

**Waterford.**—The Mayor is taking steps to organise a meeting to protest against the brutalities perpetrated on Irish prisoners in English gaols.

**Wexford.**—Amongst the papers communicated to the International Medical Congress held recently in Berlin was one on the rational classification of skin diseases by D. Greene, of Ferns. Dr. Greene also exhibited two new surgical appliances, his own invention, in the Medical-Scientific Exhibition.

## A PASSING GLIMPSE AT INNISMURRAY.

(By A. CAUSAL VISITOR, in the *Nation*.)

FEW of the holy islands for which Ireland is remarkable possess such interest or attraction as the little island of Innismurray, which lies about five miles off the coast of Sligo at the entrance to the Bay of Donegal. A brief holiday of late at the favourite watering place of Bundoran put it within our reach to visit that sacred spot, and there to witness one of the most perfect specimens extant of an early cenobitical retreat. In this material age no word-painting or description can bring before the mind with realistic effect the austere discipline and penitential lives led by our fathers in the Faith in the distant past. To walk, therefore—at least in spirit—with the saints and scholars of ancient Erin, and to contemplate the life of heroic virtue which they led midst some of the wildest and most desolate scenes in our country, one has but to visit such sacred retreats as Innismurray, where the very stones speak eloquently of the time when those "roofless, shrineless, monkless" cloisters resounded with the hymns and canticles of the Creator's praise.

To visit Innismurray, fair weather is indispensable. Fortunately for us, the day appointed for the little excursion was extremely calm, the only drawback being a clouded and hazy atmosphere. Leaving Bundoran at nine o'clock on a well-appointed waggonette, our party, in little over an hour's drive, reached Mount Temple, some distance beyond the village of Duffoney, and here that genial guide and ferryman, Johnny McCann, already known to fame, kindly took us in charge, and without a moment's delay had us located in his trusty skiff, previously engaged. A crew of four experienced boatmen, supplemented at intervals by volunteers from our party, with McCann junior, at the helm, caused the little craft to speed swiftly over the placid waters. Soon we passed Derinish Island, and advanced towards the open sea in the direction of Carrig-na-Spagna, so called, according to local tradition, from the fact that a large warship of the Spanish Armada was here wrecked. At this stage of our voyage the monotony was relieved by a large flock of sea-fowl, chiefly cormorants and puffins, some poised on wing, others afloat on the waves, while others at our near approach dived to a considerable distance away. After straining our eyes eagerly for a glimpse of Innismurray, we at length descried it dimly through the surrounding haze; and, as we draw closer, it looks like an immense warship looming up majestically from the ocean's crest. The tide being then at ebb, the island stood out bold and precipitous to our view, its steep sides and cliffs, especially at the western extremity, clearly indicating the effects of the constant battling of wind and wave against its rock-bound coast. Our voyage from Mount Temple, a distance of nine miles, was made in less than two hours; and when it is borne in mind that we rowed most of the way against an adverse, though gentle breeze, as well as against the receding tide, the feat may not be wholly despised.

At our touching shore in the perilous creek called Clashmore Harbour, the islanders awaited our landing, and gave us very needful assistance in disembarking and in climbing up the steep crags, which rise tier after tier like huge steps from the water's edge. As this is the only landing stage on the island, we were astonished to think how the natives could by any means put to sea, except in the calmest of weather. It is clearly the duty of the Government to erect a suitable pier at Innismurray, besides aiding the fishermen with loans to provide boats and nets, and thus enabling them to reap the rich harvest of the deep.

Innismurray contains about two hundred acres, scarcely one-fourth of which can be termed, by any stretch of the imagination, as arable land. In shape it is elliptical, and measures about a mile in length from Kinavally to Rus Point, its western and eastern extremities respectively; whilst its greatest width from Portachurry on the south to Tearanacane on its northern slope is considerably under half that distance. What strikes you at first sight is the bare aspect of the island—not a tree nor even a shrub being visible. Of the poorest and most barren quality is the soil, so that it did not surprise us to learn that the Land Commissioners reduced the rents upon it by about fifty per cent. The soil is of a light peat, with, unfortunately, but little of the peat remaining, as the islanders depend upon its turf for fuel, and thus, year after year, an additional portion of the surface is removed, laying bare an immense number of granite and sandstone boulders, which give a rugged and uninviting look to the western portion of the island in particular. The island possesses a colony of thirteen families, with a population of about one hundred in all. Their principal man—euphemistically styled "king"—rejoices in the name of Martin Heraghty. In proof of his royal lineage, Mr. Heraghty referred us to page 322 of O'Hart's "Pedigrees," and with no little pride presented to our view the extract itself, copied in very superior penmanship. He is regarded as the repository of the tradition of the place, and as the arbiter of whatever differences may arise within his dominion. To Mr. Heraghty's courtesy and kindness towards visitors, in which the other islanders also share, our meed of praise is given without reserve. And here we must express our deep regret at the sad intelligence, lately conveyed in the public press, of the death by a boat accident of one or two individuals of the above name, natives of Innismurray, and to request a prayer for their eternal repose. The principal industry of Innismurray is fishing and with the primitive means of fishing at their disposal, an Innismurray man can earn about a shilling *per diem*—that is, when the settled state of the weather will permit their going to sea in their frail craft. They supplement fishing by catching lobsters in wicker

cages or boxes made for the purpose, a device resembling a large bird-cage; and also by kelp-making. Agriculture is only a secondary occupation, and, from the wretched patches of oats and potatoes, and the still more wretched sample of wheat, and even mangolds, which we saw, farming on Innismurray must be a highly unremunerative speculation. The fields for crop and pasture lie in the south-eastern corner of the island, in the portion cleared of stones for the building of the *cashel* and the religious houses. All the rest of the island is a rugged common with little of herbage, and that of the coarsest kind. The largest farm contains about ten acres, and belongs to "King" O'Heraghty, its former rent of £5 having been reduced by the Land Commission to £2 5s; the rents of the others being reduced in like proportion. A few cows and young cattle of the poorest quality, together with some sheep and donkeys, constitute their entire stock. They manure their crops with seaweed which can be had in abundance, yet, making allowance for all this, the poor patches of crop which we saw afford the clearest proof of the utter barrenness of the soil, and, consequently, of the desperate struggle those simple-minded and industrious people must have to procure the merest necessities of life. The potatoes, too, were quite soft and badly-tasted, and as this was at a time when potatoes were an excellent crop on the mainland, what must not be the condition of the poor islanders around our coast be at present when the potato crop is almost a total failure?

Innismurray is situated at the mouth of Donegal Bay, in line with Ben Bulbin in Sligo, and Slieve League in Donegal. About a mile to the north of it lies a range of reefs in great part visible at low water, the highest elevation of which is called Bowmore, and on its summit stands the remains of a building which in ages past may have been the residence of some recluse to whom the retirement of Innismurray was not sufficiently remote and solitary. This hidden island is about the same size as Innismurray, and, with the latter, contributes much to shelter the Bay of Donegal from the ocean storms. About five miles south of Innismurray is the lonely harbour of Streedagh, near the village of Grange; while northward, and about ten miles distant, Teelin Bay nestles under the overarching shadow of Slieve League, in Donegal.

Without its ecclesiastical remains Innismurray would present but very faint attraction, indeed. In 1830 the Board of Public Works undertook the renovation of those structures, and it is much to be regretted that certain changes altogether out of harmony with the original design of those buildings were introduced; yet, making all due allowance for such exceptions, the *tout ensemble* of this monastic establishment is, in its main features, unchangeable, and presents us with the finest example now extant of an early monastic retreat. A colossal wall or *cashel* varying from ten to fifteen feet high, by from seven to eight feet in thickness, surrounds, in a somewhat circular fashion, the cluster of monastic buildings which it shelters and guards—the space enclosed by this *cashel* being only about one half acre in extent. By a low and narrow entrance, capable of admitting but one at a time, we made our way into the sacred precincts of St. Molaise's or St. Molais's religious foundation; we subsequently found that there are two or three other entrances in the boundary wall, but so low and confined as to be practically passable. The chief structures within the *cashel* are three churches, two of which are roofless, while the smallest of the three—as it is the most ancient and interesting—is stone-roofed, and is called after the name of its founder and patron, St. Molaise's Church. This latter measures twelve feet long, eight wide, and ten high; and it contains besides the altar, under which the remains of "Bishop Molash" repose, an oak effigy of the saint—life-size—and, notwithstanding its ruthless mutilation and disfigurement, yet preserving in a remarkable degree the outline, features, and habit of an early recluse. The head is crowned with the coronal tonsure; the habit is high-collared, and hangs in close fitting and gracefully formed folds, and the hands are raised in an attitude of preaching or exhorting. Vandals, whose names yet live in the execration of the people of the locality, on visiting the island in the evil days happily now past, vented their fanatical spleen on this statue. They broke off its hands, cut off the head, disfigured the face, and holed out the back of the statue in the form of a boat, so that it might float away on the waves, into which they cast it. But, marvellous to tell, it drifted back to shore again, where the islanders picked it up, and enshrined it once more with loving hands in its former position on the saint's tomb in *Teampul Molaise*. In this little oratory of St. Molaise the islanders assemble on Sundays and holidays to recite their prayers and tell their beads when stress of weather hinders them from hearing Mass in the chapel of Grange, on the mainland. The other churches are called *Teampul-na-Fear*, i.e., the Men's Church, also styled the Monastery. It measures seventeen by twelve feet. While the best preserved church of the three is named *Teampul-na-Tennid*, or church of fire, so called from a strange legend about a flag in the centre of its floor having the extraordinary property of rekindling fire in the event of the fires on the island being extinguished. In its dimensions it closely corresponds with *Teampul-na-Fear*. We may account for the existence of three churches within this religious enclosure by reason of the growing popularity of this island home of St. Molaise and his successors and the increasing numbers that flocked thither to follow his rule and imitate his austerities. Beyond St. Molaise's Oratory stood the kitchen, and it is said that the bones of deer and of other animals have been discovered among the *debris* of that building. In the portion of the enclosure adjoining St. Molaise's Oratory and *Teampul-na-Tennid* three stone cells of beehive pattern deserve notice. The extra purpose of these *cloaghans* is not very apparent, but they seem to have been well adapted for the threefold object of prayer, meditation, and private penance. A vaulted passage connected the *cloaghans*, or cells, with the monastery, and it is said that an underground passage also led from the monastery to the sea, an affording means of escape in case of an attack or foray. The Monastic School or "House of Learning," deserves close attention. It is a huge *cloaghann*, or beehive shaped structure. The benches, upon which sat the pupils, and the recess in the wall where were carefully preserved the books and writing materials of this institution our *excursion*