

**SAMUEL
BAYNE**

ON AN IRISH
JAUNTING-CAR

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Bayne S.

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Samuel G. Bayne

On an Irish Jaunting-car / Through Donegal and Connemara

PREFACE

In the compiling of this little book, I am deeply indebted for historical data, etc., to John Cooke, M.A., the Messrs. Black, Lord Macaulay, the *Four Masters*, and many others, from whose writings I have made extracts; and for photographs to Messrs. W. Lawrence, T. Glass, and Commissioner Walker.

I sincerely hope I may be forgiven for the shortcomings and errors which can doubtless be found in this brief sketch of a few weeks' tour through the north, west, and south of Ireland.

S. G. BAYNE.
New York City.

NEW YORK TO LONDONDERRY

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.

We are now in "Derry," as it is called in Ireland, and every man in it is "town proud"; and well he may be, as Derry has a historical record second to but few cities in any country, and its siege is perhaps the most celebrated in history. At this writing it has a population of thirty-three thousand

and is otherwise prosperous. Saint Columba started it in 546 A.D. by building his abbey. Then came the deadly Dane invader, swooping down on this and other Foyle settlements and glutting his savage appetite for plunder. Out of the ruins left by the Danes arose in 1164 the "Great Abbey of Abbot O'Brolchain," who was at that time made the first bishop of Derry. The English struggled and fought for centuries to gain a foothold in this part of Ireland, but to no purpose until Sir Henry Docrora landed, about 1600 A.D., on the banks of the Foyle with a force of four thousand men and two hundred horse. He restored Fort Culmore and took Derry, destroyed all the churches, the stones of which he used for building fortifications, and left standing only the tower of the cathedral, which remained until after the siege.

In 1608 Sir Cahir O'Doherty, of Inishowen, who at first had favored the settlement, rebelled, took Culmore fort, and burned Derry. His death, and the "flight of the earls" Tyrone and Tyrconnell to France, left Derry and other vast possessions to English confiscation, over two hundred thousand acres alone falling to the citizens of London. The walls were built in 1609, and still remain in good condition, being used as a promenade; the original guns bristle from loop-holes at intervals, and "Roaring Meg" will always have a place in history for the loud crack she made when fired on the enemy. She sits at the base of Walker's monument now, silent, but still ugly. This monument is erected on a column ninety feet high, starting from a bastion on the wall, and has a statue of Walker on its summit. One of the earliest feats in sight-seeing which the writer ever accomplished was to climb to its top, up a narrow flight of spiral stairs. (There would not be room enough for him in it now.)

James I. granted a new charter of incorporation to Derry in 1613, and changed the name from Derrycolumcille to Londonderry. James II. laid siege to the town in person in 1689, but failed to capture it. It was defended for one hundred and five days by its citizens under George Walker, but two thousand of them lost their lives from wounds and starvation. On the 28th of July, the ships *Mountjoy* and *Phoenix*, by gallantly rushing in concert against the iron boom laid across the Foyle, broke it, and relieved the starving people with plenty of provisions; and so the siege was ended.

There are seven gates in the walls of Derry – viz., Bishop's Gate, Shipquay Gate, Butchers' Gate, New Gate, Ferryquay Gate, Castle Gate, and the Northern Gate, a recent addition. Those favorites of fortune who live near New York know that George Washington had some two hundred and fifty "headquarters" and places where he "once stopped," in and about that city, and that he sat in over two thousand armchairs in them – or, at least, that number has been sold with the genial auctioneer's guarantee of their authenticity. It is estimated that it would require a train of twenty freight cars to carry the chairs, desks, haircloth sofas, saddle-bags, guns, and pistols that have been sold as relics from his headquarters at Madame Jumel's alone, Harlem absorbing seventy-five per cent. of this output. But for all that, King James runs George a close second. The writer is only one man, yet he has slept in three Honduras mahogany four-posters in which James preceded him, has eaten with many knives that swept the royal mouth, and to-day owns a bone-handled razor that is said to have scraped the face of royalty; and yet, after all, he is only comparatively happy!

LONDONDERRY TO PORT SALON

We leave Derry with regret, and take the train for Fahan. This brings us to the shore of Lough Swilly, where we embark on a ferry-boat and cross the lough to Rathmullen. While crossing I saw Buncrana, a short distance down the lough. This is a pretty village containing the castle of the O'Dochertys, now in ruins, and near it the castle erected by Sir John Vaughan at a later period. Half a century ago the latter became dilapidated, but it was restored and has ever since been rented "for the season," as an investment by the owner. One of my pleasantest recollections is the week's-end visit I made many years ago to its then tenant. It had fine, terraced gardens, its outer walls were skirted by a trout and salmon river, and there was a vast court-yard behind it with cell-stalls for the cavalry horses, and even a gallows on which to hang captured invaders – and many of them were hanged on this same gallows. It was not a pleasant outlook from one's bedchamber window, but then the victims had been a long time dead, and no trouble came from their ghosts.

We soon arrived at Rathmullen, a historic spot where many things happened in the days of yore. It occupies a sheltered position at the foot of a range of hills that intervene between Lough Swilly and Mulroy Bay, of which the highest point is Crochanaffrin, one thousand one hundred and thirty-seven feet. It is worth while to make an excursion either up this hill or Croaghan, one thousand and ten feet, which is nearer; for the extraordinary view over the inlets and indentations of this singular coast will put the traveller more in mind of Norwegian fiords than British scenery. Close to it are the ivy-clad ruins of a priory of Carmelite friars, consisting of two distinct buildings erected at an interval of nearly two centuries. The eastern portion, of which the tower and chancel remain, was constructed by the McSweenys in the fifteenth century. It exhibits considerable traces of pointed Gothic architecture. Over the eastern window there still remains a figure of St. Patrick. The architecture of the remainder of the building is of the Elizabethan age, a great part of it having been rebuilt by Bishop Knox, of the diocese of Raphoe, in 1618, on obtaining possession of the manor of Rathmullen from Turlogh Oge McSweeney. The *Annals of the Four Masters* (to which we will refer later), states that in 1595 it was plundered by George Bingham, son of the Governor of Connaught. McSweeney's castle is supposed to have stood west of the priory, but it was destroyed in 1516. It was from here that the young Hugh O'Donnell was carried off in 1587, and kept a prisoner in Dublin until he made his romantic escape in 1591. In 1607, the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell took their "flight" from Rathmullen in a small vessel. "The entire number on board was ninety-nine, having little sea-store, and being otherwise miserably accommodated." After a hazardous voyage of three weeks, they landed at the mouth of the Seine.

There is a monument in the churchyard to the memory of the Hon. William H. Pakenham, captain of the British man-of-war *Saldanha*, wrecked on Swilly Rock in 1811. Every soul on board was lost; the only living thing that reached the land was the captain's gray parrot, which the wind carried in safety to the rocky shore.

Here, too, Wolfe Tone was taken prisoner on board the French frigate *Hoche*, in 1798. Tone was a talented young Irishman, and pleaded the Irish cause so eloquently in Paris that a fleet of forty-three ships, with fifteen thousand men, was sent to Ireland in 1796, Hoche commanding. A tremendous storm scattered the fleet on the Irish coast, and the ships returned to France in broken order. Nothing daunted, Tone again persuaded the French to give him a trial with a new fleet. They gave it, but this expedition was even more unfortunate than the first one, and the end of Tone's tragic career dated from his arrest on the shores of Lough Swilly.

A few miles above, Lough Swilly divides into two forks, one running up to Letterkenny and the other to Ramelton, a little town located at the point where the river Lennon meets the tidal salt water. This interesting place is celebrated for the fine views it affords and for its salmon and trout fishing.

I was exceedingly anxious to visit it, but time would not permit the shortest deviation from our rigid itinerary, as we had purchased a state-room on the *Etruria*, sailing from Queenstown on July 28th.

It was at Rathmullen that we hired our first jaunting-car; and it might here be said that of all the vehicles ever invented the modern Irish jaunting-car holds first place for the use of the traveller; it is unique and there is nothing that can take its place for an easy and comfortable lounging ride, when balanced by two passengers and a driver. It is now improved with a circular back and rubber tires, while the very latest has a driver's seat behind, like a hansom cab. We can speak truthfully of the jaunting-car, after having tested its qualities for three hundred and fifty miles on this trip; but would add that care is requisite in arranging for and selecting a car, as many of them are old and worn out.

PORT SALON TO DUNFANAGHY

Leaving Rathmullen, John, our driver, took us a short cut over the Glenalla Mountains to Port Salon, through Mr. Hart's demesne of fine timber. As we drove along, our interest was excited by the masses of furze to be seen on all sides. This shrub grows about five feet high and is thickly covered with sharp, dark-green prickles and innumerable flowers of the brightest yellow known to botanists. Its popular name is "whin," and it is extensively used as food for their horses by the farmers, who pound the prickles into pulp in a stone trough, and when so prepared the horses eat them with great relish. "Whins" grow all over the north of Ireland in wild profusion, and the startling blaze of their bright yellow bloom may be seen for miles; to those not accustomed to their beauty they are a most interesting novelty.

After driving about twelve miles through this kind of country, we arrived at Colonel Barton's handsome hotel on the bluffs of Lough Swilly, at the point where it opens into the Atlantic. I can hardly describe the beauty of this spot – its hard, yellow strand, its savage mountains covered with blooming heather, its sapphire sea in strong contrast to the deep, rich green pines. The Atlantic was booming into the numerous caves that line both sides of the lough, and so seductive was the influence of this sound that at our first view we lay down, tired and happy, in the deep heather, and fell asleep for an hour, undisturbed by fly, mosquito, or gnat. A British iron-clad was anchored a little above, which gave a note of distinction to the charming scene; we were told it was the celebrated *Camperdown*, that did the ramming in the Mediterranean disaster.

We stayed overnight, and made an excursion next morning to the "Seven Arches." This is a short and interesting trip, about a mile and a half north of the hotel. Here is a series of fine caverns scooped out of the limestone rock by the action of the waves, which can be easily reached by land, but the approach by water is grander and more imposing. From the strand where the boat deposits the visitor, a cave with a narrow entrance runs one hundred and thirty feet inland, and beyond this are the "Seven Arches," one of which, forming a grand entrance from the sea, one hundred yards long, divides into two. Beyond the left-hand cave is another, one hundred and twenty feet long. The right-hand cave is again divided into four beautiful caverns, through any one of which a passage may be made to the boulder strand, whence another arch leads towards the north.

We left Colonel Barton's and drove along the coast for a few miles to Doaghbeg, where we stopped to admire a magnificent sea-arch called "Brown George," the most remarkable natural feature, perhaps, on the whole coast of Lough Swilly. Doaghbeg is a very primitive, native village and is the capital of the district called Fanet (sometimes Fanad). This was the birthplace of the Honorable P. C. Boyle, who has made his mark in Pennsylvania. Further driving brought us to Fanet Head, one of the most northerly points in Ireland, on which is erected a large light-house, one hundred and twenty-seven feet above high-water. This has a group of occulting lights showing white to seaward and red towards land. After inspecting the light-house, we took our last look at Lough Swilly, that lake of shadows with its marvellous scenic splendor, almost unrivalled also as a safe and deep harbor. I have seen the British fleet manoeuvred in its confines, and it could easily anchor every man-of-war in commission to-day, giving them all enough cable to swing clear of one another on the tide.

We coasted the Atlantic for a few miles, and then turned into the hills that surround Mulroy Bay, which soon came into sight. When we reached the shore a council of war was held, and it was decided to save some twenty miles of driving up round the head of the bay, by crossing, if possible, at the lower end; so a broad, heavy, but unseaworthy boat was chartered, and we took Bob, the horse, out of the car and rolled the latter into the stern of our marine transport. It was no easy task to get Bob to face the water; however, after beating about the bush for half an hour, he suddenly grew tractable, and we pushed him into the boat by main strength. The passage was ludicrous in the extreme; at every high wave Bob would lash out his heels and prance. The captain of the boat (who, by the way, was an

Irishwoman) would berate John for owning a horse "whose timper was so bad that he might plouge us all into etarnity without a minit's notice!" John kept whispering in a loud voice into his horse's ear promises of oats, turnips, and a bran-mash by way of dessert, if he would only behave himself. The tide was running strong, and when we were swept past our landing we each became captain in turn without appointment, and a variety of language was indulged in that would have made the Tower of Babel seem like a Quaker meeting. The farce was suddenly ended by Bob's breaking loose from his owner and jumping ashore like a chamois. We then ran the boat aground, took out the car, and, after capturing Bob with the promised oats, were soon on our way again.

In a short time after again starting, we ascended a hill and could clearly see the spot where Lord Leitrim was assassinated in April, 1878. It lay up the bay in a clump of woods, close to the water. Lord Leitrim had been very harsh with his tenants and had evicted large numbers of them from their farms; they therefore determined to "remove" him, and a select band of them lay in ambush along the road and succeeded in killing his lordship, his driver, and his secretary while they were driving to Derry. There were many trials in court, but those arrested could never be convicted. As a boy I have been more than once startled by the appearance of a pair of cars with eight men on them, each having a couple of double-barreled shotguns. Lord Leitrim was one of them; the others were his guards, going to Milford to collect the rents. His temper was so violent that the government removed him from the office of magistrate. His son, the late Earl, was a very different kind of man; he did everything within his power to advance his tenants' interests. After his death, a few years ago, the tenantry erected a fine monument to his memory in Carrigart Square. We later read the inscription upon it, which was, "He loved his people."

After a pleasant drive we reached Carrigart and had a good lunch there; we tried the Carrigart "perfectos" afterwards, and their memory clings to us still! We then started for the Rosapenna Hotel, which was not far distant – less than two miles. This hotel was built of wood, after the Scandinavian fashion, by the trustees of the late Earl of Leitrim, and opened in 1893. It was designed in Stockholm, whence the timber was shipped to Mulroy. It stands at the base of Ganiamore Mountain, on the narrow neck of the Rossgull peninsula, between Mulroy Bay and Sheephaven. Fine golf links have been laid out with eighteen holes, the circuit being three miles and a half. For visitors there is excellent fishing in the adjacent waters, by permission of the Countess of Leitrim, and good bathing on the strands of Sheephaven, which afford a smooth promenade of six miles. From the top of Ganiamore a good view is obtained of the coast from Horn Head round to Inishowen peninsula, and from its hills a fine sweep inland to Errigal Mountain. At Downing's Bay there is one of the finest views in Donegal, looking up and down Sheephaven, the woods of Ards and the tower of Doe Castle backed up in the distance by the ponderous mass of Muckish. Within a short distance of the hotel are three caves which can be entered, one from the brow of the hill and the others at low water. Near it also is Mulroy House, the residence of the Countess of Leitrim.

From Rosapenna we drove to Doe Castle, built on the shores of Sheephaven. This was a stronghold of the McSweenys, which has been, to a certain extent, modernized and rendered habitable by a late owner, who in doing so pulled down some of the walls. It consists of a lofty keep with massive walls, which enclose passages and stone stairs. It is surrounded by a "bawn," or castle-yard, defended by a high wall, with round towers at intervals. The rock on which it stands is not very high, but from its almost insulated position it was difficult to approach. It was garrisoned by Captain Vaughan for Queen Elizabeth, but was betrayed to the followers of Sir Cahir O'Doherty. It was besieged in 1608, and Davis says: "Being the strongest in Tyrconnell, it endured one hundred blows of the demi-cannon before it surrendered."

A little to the north, but separated by a prolongation of the marsh at the head of Sheephaven, is Ards House, owned by Alexander J. R. Stewart. This demesne is fenced with a cut-stone wall which we skirted for many miles. It is a great show place, with its extensive mansion, fine gardens, and beautiful woods, fronting on the bay where the Lackagh River runs into it. We drew rein on the

Lackagh bridge to see Mr. Stewart's men draw a net with eight hundred pounds of salmon in it; there were about eighty in the haul. William Wray, the old master of Ards in the eighteenth century, had a strange history. He lived here in luxurious state and "dispensed hospitality with true regal splendor." His ambition, indeed, appeared to be to see daily as much eaten as possible; and to facilitate the arrival of guests, he engineered a road over Salt Mountain. Extravagance, however, at last told its tale, and the old man, broken down, went over to France, where he died, "poor, unfriended, and forgotten."

After crossing the bridge, we took up the road to Creeslough, where Balfour is building a narrow-gauge railroad for the purpose of giving employment to the poor; and by driving till quite late we reached Dunfanaghy. "A great day's work," as John put it while cracking his whip during the last half mile.

DUNFANAGHY TO FALLCARRAGH

We put up at the Stewart Arms, and next morning when we looked over the town we came to the conclusion that Paris had nothing to fear from Dunfanaghy. It hasn't even a Moulin Rouge to boast of, but it's a first-class place to sleep in when you're worn out on the road, as we were. We engaged a large boat with four men to row us out into the Atlantic to see the famous Horn Head from the sea. The sight has really no equal anywhere. The writer, having seen it many times since boyhood, is more impressed with it on each occasion, and this last time it seemed more entrancing than ever. Horn Head is a range of beetling mountains projecting into the Atlantic, and covers in extent some ten miles. The crags and horns are six hundred and twenty-six feet high, and are of all the colors of the rainbow, from deepest black to red, yellow, gray, purple, and green. The formation is vast galleries or amphitheatres, broken by the nature of the rock into rectangular shelves, on which perch myriads of birds, which are as the sands of the sea for multitude. Some of these birds migrate from Norway, lay one egg, and when the young are able they return home, only to come back again each succeeding summer. There are many varieties of them, in part consisting of guillemots, sheldrakes, cormorants, the shag, the gannet, the stormy petrel, the speckled diver, and the sea-parrot. One variety will fly with greater ease under a boat when pursuing fish than it can in the air, and in the clear water they may be seen at great depths, using their wings in this way. They have seen but few men, and do not rise when approached. Their cawing and cries are fearful and awe-inspiring, owing to the vast numbers of birds that are always in the air or on the rocks, the whole panorama as seen from the boat is something the beholder will remember as long as he lives.

We also saw many seals close to the boat; these live on salmon. Mr. Stewart used to pay a crown each for their scalps, but since retiring he has withdrawn the bonus and they are now increasing in numbers. The sea is very lumpy at the head, owing to the squalls that blow down over the cliffs; we encountered half a dozen, and any one of them would have put a sailboat out of commission in a few minutes. They keep a great ground-swell in constant motion, and the boat rose and fell on these waves like a cork in a whirlpool. When rowing home we passed a salmon net at a jutting point, with one end of its rope fastened to the rocks. We asked why had such a place been selected when there were so many others easier to get at, and the man replied: "Salmon are queer fish; they have a path round the headlands when going to the spawning-grounds, and never leave it. If that net were moved out fifty yards it would never catch a salmon." Two men were perched on a small ledge close to the water, watching the net against seals, as the latter will tear the fish out of the nets with the ferocity of a tiger. These men had six hundred feet of sheer rock above them, and we asked how they ever got down or up again. "Oh, they're used to it; they've been at it since they were boys, and they can scale the rocks like monkeys."

We again slept at the Stewart Arms, and we felt so much impressed by what we had seen from the sea that we determined to go on the head itself and view the surroundings; so next morning we started on the car and were soon driving over the long stone bridge with its many arches. On the way over the bridge we passed Horn Head House, the residence of C. F. Stewart, a property that has been in the possession of the present family since a Stewart raised men to fight for King James against the O'Neills, in the Irish wars. The road winds up between vast sand-hills, the sand being of a remarkable orange color, fading into pink in the distance, while large tufts of rich, deep green bent-grass are dotted over its surface, making such an unusually striking contrast that we stopped the car for full five minutes to admire it. These hills are alive with rabbits; they scampered off in all directions at our approach and quickly disappeared into their holes.

One mile to the west in a direct line is "McSwine's Gun," concerning which marvellous fables are told. The coast here is very precipitous and perforated with caverns, one of which, running in for some distance, is connected with the surface above by a narrow orifice, which is very difficult to find

without a guide, or very specific directions and the close observance of landmarks. Through this, in rough weather, the sea dashes, throwing up a column of water accompanied by a loud explosion or boom, which is said to have been heard as far as Derry.

To the south of the rocks lies the fine stretch of Tramore Strand. A little to the northeast of this spot is a circular castle. Continuing by the shore, Pollaguill Bay is reached, joined by cable with Tory Island. As seen from the land, the coast is rocky, broken, and indented, and in about two miles rises into the precipitous mass of Horn Head, over six hundred feet high. This headland somewhat resembles in shape a double horn, bordered on one side by the inlet of Sheephaven, though on the other the coast trends away to the south. The cliffs present a magnificent spectacle of precipitous descents, shelving masses of rock and yawning caverns lashed by the furious waves of the Atlantic. The view from the summit of the head is one of boundless ocean, broken only on the northwest by the islands of Inishbeg, Inishdooley, Inishbofin, and Tory, and on the northeast by the different headlands of this rugged coast —*i. e.*, Melmore, Rinmore, Fanet, Dunaff, and Malin heads, while on the east is seen in the distance the little island of Inishtrahull.

As we drove down from the head, a drizzling rain began to fall and we were glad to reach the shelter of the hotel and fortify the inner man by a substantial dinner.

At this stage in our tour we were quite undecided as to our route. We did not like to give up a visit to Glen Veigh, Gartan lakes and the "Poisoned Glen," as these are considered the finest things of their kind in Ireland, but finally decided that a *détour* which would cost us two days of driving would be impossible, owing to pressure of time; so after sleeping another night in Dunfanaghy, we pressed on to Fallcarragh. Inasmuch, however, as I often visited and fished in these glens and lakes, I may be pardoned for attempting to give the reader a short description of their principal features.

Lough Veigh lies to the east of the Derryveigh Mountains, occupying the opening to Glen Veigh. It is a long, narrow sheet of water; on the north side, and running into it, a rocky, almost perpendicular, wall rises to over twelve hundred feet, covered with Alpine vegetation. Over the top of this wall several large streams fall and break into cascades as they find their way to the lake below. Back of this and framing the whole, rises the majestic Dooish, the highest ridge in the Derryveigh range, standing two thousand one hundred and forty-seven feet above the tide. In old times I have counted a dozen eagles that built their nests on the topmost crags overhanging the water, their majestic, circling flights giving life and interest to the scene. The south side is a steep hill on which grow in riotous profusion the wild rose, bracken, creeping plants, ferns, lichen, moss, the primrose, the bluebell, the yellow gorse, and hazel; while in trees, it abounds in the gray birch, mountain-ash, larch, yew, juniper, white hawthorn, and laburnums with their glorious rain of gold – a mass of teeming harmonies and contrasts. But by far the finest display is its panoply of purple heather, which in some places reaches a height of ten feet; nowhere else can such heather be found. This is the beauty spot of Ireland; the lower part of the lake equals the best bit of Killarney, while the upper reaches of the glen surpass it in grandeur; it is indeed the wildest mountain-pass in Ireland. It may be described as, one might say, a salad of scenic loveliness, made up of countless varieties of color, form, and garniture; for I could pick out parts of it that resemble spots I have seen at the base of the Himalaya Mountains in India, and others where I have noticed a similarity to some places I visited near the Hot Springs of Hakone, in Japan. A comparison with the Trosachs of Scotland will result in no reflection on Glen Veigh; in fact, there is a close resemblance between them, and I cannot do better than quote Sir Walter Scott's celebrated description in *The Lady of the Lake*. Sir Walter, the greatest word painter of them all, the wizard of the pen, the man who could pick the magic word and almost paint a scene with it:

"The western waves of ebbing day
Rolled o'er the glen their level way;
Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
Was bathed in floods of living fire.

But not a setting beam could glow
Within the dark ravines below,
Where twined the path in shadow hid,
Round many a rocky pyramid,
Shooting abruptly from the dell
Its thunder-splintered pinnacle;
Round many an insulated mass,
The native bulwarks of the pass.
The rocky summits, split and rent,
Formed turret, dome, or battlement
Or seemed fantastically set
With cupola or minaret,
Wild crests as pagod ever deck'd,
Or mosque of Eastern architect.
Nor were these earth-born castles bare,
Nor lacked they many a banner fair;
For, from their shivered brows displayed,
Far o'er the unfathomable glade,
All twinkling with the dew-drop sheen,
The brier-rose fell in streamers green;
And creeping shrubs, of thousand dyes,
Waved in the west wind's summer sighs.

"Boon nature scatter'd free and wild,
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child.
Here eglantine embalm'd the air,
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there;
The primrose pale and violet flower,
Found in each clift a narrow bower;
Foxglove and nightshade, side by side,
Emblems of punishment and pride,
Group'd their dark hues with every stain
The weather-beaten crags retain.
With boughs that quaked at every breath,
Gray birch and aspen wept beneath;
Aloft, the ash and withe of oak
Cast anchor in the rifted rock;
And, higher yet, the pine-tree hung
His shattered trunk, and frequent flung,
Where seem'd the cliffs to meet on high,
His boughs athwart the narrow'd sky.
Highest of all, where white peaks glanced,
Where glist'ning streamers waved and danced,
The wanderer's eye could barely view
The summer heaven's delicious blue;
So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
The scenery of a fairy dream."

The "Poisoned Glen" lies to the southwest, and is a startling contrast to Glen Veigh. It has no vegetation of any kind, and is a weird, savage cañon ending in a *cul-de-sac*. It looks uncanny and forbidding, and seems as though it might be possessed, giving the visitor a creepy feeling as he drives through its gloomy defiles. No animal or bird is ever seen within its confines, as its barren sides will not support life in any form.

Gartan Lough is seen a few miles to the south. It is celebrated for its fine views and its fishing, and as the birthplace of St. Columba, who was born just where a ruined chapel now stands and which was originally erected, it is said, to mark the spot. St. Patrick made a pilgrimage to this place in 450 A.D..

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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