



# A FRENCHMAN'S WALK THROUGH LIMERICK 1796

By Chevalier de La Tocnaye

(Translated by John Stevenson)

In the last decade of the 18th century, a number of Frenchmen travelled through Ireland and wrote about their experiences afterwards. In particular, Le Chevalier de La Tocnaye and Charles - Etienne Coquebert de Montbret have left us valuable records of their impressions of the country and its people. La Tocnaye was a Breton, an officer and a royalist who fled France for England after the Revolution. Little is known of him apart from what is revealed in his three books - *Les Causes de la Revolution de France, et les efforts de la Noblesse pour en arrêter les Progrès, Promenade d'un Français dans la Grande Bretagne* and *Promenade d'un Français dans l'Irlande*. He arrived in London in December, 1792, and decided to travel through England and Scotland and to record his impressions in book form. No sooner was his first *Promenade* in print than he was off again, this time to walk around Ireland, armed with letters of introduction to members of the gentry.

*In his silk stockings and dancing pumps, with his swordstock-cum-umbrella slung over his shoulder, the exiled French Chevalier de La Tocnaye must have cut a rare figure as he tramped the roads of Ireland gathering experiences ... The witty, highly curious young man walked the length and breadth of the country in the turbulent months before the 1798 Rebellion. He travelled 'without provisions, without cares and without any baggage beyond what my pockets were able to contain'. De La Tocnaye's royalist sympathies ... colour his views of Ireland and the United Irishmen, but everywhere his observations are informed by humanity and commonsense. He is interested in everything and, apart from occasional tirades about bad lodgings, is irrepressibly light-hearted.*

Thus wrote John Gamble in his 1984 introduction to a new edition of the Frenchman's book.

La Tocnaye was 27 years old when he arrived in Ireland. He set off on foot from Dublin, and usually travelled about 22 Irish (28 English) miles per day. At the end of nearly every day's journey, he was able to rest in comfortable accommodation, because of the many letters of introduction he carried. In six months, he only stayed at inns on six occasions. But not all his perambulations were pleasant. La Tocnaye was most unfortunate when he entered the County Limerick village of Glin, on the road from Kerry. He was so badly bitten by fleas in a miserable eating-house - which had been recommended by a priest - that he was forced to run to the Shannon early next morning to secure relief. On another occasion, after leaving the house of a marquis, who could not or would not find him a bed, he spent the night in a beggar-woman's cabin, with six nearly naked children, a pig, a dog, a cat, two hens and a duck. He suffered a variety of other trials and tribulations. John Stevenson, who translated an 1917 edition of the book, wrote in his preface:

*Hurt and indignant, he cries out on the narrow souls who wound the heart of the exile. Bankers are singled*

*out for special condemnation - they, he says, think of nothing but getting of gain. He resents patronage, and very sharply punishes any attempt to exploit him ... The sorrows of France are heavy on his soul. But with all the pressure of saddening thoughts - of France's woes - personal loss - wounded dignity, he is, in the main, merry-hearted, giving way readily, as he says, 'to that native gaiety, which is the only good thing that adverse circumstances have been unable to take from me' ... He is all for the Irish against their detractors, bursts out again and again in generous defence of them against the men who mock them, laugh at their misery, and call them savages. He has an interview with one of the United Irishmen, and thinks that he has little to complain of.*

After covering more than one thousand miles in approximately a year, in 1796/7, La Tocnaye wrote up his journals when he returned to Dublin, and we learn that he had to cut short his tour because of the turbulent state of the country at the time. The first edition of the work *Promenade d'un français dans l'Irlande* was published in Dublin in 1797. The first English version appeared in Cork in 1798, and a London edition the following year. John Gamble writes:

*It is obvious that the translator of the Cork edition had a strong connection with Cork, and despite its being the year of the Rebellion, was prepared to publish the Chevalier's narrative. Unfortunately we do not know who the translator was ... The translator, working through the Rebellion year of 1798, saw fit to record the philosophical comment: 'should his observations tend to the diminution of party spirit and religious bigotry, the translator will not think his time unprofitably employed' ... and was very enthusiastic about La Tocnaye's independent thinking and observations, signing himself 'An Irishman' on the title page.*

John Stevenson tells of some difficulties with the translation:

*A word about the author's style. He has none. A well-educated man, at home in the highest circles of society, and doubtless a brilliant conversationalist, he is evidently unaccustomed to writing. His long paragraphs are characterised by imperfect relation of parts; the continuity of thought expression is frequently broken by the intrusion of an unimportant associated idea, to the detriment of sense. Therefore, in the rendering, it has been necessary, at times, to convey what he intended to say rather than what is actually set down. He has a weakness for using the swear words of the country of his sojourn, and uses them unnecessarily ... and certain little sallies in the French manner, innocent enough, but which in English print might wear the air of indecencies, have been modified or suppressed. For the rest, the translation is as literal as a care for readability in English will allow.*

La Tocnaye's description of Limerick is an entertaining and informative account of his journey through the region.

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**F**atigued by the long walk of the day before, and by the great heat, I thought it well to stop at the village of Glin, which gives the title of Knight to its proprietor. There are but four places in the whole of Ireland which have this privilege, and all are in this part of the country. It is not a title of English origin. It was given by the sovereign to four brave men of the country before or at the time of the conquest, and those who bear the titles at present are their descendants.

I asked a big priest whom I met where I could find lodging, and he led me to a miserable eating-house, assuring me that it was the only inn in the place and that it was very good. I passed the night defending myself from the monsters who regarded me as their lawful prey, and when the sun rose it was on a bloody scene. I had the appearance of having taken part in a battle, as really I had. Happily the sea was not far off; to it I fled quickly to drown unwelcome guests, and that operation finished, I was with my friend the priest going, himself, to the water. I told him of my miserable hap, but this he took to be merely an everyday matter and made light of it—in fact, he laughed very heartily. I felt inclined to wish him in a warm place, but calmed myself and only wished him, for the

good of his soul several nights such as the one I had just passed. I went on my way, and finding at the entry of the village a beautiful inn, the sight made me so angry with the priest that I could hardly resist returning to seek him and administer to him some well-deserved chastisement. However, I resisted the impulse and proceeded on my way. I saw on a height the ruins of an old castle, which sustained a siege by the forces of Queen Elizabeth. It is still surrounded by its ancient fortifications and outworks; there are also in the neighbourhood some ancient *raths*. I had already walked ten miles, and I had been on foot since three o'clock in the morning, and began to hear the wailings of my stomach; there was no inn to be seen, but I saw on the heights a pleasant-looking house, and made inquiry as to the name of the owner. The answer was John Evan.

I had observed several times that while the poor are very hospitable and offer to the tired stranger according to his needs, yet if this same traveller presented himself at the house of well-to-do people he could get nothing more than a glass of water. The occasion seemed to me fit for making an experiment, and I presented myself at the door.

The owner, Mr. John Evan, appeared. 'Monsieur,' I said, 'I have not the honour of your acquaintance, and I have no letter

of recommendation to you, but I declare to you that I am extremely hungry, and if you will give me something to eat, I shall be extremely obliged.' 'Faith,' said he, 'you could not have come at a better time, for breakfast is ready.' He brought me into his house, where I found everything I could desire. I was charmed to find myself wrong in my conjecture, but promised to myself that I would not try such an experiment again, lest I should find my first opinion to be justified.

Making a little zigzag of ten or twelve miles I came to Newcastle, where I was received by Mr. Locke and his brother, who is the minister of the place. This town is situated in a long, fertile valley, which is only separated from that of the Blackwater by a little range of heights. This castle formerly belonged to the Templars, and must have been at one time of very considerable size. It is now in the possession of Lord Courtenay.

If the great English proprietors had the wit to place on their estates men of the type found here, the country would have no occasion to complain about their absence. Mr. Locke has founded, at his own charges, a manufactory of linen, in which children can be employed from a very early age. There is no doubt that such establishments cannot make a profit at present, but they are useful for the

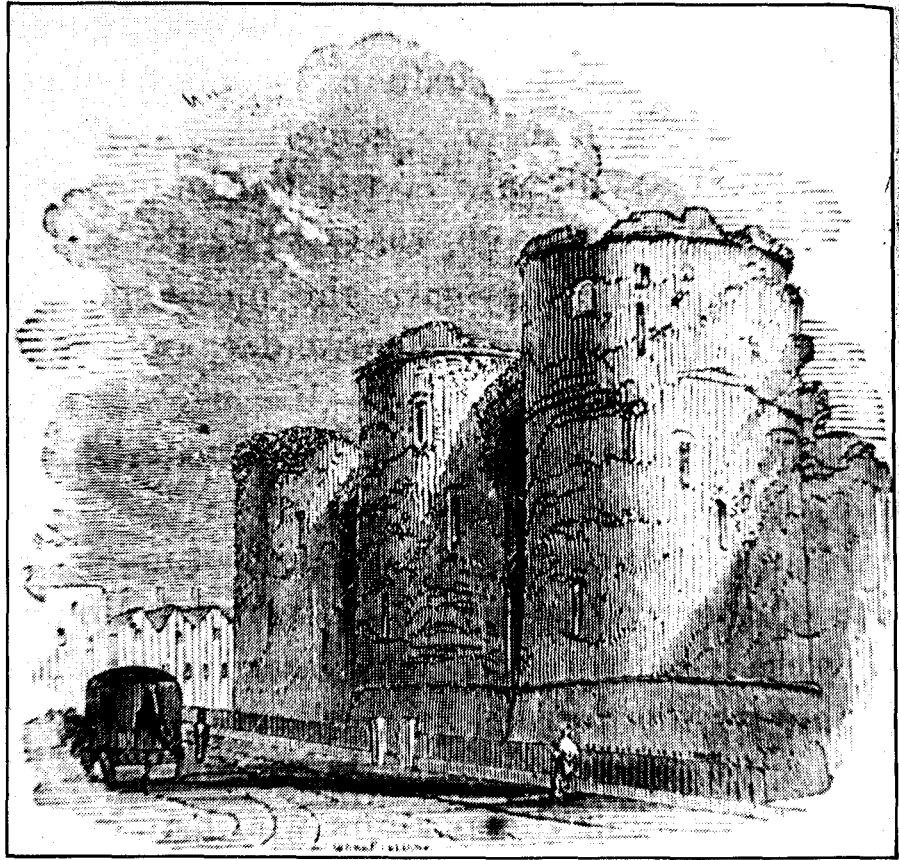


country, and cannot be too much encouraged. The proprietor will find himself amply rewarded for his trouble and cost by the new spirit of industry which will be fostered among the peasants.

The price of labour in this country is very low, not more than twopence halfpenny or threepence.<sup>(1)</sup> The observation is commonly made that the price of provisions is, in consequence, very low, but this is false, and very false, for, if potatoes are excepted, everything is just as dear as in England. True, the people live entirely on potatoes and water or buttermilk; but why can the English not live in the same manner? If anyone tried to get the English peasantry to work on such food, he would soon find that he had no labourers. A great number of the peasantry in Ireland know perfectly well that for the same work they would receive in England two shillings, and in Ireland only sixpence. And further, they would be much more sure of getting their two shillings in the one country than their sixpence in the other. Many of them have made the journey, and these same people who are accused of indolence at home are, in England, very active. There they practise the same sobriety of life to which they are accustomed in their own country, and they are always eager to return home as soon as their work has procured them a little sum of money.

I know that, with all the good-will possible, the proprietor cannot increase the price of labour without exposing himself to the just reproaches of his neighbours, but, in encouraging manufactures, hands would become more scarce and the price of labour would necessarily advance.

From Newcastle to Limerick the country is superb. This is, without contradiction, the most fertile stretch of land in Ireland. Near Rathkeale I had occasion to visit three or four villages inhabited by the descendants of a German colony from the Palatinate, established by the owner of the soil nearly eighty years ago. Until now they have always remarried among themselves, and have preserved the customs of their country. At the time of my visit there was only one man living of the original members of the colony. There is no doubt that they were received on very advantageous conditions, each family receiving, in perpetuity, ground for house and garden, as well as several acres of farm land at a very moderate rate. The rich and fertile country on which they were established was uncultivated before their arrival. Their industry is still very remarkable. Their farms are certainly better cultivated than others near, and their houses, built after the fashion of their former country, are of a comfortable character and so clean that they look like palaces in comparison with the poor cabins of the Irish. The women still wear the large straw hat and short



King John's Castle.

petticoat as worn in the Palatinate. The natives hated them cordially at the beginning, and do not love them much better now, as they are very jealous of their successes, and such feelings do not tend to make them attempt to imitate the foreigners with intention to equal or even surpass them in results. Naturally, I suppose, the Palatines will finish by becoming Irish like their neighbours.

Passing through the long town of Rathkeale I directed my steps to Adare, where I was received by Sir Richard Quin. This town was formerly full of colleges and ecclesiastical establishments. The ruins of several well-preserved buildings are still to be seen, and four of five miles away, at Skelton, are ruins of abbeys, which are perhaps the largest I have seen in this country.

The ruins in the west of Ireland are of a style of architecture absolutely different from that in the east, where they are commonly rather small, while here they are somewhat of the grandeur and style of the Gothic churches of the Continent.

In reflecting on the prodigious number of ruins of churches and abbeys, and on the immense riches which still remain in the hands of the clergy of the established religion, one is tempted to believe that at one time the whole island belonged to priests, for if the Anglican clergyman could make the most of his estates himself, I imagine that his part would still be not very far away from the half of it. The manner in which these lands are let or farmed out is a hindrance. No beneficiary can let his

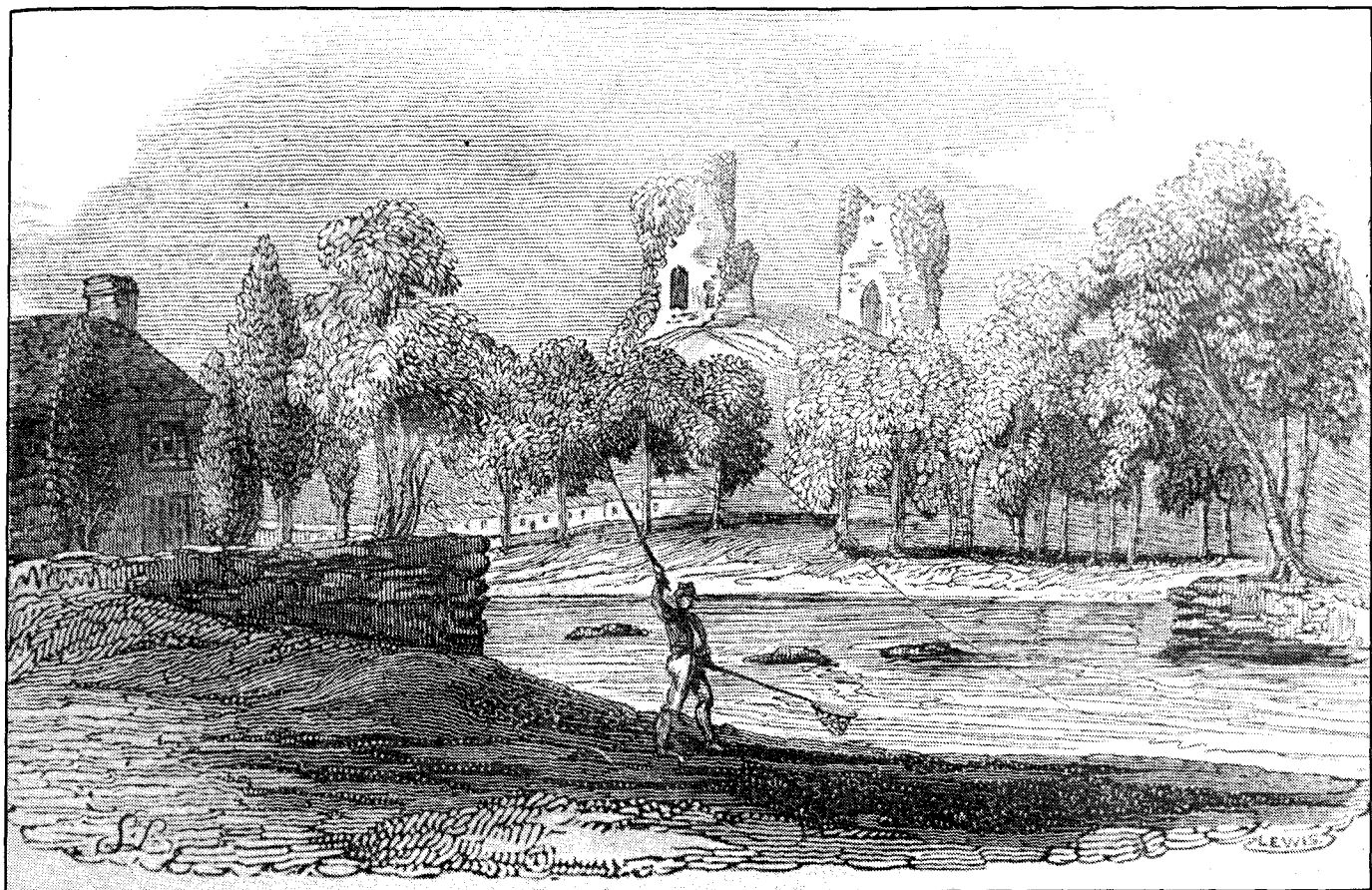
land for longer than twenty-one years, but this time is pretty long for a man who is advanced in years, and who is pressed to make some provision for his family. To rectify the trouble as much as possible, the Bishop or other beneficiary renews his leases every year with his tenant, on condition that he will be given what we call *un pot de vin*, which puts a certain sum into his pocket and makes him patient. Every clergyman who takes possession of a benefice is sure by this custom to find a tenancy renewed from the year before, and is obliged himself in some fashion to follow the same practice. I am convinced that there are certain bishoprics which are not let at the tenth part of their value, and which would produce in case of renewal of holding, sums of fifty, sixty, or even one hundred thousand pounds sterling per annum, instead of five, eight, or ten thousand. The Lord is mindful of his own.

I took the road to Limerick, and saw on the way a 'wake' in the house of a dead man. It was Sunday, and the women do not cry so loudly on that day, but the scene was, nevertheless, a rather singular one. The dead lay on a table, and the house was so full of women sitting on their heels that a bullet dropped among them would not have touched ground. The men were outside on the road, to the number of about two hundred, on foot or on horseback, and a great number prudently waiting at a neighbouring inn until it would please the dead to move.

It was the time of the horse races at

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Castleconnell.

Limerick, and also it was the duelling season. The confusion everywhere was extreme. The town was full of people coming and going. The workers were doing nothing. Everything had given way to the desire to see some breakneck performances on horseback; there were on the course more than twenty thousand persons. What made the people anxious to see was that three of the jockeys were peers; or was it that three of the peers were jockeys? The one is as bad as the other.

There came to the races some bullies from Cork and Youghal, with the laudable intention of putting lead into the brains of the Limerick folk. They went about saying to anyone they met 'Do you want powder and ball? for we can give it'. During the eight days of the races there were ten or twelve duels-an officer of the Irish brigade was killed. Then it occurred to the Chancellor to put an end to these quarrels by proceedings for criminal acts, and the warlike gentlemen took their departure.

The races finished at last, and happily for the country, for had they lasted three weeks longer, the inhabitants were so given over to sport that the harvest would have lain in the fields ungathered.

The city of Limerick is famous in history as having sustained a long siege by the troops of King William, holding out for the cause of his unfortunate father-in-law; famous also for the capitulation which the besieged troops made in the name of all Ireland. The

terms of this capitulation were most scrupulously observed during the lifetime of King William, but, without assignment of reason other than the desire to discourage the religion of the inhabitants, and force these to adopt the established form, they were most cruelly violated in the reign of Queen Anne. Priests were condemned to be hung for saying mass, and any person convicted of hearing it said, suffered severe penalties. I must add that the excessive severity of these laws was its own antidote, for judges often sought pretexts for acquitting the accused.<sup>(2)</sup> These laws were rarely or, indeed, it may be said, never put into execution; but the son, the brother, or even the distant relation of a Catholic could make himself possessor of his friend's property by becoming a Protestant. These cruel laws existed for nearly eighty years, and it is only about fourteen or fifteen years since they were abrogated, and that necessity was felt to make the laws supportable to the inhabitants. In this short space of time Ireland has attained to an extraordinary degree of prosperity, giving occasion to hope that, with a continuance of the present system of moderation and kindness, Ireland will soon rival the country that held her in bondage, and this will mean good fortune for both.

The new city of Limerick is very pretty and very regular, but just to as great degree is the old disgusting. One can hardly believe that there are here fifty thousand inhabitants.

I had here the unspeakable pleasure of receiving the visit of two bankers, who were kind enough to give me an invitation for four or five days ahead. As I have no money which can bring profit to these gentlemen, and as they on their side rarely think of anything but gain, I am not often the subject of their favours, and so when I receive such civilities I am more than ordinarily grateful for them. In a certain Scotch Society to which I was introduced I met a Mr. A-, an Edinburgh banker, who, hearing that I was to pass the winter after my travels in his city, did me the favour, publicly, to give me his card and bind me in a promise to visit him. I kept that card very carefully - I am sure I carried it twelve hundred miles - and at the end of my journey I went to present it to its owner. The reader, I take it, will not be astonished, I am sure, to learn that my reception was of the coolest.

I met in this town a certain reverend doctor, inventor of a new method of growing potatoes. This consists in cutting out, in spring, the shoots or eyes and planting them. It appears that the result is just as good as if the potatoes were cut up and planted, and with this benefit, that the tubers furnishing the shoots are still available as food-for pigs at any rate. This good man, knowing that my intention was to write the story of my travels, did me the favour to give me, in writing, the details of his method, in order that I should translate the notice and convey it to the public. Thinking



that, possibly, it may be useful, I print the document exactly as he wrote it out himself:-

'In Limerick the Rev. Doctor Mansell, about three years ago, made the most useful discovery in agriculture that ever was made, and reduced the culture to a certain system, and that is the producing potatoes from the shoots that heretofore had been thrown away as of no kind value. This discovery promises fair for feeding the lower orders of the people with food at a very cheap rate, when the culture comes to be in general practice. This gentleman, I am informed, has taken very great pains to disseminate the culture, and deserves great credit from the public for the very disinterested manner in which he has conveyed his discoveries to the world.'

Since I have enlarged so much on potatoes, it is perhaps right that I should mention very delicate roots called 'pig-nuts,' which I have seen here for the first time. Possibly the pigs are as clever in finding them as they are in scenting truffles in Languedoc, hence the name. This root is never larger than a filbert and has a flavour as delicate as that of the nut. Children amuse themselves by digging them up in the fields and eating them raw. I have an idea that these might be so improved by cultivation as to become a very nourishing and agreeable food, and this is my reason for mentioning this product of nature.

The Shannon is not navigable, properly speaking, above Limerick; its course is thereafter often interrupted by rocks and cascades through which a plank could hardly pass in safety. To make navigation possible there have been cut, lately, certain canals making connection between those parts of the river which are deep enough for boats. One of these canals, a mile long, ends at Limerick, and in its short course there is a fall of not less than thirty feet. Boats can only ascend, by the locks, at a suitable time of tide, which here rises or falls from twelve to fifteen feet, although the town is sixty miles from the mouth of the river. One or two miles higher up, there is another canal, newly-finished, joining the river seven or eight miles from Castle Connell, which place I reached after, perhaps, a needless roundabout, and where I was received by Mr. George Bruce, to whom the estate belongs.

My travels have always been delightful in the country. Were I able to jump over the towns on my way, I would do it with all my heart. Hospitality in them is too ceremonious, and although in the course of life a little ceremony is sometimes not disagreeable, in my quality of pilgrim I found it very irksome. It would be very unjust, however, not to acknowledge the kindness shown me by Dean Crosbie, and by General Walsh, who, finding me embarrassed in procuring lodging at the time of the races, had the goodness to



*'Mr. Bruce has built, at his own charges, a great number of comfortable houses for the peasantry.'*

receive me in his own house.

At Limerick I was obliged entirely to renew my wardrobe, which at the time of my departure from Dublin consisted only of my clothes and what could be contained in two silk stockings from which I had cut the feet. Although my baggage was inconsiderable, I wanted for nothing, and had the means of appearing in society as well dressed as others.

For the information of future travellers on foot, it is my pleasure here to give details of my complete equipment:

- A powder bag made out of a woman's glove
- A razor.
- Thread.
- Needles.
- Scissors.
- A comb, carried in one of a pair of dress shoes.
- A pair of silk stockings.
- Breeches, fine enough to be, when folded, not bigger than a fist.
- Two very fine shirts.
- Three cravats.
- Three handkerchiefs.

The clothes in which I travelled.

The sundries I divided in three, two lots going into the silk stockings which served as bags, the third packet contained my shoes. I had six pockets: in

three of them were stowed the packets, as described, when I was about to enter a house of consequence; but as this packing would be very inconvenient while walking, I was accustomed, on the road, to tie my three packets in a handkerchief and carry the load over my shoulder at the end of my sword-stick, on which I had grafted an umbrella which excited, everywhere, curiosity, and made the girls laugh - I can't tell why. The remaining pockets were reserved for letters, my pocket-book and ordinary uses.

The persons who received me, and whose offers of linen I always refused, were much astonished to see me reappear in the drawing-room in silk stockings and powder, as if I had travelled with considerable baggage at my ease, and in a fine carriage. Hey! Mr. Sterne, what do you think of the wardrobe with which I travelled for six solid months? - putting up at the very best houses. My portmanteau was as good as yours, I throw.

Castle Connell is a charming spot situated on the bank of the Shannon, which here flows like a torrent through stones and rocks. The beauty of the place and the mineral waters draw here a great number of Limerick's idlers, who pass the summer in the village and drink,

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## P R O M E N A D E

D'UN FRANÇAIS

DANS

## L'IRLANDE.

*Orné de Gravures en Taille Douce.*

TROISIEME VOLUME, d'un Ouvrage dont le PREMIER contient,  
*les Causes de la Révolution de France, et les efforts de la Noblesse,*  
*pour en arrêter les progrès et le SECOND Promenade dans la grande*  
*Bretagne.*

PAR DE LATOCNAYE.

à DUBLIN:

IMPRIME AUX FRAIS DE L'AUTEUR, PAR M. ET C. GRALIBERT.

1797.

*The first edition of the book was published in Dublin in 1797.*

every morning of their stay, a glass of the water. The rich strangers attract beggars from afar, and there are already more here than elsewhere in Ireland. It may seem a strange remark, but it is true, that the richer the country in Ireland, the poorer are the people and the lower the labourer's daily wage.

The misery of the people is generally attributed in Ireland to the manner in which estates are let. A rich man who does not wish to trouble himself with details will let a large extent of ground to a single man, whose intention is not to work, but to underlet to three or four others. These in their turn, having still very large areas, underlet perhaps to twenty persons; they, again, will let to perhaps a hundred peasants moderately well off; and these, once again, will let at an exorbitant rent to perhaps a thousand poor labourers. Necessity obliges these last to take their little corner of land at a

rent enormously over real value. They cultivate the greater part of it in potatoes, which serve to nourish a family, and to fatten a great pig and a few fowls, by the sale of which they commonly find the money to pay their rents. It can easily be understood that, with all these 'cascades,' it is probable that the proprietor receives not more than one-third of the money which the lowest under-tenant are obliged to pay, and the remainder goes to the profit of the rent-farmers. I ought to say that such abuses have been apparent to many proprietors, and that to my knowledge several of them in the north combined and resolved to let their estates themselves directly to the working farmers; but with what result? These latter, finding themselves no longer harassed by the small rent-farming class from whom they held, have not paid the rents, and proprietors have been obliged to revert to the old method. I know little

or nothing of cultivation, but I believe that it should be possible to find a means of arranging matters so as to avoid the dangers of the two extremes.

Several persons near Castle Connell (among others the Lord Chancellor and Mr. Bruce) in multiplying industries have increased the rate of wages – there can be no better way for the rich man to employ his money. Often I have heard the peasant reproached for his idleness and drunkenness, but when one is reduced to danger of dying from hunger, is it not a better thing to do nothing, since the most assiduous work will not hinder the evil from arriving? In such a situation also, is it not natural to drink when one can, a drop from the waters of Lethe, in order to forget one's misery? If the poor man could really feel that work would ameliorate his situation, he would quickly abandon that apathy and indifference which are born of despair.

Mr. Bruce has built, at his own charges, a great number of comfortable houses for the peasantry, and these people, so often accused with injustice of defects which really do not belong to them, have proved very careful. When he has needed workers he can always find them, even in times when his neighbours cannot get a sufficiency. I have been assured that his labourers do not wish to take from him the price which they are willing to receive from others.

The inhabitants of Castle Connell were assessed with a rate to provide means to build a Catholic chapel. I do not know what fault had been committed by the priest of the parish, but the Catholic bishop of Killaloe interdicted the work, and the church remained half built, and without a roof. Mass, however, was celebrated in a corner covered by a few planks, and the people continued to come as before, but resolutely resolved not to finish the church unless or until the favourite priest should be recalled.

Crossing the mosses which surround this village, I came by O'Brien's Bridge to Glanamore to Mr. Thomas Arthur, with whom I spent several days. His house is at the end of a fertile, little valley, surrounded by mountains covered with peat. I saw with him bones representing almost an entire skeleton of that monstrous animal which is called in this country 'moss' or 'moose deer,' and the name of which I do not know in French.

The race has been so long extinct in Ireland that history, and even tradition, have nothing to say about it. It was a species of deer which, from the size of the horns and bones which are found in the peat moss, must have been at least three times as large as any we know now. These horns are generally seven or eight feet high – they have been found indeed to be ten feet. The bones of the legs are at least double the thickness and three times the length of those of an ox.

It is extremely strange that no tradition whatever makes mention of this animal in Ireland. It is no less strange

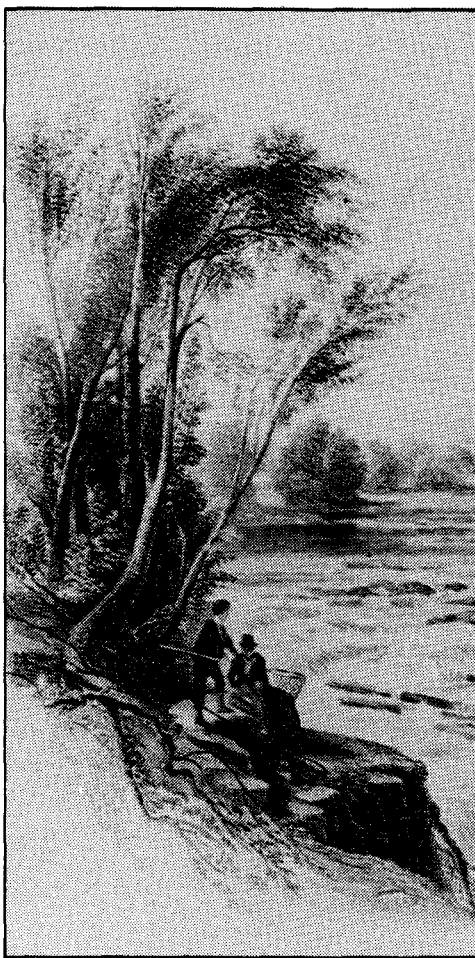


that trace of it has never been found on the continent. What was Nature thinking of to lodge in an island an animal which must have felt itself imprisoned?

In my quality of traveller it is permitted to me to dream dreams, and in that of writer of travels to make these, in some fashion, known to the public. When I have travelled a few hundred miles more, I shall have arrived at a place where it may be possible for me to propound some beautiful, conjectural matter about the singular traditions of this country.

I returned to O'Brien's Bridge, and after having taken a plunge into the Shannon in order to put him in a good temper with me, I ascended the river with Mr. Waller in a little boat, for which my umbrella served as sail. The river was charming, beautiful, calm, and it seemed to be deep, but soon we came to a waterfall and were obliged to land. They are here digging a little canal of about one hundred paces long, to join the two navigable parts of the river. Returning in the boat we travelled about ten miles and were again obliged to land and even to leave the boat. Here they are making a canal which shall be about a mile long, and which will terminate near the beautiful palace of the bishop of Killaloe. The fall of water here is very considerable, and in a distance of about fifty feet it falls fourteen or fifteen through large, round stones. This is the kind of obstruction in the rivers which forms the lakes. This one makes an immense lake of thirty miles long by twelve or fifteen wide, and although it offers, at different parts, interesting and pleasing views, like the greater part of the lakes of Ireland, it has rather the look of a great inundation, and the islands through it give *vraisemblance* to the appearance. A company offered to drain nearly the whole of this lake, provided that the riverside proprietors would give them half the new-formed land. Difficulties arose, and the matter has not been carried through. This company had calculated that, in lowering the bed of the river at Killaloe by twelve feet, they would drain fourteen thousand acres. The cost of the works would have amounted to over twenty thousand pounds sterling. It would not have been a great deal to pay for seven thousand acres of land, but it is to be presumed that this would not produce very much in the early years, and perhaps one-third of it would be sandy or unfit for cultivation.

The proprietors are usually very jealous about companies executing such works. Often they oppose the designs and prefer to have their land under water than divided with the interfering company; but it should be possible to find a way or arranging the matter to the satisfaction of both parties. A proprietor might be persuaded to pay four or five pounds sterling for every acre of land, good or bad, that the company should



*The Shannon at Castleconnell.*

drain for him at its risk and expense.

The little town of Killaloe is very ugly; the cathedral is large and appears to be fairly well built. The stone bridge which crosses the Shannon here has eighteen arches, but they are very small, and the bridge will have to be rebuilt – a modern one need not have more than nine or ten arches. I paid a visit to the minister of the parish, who has a superb house at a little distance from the town, on a height dominating Lough Derg. From there is to be had a really magnificent view of this vast sheet of water, whose banks are almost everywhere high, and cultivated with care. There is a bay of seven or eight miles, which cannot be seen without climbing to the summit of a fairly high mountain in the neighbourhood. From this height the Shannon can be seen winding through the plain as far as Limerick, with all the little towns which are on its banks, the principal of these being Nenagh.

It is disappointing that there is nowhere to be seen any appearance of industry. There are no manufactures. Beyond the labouring of the soil there is nothing to do, but patience! – a certain time must be allowed to a nation to come out of its stupor of seven hundred years. It is only fourteen years since its genius made effort to fly, and already thought is being taken to find means to surmount the immense difficulties which the

navigation of the Shannon presents. A certain measure of success has followed through the use of communication canals. The grand Canal is proceeding very slowly, but it will be finished in a few years, where interior communication will be opened across Ireland from Dublin to Limerick, and industry will grow in proportion as the means are provided for the disposal of its product.

The new movement has not stopped here. I have seen several maps of the Shannon, on which are indicated communication canals between the larger lakes. It must be admitted, however, that the navigation of the great lakes found in its course would be very difficult for canal or river boats. These lakes are subject, like the waters of the Mediterranean, to sudden tempests, which may overturn even the strongest boats. The only remedy I can see is to drain the lakes, and with money and good-will this should not be a very difficult thing, and it would give Ireland two hundred thousand more acres of earth.

The first step in the civilisation of a country is to cut the woods, drain the marshes, lower the beds of rivers, and allow stagnant waters to flow away. The people of this country have succeeded perfectly well in the matter first mentioned, seeing that they have not left wood enough to make a toothpick in many places, but they have hardly yet commenced to think about the remaining works.

I followed the western course of Lough Derg, and on the way met an honest attorney going gaily to put the surrounding country under contribution. He pointed out to me, at some distance from the shore, a square tower situated on a rock. Some determined contrabandists had there established a distillery, with intention to pay no duties. They barricaded the place, and being provided with firearms, no customs officer dare hazard his life in approaching these friends of the 'creature.' To dislodge them, it was necessary to send troops with cannon, but the distance from the bank being considerable, and there being also a wish not to proceed to extremes, they proceeded to starve out the illicit distillers, who did not surrender until the fifteenth day, and then only after having effected an honourable capitulation.

#### REFERENCES

1. The author says *cinq à six sous*. Possibly he meant 'five to six pence'. – Tr.
2. I have been told that a witness to one of such actions, having sworn that he had seen So-and-so at mass, the judge asked him if he knew what mass was. Not being able to answer, the judge said, 'Wretch, how can you swear to what you do not know?' and acquitted the prisoner. – Note by author.