

Now, it requires a certain amount of enthusiasm to see Ireland. It's like eating oysters. The taste must be cultivated. You can't take to it at first, especially if in your first dealing with an Irishman on his native sod you find he can cheat like a Neapolitan, and no Neapolitan hack driver ever thought of cheating as did the driver of my Irish jaunting car when he brought me from the steamer to the hotel. I had read a good deal about the proverbial honesty of my countrymen. I was a firm believer *once* in that lady that travelled through the worst part of Ireland wearing rich and rare gems, and having a fine gold ring on her hand, who, when she was asked if she didn't fear to stray with so much wealth about her, was indignant at the reflection on her countrymen, and said that—

“Though they love women and golden store,”
“Sir Knight they love honour and virtue more.”

It is a charming picture of Irish chivalry and scrupulous honesty, but 'tis poetry—not prose—and my countrymen are prosaic enough where they catch a presumed greenhorn.

No one objects to being cheated now and then, but to be charged five times the ordinary fare for a beastly conveyance that keeps you in jeopardy every moment is enough to try the temper of any one. And of all modes of conveyance that were ever invented to try the patience of mortals commend me to the Irish jaunting car. You sit sideways in a seat that is placed over a low wheel, holding on as best you may to a small iron bar. The shafts are tipped over the horse's head. In case of a collision with a lamp-post, a street corner, or another vehicle, your legs serve as buffers to protect the car, and your driver has a malicious pleasure in watching you squirm as with reckless audacity he turns a sharp corner that takes your breath away as you wonder how you managed to get past without a broken limb. Then the miserable little wheels go bump, bump, bump over uneven roads until you are chafed in temper as well as in body, and ready to curse the stupidity that clings to the most miserable conveyance that was ever dreamt of under the sun. Belfast has no pretence to beauty of any sort. Its streets are of fair width, but the houses are dingy and ill-assorted. They build with brick, and in some cases do not take the trouble to point the brick, which very seriously detracts from the general appearance. They have, however, some very fine stores, and seem to carry on a very brisk business.

Clones, a town about three hours from Belfast by rail, is, I suppose, a fair specimen of an Irish town. It lies on the side of a hill, and the main street runs from the railroad station up the hill to a square called the Diamond. On this main street there are about half a dozen stores fairly respectable, but with goods in admirable confusion, as if customers were allowed to haul them about, and no one cared to put them up again. The rest of the street is made up of small whitewashed cabin stores, many of them with thatched roof. All these stores have wooden doors opening above and below. In the morning, when the upper half only is opened, customers are not expected in, for the whole establishment is then busy—some industriously making their toilet. This is pleasantly suggestive where the goods sold are groceries. Others on their knees before the chimney place coaxing the fire to burn, while the children like little cherubs—like in the matter of clothing—gambolled like porpoises among the edibles for sale.

When the lower half of the door is opened customers walk in and suit themselves. Irishmen are not over fond of order anywhere, either in politics or domestic economy. Or it may be that they like to have things handy. At all events I noticed in these small groceries that the potatoes were heaped up on the floor without so much as a board to keep them in their place, while soap, flour, eggs and grain were scattered about in rich profusion. Half an hour would tidy up any of the shops, but an Irishman would say, “Sure, and it would be all upset again.” This feature in the Irish character is forced upon your notice even as you pass through the land by rail. There is a want of order manifest everywhere—a culpable carelessness as to the appearance of the little plots of ground called farms: that is noticeable even by one like myself, without any