

fine and cheap forage afforded by this rich country, and the facility of communication with the other parts of the province.

I am, dear G——, yours truly,

E—.

LETTER II.—LOUGH ERNE.

Enniskillen, 20th July, 1824.

DEAR G——,

We arrived here late last night, after having spent the day most delightfully in sailing down the upper part of Lough Erne, and visiting the most remarkable places on its banks. Before I attempt to describe the part of the lake we have visited, I shall give you some general account of it, which will perhaps enable you to understand me better when I enter into details. As you know I am fond of any thing ancient, you will not be surprised when I introduce you to the venerable Camden, and quote his authority on this occasion. His accuracy indeed appears surprising, when we reflect how difficult it must have been in his time to procure information respecting this part of Ireland.

You will find the following account of Lough Erne in the very brief history of Fermanagh, given in his well-known *Britannia*.

“ Beyond Cavan, to the west and north, the county of Fermanagh presents itself, where anciently lived the Erdini; a woody and marshy country, in whose centre is the largest and most famous lake in Ireland: Lough Erne, 40 miles in extent, covered with thick woods and full of inhabited islands, some of them containing 100, 200, and 300 acres; so well stocked with pike, trout, salmon, and other fish, that the fishermen oftener complain of the excessive plenty of fish, and of the breaking of their nets, than of any scarcity. This lake stretches east and west, as described in the maps; but, as I have been informed by those who have fully surveyed it with attention, begins at Belturbet, the northernmost village of Cavan, and runs from south to north, 14 miles in length and 4 in breadth. It afterwards contracts itself like a regular river for 6 miles. On this part of it is Inniskillin, the principal fortress in these parts, which was defended by the rebels in 1593, and taken by the brave Captain Dowdall. Thence it turns itself to the west, 20 miles in length and 10 miles in breadth, as far as Belek, near which is a cataract and a most noble salmon leap.”

Camden, with great gravity, accounts for the formation of the lake by seriously telling us, that it was at one time a populous country, which, as a judgment on the inhabitants for their shocking crimes, was suddenly overflowed with water.

“The Author of nature (says Giraldus Cambrensis, whom he quotes as his authority,) thought the land unworthy not only of its first inhabitants, but of any for ever.” This story, which is gravely told by Camden, who had not entirely shaken off the trammels of superstition in which the human mind remained so long bound, has called down on that author the severe but merited censure of Flaherty, in the two following Latin lines.

“Perlustras Anglos oculo, Camdene, duobus; Uno oculo Scotos, cœcus Hibernigenas.”*

It would be difficult to state correctly the true dimensions of Lough Erne, on account of the manner in which it winds through the country. In Gough's edition of Camden's Britannia, in the modern part of the work, its length is stated to be 23 Irish miles; which, if the map lately published be correctly laid down, must be much underrated, as by it the distance from Castle Saunderson, at the upper part of the lake, to Beleek, where it begins to discharge itself towards the sea, is upwards of 30 miles.

It is a common saying in the country that Lough Erne contains as many islands as there are days in the year. This, though it seem at first improbable, will perhaps be found nearly correct; if we include in the enumeration all the rocks and points of land seen above the surface; but, if we confine ourselves to considerable islands only, the number will not be found to be so great. The map presents about 100 islands in the lower lake, and 81 in the upper; and it is to be supposed that some of the small ones may have escaped the notice of the persons by whom the survey was made.

We left Belturbet for Crum, in a cot that we had engaged the night before. These cots, which form the principal mode of water conveyance here, are curiously constructed. A description of the one in which we sailed will serve for all; only observing that they differ in size, from that of a cock-boat to the dimensions of a lighter. It was about 20 feet in length above, having the gunwale perfectly straight from one end to the other; and was of the same breadth in all parts. From the bottom, which was flat and about 12 feet in length, the sides rose nearly perpendicularly to the height of about two feet, and the ends sloped gradually up for about four feet at each extremity, in such a manner as to be out of the water; a mode of construction which allows the cot to be brought close to the shoal margins of the lake for the purpose of landing goods or passengers. In one end of our cot sat three rowers, pulling heavy and clumsy oars. The other end was

* “You view the English with two eyes, Camden; the Scotch with one; and with regard to the Irish—you are blind.”

on this occasion occupied by our party and their luggage; though I believe it is in general appropriated to the carrying of turf from one part of the lake to another. Behind us, on the projecting part, sat a young lad who acted as steersman; who used in place of a rudder, a sort of paddle in the form of a spade; keeping it always on the side on which a man rowed with the single oar, and in this way equalizing the propelling power; his favourable situation giving him a complete command over the motions of our boat. In the construction of these cots the skill of the ship-carpenter does not seem to be called into action. Their sharp angles, indeed, and box-like joints, differ very much from the fine swelling curves of naval architecture: affording strong marks of the handiwork of the country joiner. For our accommodation, (doubtless in consequence of having paid, through ignorance, double the usual fare,) chairs were provided; seated on which we made our passage very pleasantly down the upper part of Lough Erne.

For a considerable distance after leaving Belturbet, the lake has the appearance of a large river, winding through the country; which, without possessing any striking beauties, is pleasing from the different appearances it assumes as the spectator glides along. On the right hand the ground rises from the water with a gradual slope, while on the left it is flat. Soon after passing Edentarriff, about two miles below Belturbet, the lake becomes wider, and ceases to have so much the appearance of a river. The land also on both sides becomes low, and is flooded, as we were informed, during winter; on which account, it is generally kept in meadow and pasturage. The flat ground here and in other parts, seems to have been formed by earth gradually accumulated by the stream; and by the growth of aquatic plants, of which all along this part of the lake large quantities are to be seen. As the boatmen plied their oars most diligently, we soon arrived at Bloody Pass; which receives its name from the circumstance of a part of King James the Second's army having been drowned here, in attempting to escape after being defeated by the garrison of Crum Castle.

About five miles below Belturbet is Crum, the demesnes of the Earl Erne, finely situated along the banks of the lake, and including the island of Innisharkey. The view down the lake on approaching it is most beautiful, and presents one of the finest scenes on Lough Erne. On each side, the banks as well as the neighbouring islands are covered with groves of trees, consisting chiefly of ash and oak. These rise luxuriantly from the water's edge, along the gradually ascending banks, under which the water gently winds, reflecting from

its still surface the surrounding scenery ; while the tall rushes waving along the margin, sometimes enlivened by a solitary heron stalking among them, give an appearance of wildness, which adds to the general effect. On the right bank stand the ruins of Crum Castle, once the family mansion ; whose " ivy-mantled " walls form, when seen from the lake or the opposite shore, a very picturesque object. Crum Castle holds a conspicuous place in the history of Ireland, on account of the gallant manner in which it was defended in the year 1689, for several days, against a strong detachment of King James the Second's army. On the approach of succours from Enniskillen, the garrison, under the command of Mr. David Creighton, a young man only 18 years of age, made a sally which caused the total rout of the enemy ; the greater part of whom were either cut to pieces, or drowned in attempting to escape across Lough Erne at Bloody Pass.

We landed at the garden which adjoins the castle, full of expectation at the prospect of seeing that wonder of nature, the famous yew tree of Crum. After walking from the water gate for about 100 paces, we stood before this venerable son of Nature, and passed under its far spreading branches. The first feeling we experienced on viewing it, was certainly one of disappointment ; our expectations had been so highly raised by the accounts given of its magnitude, that we could scarcely realize in it the idea which fancy had formed, of a tree said to be capable of sheltering 1000 men. It was only after the mechanical operation of admeasurement, that we began to perceive its vast size. The situation in which it stands prevents it from being seen to advantage ; for it is so much surrounded that there is no point from which an observer can have a view of the entire tree. This is occasioned partly, as I have mentioned, by the nature of the situation in which it stands, and partly by the pains the proprietors have taken to secure it from injury. From the level of the ground, to where the branches begin to shoot out, the height of the trunk is only about seven feet ; of which nearly three have been concealed by the erection of a brick wall of considerable dimensions around it, having the space within filled up with earth, for the purpose of supporting the trunk. This wall, with the earth heaped up within, destroys the effect which the great dimensions of the tree would otherwise produce ; causing an unpleasing association by constantly reminding one of a plant in a flower-pot : while it is impossible to prevent this ludicrous idea from recurring whenever we turn to examine it. As an additional defence, a hedge has been planted round the tree at the outer circumference of its branches, which it meets in all directions ; thus giving it a very

confined appearance. These precautions, though at first most probably uncalled for, have now, it is to be supposed, become absolutely necessary for its existence; and although good taste may regret their erection, their removal would in all probability cause the destruction of this fine tree.

From the observations we made, the following particulars may be given as tolerably accurate. The girth of the trunk, measured at the part above the enclosure already mentioned, is about 14 feet. The branches extend about an equal distance in all directions, and are supported by 2 concentric rows of pillars, of which 15 are built of brick, and 8 made of wood, presenting a very curious appearance; from which the tree has been very happily compared "to age and decrepitude supported on crutches." The diameter of the circle formed by its branches, measuring by a walk that passes the outer row of pillars, but beyond which the tree extends considerably, is 58 feet, making a circle of 174 feet; which is much within its real circumference. In proof of this it may be mentioned, that, measuring from the trunk to the extremity of its branches, towards the lake, we found it to be 33 feet; which, including the thickness of the trunk, gives a diameter of 70 feet, which is perhaps nearer the truth. We found it impossible to measure its height, but it does not most probably exceed 20 feet; though perhaps even this is overrated, as the top appears very flat, shooting out almost horizontally from the trunk.*

This famous yew tree seems not to have suffered in any respect from the effects of time; but to all appearance, it may exist for many centuries longer, and witness, as it has already done, itself an evergreen, many races of men passing away, and their habitations and works of strength crumbling into dust. We examined particularly parts which the gardener had been pruning when removing broken branches, and found them still fresh and healthy.

The great yew tree of Mucruss Abbey is generally described as the largest in Ireland: yet it is far surpassed in magnitude by that of Crum, as may be seen by the following dimensions. The one at Mucruss is in diameter only 2 feet, giving a circumference of 6 feet. The circumference of that at Crum is 14 feet, or more than double that of the other. The extent to which that at Mucruss spreads is not given by Weld

* B——, whose sketch book is always in requisition when any thing curious or beautiful in Nature or Art presents itself, was fairly puzzled on this occasion, to know how to proceed. If he went to a distance, he could only show in his drawing the top of the tree, resting like a verdant roof on the hedge which surrounds it. If he approached so near as to see the trunk and the pillars supporting the branches, he lost altogether its foliage and outer form. What a dilemma for a student of Nature! At last he succeeded by squatting down under the shade of the tree; and having finished the trunk, retired to a distance and added the top; thus making an admirable sketch of the whole.

or any author I have met with ; but it must be immense, as it overshadows the entire cloister, and makes so deep a shade even during the day, that bats are seen flying under it. The height of the stem, which is 14 feet, exceeds that of Crum considerably.

After visiting the yew tree, and spending a considerable time in the examination of it, we passed to the opposite shore, and landed on a part of the main land called Corlatz, which runs out into the lake, having the appearance of an island. The view of this from the water is very fine ; being covered with a thick wood, through which a vista in one place opens, and allows the eye to reach to a considerable extent over its sloping banks, and to see the distant mountains. At Corlatz, which forms part of the demesnes of Crum, is a pretty cottage, beautifully situated at a short distance from the water's edge, on a bank rising gradually from the shore. It commands an extensive view down Lough Erne, whose silver tide is seen winding for a considerable distance through woods of ancient trees, until the view is closed by the wooded point of Gub Riley. The cottage is furnished quite in the rural style in every respect ; and in this secluded spot, surrounded by trees and underwood, has a good effect. The outer walls are entirely stuck over with pebbles from the lake, and the porch and front are covered with honeysuckle, jessamines, and other plants. After walking over Corlatz, which presents a great variety of surface, well wooded, and rises in the centre to a considerable height, we repaired to the shore ; which we were anxious to examine, from having seen some fossils at the cottage that we were informed had been collected there.

Having procured our specimens, which consisted chiefly of coralloid limestone, we left Corlatz with regret, and crossed over to Innissharkey, an island lying between it and Crum Castle. On this island there is little particularly attractive ; and we should not perhaps have visited it, had it not been the site of Crum Lodge, which is at present the residence of Colonel Creighton, and the only mansion of the Erne family since the destruction of the ancient castle. This island is of considerable extent, and rises gradually to the water's edge, forming a gentle hill, on which the mansion house is built. It is a handsome modern building, having nothing very remarkable about it ; the offices belonging to it stand on the main land, where of course the carriages and horses must be kept ; and visitors are carried over the narrow channel which divides the island from the land, in boats. This island, like the neighbourhood, is well wooded, and commands views of the lake in different directions. After leaving Innissharkey we again crossed to Crum, and landed near the stables, where we

expected to meet a car we had engaged to carry us to Enniskillen. To our astonishment, however, we found that it had not yet arrived, although it was nearly two hours past the time we had appointed. Our situation now became rather awkward; the men who had rowed us down from Belturbet, had never been farther, and could not be induced to venture on this unknown sea; the nearest town was some miles distant, and no boat could be procured at Crum, as all the men were busily employed in making hay. At last we succeeded in engaging a boat, on condition of waiting until the men could be spared from their work: and in the meantime, we amused ourselves as well as we could in walking along the shore.

After a considerable delay, during which M——, who acts as our purveyor, succeeded in procuring for us our dinner, we embarked in the cot we had engaged, and proceeded on our voyage towards Enniskillen; intending on our way to call at Bellisle, which had been described to us as one of the most beautiful seats on the Lough. It was now late in the day; and soon after passing the well wooded shores of Innisharkey, the sky became clouded, and the weather intensely cold; a change that we felt more strongly in consequence of the great heat of the early part of the day. Lough Erne in this part is a perfect labyrinth; the number of islands forming channels in all directions, so that a stranger can scarcely make his way downwards unless directed by the current of the water; which always sets in the direction towards Ballyshannon, where it discharges itself into the sea. In summer, however, it is very trifling. The confusion arising from the number of islands, is increased by the branches of the lake shooting out in different directions, any one of which may be mistaken for the direct course.

At this time the wind began to blow pretty freshly, raising a slight surf on the water, particularly in those parts where the Lough expands to a considerable extent. The shape of the cot, which in every part presented a flat surface to the waves that drove against it unbroken, rendered our situation less agreeable than in the morning, in consequence of the occasional sprinkling which we got from the spray it threw on us. By means of our great coats we made ourselves as comfortable as a seat of four inches in breadth would permit, (for we had no longer the honour of chairs allowed us,) and, when we pleased, we pulled a spare oar to keep ourselves warm. As we approached Bellisle the weather became milder, and the wind abated; which rendered our sail pleasanter than it had been for the last hour or two.

Bellisle is a considerable island, containing, it is said, 200 Irish acres; and formed at one time the favourite demesnes of

the Earl of Ross. We landed at the lowest part of it, and ascended the hill on which the house is situated, passing on our way through fine pasturage, with large flocks of cattle grazing. Bellisle, which was once celebrated, not only for the natural beauty of its situation, but for the taste displayed in the improvements of the Earl of Ross, at present scarcely retains a vestige of what it once was; and any person who reads the description given of it in Young's tour, with its fine hanging woods and deep groves, its walks, its gardens, and its temples, can scarcely believe that in so short a time it could be reduced to its present state. The roads and walks are overgrown with weeds; the bridges have fallen; and the house itself is in such a state of dilapidation, as to seem uninhabitable. A green-house, that at one time covered the front, is nearly a heap of ruins; and the neglected vines, unrestrained by the hand of man, have forced their way in many places through the glass which remains, and trail unheeded along the ground. The view, from the front of the house, is very fine; commanding an extensive prospect of the lake, which is here studded with numerous islands. On leaving the house we proceeded to our boat, which we had ordered to meet us at the bridge that connects Bellisle with the main land. On our way we were joined by a sort of fresh-water sailor, who conducted us to the bridge, and who being known to our boatmen offered to steer to Enniskillen. This person we found to be very intelligent, and possessed of a perfect knowledge of all the country we passed through. He lamented with much feeling the fallen state of Bellisle, which he represented as having been, in his youth, the most beautiful place in this country; and deplored the ravages that had been committed on its fine forests of venerable trees, among which, he informed us, there had been oaks of immense magnitude. All these had been cut down some years ago.

In one of the mountains in this neighbourhood a vein of coal has been discovered; and, we were told, is at present wrought. We regretted very much that we could not find time to visit the place and learn some particulars respecting it, which would have been particularly gratifying at a time when the public attention in this country has been so much turned to its mineral productions. From the appearance of some of the coal which we saw, the mine does not appear to have been wrought to any depth.

Having embarked in our cot, we now proceeded towards Enniskillen; passing on our left the island of Innismore, the largest in the upper part of Lough Erne. There are from this a number of passages among the islands. Our new companion, who now directed our motions, chose one which

runs among reefs of dark limestone, from which it gets its name of the Black Rock Pass.

As we pursued our course downwards, we remarked a number of buoys floating on the water in different places, which the boatmen said marked the stations of different fishermen living along the lake. These, we were informed, are in the practice of feeding the fish regularly; which draws them in great numbers to places where they are easily taken, when required.

At this time, we observed numbers of men in their cots, busily employed in fishing. One man manages a number of rods, which he has placed along the sides of his boat, and draws them in succession. In one place we were amused by seeing a man crossing to his fishing station, with no better mode of conveyance than a large bundle of rushes, on which he sat, moving it along by means of a small paddle. This was certainly returning to the primitive days of navigation.

After a pleasant sail, we reached Enniskillen, at about eleven o'clock at night.

In my next, I shall give you some account of the natural productions of the Lough, and of several interesting places in this neighbourhood, which we visited to-day.

I remain, &c.

E—

W O M A N.

“Daughter of God and Man.”—MILTON.

There is a language of the heart
That mocks at learning's studied art;
There is an utterance of the soul
That laughs at scholarship's control,
Breathes forth in verse a living thought,
With feeling, love, and nature fraught;
WOMAN'S the theme; and who would e'er require
One borrowed string to animate his lyre?

There is a witchery that lies
Within the sunshine of her eyes,
More potent than the magic spell
Of talisman, or fairy dell.
Who has not felt her very name
Inspire his heart, and thrill his frame?
The world may frowning cry, Idolatry!
But who would e'er forego the witching ecstasy!

Woman! companion of my life,
Less loved when maiden than when wife;
How fondly do I sing of thee,
Of wedded love and constancy!
Dear mother of my child! I trace
Thy emblem in his artless face.
I clasp the lisping babe, receive a kiss,
And feel a father's love—a father's bliss!

'Tis Woman's voice, in accents low,
That hushes first the infant's woe;
'Tis Woman's fond maternal arms
That shield her boy from vain alarms;
Uprear him in a world of cares,
And save him from its countless snares.
Nurse of mankind! I fondly view in thee
The watchful guardian of our infancy.

Now, would I Woman's friendship sing,—
O, 'tis a pure, undying thing!
'Tis the dew that gems the blossomed thorn
Shines brightest in the sunny morn;
But faithful Woman can bestow
A light to gild the night of woe!
Her love, like moon-beam on a stormy sea,
Sheds o'er our cares its own serenity.

I've found the world a faithless thing;
Man's friendship weak and perishing,—
Man's friendship!—'Tis the ocean's spray;
The froth that rude winds sweep away!
You ask where friendship then can rest;
Go, find it in a Woman's breast!
I would not give one fair loved friend I boast,
For all the wealth of India's golden coast!

When pale disease, with all her train,
Fev'ers the blood and fires the brain,
'Tis Woman's sympathetic art
Quells the wild throbbing of the heart;
The mortal pang, the burning sigh,
In nature's latest agony!
O fair Physician! thou art ever near,
With oil and wine the drooping frame to cheer.

I ask not, on the bed of death,
Proud man to watch my fleeting breath;
Let Woman's prayer embalm the hour!
For Oh, it has a soothing power
To calm the awful struggle here,
To brighten hope and banish fear;
To raise new prospects of a land on high,
Where death is swallowed up in victory!

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