

# Sergt. T. C. Lapp Visits the Emerald Isle and Gives His Impressions

**A Tour Through Old Ireland Gives Former Member of The Ontario Staff a Fine Opportunity to Gather Experiences and Impressions—Cork, Killarney, Belfast and Dublin Visited and Many Interesting Side Trips—A Land of Great Natural Beauty Where Wealth and Extreme Poverty, Gladness and Sadness Exist Side by Side.**

Witley Camp, Surrey, England, December 18, '18.  
 Editor Ontario:  
 After eleven days in Ireland it is with mixed feelings that I endeavor to put in words some of the things I saw and heard while there. I came away greatly impressed by the natural beauty of the country, but sorrowful at heart at the thought of the extreme poverty I had seen in some parts, which is more or less a result of the unsettled state of the country. I found the Irish people at home the same as we have known them in Canada—warm hearted, generous to a fault and always seeing the humorous side of even their most extreme troubles. I met Irishmen of all classes and the characteristics are more or less the same in all. An American sailor expressed the general opinion of the Irish people when he said: "They welcome you just as heartily when you haven't a cent in your pocket as they would if you were a millionaire."

My time was divided mostly between Cork, Killarney, Dublin and Belfast, with a few side trips; so I will deal with each as I saw them, reserving mention of political activities till the end.  
 Leaving the hospital at Bexhill Friday morning, November 29th, we arrived in London before noon and found the great metropolis filled with soldiers of all nationalities on leave. Even the Law Courts had been commandeered to provide sleeping accommodation. Fortunately I was leaving the same evening so avoided the crush. We left Euston station about 9 p.m. and proceeded by way of Rugby and Crewe to Holyhead, where the mail boat awaited the arrival of the train. At daybreak we left harbor, and an hour later passed over the scene of the last great German atrocity—the sinking of the mail and passenger steamer, Leinster. Three hours after leaving Holyhead we were docked at Kingstown, a short distance from Dublin.

Deciding to leave the visit to the famous city on the Athy till the return journey, I entrained at once and was soon speeding through green fields south-westward.  
 The country side along the railway presented no unusual characteristics, being much the same as the English landscape, until approximately half way across the country, when the first of the "Irish coal mines"—the peat bogs—came into view. I was enabled to examine the peat-cutting operations at first hand later. The bog is opened by cutting a "draining ditch" through the centre and then the turf is cut in blocks of eight or ten inches, and piled on high ground, where it is left until dried. Before the war a small cart-load could be bought for a shilling. Ten shillings is the present price. Through the south and west of Ireland there are thousands of acres of peat yet untouched. The depth varies from two to eight feet. And beside this there are extensive unmined coal deposits.

My first impressions of Irish life were gained in Thurles, a junction point where I had to wait over for a train to Cork. The donkey and two-wheeled carts were everywhere in evidence, also the jaunting car; also discovered from experience that the proverbial wit of "Pat and Mike" is a true Irish product. On the slightest provocation a witty remark is forthcoming.

**Cork**  
 Resuming the journey later I arrived in Cork Saturday evening. Several repatriated prisoners of war came by the same train and I had the not unpleasant experience of being mistaken for one of them. Before I could explain the difference I was profusely greeted by several fair colleens, and even then had difficulty in convincing them that I wasn't "camouflaging."

Cork is a very lively town in the evening. Everyone seemed bent on driving dull care away with the result that some imbibed well but not wisely. There was an occasional fiscal encounter (not always with men principles), and much laughter and good-natured jostling. It was much like a fair-day crowd, but I was assured that it was not an unusual evening in Cork.  
 Sunday morning the place was as lifeless as it had been alive the previous evening, so I had a good opportunity of seeing the city undisturbed. The river Lee flows through the centre in two streams which join in the suburbs. This makes it rather confusing to a stranger, and I was "lost" several times. Patrick street is the main thoroughfare. It is a fine wide street, lined with substantial buildings of well-stocked shops. The street would be easily three times the width of Front street, Belleville. The Grand Parade is another fine street, following the banks of the Lee. Patrick Bridge and Parnell Bridge carry the bulk of the traffic over the river. The City Hall is prominent among the city buildings being much the same in appearance as the Hastings County buildings. Shandon church is perhaps the most famous building, the bells of which were the subject of the poem, "The Bells of Shandon." There were several ships in the Lee awaiting repairs as a result of encounters with submarines.  
 About fifteen miles from Cork is Queenstown, a fine port brought into prominence by the sinking of the "Lusitania." The survivors and the bodies of victims were brought there, and the inquests were conducted there. At present it is an American naval base. The harbor presents a splendid appearance with its extensive shipping and numerous islets. The town is popular as a summer resort. The cathedral is the outstanding building.

**Blarney Castle**  
 From Cork I made the journey to Blarney Castle on a quaint little light railway. The castle, famous in song and story, is situated on an eminence amid surroundings of great natural beauty—a region of enchantment, which loses nothing in the telling by the inhabitants. Of course the "Blarney Stone" is the foundation of all, but its origin is obscure. The generally accepted tale is that it is a piece of the old stone of Scone (Jacob's pillow), sent by Edward Bruce of Scotland, to Cormac McCarthy, King of Munster, in return for assistance that he rendered Bruce against Edward II of England. It is located in the outer wall a few feet from the top of the tower. To perform the osculating ceremony one must be held head-downward over the wall. There is seldom any difficulty in finding enough help to perform the feat, in return for your assistance to them. I think part of the charm must be in having a receptive mind, for I have felt no unusual effects as yet.  
 Monday morning found me in Killarney, "that Eden of the West," and the commencement of the most interesting part of the whole trip.

**Killarney.**  
 After four days of viewing Killarney's lakes and mountains, one can fully appreciate the words of the famous song:  
 "By Killarney's lakes and falls,  
 Emerald isles and winding bays,  
 Mountain paths and woodland dells,  
 Memory ever fondly strays."  
 "Bounteous nature loves all lands,  
 Beauty wanders every where;  
 Footprints leaves on many strands,  
 But her home is surely there."  
 It would require a more gifted pen than mine to do justice to its varied beauty, but I will endeavor to describe it as I saw it.

In company with two Australians, an early start was made the first day, leaving the town in the Irish national vehicle—the jaunting car. For about eight miles the way led through winding lanes past the humble homes of the Irish peasant folk. Invariably their cottages are built of stone with low walls and deeply thatched roofs. The enclosed yards in front of the cottages were lively with pigs and fowl, and children. Every peasant has his donkey and heavy two-wheeled cart. The combination seems capable of carrying loads out of all proportion to their size.  
 The first stop was made at a clean white-walled cottage at the entrance of the Gap of Dunloe. The cottage is the reputed home of Kate Kearney, of whom the poet sings:  
 "Oh! did ye ne'er hear of Kate Kearney lives by the Lakes of Killarney?"  
 Here we changed to horses for the ride through the famous Gap to the head of the Upper Lake. The Gap of Dunloe is a magnificent pass between the MacGillycuddy Reeks, which are about 3,500 feet high (the highest in Ireland), and the Tomies and Purple Mountains. Entering from the north, the widest part of the Gap came to view. Beyond the huge Torripick Rocks lay Serpent Lake where, if we may believe the old Irish legend, St. Patrick killed the last snake in Erin. The way led along a rocky path over mountain torrents, with the huge mass of the Reeks rising precipitously on either side. Occasionally from a cottage among the rocks an old woman would run out and endeavor to force upon us a concoction of milk and whiskey, known as "mountain dew." Nearly every one had a pitiful tale about losing two or three sons in the war. They were forewarned not to be too sympathetic, and governed ourselves accordingly. Reaching the other side of the Gap we paused to view the magnificent scenery on every hand. Southward lay the gloomy lakes of the Black Valley; westward, the majestic sweep of the mountains; northward, the winding road which we had just traversed, and to the east the Upper Lake, where a boat was awaiting to take us back through the Lakes of Killarney. About noon we climbed aboard and the eight oarsmen took up their task. No power vessels of any description are permitted on the lakes.  
 The Lakes of Killarney are three in number—the Upper Lake; the Middle, Muckross or Torc Lake; and the Lower Lake, or Lough Leane. The first two are connected by a narrow channel known as the Long Range. At the time we passed through the volume of water was abnormal owing to heavy rains, and if anything, this added to the enjoyment as we had to shoot swiftly flowing rapids in two occasions. The upper lake is the smallest but most beautiful of the three; with its surroundings of wild and lofty mountains and its dozen picturesque islands. It is about two and a half miles long by a mile in breadth.  
 In the middle lake Dinnis Island proved to be the centre of attraction, with its luxuriant growth of semi-tropical plants and its cottage of Colleen Bawn fame. The Torc Mountain looms high over the lake, and down the mountain side run innumerable little torrents. The largest of these develop into a beautiful cascade known as the Torc waterfall. It is about 150 feet high and was especially beautiful owing to recent heavy rains. The water passing over the rocks resembled filmy lace with a green bordering of ferns and moss.  
 As we passed from the Middle to the lower lake we had a delightful thrill in shooting the rapids under the Old Wolf Bridge, which brought us to the Meeting of the Waters, described by Sir Walter Scott as exceedingly beautiful. We fully agreed with him. We rendered ourselves immune to further trouble from toothache by rubbing some of the water around our teeth. I noticed that, in spite of sceptical remarks, everybody tried the "preventative." Passing under the picturesque Brickemore Bridge we came out upon the broad waters of the Lower and largest lake.  
 Although I have described the Upper lake as the most beautiful of the three, the lower lakes excel in points of interest. One is immediately struck with the beauty of its miniature archipelago of fairy-like islands,

the largest of which, and lying about the centre, is Inisfallen. It is about thirty acres in extent, well wooded, and contains the ruins of an Abbey, which are of great interest to the antiquarian. From available records it is known to have been founded about the year 600 by St. Finlan Lobhar.  
 The "Annals of Inisfallen" were composed there, by two monks. This work is among the earliest records of Irish history, and contains a history of the world down to the time of the arrival of St. Patrick in Ireland. Of Inisfallen, Moore wrote:  
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 Queen's cottage in Glens Bay is another beautiful spot, as is also the three-drop waterfall of O'Sullivan, with its hanging rocks and charming grotto, at the foot of Tomies Mountain.  
 In the growing dusk we landed under the frowning bastions of Ross Castle and completed the trip back to Killarney by the same means as we started—in a jaunting car.  
 The next day's trip was entirely by car and included a drive through the whole of the Muckross demesne. Near the quaint village of Cloghreen we first visited the venerable old ruin of Muckross Abbey. Built about the year 1190, Muckross was chosen by ancient chiefs as their place of sepulture and every part is filled with tombs. The tombs particularly noticeable are those of the MacCarthy's, O'Sullivan's, Mor and O'Donoghue's. The building consists of a church and convent. The best remaining portion is the cloister, in the centre of which grows a magnificent yew tree, which is now some 13 feet in circumference, so 'r'ust be as old as the Abbey itself.  
 Passing on, our road was along the shores of the Middle lake, past the Colleen Bawn Rock, near which are the Colleen Bawn caves. The driver repeated the story of the Colleen Bawn and we were enabled to visualize each scene as it actually occurred. From the road-way excellent views were had of the Torc, Mangerton and Eagle's Nest mountains. The summit of the latter is inaccessible and for centuries eagles built their nests there until exterminated in late years by gamekeepers.  
 The next stop was at the Ross Castle, a huge, ivy-clad ruin, formerly the stronghold of the great O'Donoghue family. It was built in the fourteenth century and is celebrated as being the last stronghold in Munster to hold out against the Parliamentary army. Climbing to the top of the tower, we were rewarded by some magnificent views of the Lake scenery.  
 Near the castle is an old copper mine, which was worked profitably for some years at the beginning of the nineteenth century.  
 Kenmare House, the beautiful home of the Earl of Kenmare, was the last point visited. The building is comparatively modern, but is given a pleasing effect of antiquity by a covering of ivy. The grounds are well kept and are a sight worth coming to see, of themselves.  
 The last day's trip was a drive to Glengarriff. It is situated at the head of Bantry Bay on an excellent harbor. Owing to its mild climate Glengarriff is known as the "Maderia of Ireland." It is surrounded by mountains which protect it from cold winds, and the scenery is in keeping with the rest of the Killarney Lake district. At one point along the journey the road passes through a long tunnel. From the road a splendid view can be had of Bantry Bay. At the time of my visit there were several American warships at anchor there. Lord Macaulay characterized Glengarriff as "the fairest spot in the British Isles," but I think that statement must have been made before he saw Killarney.  
 With great reluctance I left Killarney and started the return journey, which was by way of Mallow and Tipperary. The latter place, made famous by the song early during the war, is a small uninteresting village. Perhaps the inspiration for the song came from the fact that the village is a "long way" from the station.  
 Dublin.  
 Dublin is a city of considerable antiquity, the first mention of it in history having been A.D. 140. Rich in historic associations and as a centre of learning and culture, it is rightly the capital of Ireland and the seat of Government. It abounds in buildings and statuary that provoke the admiration of all visitors.  
 I started my tour of exploration from College Green, which is the strategic centre of the city. On the east side of the green are the buildings of Ireland's greatest educational institution, Trinity College.

Of the various buildings and halls, the library proved of greatest interest. It contains over 300,000 volumes and some 2,000 manuscripts many of which are priceless. The most famous trophy is the Book of Kells, with its Celtic designs and wonderful coloring, still perfect, notwithstanding the lapse of a thousand years since it was produced by monks at Kells, County Meath.  
 The examination hall contains a fine painting of Dean Swift, and an organ, the case of which was taken from a ship of the Spanish Armada, wrecked on the Irish Coast.  
 Trinity College alone is sufficiently interesting to require columns in description, but there are so many things of extreme interest in the city that I must pass on.  
 Leaving the college, a brief visit was made to Leinster House, the home of the Royal Dublin Society, whose object is the encouragement of art, science and industry. The great Dublin Horse show is held each year under their auspices.  
 Near Leinster House is the National Gallery, containing many fine paintings, notably a collection of national portraits. The National History Museum, next visited, was extremely interesting, as was also the Science and Art Museum. The latter has especially fine collection of antiques of the Bronze Age—about 1500 B.C. Passing the National Library and the Royal College of Physicians, a brief stop was made in St. Stephen's Green Park, one of Dublin's many fine public parks. Nearby, in Augier street, Thomas Moore, the poet, was born.  
 St. Patrick's Cathedral next claimed our attention and we spent nearly two hours examining its many interesting and historical features. The cathedral is said to have been originally founded by St. Patrick in about the year A.D. 450, and the present building dates from about 1190. Of course many changes have been made in that time. The bell tower is 220 feet high and dates from the fourteenth century. It contains a fine peal of old bells. The banners and stalls of the Knights of St. Patrick form another interesting feature, remaining as they were before the severance of the church and state in 1870. Many flags of Irish regiments are also kept there. Several reminders of Dean Swift are to be seen, notably the tablet of which wrote the inscription, and the old wooden pulpit from which he preached during his pastorate.  
 Returning to College Green a brief inspection was made of the Bank of Ireland, formerly the Irish House of Parliament. The building is considered the architectural gem of Dublin. The only untouched part of the interior is the House of Lords, a small but imposing room, ornamented with priceless tapestries representing the Battle of the Boyne and the Siege of Derry. The rest of the building has been altered for banking offices.  
 Passing northward from College Green, we came to O'Connell's Bridge, an imposing structure over the Liffey, unique in that its width is greater than its length looking eastward from the bridge a good view is had of the Fort of Dublin and the handsome front of the Custom House. Northward is Sackville street, with a magnificent statue of O'Connell in the foreground. Further on is Nelson's Pillar, a Doric column 103 feet high, surmounted by a gigantic statue of Lord Nelson. The view from the top is the best we had of the city.  
 Sackville street is a fine, wide thoroughfare, but suffered much in the Easter week rebellion of 1916. Evidence of that fateful period are on every hand, notably the empty shell of the once noble structure of the General Post Office.  
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 The next trip was a jaunting-car ride through the famous Phoenix Park, north-west of the city proper. It is seven miles in circumference and comprises about 1,760 acres. It contains the Vice-regal lodge, the residence of the Lord Lieutenant, Viscount French; the Mountjoy Barracks and other military institutions; the Zoological Gardens; as well as polo, cricket and football grounds. Herds of fallow deer are to be seen here and there in the park. The most notable monument is the Wellington testimonial, a huge obelisk 205 feet in height. A fine equestrian statue of Lord Gough occupies a position on the main road. Citizens of Dublin are rightly proud of this beautiful park.  
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 In the growing dusk we landed under the frowning bastions of Ross Castle and completed the trip back to Killarney by the same means as we started—in a jaunting car.  
 The next day's trip was entirely by car and included a drive through the whole of the Muckross demesne. Near the quaint village of Cloghreen we first visited the venerable old ruin of Muckross Abbey. Built about the year 1190, Muckross was chosen by ancient chiefs as their place of sepulture and every part is filled with tombs. The tombs particularly noticeable are those of the MacCarthy's, O'Sullivan's, Mor and O'Donoghue's. The building consists of a church and convent. The best remaining portion is the cloister, in the centre of which grows a magnificent yew tree, which is now some 13 feet in circumference, so 'r'ust be as old as the Abbey itself.  
 Passing on, our road was along the shores of the Middle lake, past the Colleen Bawn Rock, near which are the Colleen Bawn caves. The driver repeated the story of the Colleen Bawn and we were enabled to visualize each scene as it actually occurred. From the road-way excellent views were had of the Torc, Mangerton and Eagle's Nest mountains. The summit of the latter is inaccessible and for centuries eagles built their nests there until exterminated in late years by gamekeepers.  
 The next stop was at the Ross Castle, a huge, ivy-clad ruin, formerly the stronghold of the great O'Donoghue family. It was built in the fourteenth century and is celebrated as being the last stronghold in Munster to hold out against the Parliamentary army. Climbing to the top of the tower, we were rewarded by some magnificent views of the Lake scenery.  
 Near the castle is an old copper mine, which was worked profitably for some years at the beginning of the nineteenth century.  
 Kenmare House, the beautiful home of the Earl of Kenmare, was the last point visited. The building is comparatively modern, but is given a pleasing effect of antiquity by a covering of ivy. The grounds are well kept and are a sight worth coming to see, of themselves.  
 The last day's trip was a drive to Glengarriff. It is situated at the head of Bantry Bay on an excellent harbor. Owing to its mild climate Glengarriff is known as the "Maderia of Ireland." It is surrounded by mountains which protect it from cold winds, and the scenery is in keeping with the rest of the Killarney Lake district. At one point along the journey the road passes through a long tunnel. From the road a splendid view can be had of Bantry Bay. At the time of my visit there were several American warships at anchor there. Lord Macaulay characterized Glengarriff as "the fairest spot in the British Isles," but I think that statement must have been made before he saw Killarney.  
 With great reluctance I left Killarney and started the return journey, which was by way of Mallow and Tipperary. The latter place, made famous by the song early during the war, is a small uninteresting village. Perhaps the inspiration for the song came from the fact that the village is a "long way" from the station.  
 Dublin.  
 Dublin is a city of considerable antiquity, the first mention of it in history having been A.D. 140. Rich in historic associations and as a centre of learning and culture, it is rightly the capital of Ireland and the seat of Government. It abounds in buildings and statuary that provoke the admiration of all visitors.  
 I started my tour of exploration from College Green, which is the strategic centre of the city. On the east side of the green are the buildings of Ireland's greatest educational institution, Trinity College.

Of the various buildings and halls, the library proved of greatest interest. It contains over 300,000 volumes and some 2,000 manuscripts many of which are priceless. The most famous trophy is the Book of Kells, with its Celtic designs and wonderful coloring, still perfect, notwithstanding the lapse of a thousand years since it was produced by monks at Kells, County Meath.  
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