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A Walk Through the Country of the Irish Highlanders.

GAUNTLET OF THE BARRISTERS.

Red Hugh and His Thrilling Experiences—Diet of a Broken Heart—War of the Ancient Hibernians.

Afoot in Ireland.

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STRANDBEAR, Inc., Oct. 30.—(Special Correspondence of THE BEE.)—The ancient seaport of Ireland's romantic Northwest, quaint, misty Donegal is a very little place with a very large amount of country about it. But great interest is found from possible historic and traditional researches; from scenic fascinations within range of its surrounding hills; from studies of its people and the quaint mountain peasantry who resort to it; from its near fine salmon-leaps and picturesque sea side resorts; from its nearness to the orner home of that love-to-love maiden from whose deplorable misfortunes sprang the pathetic story of "Colleen Bawn;" and from the weird, grand and often sublime groupings of mountains, lochs, glens, tarus and rivers which in every direction bewitch and enthrall as in no other part of Ireland, and I believe in no other part of the whole world. America annually sends 20,000 tourists to Europe. Not one in a thousand ever set vision upon these transcendent beauties. That one fact is a greater marvel than the most marvelous scene upon which the eye may rest in all the glorious Donegal hills.

In the sunshine old Donegal town is cheery and snug; but when the fog-winds come up from the sea like dingy wings slapping it grossly in its face, the half town, half hamlet, seems to shudderingly shrink closer to the shores of the noisy Esk, as if seeking shelter at the bases of the dark mountains behind. Fort of the White Strangers is the signification of the name, Donegal, although one would have a hard time indeed to find what that meant. Aside from the picturesque of its charming old streets, an interest that is almost melancholy attaches to its half ruined castle, at the river-side, near the ancient arched bridge. A number of the old towers and castles are so-called to learn its haps and mishaps, and of its different lords, governors and rulers; for here during the last five centuries was the center of bloodiest struggles between northern Irish clans and their foes, and especially the conflicts between the O'Neills and O'Donnells. The life and adventures of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, or Red Hugh, properly depicted, would alone surpass the most thrilling tale of Scottish border-land warfare. During the fourteenth century the daring and heroic spirit of Hugh when still but a boy, attracted the notice of Sir John Perrott, lord justice of Ireland. In order to get him within his power, Perrott sent a Lough Swilly laden with samples of the finest Spanish wines, and manned by his own seamen disguised as Spanish wine merchants. Hugh, with others, was lured aboard, and while being feasted, the hatches were battened and the young chief carried to Dublin, where he was immured in the Tower. Though but sixteen, he here made one of the most heroic prison escapes known to those savage times. Flying to a supposed friend, Sir Phelim O'Toole, who had been his fellow prisoner, he was betrayed, again imprisoned, and subjected to every barbarity save downright murder. In a year he again escaped, fled to the mountains where he for months subsisted like a wild beast, but finally regained his own country and kingdom about Donegal. Succeeding his father as ruler, and being joined by the valiant O'Neil, he set about avenging his wrongs and indignities, against the English; but quarrelling with O'Neil as to which should lead the attack against the entrenched foe at Kinsale, each contending for the bloody honor, the battle, after great slaughter was lost, Hughes followers routed and dispersed, and the brave young chief, himself wounded, compelled to fly to Spain. Here after great labors he succeeded in inducing King Philip to raise an army of succor for the recovery of his domain; but worn out with delay and effort, he died from grief and a broken heart at Valladolid. His character and noble qualities, as they were then measured, and his wondrous bravery, rendered his name a luminous and pathetic one in the Irish annals. This old stronghold of the lords of Tirconnel must have been a splendid and powerful fortress. Chimney-pieces of magnificent sculpture in the style of James I. are still seen; and some of the Gothic windows overlooking the bay are fairly preserved specimens of the impressive architecture of half a thousand years ago.

To Irishmen, or indeed to all men who are earnest students of the history of any race, people or land, the dream old ruin on the coast below Donegal, nearer Ballyshannon, must possess an absorbing fascination. Here stood the lone, semi-monastic castle of Killybarrow, an ancient fortress, and seat of the O'Clery chiefs. It was in this stronghold that the brothers O'Clery, Hugh Ward and John Colgan, known to all scholars as the four masters, in the midst of furious wars of clans, chiefs, kings and what not, preserved their great historical researches and labors, resulting in those monuments of industry called the "Donegal Annals," or the "Annals of the Four Masters," which, despite all civil or prejudice, stand out as grand landmarks against the age of darkness and blood in which they were produced. The scholar and erudite, surrounded as he is with the illimitable possibilities and facilities of to-day, should stand here and contemplate the few remaining crumbling peaks of masonry, standing in this awful solitude of cliff, wind and sea, in order to just for once realize the sacrifice and devotion of the patient souls of all lands in the dim days behind us, and the infinite advantage of the brighter time that is ours. The gray old ruins stand at the very edge of a precipitous and almost insular cliff. Furze and heather cover most of the flattened escarpments of the once mighty walls. To the east, the south, and southwest, save where the misty coast-line of Sligo here and there pushes through the distance, naught can be seen but wild sweeps of upland moor, white sand-reaches and ghostly dunes, or vast and dreary stretches of wind-swept, shuddering heather. To the north across Donegal bay the great headlands loom hard and savagely, as if some mighty impulse of nature were about to topple them into the waves. While to the west, where the sun is ever setting in the ceaseless turbulence of the sea, but rising upon happier lands beyond, there are just the meanings and thunderings of the mighty ocean. But down the coast, behind the sand-hills, is rare old

Ballyshannon upon the stately Erne, where, as its waters leap with a roar into the bay was once one of the most splendid salmon fisheries in Ireland. Three miles above, where the waters of the noble lakes of Erne, after leaping in the sandy valley, make a mad rush as if to engulf Ballyshannon, forming the beautiful falls of Belleek. On beyond the old town along the circling bay, is Bandon, where families of the Irish gentry from the middle counties and the west, come in summer to the glorious Bundoran donkeys and the sea. While back along the beach from Ballyshannon, down behind the old Killybarrow ruins is the tiny hamlet of Ward-town, the old seat of the Follitts only, where the incidents of the tenderest and most pathetic of Irish love dramas "Colleen Bawn" had their momentous origin. Here once really lived "Squire Follitt, whose daughter Helen, a lass of radiant beauty, was enamored of a bright Irish lad-servant, Willy Reilly. In vain the stern old Squire sought to stem the torrent of their love. Finally the couple stole away together, the girl taking with her her jewels. They were pursued and overtaken. The jewels being found on the lad he was prosecuted for felony and sentenced to transportation for seven years; but from the moment poor Reilly's sentence was known Helen, the Colleen Bawn, the lovely maiden, became a raving maniac. For seven long years she suffered the pains and degradation of penal servitude; for seven long years Squire Follitt's daughter called madly for her first love. Nothing like the excitement occasioned by the loss of these two lovers was ever known in this blessed land of marvels. And what a meeting was there when the lover true returned and claimed his poor mad bride; and kind heaven that instant gave her back her reason! Why, the story reads and thrills through Irish heads and hearts to-day with the same magical power as when it was new; and until love is dead, the eyes will glisten, the bosom heave, and the tender heart's-blood leap into the glowing face of every fair daughter of Ireland at the recital of the old days down here among the sand hills, near Ballyshannon by the sea. A gouty old doctor is now living in the Follitt home. Become a sentimentalist, and knock at his vine-covered door; and mention "Colleen Bawn" to him with a sort of longing look in your eyes, as though you yearned to be shown about the place. While the doctor goes into convulsions, his faithful hirelings will set the dogs on you, Gentle memories of Helen and Willy do not brood over the interesting spot; not at present.

A rude yet charming independence seems to possess the people of Donegal town, and the peasantry of the Donegal Highlands. This goes on, too, from character to physique. However humble and poverty-cursed men and women may be, they stand straight and tall, both in their own individuality and upon their strong, long legs. Indeed, this often reaches to grotesqueness in both respects. While the Irish peasantry, particularly of the south, are frequently diminutive in form and sometimes ferrety in character, these folk seem to possess an inner consciousness of self, that the year! I know every word that the gib longest are saying, and shall here set it down:
"Here's a thatch off his roof, the poor creature!"
But 'twas not in me breadin' or natur' By me sowl, he might be a bould major; Or far worse, the devil's own gauger!"
But to pass him an' silence, I'd scorn.
"Here's a thatch off his roof, the poor creature!"
"Likes he, was eably mis-rated by natur'— Mind him slatherin' down the braxies. But, what! ye can't tell what his staka is; For sometimes the heartsomest praties Get mixed with the dirty porraens!"
EDGAR L. WALKEMAN.
* Gauger; an excise officer.
† Braxies; mountain paths, or roads.
‡ Porraens; unmarketable potatoes.

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