

I Left Belfast for Larne

The scenery and antiquities of Ireland

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“ *Erin mavourneen !* ”

Where is they land ? “ ’Tis where the woods are waving
In their dark richness to the summer air ;
Where the blue streams, a thousand flower-banks laving,
Lead down the hills in veins of light—’tis there.”

1842

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I LEFT Belfast for Larne, in company with my kinsman, Dr. Wall, of Dublin, on a rainy morning at daylight. Cowering under an umbrella, on an outside car, we felt that the promise for the day’s enjoyment was a poor one ; but we had scarce reached the base of Cave Hill, before the clouds broke away, and the chequered light thrown over the landscape through the flying clouds, was more favourable even than clear sunshine to the scenery. The view of BELFAST LOUGH from CAVE HILL is exceedingly fine, commanding, besides the whole of the Lough, the greater part of the Down county, and in clear weather, the coast of Scotland. The fine sheet of water lying below the eye, (the Vinderius of Ptolemy,) is called, indiscriminately, the Bay of Carrickfergus and Belfast Lough. It is, (says Curry’s Guide to the County of Antrim, to which I am indebted for much information,) about twelve miles long and five broad, measuring from Groomsport, in Down, to Whitehead, on the Antrim side. The breadth gradually diminishes from the entrance to the embouchure of the river Logan, and the channel, formerly very shallow near that place, has been so deepened by skilful management, as to admit vessels which draw thirteen feet of water, close to the wharfs. There is a deep pool, called Carmoyl or Garmoyle, about one mile from the south shore, opposite Hollywood, where vessels ride at low water, when the bank within twenty yards is completely dry. There are scarcely any rocks in this bay, except one reef on the north side, (which is covered at high water,) called by the Irish the Briggs, *i. e.* the tombs ; but by the Scotch the Clachan, from its resemblance to a village when uncovered at low water. There is a shoal a little southwest of Carrickfergus, over which lies three fathom of water at ebb-tide. The Speedwell, a Scotch ship, in King William’s reign, was the only ship ever known to suffer on it. The Down coast is distinctly seen during the drive to Carrickfergus, and is beautifully diversified with seats and villages ; of these the most important are Hollywood and Bangor, whose sites appear peculiarly well chosen. Near the latter town, at a little inlet called Groomsport Bay, the Duke Schomberg first cast anchor. At the entrance are seen the Copeland Isles, so called from a family of that name settled on the coast of Down in the twelfth century ; and passing a few miles onward, by a range of fine villas, the town and castle of Carrickfergus are presented in the front field of the view. The latter is a bold and magnificent object, standing upon a reef of rocks projecting into the bay, by which means in this approach its outline is most clearly and strongly defined to the eye of the spectator. The shore near Carrickfergus is said to be particularly adapted to bathing, from its freedom from mud and ooze, and the cottages erected along the shore, are let at high rents during the bathing-season. It was in the Bay of Carrickfergus that Paul Jones appeared in 1778, and, after a bloody engagement, captured the British sloop-of-war, Drake.

The CASTLE OF CARRICKFERGUS forms a most noble projection on the bay, and in every view of the town is a most conspicuous and picturesque object. At common tides three sides of the building are enclosed by water. The greatest height of the rock is at its further extremity, where it is about thirty feet, shelving considerably towards the land ; the walls of the castle following exactly its different windings. [1] Towards the town are two towers, called, from their shape, half-moons, and between these is the only entrance, which is defended by a strait passage, with embrasures for fire-arms. About the centre of this passage was formerly a drawbridge ; a part of the barbican that protected the bridge can still be seen. A dam, west of the castle, is believed to have been originally made to supply the ditch at this entrance with water. Between the half-moons is a strong gate, above which is a machicolation, or aperture for letting fall stones, melted lead or the like, on the assailants. Inside this gate is a portcullis, and an aperture for the like purpose as that just mentioned ; the arches and each side of this aperture are of the Gothic kind, and the only ones observed about the building. In the gun-room of these towers are a few pieces of light ordnance. A window in the east tower, inside, is ornamented with round pillars ; the columns are five feet high, including base and capital, and five inches and a half in diameter. The centre column seems to be a rude attempt at the Ionic ; the flank columns have the leaves of the Corinthian ; their bases consist of two toruses. Within the gates is the lower yard, or balium ; on the right are the guard-room and a barrack ; the latter was built in 1802. Opposite these are large vaults, said to be bomb-proof, over which are a few neat apartments occupied by the officers of the garrison, ordnance-storekeeper, and master-gunner. A little southward are the armourer's forge, and a furnace for heating shot ; near which, on the outer wall of the castle, is a small projecting tower, called the lion's den.

The tower is divided into five stories ; the largest room was formerly in the third story, with semicircular windows. It was called Fergus's dining-room, and was twenty-five feet ten inches high, forty feet long, and thirty-eight broad. Within the keep was formerly a draw-well, thirty-seven feet deep, the water of which was anciently celebrated for medicinal purposes. This well is now nearly filled up with rubbish.

The following notice of this castle is given in a survey by George Clarkson, in 1567. " The building of the said castle on the south part is three towers, viz., the gate-house tower in the middle thereof, which is the entry at a draw-bridge, over a dry moat ; and in said tower is a prison and porter-lodge, and over the same a fair lodging, called the constable's lodging ; and in the courtain between the gate-house and west tower in the corner, being of divers squares, called Cradyfergus, is a fair and comely building, a chapel, and divers houses of office, on the ground, and above the great chamber and the lords' lodging, all which is now in great decay as well as the couverture being lead, also in timber and glass, and without help and reparation, it will soon come to utter ruin."

We enjoyed the delightful view of Carrickfergus Bay, by snatches, during almost the whole of the road from Cave Hill to Larne. It was the first week in February, a time of the year when in America we have almost forgotten the colour of the snow-covered ground, and here were fields of the brightest and tenderest green, cattle grazing, birds singing, every sign of an October morning, indeed, except the leaves on the trees. The wintriest picture of the scene was an occasional bleaching-field, where, in long stripes upon the grass, lay the white linen, resembling the vanishing snow-wreaths in an American thaw. There seemed to me very little difference between summer and winter in Ireland, for in my first visit to the country, in August, I was travelling with the same degree of clothing, and I am sure the winds were as chilly then as now, and the fields no greener.

We came very suddenly upon LARNE, and at the same moment that we turned over the edge of the deep glen on which it lies, the sun broke out upon the lovely bay and village below, illuminating the whole scene with a light such as a painter would have chosen. It was, indeed, a delicious picture, and there was something Italian, no less in the soft vapoury light in which it was bathed, than in the position and aspect of the town. Island Magee lay in fine outline across the bay, and on a narrow tongue of land, called the Curraàn, stood the ruins of an old castle, giving a romantic and foreign look to the entire scene. Our car-driver descended too fast for us, though our breakfast was at the foot of the hill, and entering a narrow and old-fashioned street, he deposited us at a small and tidy inn, so like the same thing in Italy, (the street and inn of a small village between Rome and Florence,) that the illusion was difficult to shake off. We ordered our breakfast, and started out for a stroll along the crescent of the little bay, and, hungry as we were, the impression made on us by its spring-like softness and beauty, is among the most agreeable of my Irish recollections. Larne, (says the Guide Book to the Giant's Causeway,) was anciently called Inver, (which signifies *lowly situated*.) Its trade was once of some importance, and even yet it is not contemptible. The duties in the year 1810, amounted to £14,000, and there is still occasion to make it the residence of a collector. The chief articles of commerce here are rock-salt and limestone, both of which are exported in very considerable quantities. There is a good deal of cotton-weaving, and a manufacture of sail-cloth, with some other traffic connected with nautical affairs, Larne being the best harbour on this coast, from Belfast Lough to Derry.

The town consists of two divisions, usually called the old and new towns ; the old one is built on rather an irregular plan, the latter consists of one long avenue, in which there are several excellent houses. The population amounts to about three thousand souls. There are, besides the parish church, one Methodist meeting-house, three Presbyterian, and one Roman Catholic, chapel.

The most interesting historical record, in the vicinity of Larne, is the castle of Olderfleet, before mentioned, standing on the extremity of the peninsula, called the Curraàn, [2] a sort of natural pier, forming the northern side of the Larne harbour ; and completely commanding the strait by which it is entered. In the road from the town to the castle, the ruins of a little chapel, called Clondumales, are passed. The castle is now an insignificant ruin, but the advantage and dignity of its situation can never fail of attracting the visitor. It is supposed to have been erected by one of the Bissetts, a powerful Scotch family, upon whom Henry III. bestowed large possessions in the barony of Glenarm, some of which were forfeited by Hugh Bissett in the reign of Edward II. for rebellion. James M'Donnell, Lord of Kantyre, asserted his claim to this land in right of the Bissetts, but his son Æneas was content to accept of them on conditions approved of by Elizabeth, viz., that he would not carry arms under any but the kings of England, and would pay an annual tribute of hawks and cattle.

It was on the peninsula of the Curraàn that Edward Bruce effected his landing, in 1315, with the expectation of making himself king of Ireland, which vain and foolish ambition caused so much bloodshed through the east of Ireland, and was productive of such dreadful calamities, to the English settlers particularly.

The castle of Olderfleet became important as a defensive fortress against the predatory bands of Scots, who infested the north-eastern coasts, and was generally under the direction of a governor. In 1569, we find Sir Moyses Hill held this office, but in 1598, being thought no longer useful, it was abolished. After changing proprietors several times, the castle was finally granted to Sir Arthur Chichester, in 1610, by James I. At Olderfleet will be found a ferry-boat, which plies regularly between that point and Island Magee, for which passage one

penny is demanded ; and, having landed, the pedestrian will find two roads, one towards Brown's Bay, another along the Larne side : let him take the former. Of this island a curious and brief account is to be met with in a private MS. in this county, which mentions that in the reign of Elizabeth it was a complete waste, without any wood, although a fertile soil ; and that the queen had granted a lease of it to Savage, a follower of the Earl of Essex. At this time, says the MS., it was inhabited by the Magees, from whom it derives its name.

Not far from the landing-place stands a druidical cromlech. The covering stone, which rests on three supporters, is six feet in length, and of a triangular shape ; its inclination is to the rising sun. On the east of Brown's Bay is a rocking-stone, or giant's cradle, which was said to acquire a rocking, tremulous motion at the approach of sinners or malefactors : there were many of these over the face of the kingdom, but they are now dislodged in most places, so that the few which remain are most interesting curiosities. They were so ingeniously poised, that the slightest impulse was capable of rocking a mass which the greatest strength was unable to dislodge ; nor does there appear to be any contrivance adopted but the circumstance of placing the stone upon its rude pedestal. Until a very late period, Island Magee was the residence of witches, and the theatre of sorcery : in 1711, eight females were tried upon this extraordinary charge in Carrickfergus, and the memory of Fairy Brown is still a cause of terror among the neighbouring peasantry.

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THE inn parlour at Larne was very clean, and the breakfast excellent. Two books graced the old-fashioned sideboard, of which one was a volume I scarce thought to stumble upon so far from home, a Biography of the Heroes of the American Revolution, printed in Cincinnati, Ohio. I had no time to refresh my memory with it, however, for the day shone bright through the little inn-windows, and our expeditious landlord, who was to drive us himself to Glenarm, had his tandem-car at the door, by the time we had polished our first egg-shell. The car and team were the worst we met with on our excursion, but all deficiencies were made up by the enthusiasm with which we were driven. I never saw a much more damaged grey mare than the wheeler, but she was "persuaded" in a style that would have worked speed into a tortoise. Our Jehu was a merry, pleasure-loving looking boy, with a very big arm, and a most formidable whip, and spite of the dreadful dislocation of the car's movement, I was in a constant laugh at the tender terms with which he accompanied blows that threatened to break in the poor creature's ribs at every repetition. Imagine the contrast between tune and accompaniment in a performance like this : "Come up, woman !" (thwack !) "Go along, pet !" (thwack ! thwack !) "Whew, sweetheart !" (thwack !) "Hip, old mare !" (thwack ! thwack ! thwack!) And "*da capo*" for twelve Irish miles.

The coast from Larne to Glenarm reminded me of the road along the Mediterranean in the south of France. The hills are not so high, nor the road carried so loftily as that over the maritime Alps, but the profiles of the coast of Antrim are bolder and finer, and, indeed, nothing can surpass the beauty of the successive views got at every turn of the road. We rounded a noble promontory into Glenarm, the church-spire first breaking on the view, and the towers of the castle immediately after—the whole apparition of the town and its fine points of picturesque resembling the moving tableaux of theatrical scenery. We lost no time in making for the castle, and, turning out of the street, came directly upon the bridge connected with its lofty and superb barbican. A small mountain-river brawls between the town and the lofty structure which, in feudal days, lodged its master the M'Donnell, and from the deep water rises directly the stern old wall, with its embrasures and towers, in as high preservation as on the day it was completed. A great part of the walls and ornamental architecture of Glenarm are modern, but all the additions are executed in the finest spirit of antiquity. A more

beautiful gem than the castellated structure, nestled between the overhanging sides of this ravine, I never have seen. It has all the charms, beside, of high care and cultivation, the deer-park stretching away up the valley, and the green swards and walks within the grounds kept with the nice care which distinguishes the noble demesnes of England. The excellent Guide to Antrim, (which is graced with drawings by the distinguished scholar Petrie,) gives the following information relative to Glenarm and its dependencies.

“ The village of Glenarm consists of about two hundred cottages, and appears originally to have been built for the clansmen of the noble family, whose castle stands beyond the river. The castle is a stately, ancient pile, in a commanding position ; from our front there is a view of the bay and its enclosing promontories, and from the other a prospect up the wooded glen towards the deer park. The castle is large, and contains some excellent apartments ; its exterior presents something of the character of a baronial castle of the fifteenth century. The approach to the castle is by a lofty barbican standing on the northern extremity of the bridge. Passing through this, a long terrace, overhanging the river, and confined on the opposite side by a lofty, embattled curtain-wall, leads through an avenue of ancient lime-trees, to the principal front of the castle, the appearance of which from this approach is very impressive. Lofty towers, terminated with cupolas and gilded vanes occupy the angles of the building ; the parapets are crowded with gables, decorated with carved pinnacles, and exhibiting various heraldic ornaments.

The hall is a noble apartment, forty-four feet in length by twenty in breadth and thirty-feet high ; in the centre of which stands a handsome billiard-table. Across one end passes a gallery, communicating with the bed-chambers, and supported by richly ornamented columns, from the grotesque ornaments of which springs a beautiful grained ceiling.

On the principal floor are several noble apartments ; the dining-parlour, forty feet by twenty-four, and the drawing-room, forty-four by twenty-two, are the most spacious : the small drawing-room, library, &c., though of considerably less dimensions, are most commodious apartments. The demesne of Glenarm is very extensive, and beautifully wooded : it has latterly been much improved, and many obstructions to the view removed. There is also an enclosure in the glen, called the Great Deer Park, which is generally supposed to be the most comprehensive park in the kingdom, and the venison fed here the choicest.

The parish-church stands near one of the entrances to the demesne, upon the beach, with a small enclosed cemetery around. There are no monuments in the interior.

In the burying-ground, around the church, stand the remains of a cruciformed building, formerly a monastery for Franciscan friars of the third order.

This monastery was founded in 1465, by Robert Bissett, a Scotchman, who was banished his country for aiding in the murder of the Duke of Athol, and was established here by Henry III. The estates were subsequently forfeited by the rebellion of Hugh Bissett, in the reign of Edward II. About this time, John More M'Donnell, son of John, Lord of the Isles, landed here, and marrying Mary, daughter of Sir John Bissett, claimed the lands called Glenshiesk, that is, the baronies of Carey and Glenarm ; and thus it was that the Antrim family became entitled to the Bissett's property. The barony of Dunluce became the property of the M'Donnell's in right of M'Quillan's daughter, who married a M'Donnell, and so the claim of the M'Donnells to three baronies of the county became perfectly plain. This family was ennobled by the title of Viscount Dunluce, in the person of Sir Randal M'Sorley M'Donnell, of Dunluce, June 25th, 1618. The same distinguished personage was two years after raised to the Earldom of Antrim. His son Randal, afterwards Marquis of Antrim was equally remark-

able for his abilities and misfortunes. He was treacherously arrested on one occasion by Munro, while entertaining him with hospitality at his castle of Dunluce, and confined in the castle of Carrickfergus, whence he escaped to York, and complained to the queen. Returning to Ireland again with instructions, he was seized once more by the avaricious and treacherous general, and committed to the same castle, from which he a second time effected his escape, and flying into England, by the assistance of the Marquis of Montrose, was commissioned to raise a force in Ireland for his majesty and transport it into Scotland to oppose the Covenanters. The marquis married, first, the widow of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, and, secondly, Rose, daughter of Sir Henry O'Neill, of Shane's Castle, but dying without issue, the title of marquis became extinct, and the earldom devolved on his brother Alexander.

The monastery of Glenarm, though founded by the Bissetts, appears to have been retained by the crown from the time of Edward II., and granted to Alexander M'Donnell in 1557, in the reign of Queen Mary, at which time he was presented by the lord deputy, the Earl of Sussex, with a gold sword and silver-gilt spurs for his services against the Scots.

The remains of the monastery are very insignificant. Near the eastern end stands a monument, dated 1720, bearing the crest of a hand and dagger, but the inscription is not legible. The tomb-stones all round are ornamented by the arms of each family carved thereon ; and from the ages on the slabs, it would appear, that longevity is a gift bestowed upon the innocent inhabitants of Glenarm. The ages on the tombs, some exceeding one hundred years, may, perhaps, prove this to be that blessed portion of " this sainted isle," where the inhabitants live so long, that they sometimes find a continuance of existence burdensome, in which case their friends are said to convey them to an adjacent country, where the spirit will sooner relax its tenacious hold.

There are some members of the Antrim family buried at Glenarm ; but the Abbey of Bona Margery, near Ballycastle, is their place of rest. In the fifteenth century, O'Neill the Great was killed in the camp of Sorley Boy, and his body, being removed to Glenarm, was interred in the Franciscan monastery of that place. Not long after, a friar from Armagh appeared at the monastery, and was admitted to its shelter and hospitality ; and when near about to take his leave, he thus addressed the abbot : " Father, I am come from our brothers of Armagh, to beg that you would grant me leave to remove the body of the great O'Neill, who lies buried here, to the grave of his ancestors at Armagh. "

The abbot paused awhile, then answered, " Have you brought hither the corpse of my Lord James, of Cantyre, which was interred amongst the strangers at Armagh ?" To which the friar replying, that he had not ; " Then," said the abbot, " while you walk over the grave of my Lord James, of Cantyre, at Armagh, I will trample upon the great O'Neill at Glenarm ;" and so, at midnight, dismissed his guest.

The Bay of Glenarm is formed by a deep circular winding of the shore, and is protected on each side by lofty headlands. There is deep water here, and a quay might readily be formed by building upon a natural basaltic pier on the north side of the bay. This would be not only of great advantage here, but of very universal benefit to the shipping in the northern part of the Irish Sea ; for, from the tremendous swell, and precipitous shore, the land is unapproachable when the wind blows from the north-east, nor is there a sheltering harbour on this coast from Lough Foyle to Larne. Further, the fishing along the coast is at present so exceedingly precarious, that it does not yield a sufficient return to the poor seaman, who has the hardihood to prosecute it. This would be remedied, to a certain extent, by the erection of a pier in this harbour, where the little skiff might fly for protection when the sea assumed one of those angry perturbations which are so sudden and so frequent on the Antrim coast. At present, for

seven months and upwards, the fisherman's boat is drawn up on the beach, and the inverted hulk secured by a quantity of large stones until the return of the milder season ; for as he has no place of retreat in the hurricane, and he dares not approach the shore while it continues, he is obliged to abandon this vocation altogether, and seek another and less perilous mode of subsistence.

We were very glad to be rid of our two miserable jades and the Larne post-car, and, with many a lingering look behind at the romantic castle of Glenarm and its green valley and bright river, we took the new road to Cushendall. If the engineer of the new and capital coast-road of Antrim had worked with a poet and painter at his back, he could not have laid out its course more agreeably to the eye and the imagination. It is constructed with equal skill, taste, and enterprise, cliffs cut through, chasms crossed, water-courses walled and bridged a roughly-ribbed and jagged coast, in short, traversed by a road as smooth and almost as level as a tennis-court. I have been surprised by the excellence of the roads all over Ireland, but by none so agreeably as this.

With an easy car, a smart little Shetland mare, a silent, but good-natured driver, and a bright sun, we should have been difficult not to have enjoyed our drive from Glenarm to Cushendall. We crossed the outlets of several deep and romantic glens, and observed that there was not one without its waterfall. Over one or two, at the brow of the precipice from which the white torrent took its first leap, we noticed light bridges, and plantations in their neighbourhood, indicating park-scenery on the table-land above. We soon entered upon the curve of the Red Bay, and crossed the entrance of the wild VALE OF GLENARIFF, " called sometimes Glen-aireamp, the valley of numbers, and Glen-aireachaib, the valley of chiefs." Up this glen is the waterfall with the musical name of Isnaleara, which sends its waters to the sea near the caves of Red Bay. The prospect to the west is terminated by the lofty conical summit of Cruach-a-crue, while that to the north is limited by the extraordinary mountain of Lurgeidan, not unlike the frustum of an enormous cone of considerable altitude, but whose base is disproportionately narrow. Passing the neglected hamlet of Waterford, at the mouth of the Glenariff river, the caves of Red Bay are reached : they are excavations probably formed at some remote period by the inroads of the tide, which is now excluded by the embankment in front, in a species of soft red sand-stone. There are three of tolerable magnitude, one of which is very appropriately converted into a smith's forge, and affords a very Cyclopean appearance. A second is reported to be the residence of a female, (Nancy Murray, the driver called her,) whose trade is the sale of illicit spirits. The ruined castle of Red Bay towered above us as we passed from a lofty arch cut through the southern extremity of one of the red cliffs, and beneath this is a cave, said once to have been used as a school. The castle was built, it is said, by the Bissetts, from whom the Antrim family derive this barony.

A fine conical mound rose up before us as we approached Cushendall, and a few minutes brought us in sight of this most picturesque little village. I was immediately reminded of Amalfi, in looking down upon it ; and, indeed, this whole coast has the peculiar character of that of the Bay of Salerno. The softness of the atmosphere added something no doubt to the resemblance—for I descended Scaracatoja, on my way to Salerno in the same month, and with very much such weather.

We entered the small inn of Cushendall, and found the hostess, a remarkably handsome young woman, reading the Bible. Religion and neatness are inseparable, as every traveller knows ; and after a look into the cheerful kitchen and tidy little parlour, I regretted that night had not overtaken us at Cushendall. While our next Jehu was getting ready his car, however, we sat down by the kitchen-fire and lunched upon most exemplary bread and butter, our modest and neatly-dressed landlady attending upon us with a kindness and ease that would

have graced the castle of Glenarm. If I were ever in want of romantic scenery and a pleasant retreat from the world, Cushendall would be among the first spots that would occur to my memory. Our horse and car from this inn were the best we saw on our tour to the north, and, with a fine lad for a driver, we whirled away towards the wild mountain-road that lies between Cushendall and Ballycastle. We left the coast for some time, and on reaching it again, came in sight of the magnificent headland of FAIR HEAD, one of the noblest points of this remarkable coast. “The promontory of Fair Head rises perpendicularly to the height of six hundred and thirty-one feet above the level of the sea. On approaching its summit, the tourist will perceive two small lakes, Lough Dhu and Lough-na-Cranagh, and near to its highest point, a curious cave, said to have been a Pict’s house.” The view from this headland is of a most enchanting description—to the west, the whole line of finely variegated limestone and basaltic coast, as far as Bangore Head ; the beautiful promontory of Renbaan or Whitehead, majestically presenting its snow-white front to the foaming ocean—the swinging-bridge and bay of Carric-a-rede—beyond this, Sheep Island—and directly in front, the island of Raghery ; and to the east, the Scottish coast, &c. as already described.

The promontory of Fairhead is formed of a number of basaltic colossal pillars, many of them of a much larger size than any to be seen at the Causeway ; in some instances exceeding two hundred feet in length, and five in breadth ; one of them forming a quadrangular prism, thirty-three feet by thirty-six on the sides, and of the gigantic altitude we have just mentioned. It is said to be the largest basaltic pillar yet discovered upon the face of our globe, exceeding in diameter the pedestal that supports the statue of Peter the Great, at Petersburg, and considerably surpassing in length the shaft of Pompey’s Pillar, at Alexandria. At the foot of this magnificent colonnade is seen an immense mass of rock, similarly formed, like a wide waste of natural ruins, which are by some supposed to have been, in the course of successive ages, tumbled down from their original foundation, by storms or some violent operation of nature. These massive bodies have sometimes withstood the shock of their fall, and often lie in groups and clumps of pillars, resembling many of the varieties of artificial ruins, and forming a very novel and striking landscape the deep waters of the sea rolling at their base with a full and heavy swell.

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NEAR Fair Head is a singular fissure in the face of the precipice, called Fhir Leith, or the GRAY MAN’S PATH. The entrance to the pass at the top is extremely narrow ; and a joint of green-stone, which has fallen across it, forms a sort of natural gate, through which the bold inquirer must descend, and which conducts to a gradually expanding passage leading to the base. There are said to be one or two similar chasms along the summit, which have frequently proved fatal to cattle pasturing upon the headland. These cliffs suggest the probability of accidents of a more serious kind, and in the Dublin Penny Journal, (the best conducted and most valuable work of its kind in Great Britain,) I find the following anecdotes relative to accidents in this neighbourhood. “From the Aird Snout, a man, named J. Rane, tumbled down while engaged in searching for fossil-coal, during a severe winter ; and, strange to say, was taken up alive, although seriously injured by the fall. Another man, named Adam Morning, when descending a giddy path that leads to the foot of Port-na-Spania, with his wife’s breakfast, who was at the time employed in making kelp, missed his footing, and tumbling headlong, was dashed to atoms ere he reached the bottom. The poor woman witnessed the misfortune from a distance ; but supposing, from the kind of coat he wore, that it had been one of the sheep that had been grazing on the headland, she went to examine it, when she found instead, the mangled corpse of her husband.” Another story is told of a poor girl, who, being betrothed to one she loved, in order to furnish herself and her intended husband with some of the little comforts of life, procured employment on the shore, in the manu-

facture alluded to, with some other persons in the neighbourhood. Port-na-Spania, as will be observed, is completely surrounded by a tremendous precipice from three to four hundred feet high, and is only accessible by a narrow pathway, by far the most difficult and dangerous of any of those nearly perpendicular ascents to be met with along the entire coast. Up this frightful foot-way was this poor girl, in common with all who were engaged in the same manufacture, obliged to climb, heavily laden with a burden of the kelp ; and, having gained the steepest point of the peak, was just about to place her foot on the summit, when, in consequence of the load on her shoulders shifting a little to one side, she lost her balance, fell backwards, and ere she reached the bottom, was a lifeless and mangled corpse. To behold women and children toiling up this dreadful ascent, bearing heavy loads, either on their heads or fastened from their necks and shoulders, is really painful, even to the least sensitive, unaccustomed to the sight—and yet the natives themselves appear to think nothing whatever of it.

An anecdote is also related of a man who was in the habit of seating himself on the edge of a cliff which overhung its base, at Poortmoor, to enjoy the beauty of the widely-extended scene. One fine summer morning, however, having gained the height, and taken his accustomed seat, while indulging in the thoughts and feelings which we may suppose the scene likely to inspire, “ a change came o’er the spirit of his dream”—the rock upon which he was perched gave way, and, in the twinkling of an eye, bore him on “ its rapid wing” to the foot of a precipice, where it sunk several feet into the earth—safely depositing its ambitious bestrider on the shore, at a distance of fully four hundred feet from the towering eminence off which he had made his involuntary aerial descent.

The shore in this neighbourhood is beautifully indented with coves, made partly by the action of the sea, and partly by the wear of the mountain-torrents. One of these forms a beautiful fall, called THE LEAP, which in rainy seasons is an object of great beauty. Night closed upon us as we entered Ballycastle, and we were happy to find ourselves at another comfortable inn, and within a two hours’ drive of the Causeway. This little town possesses a very strong interest for the historian and antiquarian, as well as the geologist and traveller. The collieries of Ballycastle have, at different periods, occupied the attention of speculators ; and it is confidently believed they will still prove a source of wealth to Ireland. But a more than ordinary interest is attached to them from a discovery made about seventy years ago by the miners employed in the works. Mr. Hamilton, in his Letters on the Antrim Coast, says, that about the year 1770, while the miners were pushing forward an *adit* towards the bed of coal in an unexplored part of the Ballycastle cliff, they unexpectedly broke through the rock into a narrow passage, so much contracted and choked up with various drippings and deposits on its side and bottom, as to render it impossible for any of the workmen to force through that they might examine it further. Two lads were therefore made to creep in with candles, for the purpose of exploring this subterranean avenue, they accordingly proceeded for a considerable time, with much labour and difficulty, and at length entered into an extensive labyrinth, diverging into numerous apartments, in the mazes and windings of which they were completely bewildered and lost. After various vain attempts to return, their lights were extinguished, their voices became hoarse and exhausted with frequent shouting ; at length, becoming completely fatigued, they sat down together in utter despair. Meanwhile their friends without, alarmed for their safety, used equal exertions to indicate their presence, but in vain ; at length, it occurred to one of the subterranean wanderers, that the sound of his hammer against a stone would be better heard than the sound of a human voice, which artifice succeeded in directing their friends to the place where the two young adventurers were seated in despondence, and so ultimately restored them to the light of the sun, after an absence of twelve hours.

Thirty-six chambers were discovered here, all trimmed and dressed by excellent hands ; also baskets and mining-instruments, and other demonstrations of the original miner's knowledge and expertness in the art, equal to that of the present age. No tradition remains in the country of the working of this mine ; and the peasantry, who attribute all works of antiquity in this kingdom to the Danes or the giants, in this instance prefer the former. But this conclusion is erroneous, as is very satisfactorily proved by the writer of the above extract. Another argument in favour of the supposition, that these collieries were wrought anciently, is derived from this curious circumstance. Bruce's Castle, on the Island of Raghery, appears to have been built with lime, which had been burned with sea-coal, some cinders of which may still be detected in the mortar, and bear a strong resemblance to those of Ballycastle coals. Now these coals, in all probability, were brought from Ballycastle ; for the English collieries were not then in general use, and this was more than five centuries ago.

About two miles north-west of the town of Ballycastle, on a narrow peninsula, composed of white limestone, which projects its perpendicular front into the sea, are the ruins of the ancient CASTLE OF KENBAAN, or the White Promontory a name derived from that of the precipitous cliff on which it stands.

At present little remains of this building except a part of the massy walls of the tower or keep, which, from its bold and romantic situation, adds not a little to the beauty of the scenery of this wonderful coast. During summer, it is often frequented by parties, and the scene of many a festive collation ; where instead of the grim warder pacing at its gate, are seen inside the portal the " fairest, of the fair."

Tradition states, this building to have been erected by the Irish sept of M'Hendrie ; but as its scanty ruins bear a striking resemblance to those castles reared by the first English settlers on the coast from the Boyne to the Bann, we think its erection may, with greater probability, be ascribed to them, or, if it be an Irish castle, it is at least erected on the plan of those of the adventurers.

Be this as it may, about the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, we find it held by the Scottish clan of M'Alister, who arrived in Ireland with the M'Donnells from Cautyre. In 1568, the M'Alisters entered into a conspiracy against the English quartered in those parts, and in an encounter which took place, two English horsemen were slain ; and soon after " Rannel Oge M'Alister Caraghe," chief of the M'Alister, was killed in revenge, by some English soldiers. On this commotion, Captain William Piers, governor of Carrickfergus, and seneschal of the county of Antrim, proceeded with some troops to the Glynnns, where he made three of the M'Alisters prisoners, one of whom he hung in chains ; and Alexander, chief of that sept, making his submission about this time, the M'Alisters sunk beneath the English power. Many of this name are still to be found in the *Glynnns*.

We were up with the lark on the morning that we left Ballycastle for the Causeway, but our attentive host had anticipated us, and our breakfast was smoking before a brilliant turf-fire. Dawn was just creeping into a sky fortunately clear, as we flourished away, Irish fashion, from the inn-door, and broad daylight found us near the far-famed CARRICK-A-REDE. The new road runs close to this singular chasm, and we had no difficulties to contend with, but the mud and water with which the wet season had covered the whole country. The " flying-bridge," as it is called, is removed during the winter, but the scenery of the spot, in other respects, is not susceptible of change, as there is not a tree within sight, and the grass on the summit is as bright in winter as in spring. Carrick-a-Rede signifies *the rock in the road*, and it is so called because it interrupts the salmon in their passage along the coast. The rock is an insulated crag of rudely prismatic basalt, connected with the main-land by a bridge of ropes,

thrown across a chasm, sixty feet in breadth and eighty-four in depth. This flying-bridge which is not unlike the connecting-bridge between Holyhead Mountain and the South Stack, is thus formed ; two strong cables, parallel to each other, are fastened to rings inserted in the solid rock, on each side of the chasm, and the narrow interval of the ropes is occupied by a boarded pathway. The danger in crossing is attributable to an irregularity in planting the foot upon the board, which, of course, recoils against the impression too soon, and precipitates the unguarded and courageous venturer into the deep chasm below. Persons accustomed to walk along planks may safely venture over, and the women and boys attached to the fishery, carry great loads across with the utmost contempt of danger, and apparent ease. It should be remarked, that the Island of Carrick-a-Rede is of nearly equal elevation with the main land, three hundred and fifty feet. In the cliffs, near the island, is a very beautiful cave, about thirty feet in height, formed entirely of columnar basalt, of which the bases appear to have been removed, so that the unsupported polygonal columns compose the cave.

The chief use of this insulated rock appears to be that of interrupting the salmon, who annually coast along the shore in search of rivers in which to deposit their spawn. Their passage is generally made close to the shore, so that Carrick-a-Rede is very opportunely situated for projecting the interrupting nets. It will lie here inquired, why the fishermen do not spare themselves the trouble of throwing across this very dangerous bridge, and approach the island by water ; but this is perfectly impracticable, owing to the extreme perpendicularity of the basaltic cliff's on every side, except in one small bay, which is not accessible but at particular periods. This fishery, and, indeed, all those along the northern coast, are very productive. The only residents in the little cottage on the island are the clerk and fishermen, and they remain only during the summer months. The fishermen are paid, and all the expenses of fishing defrayed, by proportionate allowances of salmon.

About three miles east of the Giant's Causeway we came in sight of a detached and lofty rock, elevating its head near the centre of a small bay, and crowned with the ruins of the CASTLE OF DUNSEVERICK. This picturesque spot was once the seat of the family of O'Cahan, or as they were commonly called, O'Kane. Mr. M'Skimmin, the distinguished antiquarian of Carrickfergus, displays great learning in an essay in the Dublin Penny Journal, the object of which is to prove that Dunseverick is the ancient and celebrated Dun Soorke of Irish history—the seat of successive chieftains and powerful families of the north. It is at present a lonely remnant of a structure, and though traces of the outworks are visible, the “ keep ” is the only part that is still erect, and this too, from its appearance, will soon be as prostrate as the rest. Immense masses of the rock have been hewn away, evidently for the purpose of rendering the castle as inaccessible as possible. An enormous basaltic rock, south of the entrance, also appears to have been cut of a pyramidal form, and flattened on the top, perhaps as a station for a warder, or for the purpose of placing upon it some engine of defence. That the insulated rock on which the castle is placed, should, from its peculiar strength, have been selected by the early settlers in Ireland as a proper situation for one of their strongholds is not to be wondered at ; but of that original fortress, M'Skimmin remarks, there are no remains. The present ruin, though of great strength, the walls being eleven feet in thickness, is evidently of an age not anterior to the English invasion, and most probably erected by the M'Quillans, but the annals of the time are silent as to the period of its re-edification.

In all the views between Ballycastle and Dunluce, the Island of Rathlin, (or Rathkerry,) is one of the most conspicuous features, stretching its length along the shore within six miles of the cliffs, and backed by the misty tops of the far-seen Scotch coast. The island is the property of Mr. Gage, who holds it by a lease in perpetuity under the Countess of Antrim. This gentleman is completely lord of the isle, and banishes his subjects to the *continent* of Ireland for misconduct or repeated offences against his laws. Raghery is about five English

miles in length by three and a half in breadth. It contains about two thousand acres, one quarter of which grows corn, &c. There are three town-lands, called Shandra, Alia, and Knockard, upon which the majority of the inhabitants, generally about one thousand, reside. It appears from a late census that its population is not increasing, and varies very little. There are two places of worship here, a Protestant church and a Roman Catholic chapel.

The extreme western end of the island is called Keuramer, and is three hundred and fifty-two feet above the ocean. Formerly distinctions existed between the inhabitants of each end of the island, and the qualifications of each were looked upon as totally dissimilar. This, however, is not quite done away.

Near Ushet, at a place called Doon Point, the disposition of the basaltic columns is very remarkable, some being perpendicular, others horizontal, others carved. The base of this little promontory is a natural pier or mole. Above this is a collection of columns of a curved form, apparently assumed in conformity with the surface on which they rest, and inducing a belief that they were so moulded when in a state of softness ; and above both these arrangements, there is a variety of differently disposed columns, partaking of every position in which basalt has been discovered in other places. The form of Raghery Island is that of a right-angle, whose sides or legs are Kenramer and Ushet Points. On the external vertex of the right-angle stands Bruce's Castle. In the early ages of Irish history, the proximity of Scotland and Ireland invited mutual predatory expeditions, to which it is said the Scotch were more addicted than the Irish. In these occasional partial invasions the island of Raghery was found very useful, both as a depôt and place of retreat. During the civil wars which devastated Scotland, between Robert Bruce and Baliol, the former fled to Raghery for shelter ; and fortifying himself in the castle which now bears his name, made a bold and successful resistance to his enemies. The short time which Bruce remained upon the island, may be very fairly assigned as a reason for his not having been the founder or builder of the castle ; besides, in all probability, it was the existence of this fortified place or Raghery which induced the exiled king to fly thither for shelter.

[1] M'Skimmin's History of Carrickfergus

[2] Curraàn is a corruption of the Irish word *carrían*, a hoop, which the curved form of the peninsula suggested originally.

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