

F.A.S....

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## ON MID-SUMMER HOLIDAY.

(By the Editor.)

The ponie's owners or guides asserted that the length of the road, from Norah's Cottage through the Gap of Dunloe to the turnstile near the head of the lakes, is nine miles. If that be so then the geography of the place passes ordinary understanding. From Killarney to Norah's Cottage is about six miles; from Norah's Cottage to the Gap nine miles, and from the head of the upper lake to the end of the lower lake other nine miles. From the lower lake to Killarney is not much over a mile, while to Norah's Cottage it cannot be more than six to eight miles. I have tried to figure it out but it wears one; the conclusion is that the boatmen and the drivers were beguiling the innocent with fairy tales. After dismounting, as none of either party were expert horsemen, stiffness of joints was expected but none was experienced, due probably to the staid gait of the ponies. The turnstile, or rather the landlords' treasury box, is about a half mile from the lake. For admission to the road a shilling each was demanded. You cannot get clear of the ground rental. (There are sentry boxes at the upper and lower entrances to the grounds.) A couple of hundred feet from the seat of customs is a gate. Need I add there was a boy and a girl, well dressed, probably the sub-factors children, ready and eager to open the gate. They did not ask a donation verbally, but they looked the request and resignedly we complied. We blamed the other party for setting the 'tip' pace, but we found out that the vengeance on Cook. They did lay a complaint and were told that when the guides demanded or expected two shillings, they should have been content with sixpence and other tips in proportion. This valuable information was not given at the start, though Cook's officials must have known the men they employed.

The boatmen declared we were late and that it would be hard work to get to Muckross in time to catch the train. We found out afterwards that we had two hours to spare. The boats on the lakes are substantial and not elegant. They look quite as spruce as the gondolas at Venice, while the Irish boatmen are more respectable looking in every way than the Venetian. They have nothing common in appearance.

A sort of canal, the sides of rough stones, forms the entrance to the upper lake. At this point the scenery is pleasing and pastoral. The upper lake to my fancy is by far the prettiest. Some tourists

compare it to Loch Lomond, but though I have gone over the Loch Lomond route more than once, I failed to see any great comparison. There are a few islands but there are no rugged mountains, no 'steep steep sides' as in the Scottish Lake. A part of the shore of one of the lakes is marshy ground with flags and this detracts from its beauty. But when all is said it is charming. The middle lake is famous for the Meeting of the Waters, and for the celebrated rapids. As the lakes were low, the rapids were not flowing strong. The rapids flow under the arch of a bridge. The boatmen make it as exciting as possible. They steer the boat with an oar or rather keep it off the sides of the bridge. Of course the boat grates the bottom, that is in the programme, but as none of the females scream there is not the least bit of excitement. The boatmen impressed on us the dangers when the lake was in flood, and the difficulties when the lake was low. The stone on which the boat's keel grated was flat and smooth. The question is, Was it placed there? I believe it was. There would not be the slightest trouble in clearing a channel. A man by pulling up his trouser legs and rolling up his sleeves could remove all impediments to navigation, but then the romance of shooting the rapids would be gone. No wonder Ireland had its Currans and its males and the females. One boatman never let up. He told us all about the Devil's punch bowl; the Eagles nest; and every little hillock on the route. One of our party infiduously remarked that we were gaining on the other boat, which had left a while before us. On hearing this our head-boatman asked if it was worth half a sovereign to pass it. This was put to vote by ballot, and unanimously decided in the negative. Then our boat resumed its normal speed. There are few tricks the guides and the boatmen are not familiar with. One cannot well compare Killarney with Loch Lomond. Killarney had not Scott to write it up; had no encounter of Saxon and gael, no Helen's Isle, in short, no Lady of the Lake. Killarney lacks the associations. Further, it is the sail on the Loch which is enchanting, while it is the drive round the lakes that puts one in raptures. Both Loch and Lakes are beautiful, but give me Higgins. You have probably heard of Higgins. No! Well Higgins was a Chicago moneyed man. He could not 'do' Europe with his wife, so she went alone. In the programme was a visit to the Apollo Belvedere. She gazed at the statue. "Is that the great Apollo?" Yes. "Well I have seen the Apollo Belvedere and I have seen Higgins, and give me Higgins." Natural, you say.