

looking at me, I perceived the whole audience had their eyes turned upon the lady who had been nine months in London; from her they expected the decision which was to secure the general's truncheon in my hand, or sink me down into a theatrical letter-carrier. I opened my snuff-box, took snuff; the lady was solemn, and so were the rest; I broke my cudgel on Alderman Smuggler's back: still gloomy, melancholy all: the lady groaned and shrugged her shoulders; I attempted, by laughing myself, to excite at least a smile; but the devil a cheek could I perceive wrinkled into sympathy: I found it would not do; all my good humour now became forced; my laughter was converted into hysteric grinning; and, while I pretended spirits, my eye showed the agony of my heart: in short, the lady came with an intention to be displeased, and displeased she was; my frame expired; I am here, and—the tankard is no more!

MARIA EDGEWORTH · 1767–1849

The Limerick Gloves

I

It was Sunday morning, and a fine day in autumn; the bells of Hereford cathedral rang, and all the world smartly dressed were flocking to church.

'Mrs Hill! Mrs Hill!—Phoebe! Phoebe! There's the cathedral bell, I say, and neither of you ready for church, and I a verger,' cried Mr Hill, the ranner, as he stood at the bottom of his own staircase. 'I'm ready, papa,' replied Phoebe; and down she came, looking so clean, so fresh, and so gay, that her stern father's brows unbent, and he could only say to her, as she was drawing on a new pair of gloves, 'Child, you ought to have had those gloves on before this time of day.'

'Before this time of day!' cried Mrs Hill, who was now coming down stairs completely equipped, 'before this time of day! she should know better, I say, than to put on those gloves at all: more especially when going to the cathedral.'

'The gloves are very good gloves, as far as I see,' replied Mr Hill. 'But no matter now. It is more fitting that we should be in proper time in our pew, to set an example, as becomes us, than to stand here talking of gloves and nonsense.'

He offered his wife and daughter each an arm, and set out for the cathedral; but Phoebe was too busy in drawing on her new gloves, and her mother was too angry at the sight of them, to accept of Mr Hill's courtesy: 'What I say is always nonsense, I know, Mr Hill,' resumed the matron: 'but I can see as far into a millstone as other folks. Was it not I that first gave you a hint of what became of the great dog, that we lost out of our tan-yard last winter? And was it not I who first took notice to you, Mr Hill, verger as you are, of the hole under the foundation of the cathedral? Was it not, I ask you, Mr Hill?'

'But, my dear Mrs Hill, what has all this to do with Phoebe's gloves?'

'Are you blind, Mr Hill? Don't you see that they are Limerick gloves?'

'What of that?' said Mr Hill; still preserving his composure, as it was his custom to do as long as he could, when he saw his wife was ruffled.

'What of that, Mr Hill! why don't you know that Limerick is in Ireland, Mr Hill?'

'With all my heart, my dear.'

'Yes, and with all your heart, I suppose, Mr Hill, you would see our cathedral blown up, some fair day or other, and your own daughter married to the person that did it; and you a verger, Mr Hill.'

'God forbid!' cried Mr Hill; and he stopped short and settled his wig. Presently recovering himself, he added, 'But, Mrs Hill, the cathedral is not yet blown up; and our Phoebe is not yet married.'

'No: but what of that, Mr Hill? Forewarned is forearmed, as I told you before your dog was gone; but you would not believe me, and you see how it turned out in that case; and so it will in this case, you'll see, Mr Hill.'

'But you puzzle and frighten me out of my wits, Mrs Hill,' said the verger, again settling his wig. '*In that case and in this case!* I can't understand a syllable of what you've been saying to me this half hour. In plain English, what is there the matter about Phoebe's gloves?'

'In plain English, then, Mr Hill, since you can understand nothing else, please to ask your daughter Phoebe who gave her those gloves. Phoebe, who gave you those gloves?'

'I wish they were burnt,' said the husband, whose patience could endure no longer. 'Who gave you those cursed gloves, Phoebe?'

'Papa,' answered Phoebe, in a low voice, 'they were a present from Mr Brian O'Neill.'

'The Irish glover,' cried Mr Hill, with a look of terror.

'Yes,' resumed the mother; 'very true, Mr Hill, I assure you. Now, you see, I had my reasons.'

'Take off the gloves directly: I order you, Phoebe,' said her father, in his most peremptory tone. 'I took a mortal dislike to that Mr Brian O'Neill the first time I ever saw him. He's an Irishman, and that's enough, and too much for me. Off with the gloves, Phoebe! When I order a thing, it must be done.'

Phoebe seemed to find some difficulty in getting off the gloves,

and gently urged that she could not well go into the cathedral without them. This objection was immediately removed, by her mother's pulling from her pocket a pair of mittens, which had once been brown, and once been whole, but which were now rent in sundry places; and which, having been long stretched by one who was twice the size of Phoebe, now hung in huge wrinkles upon her well-upturned arms.

'But, papa,' said Phoebe, 'why should we take a dislike to him because he is an Irishman? Cannot an Irishman be a good man?'

The verger made no answer to this question, but a few seconds after it was put to him, observed that the cathedral bell had just done ringing; and, as they were now got to the church door, Mrs Hill, with a significant look at Phoebe, remarked that it was no proper time to talk or think of good men, or bad men, or Irishmen, or any men, especially for a verger's daughter.

We pass over in silence the many conjectures that were made by several of the congregation, concerning the reason why Miss Phoebe Hill should appear in such a shameful shabby pair of gloves on a Sunday. After service was ended, the verger went, with great mystery, to examine the hole under the foundation of the cathedral; and Mrs Hill repaired, with the grocer's and the stationer's ladies, to take a walk in the Close; where she boasted to all her female acquaintance, whom she called her friends, of her maternal discretion in prevailing upon Mr Hill to forbid her daughter Phoebe to wear the Limerick gloves.

In the mean time, Phoebe walked pensively homewards; endeavouring to discover why her father should take a mortal dislike to a man, at first sight, merely because he was an Irishman; and why her mother had talked so much of the great dog, which had been lost last year out of the tan-yard; and of the hole under the foundation of the cathedral! What has all this to do with my Limerick gloves? thought she. The more she thought, the less connection she could perceive between these things: for as she had not taken a dislike to Mr Brian O'Neill at first sight, because he was an Irishman, she could not think it quite reasonable to suspect him of making away with her father's dog; nor yet of a design to blow up Hereford cathedral. As she was pondering upon these matters, she came within sight of the ruins of a poor man's house, which a few months before this time had been burnt down. She recollected that her first acquaintance with her lover began at the time of this

fire; and she thought that the courage and humanity he showed, in exerting himself to save this unfortunate woman and her children, justified her notion of the possibility that an Irishman might be a good man.

The name of the poor woman, whose house had been burnt down, was Smith: she was a widow, and she now lived at the extremity of a narrow lane in a wretched habitation. Why Phoebe thought of her with more concern than usual at this instant we need not examine, but she did; and, reproaching herself for having neglected it for some weeks past, she resolved to go directly to see the widow Smith, and to give her a crown which she had long had in her pocket, with which she had intended to have bought play tickets.

It happened that the first person she saw in the poor widow's kitchen was the identical Mr O'Neill. 'I did not expect to see any body here but you, Mrs Smith,' said Phoebe, blushing.

'So much the greater the pleasure of the meeting; to me, I mean, Miss Hill,' said O'Neill, rising, and putting down a little boy, with whom he had been playing. Phoebe went on talking to the poor woman; and, after slipping the crown into her hand, said she would call again. O'Neill, surprised at the change in her manner, followed her when she left the house, and said, 'It would be a great misfortune to me to have done any thing to offend Miss Hill; especially if I could not conceive how or what it was, which is my case at this present speaking.' And, as the spruce glover spoke, he fixed his eyes upon Phoebe's ragged gloves. She drew them up in vain; and then said, with her natural simplicity and gentleness, 'You have not done any thing to offend me, Mr O'Neill; but you are some way or other displeasing to my father and mother, and they have forbid me to wear the Limerick gloves.'

'And sure Miss Hill would not be after changing her opinion of her humble servant for no reason in life, but because her father and mother, who have taken a prejudice against him, are a little contrary.'

'No,' replied Phoebe; 'I should not change my opinion without any reason; but I have not yet had time to fix my opinion of you, Mr O'Neill.'

'To let you know a piece of my mind, then, my dear Miss Hill,' resumed he, 'the more contrary they are, the more pride and joy it would give me to win and wear you, in spite of 'em all; and if

without a farthing in your pocket, so much the more I should rejoice in the opportunity of proving to your dear self, and all else whom it may concern, that Brian O'Neill is no fortune-hunter, and scorns them that are so narrow-minded as to think that no other kind of cattle but them there fortune-hunters can come out of all Ireland. So, my dear Phoebe, now we understand one another, I hope you will not be paining my eyes any longer with the sight of these odious brown bags, which are not fit to be worn by any Christian arms, to say nothing of Miss Hill's, which are the handsomest, without any compliment, that ever I saw; and, to my mind, would become a pair of Limerick gloves beyond any thing: and I expect she'll show her generosity and proper spirit by putting them on immediately.'

'You expect, sir?' repeated Miss Hill, with a look of more indignation than her gentle countenance had ever before been seen to assume. 'Expect! If he had said hope, thought she, it would have been another thing: but expect! what right has he to expect?'

Now Miss Hill, unfortunately, was not sufficiently acquainted with the Irish idiom, to know, that to expect, in Ireland, is the same thing as to hope in England; and, when her Irish admirer said I expect, he meant only in plain English, I hope. But thus it is that a poor Irishman, often, for want of understanding the niceties of the English language, says the rudest when he means to say the civillest things imaginable.

Miss Hill's feelings were so much hurt by this unlucky 'I expect,' that the whole of his speech, which had before made some favourable impression upon her, now lost its effect; and she replied with proper spirit, as she thought, 'You expect a great deal too much, Mr O'Neill; and more than ever I gave you reason to do. It would be neither pleasure nor pride to me to be won and worn, as you were pleased to say, in spite of them all; and to be thrown, without a farthing in my pocket, upon the protection of one who expects so much at first setting out.—So I assure you, sir, whatever you may expect, I shall not put on the Limerick gloves.'

Mr O'Neill was not without his share of pride and proper spirit; nay, he had, it must be confessed, in common with some others of his countrymen, an improper share of pride and spirit. Fired by the lady's coldness, he poured forth a volley of reproaches; and ended by wishing, as he said, a good morning, for ever and ever, to one who could change her opinion, point blank, like the weathercock. 'I

am, miss, your most obedient; and I expect you'll never think no more of poor Brian O'Neill, and the Limerick gloves.'

If he had not been in too great a passion to observe any thing, poor Brian O'Neill would have found out that Phoebe was not a weavercock: but he left her abruptly, and hurried away, imagining all the while that it was Phoebe, and not himself, who was in a rage. Thus, to the horseman, who is galloping at full speed, the hedges, trees, and houses, seem rapidly to recede; whilst, in reality, they never move from their places. It is he that flies from them, and not they from him.

On Monday morning Miss Jenny Brown, the perfumer's daughter, came to pay Phoebe a morning visit, with face of busy joy.

'So, my dear!' said she: 'fine doings in Hereford! but what makes you look so downcast? To be sure you are invited, as well as the rest of us.'

'Invited where?' cried Mrs Hill, who was present, and who could never endure to hear of an invitation in which she was not included. 'Invited where, pray, Miss Jenny?'

'Let have not you heard? Why, we all took it for granted that you and Miss Phoebe would have been the first and foremost to have been asked to Mr O'Neill's ball.'

'Ball!' cried Mrs Hill; and luckily saved Phoebe, who was in some agitation, the trouble of speaking. 'Why, this is a mighty sudden thing: I never heard a tittle of it before.'

'Well, this is really extraordinary! And, Phoebe, have you not received a pair of Limerick gloves?'

'Yes, I have,' said Phoebe, 'but what then? What have my Limerick gloves to do with the ball?'

'A great deal,' replied Jenny. 'Don't you know, that a pair of Limerick gloves is, as one may say, a ticket to this ball? for every lady that has been asked has had a pair sent to her along with the card; and I believe as many as twenty, besides myself, have been asked this morning.'

Jenny then produced her new pair of Limerick gloves; and as she tried them on, and showed how well they fitted, she counted up the names of the ladies who, to her knowledge, were to be at this ball. When she had finished the catalogue, she expatiated upon the grand preparations which it was said the widow O'Neill, Mr O'Neill's mother, was making for the supper; and concluded by condoling with Mrs Hill for her misfortune in not having been

invited. Jenny took her leave, to get her dress in readiness: 'for,' added she, 'Mr O'Neill has engaged me to open the ball, in case Phoebe does not go: but I suppose she will cheer up and go, as she had a pair of Limerick gloves as well as the rest of us.'

There was a silence for some minutes after Jenny's departure, which was broken by Phoebe, who told her mother that, early in the morning, a note had been brought to her, which she had returned unopened; because she knew, from the hand-writing of the direction, that it came from Mr O'Neill.

We must observe that Phoebe had already told her mother of her meeting with this gentleman at the poor widow's, and of all that had passed between them afterwards. This openness, on her part, had softened the heart of Mrs Hill; who was really inclined to be good-natured, provided people would allow that she had more penetration than any one else in Hereford. She was moreover a good deal piqued and alarmed by the idea that the perfumer's daughter might rival and outshine her own. Whilst she had thought herself sure of Mr O'Neill's attachment to Phoebe, she had looked higher; especially as she was persuaded, by the perfumer's lady, to think that an Irishman could not be a bad match: but now she began to suspect that the perfumer's lady had changed her opinion of Irishmen, since she did not object to her own Jenny's leading up the ball at Mr O'Neill's.

All these thoughts passed rapidly in the mother's mind; and, with her fear of losing an admirer for her Phoebe, the value of that admirer suddenly rose in her estimation. Thus, at an auction, if a lot is going to be knocked down to a lady, who is the only person that has bid for it, even she feels discontented, and despises that which nobody covets; but if, as the hammer is falling, many voices answer to the question, 'Who bids more?' then her anxiety to secure the prize suddenly rises; and, rather than be outbid, she will give far beyond its value.

'Why, child,' said Mrs Hill, 'since you have a pair of Limerick gloves; and since certainly that note was an invitation to us to this ball; and since it is much more fitting that you should open the ball than Jenny Brown; and since, after all, it was very handsome and genteel of the young man to say he would take you without a farthing in your pocket, which shows that those were misinformed who talked of him as an Irish adventurer; and since we are not certain 'twas he made away with the dog, although he said its

barking was a great nuisance; there is no great reason to suppose he was the person who made the hole under the foundation of the cathedral, or that he could have such a wicked thought as to blow it up; and since he must be in a very good way of business to be able to afford giving away four or five guineas' worth of Limerick gloves, and balls and suppers; and since, after all, it is no fault of his to be an Irishman; I give it as my vote and opinion, my dear, that you put on your Limerick gloves and go to this ball; and I'll go and speak to your father, and bring him round to our opinion; and then I'll pay the morning visit I owe to the widow O'Neill, and make up your quarrel with Brian. Love quarrels are easy to make up, you know; and then we shall have things all upon velvet again; and Jenny Brown need not come with her hypocritical condoling face to us any more.'

After running this speech glibly off, Mrs Hill, without waiting to hear a syllable from poor Phoebe, trotted off in search of her consort. It was not, however, quite so easy a task as his wife expected to bring Mr Hill round to her opinion. He was slow in declaring himself of any opinion; but, when once he had said a thing, there was but little chance of altering his notions. On this occasion, Mr Hill was doubly bound to his prejudice against our unlucky Irishman; for he had mentioned with great solemnity at the club which he frequented, the grand affair of the hole under the foundation of the cathedral; and his suspicions that there was a design to blow it up. Several of the club had laughed at this idea; others, who supposed that Mr O'Neill was a Roman Catholic, and who had a confused notion that a Roman Catholic *must* be a very wicked, dangerous being, thought that there might be a great deal in the verger's suggestions; and observed that a very watchful eye ought to be kept upon this Irish glover, who had come to settle at Hereford nobody knew why, and who seemed to have money at command nobody knew how.

The news of this ball sounded to Mr Hill's prejudiced imagination like the news of a conspiracy. Ay! ay! thought he; the Irishman is cunning enough! But we shall be too many for him: he wants to throw all the good sober folks of Hereford off their guard, by feasting, and dancing, and carousing, I take it; and so to perpetrate his evil designs when it is least suspected; but we shall be prepared for him, fools as he takes us plain Englishmen to be, I warrant.

In consequence of these most shrewd cogitations, our verger silenced his wife with a peremptory nod, when she came to

persuade him to let Phoebe put on the Limerick gloves, and go to the ball. 'To this ball she shall not go; and I charge her not to put on those Limerick gloves, as she values my blessing,' said Mr Hill. 'Please to tell her so, Mrs Hill, and trust to my judgement and discretion in all things, Mrs Hill. Strange work may be in Hereford yet: but I'll say no more; I must go and consult with knowing men, who are of my opinion.'

He sallied forth, and Mrs Hill was left in a state which only those who are troubled with the disease of excessive curiosity can rightly comprehend or compassionate. She hid her back to Phoebe, to whom she announced her father's answer; and then went gossiping to all her female acquaintance in Hereford, to tell them all that she knew, and all that she did not know; and to endeavour to find out a secret where there was none to be found.

There are trials of temper in all conditions: and no lady, in high or low life, could endure them with a better grace than Phoebe. Whilst Mr and Mrs Hill were busied abroad, there came to see Phoebe one of the widow Smith's children. With artless expressions of gratitude to Phoebe, this little girl mixed the praises of O'Neill, who, she said, had been the constant friend of her mother, and had given her money every week since the fire happened. 'Mammy loves him dearly, for being so good-natured,' continued the child: 'and he has been good to other people as well as to us.'

'To whom?' said Phoebe.

'To a poor man who has lodged for these few days past next door to us,' replied the child; 'I don't know his name rightly, but he is an Irishman; and he goes out a-haymaking in the daytime, along with a number of others. He knew Mr O'Neill in his own country, and he told mammy a great deal about his goodness.'

As the child finished these words, Phoebe took out of a drawer some clothes, which she had made for the poor woman's children, and gave them to the little girl. It happened that the Limerick gloves had been thrown into this drawer; and Phoebe's favourable sentiments of the giver of those gloves were revived by what she had just heard, and by the confession Mrs Hill had made, that she had no reasons, and but vague suspicions, for thinking ill of him. She laid the gloves perfectly smooth, and strewed over them, whilst the little girl went on talking of Mr O'Neill, the leaves of a rose which she had worn on Sunday.

Mr Hill was all this time in deep conference with those prudent

men of Hereford, who were of his own opinion, about the perilous hole under the cathedral. The ominous circumstance of this ball was also considered, the great expense at which the Irish glover lived, and his giving away gloves; which was a sure sign he was not under any necessity to sell them; and consequently a proof that, though he pretended to be a glover, he was something wrong in disguise. Upon putting all these things together, it was resolved, by these over-wise politicians, that the best thing that could be done for Hereford, and the only possible means of preventing the immediate destruction of its cathedral, would be to take Mr O'Neill into custody. Upon recollection, however, it was perceived that there was no legal ground on which he could be attacked. At length, after consulting an attorney, they devised what they thought an admirable mode of proceeding.

Our Irish hero had not that punctuality which English tradesmen usually observe in the payment of bills: he had, the preceding year, run up a long bill with a grocer in Hereford; and, as he had not at Christmas cash in hand to pay it, he had given a note, payable six months after date. The grocer, at Mr Hill's request, made over the note to him; and it was determined that the money should be demanded, as it was now due, and that, if it was not paid directly, O'Neill should be that night arrested. How Mr Hill made the discovery of this debt to the grocer agree with his former notion that the Irish glover had always money at command, we cannot well conceive; but anger and prejudice will swallow down the grossest contradictions without difficulty.

When Mr Hill's clerk went to demand payment of the note, O'Neill's head was full of the ball which he was to give that evening. He was much surprised at the unexpected appearance of the note: he had not ready money by him to pay it; and, after swearing a good deal at the clerk, and complaining of this ungenerous and ungentleman-like behaviour in the grocer and the tanner, he told the clerk to be gone, and not to be bothering him at such an unseasonable time; that he could not have the money then, and did not deserve to have it at all.

This language and conduct were rather new to the English clerk's mercantile ears: we cannot wonder that it should seem to him, as he said to his master, more the language of a madman than a man of business. This want of punctuality in money transactions, and this mode of treating contracts as matters of favour and affection, might

not have dammed the fame of our hero in his own country, where such conduct is, alas! too common; but he was now in a kingdom where the manners and customs are so directly opposite, that he could meet with no allowance for his national faults. It would be well for his countrymen if they were made, even by a few mortifications, somewhat sensible of this important difference in the habits of Irish and English traders, before they come to settle in England.

But, to proceed with our story. On the night of Mr O'Neill's grand ball, as he was seeing his fair partner, the perfumer's daughter, safe home, he felt himself tapped on the shoulder by no friendly hand. When he was told that he was the king's prisoner, he vociferated with sundry strange oaths, which we forbear to repeat, 'No, I am not the king's prisoner! I am the prisoner of that shabby rascally tanner, Jonathan Hill. None but he would arrest a gentleman, in this way, for a trifle not worth mentioning.'

Miss Jenny Brown screamed when she found herself under the protection of a man who was arrested; and, what between her screams and his oaths, there was such a disturbance that a mob gathered.

Among this mob there was a party of Irish haymakers, who, after returning late from a hard day's work, had been drinking in a neighbouring ale-house. With one accord they took part with their countryman, and would have rescued him from the civil officers with all the pleasure in life, if he had not fortunately possessed just sufficient sense and command of himself, to restrain their party spirit, and to forbid them, as they valued his life and reputation, to interfere, by word or deed, in his defence.

He then dispatched one of the haymakers home to his mother, to inform her of what had happened; and to request that she would get somebody to be bail for him as soon as possible, as the officers said they could not let him out of their sight till he was bailed by substantial people, or till the debt was discharged.

The widow O'Neill was just putting out the candles in the ball-room when this news of her son's arrest was brought to her. We pass over Hibernian exclamations: she consoled her pride by reflecting that it would certainly be the most easy thing imaginable to procure bail for Mr O'Neill in Hereford, where he had so many friends who had just been dancing at his house, but to dance at his house she found was one thing, and to be bail for him quite

another. Each guest sent excuses; and the widow O'Neill was astonished at what never fails to astonish every body when it happens to themselves. 'Rather than let my son be detained in this manner for a paltry debt,' cried she, 'I'd sell all I have within half an hour to a pawnbroker.' It was well no pawnbroker heard this declaration: she was too warm to consider economy. She sent for a pawnbroker, who lived in the same street, and, after pledging goods to treble the amount of the debt, she obtained ready money for her son's release.

O'Neill, after being in custody for about an hour and a half, was set at liberty upon the payment of his debt. As he passed by the cathedral in his way home, he heard the clock strike; and he called to a man, who was walking backwards and forwards in the churchyard, to ask whether it was two or three that the clock struck. 'Three,' answered the man; 'and, as yet, all is safe.'

O'Neill, whose head was full of other things, did not stop to inquire the meaning of these last words. He little suspected that this man was a watchman, whom the over-vigilant verger had stationed there to guard the Hereford cathedral from his attacks. O'Neill little guessed that he had been arrested merely to keep him from blowing up the cathedral this night. The arrest had an excellent effect upon his mind, for he was a young man of good sense: it made him resolve to retrench his expenses in time, to live more like a glover and less like a gentleman; and to aim more at establishing credit, and less at gaining popularity. He found, from experience, that good friends will not pay bad debts.

11

On Thursday morning, our verger rose in unusually good spirits, congratulating himself upon the eminent service he had done to the city of Hereford, by his sagacity in discovering the foreign plot to blow up the cathedral, and by his dexterity in having the enemy held in custody, at the very hour when the dreadful deed was to have been perpetrated. Mr Hill's knowing friends farther agreed it would be necessary to have a guard that should sit up every night in the churchyard; and that as soon as they could, by constantly watching the enemy's motions, procure any information which the attorney should deem sufficient grounds for a legal proceeding, they should lay the whole business before the mayor.

After arranging all this most judiciously and mysteriously with friends who were exactly of his own opinion, Mr Hill laid aside his dignity of verger; and assuming his other character of a tanner proceeded to his tan-yard. What was his surprise and consternation, when he beheld his great rick of oak bark levelled to the ground; the pieces of bark were scattered far and wide, some over the close, some over the fields, and some were seen swimming upon the water! No tongue, no pen, no muse can describe the feelings of our tanner at this spectacle! feelings which became the more violent from the absolute silence which he imposed on himself upon this occasion. He instantly decided in his own mind, that this injury was perpetrated by O'Neill, in revenge for his arrest; and went privately to the attorney to inquire what was to be done, on his part, to secure legal vengeance.

The attorney unluckily, or at least as Mr Hill thought, unluckily, had been sent for, half an hour before, by a gentleman at some distance from Hereford, to draw up a will; so that our tanner was obliged to postpone his legal operations.

We forbear to recount his return, and how many times he walked up and down the close to view his scattered bark, and to estimate the damage that had been done to him. At length that hour came which usually suspends all passions by the more imperious power of appetite—the hour of dinner; an hour of which it was never needful to remind Mr Hill by watch, clock, or dial; for he was blessed with a punctual appetite, and powerful as punctual: so powerful, indeed, that it often excited the spleen of his more genteel, or less hungry wife—'Bless my stars, Mr Hill,' she would oftentimes say, 'I am really downright ashamed to see you eat so much; and when company is to dine with us, I do wish you would take a snack by way of a damper before dinner, that you may not look so prodigious famishing and ungenteel.'

Upon this hint, Mr Hill commenced a practice, to which he ever afterwards religiously adhered, of going, whether there was to be company or no company, into the kitchen regularly every day, half an hour before dinner, to take a slice from the roast or the boiled before it went up to table. As he was this day, according to his custom, in the kitchen, taking his snack by way of a damper, he heard the housemaid and the cook talking about some wonderful fortune-teller, whom the housemaid had been consulting. This fortune-teller was no less a personage than the successor to

Bampfyld Moore Carew, king of the gipsies, whose life and adventures are probably in many, too many, of our readers' hands. Bampfyld, the second king of the gipsies, assumed this title, in hopes of becoming as famous, or as infamous, as his predecessor: he was now holding his court in a wood near the town of Hereford, and numbers of servants and 'prentices went to consult him—nay, it was whispered that he was resorted to, secretly, by some whose education might have taught them better sense.

Nevertheless were the instances which our verger heard in his kitchen of the supernatural skill of this cunning man; and whilst Mr Hill ate his snack with his wonted gravity, he revolved great designs in his secret soul. Mrs Hill was surprised, several times during dinner, to see her consort put down his knife and fork, and meditate. 'Gracious me, Mr Hill, what can have happened to you this day? What can you be thinking of, Mr Hill, that can make you forget what you have upon your plate?'

'Mrs Hill,' replied the thoughtful verger, 'our grandmother Eve had too much curiosity; and we all know it did not lead to good. What I am thinking of will be known to you in due time, but not now, Mrs Hill; therefore, pray, no questions, or teasing, or pumping. What I think, I think; what I say, I say; what I know, I know; and that is enough for you to know at present: only this, Phoebe, you did very well not to put on the Limerick gloves, child. What I know, I know. Things will turn out just as I said from the first. What I say, I say; and what I think, I think; and this is enough for you to know at present.'

Having finished dinner with this solemn speech, Mr Hill settled himself in his arm-chair, to take his after-dinner nap: and he dreamed of blowing up cathedrals, and of oak bark floating upon the waters; and the cathedral was, he thought, blown up by a man dressed in a pair of woman's Limerick gloves, and the oak bark turned into mutton steaks, after which his great dog Jowler was swimming; when, all on a sudden, as he was going to beat Jowler for eating the bark transformed into mutton steaks, Jowler became Bampfyld the second, king of the gipsies; and putting a horsewhip with a silver handle into Hill's hand, commanded him three times, in a voice as loud as the town crier's, to have O'Neill whipped through the market-place of Hereford: but, just as he was going to the window to see this whipping, his wig fell off, and he awoke. It was difficult, even for Mr Hill's sagacity, to make a sense of

this dream: but he had the wise art of always finding in his dreams something that confirmed his waking determinations. Before he went to sleep, he had half resolved to consult the king of the gipsies, in the absence of the attorney; and his dream made him now wholly determined upon this prudent step. From Bampfyld the second, thought he, I shall learn for certain who made the hole under the cathedral, who pulled down my rick of bark, and who made away with my dog Jowler; and then I shall swear examinations against O'Neill without waiting for attorneys. I will follow my own way in this business: I have always found my own way best.

So, when the dusk of the evening increased, our wise man set out towards the wood to consult the cunning man. Bampfyld the second, king of the gipsies, resided in a sort of hut made of the branches of trees: the verger stooped, but did not stoop low enough, as he entered this temporary palace; and, whilst his body was almost bent double, his peruke was caught upon a twig. From this awkward situation he was relieved by the consort of the king; and he now beheld, by the light of some embers, the person of his gipsy majesty, to whose sublime appearance this dim light was so favourable that it struck a secret awe into our wise man's soul; and, forgetting Hereford cathedral, and oak bark, and Limerick gloves, he stood for some seconds speechless. During this time, the queen very dexterously disencumbered his pocket of all superfluous articles. When he recovered his recollection, he put with great solemnity the following queries to the king of the gipsies, and received the following answers:

'Do you know a dangerous Irishman, of the name of O'Neill, who has come, for purposes best known to himself, to settle at Hereford?'

'Yes, we know him well.'

'Indeed! And what do you know of him?'

'That he is a dangerous Irishman.'

'Right! And it was he, was it not, that pulled down, or caused to be pulled down, my rick of oak bark?'

'It was.'

'And who was it that made away with my dog Jowler, that used to guard the tan-yard?'

'It was the person that you suspect.'

'And was it the person whom I suspect that made the hole under the foundation of our cathedral?'

'The same, and no other.'

'And for what purpose did he make that hole?'

'For a purpose that must not be named,' replied the king of the gipsies; nodding his head in a mysterious manner.

'But it may be named to me,' cried the verger, 'for I have found it out, and I am one of the vergers; and is it not fit that a plot to blow up the Hereford cathedral should be known to me, and *through me*?'

'Now, take my word,

Wise men of Hereford,

None in safety may be,

Till the *bad man* doth flee.'

These oracular verses, pronounced by Bampfyld with all the enthusiasm of one who was inspired, had the desired effect upon our wise man; and he left the presence of the king of the gipsies with a prodigiously high opinion of his majesty's judgement and of his own, fully resolved to impart, the next morning, to the mayor of Hereford, his important discoveries.

Now it happened that, during the time Mr Hill was putting the foregoing queries to Bampfyld the second, there came to the door or entrance of the audience chamber, an Irish haymaker, who wanted to consult the cunning man about a little leathern purse which he had lost, whilst he was making hay, in a field near Hereford. This haymaker was the same person who, as we have related, spoke so advantageously of our hero, O'Neill, to the widow Smith. As this man, whose name was Paddy M'Cormack, stood at the entrance of the gipsies' hut, his attention was caught by the name of O'Neill; and he lost not a word of all that passed. He had reason to be somewhat surprised at hearing Bampfyld assert it was O'Neill who had pulled down the rick of bark. 'By the holy poker,' said he to himself, 'the old fellow now is out there. I know more o' that matter than he does—no offence to his majesty: he knows no more of my purse, I'll engage now, than he does of this man's rick of bark and his dog: so I'll keep my tester in my pocket, and not be giving it to this king o' the gipsies, as they call him; who, as near as I can guess, is no better than a cheat. But there is one secret which I can be telling this conjuror himself, he shall not find it such an easy matter to do all what he thinks; he shall not be after ruining an innocent countryman of my own, whilst Paddy M'Cormack has a tongue and brains.'

Now Paddy M'Cormack had the best reason possible for

knowing that Mr O'Neill did not pull down Mr Hill's rick of bark; it was M'Cormack himself, who, in the heat of his resentment for the insulting arrest of his countryman in the streets of Hereford, had instigated his fellow haymakers to this mischief; he headed them, and thought he was doing a clever, spirited action.

There is a strange mixture of virtue and vice in the minds of the lower class of Irish; or rather a strange confusion in their ideas of right and wrong, from want of proper education. As soon as poor Paddy found out that his spirited action of pulling down the rick of bark was likely to be the ruin of his countryman, he resolved to make all the amends in his power for his folly: he went to collect his fellow haymakers and persuaded them to assist him this night in rebuilding what they had pulled down.

They went to this work when every body except themselves, as they thought, was asleep in Hereford. They had just completed the stack, and were all going away except Paddy, who was seated at the very top, finishing the pile, when they heard a loud voice cry out, 'Here they are, Watch! Watch!'

Immediately, all the haymakers, who could, ran off as fast as possible. It was the watch who had been sitting up at the cathedral who gave the alarm. Paddy was taken from the top of the rick, and lodged in the watchhouse till morning. 'Since I'm to be rewarded this way for doing a good action, sorrow take me,' said he, 'if they catch me doing another the longest day ever I live.'

Happy they who have in their neighbourhood such a magistrate as Mr Marshal! He was a man who, to an exact knowledge of the duties of his office, joined the power of discovering truth from the midst of contradictory evidence; and the happy art of soothing, or laughing, the angry passions into good-humour. It was a common saying in Hereford—that no one ever came out of Justice Marshal's house as angry as he went into it.

Mr Marshal had scarcely breakfasted when he was informed that Mr Hill, the verger, wanted to speak to him on business of the utmost importance. Mr Hill, the verger, was ushered in; and, with gloomy solemnity, took a seat opposite to Mr Marshal.

'Sad doings in Hereford, Mr Marshal! Sad doings, sir.'

'Sad doings? Why, I was told we had merry doings in Hereford. A ball the night before last, as I heard.'

'So much the worse, Mr Marshal; so much the worse; as those think with reason that see as far into things as I do.'

'So much the better, Mr Hill,' said Mr Marshal, laughing; 'so much the better; as those think with reason that see no farther into things than I do.'

'But, sir,' said the verger, still more solemnly, 'this is no laughing matter, nor time for laughing; begging your pardon. Why, sir, the night of that there diabolical ball, our Hereford cathedral, sir, would have been blown up—blown up from the foundation, if it had not been for me, sir!'

'Indeed, Mr Verger! And pray how, and by whom, was the cathedral to be blown up? and what was there diabolical in this ball?'

Here Mr Hill let Mr Marshal into the whole history of his early dislike to O'Neill, and his shrewd suspicions of him the first moment he saw him in Hereford; related in the most prolix manner all that the reader knows already, and concluded by saying that, as he was now certain of his facts, he was come to swear examinations against this villainous Irishman, who, he hoped, would be speedily brought to justice, as he deserved.

'To justice he shall be brought, as he deserves,' said Mr Marshal; 'but, before I write, and before you swear, will you have the goodness to inform me how you have made yourself as certain, as you evidently are, of what you call your facts?'

'Sir, that is a secret,' replied our wise man, 'which I shall trust to you alone; and he whispered into Mr Marshal's ear that his information came from Bampfyld the second, king of the gipsies.

Mr Marshal instantly burst into laughter; then composing himself said, 'My good sir, I am really glad that you have proceeded no farther in this business; and that no one in Hereford, beside myself, knows that you were on the point of swearing examinations against a man on the evidence of Bampfyld the second, king of the gipsies. My dear sir, it would be a standing joke against you to the end of your days. A grave man, like Mr Hill, and a verger too! Why, you would be the laughing-stock of Hereford!'

Now Mr Marshal well knew the character of the man to whom he was talking, who, above all things on earth, dreaded to be laughed at. Mr Hill coloured all over his face, and, pushing back his wig by way of settling it, showed that he blushed not only all over his face but all over his head.

'Why, Mr Marshal, sir,' said he, 'as to my being laughed at, it is what I did not look for, being as there are some men in Hereford to

whom I have mentioned that hole in the cathedral, who have thought it no laughing matter, and who have been precisely of my own opinion thereupon.'

'But did you tell these gentlemen that you had been consulting the king of the gipsies?'

'No, sir, no: I can't say that I did.'

'Then I advise you, keep your own counsel, as I will.'

Mr Hill, whose imagination wavered between the hole in the cathedral and his rick of bark on one side, and between his rick of bark and his dog Jowler on the other, now began to talk of the dog, and now of the rick of bark; and when he had exhausted all he had to say upon these subjects, Mr Marshal gently pulled him towards the window, and putting a spy-glass into his hand, bid him look towards his own tan-yard, and tell him what he saw. To his great surprise, Mr Hill saw his rick of bark rebuilt. 'Why, it was not there last night,' exclaimed he, rubbing his eyes. 'Why, some conjuror must have done this.'

'No,' replied Mr Marshal, 'no conjuror did it: but your friend Bampfyld the second, king of the gipsies, was the cause of its being rebuilt; and here is the man who actually pulled it down, and who actually rebuilt it.'

As he said these words, Mr Marshal opened the door of an adjoining room, and beckoned to the Irish haymaker, who had been taken into custody about an hour before this time. The watch who took Paddy had called at Mr Hill's house to tell him what had happened, but Mr Hill was not then at home.

It was with much surprise that the verger heard the simple truth from this poor fellow; but no sooner was he convinced that O'Neill was innocent as to this affair, than he returned to his other ground of suspicion, the loss of his dog.

The Irish haymaker now stepped forward, and, with a peculiar twist of the hips and shoulders, which those only who have seen it can picture to themselves, said, 'Please your honour's honour, I have a little word to say too about the dog.'

'Say it then,' said Mr Marshal.

'Please your honour, if I might expect to be forgiven, and let off for pulling down the jontleman's stack, I might be able to tell him what I know about the dog.'

'If you can tell me any thing about my dog,' said the tanner, 'I will freely forgive you for pulling down the rick: especially as you

have built it up again. Speak the truth now: did not O'Neill make away with the dog?'

'Not at all at all, plase your honour,' replied the haymaker: 'and the truth of the matter is, I know nothing of the dog, good or bad; but I know something of his collar, if your name, plase your honour, is Hill, as I take it to be?'

'My name is Hill: proceed,' said the tanner, with great eagerness.

'You know something about the collar of my dog Jowler?'

'Plase your honour, this much I know any way, that it is now or was the night before last, at the pawnbroker's there, below in town; for, plase your honour, I was sent late at night (that night that Mr O'Neill, long life to him! was arrested) to the pawnbroker's for a Jew, by Mrs O'Neill, poor creature! she was in great trouble that same time.'

'Very likely,' interrupted Mr Hill: 'but go on to the collar; what of the collar?'

'She sent me,—I'll tell you the story, plase your honour, *out of the face*—she sent me to the pawnbroker's for the Jew; and, it being so late at night, the shop was shut, and it was with all the trouble in life that I got into the house any way: and, when I got in, there was none but a slip of a boy up; and he set down the light that he had in his hand, and ran up the stairs to waken his master: and, whilst he was gone, I just made bold to look round at what sort of a place I was in, and at the old clothes and rags and scraps; there was a sort of a frieze trusty.'

'A trusty!' said Mr Hill; 'what is that pray?'

'A big coat, sure, plase your honour: there was a frieze big coat lying in a corner, which I had my eye upon, to trate myself to; I having, as I then thought, money in my little purse enough for it. Well, I won't trouble your honour's honour with telling of you now how I lost my purse in the field, as I found after; but about the big coat, as I was saying, I just lifted it off the ground, to see would it fit me; and, as I swung it round, something, plase your honour, hit me a great knock on the shins: it was in the pocket of the coat, whatever it was, I knew; so I looks into the pocket, to see what it was, plase your honour, and out I pulls a hammer and a dog-collar; it was a wonder, both together, they did not break my shins entirely: but it's no matter for my shins now: so, before the boy came down, I just out of idleness spelt out to myself the name that was upon the collar: there were two names, plase your honour; and

out of the first there were so many letters hammered out I could make nothing of it, at all at all; but the other name was plain enough to read any way, and it was Hill, plase your honour's honour, as sure as life: Hill, now.'

This story was related in tones and gestures which were so new and strange to English ears and eyes, that even the solemnity of our verger gave way to laughter—Mr Marshal sent a summons for the pawnbroker, that he might learn from him how he came by the dog-collar. The pawnbroker, when he found from Mr Marshal that he could by no other means save himself from being committed to prison, confessed that the collar had been sold to him by Bampfyld the second, king of the gipsies.

A warrant was immediately despatched for his majesty: and Mr Hill was a good deal alarmed, by the fear of its being known in Hereford that he was on the point of swearing examinations against an innocent man, upon the evidence of a dog-stealer and a gipsy.

Bampfyld the second made no sublime appearance, when he was brought before Mr Marshal; nor could all his astrology avail upon this occasion: the evidence of the pawnbroker was so positive, as to the fact of his having sold to him the dog-collar, that there was no resource left for Bampfyld but an appeal to Mr Hill's mercy. He fell on his knees, and confessed that it was he who stole the dog; which used to bark at him at night so furiously that he could not commit certain petty depredations, by which, as much as by telling fortunes, he made his livelihood.

'And so,' said Mr Marshal, with a sternness of manner which till now he had never shown, 'to screen yourself, you accused an innocent man; and by your vile arts would have driven him from Hereford, and have set two families for ever at variance, to conceal that you had stolen a dog.'

The king of the gipsies was, without farther ceremony, committed to the house of correction. We should not omit to mention, that, on searching his hut, the Irish haymaker's purse was found, which some of his majesty's train had emptied. The whole set of gipsies decamped, upon the news of the apprehension of their monarch.

Mr Hill stood in profound silence, leaning upon his walking-stick, whilst the committal was making out for Bampfyld the second. The fear of ridicule was struggling with the natural positiveness of his temper: he was dreadfully afraid that the story of

his being taken in by the king of the gipsies would get abroad; and, at the same time, he was unwilling to give up his prejudice against the Irish glover.

'But, Mr Marshal,' cried he, after a long silence, 'the hole under the foundation of the cathedral has never been accounted for: that is, was, and ever will be, an ugly mystery to me; and I never can have a good opinion of this Irishman, till it is cleared up; nor can I think the cathedral in safety.'

'What,' said Mr Marshal, with an arch smile, 'I suppose the verses of the oracle still work upon your imagination, Mr Hill. They are excellent in their kind. I must have them by heart that, when I am asked the reason why Mr Hill has taken an aversion to an Irish glover, I may be able to repeat them:

"Now, take my word,
Wise men of Hereford,
None in safety may be,
Till the bad man doth flee"'

'You'll oblige me, sir,' said the verger, 'if you would never repeat those verses, sir; nor mention, in any company, the affair of the king of the gipsies.'

'I will oblige you,' replied Mr Marshal, 'if you will oblige me. Will you tell me honestly whether now that you find this Mr O'Neill is neither a dog-killer nor a puller down of bark ricks, you feel that you could forgive him for being an Irishman, if the mystery, as you call it, of the hole under the cathedral was cleared up?'

'But that is not cleared up, I say, sir,' cried Mr Hill, striking his walking-stick forcibly upon the ground, with both his hands. 'As to the matter of his being an Irishman, I have nothing to say to it: I am not saying any thing about that, for I know we all are born where it pleases God; and an Irishman may be as good as another. I know that much, Mr Marshal; and I am not one of those illiberal-minded ignorant people that cannot abide a man that was not born in England. Ireland is now in his majesty's dominions, I know very well, Mr Marshal; and I have no manner of doubt, as I said before, that an Irishman born may be as good, almost, as an Englishman born.'

'I am glad,' said Mr Marshal, 'to hear you speak, almost, as

reasonably as an Englishman born and every man ought to speak; and I am convinced that you have too much English hospitality to persecute an inoffensive stranger, who comes amongst us trusting to our justice and good nature.

'I would not persecute a stranger, God forbid!' replied the verger, 'if he was, as you say, inoffensive.'

'And if he was not only inoffensive, but ready to do every service in his power to those who are in want of his assistance, we should not return evil for good, should we?'

'That would be uncharitable, to be sure; and moreover a scandal,' said the verger.

'Then,' said Mr Marshal, 'will you walk with me as far as the widow Smith's, the poor woman whose house was burnt last winter! This haymaker, who lodged near her, can show us the way to her present abode.'

During his examination of Paddy Mc'Connell, who would tell his whole history, as he called it, *out of the face*, Mr Marshal heard several instances of the humanity and goodness of O'Neill, which Paddy related to excuse himself for that warmth of attachment to his cause, that had been manifested so injudiciously by pulling down the rick of bark in revenge for the arrest. Amongst other things, Paddy mentioned his countryman's goodness to the widow Smith: Mr Marshal was determined, therefore, to see whether he had, in this instance, spoken the truth; and he took Mr Hill with him, in hopes of being able to show him the favourable side of O'Neill's character.

Things turned out just as Mr Marshal expected. The poor widow and her family, in the most simple and affecting manner, described the distress from which they had been relieved by the good gentleman and lady, the lady was Phoebe Hill; and the praises that were bestowed upon Phoebe were delightful to her father's ear, whose angry passions had now all subsided.

The benevolent Mr Marshal seized the moment when he saw Mr Hill's heart was touched, and exclaimed, 'I must be acquainted with this Mr O'Neill. I am sure we people of Hereford ought to show some hospitality to a stranger, who has so much humanity. Mr Hill, will you dine with him tomorrow at my house?'

Mr Hill was just going to accept of this invitation, when the recollection of all he had said to his club about the hole under the cathedral came across him; and, drawing Mr Marshal aside, he

whispered, 'But sir, sir, that affair of the hole under the cathedral has not been cleared up yet.'

At this instant, the widow Smith exclaimed, 'Oh! here comes my little Mary' (one of her children, who came running in): 'this is the little girl, sir, to whom the lady has been so good. Make your little curtsy, child. Where have you been all this while?'

'Mamma,' said the child, 'I've been showing the lady my rat.'

'Lord bless her! Gentlemen, the child has been wanting me this many a day to go to see this tame rat of hers; but I could never get time, never: and I wondered too at the child's liking such a creature. Tell the gentlemen, dear, about your rat. All I know is, that, let her have but never such a tiny bit of bread, for breakfast or supper, she saves a little of that little for this rat of hers: she and her brothers have found it out somewhere by the cathedral.'

'It comes out of a hole under the wall of the cathedral,' said one of the elder boys; 'and we have diverted ourselves watching it, and sometimes we have put victuals for it, so it has grown, in a manner, tame like.'

Mr Hill and Mr Marshal looked at one another during this speech; and the dread of ridicule again seized on Mr Hill, when he apprehended that, after all he had said, the mountain might, at last, bring forth—a rat. Mr Marshal, who instantly saw what passed in the verger's mind, relieved him from this fear, by refraining even from a smile on this occasion. He only said to the child, in a grave manner, 'I am afraid, my dear, we shall be obliged to spoil your diversion. Mr Verger, here, cannot suffer rat-holes in the cathedral; but, to make you amends for the loss of your favourite, I will give you a very pretty little dog, if you have a mind.'

The child was well pleased with this promise; and, at Mr Marshal's desire, she then went along with him and Mr Hill to the cathedral, and they placed themselves at a little distance from that hole which had created so much disturbance. The child soon brought the dreadful enemy to light; and Mr Hill, with a faint laugh, said, 'I'm glad it's no worse: but there were many in our club who were of my opinion; and, if they had not suspected O'Neill too, I am sure I should never have given you so much trouble, sir, as I have done this morning. But, I hope, as the club know nothing about the vagabond, that king of the gipsies, you will not let any one know any thing about the prophecy, and all that? I am sure, I am very sorry to have given you so much trouble, Mr Marshal.'

Mr Marshal assured him that he did not regret the time which he had spent in endeavouring to clear up all these mysteries and suspicions; and Mr Hill gladly accepted his invitation to meet O'Neill at his house the next day. No sooner had Mr Marshal brought one of the parties to reason and good-humour, than he went to prepare the other for a reconciliation. O'Neill and his mother were both people of warm but forgiving tempers: the arrest was fresh in their minds; but when Mr Marshal represented to them the whole affair, and the verger's prejudices, in a humorous light, they joined in the good-natured laugh, and O'Neill declared that, for his part, he was ready to forgive and to forget every thing, if he could but see Miss Phoebe in the Limerick gloves.

Phoebe appeared the next day, at Mr Marshal's, in the Limerick gloves; and no perfume ever was so delightful to her lover as the smell of the rose leaves, in which they had been kept.

Mr Marshal had the benevolent pleasure of reconciling the two families. The tanner and the glover of Hereford became, from bitter enemies, useful friends to each other; and they were convinced, by experience, that nothing could be more for their mutual advantage than to live in union.

George Moore (1852-1933)

George Moore was born at Moore Hall, County Mayo, in 1852. His family were Catholic landowners, and he was educated at Oscott, a Roman Catholic boarding school in England. He first wanted to paint, and after inheriting his father's estate he left for Paris in 1873. He soon abandoned his dreams of a career as a professional artist and turned to literature. During the next twenty-five years, dividing his time between Paris and London, he gradually acquired a reputation as one of the major English writers of his time. Among his books during these years are *A Drama in Muslim* (1886), *Confessions of a Young Man* (1888), *Impressions and Opinions* (1891), *Modern Painting* (1893), and the famous novel *Esther Waters* (1894). It came as a surprise, therefore, to many of his contemporaries when he left the sophisticated world of literature and art on the Continent, and returned to Ireland to take an active role in the *Literary Revival*. In 1898 he helped W. B. Yeats, Edward Martyn, and Lady Gregory found the Irish Literary Theatre, the forerunner of the Abbey, and in 1901 he moved to Dublin, remaining there nine years. During this period Moore brought to the Revival a familiarity with European literature and art and a lively, ironic temperament. He also brought a mind that tended to change suddenly, and absolutely, from one enthusiasm to another, and he could never reconcile his love of Ireland, especially its pagan past, with his hate of Ireland's religious superstition and social convention. Finally, considering himself as a sort of failed and rebuffed cultural messiah, he left Ireland and settled in London. He did contribute several major works to modern Irish literature, however, beginning with the seminal collection of short stories *The Untilled Field*, published in English in 1903. Several of these stories

had appeared in an Irish translation in 1902. "Home Sickness" from The Unlilled Field was Frank O'Connor's favorite story by Moore. Moore later wrote a collection of historical and legendary stories. A Story-Teller's Holiday (1918); but his best books are his novel The Lake (1905) and his masterpiece, the three-volume autobiography Hail and Farewell (1911-1914), an eccentric, biased, and fully entertaining account of the Literary Revival.

Home Sickness

He told the doctor he was due in the barroom at eight o'clock in the morning; the barroom was in a slum in the Bowery; and he had only been able to keep himself in health by getting up at five o'clock and going for long walks in the Central Park.

"A sea voyage is what you want," said the doctor. "Why not go to Ireland for two or three months? You will come back a new man."

"I'd like to see Ireland again."

And he began to wonder how the people at home were getting on. The doctor was right. He thanked him, and three weeks after he landed in Cork.

As he sat in the railway carriage he recalled his native village, built among the rocks of the large headland stretching out into the winding lake. He could see the houses and the streets, and the fields of the tenants, and the Georgian mansion and the owners of it; he and they had been boys together before he went to America. He remembered the villagers going every morning to the big house to work in the stables, in the garden, in the fields—mowing, reaping, digging, and Michael Malia building a wall; it was all as clear as if it were yesterday, yet he had been thirteen years in America; and when the train stopped

at the station the first thing he did was to look round for any changes that might have come into it. It was the same blue limestone station as it was thirteen years ago, with the same five long miles between it and Duncannon. He had once walked these miles gaily, in little over an hour, carrying a heavy bundle on a stick, but he did not feel strong enough for the walk today, though the evening tempted him to try it. A car was waiting at the station, and the boy, discerning from his accent and his dress that Bryden had come from America, plied him with questions, which Bryden answered rapidly, for he wanted to hear who were still living in the village, and if there was a house in which he could get a clean lodging. The best house in the village, he was told, was Mike Scully's, who had been away in a situation for many years, as a coachman in the King's County, but had come back and built a fine house with a concrete floor. The boy could recommend the loft, he had slept in it himself, and Mike would be glad to take in a lodger, he had no doubt. Bryden remembered that Mike had been in a situation at the big house. He had intended to be a jockey, but had suddenly shot up into a fine tall man, and had become a coachman instead; and Bryden tried to recall his face, but could only remember a straight nose and a somewhat dusky complexion.

So Mike had come back from King's County, and had built himself a house, had married—there were children for sure running about; while he, Bryden, had gone to America, but he had come back; perhaps he, too, would build a house in Duncannon, and—his reverie was suddenly interrupted by the carman.

"There's Mike Scully," he said, pointing with his whip, and Bryden saw a tall, finely built, middle-aged man coming through the gates, who looked astonished when he was accosted, for he had forgotten Bryden even more completely than Bryden had forgotten him; and many aunts and uncles were mentioned before he began to understand.

"You've grown into a fine man, James," he said, looking at Bryden's great width of chest. "But you're thin in the cheeks, and you're very fallow in the cheeks, too."

"I haven't been very well lately—that is one of the reasons I've come back; but I want to see you all again."

"And thousand welcome you are."

Bryden paid the carman, and wished him Godspeed. They divided the luggage, Mike carrying the bag and Bryden the bundle, and they walked round the lake, for the townland was at the back of the domain; and while walking he remembered the woods thick and well forested; now they were wind worn, the drains were choked, and the bridge leading across the lake inlet was falling away. Their way led between long fields where herds of cattle were grazing, the road was broken—Bryden wondered how the villagers drove their carts over it, and Mike told him that the landlord could not keep it in repair, and he would not allow it to be kept in repair out of the rates, for then it would be a public road, and he did not think there should be a public road through his property.

At the end of many fields they came to the village, and it looked a desolate place, even on this fine evening, and Bryden remarked that the county did not seem to be as much lived in as it used to be. It was at once strange and familiar to see the chickens in the kitchen; and, wishing to reknit himself to the old customs, he begged of Mrs. Scully not to drive them out, saying they reminded him of old times.

"And why wouldn't they?" Mike answered, "he being one of ourselves bred and born in Duncannon, and his father before him."

"Now, is it truth ye are telling me?" and she gave him her hand, after wiping it on her apron, saying he was heartily welcome, only she was afraid he wouldn't care to sleep in a loft.

"Why wouldn't I sleep in a loft, a dry loft! You're thinking a good deal of America over here," he said, "but I reckon it isn't all you think it. Here you work when you like and you sit

down when you like; but when you've had a touch of blood-poisoning as I had, and when you have seen young people walking with a stick, you think that there is something to be said for old Ireland."

"You'll take a sup of milk, won't you? You must be dry," said Mrs. Scully.

And when he had drunk the milk Mike asked him if he would like to go inside or if he would like to go for a walk.

"Maybe resting you'd like to be."

And they went into the cabin and started to talk about the wages a man could get in America, and the long hours of work.

And after Bryden had told Mike everything about America that he thought of interest, he asked Mike about Ireland. But Mike did not seem to be able to tell him much. They were all very poor—poorer, perhaps, than when he left them.

"I don't think anyone except myself has a five-pound note to his name."

Bryden hoped he felt sufficiently sorry for Mike. But after all Mike's life and prospects mattered little to him. He had come back in search of health, and he felt better already; the milk had done him good, and the bacon and the cabbage in the pot sent forth a savory odor. The Scullys were very kind, they pressed him to make a good meal; a few weeks of country air and food, they said, would give him back the health he had lost in the Bowerly; and when Bryden said he was longing for a smoke, Mike said there was no better sign than that. During his long illness he had never wanted to smoke, and he was a confirmed smoker.

It was comfortable to sit by the mild peat fire watching the smoke of their pipes drifting up the chimney, and all Bryden wanted was to be left alone; he did not want to hear of anyone's misfortunes, but about nine o'clock a number of villagers came in, and Bryden remembered one or two of them—he used to know them very well when he was a boy; their talk was as

depressing as their appearance, and he could feel no interest whatever in them. He was not moved when he heard that Higgins the stonemason was dead; he was not affected when he heard that Mary Kelly, who used to go to do the laundry at the Big House, had married; he was only interested when he heard she had gone to America. No, he had not met her there; America is a big place. Then one of the peasants asked him if he remembered Patsy Carabine, who used to do the gardening at the Big House. Yes, he remembered Patsy well. He had not been able to do any work on account of his arm; his house had fallen in; he had given up his holding and gone into the poor-house. All this was very sad, and to avoid hearing any further unpleasantness, Bryden began to tell them about America. And they sat round listening to him; but all the talking was on his side; he wearied of it; and looking round the group he recognized a ragged hunchback with grey hair; twenty years ago he was a young hunchback and, turning to him, Bryden asked him if he were doing well with his five acres.

"Ah, not much. This has been a poor season. The potatoes failed; they were watery—there is no diet in them."

These peasants were all agreed that they could make nothing out of their farms. Their regret was that they had not gone to America when they were young; and after striving to take an interest in the fact that O'Connor had lost a mare and a foal worth forty pounds, Bryden began to wish himself back in the slum. And when they left the house he wondered if every evening would be like the present one. Mike piled fresh sods on the fire, and he hoped it would show enough light in the loft for Bryden to undress himself by.

The cackling of some geese in the street kept him awake, and he seemed to realize suddenly how lonely the country was, and he foresaw mile after mile of scanty fields stretching all round the lake with one little town in the far corner. A dog howled in the distance, and the fields and the boreens between him and the dog appeared as in a crystal. He could hear Michael breath-

ing by his wife's side in the kitchen, and he could barely resist the impulse to run out of the house, and he might have yielded to it, but he wasn't sure that he mightn't awaken Mike as he came down the ladder. His terror increased, and he drew the blanket over his head. He fell asleep and awoke and fell asleep again, and lying on his back he dreamed of the men he had seen sitting round the fireside that evening, like specters they seemed to him in his dream. He seemed to have been asleep only a few minutes when he heard Mike calling him. He had come halfway up the ladder, and was telling him that breakfast was ready.

"What kind of a breakfast will he give me?" Bryden asked himself as he pulled on his clothes. There were tea and hot griddle cakes for breakfast, and there were fresh eggs; there was sunlight in the kitchen, and he liked to hear Mike tell of the work he was going to be at in the farm—one of about fifteen acres, at least ten of it was grass; he grew an acre of potatoes, and some corn, and some turnips for his sheep. He had a nice bit of meadow, and he took down his scythe, and as he put the whetstone in his belt Bryden noticed a second scythe, and he asked Mike if he should go down with him and help him to finish the field.

"It's a long time since you've done any mowing, and it's heavier work than you think for. You'd better go for a walk by the lake." Seeing that Bryden looked a little disappointed he added, "if you like you can come up in the afternoon and help me to turn the grass over." Bryden said he would, and the morning passed pleasantly by the lakeshore—a delicious breeze rustled in the trees, and the reeds were talking together, and the ducks were talking in the reeds; a cloud blotted out the sunlight, and the cloud passed and the sun shone, and the reed cast its shadow again in the still water; there was a lapping all ways about the shingle; the magic of returning health was sufficient distraction for the convalescent; he lay with his eyes fixed upon the castles, dreaming of the men that had manned

the battlements; whenever a peasant driving a cart or an ass or an old woman with a bundle of sticks on her back went by, Bryden kept them in chat, and he soon knew the village by heart. One day the landlord from the Georgian mansion set on the pleasant green hill came along, his retriever at his heels, and stopped surprised at finding somebody whom he didn't know on his property. "What, James Bryden!" he said. And the story was told again how ill health had overtaken him at last, and he had come home to Duncannon to recover. The two walked as far as the pinewood, talking of the country, what it had been, the ruin it was slipping into, and as they parted Bryden asked for the loan of a boat.

"Of course, of course!" the landlord answered, and Bryden rowed about the islands every morning; and resting upon his oars looked at the old castles, remembering the prehistoric raiders that the landlord had told him about. He came across the stones to which the lake dwellers had tied their boats, and these signs of ancient Ireland were pleasing to Bryden in his present mood.

As well as the great lake there was a smaller lake in the bog where the villagers cut their turf. This lake was famous for its pike, and the landlord allowed Bryden to fish there, and one evening when he was looking for a frog with which to bait his line he met Margaret Dirken driving home the cows for the milking. Margaret was the herdsman's daughter, and lived in a cottage near the Big House; but she came up to the village whenever there was a dance, and Bryden had found himself opposite to her in the reeds. But until this evening he had had little opportunity of speaking to her, and he was glad to speak to someone, for the evening was lonely, and they stood talking together.

"You're getting your health again," she said, "and will be leaving us soon."

"I'm in no hurry."

"You're grand people over there; I hear a man is paid four dollars a day for his work."

"And how much," said James, "has he to pay for his food and for his clothes?"

Her cheeks were bright and her teeth small, white, and beautifully even; and a woman's soul looked at Bryden out of her soft Irish eyes. He was troubled and turned aside, and catching sight of a frog looking at him out of a tuft of grass, he said:

"I have been looking for a frog to put upon my pike line."

The frog jumped right and left, and nearly escaped in some bushes, but he caught it and returned with it in his hand.

"It is just the kind of frog a pike will like," he said. "Look at its great white belly and its bright yellow back."

And without more ado he pushed the wire to which the hook was fastened through the frog's fresh body, and dragging it through the mouth he passed the hooks through the hind legs and tied the line to the end of the wire.

"I think," said Margaret, "I must be looking after my cows; it's time I got them home."

"Won't you come down to the lake while I set my line?"

She thought for a moment and said:

"No, I'll see you from here."

He went down to the reedy tarn, and at his approach several snipe got up, and they flew above his head uttering sharp cries. His fishing rod was a long hazel stick, and he threw the frog as far as he could in the lake. In doing this he roused some wild ducks; a mallard and two ducks got up, and they flew towards the larger lake in a line with an old castle; and they had not disappeared from view when Bryden came towards her, and he and she drove the cows home together that evening.

They had not met very often when she said: "James, you had better not come here so often calling to me."

"Don't you wish me to come?"

"Yes, I wish you to come well enough, but keeping company isn't the custom of the country, and I don't want to be talked about."

"Are you afraid the priest would speak against us from the altar?"

"He has spoken against keeping company, but it is not so much what the priest says, for there is no harm in talking."

"But if you're going to be married there is no harm in walking out together."

"Well, not so much, but marriages are made differently in these parts; there isn't much courting here."

And next day it was known in the village that James was going to marry Margaret Dirken.

His desire to excel the boys in dancing had caused a stir of gaiety in the parish, and for some time past there had been dancing in every house where there was a floor fit to dance upon; and if the cottager had no money to pay for a barrel of beer, James Bryden, who had money, sent him a barrel, so that Margaret might get her dance. She told him that they sometimes crossed over into another parish where the priest was not so averse to dancing, and James wondered. And next morning at Mass he wondered at their simple fervor. Some of them held their hands above their head as they prayed, and all this was very new and very old to James Bryden. But the obedience of these people to their priest surprised him. When he was a lad they had not been so obedient, or he had forgotten their obedience; and he listened in mixed anger and wonderment to the priest, who was scolding his parishioners, speaking to them by name, saying that he had heard there was dancing going on in their homes. Worse than that, he said he had seen boys and girls loitering about the road, and the talk that went on was of one kind—love. He said that newspapers containing love stories were finding their way into the people's houses, stories about love, in which there was nothing elevating or ennobling. The people listened, accepting the priest's opinion without

question. And their pathetic submission was the submission of a primitive people clinging to religious authority, and Bryden contrasted the weakness and incompetence of the people about him with the modern restlessness and cold energy of the people he left behind him.

One evening, as they were dancing, a knock came to the door, and the piper stopped playing, and the dancers whispered:

"Someone has told on us: it is the priest."

And the awestricken villagers crowded round the cottager fire, afraid to open the door. But the priest said that if they didn't open the door he would put his shoulder to it and force it open. Bryden went towards the door, saying he would allow no one to threaten him, priest or no priest, but Margaret caught his arm and told him that if he said anything to the priest, the priest would speak against them from the altar, and they would be shunned by the neighbors.

"I've heard of your goings-on," he said—"of your beer drinking and dancing. I'll not have it in my parish. If you want that sort of thing you had better go to America."

"If that is intended for me, sir, I'll go back tomorrow. Margaret can follow."

"It isn't the dancing, it's the drinking I'm opposed to," said the priest, turning to Bryden.

"Well, no one has drunk too much, sir," said Bryden.

"But you'll sit here drinking all night," and the priest's eyes went to the corner where the women had gathered, and Bryden felt that the priest looked on the women as more dangerous than the porter. "It's after midnight," he said, taking out his watch.

By Bryden's watch it was only half past eleven, and while they were arguing about the time, Mrs. Scully offered Bryden's umbrella to the priest, for in his hurry to stop the dancing the priest had gone out without his; and, as if to show Bryden that he bore him no ill will, the priest accepted the loan of the um-

brella, for he was thinking of the big marriage fee that Bryden would pay him.

"I shall be badly off for the umbrella tomorrow," Bryden said, as soon as the priest was out of the house. He was going with his father-in-law to a fair. His father-in-law was leaning him how to buy and sell cattle. The country was mending, and a man might become rich in Ireland if he only had a little capital. Margaret had an uncle on the other side of the lake who would give twenty pounds, and her father would give another twenty pounds. Bryden had saved two hundred pounds. Never in the village of Duncannon had a young couple begun life with so much prospect of success, and some time after Christmas was spoken of as the best time for the marriage; James Bryden said that he would not be able to get his money out of America before the spring. The delay seemed to vex him, and he seemed anxious to be married, until one day he received a letter from America, from a man who had served in the bar with him. This friend wrote to ask Bryden if he were coming back. The letter was no more than a passing wish to see Bryden again. Yet Bryden stood looking at it, and everyone wondered what could be in the letter. It seemed momentous, and they hardly believed him when he said it was from a friend who wanted to know if his health were better. He tried to forget the letter, and he looked at the worn fields, divided by walls of loose stones, and a great longing came upon him.

The smell of the Bowery slum had come across the Atlantic, and had found him out in his western headland; and one night he awoke from a dream in which he was hurling some drunken customer through the open doors into the darkness. He had seen his friend in his white duck jacket throwing drink from glass into glass amid the din of voices and strange accents; he had heard the clang of money as it was swept into the till, and his sense sickened for the barroom. But how should he tell Margaret Dirken that he could not marry her? She had built her life upon this marriage. He could not tell her that he

would not marry her . . . yet he must go. He felt as if he were being hunted; the thought that he must tell Margaret that he could not marry her hunted him day after day as a weasel hunts a rabbit. Again and again he went to meet her with the intention of telling her that he did not love her, that their lives were not for one another, that it had all been a mistake, and that happily he had found out it was a mistake soon enough. But Margaret, as if she guessed what he was about to speak of, threw her arms about him and begged him to say he loved her, and that they would be married at once. He agreed that he loved her, and that they would be married at once. But he had not left her many minutes before the feeling came upon him that he could not marry her—that he must go away. The smell of the barroom hunted him down. Was it for the sake of the money that he might make there that he wished to go back? No, it was not the money. What then? His eyes fell on the bleak country, on the little fields divided by bleak walls; he remembered the pathetic ignorance of the people, and it was these things that he could not endure. It was the priest who came to forbid the dancing. Yes, it was the priest who looked at the line of the hills the barroom seemed by him. He heard the politicians, and the excitement of politics was in his blood again. He must go away from this place—he must get back to the barroom. Looking up, he saw the scanty orchard, and he hated the spare road that led to the village, and he hated the little hill at the top of which the village began, and he hated more than all other places the house where he was to live with Margaret Dirken—if he married her. He could see it from where he stood—by the edge of the lake, with twenty acres of pasture land about it, for the landlord had given up part of his demesne land to them.

He caught sight of Margaret, and he called her to come through the stile:

"I have just had a letter from America."

"About the money?"

"Yes, about the money. But I shall have to go over there." He stood looking at her, wondering what to say; and she guessed that he would tell her that he must go to America before they were married.

"Do you mean, James, you will have to go at once?"

"Yes," he said, "at once. But I shall come back in time to be married in August. It will only mean delaying our marriage a month."

They walked on a little way talking, and every step he took James felt that he was a step nearer the Bowery slum. And when they came to the gate Bryden said:

"I must walk on or I shall miss the train."

"But," she said, "you are not going now—you are not going today?"

"Yes, this morning. It is seven miles. I shall have to hurry not to miss the train."

And then she asked him if he would ever come back.

"Yes," he said, "I am coming back."

"If you are coming back, James, why don't you let me go with you?"

"You couldn't walk fast enough. We should miss the train."

"One moment, James. Don't make me suffer, tell me the truth. You are not coming back. Your clothes—where shall I send them?"

He hurried away, hoping he would come back. He tried to think that he liked the country he was leaving, that it would be better to have a farmhouse and live there with Margaret Dirken than to serve drinks behind a counter in the Bowery. He did not think he was telling her a lie when he said he was coming back. Her offer to forward his clothes touched his heart, and at the end of the road he stood and asked himself if he should go back to her. He would miss the train if he waited another minute, and he ran on. And he would have missed the train if he had not met a car. Once he was on the car he felt himself safe—the country was already behind him. The train

and the boat at Cork were mere formulae; he was already in America.

And when the tall skyscraper struck up beyond the harbor he felt the thrill of home that he had not found in his native village and wondered how it was that the smell of the bar seemed more natural than the smell of fields, and the roar of crowds more welcome than the silence of the lake's edge. He entered into negotiations for the purchase of the barroom. He took a wife, she bore him sons and daughters, the barroom prospered, property came and went; he grew old, his wife died, he retired from business, and reached the age when a man begins to feel there are not many years in front of him, and that all he has had to do in life has been done. His children married, loneliness began to creep about him in the evening, and when he looked into the firelight, a vague tender reverie floated up, and Margaret's soft eyes and name vivified the dusk. His wife and children passed out of mind, and it seemed to him that a memory was the only real thing he possessed, and the desire to see Margaret again grew intense. But she was an old woman, she had married, maybe she was dead. Well, he would like to be buried in the village where he was born.

There is an unchanging, silent life within every man that none knows but himself, and his unchanging silent life was his memory of Margaret Dirken. The barroom was forgotten and all that concerned it, and the things he saw most clearly were the green hillside, and the bog lake and the rushes about it, and the greater lake in the distance, and behind it the blue line of wandering hills.

The Sphinx without a Secret

An etching

One afternoon I was sitting outside the Café de la Paix, watching the splendour and shabbiness of Parisian life, and wondering over my vermouth at the strange panorama of pride and poverty that was passing before me, when I heard some one call my name. I turned round, and saw Lord Murchison. We had not met since we had been at college together, nearly ten years before, so I was delighted to come across him again, and we shook hands warmly. At Oxford we had been great friends. I had liked him immensely, he was so handsome, so high-spirited, and so honourable. We used to say of him that he would be the best of fellows, if he did not always speak the truth, but I think we really admired him all the more for his frankness. I found him a good deal changed. He looked anxious and puzzled, and seemed to be in doubt about something. I felt it could not be modern scepticism, for Murchison was the stoutest of Tories, and believed in the Pentateuch as firmly as he believed in the House of Peers; so I concluded that it was a woman, and asked him if he was married yet.

'I don't understand women well enough,' he answered.

'My dear Gerald,' I said, 'women are meant to be loved, not to be understood.'

'I cannot love where I cannot trust,' he replied.

'I believe you have a mystery in your life, Gerald,' I exclaimed; 'tell me about it.'

'Let us go for a drive,' he answered, 'it is too crowded here. No, not a yellow carriage, any other colour—there, that dark-green one will do; and in a few moments we were trotting down the boulevard in the direction of the Madeleine.

'Where shall we go to?' I said.

'Oh, anywhere you like!' he answered—to the restaurant in the

Bois; we will dine there, and you shall tell me all about yourself.'

'I want to hear about you first,' I said. 'Tell me your mystery.' He took from his pocket a little silver-clasped morocco case, and handed it to me. I opened it. Inside there was the photograph of a woman. She was tall and slight, and strangely picturesque with her large vague eyes and loosened hair. She looked like a *clairvoyante*, and was wrapped in rich furs.

'What do you think of that face?' he said; 'is it truthful?'

I examined it carefully. It seemed to me the face of some one who had a secret, but whether that secret was good or evil I could not say. Its beauty was a beauty moulded out of many mysteries—the beauty, in fact, which is psychological, not plastic—and the faint smile that just played across the lips was far too subtle to be really sweet.

'Well,' he cried impatiently, 'what do you say?'

'She is the Giocanda in sables,' I answered. 'Let me know all about her.'

'Not now,' he said; 'after dinner;' and began to talk of other things.

When the waiter brought us our coffee and cigarettes I reminded Gerald of his promise. He rose from his seat, walked two or three times up and down the room, and, sinking into an armchair, told me the following story:—

'One evening,' he said, 'I was walking down Bond Street about five o'clock. There was a terrific crush of carriages, and the traffic was almost stopped. Close to the pavement was standing a little yellow brougham, which, for some reason or other, attracted my attention. As I passed by there looked out from it the face I showed you this afternoon. It fascinated me immediately. All that night I kept thinking of it, and all the next day. I wandered up and down that wretched Row, peering into every carriage, and waiting for the yellow brougham; but I could not find *ma belle inconnue*, and at last I began to think she was merely a dream. About a week afterwards I was dining with Madame de Rastail. Dinner was for eight o'clock; but at half-past eight we were still waiting in the drawing-room. Finally the servant threw open the door, and announced Lady Alroy. It was the woman I had been looking for. She came in very slowly, looking like a moonbeam in grey lace, and, to my intense delight, I was asked to take her in to dinner. After we had sat down I remarked quite innocently, "I think I caught sight of

you in Bond Street some time ago, Lady Alroy." She grew very pale, and said to me in a low voice, "Pray do not talk so loud; you may be overheard." I felt miserable at having made such a bad beginning, and plunged recklessly into the subject of the French plays. She spoke very little, always in the same low musical voice, and seemed as if she was afraid of some one listening. I fell passionately, stupidly in love, and the indefinable atmosphere of mystery that surrounded her excited my most ardent curiosity. When she was going away, which she did very soon after dinner, I asked her if I might call and see her. She hesitated for a moment, glanced round to see if any one was near us, and then said, "Yes; tomorrow at a quarter to five." I begged Madame de Rastail to tell me about her; but all that I could learn was that she was a widow with a beautiful house in Park Lane, and as some scientific bore began a dissertation on widows, as exemplifying the survival of the matrimonially fittest, I left and went home.

The next day I arrived at Park Lane punctual to the moment, but was told by the butler that Lady Alroy had just gone out. I went down to the club quite unhappy and very much puzzled, and after long consideration wrote her a letter, asking if I might be allowed to try my chance some other afternoon. I had no answer for several days, but at last I got a little note saying she would be at home on Sunday at four, and with this extraordinary postscript: "Please do not write to me here again; I will explain when I see you." On Sunday she received me, and was perfectly charming; but when I was going away she begged of me if I ever had occasion to write to her again, to address my letter to "Mrs Knox, care of Whittaker's Library, Green Street." "There are reasons," she said, "why I cannot receive letters in my own house."

All through the season I saw a great deal of her, and the atmosphere of mystery never left her. Sometimes I thought that she was in the power of some man, but she looked so unapproachable that I could not believe it. It was really very difficult for me to come to any conclusion, for she was like one of those strange crystals that one sees in museums, which are at one moment clear, and at another clouded. At last I determined to ask her to be my wife: I was sick and tired of the incessant secrecy that she imposed on all my visits, and on the few letters I sent her. I wrote to her at the library to ask her if she could see me the following Monday at six. She answered yes, and I was in the seventh heaven of delight. I was

infatuated with her: in spite of the mystery, I thought then—in consequence of it, I see now. No; it was the woman herself I loved. The mystery troubled me, maddened me. Why did chance put me in its track?

'You discovered it, then?' I cried.

'I fear so,' he answered. 'You can judge for yourself.'

When Monday came round I went to lunch with my uncle, and about four o'clock found myself in the Marylebone Road. My uncle, you know, lives in Regent's Park. I wanted to get to Piccadilly, and took a short cut through a lot of shabby little streets. Suddenly I saw in front of me Lady Alroy, deeply veiled and walking very fast. On coming to the last house in the street, she went up the steps, took out a latch-key, and let herself in. "Here is the mystery," I said to myself; and I hurried on and examined the house. It seemed a sort of place for letting lodgings. On the doorstep lay her handkerchief, which she had dropped. I picked it up and put it in my pocket. Then I began to consider what I should do. I came to the conclusion that I had no right to spy on her, and I drove down to the club. At six I called to see her. She was lying on a sofa, in a tea-gown of silver tissue looped up by some strange moonstones that she always wore. She was looking quite lovely. "I am so glad to see you," she said; "I have not been out all day." I stared at her in amazement, and pulling the handkerchief out of my pocket, handed it to her. "You dropped this in Curmor Street this afternoon, Lady Alroy," I said very calmly. She looked at me in terror, but made no attempt to take the handkerchief. "What were you doing there?" I asked. "What right have you to question me?" she answered. "The right of a man who loves you," I replied; "I came here to ask you to be my wife." She hid her face in her hands, and burst into floods of tears. "You must tell me," I continued. She stood up, and, looking me straight in the face, said, "Lord Murchison, there is nothing to tell you."—"You went to meet some one," I cried; "this is your mystery." She grew dreadfully white, and said, "I went to meet no one."—"Can't you tell the truth?" I exclaimed. "I have told it," she replied. I was mad, frantic; I don't know what I said, but I said terrible things to her. Finally I rushed out of the house. She wrote me a letter the next day; I sent it back unopened, and started for Norway with Alan Colville. After a month I came back, and the first thing I saw in the *Morning Post* was the death of Lady Alroy. She had caught a chill at the Opera,

and had died in five days of congestion of the lungs. I shut myself up and saw no one. I had loved her so much, I had loved her so madly. Good God! how I had loved that woman!

'You went to the street, to the house in it?' I said.

'Yes,' he answered.

'One day I went to Cumnor Street. I could not help it; I was tortured with doubt. I knocked at the door, and a respectable-looking woman opened it to me. I asked her if she had any rooms to let. "Well, sir," she replied, "the drawing-rooms are supposed to be let; but I have not seen the lady for three months, and as rent is owing on them, you can have them."—"Is this the lady?" I said, showing the photograph. "That's her, sure enough," she exclaimed; "and when is she coming back, sir?"—"The lady is dead," I replied. "Oh, sir, I hope not!" said the woman; "she was my best lodger. She paid me three guineas a week merely to sit in my drawing-rooms now and then."—"She met some one here?" I said; but the woman assured me that it was not so, that she always came alone, and saw no one. "What on earth did she do here?" I cried. "She simply sat in the drawing-room, sir, reading books, and sometimes had tea," the woman answered. I did not know what to say, so I gave her a sovereign and went away. Now, what do you think it all meant? You don't believe the woman was telling the truth?'

'I do.'

'Then why did Lady Alroy go there?'

'My dear Gerald,' I answered, 'Lady Alroy was simply a woman with a mania for mystery. She took these rooms for the pleasure of going there with her veil down, and imagining she was a heroine. She had a passion for secrecy, but she herself was merely a Sphinx without a secret.'

'Do you really think so?'

'I am sure of it,' I replied.

He took out the morocco case, opened it, and looked at the photograph. 'I wonder?' he said at last.

E. G. SOMERVILLE · 1858-1949
MARTIN ROSS · 1862-1915

Philippa's Fox-Hunt

No one can accuse Philippa and me of having married in haste. As a matter of fact, it was but little under five years from that autumn evening on the river when I had said what is called in Ireland 'the hard word', to the day in August when I was led to the altar by my best man, and was subsequently led away from it by Mrs Sinclair Yeates. About two years out of the five had been spent by me at Shreelane in ceaseless warfare with drains, eaveshoots, chimneys, pumps; all those fundamentals, in short, that the ingenious and improving tenant expects to find established as a basis from which to rise to higher things. As far as rising to higher things went, frequent ascents to the roof to search for leaks summed up my achievements; in fact, I suffered so general a shrinkage of my ideals that the triumph of making the hall-door bell ring blinded me to the fact that the rat-holes in the hall floor were nailed up with pieces of tin biscuit boxes, and that the casual visitor could, instead of leaving a card, have easily written his name in the damp on the walls.

Philippa, however, proved adorably callous to these and similar shortcomings. She regarded Shreelane and its floundering, foundering ménage of incapables in the light of a gigantic picnic in a foreign land; she held long conversations daily with Mrs Cadogan, in order, as she informed me, to acquire the language; without any ulterior domestic intention she engaged kitchen-maids because of the beauty of their eyes, and housemaids because they had such delightfully picturesque old mothers, and she declined to correct the phraseology of the parlour-maid, whose painful habit it was to whisper 'Do ye choose cherry or clarry?' when proffering the wine. Fast-days, perhaps, afforded my wife her first insight into the sterner realities of Irish housekeeping. Philippa had what are known as High Church proclivities, and took the matter seriously. 'I don't know how we are going to manage for the servants' dinner tomorrow, Sinclair,' she said, coming in to my office one

bird made of flames had fluttered its plumage, and a voice cried as from far up in the air, "He has charged even his angels with folly, and they also bow and obey; but let your heart mingle with our hearts, which are wrought of Divine Ecstasy, and your body with our bodies, which are wrought of Divine Intellect." And at that cry I understood that the Order of the Alchemical Rose was not of this earth, and that it was still seeking over this earth for whatever souls it could gather within its glittering net; and when all the faces turned towards me, as I saw the mild eyes and the unshaken eyelids, I was full of terror, and thought they were about to fling their torches upon me, so that all I held dear, all that bound me to spiritual and social order, would be burnt up, and my soul left naked and shivering among the winds that blow from beyond this world and from beyond the stars; and then a voice cried, "Why do you fly from our torches that were made out of the trees under which Christ wept in the Garden of Gethsemane? Why do you fly from our torches that were made out of sweet wood, after it had perished from the world?"

It was not until the door of the house had closed behind my flight, and the noise of the street was breaking on my ears, that I came back to myself and to a little of my courage; and I have never dared to pass the house of Owen Aherne from that day, even though I believe him to have been driven into some distant country by the spirits whose name is legion, and whose throne is in the indefinite abyss, and whom he obeys and cannot see.

LISHEEN RACES, SECOND-HAND E. GE. Somerville and Martin Ross

IT may or may not be agreeable to have attained the age of thirty-eight, but, judging from old photographs, the privilege of being nineteen has also its drawbacks. I turned over page after page of an ancient book in which were enshrined portraits of the friends of my youth, singly, in David and Jonathan couples, and in groups in which I, as it seemed to my mature and possibly jaundiced perception, always contrived to look the most immeasurable young boulder of the lot. Our faces were fat, and yet I cannot remember ever having been considered fat in my life; we indulged in low-necked shirts, in "Jemima" ties with diagonal stripes; we wore coats that seemed three sizes too small, and trousers that were three sizes too big; we also wore small whiskers.

I stopped at last at one of the David and Jonathan memorial portraits. Yes, here was the object of my researches; this stout and earnestly romantic youth was Leigh Kelway, and that fatuous and chubby young person seated on the arm of his chair was myself. Leigh Kelway was a young man ardently believed in by a large circle of admirers, headed by himself and seconded by me, and for some time after I had left Magdalen for Sandhurst, I maintained a correspondence with him on large and abstract subjects. This phase of our friendship did not survive; I went soldiering to India, and Leigh Kelway took honours and moved suitably on into politics, as is the duty of an earnest young Radical with useful family connections and an independent income. Since then I had at intervals seen in the papers the name of the Honourable Basil Leigh Kelway mentioned as a speaker at elections, as a writer of thoughtful articles in the reviews, but we had never met, and nothing could have been less expected by me than the letter, written from Mrs. Raverty's Hotel, Skebawn, in which he told me he was making a tour in Ireland with

Lord Waterbury, to whom he was private secretary. Lord Waterbury was at present having a few days' fishing near Killarney, and he himself, not being a fisherman, was collecting statistics for his chief on various points connected with the Liquor Question in Ireland. He had heard that I was in the neighbourhood, and was kind enough to add that it would give him much pleasure to meet me again.

With a stir of the old enthusiasm I wrote begging him to be my guest for as long as it suited him, and the following afternoon he arrived at Shreelane. The stout young friend of my youth had changed considerably. His important nose and slightly prominent teeth remained, but his wavy hair had withdrawn intellectually from his temples; his eyes had acquired a statesmanlike absence of expression, and his neck had grown long and bird-like. It was his first visit to Ireland, as he lost no time in telling me, and he and his chief had already collected much valuable information on the subject to which they had dedicated the Easter recess. He further informed me that he thought of popularising the subject in a novel, and therefore intended to, as he put it, "master the brogue" before his return.

During the next few days I did my best for Leigh Kelway. I turned him loose on Father Scanlan; I showed him Mohona, our champion village, that boasts fifteen public-houses out of twenty buildings of sorts and a railway station; I took him to hear the prosecution of a publican for selling drink on a Sunday, which gave him an opportunity of studying perjury as a fine art, and of hearing a lady, on whom police suspicion justly rested, profoundly summed up by the sergeant as "a woman who had th' appearance of having knocked at a back door."

The net result of these experiences has not yet been given to the world by Leigh Kelway. For my own part, I had at the end of three days arrived at the conclusion that his society, when combined with a note-book and a thirst for statistics, was not what I used to find it at Oxford. I therefore welcomed a suggestion from Mr. Flurry Knox that we should accompany him to some typical country races, got up by the farmers at a place called Lisheen, some twelve miles away. It was the worst road in the district, the races of the most grossly unorthodox character; in fact, it was the very place for Leigh Kelway to collect impressions of Irish life, and in any case it was a blessed opportunity of disposing of him for the day.

In my guest's attire next morning I discerned an unbending from the rôle of cabinet minister towards that of sportsman; the outlines of the note-book might be traced in his breast pocket, but traversing it was the strap of a pair of field-glasses, and his light grey suit was smart enough for Goodwood.

Flurry was to drive us to the races at one o'clock, and we walked to Tory Cottage by the short cut over the hill, in the sunny beauty of an

April morning. Up to the present the weather had kept me in a more or less apologetic condition; any one who has entertained a guest in the country knows the unjust weight of responsibility that rests on the shoulders of the host in the matter of climate, and Leigh Kelway, after two drenchings, had become sarcastically resigned to what I felt he regarded as my mismanagement.

Flurry took us into the house for a drink and a biscuit, to keep us going, as he said, till "we lifted some luncheon out of the Castle Knox people at the races," and it was while we were thus engaged that the first disaster of the day occurred. The dining-room door was open, so also was the window of the little staircase just outside it, and through the window travelled sounds that told of the close proximity of the stable-yard; the clattering of hoofs on cobble stones, and voices uplifted in loud conversation. Suddenly from this region there arose a screech of the laughter peculiar to kitchen flirtation, followed by the clank of a bucket, the plunging of a horse, and then an uproar of wheels and galloping hoofs. An instant afterwards Flurry's chestnut cob, in a dogcart, dashed at full gallop into view, with the reins streaming behind him, and two men in hot pursuit. Almost before I had time to realise what had happened, Flurry jumped through the half-opened window of the dining-room like a clown at a pantomime, and joined in the chase; but the cob was resolved to make the most of his chance, and went away down the drive and out of sight at a pace that distanced every one save the kennel terrier, who sped in shrieking ecstasy beside him.

"Oh merciful hour!" exclaimed a female voice behind me. Leigh Kelway and I were by this time watching the progress of events from the gravel, in company with the remainder of Flurry's household. "The horse is destroyed! Wasn't that the square start he took! And all in the world I done was to slap a bucket of wather at Michael out the windy, and 'twas himself got it in place of Michael!"

"Ye'll never ate another bit, Bridgie Dummigan," replied the cook, with the exulting pessimism of her kind. "The Master'll have your life!"

Both speakers shouted at the top of their voices, probably because in spirit they still followed afar the flight of the cob.

Leigh Kelway looked serious as we walked on down the drive. I almost dared to hope that a note on the degrading oppression of Irish retainers was shaping itself. Before we reached the bend of the drive the rescue party was returning with the fugitive, all, with the exception of the kennel terrier, looking extremely gloomy. The cob had been confronted by a wooden gate, which he had unhesitatingly taken in his stride, landing on his head on the farther side with the gate and the cart on top of him, and had arisen with a lame foreleg, a cut on his nose, and several other minor wounds.

"You'd think the brute had been fighting the cats, with all the scratches and scrapes he has on him!" said Flurry, casting a vengeful eye at Michael, "and one shaft's broken and so is the dashboard. I haven't another horse in the place; they're all out at grass, and so there's an end of the races!"

We all three stood blankly on the hall-door steps and watched the wreck of the trap being trundled up the avenue.

"I'm very sorry you're done out of your sport," said Flurry to Leigh Kelway, in tones of deplorable sincerity; "perhaps, as there's nothing else to do, you'd like to see the hounds—?"

I felt for Flurry, but of the two I felt more for Leigh Kelway as he accepted this alleviation. He disliked dogs, and held the newest views on sanitation, and I knew what Flurry's kennels could smell like. I was lighting a precautionary cigarette, when we caught sight of an old man riding up the drive. Flurry stopped short.

"Hold on a minute," he said; "here's an old chap that often brings me horses for the kennels; I must see what he wants."

The man dismounted and approached Mr. Knox, hat in hand, towing after him a gaunt and ancient black mare with a big knee.

"Well, Barrett," began Flurry, surveying the mare with his hands in his pockets, "I'm not giving the hounds meat this month, or only very little."

"Ah, Master Flurry," answered Barrett, "it's you that's pleasant! Is it give the like o' this one for the dogs to atel. She's a vallyble strong young mare, no more than shixteen years of age, and ye'd sooner be lookin' at her goin' under a side-car than eatin' your dinner."

"There isn't as much meat on her as 'd fatten a jackdrawy," said Flurry, clinking the silver in his pockets as he searched for a matchbox. "What are you asking for her?"

The old man drew cautiously up to him.

"Master Flurry," he said solemnly, "I'll sell her to *your* honour for five pounds, and she'll be worth ten after you give her a month's grass."

Flurry lit his cigarette; then he said imperturbably, "I'll give you seven shillings for her."

Old Barrett put on his hat in silence, and in silence buttoned his coat and took hold of the stirrup leather. Flurry remained immovable.

"Master Flurry," said old Barrett suddenly, with tears in his voice, "you must make it eight, sir!"

"Michael!" called out Flurry with apparent irrelevance, "run up to your father's and ask him would he lend me a loan of his side-car."

Half-an-hour later we were, improbable as it may seem, on our way to Lishcen races. We were seated upon an outside-car of immemorial age, whose joints seemed to open and close again as it swung in and out of the ruts, whose tattered cushions stank of rats and mildew, whose wheels

staggered and rocked like the legs of a drunken man. Between the shafts jogged the latest addition to the kennel larder, the eight-shilling mare. Flurry sat on one side, and kept her going at a rate of not less than four miles an hour. Leigh Kelway and I held on to the other.

"She'll get us as far as Lynch's anyway," said Flurry, abandoning his first contention that she could do the whole distance, as he pulled her on to her legs after her fifteenth stumble, "and he'll lend us some sort of a horse, if it was only a mule."

"Do you notice that these cushions are very damp?" said Leigh Kelway to me, in a hollow undertone.

"Small blame to them if they are!" replied Flurry. "I've no doubt but they were out under the rain all day yesterday at Mrs. Hurly's funeral."

Leigh Kelway made no reply, but he took his note-book out of his pocket and sat on it.

We arrived at Lynch's at a little past three, and were there confronted by the next disappointment of this disastrous day. The door of Lynch's farmhouse was locked, and nothing replied to our knocking except a puppy, who barked hysterically from within.

"All gone to the races," said Flurry philosophically, picking his way round the manure heap. "No matter, here's the filly in the shed here. I know he's had her under a car."

An agitating ten minutes ensued, during which Leigh Kelway and I got the eight-shilling mare out of the shafts and the harness, and Flurry, with our inefficient help, crammed the young mare into them. As Flurry had stated that she had been driven before, I was bound to believe him, but the difficulty of getting the bit into her mouth was remarkable, and so also was the crab-like manner in which she sidled out of the yard, with Flurry and myself at her head, and Leigh Kelway hanging on to the back of the car to keep it from jamming in the gateway.

"Sit up on the car now," said Flurry when we got out on to the road; "I'll lead her on a bit. She's been ploughed anyway; one side of her mouth's as though as a gad!"

Leigh Kelway threw away the wisp of grass with which he had been cleaning his hands, and mopped his intellectual forehead; he was very silent. We both mounted the car, and Flurry, with the reins in his hand, walked beside the filly, who, with her tail clasped in, moved onward in a succession of short jerks.

"Oh, she's all right!" said Flurry, beginning to run, and dragging the filly into a trot; "once she gets started—" Here the filly spied a pig in a neighbouring field, and despite the fact that she had probably eaten out of the same trough with it, she gave a violent side spring, and broke into a gallop.

"Now we're off!" shouted Flurry, making a jump at the car and clambering on; "if the traces hold we'll do!"

The English language is powerless to suggest the view-halloo with which Mr. Knox ended his speech, or to do more than indicate the rigid anxiety of Leigh Kelway's face as he regained his balance after the preliminary jerk and clutched the back rail. It must be said for Lynch's filly that she did not kick: she merely fled, like a dog with a kettle tied to its tail, from the pursuing rattle and jingle behind her, with the shafts buffeting her dusty sides as the car swung to and fro. Whenever she showed any signs of slackening, Flurry loosed another yell at her that renewed her panic, and thus we precariously covered another two or three miles of our journey.

Had it not been for a large stone lying on the road, and had the filly not chosen to swerve so as to bring the wheel on top of it, I dare say we might have got to the races; but by an unfortunate coincidence both these things occurred, and when we recovered from the consequent shock, the tire of one of the wheels had come off, and was trundling with cumbrous gaiety into the ditch. Flurry stopped the filly and began to laugh. Leigh Kelway said something startlingly unparliamentary under his breath.

"Well, it might be worse," Flurry said consolingly as he lifted the tire on to the car; "we're not half a mile from a forge."

We walked that half-mile in funeral procession behind the car; the glory had departed from the weather, and an ugly wall of cloud was rising up out of the west to meet the sun; the hills had darkened and lost colour, and the white bog cotton shivered in a cold wind that smelt of rain.

By a miracle the smith was not at the races, owing, as he explained, to his having "the toothaches;" the two facts combined producing in him a morosity only equalled by that of Leigh Kelway. The smith's sole comment on the situation was to unharness the filly, and drag her into the forge, where he tied her up. He then proceeded to whistle viciously on his fingers in the direction of a cottage, and to command, in tones of thunder, some unseen creature to bring over a couple of baskets of turf. The turf arrived in process of time, on a woman's back, and was arranged in a circle in a yard at the back of the forge. The tire was bedded in it, and the turf was with difficulty kindled at different points.

"Ye'll not get to the races this day," said the smith, yielding to a sardonic satisfaction; "the turf's wet, and I haven't one to do a hand's turn for me." He laid the wheel on the ground and lit his pipe.

Leigh Kelway looked pallidly about him over the spacious empty landscape of brown mountain slopes parched with golden furze and seamed with grey walls; I wondered if he were as hungry as I. We sat on stones opposite the smouldering ring of turf and smoked, and Flurry beguiled the smith into grim and calumnious confidences about every horse in

the country. After about an hour, during which the turf went out three times, and the weather became more and more threatening, a girl with a red petticoat over her head appeared at the gate of the yard, and said to the smith:

"The horse is gone away from ye."

"Where?" exclaimed Flurry, springing to his feet.

"I met him walking wesh't the road there below, and when I thought to turn him he commenced to gallop."

"Pulled her head out of the headstall," said Flurry, after a rapid survey of the forge. "She's near home by now."

It was at this moment that the rain began; the situation could scarcely have been better stage-managed. After reviewing the position, Flurry and I decided that the only thing to do was to walk to a public-house a couple of miles farther on, feed there if possible, hire a car, and go home.

It was an uphill walk, with mild generous raindrops striking thicker and thicker on our faces; no one talked, and the grey clouds crowded up from behind the hills like billows of steam. Leigh Kelway bore it all with egregious resignation. I cannot pretend that I was at heart sympathetic, but by virtue of being his host I felt responsible for the breakdown, for his light suit, for everything, and divined his sentiment of horror at the first sight of the public-house.

It was a long, low cottage, with a line of dripping elm-trees overshadowing it; empty cars and carts round its door, and a babel from within made it evident that the racegoers were pursuing a gradual homeward route. The shop was crammed with steaming countrymen, whose loud brawling voices, all talking together, roused my English friend to his first remark since we had left the forge.

"Sure, Yeates, we are not going into that place?" he said severely; "those men are all drunk."

"Ah, nothing to signify!" said Flurry, plunging in and driving his way through the throng like a plough. "Here, Mary Kate!" he called to the girl behind the counter, "tell your mother we want some tea and bread and butter in the room inside."

The smell of bad tobacco and spilt porter was choking; we worked our way through it after him towards the end of the shop, intersecting at every hand discussions about the races.

"Tom was very nice. He spared his horse all along, and then he put into him—""Well, at Goggin's corner the third horse was before the second, but he was going wake in himself.""I tell ye the mare had the hind leg fasht in the fore.""Clancy was dipping in the saddle.""'Twas a damn nice race whatever—"

We gained the inner room at last, a cheerless apartment, adorned with sacred pictures, a sewing-machine, and an array of supplementary turn-

blers and wineglasses; but, at all events, we had it so far to ourselves. At intervals during the next half-hour Mary Kate burst in with cups and plates, cast them on the table and disappeared, but of food there was no sign. After a further period of starvation and of listening to the noise in the shop, Flurry made a sortie, and, after lengthy and unknown adventures, reappeared carrying a huge brown teapot, and driving before him Mary Kate with the remainder of the repast. The bread tasted of mice, the butter of turf-smoke, the tea of brown paper, but we had got past the critical stage. I had entered upon my third round of bread and butter when the door was flung open, and my valued acquaintance, Slipper, slightly advanced in liquor, presented himself to our gaze. His bandy legs sprawled consequently, his nose was redder than a coal of fire, his prominent eyes rolled crookedly upon us, and his left hand swept behind him the attempt of Mary Kate to frustrate his entrance.

"Good-evening to my venerable friend, Mr. Flurry Knox!" he began, in the voice of a town crier, "and to the Honourable Major Yeates, and the English gentleman!"

This impressive opening immediately attracted an audience from the shop, and the doorway filled with grinning faces as Slipper advanced farther into the room.

"Why weren't ye at the races, Mr. Flurry?" he went on, his roving eye taking a grip of us all at the same time; "sure the Miss Bennetts and all the ladies was asking where were ye."

"I'd take some time to tell them that," said Flurry, with his mouth full; "but what about the races, Slipper? Had you good sport?"

"Sport is it? Devil so pleasant an afternoon ever you seen," replied Slipper. He leaned against a side table, and all the glasses on it jingled.

"Does your honour know O'Driscoll?" he went on irrelevantly. "Sure you do. He was in your honour's stable. It's what we were all sayin'; it was a great pity your honour was not there, for the likin' you had to Driscoll."

"That's thrue," said a voice at the door.

"There wasn't one in the Barony but was gathered in it, through and fro," continued Slipper, with a quelling glance at the interrupter; "and there was tints for sellin' porters, and whisky as pliable as new milk, and boys goin' round the tints outside, feeling for heads with the big ends of their blackthorns, and all kinds of recreations, and the Sons of Liberty's piffler and drum band from Skebawn; though faith! there was more of them runnin' to look at the races than what was playin' in it; not to mention different occasions that the bandmaster was atin' his lunch within in the whisky tint."

"But what about Driscoll?" said Flurry.

"Sure it's about him I'm tellin' ye," replied Slipper, with the practised orator's watchful eye on his growing audience. "Twas within in the same

whisky tint meself was, with the bandmaster and a few of the lads, an' we buyin' a ha'porth o' crackers, when I seen me brave Driscoll landin' into the tint, and a pair o' thin long boots on him; him that hadn't a shoe nor a stocking to his foot when your honour had him picking grass out o' the stones behind in your yard. 'Well,' says I to meself, 'we'll knock some spoor out of Driscoll!'

"Come here to me, acushla!" says I to him; 'I suppose it's some way wake in the legs y'are,' says I, 'an' the dochor put them on ye the way the people wouldn't thrample ye!'

"May the devil choke ye!" says he, pleasant enough, but I knew by the blush he had he was vexed.

"Then I suppose 'tis a left-tenant colonel y'are,' says I; 'yer mother must be proud out o' ye!' says I, 'an' maybe ye'll lend her a loan o' them waders when she's rinsin' yer baunee in the river!' says I.

"There'll be work out o' this!' says he, lookin' at me both sour and birther.

"Well indeed, I was thinkin' you were blue moulded for want of a batin'; says I. He was for fightin' us then, but after we had him pacificated with about a quarter of a naggin o' sperrits, he told us he was goin' ridin' in a race.

"An' what'll ye ride?' says I.

"Owld Boccock's mare,' says he.

"Kniptes!' says I, sayin' a great curse; 'is it that little staggeen from the mountains; sure she's somethin' about the one age with meself,' says I. 'Many's the time Jamesy Geoghegan and meself used to be dhryvin' her to Macroom with pigs an' all soorts,' says I; 'an' is it leppin' stone walls ye want her to go now?'

"Faith, there's walls and every variety of obstacle in it,' says he.

"I'll be the best o' your play, so,' says I, 'to leg it away home out o' this!'

"An' who'll ride her, so?' says he.

"Let the devil ride her,' says I."

Leigh Kelway, who had been leaning back seemingly half asleep, obeyed the hypnotism of Slipper's gaze, and opened his eyes.

"That was now all the conversation that passed between himself and meself," resumed Slipper, "and there was no great delay afther that till they said there was a race startin' and the dickens a one at all was goin' to ride only two, Driscoll, and one Clancy. With that then I seen Mr. Kinahane, the Petty Sessions clerk, goin' round clearin' the coorse, an' I gathered a few o' the neighbours, an' we walked the fields hither and over till we seen the most of th' obstacles.

"Stand aisy now by the plantation,' says I; 'if they get to come as far as this, believe me ye'll see spoor,' says I, 'an' 'twill be a convenient spot

to encourage the mare if she's anyway wake in herself,' says I, cuttin' somethin' about five foot of an ash sapling out o' the plantation.

"That's yer sort!' says owld Boccock, that was thravellin' the racecourse, peggin' a bit o' paper down with a thorn in front of every lep, the way Driscoll 'd know the handiest place to face her at it.

"Well, I hadn't barely trimmed the ash plant—"

"Have you any jam, Mary Kate?" interrupted Flurry, whose meal had been in no way interfered with by either the story or the highly-scented crowd who had come to listen to it.

"We have no jam, only thraycle, sir," replied the invisible Mary Kate.

"I hadn't the switch barely trimmed," repeated Slipper firmly, "when I heard the people screechin', an' I seen Driscoll an' Clancy comin' on, leppin' all before them, an' owld Boccock's mare bellusin' an' powdherin' along, an' bedad! whatever obstrackle wouldn't throw *her* down, faith, she'd throw *it* down, an' there's the thruffic they had in it.

"I declare to me sowl,' says I, 'if they continue on this way there's a great chance some one o' them 'll wrin,' says I.

"Ye lie!' says the bandmasher, bein' a thrifle fulsome after his luncheon.

"I do not,' says I, 'in regard of sein' how soople them two boys is. Ye might observe,' says I, 'that if they have no convenient way to sit on the saddle, they'll ride the neck o' the horse till such time as they gets an occasion to lave it,' says I.

"Arrah, shut yer mouth!' says the bandmasher; 'they're puckin' out this way now, an' may the divil admire me!' says he, 'but Clancy has the other bet out, and the divil such leatherin' and beltin' of owld Boccock's mare ever you seen as what's in it!' says he.

"Well, when I seen them comin' to me, and Driscoll about the length of the plantation behind Clancy, I let a couple of bawls.

"Skelep her, ye big brute!' says I. 'What good's in ye that ye aren't able to skelep her?'"

The yell and the histrionic flourish of his stick with which Slipper delivered this incident brought down the house. Leigh Kelway was sufficiently moved to ask me in an undertone if "skelep" was a local term.

"Well, Mr. Flurry, and gentlemen," recommenced Slipper, "I declare to ye when owld Boccock's mare heard thim roars she sthretched out her neck like a gander, and when she passed me out she give a couple of grunts, and looked at me as ugly as a Christian.

"'Hah!' says I, givin' her a couple o' dhraws o' th' ash plant across the butt o' the tail, the way I wouldn't blind her; 'I'll make ye grunt!' says I, 'I'll nourish ye!'"

"I knew well she was very frightful of th' ash plant since the winter Tommeen Sullivan had her under a sidecar. But now, in place of havin'

any obligations to me, ye'd be surprised if ye heard the blasphemious expressions of that young boy that was ridin' her, and whether it was over-anxious he was, turnin' around the way I'd hear him cursin', or whether it was some slither or slide came to owld Boccock's mare, I dunno, but she was bet up agin the last obstrackle but two, and before ye could say 'Schmipes,' she was standin' on her two ears beyond in th' other field! I declare to ye, on the vartrue of me oath, she stood that way till she reconnoihered what side would Driscoll fall, an' she turned about then and rolled on him as cosy as if he was meadow grass!"

Slipper stopped short; the people in the doorway groaned appreciatively; Mary Kate murmured "The Lord save us!"

"The blood was dhruv out through his nose and ears," continued Slipper, with a voice that indicated the cream of the narration, "and you'd hear his bones crackin' on the ground! You'd have pitied the poor boy."

"Good heavens!" said Leigh Kelway, sitting up very straight in his chair.

"Was he hurt, Slipper?" asked Flurry casually.

"Hurt is it?" echoed Slipper in high scorn; "killed on the spot!" He paused to relish the effect of the *dénouement* on Leigh Kelway. "Oh, divil so pleasant an afternoon ever you seen; and indeed, Mr. Flurry, it's what we were all sayin', it was a great pity your honour was not there for the likin' you had for Driscoll!"

As he spoke the last word there was an outburst of singing and cheering from a car-load of people who had just pulled up at the door. Flurry listened, leaned back in his chair, and began to laugh.

"It scarcely strikes one as a comic incident," said Leigh Kelway, very coldly to me; "in fact, it seems to me that the police ought—"

"Show me Slipper!" bawled a voice in the shop; "show me that dirty little undherlooper till I have his blood! Hadn't I the race won only for he souring the mare on me! What's that you say? I tell ye he did! He left seven slaps on her with the handle of a hay-rake—"

There was in the room in which we were sitting a second door, leading to the back yard, a door consecrated to the unobtrusive visits of so-called "Sunday travellers." Through it Slipper faded away like a dream, and, simultaneously, a tall young man, with a face like a red-hot potato tied up in a bandage, squeezed his way from the shop into the room.

"Well, Driscoll," said Flurry, "since it wasn't the teeth of the rake he left on the mare, you needn't be talkin'!"

Leigh Kelway looked from one to the other with a wilder expression in his eye than I had thought it capable of. I read in it a resolve to abandon Ireland to her fate.

At eight o'clock we were still waiting for the car that we had been assured should be ours directly it returned from the races. At half-past

eight we had adopted the only possible course that remained, and had accepted the offers of lifts on the laden cars that were returning to Skebawn, and I presently was gratified by the spectacle of my friend Leigh Kelway wedged between a roulette table and its proprietor on one side of a car, with Driscoll and Slipper, mysteriously reconciled and excessively drunk, seated, locked in each other's arms, on the other. Flurry and I, somewhat similarly placed, followed on two other cars. I was scarcely surprised when I was informed that the melancholy white animal in the shafts of the leading car was Owdl Boccock's much-enduring steeplechaser.

The night was very dark and stormy, and it is almost superfluous to say that no one carried lamps; the rain poured upon us, and through wind and wet Owdl Boccock's mare set the pace at a rate that showed she knew from bitter experience what was expected from her by gentlemen who had spent the evening in a public-house: behind her the other two tired horses followed closely, incited to emulation by shouting, singing, and a liberal allowance of whip. We were a good ten miles from Skebawn, and never had the road seemed so long. For mile after mile the half-seen low walls slid past us, with occasional plunges into caverns of darkness under trees. Sometimes from a wayside cabin a dog would dash out to bark at us as we rattled by; sometimes our cavalcade swung aside to pass, with yells and counter-yells, crawling carts filled with other belated race-goers.

I was nearly wet through, even though I received considerable shelter from a Skebawn publican, who slept heavily and irrepressibly on my shoulder. Driscoll, on the leading car, had struck up an approximation to the "Wearing of the Green," when a wavering star appeared on the road ahead of us. It grew momentarily larger; it came towards us apace. Flurry, on the car behind me, shouted suddenly—

"That's the mail car, with one of the lamps out! Tell those fellows ahead to look out!"

But the warning fell on deaf ears.

"When laws can change the blades of grass
From growing as they grow—"

howled five discordant voices, oblivious of the towering proximity of the star.

A Bianconi mail car is nearly three times the size of an ordinary outside car, and when on a dark night it advances, Cyclops-like, with but one eye, it is difficult for even a sober driver to calculate its bulk. Above the sounds of melody there arose the thunder of heavy wheels, the splashing trample of three big horses, then a crash and a turmoil of shouts. Our

cars pulled up just in time, and I tore myself from the embrace of my publican to go to Leigh Kelway's assistance.

The wing of the Bianconi had caught the wing of the smaller car, flinging Owdl Boccock's mare on her side and throwing her freight headlong on top of her, the heap being surmounted by the roulette table. The driver of the mail car unshipped his solitary lamp and turned it on the disaster. I saw that Flurry had already got hold of Leigh Kelway by the heels, and was dragging him from under the others. He struggled up haltes, muddy, and gasping, with Driscoll hanging on by his neck, still singing the "Wearing of the Green."

A voice from the mail car said incredulously, "*Leigh Kelway!*" A spectated face glared down upon him from under the dripping spikes of an umbrella.

It was the Right Honourable the Earl of Waterbury, Leigh Kelway's chief, returning from his fishing excursion.

Meanwhile Slipper, in the ditch, did not cease to announce that "Divil so pleasant an affthernoon ever ye seen as what was in it!"