



The Giants of the Scilly Islands.

THE average Londoner knows the Scilly Islands simply as the place where early potatoes come from. New potatoes from these islands are frequently found in Covent Garden market as early as the 20th of March. To mariners they are known collectively as one of the most dangerous spots indicated on the Atlantic navigator's chart. Except in books devoted to local history or antiquities they are rarely mentioned. Newspaper readers may recall them as the scene of the terrible disaster to the steamship "Schiller," four years ago. As the writer is one of the few Ameri-

can tourists who have visited these out-of-the-way islands, a few notes connected with his visit may prove acceptable to the general reader, and especially to those interested in the latest theories relating to the geological history of the globe. Our visit might be termed accidental, an unanticipated incident of a foreign tour.

It was after four weeks of monotonous life as a cabin passenger on board a sailing vessel bound from New York to London, that we were informed one morning in the latter part of March, that we were off the south coast of Ireland. Our attention was directed to the delicious land breeze laden with the odors of early spring from the Emerald Isle, and the same day we were visited by a Cork pilot-boat, whose crew of swarthy, brave-looking natives interchanged friendly greetings with our captain in hoarse voices—told him he was about forty miles from Cork harbor—and then skillfully turning their craft about, were soon speeding on their way in search of vessels requiring their services. We watched their swift movements enviously as they swept across the waters, and finally disappeared. The weariness of ship-life grew upon us rapidly, and a few days later when we questioned the captain concerning the probable time it would take us to reach London, we were told that the ship was then near the mouth of St. George's Channel, and was tacking to enter the English Channel, and, with the adverse winds we had so long encountered, it might be a month before we reached our destination. This information was, of course, discouraging enough, but we found some relief in asking questions. We inquired what pilot-boats we might next expect to visit us, and the feasibility of getting ashore in one of them, for we had resolved, after discussing the situation with the solitary traveler who shared the cabin with us, and who was equally tired of the sea, to go ashore, if possible, on the next pilot-boat that hailed us, no matter at what point it should land us.

The next pilot-boat, we were told, would probably reach us from the Scilly Islands. The Scilly Islands! where were they? we inquired, and were answered in language rather nautical, that they were in latitude $49^{\circ} 56'$ north, and longitude $6^{\circ} 41'$ west from Greenwich, and were ten miles from the Land's End of England. While this information was to us rather vague and unsatisfying, it was sufficient to stimulate our resolution, and we felt in our impatience, that if we could once touch feet on the islands we could almost swim the ten miles to mainland.

A day or two afterward we descried, late one afternoon, a broad sail bearing down toward us, which the skipper declared was a Scilly Island pilot-boat, and we rushed below to get our baggage in readiness for departure. The boat was soon alongside, and the pilots were notified that two passengers wished to go ashore. They assured us that we could reach St. Mary's Island in two hours, provided the wind continued from the same direction, and we soon struck a bargain for a passage. Three of the Scillians put off in a small boat and

came aboard the ship. They descended to the cabin with the captain, and remained some time. When they reappeared on deck, we barely noticed that they were burdened with large-sized, canvas-covered baskets. There was a ringing "good by" from all hands on board our vessel as we went over her side, and were rowed to the rocking little sloop beside her. With prow directed landward, a light breeze soon carried us away from the ship, and we stood on deck awaiting the first sight of land. The breeze, however, gradually died away and the sea became a dead calm. Evening came on with a glorious full moon.

The pilots were extremely attentive and sociable. They provided us with an excellent supper of fresh mackerel, which are caught off the coast in large numbers. After supper we were told that unless the wind changed, there would be no prospect of reaching shore for several hours, and we retired below to our berths. Before dropping asleep, a strange hush which pervaded the vessel aroused our curiosity, and taking a peep on deck we discovered but one man there, and he at the helm. A cautious search was made to see what had become of the remainder of the crew, and finally a light was perceived through a crevice between the sliding doors that separated the forward part of the boat from our cabin. Peering through this aperture we saw a dimly lamp-lighted group, whose attitudes, expressions and surroundings were worthy the masterful pencil of a Rembrandt. The pilots were arranged in a circle, one man with an axe, in the center, was chopping up something which he took from the covered baskets we had noticed, and which we soon perceived was plug tobacco. As he cut the large plugs in two he placed a heap of pieces before each man, not forgetting an extra pile for himself. He cut rapidly, and as the baskets were exhausted and the piles finished, none but a practiced eye could discern any difference in the quantity. But there evidently was a difference, for, in order that there should be no suspicion of partiality in the division, the men turned their backs to the heaps, and at a given word began circling swiftly about until an order was given to stop and turn around, when each seizing the pile nearest in front of him stowed it away in a canvas bag, or tied it up in a large colored handkerchief. As they made a movement to separate, we quietly returned to our berths. It was clear that they were smugglers as well as pilots, and risked the penalty of transportation to evade the payment of the highest revenue duty in Great Britain. Shortly afterward we were called on deck to get a view of the distant land. The breeze had freshened, and the pilots thought we would arrive at St. Mary's before midnight. As we gazed in the direction pointed out to us a low dark line appeared in the remote distance. While trying to persuade ourselves that this was indeed land, suddenly there beamed over the waters toward shore, and far out at sea, a brilliant white light. As we watched its reflections mingled with those of the golden moon, it as suddenly disappeared. This we were told was the revolving light on St. Agnes Island, which, in order to be distinguished from every other light-house in the

English Channel, appears and disappears every minute and a half.

Not far from this island, near Bishop's Rock, the steamship "Schiller," of the New York and Hamburg line, was wrecked in a dense fog, May 7th, 1875, and 311 persons drowned.

As we approached the irregular outlines of land there was another lull in the breeze, and we sailed lazily between great masses of dark rock, barely above the surface of the water, and abruptly entered what appeared to be an inland lake, dotted here and there with huge bosses of naked rock, and closed in by far-away peaks, pillars, pyramids and crags. Rising high and bold above cavernous arches were turrets, pinnacles and massive towers, half destroyed castles and frowning fortresses. We passed by slippery stone hummocks, whose sides and summits glimmered in the moonlight, many of them taking the grotesque shapes of animals of the primeval time. Here was a herd of mastodons apparently wading in the water, and there heraldic griffins and ichthyosauri climbing the walls of castles and balanced on toppling eminences. In other places rocks seemed hurled on rocks with perpendicular and slanting lines—confused, towering, terrific and grand. Certainly, we had never dreamed there was such a wild, weird land in all the world. Here, if anywhere, the battle of the Titans must have occurred. "Here," says a writer on the antiquities of Cornwall, "nature has sustained a terrible shock, a medley of crags, precipices and caverns, a greater variety of singular combinations than the most romantic imagination can conceive."

It was toward midnight when our boat, guided by experienced hands, passed through this rocky menagerie, now suddenly evading, by a quick turn of the helm, a rock that jutted up directly in our course, only to escape by equally expert handling mighty masses to the right and left which were almost grazed in passing. We anchored at last off the long stone pier at Hughtown, on St. Mary's Island, and the pilots lowered the small boat to go ashore. We were told that our trunks would have to remain on board until the next morning in order to be inspected by the Custom House officials. We observed, however, that each one of the crew carried his bag or handkerchief of tobacco, and, as we neared the pier, one of them blew a whistle which was answered by a whistle on shore. When we ascended the stone steps of the pier, a revenue officer cordially saluted our friends—never showing the slightest curiosity as to the contents of their bundles.

We were guided through dark and narrow streets to an ancient inn, where the pilots bade us good night, promising to call in the morning. We were too excited with the strangeness of our surroundings to fall asleep quietly on our first night in old England, and it was late the next morning before we were prepared to meet the pilots who were waiting for us below stairs. Our trunks were conveyed to the Custom House, and, after a most rigid examination, all our effects were passed.

It was Sunday, and one of the first things to attract our attention was the costumes of the people, particularly of the ladies, who were dressed invariably in black, most of them

in rich silks and satins and in the fashions of the 17th and 18th centuries. Some of their dresses, we were informed, had been handed down as heirlooms for many generations, and were worn only on Sundays. Many of them wore mantillas in the Spanish style—a circumstance which puzzled us considerably, until we learned that a century or two before the Scillians had enjoyed free trade with merchantmen returning from the Indies, and gathered ideas from the Spanish and Dutch of how to dress in the fashions of those nations. This traffic, by which the inhabitants secured rich fabrics in exchange for fresh meat and vegetables, has been long suppressed, and no new modes having been introduced, the fashions remain unchanged.

The present population subsist principally by pilotage, fishing, the manufacture of kelp, and raising early vegetables for London markets. Although the date of our arrival was the 28th of March, new potatoes had been dug and were already on their way to Covent Garden. On St. Martin's Island the inhabitants are chiefly shepherds and stock-raisers. The cattle and horses raised are extremely small, owing, it is supposed, to their food of seaweed and furze. St. Mary's is the largest island, and is about three miles in length and two in breadth. Then follow in line of size and importance Trescawen, St. Agnes, St. Martin's, St. Helen's, besides many other islands, islets and rocks—altogether more than three thousand.

The people were particularly friendly toward us, and we were the objects of marked curiosity and attention. The pilots devoted the day to introducing us to their neighbors and to showing us some of the remarkable features of the islands, including the reputed work of certain old-time giants, the greatest of whom was one commonly called "Old Bolster." We were also shown many remains of Druid worship. Our visit, which was first intended to be an exceedingly brief one, was prolonged several days, and we had ample time and opportunity to investigate the marvelous works attributed to "Old Bolster" and his coadjutors, and to hear something of the history of the islands.

We learned that although the Scilly Islands are generally regarded as belonging to the Duchy of Cornwall, there has been much dispute concerning their ownership, arising from the fact that when the county was erected into a duchy these islands seem to have been forgotten or purposely omitted from the general grant. The principal proprietor on St. Mary's Island is William H. Smith, First Lord of the Admiralty, supposed to be satirized in "Pinafore." To the ancients the islands were known as the Hesperides, and were visited by the Phœnicians at an early date, who trafficked with the inhabitants, and for ages monopolized the trade in tin.

The Greeks were the next foreign visitors of whom there are authentic records, and the discovery of Roman coins, urns, utensils, sepulchres, and fortifications, shows that the Romans were not only in the islands of Scilly, but conquered them at an early date. These islands, and the neighboring land in Cornwall, were the last places of refuge of the ancient Britons when the Saxons conquered the main-

land, about 460, and here, beyond a doubt, perished the last of the Druids.

One of the first excursions we made was to the west end of St. Mary's, to gain a view of the famous Giant's Castle. On our way thither we were startled by the colossal appearance of men on the hills at a distance. The only way we could account for this optical illusion was by a rarefied condition of the atmosphere and by the absence of trees and other familiar objects, which prevented any comparison of relative sizes. It was no wonder to us that some of the scenes in the nursery-book "Jack the Giant Killer" were laid in Cornwall, for here the very atmosphere seems to aid the imagination in magnifying the power of vision.

Giant's Castle is composed of an irregular mass of rocks piled in the wildest confusion, yet often suggesting castellated architectural lines, and rising seventy or eighty feet above high tide. In its immediate vicinity we were shown a celebrated rocking or "Logan stone," of a character similar to many others found in Cornwall. The upper stone is ten feet long, seven broad, and five and a half feet thick, and is perched upon a pile of rock sixteen feet high. The upper stone rests upon one point only, and although it is estimated that it would take the power of one thousand men to place it there, it is so nicely poised that a boy of ten years, with a pole, made it rock like a cradle. When told by our guides that this was the work of giants employed by the Druids to erect such objects for religious worship, we shook our heads doubtfully. They immediately directed us to a place not far distant, and showed, in corroboration of their statement, imprints in the solid rock of a human foot nearly three feet in length. At a long stride's distance from this impression was the heel track of the other foot, the toe of which had touched earth and left no lasting trace. This was puzzling, if not convincing. We noticed that the edges of these imprints were abrupt, yet smooth, showing that the "tracks" might have been made when the rock was comparatively soft. The Logan stones, of which other specimens are found in St. Agnes Island and other parts of the Cornish coast, are supposed to have been guarded from the common people by the Druid priests, who made use of them when they wanted to confirm their authority or judicial decisions, to deceive the multitude by pretending that nothing but the holy hands of a Druid could move them. The Druids appear to have had no inclosed temples or carved images, but made use of stones, erected in all attitudes, in their forms of religious worship. They attributed great virtues to passages between upright rocks, which antiquaries believe to have been places of refuge for the persecuted, as in more modern times were the altars of churches. The common groups of stones attributed to their agency are circular temples, basins, cromlechs, barrows, canopy stones, overhanging "benches of justice," and "holocaust altars," for it is averred that they practiced human sacrifices. There are also erected flat stones with round holes through them, which the superstitious use for the cure of lameness and rheumatism. They pass children through the holes to cure the rickets. There is still another kind—a species

of stone deity, whose common name is dolmen. One of these, on St. Mary's Island, consists of a large orbicular stone, forty-five feet in girth, on the top of which is a basin, and which is supported by two upright stones inclosing a narrow passage.

On a cairn adjoining the Giant's Castle is a circular temple inclosing an area of 172 feet from north to south, and 138 feet from east to west. There are nine vast stones on the edge of the circle, not however uniform in shape nor placed at equal distances. There are many other circular temples in the Duchy of Cornwall, as well as in other parts of England and in France, nearly all of which contain in their centers cavities filled with rubble-stones and foreign adventitious earth, which are called "barrows," and which learned archæologists have decided to be places of sepulture. The earth in them is sometimes identified by its yellow color as the natural soil of hills some distance from them.

The rock basins were the most perplexing of these marvels. Thirteen of these are found in rocks composing Giant's Castle. In shape, diameter, and depth they are not uniform; some are oval or irregular, others exactly circular and symmetrical to the bottom. There are numerous basins in other parts of the islands, and they vary from a diameter and depth of six inches to six feet. They are hollowed out artistically, and are alleged to be the work of the Druids, who designed them to contain holy water. Sometimes there are passages leading from one to another. Some idea of the terrible storms which frequently visit these islands may be derived from the fact that the basins in Giant's Castle, seventy feet above the sea level, almost always contain sea-water, which during storms is dashed up to them in spray.

Many caverns are found in the islands. The principal one, known as "Piper's Hole," has an entrance on the east side of St. Mary's. It has never been fully explored, as the orifice narrows a short distance in the interior, and the walls and floor are damp and slippery. There are stories too of frightful abysses and subterranean monsters, which have helped to suppress the spirit of exploration. It is affirmed however, and universally believed by the natives, that the cavern extends the whole width of the island, and thence, underneath the surrounding waves, four miles to the island of Trescawen, where another orifice is seen that goes by the same name. This supposition is slightly confirmed by a tradition that a blind piper was once led into the cavern by his dog, which broke away from his master and penetrated the cavern, coming out at the orifice in Trescawen Island with his hair all off.

This is but an imperfect catalogue of the wonders which puzzle the tourist on these islands. Several weighty volumes have been written concerning the Druids, their religious forms and ceremonies, and the means by which they maintained their supremacy over the people. Many of the details in these volumes are purely conjectural, and to a scientific mind entirely unsatisfactory or worthless. Learned men have made laborious attempts to explain how it was possible for the ancient inhabitants to transport and elevate such mighty masses of rock. There seemed but one rational solu-

tion of the problems which surrounded and mystified us. The glacial theory, first elaborated by Agassiz and now almost universally accepted by scientists, entirely satisfied us as to the agencies employed in producing the phenomena of the Scilly Islands.

By the light of this theory we may satisfactorily account for the existence of nearly every marvel we have described. The work is too wondrous to be ascribed to any other than the hand of Nature. The islands are covered with traces of glacial action and evidences of the mighty power of hydraulic force. The circular temples, which have been the subject of so much erudite speculation, may easily have been formed by whirlpools created by rapidly melting ice. Through the cavities in their centers, now partly filled with small stones polished by long attrition, and earth from surrounding hills, the whirling waters probably escaped. Afterward the Druids may have cleared away the smaller stones in the circular detritus left by the receding waters, leaving the larger ones to be chiseled into shapes more or less uniform. The round basins which were believed to be wrought by human hands, are doubtless also produced by the action of whirling water—a rotary hard stone wearing holes in the softer rock. Basins of a similar character are found in Watkin's Glen, Howe's Cave, and in other parts of the United States. The Logan stones and other groups of rock have been plainly pushed into position by the tremendous force of moving ice, which, melting away, has left them in every imaginable position. The track of the giant's boot may have been produced, quite naturally, when the rock was comparatively yielding, by the weight of stones, which, by a sort of coincidence, left marks which a lively imagination converts into the prints of a giant's boot.

The historical monuments found in the Scilly Isles are scarcely inferior in interest to the natural novelties. On one of the highest points on St. Mary's are the ruins of Star Castle, which was built during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Here Prince Charles, afterward Charles II., found a temporary retreat. It was once the prison of Charles Edward the Pretender, and much used in Cromwell's time as a state fortress. It was constructed in the shape of a star with eight salient angles, in every point of which is a watch tower. There are the remains of an ancient fosse around it. From its ragged battlements may be obtained one of the grandest views in the world. The mainland of England is distinctly visible on a clear day, and a scene is presented comprehending the surrounding islands with their surf-beaten shores; including Brehar the rockiest of the whole group, and Samson with its two pyramidal hills rising abruptly out of the waves and visible to sailors far out at sea. There are beautiful glimpses over the limpid green waters of St. George's and the English channels, with their never-ending procession of ships beating slowly before the wind, or with favorable breeze, crowding all sail to reach some long-desired port.

It is a matter of substantial proof that a large proportion of the land of these islands and of the neighboring mainland has been overwhelmed by the advancing ocean. About

1,824 large trees were discovered near Penzance under the beach, and more than one hundred feet below high tide. On one portion of the beach of St. Mary's is visible at low tide the remains of what is believed to be an ancient Roman wall. There are remains of Roman intrenchments on St. Agnes' Island, two miles in length, and on Trescawen are the venerable ruins of an abbey dating back to the early Christian centuries.

There have been many disastrous wrecks off the treacherous coast of Scilly. At the period when the Dutch were among the chief navigators of the world, two Dutch galleons returning from the West Indies, carrying a quantity of treasure, principally, it is said, in Spanish coin, were wrecked off the western coast of St. Mary's; and to this day Spanish pieces of silver and gold are occasionally found glittering in the sand of the beach near the place of the wreck. The inhabitants of St. Agnes founded a church with the money given them for saving a French vessel, with a valuable cargo, in 1685.

But the most memorable wreck on these islands occurred to the English fleet under Admiral Sir Cloudesly Shovel, on the 22d of October, 1707. He was returning from Toulon with many ships of war, when he was wrecked during a dense fog on Gelstone's Rock near Giant's Castle. The admiral's ship was lost with all on board except one man who clung to a piece of timber. Two other men of war—one of 70 guns, the other of 50—were completely wrecked with the loss of all their crews. Several other vessels were partially destroyed, and some had miraculous escapes. In all 2,000 men perished. The body of the admiral was washed ashore, and identified by a ring on his finger. The remains were conveyed to London and interred with impressive ceremonies in Westminster Abbey.

It was with hearts warmed by the polite and generous reception we had received from the Scillians that we stepped aboard the little vessel bound for Penzance, and waved a parting farewell to a crowd of people, who had assembled on the pier to attend our departure. A few hours' sail brought us close to Land's End, where we obtained a view of the largest and most renowned of all Logan stones. Passing by the great arched cavern called "Mouse's Hole," we entered the magnificent bay of Penzance, with abbey crowned height of St. Michael's Mount in the distance.

From Penzance we crossed by railway to Hayle, there took a steamer to Bristol, and arrived in London by the Great Western Railway two weeks before the sailing vessel we had left reached her dock.

