

## Rothe House c.1808

Jammed in between two mere modern houses with shop windows, there was in it ["main street"] a curious old structure, or rather a succession of very curious old structures, situated to the rear of this introductory one. It had a high parapeted front, over which arose a gable, very sharp-angled at top, and surmounted by a tall roundish stone chimney.

A semicircular archway, gained by a few steps, ran through it from the street, and led into a small quadrangle, one side of which was formed by its own back, and the other three sides by similar old buildings; that side to your left being partially dilapidated. A second semicircular archway passed under the pile confronting you, as you entered the enclosure from the street, and gave egress into a second, but larger quadrangle. Of this, the far or top side was composed of one range of an old edifice, still; that behind you of the rear of the house that fronted you, in the lesser quadrangle, that to your right, of other ancient buildings entirely ruinous; and that to your left partly of a dead wall, partly of a shed, before which was a bench of mason-work, and partly of a little nook, containing some evergreens, and remarkable for affording place to a queer sentry-box kind of structure, built of solid stone.

And now there was yet a third archway before you, but much narrower than the others, and very much darker, boring its way under the lower part of the structure facing you. In traversing it, your eye caught, to your right hand, doorways imperfectly filled up by old oak doors, half hanging off their old-times' hinges, and leading into large, unoccupied, coal black chambers; and when you emerged from it, the cheery daylight was again around you, in a third enclosed space, of which the most remarkable feature was a long flight of wide stone steps, terminating in a sharply arched door, which led into an elevated garden.

... In the middle of the inner quadrangle, there used to be a roundish space, quite smooth, and well sanded over, while the rest of the yard around it was roughly paved – and

could human foresight have contrived anything more appropriate for the marble ring, and the pegtop ring? In "hide and seek", where could the appointed seeker find such a retreat as the old stone sentry-box – the boys called it an old confessional – in which to turn away his head and eyes, until the other urchins should have concealed themselves among some of the fantastic recesses around them? And where could leap-frog be played so well, as under the old archways? – and if a sudden shower came on, how conveniently they afforded shelter from it! To such of the boys as had courage for the undertaking, what places above ground, ay, or underground, so fit for enacting "the ghost", as were the pandemonium retreats of the black chambers of the third archway? Was there ever so luxurious a seat for a tired boy to cast himself upon, fanning his scarletted face with his hat, as that offered to him by the bench in the larger quadrangle, canopied overhead by its two umbrageous sycamores, one at its either end?

... The old house confronting you as you entered the first quadrangle from the street, and the rear of which looked into the second quadrangle, was the old school-house. Passing its sharply arched doorway of stone, you entered a hall, floored with old black oak, and ascended a spiral staircase of black oak, coiling round an upright of black oak, and stepped into the school-room, floored with black oak, and divided by a thick partition of black oak from the master's bed-chamber; in fact, all the partitions, all the doors, all the stairs, all the ceiling beams – and ponderous things they were – down stairs and up stairs, through the interior of the crude old edifice, were all, all old black oak, nearly as hard as flint, and seemingly rough from the hatchet, too; and the same was the case in the interiors of the other inhabitable portions of the concatenation of ancient buildings.

... At either end of the long apartment [the school-room] was a large square window, framed with stone, and, indeed, stone also in its principal divisions. Over head ran the enormous beams of old oak, and in the spaces between them were monotonous flights, all in a row, and equally distant from each other, of monotonous angels, in stucco – the usual children's heads, with goose wings shooting from under their

ears; and sometimes one or two of these angels became fallen angels, flapping down on clipped wings either upon the middle of the floor, or else upon the boys' heads, as they sat to their desks, and confusing them, and their books, and slates with fragments of stucco and mortar, rotten laths, and rusty nails.

**[The O'Hara Family *Father Connell*, London, 1849, p87: acknowledged as a description of Rothe House where the author, John Banim, was at school c.1803 to c.1808.]**

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The following is a Return of the Amount of the Members of the several Yeomanry Corps of this County, who are fit for active service, and ready to march to any part of Ireland, under their own Officers, in case of Invasion:

Corps		Captains	Cav	Inf
Thomastown	Cavalry	Earl of Carrick	35	—
Durrow	—————	Viscount Ashbrook	22	—
Knocktopher	Do. and Inf	Robert Langrishe	34	21
Gowran	Do. and Do.	Viscount Clifden	13	63
Kilkenny	Infantry	John Helsham	—	72
St. Canice	—————	Samuel Mathews	—	52
Gore's-bridge	—————	George Rothe	—	60
Kilfane	—————	John Power	—	49
Inistiogue	—————	William Tighe	—	97
Fassadineen	—————	Hon. James Butler	—	105
Durrow	—————	Robert Staples	—	84
Cranagh	—————	Arthur St. George	—	42
Three Castles	—————	Abraham Ball	—	32
Kells	—————	Mark Belcher	—	52
Iverk	—————	Michael Cox	—	62
Closnore	—————	Edward Elliott	—	46
Total			104	837

**[*Leinster Journal*, 4.6.1808]**