



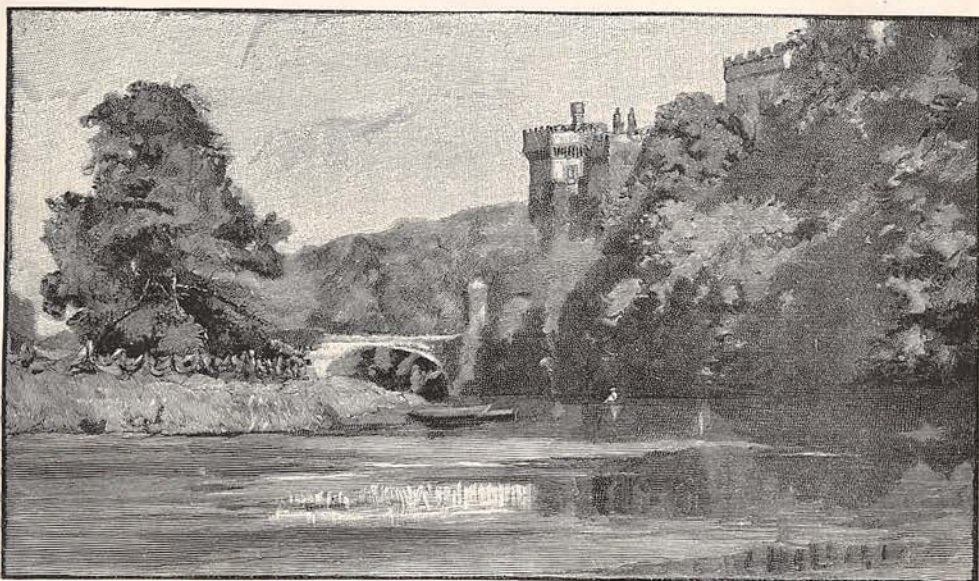
THISTLES.

## LISMORE.

By ADRIAN STOKES.

With Illustrations by MARIANNE STOKES and the Writer.

OUR first impressions as the train rushed southward from Dublin, where we landed, were dreary and sad ones. The country became more and more deserted—houseless, save for a few ruined cottages that appeared to have been abandoned before they were completely built,—then cowless even, and frequented only by crows. Still there were some promising signs. The sky was of a very fine quality of gray, and the gorse was in full blossom. We passed from time to time large tracts studded with its glorious



LISMORE CASTLE FROM THE RIVER.

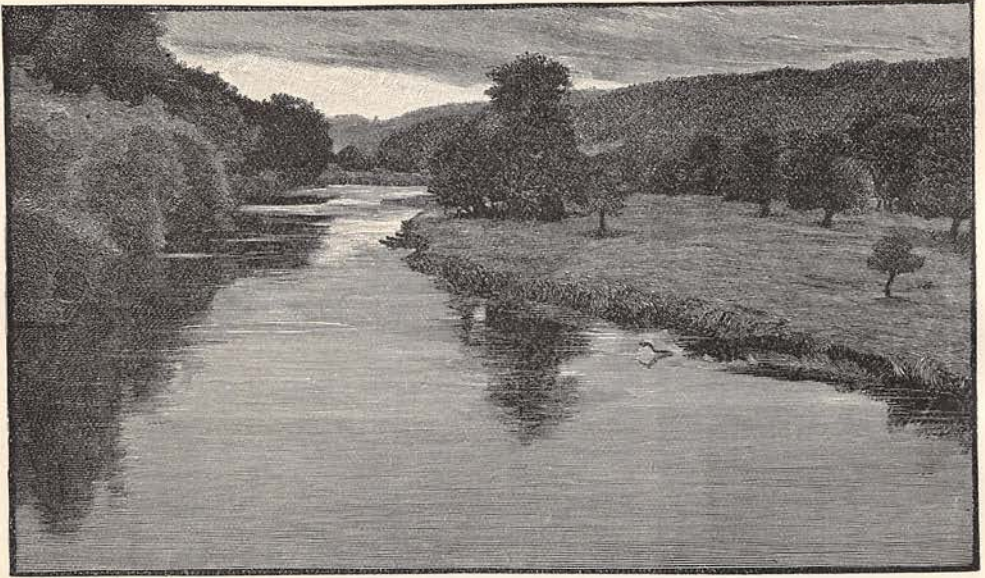
gold, in splendid contrast to the deep brown purple of the bogs. The pervading tones were low and harmonious, but nowhere was there to be seen one scrap of emerald green.

On arriving at Lismore—our destination—we found ourselves in a very fertile and beautifully wooded valley, down which the river Blackwater gently winds. Here are a castle, a cathedral, and a bridge, a few streets of uninteresting houses, and a large hotel which is shut up. Noble trees arch over the roads leading to the bridge and



grow luxuriantly in the castle grounds down the steep slopes on the south side of the river, and on the level "inches" to the north.

The castle is very large, and grand, and ducal, built in a commanding position, with a drop of a hundred feet or so from the state-room windows sheer down to the dark water, and were it not that castles are so sadly out of fashion, no doubt most of us would admire it very much. It belongs, together with the town and much of the surrounding country to the Duke of Devonshire—one of the greatest, and, I am told most generous landed proprietors of Ireland—who used to spend a portion of each year here, accompanied by many guests, doing unlimited good to the neighbourhood, until his son, Lord Frederick Cavendish, was murdered with Mr. Burke in Phoenix Park. A result of that terrible deed is that Lismore Castle, once the scene of much festivity and open hospitality is now unused except as a vast office where the duke's agents do their work.



THE RIVER FROM THE BRIDGE, LISMORE.

Queen Elizabeth thought that Ireland might be made a valuable addition to her kingdom, and one of the chief instruments she used in endeavouring to attain this end was Sir Walter Raleigh. He is perhaps the most interesting historical character who ever lived at Lismore, and endless accounts are to be found of his ability and bravery, his daring exploits and miraculous escapes.

When Captain Raleigh was sent to Ireland, the Ormonds and Desmonds—the two great families of the south-east—were constantly fighting amongst themselves, or combining under the leadership of the Earl of Desmond, to rebel against the English rule. In reward for splendid services against these nobles Raleigh received from the crown a grant of 42,000 acres of land lying about the Blackwater. He gave to his followers the castles and important places by that river, reserving Lismore for himself. Later he built a house, in which he lived for a considerable time, and which still exists at Youghal, an old town by the mouth of the river. In the garden of this house potatoes were grown for the first time in Europe. Raleigh also introduced cherry trees which he brought from the Canary Islands. They seem to have long thrived, but only a few are left now, here and there about the country—grand old fellows, gray and battered, and barren and about to disappear. From the branches of one of these trees—where she had presumably scrambled after the tempting fruit—fell Catherine Fitz-Gerald, Countess of Desmond, at the ripe age of 162. The shock caused her death. This spirited and illustrious lady was born about the year 1464, was married in the reign of Edward IV., lived during the reigns of Edward V., Richard III., Henry VII., Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary and Elizabeth, and died at the latter end of James I.'s or the beginning of Charles I.'s reign.



She is said to have walked in wrath from York to London at the already advanced age of eighty, to give a bit of her mind to a landlord who would only renew a lease until she was a hundred, when she had asked for it for the rest of her life. The Duke of Devonshire's agent told me that in looking over old papers he had found one on the margin of which was written, opposite to the description of a farm, "The lease of this to fall in on the death of the Countess of Desmond, now aged seven score years." Her memory is still cherished in the country where she generally lived. Her death is said to have occurred about four miles from Lismore, at Tourin—now Sir Richard Musgrave's place—where the fatal fruit tree grew; she was buried at Youghal in the Protestant church, where there is a monument in her honour.

Lismore Cathedral is a Gothic building surrounded by trees, carrying an extremely beautiful and simple spire, and containing some rude and ancient tombstones dating

probably from the ninth century. On one of these is roughly cut "Bendacht for an Martan" (a blessing on the soul of Martan), on another "Bendacht for an main Colgan," and on a third "Suibne mac Conhuidir" (Sweeney, son of Cuodhir). This Sweeney died in the year 854. Saint Deelan preached Christianity here about thirty years before Saint Patrick, and made many converts in the year 402. Saint Carthog, who died in 637, obtained the territories about Lismore as an endowment for a cathedral to be established there.

During a stay of four months at Lismore I never approached the bridge without pleasure, or crossed it without delight. Whether on a hot and drowsy summer morning in a glow of tempered sun—a quivering veil of purple or of blue drawn over every deep warm shade—when down the river groups of red cattle stand in the shallows, and the fishers shoot their nets. Or again in the glare of noon, what a strong effect is that facing homewards! The full-leaved towering trees are vivid black against the glare. The road over the bridge in sharp perspective leaps towards them, one side a hard cool shadow



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and the rest luminous, palpitating yet almost colourless gray. On the left hand the cathedral spire overtops the trees, and on the right are those dark and battlemented towers of which I have let another speak.

Again on a gray day—such as the one on which I tried to draw the view looking east from the bridge—when all is tender and silvery and wet, what a quiet melancholy reigns over that scene, where the river with graceful curves steals away to the sea! And yet it is in the evening, when the sun has gone down over the river in the west, that one is most likely to be touched. When a rosy glow on the distant river is reflected from a glory low down in the sky, and broken here and there by cool breezes, while the upper clouds, slowly changing, are reflected in the near water. Then the solemn trees and their reflections fall into simpler masses and deeper tones, and the broad meadows turn to a mellow green. The silence is only broken by the splash of a salmon that has leapt, and the heron under the bank strains out his slender neck. If from some loiterer clad in sportive check a whiff should drift, in the stillness, of an after dinner cigar, I do not know that it takes away much of the charm.

I have crossed the bridge, too, by moonlight, and seen, as it were, the noonday effect repeated in half tones, or—a mist rising up from the river—instead of one dark



mass of trees, a succession of planes standing in grotesque forms one behind another and growing fainter and fainter as they retire.

If the day has been sultry and the night is cool and fine what can be more pleasant than to continue one's walk beyond the bridge and up the glen, the road overarched by trees throwing fantastic shadows over the moonlit spaces. A rushing noise from the glen stream comes across the fields, or a little further on, from close below us, where it brawls among rocks. On each side rise steep wooded hills. It is at such a time as this that the castle, seen through a break in the trees, looks its best, and would look better still were the windows lighted from within.

The country both up and down the Blackwater valley, though the river is called the Irish Rhine, is gentle and peaceful in character. Several of the best houses have a ruined tower or two in their grounds, and that is the only possible excuse I can find



SMOKING THE BEES.

for the name. The trees, of which there are great variety, seem to grow easily, and even at midsummer do not become monotonous.

Through hunting for models and employing them we found some brave poor people to whom we became attached. One family, living about a mile from the town, was in every way admirable. It consisted of a husband and wife, their bedridden old mother, and seven children, all living in a small cottage with two rooms, one of which contained two roomy beds. How they all stowed themselves away at night I never liked to inquire. Still, they were healthy, clean-looking, and well dressed. The husband, a fine tall fellow, sober and industrious, earning nine shillings a week, the wife, a grandly-built peasant who welcomed us with dignity, and the children bright and rosy.

I have heard education advanced as one cause of prevailing discontent in Ireland, but have no reason to believe that the standard is unduly high. The person I knew more intimately than any other of his class was a boy named David, aged fourteen, who used to carry my things when I went out to paint. He had, he said, been for seven years to the Christian Brothers' school, but could neither read nor write. On one occasion I asked if he was called after a relation, or King David, on which he smiled and said—as was his wont—"I dunno, sir." I then asked if he knew anything about

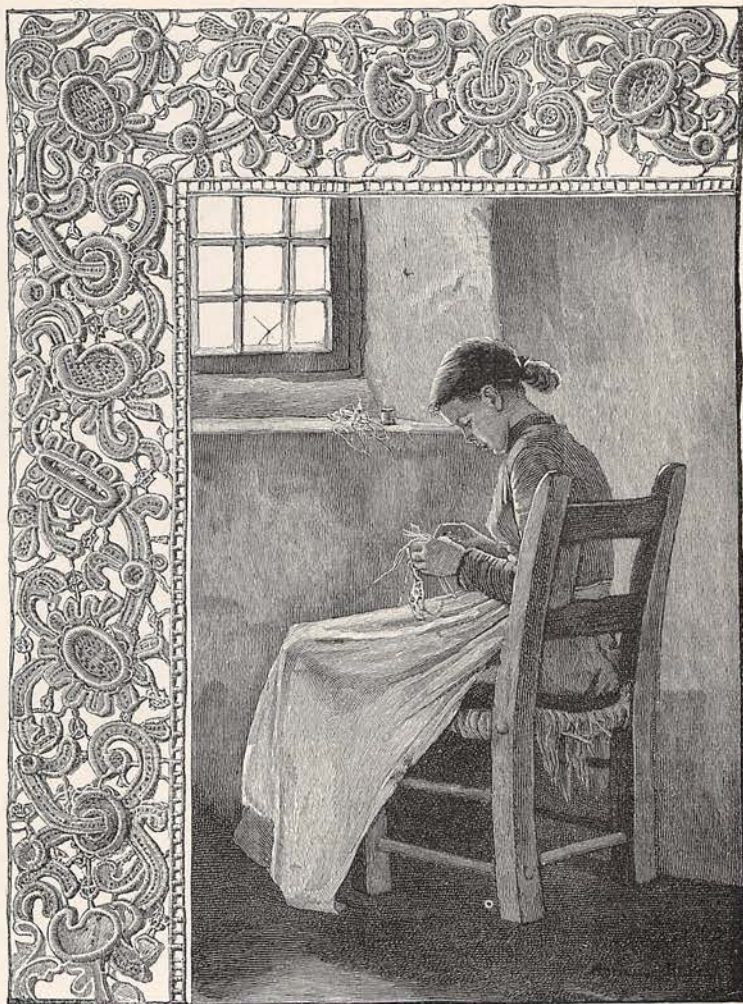


King David. "Sure," he replied, "I've heard people talking of him, but I don't know where he's king of." Then I tried geography, asking if he could tell which is the capital or largest city of Ireland. "How would I know then, sir? Sure I've never been further than Tallow." And yet this lad was no fool. When from forgetfulness I paid him his wages twice over in one week he took the money without the slightest change in a naturally mobile countenance.

We also knew a charming girl, aged thirteen. She had for a long time been at the top of the highest class in the convent school, and knew, of course, more about history and geography than most people. Yet she firmly believed that priests have power to root people for ever to the ground where they are standing by some blighting curse, and that the little black rolls which she could produce by rubbing the palms of her hands together on a hot day proved man to have been originally made of clay.

Numberless homes are rendered intolerably wretched by drink, and one of our drawings (that on page 473) represents two children who have been driven by misery to desert their parents and venture on the world alone. Let us hope they will not happen on a tourist route and add to the already ample swarms of those who follow every carriage and car crying, "The price of a book, sir, yes, sir," &c. These running vagabonds are a greater pest than anything of the kind in Europe. The horrid imps, whose rags are merely assumed, have regular beats, and after following for a mile or so resign you to another youthful band as bad, or worse than themselves. On such a drive as that from Bantry to Glengariff, or on to Killarney, one is never free from them. Away from tourist haunts we met with few beggars.

In the neighbourhood of Lismore new wooden hives have been introduced. It is easy to understand that moveable frames are a great advantage, as they enable one at once to find out the causes of failure, such as loss of queen, or disease in brood-nest, and these would have remained undiscovered until too late in the old straw hives. Other advantages are that the honey can be taken away without destroying the bees, and also that the honey to be taken is made in a different part of the hive from that in which the bees congregate round the eggs and bee-food, so that the honey is much purer. It would be well if cottagers could be induced to take up scientific bee-keeping



LACE MAKING: CAPPOQUIN.



more largely. Ireland has been backward in taking it up, but as may be seen from the illustration there are some places where it is done largely.

It was a great pleasure for us to find, on entering a poor cottage, a simple graceful girl making a piece of most artistic and valuable lace. We learnt that a school had been started by ladies at Cappoquin—a few miles from Lismore—and that many girls



WOOL-SPINNING IN A COTTAGE.

are now able to help in supporting the families to which they belong by this refined and admirable work.

At another cottage, up towards the mountains, we saw a fine stalwart woman busy at an ancient wheel, spinning wool shorn from her own black sheep, to be made up into strong frieze for her husband and twelve children. She was a bright hearty creature, and later in the year showed us her pack of boys in new coats prepared for the winter. Each day while drawing in the cottage my wife was received most kindly, made to forget that she was more or less in the way, and offered a tempting luncheon of eggs, potatoes, milk and cake. In out-of-the-way places, and where new notions have not yet taken root, we have found this kindly goodness to be the rule.