stopped at the railway station in Limerick and everyone prepared to alight. I mounted a car and trundled towards the city. The impression that the traveller receives is not comforting. The eye must become accustomed, the more one proceeds westwards, to the inhospitable bleakness, the cold monotony of life. The houses become meaner looking, the streets quieter. The people themselves appear more grave, and in the depths of their dark eyes appears an old inborn sorrow. The section of the city which opens before the railway station has indeed an English appearance, but only insofar as the names and facades are English. The inside is melancholy and desolate, and knows nothing of the fullness and pleasure of English life.

So I came to my hotel, and it was truly a colossus of a building, with the name emblazoned in gold letters on its wide brow: Cruise's Royal Hotel. The regal splendour, however, dwindled considerably as soon as I set foot in the entrance hall and ascended the labyrinth of steps. Everything was arranged as badly as possible, inconvenient, unfriendly, and confoundedly uncomfortable. The total indifference and lack of interest in everything which would make one's visit not merely tolerable, but even agreeable, met the guest at every turn and exerted a depressing effect.

I therefore betook myself immediately outdoors, and my first destination was the Cathedral of St. Mary. It lies in a quiet yard, surrounded with rustling groups of dark, ancient trees. It is now used exclusively for Anglican-Protestant worship. The ground on which it stands once bore the castle of Donald O'Brien, king of Limerick, who granted it to the church, and the building of the cathedral began about the year 1180. It was completed only in the 13th century. Its architecture illustrates the transitional style between the Irish round arch and the Norman quadrangular, and is possibly more bulky than any of the type I have seen before; but its mass and the weight of the construction, its age and the hoary moss-covered walls produce a stark melancholy impression which is not lessened by the irregularity of the whole. Here we have a quadrangular window, there a pointed-arch doorway, sometimes a rosette of wonderful delicacy and graceful perfection surprises us, and defiantly at the corner stands the dark rectangular Norman tower, whose battlements the clouds and the ravens envelop.

Divine service was being celebrated in the cathedral. The sound of the organ welcomed me, and the little daughter of the tower-warden climbed aloft with me. The organ music filled the whole building up to where the fresh air of the heavens streamed in, carrying the dissipating sounds without. But it remained melodious, and unbound the soul of he who ascended, inviting him to look about in serenity.

The black-haired child soon left me; she said she would wait for me in the bell tower, while I should climb to the top. I climbed; I left old broken steps behind me; a spiral stairway, more fragmentary the higher I went, was scaled, and lastly a wooden ladder. Now I was at the top. Below me the fading organ and choir music, below me the bells; and through the mossy cracked crenellations of the tower I looked down on the trees of the churchyard, on the streets of the New Town and the market full of people, on the bridges and the vehicles on them, on the Shannon and the many stone dams over which it foams and rushes on. Behind, I looked down on the old town with its dark maze of houses, its smoking chimneys and the smog and haze that settle over the whole, and ships which now, at low tide, lay dry on the sand at the quays.

Then I went to a different embrasure. Now I saw cottage walls eaten away through poverty and misery; roofless cottage rooms, splitting walls, amongst them houses and smoking chimneys, and behind them a different aspect of the Shannon, which here winds more tranquil through meadows and country houses and meads and chains of blue hills, which, lying together in a ring round the whole, seem to enclose all. Every embrasure presented a new prospect, and the misery of the city and the autumn showers in the broad meadows beyond cried out to me, as the steady roar of the Shannon from the depths and the strong wind from dark clouds met one another. Thus I gained an unconfined overview of the layout and construction of the city.

Limerick lies on the Shannon, which...
separates the large provinces of Leinster and Connaught, and joins the large lakes of central Ireland to the Atlantic Ocean, to which it flows in a wide estuary. Limerick lies at the point where the estuary begins to open towards the sea; the largest ships can sail right up to its stone quays. Limerick lies in one of numerous harbours of the west coast of Ireland which are sheltered by nature from all the dangers and accidents of the seas, and yet enjoy all those advantages of their immediate surroundings which only partially and with difficulty can be provided by artifice. The harbour of Limerick is quiet, and so also are the other harbours. But the time will come when the joyful clamour of international commerce will fill the bays of Ireland, when the pinnants of all nations will flutter around its coastal promontories.

The Shannon, the king of Irish rivers, flows majestically by the city, and one of its arms, the Salmon River, divides it into two still sharply separated parts, Irishtown and Englishtown. I have never seen two opposites more sharply contrasted. What I saw of Englishtown was not very inspiring; it differed, however, from that which I had yet to see. What Macaulay describes so beautifully.

I then walked by the light of the gaslamps along the promenade of Limerick, George Street, and sought out the “Royal Hotel”, in which, by this time, I intended to rest a while.

FOOTNOTE
I wish to thank Lenore Fischer, tour guide, for acquiring the original text for Limerick Museum, and for proofreading and advising on the translation.