

CastlecConnell:

its adjuncts are all
beautiful

CHAPTER XIV.

Ascent of the Shannon from Limerick to Athlone—Castle
Connell—The Rapids—Holy Well—The River above Castle
Connell—Killaloe—The Steam Navigation Company—
Voyage up Loch Derg to Portumna—Character of this
expansion of the Shannon—Details of the Ascent—Por-
tumna—The River and its Banks between Portumna and
Banagher—Comparison with other Rivers—Desolate Scenes
—Banagher—Journey to Athlone.

RIVER of billows! to whose mighty heart
The tide-wave rushes of the Atlantic sea;
River of quiet depths! by cultured lea,
Romantic wood, or city's crowded mart;
River of old poetic founts! that start
From their lone mountain cradles, wild and free,
Nursed with the Fawns, lulled by the wood-lark's glee,
And cushal's hymeneal song apart—
River of chieftains! whose baronial halls,
Like veteran warriors, watch each wave-worn steep,
Portumna's towers, Bunratty's regal walls,
Carrick's stern rock, the Geraldine's grey keep—
River of dark mementos!

I now return to the Shannon; from which, the
city of Limerick, and its attractions, and interests,
have some time diverted me.

and three hundred yards wide, through and above a congregation of huge stones and rocks, which extend nearly half a mile; and offers not only an unusual scene, but a spectacle approaching much nearer to the sublime, than any moderate-sized stream can offer even in its highest cascade. None of the Welsh water-falls, nor the Geisbach in Switzerland, can compare for a moment in grandeur and effect with the rapids of the Shannon.

✧ Nor is the river the only attractive object at **Castle Connell**: its adjuncts are all beautiful. The greenest of lawns rise from it; the finest timber fringes it: magnificent mansions tower above their surrounding woods; swelling knolls are dotted with cattle and sheep; and it so happened too, that the landscape had all the advantage which the alternations of sunshine and shadow could give it.

I went as far as a holy well, dedicated to St. Senanus. Judging from what I saw, it must be in high repute; for hundreds of little wooden vessels lay heaped in and above it, the offerings of those who had come to drink; and the trees that overshadowed the well were entirely covered with shreds of all colours—bits and clippings of gowns,

and handkerchiefs, and petticoats,—remembrances also of those who drank. These, I believe, are the title-deeds to certain exemptions, or benefits, claimed by those who thus deposit them in the keeping of the patron saint, who is supposed to be thus reminded of the individuals whose penances might otherwise have been overlooked. I noticed among the offerings, some strings of beads, and a few locks of hair.

The inn at Castle Connell is beautifully situated, and very moderate in its charges; and the inhabitants of Limerick make abundant use of it: for, besides that Castle Connell is resorted to as summer quarters, it is also a noted rendezvous of the tradespeople, on Sundays and holidays. Houses are scarce and dear. For a very small house, 10*l.* a month is asked; and a couple of rooms indifferently furnished, could not be had for less than 25*s.* per week. I found this to be universally the case throughout Ireland at all places of occasional resort; everywhere affording proof of want of enterprise in the employment of capital, however judicious the investment might be.

I hired a small rowing boat to take me up the

the cows wont lift up their heads to look at a passer-by, for fear that they should not be able to find the grass again. I reached Killaloe about four hours after leaving Castle Connell.*

Killaloe, I found an improving town. This improvement arises from several causes; but chiefly is owing to the spirited proceedings of the Inland Steam Navigation Company,—a company, whose objects are most closely connected with the improvement of Ireland, and which are too important, and too vast, to be left, in the present infancy of the establishment, to private exertion, or even to public patronage. The improvement of the navigation of the Shannon and its tributaries, is deserving of the especial protection and aid of government. Killaloe is the head-quarters of the company; and from this point, there is a regular steam communication for goods and passengers up the Shannon, through Loch Derg, to Portumna, Banagher, and Athlone; and from the same point, by packet boat to Limerick, and thence, again, by steam to the sea. It is intended to carry the steam navigation above Athlone, through Loch Ree, to Lanesborough, Carrick, and Leitrim; and when

these arrangements are completed, there will be a direct navigation on the Shannon, of nearly *two hundred and fifty miles*, mostly performed by steam; together with a direct water communication to Dublin, by the grand canal.

I have ascribed the improving condition of Killaloe, chiefly to the enterprise of the steam navigation company. This arises in several ways,—partly in the direct employment afforded by the company in the construction of buildings, docks, &c.; and partly in the general encouragement offered to trade, by the facilities afforded, both for internal communication, and for export trade, which has lately been greatly on the increase. There are also other sources of employment and wealth in Killaloe. The extensive slate quarries in the neighbourhood, afford a yearly export of at least 100,000 tons; and dispense about 300*l.* weekly, in wages: and close to the town, an extensive mill has lately been erected, for the sawing of marble and stone, which are sent there both from Galway and Limerick counties: so that altogether there is little want of employment in Killaloe.

The town is very agreeably situated on the

rising ground above the river, and within a mile of the noble expansion of water, called Loch Derg. An old bridge of nineteen arches, just below the town, connects the counties of Clare and Tipperary; and there is an old cathedral, with a square tower, and Saxon archway of considerable beauty. I attempted to gain the summit of the tower, by the stair inside; but found it in so ruinous and dangerous a condition, that I was forced to give up the attempt.

I stepped on board the steam vessel at eight in the morning, satisfied with every thing about Killaloe, excepting the inn, which is far from being what might be expected at the place where the navigation company has fixed its head-quarters. About a mile and a half from Killaloe, just at the entrance to Loch Derg, is a mount on the left bank, covered with trees, called O'Brien's fort, where it is said, the ancient kings once resided. On entering Loch Derg, several pretty and interesting objects attract one on both sides. The vessel kept nearly mid-water, and this first reach of the loch being only about a mile wide, there is nothing lost to the eye. Derry Castle, the resi-

dence of Captain Head, on the Tipperary side, is a beautiful spot: the lawn slopes down to the water; the house is almost hidden in fine woods; and there is a fine back-ground of cultivated mountains. On a little island, close to the shore, are seen the ruins of a castle.

All the way through this first reach of the loch, a distance of about four miles, the character of the banks continues the same: not that there is any thing like monotony; all the variety that can be produced by verdure, wood, and tillage is there: but the banks are invariably sloping and cultivated, with higher and more sterile elevations rising behind: ten or twelve islands, of inconsiderable size, lie scattered over this first reach. At the point where this first reach of the loch terminates, opening into the wider part of the lake, the banks on both sides are extremely beautiful. The Clare side is covered with deep woods, backed by lofty hills; and the Tipperary side is adorned by the fine domain of Castle-loch, embosomed in magnificent oak woods: here, too, an island surmounted by a ruin, is seen on the right, close to the shore; and a small harbour has been constructed in a little

Inglis, Henry

"A journey throughout
Ireland 1834"

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