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# The Inch Correspondence: A Selection

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by Jim Condon

## Introduction

The Ryans of Inch, who owned large estates at Inch between Thurles and Borrisoleigh, were one of the few native Irish and Catholic families who managed to retain their land intact from the Reformation. They were related to the notable Mathew family, some of whom conformed for a time to the established religion so as to hold on to their estates.

When the last of the Ryans, Arthur George, emigrated to New Zealand in 1985, the editor of the following selection of Inch correspondence was, with his wife Brigid (a committee member of the County Tipperary Historical Society), instrumental in ensuring that the Ryan family's voluminous papers were retained in Ireland. Readers in the Thurles area have already been introduced to some of the Ryan Papers through that town's community magazine *An Droichead*, of which the editor of this selection has also been editor since that magazine's first appearance in 1981.

Although most of the material in the Ryan Papers has now been catalogued and microfilmed, with copies available in the RDO in Limerick\* and the County Library Headquarters in Thurles, a fine collection of early correspondence still remains to be translated and transcribed.

With the exception of one letter dated 23 March 1656 (reproduced below), the general corpus begins in the first decade of the 18th century and continues through to the middle of this century. It is hoped that a calendar of this material will be completed in the near future and that funds will be available to microfilm letters of historical interest.

The selection provided below is only a fraction of the correspondence to be found amongst the Inch Papers, which include letters from such prominent historical figures as Lord John Russell, Sir Robert Peel, Lord Palmerston, Clarendon, E. G. Stanley, Daniel O'Connell, Lalor Sheil, Thomas Moore and Maria Edgeworth. A brief commentary on content and context follows the text of each letter published below.

\*Regional Development Organisation headquarters, at South Eastern Regional Industrial Estate, Limerick.

### John Ryan's Plantation (Clare, 1656)

*I have rec.d from John Riane late of Culdoty in ye County of Tippary gent an assignment from ye com.rs (i.e. Commissioners) for setting forth lands to persons transplantable at Loughreagh whereby the sd John Riane was by the Sherrif of ye County of Clare putt in possession of 239 a (cres) per plantacon measure in ye qtr of Coylagh parish of Kilsely Barrony of Tullagh & County of Clare together with a letter of Attorney from the sd John Riane for to oversee his sd lands and to sue out other lands for him in case any pte of his said lands be omitted from him by Mr Hennery Bridgman who now Claymes ye same wth said assignement together with any other assignement w.ch I may sue out for him the sd John Riane.*

*I doe hereby promisse and engadge to restore unto ye sd John Riane upon demand, wittnes my hand ye 23th or March 1656.*

*s/Teo. (?) Bentley*



There are three other 17th-century documents in the Inch Papers which refer to this assignment and the ultimate disposal of these plantation acres. From the documents it is clear that more than one transplanter was often assigned all or part of the same acreage in Clare! From the size of the allocation it appears that John Ryan's original holdings in Cooldoty and Lisnasella in County Tipperary were about 720 plantation acres.

### George Ryan ... from the Azores (1779)

... After a pleasant voyage of 4 months and 7 days we arrived in this Portugese Island (one of the Terceiras) on the 11th of August without having had, during all our trip, half an hour's disappointment (as although we met with 23 ice-bergs, we sailed through them without any trouble, with the help of fair and clear weather) nor any other occurance but the death of Senor Visitador's attendant which took place on the 18th of June within sight of Ascension Island, when he scented land. As on our arrival we got the news of the war, it was thought convenient to anchor, disembark the money and send two despath boats with the corresponding news to headquarters from where orders were received 40 days afterwards to wait for a competent escort which would soon be despatched for our custody though up to date the result has not been seen and only a privateer frioate of 38 guns (El Carmen) appeared which got lost on this coast on the night of the 31st of October, during a storm that took place in this Port, so furious that all vessels in it had the same misfortune, excepting our ship 'El Buen Consejo', which, held by 6 thick cables, managed to resist until 10 o'clock in the morning when all failed but she had the fortune to make towards the sea tho' under bare poles (having inadvertantly left her sails on land, thinking that by doing this they would make any insults from English privateers, which abound around these islands, impossible), but as up to the present we have had no news of her, we infer that with the aid of a few pieces of new tarpaulin that were on board she must have headed towards some Port favoured by the wind and under these circumstances all the passengers with a part of the crew have remained ashore, though with the hope that an escort having been promised, one of these days some war ships will appear, not only to take the money but also the crew and artillery (170 men and 36 guns) saved from the frigate.

Under these circumstances there is no other remedy but patience and to try and accomodate oneself to events in the best possible way, though certainly the place in no way helps in towards improving the state of things, notwithstanding the fact that this town is not short of Decent people and even the illustrious and noble (according to what they say) but of such strange manners for us that all intercourse, further than a salutation in the street, or a courtesy from the back of a shutter, is contraband, to such a rigorous degree that women profer conventual life (for their liberty) to that of single or married life, due to which in two Monasteries in this small place there are 234 professed Nuns besides as many (more) who have taken the veil. Poverty and Prosumption are prevalent amongst the men, who at the same time are so lazy that they are contented with the small work necessary to harvest a little 'millo' [maize] from which they obtain powder and bread for their heads [i.e. wigs] angguts, with the same and 4 'vointencs' [copper money] well held in their pockets, they go about more swelled up than the very demon. A barber gentleman of the name of Sr. Antonio de Sousa, scrapes me twice a week at the exorbitant price of 4 'roales', hairdressed once a month (for doing which I give him about 6 cuartos more than the established price) and on feast days he comes to execute his trade carrying a dirk at his side, a wig so fashionable that you wish you could grab it to present yourself before the Vicerine of Peru. It is so easy to mistake a shoemaker or a hairdresser in the street for one of the 'Veinto y cuatro' [i.e. Upper Ten] of the place, as it is also difficult to recognise the



*judge even before having seen him, because as a rule you see before his person the insignia of his office which he carries in this hand on a stick, and which in something like a wooden club of ten inches in thickness and eight feet long; I have just measured one. I protest to you that I am not exaggerating, nor do I do it in telling you that in the midst of all I have said about the restraint of the people with their jealousies and jealousies [sic], yet at the same time the streets are seen so full of youngsters as in any other part of the world, from which I judge that in this place everybody is a 'Popayan' (?) and more or less all are equal.*

This letter was never mailed by George Ryan, nor is it clear from the contents who the recipient was to be. The letter was written by George on his way home from Peru, where he had served many years as Sergeant Major of the Guanta Militia. The Governor of the province had married the widow of his uncle, George Ryan, and taken him along on his assignment to Peru.

From Spanish documents in the Inch Papers it is clear that this title was a commissioned one, authorising George to collect taxes and administer the law. George was on his way back to Tipperary and the Inch estate which he inherited on the death of his brother John in 1778. For a droll and disillusioned account of the condition of the Inch Estate when he arrived there, see 'Don Jorge Rian of Inch, Co. Tipperary (1748-1805)', in *The Irish Ancestor*, No. 1. 1986, by Jim Condon.

### **Nicholas Marsh to George Ryan (Toulouse, 1787-1790)**

*After we left you, we made to Cut - adashes - Garret - Matt was out and had taken the key with him - and now we were forc'd to sit half an hour on the stairs, during which time Kitty done nothing but Blaspheme and swear by G- and de hoky - until his return - from that until 12 he and Matt held a Privy Council - such fuss - such dawdle, where's this? where's that? & where's tother? was the whole conversation - after all Kitty bounces from Bed - 'Blood' nounce wheres the Umbrellas? - Matt half dead with Fatigue & Love had to trot to your house I believe for them. . . . fearing if he went to bed he woud oversleep himself - he wisely determined to sit up all night - so began his Watch about 12 o Clock - Nature being appriss'd soon gave way, and wrap'd him in her downy Mantle - where he lay until half p. 4: when with a string of Curses he was dispatch'd for the horses - we were soon mounted - and had now reach'd the summit of the Canal Hill, and turn'd about to take a parting view of Toulouse and give perhaps a last farewell to those in idea - we have done in person so recently - a sigh! of a particular sort escap'd me, to what Acct. I should put it to I was at a loss - if it was Love - Time will tell - for Love, like flowers, are hard to be known until they blow - weeds & Mignonete make the same appearance for a time - but I fear that Flours (six) will never blow in a Marshy [pun on writer's own name] Soil being too poor - Allpowerful Gold bears away every thing.*

*We proceeded as far as Pompignion where we breakfasted, the Sun began to grow burning hot, and I propos'd to stay until the head of the day had pass'd, or at least until the Carriage that Matt was in, arriv'd - Kitty objected violently and got into a bit of a Passion - said I ought to have considered that first - and that he woud not stay for 20 guineas. So to please him I brav'd the rays of Mr Phabus [Phoebus] - before we got to Grisole we were in a hot bath of perspiration - I therefore grew valient and swore I'd broil for no Love sick Swain on earth - and so, alight and got into the Auberge at Grisole - he follow'd as a bear goes to a Stake - a dead silence insued, - there were two beds in the room - so off I threw my coat and to bed I went, leaving orders with the fille - to call me when the Kings Coach came by - Kitty took possession of the other bed, and to sleep we both went - when we awoke the congress of Bugs, Fleas & Lice with which we were surrounded is not to be describ'd, we reciprocally aided each other in disengaging ourselves from these Gentry who had taken*



such a mighty love for us - they stuck so close tht some of them accompan'd us even here. N.B. the Notre Dame is the lousiest receptacle in France, I'd rather lie with Mary Magdalen or any other Mary of my acquaintance - than enter her dwelling again -

The coach now arriv'd, and proceed him, and he spurd his Horse - off he gallop'd with Matt, and left me in the voiture - We had not gon a mile, until I descrie him under the lee Bow of an Old Chapel, enjoying a bit of Shade that it threw on the road - he said he was in a fever, and that he had lost leather, so entered the Coach and then we continued until we came into sight of Montauban when we became equestrian again and made our triumphal entre into Montauban - We soon found the Ds [Dears?] and the Meeting was very Tinder on both sides, he seem'd as happy as an Angel, and forgot Sun, Bugs, fleas, Lice and a broken A-se - What will not mighty Love do - While he fed on the Smiles of Charlotte, I fed on a cold Loin of Veal, so hearty that the devil a thing I left him but the fat & bone - Crew was tole I had just rode by - and he and his Lady came up and drank teas and ask'd us all to dine there today.

And now to tell you of a fine piece of Roguery of mine, I took a place in the Messagerie for Bordeaux for which I was to pay 18 (livre) I gave the man six as earnest - and was to have proceeded on with him. Crew and everyone said it was very shabby behaviour to pop into town at 7 o'Clock at night and so pop out again at 3 in the Morning - it look'd as if I was afraid to see the face of the people by daylight - it look'd Whittleisk - and that as I regard their good wishes I woud stay a day or two, with them - we are easily persuaded to do what is pleasing to us - I consented! - but how (to) get shut of the Coachman - he would demand the whole fare, as there are no short Let-downs given - Crew sent for my things, only a Box & Bundle, said I wanted to Dress, to go to the presidents - and for the Coachman to call to the Tapis Vert at 3 in the morning, and ask for Count Barnival, and he would be ready - I suppose the poor man call'd - but here am I - and intend staying for Kitty until Monday - but I fear I shall then go alone, as he complains bitterly of his A. . . and has a great plaister of Diaculum on it . . . Mrs Dalton is very elegantly lodg'd she has a small house but it is Simplex Munditious - a delightful Garden etc for 2 Louis per Month - we breakfasted today on the terrass of her Garden - & look'd towards Toulouse and often wish'd those of the Jardin & Rue Escarb were tasting our Hot cake and fresh butter, they are in love with the Situation and find things if not cheaper, much better, than they had in Toulouse, Charlotte had a fit of the Ague, but this is her day, and 'tis now 10 at night and she has had no feel of it as yet - we din'd at Crews, who gave us an Elegant dinner, and walk'd a good deal after; the Lovers went home, and I to sup with an Old acquaintance who gave me \_\_\_\_\_ on my return I find N. is not come home & I thought this the best opportunity of giving so far of our History - and shall now be silent at least for a wek, as every hour I stay here, I am engaged . . . .

. . . I suppose you have heard of all the Bussiness of the Terres Etat, in Versailles, there was in consequence of that, a General Illumination last night on the Chartrons which is 3 miles long, it really was the finest thing I ever beheld, Be de hoky the French are getting a Little English & Irish Spirit of Liberty - a Lady ask'd me the other day how it could be accounted for, as hereto fore, they dare not at the peril of their Lives, say or do a twentyeth part of what they are now about - I ans'd her, that for the last 30 or 40 Years the number of English & Irish that came over exceeded what had for 100 years before, That Cruelty was not the Characteristic of the French Ladies, and that by indulging their own Passions they have materially Servd the State in bringing into the world - a Race in whose Veins run the blood of all the travelling English thro' these realms - that this breed was every day Enlarging - and that I did not despair od seeing the States Genl of Languedoc filld with the Offspring of a Ryan, a Marsh, a Lyons - a Smyth - a Jackson, and many other Astmatic & Gouty



*Voyagers thro that province - She perfectly agreed with me, and remark'd had the Ladies been over scrupulous they might have continued in a state of Slavery until dooms day - It is therefore incumbent on all English who travels and finds any benefit from the Continent to leave a few plants behind them.*

These extracts from the letters of Nicholas Marsh to George Ryan capture the rascality of the expatriate younger sons. The bloodletting of the French Revolution scarcely impinged on the antics of these gay blades.

However, George Ryan himself could no longer share in the frolicking of his fellow-countrymen because he was married, living with his wife Mary (Roche), and his sister Elizabeth (widow of Charles Mathew) in Toulouse. He hoped by this enforced exile to live cheaply and gradually rebuild the run-down Inch property with the expected savings. Although George exercised economy in everything but his pretensions (he styled himself 'Count' in France), his enforced stay in France did little for the family fortune.

### **T. Jackson (Brussels) to Mrs Hall (Limerick) (1815)**

*... We were most comfortably settled at Caen in an excellent house during the late Winter where we had been paid every attention by all the leading people of the Town when on the 6th of March Helen & I set out in my gig to pay a visit for a week or ten days to a family residing near Alencon about 60 miles from us, on the 8th we reached our destination & on the 10th one of the ladies of the family having expressed a wish to go to their market Town situated about 2 leagues from us I had the honor of being her conductor. When on our arrival there we learned for the first time to our utter dismay the return of the worthy Bony & hastened home to communicate the intelligence to our friends, the effect it had on the nerves of all the party it is impossible for me to describe, I shall only say that our host, hostess & family from being apparently unoccupied with any case or thought but to make their house pleasant & agreeable to us immediately with ourselves began to consult as to what we should do in such & such cases they of course hoping the best did not decide upon anything but Helen & I resolved to get home as fast as we could in short we commenced our journey the next day & reached Caen the 12th delighted to be again with our dear Children. We were also made most happy by hearing that the Invader was surrounded & must in a few days be taken but the posts of the 13th, 14th & 15th bringing no news whatever except that Monsieur who had been at Lyons was returned to Paris I concluded that affairs must be going wring.*

*On the 16th of March then we all commenced our journey in the above order but the day before I took the precaution to send my own Gig horse ten leagues before me having hired another to take me to him, hoping by this means to make 20 leagues that day but never was the old proverb 'most haste the worst speed' immediately exemplified, than in the mishaps which happened - I had scarcely got a league from Caen when the vile Animal I was driving turned sulky & ran us backwards fortunately quite straight into a ditch poor Helena & I descending safely over the back of the Gig on the bank with the assistance of some Country men I got the carriage on the road again & returned to Town for another horse but not one c'd I get to hire when an English gentleman residing there who also had a Gig & who intended to embark at Havre de Grosse in a day or two seeing the distress I was in lent me his horse & Servant & thus 3 in a Gig away we went a second time, having gone five leagues I pulled up to give the horse some water & the servant who was with me not having eat his breakfast before starting I desired him to go in the house to get a morsel of whatever he c'd procure. I also descended from the Gig leaving my darling child in it by this time the water was bro't for the horse & while for a moment I went into the kitchen of the*



Auberge to hurry the people with whatever they were going to give the servant the hostler took off the bridle when the poor Animal seeing what he was tied to tore away from the door galloped up a hill nearly perpendicular and on reaching the Top of it turned back again but fortunately checked in his speed when passing the Inn door by the exertions of a great number of people a few yards further with his pace greatly slackened he got entangled with 3 or 4 Carts & Waggons, nevertheless his velocity was so great that he broke both the shafts, tore the wheels & springs from the body from which latter resting upright on the ground I took my darling my deemed lost child safe & unhurt in any degree having kept her seat the whole time never, never shall I forget my sensations while all this was passing. For hours after I could not believe that my Idol lived or cease kissing her & begging her to tell me that she was alive & safe, surely you will think that for one day we had experienced enough of evil but we had yet another misfortune to happen us. I was obliged to hire a Cart to carry my Gig to the place wher my own horse & a voiture[?] for poor Helena & me & this latter our worthy driver contrive to affct & we were both dragged out of the window, here thank God however our misfortunes terminated & we concluded our journey in safety tho' we underwent & (an) infinity of fatigue getting up at 4. in the morning & travelling until 7. at night & some times later poor Helena being most days so exhausted that while my horse was resting & eating his corn she was obliged to lay down & more than once she slept for a whole stage in my Gig but it was not to be avoided we had 97 leagues to go & we did not know the moment wh should be stopped especially after we left the little town of Paix six leagues on the other side of Amiens & which we passed thro' the same day the king did in his way to Lisle & only half an hour after him - As to when I kept her ten leagues before me all the way that I might join her in case of her being detained but she made her journey like a Heroine & bore it excessively well - With respect to the feelings of the country people in the different Departments I passed through upon the great question then agitating the Country I found them invariably & frequently strongly leaning towards the King, at Racien[?] invariably & where I slept a small remainder of 5000 - Volunteers were to march off for Paris the day I left the Town & from thence to Nuefchatel I passed on the road at least 4000 more all going to the large towns for Arms & to be enrolled, at Cambray the Post had just arrived as I came in bringing intelligence of the entry of Bonaparte into Paris & Bourgeois & Military were then fighting in the Market Place with swords but I was scarcely before 20 musket shots at least were fired, the gates of the Inn however were locked instantly by the landlord who feared the Military w'd plunder the Town and as I set off at 4, in the morning I did not hear what the casualties were, this was my last day & I passed thro' Valenciennes where the whole town was hung with white Flags & the Mistress of the Inn & an English hair dresser settled there that I sent for hoping thro' him to hear some news & the true sentiments of the town's people & the surrounding peasantry assured me that except the Military & the Canaille there was not a Being in the Town or Neighbourhood who did not wish that the King's Government should stand - As to the situation of things where we are now do not suffer yourself to be alarmed about us or for an instant to entertain a thought of the French entering Brabant as with the force we have on the Frontiers in this quarter alone exceeding 80,000 - men & rapidly increasing & with an Army of upwards of an 100,000 - Prussians on our left also daily receiving reinforcements Johnny Frog wont be inclined I think to trouble us - particularly as we know that the French Minister of War the Duke de Fette[?] bro't with him when he left Paris the last returns of the French Army which did not then exceed 140,000 - men of which number 60,000 at least were in Garrisons & must remain in them & 20,000 of the remainder at least are in the soputh of France to check the inclination to insurrection, thus therefore when Bony arrived at Paris he had not a larger disposable army than about 70,000 & as he has not yet called out a conscription I think you will agree with me that we have little to fear indeed it is thought here that in a fortnight the campaign will be com-



menced by the Allies advancing & it is generally imagined that by the 1st of July or middle of the Month at latest the White Flag will again wave over the Thulleries - About 8 days ago I saw an English Gentleman who was at Paris during the late review of the National Guards which Bony put off from day to day - at least three several times & when the review did take place altho' the number of these guards exceeds 30,000 not all the exertions of his adherents, with the worthy Fouché at the head of the Police holding out the terrors of this French Inquisition could more than 8,000 be collected & the cry of Vive L'Empereur was scarcely heard to escape them notwithstanding it was mentioned in the Moniteur that 40 battalions of the National Guard had passed Bony in review & that they made the air resound with this cry. The Duke of Wellington's head Quarters are here but he is at present with Blucher I believe at Leige. Lord Hill set off Saturday for his command & the Hereditary Prince of Orange went away on Tuesday. This looks as if the War wd begin immediately but still as I have before said I believe it will not for another fortnight.

The presence of this letter in the Inch Papers can possibly be explained by the fact that Mary Ryan (nee Roche), now the widow of George Ryan, was living in Limerick with her young family. The Inch estates were rented during their minority.

To put the letter into historical context: following the indecisive battle of Leipzig in late 1813, Napoleon was forced to abdicate in April 1814. The placing of Louis XVIII on the throne of France seemed to end the myth and menace of exiled Napoleon.

In this extraordinary letter we have a first-hand account of a very close encounter with the escaped and resurgent Bonaparte. The encounter took place on 19 March 1815, ten days before the historic 'Hundred Days' (20 March to 28 June, 1815), when Napoleon challenged once again the combined might of Europe for the last time. This letter, like several others in the Inch collection, highlights the hazards of road travel in the 18th and 19th centuries.

### Michael Ryan (US) to George Ryan (Inch) (1863)

... *The face of our Dollar in paper is worth the small sum of 45 cents, that is 55 per cent in gold. I have not seen a dollar in silver in four months & I am not the only person of that description. It is heart sickening to witness the diplorable state of this once happy Country. My Tongue could not decribe the diplorable state of half the Widows & orphans of this state of Pennslyvenia [sic] not saying anything of the other states in the north.*

*Those poor famulys that had once happy firesides by the daily labour of there husbands are now thrown of the merceis of God. It was just by more chance that I escaped the draft ... if I had been drafted in fact I do not know what would become of my little family if it was my lutch to fall on the battlefield. There was 9 drafted from out of the township I live in. I main to let you know how the drafting was performed. As I told you before every County is devided into townships; cences of every every township was taken by state officers & deposited in the County Court House. Then the names all taken separate & put into a box then an officer of the law apointed with a black handkerchief tied around his eyes he drew one by one until the cota [quota] of the County was drawn & handed them to the sherif & from thence to the Judge. Then the names of the persons drafted road out & notified by the sherrif to appear within a specified time & if not apearing in the inside of that he was recond as a disarter & folowed up & punished acording to law and several who resisted was shot down like dogs without either Judge or Jury. That is as near the mode of drafting in this Country as I can relate. We expect there will be larger draft maid in the spring of five hundred Thousand more men if the allmighty God dont stop this wicked rebelan before. It was once fighting for the Union but in fact I do not*





know what they are fighting for now since the late Proclamation I have to refrain from making any observations on the questions as this letter might be stoped and read as I think all letters leaving for Urope are but I doubt it to be a fact.

Dear sir you said you had not a full account of the late battle of Murfinsborough [?]. It has been bloody battle & fought by one of the ablest Generals in the Army today there was an awful loss of lives on both sides but the skill & courage of the brave General Rosencrans [sic] & the Army he comanded gained one the most important battles of this penninsula. He is a roman Catholic & was to his Confession the morning before the battle along with the brave Colonel Garchy his Adey who fell by his side 3 ours after receiving the blessed sacrament whom a nobler solder never trod the battle field. May the lord have mercey on his soul. My brother James has escaped uninjured as yet thank God. He will be 2 years in the Service next May & will have to spend an other year before his time is expi(r)ed. He has been in 13 pitched Battles & escaped them all without a wound. Now I main to inform you why you can buy our American pork so chaip in Ireland. We have 3 kinds of fod pork here in this country. There is corn fod pork & what we call Still fod pork that is grain from about those large brureys which there is plenty of the lat(t)er in this Country. The third is the western beech nut pork which is lot run wild in these large forests & in the wild Prararoy[sic] of the west. The(y) grow to an inormous sise & is shot down before the(y) can be cetchd. I have no doubt but that is the pork is imported to europe acording to the description you gave of them. So you can now see the raison why the(y) sell it so chaip. We would not buy in the north any such pork for allmost every poror man raises his own Corn fed pork & them that dont will buy nothing but the best on prime Mess pork at from 10 to 12 cents per 1lb. Now with regards montanance of life in this Country it is allmost beyond the reach of the poor people to sustain themselves. Labour in some parts of the Country is raised to a very high rate, that is coal works & iron works. The men employed at the 2 latter can very well live & that is all, but the eastern states where Cotton has been manufactured to a high oxtont it is quite difirent. The(y) work only half time & only half the hands at that so that it is hard for them to sustain life. Provisions of all kinds was never 6so) deir in those United States. To comence on the Sugar & Coffee there double there prices now to what the(y) were 2 years. Cotton goods is troble the price it was 2 years ago. it is gone as high as 30 sents per yard that is any thing of good Cotton. There is another grade of Cotton that is sold for 25 cents per yard but\$but you would buy it for the comonest use. I could compare it to nothing but a fine scivo so you can judge how poor people have to suffer. Woolen goods is also ran up so high that the(y) are beyond the reach of poor people. Flour in this part of Pennsly is 9 Dolars & 25 sents per barrel. There has been a scarscety of hay in some parts of the north for the last 2 years which has brought butter up to 25 cents per lb.

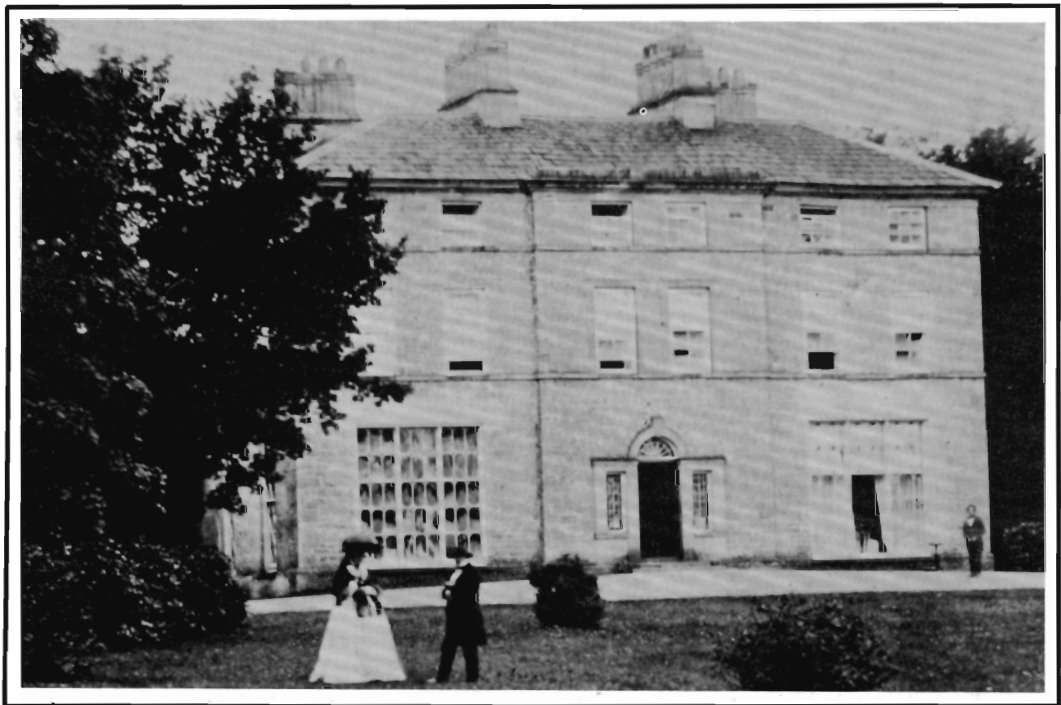
To conclude with those articles I have only to let you know that every small article that I could mention is gone up to the highest prices. Even the tobaco that ust to be sold for the small sum of from 18 to 25 sents per lb is now one dollar per lb which is a very good Job for in all the civilised Countrys in the world without it is Chine I never read of so mutch tobaco being used for it is the ruination of the youth of this Country. If you believe me I have seen Boys of from 5 to 6 or 7 years not only smoking but chewing the cursed wood.

I suppose you thought it strange to see your daughters marriage advertised in a paper in this Country. I got all the Irish knews in one paper it is called the Boston Pilot. It is a good Catholic paper that is one reason I like it so well but it is not mutch on polotics. With that & another weekly paper I find out all the politics of the County. I was very glad to learn of Miss Ryans marriage & how well she has done. I think you & Mrs Ryan must enjoy



yourselfes amongst your family. You have never let me know as yet wheather you are blessed with any Boys or not. I was also glad to learn that Mr John Ryan & family were enjoying good health & old Mrs Bennet I remember her very well. I am sorry to learn she is not enjoying the best of health. I think in the latter part of her life she may be proud of the, the family she has raised. I dont see what is your Brother in law Mr Whites idea for leaving his home in Dublin & going out to China. What i read about China I think it is the last place for (a) gentleman that I know must be well read to visit for it is a nation of cruelty & barbarity I have read some of the shockenest instances as I over of a half civilised people [the word 'hoard' probably omitted by the writer]but of course Mr White is boss of his own buisness. You mentioned to me to sent you the directions of the priest that visits our region . . . I am sorry to say that I could not at the present. The last priest that we had stationed at our myssion, he was a french man by the name of Father Charles Mogan Mogan, a very fine man. I think I told you of him once before but where he is stationed now I do not know for since the Bishop has taken him from us he has been in France but we got mass twice a month from different priests but I think we will have a priest stationed with us in a few weeks. A(s) for as my knowledge leads me his (sic) a young man by name Father Florence McCarthy u native of the County Kery. If he is stationed here I will sent yo his adress and all particulars. You will please to remember (me) to Father & Mother & ill the Leamays. Let them know AJames is yet alive & well after being in so many battles. The revel invasion unto Pennslyvenia did come nearer than 60 miles from where I live. Please to Answer this & let me know all the Knows and it you recovered the ten pound order or not.

I will now conclude with letting you know that me & family are all enjoying good health & living acording to the times. Good health & living in Contenont [sic] is the greatest



Inch House — an old photograph.

pleasure a poor man ask enjoy. You will excuse my long letter & poor writing for my fingers are gitting stiff. I have not heard anything of the Tailor this long time. Did he come to this Kountry or not. They have no account of him . . . [undecipherable] - Troy in New York State]. I got a letter from there once a month. Purcells family & uncle Jojns & uncle Redmond(s) family are doing remarkable well. It is 10 o'clock at night & time for me to retire.'

Good by Yours truly  
s/ Michael Ryan

The battle referred to above was Murfreesboro, south of Nashville in Tennessee. The proclamation referred to was probably the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, 22 September 1862, by Lincoln. In effect, it showed that henceforth the North would be fighting for the slaves as well as Union. Blossburg (from where the letter was written) as recently as 1970 still had only a population of 2,000. It is located in north central Pennsylvania in Tioga County on a tributary of the Tioga River.

**Mary Nash (nee Ryan) to Mary Ryan (nee Roche)  
1805**

... Now the 8th, finding I had so little subject I thought I wd wait the finale of our Ball which was delightful. We had four of the Ipswich first rate Belles, the ugliest finest naked Vestals I ever beheld in the estream of the last fashion, & laughably affected, the mother a very genteel old lady which I thought astonishing considering the mode of education she has pitched on for her progeny. The Officers of 2 or 3 Regts treat us to their Theatrical abilitys on Monday next Captn Rushbrook is a first rate in that line, Col Gibbons has taken 2 Box's to hold 24 in our Party of E. Middlesx those performances are for Charitable purposes, & of great value to them, & continue once a fortnight during The Winter, Mondays play is to be B-[sic - Blue?] beard the Scenery all executed by Captains Kerr Porter & Captn Whitmore who are both great artists I am now sorry I forswore plays, it wanted 20 minits of 5 when I step'd into bed after the Ball, & I am just as well as when I set out, our party for Thursday is broke up by a most melancholy evint poor Mrs Saches only Child a beautiful girl is much more likely to die than to live, & the poor Mother is in a State to distraction, this was her only comfort, how I pity her Bess had her finery from Town for the Ball the Cap is an Elphybey velvet crown with a very fine muslin turban & a long lappit on the shoulder, a Vulture feather & an antique to be worn at one side, with it she got the prettyest Bonet I ever saw in brown velvet in turns up at the front a large knott fastens to the top & a good deal of riband trimmes the Bonet in Bows they were chosen by Maria who certainly is at the top of fashions Wheel. My lasses abide by what they had before, their dress(es) at the ball was, on both, long muslin frocks, drapery of Elphybey with Gold Embroidery, Hair in cirls & braids, Combs the only ornaments, black velvet girdles & armlets, Fannys Gold Chain & Earrings, perl cross, Eliza Elphybey & gold Necklace & Earrings, they looked very well, Fanny had intirely recovered her good looks. Eliza wd be great torment to me if she minded or was at all interested in the fuss about her, but I declare to you she is the gayest never minding animale I ever saw & not in the smallest degree an encourager of the Sport. the Ipsich Misses were dress'd in Long Muslin frocks tied exactly under naked Bosoms, half the legs & pink Stockings to be seen, Gold Spangled Muslin Scullcaps with Turbans & beautiful feathers, Amethyst & Gold necklaces, a Gold Armlet on each right arm, one chemise each, & one skirt of the gown no more, very, long, land, & ugly, transparencys.



From the distaff side of the Ryan family comes, the above — perhaps the most vivacious, enlightening and entertaining collection of letters to be found in the Inch Papers. The letter, written by Mary Nash (nee Ryan) captures the frenetic round of balls and *soirees* amongst the officers and their ladies in Ipswich. This prolific writer with her Austenesque turn of phrase and a penchant for name-dropping had a positive mania for describing the prevailing *haute monde*. The lady's daughter, Eliza, referred to in the extract, married David O'Neill Power in 1807 against the wishes of both families. However, later a marriage settlement was cobbled together in 1818; but Eliza had to forego her normal 'dower and thirds' at common law.

