

The Lakes of Learning

One Irish summer

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1909

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The Lakes of Killarney

THE big stages that cross the mountains from Glengarriff to Killarney are chiefly loaded with Americans. It is singular how few other nationalities are represented in the passenger traffic. The morning we crossed there were four great vehicles carrying twenty-four persons each, and every passenger, except one German bridal couple and a funny acting Englishman, was from the United States. In our coach were representatives from Cincinnati, Washington, St Louis, Omaha, Texas, and Minnesota, and I suppose other sections were equally represented upon the three other coaches. Everybody who comes to Ireland takes this ride because it offers the grandest scenery and one of the most delightful experiences that tourists can enjoy. The coach begins to climb slowly through the beautiful glen as soon as it leaves the Eccles Hotel and continues climbing, up and up, for six miles through a dense forest of glowing green, until it emerges into a wilderness of rock and moorland, wild, picturesque, and almost entirely uninhabited. There is very little vegetation, only a few streaks and bunches of grass that grow along the cracks in the rocky surface, or in wind-carried soil that has been caught in crevices. It is one of the wildest places you can imagine, and as we go upward it becomes more so. The stage winds around the brow of a mountain that seems a solid mass of stone, and as far as one can see there is nothing else in the universe except a ribbon of silver that winds at the foot of the slope where we left a river when we began the journey. One has the sensation of awe that solitude often produces, but it is disturbed by the chatter of the passengers. It is as dreary and desolate and lonesome a place as the world contains.

This is a comparatively new road. It was not built until 1838, but, like all the roads of Ireland, it is solid and perfect and made to last forever. The old road, and the principal line of communication between the counties of Cork and Kerry for centuries, ran along the slope of Hungry Mountain, so called because it is so devoid of vegetation that a goat would have to take his luncheon if he went up there. And from there it crossed to the mountain of the "Priest's Leap," which was named from a legend that grows out of persecution of the Catholics in Cromwell's time. The driver told it in this way :

"Ye see, yer honor, in Cromwell's time there was a bounty of five pun' fer the head of a wolf and five pun' for the head of a priest ; an' a dale of money was made o' both o' 'em. Well, bedad, one foine day a priest was ridin' over the hill, whin the Tories caught sight o' him (we called thim Tories in those lays, the blaggards that did be huntin' o' the priests), and them that purshued him were jist to lay their bloody hands upon his blessed robe, whin he prayed to St. Fiachna. The bessed saint heard him, and the donkey he was ridin' gave a lape siven miles from one mountain to the ither, and ye'es can see the marks of the baste's hoofs in the solid rock to this day."

It takes but little encouragement and a minimum of material to supply legends in this desolate and weird region, where very sound seems unnatural and the trembling of a leaf causes the nerves to tingle. The road resembles Brünig Pass in Switzerland more than any other that I have seen, with the lakes of Killarney corresponding to Lake Lucerne, but it is less civilized and there are very few human habitations.

The coach keeps climbing until we come to the grand divide, 1,223 feet above the sea, where the passage from the “ Kingdom of Cork” to the “ Kingdom of Kerry,” as once they here called, is made through a tunnel about six hundred feet long and two smaller ones that are cut through the peak of the Esk Mountain. Until these tunnels were built travelers were carried over the rocks to the other end of the road on the backs of men. The country improves a little after the divide is crossed, and there is a gradual descent into a rather good grazing country which belongs to the Marquis of Lansdown but even here it is a good deal of a job for a cow to make a living, and there is a proverb that “ A Kerry cow never looks up at a passing stranger for fear it will lose the bite.”

The Earl of Lansdowne, who has been governor-general of Canada, governor-general of India, lord of the treasury, secretary of war, minister of foreign affairs, and has held other important offices in the British cabinet, is one of the largest land-owners in Ireland, although he spends very little of his time there. He has a long list of Irish titles inherited from his ancestors. In addition to being Earl Wycombe, Earl of Kerry, and Earl of Shelburne, he is Viscount Clanmaurice, Viscount Fitzmorris, Baron of Lixnaw, Baron of Dunkerron, and Viscount of Calstone, and his eldest son is the Earl of Kerry. He traces his lineage to Maurice Fitzgerald, who came over with Strongbow, who also was the ancestor of the earls of Kildare and the Duke of Leinster. The Lansdowne family have intermarried with the Leinsters, the MacCarthys, the Desmonds, the Ormondes, and other of the great families of Ireland, and, near or far, the marquis can claim relationship with nearly all the Irish nobility.

Occasionally we saw a stone cabin in the far distance, from which a pale stream of smoke was arising, but until noonday, when we dropped into the valley and approached the little village of Kenmare, there was scarcely a human habitation. At Kenmare is an attractive hotel, at which a bountiful lunch is served for two shillings, and a little time is given the passengers to rest. Those who wish to do so can take a railway train here and run over to Killarney in three-quarters of an hour, but they will lose the most attractive part of the ride and some of the sublimest scenery in Ireland. The stage commences to climb again shortly after we leave Kenmare, and crawls along the mountain sides between the rocks and the heather all the afternoon. This country was fought over again and again ages ago. The mountain range was a sort of barrier between the warlike clans of MacCarthy and O’Sullivan, who met upon its rocky slopes and slew each other for any pretext, less for reason than for the love of fighting.

The war cries of all the clans of southern Ireland, however, have been heard upon these rocks. “ Shannied-Aboo” was the cry of the earls of Desmond ; “ Crom-Aboo” was the cry of the Geraldines, and the Duke of Leinster has it for the motto upon his coat of arms. The word “ aboo” is the Gaelic equivalent to our “ hurrah.” The cry of the O’Neills was “ Lamh-Dearg-Aboo” (Hurrah for the Red Hand, which was the crest of the O’Neills). The O’Brien cry was “ Lamh-Laider-Aboo” (Hurrah for the Strong Hand). The Burkes cried “ Galraigh-Aboo” (Hurrah for the Red Englishman). The Fitzpatricks, “ Gear-Laider-Aboo” (Hurrah for the Strong and the Sharp).

In the tenth year of the reign of Henry VII. an act passed by parliament prohibited the use of these war cries in the following quaint terms :

“ Item ; Prayen the commons in this present parliament assembled ; that for as much as there has been great variances, malices, debates and comparisons between divers lords and gentlemen of this land, which hath daily increased by seditious means of divers idle, ill-disposed persons, utterly taking upon them to be servants to such lords and gentlemen ; for that they would be borne in their said idleness, and their other unlawful demeaning, and nothing for any favor or entirely good love or will that they bear under such lords and gentlemen. Therefore be it enacted and established by the same authority ; That no person nor persons, of whatsoever estate, condition or degree he or they be of, take part with any lord or

gentleman or uphold any such variances or comparisons in words or deeds as in using these words, Com-Aboo, Butler-Aboo, or other words like, or otherwise contrary to the King's laws, his crown, his dignity and his peace ; but to call on St. George in the name of his sovereign lord. King of England for the time being. And if any person or persons of whatsoever estate, condition or degree he or they be of, do contrary so offending in the premisses, or any of them be taken and committed toward, there to remain without bayle or maiprix till he or they have made fine after the discretion of the King's Deputy of Ireland, and the King's Counsail of the same for the time being."

The above is a sample of British legislation at the period that act was passed, and that conglomerate of words means simply that enthusiastic Irishmen were forbidden to excite their own emotions and the emotions of others by the cries of their clan and were admonished to use only the war cry of the King of England, who in battle is supposed to appeal to St. George.

The first glimpse of the Lakes of Killarney is obtained as the coach comes around the point of a mountain, and a great green amphitheater with a body of glimmering water at the bottom is suddenly spread out before the passengers. The outlines are fringed with forests and the lakes are studded with tiny islands of different sizes and shapes, but all glow with a vivid color that is not found anywhere else. And this picture is before the vision until the stage plunges into a tunnel of foliage at the foot of the slope, near the ancient ruins of Muckross Abbey, and follows along through a tunnel made of high stone walls and overhanging boughs until the village of Killarney is reached.

Long, long ago there were two giants, the giant of Glengariff and the giant of Killarney, and they were very jealous of each other. They kept up a continual controversy, each boasting of his own strength and valor and daring the other to cross the mountains. Finally, after everybody got tired of these threats and challenges, just as people do nowadays about the talking matches of pugilists, the giant of Killarney decided to go over to Glengariff and see what sort of a person his foe might be. Disguising himself as a monk, he crossed the divide, came down into the village, and was shown the way to his enemy's cabin. The giant of Glengariff, having heard of the approach of his rival, became very much frightened and hastily made a cradle big enough to hold his enormous carcass, and, lying down in it, ordered his wife to tuck him up with a blanket. And there he lay, pretending to be asleep, when the giant of Killarney approached the door and politely offered the compliments of the season to the lady he saw sitting on a three-legged stool with her knitting in her lap. Her hand was on the edge of a cradle twelve feet long, and she rocked it gently, crooning an old lullaby.

"Hush, you spalpeen, lest ye wake the baby !" and she continued to sing the slumber song in a soft, sweet voice.

"Let's see your baby," whispered the giant of Killarney, and she lifted the blanket gently from her husband's face.

His enemy looked at him in amazement for an instant, and then, begging the good lady's pardon for the intrusion, started back over the mountain trail as fast as his big legs could take him.

"If the baby's as big as that, how big must the ould man be !"

Valentine Charles Browne, Earl of Kenmare, owns all of the Lakes of Killarney, all the land that surrounds them, and, according to the grant of James 1, Feb. 16, 1622, "all the islands of, or in the same, and the fisheries of said lakes, and the soil and bottom thereof." He owns all the mountains round about, and one of his stewards told me that they comprised 999,000 acres. He owns the village and everything within it, even the ground on which the

railway station stands. All of the hotels occupy his soil under lease, and the insane asylum, with its six hundred patients, and the poorhouse for County Kerry, with four hundred friendless and destitute creatures within its walls.

Sir Valentine Browne, Knight of Totteridge, Lincolnshire, England, was constable, warden, victualler, and treasurer of Berwick in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, who sent him with Sir Henry Wallop in 1583 to survey escheated lands in Ireland. He remained on the island, was subsequently sworn of the privy council, represented the County of Sligo in parliament in 1588, and in June of the same year purchased from MacCarthy More, Earl of Glencare, certain lands, manors, etc., in counties Kerry and Cork, and obtained by patents from Queen Elizabeth all the remainder of the Glencare estates. He was afterward quite useful to her majesty, as his posterity have been to her successors.

Sir Valentine Browne, his grandson, was created Baronet of Kenmare in 1622 and received a grant, from which I have quoted, of all the lakes and all the lands and mountains round about them to the very bottom thereof. In 1689 these estates were forfeited by his son because of his fidelity to the unfortunate James II., but were restored to the family in 1720, and in 1724 Valentine, the fifth viscount, was made an earl. The late earl was one of the most devoted councilors and confidential advisers of the late Queen Victoria. She was very much attached to him, and he had charge of her household as vice chamberlain and lord chamberlain from 1872 to 1886, and was one of her lords in waiting until her death. His mother was Gertrude Thynne, a niece of the Earl of Bath, and is still living. The father died in 1905 at the age of eighty, after a useful and honorable career.

The present earl was educated at Eton and Oxford, served for a time in the army, went to Australia as an aid-de-camp to the Governor of Victoria, was state steward to the Earl of Aberdeen during the first term of the latter as lord lieutenant of Ireland, and married Elizabeth Baring, daughter of Lord Revelstoke of the famous firm of Baring Brothers, bankers, London. He has a brother-in-law in New York. The Earl of Kenmare is the most prominent and influential Roman Catholic in the Irish peerage. He is devoted to the interests of the church, is devout in his habits, maintains a private chapel in his London residence and at his mansion here, and a family chaplain in the old-fashioned way. He never leaves his house in the morning without prayers at which all the household and guests are present and the servants are called in from their tasks. There is a cathedral of pretentious architecture upon his grounds in the village to which his father contributed a quarter of a million dollars. It has been built within the last few years by Bishop Mangan of this diocese, and is already being enlarged, although to a stranger it seems to be big enough as it is.

Kenmare House has one hundred and nine rooms. The grand reception salon is 135 feet in length and 42 feet in width, with a deep recessed fireplace and a massive oak mantel ; the library is 48 by 42 feet, the state dining-room 52 by 30 feet, the drawing-room 36 by 24 feet, the smoking-room 25 by 17 feet, the family dining-room 21 by 16 feet, the earl's study 24 by 16 feet, her ladyship's boudoir 18 by 30 feet, the state bedroom 33 by 24 feet, and nine other state apartments of similar dimensions. There are sixteen family bedrooms, each with a bath attached, on the second floor, and twenty-six double and single bedrooms on the third floor, with a bachelor's wing of fifteen rooms entirely separate from the rest of the house and reached by a long corridor. There is a nursery and school-room 36 by 18 feet, a servants' hall 30 by 20 feet, and fifteen bedrooms for servants. Altogether there are eighty living-rooms, amply furnished, besides the kitchens, bakery, store-rooms, pantries, and servants' quarters. There is a garage, and stabling for seventeen horses, a dairy, a fish hatchery which stocks the brooks with trout and the lakes with salmon ; seven thousand acres of forest preserve with deer and other game, and, altogether, more than one hundred thousand acres of shooting upon the hills and mountains, the bogs and forests surrounding the Lakes of Killarney. In 1907 the game bag included 2,500 rabbits, 470 pheasants, 400 woodcock, 200 grouse, 150 hares, 100

snipe, and 40 teal ducks, 14 stags, 6 hinds, and 4 does. No account was taken of the trout and the salmon which abound in the lake and in the several rivers and brooks which feed it. It is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful and attractive estates in all the United Kingdom.

The fishing is very good in the spring. An Englishman at our hotel brought in several beautiful ten and twelve pound salmon, which he caught with a fly, although it was warm weather and the poorest time of year for the fishing. His lordship charges a fee of five dollars for the privilege of fishing in his lake. That pays for a license of one year, but is not transferable. A transient guest at a hotel, however, can go out with licensed fishermen as often as he likes. In the spring, when the salmon are running, nets are used, and his lordship gets the proceeds of the catch. The fish are shipped to Dublin and London, and the returns are \$3,000 and \$4,000 a year. His lordship allows none but rowboats upon the lakes. He will not permit a steamer or motor launch or even a naphtha launch, and every one who has a boat has to take out a license, for which he collects ten shillings. But the boatmen make it up during the tourist season.

The Earl of Kenmare will share his blessings, so far as his park is concerned, with you or any one else for a sixpence, and they are well worth it. I do not know any place where a lover of nature or one who is fond of strolling through the woods can get as much for his money. The demesne or park contains about nineteen hundred acres of forest and garden with many miles of walks and drives. The lodgekeepers at every one of the six gates are always alert to collect the sixpence and give you a ticket, numbered and stamped and good for that day only. But you can pass the gates with it as often as you like until they are closed at night, and a wise man will spend as much time as he can spare within the demesne every day. When we were there in June the trees were glorious ; hundreds of acres of rhododendrons were in flower and made great banks of purple blossoms ; the hawthorns, arbutus, laburnums, and other flowering trees and the woodbine were in their greatest glory. And when they fade we can admire the oaks and beeches that have been growing there for hundreds of years. Many of the trees were planted after designs. There are long avenues that are completely roofed by boughs, and at one place a magnificent cathedral of beeches has been devised of foliage, three wide aisles made by five rows of venerable beech trees more than three hundred years old, which were trimmed almost to the top when young and the branches trained to overlap so that they are almost a rain-proof roof. The trunks are smooth and almost straight, like the columns of a basilica, and the ground is covered with half decayed shells of beech nuts that have fallen during the centuries.

But the most glorious part of the demesne is the garden, which surpasses any that I have seen for years. It occupies a terrace surrounding Kenmare House upon the highest eminence in the demesne and overlooks the lakes. It is laid out in the Italian style, and the gardener told us that it was designed by the Dowager Lady Kenmare when she was a bride. If that is true her ladyship must have been a very clever landscape gardener. The most striking feature is a tennis court inclosed within a hedge of cypress ten feet high and six feet thick, with the top trimmed to represent the wall of a castle, with arches for entrances and bays and recesses where benches have been placed to accommodate spectators. This unique wall of cypress is so dense that a tennis ball will rebound from it. Adjoining the tennis court is a croquet ground, and just behind them an exquisite little cottage where her ladyship serves tea every summer afternoon to her guests.

I was told that no other garden in Ireland compares with this, and the only ones that approach it are those of the Duke of Devonshire at Lismore and the Duke of Ormonde at Kilkenny. Although those at Versailles and Fontainebleau are much more extensive, they are not so artistic.

The Lakes of Killarney are three in number and, strangely enough, have no romantic names. They really are only one lake, the Lower, Upper, and Middle lakes being connected by narrow channels only a few yards long. The three are thirty miles in circumference and the extreme end of Upper Lake is eleven miles from the extreme end of Lower Lake. The Lower Lake is the largest, being about five and a half miles long and two and a half miles wide at the widest place ; Middle Lake and Upper Lake are each about two miles long at the greatest length and about three-quarters of a mile wide at the widest point. They all contain numerous islands of different sizes. Somebody has counted them, and I think has found sixty-five, large and small. One of them, Innisfallen Island, was occupied by a monastery back in St. Patrick's time, and the famous "Annals of Innisfallen," one of the earliest and most authentic of the ancient Irish histories, was written there by the monks, who began the manuscript at least twelve hundred years ago. The original is now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and is one of the most valuable manuscripts in the world, with fifty-seven leaves, closely covered with beautiful penmanship. The earlier portion consists of extracts from the Old Testament and a history of the world down to the arrival of St. Patrick in 432. From that time it treats exclusively of Irish affairs, terminating with the year 1319. It is evidently a record of certain facts which came to the knowledge of the monks of Innisfallen Abbey during a period of nearly seven hundred years until, in 1320, the abbey was plundered and the monks massacred by Maolduin O'Donaghue and the MacCarthy's. It has since remained in ruins, a few broken walls covered with ivy, which are visited regularly by Augustinian brothers who come here on pilgrimages.

The lakes are surrounded almost entirely by a range of mountains, except on the north, where they break into low hills. There are six peaks rising over two thousand feet, including Carran-Tuel (3,314 feet), the highest mountain in Ireland ; Mangerton (2,756 feet), Purple Mountain (2,739), Devil's Punch Bowl (2,665), Toomies (2,500), and Torc (2,100). There are several other mountains which approach these in height, forming a mighty barrier between County Cork and County Kerry, and protecting Killarney from the cold southwest winds of the ocean. The Devil's Punch Bowl is an extinct volcano, and gets its name from an enormous crater near its summit which is filled with water and fed from subterranean springs. There is no bottom so far as people have been able to discover. The crater reaches down into the bowels of the earth somewhere and furnishes an inexhaustible reservoir of pure, cold water, which is now piped down to the village of Killarney.

By a curious freak of nature these mountains are all detached and separated by narrow valleys and gorges, although at a distance they seem to be in a cluster. The passes are watered with streams that fall over precipitous rocks and form numerous cascades. We came through one of them on our way from Glengariff, and nearly all the others have hard, smooth roads which are utilized for excursions on coaches, and in jaunting cars. Some of them are impassable except on horseback. They furnish delightful diversions for tourists and people who are spending the summer at the hotels, and give a good opportunity to see the scenery and Irish life. The excursion system is well organized. It is only necessary to buy a ticket and to "follow the man from Cook's." There are many short drives also and visits can be made to the islands by rowboats. There are several romantic old castles and the Earl of Kenmare has built tea houses at different points which are greatly appreciated.

There is no more delightful place in the world for rest and mild forms of enjoyment, but sporty people will find Killarney "beastly dull." It is not in the least bit exciting ; there is no dressing and there is no dancing, and some of the hotels are without barrooms. The most thrilling excitement is found in tennis, golf, fishing, walking, driving, and listening to a phonograph in the evening. There is an active rivalry between the worshipers of the Scotch and the English lakes and the admirers of the Lakes of Killarney. They all have a certain resemblance, and the latter are like Alpine lakes in miniature—not so much mountain, not so much water, but a similar canopy of blue sky and green settings. The mountains were

grouped by a competent Artist and are embroidered and fringed with foliage, but are bare as a bone on their slopes and peaks. They are good for nothing but scenery. The grass is so scarce that it doesn't pay to pasture cattle over them, and a goat would have nervous prostration from loneliness. There are said to be plenty of deer, but that is doubtful.

But as features of a picture the mountains around Killarney, with their shifting lights and shadows as the sun rises and declines, are exquisite pictures. They appear at their best when the sun goes down and the mist rises and softens their outlines. The lingering twilight leaves deep shadows of purple and blue, and every evening we sit on a bench in the hotel garden and watch them fade away like a scene in a theater when curtains of gauze are dropped one after another.

The vivid Irish imagination has furnished a volume of legends and superstitions about the lakes. Some of them have been handed down from the earliest generations. These attractions drew to them the lovers of the beautiful ages ago and they were originally known as "The Lakes of Learning," because at one time there were three monasteries there, attended by multitudes of students from all over the world. They have been a favorite theme of all the Irish poets, and the scene of innumerable romances. The legends, which account for the origin of the lakes, are not consistent. Some one neglected to close the entrance to an enchanted fountain in the mountains, which caused a flood and covered fair and fertile fields and splendid palaces with water. One of the ancestors of the O'Donaghues, who originally owned all the water and all the mountains, as the Earl of Kenmare does at present, full of skepticism and wine, defied the gods, who threatened destruction if a stone from a certain sacred well should be disturbed. With the bravado that was characteristic of his descendants, he carried the stone to his castle. When the people heard of this impiety they fled to a neighboring mountain, and in the morning when the sun rose they looked down and saw that the valley in which their homes had been was covered with water.

The O'Donaghue is the hero of most of the legends. He is identified with almost every island and with almost every glen. The legends all agree that the men and women who inhabited the lovely valley did not perish with him, but The O'Donaghue lives at the bottom of the lake in a gorgeous palace, surrounded by congenial friends and enjoys feasting and folly as much as he did before the flood. Every seven years in the summer he comes to the surface, and makes a journey from one end of the lakes to the other, riding a splendid white stallion, in an armor of gold and a helmet that glitters with diamonds. He gallops through the town and around the mountains just as he did when he was the lord of the land, and will continue to do so until the silver shoes on the hoofs of his stallion are worn out. Blessings are showered upon every one who is fortunate enough to see him. If a girl can catch a glimpse of this brilliant knight as he makes his midnight journey she is sure to be married before the end of the year.

O'Donaghue's horse, his prison, his stable, his library, his cellar, his pulpit, his table, his broom, and various other things that belonged to him are pointed out among the rocks upon the islands of the shore. Every freak of nature has some association with him.

Scores of peasants may be found who have actually seen him, and half the population believe in his seven-year visits. Many curious stories of which O'Donaghue is the hero have been invented in the generations that have passed by imaginative mothers to entertain their children. When I asked a thoughtful jaunting car driver if he believed in the periodical appearance of the ancient lord of the lake, he answered :

"Wall, I dunno', I dunno' ; me mither tould me the tale wid her own blessed lips ; me wife has tould it jist the same to our own children, and I am shure The O'Donaghue is n't in

Killarney the rist of the toime, and why shouldn't he have the pleasure of comin' for one noight ?”

St. Patrick never came to Killarney, but the legend is that he climbed up to the top of the tallest mountain, stretched out his hands over the lakes and said : “ I bless all beyint the reeks” (mountains).

Fin MacCool kept his tubs of gold in the lake near Muckross Abbey and his dog Bran watched them. “ One day a brute of an Englishman, an' a great diver intirely, came over to git the goold, and when he wint down into the wather the dog Bran sazed him by the trousers and shook the life out of him until he died, and his ghost has been wanderin' around there ivir sence.”

The shore of the lake under the windows of Ross Castle is strewn with curious-looking flat stones. They are the books of his library which The O'Donaghue threw out of the window when he was mad one day, and they turned to rocks.

When The O'Donaghue was a slip of a boy and was sitting in front of the castle an old woman came running along shrieking that the O'Sullivans had come through the pass from County Cork and were stealing the cattle. “ The O'Donaghue, thin only thirteen years old, bedad, seizes an oulde sword and kills every mother's son of the thaving blaggards, an' sticks their bodies up agin the wall as a warning to all the ruffians of the clans beyant the mount-ains.

“ When The O'Donaghue was a young man and went into his first battle he slew six hundred of his enemies in a single day. He fought so long and became so tired that his legs and arms would have fallen off his body if they hadn't been held together by his armor.

“ One day when Ossian, the poet, came to Killarney he met an old priest trying to carry a sack of corn on his back. Ossian relieved him of the burden. The priest called on the Holy Virgin to bless him, whereupon Ossian said, ‘ I help you because you are an old man and not for the sake of virgins or married women or widdies,’ for Ossian was a hathen and he didn't know any better, an' how could he know what the holy father meant when he sphoke of the Blessed Virgin ? But, nevertheless, the curse was on him, and in a minute he was an ould shrivelled, crippled crater, a dale oulder than the priest whose sack of corn he was carrying. And all this for takin' the name of Blessed Virgin in vain, and not knowing any better. But the priest, with a few words of prayer, relaved the enchantment and converted Ossian to Christianity on the sphot.”

Ross Castle was the stronghold of the O'Donaghues. It was built somewhere about the twelfth century by the celebrated Hugh O'Donaghue, who lives in the lake and rides about the country every seven years. It is an historic fact that he lived there once, although the legends that are told of him go back for centuries before its foundation. There is a massive tower or keep, about one hundred feet high and one hundred feet square, “ and ivy clasps the fissured stones with its entwining arms.” The walls of the tower are almost perfect. There is a long extension, however, entirely in ruins, but it gives an idea of the enormous dimensions of the castle. It was surrounded by outworks of great strength, and you can see traces of the round watch towers at the angles. A stone staircase leads to the top of the tower, where a beautiful view of the country can be obtained. Few ruins in Ireland are so extensive and so well kept.

Everybody has to pay a sixpence to see Ross Castle, and the money goes into the empty pocket of the Earl of Kenmare. You have to pay to see everything in this country, however, and sometimes the petty hotel charges are exasperating. They are insignificant, but every-

thing goes in the bill ; every time you draw a breath or ask a question it costs twopence. If the hotel managers would make a straight rate per day to cover all these trifles they would make a great deal more money and save a great deal of temper. The only free ruins are those of the ancient Abbey of Agahadoe, which occupy a conspicuous site on the ridge back of the town where they were built in the eighth century by Finian, the leper saint.

Ross Castle has withstood many a siege in its time, but was finally captured, dismantled, and left in its present condition during the civil war in 1652. It was attacked by General Ludlow with an army of four thousand footmen and two hundred horse, and defended by The O'Donaghue of that time. Finding it impregnable by land, Ludlow left a portion of his force to hold it in a state of siege, while he retired to Castlemaine and built a fleet of boats with which he made an attack by water. There was an ancient proverb that " Ross Castle will never fall until ships float in the Lake of Killarney," hence, the garrison remembered that saying when they saw Ludlow's flotilla approaching, and were so demoralized by the superstition that they abandoned it and laid down their arms. It was the last of the O'Donaghues. Their power and glory have never been regained.

The village of Killarney is unattractive and untidy, but it is a busy place. One doesn't understand why in a country where there is so much room to spare, the villages should not be made up of detached cottages with gardens and lawns, hedges and shade trees, instead of sections of solid blocks that look as if they had been cut out of the tenement house districts of crowded cities. Killarney is a solid mass of brick and mortar, with stuccoed fronts, painted a dingy yellow, without the slightest thing to relieve the monotony until you suddenly pass the last house and the green fields begin.

It is a great tourist center, and there are a dozen hotels and boarding-houses of different pretensions and prices. There are " licensed houses" and " unlicensed houses" and some of them are licensed for seven days in a week, which means that the proprietor has permission to sell whisky and beer from two to five o'clock on the Sabbath day. Cook's excursion parties come in like swarms of bees, buzzing around the hotels and shops where laces and other curiosities are for sale and carry off loads of queer things as souvenirs. They breakfast at seven o'clock in the morning and are piled into great four-horse coaches by nine and start off on excursions with their luncheons in baskets under the seats. They return at sunset completely tired out, but the next morning are off for Dublin or Glengariff. It is about as hard work to travel with an excursion party as anything I know of, for every moment must be economized and everybody feels under obligations to see everything.

Killarney is quite an educational center also. There are several popular schools there and several monasteries. The Franciscans conduct a theological seminary and the Christian Brothers have a college in connection with the cathedral. There are two or three convents where young ladies are educated, and a large institution in which two hundred and ten girls are being taught by the nuns to make lace, which is one of the most profitable occupations an Irish woman can engage in. And they have a School of Housewifery, conducted by the British government under the supervision of the minister of agriculture at Dublin. Paternalism is carried farther in Ireland than in Switzerland, Germany, or any other place I know of, as you will admit when you hear that twenty-three rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed mavourneens are being educated at the expense of the taxpayers as domestic servants. They are rescued from the filthy cabins in the mountains, washed, and clothed in neat liveries, natty little muslin caps are pinned to their raven tresses, frilled muslin aprons are fastened to their frocks, and they are taught how to wash dishes and cook and make beds and do plain sewing, and dust the bric-a-brac in the drawing-room and say, " Yes, me lady," and " Yes, me lord," and courtesy when they are spoken to. They learn to mend and embroider, to do up hair, to fasten dresses and other duties pertaining to the jurisdiction of a lady's maid, and, after a year or so of this training, they are found positions in the households of the nobility, where they will spend

their lives as servants and marry a footman or a gamekeeper, as will their children and grandchildren generations to come after them, because domestic service is a profession in Great Britain, and is followed by families who are trained for their work.

This school is a great thing for the Irish girls in the mountain cabins, whose lives might otherwise be hopelessly sunk in squalor and filth that seem to be inseparable from the peasant population. I have never been able to find anybody to explain why an Irish farmer piles his manure in front of the only door to his cabin. It is an habitual subject of witticism, just as it is in Switzerland, where similar customs prevail, but with thousands of acres of bare ground all around the cabin, it would seem that some other place might be found.

It occurred to me, too, as I was going through the School of Housewifery, that our government might do worse than establish similar schools in the Southern States for training colored girls in the same way, but I suppose the Supreme Court would pronounce such a scheme unconstitutional.

A house by the roadside now occupied by a farmer named McSweeney is pointed out as the birthplace of Robert Emmet.

Lord Kitchener was born about nineteen miles from here, at Crotto House, Tralee, where his father and mother were stopping for the summer. His father was a colonel in the army and was on leave from his regiment at the time of Kitchener's birth.

The great Daniel O'Connell was also born in the neighborhood, and his nephew, Sir Maurice O'Connell, lives in a stately mansion that overlooks the lower lake in the middle of a beautiful grove.

Muckross Abbey ranks with Melrose Abbey in Scotland and Kenilworth Castle in England as among the most picturesque and interesting ruins in the world. The walls and the Gothic windows, the tower and several other distinctive features are well preserved, and the ivy drapery makes it an exquisite picture. The abbey stands within the park of two hundred and ninety acres that surrounds Muckross House and is the property of Lord Ardilaun, who has many beautiful places in different parts of Ireland, and cannot possibly enjoy them all ; but none is so beautiful as Muckross House.

He purchased the property of the Herbert family who inherited it from Florence MacCarthy More, who, in 1750 married Agnes, daughter of Edward Herbert of this county, and they had one son who was the last MacCarthy More in the direct line, and that famous family became extinct, for he died without issue in 1770, and the estate passed into the possession of his mother's family, being the nearest relatives. The Honorable Arthur Herbert died in 1866, and a beautiful Celtic cross has been erected to his memory upon the highest hill in the neighborhood, overlooking the park that he prized so highly, and where he enjoyed so much pleasure. His widow and daughters lived there for thirty years until they expired, when the place was offered at auction and Lord Ardilaun bid it in for £63,000 for the estate, and paid £10,000 more for furniture, pictures, live stock, and other property, making it cost him altogether about £73,000. And now he offers it for sale—the whole thing, a house of thirty-two rooms, a park of two hundred and ninety acres, the ruins of Muckross Abbey, and history and legends galore—for £75,000.

And perhaps he would take less from the proper person. In 1907 a syndicate was organized to purchase the place and turn it into a Monte Carlo. They proposed to make the handsome old mansion a gambling-house and erect a large hotel with all possible allurements near by ; but when Lord Ardilaun learned of the scheme, he instructed his solicitors to insert in the deed a clause stipulating that it should be used for residential purposes only, and

that made it worthless to the syndicate. So Muckcross Abbey and its beautiful surroundings are still in the market.

The abbey dates back to the dawn of Christianity in Ireland, and its site was originally occupied in the fourth or fifth century by a monastery founded by St. Finian of Innisfallen and his monks. The present building, however, was erected by Donald MacCarthy More, Prince of Desmond, in 1330, and was finished by his son in 1340 for the Franciscan friars, who occupied it as a monastery and as a college. There was some kind of an institution on the same site between the monastery of St. Finian and the present one, for an ancient manuscript in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, gives an account of its destruction by fire in the eleventh century. The founder, Donald MacCarthy More, built the beautiful chapel as a burial place for himself and his posterity. It is also the burial place of the O'Donaghues of the Glens, and in the very center of the choir is a large square tomb in which was deposited the body of "The Great O'Donaghue," the chieftain of the lakes, of whom Mr. Maurice R. Moriarity, the custodian, gives many interesting legends in his history of the ruins.

The O'Donaghues were connected by marriage with the MacCarthys, kings of Munster, and had their headquarters at Blarney Castle, near Cork. Twelve generations, so far as the inscriptions can be deciphered, of that proud family are lying there, and more than twenty generations of O'Donaghues. The last MacCarthy buried here was Florence, husband of Agnes Herbert, who lived in Muckcross House until his death in 1770. The last O'Donaghue buried here was Donal, a direct descendant of The O'Donaghue of the Glens, who was a member of parliament and died in 1889. His son Jeffrey, "The O'Donaghue," as the head of the family is always called, is a barrister living in Dublin, a gentleman of high reputation and much influence, although he has lost almost everything but his proud name and a lineage that is interwoven with the history of Ireland since human actions were recorded.

The grandfather of "The O'Donaghue" was a captain in the Munster Fusiliers, which were recruited in County Kerry and was stationed at Chester, near Liverpool, the home of Gladstone, in 1860, during a religious agitation. A band of rioters were making ready to burn an effigy of the pope when Captain O'Donaghue warned the leaders that if such an insult to the holy father was offered the Kerry men of his regiment would burn the city of Chester to the ground. When this threat became known the mob dispersed, and there were no more religious demonstrations while Captain O'Donaghue and the men of Kerry were in the Chester barracks.

"The O'Donaghues were generally prayin' when they woren't foightin' or dhrinkin'," said the ancient oracle who gave me this information. "They feared none but God, and since Maolduin O'Donaghue burned the monastery of Innisfallen and murdered the monks in 1158 they have spint much toime doin' pinnance for his sins."

It is customary for the heads of these old families to use the word "The" as a prefix to their names to indicate their rank, and I have seen letters signed in that way, without the initials of the writer. For example, "The MacDermott" is a barrister of importance in Dublin. "The O'Donivan" lives at Cork and retains a part of the ancestral estates. "The O'Shea" is a clergyman of the Church of England stationed at Manchester and makes much of his position as the head of the clan. "The O'Neill" is the Lord of Londonderry, and "The O'Connor" lives at Sligo—a brother of the late Sir Nicholas O'Connor, who was British ambassador at Constantinople at the time of his death. "The O'Flaherty" is a justice of the peace near Galway, and a man of importance. And members of other old families recognize the head of their clan in a similar manner, although it carries nothing but glory and gratification with it.

"The O'Sullivans, the MacCarthys, and all the old families like the O'Donaghues, are gone; played out, as ye moight say," remarked the oracle. "For tin cinturies the O'Sullivans

ruled whole counties in Ireland, but they have lost their proid as well as their property, and are now contint to kape pooblic houses [saloons] and sit around complaining of the hard toimes. The whole country south of here is full of O'Sullivans. There's more of thim than of any other name. If anny wan were to sail across County Kerry in a balloon and cast out a bag of corn, ivery kernel would hit an O'Sullivan, but they are only proivates in the clan. The ruling line is extinct and no O'Sullivan now owns an acre of the old estates. Nor do the O'Donaghues ; they're as poor as church mice, having lost all but the name and the spirit of the race.

“ Look at that grave there ; it's filled with the bones of Black Jeffery O'Donaghue. They called him the Black Prince of the Glenflesk. He lived at Killaha Castle, situated five moiles from here and built on a rock standin' in the middle of a bog, and nobody could find the way but those who knew it. His spirit nothing could contain. He hated the English as no man ever hated thim before or since, and whin he saw an Englishman his temper would rise like the hair on the back of an angry dog. No Englishman ever came within soight of Killaha Castle and got home aloive. But Black Jeffery died in his bed after all, of tuberculosis ; ye kin see the date on the tomb—1756, age 36.

“ Did yez ivir hear about the midnight marriage of the master of Blarney Castle which took place here in the ruined abbey in the year 1590, which Quane Elizabeth an' the intire parlymint did their best to prevint ? It's a great story. The heads of the two branches of the MacCarthy family were thin united in the persons of Florence MacCarthy of Blarney Castle, the same gintleman that deludered Quane Elizabeth with his soft words and caused the invintion of the word ‘ blarney’ that is used so much these days. Waal, he was in love with Aileen MacCarthy, his cousin, daughter of Donal MacCarthy Mor, Earl of Glencare, The two factions had been inemies, and it was the policy of the English to kape thim apart, because a reconciliation would bring them togheter an' make thim more dangerous to British authority. And that was what Quane Elizabeth was trying to prevint. She feared that if the MacCarthy factions made frinds they would join Hugh O'Neill and the great Earl of Desmond, thin in rebellion, and so the marriage was forbidden by her majesty. An' that made Florence MacCarthy all the more determined to wed Aileen, who had been his sweetheart in sacrit for several years, and one day he crossed the lake wid Lady Aileen and her mother in a boat rowed by four lusty gallowglasses with their battle-axes lyin' where the oars had been.

“ They landed at midnight at the abbey, thin half in ruins, solemn and mournful, in silence and decay. The moon shone through the roofless walls and the broken windows of the crumbling shrine of Irrelagh, upon the blissed head of a venerable friar, Florence MacCarthy's chaplain, who was awaiting thim himself—one of thim who, in the dark days of Henry VIII. was expelled from the abbey at the point of a Protestant sword. Wid him was O'Sullivan Mor, MacFinian, the Countess of Glencare, and the beautiful Lady Una O'Leary, and that was all. No bard was there to sing the bridal song, no harp to give swate sounds, no banner to wave, no clansmen to raise a joyous cheer, an' no spear or battle-ax gleamed in the moonlight, but the Blissed Virgin and all the saints were lookin' down all the while, approvin', through the roofless aisles, when Florence MacCarthy and Aileen MacCarthy pledged their vows.

“ This sacred marriage was proclaimed an act of treason by Quane Elizabeth, and for that Florence MacCarthy went to the Tower, but he got the bist of it after all.”

The windows of Muckross Abbey are the most perfect of any ruin in Ireland, and the moldings of several of the doorways are in a fine state of preservation, so that the carving can be carefully studied. There is a cloister thirty-three feet square, encircled by a vaulted corridor seven feet wide and lighted by twenty-two arched windows, which is as good as if it were built yesterday. And in the center of the quadrangle is a venerable yew tree, said to be the largest in the world, having been planted by the monks at the foundation of the abbey in

1340. It was usual, so I am told, for Franciscan monks to plant yew trees in the courtyards of their monasteries, and they are found frequently in ruins. The trunk of this tree is smooth and straight to a height of twenty feet, and is about twelve feet in circumference at the base. The branches spread over the inclosing walls like an umbrella and darken the entire quadrangle, which never had any other roof.

Several legends are woven around this majestic tree which, in the eyes and hearts of the people of Killarney, is an object of great veneration. If any one should injure it, even by breaking off a twig, he would excite popular indignation. They believe that such sacrilege will be punished by the death of the guilty person within a year, and it is a remarkable coincidence that such things have occurred several times.

The kitchen, the refectory, the chapter-rooms, and several other apartments are in an excellent state of preservation and are well cared for, but the cells of the dormitory have almost disappeared. The tower stands as it was five hundred years ago, but is an empty shell, having no roof, flooring, or staircase, and visitors are prohibited from climbing the walls.

Some of the graves are quite modern. Muckross Abbey is still open for the burial of members of four families, who have ancient rights. The latest grave was made in 1902. Several of the epitaphs are quite interesting, particularly those which bear testimony to the virtues and the happiness and usefulness of the women of the O'Donaghue and MacCarthy families. For example, one of them describes a beloved wife, " who, in her progress through life, fulfilled all its duties with uniform and exemplary prudence, whose respectful love as a daughter, whose affectionate kindness as a sister, whose fond and provident care as a mother, and whose endearing tenderness as a wife, were eminently conspicuous. Combining the discharge of social obligations with piety, edifying yet unobtrusive, she lived and died a Christian. To rescue her memory from oblivion, to preserve a remembrance of her virtues for the instruction and imitation of the young, this stone is erected by her disconsolate husband."

If you want a description of Muckross Abbey that is worth reading you will find it in the works of Sir Walter Scott, who was there in 1825, and if you are pleased with that, and would like a little more of the same sort, read Lord Macaulay's account of his visit in 1849 ; in which he says that one of the boatmen on Lake Killarney " gloried in having rowed Sir Walter Scott and Maria Edgeworth about the lake when they were here twenty-four years ago, and said it was a compensation to him for having missed a hanging which took place in the village that very day."

One Irish summer (1909)

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