

Among My Own People

A cluster of nuts ; being sketches among my own people

Katharine Tynan

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MO CRAOIBHIN CNO. [1]

*The Irish woods have sycamore and quicken,
Chestnut and beech and elm-trees set a-row ;
And in the hazel copse the clusters thicken—
Mo craoibhin cno !*

*In the green hazels play the squirrel people,
Bright-eyed and brisk, not fearing any foe.
As safe above the world as daw in steeple.
Mo craoibhin cno !*

*The nuts are sweeter to the dainty squirrels
Than garden-fruit or blackberries aglow ;
Sweeter than to the youth his brown maid's curls—
Mo craoibhin cno !*

*I wandered by the hazels ere they withered,
And heard the blackbird's liquid numbers flow ;
And from the bough a cluster brown I gathered—
Mo craoibhin cno !*

*Russet and small, but still within the brownness
May hide some sweetness— pray you find it so !—
As pleases squirrels in the old wood's loneliness —
Mo craoibhin cno !*

*Brown nuts, my masters, from an Irish hazel !
But if ye will not their rough flavour, go
And leave my fruit for finer fruits that dazzle—
Mo craoibhin cno !*

[1] Ma creevin O, i.e, My cluster of nuts.

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Wayfarers.

AT Limerick Junction we first heard it, the indescribable wail, rising and falling, terrible as the “keen” for the dead, which means the farewell of the emigrants. We were quite out of the station at the end of a long train, and it was my travelling companion told me what it meant. A country train laden with emigrants and their friends had come in, and they were parting here, the emigrants coming on with us to Queenstown. No wonder they wailed, one thought, looking away, and trying to forget it. The rain was over, and the Galtees had sailed royally out of the mist ; Galtymore, that is the home of eagles, holding his head so high, that I remembered how an imaginative child once took him to be the throne of God. Below the tall peaks ran a rampart of dark blue—a frowning natural fortification behind which lies Aherlow, the fairest of glens, with woolly catkins on the willow boughs, and drifts of primroses among the uncurling ferns, and the mountains all around grey as glass, or red and brown like a pheasant’s breast, or streaked along the surface with the blue and green of the peacock, or again, towards evening flushed with roseate light, pulsing from one knew not where. O the dear country, so rich and ready to repay all care ! How often they will think of it, when they are nipped to the heart with cold, or are dying of the heat as cruel ! How they will long for this cool green, full of dew and scent, and this wind that comes across the mountains, bracing as an air for giants ! They will see the cattle going home so gently along the young grass, and hear the Angelus-bell in their dreams, ringing so peaceful and holy from a distant belfry. But down at Queenstown there is the big ship for them, puffing like a grampus out near the forts ; and as they sail away between those gates out into the world, they will leave behind them more than the unforgettable country they will never see again.

As the train steamed off, my travelling-companion leisurely opened a violin-case beside her, and began touching the strings. She was a little woman, young and pretty,—married, I discovered from the good-looking fellow who had seen her off at Dublin—the brownest of brunettes, with two rows of little white teeth, and the brownest eyes I have ever seen in a human face. She talked delicious Cork, with a soft wail. She was dressed very prettily in artistic colours that brought out her dear brownness. Her music and her books made us conversation, and I found that though she hailed from the Ultima Thule to which she was returning, she was very much of the best part of the world and its ways, thoroughly up to the last new thing in books and pictures and music. I congratulated myself on such a companion in my third-class carriage, for in Ireland people of very small pretensions indeed disdain to travel third-class, and it is usually left to the roughs.

At the first station we stopped at there was a sound of argument in the first-class carriages close by. Then our carriage door was opened, and a couple of men were unceremoniously pushed in, their bundles thrust after them, and the train started on its way. One was a middle-aged man, grey for lack of good living, but the face redeemed from grimness by the most innocent blue eyes, wide open, candid, blue as a child’s eyes. He stumbled over our feet almost sobbing with excitement, clutching to his breast something wrapped in many folds of paper. He was followed by a tall, gawky young fellow, his son evidently, from the likeness between them. The young fellow was ruddier but had the same slow seriousness of look, something quiet and heavy and patient, as though they had no occasion for joy and laughter. One could see them incessantly striving to wring a sustenance from stony rock and exhausted soil, incessantly face to face with the wet climate that, though it gives such beauty of cloud and mist, soddens the potatoes and rots the corn and turns the meadow to bitter rank grass.

Both were greatly disturbed. The boy's blue eyes had even a dash of angry tears in them. Dropped into their seats, they talked for a while in Irish that sounded very fierce. One felt a curious lump in the throat for their hurt and anger, whatever it might be ; it was as if one saw a child or an animal greatly aggrieved. I saw my little friend in the corner watching them with eyes like brown jewels. I think she knew their Irish, or some of it, for she was plainly more in the secret of what was going on than I. At last the excited talk ceased, and the two faces began to take again that look of grave patience which must have been theirs habitually.

Then I saw her lean over and put a dainty finger on the parcel on the elder man's knee.

“ Have you no case for your fiddle ?” she said, “ Won't the damp get in and spoil it as it does mine ?”

“ Spoil her, me lady !” said the man, brightening all over his face, “ is it spoil her ? Och, then, she'd take a power of spoilin', that same fiddle. 'Tis she that knows the hard weather. She's a fine fiddle,” he said, preparing to display “ her” ; “ she'd put the joy in your heart and the spring in your heels at a weddin' or a pattern, but it's at home she's at her best, and many a night she's made Thady here and me forget our troubles.”

The fiddle was carefully lifted out, and three interested heads bent over it, for Thady had joined the conclave. There was a string gone, and my friend volunteered one from her store. While she was arranging it, her soft talk and sympathy got at the trouble we had seen without understanding. As I watched her, the peasant's old fiddle on her knee, while she tuned and strung it, and resined the bow, the two men bent forward, gazing at her manipulation of it with almost incredulous pleasure. I said to her silently,—

“ Well, my dear, whoever you are, the fairies gave you the gift to make men happy. There may be prettier women and wittier women, but the men who love you will find other women unpleasing to come after you.

“ An' so, me lady,” the elder emigrant was saying, “ me an' Thady, that never travelled a mile from Adeelish before, we just got into the grand cushioned carriage as the train was goin'. An' thin we saw a lady, or a woman dressed grand, for she was no lady like you, me lady, sittin' in the corner starin' at us as if we were the dirt under her feet.

“ ‘ Do ye know,’ she says, with the sparks flashin' from her eyes, ‘ that ye're in the first class ?’

“ ‘ Well, me lady, me and Thady didn't want to intrude,’ and we were about to spake her fair when she burst out,—

“ ‘ An' I'll have yez removed by the guard at the very next station, yerselves an' your dirty baggage.’

“ Well, me lady, I could have answered her bitther enough, but me heart was too heavy for it, and sure it's a short world to be fightin' in, so I said nothing ; only Thady, that's young an' fiery, he says, ‘ It's no baggage, it's luggage.’

‘ Baggage it is,’ says she, ‘ an' out you and it shall go.’

“ Well, I just kept the boy quiet—for what's the use of arguin' with a beggar a-horseback

like that ?—and so we said nothing, while she looked out of the window sniffin', as if the sight of us would make her sick. An' so when we came to Emly, we were just putting together our bits of things to get out, when she runs to the window an' calls ' Porter !' In a great flurry, an' complains of me an' the boy travellin' first-class.

“ The porter just spoke her civil, though I saw him winkin' at another porter, an' so we got out ; but before I could reach back for the darlln' fiddle, she comes and pitches it out on the window, an' when it fell I thought it was flesh and blood. The boy here was for pullin' out her own fine portmanty ; an' as for me, all the blood was in me head, but, glory be to God ! the porters pulled us away an' there was no harm done. An' she's no worse for the fall ayther, for she was well swathed around. An' sure it was great good luck, after all, that put us in with such a kind lady as yourself.”

My little friend was as much excited over the story as the actors in it. The way she entered into their pathetic indignation at their bundles being called “ baggage,” which they evidently took to be a term of contempt, was wonderful. Her eyes flashed, and a bit of scarlet came in her brown cheeks as she denounced the fastidious first-class passenger almost with tears of anger. When the commotion was all over, she asked to hear “ her,” and first the father and afterwards the son performed on the poor instrument, jigs, reels, planxtys, giving way slowly to mournful Irish lamentations. After they had gone through their repertoire, Brown Eyes produced her fine fiddle, and, in accordance with delicately urged entreaties, began to play. It was a fine instrument, and a fine hand upon it, and the music at first was from the great masters ; then, having dazzled her audience a little, she began to play Irish airs—“ The Coolun” and “ The Blackbird” and others—while the tears rolled down the faces of the two emigrants.

We were nearly at Cork when the musician came out of her dream. If I ever saw adoration on the faces of human beings, it was on those simple faces. They will talk of her for years and years I am sure. She was consistently gracious, and after they had thanked her and she them, with the prettiest of Irish compliments on each side, they were preparing to put the treasure in its wrappings when the little lady said, “ Oh, but your fiddle would be destroyed by the sea-air, and you could never play on her again in America, you know. Now, I'll get a case in Cork, and you'll make me happy if you'll accept this old case.” And so “ she” was put to sleep in a velvet-lined case such as she had never dreamt of in all her hardworking life.

After we had gone through the long tunnel and emerged in gay sunlight at Cork, she stood up to leave us. She bowed to me with pretty courtesy, but to the emigrants she held out her little hands. The two big fellows dropped down and kissed them as if she were a saint. “ God bless an' keep you,” said the father ; “ we'll think of you in America when we play the fiddle. 'Tis you God made for a lady, an' to be the light of some one's eyes ; and the man that loves you, you'll keep his love while fire burns an' water runs.”

There was a flash of answering tears in her eyes, and she was gone down the platform, her velvet hat pulled forward a little, and daintily graceful in her hooded brown velvet cloak. She passed the first-class passenger, whom I recognized by the emigrants' sullen references, though, indeed, she “ jumped to the eye” by her vulgarity. A couple of apple-women pointed delightedly at this arrogant dame, and one spat out expressively. My poor emigrants dropped into gloom after their benefactress left them, and they looked grey and sad enough, despite the new fiddle-case, by the time we reached Queenstown, where the big liner was steaming heavily near the quay.

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Harvesters.

I WAS going home for Christmas. It was the long tiresome journey from Euston to Dublin. A too careful porter had bundled me into that abomination—a ladies' carriage—and once installed, I had not taken the trouble to change. What did it matter? I was going home to something so sweet that I and my dreams of it made excellent company, amid which the pleasantest companions one could hope for would be intruders. My fellow-travellers excited in me a less lively curiosity than usual. Yet they were not without interest. The lady with the many babies and nurses had left us at Rugby, amid a general feeling of relief that almost made us friends. There was a forlorn little spinster with mittens, and the *Christian* for her literature. There was the usual fat and comfortable lady, with a frivolous yellow-back and an abundance of sandwiches, which she good-naturedly offered all round. There was an extraordinary little girl who knitted incessantly and wore large round glasses over large round eyes. She was of an amazing self-possession, and when a jolly old gentleman nearly invaded our feminine privacy at Northampton, it was she who stood up, and, pointing with a quivering finger at the inscription on the carriage window, repeated, in a majestic voice, the words, "Ladies only," and so put the intruder to flight. She changed at Chester for somewhere or other, and before she left us graciously regretted that I was not going her way, as I might *have taken care of her*. I was rather abashed at this, feeling my entire unsuitability for such an enterprise; but replied, I trust, fittingly. Also there were two High Church Sisters, whom I should have taken for Irish nuns, but that they were in charge of a pleasant-looking Anglican clergyman, who came to look after them at the Stations we stopped at. They dropped their rosaries through their white fingers, and read their office, but added nothing to the sociability. The only other traveller I remember was a soft, languid, lovely-faced woman, dressed in garments of a country cut, who when she left us at a Welsh station was received by a gaitered young farmer, evidently her husband.

"No one for Ireland!" I said to myself, scanning the faces of my travelling companions. Out of Ireland one loves all Irish things so much that an Irish face or voice might have drawn me from my dreams into sociability. Irish faces went by the carriage-windows, and I heard the dear brogue, by fits and starts, at every station; but these belonged to men, or to women in male escort, and happily independent of the ladies' carriage.

None of us intruded on each other, save that detestable little girl. She told us her family history with great frankness; and in an interval between her knitting produced the family photographs from a woollen reticule, and offered them for our inspection. I saw the two Sisters smile at each other with a mundane slyness. The comfortable-looking lady put down her Rita novel, and looked amiably at the faded old photographs, and the awful presentments of children of varying ages, with a strong family likeness to our little girl. Her tide of reminiscences flowed undisturbed till I made a mild joke, which rather put her out. She was very dogmatic as to the correctness of a little silver watch she carried. I opined that Newmarket time—she had told us she came from that sporting town—was sure to be fast. After this she left me severely alone, and her other listener having brazened it out and returned to her Rita, she was perforce silent.

It was at Crewe we got the Irish reinforcement. It was not such as to please my national vanity. The train was almost moving when the door was flung violently open, and two Irish harvestmen precipitated themselves into our midst. I recognized their kind at once; I suppose some extra work had kept them belated when the rest of their kin had flown home—when the

swallows were flying South, and the golden wren was flinging herself over the land's edge on her way to Egypt and the Pyramids.

They spluttered in mixed Gaelic and English as they righted themselves, and got seated ; placing their bundles beside them in the corner seat the shrinking women had left for them. I eyed them with a cold disapproval. The first breath sent a whiff of spirits and coarse tobacco through the carriage. Their clothes reeked wet and unwholesome ; the boots of one, the shorter and stouter of the two, were much in evidence ; they were unlaced, and he had evidently been in a cowshed. I saw the little spinster use her vinaigrette furtively. The matron held her open book well between her face and them. The two Sisters were gently disturbed and unhappy. As for the little girl, the words, " Ladies only !" had frozen on her lips, and she was gazing at them with round eyes of objection. I felt bitter against those poor countrymen of mine for cutting such a figure in English eyes. It was not quite a mean feeling. My bitterness was in proportion to my love of native land, and my impatience of English superiority.

I looked at the two confounding them in a common indignation. The elder man, if I had had but eyes to see it, had a certain dignity. He had the cavernous dark eyes, the olive skin, and the unspeakably mournful look of the Galway peasant. His companion was low-browed, red-haired, stubby-bearded, with little red-brown eyes incessantly twinkling, and a barbarous laugh. He chattered Gaelic to his quiet companion, interspersing it with loud spluttering laughter. He spat on the floor ; he made strange noises ; he sneezed outrageously. Altogether he was a most uncomfortable travelling companion. The climax was reached, however, when he pulled out an abominable pipe and began stuffing it with black twist. His companion nudged him, whispered a few Gaelic words, and looked towards us. Then he spoke for him in a gentle drawl : " Would it disturb the lady if Mick had a pull at the pipe ?" I was as angry with one as the other. I thought I was applied to because I happened to be the best-dressed woman in the carriage. I answered sharply, " No, he can't smoke. These ladies would object, and he has no right to smoke here." Mick was rather inclined to smoke without permission, but his companion finally dissuaded him.

At Chester I got out for a cup of tea, and felt morally certain that my Irish harvestmen would be removed before I came back by the strong arm of the law. I rather wonder that little girl didn't see to it before she collected her own traps. However, I dare say she was a selfish young monkey, and only resented infractions of the law when they seemed to affect herself. She had disappeared when I got back. Her place was taken by a heavily-veiled widow. The harvesters were still there.

They were at the far end of the carriage, which was obscure, that wet December day, and the hurrying porters had not noticed them. I was disgusted. I was half-tempted to invoke the law myself ; only I was Irish, and so, with a rooted conviction that the law always takes the wrong side in a quarrel, I sat down gingerly in my seat opposite to them.

I had hardly sat down when the two stood up. They deposited their bundles, and proceeded to get out of the carriage. I saw they thought the train would not start for an indefinite period, and had been slowly making up their minds to get out. A warning was on my lips, when I drew back cruelly. They were a good riddance I thought. Conscience pricked me, but I answered it : " What does it matter ? At the worst they'll be sent on by the next train ? Why should they gall all these people, and so disgrace the old country ? Besides, they've no *right* here." With which pronouncement I sat firmly back in my corner. I saw the two Sisters look at each other with a deprecating question. No one spoke, however ; but as the two frieze-coated figures disappeared I think we all felt vaguely guilty. There were the two poor bundles staring us in the face ; and suddenly out of a mysterious brown paper

parcel, which the elder man had tenderly deposited in the corner, came a little sweet twitter. There was a bird there, and with the knowledge I suddenly felt an overpowering sense of meanness. I stood up, and hurried to the door. A porter was slamming the doors of the carriages. The train began to move. Just then I saw the two men running. The elder was a good bit ahead. I beckoned to him frantically, somewhat to my own surprise. He gained on the slowly-moving train, and bounded in at the door I held open, just as the pace lengthened. My conscience was salved, even though I saw my other countryman in the grip of two porters, as he was essaying a desperate leap after his companion.

It made me feel doubly guilty when the poor fellow began to shower blessings on me in mixed Gaelic and English. "Sure what would he have done, with all the duress closed an' him not knowin' where to turn, an' his little blind colleen in Kilnaree expecting him to-morrow, sure." I sat with the smug smile of the hypocrite on my lips.

Presently he fell to bemoaning Mick. Mick was all right, I assured him jauntily; he would be despatched by next train. "And you will be at home before him, so that his people won't be anxious," I said. I wasn't really concerned about Mick and his people—not to the extent of inquiring who might be expecting Mick in Kilnaree. Without that too-pronounced companion my friend began to show to advantage. His English was not fluent. It did not seem to rise easily to his lips. What he had was the delightful Irish-English, with the Gaelic idioms transplanted, making the sentences curiously roundabout and discursive. The slowness of speech consorted with the infinite patience of his face. His voice was rich and sweet in its deliberate wail. As he went on talking I could see that there was a reaction of public opinion, and that now it tended in his favour. He was as frank about his poor little affairs as the little girl had been two hours ago, but with a difference. His little colleen—"O, she was blind, from taking the measles when it was a baby, she was, and the mother of her being dead, the creature, there was no one to keep her from getting cold, and the measles they got into her eyes, and she was 'dark' ever since. It's for her the bird is, and 'tis herself will be glad when she hears him singing, for 'tis lonely for a dark child in Kilnaree, an' Mrs. Murphy, that she does live with, my own mother's cousin, 'tis an old woman she is, an' no companion for the *girsha*. But Mary Doyle, that's the priest's housekeeper, an' a good scholar, she writes her the weeny letters, an' so it's not as bad when I do be harvestin' in England as if no word come at all to say was she dead or alive. She fretted terrible when ould Pincher, that we had from a pup, died, so I'm bringin' her the bird, an' would your ladyship like to see it? It has a grand song entirely, an' it's Patrick's Day I'm trying to teach it, but it isn't good at learnin' tunes whatever, only the weeshy song it picks up itself."

He untied the string of the parcel and disclosed a fine green cage, in which a very tiny canary sat all in a chilly little bunch and looked at us inquiringly. He had evidently been kindly treated and knew his friends, for seeing the dark face leaning over him he broke into a glad little whistle. His master looked delighted at the ready recognition, and began to whistle "The Blackbird" very low and sweet. The canary burst into a merry trill of rivalry. So they whistled against each other, man and bird, till the canary's song became rather piercing. Then his master pulled down the brown paper curtain, and the bird retired to sleep, being under the impression it was night.

It was growing to late afternoon, indeed, by this time, and we were approaching Bangor. All the women in the carriage had leaned together over the happy *séance* of music. Our harvester was telling us how he bought the canary from a foreign man with earrings. "He had finches too, an' blackbirds, an' thrushes, an' lonely the creatures looked in their cages. The blackbird, that's cheerful at home wid us, an' lookn' well fed, whin the rest of us can't keep the life in us, sure it's desolate he was an' mopin'. Now, Dick, here, he's used to the cage, and

would be fair lost outin the wide world. I told the fellow some ould *pishrogue* about the unlucklness it was to take the wild birds, but he shook his ringlets an' his earrings, as though he didn't understand. I bought Dick, an' it's the comfort he has been to me, many a time when I'd have been sorrowful widout him."

I asked him weren't the Welsh hills like Ireland. They were looming one after the other out of the rain, and a bit of stormy sunset in the west was turning their wet flanks to vivid rose-colour. " Like the part you come from, me lady," he said, " but wid us at Kilnaree there's no more risin' than dawny little sand-hills, though I'm thinkin' wid the stones on the fields you might build mountains as big as them out there."

We had by this time got to Bangor. I thought he had quite forgotten Mick in our pleasant conversation, but I found he hadn't. He got up when the train slackened. " How long here, yer ladyship ?" he asked. " Five minutes," I replied. " Then I'm thinkin' I'll go spake to the station-master about Mick. It's the first time the boy was in England, an' it's lost he'll be entirely, besides having little of the English." I didn't dissuade him, and he got out with a cheerful warning from his erstwhile reluctant companions to hurry back. But, alas ! the poor fellow had barely plunged towards the booking office when the train was off. I suppose I had made a mistake about the time, or he had been slow in getting out, I saw his despairing look and rush towards the train, but he was too late.. We were flying on toward the Menai Bridge, and he had shared Mick's fate of being left behind.

I suppose our consternation would only be possible to a crowd of women. The misfortune that had seemed so remediable in Mick's case was hopeless in this. It seemed to us all, somehow, as if our guilty acquiescence at Chester had entailed this misfortune. There were the two forlorn bundles, knotted in red-spotted cotton handkerchiefs, and each hung to a stick, staring at us. But the bird was the last touch of the pathos of the situation. We uncovered the cage to see if he was well-provisioned. It was as clean as possible, and seed-drawers and water-pot were full. Poor Dick opened his eyes drowsily at the sudden influx of daylight, and, seeing only strangers, began to fly up and down in terror and bewilderment. I've never thought of Dick since without a pang. We did the best possible. At Holyhead I selected the gentlest-faced porter I could see, and gave the lost canary into his hands, with explicit instructions how to identify its master. I telegraphed back to the station-master at Bangor :—" Let Irish harvestman left behind know his canary awaits him here." Then I went aboard the boat, feeling that I was a miserable creature in spite of my joy ahead. I wonder were the canary and his master reunited ? I wonder how the little " dark" child at Kilnaree took her disappointment of December 22 ? I have no means of knowing. I trust all came right, and for Mick too ; that the Fates were less intolerant to them than one born like those two " kindly Irish of the Irish."

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A Descendant of Irish Earls.

HE sat in my little room on a brilliant day of May, despite that he wore a working-man's respectable cheap suit of tweeds, in face and gaze a reverend signior. The light blue eyes, that had just a film of dreams upon them, regarded me with grave dignity. The long slender olive face, with its finely-pointed beard, was the ideal one for doublet and ruff. Clap the head in an ancient picture frame, and place it alongside a gallery's length of Desmond's Earls, and you would at once recognize the relationship. Certainly not a pretender, and still less, one thought, marking his air of quiet belief in his assertions, a man who pretended to himself, or inwardly fell short of his pretensions. I suppose *noblesse oblige* will bind, or may bind, as surely the inheritor of proud blood and traditions fallen to a trade of glass-making, as one yet

in possession of his inheritance. I do not know if my poor friend was a glass-blower *manqué* because of his Desmond blood ; but sure am I that his dreams wove in the crystals such magic lines of rose and opal that if such things were tangible he were a finer craftsman than the finest of Salviatis. Sitting at his work I make no doubt he blew glass—and other things. Fairy iridescent things that floated between earth and sky, and had in them the glory of a prism. But presently he must needs go home to the tall tenement house in a grimy Dublin street, where wife and weans were depending on his mere prosaic glass-making ; and there, no doubt, the poverty, the crying children, the poor room, would prick that rosy bubble that had floated home with him along the dark streets.

In Dublin one is not often out of sight of the mountains, nor out of smell of the sea. At least these things are nearly always easy to regain. From upper windows one can get a glimpse of the blue hills, these spring days glorified with the rose and purple of the East wind. These same East-windy mornings the salt breath of the sea comes up through the streets, reminding one delightfully that Dublin is a seaboard city. G—— Street, however, though the tenements be leaning over from height and ricketiness, affords one no glimpse of the mountains ; and though a five minutes' walk will bring you in sight of Howth, like a sapphire in the bay, the sea-strand you will come upon is little more than mud-banks and sewage deposit, and from that blows no sea-salt, bright and sweet.

On the street itself is writ large, as with many of its neighbours, *Ichabod*. These were the dwellings of the peers and gentlemen-commoners of Ireland in the palmy days before the Union, the days that no legislation will restore, any more than it will “ The glory that was Greece, and the grandeur that was Rome.” The houses have forlorn remnants of bygone splendour. Doors and window-shutters are of wine-red mahogany, rich and ancient. Ornate decorations in Italian stucco-work are on walls and ceiling. Why, here Angelica Kauffmann may have worked herself, for she came over in that reign of splendour, the Rutland Vice-royalty, to decorate some of these houses, the Irish nobility having singularly munificent ideas about decoration, and the best artists to perform it.

It was of a Bank-holiday my Desmond visited me. Any other day he had been at his glass-blowing. I suppose it was delightful to him to get out of the dark street, and come by lanes of bloomy hawthorn, and fields of white and gold, with scarce a grass-blade between, and to find at the end of that delightful journey—sympathy. I suppose the wife was a little intolerant of her earl-presumptive. I am sure the children were, especially the two elder ones, a boy and a girl grown enough to be employed respectably as a post-office sorter and an apprentice to the dressmaking, respectively. After all, when one is earning one's money, and well-content with the state of life in which God has placed one, it is somewhat irritating to have a father who is a pseudo-earl, and with very serious ideas of the ways and manners incumbent on one because there is in one's veins the blood of nobles, saints and warriors, who are come to be less than dust, and of no possible use to their descendants.

He came to me for sympathy because he had seen an article of mine about Youghal, once the seat of the Desmond power, in which I had been enthusiastic over that great line—a line rather of Irish princes than of Anglo-Irish earls. Between them and their cousins, the Kildare Fitzgeralds, they pretty well halved Ireland. Indeed all the great Southern and Eastern expanse of Ireland would have been theirs, except for a race sprung from a plaguy fellow who was Henry the Second's butler, and had founded a race of Butlers, great in brain-power as well as in thew and sinew. These and the Fitzgeralds hated each other with a bitter rivalry. However, my Fitzgerald of Desmond thought upon me as one likely to understand what he had inherited. And, poor soul, he had grown tired of trying to air in the

columns of newspapers—mostly closed to him as a poor bore—the fact that he was the lineal descendant of the great Earls of Desmond, and that he would like to know on what basis certain ladies of wealth and position rested their claims to dispossess him of his honours.

He had come to prove his claims to one interested listener. Therefore he waved away all offer of refreshment ; and producing from an old portfolio, which he carried as if it contained the Crown jewels, various documents, he demanded my attention for them. Each was tied and folded with scrupulous care ; each wrapped in layers of tissue-paper. They were worn so thin that they needed such protection. “ I am in the habit of perusing them frequently, madam,” he said in his formal manner, and gazing at me over his great spectacles. It was easy to see that by the way he followed from a distance my reading of the MSS.

There was an elaborate and careful account of his derivation from Garrett Fitzgerald, nineteenth Earl of Desmond, and his wife Helen, daughter of Lord Richard Condon. His grandmother, Elizabeth Fitzgerald, was the grand-daughter of this last Fitzgerald to bear the title of Earl Desmond. They were three forlorn damsels, Elizabeth, Elleanor, and Helen, tricked of their inheritance as effectually as was their ancestor in 1589, by Sir Walter Raleigh, who was himself stript bare by the most astute Earl of Cork, thirteen years later. They had friends, however, if they had not gear, and no doubt were made much of in the gay Dublin of their time. The lovely Isabella, Duchess of Rutland, was their fast friend and sympathizer. One thinks of her protecting the wronged and innocent, for ever fresh and lovely, as Sir Joshua Reynolds painted her ; or as she shines out of a contemporary record at a Rotunda Gardens fête, in a dress of pink silk with a stomacher and sleeve-knots of diamonds, and a great hat of brown velvet, sideways on her charming powdered head, set with a plume of feathers and an aigrette of diamonds. Perhaps the three damsels danced at those Rotunda balls, for their cousin, the Earl of Grandison, or their magnificent duchess, would surely never have allowed them to languish in genteel poverty.

Helen, a woman of spirit, proceeded against the Duke of Devonshire for the restoration of their lost acres. But being single-handed and a woman, she failed, poor soul, and taking her failure to heart, died of it. I have forgotten about Elleanor ; but Elizabeth, my Desmond’s grandmother, married a very gallant soldier, who afterwards was killed at the Battle of Bunker’s Hill. So my Desmond has a lien with American earth.

If the Duke of Rutland had not taken a putrid fever after a gay progress through the North of Ireland, and died of it after a few days’ illness, my sketch need never have been written. The duchess was so interested in her *protégées* that she had obtained the Duke’s promise to settle a handsome pension upon them. No doubt, too, she would have been a powerful friend in any new effort they should make to win back their own. However, the Duke died ; the gay days of the Rutland reign were over : her Grace fled back to England a forlorn widow ; and there settled on Ireland the black shadow of the approaching Rebellion. And so the wrong went quite unrighted.

That it was acknowledged to a certain extent was shown by the fact that my Desmond’s father enjoyed during his lifetime a small State pension, which, however, lapsed with his death.

I can see as I write the grave olive face with the eyes regarding me. What an unsettling thing for a common worker in glass to be lineal descendant of so proud a line! I have said they were Irish princes. They were ; in their power, the extent of their territories, and their haughty bearing towards the race from whose loins they had sprung. More Irish than the Irish, such were the Fitzgeralds, alike of Desmond and Kildare ; but yet no Irish princes of a

half-barbarous magnificence. Rather with all the stately splendour of the Courts of the Middle Ages superadded to their free life ; with traditions of church-building and college-founding, as you will know, seeing their remains at Youghal, where is their college, and the Church of St. Mary's, and the Warden's House of one magnificent foundation ; and the town yet landmarked on North and South by the ruins of the abbeys built by them for the great mendicant Friars of the Middle Ages, Franciscan and Dominican. And along Blackwater, most lovely of rivers, all burnished copper and gold in the Autumn because of the overhanging woods, every high crag has its castle in ruins, once the proud eyrie of a Desmond Earl.

The Atlantic roars like wild bulls at the strand of Youghal. On the mildest day the air is full of its thud and reverberation, and ever a shower of silver spray springs above the strong sea-wall. It must be magnificent in storm. Where the harbour of Youghal narrows to the mouth of Blackwater, one is ferried across to holy Ardmore of St. Declan, with its church and holy well, and St. Declan's stone. Across the ferry is county Waterford. In Ardmore long ago they buried a Desmond Earl ; but, exiled from his own Temple-Michael on the Blackwater, his spirit would not rest. So every night, over the breakers and the storm they heard a strange, great voice, crying terribly, " Garoult arointha ! arointha,"—which is " Hurry over ! Give Gerald a ferry." So at last they took up the unquiet dead, and ferried him to Temple-Michael, where his sleep was sound.

A race of giants certainly. In Youghal streets, ghostly in the autumn weather, what shadows elbow each other ! Knights Templars, Desmonds, Elizabethans, Spenser and Raleigh, Noll Cromwell and his Round-heads. The past of Youghal is great and misty, like a huge tapestry blown with the sea-wind, on which stir gigantic figures of knights and horsemen. But of the great and magnificent Desmonds remains this—an old man with a wallet of yellow papers, escaped from an irksome trade one hour of a summer day, to pour into the ears of a willing listener his mouldy old tale, at which the well-fed, well-clad world had gaped and shrugged its impertinent shoulders.

A cluster of nuts ; being sketches among my own people (1894)

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