

94

LETTERS

DESCRIPTIVE OF THE PRESENT STATE

OF THE

ISLANDS AROUND IRELAND.

THE PROFITS TO BE GIVEN TO THE LADIES' IRISH
ISLAND ASSOCIATION.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY M. W. REID, GABRIEL'S ROAD.

MDCCCXXXVI.

Price Sixpence.

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STATE TENDERS NOT TO BE TENDERED



LETTERS, &c.

Origin of The Ladies' Irish Island Association.

It is believed that notwithstanding the many efforts which of late years have been made to spread the blessings of religion among the native Irish, many of the inhabitants of Great Britain are still not only ignorant of the deplorable condition of the inhabitants of the numerous small islands which encompass the coast of Ireland, but are actually unconscious of the very existence of such islands.

There are, nevertheless, about 196 islands off the Irish coast, the distance of which from the mainland varies from ten miles to less than one. About 140 of these islands are inhabited by a population of more than 50,000 souls, most of whom are still living in a state of ignorance and superstition, almost amounting to heathenism, yet willing, and in many instances anxious to receive the light of truth. While the beauty of their rocky isles, washed by the deep blue waters of the Atlantic, occasionally attracts the admiring eye of the traveller, the Christian cannot but mourn as he reflects that the Sun of Righteousness has never arisen upon the numerous *immortal, accountable* inhabitants. Being united to immense parishes on the coast, for the cultivation of which the most devoted ministry would prove inadequate, and some of them distant from 20 to 30 miles from these parishes, these islands are cut off from all the improvement proceeding on the mainland, and, unhappily for them, have hitherto found no place in the remembrance of the Church of God in Ireland: still remaining ignorant of the Word of Life, almost as uncivilized, and altogether as uneducated, as the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands.

The success with which it has pleased the Lord, in no ordinary degree to bless the labours of the Parent Irish Society is well known, but the extensive field of its labour on the mainland requiring all, and more than all the resources which it can command, it has not been able to extend its efforts to the islanders, who were thus totally neglected, till the famine which visited the West Coast of Ireland in 1832, first led the attention of some pious individuals to that wild and unculti-

vated region, and to the large islands near the shore. Famine and disease were making dreadful ravages among the people, but the famine of the bread of life was found still more extensive and ruinous.

Under divine Providence this has led to the formation of THE LADIES' IRISH ISLAND ASSOCIATION, but as much confusion still exists in the minds of many of the friends of Ireland between *this* Society and the Parent Irish Society, it may be well, in a few words, to state the different objects to which they are directed, and the different agents employed by each.

The simple and sole object of the Irish Society is to teach the Irish speaking peasantry to read their native language, and when they can read it to place the Irish Scriptures in the hands of those willing to receive them. The teachers employed are most of them (nominally) Roman Catholics, who devote their holidays and leisure evenings to the work; and every one versed practically in the work of God carrying on in Ireland, can testify to the benefit and absolute necessity of such a machinery for breaking up the ground, and making way for farther instruction.

But it was evident that a higher order of religious instruction was required to be added to this; and a few years since an Association was formed in Dublin, auxiliary to the Parent Irish Society, principally with the object of following up the operations of that Society, by employing Scripture readers, or missionary agents, men of *tried piety and prudence*, in the Irish speaking districts, with directions to open schools both for Irish and English instruction, wherever such are acceptable to the people, who are in general most eager for instruction. This Society, (one Branch of which, under the title of "The Ladies' Irish Island Association," has devoted itself exclusively to the care of the hitherto neglected islands,) has pledged itself not to employ any who were not considered "men pure in doctrine and renewed in heart and life," and it is not surprising that this most excellent and necessary resolution is the greatest difficulty; since in this age of profession, when Christians of every rank and denomination, find how much easier it is to *speak* than to *work* for Christ,—or even to throw in their mite to public charities, than to take up their cross and follow Him,—very hard indeed is it to meet with such men as can conscientiously be employed.

It is towards the support of this Association that the present appeal is made; and it is believed that after reading the following Letters, containing only very limited accounts of the universal ignorance and destitution of the islands around the Coast of Ireland, no one who really knows the blessing of possessing the Word of God in his native tongue, of enjoying a stated ministry, and of the regular dispensing of the sacraments, will refuse to assist, by every means in his power, so excellent a mode of spreading the knowledge of Jesus amongst

our perishing brethren in the Irish Islands. Through the Divine blessing several small associations have been formed in various parts of England as well as Ireland, in Edinburgh and Glasgow, auxiliary to the Society in Dublin, and it is humbly suggested that all who value the souls of their fellow-creatures, should exert themselves to form similar small associations in their own neighbourhood, for the purpose of each supporting a Scripture agent in one of the many yet unsupplied isles, or should they not be able to raise sufficient for the entire salary, (the average amount of which is £50 per annum,) they may at least give aid to those already formed.

It has been found that the interest is greatly increased when directed to one specific object, and the hands of the agent much strengthened, when those who are enabled to supply the funds also unite in fervent prayer for a blessing on his labours.

It may be well to mention that all the readers, schoolmasters and agents employed by this Society, are placed under the superintendence of clergymen of known piety and zeal, belonging to the established church, who correspond regularly with the Dublin Association.

The following are a few of the largest and most populous islands.

Name of Island.	Nearest Coast.	No. of Inhabitants.
Achill	Mayo	near 5000
Clara	do.	1500
Innishturk	do.	500
Innisboffin	Galway	1200
Moynish	do.	500
Littermore	do.	300
Garomna	do.	1800
Littermullin	do.	500
The 2 Arrans	do.	3000
Valentia	Kerry	above 2500
Bere Island	Cork	2000
Whiddy	do.	600
Sherkin	do.	1000
Clear	do.	900
Inchidoney	do.	2000
Hawlbowlina	do.	400
Great Island	do.	9000
Little Island	do.	1000
Rathlin	Antrim	1000
Innisboffin	Donegal	250
Torey	do.	500
Arranmore	do.	700
Enniskea	Mayo	200

The simple fact of these islands never having hitherto shared any of the benefits derived from the zeal and energy put forth by the church of Christ, is surely claim enough on us to devote

ourselves with ardour to the work. If Paul himself felt the abundance of his zeal stirred by the idea that he was not entering upon other men's labours, but proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus where that precious name had not before been exalted, even thus may they feel who send the word of eternal life to the Irish speaking thousands in the small islands round the coast.

No. I.—*Description of the State of the Islands off the South Coast of Ireland, in a Letter to the Secretary of the Ladies' Irish Island Association at Dublin.*

DEAR MRS P——. Cape Clear is an island containing (I think) about 900 inhabitants, who are in a state of almost heathenism, having literally no means of grace whatever within their reach. I believe there is not a protestant on the island except the family at the light-house, and I am *sure* there is not an individual there to direct a perishing soul to Jesus. The state of Sherkin is still more deplorable; it was once a protestant colony, but *now*, through the negligence of protestants, almost all the people have gone to mass, and the few who remain are, if possible, more ignorant and more careless than the Roman catholics. A reader who spoke Irish had been there a few weeks. One day we were dining on the island, and when as usual the creatures assembled to gather crumbs from our table, I asked them, "Did they know —— (the reader)?" They cried out with one voice in Irish, "Oh, God bless him, send him back to us; he told us words we never heard before." May the Lord put it into the hearts of his people to answer this cry, as that of the men of Macedonia was answered!

Within Sherkin (which lies in the Bay of Baltimore) are the Islands of Ringarozzy and Spanish Island, but they are in my brother's parish, and he has a reader, so that, though they want much they are not so literally destitute as those I have mentioned. But there is another small island, (Innisbeg,) the last of the islands in our river, which is in unbroken darkness. I have never heard of either minister or priest entering the island. The people are quiet and harmless, but in some of their habits perfectly savage. An awful instance of their religious state is the fact, that they come over constantly to worship at a holy well in our lawn, in which they believe the Virgin Mary lives in the form of an eel. In all these places Irish is the prevailing language, so that the few who speak English understand Irish better; but in Innisbeg, and, I believe, Cape Clear, there is not a word of English spoken, so that they cannot even make known to us their bodily wants without an interpreter. Of all, I fear I may say, in the full sense of the words, they are living in trespasses and sins, having no hope, and

and without God in the world. But in a district about twenty miles west from this place, the Lord has been pleased to shew his power, in over-ruling the wrath of men for his own glory, by blessing the labours of an Irish reader, in the very midst of opposition, to the conversion of many souls, and the awakening of many more, and there can be no doubt that many would be glad to listen to the joyful sound of the gospel, proclaimed in a language they understood. The reader I mentioned in our parish is under the Reformation Society, and some of these islands were included in his district, but he has more than he can do on the mainland, and is not a good Irish scholar. There is another beautiful spot (beautiful in natural scenery, but a very desert in a spiritual sense) near us, Loch Ezon, in the parish of Baltimore, which would alone furnish a sufficient field for an Irish missionary. Within the narrow circle of my immediate observation in that country, there would be ample employment for five messengers of the gospel, and there is not one.—Believe me, dear Mrs P——, Yours in the Lord Jesus, C. B——.

No. II.—*Description of Sherkin and the neighbouring Islands.*

DEAR MRS P——. I should have written to you sooner, but till within the last few days the wind was so high I could not visit any of the islands. On Thursday last I went to Sherkin, which indeed may be designated in this district the place where Satan's seat is, for popery is there in a state of progressive activity, of which I had hitherto formed no idea. Since the cholera, which made awful ravages in the island last summer, during which they were destitute alike of the warnings and comforts of Christianity, some of those who were considered the staunchest protestants have gone over to open idolatry. That awful scourge, (under which they felt that their own religion was but a name, while popery was presented to them as their only refuge,) was followed by the violent excitement which prevailed last winter amongst the Roman catholics. A poor woman, literally trembling at the recollection, told me nothing was talked of but a massacre of the protestants; "and indeed," she added, "if the Scotch soldiers had not come to Skibbereen, and frightened them, there would not have been a protestant left on the island." Considering the persecution they undergo, and their utter ignorance of the principles for the NAME of which they suffer, the only wonder is that one remains steadfast. A few do so, and with one accord they express the utmost anxiety for instruction, but they have literally no means of grace except the Scriptures, of which each family possesses a copy, but which is, alas! a sealed book to, I fear, every individual. The protestants all understand English, and gladly hear my brother's reader, whom he occasionally sends to

the island, but he has no access whatever to the Romanists, of whom the most bigotted are the apostate protestants. I left this man on Thursday to make enquiries on the subject of our anxiety, and he returned on Saturday with a satisfactory report. The protestants would all be delighted to have a Scripture reader, and three families said they should be happy to have him to board with them, and proposed to give him a comfortable bed and diet, consisting of fish, meat, potatoes, milk, and butter, for L.8 a-year. Our reader then asked such of the Roman catholics as could understand him, (for most of them speak only Irish,) would they like to have a reader among them. They said they would have no objection, but "Oh, tell them not to send us a fine man, whom we don't understand, but a person like ourselves, who will speak our own words, and have our own ways." It appears that an Irish reader from Bearhaven, spent a few days at Sherkin about a fortnight ago, and was very ill received, hooted, and laughed at, but not injured. However, the people said the case would be quite different with a man residing among them, who could talk with the men at their work, and sit with them over their cabin fires. There cannot be a doubt there would be the greatest opposition, as popery is here in the strongest state of aggression, but we often see the Lord blessing his work most remarkably where the power of Satan is highest; and it is truly awful for us to sit down one moment at ease until the standard of truth is uplifted there, and the gospel message of peace delivered, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. I asked our reader, what is the state of the papists there? He said, we may just put together all the blackest superstitions and idolatries of Rome, and all are to be found on this wretched island. I have not yet been able to visit Cape Clear, which is quite in the Atlantic, and where I hope to go in the course of the summer; but it cannot present so awful a picture as Sherkin, because the feature of apostacy is awanting. The light never shone upon the poor Capers. The other islands, Ringarozzy, Spanish Island, and Inishbeg, afford a scene of labour such as is to be seen in most parts of our benighted country, but Sherkin is, I hope, a solitary monument of the apathy of our church. I longed that Charlotte Elizabeth could have walked with me from one scene of spiritual misery to another, where nature was so lovely; ocean and mountain, and rock all smiling in the sunshine, where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile; surely her spirit would have been stirred within her had she seen the idolatry of the place,—indeed, no Christian female could have witnessed it, and not come forward to cast in some of her superfluities, nay, some of her comforts, into the Lord's treasury, to enable the invitation of Jesus to be heard there. I believe there is not at this moment a single individual on the island who could repeat the words:—"Jesus came into the world to save sinners," or could tell who

said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Were I to advise the best means to be used for these poor people. I would suggest the appointment of an Irish reader for the five islands,—to reside at Sherkin, and leave it for the other scenes of his labour when he found the people irritated against him, as they are, like all savages, subject to violent excitements, which pass away in a little time; but to be of any use he must be capable of speaking and praying, as well as reading. The reader supported by the congregation at Sandford, labouring in the west of this country, J—D—, is an instance of what may be effected by a man of God taken from their own class in society. It would cheer your heart to read some of his journals, and remember that a few years ago this young man was worshipping stocks and stones, like those to whom he is now preaching. Every evening in the week he has a large congregation in his native village, and he told me he can name a hundred persons under concern for their souls, besides several who are bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, and chiefly, (his pastor says,) by means of this Irish reader. But where shall we find such a one? a man in whom the Spirit of God is. We must remember this word of admonition, "pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send more labourers into his harvest." The clergyman whose hands are so strengthened by this reader, says he considers him a blessing entirely granted to the prayer of faith. I have asked him to be on the look-out for a man he could recommend to you, in case you should be able to employ one, as it is very desirable to have a native of the country, the different dialects of the country often causing a difficulty of understanding each other. I hope to be able to give you some further information before the summer is past. God grant that we may not have it to say, "the summer is past," and no effort made to save these poor perishing sinners. May the Lord, the Spirit who I trust first awakened your interest for them, bless your endeavours to send among them the joyful sound of a Saviour able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.—Yours, my dear Mrs P— in the bonds of Christian love,

C—B—.

I should think L.20 a-year the least your reader could subsist on, as he would have many wants besides the diet I have mentioned, and be often absent from the place where he would board. Oh, how I long to see his face, and go to land him on Sherkin. My brother would gladly undertake the superintendence, and give every assistance in his power, as the clergyman of that parish does not object to his interference.

No. III.—*Summary Account of the Proceedings of the Ladies' Irish Island Association, in a Letter from the Secretary to a Friend.*

Nov. 7, 1832.

MY DEAR MRS N——. I have much gratification in informing you of the general progress we have made since I had the pleasure of seeing you, though it is impossible to lay before you the many deeply-interesting features that characterize our work, or have done so, as we have proceeded with our efforts. Peace, harmony, and, I trust, prayerfulness, have accompanied all our proceedings from the time we were formed into a regular association. A very extensive correspondence has been carried on throughout the country, a considerable interest called forth, and some good done. We have a very faithful and suitable agent at Sherkin, under the superintendence of Mr M'A—— a clergyman of Skibbereen; we have promised a second on the mainland, where there is an immense Irish speaking population quite ignorant. My friends have enabled me to supply Mrs B—— with baby-linen and such matters for the poor people, that we may shew love both to soul and body, and the whole work is carried on in the spirit of love and zeal. In county Sligo we have a reader, of whom Mr N—— says, "you may place in him unbounded confidence; he is an Israelite indeed." In Kingscourt district, S—— has begun his labour of collecting the pupils of the Irish Schools, reading with them, conversing, and leading them to the habits of reflection and prayer. I trust this mode of labour will be much blessed to our poor Irish in that quarter. We have made arrangements for an agent in the barony of Inishaven, (for which one lady promises L.20,) as soon as we can procure a suitable person. In Scotland, we are seeking an Irish, I should rather say a Gaelic schoolmaster, for the interesting Isle of Rathlin, where the Gaelic dialect is spoken, and 800 adults are without instruction, while they are so anxious for it that they have built the walls of a schoolhouse, which they were unable either to finish or support. I must not forget to mention an interesting fact lately told me of this island, which proves the desire of the people to hear. A clergyman, who could preach in Irish, made a visit to the curate of Rathlin, and remained at the island (which is six or seven miles from the shore, off the Giant's Cuseway) a fortnight; though late in the autumn they dined each day at four, and every evening, with little lanterns in their hands to guide them over rocks and craggy mountains, they sallied forth to collect a congregation in some one quarter of the island. The poor souls came gladly to hear the gospel in the language which they love and understand; and at the close of this gentleman's visit, during which they had made the circuit of the whole island, so much had the people been affected with the

truths which they had heard, that when the day arrived for the pastor's removal, they followed him to the shore with blessings and tears. It was immediately after this event that they voluntarily erected the walls of a schoolhouse, hoping that a native teacher might be sent them,—a hope not yet fulfilled, though four years have elapsed since then, and it remains as yet unroofed, for want of means. The Lord mercifully grant that it may not long so continue!

One of our committee has collected L.15 a-year for the island of Torey, but we have not yet found a proper superintendent of it, and it will be difficult, as it is ten miles from the mainland; but we trust the Lord will grant zeal and love enough to some of his children, to induce them to look after the hundreds of barren sheep on this desert rock. In fine, my dear Madam, the ladies of Waterford and Tramore being desirous of taking an active part with us for the benefit of the Irish poor, have had schools appointed round their towns, which they will support and foster, and have carefully superintended. And I think they will also try and increase our friends, while the Cork Ladies have also come to the same conclusion. Thus you see our little committee, begun (I confess) rather under a cloudy aspect, has advanced into broader fields of light and sunshine. And of this I felt, in the least agreeable part of our progress, perfect confidence, because it was planned in love and prayer, and was in principle according to the will of God. May I entreat you to seek a blessing on it, and on all the means used to extend the Redeemer's kingdom, for without his blessing our labours are in vain.—Accept my best wishes, and believe me, dear Mrs N—— faithfully yours,

H. P——

No. IV.—*Description of Rathlin.*

January 1834.

DEAR MADAM,—Rathlin Island is about six miles long, two miles wide, and contains upwards of 1000 inhabitants, only 200 of whom are protestants, the rest being Roman catholics. The poor people of this island are constantly exposed to peculiar perils and hardships, even in purchasing the necessaries of life, as there is a very dangerous channel between the island and mainland, where the sea, during stormy weather, runs so tremendously high that they are often, during the winter, cut off from all communication with Ireland for weeks together. They have to endanger their lives to reach their market-town on the mainland, and perhaps it often occurs when their business is done, that they are storm-staid for a week or ten days, and spend all their little profits before they can return to the island. In the article of firing they are subject to great privations, and the poorest class are frequently obliged to use weeds or chaff, instead of fuel.

It is however creditable to the charity and morals of this people, that notwithstanding their poverty, there is not an ostensible beggar on the island; nor is there (what I imagine the islanders would consider a nuisance of a higher order) a police-man. A few of the very poorest of the people are chartered, and supported by receiving, not begging. They go from house to house and are given a little meal and potatoes. There is another custom on the island which is as unusual as it is creditable. On the last night of each year the young men assemble, and go in a body to every house in the island, and each householder gives so much in money, meal, potatoes, or any thing else of the kind, and the whole is afterwards distributed amongst the poor.

I merely mention these particulars in order to excite some interest in behalf of the people, in the hope that something may be done to release them from those chains of superstition in which they are so firmly bound; and in order that you may more fully understand the wants and circumstances of the people of the upper end of the Island (where we wish the Irish school and reader to be established) as compared with the lower end, I must enter a little into their respective peculiarities.

The lower end is by far the most civilized. The church and chapel are in it—the two shops (such as they are)—the public-house—the proprietor resides there—the island emporium is there—the usual landing-place—the curate's and priest's residence—the coast guard station—the mill—the barley store—in fact all the attractions are in the lower end. These things naturally are, in some degree, in its favour, and accordingly there is a very marked difference between the inhabitants of the two ports; and so strong and decided is that difference that it has long settled into an actual jealousy between them. I should also mention that with the exception of one family and one individual, *all* the protestants are in the lower end. The upper end is much more inaccessible, its shores being continued precipices, and lying very much higher above the level of the sea than the lower end. The inhabitants are, therefore, pretty much left to themselves; there is no resort there; and all these things being taken into consideration, you will not be surprised to hear that while English is well and generally understood, and even spoken in the lower end, it is very little known in the upper, nor can the people of the hills conveniently express themselves in it; young boys, especially, are totally ignorant of it, and so are many grown persons of both sexes.

In the lower end there is a Kildare Place school, which has succeeded extremely well, no opposition having been offered to it; but though it sufficiently supplies the wants of the lower end, it is of no material service to the youth of the upper, the distance being far too great for the children to attend it, and the hill-country people are deeply sensible of their loss, though, indeed, I imagine nothing except the Irish school, and Irish

Scripture reader, with the Lord's blessing, will produce an extensive, deep, and abiding effect.

The inhabitants are extremely anxious for the establishment of a boys' school amongst them. They themselves voluntarily quarried and drew the stones with which the walls of the house are built. Indeed, so anxious are they for the education of their children, that a poor man,—one, who though not an idiot, is yet what is called an *innocent*,—has commenced teaching them. He goes from hamlet to hamlet, spending a week in each. I understand however, he professes only to teach the A B C, and the very first rudiments of spelling, which comprises, I fear, nearly the whole of his own acquirements. But however great and important the result from the establishment of a native school might be,—how infinitely more so, under the Divine blessing, would the services of a faithful Scripture reader prove! One who, though ostensibly the schoolmaster, would still be as “a light that shineth in a dark place;” for indeed the heart of this people is waxed gross,—they are in the terrors of the shadow of death,—“in all things they are too superstitious.”

A woman aged 78 prays to the Saviour, (calling him “Agra,”) not to consign her to the windy side of the ditch while her soul is putting off its sins, as she terms it. Another declares that a young woman, who had been dead five years, met her, and told her that her soul was in the new school-house, and that she should get to heaven on Michaelmas-day, clear from all her sins.

It is said that a man who died lately, came in a dream to his nephew, and told him that he and a man who died at C—, met at the large mountain at the Bull, (a rock so called off the upper end, where they are to remain till they are cleansed,—all which is believed at the illiterate part of the island. But thanks be to God, light is dawning on the minds of the rising generation: for the little girl who told me this, added, that *she* did not believe it, and that she hoped to be saved through the blood of Christ.

They also believe in the power of witches and ghosts. May the Almighty look with pity on this dark part of the vineyard for Christ's sake, and grant that his holy word may dispel the gloom, and break down the strongholds of Satan.

We throw ourselves entirely upon the bounty of your Society. If *you* plant, we will water; and perhaps the Lord in great mercy will give an abundant increase.—Believe me, dear Madam, yours, &c.

V. G.

It is very gratifying, and a cause of thankfulness, to know that the prayers of the friends of Rathlin have at length been answered. After many months of delay and disappointment, a Gaelic teacher from Argyleshire was sent to the island in the

capacity of schoolmaster and Scripture reader, as the dialect of Rathlin is similar to that spoken in Cantire and the West Highlands of Scotland, and consequently Gaelic is better understood than Irish by the Raghery people. His reception by the people, and subsequent success, will be seen by the following extracts.

No. V.—*To the Secretary of the Edinburgh Auxiliary Association.*

Rathlin, April 6, 1835.

MADAM.—I have delayed replying to your letter till I could announce the arrival of your agent, which I have now the satisfaction of doing; and we now beg leave to return you, and the Society with which you are connected, our warmest thanks and acknowledgments for the zeal you have shewn for the welfare of the people of this little island.

The arrival of our teacher was hailed with much pleasure by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood in which his school is placed, who vied with each other in offering such accommodations as they had in their power till his own house should be ready to receive him. I cautioned him to be very circumspect, as he is entirely surrounded by Roman catholics, and not to propose (at least for some little time) reading the Scriptures to them, except at their own request. As soon, however, as they found he could read Gaelic, (they were previously aware that he could speak it,) they asked him for his Bible, and begged he would read them a chapter, to which they paid the most profound attention, and perfectly understood him; and on the second evening after his arrival, the house was filled with people desirous of hearing him read, to which he of course consented. How long this may last, I know not, as it has not yet come to the ears of the Roman catholic priest.

Rathlin, June 1835.

Although at this season of the year the children are employed herding cattle, the attendance is twenty seven daily, and we expect the number to increase towards winter, and have no doubt there will be a numerous adult school beside. You are already aware the population in —'s district is almost entirely Roman catholic. I once had a Sunday school up there, but, owing to the priest, the children were all withdrawn. We are, however, trying it again. Yesterday week twelve attended, — yesterday thirteen were with him. — has a good name amongst the people; and one of our lower end men proposed to me lately, with much simplicity, that, in order to give this end of the island "fair play," he should live year about in each district. We have appointed him regular sta-

tions, to one of which he goes every Sunday morning after service, where the neighbours of all denominations hitherto meet him.

No. VI.—*Extracts from a Letter from the Secretary of the Ladies' Irish Island Association.*

Dublin, June 1834

I hasten to forward to
DEAR MADAM,
Edinburgh some intelligence of our various fields of labours, which the Lord has indeed blessed, and trust that you will thereby be enabled to call forth the sympathies of many tender and devoted hearts. O that the Lord would raise up more men to bear forth his name and message of love to our perishing islanders! The poverty of both Ireland and Scotland in such persons as are required for the work is very humbling. What need have we that the Spirit be poured out from on high, when we see how few the blessed Jesus can find to declare his dying love to sinners! Not one agent has been heard of since my last; but we hope in a little time to be able, under the use of the means which the Irish Society is employing, to find men that will answer for this important work.

The isles off the west of our coast are in a heartbreaking condition for one who longs for their salvation; and all Canamara, on the mainland, is nearly as badly off. We lately established one teacher there, where there was a scattered flock having no shepherd, and with whom Sunday had become only as another, or a day of idleness, as there was neither school, church, nor minister. He has a school in the morning in English, and one in the evening for Irish, four days in the week. The other two he walks from place to place reading the word, and on Sunday collects a Sabbath school. Books would be invaluable there, but they cannot be obtained for want of means. In all these regions, where there are no resident gentry, there is much poverty; and feeling it sweet to follow our Master's method of doing good to both soul and body, we provided our superintendent with clothes for the aged and poor,—and this has told wonderfully on the hearts of the people. This, of course, is not the work of the Society, but of individuals; and I have received even from England packages of clothing, or money to purchase them.

There is one island close to the north-west coast called Tory, on which there are 500 inhabitants, all Irish speaking Roman catholics or rather heathens, as the priest only goes there to baptize: and they are afraid to do even that, as they are frequently kept there by storms a fortnight or more, which is a longer visit than their zeal prompts them to. The people

are affectionate and anxious for instruction, though deplorably dark; and to this spot an Irish lady, accompanied by two friends, a reader and his wife, go next week, and her intention is to settle there as a missionary, if she finds it a likely place to be useful in.

In every place we have found that qualifications for acting as schoolmaster are very desirable, as it is an office against which no prejudice exists; and the poor human mind is so weak and diseased in its present state, that it is very needful to meet, as far as is consistent with principle, the difficulties presented by its feebleness. The salary of our agents varies according to the abilities of the man, and the dearness or cheapness of the place where he resides; but an average of L. 30 is considered correct.

It would be a very great service to us if you could make inquiries for us amongst your Highland friends for pious and able schoolmasters, who would be willing to come to Ireland and instruct our poor people, as the difference of dialect between the north of Ireland and the western parts of Scotland is very trifling; and an intelligent man would, in an extremely short period of time, be able not only to read the Irish character, but to make himself perfectly well understood by the people; and we have ample employment for more than two or three, if we could procure such as would answer as agents. Could small associations be formed, not to support each an agent, but to *help*, it would be much for our advantage, and we should feel truly grateful to Protestant Scotland.—I remain, dear Madam, yours faithfully,

H. P.

No. VII.—*Letter descriptive of the Western Isles.*

Dublin, July 5, 1834.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You are anxious to learn the facts which have come before me relative to the destitute condition of the isles of Arran, off the coast of Galway, and the adjoining mainland, Conamara; and surely they are sufficiently awakening to arouse a missionary spirit and zeal for the souls of our dear fellow-countrymen, both Romanist and Protestant, even in the most drowsy of the children of God.

I have already informed you of the wide extent of mountainous, and (in some places) almost inaccessible regions in the district of Conamara—all under three ministers of the gospel who speak *English only*, and who, on small incomes, are obliged to journey twenty-four miles, in various directions, to meet their poor scattered flocks.

I have told you of the absence of schools in this wide wilderness, or of readers, till we were lately enabled to send one *Scripture* agent, who fills indeed a useful and important post;

but well may we say, what is one where so many are wanted;—among a population of more than 30,000, what need is there for *many tongues* to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ! The general state of destitution on the mainland as regards education or spiritual instruction, enabled us to form a pretty accurate idea of the deplorable condition of the immortal souls on the *islands* united with the parishes on the mainland, though at thirty or forty miles distance; yet it was not till I received the letters and sworn documents, from which I extract the following statements, that I had any conception of the state in which our protestant brethren (officially connected with the islands) have been permitted to fall. Had we spiritual perceptions sufficiently alive to the value of souls and the glory of our Master, *how* would our own souls be cast down,—how should we mourn and take no rest, till we saw these poor neglected ones cheered by the Sun of Righteousness, and blessed by the means of grace which we enjoy ourselves! A population of 2000 Romanists, and 70 or 80 Protestants, inhabit those isles, all alike left to the dark dogmas of the Church of Rome, and alike sunk in spiritual apathy and death. Some indeed still feel that they *have souls*, and utter vain lamentations, which few hear, and none as yet have heeded,—that no man cares for their souls,—and that (as regards eternity) they might as well have been exiled to the deserts of Siberia, as live within view of their own green isle. Of the poor Romanists I need not speak;—you know well that where protestant efforts have not extended the light of Divine truth, *they* are in perfectly unbroken darkness, approaching to heathenism; but the state of the protestants in these islands speaks volumes, as regards their Irish speaking neighbours. A respectable man, one of a coast guard now stationed there for many years, writes,—that on the isle on which he resides, there are thirty-two protestants,—five or six of their children have been baptized by the priest, in consequence of not being able to get a protestant clergyman to administer this Christian rite. In consequence the children of one family all go to mass; and the eldest daughter, a girl of twelve years, has become a bigotted catholic. The daughter of another man, married by the priest, went to confession, and attends mass.—was a protestant, but being ignorant, and receiving no religious instruction, he has become a Romanist.

The writer's youngest child being ill and unbaptized, he sent for the priest to come and perform that office; but he refused, unless the parents would consent to become Roman Catholics.

An officer of the coast-guard makes oath, that the priest not only tries to induce the protestants by persuasion and for *convenience* to change their profession, but also by threats and the most abusive language, cursing them from the altar, and calling on God to curse them,—representing them at the same

time as sworn foes to his Roman catholic hearers, and bound by oath to wade knee deep in popish blood! Into the good graces of many, however, he has insinuated himself, in the absence of all pastoral care, and smarting under a keen sense of neglect from their protestant brethren and clergy on the mainland. This melancholy condition is of course common to the guards at L— and C—, fourteen years having elapsed with some of them since they were deprived, by their appointment to these islands, of all means of grace. There are at present between 70 and 80 protestants in this awful situation; and but for apostacy from the faith, for which their fathers bled, there had been more. One of the remaining protestants writes—"My youngest child is four months old, and yet unbaptized; and, in June 1830, I was obliged to proceed with my wife and infant in a four-oared boat, a rough coasting voyage of thirty miles, for that purpose. The children of — and — would not have become Roman catholics, could they have had access to the protestant clergyman. But how terrible a situation is it for the father of six children to be in during the period of eight years, since when I have resided on these islands, deprived of all religious instruction. What distressing events have I witnessed in the course of that time in consequence of the total absence of our clergy! — and — died after long and painful illness without any spiritual consolation; but as to futurity, we might as well be in Siberia." From correspondence I have seen between his Grace of Tuam and some of the Galway clergy, it appears they are fully sensible of the heavy evils under which these islands labour; but from the extent of the parishes,—the small number of the clergy compared with the extent of district, the incomes of the curates being unequal to the heavy expenditure attending an excursion to the islands,—with the fact that for four months of the year a high and stormy sea renders it unsafe for boats to attempt crossing from the mainland to the Isles of Arran, while at all times it is very uncertain when a boat going there may return,—all these circumstances, I repeat, combine to shew that a missionary protestant minister is loudly called for to reside a portion—and that a large portion of the year—on the islands, having under him agents, fitted for carrying on the humble offices of reader and schoolmaster in the Irish and English languages, by which means (under the blessing of God) a rapid and general improvement in the state both of protestants and Romanists might be anticipated, with confident hopes of success. Let us then labour, my dear friend, with all the energies of our souls, for this great and good work. Protestantism owes it to these long-neglected isles. Philanthropy owes it to the good of the human family, of which these forgotten people form a part; and, above all, we owe it to Him who has purchased us with His own most precious blood, that we should not henceforth live to ourselves but to Him who

died and rose again, and now only waits the accomplishment of his work of redeeming love to come and receive us to himself, that where *He is*, we may be also, to behold and partake his glory.—Believe me, dear friend, faithfully yours,
H— P—.

No. VIII.—Letter from the Secretary of the Ladies' Irish Island Association.

Dublin, March 7, 1835.

DEAR MADAM,—I have great pleasure in informing you and your friends, that one of the agents whom you undertook to support, will proceed this week by order of the directors to Arranmore, the principal island of the group of the Isles of Arran, off the coast of Donegal. I have no doubt but that your agent will be blessed in the work, his heart is so engaged in it, and that you will be supporting in him an instrument that will act on the eternal interests of many. He was converted from Popery a few years since. His heart appears to be decidedly renewed and spiritual, and he possesses a most remarkable absence of worldly or covetous feeling, being quite indifferent to worldly loss or gain. He acted first as Irish teacher under the Parent Irish Society, ere yet he knew the power of religion, and in the course of teaching others, was himself led to see the way of life. Beginning to speak freely of the sense of scripture, and of the blessed Saviour he had found, the Priest denounced him, and so actively opposed what he called heretical doings, that he was forced to leave the country for a time. We have had him for some months under constant instruction, and we sent him to the Kildare Street training school, where he learned the method of teaching on that system, and in every respect established a character for pure and pious conduct. When I was in the country, I found that the effects of this young man's zeal, love, and instructions, had been quite remarkable. His own brother, formerly a bigot, had become suspected by the priest, and when he took advantage of the death of his sister, to ask him in the presence of those who attended the wake, whether he were still a Roman catholic, the only reply he could extract was conveyed in these expressive words, "I am a Christian."

Few know the sacrifices which are called for in the Irish field of labour. Here only, in this part of the vineyard of the Lord, do I find practical demonstration of those texts which speak of enmity, persecution, resistance unto blood. In making a tour in the north of Ireland last summer, I saw a young girl about 16, the only child of her widowed mother, covered with blood, having been attacked by a party of men on their return from a Popish chapel, where they had heard her denounced as a heretic, for teaching the word of God in Irish. We examined

her; found that the good seed had taken root in her heart, and removed her for a time from the scene of persecution, and I have this day placed her in an excellent training school, that she may be qualified to become one of our mistresses. Oh! what humbling of heart—what breaking of earthly ties—what pulling down of strongholds of prejudice in the mind, are endured by those who have been nurtured in Popery!—Are we sufficiently thankful for being born Protestants? Do we feel the blessed liberty we enjoyed when Jesus set us free, that no man could make us afraid, or close the book out of which the Spirit instructed us? I fear we are not sufficiently grateful.

You and your friends will now be glad to learn some particulars of your new charge, Arran and its minor isles. Arran is about six miles long and four broad. There are on it nine

twice since his location in Arran. His first report was rather of a gloomy cast, but now we have reason to praise the Lord for the great encouragement vouchsafed to his servants. I insert, therefore, a few extracts from his letter.

“I rejoice in having the pleasure of writing to you concerning the present state of this isle. The inhabitants are extremely poor, and totally ignorant of the true character of God. They know very well that the priest is careless about their temporal and spiritual welfare. Many of them have told us that his whole study is money; that he has no regard for them, or their poor deluded children; that they will send their children to our school, not caring whether the priest is pleased or not; that we have acted very prudently since our landing, and that, should he not give his consent, they will support us against him and the Bishop. We are anxious to know the Bishop’s

the means of gaining the

No. X. From the Secretary of the Ladies' Irish Island Association.

Dublin, July 3, 1835.

DEAR MADAM,—I regret that a newspaper should have brought you the first intelligence of our sad tidings from Arranmore. The facts are briefly as follows:—The work was prospering beyond our hopes, the men daily becoming more popular, the desire for instruction more lively, the attendance of both adults and juveniles more regular and numerous. I had just prepared a parcel of coarse plain clothing for the purpose of covering those children who were entirely naked. On the 17th April (I think it was) all the reports circulated by the priest to blacken the characters and lessen the influence of our teachers having failed, an attack was made on their house in the dead of the night; the window was broken with stones, and many were thrown in, which failed to hurt the objects of this unmanly assault. But so far from injuring the teachers in the eyes of the islanders, this persecution called forth their sympathy and displeasure, and a watch was set to prevent its recurrence. Accordingly, the priest finding this plan of intimidation had failed, resorted to stratagem, and a large party of his followers landed on the island, and being joined by a few of those of Arran, they came to the school, told our men all the reports circulated (by themselves) to their disadvantage; such as that their arrival was the precursor of tythes, and other taxes, with various matters too absurd for repetition; and finally said that unless they would come and clear themselves in the presence of a magistrate, they would never cease to persecute them, but that if they would do this, they would henceforth be their staunch friends. Our poor teachers did not well know what to do under such circumstances, and fearing that some of the islanders might doubt their good faith if they declined, they resolved on acquiescing, and, accompanied by a number of their Arranmore friends, they left the isles for the mainland. The magistrate heard their declarations of innocence, acted most impartially, and assured the people that they ought to consider it a blessing to have such men among them, as their conduct had been most irreproachable and praiseworthy. Our islanders now hoped they had only to conduct their friends back in triumph, but such was far from being the intention of the ignorant and priest-guided mob. The priest was at hand, but would not appear; he gave his orders, and despite of magistrate and law, they assumed an attitude of war, and when our people went to the boat to embark for Arran, they told them it should be at the peril of their lives. Accordingly, they fell on —, and wounded him severely. — escaped, leaving his clothes in their hands. In this violent state of uproar the magistrate advised our men not to return till there should be a restoration of quiet, and police stationed on the isle to

keep the peace. They journeyed therefore to Mr S —, followed by some of their friends, weeping at the loss they had sustained. Thus our teachers, blessed be God, escaped with their lives, and left behind a people sensible of their value, and mourning over their loss. I lament to say, the feelings of the islanders were displayed as we might expect from an irritable people sensible of their wrongs. Such indignation was felt towards those who had robbed them of their instructors, that dreadful riots ensued between them and the mainland people. The police had to interfere, and one life, if not more, it was feared, was lost. Prisoners were taken—the priest came to rescue, and was seized. This is all I have yet learned, but it is enough, and most afflicting. Nevertheless, seeds have been sown, that we trust shall spring up to eternal life. Some good is already done,—many consciences are awakened, many have the word of life,—some are able to spell and put together its sacred contents; and let us remember, that it is not the quantity of knowledge that makes a Christian—it is the depth of experimental religion in the heart, acting, perhaps, on one or more important texts of eternal truth.

We must take leave for a time (God grant it be only for a time) of Arranmore. In the mean time our teachers have not been idle. While waiting orders from the Direct rs, they have been labouring among the poor on the mainland; and their future destination is fixed for South Arran, of which place I will write more fully in my next. Happy for us, amidst all discouragements, we know that the Lord ruleth; and blessed be his name for giving us such a Star of hope to guide us in our pilgrimage. He will come—He will reign; and the day advances when righteousness shall cover the earth, as the waters the great deep.—Your faithful servant,

H. P.

No. XI.—Letter from the Secretary of the Ladies' Irish Island Association, describing the General Proceedings of the Society.

Dublin, Nov. 3, 1835.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Every account from Rathlin is of a gratifying character. Mr P. lately received a letter from a clergyman who was formerly curate there, who informs him that having lately visited the isle, he had met and conversed freely with your agent; and from his conduct among the people, and all that he observed while at Rathlin, he was led, and with confidence, to assure him that our efforts had been well expended, and that a real benefit had been conferred on the people. I also saw a letter last week from a pious Lady, who visited the isle after seven months' absence, and she declares she could observe a remarkable improvement; and that she was greatly pleased with —, and still more with his

nice wife. This latter remark we were much pleased with, knowing that female influence is so great in every rank of life, and a good example so important in the domestic arrangements of a teacher.

Your humble and faithful reader at South Arran is steadfast and faithful, and will, I trust, prove a blessing. His letters become more interesting and enlightened every month; and the superintending clergyman, who had gone to Arran to examine the state of affairs for us, assures us that he was acting with prudence, economy, and zeal; and adds his voice to the many others already raised, in testimony of the miserable and degraded condition of those islands, and their thousands of uneducated Irish-speaking people.

Your agent tells me, that had he been at liberty he would never have left North Arran, where the poor creatures were so earnest for instruction; and that he has no doubt a good work will yet be accomplished there. I regret to say the people are not so alive to the benefits of instruction at South Arran as they were at Arranmore; nevertheless he has opened a school, and is making progress. We are thankful to the Lord that He has so prospered your funds as to enable you to support a third agent. In consequence, the Directors have appointed, as an assistant to your present agent at South Arran, a young man, who is a single-hearted and humble Christian. He has long been a regular communicant at our church, and has been under constant instruction for some years. We can send him out without fear, and in dependence on the Divine blessing. He will reside with your other teacher, but make a daily circuit, inducing the people to learn from him to read the Scriptures,—teaching them wherever he can find them, in their houses or fields, or by the way-side, and reading for them as opportunity presents itself. I would beseech you to unite in prayer for a blessing on these two young labourers, who are neither of them more than twenty-three years of age; and I will conclude my account of South Arran with a short extract from the last letter I received from —, your teacher in that place:—"I am glad to hear you remember me in your prayers; and I desire to be remembered, not myself alone, but that the cross of Christ may be exalted in this land, and that He may be a refuge to many souls. Be strong in faith and in God's word. When He begins a work, He is able to perform it through; and though this is a dark land, yet the Holy Ghost is a strong and a good adviser."

I am happy to inform you that a new teacher of Irish reading, among the adults, has been appointed for two or three of the isles in Bantry Bay, and is to be paid according to the number he instructs in reading the Irish Scriptures. This is the best means of preparing the way for readers or preachers of the gospel, as it places the word of God in the hands of the people, and enables them to obey the injunction:—"Search the

Scriptures." A very favourable opportunity has been found, during the temporary removal of the priest on Cape Clear, (the largest of the Bantry isles,) for sowing the seed among this poor priest-ridden population. May God grant a blessing, in bringing it home with power and conviction to many souls.

Have I already informed you that a spirit of inquiry has been so far excited in the wretched Isle of Sherkin, that we have been applied to for some Welsh Bibles to supply some men from that part of the country who speak Welsh only, and labour in a slate quarry in that isle? We obtained a grant of some from the Bible Society for them. Thus the Irish labour may be a blessing to these natives of Wales.

The accounts from Achill continue to be most encouraging, but you will read them in the printed report of the Achill Mission. In addition to the Infant and other Schools, which are regularly attended by the children, and fully valued by their parents, I rejoice to say that another clergyman of the established church has settled on the island, as Mr N——'s assistant; and three agents have been placed under his charge for instruction, for the purpose of sending them hereafter to other islands. Many pages might be filled with the details of the blessed work that is going on there, notwithstanding the violent opposition, and even persecution of popery, for say what they will about the *obsolete* notions of Den's Theology, they are in full and vigorous operation amongst the mass of Irish Romanists in this land; and, excited by priestly violence, the poor bigot thinks he is doing God service, in injuring and destroying the bible-reading heretic.—Believe me, your's faithfully,
H. P.

The limits of this little pamphlet prevent us from adding many other deeply interesting details of the work going on in the Irish Islands, and the hardships and persecutions to which the faithful followers of the Lord Jesus are there exposed. But if any have, by the perusal of the preceding pages, been led to feel a warmer interest than formerly in the cause of the spiritual and temporal welfare of our countrymen in the sister isle, let them earnestly unite in pleading with their heavenly Father, through his beloved Son, that the Spirit may be poured out from on high on these dark corners,—that the labourers may be kept faithful, and their hearts and hands strengthened by divine grace,—that many fresh and zealous workmen may be raised up for the Lord's service. And, above all, let each one ask himself what can I do by my prayers, my personal influence, or the measure of worldly goods which God has committed to my stewardship, in order to shew my love for Him, and for my fellow-creatures in poor Ireland?

THE END.

Collecting Cards, with further particulars, will be supplied, and Subscriptions received, by the Secretary, Mrs E. PENDLETON, 16, Upper Sackville Street, Dublin; by Messrs HATCHARD and SONS, 187, Piccadilly, and J. NISBET, Bernard Street, London; and Messrs OLIPHANT and SONS, South Bridge, and the Secretary, Lady C. ERSKINE, 47, Minto Street, Edinburgh.