

Beneath Carrân Tual 1833

The angler in Ireland : or An Englishman's ramble through Connaught and Munster, during the summer of 1833

William Bilton

1834

THE other usual excursions in the neighbourhood of Killarney are, the Gap of Dunloe, the Ascent of Mangerton, and, for those who have sufficient time and resolution, the more difficult but infinitely finer ascent of Carrân Tual, the loftiest point, not only of the Reeks, but, I believe, of all Ireland. There are also numberless minor objects of interest and beauty, which will agreeably occupy many a vacant morning ; besides which, the Lakes themselves, to be properly appreciated, ought to be frequently seen, and closely explored.

Yet a very few days are all that the generality of visitors devote to the inspection or enjoyment of scenery they have come so far to view. The object of most, in truth, seems to be, to “ kill a lion” in the shortest possible time ; and they go through the appointed routine with admirable perseverance, be the weather favourable or not. One day they ascend Mangerton ; another they devote to the Lower Lake, Mucruss Abbey, &c. ; and the last they scamper to the Gap of Dunloe, returning by the Upper Lake.

In this way they may certainly be said to have seen the principal scenery of Killarney, which appears their great end and aim in coming there. But, independently of the very fleeting impression that must be produced by so rapid a survey, such tourists lose all the beautiful effects that result from the ever-changing play of tints and lights, so especially various and lovely in this fickle climate.

As I really wished to see the Lakes of Killarney, and not merely to be able to say I had done so, I remained there above three weeks, and would have lingered longer, had the waning season permitted. The weather was remarkably fine for the greater part of the time : and, as I was most days on the Lake, unless when making some other excursion, I consider that I saw the scenery advantageously and completely.

I was occasionally on the water at early morn ; but much oftener after sunset ; and not seldom beneath the moon's mild radiance. On these occasions I was never without my fishing-rod ; and though I have in many other places had better sport, I have rarely enjoyed the amusement of angling so much as on the Lakes of Killarney.

The exquisite loveliness of the panorama around me greatly enhanced the triumph of success, as it cheered the ennui of disappointment, while, instead of distracting my attention from the charms of nature, my diversion rather relieved the monotony of continually gazing on the same scene ; and, by occupying me on the waters, gave me every opportunity of observing those accidents of cloud and sunshine, calm and storm, which add so much to the effect of every extensive landscape, making it ever appear another, though still the same.

From the concurrent testimony of all the old fishermen, there was formerly most superior salmon-fishing at Killarney ; but the erection of stake-nets and the constant hauling on the river Laun have very much injured it. Still, a considerable number of salmon come up in the winter and spring floods, many of which remain during the summer ; and at other seasons, whenever the water is high enough for them to pass, there is sure to be a fresh supply. But

they are no longer caught of that immense size which they are said to have been thirty or forty years ago.

Wherever the angler goes, he is sure to hear these same complaints of the diminished size of the salmon of the present day. Every fisherman he meets will tell him of the enormous monsters which he or his father killed in former times. Great allowances must doubtless be made for the exaggerated medium through which Age ever contemplates the deeds of its youth. The old man has always, since the days of Nestor, been a "*Laudator temporis acti, se puero.*"

But, independently of this natural tendency to look back upon every thing connected with the days of our prime, as intrinsically superior to present objects, I think there is sufficient ground for believing that the salmon formerly, if not more numerous, were at least, in all probability, larger than now. Until within late years, the market for this delicate fish was confined to a circle of a few miles round the place where they were caught, and they were therefore of comparatively little value. But, latterly, from the improvement in the means of conveyance, and especially since the invention of steam, it has been found practicable and profitable to send salmon from the extreme North of Scotland, and from the furthest West of Ireland, to Glasgow, Liverpool, and London. The respective fisheries have consequently become infinitely more valuable, and their lessees much more attentive, as well to the protection of the spawning fish as to the capture of those which enter the rivers before the fence months.

The rivers are incomparably better protected during the breeding season than formerly ; and, such is the extraordinary fecundity of this department of the animal kingdom, that a few fish, if suffered to spawn in safety, will suffice to stock a stream. But, then, if this increased care, during the period when the salmon are the most exposed to the ruthless attacks of the rustic poacher, insure an increased number of young fish ; on the other hand, the improved methods which the prospect of gain has taught the legal fisherman to use prevent their reaching any great age.

In every river where there are stake-nets or salmon-boxes, it is almost impossible for the fish to escape for many successive seasons : few, therefore, attain their natural size. At the same time, those that do pass, either in the fence months or in very high floods, being much better protected than formerly, while they are rendered helpless and worthless by the process of spawning ; the numbers, on the whole, are not diminished, although the size of the individual fish is much inferior to what is recorded of the aged Leviathans of old, which for many succeeding years had been permitted to frequent their native stream.

Almost every stream or lake in Ireland, that I have seen or heard of, contains more or less brown trout. These vary very much in size and in appearance, some being short and thick, with small heads, and hog-like backs, as, for instance, those of Westmeath Lakes, and others distinguished by huge heads, and long, lanky bodies, as the "gubbahawns" of many of the Connemara Loughs.

But the fish, which perhaps afford the most sport, are the white or sea trout—the *salmo trutta*—and which are found in most rivers and lakes that communicate by any considerable stream with the sea. These are, in their habits, very similar to the salmon ; mounting, like them into the fresh water, to spawn ; after which they return, also like them, into the salt water.

The periods of the arrival and departure of the salmon differ much in different rivers. A few, and they are usually the finest fish, run up during the spring ; but the great body of them

commonly make their appearance about the mouths of their native streams, in the beginning of June, and thenceforward continue to ascend towards their favourite spawning beds until the winter.

The *second cause* employed to drive them from the salt water is a parasitic insect, called the *lernæa salmonea*, which adheres to their scales, and appears to cause an intolerable irritation. This species of louse dies soon after the salmon have been two or three days in fresh water, of which they seem to have an instinctive foreknowledge, and express a delight at being about to get rid of their tormentors, by the most joyous bounds and leaps, when first they feel the refreshing stream. While in the sea they grow very fast, but are believed not to feed at all in fresh water, and appear not to increase in weight there.

About September they become dark in their colour, thick in their skin, and flaccid in their flesh, soon after which they spawn. The season of their thus losing their condition, however, varies much in different rivers. For instance, in Caithness and Sutherland the fish are quite black by the beginning of August ; whereas, in the Tweed they continue in season until past the middle of September. Upon recovering from this state, so evidently intended to guard them against molestation during the necessary process of spawning, they take advantage of the spring floods to return to the ocean, and are almost immediately followed by the young fry, at this time no bigger than sprats, but which, in two or three months' time, return to the same rivers, weighing from three to seven pounds.

The history of the *salmo trutta*, or sea-trout, is precisely similar, only they seldom reach more than seven pounds in weight, and in many rivers are never caught of half that size. They also usually enter streams, in which there is much less water than is sufficient to induce salmon to run up, and at once rush towards the head of the river, or lake, much higher than the *salmo salar*. Wherever they are found, they afford the best possible sport to the angler, being very bold in rising at the fly, and remarkably strong and lively on the hook.

But to return from this long digression. There are few or no white trout in the Lakes of Killarney, but great quantities of brown trout, generally small, though occasionally of good size. There are also, fortunately, no pike.

Upon asking for the best fisherman, I was universally referred to one James Doherty ; and, finding that he had a convenient small boat of his own, I engaged it and its master, most days during my stay, in preference to one of Lord Kenmare's boats. I had every reason to be satisfied with him and his crew. They were invariably civil, ready and anxious to do any thing and every thing that I wished ; and, what is no slight recommendation at Killarney, I had not to complain of a single instance of drunkenness.

Doherty is an extremely good fisherman, and a sensible, intelligent man. He is perfectly acquainted with his lake, which is of the utmost consequence ; as without his knowledge one might fish the whole day without once casting the fly in any spot where a salmon ever lies. It is only in certain places where the depth of the water is from five to twelve feet that the angler has the least chance of rising a fish. These spots are often over isolated rocks, in the very middle of the Lake, which could never be guessed by one unacquainted with the place, but which Doherty knows to an inch by certain landmarks. These are what he calls courses, and are the only parts of the Lake that there is the slightest use in trying.

The summer had been so uncommonly dry that the water was lower than had been remembered for many years, and the salmon were consequently driven off some of their usual courses. This was much against our sport. I have had ten or twelve rise at my fly, but never succeeded in killing more than two in any one day, although it was seldom I did not take at

least a single fish. They were small, the largest that I killed weighing only seven pounds and a quarter ; but we certainly saw some much larger. Having been long in the fresh water, they had all a dark, reddish appearance, and their flesh was softer and less flavoured than of those fresh from the sea. Many of them, however, played with great strength and vigour, and the whirlpool they made in the water, when dashing at the fly, was very fine—enough to cause the heart of the young tyro to jump to his mouth.

Doherty used invariably plain flies, of a smallish size, with dark turkey wings, and brown olive bodies, ribbed with narrow gold twist. I in general preferred my own more gaudy Limerick flies ; and it was difficult to say which on the whole were the most successful ; sometimes his proving the most killing, and, at others, mine. I am, however, perfectly convinced that flies somewhat handsomer than his, and with a richer mixed wing, but not so gaudy as mine, would succeed much better than either.

The greater part of the boats belong to Lord Kenmare, who established them in order to put a stop to the system of extortion formerly practised on visitors. Their prices are regularly fixed ; and are, I think, seven shillings for two oars, eight shillings and sixpence for three oars, and ten shillings for four oars ; besides which there is *always* a coxswain, or guide, for whom two shillings more are paid ; and *generally* a bugler, who expects at least five shillings. By far the best of the buglers is Spillane ; he is, moreover, a very respectable, intelligent, and well-conducted man.

In addition to this first cost it is always expected that dinner and whisky should be provided for the crew. The former is charged at the inns one shilling a head ; the latter is *ad libitum* of the employer, but cannot be reckoned at much less than half a bottle for each, on a long day's expedition. The boating excursions at Killarney are therefore expensive pleasures, unless you are with a large party.

Most of the boatmen are, I fear, a sad drunken set. While out with their company they get a great deal to drink ; and, making double the common wages of the country, too often spend most of their money in whisky at night. They have, consequently, as might be expected, an habitually muzzy, half tipsy, half drowsy, look and manner. I must, however, add, that I scarcely heard of a single instance of their impertinence or incivility, although they have not unfrequently most extraordinary characters to deal with.

Ascent of Carrân Tual—View from the Summit—Irish Story connected with that Mountain—Beggars and Tourists—Old Gandsey, the Piper—The Church—Excursion to Mucruss.

The only other excursion in this neighbourhood, that I think it at all worth while to record, is one that I made to Carrân Tual. Carrân, in Irish, signifies both a jaw-bone and a reaping hook ; and Tual signifies inverted, or turned upside down : either sense being, of course, allusive, and by no means inappropriately, to the form of its summit. It is the highest point, not only of M'Gillicuddy's Reeks, but of Irish ground ; [1] and having been on the highest Scotch, English, and Welsh ground, I had long been anxious to complete my catalogue of altitudes, by accomplishing this ascent ; but had more than once been obliged to put it off, as it is useless to make the attempt except in the finest and clearest weather.

At length, on Monday, August 26th, the morning was so temptingly beautiful, that I determined to avail myself of it, although unfortunately unable to persuade any companion to join me. I took a car as far as Mr. Blennerhasset's Lodge, nine miles from Killarney ; and there sent it back, intending to descend by the other side of the Reeks to the head of the Upper Lake, where Doherty's boat was to meet me. Near the Gap of Dunloe, I took up one

Cornelius Moriarty, who had been recommended to me as by far the best guide for Carrân Tual : he was a stout, honest, well-meaning fellow, very civil, and very obliging, and seemed to possess a tolerable knowledge of the mountain and surrounding country.

After leaving the car, we entered a long and wide valley, with the ridge of the Reeks to our left, and Carrân Tual at its further extremity before us. Up this glen we trudged for an hour and a half, the vale gradually becoming narrower and wilder. At its upper termination I was much astonished to find an inhabited cabin, surrounded by a patch of potatoes and oats, that can but seldom ripen properly in this bleak solitude, the very verge of human existence. We soon after came upon two lakes; at which point we left the usual and easier path, and turned to the right, through what is called “ the Hag’s Glen.” It is much the longest, and most difficult, but is as decidedly the grandest passage.

The ascent now became really severe, and the scenery peculiarly savage and magnificent. We crept along the brow of some very lofty precipices, which perpendicularly overhang one of the Lakes, and soon after came in full view of a most singular pyramid of rock, called the Hag’s Tooth. Passing close under it, we next made our laborious way, first into one very confined valley of rocks, and then into a second, of rapidly increasing wildness. The character of this scenery was something in the style of the Glen of the Horse, but infinitely superior to it in grandeur and sublimity : indeed, a sterner or more desolate scene can scarcely be imagined by one who has not seen Loch Corriskin, in the Isle of Skye.

High above us, to our left, towered Carrân Tual’s mountain throne, upreared on huge ledges of precipitous rock, the undisturbed and undisturbable abode of the eagle, who continued soaring far above our heads, as long as we remained within the precincts of his domain.

We were now so completely enclosed within precipices, impracticable even to a chamois hunter, that further advance seemed not possible ; but, by climbing through a steep and strait gorge, we gained the other side of the mountain, from which a much easier ascent conducted us to the top.

Panting with fatigue and curiosity, I stood at length upon the lofty summit, from which I was to look down upon all Ireland ; and I could see—“ just nothing at all, at all !” The mists, that had frequently during the morning caused me some anxious forebodings, now so entirely enveloped the mountain-top, that for a few minutes nothing whatever was visible. It was a grievous disappointment ; but, while vainly striving to pierce the palpable obscure, in an instant the wind scattered the light clouds before it, and the glorious prospect suddenly broke upon me, as by magic, with an effect utterly indescribable.

I remained above an hour on the summit, and believe that I saw every object which, under ordinary circumstances, is ever visible from it ; but I never was able to command the whole panorama at the same moment. While one portion of the landscape was basking in brilliant sunshine, another part was sure to be hidden in fog ; which circumstance, however, far from diminishing, greatly increased, the general effect.

I could distinctly trace the line of the Shannon, from its mouth nearly to Limerick, with a large portion of the County Clare beyond it. The broad and rich plain extending from that river up to Killarney was always clear ; and most beautifully did its luxuriant corn-fields, now “ white to harvest,” contrast with the sterile mountains around me. Then Dingle Bay, with its cape, the most western point of Europe—and Kenmare Bay, with the tumultuous assemblage of the Iveragh Mountains between them—and Bantry Bay, with its lofty and bold

coast—and, beyond all these, a boundless expanse of ocean, dotted with several picturesque islands, and bearing here and there a white sail on its dark green bosom.

These were the principal distant objects to the westward. But a vast sea of mountains lay beneath and around us, within whose dark recesses lay innumerable lakes, of which Lough Carra seemed by far the most extensive. A small part only of the Lower Lake of Killarney is visible from Carrân Tual ; the others being concealed by intervening heights.

But, independently of the remoter features of the landscape, the immediate scenery of the mountain itself is very grand. On either side of its summit is an enormous chasm of bare, perpendicular rock, through one of which we had passed, and the other is scarcely, if at all, inferior to it in wildness. I will not *bore* the reader by attempting further to particularise the prospects enjoyed from Carrân Tual ; but will content myself with recording my impression, that, after seeing nearly all the most celebrated mountain views in Great Britain, I rank this among the very finest and grandest.

In descending, we at first kept rather along the ridge of the Reeks, in order to command some points which were not visible from the very summit, and then struck directly down the steep hill-side towards the head of Cwm Duive. The descent occupied exactly three hours of hard walking, from the top to Lord Brandon's cottage, which I reached about five o'clock, and was received with a shout of Milesian welcome, and "Cead mille fealtagh," from my boatmen, who were again beginning to be considerably alarmed at my delay.

They had been kindly permitted to prepare a dinner for me at the cottage ; and my morning's walk inclined me to do it immediate and ample justice. I then embarked on my passage down the lakes, just as Night and Day were disputing for empire ; it was consequently quite dark before we had escaped from the intricacies of the "Long Range" between the Upper and Lower Lake. We had a paterarero in the boat, with which we disturbed many of the slumbering echoes. The finest, I think, was from a rock, near the Eagle's Cliff, which is named the "Four Friends," from a tradition of four fellow-collegians having accidentally met and dined upon this islet.

The night was perfectly calm, and the moon, now near the full, shone at times with a brilliance that made one scarce regret the absence of the garish sun ; but at other times veiled her light behind a canopy of silver-edged clouds, with an effect that was scarcely less lovely. We all felt the enchantment of the scene : and the oar fell slowly, though regularly, into the water, as if loath to disturb the delicious stillness of that hour.

While sailing beneath the pure beams of this most lovely night, I cannot forbear relating a story connected with the mountain I had this day ascended, and not altogether unknown to some of my friends at Killarney.

When Mr.G. went up Carrân Tual, to make the necessary observations for the Trigonometrical Survey, he was accompanied by several gentleman of the country, as also by sundry guides, &c., to convey his instruments and provisions. Amongst the latter was a bottle of black-currant whisky, an excellent and favourite beverage on sporting excursions in Ireland. This bottle had evidently been tampered with, and some of its contents abstracted. The gentleman who observed it mentioned the circumstance to Mr. G., who only said, "Don't say anything about it, and you shall see I'll cure him of meddling with any of my things."

Accordingly, a short time after, when they had nearly reached the top, Mr. G. took up one of his instruments, and, asking for the identical bottle, began carefully to rub the brass with a few drops of the liquid on a piece of linen. The lower orders of the Irish are par-

ticularly inquisitive about any thing they see done by their superiors, and they all stood staring round the engineer.

“ What is that you are doing, G. ?” said his friend.

“ Why, this is one of the most disagreeable parts of our profession. When we reach these great altitudes, we are obliged to rub the instruments with this liquid, which is one of the most active poisons known ; and I am therefore, as you see, forced to take particular care, lest any of it touch my hands, or it might have an injurious effect upon my health.”

“ Och ! Captain Charles, what is that Mr. G. says ?” exclaimed the delinquent.

“ Why, didn’t you hear him say he’s obliged to take care of the stuff in that bottle, because it’s a violent poison ?”

“ And is it really poison it is, that’s in that same bottle ?”

“ Poison !” said G., with imperturbable gravity. “ I can only tell you that, just before I came upon this expedition, I saw some experiments tried with it upon a very strong bull, and twenty drops killed him in half an hour : a dog died in ten minutes.”

“ Och ! murther ! and do you really think that just a thimblefull of it would kill a man ?”

“ A man who had taken that quantity might perhaps live from thirty to forty minutes ; but, when once it began to act, he would be dead in a few seconds.”

“ Och hone ! then I’m a dead man, sure enough.”

“ Why, you don’t mean, wretched man, that you have drunk any of that bottle, which I so particularly charged you not to touch !”

“ Only just a thimblefull, your Honour.”

“ A thimblefull ! Then make your peace with your God, for you have not a quarter of an hour to live !”

A priest was of the party, who was not in the secret; and they carried it so far as actually to allow the poor man to be confessed, and be conducted to a point from which he could see the Catholic chapel ; and there the priest administered what substitute he could for the Extreme Unction and sacrament for the dying. He then joined with the poisoned man in most earnest supplications to Mr. G., to know whether there was no possible antidote for this dreadful poison. After some hesitation, Mr. G. at length said, that he had indeed heard of some very few cases being cured by a simple remedy.

“ Oh, what was that ? he would do any thing in the world that afforded the slightest chance of his recovery ; for he had a wife and five children at home, dependent on him for their support.”

“ Why, the remedy is very simple ; but so high up these barren mountains, it must be quite impossible to find water enough ;” he well knowing, all the time, that there was a copious spring within a hundred yards of the spot.

“ Oh ! if it’s water your Honour wants, I know of a fine spring close by, and will take your Honour to it this minute.”

“ Well then, your only chance is to dilute the poison by drinking as much water as you can possibly swallow—the more the better.”

Accordingly, the poor victim ran to the spring, and began gulping down tumbler after tumbler, until he positively could not drink any more. They then laid him down on the grass, and poured water down his throat, until he was so distended that he declared, if he were to die a thousand deaths, he could not swallow one drop more.

After leaving him awhile in this condition, and giving him severe lectures on his drunken habits, Mr. G. quietly took the fatal bottle, and pouring out a glass, drank it to his speedy recovery ! The poor man at first stared, as if his eyes would leave their sockets : but, in an instant perceiving the whole trick, became most outrageously angry. He however made a vow against whisky, which, I believe, he has most religiously kept : neither, I must own, did I ever see him touch one drop of water—he got enough of that liquid on Carrân Tual to last him the rest of his life.

As may be supposed, he was most unmercifully quizzed during the remainder of the day ; but, when his wrath had somewhat subsided, he gave an amusing specimen of Milesian ingenuity in warding off the attacks of his companions : “ Arra, then, wasn’t it myself that humoured the gentlemen this morning ? Och, sure, I saw that they wanted a bit of divarshion, and so I thought I would just humour their Honours ; and didn’t I keep it up mightly well entirely, now ?”

Independently of its lakes and mountains, Killarney presents many very curious scenes of a different kind, which often afforded me no small share of amusement during my long stay.

The town itself is of a considerable size, with many good houses, and several wide, regular streets. It owes its prosperity entirely to the picturesque beauties of its environs ; as it has no commerce or manufacture whatever, and is not even on the direct road between Cork and Limerick. But these beauties have been sufficient not only to allure, year after year, a crowd of visiters, who employ its population and consume its produce, but also to induce many wealthy families to fix their permanent residence along the shores of this lovely lake. The town belongs almost exclusively to Lord Kenmare, who has an old and not very handsome mansion close to it, as well as a considerable property in the neighbourhood.

During the summer months, if the weather be fine, Killarney is filled with tourists from all nations, whose manners, appearance, and actions, are frequently not the least remarkable curiosities about the place.

Then, there are the beggars, who, for numbers, importunity, and roguery, are hardly to be equalled even in Ireland. At whatever hour you may rise, you will see a dense array of this fraternity, awaiting the arrival or departure of the earliest coaches ; and each preferring his own particular claim to the benevolence of the traveller, with all the cant and perseverance belonging to his profession, but with an ingenuity peculiar to the Milesian. Of course, blessings of all kinds, in this world and the next, are promised for the small sum of one halfpenny ; and adjurations are made to the piety, to the recollections of home, to the charity, and not unfrequently to the vanity, of the departing stranger, which few find it possible wholly to resist.

I have been often much amused to witness, in contrast to the humble importunity assumed as long as there is the least chance of getting any thing, the impudent nonchalance with which the hat is tossed on, as soon as the carnage moves, and the air of contemptuous indifference with which its rapidly retiring wheels are viewed. They then gather round the different parties, who by this time are seen starting for the several points of interest on the Lakes.

Indeed, from eight to ten o'clock, on a fine morning, the streets of Killarney display a highly animated and amusing picture. *Here*, for instance, is a large party mounted for Mangerton ; laughing at their own and each other's steeds, and endeavouring to pummel their miserable hacks into a canter, at least for the start ; in which they are assisted, *con amore*, by their attendant juvenile. *There* perhaps, stands near the inn door a solitary tourist, just caught—arrived the night before—anticipating dire imposition—dubious of the weather—and undecided what he shall do. Around him are collected divers coxswains, and buglers, guides, and would-be guides, all simultaneously endeavouring to influence his decision to their own advantage ; whilst ever and anon a sort of running chorus is maintained by the mendicants—“ Your Honour, remember the poor *widdee* and the *orphins*, your Honour—only one halfpenny for the love of God, your Honour—and the Lord Almighty prosper ye, and send ye safe home to your family,” &c. &c.

In the midst of all this clamour, perhaps. Milord having vainly exercised his physio-nomical powers to detect a single honest face, with whose owner to hold colloquy about his plans, magnanimously stalks away in solemn silence, with the fruitless hope of thereby escaping from his tormentors.

Soon after, four or five boatmen appear, slowly trudging towards Ross Castle, and bearing heavy baskets, crammed with eatables and drinkables ; from among which hangs out the tail of a salmon, to be “ skivered on Arrabus,” at Glenâ or Dinis. In five minutes more, the party belonging to the same issue forth from their inn, mount their car or carriage, and, with voices, looks, manner, alike, proclaiming what a delightful day they anticipate, start in the same direction ; while their bugler peals out a joyous air, that makes the streets quite ring again with its exciting notes. And off they dash, with laugh and jest, to be succeeded by another and yet another party, all differing in component parts, yet all agreeing in general character.

At length, however, the whole tide of tourists is poured forth ; and the streets become quite still. Near the inns, and leaning against the wall, may be seen a few guides, or boatmen, unemployed and melancholy. Opposite to them, on the church steps, are seated the tribe of beggars, smoking and swearing, grumbling at the little themselves have made that morning, and venting their spleen at the superior luck of their rivals.

If, amid this general stagnation, a solitary car, or a stray tourist, chance to appear in the street, instantly beggars, and guides, and boatmen, are all set in motion, and a general rush is made towards their unfortunate prey. Not a morning passes, but many most diverting scenes of this sort are enacted, which, I confess, amused me infinitely on many an idle day.

Further to beguile the leisure of the tourist who remains any length of time here, there is a good reading-room, to which strangers are liberally admitted ; and which is frequented by most of the residents of the town and neighbourhood. There are so many highly respectable families in and near Killarney, that the society ought to be good : but, as I saw little or nothing of it, I cannot speak of its agreeableness or sociability. From what I heard, however, I rather think that politics have of late not contributed to improve it ; and the success of

O'Connell's nominees at the last election for the county, in opposition to Lord Kenmare's interest, is understood to have caused a feud between the two families.

This was assigned as the principal cause why there was no stag hunt during the five weeks that I was at Killarney, or in the neighbourhood. The hounds are kept by the Counsellor's brother, Mr. John O'Connell, who lives at Grena, near the end of the Lower Lake : but the stags are all in the woods belonging to Lord Kenmare and Mr. Herbert, without whose permission, therefore, he cannot hunt.

It was a great disappointment to me and others, not to be able to witness a spectacle of which I had heard so much. The numerous boats upon the Lake—the thousands of spectators on the Hills—the gallant stag bounding over the heathy mountain, and at last seeking coolness and safety in the treacherous wave—the hounds giving vent to their joy at scenting the tainted gale—the bugle, the shout, the echoes—must contribute to form a scene of the most animated and interesting description. I was, however, compelled to content myself with old Gandsey's representation of it on his pipes.

By the way, I ought to apologize to him for not having before mentioned this respectable old piper. Like Fitzpatrick of Cahir, and like “ blind Mæonides,” he is deprived of sight ; which seems to make the ear and the feelings more alive to harmony. He is considered a very good performer on the pipes ; and is besides an intelligent, well-informed, and most jovial companion. He has composed both words and music himself, though not of first-rate merit ; and appears to have stored up in his memory an inexhaustible stock of the beautiful old music of Erin, with whose generally plaintive and most affecting airs he oftentimes greatly delighted me. He is acquainted with a vast number that have never been published ; and pity, indeed, it were, if such melodies should be allowed to die with him. It was not difficult to see that he entertained a high idea of himself ; and perhaps it might be guessed that he was fond of a glass or two—not more (*unless he could get them*) ; and his enemies say (for what great man is without enemies ?) that he is graspingly fond of money, and, though without sight, not blind to his own interests.

I must not conclude my little notice of Killamey without saying a single word about the Church and its services. The building itself is respectable on the outside, and very neat in the inside ; and the congregation, both of strangers and residents, numerous and orderly. The first Sunday after my arrival, the young curate officiated ; and, though he was not a very effective reader, he gave an excellent, and even eloquent, sermon, which made me more than once regret afterwards that he should lend his pulpit to strangers, whose manner and doctrines I did not by any means like so well. One, in particular, mounted the pulpit, dressed in a pair of light grey trowsers, a flowered silk waistcoat, and a black coat with a velvet collar ! and described himself in the inn album as “ Citoyen du monde !” He preached extempore for one hour and ten minutes, in favour of the Church Missionary Society ; seldom in good taste, but occasionally with considerable effect ; particularly when relating some anecdotes of Missionaries, which he brought in, by neck and shoulders, evidently not for the first time.

It had been my intention to start on a tour round the coast of Kerry ; but I was induced to delay my departure for a day or two, in order to avail myself of Captain Thomas Herbert's polite invitation, to join some mutual friends in exploring Mucruss Demesne, &c. He met us at the Abbey, which we minutely examined. Though not so extensive as many of our monastic buildings in England, it is a very picturesque ruin, and accords extremely well with the sylvan glades in which it is embosomed. It has also many curiosities of detail, which the guides faithfully point out.

The Cloisters are small in extent, and plain in architecture, but they are remarkably per-

fect ; and in the centre of their court stands the largest and most magnificent yew tree I ever beheld, whose branches extend over nearly the whole building. Mucruss Abbey is still the favourite burying place of this neighbourhood. Amongst others, we were shown the tomb of the O'Donoghues, which has this year been opened to receive almost the last of that ancient race.

From the Abbey we rambled through the adjoining grounds, to various points which command exquisite views of the Middle and Lower Lakes. It is scarcely possible to name a single demesne in Great Britain of similar extent which contains such diversified and captivating scenery as Mucruss ; and I can only repeat my hope that there will ere long be a mansion worthy of the situation and the property. From Mucruss we adjourned to Turk Cottage, Captain Herbert's elegant residence ; whence, after exploring the grounds and the cascade, we embarked in our host's four-oared barge for the Upper Lake.

The weather was at first unpromising ; but it soon cleared up, and proved a most lovely afternoon. The water was so low that we had some difficulty in passing the Long Range ; but this only occasioned those laughable embarrassments which rather increase than detract from the *agrémens* of a party of this kind. In the course of our excursion we explored a secluded and romantic branch of the Upper Lake, called Newfoundland Bay, from which we landed to view the tunnel on the new road to Kenmare.

This is a perforation of about fifteen yards through a solid rock ; and, as a picturesque object, is an additional feature to a very lovely scene ; but, as a work of art, it presented no difficulties, and therefore can claim no merit. Passing under it, we walked for some distance along the road, which enchanted us all, as well by its own beautiful scenery of rock and wood as by the noble views it exhibited of the Upper Lake.

After three or four hours spent most delightfully in this manner, we adjourned to Dinis Island, where a handsome banquet had been prepared for us, including, of course, sundry "Arrabus Skivers" of salmon, which had been caught that morning under Mucruss. We formed a right *merrie* and joyous party : it was not therefore until a late hour that we returned across the moonlit lake to Turk Cottage, where we partook of refreshments, and drove back to Killarney, after a most agreeable day's excursion.

[1] Having been favoured with an extract from the great Ordnance Survey, I can now state with confidence the height of Carrán Tual to be 3394 feet above the sea at low water, in spring tides ; and that it is decided to be the highest point in all Ireland.

The angler in Ireland : or An Englishman's ramble through Connaught and Munster, during the summer of 1833 .. (1834)

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