairing its appearance. The fine eastern window, which was fast mouldering away, is now in process of restoration. The object of Mr. Guinness is to preserve what remains, and arrest the progress of decay; and we may be satisfied that everything carried out under his direction will be characterized by propriety and good taste. I may here mention, as another instance of his munificent liberality, that he has expended £800 in the erection of a beautiful spire to the new church of Cong, the work being admirably executed by Mr. Murphy of Dublin, who is now engaged in the rebuilding of St. Patrick's.

Amongst other objects of antiquity in Cong is, or rather was, a stone cross, erected in the market-place. The original base only remains, on which an Irish inscription testifies that the cross was erected in memory of two abbots of Cong, who ruled in the abbey many hundred years ago, and for the repose of whose souls a prayer is solicited from the passer-by. It appears that the old cross was wantonly destroyed some years ago, by a reverend Vandal who resided here. The famous wooden cross of Cong, now one of the most precious

possessions of the Royal Irish Academy, was sold to some gentlemen acting on behalf of that body, by the Roman Catholic clergyman to whom it had been handed down as the representative of the abbots, an act which excited much dissatisfaction amongst his parishioners, who were accustomed to regard it with feelings of superstitious reverence.

I have mentioned the name of Mr. Benjamin Lee Guinness in connection with this locality; but the position he occupies here is so important, and the good he is doing so great, both in extent and character, as to justify more than a mere passing notice. Mr. Guinness is the largest landed proprietor in the district, the several estates that he has acquired within the last twelve years comprising about 9,000 Irish acres. He first became the purchaser of the Ashford estate, immediately adjoining the village, from Lord Oranmore, and subsequently bought the Doonas estate from Sir Richard O'Donnell, the Cong estate from Mr. Alexander Lambert, and lastly he purchased the Ross-hill estate, the joint property of the Earls of Charlemont and Leitrim. He has thus become owner of a large tract of land extending from the shores of Lough Corrib to those of Lough Mask, besides having property beyond Maam and in other places. Mr. Guinness has displayed as a landed proprietor the same energy, enterprise, judgment, and liberality, which characterise the management of the gigantic commercial establishment over which he presides. He found the Ashford estate in a most neglected condition, with an impoverished tenantry, living in those miserable and filthy hovels that are so great an eyesore and disgrace to our country. The land adjoining the house had also



Forster & Co. Lith.

Ashford.

been much neglected, and a considerable portion of it was overspread with a thick growth of underwood, useless except as a cover for game. Mr. Guinness set to work to remedy these things with characteristic energy. He allowed a portion of the old house to remain, and built extensive additions to it, so as to form a spacious and comfortable edifice. The situation is delightful, being separated from the village by a rapidly flowing river, and commanding most charming views of the lake studded with thickly-wooded islands, and bounded by the picturesque mountain ranges of Connemara and Joyce's Country. The brushwood, which covered so large a portion of the estate, was all grubbed up, an immense quantity of stones removed, and the soil thoroughly drained and well cultivated, until it has been finally converted into good meadow and pasture land.

Mr. Guinness took a large number of the tenants' holdings into his demesne, which he has enclosed by a well-built stone wall; but the tenants thus dispossessed have been compensated by obtaining equally large, and in some cases larger, holdings of better land on anothe part of the estate, so that they will benefit by the change. Mr. Guinness is trying the experiment of improving the tastes and habits of his tenantry, by erecting good substantial dwelling-houses for them, provided with offices suitable to the size of each farm. The new houses are two stories high, slated, and very neat in appearance; they cost from £120 to £150 each, and it is intended to charge £5 per cent. on the outlay incurred in their construction—a rent which the tenants will be easily able to pay, inasmuch as all Mr. Guinness's land is let at a low rate. In fact, his rental could be largely increased if

he demanded rents equal to those generally obtained throughout the counties of Galway and Mayo for land of a similar description. It is intended to erect cottages of a smaller size for a lower class of tenants than those who are to occupy the two-storied houses; but the least of these will be a palace compared to the squalid cabins in which these people have hitherto been contented to dwell. These improvements are carried out under the active superintendence of Mr. William Burke, of Strand Hill, Cong, who is agent to Mr. Guinness and other proprietors in this district.

It would be difficult for me to enumerate all the improvements which Mr. Guinness has effected and all the good he has done since he became the owner of these estates. He has made roads, built largely, reclaimed much land, planted extensively; and the amount of employment which he has thus afforded to his tenants, and the labouring population generally, has been very considerable. At present the number of persons employed by him in reclaiming land, in drainage, planting, farm-work, the erection of tenants' houses, wall-building throughout the estate for the protection of young plantations, and in other occupations, is not less than 260. These are all paid good wages, and for a considerable time past Mr. Guinness's labour bill has averaged £70 a week. He has thus been the means of relieving much destitution in the country; and there can be no doubt but that, if his example were followed by other large proprietors, no cry of distress would emanate from Cong and its vicinity. I should add, that Mr. Guinness has thrown open the wood of Ballykine to his tenants, who have largely availed themselves of permis-

sion to carry away the brushwood for fuel, which is as scarce and dear in this as in any other part of Ireland. He has also chartered a large vessel laden with coal for distribution amongst his tenantry primarily, and also to others who may require such assistance.

The relief of the "fuel famine" in the village and its immediate vicinity was commenced nearly three weeks ago by a committee, consisting of Captain Elwood, the Protestant and Roman Catholic clergymen of the parish, and others connected with the locality. At their first meeting a sum of £35 was subscribed, to which the Most Rev. Dr. MacHale was a contributor of £5. The committee have imported coals from Galway, and are selling them at two-thirds of the cost price. This has already had the effect of lowering the price of turf—the reductions amounting to 4s. on an ass load, 5s. on a cart load, and 8s. on a boat load, besides bringing a larger quantity into the market..

The failure of the potato crop in this district was very great; but as it was more extensively sown last year than at any former time since the famine, there is yet a considerable quantity available for consumption. In the year 1860 this crop was peculiarly good and abundant, and all who had planted largely realized a considerable amount by the sale of potatoes, which were sent by boat from Cong to Galway. So great was the exportation of potatoes from this and the adjoining districts, that one man sent cargoes to the value of ten thousand pounds to persons in Dublin, on whose behalf he had purchased. The profits of the year were so large, that the people were tempted to sow potatoes in every perch of land they could rent, hoping that they would have an equally

favourable season. They took a great deal of conacre at the rate of £7 and £8 an acre for this purpose, and manured the potatoes with guano, which they obtained on credit. The stimulating properties of the guano caused the stalks to grow up quickly and luxuriantly, whilst the tubers were but partially developed, and afterwards the combined influences of the blight and the wet weather prevented them from reaching maturity, and hence resulted a serious deficiency in the crop and a consequent heavy loss upon all who had cultivated it extensively. They have no potatoes for export, so they are deprived of the resource on which they calculated for the payment of the high rents and the price of the guano; but, nevertheless, the general opinion seems to be that there will be enough of potatoes to supply seed and food for a couple of months.

The other crop principally grown here is wheat, and the return in almost every case is lamentably deficient. The oat crop was a fair average. There can be no doubt that a failure so great must press with intense severity on the holders of two, three, and four-acre farms; that in April and May they will be much pinched and straitened for food; and that great destitution may be expected in some individual cases.

I mentioned that on my way from Tuam I passed through the village of Shrule, about eight miles distance from Cong. The following is the substance of a communication from a gentleman residing in that parish, and well acquainted with the condition of its inhabitants: "There are some persons here who have not more than one-tenth the amount of food from the potato crop which they would have had in ordinary years; but there are

others who have two-thirds, and the average in the whole parish is one-sixth. The oat crop was nearly as good as that of last year (1860). The wheat crop was bad, and it was by wheat many paid their rents, so that the failure in it will cause great embarrassment and distress to those who must pay. Lady De Clifford has given timber to her tenants here, and some money has been contributed to purchase fuel for those who were in need of it. I anticipate great distress in winter and spring if something be not done to give the people employment, so that they may earn the price both of food and fuel". Employment, not eleemosynary aid, is the real want of the people, and the only beneficial mode of assisting them through their present difficulties. It is but too probable that a large amount of distress will manifest itself as the season advances, for the relief of which public benevolence (rarely appealed to in vain) may be fairly and properly solicited. It is a matter of public importance, no less than an act of charity and kindness, to give such assistance to a struggling artizan or labourer as will save him and his family from becoming inmates of a workhouse. I perceive that a subscription has been opened in Dublin for the relief of the poor in the West of Ireland, and it is to be hoped that the appeal thus made will be liberally responded to.

Towards the close of the month of November last the Lord Bishop of Tuam (Lord Plunket) being anxious to ascertain the true state of the case with regard to the degree of destitution, either actually existing, or to be reasonably apprehended, in the West of Ireland, addressed a circular letter to the clergy of the united dioceses of Tuam, Killala, and Achonry, containing a number of

questions which they were requested to answer. His lordship was rightly of opinion that a careful report, collected from the fair and dispassionate returns of a body of men such as the clergy of his dioceses, would form an important document,. in which the truth would suffer neither from concealment nor exaggeration. He therefore requested the clergymen to institute a searching inquiry into the matter, and ascertain not only from the members of their own Church, but from persons of all denominations in their respective parishes, the information requisite to enable them accurately to answer the queries appended to this circular. The queries are as follow:—1. How many persons are at present in the poorhouses of your parish or district, and how many did they contain this time last year? 2. Bearing in mind both the extent and quality of the potato crop, what proportion does the amount of food derivable from it bear to that of last year? 3. What is the proportion (according to a similar calculation) of the oat crop? 4. What proportion will the amount of fuel (obtainable by the poor during the next six months) bear to that of last year? 5. On the whole, which of the following four results do you anticipate as regards the poor of the parish during the approaching winter and spring, in the event of a wet or dry season respectively? 1. Not more than usual distress. 2. More than usual distress. 3. Extreme destitution. 4. Famine. In reply to this circular, Lord Plunket has obtained returns from fifty-three parishes or districts, extending over the counties of Galway and Mayo, and portions of Sligo and Roscommon.

In addition to answering the several queries, each

clergyman has appended some general remarks, expressing more fully his opinion respecting the condition and prospects of the people in his parish, and stating such facts as appeared to him to bear on the subject of the bishop's inquiries. Through the courtesy of his lordship's chaplain, the Rev. William C. Plunket, I have been permitted to see these returns, and having carefully examined them and compared the reports from the districts that I have visited, with the results of my personal observation, I have no hesitation in stating that the information thus supplied by the clergy of the dioceses of Tuam, Killala, and Achonry may be implicitly relied on. Their general remarks are characterized by candour and truthfulness, whilst their replies to the specific queries approach as nearly as possible to the actual facts of the case. Some of the reverend gentlemen take a more gloomy, others a more cheerful view, than that of the majority; but these diversities of opinion, arising from differences of temperament and tone of mind, are not greater than I have found to exist amongst persons of all classes with whom I have been in communication during my present tour. The general opinion appears to be, that there will be more than usual distress in the winter and spring months, under the most favourable circumstances, and that there will be extreme destitution amongst the poor in the event of a wet season. The idea of FAMINE is rejected by all but six clergymen, who anticipate that result in the spring months, if the weather should turn out wet and unfavourable. There are none sanguine enough to believe that there will not be more than usual distress in spring, should the season be wet, and only one who thinks that the poor of his parish will not suffer more than usually in the

winter months under similar circumstances, viz., a wet, inclement season putting a stop to employment, and rendering it more difficult to obtain even the scantiest supply of fuel.

The following are the results of Lord Plunket's inquiries, derived from a careful calculation made by his lordship's chaplain of the whole of the returns:—The average increase of paupers in each of these fifty-three parishes or districts in the month of December, 1861, over the number receiving poor law relief in the corresponding period of 1860, is fourteen. The average proportion which the potato crop of 1861, having regard both to extent and quality, bears to that of the previous year, is three-sevenths, or something less than one-half. The average proportion (according to a similar calculation) of the oat crop is six-sevenths. In many places this crop was heavier than that of the previous year, but the quality of the grain inferior. In the event of a dry season, the proportion of fuel obtainable by the poor during the next six months amounts on an average to two-sevenths of that of last year, and in the event of a wet season to about one-tenth. In the event of a dry season, not more than usual distress is anticipated during the winter months by eight clergymen; more than usual distress by fifty-eight; extreme destitution by four; famine by none. In the spring months, if the weather should prove favourable, not more than usual distress is anticipated by six; more than usual distress by fifty-three; extreme destitution by eleven; and famine by none. In the event of a wet season during the winter months, not more than usual distress is anticipated by only one clergyman; more than

usual distress by twenty-four; extreme destitution by forty-four; famine by one. In the spring months no one ventures to say that, if the season should be wet, there will be not more than usual distress, whilst nineteeen anticipate more than usual distress, forty-five extreme destitution, and six famine.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

**Town of Ballinrobe.—Scarcity of fuel.—Fuel Fund Committee.—Liberality of the local gentry and landlords.—The "marrying season".—Estate of Robert Tighe, Esq.—Farm of James Simson, Esq.**

BALLINROBE, January 10, 1862.

FIVE miles north of Cong is situated Ballinrobe, a town containing a population of 2,500 inhabitants. It is fourteen miles distant from Castlebar and Westport, and for its size, is an excellent place of business, affording a ready and convenient market for a large district of country. It is in the barony of Kilmaine, which is considered to be the richest in Mayo, and is famous for the excellence of its sheep, and the abundance and quality both of its cereal and green crops. Some twenty years ago, Ballinrobe did not contain a decent shop; now it has a good many large establishments, evincing by their thriving and prosperous appearance that there is an active and profitable trade carried on here. The principal trader in the town is Mr. Robert Tighe, J.P., brewer and merchant. Perhaps I should rather say that Mr. Tighe

*was*, than that he is, the first merchant in Ballinrobe; for, having realized a large fortune by his own industry and intelligence, he has now, I believe, retired from active business, and transferred to one of his sons the management of his extensive establishment. Mr. Livingstone, of Westport, whose business connection extends over all the province, has a large flour mill here, which is kept in constant work, and affords a considerable amount of employment.

Ballinrobe has an advantage over most of the towns in the West of Ireland that I have yet visited, in having a neat, clean, well-conducted hotel, which was recently built by Colonel Knox, the proprietor of the town, and let by him to Mr. Valkenburgh. The suburbs are large and poor, consisting of small, dirty, miserable-looking hovels, of the same description as are to be found everywhere throughout the county, inhabited by the labouring and artizan classes. Amongst these people, who are very improvident and live from hand to mouth, rarely making any provision for the future, even when they are able to do so, there is always more or less distress to be found. Their condition will be aggravated in the coming spring by the loss which the failure of the potato has inflicted on those who sowed conacre, and if the season should prove wet and unfavourable, there will probably be much destitution amongst the poorest section of them. There has yet been no scarcity of food in this town, and provisions of all kinds—flour, meal, and meat—are as cheap as they have been for several years past. Even potatoes are but 5½d. a stone, being only 1½d. higher than they were at the corresponding period of the previous year—a conclusive proof that there are plenty

yet in the country. At the same time, the failure in this crop has been considerable, and those saved are, generally speaking, small and inferior in quality. It is impossible to ascertain how long the stock of potatoes in the possession of the humbler classes will last. The people are slow to tell the truth on this point; they exaggerate their losses, and endeavour to make themselves appear poorer than they really are. But, so far as this town is concerned, I have been assured by persons who have carefully inquired into the matter, that there are no families at present suffering from a deficiency of food.

The only real want which has been felt here was that arising from the extreme scarcity of fuel. A month or six weeks ago the poor suffered intensely from this cause, and even persons of ample means were subjected to much inconvenience and discomfort. The evil has been remedied by the prompt action of the landed proprietors, who have cut down timber to a large amount, and retailed it at a cheap rate, and also by the energetic labours of the "fuel fund" committee. The latter is composed of the Protestant and Roman Catholic clergymen of the parish, the Rev. Mr. Anderson, rector, and the Rev. Mr. Hardiman, P.P., and the leading inhabitants of the town. They have purchased a quantity of coal, which they are distributing to 330 families, at the rate of one cwt. per week, at 1s. per cwt. to each family. During Christmas week coals were given at 8d. per cwt. The system has hitherto worked remarkably well. I walked after dark in the evening through the suburbs, and saw a cheerful fire in every house. Some people were burning coals on the hearth altogether, and though the want of proper grates is, of course, a disadvantage, they seemed to

manage very well, and to find no difficulty in keeping up a good and economical fire. Others burn wet turf and timber along with coals; and, in fact, many of the persons supplied by the relief committee are as well off for fuel now as they ever were—one cwt. of coal at 1s. being fully equal to the amount of fuel which they could obtain in former years for the same sum. Colonel Knox, who is the largest landed proprietor in the neighbourhood, has acted with great liberality on this occasion. Besides subscribing to the fuel fund, he has distributed gratuitously amongst his tenants 800 cart loads of timber and 280 cribs of turf, which he caused to be delivered at the houses of the people. He also purchased 100 tons of coal, which he retails to the inhabitants of the town and suburbs at 1s. per cwt., and Lady Louisa has given away a large quantity of blankets and warm clothing to the poor of the town. Lords Kilmaine and Erne, who are also large proprietors of land in the barony of Kilmaine, have given instructions to their agent, Mr. James Rutledge, to provide coals for distribution under cost price, and in some cases gratuitously, amongst their tenants. When it became apparent that there was a scarcity of fuel, Lord Clanmorris opened his demesne of Newbrook for the sale of timber to a very large extent. Newbrook is about six miles from Ballinrobe, on the mail coach road to Westport, and contains a vast extent of wood, so that his lordship could afford to dispose of a great quantity without injuring his demesne. He established a sale of timber twice a week, and disposed of it at prices ranging from 1s. to 5s. per load, according to size and quality, which conferred a great benefit on the people of the surrounding country. As the sale of timber

was commenced before the "fuel fund" committee were in a position to distribute coals, the people of Ballinrobe were for some time dependent on that source for the supply of firing; and I was told that persons even came from Roscommon, a distance of twenty or thirty miles, to buy timber at Lord Clanmorris's demesne.

Taking all these circumstances into account, I believe there are few places in the West of Ireland, which are better supplied with fuel than Ballinrobe and its neighbourhood. The local gentry and the wealthier inhabitants of the district deserve great credit for the prompt, energetic, and liberal manner in which they have acted in this emergency; and I have no doubt that, as long as necessity requires, they will persevere with unrelaxed vigour in those exertions which have already proved so successful in mitigating distress.

About three weeks ago I visited Ballinrobe, and spent several days there inquiring into the condition and prospects of the people. At that time there was a general want of employment amongst the labouring population. All agricultural operations were necessarily suspended in consequence of the unprecedented wetness of the season. From July until the middle of December, the rain had been heavy and incessant. Potatoes could not be dug, the fields could not be ploughed, and three weeks ago scarcely a grain of wheat had been sowed. On my second visit to Ballinrobe I find a most gratifying change in this respect. There had been several weeks of mild dry weather, during which great progress has been made in preparing for the next harvest. The labouring population are fully employed, and if the weather continues favourable, there will be abundance of

work for them to do for some time to come. The wages of agricultural labourers, which some fifteen years ago ranged from 6d. to 8d., have now risen to 10d. and 1s. a day in winter; 1s. 4d. in spring; and 18d. or 2s. during harvest time. As it is expected that the scarcity of fuel will be over in March, when the harsh high winds that usually prevail in that month will dry the turf and give a superabundant supply, and as spring work will then be in active operation, there is good reason for hoping that the condition of the labouring class will not be much worse than in ordinary years. The oat crop was tolerably good in this part of the country, but there was a serious deficit in the produce of the wheat crop, which is always cultivated extensively in the neighbourhood of Ballinrobe.

The large farmers have profited so well of late years, in consequence of the high prices of stock and agricultural produce generally, that they are all in a position to bear up against the reverses of one or two bad seasons. This is not the case with the numerous class of small holders in Mayo; and although some of them probably may have money, I anticipate that many will have to endure a hard and difficult struggle during the coming season, without, however, encountering the terrible privations that have been predicted.

Monday, the 6th instant, was market day at Ballinrobe, and, being a holyday, there was more than the usual concourse of people. I believe that all the inhabitants of the surrounding neighbourhood, old and young, must have been present. The shops were thronged to excess; the main street was almost impassable from the denseness of the crowd; and, judging from the comfortable


Forster & Co. Lith.

*Going to Market.*

appearance and cheerful countenances of the people, no one would suspect that there was any prospect of distress in the districts from which this well-clad and orderly multitude had come. It appears that the "marrying season" has just set in, and all the young people contemplating matrimony were assembled on this occasion to see and to be seen. The young women had all donned their sprucest attire, and thus arrayed in new gowns and shawls of brilliant colours, they presented a very creditable appearance. As I have alluded before to the extravagant style of dress indulged in by the farmers' wives and daughters in other parts of the country, I am bound to say that I observed nothing of the kind here. The girls and women were neatly and gaily dressed, but in a manner quite suited to their position in life. They, however, adopt a custom in this part of the country which strikes a stranger with surprise. On market days and Sundays, they walk barefooted from their homes, until they have arrived within a short distance from the town, when they wash their feet in a running stream, and put on their stockings and shoes, which, after leaving the town, are taken off, and the rest of the homeward journey is performed unshodden. There was a good deal of produce disposed of at this market, and the prices of grain exhibited a decline. Wheat brought 10s., and oats 6s. per cwt. Whereas on Monday, the 16th December, 1861, the prices were—wheat, 11s., and oats, 6s. 2d. per cwt., in December, 1860, the prices were—wheat, 12s. 6d., and oats, 7s. per cwt. At that time, potatoes were 4d. per stone; they are now 5½d.

About four miles from Ballinrobe, and a short distance from the village of Kilmaine, Mr. Robert Tighe, the

gentleman to whom I have previously alluded, possesses an estate which deserves special notice, because of the remarkable contrast which the houses of his tenantry present to the abodes of the farmers generally. It is really refreshing to see on either side of the high road which runs through Mr. Tighe's property, the commodious, white-washed, neatly thatched cottages in which his tenants live. No fermenting manure-heap before the door offends the passer by. Each house has a well built wall in front, with a neat gate giving entrance into a little flower garden or a clean yard. There is a proper farm-yard attached to every dwelling, containing stable, cow-house, and pig-stye. When Mr. Tighe purchased this property, the houses upon it were as bad and wretched-looking as were to be found elsewhere. Having laid down the land properly, and divided the several holdings by the erection of substantial walls, he turned his attention to the improvement of the dwellings of his tenants. He assisted them to build, and supplies them twice a-year with lime for the purpose of white-washing, which he insists on being regularly carried out, and in fact exercises a sort of paternal despotism over his tenants which other landlords might imitate with advantage. His lands are let at moderate rents, varying from 14s. to 25s. per Irish acre; and as a natural consequence, all his tenants are comfortable and prosperous; whilst for neatness and cleanliness of external appearance at least, their houses are not surpassed by those of a similar class in any part of the country. The lands of Colonel Knox and Lord Kilmaine (the two largest proprietors in the barony), are also moderately let, the rents charged by the former being about 10 per cent. over the Ordnance valuation.

The most interesting feature of Ballinrobe, in an agricultural point of view, is the great farming establishment of Mr. James Simson, a Scotch gentleman, who, some six years ago, became the tenant of Lord Lucan for no less than 2,260 statute acres, at a rent of £2,200 a-year. Mr. Simson has taken a lease for twenty-five years, of which six have expired, and during the time he has been in occupation, his farming has been attended with eminent success. Even during the late bad season he has had no great reason to complain. The return of his wheat was rather below the average, but the grain was sound and good; the oats were bulky in the straw, but did not yield an adequate return; and the barley was inferior in quality and partially damaged by the wet. On the other hand, his green crops were excellent, and the produce of the early sown turnips above an average. Considering the great drought in spring, followed by the continuous downpour of rain which prevailed during the remainder of the year, Mr. Simson may congratulate himself on being able to save his crops so well. His great practical and theoretical knowledge of agriculture, combined with the amount of labour which his capital enables him to command, gives him advantages which farmers on a more limited scale do not possess.

Mr. Simson is diametrically opposed in opinion to those who contend that Ireland is only suited for grazing, and who would fain convert this country into a huge grazing field for the supply of England with beef and mutton. On the contrary, he holds that two-thirds of the soil of Ireland are admirably suited for tillage, and that a combined system of tillage and grazing is the best and most profitable mode of farming that can be carried

on in this country. Owing to the greater humidity of the climate, he calculates that the wear and tear of agricultural implements in Ireland, exceeds that in Scotland or England by about 15 per cent.; but his experience of farming in Mayo proves that he has been able to save his crops as well, and to produce as good a quality here, as the farmers at the other side of the channel. He thinks that all the dry light soils ought to be tilled, which would not only be the means of affording much employment, but would yield a larger return both to landlord and tenant. Not only the lime stonesoil, but the black loamy soil in which the county of Mayo abounds, is peculiarly suited for tillage; and Mr. Simson believes that the breaking up of a great portion of the land in this county, which has been converted into meadow and pasturage, is only a question of time. He has exemplified his faith in this theory, by tilling 1,350 acres, the remainder of his holding being laid down in grass. He also holds 600 acres of grazing land from Lord Clanmorris. The system which he employs is the five-shift rotation, viz., oats followed by turnips, then wheat or barley, and afterwards the land is sown with grass seeds. Last season he had 230 acres under turnips, half of which are eaten on the ground by the sheep, the advantage of this being that it cleans the land nicely, and gives much better crops of corn and meadow. Mr. Simson keeps a large quantity of stock. He has 1,300 ewes, and 1,400 lambs, besides winter stock. He stall feeds 150 bullocks and heifers, and sends several every week to Smithfield Market, Dublin. His "stores" number about 200, and the quantity of turnips which he cultivates, enables him to feed them in the house during the winter months, and

thus keep up their condition. In the usual system of grazing, the highly bred cattle are allowed to get out of condition, by exposure to cold and wet during winter, and become so deteriorated, that they cannot be got round again until half the summer is over; and when put in the stall to be fed with turnips, they are frequently the last sold, when they ought to be the first. Mr. Simson adopts the plan of keeping his cattle in the house, and feeding them with turnips for three months of the year, which enables him to keep more stock, to have an "early bite" of grass by allowing the fields to rest, and, in fact, to carry on grazing to perfection.

Mr. Simson has two farm steadings, one at Cloonagh Castle, where he resides, the other at "Gallows Hill", some half-a-mile distant. No less than fourteen pairs of horses are engaged in the work of the farm, and at each steading there is a steam-engine which drives a saw mill, a bone-grinding mill, and a threshing and winnowing machine. The amount of employment given by this gentleman is necessarily very large, and the wages he allows are liberal. His ploughmen commence at 7s. a week, and their wages are advanced gradually until they reach 10s. a-week, which is the highest rate allowed. The married ploughman receives 8s. per week, with a free cottage and garden, and the keep of a cow. The general rate of wages paid by Mr. Simson, in harvest time is 18d. a day, and sometimes he has 300 extra hands employed in the saving of his crops. If there were more men in the country like him, there would be no lack of employment for the labouring population. However, while it is impossible not to admire the scientific knowledge and practical skill which he displays in every branch of agriculture, it by no means follows that

the system of farming on so great a scale is that which is best adapted for Ireland. The comparative value of large and small farms is still an open question. In his valuable essay on the management of Landed Property in Ireland, Mr. Blacker maintains that the occupant of a farm not exceeding from six to eight acres, can live comfortably, and pay as high a rent as any large farmer, if he follows a proper rotation of crops, and feeds his cattle in the house. Whether this be well or ill-founded, there can be no doubt that such a system has never been properly understood or acted upon by the small farmers of Connaught, whose ignorance and indolence in industrial matters are proverbial. The rectification of this state of things, though it must be slow and gradual, depends to a considerable extent on the landlords of the country. By acting towards their tenantry with justice, by taking a friendly interest in their welfare, and endeavouring to win their confidence by kindness, the proprietors of the land have it in their power to obtain almost unlimited influence over a people who, with all their faults, are remarkably tractable, and very easily led.

The number of paupers in the Ballinrobe workhouse on Saturday, the 4th January, 1862, was 223, being an increase of forty-three over the number at the corresponding period of the previous year. The highest poundage rate in the union is 1s. 6d., for the electoral division of Ballinrobe, and the lowest 3d., for the Cappaduff or Tourmakeady division. The average rate for the whole union is scarcely 10d. in the pound. The contract prices are: white bread, 6¼d., and wholemeal bread, 5¼d. per 4lb. loaf; Indian meal, 10s. 4d., and oatmeal, 14s. 9d. per cwt

# CHAPTER XIV.

**Westport.—Demesne of the Marquess of Sligo.—Benevolence of William Livingstone, Esq.—Condition of the Agricultural Population.—Decrease of Domestic Industry.**

WESTPORT, County Mayo, Jan. 14, 1862.

WESTPORT, a seaport town, and second in this county to Ballinrobe, in point of size, extent of population, and business, is situate on the south-eastern side of Clew Bay. For some miles after leaving Ballinrobe, the road skirts the margin of Lough Mask, across the waters of which we see the Tourmakeady hills, and can even distinguish some of the buildings to which recent occurrences have given so much notoriety. Before arriving at the police station of the Partry district, in the parish of Ballyovey, situate about six Irish miles from Tourmakeady, and five from Ballinrobe, we enter on the property of Sir Robert Lynch Blosse, Bart., whose land appears to have been carefully improved, and whose tenants are, generally speaking, the most comfortable in this locality. As we proceed, the land becomes poorer and poorer, until at length the road passes for several miles through a dreary waste of bog, with small lakes, here and there covered with wild fowl of various kinds. Scarcely a habitation is visible except on the sides of the distant mountains, where human existence is indicated by the smoke rising from a few scattered villages. Approaching Westport, a great change is perceptible. The land, though light and poor in quality, is better cultivated; the houses become more numerous, and the undulating character of the country presents an agree-

able contrast to the level and desolate tract of unproductive bog through which we have previously travelled. The town is situated in a hollow, with hills of moderate height surrounding it on every side, except towards the sea, where there is an excellent quay-wall for the accommodation of shipping, and many spacious goods' stores, large enough to supply the wants of a much more extended commerce than Westport at present enjoys. It struck me as being neater and cleaner than most of the places I have visited in the West. It has several good streets, with respectable, well-stocked shops, that appear to do an active and profitable business, though just at present trade is as dull here as elsewhere throughout the country.

The Mall forms a conspicuous feature of the town; a stream flows through the centre of it, bordered on either side with a row of fine trees, and at one end of it is the gate opening into the Marquess of Sligo's demesne. Large and respectable houses line both sides of the Mall, the two most prominent buildings being the Roman Catholic chapel, and the great hotel, nearly opposite to it, built by the late Lord Sligo for the better accommodation of visitors to Westport. This hotel was once one of the most comfortable in Ireland. Under its first proprietor, Mr. Robinson, it obtained a deservedly high reputation, which was well sustained under the management of the late Mrs. Daly, who lost her life a few years ago in attempting to cross the Erriff river at night, the bridge having been swept away by a flood some few days previously.

The demesne of the Marquess, which is of considerable extent, is finely wooded, and within it is situated a pretty little Protestant church, at a convenient distance from

Drawn on Stone

*Market day*

the town. Some distance further on, stands Westport House, a commodious and massive structure, commanding splendid views of Clew Bay. The latter is studded with innumerable islands, and presents on a summer or autumn evening, when the sun is declining in the west, what Mr. Thackeray calls the most beautiful view he ever saw in the world, the smaller islands looking like so many dolphins and whales basking in a sea of gold; whilst in the centre rises the bold form of Clare Island, once a stronghold of the famous Grace O'Malley, whose edges, when Mr. Thackeray saw it, were bright cobalt, the middle being lighted up with a brilliant scarlet tinge, such as he would have laughed at in a picture, never having seen it in nature before, but looked at with wonder and pleasure, until the sun went down, and the hue disappeared. Prevailing over the scene, and visible for miles in every direction, is the celebrated conical mountain Croagh Patrick, from which, the legend tells us, the patron saint of Ireland precipitated into the sea all the venomous reptiles in the country. The shores of Clew Bay, in the neighbourhood of Westport, are so attractive, from the beauty of the scenery, that a large number of visitors resort thither in the bathing season, and numerous pretty lodges have been erected for their accommodation. By the last census, the population of Westport numbered 3,911, exceeding that of Castlebar by 950, and lower than that of Ballina by about 1,500 persons. This number includes a considerable portion of labouring men and artizans of a humble class, shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, nailors, etc. All these people have always suffered more or less distress in spring, from the want of employment, and there is but too much reason to fear that they

will suffer more severely this year from that cause than at any time during the last six or seven years.

The farming classes spent their money in the towns freely enough during the prosperous years that they have lately enjoyed; but the check that they sustained last season has had the natural effect of causing them to draw their purse-strings tight, and not to spend a penny which they can possibly avoid. Thus, trade is almost at a stand-still, money is not circulated as usual, and the artizans have no means of gaining their livelihood. It is true, the price of provisions is very moderate, potatoes selling in the market for 4½d. and 5d. a stone; Indian meal at £9 5s., and oatmeal at £13 10s. a ton; but as few of the artizan class have been provident enough to save money, of course when they are unable to earn they are unable to buy. Some of the people of this town sowed conacre last year, a system not much practised here, and these have sustained a considerable loss by the failure of their potato crop, the deficiency of which, in this neighbourhood, is estimated at one-half. The Marquess of Sligo, who owns nearly all the land surrounding the town, does not approve of the system; and all his tenants who hold under leases are bound not to give any conacre, whilst the tenants holding from year to year are not permitted to give it, except by special permission from the rent-office. Under all the circumstances, then, the result of my inquiries leads me to believe that there will be more than usual distress amongst the artizans of Westport in the ensuing spring, and that there may be extreme destitution in individual cases. An instance of the latter kind has been mentioned to me as having occurred a few weeks ago. It was the case of the family who, from

Sunday until Wednesday, had no food but a little weak gruel. The head of this family had been a car-driver. He broke his leg, and became incapacitated for work, but picked up a few shillings a-week by attending as a helper at Bianconi's establishment; finally, he became unable to support his wife and children, and to save themselves from starvation, the whole family were obliged to go into the workhouse. I mention this case, because it was one of the few that came under my notice, of persons who had never before received poor-law relief being obliged now to resort to it. Up to the present, nearly all the individuals who have recently obtained admission into the workhouses of this county had formerly been inmates of them, or were sick, aged, and infirm persons. There are many of the humbler classes and poorer inhabitants of Westport who even now are much pressed, and are obliged to pawn articles of furniture and dress in order to exist. Their distress will increase in severity as the season progresses; but I wish to guard myself against being supposed to countenance the idea that famine is to be apprehended either in the towns or in the rural districts of such parts of the country as I have yet examined. There are remote districts in Connemara and elsewhere, in which the poverty of the people (their normal condition) will be aggravated by the deficiency of the last harvest, and where the absence of a resident gentry will deprive them of a resource possessed by the inhabitants of other places to a greater or a lesser degree; but on the whole I believe the great mass of the small farmers and labouring population will be able to struggle through until the incoming of the next harvest. In Westport and the surrounding district the ordinary fuel of the

country, turf, is scarce and dear to an unprecedented degree, which partially results from the restriction that prevails on some of the estates. Some proprietors let their turf banks at rates ranging from £4 to £6, and in some cases even as high as £8 an acre. Considering the inexhaustible extent of bogs throughout the county of Mayo, I think that the landlords might evince greater liberality in dealing with their tenantry in this matter. On Lord Sligo's estate, I understand, there is no restriction imposed on the tenants, except such as is necessary to insure the cutting of the turf in a systematic and proper manner. A nominal rent is now charged for the turf banks, and the money thus realised is expended on the construction and maintenance of roads and drains through the bogs. Mr. Smith, Lord Sligo's agent, told me that in future he intends to insist on the tenants cutting and saving their turf in May; and all who neglect doing so will be compelled to pay a higher rent for the banks. This is a very good and proper arrangement; but I apprehend that the experience of the present season will produce such an impression on the minds of the people as to prevent the recurrence of a "fuel famine" from any neglect on their part. If they do not save their turf in future at the earliest possible moment, when they can do so without neglecting any other indispensable work, they will deserve to suffer. About six weeks ago there was much distress in Westport arising from the scarcity of fuel; but I am happy to say that the want was supplied by the prompt and energetic action of one or two gentlemen, who, without calling any meeting or appealing to public charity, provided from their own resources a quantity of coals for the poorer inhabi-

tants of the town at a reduced price. The credit of this benevolent act is principally due to Mr. William Livingstone, the leading merchant in Westport, who, when the supply of turf began to fail, saw the necessity of making some provision for the relief of the people without delay, and accordingly commenced the distribution of coals from his own stores so far back as the 18th of November last. On the 31st of October a large quantity of coals had been shipped at Glasgow for consignment to Mr. Livingstone; but when I was at Westport, the week before Christmas, none of the vessels had arrived, being detained by contrary winds, and there were then scarcely any coals remaining in the town. So great was the dearth, that Mr. Livingstone was obliged for a time to keep his distillery going by burning flour barrels and other timber; but all this time the distribution of coals to the poor was never suspended, and I need not say how vast an amount of suffering was averted by this timely assistance. The relieving officer of the union supplied Mr. Livingstone with the names of the persons who stood most in need of relief; and this, together with his local knowledge, and that of his sons, who are associated with him in business, enabled him to select with tolerable certainty the most deserving objects. The town was divided into districts, and a day fixed for the distribution of the coals, which were sold at the rate of 8d. per cwt., to about 600 families, representing over 2,000 persons. The giving of coals gratuitously was not adopted, both because of the demoralising effect which public charity is generally calculated to produce, and because the necessity for such a measure was not supposed to have arisen.

I regret to say that the spirit of manly independence, which would scorn to receive aid when not absolutely required, is much wanting amongst the people of this country; and if coals or anything else were supplied gratuitously, we might safely count on seeing the list of applicants swelled by persons possessed of ample means, who ought to be above such disgraceful mendicancy. It it most difficult to guard against imposition in these matters. I was told in Westport, that a man applied for coals, who is in constant employment, and in the receipt of between £50 and £60 a-year. The gentleman to whom he applied was well acquainted with his circumstances, and asked him if he were not ashamed to class himself amongst the poor, for whom alone the relief was intended. The man's reply was: "I know very well, sir, that I am able to buy fuel at the market price: but several of my neighbours, who are as well off as I am, are getting the coals, and I don't see why I should not get them too". It is well known that, during the famine years, many persons received assistance who were supposed to be in destitute circumstances, when in point of fact they had money and possessed valuable stock; and it is not to be wondered at, that the recollection of the frightful jobbery which then prevailed should deter the poor law authorities from sanctioning the system of outdoor relief, in a country where such abuses can exist. The distribution of coals in Westport has been managed discreetly, and hitherto the system has worked admirably. Several vessels have lately arrived laden with coals, so that the town is now amply provided for, and able to supply the wants of Castlebar and other places. I should mention that the Marquess of Sligo has coöperated with

Mr Livingstone in this good work. When his lordship was communicated with on the subject, he at once entered warmly into Mr. Livingstone's views, and undertook to provide any quantity of coals that was necessary for the supply of the town. The Dowager Marchioness of Sligo has generously given several hundred pairs of blankets and a quantity of warm clothing to the poor on the estate, these liberal gifts being distributed through the agency of several local clergymen. I am not in a position to enumerate all the kind acts of the noble proprietor of Westport and his family on this occasion, but I may safely state that they have worthily acquitted themselves of the duties and responsibilities of their station. The only employment given here at present on an extensive scale is that afforded by Mr. Livingstone, who is not merely the first merchant in Westport and in Mayo, but throughout the whole province of Connaught He has a brewery and distillery, four or five mills, and several large corn stores in the town, besides having mills and stores in Ballina, Ballinrobe, Clifden, Headford, and various other places throughout the province. The large amount of corn which he has always in store keeps down the price, and prevents small dealers from exacting exorbitant rates from the poor. In these days commercial success is attainable only by the combination of enterprise, energy, knowledge, and integrity; and in addition to those qualities, which have raised him to his present position, Mr. Livingstone has evinced others, which have won for him the respect and esteem of all classes of his fellow-townsmen.

With respect to the condition of the agricultural population in the country surrounding Westport, I have little

to say that differs materially from the observations I have made with reference to other parts of the country. The question is, can the farmers bear up against the triple loss of wheat, oats, and potatoes? I believe they can, with the exception of some very small holders, who are deeply indebted for guano and "loan money" to agents, shopkeepers, loan offices, and "gombeen" men (the name applied to country usurers of the peasant class), who are very numerous in this county. It is said that some of the gombeen men expect to lose largely this year, and if so, there can be no doubt that there will be much privation endured by some of the small farmers, who do not possess any stock which they can dispose of as a *dernier resort.* It would, indeed, be a most serious thing for all classes of the community if the country were afflicted with general and severe distress, resembling that of the famine time; for if I have rightly apprehended the temper and character of the people, they will neither go into the workhouses, nor starve patiently *en masse* as they did in the terrible years of '47–'48. It is a remarkable fact, that rents have never been better paid in this part of the country than during the last year. On the large estate of Lord Sligo, which extends into the Killeries, and on his property in other parts of the county, there have been no defaulting tenants. They are nearly all small holders, paying from £5 to £10 a year, and there are a few holdings under old leases at a very low rent. All these people have paid their rent without any pressure being put upon them, as I am informed; and this was also the case with the tenantry of Mr. Clive, M.P., at Ballycroy, in the north of the county opposite to the island of Achill. The

punctuality with which these rents have been paid is a proof that the tenants must have had money saved, when we also take into consideration the fact, that a great many of them have not yet threshed out their oats. I have seen the stacks still standing in the haggards, and my attention has been called to the circumstance by persons resident here, who have been struck by the falling off in the export of oats. Up to the latter end of December last, only seven vessels laden with oats left this harbour; whereas up to the same time in the year 1860, there were about fifteen, and there was at least double the quantity of oats in store this time last year that there is at present. A considerable quantity of potatoes has hitherto been grown in this locality for export, and the actual export of potatoes from Clew Bay in the year 1860 was fully 1,500 tons. In consequence of the loss now sustained, the farmers are not able to export any, as usual, but they will have as much as will supply their own wants in the great majority of cases until the latter end of April, when it is probable the pressure will begin to be felt. I have been informed that much improvement has taken place in the cultivation of the land in the vicinity of this town; and I was particularly struck by the number of snug farm-houses, and well fenced, well tilled farms both on the road leading from Ballinrobe to Westport, and on that from the latter to Castlebar. The Marquess of Sligo has taken pains to improve the condition of his tenantry and increase the value of his own property. He has had his lands "striped", or divided, and insists on the tenants building new houses, having three windows in front, and providing proper offices and sheds for their cattle. Some twelve or thirteen

years ago it was a common thing to see three or four cows tied up inside the farmer's dwelling, whilst the pig had the run of the house at all times, and was a recognized member of the family. The Marquess will not allow this practice to be carried on, and he has undoubtedly done much to reform the habits of his tenantry in this respect. He assists them to build their houses by giving timber from his woods for that purpose, and his lands are let at reasonable rents.

With regard to public works in this neighbourhood, I am not aware of any so urgently required as the rebuilding of the bridge over the Erriff river, which was swept away a few years ago by a terrific flood that destroyed a great many other bridges in the barony of Murrisk. The river Erriff, which runs between Leenane and Westport almost at the junction of the counties of Galway and Mayo, is at all times a considerable river, but when swollen by mountain floods becomes extremely dangerous to cross, and in attempting to make the passage life has already been sacrificed. The rebuilding of the bridge has hitherto been retarded by a dispute between the ratepayers of the barony of Murrisk and the grand jury of the county, respecting the parties by whom the cost should be borne. It appears that by law the building of all bridges is made a county charge; but the grand jury being of opinion that the inhabitants of certain baronies were making too many demands for these purposes on the county purse, entered into a bye-law that in future each barony should bear the expense of building and repairing its own bridges. The ratepayers of Murrisk naturally protest against being saddled with the heavy cost of constructing such a bridge as that over the Erriff

Forster & Co. Lith.

*A Spinning Party, 1846.*

river, but hitherto the grand jury have refused to undertake the work. The absence of a bridge here is a serious loss to the town and neighbourhood of Westport, as it stops intercourse with the western part of the county of Galway. It was hoped at one time that the people of the latter county would consent to pay a portion of the expense, inasmuch as the reconstruction of the bridge is almost of as much importance to them as to the inhabitants of Mayo; but they are not likely to yield to any suggestions of this kind. The railway, which is to have its terminus at Westport, will be opened as far as Claremorris in March. The construction of the line to Castlebar will then be proceeded with. Might it not be possible, also, to go on with the making of the earthworks from Westport to Castlebar, at the same time, with a view to give employment to the people? This appears to be a work in which the government might fairly be asked to assist by advancing money at a low rate of interest, and spreading the repayment of the loan over a long period. I have been forcibly struck with the great falling off in the domestic industrial habits of the peasantry in the several counties and districts that I have travelled through. Previous to 1846-48 the people were taught thrifty habits from necessity. Every cottier tenant or small farmer sowed a portion of flax every year, the manufacture of which kept the mother and daughters of the family usefully employed during the long winter nights, each member of the household taking a separate pride in the several branches of their industry. Some spun yarn to make fine linen; others spun wool sufficiently fine to make dresses for themselves and frieze coats for their fathers and brothers, who, in those days of

domestic industry, rarely bought wearing apparel at the shops. You might see on their little hedge-rows pieces of linen bleaching and frieze hung out to dry, having undergone the process of milling. The spinning-wheel not unfrequently formed an important item in the marriage portion of the farmer's daughter. To the praises of her good qualities as a housewife were added: "There was not a girl in the county could spin a finer thread of yarn, or make a better stocking". Many a pleasant winter's night was spent usefully and cheerfully when the boys and girls of Ireland used to assemble with their spinning-wheels at a neighbour's house, the busy hum of the wheels being kept tune to by a song and chorus. There was always some "pleasant boy" among the company, who told a story, or the travelling piper not unfrequently enlivened the scene, adding his quota of stories of the "ould people". In the country towns creels full of spinning-wheels might be seen every market day exposed for sale. All this appears to have passed away: and for what reason? In those days the people learnt thrifty habits from the fact that they rarely received cash payments for their labour. They were almost in every instance paid by cohacre which they took from their employers. The latter in the summer season also advanced oatmeal and potatoes; the poor labourer was always in debt to him; the account was only settled at intervals of six months, and whatever side the balance was, it was invariably carried orward to the next half-year's account. The substitution of cash payments is no doubt an improvement on the conacre system, but so far as the industrial habits of the people are concerned, there may be some reason

Forster & Co. Lith

*The Hoop Makers.*

for regretting the disuse into which that system has fallen. Since the long-to-be-remembered years of famine, the labourers have been regularly paid weekly in cash, and the result is, that the cottier tenants, and in many instances the sons of farmers, who receive a high rate of payment in consequence of the great diminution in the numbers of the labouring population, take their wages to the shops to buy, instead of manufacturing for themselves. The consequence at the present time is very perceptible. You will rarely see a suit of home manufacture worn by any of the peasantry, either male or female, particularly the latter, who spend their earnings in the neighbouring towns in the purchase of cotton dresses and striped petticoats, and have quite got out of the system of making their own clothing. Hoops, though generally worn now by the peasantry in many parts of the country, are not of an expensive sort, as I have known of the long willow switches that grow so luxuriantly in the bog gardens being cut, peeled, and boiled, to give them the requisite flexibility, then fastened round a barrel, or some like object, until they have become "set", and thus skilfully fashioned into this now indispensable article of female attire. It is, I am sorry to say, very rare indeed to hear the busy hum of the spinning-wheel. Each village, in those thrifty days now gone by, had its weaver, who was at all times kept fully employed, making either linen or frieze. In fact, in the present day, the peasant girls of Ireland in many districts do not know how to spin either linen or woollen yarn, and some cannot knit a stocking. I fear that the falling off of these thrifty and industrious habits will be severely felt at some future day, if the population in-

creases, and the labour market becomes overstocked. It would be well if the landlords of Ireland would endeavour to urge upon the people the necessity of relying to some extent on their own resources in this particular, and to revive a system from which in former times so much benefit has been derived. These observations apply more strongly to some parts of the West than to others. Flannel and frieze are still manufactured in many places in the county of Mayo, though not nearly to the extent of former times; but the linen trade has entirely disappeared, owing, in a great measure, to the introduction of the flax-spinning machinery, which inflicted so heavy a blow on the domestic industry of the farmers of the North of Ireland. The linen trade was once extensively carried on in this district, and some thirty or forty years ago, as many as 900 or 1,000 pieces were often measured and sold on a market-day in the town of Westport. There is no trade which affords such general employment as this, and its decline is a subject of deep regret to all who are interested in the prosperity of the people.

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## CHAPTER XV.

Castlebar.—"Gombeen" Men.—Principal Landowners.—The "Rundale" System.—Lord Lucan's Farm.

CASTLEBAR, January 18, 1862.

THIS is the county town of Mayo, though inferior in size and population both to Ballina and Westport. According to the last census, Castlebar contained a population of only 2,960, and the opinion of those who have been

acquainted with the town for many years past, is, that it has not recently made any advance in prosperity. It has one good street, containing several excellent shops, whose occupants appear to do a safe, if not a very active and flourishing business. The suburbs and back streets or lanes are wretched and poor-looking in the extreme, like those of all the country towns in the west of Ireland that I have visited. A village green, a large and well-kept gaol, and a huge deserted barrack are amongst the principal features of the town. There is a good deal of distress amongst the artizans and labouring classes, but not more at present than is usually to be found amongst them in ordinary years when employment is slack. The scarcity of fuel was at first felt very severely by the poor, but prompt and effective measures have been taken by the wealthier inhabitants of the town to alleviate the suffering arising from this cause. About three weeks before Christmas a fuel committee was formed, and £180 subscribed, to which Lord Lucan, the proprietor of the town and the principal landowner in the district, contributed £25. The leading members of the committee are: The Rev. Mr. Stoney, Rector; the Rev. Mr. M'Clelland, the Venerable Archdeacon Brown, P.P.; Mr. John Bole, Mr. Young, Mr. James Malley, Mr. Stritch, R.M.; Mr. John Dudgeon, Doctors Nott and M'Grale, and Mr. John Murphy, who acts as honorary secretary. The members of the committee went through the town and collected subscriptions from all the respectable inhabitants, who contributed promptly and liberally. They were thus enabled to provide the poor with a sufficiency of fuel for Christmas week; and ever since they have continued to supply them weekly in a most satisfactory manner; so

much so, that at a recent meeting of the committee there was an unanimous opinion expressed, that the humbler artizans, labourers, and poor householders of Castlebar are now comparatively well off in respect to fuel. The number of families receiving relief in this way is 330, and of these thirty only pay a reduced price for the coals which they receive, the remaining number being relieved gratuitously. There has been, I am happy to say, the most cordial unanimity evinced by all classes and denominations in this charitable work; and hitherto they have had every reason to be satisfied with the result of their exertions.

The union of Castlebar comprises 151,900 statute acres, the poor law valuation is £45,489, and in 1851 the population was 36,893, which has decreased during the last ten years, owing to emigration. The number of paupers in the workhouse is not large in proportion to the population; and though there has latterly been an increase in the admissions, compared with those of the corresponding period of the previous year, that increase is not larger than might have been anticipated from the unfavourable nature of the harvest and the unprecedented scarcity of fuel. The number of paupers in the workhouse on Saturday, the 11th of January, was 182; at the corresponding period of the previous year the number was 157, showing an increase of twenty-five. The majority of these were persons who had been previously in the workhouse, and, so far as I could ascertain, there were few, if any, applications for relief from any other class. The rates struck for the union are very low, the highest being 1s. 4d. or 1s. 6d. in the pound, for the electoral division of Castlebar, and the lowest 4d. in the

pound, for some of the more thinly peopled districts. As yet there has been no unusual distress in this town or neighbourhood from want of food. There are always some individuals who are pinched and straitened, even in the most favourable seasons; and, in the course of a month or two, this class will probably be involved in much suffering unless employment be provided for them. There is reason to believe, however, that the inhabitants of Castlebar and its vicinity will be better off in this respect during the coming spring than the people of many other localities; inasmuch as the railway is expected to be opened to Claremorris on the 1st of March, and the works will then be pushed forward to Castlebar as quickly as possible. It is also intended to commence the erection of a lunatic asylum for the county at large at a short distance behind the jail; and the amount of employment given by these two works, combined with the demand for agricultural labour—the extent and activity of which will depend greatly on the state of the weather—must have a powerful effect in preventing the destitution which would otherwise prevail.

The potatoes are bad; but the oat crop, though not yielding a large return, is equal to that of the previous year; and the small farmers or cottier tenants, the loss of whose principal food in 1846–47 at once reduced them to a state of starvation, do not exist to the same extent as in those years. I believe also that the majority of the small farmers, though they have suffered severe losses during the last two seasons, are still in a position to bear their present reverses, and will recover themselves if the ensuing harvest should prove a favourable one. The system of borrowing money from loan offices and "gom-

been" men is universally practised in this county; and as the rate of interest charged is enormously high, the unfortunate people who resort to this mode of obtaining money are constantly in a state of embarrassment, which an unfavourable season develops into one of distress. A "gombeen" man is one of the peasant-class who has contrived to accumulate some money, which he turns to account by lending to his poorer neighbours at usurious interest. For instance, suppose a loan of £1 is asked, the borrower only receives 17s. 7d.—1s. being stopped for interest, 3d. for the price of the card, 2d. for the I O U, and 1s. for the first instalment. Nineteen shillings must then be paid back to the lender in weekly instalments of one shilling each, and there is besides a fine of one penny in the pound imposed for every default in the weekly payment. Shopkeepers are also in the habit of selling meal and guano to the country people on credit, and charging high prices. The giving out of guano in this way is practised by some land agents, who sell quantities of it to the tenants in spring, the debt thus incurred to be paid at Christmas, and the price charged being seventeen and eighteen shillings per cwt. for what is selling in the market for cash at fourteen shillings per cwt. When the tenants come to pay their rent, this private debt is first demanded, and the landlord's rent must afterwards be forthcoming.

The result of this practice is injurious in many ways. Heretofore the farmers did not know what artificial manures were. They used seaweed, mud, and lime mixed, and farm-yard manure, which they collected laboriously and industriously throughout the year. Now, however, the facility of obtaining artificial manures en-

genders laziness and idleness. The small farmers will say: "What is the use of killing ourselves collecting manure? Sure, won't we get a cwt. of guano for sixteen or seventeen shillings, and no carting, or working, or trouble at all?" Accordingly, instead of consuming their own straw, as formerly, in turning it into manure, they sell it to the large farmers for that purpose, and buy guano, which, with the imperfect mode of tillage that they pursue, is by no means beneficial to the land. When a farmer sowed an acre of potatoes with farm-yard manure, he obtained in ordinary years a good crop, and had "soil" suited for grain in the following year, besides improving the land. Guano, on the contrary, forces a crop for one year, leaving the land almost useless for grain. Then, when the crop manured with guano chances to fail, which was universally the case last season in this part of the country, the cultivator loses not only his crop and his labour, but some £4 an acre which he has expended in the purchase of artificial manure; whereas formerly, in case of failure, he lost only his crop and his labour. Another point to be remarked is, that while these people are very chary of spending their money when they have to pay in cash for their purchases, they are so improvident that they will accept credit to any amount; and the facility afforded them by shopkeepers and sub-agents of obtaining guano "on time", induces them recklessly to incur debts which they must pay. The result of this is to be seen in the number of decrees for small sums which are obtained against them at every quarter sessions by shopkeepers, gombeen men, and others to whom they have become indebted. At Castlebar there were but few decrees obtained at the last

sessions, but at Westport there were a great many. At Swinford also there were over 400 undefended decrees; and it is expected that at the present sessions there will be double that number, the sums sought to be recovered varying from £1 to £3.

The principal landowners in the union are Lord Lucan, Lord Kilmaine, Sir Roger Palmer, and Sir Robert Lynch Blosse. Lord Lucan owns the greater part of the land in the immediate vicinity of Castlebar; but Lord Kilmaine has also a large number of tenants near the town, who have been told that if they require meal, his lordship's agent is ready to give them any quantity that may be necessary, at the present low market prices, for which payment will not be demanded until Christmas. Up to the present there have not been any applicants for the meal on these terms, which would seem to show that Lord Kilmaine's tenants have a sufficient quantity of potatoes for some time to come, and will probably not find it necessary to avail themselves of his offer until late in the spring. They have paid their rents without pressure, as I am informed, and I also learn that there has not been a single defaulting tenant on Lord Lucan's estate. Sir Roger Palmer, whose estates are very extensive, has a comfortable class of tenants. His lands are reasonably let, and there is a considerable number of outstanding leases on his property. Mr. Thomas Ormsby, agent of Sir Roger Palmer, has been latterly supplying coals at half-cost price to the tenants on the Mayo and Sligo estates, giving them time for payment, and blankets have been gratuitously distributed amongst the poorer persons on the property, such as widows who stand in need of assistance. Lords Kilmaine and Erne have acted

in a similar manner, so that on the whole, the leading proprietors of this district have shown that they are not unmindful of the claims upon them in this emergency.

There has been a considerable improvement of late years in the cultivation of the land in this county in the neighbourhood of the towns, but in the mountainous districts, and especially in the more northern portions, agriculture is still in a very backward state. The wretched system of rundale, once so prevalent, has now almost disappeared. The principal landlords have had the greater part of their lands "striped": that is to say, the holding of each tenant is portioned out to him in one place; his cottage is built on it, and his farm is separated by proper fences from the holdings of his neighbours. The system of rundale tenure has been thus described: "In some instances a tenant having any part of a townland, had his proportion in thirty or forty different places, and without fences between them, it being utterly impossible to have any, as the portions were so numerous, and frequently so very small, that not more than half a stone of oats was required to sow one of those divisions". Thus every tenant considered himself entitled to a portion of each various quality of land in his townland, and the man who had some good land at one extremity, was sure to have some bad at the other, and a bit of middling in the centre, and bits of other quality in odd corners, each bounded by his neighbour's property, and without any fence or ditch between them. Fights, trespasses, confusions, disputes, and assaults were the unavoidable consequences of this system. These evils, in their various forms, were endless, and caused great loss of time and expense to the people attending petty sessions, and, of

course, continued disunion among neighbours was perpetuated. The system, too, was a complete bar to any attempt at improvement, as on a certain day all the cattle belonging to the townland were brought from the mountains and allowed to run indiscriminately over the arable land, and persons who had not their potatoes dug or other crops off the ground were much injured. Neither could any one man venture to sow turnips, clover, or other green crops, for nothing short of a seven-feet wall would keep out the mountain sheep. To add to this, no one would attempt to manure better or otherwise improve his proportion, as his neighbours' cattle only would have the benefit, and in spring no individual occupier of the division would labour in the field before a certain day, when the cattle were again sent to the hills until after harvest; and should any of them, more industrious or enterprising than the others, reclaim a portion of the bog or mountain, it would be taken from him as soon as he had obtained one crop off it, and it would forthwith be divided among all the tenants in the townland in proportion to the rent which each paid.

It is obvious that the first step to the introduction of improved methods of agriculture was to put an end to this rundale system, which is being done by the "striping" or "squaring" of the lands. There are many instances, however, of lands being held in Rundale on joint lease where the tenants have been comfortable and prosperous, though the appearance of their cabins would lead one to suppose that they were plunged in the deepest poverty. Cloonkeen, a village midway between Westport and Castlebar, on Lord Lucan's estate, is an example of this kind. It goes by the *soubriquet* of

"Cabbagetown", from the immense quantity of that excellent vegetable cultivated there; but the inhabitants are not pleased at the name, and any stranger who ventured to utter aloud the obnoxious epithet in the hearing of the villagers would probabably find himself assailed with a shower of cabbage-stalks, if not with missiles of a more formidable character. The people keep a large number of milch cows, and carry on a profitable trade by supplying the towns with milk, butter, and cabbage. All of them are well off, and several are persons of wealth for their station in life, being possessed of some hundreds of pounds each, which they lend out at "gombeen". Cloonkeen is a curiosity of dirt, irregularity, and confusion. One-half of the village fell out of lease recently, and the rents, which were very low, were raised. None of the tenants were disturbed, with the exception of one person, a woman, who was ejected in consequence of her troublesome disposition.

There is another rundale village, called Derrycoosh, about three miles from Castlebar, on the Newport road, which exhibits in an exaggerated form all the characteristics of the village I have just described. The cottages are built most irregularly, here, there, and everywhere—some parallel with the road, others at right angles with it. The walls are black, green, and brown—in short, every colour but white; there is scarcely a clean thatch to be seen; every cabin has its pond of liquid and its heap of solid manure directly opposite and within a few feet of the door; the road through the village is ankle deep in mud; and pigs, poultry, and children are to be seen running about in every direction. Words fail to convey an adequate idea of the filthy and disorderly

## CHAPTER XVI.

**Belmullet.—Newport, its trade and population.—Ballycroy.—Emigration.—Bangor.—Dearth of fuel.—High rents.—Revival of the Kelp manufacture.—Tax upon industry.—Wretched condition of the inhabitants of "the Mullet".**

BELMULLET, Erris, Co. Mayo, Jan. 22.

THIS little town is situated almost at the extreme north-west of the county of Mayo, and at the most inland point of Blacksod Bay, justly reputed one of the finest harbours in the world. To the east of Belmullet is Broadhaven Bay, the waters of which approach close to the town by a narrow and rather tortuous channel, and a communication between the two bays has been effected by means of a canal made during the famine years, through which vessels of 120 or 130 tons burden can pass at full tide, thereby avoiding the dangerous headland of Erris. The town is built on an exceedingly narrow isthmus connecting the mainland with "the Mullet" —a tongue of land of very peculiar shape, about fourteen miles in length, and the southern extremity of which forms one of the headlands that protect the entrance into Blacksod Bay. By the making of the canal "the Mullet" has been converted into an island, and communication between it and the town is obtained by means of a drawbridge, which, I regret to say, is too often out of order. Belmullet is a completely modern town, having sprung into existence within the last thirty years. Its population is about 1,000, and on fair and market days there appears to be a good deal of business transacted. There are several extensive traders here

—extensive, I mean for a small country place—some of whom have realized considerable fortunes; and there are two hotels, which are better than I expected to find in so remote and wild a locality. A public car conveys mails and passengers daily to and from Ballina, and there is also a constant communication kept up between Belmullet and Westport by hookers running along the coast and passing through Achill Sound.

Before entering into any details respecting the condition of the people in Belmullet and its immediate neighbourhood, to the examination of which I have devoted several days, I shall refer to some other places that I visited on my way here. After leaving Castlebar I proceeded to Newport, a small town situated on Clew Bay, about nine miles from Castlebar and six from Westport. It is of some antiquity, but was a miserable and unimportant place until within the last forty years. During the time of the famine the present harbour was constructed, and within the last year or two a sum of £900 was expended in dredging the harbour, deepening the channel of the river, and other improvements. The trade chiefly carried on is with Glasgow and Liverpool, consisting in the exportation of breadstuffs, flour, and meal, manufactured in the extensive mills here, and the importation of general cargoes. The population of Newport, according to the last census, numbers 860 persons, showing a decrease since 1851. These comprise many labouring men, whose chief dependence was on the produce of their conacre crop of potatoes, which has proved as great a failure as elsewhere. Employment would enable them to tide over their difficulties until the coming in of the new potatoes; but, in order to be effectual and

adequate to the occasion, it must be given on a more extended scale than has hitherto been usual in this district. Living so close to the sea, one might naturally suppose that the people of Newport have some resources in the way of fishing; but the contrary is the case. The quantity of fish taken by fishermen in their small open boats is quite inconsiderable. The people here are wholly ignorant of the art of fishing, and have neither the lines, nets, nor boats necessary to enable them to fish with any chances of success. I believe I do not exaggerate their deficiency in this respect, when I say that there is not a single decked boat along the coast from Newport to Achill.

Although surrounded by bogs, turf has latterly been always scarce and dear in this town, because of the restrictions placed by some landlords on the cutting of it for sale, and the high rent charged by others for their turf banks. Four pounds an acre for bog is not an unusual price in this locality, and I have heard of other places in the country where the rent is as high as £8 an acre. The suffering for want of fuel was so great, and the consequences threatened to be of so serious a nature, that a local committee was formed here early in the month of December, for the purpose of providing coals for the poor. A sum of £60 was collected for this purpose, and a cargo of coals purchased and distributed at the rate of 6d. and 7d. per cwt. to the poorer inhabitants of the town. Sir Richard O'Donnell, Bart., who is the proprietor of Newport, and of a large tract of land in the neighbourhood, has also contributed much to the relief of the people by the gratuitous distribution of a

Forster & Co Lith.

Fisherman.
(Co. Mayo)

large quantity of turf, which he had saved in the early part of the season.

The Newport union is a large one, embracing an area of 159,510 statute acres; but so many of these are waste, that the poor law valuation is only £12,729, and the population in 1851 was but 15,379 persons. Compared with the population, the number of the paupers now in the Newport workhouse is larger than that of most of the other unions in this county, and the increase over the number of inmates at the corresponding period of the previous year is also greater in proportion. On the 4th of January, 1862, the number of paupers in the house was 106, being an increase of 31 over the number of inmates on the 5th of January, 1861.

The holders of land all belong to the class of small farmers, with the exception of a few Scotchmen, who took large farms at low rents during the bad times, and have turned them to good account. Their holdings are at once recognized by the large, well-fenced, well-drained, clean-looking fields, the high cultivation of which evinces an amount of agricultural knowledge and skill infinitely in advance of that possessed by the small farmers surrounding them, who have neither the skill, the capital, nor, I must add, the encouragement necessary to enable them fully to develop the capabilities of the soil. The position in which these small farmers find themselves at present is this:—They have lost fully one-half of their potatoes, and their oat crop is not a good one, being heavy in the straw and light in the grain. The cultivation of green crops, such as turnips and mangel wurzel, has made but little progress among this class, and I apprehend that some of them will find a difficulty in providing a suffi-

ciency of fodder for their stock. Nearly all of them have cows, pigs, geese, etc., and as they have, generally speaking, been able to pay the last gale of rent, I do not doubt but that they will contrive to pull through the year, though at the cost of much privation. The scarcity of fuel is, of course, pressing on them with great severity, but by dint of extraordinary exertions they hitherto have been able to scrape together as much as serves for the purposes of cooking, if not of comfort, and before the expiration of two months we may reasonably expect that the "fuel famine" will be amongst the things of the past, to be remembered as a salutary warning against procrastination for the future.

From Newport I proceeded to Ballycroy, an extremely wild and beautiful district of country, bordering on the sea and lying opposite to the island of Achill, whose lofty mountains, rising in some places precipitously from the ocean, form conspicuous and imposing features of the scene. The road leads for some distance along the shores of Clew Bay, of which many fine views are obtained; and afterwards, on entering the region known as Ballycroy, we pursue our way along the base of noble hills, winding round numerous creeks and inlets of the sea, which indent the shore so deeply that they sometimes present the appearance of inland lakes. The coast scenery of Mayo is, indeed, singularly grand and picturesque, equalling in beauty and wildness that of many other places more highly praised because more frequented and better known. The population of this extensive district is very thin. Except at a few points along the sea shore and on the mountain slopes, there are scarcely any houses to be seen. The greater part of the country

is a complete desert. As far as the eye can reach, the brown moor extends on every side, bounded by the sea in one direction, and encompassed on all the others by a framework of mountains covered to their summits with peat.

The amount of waste land in Ballycroy alone would give employment and subsistence to the whole of the unemployed population of Mayo, and there are thousands of acres of reclaimable bog, which might be brought into cultivation at a comparatively trifling expense. The first step, if the reclamation of these waste lands were attempted on a large scale, would be to carry out a proper system of drainage—a work which, if efficiently done throughout the whole of the West of Ireland, with respect to the arable land now under tillage, would more than double its value. But to all appearances the reclamation of the waste lands of Mayo seems to be one of those things which are destined to remain a matter of theory and speculation, and never to be carried into practical realization. The landlords have neither the capital nor the enterprise to undertake the work themselves, and the people will not be allowed to do it on terms that would remunerate them for their labour. Nay, more, the population is not now large enough for the efficient cultivation of what has been already reclaimed; and so fearful are some gentlemen of allowing the people to increase to an extent that would lead to a confiscation of their properties in the event of another famine such as that of 1846–47, that they are endeavouring to place a restriction on the increase of population by the most stringent prohibition of the subdivision of holdings. So far as this rule only prevents that minute subdivision of farms,

which is undoubtedly one of the causes of the backward state of Irish agriculture, it is to be commended But it may be, and in some instances I think has been, carried too far, with this result, that large numbers of the young people, not having means to marry and live at home, are flying to America whenever they can obtain funds sufficient to pay their passage. The civil war now in progress between the Northern and Southern States has for the present put a stop to emigration; but when peace shall have been restored, I anticipate that the emigrant ships will again be crowded with voluntary exiles from the western counties of Ireland. Should this anticipation turn out to be correct, it will be a grave question for the government, whether they should not endeavour to devise some measures which, by enabling the people to live comfortably at home, will put a stop to so fearful a drain of the bone and sinew of the land.

I found the inhabitants of Ballycroy better off both as regards food and fuel than the people of many other districts in Mayo. There is unquestionably a scarcity of turf; but the contiguity of the bogs enables the people to get as much as will supply their wants, though at times some of them may be sorely straitened. By some, the yield of the potatoes is estimated at half a crop. Others, with whom I agree, think the return larger, a good deal of fresh moor having been planted with potatoes last year, and the tubers having thriven better in that description of land than in any other. The produce of the oat crop is, at the lowest calculation, about three-fourths of that of the previous year, which it must be remembered was not a large one. On the other hand, in this part of the country the quantity of stock kept is considerable, the

mountains and moors affording an unlimited extent of tolerably good pasture both for sheep and cattle; so that, on the whole, I do not fear that very much distress will be found amongst the inhabitants of this locality in the ensuing spring.

Mr. Clive, M.P., who is the owner of a large estate in Ballycroy, is spoken of as a very fair landlord; his lands are moderately let compared with those of neighbouring proprietors. He will not give any leases, but I believe that all who hold under this gentleman feel themselves perfectly secure so long as they fulfil the obligations they have contracted towards him. Mr. Birch, an English gentleman, holds a large farm under Mr. Clive, and employs constantly throughout the year thirty or forty men. Mr. Birch holds the office of a county court judge in England, but he spends every day that he can spare at Ballycroy, and it is said keeps all these persons at work more for the sake of giving employment than for any profit he can hope to derive from their labours on his farm.

From Ballycroy I went to Bangor, a little village, situated about ten miles from Belmullet, in the barony of Erris. Here the loss of the potato crop is considered to be greater than at Ballycroy. Many persons living near the Glenamoy river suffered greatly last season from the floods which spread over the fields, carrying destruction wherever they went, and rendering the potatoes unfit for any purpose save food for pigs. The inhabitants of this district must, therefore, suffer more or less from a deficiency of food, and they are now suffering severely from an almost total want of fuel. I have been assured on good authority, that instances have occurred in the parish

of Bangor and Poula Thomas of persons having been obliged to go to bed without their supper in consequence of not having fuel to cook it, whilst others have been compelled to get their food cooked in the houses of their neighbours, who were fortunate enough to have secured a small supply of turf. Brambles, heather, the dry sods of fences, and such like things, are in constant requisition here. Bog timber is to be had in abundance; but the labour of procuring it is very great, and when taken out of the bog it requires nearly as much time to dry as the wet turf.

The country between Bangor and Belmullet is for the most part a vast tract of bog, with small patches of arable land few and far between. The cultivated parts are badly tilled, and the cottages of the people are of the worst description, indicative of a very low standard of comfort amongst their inhabitants, if not of the most abject poverty. I noticed in many of the haggards a tolerably good supply of oats; and this circumstance would lead a stranger, unacquainted with the habits and circumstances of the people of Erris, to form a most erroneous conclusion as to their actual condition. How can these people be badly off, it might be said, as long as they have such a quantity of oats to sell? All very true, *if* they have the oats to sell; but what if the oats were sold before they became ripe, and the price already expended in the purchase of provisions? I was assured that such is the case with the majority of the small farmers of Erris, which is probably entitled to the unenviable distinction of being the poorest barony in Ireland. The people are always in debt; the rents are screwed up to the highest penny; their payment is insisted on with the strictest punctuality;

and the small farmers are often reduced to such straits to make up their rents, to procure seed, and to provide themselves with food during the couple of months that precede the coming in of the new harvest, that it is a common practice to borrow money from corn merchants by selling them the crops before they have arrived at maturity. If the harvest should prove a bad one, the farmer alone suffers, as the contract with the merchant is to sell him the produce of the crop at the market price, and it may often happen that the amount which the farmer has to sell will not realize a sum equal to that which he has borrowed. He thus remains indebted to the merchant, and a portion of his next crop is pledged for the payment of that debt. In this way the liabilities of some of the farmers go on accumulating until the wonder is how they can bear up against so heavy a burden. This vicious system is due partly to the improvidence of the people themselves, but mainly, as I collect, to the high rents which they are compelled to pay, and which, in many cases are so excessive that the tenant is barely able to live, and utterly unable to save.

*Primâ facie* considering the manner in which the land is cultivated, and the miserable condition of the people, I should say that the landlords of Erris are not a very indulgent class, and offer but few inducements to their tenants to exert themselves in the improvement of their holdings. This conclusion, to which I have come from my unassisted personal observation, is confirmed by all I have heard as to the mode of treatment adopted towards their tenants by a great number of the proprietors in this barony. There are not many very extensive proprietors in Erris. If there were, the tenants might expect more

kindness and consideration. In lieu of great territorial magnates, we have here a number of petty landlords, some of whom, not content with living quietly, must attempt the style of men having vastly superior incomes, and are therefore obliged to put the highest rent on their land that they can manage to obtain. Of course, in a well-regulated state of society, no one would offer more for the land than it was worth; but in Ireland land is life, and the competition existing amongst the people so keen that men will offer any amount, no matter how extravagant, in order to get into possession of the farms for which they are bidding. Then the needy landlords must always have their rent, no matter how unfavourable the season may have been, or how inconvenient it may be at the moment for the tenant to pay. There is no such thing known in Erris as a hanging gale. The half-year's rent must always be paid soon after it is due; and I have been informed of one landlord who invariably insists on payment the day after the rent falls due, the penalty for non-compliance being eviction. This gentleman avowed on oath before the assistant-barrister some time ago, that this was his practice, and defended it plausibly enough, by saying that he thought it better to collect his rents when they became due, instead of allowing arrears to accumulate; and that his tenants having contracted to pay at a particular time, he considered himself entitled and justified to insist on the fulfilment of their agreement. The occasion on which this statement was made was not a little remarkable. It appeared that a tenant on this property had paid his rent either before or on the day it became due to one of the bailiffs, who absconded without accounting to his master for the moneys he had received.

A few days after the gale day, another bailiff called at the tenant's house, and distrained for the rent which had been paid. The tenant resisted, and was assaulted by the bailiff, who carried off with him a cow, and placed it in his master's pound. No regular distraining notice had been served at this time, but on the evening of that day the bailiff returned with a distraining notice, which had been written by his master in the interval, and served it upon the tenant. For this proceeding the tenant processed his landlord for an illegal distress and assault. The receipt for the rent having been produced, the illegality of the distress was established, and Sir Colman O'Loghlen, before whom the case was tried, expressed in strong terms his reprobation of the whole transaction. As there was no reason to believe that the landlord knew of the payment of the rent, and as the cow had sustained no injury by having been impounded, Sir Colman said that if the landlord had not recognized the act of the bailiff in the first instance, but returned the cow to the tenant, and served a proper distraining notice in the regular way, and then levied the distress, he would have inflicted only a nominal penalty; but to mark his disapproval of the course that had been taken, he decreed the landlord in the sum of £3 and costs. Of course, the tenant who had the temerity to make his landlord amenable for his illegal conduct knew too well the consequence of such an act, and at once vacated his holding and betook himself elsewhere.

I have been credibly informed that some landlords, not content with charging a rack rent, have imposed a tax on the industry of their tenants, which appears to me to be in the highest degree arbitrary and unjust.

the southern division of the island who are likely to suffer most during the coming spring. They are more numerous, and contain amongst them a greater number of wretchedly poor persons than are to be found in other parts of Erris within so small a compass. They are also worse off than the people of any other part of Mayo that I have yet seen with respect to fuel. There are no bogs, or next to none, in the district. Heretofore the people were in the habit of obtaining their supply of turf from the Island of Achill, but the dearth of fuel which prevails there also has deprived them of that resource. The further removed they are from the mainland, the greater will be their distress; and that is the position of the inhabitants of Fallmore, a small village at the extreme southern point of the island, the property of an English clergyman named Palmer, who some two years ago evicted nearly half the village. The people of this place have to travel twelve or fourteen miles to buy an ass-load of turf, for which they pay one shilling, being treble its price in ordinary years, which they economize as well as they can by burning it with bits of stick, old bog scraws, and dry sods from the fences whenever they can procure any. The condition to which they are reduced is indeed most pitiable; and it must be remembered that these people are not suffering from any neglect of their own, because there is no bog near them, and they had always to purchase their supply at a distance.

In other respects they appear to be amongst the most miserable of human beings. Poverty is apparent in the furniture of their houses, their patched and ragged garments, their listless, hopeless, woebegone aspect. Their cottages, situated close beside the sea, are built of huge

blocks of red granite, but whilst the walls are strong and firm, the thatch appears to have long been in a decaying state, and to afford but a poor protection against the cold and rain. Their beds consist of a few sticks laid across two piles of stones and covered with a bundle of straw. The bed clothing is scanty and of the most wretched kind, often consisting of an old thin quilt, without any blankets. In every house I saw either a pig, a cow, or a donkey. In two of the houses into which I went, men were lying sick, and the fires that smouldered on the hearth could not afford warmth or comfort to the poor invalids. In another house a pale hollow-eyed woman, having a sickly-looking infant in her arms, and surrounded by a troop of ragged, hungry-looking children, addressed the gentleman who accompanied me in Irish, with an energy of gesticulation and a fluency of speech that I am sure must have been full of eloquence, for it was the passionate pleading of a mother for her children. My companion told me that she said she and her children would go into the workhouse, but they would not be received unless her husband went in also, and he did not like to give up the bit of land. I thought it would be difficult to find another community exceeding in wretchedness of appearance the village of Fallmore; but I had not proceeded far when my attention was directed to a collection of hovels such as I should think is not to be found elsewhere in Ireland. These were the abodes built by some of the persons evicted from Fallmore. They are composed of large pieces of granite found on the beach and rudely placed together. The roofs are very nearly flat, and each hovel is so low that an ordinary man cannot stand upright in it, and so small, that it

can hardly contain three or four persons at the same time. In attempting to enter one of these extraordinary dwellings my head came in unpleasant contact with a stone over the doorway, a circumstance which compelled me to retreat from such a scene of misery. These people each cultivate half an acre or so of poor sandy soil, from which they have obtained a sufficient quantity of potatoes to last them for another month or so; but when these are exhausted, I do not know how they are to exist, for they do not appear to have any stock, and I am sure they have no money.

There is still another strange assemblage of huts also situate on the margin of the sea, about midway between Fallmore and Belmullet. This place is known as Sebastopol, an ironical name given to it by the inhabitants themselves, for what reason I am unable to say. The occupants of these wretched sod cabins (for such is the material of which they are built), had been from time to time evicted from different properties. They squatted here, and rent small patches of land, on which they grow potatoes. They also keep some pigs and fowl, and the women endeavour by begging to add to the resources of the family. I saw a pit opened in which one of these families had their potatoes stored. Some had rotted in the pit, and the sound ones in general were not larger than ordinary-sized gooseberries. Your readers can judge for themselves whether such a crop can supply these people with food much longer. For my part, I have no doubt that many of the persons living in the three places which I have attempted to describe must, if not otherwise assisted, seek relief within the walls of the workhouse. Most fortunately, the season, though wet, has hitherto

been mild and favourable, and the poor are getting through the winter much better than could have been reasonably expected in the month of November. Had we anything like the piercing frosts and heavy falls of snow which prevailed during the previous winter, the sufferings of the people in this remote district would have been appalling, and death in many instances the inevitable consequence. The comparatively warm weather with which we have been blessed has saved us from witnessing such scenes; and a dry spring and summer, accompanied, as we may anticipate, by a more than usual amount of agricultural employment, will, I trust, enable the people generally to encounter the food difficulty with equal success.

The number of paupers in Belmullet workhouse on Saturday, the 10th instant, was 138, being an increase of 42 over that in the corresponding period of the previous year. The house is calculated to contain 325 persons. The present inmates are thus classed: 32 able-bodied paupers, 9 males, and 23 females, 57 infirm, and 49 children. The highest rates struck for the union in October, 1861, were 3s. 4d. in the pound, for Binghamstown North, 3s. 4d. for Knockaduff, and 3s. each for Binghamstown South, Belmullet, and two other electoral divisions. The estimated rates required to meet expenditure up to the 29th September, 1862, were 3s. 7d. for Binghamstown North, 4s. 9d. for Binghamstown South, and 4s. 1d. for Belmullet; and the guardians have incurred the censure of the commissioners for not having at once made these rates. The lowest rate struck was 1s. 6d. in the pound, for the division of Glenamoy. The area of the union comprises 177,932 statute acres; the poor law valuation is £10,716, and the population in 1851 was 17,336.

## CHAPTER XVII.

**Belmullet continued.—Village of Tip and its Fishery.—The "Curraghs".—State of the northern portion of "the Mullet".—The Relief Committee.—A Landlord's suggestion for the prevention of future famines.—Mr. J. S. Mill on the evils of the cottier system.**

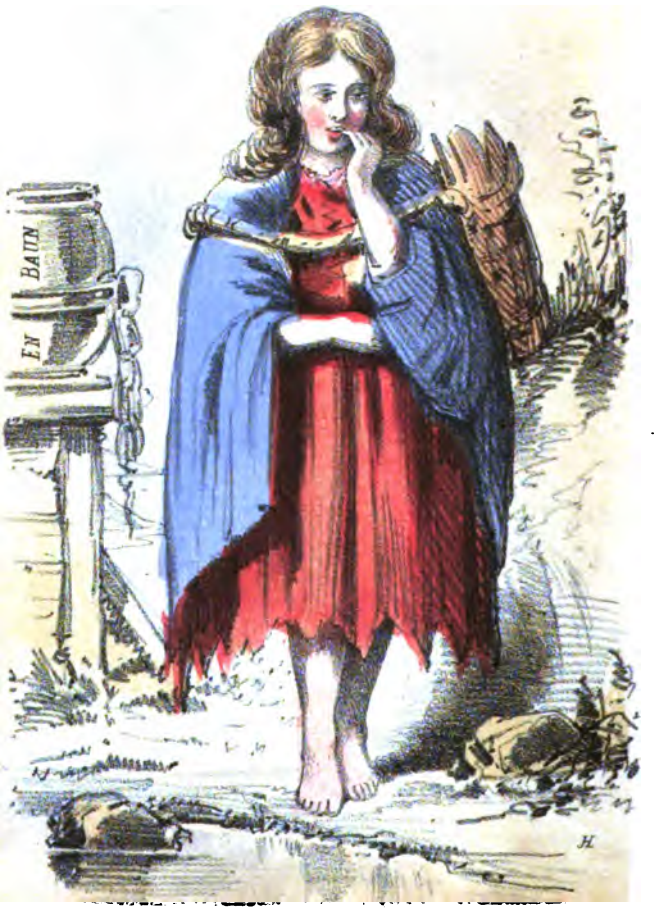
BELMULLET, Erris, Co. Mayo, Jan. 25.

THE Irish fisheries being admittedly one of the most valuable of the neglected resources of this country, it may be interesting to mention some details of the little fishing village of "Tip", as it is called, four miles from this town, on the northern coast, where, in favourable weather, a large supply of excellent fish is obtained, and of the efforts which have been made to establish the curing system at this place, and thus to render available the teeming waters of Broadhaven Bay and of the adjoining coast. This fishery has been in active operation about ten years, when the curing of fish was commenced. There is a numerous fishing population; but, like almost all the fishermen on the Irish coast, they are but imperfectly provided with the materials and appliances necessary for the successful pursuit of their calling except under the most favourable circumstances; and their operations, being so much dependent on the state of the weather, are, consequently, carried on in an irregular, precarious, and unsatisfactory manner. These people live in a village—if I can apply the term to a number of wretched cabins scattered over the surface of a bog and at considerable distances from each other,—lying adjacent to Blind Harbour, a little creek near the entrance into

Broadhaven Bay. The fishing ground is situated a few miles from Blind Harbour; and the latter, though the only place within convenient distance into which boats can run, has an entrance so dangerous that, when the wind is blowing from the north, it is impossible to leave or to enter it with safety. When I visited the locality the weather was comparatively calm, nevertheless there was a tremendous sea rolling into the harbour, which would have effectually prevented any of the fishermen from venturing out, and in which it would have been possible only for a lifeboat to live.

Some ten years ago the immediate lessee of the land adjoining this harbour, being anxious to develop the fishery, erected stores for the curing of fish, and built houses for the accommodation of a party of coast-guards, who have ever since been stationed here. The stores have been let to various parties successively, and the curing of haddock, cod, ling, etc., has been carried on extensively for several years past, but hitherto without much success in a pecuniary point of view. The causes of the failure I am unable to state with certainty. I have been told that the supply of fish was irregular and scanty in some seasons, owing to the stormy weather, and, on the other hand, I cannot help thinking that the business has not been skilfully managed. The stores have recently been taken by a new firm, and it is to be hoped that the speculation will prove more profitable in their hands than in those of their predecessors. I have not the slightest doubt that with proper management this fishery may be made a valuable one, and that, if a secure harbour were provided for the fishermen, its value might be indefinitely increased. It is said that a suitable harbour could

The boats used by the fishermen are not such as would enable them to put to sea, except when the weather is very calm, and even then they cannot prudently venture very far off the coast, as they might do if they had large decked hookers, specially built for the purpose. At the same time the "curraghs", frail as they are, being composed merely of thin hoops or laths covered with tarred calico, are wonderfully safe, and will stand a heavy sea nearly as well as a life-boat. Their extreme lightness enables them to skim buoyantly over the surface of the water, and to evade the fury of the waves that would swamp a heavier and stronger boat. A story is told of an Arran fisherman who was once on board a large vessel when a violent storm arose which threatened her safety. Believing his life in danger, the Arran man exclaimed in an ecstasy of terror: "Let me out, let me out; let me into my curragh!"—the only place where he would consider himself to be safe under the circumstances. I may mention an instance that occurred not very long ago at "Tip", which affords another illustration of the safety and good sea-going qualities of the curraghs. A gentleman who had rented the curing-store conceived the project of sending fish by steamer to Galway, either for sale there or to be forwarded by railway to Dublin. On a particular day he had his steamer ready, with five hundred hampers on board for the reception of the fish, and he wrote a letter stating that if the "Tip" fishermen did not procure a supply for him by the next morning, he would never again purchase another fish from them. He was told by the gentleman to whom he wrote that the weather was stormy, that fishing was dangerous, and that even if the fish could be obtained, his steamer could not




Lowes & Co. lith.

*Fisherman's Child.*

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put to sea. However, the letter having been read to the fishermen, they resolved to venture out in one of the roughest seas they had ever encountered. They were fortunate, and returned between ten and eleven o'clock, a.m., laden with fish of all kinds. The steamer came out of Broadhaven Bay to meet them, but could not resist the heavy sea, and was obliged to bear up and return to port, whilst the fishermen in their little curraghs came in safely, having successfully performed their part. But though the curraghs are tolerably safe at all times, and serve their intended purpose admirably in fine weather, it is obvious that boats of a larger, stronger, and different description altogether must be employed, if the fishing is to be carried on regularly and systematically, instead of by fits and starts as at present; and for such boats a safety harbour is indispensable.

The fishermen seem to be rather a careless, indolent, improvident class of men, arising, in all probability, from the precarious nature of their occupation. Their life when at sea is a very hard one, and when fortune favours them they spend their gains recklessly, and lounge about in idleness until the weather enables them again to go out to the fishing ground. Each boat is generally owned by four men, who divide the profits equally. Like the small farmers, who have so often sold their oats before they became ripe, the fishermen were constantly in the habit of obtaining advances of money from the owners of the curing stores, to be repaid by the fish which they caught. The result of this system has been to involve many of them hopelessly in debt, and when the fishing failed, the persons who advanced the money had to put up with the loss. In this way, I understand, the last

proprietor of the fish-curing establishment sustained such heavy losses that he thought it prudent to abandon the speculation altogether, and the stores have now passed into other hands.

If the weather allows the fishermen to pursue their occupation without much interruption during the spring and summer, the amount of distress amongst them cannot be considerable; but should the season be stormy and unfavourable, there may be a scarcity of food in May, and in some cases earlier. Looking at the dwellings of these people, one would be inclined to regard them as the most oppressed, degraded, wretched beings on the face of the Earth. The burrows of the African Bushmen can scarcely be filthier or more devoid of the comforts and decencies of civilized life. As well as I could judge, there are about sixty houses, which, at an average of five to each family, would give a population of 300 persons, though I have heard the number estimated at nearly 500.

The northern part of "the Mullet", in which these houses are, differs very much from the southern division. The latter, except at one point, called Termon Hill, is all a flat surface of light moory and sandy soil; the former is more undulating, much greater in width, composed almost entirely of bog, and the highest point, forming one of the headlands of Broadhaven Bay, is 285 feet above the level of the sea. Near the town of Belmullet a great deal of the original bog has been reclaimed, and now produces excellent crops of oats, turnips, and potatoes. I observed also several snug cottages—snug at least in comparison with those in other parts of the island. But as we approach the fishing village at the

northern extremity of the Mullet, we find that there has been very little done in the way of reclamation, and the cottages built in the midst of the bog, and entirely composed of large sods of turf, are of the most miserable kind that it is possible to conceive. None of them have any windows, and few possess proper doors. The base of the turf walls is simply a ridge of the original bog, the interior space having been excavated, and a trench cut round it outside. These wretched abodes seem to be neither air nor water tight. I went into one of the best of them, judging from its appearance, and I was informed by a gentleman who accompanied me, that he knew the owner of it to be better off than any of the other inhabitants. As there was no window and the only light came from the entrance, and was obscured by dense volumes of smoke proceeding from the half-dried turf, I was for some moments hardly able to discern any of the objects within. When I did see clearly, the scene which presented itself was a melancholy illustration of the degraded habits of the people. At one end of the house, which had no separate apartment, three cows were tied, and an old woman was engaged in milking; while at the other end several women were seated, or rather squatted, round the fire. There was no suitable furniture of any kind to be seen. The floor was uneven, worn into holes, and dirty in the extreme. In fact, these people were living, without any notion of comfort or cleanliness, in a cow-house, filled with the litter peculiar to such a place. The owner was an old man with two good-looking stalwart sons, one of whom told me that the family would have enough of potatoes to last them until May, and that if the fishing were good, they would not be apprehensive

of any want. Some of their neighbours, however, would be out of potatoes earlier, and were not so well off in other respects.

The village of Binghamstown, in the southern division of "the Mullet", also contains a number of extremely poor persons, and is one of the most decayed, poverty-stricken places in appearance that I have ever seen. The village of Drum, though dirty and poor looking, has a much more independent class of inhabitant. They are reputed to be the richest people within "the Mullet", but they also are suffering like the others from the scarcity of turf. As an indication of the scarcity of potatoes and fuel throughout the whole district, I may mention that over forty tons of meal have been sold in Belmullet since November last, and the sales are increasing. Last year very few bought any meal before the month of March. There is hardly a man in the country who has not bought a hatchet for the purpose of cutting bog timber. One shopkeeper in this town sold 150 hatchets this season, and the smiths in town and country are kept constantly employed in making them.

The committee which was formed here for the relief of distress has for its leading members the Rev. Mr. Jackson, the Protestant Rector, and the Rev. P. Malone, P.P.; the Rev. Mr. Hewson, rector of a neighbouring parish, and Mr. Carey, the proprietor of the Erris Hotel, are the Honorary Secretaries. A sum of £70 has been subscribed by a few of the principal landlords and the merchants and traders of the town. The committee have not called in the subscriptions up to the present, fearing that as the season advances, a greater amount of distress than has yet manifested itself will require to be relieved, and they wish

to husband their resources as long as possible. The reverend gentlemen whose names I have mentioned are working most harmoniously, and two years ago, in the spring of 1860, they were also associated in a similar work. On that occasion the distress was occasioned by violent storms and floods, which destroyed nearly all the oat crop, and by the failure of the potatoes. The condition of the Erris people was quite an exceptional one that year, and public charity, stimulated by repeated appeals through the press, was liberally afforded to them. I had heard it broadly stated that this charity was not always properly dispensed, and that people received gratuitous relief who had several head of cattle. Having inquired into this statement, I was informed that it was true some persons got orders for meal who had a few miserable cows, which they were unable to feed, which no one would buy, and which actually died from the want of fodder. I confess when I see clergymen of both persuasions joining together for the purpose of relieving distress, whose existence they affirm from their own observation, I should be very slow indeed to suspect their motives or doubt the accuracy of their information.

One of the largest proprietors in the neighbourhood of Belmullet, who is considered to be a fair landlord, in sending his subscription of £5 to the Fuel Fund, addressed a letter to the Rev. Mr. Jackson, from which I have been permitted to extract the following passage, in which he refers to the future. I quote the observations, because I think it may be interesting to learn the deliberate opinion of an intelligent landlord on this subject:—

And now, with respect to the future, I know there are many who will say this will never occur again. Perhaps not; but unfortunately

these periods of distress, from one cause or another, are constantly recurring, and have been of constant occurrence since long before any of us were born, and of late years have been of more than accustomed frequency, and at this rate will soon become annual or perennial and the normal condition of the country. There is not the slightest reason why the people of Erris, at least nine-tenths of them, should always be in this helpless state, bordering on famine of some sort or other. I have endeavoured to make myself acquainted with the state of the country, not only lately but years ago, and I am satisfied that to the improvident habits of the people, their want of industry, their unwillingness to improve their position, preferring their uncleanliness, and misery, and poverty, with idleness, and inactivity, to activity and industry, with prosperity, happiness, and comfort, is the main cause of the whole evil; and till you can get them to change these habits you will in vain expect to escape these periods of difficulty. Speaking for myself, I can say I have endeavoured, without over-letting my lands, to raise my tenants in the social scale, but I am not satisfied with the results. I have endeavoured to encourage improvement, with very slight success hitherto, but I do not despair. What I should like to see is every man on my estate, and indeed all over Erris, with a year's rent in his pocket, and this can and will only be brought about by an improved system of agriculture, more industrious habits in the people, and a desire on their parts for a better and more comfortable course of life; and believe me, these are things not impossible to be brought about by strong and powerful means, and it will be the duty as well as the interest of all the educated classes connected with Erris to endeavour to bring about, generally and universally, a totally different state of things from what at present exists. It is to be done, and must be done, and should be done, not alone by one landlord, but by all. We should agree from time to time as to what measures we should adopt for the general benefit of our estates and the country, and endeavour to carry such measures into effect. My own opinion is, that by the cultivation of turnips, swedes, rape, mangold wurzel, etc., the people of Erris might keep, I do not like to say, for fear of creating ridicule, how many times more stock than they do. I think really this is the very first step to be taken, and ought to be enforced—not the growing of half an acre or an acre of turnips and swedes, but large patches of from ten to twenty acres in every townland in Erris, or more in large townlands. Other practical steps might follow, but this is the first, and the sooner it is accomplished the better. Then, and then only, we shall feel ourselves getting out of the power of potato famines or turf famines. When those who now keep

ten head of cattle can keep from twenty to forty, when the bogs, now valueless almost, shall become valuable (and that this can be done is not problematical, but has been proved practically even in Erris), then people will not want a few shillings to buy themselves a little fuel for the winter.

There is much truth in the above remarks, but it is idle to look for any real progress in a people whose tenure is so insecure as that of the tenant farmers of Erris. How can they rear and feed cattle in such a way as to be really profitable, if they have no proper steadings? If the landlords do not provide these, can they expect that the tenant will go to the expense of doing so—even if he were able—with the prospect of having his improvements confiscated in accordance with law, or his rent increased year after year as his circumstances appear to improve, until at last a rack-rent is reached, which effectually debars further progress, if it does not reduce him again to the condition of pauperism out of which he had emerged? How can it be expected that a people thus situated can make any progress in improvement, or be otherwise than the most backward amongst European populations in the industrial virtues? Mr. John Stuart Mill, in his great work on political economy, discusses the whole question of the Irish cottier system, tenant-right, and peasant proprietors, in a succinct but masterly and exhaustive manner. Asserting that the very foundation of the economical evils of Ireland is the cottier system, which he describes as placing the tenant in a situation than which human imagination cannot conceive one more devoid of motives either to labour or self-command, he administers the following rebuke to those who have been in the habit of attributing Irish

indolence to a peculiarity of race:—"Is it not then", says this profound thinker, "a bitter satire on the mode in which opinions are formed on the most important problems of human nature and life, to find public instructors of the greatest pretension imputing the backwardness of Irish industry and the want of energy of the Irish people in improving their condition, to a peculiar indolence and *insouciance* in the Celtic race? Of all the vulgar modes of escaping from the consideration of the effect of social and moral influences on the human mind, the most vulgar is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences. What race would not be indolent and insouciant when things are so arranged that they derive no advantage from forethought or exertion? If such are the arrangements in the midst of which they live and work, what wonder if the listlessness and indifference so engendered are not shaken off the first moment an opportunity offers when exertion would be really of use? It is very natural that a pleasure-loving and sensitively organised people, like the Irish, should be less addicted to steady routine labour than the English, because life has more excitements for them independent of it; but they are not less fitted for it than their Celtic brethren the French, nor less so than the Tuscans or the ancient Greeks. An excitable organisation is precisely that in which by adequate inducements it is easiest to kindle a spirit of animated exertion. It speaks nothing against the capacities for industry in human beings, that they will not exert themselves when they have no motive. No labourers work harder in England or America than the Irish, but not under a cottier system".

## CHAPTER XVIII.

**Ballina.—Its trade.—The Salmon Fishery.—Distribution of Coals.—Estates of Colonel Gore and the Earl of Arran.**

BALLINA, Co. Mayo, Jan. 28, 1862.

BALLINA is the largest and best town in Mayo, though its geographical position precludes it from having the honour of being the county town—an advantage which Castlebar by virtue of its central situation possesses. It is situated on the banks of the river Moy, which at this point is wider than the Liffey at Dublin, with an ever-flowing tide, and no mud deposits, the bed of the river consisting of gravel and flags. The quay and harbour lie within two and a-half miles of the town; and from the harbour to the bay, which is part of the Atlantic Ocean, the distance is about five and a-half miles. Vessels proceeding to America, can be often descried from the little bathing village of Enniscroan, which is densely populated during the summer season by people from the adjoining country, for whose accommodation numerous bathing lodges have been erected, as at Kilkee, Miltown-Malbay, and other watering places. The bar is a shifting one, and vessels of large tonnage are prevented thereby from venturing in to be freighted with oats, which are annually exported in vast quantities from this locality to Liverpool and Runcorn. Large shipments are also made here for Glasgow and other places, of oatmeal, ground by Messrs. Gallagher and Co. and several other extensive millers, who are all buyers of corn on

free, and who not. The system has now been in operation for upwards of five weeks, and seems to have worked admirably. During the five weeks the number of tickets issued by the committee was 3,036, of which 2,956 were presented, and coals purchased by the holders of them. In the first week 554 families obtained coals at half-price, and in the week ending 19th January the number of families thus receiving relief had increased to 684. The price charged is 7d. per cwt., which, it is calculated, gives each family a sufficient supply of fuel for the week, at the rate of 1d. per day.

The poor law union of Ballina comprises an area of 150,415 statute acres; the valuation is £46,355, and the number of inhabitants in 1851 was 35,266. The poorhouse, which was built to accommodate 1,200 persons, contained on the 18th of January, 1862, only 241 paupers, of which 39 were classed as able-abodied, though there were really no inmates properly answering to that description. At the corresponding period of the three preceding years the numbers were: 210 paupers in 1861, 223 in 1860, and 249 in 1859. The present contract prices are low, the price of white bread being 7½d. the four-pound loaf. The rates for the present year were struck on the 1st of November, the highest rate being 2s. 1d. in the pound, for the electoral division of Ballina, and the lowest 6d in the pound, for the division of Letterbrick. In the famine years the number of paupers in this workhouse and the auxiliary sheds was 3,000, and the entire number receiving indoor relief in the union was 4,500, whilst outdoor relief was given to no less than 41,000 individuals. The union of Ballina, however, then comprised the districts of Belmullet and a part

of Dromore West, which have since been made separate unions.

Amongst the agricultural population of the Ballina union I do not anticipate any very severe pressure arising from a deficiency of food. There will be some distress, undoubtedly, but it will be confined to a portion of the small farmers and to a limited number of the labouring population. There has been a considerable failure in the potato crop, but, as usual, the result has been most various; some persons who sowed early, and in light, sandy, or moory soils, having had very fair crops, both as regards quantity and quality. For instance, I was told by a resident in the parish of Kilgarvan, to the east of Ballina, that many of the people there had as much potatoes as would last them until the new crop came in. These people are tenants of a gentleman named Thompson, who is said to be a good landlord, letting his land at reasonable rents, and compensating those who have reclaimed any portions of the mountain or bog. Failure, however, was the rule with respect to the potatoes. Wherever guano was used, the loss was greater than in land manured in the old fashion with a compost of turf-mould and stable manure. It is obvious that the class of very small farmers, who obtained their guano on credit, must be much pinched by the loss of the potato, on which they depended for food. From all that I have been able to learn, however, the greater number of them will contrive to struggle through their present difficulties, though I fear they cannot do so without incurring debts to the shopkeepers for meal and to the local usurers for money; and, of course, they will have to pay a more

usurious interest, the greater their necessities and the more precarious their position.

The gombeen and loan fund systems are the curse of these people. The bailiffs of some landlords practise usury on an extensive scale, and grow wealthy on the gains extracted from the poor farmers. I have heard of persons in this position, common bailiffs, quite uneducated, surprising every one who knew them, by purchasing townlands in the Landed Estates Court, for four, five, and even six thousand pounds. When such persons attain the position of landlords, woe to the unfortunate tenant who holds under them: his land is rack-rented to the utmost, and the rent must be paid with the most rigid punctuality. It is a common remark, that men who rise from low degrees are frequently severer taskmasters, than persons of originally high birth and position; and the truth of this observation is amply confirmed by the conduct of some of the new proprietors, who, in different parts of the country, have taken the place of the old lords of the soil. With all the faults of the latter, I believe that in very many instances the people would be glad to have them back again.

The greater part of the land in the vicinity of Ballina is owned by Colonel Gore and the Earl of Arran, who are joint proprietors of the town. On Lord Arran's estate the tenantry are, generally speaking, in a comfortable condition. The agent, Mr. Symes, insists on the people whitewashing their houses, and is doing his utmost to stimulate them to increased exertions, order, and cleanliness. Colonel Gore's tenantry are also tolerably well off, and have paid their rents without default. In fact,

generally throughout the county of Mayo the rents have been punctually paid. The landlords have not taken any excuse, and wherever they believe that the tenants are able to pay, they are right to insist on payment. It is better that the landlords should receive their rents, than that the money should go into the pockets of the usurers. On the other hand, it would be a real benefit to the people if the landlords would conbine in some way to rescue the people out of the clutches of the persons who are preying on them so unmercifully. This could be done by advice, remonstrance, and assistance whenever really required. It is the duty of every landlord to make himself acquainted with the actual condition of his tenantry; and would it not be infinitely better that, when a man has not the means to buy seed or other necessaries, his landlord should advance him the money to do so, rather than allow him to resort to the loan-office, which, by plunging him in debt, may ultimately imperil the payment of the rent?

Colonel Gore resides at Belleek Abbey, a large and handsome edifice, situated about a mile from the town; and by constant attention to his property fulfils the duties of a resident country gentleman. Thinking it probable that there might be some distress amongst the people during the coming spring, he resolved to test it by laying out works on his estates, both in Sligo and Mayo, either on the tenants' holding, or on the lands in his own possession, or on those held as grazing farms from year to year. In the case of works on the lands of the tenants, Colonel Gore is to pay one-half, and in some instances the entire of the expense; and in the case of works on land in his own hands or on grazing farms, he of course

pays the entire cost at the prices laid down by the Board of Works for the making of drains and fences, levelling the fields, and other such improvements. There has not yet been much demand made for employment on these terms, the statement being made that the potato crop was not yet dug out, from the wetness of the year. It is probable that before the spring work begins there may be a considerable demand for employment on the works thus laid out. In his own demesne Colonel Gore is carrying out rather extensive works, and thereby giving a good deal of employment to artizans and labourers. Amongst other things, he is carrying water from a considerable distance into his farm steading, for the purpose of working by water-power threshing, sawing, and grinding machines.

With respect to fuel, he has been able to supply as much from old thorn hedges, furze bushes, and the loppings of ash, beech, and other timber, as will meet the wants of his own tenants, as well as of labourers who live on adjoining properties, but who are working for him. It is hoped that the supply thus given will suffice to carry them on until the March winds shall have dried some of the turf now cut and lying on the bogs, and which may be rendered available, provided we have no heavy frosts in the mean time. Colonel Gore has done much to improve his property. Some years ago he purchased an estate here, from which all the small tenants had been swept away during the famine years. He has made two fine farms—one of 400, the other of 200 acres—which have been let on leases of twenty-one years to Scotchmen; the larger farm being taken by Mr. Petrie, and the other by Mr. Bruce. These gentlemen have been in possession about three years only, and already

they have effected a vast improvement in the land, having drained it to a great extent, divided the fields by quickset hedges, levelled old fences, and deepened shallow spots. The change which they have wrought in the appearance of the land is at once observed by comparing their carefully-tilled and well-fenced fields with the adjoining holdings of the small tenants, which show neglect, indolence, and bad cultivation. The land comprised in these beautiful farms was once in exactly the same neglected and impoverished condition. Two farmsteadings have been built in the most permanent manner, and each is supplied with an eight-horse water-power, to turn a wheel that drives machinery for threshing, etc., all of which are of the best character, and were manufactured by Mr. Gray, of Uddingstone, whose name is so frequently heard at our agricultural shows. The expense of these works is borne jointly by Colonel Gore and the tenants. On the larger farm there is a steading for upwards of 100 head of cattle.

It is satisfactory to find that some of the small holders in the neighbourhood are beginning to see the advantages of the system of cultivation and of the mode of feeding cattle adopted by these Scotch farmers, and are this year commencing to carry out improvements of the same nature on a scale proportioned to the size of their farms. Large farms, such as those occupied by Messrs. Petrie and Bruce, may be regarded as model farms for the district, and of the very best kind, as nothing will convince the people so much of the advantages of improved methods of cultivation, as seeing the success of the men who practise them, and who are paying at the rate of 25s. an acre for their land.

## CHAPTER XIX.

**Ballina, continued.—Consumption of Indian meal.—Messrs. Sturge's Corn Circular.—High rents.—Maxwell's *Wild Sports of the West.*—Flax cultivation.—Education.**

BALLINA, February 5, 1862.

MANY of the small farmers and their families are at present subsisting exclusively on Indian meal or oatmeal. Some are getting their own oats ground, but the majority are selling them and applying the proceeds to the purchase of Indian meal, which is becoming a common article of diet with the Irish peasantry. They now understand the proper way of cooking it, so as to convert it into nutritious and palatable food, and the aversion with which they once regarded the "yellow meal" has almost entirely disappeared. The people are reluctant to give up the cultivation of the potato; still the repeated failures of late years have shaken their confidence in it considerably, and necessity has obliged them to resort to the Indian meal, for which they have gradually acquired a relish. The large purchases of meal which have been been made so early in the season in all the country towns, show that there is a deficiency of potatoes either actually felt or soon to be expected. At the same time, it should not be overlooked that the fear of war with America may, in all probability, have induced some people to purchase meal earlier and in larger quantities than they would otherwise have done. In many instances these purchases have been made on credit, and in others

the money to pay for the meal has been borrowed at usurious rates of interest.

In the corn circular lately issued by Messrs. Sturge, of Birmingham, the following passage appears: "The way in which the people of Ireland have found the means to pay for the large quantities of foreign wheat and Indian corn imported since the famine has long been a mystery to us; it is now becoming evident that this has been done in part at least out of capital, as the last government returns show a great reduction both in the number of cattle kept and the acreage under cultivation. For a time, the expenditure of English capital in the purchase and improvement of estates prevented the drain of money from being felt; but now we see its results in decreasing stock and diminished cultivation, which, if continued, must reduce a considerable portion of the country to a mere sheepwalk". The above remarks, so far as they apply to the introduction of English capital into Ireland, are founded on a misconception of the operations of the Incumbered Estates Court. It is well known that the amount of English capital expended in the purchase of property under that court is very small compared with the purchases made by Irishmen; and, as a general rule, the money spent in the improvement of their estates by new purchasers bears but a small proportion to the sum that would be necessary to carry out all the works that yet remain to be done. The real cause of the diminution of stock is to be found in the enormous loss of cattle sustained by the small farmers during the spring of 1860, owing to the scarcity of fodder occasioned by the dry summer and inclement winter of 1859. In 1860, the price of hay rose to £8, £10, and, in some parts of Ire-

land, even to £15 a ton. The farmers had to buy at this high rate in the hope of being able to keep their stock alive, but many were unable to procure a sufficient amount of fodder for that purpose; and after the expenditure of some of their means in purchasing hay, were compelled to let their cattle die in the fields of pure inanition; thus losing both their money and their stock. The destruction of cattle on that occasion was very great, and it may be said to have been the first check sustained by the farming classes since the famine. The prosperous state of Irish agriculture for the five or six preceding years had been a theme for universal congratulation, when this unexpected blow fell upon the people, from which they have never since recovered. The harvest of 1860 was a bad one, and it has been followed by a worse; but were it not for the serious losses caused by the destruction of their cattle, the farmers could have borne without difficulty the failure of their potatoes and cereal crops. It must, therefore, always be kept in mind that their present depressed condition is not attributable to one, but to a succession of bad years. They are now reduced so low that it depends altogether on the next harvest whether many of them will be able to hold their position; and two or three deficient harvests would throw the country back to the state in which it was when just beginning to recover from the effects of the famine of 1847. We must hope for the best; but it is right, in considering the future prospects of the people, not to overlook this possible contingency.

I have heard but few instances of defaulting tenants, and I can state that, on a great many properties, the whole of the year's rent has been paid. The agent of several large

estates in this and in other counties told me that the tenants had paid him the whole year's rent without pressure. When he called for the May rent in September, the tenants on one property said: "We can't pay you now, but if you come in November we will do so". The agent did not apply to them until December, and they then voluntarily paid him the whole of the year's rent. My informant said he had been trying to account for the remarkably prompt way in which the people had paid their rents, considering that the produce of their crops was more or less deficient; and the conclusion he arrived at was, that finding America closed against them by the civil war, they feared to evince any hesitation or difficulty about paying rent, lest they should subject themselves to eviction. In former years, he said, some of these people would have thought nothing of emigrating to America with the year's rent, in their pockets; but now, as they cannot adopt that course, eviction has greater terrors for them, and they strain every nerve to meet the landlord's claim, so as to secure, for the time at least, possession of their holdings. In many instances, the tenants referred to by this gentleman paid their rents in gold, which from its appearance seemed to have been kept by them for some time, from which he inferred that they were drawing on the savings of previous years. Some people seem satisfied that nearly all the small farmers have still a little money, but that they endeavour to conceal the fact, and for that purpose it is said they have borrowed money to pay their rent, when they had sufficient funds in their possession to enable them to do so. This notion appears to me to be too far fetched. It is more like the tricks of a stage Irishman than the conduct of the real working peasant

or tenant farmer of the present day; and, for my part, I believe that when a man resorts to the loan fund, it is because necessity has compelled him to do so. If this be the case, the prevalence and success of loan funds everywhere throughout this county would be strong evidence of the unsound and unsatisfactory condition of the farming class.

Even at the risk of differing with your agricultural contemporary, the *Farmers' Gazette*, I must repeat that the present impoverished state of many of the small farmers is in a great measure attributable to the over-renting of their lands. The *Gazette* thinks that my remarks about high rents are "terribly out of place", and calculated to stir up feuds between landlord and tenant. I cannot assent to the first statement, because in any inquiry into the condition and prospects of the people, it would be impossible to omit from our consideration so material a point as the amount of the rents. The statements which I made on this subject were derived from the information of men on whose truthfulness I fully rely; and I may observe, that I did not write one-fifth of what I saw or heard. Amongst my informants were landlords, agents, clergymen of different persuasions, and the people themselves. I have touched on the matter very lightly, and have only mentioned the names of such noblemen and gentlemen as I could honestly praise for the fair and liberal spirit in which they have dealt with their tenantry. The over-rented properties are chiefly those purchased in the Incumbered Estates Court by land speculators, traders, and bailiffs, who have accumulated wealth by money-lending and unjust modes of dealing with the tenants over whom they had control.

When persons of these classes buy estates, their great object is to obtain a high rate of interest on the purchase money; and as land in Ireland has latterly attained quite a factitious value, almost all the recent purchasers have paid more than the land is worth, and therefore find themselves compelled to raise the rent to the highest possible amount, in order to render their investments profitable. Instances have come to my knowledge in which the rent has been trebled by the new proprietors. With respect to "the stirring up of feuds between landlord and tenant", nothing could be further from my intention, and I think the alarm of the writer on this point is quite unfounded.

The other day I bought a cheap copy of Maxwell's *Wild Sports of the West*, and under the heading of the "Moral Condition of the West", I found a passage so apposite to the subject of which I am now writing, that I cannot resist the temptation of quoting it: "The last fading gleam of western prosperity was during the power of Napoleon, and with his dynasty it vanished. The terrible change from war to peace, the bursting of the banking bubbles which supplied for that time an imaginary capital, over-population, and high rents, have ruined this wild district, and reduced its peasantry, with few exceptions, to abject wretchedness and want. Is there for this any remedy? Cannot modern landlords, acting on what they call enlightened principles, remove the causes of distress, and restore the peasantry to that scale of comfort they enjoyed under the rude and tyrannical *regime* of their fathers? They cannot. They will talk 'scholarly' of tithes and local taxation, and vainly attribute the insolvency of their tenants to these and

such like causes; this is *vox et præterea nihil*—an unreal and fanciful conceit. The true cause of the misery of the western population is over-population and excessive rents; and before the peasantry could be tolerably comfortable, the lands must, on the average, be lowered at least *one-third*. Even then, at present prices the occupant will be hardly able to manage to pay the rent and live. But can the landlords do this? Can they afford to equalize their rental to the times, and throw a third portion from their nominal income overboard? They cannot. The majority of the owners of western estates, from family burdens and national unthriftiness, are heavily and hopelessly encumbered; and a reduction on such a scale as would be necessary to ensure their tenants' comforts would completely pauperise themselves. Hence, to keep off the evil day, every pretext but the true one will be assigned for local wretchedness, and every reason but the right one offered to the starving tenant to persuade him that ruinous rents will never occasion want and poverty". This was written exactly thirty years ago, and the over-population then complained of no longer exists. Most of the small and large incumbered proprietors have also disappeared; but, as I have already stated, the people have not derived much benefit from the change. Few persons had better opportunities than Mr. Maxwell of obtaining an insight into the condition of the people of the West; and his education and position were such as to prevent him from taking an adverse view of the subsisting relations between landlord and tenant, if it were not forced on him by irresistible facts.

It may be interesting to state that the cultivation of flax has latterly been commenced in the neighbourhood

of Ballina, and is likely to increase every year. A gentleman engaged in the flax manufacture in the North of Ireland has taken a scutching mill about half a mile from the town, where some years ago the patent steeping process was tried, but without success. He is now carrying on the scutching of flax in the ordinary way, and is encouraging the people to cultivate the plant extensively. Sometimes he rents ground from the farmers, on which he grows flax himself, or he sells them the seed and purchases the produce at the market price. The crop is found to be a profitable one by the farmers, and as the manufacturer pays for the flax in cash, he is increasing the confidence of the people in its cultivation. The number of acres under flax last year was much larger than in the year 1860, and the climate and soil of this district are said to be well suited to it.

In the town of Ballina the production of sewed muslin has been carried on to a considerable extent. It was first introduced into the schools under the management of the Rev. Mr. Armstrong, minister of the first and only Presbyterian congregation in Ballina. The girls thus trained in this industrial art have been able to contribute by their earnings to the support and comfort of their families. Speaking of schools, I am glad to see that much has been done of late years to promote the cause of education, which was heretofore so backward in the province of Connaught. The Irish Church Missions are entitled to much of the credit of producing this beneficial state of things. Previous to the establishment of their admirable schools—I speak of their merits solely as institutions for imparting secular instruction—education appeared to be under a ban in this province. It

was found, however, that, if other schools were not provided for the people, they would send their children to those of the Irish Church Missions, or of any other society; and, accordingly, the National Schools were gradually allowed to be established throughout the country. The people are most anxious to have their children educated. The necessity and importance of this has been brought home forcibly to their minds by the letters constantly received from young persons who have emigrated to America. Those who went out ignorant, write home saying that want of education has prevented them succeeding like others in the New World; and those who were fortunate enough to have received a good education before they emigrated, attribute to that fact the success which has attended their exertions amongst the "Go-a-head" Yankee people.

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## CHAPTER XX.

**Sligo.—State of the harbour and port.—The District Lunatic Asylum.—The merchants, shopkeepers, and mills.—Scenery near Sligo.—Condition of the small farmers.—Lord Palmerston's estates, and the improvements he has effected.**

SLIGO, Feb. 9.

THIS is the most active, enterprising, and prosperous town in the province of Connaught. Its population is smaller than that of Galway, being 10,429, compared with 16,786; but this disadvantage is more than compensated by the energy and vigour which are displayed by its principal merchants and traders. The retail trade is very extensive, for not only is Sligo situated in a populous

neighbourhood, but it is the chief market for the north-west of Ireland, the nearest town of any importance being at least thirty miles distant. The export trade of the borough is also the largest in the north-west of Ireland, and has been for many years past steadily increasing. In the year 1860 the tonnage of foreign trade inwards was 9,296 tons; in 1861 it had increased to 15,326 tons. In 1860 the coasting trade inwards was 54,012 tons, and outwards, 44,801 tons, as compared with 54,059 and 45,056 tons respectively, during the past year. In 1859 the duties received at the Custom-house amounted to £24,360; in 1860, to £21,342; and in 1861, to £21,453. This is not a bad criterion of the condition of the people; for there are not many wholesale merchants in Sligo, and the excisable articles imported, are chiefly disposed of by retail. The falling off in the duties since 1859 would lead to the belief that the farming classes are not so prosperous now as they were in that year, and are unable to purchase as much tea, sugar, and other luxuries of that kind as they were in the habit of doing when the country was in a more flourishing condition.

It must not be forgotten that the steam communication existing between Sligo and Liverpool, Glasgow, Londonderry, and Portrush, has a tendency to diminish the amount of tonnage at the port. There are two steamers which ply between this and Liverpool, each leaving and returning once a week on alternate days. The town is situate near the mouth of the Garogue, which is crossed by two bridges, and discharges itself into Sligo Bay. The port is under the control of town and harbour commissioners, elected for life under a local act. It is approached by a circuitous channel, and latterly a great

improvement has been effected in the navigation by the cutting of a new one, the sides of which are embanked with stones and rubble masonry. The effect of this alteration is, that vessels of thirteen or fourteen feet draught of water can now come up and moor at the quays, which have recently been considerably extended and improved by the board. Vessels of larger draught have to anchor in the Pool, which is safe and secure, but inconvenient for discharging or taking in cargoes, being at least three miles distant from the town. The cost of these extensive works was defrayed out of the dues upon the imports and exports and tonnage of ships frequenting the harbour. With a view of increasing the trade of Sligo with adjoining localities, the board have recently adopted a resolution exempting from the payment of import, export, and harbour dues, all vessels trading between this and any other place comprised within Erris Head on the south and Teelan Head on the north, including Killybegs, Ballina, Killala, Ballyshannon, etc. Goods are also included in this exemption, which is to extend over a period of three years; and it is confidently hoped that this measure will have a considerable effect in developing the trade of the port.

A gentleman named Egan has proposed a plan for improving the navigation by means of an embankment, which, he contends, would not only remedy the rush of water through the narrow entrance of the harbour, which is found to be so dangerous at the higher stages of the tide, but enable the commissioners to reclaim 3,500 acres of waste land within the harbour. The creation of this tract of land in so excellent a situation would, he states, supply them with ample resources for the vigorous pro-

secution and completion of the other alterations which are urgently required. The feasibility of this scheme is an engineering question, and should it be proved to be practicable and profitable, I am sure there is a sufficient spirit of enterprise amongst the inhabitants of Sligo to carry it out.

Within the last ten or twelve years great improvements have been made in the town and neighbourhood. The approach from the Ballina side was formerly a very bad one. The road was narrow and hilly, and passed through some of the worst and poorest streets. A broad and level road has now been constructed, which greatly facilitates the immense traffic that exists in the conveyance of bread-stuffs to and from the mills of Robert Culbertson and Co., at Ballisodare, and those of Mr. Alexander Sim and Mr. Madden, at Collooney. A good river wall has also been built, and a fine road made alongside of it, leading in the direction of Ballyshannon. The improvements in the town itself are of a various and extensive character. Old houses have been taken down, and new ones erected in their place, and house property has advanced considerably in value. Much still remains to be done. The streets and pathways are too narrow, and require alterations in several respects. In the course of time these defects will be remedied, and I have no doubt that within the space of ten years the borough of Sligo will have undergone a great change for the better.

The public buildings are not remarkable either for size or beauty, with the exception of the District Lunatic Asylum, an imposing and massive structure, situated a little outside the town. This institution is admirably managed by Dr. M'Munn, who carries out to the fullest

extent, and with the most gratifying success, the principle of the humane treatment of lunatics, the general adoption of which is one of the most creditable features of the age in which we live. No restraint whatever is used; the lunatics are governed and controlled solely by the moral influence exercised over their minds by kindness, gentleness, and firmness. All the male inmates who are able to work are kept constantly employed, some at field labour, others at the trades which they had previously learned. The women are similarly occupied in work suited to their sex and condition, such as sewing, knitting, washing, making up clothing, etc. In summer the doctor frequently gives these afflicted beings the great enjoyment of a country excursion, or rural *fete*, visiting Hazelwood and other places of interest in the vicinity of Sligo. The asylum contains at present 198 patients, of whom two-thirds belong to this county, and one-third to the adjoining county of Leitrim.

I have been informed that the activity and enterprise of the Sligo traders is attributed in some degree to the large infusion of the Scottish and North of Ireland element. Many of the leading merchants are descended from Scotchmen, or have come to Sligo from various districts in the North of Ireland, bringing with them the shrewdness and sagacity, combined with the energy and perseverance, which characterise in so high a degree the inhabitants of Ulster. The unceasing industry and practical skill which they have brought to bear in the various departments of trade in which they are engaged, have largely contributed to make Sligo what it is. The principal firm in the corn and flour trade is that of Robert Culbertson and Co. Mr. James Kidd, J.P., is also ex-

tensively engaged in the corn trade, and has a fine steam mill, in which he manufactures Indian meal and oatmeal.

The curing of provisions is carried on largely here, principally by Mr. Harper Campbell, who has more than a merely local reputation for the excellence of his bacon and hams. Mr. Campbell's establishment is an extensive one, and the employment which he gives both to the persons immediately engaged in the various processes of curing pork and bacon, and to coopers and other artizans, is very great. Mr. Rooney, Alderman Dobbyn, J.P., and Mr. Foley, are also engaged in the curing trade. Latterly business in this department has been rather slack, owing to the fact that there are no government contracts now being executed in the town, and also to the immense quantity of provisions imported from America. The civil war has for the present closed the Southern markets against the great provision curers of the North, and they are consequently exporting to these countries vast quantities of salted meats which, under other circumstances, they would have sold at home. Our merchants are experiencing the effect of this competition at the present moment in the greatly diminished demand that exists for their produce, and in no place has this been felt more severely than in Sligo. The greatest general merchants in Sligo are the enterprising firm of Middleton and Pollexfen, who may be said to be the only ship-owners connected with the port, and who own one of the steamers that ply to and from Liverpool. James O'Connor and Co. carry on the timber trade on an extensive scale, having succeeded to the connection of Mr. Peter O'Connor, J.P., who has retired from business after

having realized a large fortune. There is no distillery in Sligo, and only one brewery, which belongs to Mr. Anderson, who imports a great deal of Scotch whiskey, which, together with the ale and porter of his own manufacture, he sends all over the county. The manufacture of tobacco is carried on by Mrs. Donegan. Amongst the shopkeepers of Sligo there are several wealthy and enterprising men, viz., Mr. Williams, J.P., the present mayor; Mr. Henry Lyons, J.P., who has also filled the civic chair; Mr. Maurice Conry, J.P.; and Mr. Balfour.

I was much pleased by my visit to the corn stores and flour mills of Robert Culbertson and Co., which I had an opportunity of examining through the courtesy of one of the partners of the firm, Mr. Thomas Wood, upon whom the management of the concern has of late years principally devolved. The stores, which are very large, are filled from top to bottom with Indian corn, oats, and wheat of various kinds, foreign, English, and Irish. A constant traffic is kept up between the stores in Sligo and the mills at Ballisodare, about four or five miles from this town. The size of these may be imagined from the fact that they are able to turn out 1,600 sacks of flour in the week. The large flour mill was burned down two years ago, and has now been rebuilt and fitted up with all the modern improvements, so as to render it as well-appointed and perfect as any in Ireland. The various contrivances for economising and facilitating human labour are most ingenious and interesting. Two of them are American inventions, and are great improvements on the processes formerly in use. For instance, the wheat is now cleaned in one machine, which separates effectually the refuse of

various kinds, as well as the small and imperfectly formed grains from the good wheat. The other machine cools the flour after it has been ground, so as to render it fit to be passed through the silken sieves by which the finer are separated from the coarser qualities. In establishing the manufacture of flour, Mr. Culbertson opened a new trade in Sligo. Irish wheat by itself will not make good flour, and Mr. Culbertson imports grain from the Baltic, the Mediterranean, America, and England, and by a judicious admixture of the several kinds produces flour of a first-rate description. The water-power is magnificent. The river comes foaming and leaping in a perfect cataract down a ledge of rocks with a force and volume sufficient to turn fifty mills. It is the envy of all the Englishmen who see it; and, knowing how valuable such a water-power would be in their own country, they cannot understand why every foot of the river banks on both sides is not occupied with mills and factories. Mr. Alexander Sim has also a beautiful mill at Collooney, two miles further on, with an overshot wheel 36 feet in diameter. He has also a turbine wheel, by which a portion of the work is performed, and contemplates fitting up another turbine to turn eight additional pairs of stones. He has recently erected a fine range of stores, which are full of Indian corn and oats, as well as the manufactured article, to the value of several thousand pounds. At the opposite side of the river Mr. Madden has a large mill, with water-power of the same character as that at Ballisodare.

There is a good salmon fishery in both rivers belonging to Mr. Cooper, of Markree Castle, who went to considerable expense in erecting ladders to enable the fish to get up into the river above the falls. On a fine summer's

evening the salmon and white trout may be seen here in hundreds, ascending the ladders, and making their way up the river to the spawning grounds. There is also a salmon fishery in the Sligo river, in the very centre of the town, belonging to Captain Martin, the present high sheriff of the county. Mr. Petrie, the enterprising Scotch farmer, whose name I have previously mentioned as holding a farm under Colonel Knox Gore at Ballina, rents this property; and the season having opened on the 1st of February, he and his men have since been actively engaged with their nets. He stores the fish in an ice-house until the steamer for Liverpool is ready to leave, and then sends away all he has secured to the English market. Since the opening of the season I have seen gentlemen angling here with tolerably good success, considering the early period of the year.

Sligo is very beautifully situated. The scenery is exquisitely varied and charming, combining extensive sea views with bold mountain ranges of every form and character—some of the hills being cultivated to the summit, whilst others are bleak and bare, fantastic and picturesque in outline, and contrast finely with the undulous, highly cultivated, and finely wooded country surrounding the town. Lough Gill, from which the river that flows through the town proceeds, is one of the loveliest of the Irish lakes, having numerous islands and peninsulas, with rich overhanging woods, and encompassed almost completely with lofty hills. Hazelwood, the demesne of the Right Honourable John Wynne, lies alongside the banks of the lake, and is excelled in beauty of situation by few places in the United Kingdom. Lord Macaulay's remark as to Killarney appears equally

applicable to Sligo: "Its beauties are too often obscured by the mist and rain that a western wind brings from a boundless ocean". Certainly, during my stay here, I have had ample experience of the pluvial influences that reign predominant in Sligo. Until a very short time ago the wet has been continuous and excessive, but latterly we have had dry frosty weather, which it is to be hoped will last for some weeks at least.

With respect to the condition of the poorer inhabitants of the town, it must be admitted that there is a considerable amount of distress at present existing amongst them; but it is not of a very unusual character, nor is there reasonable ground for anticipating extreme destitution. Up to a recent period there was so much employment given in the construction of the railway, which has now been nearly completed from Boyle to Sligo, that private persons found some difficulty in getting labourers, and could only obtain them by paying a high rate of wages. The railway works have ceased in the neighbourhood of the town, with the exception of some building which is yet going on. Other works, however, are in progress, such as the erection of a large model school a little above the town, and the addition of two wings to the nunnery, at an estimated cost of £1,000 for each. The decline in the provision and butter trade has thrown several coopers out of work. These artizans were in the habit of earning from 15s. to £1 a week, and of course as long as the depression lasts they must suffer. I have heard it stated, however, that some of them were offered work at the reduced wages of 12s. per week, and refused to take it, fearing to establish a lower rate of payment for the future. As long as they refuse to work on these

terms, it cannot be said that they are suffering much from distress. It is to be hoped that in a short time the want of employment, now so generally complained of, will not exist to any great extent. This is always a dull period of the year; but we are fast approaching the time when the spring work will begin, and then I believe there will be few able-bodied men in Sligo and its neighbourhood who will not have plenty of work at good wages. At one time agricultural labourers in this province were only paid 5d. or 6d. per day. The general rate is now 1s.; and in harvest time, when the number of labourers is diminished by the annual migration of reapers to England, the wages often rise to 18d. and 2s. a-day.

Hitherto the want of fuel has been the only serious pressure felt by the people, and most active measures have been taken to relieve it. A fuel relief committee was formed shortly before Christmas, in which men of all creeds and parties have united. A sum of £300 has been subscribed, including a liberal contribution from Lord Palmerston and the Right Hon. John Wynne, the owners of the town, and also from the borough member, Mr. M'Donogh, Q.C. The members of the committee have made a house-to-house visitation, and one of them informed me that he was not prepared for the amount of destitution which he witnessed. Eight hundred families are now receiving relief by obtaining coals at half price; and in some instances coals have been given gratuitously. There has also been a great deal of relief given out of a charitable fund at the disposal of the Rev. Mr. Jellet, one of the Protestant curates, and by the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Although the number receiving relief from the fuel committee seems to be a large one, yet it is

not so great in proportion to the population as that on the relief lists of some other towns. Ballina, with a population of 5,400, has over 600 families at present on the relief list; whilst Sligo, with nearly double the number of inhabitants, has only 800.

In the country districts much has been done by the landed proprietors to supply their tenantry with fuel. Mr. Wynne, of Hazelwood, has had his plantations in several places greatly thinned, and has sold the timber at a merely nominal price, scarcely sufficient to pay for the expense of felling it. Captain Martin has also cut down timber, and sold it at a cheap rate. The result of all these exertions is, that the poor in the town and neighbourhood—notwithstanding the extraordinary scarcity of turf—are almost as well supplied with fuel this year as they have been for many years past. The union of Sligo comprises 143,523 statute acres, and contained in 1851 a population of 58,565 persons. The poor-law valuation is £94,666. On Tuesday, the 4th of February last, the number of paupers in the workhouse was 538, and at the corresponding period of the previous year 482, showing an increase of 56. The highest rate struck for the year is 2s., for the electoral division of Sligo.

The small farmers within a radius of eight or ten miles from the town appear to be in a more comfortable position than the same class in the county of Mayo. Their cottages are much better, and their land more carefully cultivated. They seem also to be a more industrious and intelligent race of men. I anticipate severe pressure on many of them during the summer. They have not recovered from the losses which they sustained by the dearth of fodder in the spring of 1860, and most of them have

lead to the bogs and the sea, and through the different townlands, the cottages of the tenants being built alongside of them. Much employment is given in the making of large main drains through deep bogs, and through the different townlands, in subsoiling and thorough drainage, in constructing fences between tenants' holdings on townlands newly squared, building walls, planting trees, sowing pine seeds, planting bent grass on the sand-hills, keeping roads in repair, making new ones, repairing schoolhouses, and other works. The monthly bill for the works is £63, and his lordship is also paying £38 a month for the construction of a new breakwater at Mullaghmore, and the deepening of the basin and the entrance to the harbour, amounting to an expenditure on the estate of £101 per month.

The result of Lord Palmerston's efforts is to be seen in the neat and comfortable cottages of the people, and in the advanced state of their agriculture, compared with that of the small holders on many other properties, and particularly in the adjoining county of Mayo. Except at one place, all the cottages are well built, substantial, and comfortable, and some are beautifully neat and clean. The fields also exhibit the marks of careful cultivation, and the several holdings are separated from each other by good walls or hedges, which are regularly trimmed by a person specially employed for that purpose. The exception to which I refer is a townland held on a joint-lease that has recently expired. Here the cottages are of the most miserable description, and the cultivation of the soil is in a very backward state.

The land having now come into Lord Palmerston's possession, it is intended to square the various holdings,

Fisherman's Cottage

to pull down the wretched hovels, and induce the people to build comfortable cottages, such as those on other parts of the estate. Lord Palmerston never turns out a tenant who conducts himself properly; and although many of the holdings on his property are too small, he has not shown any disposition to disturb the present occupants as long as they conform to the reasonable regulations of the estate, and pay the moderate rent to which they are subjected. In consequence of the truly paternal manner in which Lord Palmerston's property is managed, there is not much distress amongst his tenantry. The poorest of them are the fishermen of Mullaghmore, who hold only a few bog plots or small portion of arable land, and depend mainly for subsistence on the produce of their fishing. The stormy weather, which has prevailed for some time past, has prevented these people from pursuing their ordinary avocation; and in order to afford them relief, they have been employed in raising and planting bent on the sand-banks along the sea-shore. Forty boys and men were employed in this way up to a very recent period. The fishery has, however, commenced with very good success; and should the weather continue to be favourable, I have no doubt but that a sufficient quantity will be taken to prevent any severe distress amongst this class.

On my visit to Mullaghmore, a week ago, I saw several fishing-boats coming into the harbour laden with fine cod-fish, of which one boat had six dozen, another five, and so on. They were offered at 10s. per dozen to hawkers, who retail the fish in Sligo at 1s. 6d. a-piece. The bay abounds with fish of the best description—haddock, ling, etc.; and if the fishermen had proper boats, they would be able to go further out to sea, and take the

fish in larger quantities than they are now able to obtain. The harbour made by Lord Palmerston, at an expense of £25,000, affords excellent shelter, and will ultimately be of the greatest service in developing this valuable fishery. Turbot and soles are caught here in abundance during the summer season.

The situation of the village is such as to shelter it to a considerable extent against the western wind. It has a southern aspect, and a beautiful curving strand on one side, with a rocky shore on the other. In summer it is a delightful place of resort for persons wishing to enjoy good sea-bathing, pure air, fine scenery, and almost complete privacy; for, as yet, only a few bathing lodges have been erected, and there is no place where respectable lodgings can be had nearer than Cliffoney, a few miles distant. Lord Palmerston has erected baths, and intends to build and encourage the building of lodges for the accommodation of summer visitors, and it is not improbable that the little fishing village of Mullaghmore, now so insignificant, will, in the course of some years, become a favourite watering place. Cliffoney, the principal village on Lord Palmerston's estate, is a neat and pretty place, and contains some good houses, a hotel, a dispensary, a police barrack, and a National school. Lord and Lady Palmerston, when visiting the estate, which they did about three years ago, resided at the hotel. His lordship contemplates the building of a handsome house here, and has had the plans drawn up and the site decided upon. One of the most interesting features of Cliffoney is the pine plantation, by which the blowing sand-hills have been consolidated, and from being a source of considerable injury to the adjoining land, have been rendered both orna-

mental and useful. Some fifteen or sixteen years ago the sea shore was bounded by a range of sand-hills which were constantly shifting, and frequently during the prevalence of high winds the sand was scattered far and wide over the fields. Lord Palmerston resolved to try the plan so successfully adopted in France of fixing moving sand-hills by the planting of bent-grass and the Pinus Maritima—a description of fir tree which has been found to thrive well, even when exposed to the fierce blasts of the Atlantic. The experiment has been attended with complete success. One thousand acres of sand-hills are now covered with a flourishing plantation of pines, some of which have attained the height of twenty feet. The process of planting is at present going on vigorously, under the superintendence of his lordship's skilful agriculturist and steward, Mr. John Hannon. The course adopted is the following: On the blowing sand-hills bent is first planted, and after a year or two the sand becomes tolerably well fixed. The seed is then sown, and all that remains to be done is to protect, as far as possible, the young pines, which will soon make their appearance above the ground. Hares, rabbits, crows, and snails, are great enemies to seedling pines until they attain their first year's growth. The Pinus Maritima has been found to thrive well, not only on the sand-hills near the sea shore, but on bog or peat lands that have been tolerably well drained, and in various places throughout Lord Palmerston's estate they have been planted extensively. There is a large nursery near Cliffoney well stocked with larch, spruce, Scotch fir, elm, holly, thorn quicks, etc.

The following is a return of the number of acres in the

Ahamlish estate, under several kinds of crops, in the year 1861: Wheat, 60a. 3r.; oats 427a.; potatoes, 828a. 2r.; turnips, 43a.; cabbages, 46a. 3r. 31p.; clover, 46a. 3r. 11p.; meadow, 591a. 1r. The wheat and oat crops were both light, the potatoes more than half diseased, the turnips, clover, and meadow good, and the cabbages very good. The following is a return of the stock on the estate last year: Cows, 1,562; heifers, 724; horses, 226; donkeys, 206; sheep, 983; pigs, 776; showing a decrease since the preceding year of 115 cows, 25 heifers, 5 donkeys, 45 sheep, and 224 pigs. The decrease in the number of pigs since 1859 is 336. The number of tenants who have cow houses built is 494, and 109 tenants (including fishermen and persons holding only bog plots) have no cows. Lord Palmerston's estate is managed by the eminent firm of Stewarts and Kincaid, of Dublin, who have a very able and efficient representative in their local agent, Mr. Edward Smith.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

Sligo continued.—Tubbercurry.—Joshua Cooper, Esq., Markree Castle.—Lissadill.—Sir R. Gore Booth.—Mr. Barber's Farm.—Easkey.—Manufacture of Kelp.—Want of a secure Harbour.

SLIGO, Feb. 15.

A FEW miles from the town of Sligo, and visible in every direction for a distance of twenty miles and more, rises a remarkably formed and isolated mountain called Knocknaree—"The hill of Kings". It slopes up gradually on

the eastern side, which is cultivated almost to the summit, whilst on the west it is quite precipitous. The population of this district, which is bounded by the sea on all sides except towards the east, consists generally of a very poor class of farmers, who will find it difficult to hold their ground during the ensuing summer. With the exception of one or two sandy spots near the sea shore, the potato crop has been extremely bad, and the oat crop considerably under the average. Lord Erne is the owner of a small estate in this neighbourhood, and his lands are all let at a reasonable rate, the general rent being being 24s. or 25s. per acre, which hitherto has been paid with tolerable punctuality, but not so well as in former years; and an additional proof of the pressure under which the people are now labouring is to be found in the fact that they are to a considerable extent living on meal which they have bought on credit. The eastern portion of the parish of Calry, in the Manorhamilton direction, and the country lying at both sides of the Ox mountains, which extend almost from Sligo to Ballina, are amongst the poorest parts of the county. I refer more especially to the districts of Colloony, Lower Easkey, and Tubbercurry. The land is very inferior, boggy, and mountainous, the holdings small, and the farmers much reduced in means by the loss of their cattle in 1860, and the two bad harvests which have followed. A gentleman who has extensive agencies in this county, and is intimately acquainted with the condition of the farmers in Tubbercurry, told me, that though the rents have been well paid up to the present, he believes much difficulty will be experienced in obtaining payment of the next gale, and that some of the small holders will be obliged to

give up their land and go into the workhouse. Mr. Burton Irwin, one of the proprietors in Tubbercurry, has directed the laying out of drainage and other works with the view of giving employment; and if this example were followed extensively, the apprehended distress would be much mitigated, and the impending ruin of some of the small farmers averted. The scarcity of turf has been a serious privation to the people of this and every other district in the county. Mr. Irwin offered fuel to his tenantry at a reduced price, but hitherto very few persons have taken advantage of his offer, preferring to work on as best they can with imperfectly dried turf, bogwood, brushwood, heather, and such other substitutes for fuel as they can obtain without purchasing. To whatever cause attributable, fever has broken out in some places in the union of Tubbercurry; and at no time have the people manifested such dread of this disease as at present. Judging from their conversation and tone, they regard their position with no small degree of apprehension. They have seen their means gradually dwindling away during the last three years; they are in debt to the loan offices and gombeen men; their credit is greatly shaken, and they feel that another unfavourable season must swamp them completely. In the worst event there can be no famine, for the supply of food is abundant, and the prices remarkably cheap; but if the weather should prove wet during the spring months, there will be much distress of an aggravated character, and the workhouses will receive a large accession of inmates. At present the paupers in the workhouse of Tubbercurry are nearly double the number relieved at the corresponding period of the year 1861—the proportion being 150 to

80. This great increase is attributed, and I think justly, rather to the dearth of fuel than to any other cause.

Sligo is fortunate in having several most excellent resident landlords, who let their lands at moderate rents, and have won the confidence and affection of their tenantry. Prominent amongst them are Sir Robert Gore Booth, M.P.; Mr. Cooper, of Markree Castle; Major Ormsby Gore, and Mr. O'Hara, M.P., of Cooper's Hill. The last-named gentleman has but recently come into possession of a large estate, inherited from his uncle, Major O'Hara; and he has only to follow in the footsteps of that lamented gentleman to win for himself the reputation of one of the best landlords in the country. The residence of Mr. Cooper, Markree Castle, is one of the places most attractive to visitors in the county, and affords a great treat to the lovers of science in the splendid observatory which the owner has constructed in his demesne, and the fine astronomical instruments which he has fitted up. His equatorial telescope is considered to be one of the largest and most powerful in the United Kingdom. Nearly all the tenants on the estate, which is a very extensive one, will be able to hold their position for at least another season. The farms on this property vary from 15 to 60 acres, and a few reach 100 acres, and occasionally exceed that size. Where the farms are less than 15 acres, it has generally arisen from subletting by middlemen. On the falling in of a middleman's lease, it has often been found that a farm originally of 100 acres, has been parcelled out in 20 or 30 patches; and the head landlord, who shrinks from the idea of eviction, has no alternative but to retain a class of ten-

ants which he would never have chosen, if he had had a voice in their selection.

It is amongst this class that distress will manifest itself on Mr. Cooper's estate. I have been informed that in any case in which a tenant vacates his farm, there are dozens of applicants who are willing to pay the out-going tenant from £3 to £8 per Irish acre for his good-will of the vacant holding. Mr. Cooper, under certain well known restrictions, allows tenant right on his estate, which makes farmers anxious to hold under him. The rents vary from £1 to 30s. per Irish acre for fair arable land, except for town plots, or where there is a right to seaweed for manure. The bulk of the estate is dry limestone land, though it includes some townlands which are wet and stiff. Almost all labouring men on the property are employed; and in fact, relatively speaking, they are better off than the struggling five or six acre-men. The wages of labourers by agreement are 1s. a day all the year round; 1s. a day with food, or 1s. 8d. a day without food, for odd weeks. The wages of servant boys range from £6 to £9 a year, with board, and servant girls in farm houses receive from £4 to £5 a year.

The great emigration during the last fourteen years has reduced the number of the labouring population below the requirements of the country, especially during harvest. The construction of the railway from Longford to Sligo, as I have previously stated, gave an immense amount of employment at an opportune time; but the line being now nearly completed in this county, it would be a most desirable thing if some other work were set on foot to give occupation to the labouring

classes during the period when there will be a temporary slackness of ordinary agricultural labour.

There is no work that could be devised more remunerative or practical than drainage. The want of this fundamental improvement has been glaringly manifested during the two wet years through which we have just passed. Last autumn it was impossible to ride in any direction throughout the county without witnessing an enormous destruction of property in consequence of the neglect of drainage. The larger rivers, overflowing their banks and inundating the country far and wide, carried off and destroyed an immense quantity of hay; the lesser streams were unable to discharge their swollen waters through their tortuous and neglected channels, and therefore saturated the valleys they passed through to such an extent that hundreds of acres of excellent crops were utterly ruined—the stiff uplands showing in the aquatic herbage, stunted corn, or sickly turnips, how much drainage was needed. Instances have been mentioned to me, in which the damage done last season by one stream alone would, at a low computation, amount to a sum equal to five years' interest on the money it would have taken to deepen the stream. Except in rare cases, tenants will not thorough drain, and they cannot reasonably be expected to do so. It is the landlord's duty to carry out this all-important work, charging the tenant a fair interest on the outlay. The farmers and labourers now know how to carry on drainage works with but little instruction, and by setting about it at once, sufficient assistance would be afforded until a favourable harvest puts the farming classes all right again.

Notwithstanding the high opinion which I entertain

of many of the leading proprietors of this county, I am bound to say that, even where not tied down by having only a life interest, the landlords generally do not meet their tenants as they ought to do in the permanent improvement of the land by draining, fencing, building, etc. A gentleman who has known this county a long time, and who is fully competent to express an opinion on this subject, informs me that within the last fifteen years the tenant farmers of Sligo have advanced an age in agricultural knowledge and skill. "This", says my informant, "is evidenced by a hundred signs; and though, to an eye accustomed to the more advanced stage of agricultural progress attained in other parts of the United Kingdom, the style of husbandry in Sligo may appear primitive enough, still, as all progress is relative, to me the advance is apparent. Fifteen years ago I knew parishes in which an ounce of clover or grass seed was not sown, turnips unknown, a straight fence a novelty, and an iron plough almost thought unlucky, where we now see comfortable cottages, neat hedge-rows, fine clover fields, and well-managed green crops, besides a great improvement in the breeding of cattle".

One of the most interesting places in Sligo is Lissadill, the beautiful seat of Sir Robert Gore Booth, the senior member for the county. No more striking example can be had of the immense improvement which may be made in the appearance of the country and in the quality of the soil, by the judicious expenditure of capital, than that afforded by the estate of this estimable gentleman.

Lissadill is situated about seven miles to the north-west of Sligo, and a large portion of the property lies along the shores of the inlet known as Drumcliffe Bay. Within a

comparatively recent period it was as wild, miserable, and poor-looking a district as could be found in the entire country; but Sir Robert has transformed it into one of the most highly-cultivated and beautiful estates in the United Kingdom. The demesne is kept with exquisite neatness and taste, resembling in that respect the parks and pleasure-grounds of England, and contrasting strongly with the carelessness and neglect that too often characterise the country seats in the West of Ireland. The public roads through Sir Robert's property are bounded by good walls and well-trimmed hedgerows; and in the demesne there are flourishing plantations of great extent, all of which are the creation of the present proprie or. Lissadill House is a fine massive structure, and the stables, which have been only recently finished, are perhaps the largest and best in Ireland. There is a very handsome church situate at a short distance from Sir Robert's house, to the building of which he largely contributed. The extensive works which have been carried out on this estate involved a large expenditure of money, and afforded, during many years, a great deal of employment. If the excellent example set by Sir Robert Booth as a resident country gentleman, living at home and devoting himself to the improvement of his property, were more generally followed by Irish landlords, then, indeed, the cry of distress which is so often raised—sometimes in a spirit of gross exaggeration, but generally with some foundation of truth—would never more be heard, even in the west of Ireland. Sir Robert's lands are let at reasonable rents: he encourages his tenants to improve their holdings, and recognizes the principle of tenant-right, so that his tenantry have the greatest confidence in him, and

do not care to have leases. The result is, that they are for the most part comfortable and prosperous, their cottages neat and clean, their farms tolerably well tilled; and though, in common with all others of their class, they must have suffered from the unfavourable harvests of the last two years, there have as yet been no indications of distress even amongst the poorest of them. The want of turf has been severely felt; but the thinning of the plantations at Lissadill has, to some extent, supplied the people in the neighbourhood.

Next to Sir Robert Booth's demesne, the most remarkable feature of this district is the farm of one of his tenants, Mr. Barber, who may be held up to the tenant-farmers of Ireland as a striking example of industry, enterprise, intelligence, and success. He holds 630 Irish acres, a great deal of which, when it came into his possession, was little better than a swamp fit only to feed snipe. He has drained, fenced, and subsoiled to a considerable extent, and brought the greater part of the land into so excellent a condition, that the common remark of the country people, and of gentlemen acquainted with Mr. Barber's improvements, is that he has increased its value from 5s. to 30s. an acre. Fine meadows and rich land producing abundant crops, have, by his skilful management, taken the place of the barren, stony, and swampy soil. In the year 1861 Mr. Barber laid down 2,600 perches of drains, and he is about to carry on similar work on an extensive scale during the present year. He has about 150 Irish acres under tillage and meadow. The remainder of his land, a portion of which is as yet unreclaimed, is used for grazing, but in the course of time it will all be drained, subsoiled, brought into proper con-

dition, and made good tillage land. Mr. Barber keeps a large stud of horses for his farm work and the carrying out of his contract for the repairing of the public roads. He feeds about 160 head of cattle, and intends increasing his stock according as he brings more land into cultivation. He also keeps a large number of people constantly employed in farm labour and building, and his labour bill averages £1,100 a year. He has built a large house and an extensive range of offices, stores, stables, and cattle sheds. They are not fully completed, but a few months would suffice to finish them. In the erection of his house and offices, and in the permanent improvement of the land, Mr. Barber told me he has expended £12,000, although his tenure is not a long one, and he has never applied for, or obtained, the slightest assistance from Sir Robert Booth.

Heretofore, whenever I met with a particularly good farm, I was certain to discover that the occupant whose industry and skill I admired, hailed from "the Land o' Cakes". At last, in the most remote part of the county of Sligo, I find an Irishman who has obtained equal success by pursuing a similar course. I do not mean to convey that Mr. Barber is such an accomplished farmer as Mr. Simson, of Ballinrobe; but his long experience and native shrewdness have rendered him inferior to few in practical skill and knowledge of agriculture. Whilst the Scotch farmers have had the land brought into good condition, and suitable steadings erected, by the proprietor, or have made an arrangement that the cost of all permanent improvements should be borne jointly by themselves and their landlord, Mr. Barber boldly undertook the reclamation of the land and the erection of the farm

teadings at his own expense. There can be no doubt of the enterprising spirit which dictated this liberal expenditure on the part of Mr. Barber, who, I may add, has the most perfect confidence in the honour and justice of the gentleman under whom he holds.

The only other parts of the county to which I think it necessary to refer are the village and neighbourhood of Skreen, about fifteen miles to the south-west of Sligo, and the parish of Easkey, which is situate seven or eight miles further on. The condition of the inhabitants of these districts does not materially differ from that of the people of other places which I have endeavoured to describe. The immediate want was that of fuel, and prompt measures were taken to relieve the distress, which would otherwise have been most severely felt, by the establishment of fuel funds, both in Skreen and Easkey. The Protestant rector of Skreen, the Rev. Mr. Nangle, was the first to take action in the matter. He formed a committee, collected funds, and distributed coals to all parties who were proper objects of relief. The reverend gentleman is exceedingly zealous and energetic, and holds strong opinions, which he is always ready to declare and act upon. In forming his committee he did not invite the coöperation of the Roman Catholic clergy. This circumstance has led to a newspaper controversy, and to the formation of another committee by the Rev. Mr. Conway, P.P., who has collected some money, which I was informed would be expended in the purchase of meal, for distribution either gratuitously or at a very low price.

Easkey is a large and thickly populated agricultural district, situate on the sea shore, and remarkable amongst

Forster & Co. Lith.

*Gathering Sea Weed.*
*(Connemara.)*

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other things for the vast quantities of kelp manufactured by its inhabitants, from which they derive a large annual revenue, which, in favourable seasons, enables them to live in comparative comfort; but last year they were deprived of this resource in consequence of the wetness of the season, which prevented them from drying the sea-weed. The process of making kelp is briefly as follows: The sea-weed is collected during the summer months and carefully dried in the sun; it is then piled up in ricks, and left for some time to season, and when it begins to deliquesce it is fit for burning. The substance which remains after the burning of the weed is called kelp, and is a valuable article of commerce, being rich in iodine, nitre, alum, and sulphur. The trade is one of growing importance, and the manufacture is carried on by the people residing along the shores of Donegal, Sligo, and Mayo.

Mr. Michael Fenton, of Castletown, near Easkey, purchases a great deal of the kelp produced in these places, and pays £6 10s. per ton for the best quality. When he first commenced to buy kelp, it only brought 25s., 30s., and at the highest rate 50s. per ton, in consequence of the gross adulteration practised by the makers. Mr. Fenton, however, introduced the system of submitting the kelp to chemical analysis, and paying a high or low price in proportion to its purity or the reverse. Although the people were at first greatly puzzled and annoyed by the mysterious bottle that revealed their delinquencies, and which they looked upon with a kind of awe, as Mr. Fenton's familiar spirit, they are now quite satisfied, and vie with each other in making good kelp, having learned from the best of all instructors—practical experience—that honesty is the best policy. All the kelp purchased

by Mr. Fenton is exported to Glasgow, which is the only market in the United Kingdom for this article. I saw a large quantity of the seaweed rotting in ricks upon the shore, which, had the season been dry, would have been converted into kelp. This loss, combined with the failure of their crops, has pressed severely on the small farmers resident along the sea shore. I was present when several of them applied to Mr. Fenton for loans, to be repaid in kelp next summer. They pressed for the advance, stating that they wanted the money to pay rent and to purchase food.

With a view of giving employment to the labouring classes, it has been suggested that a quay or pier should be constructed adjacent to the town of Easkey; and a memorial, signed by the most influential men in the county, has been, or is about to be, presented to the Government, praying them to undertake that work. A pier of some description is urgently required. Between Ballina and Sligo there is not a single harbour into which boats can run during stormy weather. The fishery along this coast might be made most valuable if there was a safe harbour in the neighbourhood of Easkey; and there are two places at which such a harbour could be easily and cheaply made. One is near Easkey, where the late Captain Fenton, of Castletown, commenced, many years ago, the construction of a breakwater, and from which he was in the habit of shipping both grain and kelp. The other point is at Poolanaheeny, three or four miles to the south-west of Easkey, where an iron vessel belonging to Mr. Harper Campbell, of Sligo, was wrecked in December last, after having taken in a cargo of kelp, and shortly before she was about to sail. When the wind blows

strongly from the west, the sea breaks with fearful violence on this exposed coast. In the case to which I refer, the storm came on so suddenly that the crew had barely time to save themselves when the vessel was cast on shore, where I saw her a few days ago lying high and dry, with a broken back, upon the beach. This circumstance alone furnishes a strong argument in favour of the construction of a harbour at a suitable place in the vicinity in the town of Easkey.

I should mention, in reference to the dearth of fuel in this locality, that Mr. Brinkley, a recent purchaser under the Incumbered Estates Court, has given much assistance to the people by cutting down an immense tract of wood, and giving the timber at a nominal price to the inhabitants of this and neighbouring parishes, and gratuitously to his own tenants. The price charged by Mr. Brinkley is scarcely sufficient to pay the men employed in felling the wood. I am happy to say that relief of this kind has been generously afforded by the proprietors in all parts of the country.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

County Donegal.—Probable increase of emigration.—Bundoran.—Ballyshannon.—Poverty of the inhabitants.—Estates of Thomas Connolly, Esq., M.P.—Decrease of the sewed-muslin trade.—Scarcity of fuel.—Porcelain factory at Belleek.

DONEGAL, Feb. 22.

THE county of Donegal is one of the most interesting in Ireland. It is rich in historic memories, remarkable for the admixture of the ancient Celtic and Scottish races in

its population, and celebrated for the wild grandeur and sublimity of its coast scenery. I regret that I am unable to devote time to an examination of a county which affords such abundant materials for observation and study; but the length to which my correspondence has already extended precludes me from entering as minutely and fully as I might otherwise have done into a description of Donegal and the condition of its people. I have seen and heard enough, however, to enable me to form a tolerably accurate judgment on the main subject of my mission, viz., the state and prospects of the agricultural population. Donegal is proverbially one of the poorest counties in Ireland; and a glance at the map will at once show why it is so. With the exception of the country extending from Bundoran to Donegal, and that in the neighbourhoods of Stranorlar, Lifford, Letterkenny, and Rathmelton, in the north and east, the entire of the interior and the west coast of the county is composed of mountains, moorland, and bogs. The mountain ranges sometimes rise to a considerable elevation, and in the valleys which they enclose, and on the lower slopes of the hills, patches of arable land are to be found, bearing but a small proportion to the wild and uncultivated wastes which meet the eye in every direction. The greatest length of Donegal, north-east by south-west, is 85 miles; the greatest breadth, south-east by north-west, 41 miles, comprising an area of 1,193,443 acres, of which 393,191 are arable, 769,587 uncultivated, 7,079 in plantations, 479 in towns, and 23,107 under water.

With very few exceptions, the arable land in the mountainous districts is poor in quality, though occasionally we meet with valleys of great richness and fertility.

The nature of the soil and the moisture of the climate are unfavourable to the cultivation of wheat; the chief crops grown are potatoes, oats, and flax; but the main dependence of the farmers is upon their flocks and herds, which are pastured on the land that is unsuited for tillage, and the number of which exceeds that of any other county in Ulster. According to the last return issued by the Registrar-General of Agricultural Statistics, the total number of cattle in the county of Donegal in the year 1861 was 178,099, being a decrease of 9,484 since the previous year; and the number of sheep was 150,403, showing a decrease during the same period of 9,120. The number of pigs in 1860 was 25,300, which had diminished to 23,505 in 1861. Excepting Fermanagh, Monaghan, and Armagh, the other counties of Ulster have a much larger number of pigs than Donegal; but the only county which approaches it in the number of its cattle and sheep is Tyrone, which in 1861 contained 152,910 head of cattle and 41,635 sheep.

In point of population, Donegal stands fourth in the province, the first place being occupied by Down, the next by Antrim, and the third by Tyrone. The inhabitants of Donegal, according to the last census, number 236,859 individuals, showing a decrease within ten years of 18,299. Some of the landed proprietors and agents are of opinion that the population is still too large; and there is every probability that their wish for a further diminution of the inhabitants will be gratified by the emigration of the people on an extensive scale as soon as the Americans shall have settled their differences. I have scarcely spoken to any person in the position of a small farmer or agricultural labourer, who has not one or

more relatives in America, and who did not express an ardent desire to join them there. So far has emigration been carried, that there are at present, comparatively, few young and able men in this part of the country; and the lads of fourteen and fifteen are all growing up with the determination to bid adieu for ever to their native land whenever they can save enough money to pay their passage to the shores of the New World.

On my way to this county I passed through Lord Palmerston's property, which I had previously visited, and have already described. His lordship's estate is bounded at its northern extremity by a river, which at this point separates Sligo from Leitrim. A drive of a few miles through the latter county brought me into Donegal, and shortly afterwards I arrived at the pretty and fashionable watering place of Bundoran, the favourite resort of summer visitors from Sligo, Enniskillen, and other towns in the north-west of Ireland. I was very much pleased by the appearance which Bundoran presented; its well-kept streets, neat clean cottages, handsome terraces, and general aspect of comfort and prosperity. The town belongs to Mr. Conolly, M.P.; and the encouragement which he and his lamented father, Colonel Conolly, have given to builders, has been the cause of the vast improvement that has taken place within the last fifteen or twenty years. One person alone has expended several thousand pounds in the erection of houses, and was granted a lease in perpetuity after some of them had been built. He has taken additional ground for building purposes; and the near prospect of railway communication between Enniskillen and Bundoran will probably encourage others to

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Rundoran

follow his example, and greatly promote the growth and development of this interesting town.

From Bundoran I proceeded to Ballyshannon, a town of considerable antiquity, situated on the river Erne, about two miles from the frontier line between Ulster and Connaught. The population, though of late years much diminished, is larger than that of any other town in this county, amounting in 1851 to 3,697, and in 1861 to 3,183. It may be described as a town which was once flourishing, but has greatly declined, and now seems to be gradually reviving, Half a century ago Ballyshannon was occupied by a large military garrison, and possessed a good shipping trade, as it was, in a great degree, the mercantile *entrepot* for Enniskillen, Omagh, Belturbet, etc., and a large district bordering on Lough Erne. In a well-written description of the town and neighbourhood prefixed to the *Ballyshannon Almanac*, published at the office of the *Herald*, the only newspaper in the county, the writer, speaking of the decadence of trade, says: "Steamships, and after them railways, have turned commerce into other channels, and instead of Ballyshannon supplying the inland country with imported articles, the town itself has of late years become dependent upon distant ports which proved better able to keep up with the march of modern improvements. Various attempts have been made towards facilitating navigation and reviving commerce at Ballyshannon, but hitherto without success; and we must be content to hope that the line of railway to Enniskillen, for which an act has been obtained, will do us some good, by at least connecting us with the general railway system of the kingdom, and that the undoubted natural advantages of our lake, river, and

sea coast, will at last give rise to a solid prosperity". The indications of progress are to be found in the springing up of public companies, such as the Gas Company, whose works are now in course of erection, and in the increased number and improved appearance of the shops. There is some talk of providing a tug-steamer for the port; but the uncertain shifting bar which has hitherto been so detrimental to the navigation, presents an obstacle which cannot be overcome without much difficulty and expense.

The salmon fishery of Ballyshannon, which is rented by Dr. Shields from Mr. Conolly, is one of the best in Ireland. The fishing does not begin until June, and from that time until the commencement of the close season a large amount of employment is given by Dr. Shields.

I regret to say that there is much poverty amongst the artizans and labouring population. Their hovels are of the worst description, and so bad are many of them, that I have been assured the proprietors do not charge the occupants any rent. The roofs are, in many instances, completely out of repair, and it is necessary that holes should be made in the clay floors to receive the rain-water, which would otherwise flood the entire place. Living in such wretched habitations, and insufficiently supplied with food, it is not to be wondered at that disease and ill-health exist to a considerable extent amongst the poor. In ordinary years it is not an uncommon thing for people here to go without food for twenty-four hours, and they are so accustomed to the privation that they think but little of it. This year, I believe there is not more than the average amount of destitution existing amongst this class, except as regards fuel; and

that want has been supplied by private charity. A committee, consisting of men of all sects and parties, has been formed for the purpose of providing coals for the poor, and they have given gratuitous relief to all persons requiring it.

The union of Ballyshannon comprises 132,081 statute acres, the poor law valuation is £35,602, and the population in 1851 was 35,544. In the week ending the 8th of February, the number of paupers in the workhouse was 215, being an increase of 75 over the number relieved at the corresponding period of the previous year. The highest rate struck is 2s. in the pound, for the electoral division of Ballyshannon: and it is probable that the burden will be increased by the influx into the town of tenants who have been evicted or are unable to retain their holdings any longer, and most of whom ultimately become inmates of the workhouse. I do not mean to convey the idea that eviction is common in this part of the country. On the contrary, it rarely happens on the estates of the principal landlords, but cases of the kind sometimes take place, and instances are not unfrequent of small farmers who cannot meet their engagements, being obliged to sell the good will of their farms, and discharge their debts out of the purchase money, leaving a very small residue, which is soon exhausted.

The country immediately about Ballyshannon, and extending as far as Donegal, which is about twelve miles distant, is pretty well cultivated. The undulating character of the ground, with the distant mountains and the fine sea views that are obtained from various points, present a very pleasing and picturesque appearance, even in this unfavourable season, when nature is dressed in

her most sombre attire. In summer the landscape must be very charming. It derives not a little of its attractions from the beautiful green hills that form a peculiar feature of the country for miles around, and which run east and west, having a north and south side. The latter is always cultivated, but the north side is generally covered with whins, and left in a wild condition, only fit for the grazing of cattle. This is indicative, to some extent, either of a want of industry on the part of the people, or of a low state of agricultural knowledge. Persons acquainted with the country for many years notice a great improvement in the cultivation of the land, but industrial knowledge and skill are yet in a backward state. I observed in the fields between Ballyshannon and Donegal some wooden ploughs, but this rude instrument of agriculture is now nearly exploded. Judging from the comfortable appearance of the farm houses in this district, one would imagine that the people are tolerably well off. The cottages are for the most part well built, properly thatched, and white-washed, and contain several apartments.

Mr. Conolly, M.P., whose estates in this county extend over an area of 176,000 acres, is the principal proprietor in this locality. The improvement of his estate generally, and especially of the houses of his tenantry, was effected in the lifetime of his father, under the management and superintendence of his excellent agent, Mr. Alexander Hamilton, J.P., of Coxtown, near Donegal. Forty years ago the whole of this vast property was held in rundale — an extraordinary system, which I have before described. The tenants of each townland were congregated in a cluster of wretched, filthy, dilapidated cabins, which disgraced the

name of village. The holdings were subdivided and intermixed in the most complicated and inextricable state of confusion, giving rise to unceasing quarrels, assaults, and litigation, besides opposing an effectual bar to improvement. Mr. Hamilton put an end to this miserable state of things by squaring the lands, and making each tenant live on his own holding. The new arrangement was carried out thus:—If there were nine tenants on a townland, for example, the land was divided into nine holdings. Each tenant drew his portion by lot, and he obtained the value of his original rent in the new position in which he was placed—either less land if it were better, or more if it were of an inferior quality to that which he possessed before. The value of the land was determined by two arbitrators appointed by the tenants themselves. This change caused a great improvement in the appearance of the country and in the condition of the people. They were encouraged and assisted to build better houses; they were also enabled to improve their land and to keep more stock than formerly, in addition to which the demolition of the dirty over-crowded villages had the effect of diminishing and checking the progress of infectious diseases. At first the people objected strongly to the squaring of their lands, but after a short time they began to appreciate the advantages of the measure; and Mr. Hamilton was besieged with applications from the occupants of townlands which had not been squared to have the new system applied to them also.

The re-arrangement of so extensive a property as Mr. Conolly's was a work of much time, labour, and difficulty; but many years have elapsed since it was completed, and the result has been most beneficial both to

the tenant and the landlord. Mr. Conolly's estate comprises land of every description, and is situated in nearly every part of the county. His tenants are mostly small holders, but the size of the farms varies very much, some being as small as five, and others exceeding one hundred acres. The rents are punctually paid, and the arrears very trifling, considering the extent of the property. His tenantry are described to be a most respectable, orderly, and well-disposed class of men. Their condition, generally speaking, is comfortable, and though their resources must have been greatly diminished during the last three years, I do not anticipate any serious distress amongst them during the ensuing summer. So far as I can ascertain, I believe the rents are moderate; but I understand that the lands have been recently surveyed and re-valued, with a view to a general increase of rent all over the estate.

In the face of such a deficient harvest as the last—the potatoes not having yielded half a crop, and the return of the oat crop being under the average—it is not likely that the rents will be raised this year at all events. I think it a great pity that men who derive £10,000, £15,000, or £20,000 a year from their Irish estates, do not rest satisfied with those handsome incomes. Certainly, whether well-founded or not, the complaint is general amongst the tenant-farmers of the West and North-West of Ireland, that whenever they improve their land, and begin to show that they are prospering, the rent is invariably raised. They give this as a reason for their want of energy in improving their holdings; and it is a reason sufficiently obvious and adequate, though my acquaintance with the circumstances of the country is

too imperfect to enable me to declare whether the cause assigned be the true one. I am bound to say that, from everything I have heard, I believe the tenantry on Mr. Conolly's estate have confidence in their landlord, and hitherto that confidence has not been abused. The same observation is applicable to the tenantry of Mr. Murray Stewart, the owner of an estate comprising over 50,000 acres, extending nearly from Donegal to Killybegs, and a considerable part of which also lies in the wild and mountainous country to the north-west of the last-mentioned town. Within the last five years the rental of this estate has been raised nearly £1,500 a year. I am informed, however, that the rents were previously very low, and that the lands are not at present over-rented. It may be observed that the operations of the Incumbered Estates Court in Donegal have been very limited. In fact, there have been no sales under the Court in the southern division of the county. The great estates remain at the present day in the possession of families who have held them for generations; and the tenants know and have confidence in their landlords. I am sorry, however, to say, that the principal proprietors in this part of the county must be classed as absentees. Mr. Conolly has an establishment near Ballyshannon, but he visits his Donegal estates for a month or so only during the shooting season. Mr. Murray Stewart exchanges for a brief time every year his palatial residence in Scotland for the White House at Killybegs, which is occupied *en permanence* by his active and energetic agent, Mr. Wilson, J.P.; and the Marquess Conyngham may pay a flying visit now and then to Mountcharles or Glenties.

I have not much to say with reference to the condition

of the people in the district of country to which I am now referring, because the observations respecting Sligo and Ballina apply equally to the southern portion of Donegal. The diminished means of the people is not attributable to the bad harvest of last year, but to a succession of two unfavourable seasons following upon the hay famine in the spring of 1860, which was unprecedented in its severity and most disastrous in its results. No county suffered more from this cause than Donegal. In some places the price of hay was £10 and £12 per ton, and in the town of Donegal it even reached the enormous amount of £15. Many of the small farmers who bought at this price had the misfortune to lose their cattle by a virulent disease, and those who succeeded in keeping their stock alive, found in the end that they were not worth the sum expended on their maintenance. The people have also sustained a serious loss by the falling off in the "sprigging" or sewed muslin trade, which, a short time back, afforded profitable employment to a large number of the female population. This trade has been nearly destroyed for the present by the American war—in fact, there is scarcely a branch of industry in the empire which has not been injuriously affected by that calamitous event. The extent of the loss sustained by the diminished demand for the sewed muslin will be better understood, when I state that from September, 1859, to September, 1860, there was paid through the branch of the Ulster Bank in Donegal, and through other channels, a sum of £150,000 to people residing within a circuit of twenty miles, on account of sewed muslin; whilst, during the year from September, 1860, to September, 1861, the payments on this account amounted to

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(Donegal)

only £45,000—being a loss to the people of that district of over £100,000 in one year. All these circumstances have necessarily very much impoverished the poorer class of landholders, and the system of obtaining goods and money on credit, which has latterly become universal throughout the country, has involved them deeply in debt. At Ballintra, four miles south of Donegal, there is a public loan fund, managed chiefly by the Rev. Mr. Kincaid, the Protestant rector, and by Doctor Hamilton. The interest charged is four per cent. If the accommodation afforded by this institution kept the people out of the hands of usurers, it would be productive of much public benefit; but it has not had this effect, and private money lenders are established and flourishing in every part of the county.

The existence of tenant right, which is almost universally recognized in Donegal, enables the tenant to offer a security upon which the meal factor or shopkeeper does not hesitate to give him a reasonable amount of credit. If a tenant on Mr. Conolly's estate, for instance, wishes to sell the good-will of his farm, the agent will not allow the purchase to be completed until the seller has shown that he has paid all his just debts. The price paid to the outgoing tenant for his tenant right, or good will, generally amounts to twelve or fourteen years' purchase, and sometimes equals the fee-simple value of the land. The tenant right of a farm of six and a half acres, held under Mr. Alexander Hamilton, was sold a few days ago for £70; and I have heard of one case on the Marquess Conyngham's estate where the tenant right was sold for eighty-four years' purchase (the rent was only £1 a-year, and the tenant-right was sold for

£84). Very recently the tenant-right of a farm held under Mr. Stewart Murray at the yearly rent of £4 6s., was sold for £121.

With reference to the supply of fuel in the country districts, there is a very great scarcity, but it does not amount to an absolute dearth. Those who have no turf, generally contrive to obtain bogwood, of which there is an immense quantity, and they also possess a resource not to be despised, in the plentiful crops of furze that are to be found in every direction. Mr. Conolly's tenantry are allowed to cut as much turf as they require without any charge, and this privilege is even extended to the tenants on some adjoining properties. The Donegal union comprises an area of 160,158 statute acres, the poor law valuation is £33,935, and the population in 1851 was 34,120. The number of paupers in the workhouse on 8th of February was 114, and at the corresponding period of 1861, 84, showing an increase of 30. The highest rate struck for the year is 1s. 6d. in the pound.

In the course of my investigations on the borders of Donegal, where that county is separated from Fermanagh by the river Erne at the bridge of Belleek, seeing at the head of those splendid falls—which, perhaps, either in scenic effect or manufacturing capabilities, are unsurpassed in the kingdom—a large and pretentious building, I took the opportunity of going a few yards out of my route, and found myself at once in front of the porcelain factory erected by our worthy townsman, Mr. David M'Birney, with the aid of his resident partner, Mr. Armstrong. Inasmuch as the question of creating local manufactures, and thereby developing the industrial resources of Ireland,

is intimately interwoven with that of misery and want arising from an unemployed population, I think that a few lines devoted to this most interesting matter will not be inappropriate.

It is some time since your journal first opened its columns to an argument respecting the possibility of manufacturing china-ware in Ireland—the discussion of the question having arisen from the fact of kaolin (china clay) and felspar having been discovered on the Castle Caldwell property. I was aware that the discussion had led to some result, and that Mr. M'Birney was doing something towards practically testing the vexed question; but I was not prepared to witness the progress which had been made in this quiet and unobtrusively-working establishment towards settling the question of an Irish pottery manufacture. Upon asking permission to view the works, I was instantly admitted, and obligingly conducted over the whole concern by the resident partner, who, by his answers to my various queries, conveyed to me a very good general idea of the present position and future prospects of the undertaking. A water-wheel of 100 horse power—a fine specimen of Mr. Fairbairn's skill—finished with all the latest improvements, supplies the necessary power for the purposes of the factory. The building is perfectly fire-proof, having wrought-iron floor, beams, joists, etc., and on the top is an immense iron tank supplied by the wheel, thus providing the water necessary for the preparation of the raw materials, whilst fire plugs are laid on from it to each floor, so as to give an immediate and abundant supply of water to each apartment, should accident occur. The grinding machinery is of Staffordshire make, and I inspected the process of

grinding both flints and felspar, which were being prepared for the making of Parian ware, one or two beautiful specimens of which I saw that had been manufactured from the Irish materials. Considering the advantages which this establishment possesses — a beautiful site, enormous water power, the rarest and most valuable of the raw materials required for the ceramic art obtained in the locality, water carriage at present, and railway transit soon to be provided, it seems to contain all the elements of success; and I sincerely trust that no unforeseen contingency or want of persevering energy may interfere to mar so fair a prospect. It must be understood that the factory is still unfinished. Only a few grinding machines have been put up. The materials when ground are exported to England at a large profit; but how much better would it not be to have them converted at home into those various articles of porcelain ware for the manufacture of which the factory has been built? Ten thousand pounds have already been expended in the erection of this fine building; but a large sum will be required to put it into thorough and complete working order. The proprietors can at any time find the means for this purpose; and believing, as I do, that the undertaking requires only to be pushed forward with energy to be attended with success, I must say that I am at a loss to account for the delay that has taken place in its completion.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

**Killybegs.—Estate of Murray Stewart, Esq.—Abolition of the Rundale System.—"Glenswilly Decrees".—St. John's Point.—Description of "Slieve League".—Bog Iron Ore.**

KILLYBEGS, Feb. 26.

IN proceeding from Donegal northwards to Killybegs, I found a considerable change for the worse, so far as the appearance of the country is concerned, and indications of greater poverty amongst the small holders of land. The road runs through a wild, hilly, and barren tract, with an abundance of moorland and bog, much of which has been reclaimed and cultivated, though as yet very imperfectly, from the want of sufficient drainage. The farms generally are small, the haggards were badly furnished, and the stock, both of cattle and sheep, exceedingly scanty, as well as of an inferior description. The farm-houses, however, were comparatively clean and comfortable-looking, and, except at one or two places, I did not see any of those miserable hovels which form so characteristic and unpleasant a feature in Connemara and the poorer districts of Mayo. The worst that came under my notice was a cluster of fishermen's huts on the strand of Inver Bay, the unfortunate inmates of which hold no land, and depend solely for their livelihood on fishing.

The greater part of this district forms a portion of the estate of Mr. Murray Stewart, who divides with Mr. Conolly, M.P., the ownership of the little town of Killybegs. Nothing can be more attractive than the situation of this town, built on the margin of a beautiful land-locked

bay, which is remarkably safe, commodious, and easy of access. The harbour of Killybegs is justly reputed to be the safest port of refuge on the north-west coast of Ireland; but although the largest vessel in the British navy can ride securely at anchor there, this fine sheet of water is rarely enlivened with a sail. The country surrounding the town is too poor to admit of any import or export trade, and the few vessels that visit the port almost invariably come with Indian meal and oatmeal from Sligo and Derry. During the last week a vessel from Derry, of 88 tons register, was lying at the quay, discharging a cargo of Indian meal, imported by a trader in the town. Two small hookers, used in the conveyance of meal and other articles from Sligo, were the only other sailing vessels in the harbour during the time of my visit.

On entering Killybegs, I was very much struck by a school-house, prettily situated on a round green hill, just outside the town. This really splendid building comprises both a male and a female school, and was built at the expense of Mr. Murray Stewart, under the advice and superintendence of his agent, Mr. George Venables Wilson, J.P., who resides permanently at Killybegs. Mr. Wilson is a man of great energy and activity, and it is acknowledged on all hands that he has done a great deal for the improvement of the town and of the extensive estate under his management. Since he became agent to this property, he has had the streets widened, old dilapidated buildings cleared away, and several good houses erected in their stead, and he contemplates doing more in this direction, when time and opportunity shall admit of his designs being carried out.

With reference to the estate generally, the changes

which he has effected during the last fifteen years are of the most extensive and beneficial nature. The amount expended during the last fifteen years, in building, draining, road-making, and the improvement of tenants' houses, cannot be less than £40,000; and the labour bill for some time past averages £100 a month. I may also state that at Christmas Mr. Wilson distributed several tons of coals and a quantity of blankets to poor persons in Killybegs. When he first entered upon the management of the property, all the lands were held in rundale, and he immediately set about the abolition of this mischievous state of things by having the lands squared or striped. The people at first were strongly opposed to the innovation, but they soon began to see the advantage of the system, whereby every man had his house placed on his own farm, and was enabled to improve and cultivate his holding without the fear of having his crops injured by the sheep and cattle of his neighbours. The abolition of the rundale system of course necessitated the construction of new houses by nearly all the tenants; and Mr. Wilson assisted them liberally in the building of their cottages, by supplying them with slates, timber, windows, and doors. Sums varying from 30s. to £2 were given to persons who built houses having a kitchen 15 feet by 12, and two other rooms 10 feet by 12 in size. The result of the encouragement thus given, and the stimulus applied to the tenants by Mr. Wilson's constant personal supervision, has been, that the Murray Stewart estate can boast of the best and most comfortable cottages and farm-houses which are to be found in the mountainous districts of Donegal. This great work of reformation was not effected without a vast amount of

labour and difficulty. Accustomed from their infancy to live in dirt and wretchedness, in cabins unprovided either with chimneys or windows, it was extremely difficult to induce the people to make their dwellings more habitable. Mr. Wilson's views were assisted in rather a curious way. When the sewed muslin trade was introduced into this county, the young girls found that they could not work at it in their dark and smoky houses, and they insisted on their parents providing chimneys and windows.

The condition of the dwellings of the people is a matter of very great importance; for if a man's house be neat, clean, and comfortable, it unconsciously tends to elevate his ideas, raise his standard of personal comfort, and increase his self-respect. Every landlord, therefore, who desires to better the moral and physical condition of his tenantry, should direct his efforts especially to the improvement of their cottages. In the remote mountain districts of this county it is still a common thing to tie up the cows in the dwelling-houses at night; and the people excuse this practice by alleging that the cows give more milk when they are kept in the house, and also that it is necessary to keep them there lest they should be stolen. When this statement was made to me, I expressed my surprise, inasmuch as I had previously heard that theft and robbery were not of frequent occurrence in this county. To this my informant replied that ordinary robberies were not common, but that it was a frequent thing for persons having what he termed "fictitious claims" against others, to pay themselves by taking away their so-called debtors' cattle under a "Glenswilly decree". He illustrated the nature of a Glenswilly decree by a circumstance that happened to himself. Some years ago

two of his heifers were stolen, and no trace of them could be discovered. A couple of years afterwards some persons were convicted of ribbonism in the neighbourhood of Ardara, and one of them confessed that the missing heifers had been taken under a Glenswilly decree. It appeared that my informant, in his capacity as magistrate, had fined several persons who were charged before him with assaults and other offences. These persons met in secret conclave, and resolved to reimburse themselves for the fines in which they had been mulcted, by stealing the magistrate's heifers, which they accordingly did, sold them at a distant fair, and divided the proceeds amongst themselves, each person receiving the amount of the fine or fines that he had paid. After the liquidation of all these claims fifteen shillings remained over; and the plunderers debated for a long time whether they should not send this balance to the owner of the heifers, but finally decided on spending it in drink.

I understand that the Glenswilly decrees were originated as a means of obtaining payment for illicit spirits, the manufacture of which was once carried on most extensively in the mountains of Donegal. As such a debt could not be legally recovered, the person who sold the potheen generally recovered the amount from a dishonest debtor by "lifting" his cattle, which were restored when the money was paid. The "Glenswilly decrees" thus became a recognized institution amongst this wild and half-civilised people; but, as illicit distillation does not now exist to any great extent, the practice is generally resorted to for the purpose of extorting from hard-fisted and miserly parents the fortunes which they had promised to give with their daughters. An instance of this kind

occurred recently, and was communicated to me by a sergeant of police. A farmer had promised to give his daughter a fortune of £20, but after the marriage refused to pay the money. One fine night several of his cattle disappeared, and he claimed the assistance of the police to recover them. All the efforts made to discover the perpetrators of the offence were fruitless, but after some time the farmer received a letter, telling him that on the day following that upon which he deposited his daughter's marriage portion with a certain person, his cattle would be restored to him. Under these circumstances he thought it better to pay the money, and the next day the cattle were discovered in the parish pound. They had been put into a neighbouring field during the night, and the owner finding them trespassing deposited them in the pound. Of course it was well known that the robbery, if it can be so designated, was instigated by, and carried out for the benefit of, the son-in-law of the farmer; but the decree was executed by his friends, and legal proof of his connection with it could not be obtained.

Having made careful inquiry as to the condition of the people in the neighbourhood of Killybegs, I found that there was one place in particular where the inhabitants had been for time past suffering under severe distress. This was St. John's Point, a very narrow tongue of land running about seven or eight miles into the sea, having Inver Bay at one side and MacSwine's Bay at the other. The little village of Dunkineely is situated at the base of St. John's Point, which has a lighthouse and a coast-guard station at its extremity. This promontory is thickly peopled with fishermen, there being one hundred families, numbering at least five hundred individuals, at present

living upon it. I was informed that up to a very recent period these people were in a condition of extreme destitution, almost approaching to starvation; that many families were at times without food for twenty-four hours; and that the generality of them were unable to afford more than one meal a day. There may have been some exaggeration in these statements, but of the existence of very great and general distress there can be no doubt. It could not be otherwise; for the fishing, on which they mainly depend for subsistence, has been a complete failure during the last two years. The weather was so stormy from the month of November until very recently, that they could not fish at all; besides which, they had lost their lobster and fishing gear early in the season, and were unable to provide themselves with new lines, nets, etc. Moreover, none of them hold any land, but are in the habit of taking some conacre every year for the cultivation of a few roods of potatoes, for which they pay at the rate of £2 10s. an acre. Last year the failure of their potatoes was not partial, but complete. The land is a heavy stiff soil, excellent for grass, but quite unsuited for the growth of potatoes. In addition to the total loss of their potato crop, the people are altogether without turf, and there is not a tree or shrub on the land available for fuel. A few persons have been able to buy some coals at Killybegs, but the majority have had to content themselves with brambles and dried cow dung; and even the supply of these wretched substitutes is so limited that they can scarcely get enough to cook their scanty meals. An intelligent coastguard man, who has been resident on St. John's Point for some years, told me that he has known several families to assemble in one house in order

to obtain the benefit of the fire which its owner (more fortunate than his neighbours) was able to afford. He also stated that after nightfall a light is never to be seen in any of the cabins, which are all of the most wretched kind, being generally built without mortar, and necessarily cold and comfortless.

Not only have the potatoes and the fishing both failed, but the fishermen are deeply in debt, and cannot, except in a few instances, obtain meal on credit. Within the last three weeks their condition has been in a measure improved, as they have had some good takes of cod-fish which they sold to hawkers at 8s., and to the proprietor of a small curing store here at 6s. per dozen. In a short time the season for cod fishing will be over; and if the mackerel and herring fishery should prove unproductive during the spring and summer, half the inhabitants of St. John's Point must go into the workhouse or starve. When I visited the Point the bay was full of herrings, but the fishermen had no nets to catch them. On the previous evening one man who had a small net went out to fish, but the net broke, and he could secure only a few barrels of herrings. The want of a pier or harbour in this place is a great disadvantage to the fishermen. They get wet when putting their boats to sea, and also when bringing them in, and having no large boats, they cannot venture to sea in rough weather. As there is a large population, and as the bay abounds with fish of various kinds—cod, haddock, ling, turbot, mackerel, and herrings—it would be desirable to enable the people to avail themselves of the resources which lie within their reach by the construction of a proper harbour. There are several points where a harbour could be cheaply made, and

if suitable protection of this kind were provided, larger boats, in which the fishermen could venture far out to sea, might in course of time be introduced. The Irish fisheries cannot be properly developed until larger and better boats are used; and before we can expect to see any improvement in this respect, harbours must be made within a convenient distance of the best fishing grounds. There is also a fishing village to the north-west of Killybegs, called Portnacroosh; and further on, at Teelin Harbour—a long and narrow inlet of the sea, surrounded with rocky hills—there is another fishing station and a very numerous and needy population. They are not so badly off, however, as their brethren of St. John's Point, because they have all small patches of ground, and possess a few sheep and cattle.

About a mile and a-half from Killybegs there is an estate situated along the shores of Fintragh Bay, the tenants on which are in a very poor condition. Their land is much more highly rented than either that of Mr. Stewart or Mr. Conolly, and they complain that some four years ago the mountains on which from time immemorial their ancestors were accustomed to feed sheep and cattle, were taken from them by the proprietor, and that no reduction was made in the rent. This is considered by the people to be a great grievance; it has given rise to much dissatisfaction, and there can be no doubt that it has considerably crippled them in their means. Almost all of them are living at present on meal purchased on credit at a usurious rate of interest. Their cottages are very inferior to those on Mr. Stewart's property, and the general aspect of their dwellings and farms is that of extreme poverty.

Having heard great praises of the sublime and romantic scenery in the Parish of Glen, I resolved to spend a day in visiting a locality which presents so many features of interest, not only to the lover of nature, but to the antiquary and archæologist. Though my visit was made at a season when the country looks least attractive, I derived the greatest enjoyment from what I saw, and feel justified in recommending all tourists in search of health to spend a few weeks in this wonderful region of varied scenery. On the way to Glen Columbkille, I passed through the village of Kilcar, the property of Mr. Murray Stewart, and two or three miles further on is the little village of Carrick, belonging to Mr. Conolly, M.P. Here the proprietor has built a nice little hotel, where the tourist, wishing to ascend Slieve League, or explore the Glen, will find excellent accommodation. Slieve League is a grand and picturesque mountain, having an elevation of nearly two thousand feet above the level of the sea. Its eastern side, though steep, can be ascended by a road, which Mr. Conolly has made, to the summit; but its western side descends precipitously into the sea, constituting the grandest cliff in the United Kingdom. The state of the weather did not permit me to ascend the mountain, or make my way to a point called the Awark More, or Gran Sight, from which the outline of the cliffs is discernible for five miles; but I may be permitted to quote the graphic description of the scene, from a brilliant article on the North-west coast of Ireland, which appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* of September, 1860. Having arrived at the Awark More, the writer says:—

"The whole stretch of Slieve League, from wave-

washed base to dizzy summit—from south to north—lay before us. We saw it well and clearly: no mist rose from the wave below—no cloud overwreathed the rocks above, whose outlines were cut sharply against the dome of the blue sky, and the broad face of the cliff itself was steeped and glistening in sunshine, and all bathed and diffused with one wide and vast glory of light. We had expected much, but nothing like what we saw: we were prepared for the height: we knew that we were to look upon cliffs twice as lofty as Horn Head, and three times higher than its grand brother of Fair Head. We had even heard it asserted by a trustworthy authority, that Slieve League was the loftiest and grandest cliff in Europe, except one in Norway, whose name we did not hear; but any anticipation we had formed came far short of the sublime reality which now lay in strong and magnificent expanse before us. It was not even the altitude of these great cliffs—and the eye did traverse them from their black bases up to the terrible height where their edged tops stood out against the sky—it was not this feature, striking as it was, but it was their extraordinary colouring. They are most gorgeous. We do, indeed, assert that nothing can surpass their tints and hues. The whole face of the cliff is coloured like an opal gem, with every variation of dye. Now, we see the ancient gray of the rock, weather-stained and worn; now it is inky black, where the shadows lie in the clefts and recesses; now a bold Vandyke brown, mounting to a tawny red; now the cliff brightens with lines of pink and delicate pea green as pale as the painting on a Sevres China vase; now there are large patches of sulphur very vivid, traversings of amber and gold colour, deepening down to coarser hues

of ochre and gamboge, the rusted iron hue prevailing at the bases, while mingling with it were spots of flecked green like Galway marble; pillared rocks stand out from the cliffs like gray altars, their tops covered with light green. Beneath and far down, the profound indigo of the sea, commingling with its own snowy foam, weltered and creamed around the huge black bases, or broke in hollow thunder among the thousand caves and buttresses which prop these vast sea palaces, the old ocean temples of great Nature".

The writer goes on to ask the Irish Rhine resorters, Rome admirers, Danube devotees, and Alpine aspirants, why they leave their own country with all its bright and beautiful scenery, with all its wild, strange, original, and untrodden landscape, where there is everything that is fresh, and lovely, and striking, and piquant. "Why", he asks, "do ye leave it year after year to bustle and herd with a cigar-perfumed crowd on board a river steamer, drinking vinous vinegar, and devouring sweet omelettes, and *doing* the Rhine; or donkeying up a narrow break-neck path, and *doing* the Righi; or enduring the dirt and pedicularia of Rome, and *doing* the Eternal City; and all at vast outlay of purse, and patience, and physical labour, and waste of time, and travel—when here is your own Innisfail, your green Erin—ma colleen dhas macree, the fair young girl of our heart—smiling ever, though forsaken; lovely, but lone in her beauty and unutterable gracefulness; deserted midst all her native and wild attractions, for the clumsy and used-up *fadeurs* of foreign lands; and sitting on her heathery mountain with the cataract flashing down its rocks beside her; and her oakwood glen, and all its

music behind her; and her glorious cliffs before her, beaten by the westerly winds, and lashed by ten thousand sweeping billows; and all her grand and giant mountains around her, with their solemn peaks, their shadows, and their straiths, and their still lakes which glitter in the sun like diamonds? Yet she is, like Lear, forsaken by her own children, with so many of her glens unexplored and her mountains unscaled; those very cliffs which now fill our mind with their beauty, unheard-of by nine-tenths of her travelling population or her reading literati; when all the time there is scarce one scene on the Continent of more peculiar and original sublimity; nor is there one painting in Barberini Palace or Farnese—nor arch, nor ancient capitol in forum or colisseum—which can surpass in true grandeur, or chaste effect, or just proportion, or tint or vivid dye, or lovely and lasting colouring, these grand old cliffs".

The hamlet and townland of Carrick contain between thirty and forty houses. The land is pretty good, but wants draining and fencing badly. The people grow potatoes and hay only, and keep herds of cattle and flocks of sheep of an inferior description. At present, I am told, the sheep are dying on the mountains from disease, occasioned by the excessive wet to which they have been exposed. The farms are let at a low rate, averaging about five or six shillings an acre. It is rather difficult to ascertain the exact rent charged per acre, because there is scarcely a tenant on this part of Mr. Conolly's estate who knows the actual measurement of his holding. A farm here is spoken of as containing so many cows' grass, which, as well as I can ascertain, is about five acres for each cow. The tenants have a claim to put their stock on the mountains, and

neither Mr. Conolly nor Mr. Stewart imposes any restrictions upon them in this respect. The value of a tenancy under Mr. Conolly may be judged from the fact that the tenant right of a farm in this neighbourhood, held at a yearly rent of £4, was sold recently by public auction for £160, and the occupying tenant thought it went too cheaply, and refused to give it for that sum. I also saw a small farm, for the good will of which the tenant wants £200; and I was told that this man purchased a farm for one of his sons for £100, and was able to give a marriage portion of £40 to each of his four daughters. I must state, however, that it was generally supposed that smuggling, and not farming, was the real source of the old gentleman's prosperity. Some employment is given at present in this parish by a private English company in the digging and carting to Teelin Harbour of bog-iron ore, which lies in small quantities in the bog, and is, in fact, the deposit left by numerous iron springs in the turf, which acts as a sponge, allowing the water to strain through, and retaining the iron. The ore, which is exported to Liverpool, is principally used for the purification of gas, the mode adopted being similar to the dry-lime process which is generally used. After being in use some time, the bog ore becomes highly charged with the sulphur which has been eliminated from the gas. The sulphur is extracted by a patent process, and a considerable profit is thus realised. Bog-iron ore is not found in many other parts of the United Kingdom, and the English market is supplied with it principally from Denmark and Nova Scotia.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

**General State of the County Donegal.—Glenties.—Tenant Right.—Gweedore.—Lord George Hill.—Letterkenny.—Value of Education.—Estate of Sir James Emerson Tennent.**

LETTERKENNY, Co. Donegal, March 8.

I HAVE now travelled the coast of this great county from Bundoran to Gweedore, and have found the condition of the people everywhere, in the remote and mountainous districts, pretty much the same, and not such as to call for any special remark, considering the fulness with which I have entered into the subject in my previous correspondence. The condition of the small farmers at present is very low, arising from the misfortune of two deficient harvests, following close on the hay famine in the spring of 1860, which was the first interruption to the general prosperity enjoyed by the farming classes for several years previously. There was scarcely a farm that was not overstocked when the great scarcity of fodder set in, and the efforts then unavailingly made to save their cattle by the purchase of hay at exorbitant prices, exhausted the savings of the small farmers, and involved many of them deeply in debt. From that blow they have never recovered. The harvest of 1860 was unusually deficient; and last year the potato crop, which was most extensively planted, proved a miserable failure, whilst in addition there has been the serious calamity of an almost total want of turf—a scarcity unparalleled in Ireland during the last thirty years. I have stated these facts so often, that the reiteration of them in detail would be tiresome; and I now

mention them once for all as the true explanation of the distress which unquestionably exists, with more or less severity, throughout the west and north-west of Ireland.

At the same time I have drawn a distinction between the distress either actually existing, or to be reasonably anticipated during the coming summer, and actual *famine*, of which there need be no fear. I have also stated as the result of my observation and inquiries, that the pressure to which the people may be subjected, will not be so great as to call for any extraordinary measures of relief; that extreme destitution is not to be apprehended, except in a few remote districts, and amongst a small number of the very poorest class, who, in the best of times, are barely able to live; and that if the owners of land and the holders of large farms give employment on a more extensive scale than usual, the small farmers and the labouring population will be enabled to get through the year without the necessity of resorting to the workhouse. That there will be an increase of paupers as the season advances there can be no doubt. In all the workhouses I have visited an increase has already taken place; but I see no grounds for expecting that the pauper roll in any district will be swelled out of proportion to the population, and even if the increase amounted to double the number of persons relieved in the year 1861, it would still fall far short of the number that the workhouses are capable of containing. Up to the present, I do not believe that any really able-bodied man, capable of doing a good day's work, has applied for admission; and the greater number of the aged and decrepid persons who have recently entered the workhouses, have been driven there rather by want of fuel than scarcity of food.

The holders of land will struggle to the last rather than seek for any relief which would involve the giving up of their little farms; and on every account it would be deeply to be lamented if any considerable number of this class were forced to that extremity. It is in times such as these that the operation of the quarter-acre clause is felt so severely. If that clause were repealed, I think that the vigilance of relieving officers and boards of guardians, together with the undoubted dislike of the Irish peasant to confinement within the walls of a workhouse, would afford a sufficient guarantee against the expenditure of the public money in the relief of persons not absolutely in want. I believe the Committee of the House of Commons, which sat last session to consider the question of the Irish poor laws, recommended the repeal of this clause, and I trust their suggestion will be speedily carried into effect. The system of out-door relief, from its liability to abuse, is regarded with great disfavour by the administrators of the poor laws in this country, and there is no likelihood of its being resorted to in the present emergency. There seems, however, to be no reason why, with proper officers and careful management, out-door relief might not be as efficiently carried out here as as in England, where it has been found to work so well.

From Killybegs I proceeded to Glenties, a poor and apparently neglected village upon the estate of the Marquess Conyngham, who is the possessor of a vast territory in this county. His agent, Mr. Russell, bears a high character in the neighbourhood for his just and fair dealing with the tenantry; but it is difficult for any agent, no matter how well disposed, to improve the condition of the people without the assistance of a resident landlord.

Glenties is surrounded on all sides by barren moorland which could be easily reclaimed. In the immediate vicinity of the village there are fields producing grain, grass, and potatoes of the best description, which a few years ago were as unproductive as the heath-clad tracts surrounding them. The very numerous tenantry of Lord Conyngham are in the same position as those of the other large proprietors to whom I have previously referred. They include some rich and comfortable farmers, and they have all been able to pay their rent with tolerable punctuality; but there is a large number whose means and credit have been reduced to a very low state indeed. I do not, however, anticipate any destitution of an extreme character amongst them, and I believe that a few good harvests will render them as prosperous as they have ever been. The chief dependence of the farmers in this district is on the rearing and the sale of stock. The number of their cattle has been greatly diminished, and their resources are therefore so much the less; and if in the course of time they should be enabled to recover their position, I believe that their dear-bought experience during the hay famine of 1860 will prevent them from again committing the mistake of over-stocking their farms.

Many of Lord Conyngham's tenants, in the neighbourhood of Glenties, have been great sufferers from the overflowing of the river Oneagh, whose waters spread over the land at either side to a considerable extent, carrying away oats, injuring the potatoes, and destroying the hay. Men have been seen nearly up to their waists in water, endeavouring to secure the stooks of oats which the flood was bearing down; and in some instances, when

the stooks were taken out of the water and deposited in what was considered at the time to be a place of safety, the flood rose higher and carried them away. The name of one man was mentioned to me, all of whose potatoes, oats, and hay were destroyed; and there can be no doubt that a great many others have sustained very severe losses from the same cause. I have even heard of cattle dying from disease occasioned by feeding them on hay which had been rendered sour and unwholesome by the floods. These cases are of a nature to call for some allowance to the tenants in the payment of their rent, but I have not been able to discover any instance in which a reduction has been made. A short time ago there was a general increase of rent in this district, and I should say that the land is now rented at its full value.

The custom of tenant right is in full force on this estate, and no restriction is imposed which can be fairly objected to. Some agents speak highly in praise of tenant right, and others, who object to it on principle, are powerless to disturb a custom so universally recognized, and admit that it would be most unjust to prevent a tenant who had bought his farm, from selling it again if circumstances compelled him to give it up. The only sound objection to the custom seems to be, that the keen competition which exists for the possession of land, sometimes raises the price of a farm so high that the incoming tenant finds himself, after payment of that sum, without sufficient capital to cultivate his land as he ought to do. I should not, however, convey a true notion of tenant right in Donegal if I were to omit mentioning that it is acquiesced in and encouraged by many agents and landlords because they look on it as the best security they

can have for the payment of the rent. If a tenant should fall into arrear, and be evicted from his farm, he is still allowed to sell his "good will", and the arrears of rent and all his just debts are liquidated out of the purchase-money, otherwise the landlord will not permit the transfer to be made. Whenever a man wants to dispose of his farm or tenant right, he puts up a notice to that effect on the door of the next chapel, or some other convenient and public place, stating when and where the auction is to come off. One condition the landlord always most properly imposes, viz., that the incoming tenant must be a man of respectable character. The rule on Mr. Conolly's estate is, that the next neighbour of the man who is disposing of his tenant right has the first claim to the farm, if he will consent to give as much for it as any one else. If he should not be able to purchase, any of the tenants on the same townland may do so; after them a preference is given to the tenants on the estate; and if none of them should be willing to purchase, any stranger will be accepted as a tenant.

After leaving Glenties I drove to Gweedore through some of the wildest scenery that it is possible to conceive. The road sometimes wound its way through a valley along the base of lofty cliffs, and then ascended to a great height, commanding prospects of the most varied and extensive character. Mountains of every form, both rugged and regular in outline, and far-stretching plains of bronzed moorland, constituted the principle features of the scene, and at times the waves of the Atlantic, breaking in foam against the iron-bound coast, burst upon the sight. Grand as is this scenery in winter, it is infinitely more beautiful in summer, when the hills and

valleys are clothed with verdure, and the mountains glow with the richest and most varied colours, and the moors glitter in the sun with an almost metallic lustre. I passed through the village of Dunglow and one or two small hamlets; but for miles and miles not a single house, or human being, or four-footed beast, was to be seen. The country was a complete desert. It was a relief to arrive at length at the beautiful and well-conducted hotel built by Lord George A. Hill at Gweedore, and to witness what he has done in the reclamation of land, which, when it came into his possession, was as wild and worthless as any in the country. In 1838 Lord George Hill purchased this property, amounting in the aggregate to upwards of 23,000 acres. In a little work called *Facts from Gweedore*, Lord George thus describes his purchase:—

"The district extends for some miles along the north-west coast, or corner, of Ireland, and the scenery is of the very wildest description; the Atlantic dashing along those shores in all its magnificent freshness, whilst the harsh screeching of the sea-fowl is its continual and suitable accompaniment. The coast is studded with numerous little islands, and when the ocean is 'up', or 'ruffled', it may be seen striking against opposing headlands or precipitous cliffs with a force and effect that is grand beyond description, the waves forming into a column of foam which is driven to an immense height, and remaining visible for many seconds, until the feathered spray becomes gracefully and gradually dispersed—

> It plays with the clouds, it mocks the skies,
> Or like a cradled creature lies.

The social condition of the country, previously to the

transfer of these properties, was more deplorable than can be well conceived—famine was periodical, and fever its attendant: wretchedness pervaded the district".

Lord George, by great personal labour, unwearied perseverance, and a large expenditure of capital, has done a vast amount of good. He commenced by abolishing the old system of rundale, and in lieu giving to each tenant a separate, clearly defined, and equivalent farm, which he states "has had the effect of more than doubling the quantity of land previously under cultivation; chiefly by inducing the tenantry to bestow an amount of care and labour on their own share, which they naturally, under the ancient system, never thought it worth their while to exert on the precarious scraps of a field held in common by a dozen or two of neighbours". The result is stated to be, that both rents and the county cess are more punctually paid than either formerly were; that regularity on the part of the landlord, his agent, and overseers has had its effect upon the tenants of the estate; that all promises and agreements having been faithfully adhered to, and impartial justice rendered to all, a greater amount of confidence has sprung up; and that tricks, subterfuges, and craft, are less resorted to by the inhabitants. Those who knew Gweedore before it came into the hands of Lord George, would scarcely recognize it as the same place, so great are the improvements that have been effected in the land, and so successful have his efforts proved in ameliorating the condition of the people. At present there is no cry of extreme distress from Gweedore. Some individuals living along the sea shore may be in want of food a month or two before the coming in of the next harvest; but the great majority of Lord George's tenants

will not suffer severely from distress. They have been able to pay their rents and to retain a fair share of their oats, which they are getting ground into meal for their own use. The land is let at a low rate, and the value of a tenant's interest on this property may be conceived from the fact that a man paying a rent of £1 a-year has got as much as £40 for his tenant right.

The town of Letterkenny is about twenty-two miles distant from Gweedore, and is situated at the extremity of that great arm of the sea called Lough Swilly. For the greater part of the way the country is of a similar character to that which I have already described—extremely wild, picturesque, and desolate. There are mountain gorges of romantic beauty, lonely little lakes embosomed amongst the hills, and vast tracts of moorland, which would be dreary in the extreme but for the range of mountain masses that bound and diversify the prospect. Until we approach within six or seven miles of Letterkenny, there are but few houses to be seen, but from that point till we arrive at the town, there is a numerous population, and the land, which is of excellent quality, seems to be carefully cultivated.

The population of Letterkenny, according to the last census, was 2,160. It is a neat, clean, and apparently a thriving town. Within the last ten years its appearance has been considerably improved, and I have been given to understand that it would be still further improved if the landlords would give long building leases, without which people will not expend their money in the erection of good houses. The county lunatic asylum is about to be erected here, and the estimated expense is about £20,000. It is also intended to commence without

delay the construction of a railway from St. Johnstones, near Strabane, to Letterkenny, which can hardly fail to prove beneficial to the traders and the community at large. The amount of employment which will thus be given to the artizans and labouring classes of the town and neighbourhood will, it is hoped, prevent much distress in this locality during the summer.

The want of fuel has been felt very severely by the poor, but active measures have been taken by the wealthier inhabitants to relieve this distress. A subscription was entered into, and £75, the profits of the public loan fund, were added to it, making in all a sum of £200, which has enabled the committee to distribute fourteen and a-half tons weekly to the poor of the town and neighbourhood within a circle of three miles. The whole of this district, and all the country to the north and east of Letterkenny, from Dunfanaghy to Lifford, is suited for the growth of flax, which is, therefore, the chief crop cultivated by the farmers. Last year the produce of the crop was one-sixth short, and the prices have fallen, owing to the depression in the linen trade occasioned by the American war. In December, 1860, the prices of flax in Letterkenny ranged from 50s. to 72s. per 124lbs.; and in December, 1861, from 45s. to 65s. for the same quantity. The short crop and the reduced prices have had a serious effect on the small farmers, who have also lost at least one-half of their potatoes, and are, moreover, suffering from the effects of the hay famine two years since. There can be no doubt that they are all much reduced in means, and that they will have a hard struggle to get through the summer. Nearly all the persons of this class are now getting meal on credit, as well as oats

*Lough Swilly*

and flax seed for cropping their lands. Their credit, however, does not stand high, for there are some merchants who have sums varying from one to two thousand pounds due to them since the previous year. The poverty of the country generally is indicated by the fact that at the last Hilary sessions of Donegal and Lifford, the civil bill entries were nearly treble what they had been for many years before, and it is feared that the next sessions will show a large increase. These were principally for debts incurred in the purchase of meal and fodder in the year 1860. Ejectments were not so numerous in proportion to the other entries; but it is expected that a great many ejectments for nonpayment of rent will be brought forward at the ensuing sessions. The number of paupers in the workhouse on the 21st of February, 1862, was 120, and the number in the corresponding week of last year 72, being an increase of 48. The rates range from 20d. to 8d. in the pound, except as to the division of Gartan, where the rate amounts to 10s. in the pound, owing to certain wholesale evictions which recently took place in that locality.

The country lying between Letterkenny and Lifford is highly cultivated, and the land, especially that bordering the shores of Lough Swilly, is exceedingly rich and fertile. The Marquess of Abercorn owns a good deal of property in this district, as well as a large tract of the finest land, extending from Carrighan, about five miles from Derry, to within a few miles of Lifford, and which is alongside the river Foyle. The tenants on Lord Abercorn's estate, which is admirably managed, are all large and comfortable farmers, paying from £30 to £100 a-year. It is needless to say that there is no distress

amongst these persons; and, as they necessarily give a large amount of employment, the labouring population have not suffered nearly so much as in other places from the want of work. In fact, in the neighbourhood of Lifford and Strabane there has been a considerable demand for labour at good wages. The remark which I have had occasion to make with respect to the farmers in other counties, applies also to those in the north-east of Donegal. They received such high prices for their produce during several years previous to 1860, that they thought the times would never change for the worse, and they launched into extravagance, and, in short, lived too fast. Any difficulties or privations in which they may now find themselves involved have been occasioned by their own want of prudence. There is a large Protestant population in this part of the county, and they are distinguished by an independence of thought and demeanour, and greater energy, industry, and skill, than are to be found amongst the inhabitants of the poor mountainous districts of the south and west.

Although there are some localities in which the people are unruly and difficult to manage, I have the authority of gentlemen of position, who know them well, for stating that there are no people more susceptible to the influence of just and kind treatment than the Roman Catholic population of Donegal. They are a keen, quick-witted race; and when they find a landlord, agent, or magistrate scrupulously just in his dealings, and acting invariably on principle, they are not slow to give him credit for good motives, and to acknowledge the justice of his acts. This is the character of them which I have received, not from persons of their own persuasion, but from Protestant

clergymen; and it is only confirmatory of the opinion long ago expressed by Sir John Davies, who says: "There is no nation of people under the sun that doth love equal and indifferent justice better than the Irish, or will rest better satisfied with the execution thereof, although it be against themselves, if so they may have the protection and benefit of the law when upon just cause they do desire it". There is little doubt that education, which is progressing steadily, though slowly, in this part of the country, will exercise a great and salutary influence on the rising generation. I have already mentioned, in reference to the county of Mayo, that the people were stimulated to send their children to school by the letters received from their relatives in America deploring their want of education, the disadvantages of which they then experienced for the first time. When at Glenties, I was shown a letter received by a respectable farmer from his son, a successful miner in California, which affords so good an illustration on this point that I will quote a passage from it: "Mother tells me Walsh (a younger brother) does not like to stay in Ireland. I wish him to go to school and get all the learning he can, and when I write again in the fall, I will let him know what the prospects are here. If he wishes to come out, it is my earnest desire that he should get all the learning he possibly can, quit work, and go to school, for I want learning myself, and sorely feel the need of it every day. I would freely give one hundred dollars to be scholar enough to do my own business; and if he goes to school and learns well, in a short time I will give him as good a shove as I gave Matthew. You don't know the want of education till you come to travel. Then you

will find the benefit of your education. Matthew found his of great use to him on the passage out here. I wish, father, that you had sent me to school in place of working me so steady when I was with you. It would have been more use to me since; and now I feel lonesome and tired when I see others reading and enjoying themselves while I sit and look idly on, when, if I had got a limited education, it would have been much improved since coming to this country. I am advancing in years, and don't like to show the world that I am so ignorant. So don't fail to send Walsh to school". This letter was written for the young man by one of his companions. His brother has acted on the advice, and, though twenty years of age, has gone to school and worked with such assiduity that, in the space of two months, he has learned to read and write. He intends to leave Ireland for America in the course of the present or next month.

Having reached the point of my destination in Donegal, I returned by the county Fermanagh to Enniskillen, on my way to Leitrim. I heard here that very extensive improvements were in progress at Tempo, the estate of our distinguished countryman, Sir James Emerson Tennent, and although this district was not within the line marked in my instructions, I considered it desirable to visit the place. Arriving at Tempo, I was highly gratified at the scene of activity which I witnessed there, and at the thorough manner in which Sir James has set about the improvement and beautifying of his property.

There is much interest attaching to the beautiful demesne of Tempo, from the fact that the old mansion which stood upon it was the scene of that remarkable Irish story, *Castle Rackrent*, by Miss Edgeworth. It

Forster & Co. Lith.

Tempo

was the castle of the Maguires, an ancient race, ennobled by James the Second, from whom the estates passed into the family of the present proprietor. The house, which Sir James has just removed, contained the apartments in which Miss Edgeworth placed the long imprisonment of Lady Cathcart by her husband, Colonel Maguire (who was the Sir Kit of the tale), and the window out of which the forlorn lady, to preserve her diamonds from her husband, threw them down to a beggarwoman, who faithfully conveyed them to the person to whom Lady Cathcart wished them confided, and from whom, many years after, she recovered them in safety on her escape from confinement.

On the site of this old house Sir J. E. Tennent is now building a mansion in the Byzantine Gothic style of architecture, after a design by Messrs. Lanyon, Lynn, and Lanyon, of Belfast. The building is of hammered sandstone with dressings of cut stone; and, having seen the plans and drawings, I can state that when completed it will be one of the handsomest houses in the country. It will contain about thirty apartments. The west side will be 72 feet in length, the south about 50 feet, and the apex of the gables 42 feet in height. The ornamentation will be very tasteful, but not of an elaborate character. The demesne of Tempo is of unusual beauty, being richly planted with extremely fine old trees: and, besides a river which flows through its entire extent, the hills enclose three small lakes wooded down to the water's edge. When Sir James came into possession of the demesne, it was in a wild and neglected state. The fine old timber had been allowed to suffer considerably from decay, the ground was overgrown with weeds, and sadly in want of drainage, and the lakes were choked

with sedges and foul with decaying vegetable matter. The place in short had been left for thirty or forty years in a state of nature, and was little better than a wilderness. To improve a place which had been so long neglected, was a work of great labour and expense; but Sir James has undertaken the task with an energy and spirit which I should like to see evinced by other landed proprietors, whose estates stand in need of improvement. Since the month of October last, arterial and thorough drainage works have been carried on at Tempo on a most extensive scale; and other works, such as the levelling of old and the making of new fences, have also been proceeded with. One hundred men have been kept continually engaged in these several operations, in consequence of which there is not a man for six miles round who is not fully employed. The sum paid in wages varies from £40 to £50 a week, and the carrying out of all the contemplated improvements will involve an expenditure of several thousand pounds. A good-sized river ran through the demesne, and as it was often unable to discharge its swollen waters through its neglected channel, they overflowed and injured the adjoining meadows. This evil has been remedied by the cutting of a straight, deep channel, which will effectually prevent overflowing in future. When the works now laid out in the demesne shall have been completed, there will be fully two miles of arterial drains, five miles of thorough drains, two miles of new fences, and the extent of old fences levelled will not be much under four miles. The arterial drains are from four to six feet deep, and some of the main drains have been cut to a depth of 25 and 30 feet. One lake covering six or eight acres

of land has been completely drained, and the others have been thoroughly cleansed. The fences consist of a sunk fence five feet deep with a good sound bank planted with thorn quicks. As soon as the works in the demesne have been finished, thorough drainage of the estate generally will be commenced.

Sir James E. Tennent has a very comfortable and respectable class of tenants. The land is very good and the rents moderate. I was assured there has not been a shilling of arrears in the rentals for a considerable time back: the present proprietor, since he succeeded to the estate, has never had occasion to dispossess any farmer of his holding. Last year they have had, generally speaking, a fair oat crop; but the potatoes failed here as in many other parts of Ireland. Most of them are very well off, having saved money in former years. Fuel was very scarce in this neighbourhood, but Sir James gave a large quantity of timber gratuitously to the poor in the village of Tempo and the surrounding localities. By the assistance which he thus afforded, and the large amount of constant employment that he has been giving for several months past, he has proved himself a great public benefactor. The estate is managed by a gentleman of high character and great experience as an agent, Mr. Matthew H. Sankey, of Brookborough, who is also agent over the vast estate of the late Sir A. Brooke in this county. The improvements at Tempo are carried out under the superintendence of Mr. Sankey, assisted by an intelligent steward and agriculturist, Mr. Cowan, who is also charged with the duty of giving instruction to the farmers as to the best and most suitable methods of cultivating their holdings.

## CHAPTER XXV.

**County Leitrim.—Manorhamilton and its neighbourhood.—Estates of the Right Hon. John Wynne, Mr. Johnston, and Mr. Lane Fox.—Want of drainage.—Description of a hovel near Castletown.—Agrarian murder.—Creevilia ironworks.—Hints on the potato culture.**

DRUMKEERIN, March 15.

I HAVE spent several days in the county Leitrim, during which time I have visited Manorhamilton, Drumkeerin, and Carrick-on-Shannon, and endeavoured, by personal observation and inquiries from the people, to make myself acquainted with the actual condition of the country. I have found the immediate neighbourhood of Manorhamilton and the mountainous district bordering on the county Sligo, and extending northward as far as Bundoran, to be rather worse than other portions of the county, though there is also much distress to be found amongst the small farmers in the neighbourhood of Drumkeerin, especially those living on the slopes of the Braulieve Mountains and the inhabitants of the wild country to the east of Lough Allen, adjoining the county of Cavan. The poverty of the people has not interfered much with the payment of their rents. The most strenuous exertions have been made everywhere to meet the landlord's claim, and the information which I have received leads me to believe that there will be very few arrears on the several properties in this county at the close of last year's account. It is greatly to be feared, however, that much difficulty will be experienced in the collection of the next gale when it becomes due, and

that many landlords will find it necessary to give time and indulgence to their tenants until after the coming in of this year's harvest.

The town of Manorhamilton, and the land surrounding it, belong to the Earl of Leitrim. I have heard complaints of the land being too highly rented; and, on the other hand, his lordship has been commended for the mode in which he collects his rents—viz., at the end of every year, instead of half-yearly, as on many other estates. By allowing the May gale to remain unpaid until the close of the year, a substantial benefit is conferred on the tenant. Lord Leitrim is also said to be indulgent towards the poor on his estate, giving them permission to cut turf at a cheap rate, and distributing blankets amongst them at Christmas.

A few miles from the town there is a large tract of land belonging to the Right Hon. John Wynne, of Hazelwood, county Sligo. The population is numerous, and they are, comparatively speaking, in a comfortable condition. Mr. Wynne's land is let at a low rate—from 14s. to 15s. per acre for land of fair quality. He is a most liberal and indulgent landlord, and is greatly respected and loved by those who hold under him. I entered into conversation with an intelligent man, holding about fourteen acres, in addition to which he has four acres of bog, which he reclaimed, and had sown with oats last year. I saw some of the oats grown on the bog, and the quality of the grain was excellent, whilst the produce was abundant. The farmer attributed the superiority of his bog-grown oats to the fact that he dug deeper, drained better, and manured more highly than his neighbours. He had sown potatoes previously,

manured with lime and farm-yard manure, and he prepared the soil for oats by mixing blue clay and sand, which he obtained on his farm, with the peaty soil. I the course of time these four acres of bog will be converted into good arable land. At present he pays no rent for this, and Mr. Wynne has promised him that as long as he holds the farm of fourteen acres, he shall have the reclaimed land rent free. The farmer said that at the end of ten or fifteen years he expected to be charged a rent for the four acres, but in the meantime he will have been amply repaid for his expenditure of capital and labour, and he would gladly undertake the reclamation of more waste land on the same terms. This man has a good substantial dwelling-house, and an excellent cow-house and dairy. He has six or seven milch cows, and as many more one and two-year-old heifers, all of which were comfortably housed and well provided with fodder. There are a good many other tenants of Mr. Wynne equally well off; but on the neighbouring estates it would be difficult to find similar instances of prosperity amongst the small holders, and they are nearly all of that class in this part of the county.

I heard a sad account of the poverty of the people in the parish of Rensenvir, barony of Rossclogher. There were several distresses about to be levied for rent, and in some instances farmers were raising money to pay it and purchase food on the security of their next crops. Employment, too, was much wanting. A road contractor told me that he could get plenty of men to work at a low rate of wages, and that he knew persons who were then actually working for a farmer, making drains and fences, for no other payment than their daily food. It would be

difficult to find a stronger proof of the extremity to which these people have been reduced. The spring work can scarcely be said to have commenced. When it does, we may expect some amelioration in the condition of the labouring classes, and of the small farmers whose holdings are not sufficiently large to require their exclusive attention; but under any circumstances, there is not much likelihood of employment being given in the district of which I am speaking, to an extent that would fully relieve the anticipated distress.

There are some landlords who give a great amount of employment, and act most generously towards their tenants. Prominent amongst them is Mr. Johnston, of Kinlough, near Bundoran, who owns large estates in Leitrim, including the town of Drumkeerin in the barony of Drumahair. The accounts which I have received from several quarters in reference to this gentleman, represent him to be an excellent landlord. He lets his land at moderate rents, the average being about 15s. per acre, and he gives every encouragement to improvement on the part of his tenants. He pays them for the making of drains, and does not charge a per-centage, which he might fairly do, on the outlay. He also remunerates the tenants for levelling old and making new fences, gives them lime gratuitously for the manuring of their land, and supplies timber, lime, and slates, to those who build new houses. This is not all. He allows the whole of the poor rate to be deducted from the rent, and this year he has made a liberal abatement to those tenants whose crops were injured by the overflowing of a river in the neighbourhood of Drumkeerin. Between the 23rd of June and the latter end of October, there were no less

than thirteen floods here, causing great injury to hay, oats, and potatoes. Much damage was also occasioned by floods in the vicinity of Manorhamilton, and the tenants have had to bear the whole of the loss, though this would appear to be a case peculiarly calling for indulgence. I have further to state, with respect to Mr. Johnston, that he gives a large amount of constant employment, in addition to that given to tenants in the making of drains and other improvements on their own holdings. He also recognizes tenant right on his property, and a short time ago one of his tenants sold the good will of a farm of six acres for £65. His tenants are comfortable, as they could hardly fail to be under such a landlord, and his rents are always punctually paid.

Mr. Lane Fox is the proprietor of a large estate lying between Manorhamilton and Drumahair. He is also an excellent landlord, letting his land at a fair rent, and encouraging the tenants to improve. Being a resident in England, he cannot give much time to the personal management of his property, but he is represented by an agent (Mr. Kell), who is most highly spoken of for the fairness of his dealings with the tenantry. Mr. Montgomery, late member for the county, has an estate situated between Manorhamilton and Dumkeerin; his residence, Belhavel House, is about four or five miles distant from the last-named town. His tenantry are tolerably comfortable, having their farms at reasonable rents, which they have paid up to the 1st November last. I am not to be understood as intending to convey that the gentlemen whom I have named are the only good landlords in this district. I have referred to them especially, because they are the principal proprietors

through whose estates I have passed; and I doubt not that there are many others equally deserving of commendation.

The observation which I have had occasion to make with respect to the want of drainage in other parts of the country, is also applicable to many places in Leitrim. I have seen innumerable fields overgrown with rushes, and full of swampy places, which could be thorough-drained and doubled in value at a trifling expense. The time will come when this important work—the indispensable preliminary to those improved processes of agriculture in which the people of the west are so deficient—will be carried out; and though one can scarcely restrain an expression of impatience at witnessing the neglected state of some extensive districts, it is only fair to say that indications of progress are plainly discernible; that the proprietors and cultivators of the soil are becoming alive to their true interests; and that improvement is going on steadily, though slowly, even in the most backward parts of the province of Connaught.

There is one class of property on which there has been little or no improvement. I refer to the glebe lands generally. I do not speak positively as to their condition in this county; but in Donegal, for instance, the rundale system prevails on nearly all the glebe lands, and the incumbents, having only a life interest, naturally do not wish to incur the expense of squaring the lands, or making other improvements that are urgently needed. There are many glebes, comprising three or four thousand acres, and in nearly every case the land is not half cultivated, and could be trebled in value by a judicious expenditure. The incumbent of a living has no power to borrow money under the Land Improvement Act for

drainage works. Under Mr. Napier's Act he can obtain an advance for the building or repairing of his glebe-house; but if he wishes to improve his lands or provide better houses for his tenants, he must do so at his own expense. Might not an act be passed giving the incumbent of a glebe power to borrow money for these purposes, the advance to be repaid in instalments by him or by his successor, in case of his death before the liquidation of the debt? There is every reason to believe that such a measure would be taken advantage of, and that a great benefit would be conferred on the community by the improvement of these large estates which are now in such a neglected condition.

Speaking generally, the inhabitants of this county have much better houses and farms than the people of Connemara, or of the wilder and poorer parts of Mayo. The external appearance of the cottages is often very good and apparently indicative of comfort and prosperity on the part of the occupants. The interiors, however, show a remarkable absence of neatness and cleanliness, arising, not from the poverty of the people so much as from the low standard of comfort to which they have been habituated, and their consequent want of appreciation of the conveniences and comforts of civilised life. The clay floor is generally uneven, worn into holes, damp, greasy, and slippery, and with this they are quite contented, though it would be perfectly easy to make their floors level and dry. The furniture is of the worst and meanest description—a few stools, two or three rudely-constructed chairs, and perhaps a table, though the latter is a luxury mostly confined to the houses of what are called respectable farmers.

In some places we find cabins of squatters indicative of extreme poverty; but these are comparatively few in the county of Leitrim. Few counties suffered more severely than this during the famine. A vast number of the poorest class of the population were taken away by death and emigration; but some of them still linger in the mountainous districts, and contrive to drag on a wretched existence from year to year, always in distress, and often on the verge of starvation. In rambling over the mountains to the north of Manorhamilton, about a mile from a place called Castletown, I came upon two or three hovels belonging to persons of this class, which were certainly as bad as any that I had previously seen in any part of Ireland. One of these houses was built by the side of the road and in the immediate vicinity of a bog. It contained two rooms, the largest being 12 feet long by 9 feet wide; the other, which served as a sleeping-room, was of much smaller dimensions. The floor of the latter was strewn with hay, just as a stable would be littered for horses. It contained no bed or furniture of any description, and the only articles which I saw in the outer room were a stool, an iron pot, a frying-pan, and two or three mugs. There were six children in the cabin, three of whom belonged to a strolling beggarwoman who had sought and obtained hospitality on the previous evening. The others were the children of the owners of the house; and the eldest of them, a good-looking, clean, and very intelligent boy, ten years of age, told me that his father was away working for a gentleman, and that his mother had gone to Manorhamilton to sell a creel of turf. The land, he said, was the property of a clergyman; and his father held

under a tenant who allowed him to reclaim a portion of the wild moor, and promised to pay him at the end of three years "the currency of the country of reclaiming money". The little fellow could not tell me the amount of the "currency of the country", viz., the sum customarily given for the reclamation of waste land; but, he added, "Now Denny —— denies that he made any promise, and wants to take the garden from us without giving my father anything". The boy pointed out to me the field, something over an acre, which his father had reclaimed and cultivated. Last year he grew potatoes, oats, and cabbages. The potatoes had been exhausted for some time, and the family were living on Indian meal. The extreme paleness of the little children proved that they were not sufficiently fed.

At Manorhamilton, Leitrim, Carrick-on-Shannon, and all through the country, the poor have suffered greatly from want of turf. Fortunately we have had a mild, open winter, or the consequences would have been most serious. The dry weather, accompanied as it was by high winds, had the effect of drying to some extent the turf that remained on the bogs; but I fear very little of this will be worth anything, the frosts and rains of winter having rotted it and washed the substance away. At Manorhamilton the poor were supplied with some firing by the liberality of Mr. O'Donnell, J.P., who lives at a short distance from the town, and allowed those who were in want to carry away brushwood and useless branches out of his plantation. At Carrick-on-Shannon a relief committee was formed, to which C. M. St. George, Esq., the principal proprietor in the district, contributed £20; and he also gave another sum of £20 for the re-

lief of the poor, which was dispensed by M. Victor De L'Herault. Mr. St. George gives money every year for the relief of the destitute poor on his estate; and I have heard him spoken of as an excellent landlord, who lets his land reasonably, and deals kindly and considerately with his tenantry.

The workhouses in this county are, comparatively speaking, empty. The number of paupers in Manorhamilton workhouse a fortnight ago was 163, being an increase of 31 over the number at the corresponding period of 1861. The figures are very nearly the same with respect to Carrick workhouse—the number of inmates being 166, compared with 132 at the corresponding period of the previous year—an increase of 34. The rates in both unions are low, the highest, in Manorhamilton, being 1s. 6d. in the pound.

The barony of Mohill in the southern part of the county, bordering on Longford and Roscommon, is in a better condition than the country surrounding Manorhamilton and Drumkeerin. I regret to say, however, that agrarian crime is rife in this district; threatening notices are more frequent than in any other parts of the county, and the outrages which have been committed have rendered it necessary that the barony should be proclaimed by the Lord Lieutenant. The recent atrocious murder of an old man, arising out of a dispute about land, is a proof of the unhappy state of society which exists there. It is to be hoped that the murderers may be discovered and brought to justice, and that the lawless people who commit and encourage such crimes shall be taught by a stern example that they must refrain from deeds of violence and blood.

About four miles to the north-east of Drumkeerin are situated the Creevilia ironworks—a project which was originated in the year 1851 by a Scotch company, and has now been taken up by a private company, after an interval of several years, with fair prospects of success. The experiment possesses a two-fold interest. In the first place, it is an attempt to test practically the value of peat fuel as an agent for the smelting of iron ore; and in the next place, it is an effort to develop the mineral resources of the country, which, if successful, must result in the giving of a large amount of employment to the people of this district. I visited the works, and will state briefly the present position of the undertaking.

The first company took a lease of the land and erected thereon two blast furnaces, a very superior blowing engine of 80 horse-power, and other appurtenances, including a moulder's cupola, with moulding and pattern shops, cottages for workmen, smiths' and carpenters shops, store-houses, offices, and stables. In the immediate' vicinity of the works, iron ore of the richest quality is to be obtained in abundance at a very cheap rate; but the distance from which coals had to be brought, and the absence of any facilities for transit, constituted a formidable obstacle to the success of the company. The cost of fuel was, in fact, too great to allow the company to manufacture iron at a profit. The selection of the present site was, therefore, a mistake, when it was intended to smelt the ore with coke. The proper situation for the works, under those circumstances, would have been at the Collieries, which are situated at a distance of eight miles from Creevilia, on the north-west side of Lough Allen, and on the Braulieve mountains, which

form the central range of the bituminous coal district of the county of Leitrim. The whole of this district abounds with iron stone, and the ore and the fuel being found in the same place, presented the most favourable conditions for the successful prosecution of the iron manufacture. The manufactured article could also have been cheaply carried down the mountain side to Lough Allen, and sent by boat to Limerick.

Under these disadvantages, the company commenced operations in 1853, and struggled on a few years, when the works were brought to a stand from want of funds. The project has now been revived with the intention of smelting iron ore by a fuel termed "condensed peat". The supply of peat for this purpose will be obtained from the top of a mountain range, about a mile and a furlong distant from the works; and the transit of the peat from the bog will be effected by means of an endless chain, working in grooves, and covered with a web, or net work, on which the peat will be carried down to the machine in which it is to be manufactured. The latter has been already described in your columns. It is a very ingenious apparatus, and appears to be well adapted for the purpose in view—viz., the separation of fibrous substances from the peat, which, when freed from all matters of this kind, has a natural tendency to condense and harden. The machine consists of a cone made of perforated zinc, inside of which an Archimedean screw of wood revolves. The wet peat is shovelled into the cone, and the revolution of the screw collects all the fibrous substances together, and forces the soft peat through the holes. The pure peat thus obtained is conveyed by an endless band to a machine in which it is formed into

bricks, and then allowed to dry. At the Creevilia works the peat, when carried down from the bog, will be thrown into a hopper, conveyed by a screw up a cylinder, and then deposited in the machine. It has been so arranged that a hot blast will pass through the cylinder, heating the turf and depriving it of a portion of its moisture. In this hot state it will pass into the cone, and when formed into bricks it will be stored and dried by means of heated air obtained from the furnaces. It is calculated that a hundred tons of wet peat will be obtained daily by means of the apparatus now in course of erection, and that this, when manufactured, will give twenty-five tons of the dried fuel, which will then have to be charred, when it will be ready for use in the smelting of the iron ore.

I have been in the mine levels, which have been lately put into working order, and are now in a fit state for the raising of ore. There is one seam fourteen inches thick of excellent ore, and mine ground of three feet six inches or four feet deep, containing two and sometimes three courses of iron balls of much better quality, and upon an average about ten inches thick. The ore can be obtained at 18d. per ton, and there are thirteen or fourteen men at present engaged in raising it at that rate. The cost to some of the manufacturers in England is sometimes 14s. per ton. It is estimated that the dried or condensed peat can be obtained at 3s. 6d. per ton, and it would be cheap if it were got at 10s. and proved suitable for the purpose intended. The patent peat fuel has been tested in various ways. It has been submitted to blasts varying from 1½lb. to 2lb. of pressure to the square inch, and has borne them satisfactorily: but, of course, its real

value as a smelting agent remains to be proved. If the company succeeds at all, the speculation will prove very profitable. One great drawback is the want of facilities for the carriage of their iron to market. Lough Allen is within a mile and a half of Creevilia, and it is said that a canal could be brought within half a mile of the works at a trifling expense, the intervening ground being suitable for that purpose. This, if it be practicable, would give the company water carriage to Limerick. The company have now been engaged since October last in making all the necessary preparations for commencing the manufacture of iron. Their able manager, Mr. George Murrall, has resided since that time at the works, and is anxiously engaged in seeing that everything is properly carried out. Roads have been repaired, and the plant, which was in very good condition, carefully inspected and put into working order. Mr. Murrall is now waiting for a small machine for manufacturing the peat, with a view of making experiments and testing the matter thoroughly before commencing operations on an extensive scale. He has procured a stock of peat, and has had a small drying stove constructed; so that, if I deferred my visit for a week or two, I would probably have an opportunity of seeing the whole process carried out. The erection of the apparatus for bringing the peat down from the bog is being carried on under the superintendence of Mr. Job Hurley, the inventor both of that and the peat manufacturing machine. It is expected that everything will be in readiness by the end of the present, or the beginning of next month.

I have been favoured by Mr. Miles, of Bristol, with some hints on the potato culture—the "sorts to grow,

and how to grow them". They appear so practical and instructive that I do not hesitate to introduce the subject here. This idea may be useful to the gentry as well as to the farmers of Ireland, and cannot be too extensively circulated, as the season for planting this uncertain crop is at hand:—

"As the planting season of this invaluable root crop is now approaching, a few particulars concerning the sorts best deserving of cultivation may not be out of place to introduce into your correspondence from the West of Ireland, nor unacceptable to those who, like myself take an interest in such matters. A warm border, in a sheltered situation, is the most eligible spot for early potatoes. In like manner, late potatoes thrive best planted on a good piece of level land in the open. Early potatoes should be planted as soon after St. Valentine's Day as the weather will permit; and if a good crop of late potatoes is desired, take time by the forelock, and complete planting all the sorts before the middle of March. It has been observed that the better the potato, the stronger the soil is required in order to obtain a good crop. It follows, therefore, that on poor land second and third-rate varieties alone should be planted.

"All who intend to grow their own potatoes will find it to their advantage to follow the advice I am about to give. The present mild winter having failed to kill the insects of which the ground is full, a good dressing of lime will achieve in this respect what the winter may have failed to accomplish. Not only will lime do this, but on exhausted soils, which have become reduced through the combined action of manure and cultivation, its liberal application will open up new sources of

fertility. The latent forces of the soil, which have become neutralized through the incessant application of the vulgar stimulant, manure, will, through the aid of lime, start into existence afresh, and present a bold front to the disease. Lime has the good property of making potatoes mealy, when, without its aid, particularly on wet soils, or in a damp season, the same would boil close and watery.

"The kinds of early potatoes best deserving of culture, are the Ashleaf, Defiance, Lapstone, Asbridge, and Cornish Kidneys; and to the whole of the agricultural and horticultural farmers in Ireland I confidently recommend these varieties, as they are capital croppers and extremely early. It is a remarkable fact that there are no potatoes amongst the sound varieties, of a character sufficiently first-class to rank with the kidneys. To the same extent kidneys take precedence of every other sort among the late potatoes. Planted in good soil, they boil beautifully white and floury; rich flavour, moreover, and freedom from waste characterise these universal favourites. In planting early poatoes care must be taken that planting is effected before sprouting becomes necessary, for blindness invariably follows the removal of the first shoots; and, as the seed is usually a costly affair, a vigorous preliminary preparation of the soil must be followed by a well-digested plan of operations with respect to the depth at which the seed is planted, the width of the rows, and the distance apart of the sets in them. I always maintain that, if the seed be good, liberality of proceeding in each of these three particulars is a positive gain to the cultivator. Plant your early potatoes from five to six inches deep, and they will have head-room to shoot away finely before

the shoots reach the surface: two feet apart between the rows, and one foot from plant to plant will afford ample space for the healthy development of the plant and the crop. Even after the plant is above ground, nothing can be more simple than the precaution necessary to protect the tender shoots from spring frosts. A light covering of dry litter will answer every purpose in this respect, put on at night and taken off in the morning till the season is too far advanced for any danger resulting from spring frost to be apprehended. Of the time for planting second, early, and late potatoes, I have already spoken; the best among the former are the York Regent, Early Blue, Forty-Fold, and Prolific: these are all first-rate in quality; but the liability of the two latter to the disease will shortly (unless the seed be kiln-dried) do away with their cultivation altogether. Neither of the above four sorts should ever be planted on what is termed a wet soil: avoid the use of manure in their culture, for which substitute a good dressing of lime. Plant good seed, give the crop plenty of room, and do not suffer any more than three shoots to each plant; flat hoe the ground well, and earth the rows up into good substantial ridges.

"Among late potatoes the White Rock, White Apple, Scotch Downs, and Champion will bear up under the disadvantages of a poor soil, wet land, and a bad season the best, especially if a good dressing of lime have preceded the time of planting. The Fluke and the Ravensworth are the best late Kidney and round potato in cultivation, but these thrive better under lime than manure; either sort makes a good store for the winter. White and floury when cooked, they are, in point of flavour, fairly without a rival. After Lady-Day both the Fluke and Ravens-

worth are usually past their best. Between that and the digging of early potatoes the supply is continued by the Rock kinds, of which the Protestant variety is the best I have ever seen; and although it is a second-rate potatoe, the Protestant is good when it comes out of the ground, and keeps so till digging time comes round again. Ireland is famous for the richness of its soil, and I am anxious to impress upon the farmers there the necessity of an improvement in the quality of the potatoes they cultivate. The Rock kinds appear to be the prevailing varieties that are being grown all over Ireland, judging from the quality of those now imported into Bristol from Ireland. I earnestly recommend the Fluke, Kidney, York Regent, and Ravensworth, as a substitute, as sorts which rule high in the market, and certain to realise a high price for home consumption".

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

County Roscommon. — Boyle. — Rockingham, the seat of Viscount Lorton. — Castle Tenison. — French Park.—Moate Park. — Lough Glyn, the seat of Viscount Dillon.—Ballaghaderreen.—Termination of Tour, and concluding observations.

ROSCOMMON, March 22.

THE county of Roscommon is situated nearly in the centre of Ireland; and of the five counties that compose the province of Connaught, has probably suffered the least from the deficiency of the last harvest. Its greatest length is sixty miles, and its greatest breadth forty, comprising an area of 607,691 acres, of which 440,522 are

arable, 130,299 uncultivated, 6,732 in plantations, 768 in towns, and 29,370 under water. Nearly two-thirds of the boundaries of the county are defined by water, of which the most remarkable feature is the boundary on its eastern side, formed by the river Shannon and its extensive lakes. On the south-western side the boundary is formed by the river Suck, which flows between Roscommon and Galway in a meandering course, which, computing all its windings, cannot be much less than fifty miles. The population in 1841 was 253,591, which in 1851 had diminished to 173,436, being a decrease of 80,155. By the last census the population was 156,154, showing a further decrease of 17,282. The surface of the country is undulating or flat, except towards the north, where the scene is agreeably diversified by the Curlew mountains near Sligo, and by the Braulieve range on the borders of Leitrim, and in the centre, where the great sandstone ridge of Slievebawn extends through the baronies of Ballintobber and Roscommon. The greater part of the subsoil is limestone, the appearance and quality of which varies very considerably in different places; but, says Mr. Weld, in his statistical survey of this county, published by the Royal Dublin Society in 1832, "by far the most interesting part of Roscommon in reference to its geological construction, is the northern district of the county, on the confines of Lough Allen, where the series of rocks occur which constitute what is called the coal formation". The soil exhibits great variety of character, and in many places is extraordinarily rich and fertile. The limestone districts include the best soil in the county, producing those fine natural pastures for which Roscommon is celebrated, such as the rich fat-

tening lands in the vicinity of Tulsk and Kilcorkey, and the plains of Boyle to the south-east of that town. Bogs are numerous, and there are large tracts of marshy ground on the borders of the Shannon, the Suck, and other rivers.

The two principal towns, exclusive of part of the borough of Athlone, are Boyle and Roscommon, the former being situated in the north-west of the county, and the latter about twenty-four miles to the south-west of Boyle and on the borders of the county of Galway. The present population of Boyle is 3,002, showing an increase of 235 since the year 1851; whilst the number of the inhabitants of Roscommon has suffered a diminution of 665 during the same period, having fallen from 3,364 to 2,699, according to the census returns. Boyle consists of two divisions, separated from each other by the river which flows out of Lough Gara, and connected by a bridge of five arches. It contains some well-built houses and shops, and is a tolerably good place of business, though the general stagnation of commerce and the decrease of the country trade are just now pressing heavily on the shopkeepers. The condition of the poorer class of tradesmen and the artizans here is similar to what I have found existing in other country towns, but the distress that prevails amongst them is not of a very unusual character. The want of fuel has been supplied by the exertions of a committee consisting of men of all parties, and under the direction of the Rev. Mr. Maguire, Vicar of Boyle, and the parish priest, the Rev. Mr. M'Tulker. The committee was established in November, and they have already distributed about 100 tons of coal gratuitously to 374 families. The fund collected amounted to

£126, including the subscription by the trustees of Lord Lorton's estate of £10 per month. No less than 1,240 cart loads of timber have already been distributed gratuitously by the trustees to the tenantry on this estate and the poorer inhabitants of the town. A clothing society has also been established, by which 600 persons have been supplied with various articles of which they stood in need.

There are several features of interest in the neighbourhood of Boyle, prominent amongst which is the ancient Abbey, one of the most venerable and picturesque ruins in the kingdom. But the great attractions of this part of the country are the beautiful demesne and castle of Rockingham, the seat of Viscount Lorton. Rockingham is situated about two miles distance from Boyle, at the south-eastern side of Lough Key. As my visit to this fine mansion was rather a cursory one, I avail myself of Mr. Weld's description of it:—"The architecture is irregular, neither wholly castellated nor wholly Grecian. The entrance is under an Ionic portico of four columns, corresponding with which a range of pillars of the same order and proportion appears along the walls of the house, producing from certain points of view a pleasing effect. An extensive orangery projects from the house on another side. One of the most striking features of the mansion consists in its perfectly insulated position, no building of any description being visible, but the whole surrounded by smooth shorn grass, interspersed with beds of flowers, and ornamented with walks. This arrangement has been effected by having most of the basement story covered over, and subterranean passages carried from underneath the eminence on which the house stands,

towards the lake in one direction, and in another towards the stables, which stand at a considerable distance, screened out by trees; the covered passage does not reach the whole way to the latter, but merely far enough to prevent the appearance of movement near the mansion. The building is executed in the most substantial style, and its interior displays not merely the elegancies and luxuries which great wealth has everywhere at its command, but, at the same time, all those comforts and accommodations which contribute so essentially to the enjoyments of every-day life in a family residence. The material of which the exterior walls is composed is marble, of which, if there were any doubt, it is removed by a specimen of the stone shaped into an ornamental form and highly polished, exhibited on the half-landing of the great staircase. In the exterior of the house the stone is simply chiselled and not polished; and in that state is liable to assume during rain tints different from its ordinary hue; this, in perfectly dry weather, is rather paler than might be desired, but with moisture the surface becomes very dark".

The demesne is of vast extent, and consists of gently undulating ground, thickly planted with the most exquisite taste and judgment. The greater part of the plantation was the work of the late Lord Lorton, and there are but few trees of great age or size in the demesne, with one notable exception—an old avenue of beech near some of the original offices. The lake, with its numerous bays and inlets, and its well-wooded islands, enhances the beauty of this superb demesne. The greatest length of the lake, taken in a north-west direction from the head of a bay near the house, is about two and a-half

miles, and in its greatest breadth nearly the same. The scenery is rather what may be termed soft and beautiful than bold or romantic, though the broken and rocky character of the northern and western shores, and the graceful outline of the Curlew mountains rising above them, imparts picturesque variety to a landscape which might otherwise be considered by some as rather tame and monotonous. The castle and demesne of Rockingham owe all their beauty and splendour to the energy and taste of the late Lord Lorton, who lived constantly at home, and expended with princely liberality a noble revenue on the adornment of his demesne, the general improvement of his property, and the promotion of the comfort and prosperity of his numerous tenantry. The education of the people was a subject of deep interest to this benevolent nobleman, and he erected several schools in various parts of his estate, some of which, together with charities also established by him, are maintained by the present proprietor.

I again quote from the valuable work of Mr. Weld, who, speaking of the benefits conferred on the neighbourhood by Lord Lorton, and the liberal encouragement which he afforded to persons desiring to build on the estate, says: "Really, when one reflects upon the principles which some theorists in political economy have ventured to broach of late years, that absenteeism is not in itself an evil, it is difficult to maintain either one's temper or one's gravity. Let any person look calmly and attentively around him on the Rockingham estate, and afterwards compare it with what he will see on other estates and around other demesnes within the same county, which are deserted by their proprietors, and if

in the condition of the country and of the inhabitants he does not perceive a positive and decided difference—in the one the wholesome appearance of prosperity and improvement which admit of no mistake—in the other of backwardness, despondency, and discontent, then it can only be concluded that such a person must see things through a jaundiced and prejudiced medium, or see with eyes widely different from those of an ordinary observer possessed of a sane mind and common sense".

Since Mr. Weld wrote in 1830, a great change has taken place in the management of this estate. The present Lord Lorton is an absentee, and has confided the care of his property to trustees, who expend about £1,200 a year on the demense. The estate comprises a great deal of rough and unimproved land, as well as some of the best soil in the country. The latter includes the plains of Boyle—a vast tract of high limestone lands, with an undulating surface, without trees or rocks, famous for their rich pastures and their properties of fattening cattle. These plains are divided into grazing farms averaging from two to three hundred acres, but there are several farms ranging from six to eight hundred acres in size. The rents on Lord Lorton's estate are moderate, good land being let at £1, and town parks at £3 10s. per acre. The poorer tenants are chiefly those on the Curlew mountains, where the lands are set not by the acre but by bulk. The size of the farms is from ten to fifteen acres, though there are some even smaller, and their rent is about 10s. per acre. These mountains, which are situated to the north of Boyle, extend in a north-east and south-west direction, and form a boundary between the counties of Sligo and Roscommon. They are cultivated nearly to

the summit, and are thickly dotted over with small white cottages, whose occupants are just now much reduced in means. Two facts, which I have learned on good authority in reference to Lord Lorton's estate, sufficiently indicate the present condition of the small holders in this district. For several years past there have been no arrears on the estate; but now there are some hundreds of pounds which it has been found impossible to collect. The demesne is always let out in grazing to small farmers; and a few years ago there was not accommodation for one half the applications; whereas at present the grounds are not half stocked. The deposits in the Boyle savings' bank have diminished to the extent of £1,000 in the course of the last year. The people in some places in the neighbourhood of Boyle are paying their rents by bills, which they hope to renew, so as to carry them on until the harvest, when another gale of rent will come on them. It is also a noticeable fact that, whereas a year or two ago there were no farms vacant, and people were always found in abundance anxious to purchase the good-will of any holding that might be in the market, there are many farms now to be had on comparatively cheap terms, but purchasers are not so numerous or so eager as formerly. All these facts plainly show a considerable diminution in the means and the comforts of the small farmers and of the labouring classes.

Mr. Edward King Tenison, Lieutenant and Custos-Rotulorum of Roscommon, has a large estate in this county. His residence, Castle Tenison, is situated about ten miles from Boyle, at the western and lower end of Lough Meelagh, down to whose waters the demesne extends. The castle is a very fine and spacious modern

edifice, and is surrounded by extensive plantations, which, as well as the pleasure-grounds and gardens, have been laid out in the most tasteful manner. This cultivated and beautiful scene presents a vivid contrast to the adjacent country, which is wild, boggy, and almost completely devoid of trees. Rising immediately behind Mr. Tenison's mansion are the Arigna coal mountains, the slopes of which are occupied by a numerous tenantry. Mr. Tenison expended a large sum of money in draining and otherwise improving the land on these mountains. His tenants are, comparatively speaking, comfortable, and they have not suffered so much from the want of fuel as the people in other places, because they have been able to obtain coals at a moderate cost from the Arigna mines. The number of persons generally occupied on the estate in building, planting, and draining is between 50 and 60. Lady Louisa Tenison devotes a good deal of time to the management and supervision of this extensive property, and every year dispenses charity to the poor with a liberal hand. Mr. Tenison has recently become the purchaser, from Mr. Barton, of the Cootehall estate, which commences on the eastern side of Upper Oakport Lough, and extends from thence to Battle Bridge on the Shannon, and to the northward along the river to the extreme confines of the parish of Tumma, comprising in all about 4,000 acres. Oak Park, the residence of Captain Goff, is situated between Kilronan and Rockingham, and, through the liberality of its owner, the people of the neighbourhood derived from it a large supply of timber during the winter.

The village and demesne of French Park, seven miles from Boyle, belong to Lord De Freyne, whose estate is

one of the largest in the county. The house is one of considerable antiquity, the demesne well wooded, and the estate comprises land of various qualities, including large tracts of bog capable of reclamation. There are few properties in Roscommon standing more in need of drainage, or which would better repay a liberal and judicious expenditure. Many of the numerous tenantry are exceedingly poor. Personally there cannot be a kinder or more charitable man than Lord De Freyne. He is always ready to relieve want to the utmost of his means, and has shown the greatest liberality in supplying the people with fuel from his extensive woods. The O'Conor Don, M.P., has also thrown open to the poor his plantations at Ballynagar, the old family residence, about two and ahalf miles from French Park; and in consequence of the assistance thus afforded much suffering has been prevented.

At Erritt (the property of the esteemed and popular senior member for the county, Colonel Fitzstephen French), we see what may be done in the reclamation of bog land. There are some hundreds of acres of deep bog here, part of which has been laid down in meadow for years, and part laid down recently for permanent pasture. Excellent green and white crops have also been grown on soil, which, not very long ago, was a wild uncultivated moor. Erritt is situated about ten Irish miles from French Park, and on the borders of the county of Mayo.

Scarcely any work is going on in this neighbourhood with the exception of the drainage operations which Mr. William Longfield, of Harcourt Street, Dublin, is carrying out on his property bordering Lough Gara, and lying between French Park and Ballaghaderreen. These works

are noticeable from the very efficient manner in which they are executed. The main arteries and the thorough drains are constructed on the best plan and in the most complete manner, which is not always the case with drainage performed under the superintendence of the Board of Works. Mr. Longfield has expended £1,000 on this property, and contemplates obtaining a further loan, to be laid out in the completion of thorough drainage and other improvements. He has another property, eight miles from Castlerea, on the borders of Mayo, where for three years past he has also been carrying out similar works on an extensive scale, adding largely to the value of his land, and conferring a great benefit on the small farmers and labourers by the circulation of money amongst them, as well as by the practical knowledge which they are thus afforded an opportunity of acquiring. The greater portion of Mr. Longfield's property is let in large grazing farms, but he has a considerable number of small tenants, whose condition he is endeavouring to elevate. To encourage the building of good cottages, he supplies them with timber for roofing, together with doors and windows, and thirty barrels of lime each. The amount of employment going on throughout the country is small compared with the necessities of the people. The O'Conor Don has laid out some drainage works at Cloonallis, expressly with a view to afford relief, though of course he will reap the advantage of it in the increased value of his land. The honourable member is fully alive to the responsibilities which devolve on him as a large proprietor in such an emergency as the present; and he has endeavoured to make himself acquainted with the actual condition of his

tenantry, for the purpose of making such arrangements as will enable them to bear up against the adverse circumstances in which a succession of deficient harvests has placed them. Mr. Thomas G. Wills Sandford, J.P., D.L., who has a large property in the western division of the barony of Ballintobber, is also an excellent landlord, residing for a considerable portion of the year at his residence near his town of Castlerea, spending his income at home, and dealing liberally with his tenants. He is building at present a number of houses for his tenants on a property which he has recently purchased, and is planting largely in different parts of his estate to replace the timber that has been cut for distribution to the poor and others who were in need of fuel. In conjunction with The O'Conor Don, he has purchased coals, which are stored in Castlerea, and sold at a reduced price; but the demand has not been equal to the supply, owing probably to the liberality with which timber has been distributed. I have also heard that Mr. Sandford has gone to considerable expense in providing seed for his numerous tenantry.

It is unnecessary to enter minutely into a description of the south-western division of the county, extending from the town of Roscommon to Shannon Bridge, and including the parishes of Athleague, Tissara, Dysart, and others. It would be only to repeat for the most part what I have already stated in reference to other districts. Wherever small farmers exist—and they constitute a numerous class in the places I have named—there must necessarily be a considerable amount of distress. Early in the month of November there was much talk of destitution in the parish of Dysart, but in truth, except in the

portions of it lying alongside the river Suck, the inhabitants are by no means so badly off as in other places. The barony of Athlone, in which Dysart lies, consists chiefly of a light limestone or limestone gravel soil, and the potatoes did better there last year than in any other part of the county of Roscommon.

Moate Park, the seat of Lord Crofton, is situate about two miles from the town of Roscommon. The condition of his numerous tenantry is superior to that of the generality of their class in this county. They hold their farms at moderate rents, and are encouraged to improve by the confidence which they have in their landlord, who resides much at home, and takes a lively interest in the improvement of his property and the well-being of his tenants. The latter are permitted to sell the good will of their farm; and on a recent occasion the good will of sixteen acres on the Moate Park estate was sold for £120, a price which is frequently exceeded. Lord Crofton supplied timber from his demesne to his tenants, and to the inhabitants of the town of Roscommon, which, together with the assistance derived from the "fuel fund", enabled the people to get through the winter without much suffering. Mr. Holmes, Lord Crofton's agent, undertook the management of the fund, which was liberally subscribed to by the townspeople and the neighbouring proprietors; and from an early period in November, down to the present time, nearly two hundred families have been supplied weekly with coals at half price. Roscommon contains a population of 2,699 persons. The improved appearance of its shops and houses, the lighting of the town with gas, and the completion of railway communication with the capital, are all indications of

progress. On the other hand, the inhabitants have suffered a decrease of 660 within the last ten years, and the general diminution of the country population has necessarily had an injurious effect on trade, though the latter is still considerable. I do not, of course, refer to the condition of trade last year or at present, when business is everywhere so stagnant. There is undoubtedly much distress amongst the labouring population, owing to the want of employment, and it is beginning to show itself by the increased number of paupers in the workhouses. Thus on the 16th March, 1861, the inmates of the Roscommon workhouse numbered 335, and the number of the recipients of out-door relief was 23. On the 8th March, 1862, the numbers were, 460 in the house, and 61 receiving out-door relief. The rates are not high, the average being 1s. 11d., and the highest 3s. 0½d. in the pound; but it is believed that these rates will not be sufficient to carry on during the year.

It is unnecessary to enter further into details in reference to the county of Roscommon. I may mention, however, the names of some of the resident proprietors who have contributed to relieve distress by distributing timber to their tenants and others who stood in need of fuel, viz.:—Mr. St. George Caulfield, J.P., Donaman Castle; Captain Robert Goff, Carraroe; Major Chichester, Runnemede; Colonel Mitchell, Castle Strange; Mr. Denis O'Connor, J.P., D.L., Mount Druid; Mr. Daniel Henry Irwin, J.P., Beechwood; Mr. Denis Henry Kelly, J.P., Castlekelly, Mount Talbot; Mr. William J. M'Loughlin, J.P., Castlecoote; and Mr. Christopher French, J.P., Cloonaquin, Tulsk; etc. The last named gentleman is a very improving landlord. He lives con-

stantly at home, and leaves nothing undone to promote the welfare of his tenants, who evince by their prosperous condition the results of his fostering care. He has established agricultural schools for the instruction of his tenants, and stimulates them to adopt better methods of cultivation by giving premiums for the best produce, etc. The resident gentry of Roscommon have all acted admirably on this occasion, and have liberally contributed to the various local funds which have been established for the purpose of procuring coals to be distributed either gratuitously or at half price. Messrs. Stewart and Kincaid, the eminent land agents, are entrusted with the management of several estates in various parts of the county. They have an efficient local agent, Mr. William Garnett, who informed me that the rents have, as a rule, been well paid on all the properties under his care; and this is an observation generally applicable to the seven counties which I have visited.

One of the most interesting places which I visited in Roscommon was the demesne of Lough Glyn, the seat of Viscount Dillon. It is situated in the barony of French Park, about seven miles from the village of that name, and almost on the borders of the county of Mayo. Although surrounded by extensive tracts of bog, the demesne is a fine one, having a beautiful sheet of water, nearly an Irish mile in length, rich hanging woods, and a large mansion-house standing on the northern bank of the lake and embosomed amidst fine trees. The principal entrance to the mansion is on the side away from the water, but from the rear a door opens to a flight of steps leading out to a pleasure ground and a lawn sloping down to the lake. Lord Dillon resides in England, but

takes great interest in his tenantry, and is a most liberal and indulgent landlord. His estate, the greater part of which is in the barony of Costello, county Mayo, comprises over 100,000 acres, and is the third largest property in that county, ranking in extent next to those of the Marquess of Sligo and Sir Roger Palmer.

Lord Dillon is fortunate in having an agent who is eminently fitted for his position, not only by his practical abilities, but by his station as a gentleman, and the uniform justice and kindness which characterise his dealings with the tenantry. These qualities have won for Mr. Charles Strickland, J.P., the respect and confidence of the people; and though it is not possible for any man who does his duty honestly and fearlessly to please all parties, I believe there are few men having the management of property in Connaught more generally esteemed and popular than this gentleman. Mr. Strickland succeeded his father in the management of this large estate. It was under his charge when the famine of 1846–47 swept over the land; and the manner in which it passed through that terrible ordeal speaks volumes for the care, solicitude, and ability which were displayed in the preservation of the people. In the year 1841 the population on Lord Dillon's estate numbered nearly 33,000 persons; and in 1851 it showed a decrease of only six or seven hundred, whilst, within the same time, neighbouring estates were almost depopulated. During the famine years considerable abatements were given to the tenants generally, and an allowance besides of half a year's rent. Provisions were also provided and sold at a cheap rate, so as to bring food within the reach of all, even the poorest amongst them. The course pur-

sued by Mr. Strickland, in nursing the tenantry during that period, was not only benevolent, but politic and wise. A great portion of Lord Dillon's property is such that it can only be cultivated profitably by a small class of tenants, and cannot be converted into those large grazing farms which are so much the rage at present, so that, if the people had been allowed to starve or emigrate, the lands might have been waste for years. Mr. Strickland, therefore, acted most prudently in preserving the tenantry; and though a vast number of the holdings are too small, he has never attempted to correct this evil and consolidate farms at the expense of any tenant who has a *bona fide* claim on the estate.

The rundale system existed here, as on other properties in Mayo, and led to that minute subdivision of holdings which has been found to be productive of so many mischievous effects. The striping of the lands was commenced systematically in 1840, and has been carried out over at least two-thirds of the estate; and wherever the old system still remains, it is owing to the existence of old leases. The people are fully alive to the benefit of having their lands properly divided, and in some instances they have voluntarily surrendered their leases for the purpose of having this effected. In the laying out of the new farms on the various townlands at the fall of the old joint tenancy leases, great pains were taken by Mr. Strickland that perfect justice should be done to all parties. The proportionate rights of every tenant were strictly observed, and care was taken that each should have in one division a fair proportion of the good and inferior qualities of land, with bog attached, for fuel and future reclamation. It was so arranged that each holding

should, if possible, abut on the public road; but where this could not be done, accommodation roads were made at the landlord's expense, to be subsequently maintained by the tenants.

The building of a better class of houses has been encouraged by giving the tenants timber, and, in some instances, slates, together with a money allowance according to the style of cottage that has been erected. Limestone abounds everywhere throughout this district, and there are numerous little limekilns scattered over the estate, in which the people make their own lime. Lord Dillon allows his tenants for making their new mearing fences—an act of liberality which is not very common on large estates in Connaught. The tenants have a strong encouragement to improve, in the custom, which may be considered to be permanently established on this estate, of making the lettings for twenty-one years. Although the farmer is nominally a tenant from year to year, he knows that he will be allowed to remain undisturbed for twenty-one years at his original rent, and that, no matter how much more valuable he may have rendered his holding, the rent will not be increased until the expiration of that time. In consequence of this encouragement, a great deal of bog has been reclaimed, and every year more of it is being brought into cultivation. The progress of the people in industrial knowledge is slow, but it is plainly perceptible. Some years ago the sowing of turnips and grass seeds was unknown in this locality, but now they are sown in increasing quantities every year, and the people cultivate their land more carefully, though they have yet much to learn in this respect. They are allowed to sell the good-will of their holdings,

and every outgoing tenant is liberally paid for any real improvement that he may have made on his land. Lord Dillon has interested himself much in the education of the people, and has built seven new schools on his estate, besides repairing several old ones previously in existence, and enclosing the grounds. The master of the school near Lough Glyn demesne gives practical instruction to the boys in agriculture, and a piece of land is attached to the schoolhouse for that purpose. The pupils carry out in their little gardens at home the instructions they have received, and there is an annual exhibition of their produce, for the best specimens of which prizes in money and agricultural implements are awarded.

Ballaghaderreen, the fifth largest town in Mayo, is situated on Lord Dillon's estate. Although it does not date further back than the year 1826, it has a larger population than Castlerea, which is a place of some antiquity, and its superiority to the latter town shows what may be effected by liberal and energetic management. The houses are well and substantially built, and a new market-square has recently been made at the expense of the noble proprietor, which is superior to anything of the kind in the county, if not in the entire province. The spacious square is enclosed all round, and has three separate entrances, with ranges of sheds and lock-up stores. The weighing of the goods is carried on with great regularity by persons employed for that purpose, and the extent of the business transacted may be judged from the fact that twelve or fourteen hundred barrels of oats are sold weekly in this market. Large quantities of roll and firkin butter are brought to market, and on one occasion this year there were no less than 800 firkins

exposed for sale. The quantity of eggs sold is also considerable, and they are exported by the buyers to Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and London. Eight fairs are held every year in Ballaghaderreen. They are increasing in importance, and beginning to be more frequented than formerly by buyers from the grazing districts of Roscommon and by the gentry of the county. Since the establishment of the market-square, the produce sold there has been doubled; the tolls have also largely increased, and all the money realised thereby is expended in the further improvement of the square. Ballaghaderreen can boast of a really beautiful Roman Catholic Cathedral, which was consecrated last year, though it is not yet fully completed. The style is the early English Gothic, and the architect, Mr. Goldie, deserves high praise for the admirable manner in which he has designed the building, so as to produce an equally fine effect externally and internally. The cost of the edifice was £6,000. At Charlestown, some miles distant, a very handsome chapel, which cost £2,000, and the funds for which were originally provided by Mr. Strickland, has been built by the same architect. Charlestown is a rapidly improving place. It was commenced in the year 1846, and now contains over one hundred excellent slated houses, two stories high, with good offices, spacious yards, and roads running to the back of each row of buildings. Several new houses are now in course of erection, but the depression of the last two years has to some extent retarded their completion, and interfered generally with the development of the town.

The condition of Lord Dillon's tenantry affords the best proof of the liberal and judicious manner in which

they have been dealt with. I do not know of any estate in the county of Mayo where the small holders are apparently better off. There is no doubt that many of them are greatly embarrassed; but, considering the size of their farms and the bad harvests with which they have lately been afflicted, it is impossible that it could be otherwise. The appearance of their cottages, however, presents a strong contrast to the squalid and miserable hovels which are but too general throughout the county of Mayo. I understand that Mr. Strickland intends to provide those who require assistance, with potatoes and oats for seed, and I have no doubt that they will all be treated with the same kindness and consideration which marked the management of this estate during the famine years. Last year Lord Dillon expended over £1,200 in the deepening of rivers and the making of roads and fences. This year he will also give employment in similar works; and but that he has already reached the limit fixed under the Drainage or Land Improvement Act, he would borrow more money for draining, fencing, and other improvements. An immense quantity of timber was cut down and supplied to the tenants, and all who applied for it, at a merely nominal price. This was done not only in the Lough Glyn demesne, but in two other woods on the estate, and the distribution of the firewood was commenced by Mr. Strickland as early as September. He also established coal stores at Lough Glyn, Ballaghaderreen, and Charlestown, and supplied over 200 grates, at 1s. 10d. a piece, which enabled the people to burn the coals economically. On the whole, everything that could reasonably be expected has been done to assist the tenantry on this property.

In the neighbourhood of Ballaghaderreen, Mr. Thomas Strickland, a brother of Lord Dillon's agent, has a large dairy farm, which is interesting as an illustration of the successful manner in which the Limerick dairy system can be carried out in this part of the country. This system, combining the rearing of calves with the making of firkin butter for the English market, was first introduced into Connaught by Mr. Patrick Taaffe, of Tulsk, county Roscommon, one of the largest and most famous graziers in the province. Mr. Strickland took the idea from Mr. Taaffe, and having devoted much attention to the matter, has established a dairy farm which may be justly regarded as a model of its kind. He holds about 370 acres, which have been all laid down in the most approved manner; and in the building of his house and offices, in the erection of a large mill, and in draining, fencing, and planting, he has expended several thousand pounds.

My commission to the West of Ireland, terminating with this letter, has extended over the greater portion of seven counties, and occupied a period of four months. I have endeavoured during the course of my inquiries to collect every fact within my reach bearing on the condition of the country generally, and the poorer classes in particular, and to present a faithful picture to the public of what came under my observation. I am bound here to add my acknowledgments for the great facilities afforded me in obtaining information, by the noblemen, gentlemen, clergy, and farmers of the several districts I passed through, and to bear testimony to the united exertions of all, irrespective of creed or politics, in their cordial exertions to relieve the distress of the people. I was a perfect

stranger in the West of Ireland when I went there. I feel that I am not so now; and for the kindness with which I was received by all classes, I must here record my sincere thanks. This letter having exceeded the usual limit, I will close it by stating shortly the conclusions at which I have arrived.

There need not be any apprehension of famine approximating to that which we have experienced in former years. There is an abundance of food in the country, and the prices are extremely moderate; but money is unusually scarce, the means of the small farmers are nearly exhausted, and a large proportion of them are deeply involved in debt. The inevitable consequence of this state of things must be suffering and privation, and in many cases extreme destitution. Employment on reproductive works would be the best and most effectual mode of affording relief; but I see little prospect of this being given on an extensive scale, and I fear that the mass of the people will be left to struggle through their difficulties as best they can. Another bad season must ruin nearly all the small farmers in Connaught; and I believe that this is an opinion from which no one acquainted with the state of the country will dissent.

The scarcity of fuel would have been productive of most disastrous consequences, but for the unusual mildness of the past winter, and the prompt and energetic action of the Protestant and Roman Catholic clergy, the resident proprietors, and the traders, in organizing relief committees for the purchase and distribution of coals, either gratuitously or at a low price, to the poorer classes in the towns, villages, and surrounding country. The gentry promptly responded to the calls of charity, not only

by their contributions to relief funds, but also by throwing open their demesnes to the poor, and felling large quantities of timber for distribution at a nominal price. The ordeal through which the country is now passing will not be without benefit, if it should have the effect of drawing closer the bonds of union between the different classes of the community, and impressing on the minds of the people the necessity of forethought, activity, and industry. It has already produced the latter effect to a considerable extent. The cutting of turf has been commenced in some places, and it has been remarked that there never was so early an attempt as has been made this season to cultivate the land.

If God should bless us with a favourable harvest, the country will speedily recover from its present state of depression; but in the meantime much suffering must be endured, which it is the duty of the landed proprietors, whose interests are inseparably bound up with those of the people, to endeavour to mitigate by every means in their power. As they have already so nobly come forward in this charitable cause, I am persuaded that the great good they have done will stimulate them to greater exertions to do more, and to continue such a praiseworthy course until the pressure on their people shall have passed away.

THE END.

JOHN F. FOWLER, Printer, 3 Crow Street, Dame Street, Dublin.

# National Assurance Company of Ireland,

## 1822,

*Incorporated by Royal Charter,*

FOR

THE ASSURING OF HOUSES, GOODS, ETC., FROM FIRE; SHIPS, MERCHANDIZE, ETC., FROM THE DANGERS OF THE SEA; LIVES; AND FOR PURCHASING AND GRANTING ANNUITIES.

## PRINCIPAL OFFICE, 3 COLLEGE GREEN, DUBLIN.

## CAPITAL, ONE MILLION.

DIRECTORS.

John Barlow,
Samuel Bewley,
Robert Callwell,
Thomas Crosthwait,
Alexander J. Ferrier,
Lundy Edward Foot,
John P. Hardy,
William Hogg,
Nathaniel Hone,
Thomas Laffan Kelly,
David Charles La Touche,
Wm. Digges La Touche,
Charles Leslie,
Richard Manders,
Hugh O'Connor,
George Pim,
Thomas Pim,
George Roe,
Patrick Sweetman,
Henry Thompson.

### LIFE DEPARTMENT—Declaration of Bonus.

The Directors having had a careful investigation made into the Life business of the Company for the first Septennial period since the adoption of the Bonus system, ending on 31st December, 1857, have the gratification of stating that the result has been highly satisfactory, as will be seen by the following

EXAMPLES:

| Date of Policy. | Age. | Amount Insured. | Annual Premium. | | | Bonus Added. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | £ | £ | s. | d. | £ |
| 1851 . . . | 58 | 500 | 32 | 5 | 0 | 86 |
| 1852 . . . | 50 | 3,000 | 136 | 2 | 6 | 407 |
| 1853 . . . | 40 | 1,000 | 32 | 18 | 4 | 97 |
| 1854 . . . | 55 | 600 | 32 | 11 | 0 | 50 |
| 1855 . . . | 57 | 500 | 29 | 9 | 2 | 29 |

The next investigation will take place on the 31st December, 1864; Policies effected in the year 1862 will participate in the Bonus then to be ascertained.

At the option of the Assured, the Bonus may be commuted for a reduction of the Annual Premium, or a payment in money.

Thirty days allowed for renewing Life Policies. No charge for Life Policy Stamps.

### INSURANCES AGAINST FIRE,

On private houses, and all common risks, at the reduced rate of One Shilling and Six Pence per cent. per annum.

### MARINE INSURANCES

Effected at the Current Premiums of the day. Losses and averages adjusted on the most liberal principles of Indemnity, and settled with despatch.

Attendance daily at the Office, from 10 in the morning to 5 o'clock in the afternoon for general business, and a Committee of Directors meet from 2 to 3 o'clock each day, for the purpose of deciding on proposals for insurance, before whom persons whose lives are to be insured may appear.

By Order,

JOSEPH TODHUNTER, *Secretary.*

*January*, 1862.

# Scottish Union Life Insurance Company.

**Edinburgh—47 GEORGE STREET. London—37 CORNHILL.**
**Dublin—52 DAME STREET,**

ESTABLISHED IN 1824. | INCORPORATED BY ROYAL CHARTER.

| | |
|---|---|
| PROPRIETORS' CAPITAL paid up, and SINKING FUND arising from undivided Profits ... | £281,070 |
| ACCUMULATED LIFE FUND .. .. ... ... ... ... ... | 475,000 |
| ANNUAL REVENUE from all sources, upwards of ... ... ... .. ... | 163,000 |
| AMOUNT OF LIFE INSURANCES IN FORCE ... ... ... ... ... | 2,400,000 |

The large increase which has taken place in this Company's Business is the best proof that the liberal principles upon which it is conducted, and the equitable manner in which the surplus Life Profits are divided, are duly appreciated by the public.

**Progress during the last Three Years.**

| Year Ending. | No. of Policies. | Sum Insured. | New Premiums. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1st August, 1859 | 522 | £252,740 | £7314 |
| " 1860 | 625 | 304,705 | 9828 |
| " 1861 | 874 | 404,014 | 12,785 |

The Directors request the special attention of intending Insurers to the system of Division of Profits followed by this Company, than which no plan can be more fair and equitable.

Every five years, each Policy-holder entitled to participate, receives a share of the Surplus in exact proportion to the Premiums paid during the five years, with accumulated interest thereon. The share of Profits so allocated is then converted into a Reversionary Bonus according to the age of the party.

While this system gives to each an exact proportion, it will be found alike favourable to young lives whose prospects of longevity are greater, and to parties entering at middle life or the more advanced ages; the Premiums paid by them being higher than at the earlier ages.

The following examples illustrate the mode of division.

TABLE showing the Additions made to Policies of £1000, which have been in existence Five complete Years, prior to 1st August, 1861.

| Ages at Entry. | Bonus Additions. | Sum Assured, with Additions. | Per Centage per Annum of Bonus on Sums Assured. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 30 | £53 18 0 | £1053 18 0 | £1 1 7 |
| 35 | 56 8 4 | 1056 8 4 | 1 2 7 |
| 40 | 59 17 6 | 1059 17 6 | 1 3 11 |
| 45 | 63 10 0 | 1063 10 0 | 1 5 5 |
| 50 | 67 9 10 | 1067 9 10 | 1 7 0 |
| 55 | 76 19 6 | 1076 19 6 | 1 10 9 |
| 60 | 89 9 6 | 1089 9 6 | 1 15 0 |

The following Examples of Bonus Additions are taken from the Company's Books:—

| | |
|---|---|
| A Policy issued in 1834, for £4000, had increased at 1st August, 1861, to the sum of .. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | £5402 17 1 |
| A Policy issued in 1836, for £5000, had increased at 1st August, 1861, to the sum of ... ... .. ... ... ... ... ... | 6487 15 10 |
| A Policy issued in 1841, for £1000, had increased at 1st August, 1861, to the sum of ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 1256 14 9 |

Prospectuses, and all other information, may be obtained at the Offices of the Company in Edinburgh, London, or Dublin, or from any of the Agents.

GEORGE RAMSAY, Manager. | JAMES BARLAS, Secretary.

# IRISH LIFE DEPARTMENT,

## HEAD OFFICE, 52 DAME STREET, DUBLIN.

LUCIUS H. DEERING (WINE MERCHANT), AGENT AND SUPERINTENDENT:
ROBERT ADAMS, ESQ., M.D., MEDICAL REFEREE.
MESSRS. WILLIAM GODDARD AND SON, SOLICITORS.

**Local Agents:**

BALLINA—William Mally, jun.
CARLOW—James Bolger.
CASTLEBLANEY—Robert A. Mayne.
CLONMEL—J. J. Shee.
CORK—W. H. Townsend.
COOTEHILL—J. D Macfadin.
DUBLIN—L. H. Deering
DUNDALK—James D. MacAllister.
ENNISKILLEN—Charles A. Mills.
LIMERICK—Ed. Harold.
LONGFORD and NEWTOWNFORBES } Thomas Gill.
SLIGO—Thomas R. Wilson.
STRABANE—J. A. Ledlie.
WESTPORT—J. Pinkerton, jun.
WATERFORD—B. E. Whitestone.

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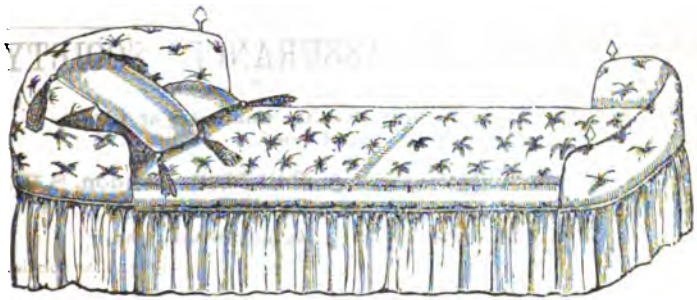

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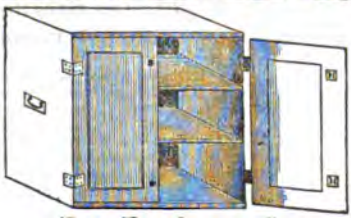

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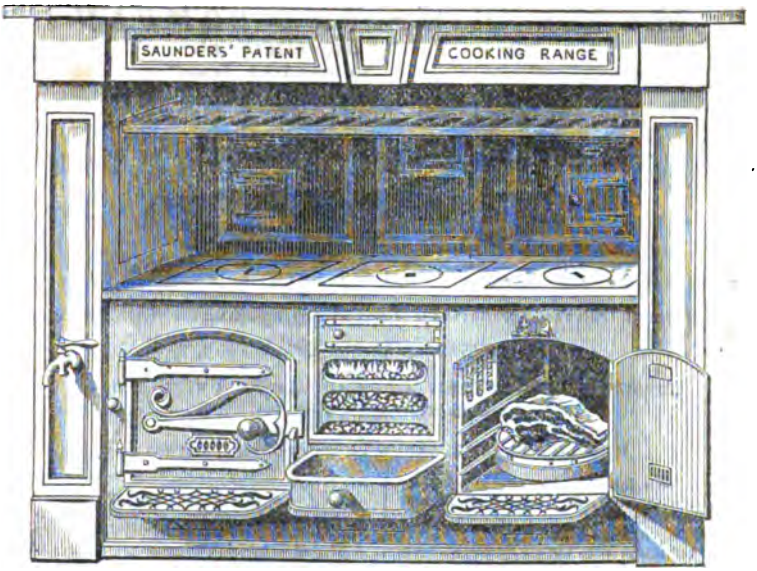


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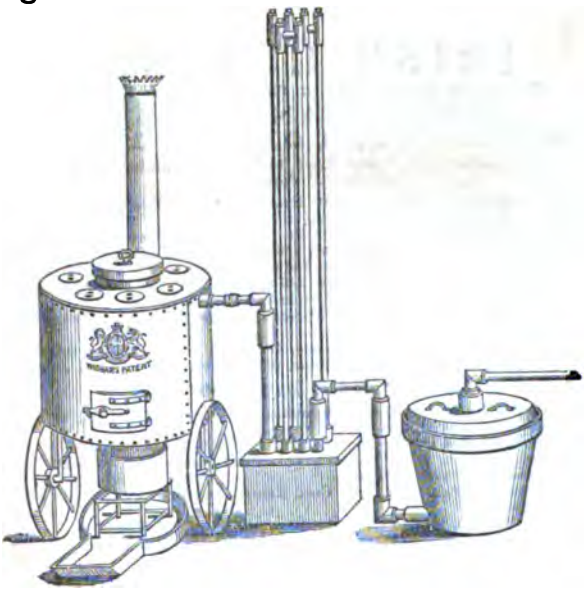


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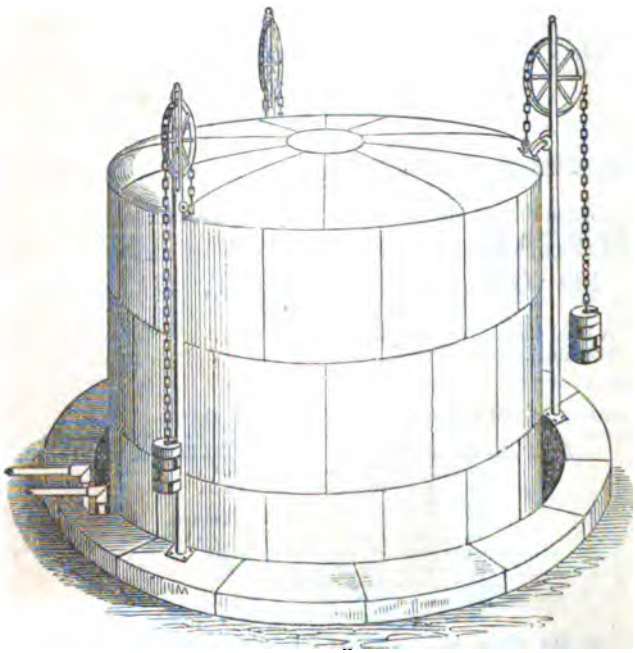

This Apparatus meets the want long felt, of compact portable Gas Works, by which houses of moderate dimensions may be lighted by **Home-made Gas.** The manufacture of Gas by this Apparatus is so very simple, that an ordinary labourer can attend to it without having his time for other occupations materially interfered with. The most important advantages to be gained by the use of this Apparatus are the perfect purity of the Gas produced, and the economy and extreme brilliancy of its light.

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