



Trees, what trees? The demesnes of Ireland were savaged, the great country houses left naked to the gale.

Salt was tasted off trees forty miles from the sea.¹⁰⁷ In Roscommon walls and gates had 'a salty crust'.¹⁰⁸ Seaweed was found on hilltops.¹⁰⁹ Herrings were picked up six miles inland.¹¹⁰ Slates were discovered 'sank so deep into the ground that with the hand it is impossible to stir them.'¹¹¹ Stormy petrels 'were found dead everywhere in the middle of the country'.¹¹² Fish found high in the hills around Lough Sur were gathered up and salted.¹¹³

The Shannon and the Boyne became so thick with hay and oats that it seemed as if they might be walked across.¹¹⁴ Lesser rivers gagged, flooding the countryside around them.¹¹⁵ In Corraslira a lake was 'taken', and hundreds of perch scattered over the fields.¹¹⁶ In County Down, the crannog on Ballyrony Lough was 'shipwrecked'

and blown on shore;¹¹⁷ and near Kanturk in County Cork:

three acres of the Bog of Glounamuckalough... moved completely from its position and after traversing a distance of a mile, and crossing a rapid river, landed on the opposite side.¹¹⁸

Nothing was where it should be. The produce of the land was in the rivers, and the rivers were in the fields. Boats were put out to gather hay. Much of the harvest ended up in the Atlantic and the waters of the Irish Sea. More was swept into 'old scraws and bog holes', or caught up in hedges and the branches of trees.¹¹⁹ Grain was killed by frost and eaten by birds, or simply grew up where it fell:

Hay and oats were sometimes mixed together, and it was no easy job to separate them... no man could tell what was his own.¹²⁰

People got 'as busy as bees in a hive', retrieving the grain in 'horse's carts and donkey's carts and creels and in bundles on their backs'. However, a lot was never seen again:¹²¹

Farm implements, too, in some cases, joined the general dispersal, and were never afterwards recovered.

For some it was all too much. More than seventy years after that extraordinary morning, the great gaelic scholar and lexicographer P.W. Joyce recalled one of his neighbours, a prosperous farmer, staring bitterly into his empty haggard:

Suddenly he raised his two hands — palms open — high over his head, and looking up at the sky, he cried out... "Oh, God Almighty, what did I ever do to You that You should thrate me in that way!" The little group of people were struck dumb with awe; and as for me, though little more than a child... I was so frightened that I turned round without a word and ran straight home.¹²²

People survived by helping each other. There was an outbreak of something close to brotherly love. Folk opened their houses, sheltering, and where necessary, feeding and clothing relatives and neighbours. As Mary Kettle of County Cavan recalled:

it was a very curious thing the day after the storm to see families carrying their beds and bedding and stools and pots and pans to their neighbour's houses.¹²³

This warmth, a coming together in adversity, was so universal