

## OLD IRELAND.

Soon after the opening of Parliament at the commencement of 1870, the Prime Minister awoke some of the drowsy members by quoting from "A Tour through Ireland" which was published without the author's name just ninety years ago. Our curiosity was awakened, and we found some difficulty in obtaining the first edition of 1780 referred to by Mr. Gladstone. The writer's name now is well known, and Arthur Young's "Ireland," which has long been a standard work, will be inquired after by a new generation since the Premier has quoted from its pages in the British House of Commons. Let it be borne in mind that Arthur Young made his tour in Ireland in exactly the same number of years after the Battle of the Boyne as has elapsed since he wrote to the passing of the great Irish Reform Bill of the present day, when Ireland is commencing her new and better life, and the cry of the oppressor, which for centuries has sent wailing through that beautiful land, has ceased to be heard. The great Irish rebellion broke out soon after the "Tour" was published; and, though the land was silently fermenting when Arthur Young went over it from east to west and north to south, it was in a state of apparent peace; and the beautiful scenery he describes makes us sigh over the past, while the eye of hope is turned to the future. No imaginary description of the garden of Eden is more delightful to read than what our author saw with the naked eye in the land of the shamrock. The orchards he describes would have tempted another Eve to transgress had she seen the apples, especially that called the Toonmore, from which was made such splendid cyder. As for the wild strawberries it fairly makes our mouth water, for they look as tempting as those represented in our Coloured Illustration of the flowers of Ireland. Like Noah's gushing lips, and fair face, and pearly teeth which the beautiful Irish song compares to

A dish of sweet strawberries smothered in cream,

the beauty of the Irish ladies of that day almost made staid Arthur Young wish he were the Grand Turk and had a harem filled with them. As Burns says "they carried him off his legs." And such splendid dancers! their eyes only seem to have "pierced his body through." Limestone abounds everywhere, and the land is so rich that, as Jerrold says, you have but "to tickle it with a hoe" to make it bear all kinds of heavy crops. Seventy-two horses could stand "under the drip of an apple-tree" which the author measured, and in some places there is such rich feeding for the cattle that the fat on them cannot be used by the chandler unless mixed with an inferior kind. The crops that many places produce are amazing from their abundance, and startle us in this age of agricultural chemistry, for with all our discoveries we are not able to come up to what parts of Ireland then produced. We read of parks filled with fat deer, of rivers swarming with fish, of vast extents of country covered with cattle, of orchard-trees bending beneath their heavy loads of fruit, of almost all kinds of birds, and find no dearth of anything, except corn, which was not so plentiful, as the grass lands required no labour, and so vast a space was left for grazing. The cattle fed up to their dewlaps on the shamrock, so tall did the white clover grow; for the trefoil was as common as grass in our English pastures. They brewed an agreeable drink from the heather out of which the bees gather such stores of honey, which we have no doubt was much approved of when mingled with good Irish whisky. Still, with all the abundance of mutton, beef, and butter, which was produced without trouble on the fat grazing lands, they had to import corn into Cork and Limerick, though these places abounded in outlying fields that would have borne corn in abundance had they been ploughed and sown.

Arthur Young's picture of an Irish corn market ninety years ago is not at all pleasant to contemplate. He is staying at Cashel, and says, "Among other things, I observed in the market a great number of little bags which men carried in upon their shoulders, and set down for sale. Upon examination I found them filled with wheat, some of them containing ten or twelve pounds, some a stone and a half, some more, and some less." Thus, though beef and mutton were produced without trouble, and while they slept in the sun, yet to all these luxuries they could hardly raise "a poor ha'porth of bread," and seem to have required it no more than Falstaff did to his sack.

Our author has some excellent remarks about this love of ease, and attributes it to the richness of a land which brings forth so abundantly as to satisfy all their simple wants, arguing that "a man who feels no inconvenience from walking barefoot will hardly be induced to work for a pair of brogues," and that there must be artificial wants to supply to make such a people industrious. This notion cuts clean in two our old aphorism of "resting contented with little;" but when he wrote there had been no potato famine, and this seems to have been the principal dependence of the poor peasantry at that time. Yet ninety years ago good land in Ireland let for as much as two guineas an acre, although the Irish acre contained more than ours.

Yet, at the period of which we are writing, Arthur Young tells us that salmon was so plentiful that it sold at one penny a pound. Over and over again does he allude to the large store of fish in the Irish markets? Beside some of the bays, whole villages were occupied in the curing of fish, especially pilchards; and the

buildings in which they were cured were called fish palaces. Beside these bays stood large heronries, while eagles built on the rocks, for these birds are great fish-eaters. Where are now the Irish plaice as big as turbot; the large lobsters and crabs; and, above, all the Carlingford oysters, masses of shelled cream, which we never meet with now? Surely this land of plenty will have an awakening after its long troubled sleep; and Pat, after boasting of its former cheapness, when asked why he left it, will no longer have to say "where were all the pennies and twopences to come?" We believe if rogues and knaves are prevented from interfering with the affairs of Ireland that it will be one of the happiest countries in the world, and that thousands will be eager to build houses and purchase land amid its beautiful scenery, for the Lake of Killarney and its matchless beauty seems like reading a poetical description of the rivers of heaven on whose shore the angels walked.

But the very poor in this land of plenty were almost as badly off as they were before emigration on so large a scale took place. Bridget too often was housed with the donkey, which we see her riding on in our Picture, beside Pat, with the pig on the hill; and wife, husband, and childred huddled together on the same floor with the animals without any division between them. Straw or rushes formed their bed, and grass sods the walls of their cabin. They appear to have found their principal comfort in early marriages; and, if they had a cow and plenty of potatoes, cared not if the humble cabin was full of children, and seemed not to have envied the owner of the rich estate so long as they were permitted to dwell peaceably in their sod-hut by the ditch, and had a patch of ground for the cow, the pig, and the potatoes. And yet these men are not naturally indolent. Look how hard they worked in our harvest-fields when they came over to reap the corn, how hard they fared, and how careful they were to carry back nearly all they earned to dear Old Ireland! It was the difficulty they had to procure a morsel of land and the short, sharp, method of ejection they were subject to, when it was wanted to inclose in some larger holding, that made the poor peasant wage war against the landlords and their agents. No matter what sums the poor Irish tenant had expended in improving the land he rented, out he must go, and that without any consideration for his outlay. His cabin was unroofed, his cattle driven off, and himself and family too often left by the bare roadside. But, thank God! all this is now altered, and the long outcry of "Ireland for the Irish" at last heard and answered; and in the picturesque language of Scripture everyone there will soon be able to "sit under his own vine and under his own fig-tree." There appears to be no richer soil in the world than that of Ireland, and while it produces such abundance of fruit and food for cattle without the trouble of cultivation, what will it do when patient industry and agricultural science take it in hand?

A company was formerly started for the collecting of precious stones, though we believe it failed, but not before the Queen had accepted a necklace and earrings of these Irish amethysts, which were presented by the Countess of Kerry, and were the envy and admiration of all the ladies of the English Court. There were also large manufactories of earthenware, and the white and red clays of Ireland used for that purpose are highly spoken of. Ironworks were frequently stopped for want of fuel, and the acres of trees that were cut down to feed the "bloomeries," as the furnaces were called, are spoken of with regret, for having left naked and desolate many a mile of land that had been covered with woods. An old man named Dennis Hurley, who lived till he was ninety-six, remembered the cutting down of a wood near Bantry "three different times, and at each cutting the trees were fit for beams, boat timber, and most other purposes."

Nor must we omit mentioning the Bantry mutton, which a gentleman's table was as seldom without as it was of their famous claret, so highly was it prized. We know that about the last wolf killed that mention is made of was in Ireland, just before the rebellion; but we read with amazement of the large herds of red and fallow deer that ran wild on the Irish mountains only ninety years ago, for a century had not then elapsed from the date of the landing of William of Orange. There is a sad dearth of good histories of Ireland prior to that period, though manuscripts have lately turned up among the old rolls that give us fresh information about the wars in Elizabeth's time.

We have glanced at random on the Irish wild flowers as we passed along, though the beauty of some of the heath, or ling, will arrest the eye by the graceful shape of the bells in our coloured Illustration, which shows their vase-like forms. As for the shamrock, we never could find any difference in it from our own large white clover, which is a globe of pea-shaped bloom. The Irish ivy growing on some of the oldest ruins in the country is said to have beautifully-shaped leaves, such as are rarely met with in England. As for the butterwort, with its large flowers, they are as common as our marsh marigold, and as attractive to the eye. But we have nothing in our island to match the Irish arbutus, the strawberries of which crimson span a picturesque mountain slope by the far-famed waters of Killarney, the scenery of which has called forth the praises of every traveller who attempted to describe the beauty of a spot that is unequalled in Europe, and which we hope will now have as many visitors as flock to our English Lakes. May the light that is now breaking be the dawn of a golden morning, after the dark days that have so long hung over green and beautiful Old Ireland!





J. PROCTOR, PINXIT.

LEIGHTON, BROS.

TURF CARRIER.