

**PATRIOTIC SKETCHES OF  
IRELAND,  
WRITTEN IN CONNAUGHT.  
IN TWO VOLUMES. VOL. I**

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**SYDNEY OWENSON**

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S K E T C H E S

OF

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BY MISS OWENSON.

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CLC

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EMR

## PREFACE.

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IN that happy age when the first gloss of nature is fresh on every sense, when infant attention hangs eagerly on the tale of fanciful tradition, when the heart trembles to the pathetic, and the imagination revels in the marvellous; it was my destiny to have had the first warmed into feeling—the other, first kindled into ardour, by the pensive legend of national woe, or the romantic tale of national heroism.

To have caught from the paternal

lip, the transmitted "song of other times," breathed in the native strains of my native country, and emulous of the lay which ingrafted on the simple sensations of childhood the glowing sensibilities of maturer life, early to have learnt to lisp its echo, and to awaken the first tones of my infant lyre to the inspirations of national enthusiasm.

In a more advanced period of existence, I became the resident of those scenes sacred to the airy images of my childhood's wonder; from whence tradition still sends forth her tale of interest; and where to the heated fancy, the *genius of Ire-*

*land* still seems to droop over her silenced harp, and at intervals to snatch from its tremulous chords, a strain, which like the music of her own bards is "sweet, though mournful to the soul."

Here, revelling in the ever ready *cead mile faltra* of Milesian cordiality, the frequent visitant of the peasant's hut, the sometimes guest of the chieftain's mansion, my heart in its general intercourse, thus touched on the two extremes of Irish wretchedness and Irish comfort. While in the genuine aspect of the national character, whether viewed in the rough-hewn traits of immo-



dified illiteracy, or the polished features of educated refinement, my mind still found a sanction for that national partiality, which if not an intuitive principle, at least, formed the first of its imbibed ideas.

It was requisite therefore I should leave my native country to learn the turpitude, degradation, ferocity, and inconsequence of her offspring; the miseries of her present, and the falsity of the recorded splendours of her ancient state. This ungracious information I acquired during a short tour through a sister isle; and it was in the course of one of the many conversations which occurred on the

subject of my (always termed) "unhappy country," that a hint casually suggested, formed the origin of a little work, which has since appeared under the title of the "*Wild Irish Girl*." Yet I came to the self-devoted task, with a diffidence proportioned to the ardour which instigated me to the attempt; for as a *woman*, a *young woman*, and an *Irish woman*, I felt all the delicacy of undertaking a work which had for the professed theme of its discussion, circumstances of national import, and national interest.

But though I meant not to appear on the list of opposition as a fairy

amazon, armed with a pebble and a sling, against a host of gigantic prejudices : although to compose a national defence, to ward the shaft of opprobrium hurled at the character of my country, to extenuate the effects or expose the causes of its popular discontents, was as incompatible with my sex and years, as with my trivial talent, and limited powers ; yet I was still aware that in the historic page, recent details, and existing circumstances of Irish story, lived many a record of Irish virtue, Irish genius, and Irish heroism, which the simplicity of truth alone was sufficient to delineate ; many