

## The Beauties of Connemara

### *Connemara and the neighboring spots of beauty and interest*

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#### *The Killaeies—The Great Killary—Fuchsias—Insectivorous Plants—Mweelea—Canoes .*

The late Dean Hole...wrote that the beauties of Connemara are indescribable. Indeed they are. No truer summing up of the scenery, colouring, capricious climate, and interesting inhabitants could be given. For instance, the weather is emotional—very. Tears and laughter, sadness and merriment in quick succession. We have known in one short day in the Killaries hailstorms, torrential rains, soft, misty drizzle, and dazzling sunshine alternating with each other with marvellous thoroughness and rapidity.

To some people this very changeableness is the greatest charm. Certainly Connemara woos you as a coquettish maiden. The rain pours down and you feel despondent at its persistence, and lo ! in a moment, when things seem at their worst, all is changed, and the warm sunshine tempts you out of your shelter, your damp clothes dry as if by magic, and the past is forgotten in the brilliant joyfulness of all Nature around you. No wonder the love of Connemara grows upon you, and the visitor of one year becomes the guide for others another year.

Associated with the fickleness of the weather is the marvellous variety in colouring on mountain and lake—peculiarly fascinating, if not absolutely unique, in the afternoons when the sun rays impinge on hill and water at an acute angle. Greens, yellows, the loveliest of orange, blues and purples in every possible and, one would have said, impossible gradation of shade and gorgeous or delicate intensity—and never two minutes the same.

The air is mild and balmy, never really cold, and the winters are such only in name ; indeed, the freshness of shrub, tree, grass, and flower all the year round is so remarkable that spring may be said never to be entirely absent from this favoured region.

Not quite so bracing as Achill Island, the climate is well suited to all except the rheumatically disposed. A most desirable part of the country is Connemara for consumptives, as they could live here in the open air all the year round without discomfort, and, like the fuchsias, have a vigorous, healthy existence.

The most obvious indication of what the climate is may be gathered from the fuchsias. They are about the best test. They like a fairly humid atmosphere, plenty of sunshine, and are at daggers drawn with continued frost. If, therefore, they grow in the open air all the year round it may fairly be surmised that the climate is mild. Connemara is the place to see fuchsias in perfection, for they grow, or rather luxuriate, there in grand, freely flowering, gorgeous masses of bloom. They run wild in lovely unrestrained riot. Not solitary plants in pots, or carefully tended and kept free from weeds in cultivated gardens, taken in in the winter and coddled up in greenhouses. Grand, freely flowering masses of bloom—six, ten, and even more feet in height. Bushes of them as large as fair-sized elder trees. Hedges of them—as in the Kylemore Pass—literally miles long in two converging lines of startling bright red, to drive between which is an experience alone worth a pilgrimage to Connemara. Common or garden boundaries marked out by trees laden with the four-petalled crimson crosses, enclosing the inner whorl of regal purple, which in turn keep guard over the foundations of the eight turkey-red stamens, and the long spur, shooting out, pistil. In every crevice in the walls, in every ditch. In short, fuchsias as only Connemara can grow them.

But fuchsias not alone gladden the earth of this spot so favoured by Nature. Other wild flowers in their due season are to be found in abundance to keep them company ; some most rare, almost bordering upon the exotic. The fern along the wayside and in the ditches most common being the king of all ferns, the *Osmunda regalis*, with polypodies and several species of maiden-hair as associates to tone down the exuberance of imperial greatness. Heathers—the ordinary purple, the small bell heather, and the large Cape (which is to be found on the northern, less visited, shores of the Great Killary)—grow in profusion and lining the slopes of the mountains to the water's edge, both fresh and salt, mixed with tall bracken, afford appropriate purple and green setting for the small white specks on the landscape representing the hardy Connemara sheep.

The grass here, as elsewhere in Ireland, is green—verdant green. There is no grass in the world like Irish grass. The tropics have their delights, but they have no turf. Even the original Garden of Eden could not possibly have had such turf as you see all over Ireland. And what value has a garden without grass ? Such is Connemara in the summer.

And then what a grand place to study the insectivorous plants in ! The sun-dew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) growing all over the mountains and even down to the sea level, where it may be found in the same heathery moist clumps with its companion in insect slaughter, the butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*). Along the lovely switchback-like road, for instance, by the fiord of the Lesser Killary, between Salruck and Rosroe, the pale green leaves of the latter, with their incurved margins and their treacherous sticky concavities boldly flouting, and setting their fatal traps in the face of the sun, are to be found in considerable numbers. The light yellowish green of the rosette-arranged leaves attract more attention than do the dull purple, uncanny, tiny octopus tentacles of the sun-dew. Yet both, with their respective weapons and arrangements, are engaged in a tremendous struggle for existence, fighting over which can capture the most flies which blow in from the sea or are wafted across the trout lakes and streams.

The western coast of Ireland is much fretted, as if bitten into by acid. The name Connemara itself is indicative of its sea-line—the bays of the sea. These Norwegian-fiord examples of the intrusions of the Atlantic Ocean into the land are most confusing, and the casual tourist may be excused calling occasionally fiords lakes, and lakes sea ; for when the tide is full and close up to the green of the emerald shores in some apparently land-locked expanse of water, it were impossible to tell the scene was a sea- and not a land-scape. And when a drive of some twenty miles or more, entirely inland, amongst mountain passes and sheets of water suddenly reveals one of these puzzling phenomena, the rule of tasting the water before venturing an opinion may be excused to the Cockney caring nothing for, or knowing nothing of, geography.

The longest and most characteristically Norwegian fiord is the Great Killary. This is unquestionably the feature of Connemara, and there is nothing like it in the United Kingdom. Running eleven miles, more or less east, from the Atlantic, this sea-attenuation irresistibly recalls the Sogne and Hardanger Fiords, for it combines, during its length, two extremes of scenery—grand, solitary savageness, and minute verdant beauty. The width varies from half a mile to a mile or more, and the mountains on either side run nearly up to the finger-tip at Aasleagh, and are mostly precipitous to the water's edge, particularly on the northern side. Still, here and there they fall off, and disclose wild glens and torrent-scored, barranco-looking ravines. Such are the Pass of Salruck on the south and Bundorrha on the north, while in striking contrast at Dernasliggaun trees, grass, and ferns in semi-tropical magnificence soothingly nestle right down to the water.

Mweelrea, a precipitous mountain near the entrance to the Killary on the north, opposite exquisitely situated Rosroe Cottage, rises straightway from the water's edge. It is 2,688 feet

in height, and from the summit a grand panoramic view is obtainable on a clear day of the west coast for many miles round, of the fiord's guardian islands, and the almost innumerable inland lakes. In the picture of the Salruck road, mighty Mweelrea (pronounced *Mool-ray*) is seen in the background towering over the smaller mountains dividing the Little from, the Great Killary.

A more deceptive, old, wrinkled, and deeply-seamed mountain it were difficult to find. Bald King is its name in English, and bald it certainly is in reality, for no trees grow over its wizened surface. Probably, centuries ago, its nakedness, in contrast to the arboreal clothing of the lower land all around, accounts for the mountain's singular name. Still, the marvellous yellows, orange, green, and purple shades of colour which everlastingly play with chameleon-like character over its surface make Mweelrea, at all times of the day and under all circumstances of weather, attractive.

We have heard travellers, of some globe-trotting experience, on a casual view from the southern shore of the Killary, estimate the height at a thousand feet, with say 250 feet to the shoulder ; others have placed it at 1500 feet. The truth is the air is so translucent that the summit when visible (which is not often, mist generally hanging in clinging masses or in delightful, fleecy, horizontal layers over the upper part) seems much nearer than it really is. Rising, as the mountain does, sheer and straight up from the water's edge, there is nothing of a known height beside it from which to gauge Mweelrea's stature. Similarly deceptive is the Peak of Tenerife, whose gigantic height when seen from, the sea is absolutely unthinkable. The proof of the pudding is in the eating : the height of a mountain is in the climbing ; and the quickest climber the writer has ever heard of who ascended Mweelrea took just one hour and three-quarters from the nearest Killary shore, opposite Rosroe, to summit. The average-legged person takes three hours.

A creeping, sinuous, silent tide is the Killary in fair weather ; when the wind blows in with Atlantic violence from the west a choppy sea of dangerous, treacherous, impleasantness. The Killary, in fact, is not safe for sailing boats eastward of Rosroe, the sides being too precipitous, and consequently squalls of considerable violence are frequent and top-heavy. Sailing is only advisable westward of that point, where sea-room begins, to be obtainable.

The safest boat for such a changeable-weather spot is that now mostly used—the canoe or curragh. These are extremely light, constructed of thin deal planking with well-tarred canvas outside. They float like corks, riding on top of the waves, over which they skim with wonderful speed, and, if the paddles are kept out, are extremely stable. Of course they are not craft, to stand up in, or play the fool in, but for these short, choppy, wind-swept seas, coast-work among the islands, and squall-labile inland lakes, are unsurpassed. The ancient Irish had apparently evolved the most perfectly adapted boat for local requirements, the canoe now in use being obviously the direct descendant of the old skin-covered curragh. They are made of light deal laths, between a quarter and three-eighths of an inch thick, covered with canvas stretched and well-tarred on the outside. As wind is very prevalent all along the west coast, of Ireland, these canoes have to be kept on the shore, where they are turned upside down, and have large flat stones placed around the outside of the gunwale to prevent them being blown bodily into the sea.

A comic sight it is to see these black whale-like monsters walking down to the sea. The men get underneath, and, supporting the weight on their shoulders, leave only their trousered legs visible. Perhaps a gigantic black-beetle on four short legs is more nearly portrayed. The ordinary-sized curragh can be carried by two men, though there are small ones which a man can carry on his back unaided. The largest I ever saw was made for four rowers and belonged to the Achill Islanders. When carrying a canoe, as the bearers' heads and shoulders are com-

pletely hidden, unless the way is well known a man has to remain outside and guide his comrades' footsteps with his voice.

These canoes are such light, corky crafts that any mast and sail is impossible. Still, in a light wind, when sailing before it, a workable makeshift is universally adopted—still even that is risky. The paddler takes off his coat, thrusts the blade of a paddle into each arm-hole, and hoists up the coat on the paddles' extremities. The handle-ends of the paddles he crosses and holds between his knees, so that at any moment he can "lower sail" by pushing the two paddles together. The arrangement is undoubtedly labour-saving, but dangerous. If a sudden gust came down the mountains over would go the canoe, and then it would be, as it often has been, a bad look-out for the occupants. The waters in these parts are not thickly populated! Help seldom comes.

*The Great Killary—Inishbarna—Birds—Arboreal Clothing.*

The water of the Great Killary, in keeping with its fiord-like character is deep—more than twenty-five fathoms at high-water in its centre right up to the finger-tip at Aasleagh. So it affords a splendid anchorage when the difficulty of entering the mouth through the guardian islands has been negotiated. To facilitate this, a few years ago on two of the islands—the larger named Inishbarna—were placed marks, consisting of solid walls, twenty feet high, like the butts of rifle ranges, but faced on the westward with white tiled bricks. These marks are on the summits of the islands, and when got into line indicate the deep water-way into the Killary a little to their north. Before they were placed there the approach must have been a hazardous exploit, as the sea is strewn all about with small rocky islets and half-sunken rocks.

A visit to Inishbarna is well worth making. The island is uninhabited, though the ruins of a cabin shew that once it had inhabitants. At present only a few sheep graze there, but the large number of sheep bones and horns of sheep tell a tale of past sheep disasters. The view from the summit, near the curious square piece of wall marking the entrance to the Great Killary, is comprehensive and instructive. Looking eastward—back to the main land—the entrances to both Great and Little Killaries are seen, and just below at your feet the narrow passage between the main land and the island on which you stand. It is through this narrow water-way that the canoes go as a short cut from the Little to the Great Killary, and *vice versa*. The tide sometimes sets through this opening with great force, and some knowledge is required to make the journey safely. Inishbarna abounds with white heather, and is often visited to obtain that luck-bringing blossom.

At night the Killary is still, of course, most dangerous to enter, as there are no lights of any description to guide the mariner's course. Most assuredly lighthouses ought to be placed to shew the entrance to this grand natural harbour, which could easily take the whole of our fleet, and where, too, they could run for absolute shelter in any state of the weather. Enormous sums—many millions—are being spent in making artificial harbours when here is one ready made and not used. The day will come when England will bitterly repent this neglect.

The Irish Celt, unlike his ancient predecessor, is devoid of artistic feeling. Hard times and sufferings leave no place for luxuries. But I think a third requirement may be added to make Connemara at any rate idealistically perfect.

The observant English visitor will notice the dearth of small birds, those beautiful songsters who charm all foreigners paying a visit to our shores. Mile after mile of wild, grand scenery will be passed, and the sole representatives of bird life seen on wing or ground are large black crows in flocks, and occasional magpies. Both these birds have been protected by

the halo of foolish superstition from time immemorial, their death by violence being considered unlucky to the perpetrators.

The crow might, with advantage to everybody, be reduced in number, as it is a deadly enemy to all small birds, killing them, eating their eggs, and even preying upon small chickens round the cabins. Yet, in spite of this, the natives let these birds multiply and grow strong in the land. Irish superstition is fathomless and irradicable. Increased knowledge of natural science and general education are the only hopes for the future. An occasional wren or robin is to be met with where there are thorn hedges or holly trees, but such spots are unfortunately rare in Connemara. Still the holly-trees on the mountain sides going down to the waters of the Little Killary, a sharp drop of 260 feet to Salruck, are a fine sight to see. They are truly magnificent, and when in full red or yellow berry, gorgeous. Even the *cheep, cheep* of the ubiquitous sparrow is uncommon.

Trees are scarce. Yet in no part of Ireland are evident signs wanting to shew that woods once covered the land. Roots of trees of the largest size are dug up in every bog when the turf for fuel is cut. The standing stumps of many gigantic monsters shew that the destruction has not been of any very ancient date. Further, the local names in Irish for many of the hills, valleys, mountains, and plains have forests, woods, groves, or trees for their English equivalents. As a writer of old expressed it, concerning one estate of a vast number of acres : “ You must take a breathing gallop to find a stick large enough to beat a dog.” For the last two hundred years at least the woods have been destroyed with the most criminally thoughtless prodigality. No doubt what timber there is about is freely stolen by the people. Young writes that he was told the peasants had an aversion to a tree ; at the earliest age they steal it for a walking-stick, afterwards for a spade handle ; later for a car shaft, and later still for a cabin rafter. But he indignantly says : “ Is it the consumption of sticks and handles that has destroyed millions of acres ? Absurdity ! The profligate, prodigal, worthless landowner cuts down his acres and leaves them unfenced against cattle, and then he has the impudence to charge the scarcity of trees to the walking-sticks of the poor !”

History tells the same sad story. Ancient manuscripts are extant in which mention is made of woods existing in Connemara and neighbourhood, among which are these : Sylan, near Tuam ; Carantrila, near Dunmore ; Beagh, near Dunmore ; Dalgan River, Killtrasna, near Headford ; Kellysgrove, near Ballinasloe ; Derrygimla, near Leenane ; Woodlawn, near Ballinasloe ; Derreen, near Ballyglunin ; Pollnacreeva and Kildaree, near Dunmore.

Did not the London City Companies sell no less than ten thousand pounds' worth of limber alone—an enormous sum of money for those days—out of the province of Ulster in King James's reign ? Much of Ireland's arboreal clothing in other parts found its way similarly in a cash shape into English pockets.

But Ireland could grow trees again ; the luxuriance of the hollies, birches, and mountain ash of Salruck and a few other spots in Connemara prove this, so that the sad loss of trees generally is the more deplorable. Small birds, too, cannot exist without them. With the advent of trees will therefore be the advent of song. This present Irish country silence is therefore saddening, because one knows it is unnecessary, and only due to a course of wrong-headedness and short-sightedness on the part of man through many generations.

But where Nature has prevented man exercising his destroying, despotic sway things are different. Sea-birds are plentiful on the coast, and still more so on the islands lying out in the Atlantic—the various species of seagull, the cormorant, and the oyster-catcher in vast numbers. On the seaweed-clad little promontories of the fiord, quite inland, the heron is often seen on its tall legs gazing dreamily at the receding water on the look-out for small pollack and other fry. If approached too closely it lazily flaps its big parallelogram-like wings and

flops off sluggishly to another finger-tip of land not far away. The heron is the weather omen bird, steadfastly believed in, and probably with much reason, by weatherglassless meteorological forecasters. When the bird flies high in the middle of the day it is a sign that dry weather will continue ; when the flights are low, and the bird frequently stops, rain may be expected. In Ireland its flights are generally low, with frequent stops. Ireland unquestionably has its full share of rain, but that matters little. One goes prepared for showers, and to catch a cold is exceptional.

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*The Lesser Killart—The Pipe Cemeteey—Salruck.*

The Lesser Killary, only about three miles long, runs inland, at a sharp angle from the mouth of the Great, up to Salruck. This name is said to be derived from a certain Saint Rock, who once, at some uncertain date, had his abode there at the end of the Little Killary at the bottom of the valley.

He was most attentive to his devotions, but once, getting lax—a saint often finds it difficult to live up to his reputation—the Devil took advantage of his temporary aberration and proceeded to bind him with a chain. As he was completing the investiture the wind blew the holy man's vestment apart, and the Unholy One saw there a cross, which made him jump.

He did not lose his hold—the Devil is loth to leave go — on the end of the chain, but he jumped with it in his hand right over the mountain into the Great Killary on the other side, and the chain, cutting deep into the mountain, scored out the present Pass of Salruck.

Since then the spot has naturally been sacred, and the place where the saint dwelt was turned into the favourite burial-ground of the district.

The spot is most confusing for the scene itself at first sight reminds one more than anything else of the back-yard of a country town grocer's shop, where odds and ends are deposited. A strange medley of old pieces of wood, like remains of broken-up packing-cases, sticking up here and there, an occasional intact though lid-less shallow deal box, two feet by one, half full of sawdust, and a few black bottles, apparently flung away, which have rolled into crevices between heaps of slab-like stones resembling paving-stones, but not neatly squared off as we see them in the streets.

The dispelling of the resemblance is due to the thick overhanging ash-trees, whose trunks shew centenarian age, and whose interlacing branches form a protecting lace-work against the sky. The spot is really, as we have said, a God's acre, and its disguising, distressful untidiness is, we are sorry to say, very characteristic of many other old Irish burial-places. Rotten boughs from the trees have fallen all over the ground, ferns grow up here and there, and rank undergrowth of grass and bramble partially hide the evidences of mortality. Strangers, visiting the place without knowing what they were going to see, have exclaimed, in our hearing, "What does it all mean—what is it?"

A very curious old custom is associated with interments here, which has made the place famous even beyond the limits of Western Ireland. A box of pipes—short clays—is brought with each corpse, and a pipe with tobacco served out to each mourner. The pipes are smoked after the earth has been filled in, and a mound of stones raised above the grave ; the ashes are knocked out on the top and the pipes broken or left behind.

The small boxes with remains of sawdust in them, contained pipes used at various funerals. The origin of this singular custom is unknown, but it certainly is very expressively

emblematic of “ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” The empty black bottles I have seen on the site seem to point to the fact that other ceremonies are also indulged in at times by the mourners. The corpse, too, is borne three times round the cemetery, and only close relations carry it, preferably those of the same surname.

The odd pieces of planking sticking up here and there are placed at the head and foot of the graves. There are also a few simple wooden crosses, but only one or two graves bear any inscriptions.

There is also a holy well in the cemetery, now filled up with rubbish, and two ash-trees growing in very close proximity to one another over two graves, which tradition asserts are the final resting-places of two lovers never united in life, but who departed on the same day, so that in death they were not divided. The superstitious see in the two trees, grown so close together, a similitude to the lives of those whose graves they cover.

The situation of this unique cemetery is lovely. It lies at the bottom of a valley at the end of the Lesser Killary, quite by itself, away from all houses, with a small trout stream bubbling and bustling along close at hand. The entrance to it from the road, running from Salruck to Rosroe, is up a lane, beautifully and completely arched over with ash-trees, down which almost a veritable brook runs after rain. Ferns of many species, some rare—the *Osmunda* most common—decorate the roadside, and the two carnivorous plants, the sundew and the butterwort, are to be found in abundance on the banks amid the damp mosses.

A tiny Church of Ireland church, built by the Thomson family, occupies a magnificent position at the end of the Little Killary, not three hundred yards from the Pipe Cemetery, and when I have been there the congregation, including the clergyman, who came on a bicycle from Aasleagh at the finger-tip of the Great Killary, some thirteen miles, to officiate, used to average about seven.

In this district the other churches are at Aasleagh, and in the grounds of Kylemore. There are two Roman Catholic chapels in the neighbourhood, one about a mile from Leenane and another a mile or two on the road to Kylemore after leaving the junction of the Salruck road with the main road.

The road from Salruck to Rosroe is most fascinating. One never tires of it no matter how often it is traversed, for naught can stale its infinite variety. Physically it is an awful road—all ups and downs—a switchback of the roughest description, bad enough for horse vehicles—one would say fatal for motors, yet I have known a motor do the journey in safety.

Yes, this part of the Lesser Killary is lovely. To see the moon rise over the hills at the back while the sun sinks in a blood-red, golden ball on the west before it plunges into the Atlantic is an experience. Nature, in her most sensitive, thrilling aspect can scarcely be realized till one has visited the Little Killary. I have seen the sun rise from Tenerife's Peak ; I have seen the grand view from the Mountain House, in the Catskill Mountains ; I have seen the view from the Stalheimsleft in Norway ; I have gazed with awe over the eight-mile crater of Palma in the Canaries—but I have seen no view of such peculiar beauty of its own like that in the Little Killary. Description fails one—comparisons are only then left, and they are feeble in the extreme.

There are many other exquisitely beautiful spots throughout Connemara, with magnificent views and unequalled facilities for sea-bathing, sea-fishing, and also trout-fishing, all practically close together, where reasonable hotels or pensions would certainly succeed, and be a distinct boon to the tourist. At present the most enticing bits of Connemara have to be rapidly driven through and not explored, nearly all the existing inns being in the less inter-

esting spots. And there must be an untold number of delightful retreats for artists, anglers, and health-seekers at present absolutely unknown. Africa is getting much more popularized than many parts of Ireland.

One spot, at any rate, is entrancingly beautiful—Rosroe on the Great Killary, at its mouth just sheltered from the rude, overpowering greatness of the Atlantic rollers by guardian islands. How ideal is the view from the little cottage lying in solitary beauty, with sea close in front, queen of all around ! And then to throw wide open the French windows in early morning before anyone is about, when man the bustler, the destroyer of peace, is at home at rest ; to breathe in the keen, fresh, virginal air, which seems to saturate the senses, to intoxicate the imagination, to waken mystic, subtle memories of former times, may be in other far-off countries, under other circumstances ; to watch the light fleecy bits of mist, like angel snowflakes, wither up and gradually, imperceptibly vanish into mysterious nothingness as the sun attains a slight glow of warmth on the yellowish greens and purples of the precipices just opposite across the water ; perhaps to hear, as one often does, the fizz of myriad mackerel playing and foaming the water up only a few yards distant, for all the world like a newly-opened gigantic bottle of champagne. This is life. This is balm to the unrest of troublous human nature ; a nerve-restorer of priceless value. This is communing with Nature in her most beneficent mood — and this is Connemara.

The views at the mouth of this charming fiord, looking up it till the eye rests with peaceful satisfaction on tiny Salruck Church, are beautiful. Often when fishing at this sweet spot, rainbow after rainbow, sometimes two together, were seen apparently close at hand, one arm of the richly-coloured prismatic arch arising from the sea, the other ending on the mountains. The vivid brilliancy of these Killary rainbows I have never seen equalled or approached elsewhere.

It is good to see the sun set, to watch it dip down, down into the sea, far away on the open Atlantic, after a gorgeous blaze of ever-changing myriad colours, for it affords a happy memory never to be forgotten. And then—

“ Soon as the evening shades prevail,  
The moon takes up the wondrous tale ;  
And nightly to the listening earth  
Repeats the story of her birth.”

At no place, as at the mouth of the Little Killary, have I been more reminded of Turner’s pictures.

In the Lesser Killary are oyster beds, but they have been sadly neglected. The molluscs, those that are of any size, are fat and exceedingly well-flavoured. They are quite equal to the Whitstable natives, and yet they have never been commercially put upon the market. Ireland, in many directions, has yet to be exploited.

The salmon-fishing in the Killary neighbourhood has been a failure for some years, though fair rod catches have been made in Lakes Muck and Pee.

The Erriff river, which flows into the finger-tip of the Killary over some most picturesque falls—“ where sea and river meet”— is probably one of the best salmon rivers in Ireland.

The capricious herring is a frequenter of the coast and bays of this part of Ireland, as elsewhere, but its advent in thousands can never be foretold. How singular it is that you never by any chance catch a herring on a hook !

A capital centre for both sea, trout, and pike fishing is at Leenane, where there is a really comfortable and moderate hotel, whose proprietor does all that is possible, and with marked success, to afford his visitors sport.

For a holiday, for a thorough change of air and scene, a visit to Connemara is probably more beneficial than a visit to the northern parts of the Continent. The contrast certainly is greater. The dress of the peasants is just as different, the manner of life and locomotion strangely foreign (panniers are still used for carrying fish and turf, and pillion on horseback for man and wife a common sight), and the language is much less understandable than is French or German. In many parts of Connemara and on the adjacent islands to this day Irish is more used than English by the peasants among themselves, and we have met several who knew no English at all. Connemara is, in short, more reminiscent of Spain and Italy than of any other countries. And it is now not difficult to get to. The Irish mail leaves Euston at 8.45 p.m., arriving at Holyhead at 2.17 a.m., where trains from the North also join. Dublin is reached at 6 a.m., and the Connemara express leaves Broadstone Station at 7 a.m., arriving at Recess at 12.15 p.m., whence a charming drive through almost unequalled wild scenery, along Lough Inagh, takes you to Leenane, the centre of the district. The time from Euston to Ecess is only fifteen hours and a half, and of course there is a daylight route as well.

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*Cashel—The Twelve Pins—Carna—Connemara Roads—The Irishman and his Pig.*

The southern part of Connemara, from Cashel, is not so well known as it deserves. Let the picturesque painter, as well as the angler, go to that part of Ireland, and he will find endless variety of shape, colour, and character in the deliriously irregular hills and mountains.

Cashel Bay, when the tide is low, and the nearly numberless yellow islands appear as by magic all over its surface, is like a crystallized dream from the Arabian Nights ; and then the Zetland Arms Hotel, at the head of the lake-like expanse of water, is a charmingly home-like hostel for angler, artist, or health-seeker. Would there were more such in this part of Connemara ! When I was last there they actually had a German waiter ! The incongruity was obvious—he should have been a loquacious Irishman.

The nearest station to Cashel is Recess, from which it is four and a half miles distant, the drive not of a very interesting character. The hotel has good lake fishing, which is free for visitors staying in the house.

The Twelve Pins of Binabola are said to occupy some twenty-five square miles. I should think they do. The beauty of these mountains is great, and as they vary their relative distance to one another at every turn of the road, they never lose their charm. The best view of them as a whole is undoubtedly from Cashel, on the south of Recess Station. When looking northwards from that spot you see their curious denticulated or serrated peaks—jagged, rounded, smooth, conical—silhouetted against the sky in far-away pale outlines which are almost ethereal, the soothing yellows, orange, gorgeous purples, and brilliant greens of bog and hill in the near-distance aiding a delightfully artistic scene. As a matter of fact the peaks are more than twelve, but the dozen have obvious dignity over the remainder. They become dear friends, as throughout Connemara some of them are present at some point or other in every view. You can't get away from them in Connemara, and you don't want to. Your p.p.c. card on leaving their society would contain the postscript—"With deep regret."

An interesting drive can be taken from Cashel or Recess round by Carna, but the roads are not kept in good condition, and consequently are bumpy. The county is bare of trees and lonesome. At Carna there is a quiet, comfortable hotel, with old-fashioned enclosed garden,

but no view. A bed can also be had over a grocer's shop at Kilkieran should the traveller care to take that route back to Recess, but the journey (which the writer has made) hardly repays the trouble. The scenery is not for one moment comparable to that north of the railway line. At some little lakes near Kilkieran, however, the writer caught some fair-sized brown trout without much exertion, so that probably the lakes, not being fished at all, would yield good sport to the persistent angler.

But Connemara has one want—a want in capital letters—roads. At present the main trunk roads are far too few and circuitous. They become most monotonous, and one has to go over and over them again to get to places at no great distance as the crow flies. Yet engineering difficulties are slight and the best road material everywhere ready to hand on the spot. After the famine, about 1847, and since then at times of distress, excellently planned roads have been begun in various parts of Connemara to connect routes in most desirable positions, often to cut off miles of road circumlocution. Such, for example, was the short “relief” road, commenced during a famine some seven years ago, to connect the Salruck road with the Tully Cross road across one, and the shortest, side of a triangle. To arrive at the end of the Lesser Killary at Salruck the two longer sides of the triangle have now to be traversed. The immense advantage of this short mile, or mile and a half at most, to the district would be inestimable. It would also open up some of the grandest scenery in Ireland, yet it remains just half-finished, ending at the top of the hill over-looking Salruck with curious, startling abruptness. Up to the present the money expended on this road has been absolutely wasted. I know of no country-where public money is more wasted than in Ireland.

Another road which also might advantageously be finished lies along the southern shore of the Great Killary and runs from Rosroe. This route would supply a much-needed alternate route from Letterfrack, Renvyle, and Tully to Leenane. At present it exists in a half-finished state, but quite impassable to vehicles.

The remains of a track are also still visible on the northern side of the Killary, leading to a truly magnificent expanse of sandy sea-shore on the extreme north-west entrance to the fiord, which makes an unusually suitable bathing-place, with beautiful scenery all round. But this favoured spot, called by us the Mayo Sands, is now practically unknown, the old road is grass-covered, and in places has trees and shrubs growing over it. A comparatively small expense would throw this Riviera-like drive open. At present it can only be reached by boat.

A short piece of connecting road, imperatively needed, would materially shorten the route from Recess to Leenane. At present one has to drive, quite out of the way, nearly into the Kylemore Pass, and then double back again for some miles over the same track of country, the road from Recess joining the Leenane road at a long, attenuated angle. The annoying part of the journey is that you can see all the time the piece of road thus absolutely taking you in the opposite direction. A short juncture piece of road would here save this terribly irritating duplicity, and be of universal and lasting benefit to natives as well as tourists.

A landowner in this part of Ireland, whom I know, was desirous of getting his tenants to adopt a cleaner mode of living, and particularly to persuade them to build outhouses for their live stock, so that the time-honoured, communal, Noah's Ark arrangement of the one living-room in the cabin for man, beast, and bird might be changed. One of his better-class tenants, in a fairly well-to-do way, had a large yard, with the usual dung-heap, of course, in front of his door, but where there was ample space for outhouses. So repeatedly in passing my friend looked into the cabin, over the half-door, and said, “Maloney, you have plenty of room, why not build a separate house for the pigs; it is a pity to see them running all over the floor, and it would be much better for the health of yourselves and the children?” Several times he called, and the frequency of the suggestion seemed at last to have fixed the idea in Maloney's head and roused him to action, for he was on good terms with his landlord, and

wished to stand well with him. After several weeks of incubation action ensued, and eventually Maloney sent one of his children up to the house to say that the next time the master was that way would he give him a call, for he had carried into practice the advice about the pigs. My friend lost no time in calling on Maloney, well pleased to think the advent of a better style of living had begun on his estate. Arriving at Maloney's farm, he looked round the yard, but could see no alteration in the state of things. The usual dung-heap was still prominent as heretofore, but no piggeries were visible in the yard. He put his head in over the half-door of the cabin and hailed Maloney, "Where's the new house for the pigs?" "Step forward," says Maloney, "sure it's straight in front of you." And there, sure enough, on one side of the interior wall of the cabin was a neatly-made miniature cabin, carefully thatched, with a half-door, and finished off in exact imitation of the full-sized structure; and the contented grunts emanating from it shewed it to be then inhabited. Now this is no good story, but an actual fact and it had nothing of the joke attached to it, but was a serious endeavour on the peasant's part to please the master and carry out his wishes. That his pigs should sleep outside, apart from the family, had never entered Maloney's head as a possibility.

But, though Connemara is a delightful country to travel in, yet it has its sad, depressing side. Deserted homesteads are everywhere; roofless cabins predominant. Often on some railway journeys at every station on the line I have seen farewell "wakes," as they are termed, held, and the terribly pathetic picture witnessed of farewells—many obviously for ever in this world—taking place. This exodus is so draining the country that very soon only the old, feeble, incapable, and hopeless will be left. In 1841 the population of Ireland was about eight millions and a quarter; now it numbers less than four and a half millions; or, to look at it in another light, in 1841 the population of Ireland was over three times as great as that of Scotland, now it is thirteen thousand less. Already the unions and workhouses are too big for the requirements of the remnant of the population. [1]

It may be said of Connemara that God has done a great deal for the district, man little. It is time man woke up and did more.

[1] Since the above was written the emigration returns to December 31st, 1905, have been issued. They shew that the total number of emigrants who left Irish ports since the returns began (May 1st, 1851) is 4,028,589—2,092,154 males and 1,936,436 females. Last year, I am glad to observe, there were 6243 less emigrants than in 1904, the total for last year being 31,172, three-fourths of whom emigrated to the United States of America.

Connemara and the neighboring spots of beauty and interest... with remarks on sea and fresh water fishing, Irish character, Archaeology, Botany, etc. (1906)

Author: Stone, J. Harris (John Harris)

Publisher: London : Health Resort publishing Co.

Language: English

Digitizing sponsor: MSN

Book contributor: Cornell University Library

Contributor usage rights: See terms

Collection: cornell; americana

Source : Internet Archive

<http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924028070260>

Edited and uploaded to [www.augty.org](http://www.augty.org)

December 12 2011