

Whatever the reasons for the same, these massive stone keeps—for they bore no resemblance to the architecturally beautiful Irish and English castles of the Elizabethan and a still more modern time—seemed to have been constructed with reference to conveying intelligence from one to another, probably from signal-lights from their lofty parapets, as some which are still standing are more than 100 feet in height. Wherever you may saunter along these southern Irish rivers, you will find that there is an uninterrupted view between the sites of the ancient castle ruins. Often they are but two miles apart—frequently from four to six; but in every instance they are in view of each other; and ancient roads, showing that quick and easy communication was taken into account, are invariably found between.

Probably three of the most interesting of these massive old structures in the south of Ireland are very near together, and can all be visited in a day's journey. They are castles Lisfinny, at the ancient town of Tallow on the river Bride, near the boundaries of counties Waterford and Cork; castle Kilcolman, on a rivulet flowing into the Awbeg, in the northern part of county Cork; and castle Blarney, in the beautiful Blarney vale, but an hour's lovely walk from the winsome city of Cork. Taken together these three are the best existing specimens of the tower house or castle of the ancient Irish chieftain; while each in its way is world famous in view of its distinctive associations.

Castle Lisfinny stands on the side of a gentle declivity, which rises from the margin of the river Bride, with the sleepy old town of Tallow and its low, gray convent nestling in the valley on the southern side. It is supposed to have been built by the earl of Desmond, and has undergone but little change during the past hundred years. It consists of a massive square tower with facades of fully fifty feet and the structure is nearly 100 feet high. Its summit commands a delightful view of the valley of the Bride, upwards of twenty miles in extent, gemmed with villas, sheeted with luxuriant farms, and dappled at intervals with witching revelations of the river, here and there appearing like tiny lakes of silver in emerald settings of verdure and woodland.

The late Douglas Pyne, M. P. for West Waterford, as I knew from personal acquaintance one of the most lovable of men, in the fall of 1887 threw the whole United Kingdom and a part of America into roars of laughter, from his odd and characteristically Irish mode of avoiding arrest for upwards of three months, with the police, soldiery and a warrant all literally under his very nose. The "seditious offenses" which had brought the law upon him consisted in tunnelling, from his own land to the house of a neighboring tenant undergoing siege for eviction, and in this novel manner supplying him now and then in his dilemma with courage and comfort in the form of an odd bottle of whiskey, and a snug hamper of victuals cooked by good Mrs. Pyne herself. Mr. Pyne was considerable of a wag, and as it was October when he was "summoned," his crops were all in, and as Parliament did not meet until January, he decided to employ the intervening time in having a little fun with the minions of the law.

Mr. Pyne was tenant of the Lisfinny demesne; and his home, a few yards from the castle, was one of those old and almost obsolete mansions of the Irish gentleman of half a century ago. He had converted the castle into byre, barn and storehouse. Into this strange structure Pyne and two of his companions retreated, walling up and completely barricading the lower entrance; and, provided with canned meats, fruits and other edibles, with an unknown quantity of whiskey and cigars, here he grandiosely defied arrest.

An entire company of Balfour's soldiers endeavored to dislodge him. But that was impossible. An entrance could not be effected. Even if one had been made, arrangements were such within, that anywhere from one to a dozen tons of rock could have been precipitated upon the invaders. Mr. Pyne from his lofty perch above them, soothingly told the soldiers all this, and much more which made their duties particularly disagreeable. The situation becoming known, Lisfinny was the center of attraction for all Ireland. Throngs came to Tallow daily to cheer Mr. Pyne, who sagely addressed them on the "wrongs of Ireland" from a window ninety feet from the ground; while the unfortunate soldiery were the butt of immeasurable and inexpressible ridicule.

For thirteen weeks this tremendous farce continued, when finally the great question as to how Mr. Pyne would take his seat in Parliament grew to be universally discussed. Irish wit and recourse answered this promptly. Suddenly there appeared placarded all over the counties of Cork and Waterford a notice that Mr. Douglas Pyne's grazing lands would on a certain day be sub-let by auction. Towards evening of that day every road leading into Tallow swarmed with Irish cattle and Irish men. By sunset over 1,000 cattle were bellowing and charging around the base of old Lisfinny, while fully 100 tenant farmers, swearing, protesting, fighting, managed to have the soldiers hopelessly stampeded by the excited herds.

It is about forty miles by road from Tallow to Cork harbor. In the melee, a clever ruse by Pyne's friends among the tenantry, the eminent offender was lowered from his eerie, and by relays of swift horses was at Queenstown before midnight. The next night he was in the south of England, and ten days later, while Balfour's soldiers were still closely guarding old Lisfinny, that the arrant rebel should not escape, Douglas Pyne quietly entered the House of Commons in London, and gravely took his seat in Parliament, amid such cheers as never before or since made the great structure tremble to its very foundations.

I feel sure that one—after enjoying the glories of the Blackwater with those of its sweet and murmurous tributary, the Awbeg, and after a tramp from old Doneraile town, set like a squalid Gipsy encampment amid gorgeous natural environs, to the level tract where stand the ruins of Kilcolman Castle, the Irish home of the poet Spenser—would agree with me in pronouncing the place one of the loneliest spots in all Ireland. A vast vale surrounds it; but as far as the eye can reach there is scarcely a sign of human habitation. The once noble forests have disappeared. Only one little lake to the south can be seen; and searching in vain for sight or sound of human activity or nearness, only the

gray of a fair horizon dge settles leadenly down upon the Waterford mountains to the east, the heights of Kerry to the west, the Nagle mountains to the south, and the Ballyhowra Hills to the north. It is said that from the top of the castle a view of above half the breadth of Ireland was once commanded. If there was compensation in that in Spenser's time, it could hardly be found now.

Kilcolman or *Cill Colman* in Irish, means Colman's Church. There were above sixty saints Colman, and any of these, to one's liking, may be taken as the patron saint of this particular townland locality. The castle, as the ruins indicate, however remote its date of construction, must have been one of strength and importance. Historically it is known to have been originally one of the great Earl of Desmond's fortified castles. The lower portion of the great quadrangular keep is in a good state of preservation for about thirty feet from the ground; one of its side walls, showing a noble window, rises solidly and firmly for perhaps twenty-five feet above this; and a massive square flanking tower still lifts its rough old walls to a probable height of seventy feet. It must have been a weird and dreary place for one of Spenser's fine nature.

But three things of the gravest importance to poet, prince or peasant, came to this man in his eleven years of practical banishment here, between 1587 and 1599. The first of these was the chastening and exalting influence of absolute self-denial. The second was in his wooing and marrying a woman "of mean birth," who was so loyal, sweet and good, that Spenser never knew an unhappy hour on her account during his life, more power to women "of mean birth" for it. The other was in his visits to and communions with his noble friend, Raleigh, at mossy old Youghal, a few miles distant upon the sea coast. Raleigh, genius and poet that he himself was, generously recognized the greater poet's true greatness; warmed his heart with sunny hospitalities; sustained his doubtful dreamings with a strong and heartsome friendship; and in 1589 bodily took the timorous Spenser to London; personally introduced him to the queen; and that very year saw the publication of the first three books of *Faerie Queen*.

These three good fortunes, despite bitter financial straits on the one hand, and, on the other, Irish "rebellions" of such startling frequency that every far line of trees, like trembling silhouettes against the horizon, undoubtedly took on the form of Desmond and Tyrone avengers, made him sing as no English poet before his time had ever sung. And in these true things of his life lay the compensations; for the later days of poverty in London, where, as the sequel proved, English indifference was more fatal than Irish savagery, brought him nothing save the loyalty of his companion "of mean birth;" and he was allowed to die in want in the land he had more infinitely honored than any other who ever lived in it, save Shakespeare. There is but little here to remind of Spenser now. So desolate is old Kilcolman and devoid of suggestive association the region roundabout, that the pilgrim hither must perforce bring Spenser along in his heart, and build almost the entire fabric of life, home and haunts from his own loving fancy.