

## Adieu My Native Shore

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### *On an Irish jaunting-car through Donegal and Connemara*

New York to Londonderry

1902

AT New York, on the 26th of June, we boarded the SS. *Columbia*, the new twin-screw steamer of the Anchor Line. Every berth was taken, and as the passengers were a bright set, "on pleasure bent," there was an entire absence of formality and exclusiveness. They sang, danced, and amused themselves in many original ways, while the *Columbia* reeled off the knots with a clock-like regularity very agreeable to the experienced travellers on board.

As our destination was Londonderry, we took a northerly course, which brought us into floating ice-fields and among schools of porpoises and whales ; in fact, it was an uneventful day on which some passenger could not boast of having seen "a spouter, just a few minutes ago !"

We celebrated the morning of the Fourth of July in a very pretentious way with a procession of the nations in costume and burlesques on the conditions of the day. The writer was cast to represent the Beef Trust, and at two hundred and twenty-five pounds the selection met with popular approval ; but he found a passenger of thirty-five pounds more in the foreground, and thereupon retired to the side-lines. Attorney Grant, of New York, made a striking "Rob Roy," with his colossal Corinthian pillars in their natural condition. A long list of games and a variety of races for prizes gave us a lively afternoon, and the evening wound up with a "grand" concert, at which Professor Green, of Yale, made an excellent comic oration.

W. A. Ross, of New York, was my companion on the trip ; A. B. Hepburn, ex-Comptroller of the Currency, intended going with us, but was prevented at the last moment by a pressure of business, which we very much regretted.

The steamer soon sighted Tory Island, rapidly passed Malin Head, and then turned in to Lough Foyle. When a few miles inside the mouth of the latter, we stopped at Moville and the passengers for Ireland were sent up to Londonderry on a tender. We were so far north and the date was so near the longest day that we could easily read a paper at midnight, and as we did not get through the custom-house until 4 A.M., we did not go to bed, but went to a hotel and had breakfast instead. The custom-house examination at Derry, conducted under the *personal* direction of a collector, is perhaps the most exasperating ordeal of its kind to be found in any port in existence. The writer has passed through almost all the important custom-houses in the world, and has never seen such a display of inherent meanness as was shown by this "collector." He seized with glee and charged duty upon a single package of cigarettes belonging to a passenger, and he "nabbed" another man with a quarter-pound of tobacco, thereby putting an extra shilling into his King's pocket. He was an Irish imitation Englishman, and his h's dropped on the dock like a shower of peas when he directed his understrappers in a husky squeak how best to trap the passengers. The owner of the quarter-pound of tobacco poured out the vials of his wrath on the "collector" afterwards at the hotel : "I would give a five-pound note to get him in some quiet place and pull his parrot nose," was the way he wound up his invective. Neither were the ladies allowed to escape, their clothing being shaken out in quest of tobacco and spirits, since those are about the only articles on which duty is charged. The very last cigar was extracted by long and bony fingers from its cosy resting-place in the vest-pocket of a passenger who shall be nameless—hence these

tears ! All other ports in Europe vie with one another in liberal treatment of the tourist ; they want his gold. The writer landed both at Southampton and Dover last summer, and at the latter place, although there were over five hundred trunks and satchels on the steamer, not one was opened, nor was a single passenger asked a question. Smuggling means the sale at a profit of goods brought into port for that purpose ; nothing from America can be sold at a profit, unless it be steel rails, and they are much too long to carry in a trunk.

### Ballyshannon to Sligo

WITH a fresh horse we started for Ballyshannon, some fifteen miles ahead of us. The surrounding country was interesting and appeared to be prosperous, containing many fine seats, the great feature of which was their magnificent timber. Ballyshannon seems a busy town, with two thousand five hundred inhabitants. Its castle, of which scarcely any traces remain, belongs to the O'Donnells and was the scene of a disastrous defeat of the English under Sir Convers Clifford in 1597. The castle was besieged with vigor for three days and an attempt made to sap the walls, but the garrison having made a desperate sally, the English retreated in haste, and, pursued by Hugh Roe O'Donnell, they lost a great portion of their force in an unsuccessful attempt to cross the Erne.

The two portions of the town, the lower one of which is called the Port, are connected by a bridge of twelve arches about four hundred yards above the celebrated falls, where an enormous body of water is precipitated over a cliff some thirty feet high and ten feet above high-water, with a noise that is perfectly deafening. This is the scene of the "salmon-leap." The salmon that come down the river in the autumn return again in the spring months, and this can only be accomplished by ascending the falls. Traps with funnel-shaped entrances are placed in different parts of the falls, in which the salmon are caught, and taken out for market as required. Between the traps are intervals through which the fish can reach the top of the falls by leaping, and as at low water the spring is about sixteen feet, the scene is singularly interesting. Below the falls is the island of Inis-Saimer, on which are buildings connected with the fishery. The fishery is very valuable, and is owned by Messrs. Moore & Alexander.

On the bridge is a tablet to William Allingham (1824-1889), a native of Ballyshannon. I give Allingham's own description of his home ; it can hardly be surpassed in the English language for simple, graceful, and yet direct diction. I also quote a few lines from a poem he wrote before he sailed for America ; they are not Miltonian in their style, but Milton could not have touched the spot as he did.

" The little old town where I was born has a voice of its own, low, solemn, persistent, humming through the air day and night, summer and winter. Whenever I think of that town I seem to hear the voice. The river which makes it rolls over rocky ledges into the tide. Before spreads a great ocean in sunshine or storm ; behind stretches a many-islanded lake. On the south runs a wavy line of blue mountains ; and on the north, over green, rocky hills, rise peaks of a more distant range. The trees hide in glens, or cluster near the river ; gray rocks and boulders lie scattered about the windy pastures. The sky arches wide over all, giving room to multitudes of stars by night and long processions of clouds blown from the sea, but also, in the childish memory where these pictures live, to deeps of celestial blue in the endless days of summer. An odd, out-of-the-way little town ours, on the extreme western verge of Europe, our next neighbors, sunset way, being citizens of the great new republic which, indeed, to our imagination seemed little, if at all, farther off than England in the opposite direction."

" Adieu to Ballyshannon ! where I was bred and  
born ;  
Go where I may, I'll think of you, as sure as

night and morn ;  
The kindly spot, the friendly town, where every  
one is known,  
And not a face in all the place but partly seems  
my own.

There's not a house or window, there's not a  
field or hill,  
But, east or west, in foreign lands, I'll recollect  
them still.  
I leave my warm heart with you, tho' my back  
I'm forced to turn,  
So adieu to Ballyshannon and the winding banks  
of Erne !

“ Farewell, Coolmore—Bundoran! and your sum-  
mer crowds that run  
From inland homes to see with joy th' Atlantic  
setting sun ;  
To breathe the buoyant salted air, and sport  
among the waves ;  
To gather shells on sandy beach and tempt the  
gloomy caves ;  
To watch the flowing, ebbing tide, the boats, the  
crabs, the fish ;  
Young men and maids to meet and smile, and  
form a tender wish ;  
The sick and old in search of health, for all things  
have their turn—  
And I must quit my native shore and the wind-  
ing banks of Erne !”

Near here are the ruins of Kilbarron Castle, an ancient fortress of the O'Clerys, a family renowned in their day for their skill in science, poetry, and history, of whom was Father Michael O'Clery, the leader of the illustrious quartet of the “ Four Masters.” It stands on a precipitous rock at the very edge of the coast.

In the vicinity of Ballyshannon can be seen Ballymacward Castle, which was built during the famine of 1739. This was the home of the “ Colleen Bawn,” famous in song and story, who was one of the Ffolliott girls, and eloped with Willy Reilly.

Now we are on the road to Bundoran, and we had hardly cleared the skirts of Ballyshannon before it began to rain so hard that even had old Noah been with us he could not have bragged much about the Flood. It came in at our collars and went out at our boots. Our new driver could not be induced to say a single word except yes or no ; he was neither a historian, a botanist, nor a geologist, and he took no interest whatever in ruins ; but we forgave him for all these shortcomings, for he drove his horse steadily onward through the torrent with an unswerving perseverance that covered a multitude of sins. When we arrived at Bundoran's fashionable watering-place hotel, The Irish Highlands, the guests received us with shouts of laughter, in which we good-humoredly joined. No more weary pilgrims ever drew rein at inn in such a sorry plight.

Our clothes were dried during the night, and with a new steed we started for Sligo. It was clear weather and we had a pleasant ride along the coast-line. The feature of the day was

skirting the base of Benbulbin for about seven miles. This is a most peculiar mountain, almost eighteen hundred feet high. Its base starts in with patches of yellow and sage-green verdure, then turns to streams of broken rocks. From these, regular pillars of stone start like the pipes of an organ, which can be seen for fifty miles, these again being covered by a flat crown of green growth. The whole looks like a vast temple in India. A large water-fall, consisting of three separate cascades, cuts its side and adds greatly to its beauty and attractiveness.

We passed through the village of Drumcliff, situated on the bank of the river of the same name which here enters Drumcliff Bay from Glencar Lake. A monastery was founded here by St. Columba, the site for which was given in 575, and it was made into a bishop's see, afterwards united to Elphin. This village was anciently called "Drumcliff of the Crosses," and of the remains of these the "Great Cross" is a fine example. It is thirteen feet high and three feet eight inches across the arms, which are connected by the usual circular segments. It is of hard sandstone and consists of three sections, the base, shaft, and top. It is highly sculptured, showing human figures, animals, and fine, interlaced scroll-work. There is also the stump of a round tower, about forty feet high, of rude masonry of the earliest group. The door is square-headed, six feet from the ground, and the walls are three feet thick.

Near Drumcliff was fought a great battle in 561, arising out of a quarrel over the possession of a copy of a Latin Psalter made by St. Columba from one borrowed of St. Finnian, of Moville. St. Finnian claimed the copy, and the case was brought before Dermot, King of Meath, who decided, Brehon fashion, that as "to every cow belongs its calf, so to every book belongs its copy," a judgment from which St. Columba appealed to his tribe. The party of St. Columba was victorious, three thousand of the men of Meath being slain. St. Columba was advised by St. Molaise to go to Scotland and convert the pagans as penance for the blood he had shed, which he did, and founded a missionary establishment in Iona.

Lord Palmerston took a great interest in this part of the country, laying out plantations in 1842 and building a harbor, which we saw from the car. It cost him over £20,000.

While riding along we noticed a tower on a distant hill, and said to the driver, "Is that a *round* tower?" "Yis, sur." "Are you sure it's round?" "Yis, sur, I am; it's square it is."

### Sligo to Ballinrobe

WE finally reached Sligo; and Sligo is quite a place, both historically and commercially. It has a population of 10,274, and is an important seaport town in close neighborhood to scenery such as falls to the lot of very few business towns. It is remarkably well situated in the centre of a richly wooded plain, encircled on all sides, save that of the sea, by high mountains, the ascent of which commences within three to four miles of the town, while on one side of it is Lough Gill, almost equal in beauty to any lake in Ireland, and on the other a wide and sheltered bay. Connection between the two is maintained by the broad river Garroogue, which issues from Lough Gill and empties itself, after a course of nearly three miles, into Sligo Bay. It is crossed by two bridges, joining the parish of St. John with that of Calry on the north bank. Steamers ply regularly between this town and Glasgow and Liverpool.

Sligo attained some importance as early as 1245 as the residence of Maurice Fitz-Gerald, Earl of Kildare, who there founded a castle and monastery. The castle played an important part in the struggles of the English against the Irish chiefs in the thirteenth century and subsequently, in which the rival O'Conors and O'Donnells were mainly concerned. Sligo suffered in the massacres of 1641, when it was taken by Sir Frederick Hamilton and the abbey burned. The Parliamentary troops, under Sir Charles Coote, took it in 1645 after a battle in which the Irish were defeated and the warlike Archbishop of Tuam, Malachy O'Kelly, was killed. In the great abbey, which is now a fine ruin, is the grave of Patrick Beolan, who did

not “ give in,” as they say in Ireland, till he had reached the age of one hundred and forty-four.

While at Sligo we met the brother of Lieutenant Henn (owner of the *Galatea*, and who tried to lift the cup with her some years ago). This man is a local judge and a very pleasant and entertaining gentleman, reminding us greatly of his late brother, whose estate he inherited.

#### Ballinrobe to Leenane

OUR next points were Claremorris and Ballinrobe. They were not interesting, so we took a car to Cong, a very ancient place lying on the neck of land which separates Lough Corrib from Lough Mask. St. Fechin, of Fore, founded a church here in 624, and it is at this place that Lord Ardilaun has his castle, a large building on the shores of Lough Corrib, surrounded by an immense park, with fine timber, Italian sunken gardens, and a pheasantry. In the gardens, in luxuriant profusion, countless varieties of rare plants, gigantic palms, delicate ferns, are as much at home as in their native tropics, carefully nurtured in a climate tempered to their necessities, soft and balmy from the influence of the Gulf Stream. Lord Ardilaun has many other attractions besides these at Ashford Castle—*i.e.*, steam-yachts, watch-towers, conservatories, stables, a salmon-river, game-preserves, and large herds of red and fallow deer, not to mention the Augustinian monastery built by the king-monk Roderic O’Conor in the twelfth century. He was the last Irish king, and lived the concluding fifteen years of his life within these walls as a monk, in the strictest seclusion; he died in 1198, aged eighty-two.

The Cross of Cong, which was made for Tuam, was brought here, it is thought, by Roderic O’Conor. It measures two and a half feet high, one foot six and three-quarter inches across arms, and one and three-quarter inches thick. It is made of oak plated with copper, and covered with the most beautiful gold tracery of Celtic pattern. In the centre of the arms is a large crystal ; thirteen of the original eighteen jewels remain, set along the edges of shaft and arms, while eleven of those which were set down the centre of arms and shaft and round the crystal are lost. It was found by the Rev. P. Prendergast early in the present century in a chest in the village, and after his death it was purchased by Professor MacCullagh for one hundred guineas, and presented to the Royal Irish Academy.

Loughs Mask and Corrib are connected by an underground river, as the porous nature of the rock will not permit the water to flow on the surface. We went down thirty feet into the “ pigeon-hole,” which is near the castle, to see the flow of water through the ground. The arrangements for seeing this place might truly be called hospitality in a high form, as everything is shown and nothing expected in return for the courtesy. The solicitude of the old gate-keeper for our welfare was particularly marked, for when we returned to the gate after a very peaceful inspection, he doffed his hat and exclaimed, “ Glory be to God, yer honors have returned safe and in good health, too, I see !”

During the Irish famine an attempt was made to dig a canal connecting the lakes, so as to give the people something to do, and an enormous amount of money was sunk in the project. The rocky bed absorbed the water, however, as fast as it flowed in, and the enterprise proved an utter failure. Every visitor asks what it is when he sees it. It is called “ The Great Blunder.”

#### Leenane to Recess

NEXT morning, with new car, horse, and driver, we put off for Leenane, twenty-seven miles away. We drove along the banks of Lough Mask, with its groups of small, wooded islands, and left it to take the road along Lough Nafuoey, a very picturesque drive. After some hours of driving, we put up at McKeown’s Hotel in Leenane. “ Mac” is a Pooh-Bah, a tall, strap-

ping young Irishman, a “six-foot-twoer,” with an intermittent laugh that takes most of the sting out of his hotel bills, and he holds the complimentary title of “The Major.” He runs an up-to-date hotel, is postmaster, owns a store, has all the mail-posting contracts, rents salmon and trout rivers and lakes, ships salmon to London, and owns ten thousand acres of shooting-land stocked with grouse, hares, snipe, duck, and cock, which he lets to visitors, as well as seal shooting on the bay. He also owns a sheep-mountain, from which he serves mutton to his guests in all the ways that mankind has ever known since sheep were first slaughtered for food. We had on succeeding days, as part of the menu, roast mutton (hot and cold), stewed lamb, boiled leg, roast saddle, minced lamb, mutton cutlets, broiled kidneys, lamb chops, Irish stew, suet-pudding, sweet-breads, French chops, sheep’s-head, and mutton broth. We fancied we could detect wool growing on the palms of our hands when we left the hotel, and could have forgiven “Mac” if we could only have found it starting on the tops of our heads instead. At another hotel in a fishing centre we had an aquarium style of living, which in time became monotonous : they served up in the course of time for our delectation, salmon boiled and salmon broiled, cold salmon, salmon steak, salmon croquettes, salmon cutlets, and stewed salmon, intersticed with white trout, black trout, yellow trout, brown trout, sea trout, speckled trout, and gillaroo. But at Recess they combined such things with chops, duck, green pease, lobster, and Irish sole right out of the near-by sea. All hail, Recess ! And long life to Polly, the peach-cheeked waitress who served us so nimbly !

Next morning we crossed Killary Bay in a boat, and while doing so we noticed that the captain held his leg in a very constrained position. We asked him if it was stiff, or if he was troubled with rheumatism. “No ; to tell your honor the truth, there’s a hole in the boat, an’ I’m jist kapin’ me heel in it to save her from sinkin’.”

After landing we drove to Delphi to see its lake and woods ; then on to Lough Dhu, a long sheet of water from the banks of which the mountains rise to a height of twenty-five hundred feet. Delphi is one of the loveliest spots in Connemara, but we can hardly go as far as the enthusiastic Englishman who wrote : “It may be safely said that if Connemara contained no other beauty, Delphi alone would be worth the journey from London, for the sake of the mountain scenery.” Delphi House formerly belonged to the Marquis of Sligo, and at one time he lived there. We returned by driving round the head of the bay, with a horse that would have retarded a funeral procession. Within a mile of the hotel there is a double echo, which we tested by loud whistling on our fingers. After crossing the bay, the echo came back to us with great strength, striking our side of the mountain again and thus making a second echo.

On the morning before we left, I lay in bed half asleep, and, as the bedrooms in the west of Ireland rarely have any locks on their doors, our confidential “boots” stole quietly into the room and, looking at me, soliloquized in a tender tone, suggestive of a tip if I should hear him : “Sure, his honor is slapin’ loike a baby, an’ ’twould be nothin’ short of a crime to wake him up this wet mornin’ ; I haven’t the heart to do it.” And he walked out of the room with his eye on the future.

The following day we “took in” the Killaries, as they are called. This is a long arm of the sea, surrounded by high, bold mountains, clothed with very green verdure to their tops. It is a wonderful fiord, which has scarcely any parallel in the British Isles and much resembles the coast scenery in Norway. Capacious and fit for the largest ships, it runs inland to the very heart of the mountains for a distance of some nine miles. The mountain scenery on the north of the fiord is incomparably the finest, the enormous walls of Mweelrea, the “Giant of the West,” and Bengorm rising abruptly to the height of two thousand six hundred and eighty-eight feet and two thousand three hundred and three feet, while the excessive stillness of the land-locked water, in which the shadows of the hills are clearly reflected, makes it difficult for one to believe that it is the actual ocean which he beholds.

That night, after a drive of twelve miles, we reached Casson's Hotel in Letterfrack, where we asked for a fire in the dining-room, as it was cold when we arrived. The maid brought a burning scuttle of peat, the smoke from which did not subside during the entire dinner, but it looked comfortable, to see each other through it, reminding us of cheerful fires and warm nooks at home ; the comparison could go no farther, however. We asked the maid for a wine-list, in order that we might try to overcome the effect of the smoke, and she responded, with great *naïveté*, that she had no wine-list, but would bring us a sample from every bin in the cellar.

In a few minutes, sure enough, she bounced into the room with her arms full of bottles, saying : ' Take yer ch'ice, gintlemen ; there's nothin' foiner in all Connemara !' We took her at her word ; she had not deceived us—the bottle we selected was a good claret.

Next morning the landlady furnished us with the best animal we had on the trip. She was a stout, bay mare, and when her spirits had rallied after leaving a young colt of hers behind, she reeled off the miles like a machine. Our object in visiting this part of the country was to see Mitchell Henry's famous castle, Kylemore, and the Twelve Pins, about which we had been hearing all our lives without ever having had an opportunity to visit them until now.

Mr. Henry was a linen merchant, with houses in Belfast and Manchester ; he made a fortune, purchased fourteen thousand acres of land in Connemara to give himself a political foothold, and in consequence became M.P. for Galway, which position he retained for six years. About forty years ago he began the construction of Kylemore, selecting as a site a valley between very high mountains, with a lake and river in front of the spot where his castle would stand. He collected rare trees and planted the mountain-sides with them, as well as the valley round his buildings. In addition to the castle, he erected fine stables, a private chapel, sheltered gardens, and conservatories, and preserved the salmon and trout in the lake and river. The moist heat from the Gulf Stream was his main ally, and nowhere else in the world can more bursting vigor and splendid growth be seen than are exhibited by his trees, shrubs, and flowers ; to see them is a veritable treat to those who are interested in such things. In the gardens flourish groups of tropical plants, palms, and rare ferns the year round ; they need no protection in this mild climate. His roads have double fuchsia hedges twelve feet high, which, anywhere else than in Connemara, would be worth a fortune. They were in full bloom when we saw them. Mr. Henry is now a very old man and lives in London ; and the sad part of it all is that he cannot enjoy the glories of his famous property, and it is for sale. *Sic transit gloria mundi !*

After visiting the castle, church, gardens, and conservatories, we drove through the extensive, finely wooded demesne, passing vast banks of rhododendrons and hydrangeas in rare bloom, till we reached the county road and caught our first glimpse of the Twelve Pins, or Bens, as they are sometimes called. They were a disappointment; we had heard too much about them. The Twelve Pins is a group of high mountains having but little verdure ; the highest, Benbaun, is two thousand four hundred feet above sea-level. The remarkable feature about them is that they are practically one long mountain with twelve peaks rising from it at regular intervals. Excepting this startling effect, they do not compare with Muckish, Dooish, or Errigal, the " peerless cone" of Donegal.

The bay mare carried us in gallant style past the long, romantic-looking Lough Inagh down to Recess, where we put up at the best hotel we had found since we started.

#### Achill Island

I AM writing this from memory and without notes, so I may be pardoned for having forgotten to introduce in its proper place our trip to Achill Island, one of the most interesting of our ex-

periences. I shall start by saying that we crossed over to the island at its nearest point to the mainland, and, taking our seats on a “long” public car which stood in readiness, we were pulled by two immense horses the thirteen miles to the village of Dugort at a steady pace that never “slacked up” for the entire distance. It rained, but the car was plentifully supplied with tarpaulins, which were strapped round us in artistic style, and so we arrived at the Slievemore Hotel dry but benumbed. “Mine host” of the Slievemore, one Captain Sheridan, is perhaps the best-known Boniface in the west of Ireland. The iridescent splendor of his imagination, his contempt for detail, and his facility in escaping when cornered, place him on a plinth so high that, compared with him, Baron Munchausen would seem to be a practical monument of truth and accuracy ; indeed, the Baron is his only rival in all the years that have gone to make up history. He greeted us with : “ I saw you coming ; knew by your looks you were the real thing, and wired for a ten-pound salmon.”

We were stiff and cold after the wet drive, and asked for a nip of Irish whiskey. “ Bad luck to it, anyhow, I haven’t a drop in the house, but my team is hauling a cask of ‘ Power’s Best’ from the mainland. But I have ‘ Scotch’ boys, as *is* ‘ Scotch’ ; not a headache in a hogshead of it !” So we had the substitute, and, upon our asking its age, he started in rather modestly at “ five,” and when we gave him a drink quickly raised it to “ ten year old.” Before the evening was over, he told us, in a confidential whisper, that the prime-minister had been his guest some time before and had pronounced it “ twenty,” so he did not know how old it really was—we must be the judges. He had a collection of stuffed birds and horns, and upon being asked what he would take for a pair of ram’s horns, he exclaimed : “ ’Tis simply priceless they are ! ’Twould cost you a thousand pounds to fit out an expedition to get them, and besides you would have to get permission from the Grand Llama of Thibet, for ’tis only in his dominions that these rare animals are found ; but still, I have too many horns, and I’ll let you have the pair for forty guineas, packed up and ready for the steamer.”

He admitted that he was a first cousin of Phil Sheridan’s. “ They try to make out that Phil wasn’t an Irishman, that he was born half-way over, but I tell you the true facts are that he was born before he started,” was the way he conclusively settled General Sheridan’s nationality.

Guests “ move on” at the approach of rain in Irish hotels, so our genial host would pass from room to room if it threatened rain, calling out to an imaginary guest, “ ’Twill be a lovely day to-morrow.” Pressed to divulge his sentiments on the landlord-and-tenant question, and not knowing how we stood, he said : “ I’m for ‘ give and take’ ; the tenant to give what he thinks fair, and the landlord to take it or leave it.”

He had a supreme contempt for rival attractions, and said that the Dunfanaghy puffins were corn-fed and the seals were chained to the bottom to attract visitors. He had a comic-opera, smuggler, weather predictor, and long-distance-sea-serpent man who turned up every morning and mingled with the guests. He dressed the part to perfection, *à la* Dick Deadeye, and would tell how many whales and seals he had seen in the bay at daybreak.

As for the weather, with him it was always assured ; if it rained while he was talking, he would belittle it by saying, “ Sure, ’tis but a little bit of a shower ; ’twon’t last ten minutes” ; then he would pilot a schooner over the bar and disappear.

But, after all, our host Sheridan was a kindly, good-natured fellow and very accommodating ; he had told his tales so often that he really believed them, and was not so much to blame as one would think at first sight. His wife was a most capable manager, and largely made up for his shortcomings in the fulfilment of promises. *Cead Mille Failthe* (a hundred thousand welcomes) was emblazoned on a large Crescent over the door.

The place was well supplied with pets—cats, dogs, and a tame crow making up the family. The house has four pairs of stairs leading from the hall vestibule ; there is a high mountain close to its rear and another right in front of it, with the Atlantic to the west ; so that it must be described as a picturesque establishment in every detail. The weather became foggy, and we were about to leave without trying to see anything, when the sun suddenly broke through the clouds and we changed the programme by remaining.

Achill Island is fifteen miles long by twelve miles wide ; it is bounded by Blacksod Bay on the north and by Clew Bay on the south. There is a small grocery store on the west side of the island which is said to be the nearest saloon to America, and proud is the owner of this distinction. The people lead a very peculiar life. The latitude is high, and consequently in the dead of winter the day is very short, and they cannot fish in the stormy waters surrounding the island. They save enough money in summer to carry them through the winter months, and amuse themselves during the long nights by dancing. Every community has its fiddler, and it is his business to provide a house with a large room in which the dances can be held. Each family furnishes the supper in turn, and all “ pay the fiddler.” One would suppose that whiskey would play the leading part in such entertainments ; and up to the latter part of the last century it did, but it is now entirely absent. Long experience taught the participants that if peaceful family parties were to be indulged in, the “ mountain dew” must be an absentee ; so they took to Guinness’s stout, and the piles of “ empties,” everywhere to be seen, show clearly that the Guinness shares are a valuable investment. This dancing is carried on in most of the northwestern counties, where the winter days are short. The “ balls” end at about 3 A.M., and the dancers sleep till eleven the next morning.

The island contains the cathedral cliffs of Menawn, one thousand feet in height, hollowed by the long action of the waves through countless centuries, and having a striking resemblance to stupendous Gothic aisles.

We started early in the morning for Achill Head, via Keem Bay, traveling as usual on a car, driven by a boy. We drove through a unique fishing village, consisting of very small houses laid out in regular streets, the thatched roofs being secured against the winter storms by ropes on which were hung large stones about the size of watermelons. These rows of stones swayed in the wind and produced a curious effect while in motion. The car stopped at the foot-hills, where the road changed into a path, and waited under a shed for our return in the evening. On alighting we were delighted to hear the sweet, familiar song of a pair of larks that soared up under the clear, blue sky so far above our heads that they seemed mere specks which we could see but indistinctly. It was many years since we had seen and heard the Irish lark in its native element, and we listened to the notes with keen, reminiscent pleasure.

Here we hired two gillies to help us in climbing Achill Head, which is quite a high mountain. We climbed up a steep track for about three miles, and were congratulating ourselves upon our progress, when, on rounding the hip of the hill, we discovered that we should have to descend again to sea-level at Keem Bay, in order to commence the real ordeal. It was easy work going down, and we soon reached the bay. This is a beautiful spot, an indenture in the headland, with a firm, yellow strand at the head, and perpendicular, rocky bluffs on its sides. Three large boats were salmon-fishing, and from the many places where we rested on our long climb up the mountain we saw them tacking back and forth all day.

Near the shore we visited the house and store of Captain Boycott, both in ruins. This is the gentleman who gave us a new word for our vocabulary. Notwithstanding his fate, he had many warm friends among the peasantry.

We started climbing again by following the bed of a brawling stream, and adhered to it until it turned into a rivulet. Most Irish mountains are formed by a series of benches, and our plan was to climb briskly till we reached a bench and there make a recovery for the next assault. As we rose in the air we felt our clothing becoming burdensome, and we gave one article after another to the gillies, so that by the time we reached the top our wardrobes were quite elementary. It seemed to us that all the benches in Ireland were collected on that mountain ; each one was to have been the last, but still there was another and yet another. We finally reached the summit and, bathed in perspiration, lay down on the heather, wrapping ourselves in raincoats, and, telling the gillies to wake us in an hour, fell asleep. It would not have been much of a climb for a mountaineer, but for us, of full habit and totally untrained, it was exercise to the extreme limit of endurance.

When we awoke we crawled on all-fours to the edge of the head and looked over, and we shall never forget the sight that greeted our eyes ! Achill Head and Croaghaun Mountain, adjoining it, have the reputation of being the highest marine cliffs in existence. They are poised above the Atlantic at an angle of sixty degrees, and the particular point on which we lay far overhung the ocean. Here lightning-splintered pinnacles shoot from the mass ; savage, titanic rocks lie on the face of the two mountains in wild confusion, scarred and rent from top to bottom, and the blue waters surge and break at their base in restless confusion, throwing up the spray to great heights. Then for a moment all is calm, only to begin over again. It was as if the grandest Alpine scenery had the Atlantic breaking on its lower levels, and yet it retained the charm of the finest verdure. Between the crevices grew blooming heather, luxuriant ferns, wild flowers, and arbutus in great profusion, while flocks of wild gulls circled gracefully through the air in quest of food, the whole being enveloped in the warm, moist air of the Gulf Stream, rising from the face of the ocean and suffusing the cliff upon which we rested, giving it practically the temperature of a hot-house. It was always a struggle between the mist and the sun ; each alternately gained the mastery, and it was this weird kaleidoscope that held us spellbound and presented wonderland in a new guise. The Croaghaun Mountain, two thousand two hundred and nineteen feet in height, lay right beside us, joined to Achill Head by a rocky bridge. Its grand and peculiar feature is that at the very highest point it would seem as if the rest of the mountain had been suddenly cut away, leaving a vast and tremendous precipice descending to the water nearly one thousand nine hundred and fifty feet. Deep fissures and rocky furrows have been worn by the torrents which pour down after heavy rains, and the bottom, where it shelves slightly, is strewn with boulders and masses of shattered rock, forming natural bulwarks against the advancing tide. From where we stood, the view seaward was, of course, boundless, the nearest land being America. It is doubtful if such another panorama is unfolded from any other height in the British Isles. Far out is the Black Rock, on which is a light-house two hundred and sixty-eight feet high, and to the northward are North and South Inishkea and Duvillaun. The Mullet peninsula, Erris, and the ever-varying outlines of Blacksod Bay lie spread out like a map, and beyond Slievemore is a network of island and inlet, above which the splendid range of the Ballycroy Hills forms a background. In the distance is Nephin ; far to the south rises the rugged head of Croagh Patrick and the mountains round Clew Bay ; farther off are the summits of the Twelve Pins ; Achill Beg lies immediately below ; beyond it, Clare Island, and farther south Inishturk, Inishbofin, and Inishshark bound the horizon. Off the Mullet are numerous islands, of which the principal are Inishkeeragh and Inishglora, where, according to some, the dead are subject to such extraordinary and preserving influences that their nails and hair grow as in life, “ so that their descendants to the tenth generation can come and with pious compare the one and clip the other.” The eagle still haunts these cliffs, and the wild goat feeds almost secure in his last haunts on these islands.

It was growing late, and, as we had five miles of walking before us, we retraced our steps down the mountain to Keem Bay. The trials of that descent have not been written in sand—they will never be forgotten. In our exhausted condition we reeled and staggered from hum-

mock to hummock, floundered through the soggy bog like a pair of stranded seals, sat down in the heather for a few gasps of breath when we could go on no longer. We geyed each other, geyed the Emerald Isle and its people ; we sneered at the story of George's hatchet, and concluded that, after all, King Edward's job was not what it was cracked up to be—anything to divert our minds from the dreadful present. If we could have put Achill Island and all its scenery out of commission forever, we would gladly have done it. But time and the hour run through the roughest day, and so we got to the bottom. At the beach we saw a cowherd coming towards us with numerous cans, and, supposing these to be full, we pounced upon him for a drink of milk. Luck was against us again—his cans were empty, and he told us he had to walk a mile or more to where his cows were grazing before he could fill them. We braced ourselves for the final walk round the mountain, and as it was a fair road we had little difficulty in reaching the shed where we had left the car in the early morning. The driver was watching for us, and we gladly swung ourselves up on the seats ; and no pair of Irish kings ever enjoyed riding in royal state more than we did. We stopped a few minutes at a lake by the wayside to see some of the hotel guests catching a basket of fine trout, which were afterwards served for a late supper.

We awoke next morning stiff and sore, but a breezy chat with our genial host soon put us on good terms with ourselves and everything about us. We left Achill Island in the afternoon, deeply regretting that we had not more time to devote to its wonders.

### Recess

Now back to Recess, which we left so abruptly. In the evening we went for a circular drive to Ballynahinch, with its river, lakes, and islands up the river on one side, crossing it on a bridge, and down again by the base of the Twelve Pins, which you can't get away from in this country. We saw Ballynahinch Castle, close to the road on the edge of the lake. It belongs to the celebrated Martins, whose fortunes have been graphically described by Charles Lever in his popular novel, *The Martins of Cro Martin*. They owned two hundred thousand acres of land, and Colonel Martin is said to have endeavored to put the Prince Regent of that day out of conceit with the famous Long Walk at Windsor by saying that the avenue which led to his hall door was thirty miles long. The pleasantry was true, for he owned the forty miles of road from Galway to his own door.

Thackeray was a great admirer of Irish scenery and wrote profusely about it. These " Pins" were his particular hobby, and he never tired of them. In one book he writes : " I won't attempt to pile up big words in place of those wild mountains over which the clouds as they passed, or the sunshine as it went and came, cast every variety of tint, light, and shadow. All one can do is to lay down the pen and ruminare, and cry ' Beautiful !' once more."

Bravo, William ! but you ought to have peered over Achill, or have gone in a boat to see the birds at Horn Head ; then we should have heard from you on a really great theme.

On an Irish jaunting-car through Donegal and Connemara ([1902])

Author : Bayne, Samuel G. (Samuel Gamble), 1844-1924

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*Adieu to Belshanny*

William Allingham

Also known as *The Winding Banks of Erne*, or the *Emigrant's Adieu to Belshanny*  
(*A local Ballad*)

ADIEU to Belashanny ! where I was bred and born ;  
Go where I may, I'll think of you, as sure as night and morn.  
The kindly spot, the friendly town, where every one is known,  
And not a face in all the place but partly seems my own ;  
There's not a house or window, there's not a field or hill,  
But, east or west, in foreign lands, I recollect them still.  
I leave my warm heart with you, tho' my back I'm forced to turn  
Adieu to Belashanny, and the winding banks of Erne !

No more on pleasant evenings we'll saunter down the Mall,  
When the trout is rising to the fly, the salmon to the fall.  
The boat comes straining on her net, and heavily she creeps,  
Cast off, cast off—she feels the oars, and to her berth she sweeps ;  
Now fore and aft keep hauling, and gathering up the clew,  
Till a silver wave of salmon rolls in among the crew.  
Then they may sit, with pipes a-lit, and many a joke and ' yarn ' ;—  
Adieu to Belashanny; and the winding banks of Erne !

The music of the waterfall, the mirror of the tide,  
When all the greenhill'd harbour is full from side to side,  
From Portnasun to Bulliebawns, and round the Abbey Bay,  
From rocky Inis Saimer to Coolnargit sand-hills gray ;  
While far upon the southern line, to guard it like a wall,  
The Leitrim mountains clothed in blue gaze calmly over all,  
And watch the ship sail up or down, the red flag at her stern ;—  
Adieu to these, adieu to all the winding banks of Erne !

Farewell to you, Kildoney lads, and them that pull an oar,  
A lug-sail set, or haul a net, from the Point to Mullaghmore ;  
From Killybegs to bold Slieve-League, that ocean-Mountain steep,  
Six hundred yards in air aloft, six hundred in the deep,  
From Dooran to the Fairy Bridge, and round by Tullen strand,  
Level and long, and white with waves, where gull and curlew stand ;  
Head out to sea when on your lee the breakers you discern !—  
Adieu to all the billowy coast, and winding banks of Erne !

Farewell, Coolmore—Bundoran ! And your summer crowds that run  
From inland homes to see with joy th' Atlantic-setting sun ;  
To breathe the buoyant salted air, and sport among the waves ;  
To gather shells on sandy beach, and tempt the gloomy caves ;  
To watch the flowing, ebbing tide, the boats, the crabs, the fish ;  
Young men and maids to meet and smile, and form a tender wish ;  
The sick and old in search of health, for all things have their turn—  
And I must quit my native shore, and the winding banks of Erne!  
Farewell to every white cascade from the Harbour to Belleek,  
And every pool where fins may rest, and ivy-shaded creek ;  
The sloping fields, the lofty rocks, where ash and holly grow,

The one split yew-tree gazing on the curving flood below ;  
The Lough, that winds through islands under Turaw mountain green ;  
And Castle Caldwell's stretching woods, with tranquil bays between ;  
And Breesie Hill, and many a pond among the heath and fern,—  
For I must say adieu—adieu to the winding banks of Erne !

The thrush will call through Camlin groves the live-long summer day ;  
The waters run by mossy cliff, and banks with wild flowers gay ;  
The girls will bring their work and sing beneath a twisted thorn,  
Or stray with sweethearts down the path among growing corn ;  
Along the river-side they go, where I have often been,  
O, never shall I see again the days that I have seen !  
A thousand chances are to one I never may return,—  
Adieu to Belashanny, and the winding banks of Erne !

Adieu to evening dances, when merry neighbours meet,  
And the fiddle says to boys and girls, 'Get up and shake your feet !'  
To shanachus and wise old talk of Erin's days gone by—  
Who trench'd the rath on such a hill, and where the bones may lie  
Of saint, or king, or warrior chief ; with tales of fairy power,  
And tender ditties sweetly sung to pass the twilight hour.  
The mournful song of exile is now for me to learn—  
Adieu, my dear companions on the winding banks of Erne !

Now measure from the Commons down to each end of the Purt,  
Round the Abbey, Moy, and Knather—I wish no one any hurt ;  
The Main Street, Back Street, College Lane, the Mall, and Portnasun,  
If any foes of mine are there, I pardon every one.  
I hope that man and womankind will do the same by me ;  
For my heart is sore and heavy at voyaging the sea.  
My loving friends I'll bear in mind, and often fondly turn  
To think of Belashanny, and the winding banks of Erne.

If ever I'm a money'd man, I mean, please God, to cast  
My golden anchor in the place where youthful years were pass'd ;  
Though heads that now are black and brown must meanwhile gather gray,  
New faces rise by every hearth, and old ones drop away—  
Yet dearer still that Irish hill than all the world beside ;  
It's home, sweet home, where'er I roam, through lands and waters wide.  
And if the Lord allows me, I surely will return  
To my native Belashanny, and the winding banks of Erne.

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