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BY

ALFRED AUSTIN

POET-LAUREATE

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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TO

THE BRAVE AND GIFTED

IRISH PEOPLE

I TENDER THIS VOLUME.

SAINT PATRICK'S DAY,
1900.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS volume is reproduced from two papers that appeared in 'Blackwood's Magazine' in the years 1894, 1895. It has been thought that their republication, expressive as they are of the love and admiration the author has long felt for Ireland, and which now animates all hearts, may be deemed not inappropriate at the present moment.

SPRING AND AUTUMN IN IRELAND.

I.

"This damnable country!" Such was the description given of Ireland, now many generations ago, by an English statesman to his superiors in London concerning the land he had been sent to administer; and the same phrase, or the same sentiment in different words, has been re-echoed many a time since, by politicians and non-politicians on each side of the Channel, respecting the island "lying a-loose," as Campion the historian in the reign of Elizabeth has it, "on the west ocean." This damnable country! Far be it from me to add the very smallest stone to the colossal cairn of controversy that has been raised over the Irish

Question. I went to Ireland for the first time in the spring of 1894, and I returned from it with the feeling that it is anything rather than damnable. Indeed I sometimes find myself almost wishing that the intervening seasons would pass, that it might again be May, and I might anew be gathering thrift amid the landward-flying foam of Loop Head, listening to the missel-thrushes shrilling in the gardens of Tourin or the woods of Dromana, watching the smiles and tears of fair fitful Killarney, losing myself in the gorse-covered clefts of matchless Glengariff, or dazzled and almost blinded by the boundless bluebell woods of Abbey Leix. I do not willingly allow that Ireland is lovelier still than England, but it is. One has said with Æneas, perhaps too often, when Spring came round, *Italiam petimus.* Yet are not Bantry Bay and Clon-Mac-Nois as beautiful, and as hallowed by the past, even as the Gulf of Spezia and the cyclopean walls of Sora? But then I went to Ireland, not in the pursuit of angry polemics, to which I would add nothing new, but in search of natural beauty

and human kindness. Nowhere have I ever met with more of either.

First impressions are a sort of premonitory experience; and, as the sun sank lower in a cloudless sky over a surgeless sea, I could not gaze on the tender sinuosities of the Wicklow Mountains, or turn to the Hill of Howth, Ireland's Eye, and the more distant Lambay Island, without a sense of rising gladness that I was at last to set foot on a land that greets one with so fair and feminine a face.

The most indulgent imagination could hardly cast a halo over the unloveliness of Dublin; and not even the most gracious and agreeable hospitality could make regret prevail over anticipation as I turned my face westward. But the gorse, the pastures, and the streams of Kildare would have made one forget the most attractive of cities, though I was well aware I was passing through perhaps the least beautiful part of Ireland. A couple of mornings later I was driving on an outside car, balanced on the other side by a congenial companion, towards Athlone, where we were to take train for the coast of

Clare. The driver assured us that he could easily traverse the distance in an hour and twenty minutes, so I gave him an hour and forty. I had quite forgotten, in the exhilaration of a new experience, that absolute accuracy is not a Celtic gift, and that time is computed long or short, according as it is thought you wish it to be the one or the other. Moreover, the Irish mile is a fine source of confusion when distances are computed. In one county a mile means a statute mile, in another it means an Irish mile; and though you may recollect that it takes fourteen of the first to make eleven of the second, it does not at all follow that your local conductor will do so. My companion, who knew something of the road, suddenly asked me from under her umbrella—for it was raining in the most approved Irish manner—what time it was, and, on getting her answer, she rejoined we had still three miles to cover and only eighteen minutes to do it in. The wish to oblige, and native hopefulness of temperament, made the driver exclaim, "Oh, we'll do it!" and straightway he imparted to his horse an

alertness of which I had not thought it capable. Watch in hand, I saw us trot through the streets of Athlone at a rattling pace, and we had both made up our minds that the train was caught. But, again, that curious vagueness of mind and happy-go-lucky indiscipline of character came into play; and, though we really were just in time, he drove past the entrance to the station, and did not discover his mistake till too late. It then turned out that he had never been to Athlone before, and had not the faintest notion where the station was. I have observed that most travellers in such circumstances fume, fret, and objurgate. We laughed consumedly, though we were well aware that Athlone is scarcely a place in which to spend several hours pleasantly, and that now, instead of arriving at Kilkee at half-past three, we could not get there till after nine. Perhaps our good-humour was due in some measure to the fact that, some three miles away, was a house where we knew we could consume the inevitable interval agreeably enough; and we were soon making for it. But Irish hospitality

does not understand the mere "looking-in-on-us" which satisfies so many English people; and we were bidden, indeed irresistibly commanded, to pass the night with the hosts we had thus surprised. We were amply repaid, in more ways than one, for our equanimity; for the next day was as fine as the previous one had been morose, and so we started on our wanderings in search of striking scenery, in sunshine instead of in storm.

I am told Kilkee is "a fashionable watering-place." Happily watering-places and fashion mean something different on the west coast of Ireland from what they signify on the south coast of Britain, or one need scarcely have bent one's steps towards Kilkee even in order to see Loop Head and the Cliffs of Moher. Even at the height of its season, for I suppose it has one, Kilkee must be what those who resort to Eastbourne or Bournemouth would call a very dull little place. You can get out of any part of it in two or three minutes, to find yourself on the undenizened cliffs that form the westernmost barrier between this Realm and the Atlantic.

If there were any strangers in the place in the early days of May save ourselves, I did not observe them. We were the sole occupants of a large, old-fashioned, and quite comfortable enough inn, which the local taste for high-sounding words would probably wish one to call a hotel. It takes its name from Moore's Bay on which it stands. You observe by various little indications that the standard of comfort, convenience, and refinement is lower by a few inches than in England; but why should it not be? I pity the people who travel through the world with their own weights and measures, their own hard-and-fast rule of how things should look and how they should be done. If you have to sit with the door open because, should you not do so, the smoke and dust of the turf fire would be blown all over the house, is that such a hardship to folks who have got nothing to do but to be pleasant and enjoy themselves? If the green Atlantic water, the blackly towering cliffs, the vast expanse of rising and rolling emerald down, the soft insinuating air, and the sense of freedom and "away-

ness," do not compensate you for the lack of hot water in your sleeping chamber and for a certain friendly irregularity in the service, go not to Clare or Galway, but follow your own trite footsteps to Brighton, Nice, or Cannes. We for our part thought Kilkee, its lean chickens, its imperfect soda-bread, and its lack of vegetables save the national potato, absolutely delightful. How the winds must blow and bellow sometimes, and the waves rear and plunge and toss their iron-grey manes along and over that crenelated coast! The word "over" is no figure of speech, for there are times when the foam is flung, by waves indignant at the first check they have met with for two thousand miles, high over the foreheads of the loftiest crags and far inland on to the stunted grass of the grey-green downs. There is a peculiar pleasure in watching how gentle the strong can be, how strong the gentle; and when we got to Kilkee there seemed at first almost a caressing touch in the dimpling green water, as though it had the soothing stroke of a soft and velvety hand. But as we pushed on to the bolder bluffs and

towards the open sea, even on that comparatively windless May sundown, the waves, when challenged or interfered with, waxed black and angry, swirled round and round in great sinuous troughs and coils, and then rushed and raced with imperative fury through the jagged channels made for them by the millions of domineering breakers that had for centuries preceded them, and forced a way somehow, somewhere, through the granite barriers. We stood hushed by the splendour and sonorous terror of it, and, like Xenophon's Ten Thousand, I cried out at length, "Θάλασσα! Θάλασσα!" as though I had never seen the Sea before. Neither Yorkshire nor Devonshire cliffs can show anything comparable in stern beauty and magnificence with the west coast of Ireland. Their billows are baby billows, mere cradles rather, swaying and swinging for a child's or a lover's lullaby, when paragoned with these monsters of the real deep, these booming behemoths, never fixed nor crystallised, and therefore never extinct, — charging squadrons of ocean-horses, coming on ten thousand strong, glittering and gleaming in all the

panoply of serried onset, and then broken and lost in the foam and spume of their own champing and churning. Turn the headland, which mayhap now fronts leeward, and all those warlike waves seem like dolphins at peace and play. Their very backs subside, and you see nothing but indescribably green water, green of a green you have never seen before, pearly, pellucid, —the mirror, not of eternity, but of whatever tender mood of the moment. Look round! look wide! look far! your eye will meet nothing but the lonely and uncompromising gaze of Nature. This it is that gives one the sense of "awayness" of which I spoke. Is it not the duke in "Measure for Measure" who says—

"For I have ever loved the life removed"?

Here indeed he might have got it, far more effectually than in any cloister that was ever reared. England nowhere now gives one quite this sensation. Should you get beyond the smoke of the locomotive, you will with difficulty evade the shadow of the tourist. But even by this all-penetrating person some of the most

beautiful parts of Ireland are forgotten and spared.

A road that for the most part follows the wavering coast-line was made from Kilkee to Loop Head in the dark days of the still remembered Famine, and the driver of our car told me he had helped to make it. He was communicative enough in answer to questions put to him; but in his case, as in many another later on, I observed little of that loquacious gaiety, and still less of the spontaneous humour, which we are educated to expect from Irish companionship. Of course, my experience was limited and imperfect; but I found myself once remarking, no doubt with a touch of extravagance, that it must be a very dull Englishman who finds Irish people particularly lively. Doubtless they are more amiable in the social sense; but I cannot put aside the impression that sadness is the deepest note in the Irish character. They remind one of what Madame de Staël said of herself, "*Je suis triste, mais gai.*" Under provocation or stimulus they become both loquacious and merry; nor need the provocation be very

forcible. But they readily fall back again into the minor key, and much of their wit springs from their sensibility to the tearfulness of things. "You can talk them into anything," said one of themselves to me; and I think it is still more true that they can talk themselves into anything, for the moment at least. They are sad, but not serious. Indeed their want of what an Englishman means by seriousness is very noticeable; and they shift "from grave to gay, from lively to severe," with astonishing mobility. It is the profound sadness of their character which makes them so sociable, since in companionship, and most of all in voluble talk, they for a time escape from it. A person of high seriousness requires no one to help him to be gravely cheerful, and his spirits are never depressed by solitude. It is in society, rather than in solitude, that he is conscious of being, or at least of seeming, morose. The gaiety of a sad person is always demonstrative, exuberant, almost noisy; for he wants others to see how tremendously happy he has suddenly become. Once removed from "wine and women, mirth and

laughter," he relapses into the passive gloom natural to one who is conscious of a mystery which is too congenial to him for him to want to solve it. The Irishman sees into his native mist, but not through it. He is best understood when you watch him abiding within the influence of brown, barren bog, of unapproachable peaks, and of the wail of homeless waves. Though otherwise but little akin to the island of the lotos-eaters, Ireland is withal a land where it seems always afternoon. In their normal movements the Irish are much quieter than the English. I am speaking, of course, of peasants, not of politicians, nor yet of folk huddled so closely together in streets that they irritate each other all day long. The very children in Ireland do not shout as English children do. Both young and old stand, or sit, or gaze, well content to do so: the being alive,—I might almost say, the waiting for life to come to an end,—seeming to be occupation enough for them. Ebullitions and explosions of gaiety, of course, they have; and these are so volcanic that they perforce attract much attention. But I think people

fail to observe that, like to volcanoes generally, their normal condition is one of quietude. They have irregular impulses, but they have no settled purpose. How can they have, in a world they do not profess nor care to understand?

> "Their soul proud Science never taught to stray
> Far as the solar walk or Milky Way."

They know their own cabin, their own patch of "lazy" potatoes, their own boat and fishing-nets, their eternal dependence on the forces of Nature, their eternal feud with people who they think do nothing for them, yet claim a share in the fruit of their labours, the imperfectly understood theories of a pastor who, perhaps, is himself imperfectly instructed in the dogmas he affirms, and that there is something called Ireland whose lot they believe is, and has immemorially been, as hard as their own. Truth to tell, in ordinary moments, and when some one does not come and "talk them into" indignation, they bear its supposed wrongs very patiently, just as they patiently bear their own. When not stimulated by professional agitators they ask little, they expect little,

from life. They are not *indociles pauperiem pati.* Indeed poverty seems natural, and even congenial, to them. Life is not to them, as to Englishmen or Scotsmen, a business to conduct, to extend, to render profitable. It is a dream, a little bit of passing consciousness on a rather hard pillow, the hard part of it being the occasional necessity for work, which spoils the tenderness and continuity of the dream. A little way before you get to Loop Head, there is a series of seaward-jutting rocks of low elevation, which have been christened *The Bridges*, for the waves have burrowed under them, so that they stand arched in mid-air. At the extreme point we saw a young fellow in knee-breeches, blue woollen stockings, short jacket, and Mercury hat, — the only human thing visible, save ourselves, whether seaward or landward, — gazing apparently at the waves. "I wonder what he comes here for," said my companion.

"Ask him," I said, and she did so.

"I've coom to see the toombling," he said.

The "toombling" was the plunging and shat-

tering of the breakers, and looking at them was occupation enough for this letterless lad. A potential poet, some one perhaps will say? But no. A poet, to be of much account, must understand, must find or put a meaning into, inanimate things; and this boy, typical of his race, was asking no questions, much less finding harmonious answers to them. He was only gazing at the "toombling" he could not control, any more than he and his can control the wilful seasons, the fiat that brought them here, that will take them away, and that deals so austerely with them in the interval.

Such, at least, was the explanation I offered of his being there, and the cause of it. Perhaps we found reason, in some degree, to modify our conclusion a few minutes later; for, seeking to return to the point where we had left our car, we passed through a gap in a loose stone-wall, and saw sitting under it, just to the right of us, a bare-headed, bare-legged peasant girl of, I daresay, some eighteen years of age, just as unoccupied as the youngster we had left pondering at the waves, but

looking by no means so unhappy. On her face was

"The bloom of young desire, and purple light of love,"

and her eyes seemed to sparkle with amorous mischief. Possibly she was the cause of his having gone, in vexation of spirit, to look on the "toombling," and so make himself yet more miserable, like many another tantalised swain before him, by communicating his ephemeral sorrow to the permanent indifference of Nature.

Within three miles of Loop Head, we were told, no flower will grow save the pink sea-thrift; and I can well believe it. It is a sort of Hinterland to the ocean, within whose influence it lies; and, though the sea has not actually annexed it, it permits no law save that of its own blusterous barrenness to rule there. The Coastguard Station represents the indomitable audacity and imperious usurpation of man; but at Loop Head, though he can build walls, and take and record observations, he can do no more. He can grow nothing

for his own sustenance; and on many a wild winter night, if he ventures out-of-doors, he has to crawl on hands and knees under the protection of the walls of the small herbless enclosure, lest he should be blown and battered against the barriers of his own raising. From the lighthouse one gets a commanding view of the estuary of the Shannon. Looking southward, one descries, if dimly, Kerry Head, Brandon Mount, and the hills of Dingle promontory, with the summits of Macgillicuddy's Reeks darkly behind them. Northward lie the mountains of Connemara, and the islands of Aran well out to sea. A little way below the Coastguard Station, there is what you may call either a little island or a huge rock, separated from the mainland by a narrow but terrific chasm. An enterprising engineer thought a few years ago he would like to throw a bridge across it, and he persevered in his task for about half the distance. He then wearied either of the labour or the cost, and the intended communication thus stops short midway over the profound black gap and the

tormented waters. Last year, however, a derrick was pushed across, and a small party landed for the day, leaving behind them a couple of goats. One we could still descry calmly grazing, but the other had either died or been blown out to sea. On the dark narrow ledge on each side of the rocky chasm, all the way down innumerable puffins were congregated, as restless in their flight, and as melancholy in their cry, as the waters over which they skim, or into which they fitfully dive and awhile disappear.

It takes some time to get beyond the impression of such a scene, even though one may have left it, visually, behind; and I could still hear those pairing sea-birds, and still see the sweeping, swirling coils of strandless water running in and out of the black honeycombed abysses, until the bay and village of Carrigaholt, and the hamlets of Cross and Kilbaha, obliterated the reminiscence by stimulating the senses to receive fresh sights and sounds. I was greatly surprised at finding so many National Schools in so wild and poorly popu-

lated a district as that between Loop Head and Kilkee; and I noticed that, almost in every instance, an older, meaner, and thatched building had been superseded by a new, larger, and more commodious one of stone and slate.

In the afternoon of the following day we crossed the Shannon from Kilrush to Tarbert, and had occasion to note how a river, nobler and more inviting in its proportions than any English stream, be it Thames, or Severn, or Mersey, showed neither sail nor funnel, and is practically neglected by the commerce of the world. The modern rhetorician, primed with statistics, and animated by conventional convictions, might doubtless produce, and, for anything I know of, may frequently have produced, a striking effect on the platform by dwelling on this conspicuous fact, and out of it manufacturing another Irish grievance. But I think I can perceive that, in presence of the many painful phenomena and perplexing problems that owe their origin to high-pressure enterprise and material development, it is gradually becoming pardonable to hint that Civilisation,

as properly understood, is not necessarily identical with huge cities, countless factories, and interminable goods-trains. I am aware that the English ideal of life is, or has been till quite recently, that every man, woman, and child should get as much work out of himself as he possibly can, and should in turn get as much out of the machines that he produces. In a word, according to this view, existence was given us in order that we may be perpetually active, and by our activity go on increasing what is called the wealth of the world. Of course, as it is only fair to add, there underlies this theory the further doctrine or belief that, by the operation thus described, Man will best expand his intellect and most surely improve his morals.

An examination of the soundness of this view, to be of any value, would require no little time and demand no little space; and this is not the moment for it, in any case. But one cannot travel in Ireland without perceiving that this so-many-horse-power and perpetual-catching-of-trains theory of life is not one that is accepted

by the Irish people; and I do not think it ever will be. Their religion, their traditions, their chief occupations, their temperament, all of which I suppose are closely allied, are opposed to it. The saying, "Take it aisy, and, if you can't take it aisy, take it as aisy as you can," doubtless represents *their* theory of life; and, for my part, if it were a question either of dialectics or of morals, I would sooner have to defend that view of existence than the so-many-horse-power one. Far from a wise man getting all he can out of himself in one direction, he will, it seems to me, rigidly and carefully abstain from doing so in the interests of that catholic and harmonious development which requires that he should get a little out of himself in every direction. One would not like to assert that the bulk of the Irish people are "harmoniously developed." But neither, if one may be permitted to say so, are the English or the Scotch people; and as, in reality, all three probably err by lob-sided activity or lob-sided inactivity, it still remains to be seen whether too much perpetual-catching-of-trains or too much

taking-it-aisy is, on the whole, the wiser course, and the less insane interpretation of the purport and uses of life. I fear one is not an impartial judge; for, when one continually hears the Irish upbraided with sitting on gates or walls and doing nothing, one remembers that some of us in England likewise sit on gates and walls and do nothing, and are greatly addicted to that pastime. But whether taking-it-aisy, or for ever trying to beat the record, be the best use to make of life, certain it is that the English, speaking generally, hold the one theory, and the Irish, speaking generally, hold the other, and manifest little or no intention of abandoning it. Unfortunately, Englishmen are not satisfied with being allowed to hold their own view of life. We cannot help trying to force it on the acceptance of other people; and, if they prove recalcitrant, we at once regard them as inferior, because they are different from ourselves. Our religion, our manners, our morals, our way of conducting business, our pace, our goal, are ours, and therefore must be the best. No doubt it is this masterful narrowness that makes us an

imperial and a conquering race. But should we not do well to interpret *parcere subjectis* as including some consideration for the conceptions of life and duty entertained by the peoples we have annexed? Failing to do so, we find ourselves baffled, all the same. There is a feminine power of passive resistance in the Celtic race which all our masculine Saxon imperiousness has not overcome. The Virgilian *curis acuens mortalia corda* applies but imperfectly to the majority of the Irish people, who quietly refuse to be prodded and sharpened into exertion beyond a certain point, let heaven send them what cares and difficulties it may. No doubt, an agricultural people always take life more easily than a manufacturing people. One cannot well live habitually in the presence and within the influence of Nature without imbibing and finally imitating something of her deliberation and serene patience. Man may increase the pace of his machine-made wheels and pistons, but he cannot compel or induce Nature to go any faster. Neither, beyond a certain point which is soon reached, can he force her to be more wealth-

producing, as the most recent results of high farming plainly show. The bulk of the Irish people are bred and wedded to the soil, the air, the seasons, the weather, mist, hail, sunshine, and snow; and familiarity and co-operation with these help to deepen that pious Christian fatalism which is innate in their temperament. Therefore they work in moderation, and with long rests between whiles,— rest, perhaps, not absolutely needed by the physical frame, but akin to that passiveness which Wordsworth somewhere calls wise. Compare an ordinary English or Scotch with an ordinary Irish railway station, and the contrast is most striking. In the latter there is a total absence of fuss, bustle, expedition, and of a desire to get the trains off as summarily as possible. Even the railway porters are of opinion that there is plenty of time between this and the Day of Judgment in which to get life's rather unimportant business done, after a fashion.

After leaving Kilkee, I was so anxious to get to Killarney, and to get there quickly, in order that we might enjoy the sharp and sudden con-

trast between the barren grandeur of Clare and the leafy loveliness of Kerry, that, had it not been for the foregoing reflections, prompted by the splendid but sailless Shannon, I might perhaps have been impatient at the railway dispensation which forbade us to get farther that night than Tralee. But abiding by the true traveller's motto,

> "Levius fit patientiâ
> Quidquid corrigere est nefas,"

—I am sure Horace learned that little bit of wisdom, not in Rome, but at his Sabine farm,—we congratulated ourselves on the easy-goingness which permitted us to have tea and a couple of hours at Listowel, to saunter towards sundown by the banks of the salmon-haunted Feale, and to gaze at what is left upon its banks of the last stronghold that held out against Elizabeth in the Desmond insurrection.

Spring never arrayed herself in beauty more captivatingly childlike than on the mid-May morning when we arrived at Killarney. She had been weeping, half in play, half for petulance; but now she had put all her tears away,

or had glorified what was left of them with radiating sunshine. Was it April? Was it May? Was it June? It seemed all three. But indeed every month keeps reminiscences of the one that precedes and cherishes anticipations of the one that is to follow it.

> "Fresh emeralds jewelled the bare brown mould,
> And the blond sallow tasseled herself with gold;
> The hive of the broom brimmed with honeyed dew,
> And springtime swarmed in the gorse anew."

There is no such gorse in wealthy Britain as enriches the vernal season in Ireland. I had come to that conclusion from what I had seen in King's County, in West Meath, and in Clare itself; but they in turn seemed poor in this opulent flower compared with the golden growth all about Mahony's Point and many another open space near Killarney Lake. Yet, at the same time, here was

> "June blushing under her hawthorn veil."

For Ireland is the land of the white as well as of the black thorn. But indeed of what wild flower that grows, of what green tree that

burgeons, of what shrub that blossoms, are not the shores and woods and lanes and meadows of Killarney the home? Such varied and vigorous vegetation I have seen no otherwhere; and when one has said that, one has gone far towards awarding the prize for natural beauty. But vegetation, at once robust and graceful, is but the fringe and decoration of the loveliness of that enchanting district. The tender grace of wood and water is set in a framework of hills, now stern, now ineffably gentle, now dimpling with smiles, now frowning and rugged with impending storm, now muffled and mysterious with mist, only to gaze out on you again with clear and candid sunshine. Here the trout leaps, there the eagle soars, and, there beyond, the wild deer dash through the arbutus coverts, through which they have come to the margin of the lake to drink, and, scared by your footstep or your oar, are away back to crosiered bracken or heather-covered moorland. But the first, the final, the deepest and most enduring impression of Killarney is that of beauty unspeakably tender, which puts on at times a garb of grandeur and a look

of awe only in order to heighten, by passing contrast, the sense of soft insinuating loveliness. How the missel-thrushes sing, as well they may! How the streams and runnels gurgle and leap and laugh! For the sound of journeying water is never out of your ears, the feeling of the moist, the fresh, the vernal, never out of your heart. My companion agreed with me that there is nothing in England or Scotland as beautiful as Killarney, meaning by Killarney its lakes, its streams, its hills, its vegetation; and, if mountain, wood, and water, harmoniously blent, constitute the most perfect and adequate loveliness that Nature presents, it surely must be owned that it has, all the world over, no superior. I suppose there is a time when tourists pass through Killarney. Happily it had not commenced when we were there. But I gathered that they come for but a brief season; and a well-known resident and landowner, to whom we were indebted for much that added to the inevitable enjoyment of our visit, told me that he had in vain tried to provide himself with a few neighbours, by maintaining and even fur-

nishing some most attractive and charmingly placed dwellings on his estate. It is so far away, so remote from London. And then—it is Ireland.

To portray scenery by language is not possible, often as the feat has been attempted in our time. The utmost one can do is to convey an impression of beauty, grandeur, or picturesqueness; and one would but use familiar epithets and adjectives to but little purpose, were one to attempt to depict in words what one saw on Long Island, at Muckross Abbey, at Torc Waterfall, in the Lower Lake, the Upper Lake, the Long Range, or what one gazed out on at Glena Cottage, where we found tea and Irish slim-cakes provided for us in a sitting-room silently eloquent of the taste and refinement of its absent mistress. Equally futile would it be to try to describe the eight hours' drive from Killarney to Glengarriff by Kenmare Bay. I can only say to everybody, "Do not die without taking it." As for Glengarriff, I scarcely know how any one who goes there ever leaves it. For my part, I have been there ever since. It is a haven of absolute beauty and perfect rest.

I came to the conclusion at last that the reason why, though Ireland is more beautiful still than Britain, it is less travelled in and less talked about, is that it has never produced a great poet, a great painter, or even a great novelist,—I mean one who has sung or depicted the beauties of Ireland so as to excite general enthusiasm about them. *Carent vate sacro.* The crowd have not been bewitched into going to Ireland; and indeed, if they went, the crowd would never discover loveliness for themselves, or at least never apprehend its relation to other loveliness. I hope I shall not give offence to a race I greatly admire, if I say that Irishmen do not seem to love Ireland as Englishmen love England, or Scotchmen Scotland. If Tom Moore had only loved Ireland as a poet should love his native land, he might have brought its extraordinary charm home to the world, and made its beauty universally known. I am sure the Vale of Cashmere is not lovelier than Innisfallen and all that surrounds it; but, for want of intimate affection, he wrote of both in precisely the same strain and style, insensible to local colour, local form,

local character, and in each case satisfying himself and asking us to be satisfied with vague dulcet adjectives and melodious generalities. But in truth I doubt whether the Irish are a poetical people, in the higher sense. They have plenty of fancy, but little or no imagination; and it is imagination that gives to thought, feeling, and sentiment about a country a local habitation and a name. The Irish are too inaccurate to produce poetry of the impressive and influencing sort. The groundwork of the highest imagination is close attention to and clear apprehension of the fact, which imagination may then, if it chooses, glorify and transfigure as it will. To the typical Irishman of whom I am speaking, the fact, the precise fact, seems unimportant. He never looks at it, he never grasps it; therefore he exaggerates or curtails,—the statement he makes to you, and indeed the one he makes to himself, being either in excess or in diminution of the reality. I am aware that, according to the habitual conception of many persons, perhaps of most, exaggeration and imagination are one and the same thing, or at any rate closely akin.

There could not be a greater error. Not only are they not akin, they are utterly alien to each other. Fancy exaggerates or invents. Imagination perceives and transfigures.

Equally common is the belief, more especially in days when pessimism is a creed with some and a fashion with others, that poetry and sadness are not only closely but inseparably related; and, up to a certain point, and within a certain range of poetry, but necessarily a lower and a narrower one, that is true. Much beautiful lyrical and elegiac verse do we owe to sadness; but it is unequal to the task of inspiring and sustaining the loftier flights of the poetic imagination. The Athenians were not sad. The Germans are not sad. The English are not sad. They are serious, which is a totally different thing; and, as I have ventured to assert, the Irish character, though sad, is noticeably wanting in seriousness. Be it observed too, in passing, that serious people are accurate—of course, as far as human infirmity will permit. But, as regards poetry and sadness, did not Euripides long ago say, in "The Suppliants," that it is well

the poet should produce songs with joy; and did he not ask how, if the poet have it not, he can communicate delight to others? The joy here spoken of is not a violent nor a spasmodic joy, which is own brother to sadness, but a serene and temperate joy, such as Tennyson had in his mind when he wrote concerning the poet:

> "He saw through life and death, through good and ill,
> He saw through his own soul."

I was again struck by the superiority of Irish scenery to its reputation, when, passing round from west to south, I found myself on the Blackwater. What Englishman has not seen Warwick Castle, and to whom are its romantic position and imposing aspect not household talk? How many Englishmen have seen, or even heard of, Lismore? To my surprise and shame, I suddenly discovered that Lismore—concerning which, I will be bound to say, most persons, if interrogated, would vaguely reply, "Lismore? Lismore? It belongs to the Duke of Devonshire, does it not?"—is more beautiful than Warwick, and almost as picturesque. It was my good fortune to spend several days in a charming and hospit-

able house, whose spacious grounds slope gradually down to the Blackwater, where that noble stream is a quarter of a mile broad; passing on one side the ruined Castle of Tourin, and on the other the woods of Dromana, through which one galloped, as only Irish horses will gallop, over rough and uneven ground, for the better part of two hours, without coming to the end of them. What strikes one in Ireland is the abundance of everything, the "lots to spare," what Irish people call "lashins." Flower-garden, kitchen-garden, pleasure-garden alike, are invariably much larger in Ireland in proportion to the size of the domain than in England. An Irish acre is about the very least anybody apparently has ever troubled himself to enclose for vegetables and fruit; and frequently this handsome allowance is exceeded where, from the domestic conditions, you would have thought it considerably in excess of the needs of the family. This superfluous and prodigal assignment of space frequently leads to a good deal of untidiness; but Irish people seem to prefer waste places and neglected corners to prim parsimoniousness. But it must

not be supposed that all establishments in Ireland are untidy and uncared-for. I saw several gardens, not only near Dublin,—like Lady Ardilaun's beautiful one of St Ann's at Clontarf,—but in the most remote and rustic parts of Ireland, that would hold their own against the best-kept ones in England. In the grounds of the house on the Blackwater to which I have alluded, I found the most effective spring-garden I ever saw, the Irish climate being peculiarly favourable to spring and early summer gardening, where man seconds with any pains the bounty and geniality of Nature. One must go to the most favoured spots in the south of Devonshire to meet, in England, with such flowering-shrubs, such rhododendrons, such out-door azaleas as abound all over the west, the south, and even the east of Ireland. At the same time, with Irish gardens and gardening, as with most other Irish things, "taking-it-aisy" is the general law. The result is far from being disastrous, where neglect and unkemptness have not been carried too far. Many a fair and precious flower is coddled and cultivated out of existence in these trim and orderly days; and I

shrewdly suspect that the greater part of the old-fashioned herbaceous plants which have recently come into favour with all of us, and which had died out in most parts of England, have been brought back from Irish gardens, where they have always flourished undisturbed and unsuperseded. I can say for myself that I am indebted to the sister island for several new, otherwise old, herbaceous flowers; for, as we all know, Irish people are never happier than when they are giving what they have got.

One wishes that this love of flowers, which educated folk in Ireland exhibit in so marked a manner, was felt by its peasantry. Could their whitewashed cottages but have little gardens in front of them, instead of what they call "the street," which consists of a dunghill-tenanted bit of roughly-paved, and not always paved, ground that abuts on the road; could they be got to plant creepers against their walls, to cherish a climbing rose, to embower their porches in honeysuckle, Ireland would, as if by enchantment, be an utterly transformed country to travel in. But just as its people, in many respects so gifted,

have little imagination, so have they little feeling for beauty. After leaving the country of the Blackwater, I found a warm welcome in Queen's County from one who is indeed a Lady Bountiful, and well known as such, and who is doing her utmost to get the peasantry to understand the charm and refining influence of flowers, just as she has employed almost every known device for adding to the grace and dignity, as well as to the material comfort, of their lives. If she succeeds, as I fervently hope she may, she will indeed have been a benefactress to the people among whom she lives, and who, I could perceive, are not insensible to her large, catholic, and unostentatious interest in them. I had always imagined that Kent has no superior as a habitat for wild-flowers. But all that I know at home of floral woodland beauty fades into insignificance when compared with the miles on miles of bluebells, under secular timber of every kind, through which she led me on the evening of my arrival. At last I saw Fairy Land, not with the mind's eye, but with the bodily vision; and not for days did the colour of that seemingly endless tract of

wildwood hyacinths fade from the retina. Here again was another, and perhaps the most surprising, instance of the lavishness, the abundance of everything in Ireland, of which I have spoken, and the complete ignorance on the part of Englishmen of what Ireland has to show in the way of natural and cultivated beauty, which they are supposed, not unjustly, to love so dearly.

No country is beautiful throughout, but I cannot agree with the opinion I have heard expressed so frequently that the centre of Ireland is ugly. For my part, I have yet to see an ugly country where it still remains country; and I cannot understand how any rural tract can be otherwise than enchanting to the eye that has ample colour in the foreground and the middle distance, and boasts a mountain horizon. Alike in Queen's County, in King's County, and in Westmeath, the Slieve Bloom Mountains are rarely out of sight; and I observed more than once, in the light and shade of their ample folds, effects of colour such as I had hitherto seen only in Italy. I spent a delightful morning, wandering tracklessly and aimlessly over a portion of

the Bog of Allen, which strongly reminded me of the wetter portions of the Yorkshire moorlands familiar to my childhood. But, apart altogether from the glamour of association, I saw in its colour and its character, in its heather, its bog-cotton, its bilberry leaves and blossoms, an effective and unusual contrast to the golden gorse, to the patches of green oats, to accidental clumps of timber, and to the irregular barrier of purple hill-land in the immaterial distance. It was pleasant to pay a visit to a property in that part of Ireland, the owner of which was, for thirty years of his manhood, engaged in administering the affairs of many millions of her Majesty's subjects in India, and who, now that in the course of nature he has come into his inheritance, spends his days, his pension, and his savings in improving the old home and developing his estate, instead of hanging about London Clubs and trying to extract diversion from the hackneyed amusements of society. Will those who come after him do the same? Let us hope so; for what Ireland most wants is the presence, the love, and the encouragement

of its own children. I found the majority of landowners with whom I talked in favour of the compulsory sale and purchase of holdings; and when I asked if they did not think this would finally deplete Ireland of its rural gentry, which would be a culminating curse to it, they one and all expressed the opinion that it would have no such effect, since the expropriated landlords would retain the house, the demesne, and what we call in England the home farm, and would live on excellent terms with the farmers and the peasantry, once the burning question of the tenure of land was extinguished.

It has frequently been said to me, when extolling the extraordinary beauty and natural charm of Ireland, "But what a climate! It rains incessantly." This assertion is one of the exaggerations incidental to ignorance or to very partial knowledge. Most persons of one's acquaintance who live habitually in London abuse the English climate, which, I humbly venture to assert, is the best climate in the world. The climate is good, though the weather may sometimes be bad; just as in Italy and kindred countries, the

weather is generally good, but the climate is usually the reverse of pleasant, being almost either excessively hot or excessively cold, or, thanks to conflict between sun and wind, both one and the other at the same time. One cannot well conceive of an agreeable climate without a certain amount of rain. Londoners, who do not like to have their hats injured or their boots soiled, and to whom the beauty of Nature, as not being within sight, is a matter of complete indifference, consider the weather good when the pavements are clean and the sky cloudless. But that is a characteristically narrow view of the matter. It may be that Ireland has too much of a good thing in respect of rain. But there is a quality of mercy in Irish showers, which are, for the most part, of the soft sort sent by southerly or westerly breezes. We had abundant sunshine at Killarney; but I remember greatly enjoying a tramp in the rain one wet morning up to Aghadoe and Fossa. I cannot understand why people abuse rain as they do. It is one of the most beautiful, as well as one of the most precious, of Nature's gifts. Watch it

beginning to fall on the silvery water, making delicate fretwork of the dinted surface, which, as it falls faster, becomes a sheet of dancing diamonds. Then the watery spears slacken, and gradually cease to descend, and the lake resumes its silvery serenity as though nothing had happened. I say it rained that morning, and on into the early part of the afternoon; and what a goodly sight were the young children, the girls especially, making haste homeward from school, with bare legs and bare heads, save that some of the girls cowled the latter with their picturesque shawls, lest they should be caught in another shower! It might have rained all day, for anything I cared, after the comfort I had gleaned from the stockingless legs and unbonneted heads that went withal with comely garments and well-washed faces; and I came to the conclusion that Irish rain is warm as an Irish welcome, and soft as an Irish smile. But by three o'clock—in Ireland the children leave school, I observed, at that early hour—the clouds melted into thin air; and what Killarney then was for hour on hour, till the gloaming deepened into starlight,

I shall never forget, but should vainly attempt to describe.

No eulogy of the attractions of Ireland would be complete that did not bear grateful testimony to the hospitality of its people, the example of which seems to be imitated even by those who go to dwell there only for a time. On first arriving at Dublin, anxious as I was to push on into the interior, I could not well reject the graceful welcome that kept me a willing prisoner for several days in a comely home, surrounded by a beautiful garden and exquisite grounds, not far from the Vice-regal Lodge; and, on reaching the Capital again on my way homeward, it was difficult to get away from the hearty hospitality of the brilliant soldier, himself an Irishman, who had just published the first instalment of that important biography on which he had for years been working, amid a thousand distractions of public duty, private friendship, and social intercourse, with characteristic tenacity; and the popularity of which, added to the distinction its author has won as an active and successful

soldier, justifies one in enrolling him among those *quibus deorum munere datum est* — the original, it will be remembered, only says *aut —facere scribenda, et scribere legenda.*

My parting exhortation, therefore, naturally is—"Go to Ireland, and go often." It is a delightful country to travel in. Doubtless the Irish have their faults; I suppose we all have. Ireland never had, like England, like most of Scotland, like France, like Germany, like Spain, the advantage of Roman civilisation and Roman discipline, by which their inhabitants are still influenced far more than they dream of. Ireland, no doubt, is a little undisciplined; for it has remained tribal and provincial, with the defects as with the virtues of a tribal and clannish race. But the only way to enjoy either a country or a people is to take it as it is, and not, when you travel, to carry your own *imprimatur* about with you. There is no true understanding without sympathy and love, and Ireland has not been loved enough by Englishmen, or by Irishmen either. The direst offence, however, against the duty they owe to each other would be to sever

or to weaken the tie that subsists between them; and I cannot help thinking it might be insensibly but effectually strengthened, and rendered more acceptable to both, if Englishmen would but make themselves more familiar with the charm of Irish scenery and Irish character.

I have said the Irish seem to be somewhat deficient in a sense of beauty. Yet I noticed one gesture, one attitude, as common as the gorse itself, the gracefulness of which would be observed if one met with it even in Italy or Greece. As you drive along the rudest parts of Ireland, there will come to the open doorway of a ling-thatched hut a woman, bare-headed, bare-footed, very quiet and patient of mien, and she will raise her hand, and with it shade her eyes, while she gazes on you as you pass. Then she will return to the gloom of her narrow home. When I think of Ireland, now that I have visited it, I seem to see a solitary figure, that emerges at moments from a settled twilight of its own, to gaze, but with shaded eyes, at the excessive glare and questionable march of English progress.

II.

WHEN, after making acquaintance with Ireland in the Spring of 1894, I ventured to express my admiration of its scenery, its climate, and its people, and confessed to a keen desire to revisit them as soon as might be, some of my English friends said to me, "Leave well alone. Doubtless your experience was an exceptionally favourable one. You went in May, when the whole world is beautiful. Perhaps you had an agreeable travelling companion, and were hospitably entertained in various parts of the island. Possibly you had some fine weather. But remember the fate of the Hebrew Leader, who struck the rock twice, and was excluded from the Promised Land. What you saw was new to you; and conceivably you took with you a temperament uncritically alert to fresh impres-

sions. You have had the good fortune which happens to few in later life, to foster a new illusion. Take care to keep it. If you go to Ireland a second time, it will vanish."

Nevertheless, I went to Ireland a second time; and, if the conviction that its mountains, lakes, rivers, bays, fiords, are unsurpassed in picturesqueness and fascination; that its climate has all the charm of vernal caprice, for Spring never quite leaves Ireland; that its people, when approached in a spirit of sympathetic inquiry, and not in the temper of the drill-sergeant, are singularly engaging; and that its ways, though in many respects not our ways, repose on a theory of life, a conception of Here and Hereafter, not to be brushed aside by a fine air of material superiority, — if this conviction was an illusion, it is an illusion that was not weakened, but confirmed, by a second experience. The first visit I paid to Ireland was in Spring. The second was in late Summer and early Autumn. On the former occasion, I was for the most part in the south and south-west. On the latter, I was mostly in

the north-west. But the effect produced was the same in both instances, and I was as much delighted with Connemara as with Killarney, with Achill almost as much as with unequalled Glengarriff.

The London and North-Western, that *primus inter pares* of the best English railways, enables one to go to Ireland either by day or by night; and having travelled by day on my first visit, on the second I tried the less agreeable method. As I stood on the platform of the Euston Station, I almost felt as if I were already in Ireland; for there was everything to remind one that Ireland is the poor relation of the British Family. The trains to Holyhead are most commodious, and the service, though it might be expedited somewhat, is reasonably good. But, to the left of the platform stood the Irish Mail, and on the right the Mail to Scotland. What a contrast! Of course, the Mail to Scotland was to start the first. Scotland has precedence, as though it will always be soon enough to get to Ireland. The Scotch Mail consisted of every conceivable kind of railway carriage, each a model of sump-

tuous, almost ostentatious, comfort; and the occupants gave like indications of opulent ease. Footmen, valets, and ladies'-maids moved to and fro with dignified obsequiousness, instructing porters solicitous to please as to the disposal of gun-cases, fishing-rods, and dressing-bags. Pointers, retrievers, and lapdogs were the object of the most sedulous attention; and the young men of Messrs Smith & Co.'s bookstall carried none but the smartest editions and the sixpenny Society papers to the carriage windows. A quiet signal; and with equal quietness the glittering train glided away. We were not to start for another ten minutes. But, simultaneously with the departure of our plutocratic kin, the book-stall was closed. I suppose it was not worth while to keep it open for humble folk who were only going to Ireland. There are so many Irish grievances already, I hope no one will think I am inventing another. If there were no dogs in our train, no gun-cases, and only here and there a fishing-rod, with whom lies the fault? From dogs to guns, from guns to valets, from valets to ladies'-maids and footmen, from valets

and ladies'-maids to their masters and mistresses, the transition is natural, logical, and necessary. But, below the dog again, are the grouse and the black-cock; and the fishing-rod reposes on a plentiful substratum of trout and salmon. Your Scotchman preserves, or suffers preserving. Your Irishman poaches; and, being himself perhaps still a little *ferus naturæ*, he looks askance at your keepers, your watchers, and your beaters. And so our train was a humble one. The poor relation refuses to amend his poverty on the conditions offered him by his richer kin. Perhaps he is right. But it would hardly be fair to manufacture a grievance out of the consequences of his independence.

On any other steamboat service with which I am acquainted, should you wish to have a private cabin it is not always to be had; and, if you are allotted it, it is rarely very spacious, and you invariably pay for it. On the Irish steamers between Holyhead and Kingstown, if you take the ordinary precaution of writing to Dublin in good time, you are sure of a private cabin, both

large and commodious, and no charge is made for it, though you will do well, of course, not to forget the steward. I look on the arrangement as a foretaste of that Irish hospitality that has passed into a proverb. By a blunder of my own, my heavier luggage had been labelled at Euston only as far as Westland Row, though I was going on to Kingsbridge, and indeed farther, without breaking my journey. But, on explaining my mistake to the luggage-porter on board the boat, describing the things, and telling him they all bore a label with name and address written on them, he begged me not to give them another thought, for he would find and re-label them in the course of the transit, and I might count on their being at Kingsbridge Station. The civility and attention shown to travellers by the servants of English railway companies could not be surpassed. But, while they seem to be performing a duty, though performing it most cheerfully, in Ireland a similar service appears as if it were an act of personal politeness. Fine manners are surely some test of civilisation; and, if that be so, Ireland is not altogether barbarous, while we

ourselves, as a community, cannot boast to be, in every respect, supremely civilised. At the Kingsbridge Station I breakfasted as well as I should have done in any railway refreshment-room in England; and again I noticed a personal desire that I should have everything I wanted; being treated as a living creature with individual tastes and peculiarities, not merely as one of a number of insignificant travelling units. But then, in order to receive this agreeable deference and discrimination, I suppose you must yourself manifest something of it, and exhibit some interest in those who are good enough to find you interesting because you are a human being.

But the Irish are so casual and inaccurate. Perhaps they are. I wanted a ticket to Ballycumber. The ticket-clerk asked me if Ballyhooley would do for me. Naturally, I said it would not; which evoked the exclamation, "It's Prospect you're going to." Which it was, only the ticket was stamped to Prospect and the station itself is inscribed Ballycumber. I remember that, at Westport, on asking why the train did not start, seeing that it was a

quarter of an hour after the time named for its doing so, the answer I received was, "The engine's gone cold,"—doubtless during a warm conversation between the driver and some of his friends; and a lady who was in the same compartment with me, and overheard the remark, told me that on the previous day a station-master had said to the driver of a locomotive as he steamed in and drew up at the platform, "Where's your train?" The man had come without it. I suppose these casualties cause inconvenience sometimes, but they contribute diversion to irresponsible travel. Moreover, one sometimes reaps advantage from a free-and-easy system of locomotion. When going from Galway to Recess by the new light railway, I wanted at Oughterard to look at the river, but feared I should not be able to do so in the time allowed for our halt. "Sure, we'll wait for you," said a porter; and they did. In Ireland people like waiting. What they do object to is being hurried. They dislike "tedious haste."

Perhaps the fact that this light railway from Galway to Clifden was then but newly made,

and scarcely yet in working order, rendered this obliging act of civility more feasible. What constitutes a light railway I do not know, for the one I speak of, though consisting of only a single line of rails, apparently resembled all other railways, save in so far as its stations and the buildings connected with them are exceptionally good. The gratitude expressed by the inhabitants of the district for the boon secured to them by Mr Balfour is very striking. They declare, and are never tired of declaring, that "he's the only man who ever did anything for this country"; and they wanted to know if there was any chance of his coming there again, for "would he not have a fine reception?" and when it was explained to them that his brother was now Chief Secretary, they hoped he was "the same sort of gentleman." During the next fortnight I had to hear the changes frequently rung on this theme; so that when I got farther into the land, I could not help thinking what is known as "Joyce's Country" might not inappropriately henceforth be called "Arthur's Country."

The admiration of Ireland I had expressed

when I first visited it had brought me characteristic offers of gratuitous hospitality from the landlords of certain inns in Connemara. But my steps were not quite in their direction, and my first halt in that part of the world was at Recess, a first-rate headquarter for any one who wants to combine fishing with beautiful scenery. The Irish Tourists' Association and the Irish railway companies, acting together, will in due course endow the most picturesque parts of Ireland with the conventional model hotel, and I have no doubt they are wise in their generation in doing so. I have observed that many people, in travelling, are anxious, above all things, to meet with a reproduction, as far as possible, of the circumstances and conditions they left at home. That seems odd, since I should have thought absolute novelty was the chief charm of travel. Moreover, the best hotel is necessarily but a bad imitation of domestic comfort; whereas a good or even an indifferent inn atones for inferiority of accommodation by freshness of sensation. There is no necessity for dogmatism in this matter; and

I do not doubt that the hotels of Parknasilla, Kenmare, Waterville, Derrynane, &c., recently established, will both attract and satisfy numbers of visitors to the exquisite scenery of Kerry. In Galway, and in parts of Donegal, similar accommodation for tourists will be provided. Only I should like to say a word in favour of the Inn, as against the Hotel, at least in the more primitive localities. It has always seemed to me there is the same difference between an inn and a hotel that there is between hospitality and entertaining. One is at home in an inn; one is not at home, one is on sufferance, in a hotel. It may not be easy to hit the exact distinction between the two; but I should think the proprietor ought, like Phaethon, to take the middle course, and that most people would rather, when among the mountains or by the ocean-cliffs, stay or abide at a rather primitive inn than at a strictly modern hotel.

Yet perhaps it is dangerous to offer advice of this kind; for I perceive an indignant tourist writes to the 'Times' because the milk for

his tea was brought to him in Ireland in a cup instead of in the orthodox ewer, and he accordingly counsels holiday-makers to avoid that country! Fancy missing magnificent scenery for such a reason! I do not think he can have travelled much in Italy, to say nothing of Greece.

The inn at Recess, which I believe has now been replaced by a more pretentious one, was then primitive in its service, but otherwise not open to criticism save of the fastidious and carping sort. You must not look for division of labour in Ireland. It is everybody's business to answer your bell, — supposing there to be one, — to clean your boots, or to bring your hot water, and therefore it will sometimes happen that it is nobody's business. But you will never be wrong in asking anybody to do anything for you, and in time it will be done; and I can never understand why people who seem, in the course of the day, to have so much time on their hands, should be in such a hurry to have their needs of the moment responded to. If honest joints properly cooked, plain puddings, stewed fruit, good bread, good

butter, good bacon, eggs without stint, and tea made with boiling water, do not satisfy people's appetite, they had better not go for change of air and scene to the Twelve Pins. The water for their tub, of a morning, will be brought them in instalments; but it will be brought. If you desire anything more dainty than I have named, you need not fear to invade the kitchen and take counsel with Miss Mullarkey. For in Ireland, as in Italy, the kitchen seems open to anybody, and you meet people there who have nothing on earth to do with the establishment. I suppose they bring news or gossip, have a fowl or a fish to sell, are the sixteenth-cousin-removed of the great grandmother of the landlady, or perhaps they too want a little change of air and scene. The English idea expressed by the words, "No entrance here except on business," is unknown in Ireland. Everybody has business that has anything to say; and everybody has something to say. The English, being a self-satisfied, self-sufficient, and quietly contented race, and not in the least terrified by the Universe, whose

laws they have bitted and bridled and made to drudge for them, are sufficiently happy in remaining silent. They do not require the society of their kind, save for the purpose of helping to lift a load or overcoming *vis inertiæ* somewhere. But the Celt, the Irish Celt at least, when left to himself and the resources of his own nature, is oppressed and appalled by the vast unsympathising silence of things, and falls into lethargic melancholy. He wants to talk, in order to break the dumb spell of the surrounding mystery, to forget that he is a lonely segregated unit in a world of infinite indifference, and to intoxicate himself for a time with the idea that he is part of a goodly company, a protected member of the great human tribe. Moreover, it is part of his politeness, of his urbanity, to talk; and the taciturnity of the Saxon seems to him inhuman.

The fisherman can hardly do better than make Recess his headquarters, for he has, within driving distance, Lough Orid, Lough Inagh, Lough Derryclare, Lough Ballynahinch, and the rivers that connect them, at the disposal of his rod.

On this subject I speak rather as a novice than as an expert, and express the opinion of others, gathered on the spot, rather than my own. But I received the impression, both from personal experience and from surer sources of information, that the fishing is, for the most part, not so good as you would expect it to be, either from the look of the water or from the price you have to pay for the privilege of enjoying it. A day's salmon-fishing costs fifteen shillings, independently of what you give the boatmen; though, for a second rod in the same boat, you are charged but seven-and-sixpence. The charge for trout-fishing on the same conditions is seven-and-sixpence and two-and-sixpence. No charge is made for the boat, but you have to pay the boatmen. As a rule, you have to drive some distance to reach your "stand," and thus a further addition is made to the expenses of the day. I think it right to say all this, lest any one should imagine he will get sport for nothing. No doubt, there are loughs, and I daresay streams, that are free. But they are less accessible, and there-

fore entail either a considerable amount of pedestrianism, or still larger outlay on conveyance. I believe the enthusiastic fisherman will fish the air rather than not fish at all, and considers no distance too great, if he can only cast successfully at the end of it. His motto is, "*Nulla dies sine lineâ*,"—let no day pass without casting a line somewhere.

To the profane outsider, like myself, fishing is valued less for the contents of the creel at the end of the day than for the lake and mountain, light and shade, sunshine and storm, river-song, wind-melody, and cloud-architecture, that are the circumambient accidents of the so-called gentle craft. I fished, for a long day, on Lough Orid, and for a short one, on Lough Inagh,—both days of ideal summer weather, by which I mean windless days, warmed and enlivened by sunshine, of which you are not too conscious, since tempered by a few stationary clouds that lay their grey shadows softly on the green hillside. Every now and then there was a rise from a sea-trout, more frequently a bite from a brown one; and then, for some

minutes, the serenity of Nature was forgotten for the excitement of wearing out and capturing a pertinacious adversary. The boatmen, who themselves are of course expert fishermen, and who spend the dead months in watching their spawning-beds in lake and river, manifested the liveliest interest in each fresh catch, the primitive man never losing his zest for simple pleasures. Thus for him life never palls, so long as there is a fin in the wave or a feather in the air. Yet these companions were very tolerant of one's long fits of absence from the matter in hand, of one's purposeless listening to the lapping of the water on the lake-boulders, to one's lending an attentive ear to the rustle of the ripening river-reeds, to one's empty-visaged gazing at the silvery veil that ever and anon came athwart the face of the purple mountain-side. On the quietest days there is nearly always some little wind on a large-sized lake; and, while I craved for no more, they kindly regretted there was not more curl and a darker colour on the water, so that the basket might be better filled. But the days

were not always of that tranquil, transparent complexion. I must allow that it sometimes rains in Ireland, but Irish rain is not quite like other rain. It is, as a rule, softer than rain elsewhere; and, if the truth must be told, I like rain, so long as one has not to say, "For the rain it raineth every day." Irish weather is not so much capricious as coquettish. It likes to plague you, if but to prepare you to enjoy the more its sunny, melting mood. It will weep and wail all night; and lo! the next morning Ireland is one sweet smile, and seems to say, "Is it raining I was yesterday? Ah then! I'll rain no more." And the runnels leap and laugh, and the pastures and very stone walls glisten; the larks carol on their celestial journey; there is a pungent, healthy smell of drying peat; the mountains are all dimpled with the joy of life and sunshine; the lake lies perfectly still, content to reflect the overhanging face of heaven; and just won't your Honour buy the stoutest pair of home-made hose from a barefooted, bareheaded daughter of dethroned kings, with eyes like dewdrops, and

a voice that would charm the coin out of the most churlish purse. If, on such mornings as these, you do not lose your heart to Ireland, it must be made of stern, unimpressionable stuff indeed.

It takes some time, in ordinary weather, to fish driftingly from one end of Lough Inagh to another; but, when you have done so, the boatmen bend to their oars, row you back again, and you reel out a long line on the chance of your crossing the path of a greedy gullet. Then, as skill has nothing whatever to do with the result, you can surrender yourself without compunction to the contemplation of that Nature which some people, with an odd vocabulary of their own, call inanimate. I should have thought they were the more inanimate of the two. Look! the mountains blush and blanch with deep abiding pulsations of their own. Listen! the pebbles, fingered by the fringe of the miniature billow your keel has created, give forth Orphic music, whispering intimations from the under-world and the over-world, as twilight noiselessly draws its

curtain of mist around the sleepy hills, and one bright star looks out of heaven to see if it be night. Dewy and damp! damp and dewy! Homeward now on the outside car that has been patiently waiting for you. The very evening for four-year-old mountain mutton, a just quantity of the "craytur," and endless stories of how this salmon was landed and how that trout broke away! How Horace would have enjoyed it! As it is, we must make shift without him, save by apt citation, at which my travelling companion, notwithstanding thirty years of administration in India, was a good deal quicker than at hooking a seven-pounder.

The drive from Recess to Leenane lies along the shores of Lough Inagh and the banks of the river Erriff, a fretted framework of mountains, in which the Twelve Pins form the most noticeable feature, accompanying you nearly all the way. Why do not English artists take their easels, their sketch-books, and their umbrella-tents, to Ireland? I have heard some of them complain that, though English scenery may be very "nice," and amply supply subject-matter

for the poet, it is too unpicturesque for the painter, who must therefore perforce cross the Alps in search of what he needs. Then let the picturesque-hunting artist go to Ireland, to Galway, to Mayo, to Donegal, to Sligo, and he will find endless variety of form and attitude in the lofty and irregular hills. If he be in search of colour, I think he ought to make Ireland his home. The writer is fairly familiar with Italy; and Greece and the Ægean are not unknown to him. He once passed a month at Perugia gazing at the lights and shadows in heaven and on earth, on the mountains, in the sky, on the plain, which the great Umbrian painters have tried to reproduce in the background of their altar-pieces. But the colouring on mountain crag, mountain slope, and mountain gully, on lake-shore and lake-island, on wood and plain and bog, in Ireland, in intermittent hours of sunshine, would have shown even Raphael something more, and imbued the landscape in Perugino's frescoes with yet more tenderness. It is as though all the rainbow hues of Nature, that fail to find in the uni-

form sea and sky of the wide Atlantic a fitting and sufficiently sensitive canvas, discharged their iridescent loveliness on the mountain-brows of Connemara and the ocean-fronts of Achill. There Nature works her own colours on her own palette with her own dew,—the moisture of the atmosphere renders the task so easy. Often, no doubt, she seems dissatisfied with her work, blurs all the picture with mist, or even, as it were, effaces it altogether with discontented hand. But that is only in order to perfect her conception on the morrow; and, meanwhile, he must have a very exclusive and intolerant vision who cannot gaze on the white veil hanging against that purple mountain without wishing that it would lift.

Go where you will, too, the music of rambling water is never out of your ears; and the tawny crests of the turf-fed runnels are bounding along, hither and thither, untamed streams that rejoice in the pathless indiscipline of their going. I am told the Irish are not a water-loving people, either for inward or outward application. Perhaps they think meanly of water, because there

is so much of it. It falls upon their thatch; it beats against their windows; it drips from their turf; it flows past their door; it splashes over their bare feet; it slashes and scourges their bellowing granite coasts; it has been known to fall for more than forty days and forty nights, yet no one dreams of building himself an ark. Hercules cleansed the stables of Augeas in a single day by turning the rivers Alpheus and Peneus through their stalls. But Augeas had but three thousand oxen, and nothing is said of pigs; and the stalls had been left uncleaned for only thirty years. How many head of cattle Ireland has, I suppose we should know by looking at 'Thom's Directory.' But, though it must be nearer three thousand than thirty years since Ireland was subjected to a good swilling and scrubbing, it is not, like Elis, comparatively waterless; and it has a thousand streams as copious as Peneus and Alpheus. Let us not, however, expect the Hibernian Hercules, should he arise, to make Ireland clean in a day. Still, could not the operation be taken in hand? The days when

dirt was synonymous with devotion have passed away with the Hermits of the Desert; and Roman Cardinals and Monsignori are pictures and patterns of the cleanliness which is next to godliness. I trust I shall not give offence to those who, from their sacred functions, are entitled to every one's respect, if I venture to ask if it be not a little surprising to see men who are engaged in the service of the House of God, and to whom the care of the very Altar is committed, going about unshaven and uncomely, and setting their flocks an example of what they should surely be enjoined to avoid, as far as their condition and occupation will permit? Could not a privately communicated Pastoral correct this unseemly spectacle, and sow the seeds of perhaps the most needed reform in Ireland? Indeed, only two things are wanted to make Ireland the most attractive country in the world: a love of cleanliness, and a love of flowers. It is distressing to see cottage after cottage, from one end of the island to the other, without a creeper against its walls, without a flower in

its precincts. I made this observation to an intelligent Irish commercial traveller in the coffee-room of the hotel at Westport, where I had to make an hour and a half's halt; and he ingeniously pleaded that any indication of prosperity on the part of a tenant, which a cared-for garden enclosure would be, would only lead to an advance of rent on the part of the landlord. I pointed out that, even if this could once have happened, it cannot occur now, and has been rendered impossible for several years past. I suppose he did not like to allow that love of beauty, and the artistic sense generally, are not noticeably Irish qualities. Nor can it accurately be pleaded that the struggle for bare existence carried on by Irish peasants is so severe that they have no leisure to consider even the less costly refinements of life. Their methods of cultivation unfortunately leave only too many unoccupied hours on their hands, and they have far more time than an English or Scotch labourer to devote to the refining recreation of gardening. Another apologist for the flowerlessness of Irish

peasant dwellings explained to me, triumphantly as he thought, that it would be worse than useless to attempt to grow creepers against the walls, for the cow, the pig, the donkey, and even the ducks, would make short work of them. But what are the donkey and the pig doing there? Why is not a little space enclosed, in front of the house, into which cows and ducks enter not? Think of the labour and the cost of material. What cost, what labour? Heaven has placed the materials for stone walls all over Ireland, and they are quickly run up where oats or potatoes have to be protected against invasion. How readily the typical Irish cottage, or hut if you will, lends itself to the courteous company of flowers, any one may judge who has happened to come across a smiling exception to the surly rule of midden-heaps and duck-ponds. Driving one day from Moate to Ballycumber, I suddenly called to the driver, "Stop! stop!" There was a hut of the ordinary pattern, with rough whitewashed walls, and a roof of yellow thatch. But crimson roses and golden

nasturtiums were clambering up its face, and marigolds, ten-week stocks, and pansies, were in full blow in the midst of a carefully mown piece of turf enclosed by an unmortared wall. Who does not know the sensation of suddenly coming across some humble rustic home, that makes one exclaim, "Here could I live, here die!" I had that sensation on gazing on this comely dwelling. Who lived there? I asked. A retired pensioner, I was told. There it is! Its owner had been drilled and disciplined. He had been taught order and seemliness, and from these the advance to some sense and love of the beautiful is easy, natural, and almost certain. As it is, the only flowers one sees near Irish cottages are wild-flowers; and, at the time of year in which I saw them, they were almost wholly ragwort and purple loose-strife. These are everywhere,—in the potato drills, in the cabbage furrows, among the oats and the barley, under the walls, on the walls, and on the slope of many a roof. They have a certain accidental beauty of their own, but they are wild-flowers in the wrong place, and

therefore fail wholly to please. Still, dirt and desolation are less offensive in the open country than in narrow, confining streets. I shrink from dwelling on what these are in some urban parts of Ireland, and prefer to remember that its inhabitants would probably say, like Valentine in "Two Gentlemen of Verona"—

> "These shadowy, desert, unfrequented woods,
> We better brook than flourishing populous towns."

Wild-flowers are plentiful in Ireland, but they are less various than in Britain, by reason, I presume, of a more uniform geological surface formation. But for garden flowers Ireland would seem to be made, both its soil and its climate singularly favouring their growth; and once again, in August, as before in May, I had more than one occasion of admiring, and almost of envying, the terraces and the flower-borders of cultivated and refined Irish homes. Every lady in Ireland seems to be an expert in the art of making and tending a garden—its cultivation there not being remitted, as too frequently happens in England, to the hired

service of men who regard orchids and pine-apples as the crowning triumphs of horticulture. In Ireland, to admire is to receive; and I believe I might have brought away with me all the herbaceous plants I saw, could I have carried them on my back. Efforts are being made here and there to imbue the peasantry with a love of flowers; but I did not observe many indications of success. A sense of beauty is a plant of slow growth in rudimentary bosoms.

Once in the country through which I kept driving, you cannot go wrong, if you are in quest of beautiful scenery. You may drive between Lissoughter and Derryclare, by the valley of Lough Inagh, to Kylemore, or between the Twelve Pins and the Maam Mountains, with the Atlantic in front of you, or to Letterfrack, and round to Killery Bay. But indeed the excursions that may be made are endless in number; and cars are always at hand. If I am asked, does my liking for Ireland extend to outside cars, I cannot say that it does. Irish people will tell you, if you talk of its unfriendliness, that it is

"Cupid's own conveyance"! But as the God of Love is not always the driver, and the Graces are not invariably one's companions, one has the choice of being unsociable if there happen to be two of you, by sitting one on each side of the car, or of being uncomfortable by both of you occupying the same seat. When luggage likewise has to be carried, the space left for the traveller becomes yet more limited; and, in a good prolonged downpour, it requires some ingenuity to protect yourself against a wetting. It is to be done, however, as I proved, one afternoon, when we drove to Kylemore, and it rained in that dogged universal manner that leads you to feel it is going to rain henceforward evermore. But I had faith in the fascinating caprice of Irish weather, and won my companion over to my proposal that, the rain notwithstanding, we should not return to Leenane, then our headquarters, by the same road we had already traversed, but follow a new if longer one by Letterfrack, Sal Ruck Pass, and Lough Fee. For a while I feared to be reproached for my obstinate ambition, for one could see no farther

than the whalebone of one's umbrella; and I gladly accepted the suggestion that, while our horse had his mouth washed out with oatmeal-and-water, and the driver refreshed himself with something more potent, we should enter a good-sized cottage, and cheer ourselves at the turf fire we should be sure to find. There it was, sure enough, with the caldron of potatoes steaming over it, a shock-headed young boy curled up asleep on a bench close by it, and the mother and two pretty shy young daughters going about the household work. It was not their business to give us anything; but they boiled water, and gave us tea, and offered us far more than we wanted from their larder. Resuming our journey, we soon caught the sound of the sea leftward, and followed for miles the corroded and indented cliffs that confront the full shock of the Atlantic. The rain softened to intermittent showers, and then these gathered themselves up and retired into the deeper hills, and the sun came out anew, and over little lake after little lake ran the wind, gleaming and glittering. At the head of Killery Bay, which is ten miles in length, and which,

when the tide is not running in, looks rather a wandering and widening river than an arm of the sea, are the hamlet of Leenane and Mr M'Keown's hotel, than which no English inn could be managed in a more business-like manner. Not having notified him beforehand of our coming, I had to put up with a bedroom of somewhat narrow dimensions; but I was speedily reconciled to it by the characteristically optimistic observation of the chambermaid, "Sure, you'll be nearer to your things." Even in parts where the tourist is now beginning to penetrate, the native humours of the land still linger. One morning, while at Leenane, I went fishing for two or three hours in the river Monterone, which, if given its full quota of syllables, sounds as though one were in Italy; and, curiously enough, Delphi is hard by. On returning from the expedition, I asked the waiter what I should give the youngster who had accompanied me. "Eighteenpence" was his answer. "Give him two shillings," I said. He returned directly, saying, "Please, sir, it's half-a-crown." I daresay some people would attribute this odd trait to an extortionate spirit. I interpret it

quite differently. The Irish temperament dislikes accuracy, and at the same time wishes to please. He imagined he would please me by naming the smaller sum, and then that he would please the boy by naming the larger one, though he might just as well have done this at first. But he and his kin prefer a roundabout road to a straight one. It is more entertaining, and fills up more time. Do not the roads in Ireland travel circuitously, in order to go round the bog-land, and the minds of its people journey in much the same fashion. I have sometimes thought they look on inaccuracy as a form of politeness, and would regard it as English rudeness and dogmatism to pin you down at once to a precise fact. When, a few days later, on going from Achill Sound to Dugort, I asked the boy who was driving me what age he was, he answered, "Fifteen *or* sixteen"; courteously leaving me a latitude of choice. I remember, too, that when, at Recess, I wanted, for my own arbitrary preference, to alter an arrangement in regard to the fishing that had been made for us overnight, and was feeling my way as to whether I was face to face with a law

of the Medes and Persians, receiving the answer, "Sure, *you* must be pleased," first. That seems to me to be the sentiment that animates every one in Ireland. Is it not conceivable that we impregnate the air of the places where we live with our own characteristics, our virtues, defects, and foibles? That would explain why Irish scenery and the Irish atmosphere feel so kindly. They are inhabited by an amiable people.

Grouse-shooting, that used not to begin in Ireland till the 20th of August, now commences, as in England and Scotland, on the 12th; and so, at Westport, I lost my travelling companion, and went on to Achill alone. The day, a goodly portion of which had been spent in driving leisurely from Leenane to Westport, had been one of exquisite beauty; but, as I drew nearer, towards sundown, to the island of which I had heard so much, a melancholy mist began to suffuse, without hiding, sea, shore, and mountain-ranges. Diminutive island after diminutive island bulged out of the ocean like green amphibious megalosauri, half embedded in the sand and mud, half indolently inhaling the

moisture of the air. Stone walls, white huts, and potato-patches, illumined by the ubiquitous yellow ragwort, looked drearier than ever in the gloom of the dripping gloaming; and, gazing out on the formless and pastureless expanse of inextricably blended mountain and main, one felt that here at last was *Ultima Thule*, the very end and desolate boundary of things.

At Achill Sound one quits the railway, and approaches the island across the iron bridge which spans the narrow creek that here separates Achill from the mainland—another of the boons conferred on this part of Ireland during Mr Balfour's Chief Secretaryship. I was bound for Dugort, some nine miles distant, to the north of the island, and was vigorously competed for by the driver of a long car belonging to Mr Sheridan of the "Slievemore Hotel," and by a young boy, —the same who declared himself to be fifteen *or* sixteen,—with an outside car belonging to Mr Sheridan, a brother of the former, of the "Sea View Hotel"; and, as the youngster offered to take me and my luggage for the same fare I should have paid on the long car, I closed with

his offer, and away we went. He was driving a mare only three years old; but by dint of incessant "Git an, out o' that!" he managed to get her over the ground, though I should think the nine miles were made twelve by the serpentine nature of her progress. How it rained! But I got to Dugort with a dry skin an hour before the long car, whose passengers, I afterwards heard, had been less fortunate. The Celt always prefers the more sonorous word, and therefore the two little inns at Dugort are Hotels. But at the one where I descended I met with an inn-warm welcome, and discovered the next morning that various kindly little offices had been performed for me, on my arrival, by a comely looking girl who had no call to see to my wants, since she was the nurse-maid of some guests who had arrived the day previously, but to whom it seemed perfectly natural, at my request, to lend a hand to my better comfort. On my apologising for my mistake, she only said, "Sure, I'd only be too pleased to do anything for you." She afterwards told me she came from Ballina,—pronounced Ballinà,

—which I had at one time hoped to see in the course of my visit, for, as she said, and indeed I had already heard, it is charmingly placed on the river Moy, three miles above Killalà Bay, and affords first-rate fishing. The last thing I heard at Dugort, when I drove away, was from this obliging handmaiden, as, dandling in her arms the youngest of her charges, she made the morning musical with the speeding words, "Come to Ballinà!"

There was a broken pane, provisionally mended with brown paper, in my bedroom, and the rain slashed it all night long without, however, penetrating farther. But the room was spacious, the bed perfectly clean,—perhaps the floor was not equally so,—and, by sunrise, the storm had blown and beaten itself out, and day broke and broadened with the clearness and brightness of Irish eyes. I have never had better fare, of the simple sort, than at Dugort; and London epicures now know no such mutton as was served me both there, at Achill Sound, and at Westport. Mrs Sheridan was in Dublin, invalided for the moment; and the cooking was

done by her daughter, a girl in her sixteenth year, and everything she did, she did carefully and to perfection. So much for my experience of the alleged happy-go-lucky slovenliness of Irish inns, in one of the most primitive parts of the country. Nor was I less agreeably surprised by the aspect of its inhabitants and its fields. It is true that everybody said the crops were the best known for fifteen years; but the present condition of the people is necessarily the result of many bygone seasons, and I saw no traces of destitution during my brief sojourn on the island. It is only twenty miles in its widest part; and I both drove and walked over much of it. The morning after my arrival I went to Keem Bay, and met hundreds of men, women, and children on their way to Mass. The chapels are not in the villages, but at some solitary spot equidistant from a certain number of these, and at a convenient distance from them all. All the people I met were well dressed; some were on horseback, a man and his wife or daughter riding pillion-fashion, and some being conveyed on private cars. I talked

with an old fellow who had been, he said, twenty-seven years with Captain Boycott, when the latter lived in Achill; and he still chuckled over his recollections of the actions for trespass, —"many's the law I've seen," was his way of putting it,—at the Westport Assizes, and over the manner in which he got the better of the great lawyers when giving his evidence. He bore spontaneous testimony to the material improvement that has taken place in the condition of the people in his time; and, like many another of his class that I talked with in the course of my visit, whose testimony, however, would be more valuable but for their racial wish to be agreeable to the person they happen to be with, he averred that people no longer want Home Rule,—one woman called it "that dirty thing, Home Rule,"—and that until lately they had "not quite understood it." "What 'ud we do without England?" he said. "Sure the English I've seen are as good as the Irish —and better." He had been called on to pay half-a-crown "cess," in consequence of the shocking and yet remembered outrage in the island;

which he recognised as perfectly just, but felt to be a most unwelcome tax. Every now and then there waxed and waned a silvery shower, from which we took efficient shelter under some overhanging rock along the mountainous coast foot-track: and then the ocean laughed into dimples again, running up to suddenly seen creeks and bays of yellow sand, and weltering more austerely round remoter islands, Innisturk, Innisboffin, Ben Mullet, and many a nameless ait and promontory. Well could I believe that somewhere among them, though now by enchantment rendered invisible to the eye of man, is the beautiful island, flowing with milk and honey, where Saint Brendan and his companions dwelt happily for seven years, and which will yet again some day surge above the waves.

A more perfect place of holiday resort than Dugort it would not be possible to imagine. There are firm yellow sands, where children may make their mimic dykes and fortresses; mountains of moderate height, Slieve Crooghaun 2500 feet, Slievemore of only 2200, for the young and vigorous to ascend; easy hill foot-tracks for

the weaker brethren; fishing either in smooth or in rolling water for those who love the indolent rocking or the rough rise and fall of the sea; precipitous and fretted cliffs carved with the likeness of some time-eaten Gothic fane by the architectonic ocean; rides, drives, and walks, amid the finest scenery of the kingdom. "I think she prefers Brighton," said a stranger to me of his companion; and, if one prefers Brighton, one knows where to go. But if Nature, now majestically serene, now fierce and passionate, be more to you than bicyclettes and German bands, you can nowhere be better than at Achill, and starting from London you can be there in less than twenty-four hours. If you elect to sleep in Dublin, two easy journeys in full daylight will take you there. On the morning of the day I with reluctance quitted it, I went out with my landlord and two fishermen to the caves of the Seals, letting out, as we glided silently over the water, a long line baited only with a hook and a feather, and ever and again dragging in a pollock. It was with difficulty I could persuade myself I was not in the

Ægean. Nowhere else have I seen atmosphere, sea, promontories, and islands, so like the natural framework of the Odyssey, and I could almost hear the musical words—

> *τοῖσιν δ' ἴκμενον οὖρον ἵει γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη,*
> *ἀκραῆ Ζέφυρον, κελάδοντ' ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον.*

"There's a seal!" I exclaimed, but was quickly corrected by one of the rowers. "No, that's a muck-morrough," a word that was new to me, but which meant a porpoise,—*muck* in Celtic signifying a pig. Thereupon one remembered that "running *amock*" means charging like a wild-boar, after a Hindostanee word for that animal; and one pondered on the kinship of language in the two far-apart extremities of Britain's imposing Empire. A moment later we saw seal upon seal, surging, diving, and disporting in the water; while puffins, grebes, and the larger and smaller gull revelled in their unchallenged dominion of shimmering sea and spacious air.

It is easier to write of a country when you are moving from inn to inn, than when you are

the guest of private hospitality. But one of the charms of Ireland is the heartiness of the welcome extended to one, not only by relatives and friends, but by others to whom, before one's visit, you were almost a stranger. I hope we are not inhospitable in England; but our hospitality is, as a rule, and perhaps by virtue of the very conditions under which we conduct our lives, measured and formal. From "Saturday to Monday," or from "Friday to Monday," has become an English country-house institution. There are no days in the week for coming or going in Irish country-houses. Their denizens are most eager to welcome the arriving, most loth to speed the parting, guest. Indeed I should be disposed to say, "Do not go to an Irish country-house if you are likely to be in any hurry to leave it"; and you will never be made to feel that you have stayed too long. In Ireland, to have is to give, and hospitality there consists in making you free, not only of all that your hosts possess, but of their time, their thoughts, their interests. You are made, in no conventional sense, thoroughly at home

by people who have all the refinement, all the travelled experience, and perhaps something more than all the intelligence, of English folk. Their interests seem somewhat more elevated and less personal. I was driven to such reflections, when visiting on the Blackwater, and in Queen's County. They were forced on me afresh, when staying near Lough Mask and Lough Corrib. What is so pleasing is to find persons who, not long ago, experienced cruel and ungrateful treatment from a peasantry inflamed against them by malevolent agitators, and who now find their incomes materially reduced by English legislation, expressing themselves in no harsh language concerning either, and cherishing towards the former the most intelligent indulgence and the tenderest sympathy. I was glad, too, to find landowners, while prepared for legislative proposals that will probably leave them the owners only of house and demesne, harbouring no intention, in that event, of ceasing to live in Ireland for the greater part of the year. Any economic or agrarian legislation that deprived Ireland of the soften-

ing and civilising influence exerted by such persons would be to inflict on it the direst of injuries. It is difficult enough already to induce any save those who are rich enough to use the island as an occasional happy hunting-ground, or those who are too poor to shift their tent at all, to give it the benefit of their presence and their expenditure. When I speak to my friends of the natural charm of Ireland, I am reminded of the difficulties that there attend the education of children, of the necessity of sending boys to English schools and English universities, and of the expense and inconvenience of despatching them backward and forward at vacation and term time. This is one of the considerations, for there are others, that must, I fear, continue to deter cultivated persons of moderate means from living in Ireland, notwithstanding the many attractions it presents. But, for the holiday-maker and the tourist, Ireland is already almost an ideal country, and will be absolutely such when the various new hotels, now in process of construction, are open.

No one need wish, and certainly I do not, that

Ireland should be made a feeble and ineffectual copy of Great Britain. *Opposuit Natura.* It is, and always must remain, an agricultural country. I do not know that it requires alteration in more than one or two respects. I have already pleaded for cottage-gardens, and a more copious use of water. One would like to see Separatist agitation disappear, and it is at this moment beginning to subside, for lack both of audiences and of subject-matter. It is for English statesmen to see that the latter vanishes altogether. No one can read the history of the economic relations of Great Britain with Ireland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, without feeling, if he has any sense of justice, that reparation is due to Ireland for the monstrous commercial fetters in which it was then for so long a period bound; and any assistance wisely and discriminately given to Ireland for the purpose of stimulating material amelioration will be neither a bribe nor a dole, but the restoration of something owing. Nor can it be other than a reproach to British statesmanship that there should not exist a reasonably friendly

understanding between the Imperial Government and the priesthood of an eminently Conservative Church. An incident was related to me, while I was in Ireland, by a connection of my own who was out with his battery of Horse Artillery during the Manœuvres held by Lord Wolseley in Queen's County as Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, on the eve of his leaving it for a yet higher post. He had lost a pair of valuable field-glasses, on which was no name, having, in the course of the day's exercises, stupidly left them on the top of a wall. "Go and ask the priest," some one said to him, "and you will probably get them back." He followed the advice, and was at once told that Widow So-and-so had found them, and would give them to him on personal application. She had taken them to the priest, who, I suppose, had told her she must hand them to the owner, if he could be found, and that in default of such discovery she might keep them. What sagacious statesman, indeed what man of sense, would quarrel more than he could help with so valuable an intermediary?

Irish ideas are not always the same as English ideas. But, in so far as they do not conflict with the moral law, or with the fundamental Constitution of the Realm, they surely are deserving of consideration—in Ireland. On the excuse being offered for a tailor who had made a badly fitting suit of clothes, that the customer in question was a very curiously built man, the answer came swift and sharp, "Sure, he should have followed him wheriver he wint." Irish ideas may seem to some of us curious, for Englishmen have rather the habit of regarding all ideas other than their own as curious. But, since we have to fit Ireland with what is necessary for it, is not that a reason why we should take extra pains in the performance of the duty?

I had to leave on the very eve of the great Dublin Horse Show. But I saw a Horse Show at a little place called Moate, that once gave a night's shelter to Cromwell, at which I was greatly impressed not only by the lepping,—*Anglicè*, jumping,—but by the quality of the animals, the horsemanship of the riders, and the extraordinary interest and enthusiasm displayed

by the company, which consisted for the most part of gossoons, sitting in their hundreds on a stone wall that girt the enclosure, and giving forth a Celtic yell as the horses shirked, cleared, or missed their jump. There was one handsome and likely-looking mare that, no doubt from want of due preparation for this particular kind of trial, was among those who elected the first course. Her name was Dairymaid; and I overheard the observation behind me, "Dairymaid, is it? Ah, well! she'd better go home and make bootter. She's no good here." In Ireland, every one can ride, and every horse can go. What a Reserve of Light Cavalry Ireland might furnish us, and, I trust, some day not far off will, when all Irishmen know and recognise what is for their peace. In England young colts at grass are nearly always out in smooth pastures. In Ireland they are among rocks, and stones, and broken and sloping ground, and thus acquire a better use of their legs betimes. Possibly the lime in the subsoil is good for their bones; and assuredly the soft moist climate is all in their favour. Irish horses have better tempers, and therefore better man-

ners, than English horses, in consequence no doubt of the gentler and more patient treatment they receive. But as one who knows them well reminds me, "When they *are* bad-tempered, they are the ——"

In an old-world garden in Westmeath, tended by wise and contented old-world folk, I was admiring an *Osmunda regalis* that seemed to me of amazing dimensions, and was told of the Irish Princess who once escaped her pursuers by hiding under one of these graceful ferns. Is she not crouching there still, half fearing to come forth? And will she not now leave her emerald lurking-place, and accept the warm-hearted embrace that is offered her by the worthiest Monarch that ever graced and sanctified a Throne?

III.

For those, and, I fancy, the Irish people for the most part are among them, who, being endowed with the lyrical temperament, find in prose an imperfect medium for the expression of their deeper feelings, I append the following poem, written at Dugort, in the Island of Achill, in the autumn of 1895.

TO IRELAND.

I.

"WHAT ails you, Sister Erin, that your face
Is, like your mountains, still bedewed with tears?
As though some ancient sorrow or disgrace,
Some unforgettable wrong from far-off years,
Done to your name or wreaked upon your race,
Broods in your heart and shadows all your mind;
So that no change of Season, nor the voice
Of hopeful Time, who bids the sad rejoice,
Can lift your gloom, but you, to kind unkind,
Keep moaning with the wave, and wailing with the wind.

II.

"Come, let us sit upon this cliff, we twain,
Whence we may gaze across your soft green Isle,

Girt by the strong immeasurable main,
That, see! looks up, and sweetens to a smile;
And you shall talk to me of all your pain,
Through deep blue eyes and dark unbraided tresses
Hooded by wimple that your own hands weaved
When you and Winter last together grieved,
While far beneath our feet the fast foam presses
Round bluff, and creek, and bay, and seabird-sung-to nesses."

III.

Then, half withholding, yielding half, her gaze,
She smoothed her kirtle under her, and clasped
Her hands about her knees, as one who prays,
Watching the clambering billows as they grasped
At slippery rocks where wild-goats may not graze,
Then fell back foiled, shivered to spray and smoke.
And I could see the warm blood of her race
Crimson beneath her weather-beaten face:

As though her heart would break, her voice would choke,
In accents harsh with hate, and brimmed with sobs, she spoke.

IV.

"They came across the sea with greed of spoil,
And drove me hither and thither from fen to foam,
Reaving and burning, till the blackened soil
Waxed bitter-barren as the brine they clomb,
Sterile to seed and thankless unto toil.
Harried and hunted, fleeing through the land,
I hid among the caves, the woods, the hills,
Where the mist curdles and the blind gust shrills,
Suckling my hate and sharpening my brand,
My heart against their heart, my hand against their hand.

V.

"And ever as I fled, they ever pursued.
They drove away my cattle and my flocks,

And left me, me a Mother! to claw for food
'Mong ocean-boulders and the brackish rocks
Where sea-hogs wallow and gorged cormorants brood;
Unroofed my hut, set the sere thatch aflame,
Scattered my hearth-fire to the wintry air,
Made what was bare before stretch yet more bare,
I waxing wilder more they strove to tame,
To force and guile alike implacably the same.

VI.

"They would not suffer me to weep or pray:
Upon the altar of my Saints they trod;
They banned my Faith, they took my Heaven away,
And tried to rob me of my very God!
And, when I begged them leave me where I lay,
And get them hence, still, still they would not go.
They reft the spindle from my famished hands,
My kith and kin they drove to other lands,

Widowed and orphaned me! And now you know
Why all my face is wet, and all my voice is woe!"

VII.

I crept a little nearer, and I laid
My hand on hers, and fondled it with mine;
And, "Listen, dear Sister Erin," soft I said,
"Not to the moaning of the salt-sea brine,
Nor to the melancholy crooning made
By thoughts attuned to Sorrow's ancient song
But to the music of a mellower day.
Forgive! Forget! lest harsher lips should say,
Like your turf fire, your rancour smoulders long,
And let Oblivion strew Time's ashes o'er this wrong.

VIII.

"The robber bands that filled the Isle with groans
Were long since clamped and prisoned in their graves:

The flesh hath dried and shrivelled from their bones,
Their wild war-standards rotted from their staves;
Their name is nought. 'Tis thus that Time atones
For all the griefs man fastens on his kind.
The days were dire: his passions swift and fell:
His very Heaven was but a sterner Hell.
His love was thraldom, hatred black and blind,
As headstrong as the wave, as wayward as the wind.

IX.

"Nor did alone you suffer. You too dealt
Full many a stroke, too fierce to be subdued
Till you had made the fangs of vengeance felt.
Mercy and truce you spurned, and fed the feud
Of Celt with Saxon, Saxon against Celt,
Till lust enforced whatever law forbade.
Nay! do not linger on that painful dream,
But turn and smile! as when a silvery gleam

Dimples your loughs that whilom seemed so
sad,
And runs along the wave, and glistens and is
glad!

X.

"We own our fault the greater, so we now
For balance of that wrong would make amends.
Lift the low wimple from your clouded brow,
Give me your gaze, and say that we are friends;
And be your mountains witness of that vow,
Your dewy dingles white with blossoming
sloe,
Your tawny torrents tumbling to the sea:
For You are far the fairest of the Three,
And we can never, never let you go,
Long as your warm heart beats, long as your
bright eyes glow.

XI.

"The Triune Flag, none now save Tyrants
dread,
That with Imperial peace protects the world,

Hath by the sinewy sons you bore and bred
Round the wide globe been carried and unfurled.
Where danger greatest, they it was who led,
And stormed death rather than be backward driven.
Now, gaze no more across the western main,
Whose barren furrows hope still ploughs in vain.
Turn Eastward, where, through clouds by sunrise riven,
England holds out her hand, and craves to be forgiven.

XII.

"Live your own life, but ever at our side!
Have your own Heaven, but blend your prayer with ours!
Remain your own fair self, to bridegroom bride,
Veiled in your mist and diamonded with showers,
We twain love-linked whom nothing can divide!
Look up! From Slievemore's brow to Dingle's shore,

From Inagh's lake to Innisfallen's Isle
And Garriff's glen, the land is one green smile!
The dolphins gambol and the laverocks soar:
Lift up your heart and live, enthralled to grief no more!"

DUGORT, ACHILL ISLAND,
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