

If there could be degrees in obscurity where all is involved in darkness, it might be lamented that a still deeper shade was spread over every particular appertaining to the usages and customs of the middle ages in Ireland. Many a beauteous lady, many a valiant warrior has doubtless past the portals of this castle of Roscommon, and trod the chambers of its lofty towers, whose ruined casements still look out unwearied upon the swelling hills or wide morass. But the history of these gloomy ages is merely a repetition of scenes of violence and bloodshed; of one chieftain exalted, of another overthrown; we scarcely know what arms were used, or how the fight was won; whilst of arts and commerce, and their various productions and supplies, and of the intercourse which existed between the different parts of the island, if indeed any did exist, we remain in profound ignorance.

It remains merely to say a few words of the general effect of the ruins in a picturesque point of view. From several positions they make a grand and noble appearance, more particularly on the eastern side, where the towers of the portal range in a commanding line with those at the angles; but there are neither mountains, nor woods, nor waters, to give relief. Perhaps the most striking point of view is on approaching from the eastward, along the old road known by the name of the walk, and which probably might once have been a walk embellished with trees, leading up to the castle, but is now a wretched road studded with wretched cabins. Yet a few stunted trees survive in the torn and ragged hedges, which overlapping each other at the windings of the road, shut out, in some measure, the bare and uninteresting parts of the landscape, but

leave an open between them for the castle, which is seen towering magnificently in the distance. In the evening, when the gleams of the setting sun are seen darting through the ruined casements and narrow loop holes, whilst the main body of the ruins remains involved in deep shade, the effect of the scene is more than usually impressive.

The castle belongs to the Earl of Essex, and the interior area, with some of the fields in the vicinity, are leased to a small farmer, whose humble habitation stands near the southern ruined wall of the castle. It was a service of some danger to approach the place, owing to the fierceness of the dogs, three or four in number, which were constantly prowling about the passage in front, performing probably the duty in which they had been instructed, that of preventing the access of strangers; and at each several visit we had regularly to commence a cautious and distant parley with the people.

The low meadows behind the castle, as well as those on the uplands, seemed to be rich and productive: but the cultivation of the parts under tillage was slovenly; and the want of hedges lamentable.

*The Abbey.*—The ruins of the abbey of Roscommon stand at the foot of the hill occupied by the town, in a flat meadow or lawn, behind some old villa residences on the road below the infirmary. The gardens of these houses open out towards the ruins. But another and public way of approach lies down a lane, from the parish church, which leads to a stile on the verge of the meadow, beyond which there is a foot path; and in this direction bodies are brought for in-