

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1893.

## AROUND THE SKELLIGS.

RAMBLES OF A STRANGER WITH A PENCIL AND NOTE BOOK.

What Can be Found to Interest and Instruct One Among the Old Monks' Haunts of Great Skellig Rock—A Scene in Valletta in Early Morning.

LONDON, Jan. 30.—I wonder how many Americans ever visited the famous Skelligs of the southwest coast of Ireland? They are the most southwesterly extensions of Ireland; are three in number; and lie in a direct line southwest of Port Magee. The first, and the least, is called Lemon Rock. It is a round, solid mass rising only a few feet above the water. The second and next larger is called Little, or Lesser, Skellig, and is a craggy grouping of rocky pinnacles, standing grim and black against the sky; as though some city of churches with wondrous steeples had been submerged, rearing above the waves their mighty Gothic spires, among which millions of sea-birds had found their desolate homes.

The third, the Great Skellig, is precisely nine miles at sea from Port Magee. It is an enormous and precipitous mass of rock rising perpendicularly at nearly all angles to the height of several hundred feet, and from thence pushing skyward stupendous, irregular groups, terminating in two lofty pinnacles, the highest of which reaches an altitude of 710 feet. It is said that the ocean surroundings around it are far deeper than those in any part of the English channel; and at no other point upon the whole Atlantic are witnessed such awful battles between wave and stone. The base of the only lighthouse now in use upon Great Skellig stands upon a levelled rock, 140 feet above the sea, and the roof of this lofty structure was a few years ago crushed in and partly carried away by the assaults of the waves, which must have been lifted upwards of 180 feet above the sea-level to have been dashed upon it!

A determination to land upon and scale Great Skellig rock is more easily formed than is the project performed; for certain destruction attends attempting landing, save when old ocean may be caught napping and for a few hours quite at rest. Every day for nearly a week, with a Kerry fisherman friend, I arose before day and tramped to the cliffs below Port Magee for forecast of wind, weather and sea. At last a propitious day came. With my friend and three of his hardy companions we set forth in a strong open boat with the outgoing tide from the tiny pier of the port, and without stroke of oar were soon sweeping through the southern entrance of the harbor of Valletta.

The sea was perfectly calm as we left the channel, save where imperceptible distant swells, massing upon the half-hidden ledge that protects the harbor entrance, flung glittering spume and spray landward behind us. Over to the west, Bray Head rose precipitously 1,000 feet out of the water. Beyond this, innumerable fishers' sails blended with a huge oncoming surge at the edge of the horizon. To the left, grim headlands stretched away in dark projections to far Bolus Head; and the long, regular stroke of the oarsmen soon sped us past Puffin Island. In an hour and a half we were alongside Lemon Island, lying like some sleeping half-hidden monster to our right; and in two hours' time we had come abreast of Little Skellig.

Here we were favored with a characteristic sight. This island is the only one off the Irish coast where the puffin haunts and breeds in countless numbers. Taking advantage of the placid sea, perhaps three score coastwise folk were here seeking these fowl within the fissures and clefts of the crags. Many aerial battles between men slung with ropes from dangerous heights and the birds they were mercilessly seeking, were seen in progress as we passed. The eggs and flesh of the puffin are eaten; their feathers are dried and sold; and a trifling traffic is carried on in pickled, or cured puffins which are exchanged for potatoes and meal with the country folk of the Iveragh wilds.

At last the Great Skellig was reached, and we made a landing without difficulty at the only spot upon which foot can be set from the sea. I begged the boatmen to climb the crags with me, but they shook their heads gravely and refused. The reason for this, as related by my fisher friend who consented to accompany me, was on account of certain portentous superstitions the peasantry and fishermen tenaciously hold regarding the spot. The only human beings now living upon Great Skellig are those having charge of the lighthouse.

But more than a thousand years ago, hundreds, if not thousands, passed their lives in religious devotions upon this wild sea-mountain; for this place was then the St. Michael's Mount of Ireland. Its history was luminous even in the earliest days of Christianity in Erin. A majestic monastery once stood in the little valley between the two lofty peaks of the island. From the single landing place, 620 stone steps, many portions of which remain, led to the monastery, the great cashel, the oratories, the stone cells, the ancient burial place, and

many unrecorded structures which the incalculable toil and zealous consecration of a remote age grouped within this sacred spot. Easily traced remains of nearly all these structures still exist; and fragments of gigantic crosses here and there push through the strange debris, whose contemplation cannot but send a thrill through the least impressive heart.

Far, far above this tens of thousands of pilgrims in the intervening centuries have climbed. Near the top of the highest pinnacle one must squeeze through a narrow orifice called the Needle's Eye, in order to follow their olden painful way. Just beyond this is a narrow ridge or saddle of solid rock. One must get astride this and work along with legs and hands until an ascending shelving rock is reached. The danger here is terrible. One false movement, and you are plunged headlong into the sea from either side. From this to the highest point any fairly sure-footed man may pass securely to the slender yard-wide summit, along which are found rudely-sculptured crosses, or stations.

I have been in some eerie spots in my travel, but never before have I stood where such sense of sublimity mingled with awe-inspiring insecurity possessed me. On three sides you look down a black, straight line of over 700 feet into the ocean. Behind and below you are the solemn ruins of remote ages. Far to the north and east is the weird, sea-walled coast. Your own land is 2,000 miles beyond those white specks of fisher-boats to the west. Around and above you are only the palpable clouds, and ghostly whistle of darting sea-bird's wing. The solemn grandeur and awful impressiveness of the place are appalling.

The descent was more dangerous than the climbing; but we accomplished it safely, re-entered the boat and made for Port Magee. I never wish to see Great Skellig again—unless from the deck of an Atlantic steamer, when a sight of it as the first glimpse of Europe is occasionally had; and as we rounded the reef into the safer channel, while night was softly descending, and the lights from a thousand mackerel-fishers' boats gleamed along the western horizon, I turned with a sigh of relief from this tremendous and desolate terror of the deep, to welcoming land, as from some hideous phantom of unhappy dreams.

Valletta, the chief city of Malta, is never silent save in the early morning hours. Then it is like a city of the dead; but always sweet and cool and winsome. At that time if you are abroad alone, the silent churches, the huge auberges, the tremendous ramparts, the vast archways, the dim porticoes and the shadowy balconies seem to whisper anew their tales of romance old, their mysteries of chivalrous and knightly days.

But soon from this patio, from that narrow thoroughfare, another silent archway, from huge barred doors that open and close with a startling click, come funeral forms, clad in sombre black. They glide along with bowed heads. Their advent has been so sudden and their number is at once so great that you are filled with surprise and dismay. But these do not remain.

For a soft and delicate hand, as if by accident, with a swift motion changes the folds of the *faldetta*, and the pretty faces of half a thousand Maltese maids and matrons are one by one turned roughly or kindly to yours. Then you realize that the faithful fair of Valletta are on their way to early mass, and you stand there, hat in hand, yourself a reverent worshipper, mentally blessing one and all for their piety and pretty graying ways.

EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

### A Banquet of Chestnuts.

"I have eaten apples that ripened more than 1,800 years ago, bread made from wheat grown before the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea, spread it with butter that was made when Elizabeth was Queen of England, and washed down the repast with wine that was old when Columbus was playing barefoot with the boys of Genoa," says a writer in the Chicago Tribune.

"The remarkable 'spread' was given by an antiquary named Gobel, in the city of Brussels, in 1871. The apples were from a jar taken from the ruins of Pompeii, that buried city to whose people we owe our knowledge of canning fruit."

"The wheat was taken from a chamber in one of the smaller pyramids, the butter from a stone shelf in an old well in Scotland, where it had lain in an earthenware crock in icy water, and the wine came from an old vault in the city of Corinth."

"There were six guests at the table, and each had a mouthful of the bread and a teaspoonful of the wine, but was permitted to help himself liberally to the butter, there being several pounds of it."

"The apple-jar held about two-thirds of a gallon, and the fruit was as sweet and the flavor as fine as though put up yesterday."

The Patent office at Washington last year issued 21,427 patents to the citizens of the United States and 2,051 to foreigners. The surplus for the year amounted to \$175,592.49.

## IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS.

THE STORY OF THE GROWTH OF A VILLAGE ON THE BORDER.

It is a Town Now, and Revels in Many New Fangled Notions—Some of the Resources of Civilization, Including the Scott Act and Town Council.

Well, it has been cold. It reminds one of the hard winters of long ago. It is only a gentle reminder however, for the winters such as we had as boys are things of the past. It was in 1840, if I remember rightly, that winter set in with a heavy snow storm on the 20th. November, and it was a winter. I was not grown to man's estate at that time and whether it be that the journeys through the drifts to the little school-house unduly impressed my youthful mind, or whether the snow actually was as deep as fancy paints it, I know not, but our modern snows look as nothing in comparison. True, we had no snow-ploughs then to clean the sidewalks, and as we had little in the way of sidewalks there was not much need for it. The middle of the road was broken with a two or four or six horse team, and that answered for pedestrians as well as equestrians. What good old days they were. The folk lived simply in our village 40 or 50 years ago. Everybody knew everybody else, and many a pleasant evening was spent at a social game of whist by the light of a home made tallow dip and the heat of a blazing log fire, or in merry social games in which old and young could join. Alas! it is not only the winters that have changed. The tallows have given place to kerosene, gas and electricity, which perhaps were not so bad were it not so expensive. Nothing less than a five cent ante will do now as an accompaniment to the erst-while harmless game of whist, and gaming for larger stakes is carried on nightly by those who frequent the dog-hole bar room, and on up through society to those who go to the big hotel. An honest man was not of infrequent occurrence in days of yore, but such is the greed for gain and the stress of party politics that even our leaders submerge the right, and are ready to trade off principle for immediate party advantage or personal ends.

The village has outgrown its short clothes and now revels in the name of the town, with all the glories that the name implies. We have a mayor and six councillors and all the minor officers, plank sidewalks, high taxation, and a big debt which is growing bigger, and a daily newspaper within a mile of us. The old hand engine "Iron Duke" which with the boys in blue shirts and white pants to man it, danced with pride as it sent a stream from a seven eighth nozzle over the highest building in town, is supplanted by the new fangled hydrants, which might be well enough if the head of the department knew how to handle the water that comes from them, which he does not seem to. The volunteer fire company that used to make the welkin ring with its cheery song as the members pumped, pumped, pumped, to fill the reservoir from the river after the fire was over, has given way to the smaller company of mercenaries whose salary has been increased in greater ratio than its efficiency by the present council. A somewhat bulky brass buttoned individual, the view of said buttons being now obscured by a coon skin coat, is supposed to parade our streets and quell disorder, and drive stray cows to the pound, etc., etc., what time he is not engaged in training his friend's fast horses in the streets of St. Stephen and Calais, and there is a lesser light supposed to rule the night, whose principal characteristic is that he becomes invisible to the ordinary naked eye after midnight.

The old militia day is gone, and the town meeting is no more. What a day it was to be sure. Plenty of liquid refreshments then, with the usual results, and no one to interfere with the personal liberty of the drinker or the seller. The town has gone dry since, or at least it is supposed to have done so. Senator Scott would fail to recognize his act however as it is administered in St. Stephen at present. The little Montreal Frenchman who sells French liquors to Murray and others says that it pays him to come here often now. Murray knows what good liquor is, and has a good class of customers and is well protected by the authorities. It is said that he has to pay well for the protection, but that is a private matter into which it would be uncourteous for us to inquire. Time was, and that not very long ago, when the dispensers of the ardent kept front and back doors locked and the shutters on and the thirsty soul had to give the proper signal before he could gain admission. In the advance of civilization the hindrances to trade have been removed and under the encouragement given it during the past year the business has prospered. The uncouth shutters are off the windows and the doors unlocked, and free right and access from the street to the bar-room. The number of business houses has increased twofold, and the persecuted beings can now lift up their heads with their neighbors in

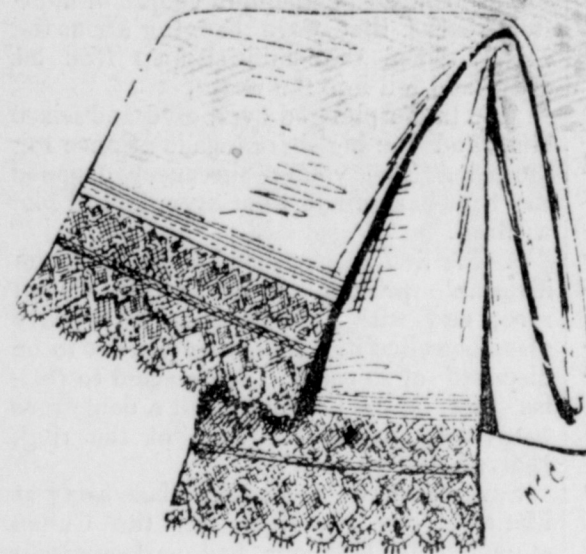
## A MAGNIFICENT ASSORTMENT OF LADIES' AND CHILDREN'S WHITE WEAR

For Our FEBRUARY SALE.



CORSET COVERS.

17c. to \$1.80. CHEMISE. 25c. to \$2.25. SKIRTS. 47c. to \$5.00.



DRAWERS.



NIGHTGOWNS.

55c. to \$5.00. 55c. to \$3.25. \$5.00.

Ladies' Underclothing Cheaper than they can be made up in your own homes.

SPECIAL PRICES ON MANY ARTICLES FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY.

MANCHESTER, ROBERTSON & ALLISON, St. John.



Our Big Store, Corner King & Germain.

The early to rise, Roll-the-Hoop-Boys' clothes, are a shade rusty about now. Get him a school suit, or play suit. Either will do; they're the same. Extra Knicker Pants brighten up the clothes. But you'd better get the whole suit.

Best of all.

Send Back What You Don't Like.

SCOVIL, FRASER & COMPANY.

the dry goods trade. True, the town still keeps a man whose duty it is to close up these places, but it doesn't want him to do his duty and he does it not. He gets pay for doing his duty and it has been publicly charged that he got pay for not doing it but the council never has found time to look into the matter. Yes, things have changed since the good old days when a man of this kind had to earn his living.

I think I said that things have changed. They are changing all the time. When we first blossomed out into a town, citizens sought the suffrages of their neighbors, willing to take office in the government of the town for the honor and prestige the position might bring. Naturally this has ceased to be considered a sufficient reward. Our local paper has been constrained from time to time when the members of the board have sold of their wares to the town, to raise the cry of boodles, and severely has criticized the culprits. The past year has marked another step in advance, however, as it seems to be the first time that benefits have been received by the gentlemen whom the voters delighted to honor, and no semblance of value given. Of course the three new electric street lights erected, while the president of the company was the leading spirit at the board, would not come under this head. The occupancy of the end of Main street by one of the councillors with the concurrence of his colleagues is, however, a very bad case. There was no value given here unless the trading of support for other measures might be considered in that light. The stone street crossings for the mayor and two of the councillors, at the public expense might be called pretty hard jobs, but not so bad as the protection to the barroom in the big hotel, of which the mayor is one of the proprietors. The monotony of its daily work has not been relieved by the imposition of a single fine throughout the year. Queer, too, what a change has come over the mayor's newspaper, which was wont to be so regardless of the people's rights, but which now does not squeak.

Some of the older residents, afflicted with old fashioned honesty, will lament the changes noted, and pessimistically enquire as to the future, but the people at large

are satisfied and pay up and look happy. After all our town political squabble is only a side show to the politics of a wider range, and is an ill-concealed struggle for a vantage ground from which to fight the larger contest, and who can complain?

Don.

St. Stephen, N. B., Feb. 2, 1893.

Rather more than 69 persons in every 100 in London are living in comfort, while rather more than 30 in every 100 are living in poverty.

During February

we hem Cottons and Linens free, or if you prefer to do your own hemming we will pay you the same as we would have to pay another.

The lot of trimmings that were accounted such big bargains at 8c., are now 5c., and Dress Goods—well our stock of Dress Goods in now in such a condition we do not urge their sale.

Butterick's Large Catalogues for Winter, 5c. Former price 25c.

Ceo. H. McKay, 61 Charlotte St., St. John.

### DICKENS AND GHOSTS.

He Never Could find a Haunted House in Which to Study Them.

My friend Mr. Charles Dickens writes me: "You are not quite accurate in the 'Note Book' as to my father and the haunted houses. He never obtained permission to pass a night in one. He tried to do so often enough, but the difficulty was that no haunted house could ever be found. . . . The most promising stories melted into thin air on close examination. There was a party always ready to investigate any phenomena anywhere: it consisted of my father, W. H. Willis, Edmund Yates, myself, and two big dogs, who lived in the stable-yard at Gad's hill. But no employment was ever found for us."

Haunted houses therefore, it seems, like ghosts themselves, are often heard but never seen. It is not at all likely that they should have become more common since the great novelist's time. One meets lawyers who believe in a good many things that a mere layman is unable to swallow, but never one that believes in a ghost; it is therefore curious enough that perhaps the best authenticated story of the return of a departed spirit to this world owes its imprimatur to a judge's "opinion." Smellie, the naturalist, made a solemn agreement with his friend Greenlaw, the linguist, that whichever of them died first should return and give an account of his experience to the other; if the deceased should not return within a year, it was to be concluded that he could not obtain permission. This document was signed with their blood and formally sealed.

Greenlaw died in 1774, aged sixty-two. Smellie grew very anxious as the end of the year approached "owing to the intensity of his expectations." One evening he fell asleep in his chair, and Greenlaw, habited in white, appeared to him. He said he had had such difficulty in procuring the desired permission that he was in a better world than the present, but that the hopes of its inhabitants were by no means satisfied, and they still looked forward to a happier existence. Smellie was quite confident that he had seen his friend, but to make sure laid the whole case, with the contract, before his friend, Lord Monboddo, "which decided that there could not be the smallest reasonable doubt in believing that Greenlaw did actually appear."—James Poqu in London Press.