



MALLOW CASTLE, COUNTY OF CORK, IRELAND.

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CORK, the largest county in Ireland, offers many points of interest to the tourist. Thirty years ago its north-western districts were mere bog and moorland, unreclaimed, without passable roads, and very scantily populated. The ancient lords of the soil—the Earls of Desmond—had been dispossessed of their lands in the reign of Elizabeth, and since then large tracts of country had been suffered to lapse into a condition little better than that of a wilderness. This state of things attracted the attention of Government, and considerable sums were advanced by the Treasury and afterwards by the Board of Works, for making roads and other public improvements throughout the north-western districts. The result was a speedy amelioration in the condition of the population.

The improvements thus commenced have been extended year by year, since that time.

The late famine acted as a check upon the onward movement, and while it continued, some parts of the county—Skibbereen, and the neighbourhood—acquired a painful notoriety, as the district in which the scarcity was most severely felt. Since that period, however, in this and in other parts of the county, the advance of commerce and of agriculture has been rapid and steady. The fine harbours along the coast offer every facility for that increased trade which the energy of the people is so well calculated to develop.

Along the coast line, and especially in the neighbourhood of the bay of Glengariff, the scenery is magnificent; while in the interior of the county many a scene of wild beauty, varied sometimes by a softer landscape, meets the eye of the traveller. One of the most interesting towns is Mallow, with its spa, its handsome bridge, its ancient ruins, and its lively streets. From its situation at the junction of the Dublin and Killarney railway lines, it is easy of access to the tourist, who, if picturesque scenery be his object, will be well repaid for a visit, long or short, to the town and its environs.

The castle represented in the above sketch was built by one of the Earls of Desmond, and, from its commanding site above the principal bridge across

the Blackwater, was at all times an important fortress. On the attainder of the last earl, in the reign of Elizabeth, it was granted, together with the surrounding barony, to Sir John Norris, who, after serving in the Portuguese wars, under the house of Braganza, and establishing the succession of that house to the throne, returned to England, and was appointed by the Government Lord President of Munster. It remained in the possession of the president till his death, when it passed to his daughter and heiress, who married Major-Gen. Sir John Jephson, Knt., of Froyle, in Hampshire, whose descendants still retain it.

In the year 1642 Lord Mountgarret, at the head of the Irish forces, invested Mallow, but was repulsed by the English garrison. In 1645 the town was again attacked by the Irish, under the command of Lord Castlehaven, the English were defeated, and the castle was burnt. In 1690, after the battle of the Boyne, M'Donogh, one of the governors of the county Cork under King James, threatened Mallow with his forces, but was defeated in a meadow near the town by the infantry of King William, assisted by the Danish horse sent by General S'Gravenmore.

Mallow, before the union, had two representatives, but at present returns only one member to the Imperial Parliament.

The town was at one time called the Irish Bath, in consequence of the numbers who resorted there during the summer in pursuit of pleasure or for the benefit of the spa. The spa is situated near the castle, and, with the adjacent walks and groves resounding with music and the murmuring of artificial waterfalls, took the taste of the public at one time to such an extent, that Killarney, and even the most attractive watering-places, were forgotten, and people flocked here from all parts of the United Kingdom, to enjoy themselves during the summer and autumn seasons. The waters of the spa resemble those of the Bristol wells, both in temperature and in chemical constitution.

The neighbourhood around Mallow is very interesting in beautiful scenery and historic lore. At Mournie, a few miles to the south, are the picturesque remains of a preceptory of the Knights

Templars, built in the reign of King John, by an Englishman named Alexander de St. Helena. At this place, also, was an ancient walled town, destroyed in the year 1367 by Murrough O'Brien, Earl of Thomond. Some miles to the north-east of Mallow, near the banks of the Aubeg, or Mulla, stands Kileoleman Castle, where Spenser composed his "Faery Queen," and where he resided till his home was burnt by the Irish in the great war during the latter years of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

Mallow is rich in stories and strange legends. Here, as in many a similar spot, these old fables still retain their hold upon the minds of an imaginative people, who, in the midst of their present prosperity, cherish the recollections of former greatness. Apart from the local associations, however, few legends offer any interest to the reader, beyond the insight they may afford into the manners of the rude and lawless times to which they refer. They point invariably to an age of disorder and bloodshed, when war was the trade of every unscrupulous adventurer; and they often disclose a state of morals which it can be neither agreeable nor profitable to contemplate.

Previous to the twelfth century, the county of Cork, with portions of Kerry and Limerick, formed a separate kingdom, over which the M'Carthy's exercised sovereignty, supported by a small but powerful aristocracy of wealthy families. In 1172 Dermot M'Carthy, King of Cork, swore fealty to King Henry II., and from that period, notwithstanding many a fierce struggle, which sometimes assumed almost the dimensions of a war, the Irish princes never permanently regained their independence. As memorials of those contests, numerous strongholds, in addition to that of Mallow, are scattered about the country, and in their massive strength still defy the ravages of time. We may instance Blarney Castle, built in 1449, by Cormack M'Carthy, the walls of which are eighteen feet thick. There are also others of earlier date, such as the castle of Kanturk, built by M'Donough, Prince of Duhallow. In addition to the foregoing, this county contains numerous antiquities, chiefly military, and often possessing considerable historical interest.