

Dublin This Town

The glamour of Dublin

D. L. Kelleher.

1920

FOREWORD.

THE READER IS WELCOMED IN.

ERE ever Helen brought down the Eastern world for the sake of the captive tears she shed, before Plato grew wise or Hannibal marched away, there were tales of Troy and Tyre and Carthage here.

And often there was a flutter over the water and a shake of the stepping-stones by Whitworth Bridge as a pilgrim or a bandit, or an envoy or some runaway sailor out of a ship from Sidon crossed to take the Tara road. For you will hear of Firbolgs and Fomorians, and Tuatha de Danaans, and Milesians and Phoenicians ; some of them arrived not long after the Flood. And, for certain, they were smelting gold already in the forests “ east of the Liffey ” about 1200 B.C. close by this Dublin, auriferous now in the gold of the spirit as who that dwells herein must know.

To all then who cherish a care or a curiosity for the story of the town I offer this book of colours. It is pictorial, and it is as true as it may be ; since truth without colour is but a conceit of infallibility or the dull light of a barren mind. Enter, at once, then reader to your gallery of words.

The Glamour of Dublin.

The Curtain Rises in O'Connell Street.

“ No man has a right to fix a boundary to the march of a Nation.” Thus, it is written in bronze at the base of a shaft of stone. And, before it, the bronze impenetrable Parnell stands confronting the centuries now at the top of O'Connell Street, in Dublin City. Straight down the wild boulevard he looks towards the Bridge, and red flushes sweep over his face as though life were flowing in the metal again. It is not he indeed who has done this immediate thing, but, in the refracted air, those limbs of his seem to strain forward and that outstretched arm quivers a little as though waving his people on. “ No man can set a boundary.” And, lo ! they are thrusting at the frontiers again to-day ! For this is the hour of Illusion in Europe, with “ Freedom ” and “ Right ” and “ Small Nations ” and “ Truth ” upon every Imperial breeze. Till, here too, youth, so incurably good, so splendidly bold, is beguiled by the call, and, however few, will hazard the proving of its faith even to the death for its own little land. As, behold, over there that Post Office, a nest of poets and impassioned young fellows firing guns and breathing hard with the inspiration of a great ideal in their breasts ! For rebellion is loose, and those desperate lovers have run up their Republican ensign and taken the eyes of beholders from distant housetops with a kind of troubled ecstasy—and the end of it all by that fish-shop window in Moore Street over the way. For the English General Lowe has “ come round in his car ” to parley on the flag-stones with Patrick Pearse, this Schoolmaster to whom so long

“ voices” had been vouchsafed till he donned his armour and marched away. And so with a squad of troops, Staffordshire lads from homes that seldom bred a dream, forward he goes to judgment and the final volley on Kilmainham Square—Patrick Higgins Pearse, the London man’s son, whose heart “ was all a hive for Ireland’s sake.”

So, speed thee, daring fellow ! Speed thee well ! “ A friend ?” “ Pass, friend,” the answer given at seraphic gates wherever, east of the moon, the jasper hinges turn.

Sackville Street.

Thomas Carlyle.

Up there in that Imperial Hotel, a superman—if ever the stupid word signifies—to-night does the mere human act of pulling down his bedroom blind. For poet cum dyspeptic cum sage, he is new-arrived in Ireland this mild September evening, and already, though he has had but a glance of us at close quarters, he is reeling to his ironical ropes. The handsome, dark-eyed, sallow philosopher with those long trails of hair over his ears and down the back of his neck, dishevelled as is the soul of the fellow himself, abolishes us with a phrase as he fills his diary on the little table by the bed—“ A brawling and unreasonable people” his first and almost his last epigram upon us, though behind his chlorosis he loved us just a little too. So he settles to sleep, having missed two who were to have met him at Drogheda, and who had blundered as to the place. For John Mitchel and Charles Gavan Duffy were eager to greet this Thomas Carlyle, and when they discovered him later in his hotel, whither the 1916 revolutionaries came aptly in their time too, it was to find him fully convinced that Dublin was and would be “ the breaking-point of the huge suppuration, which all European society now is.” So, fascinated and appalled, he will return to tour all Ireland in 1849, Craigenputtock in frightful eruption of irony again at sight of the elaborate futilities that were the masterpiece of England’s effort to convert the Irish Celt into a loyal citizen of Empire.

The Central Bridges.

THE tragedy of utility is in the heart of Dublin as of London. The great Thames view from St. Paul’s away to Vauxhall, which is naturally one of the most impressive of river vistas, is marred and broken by the railway bridge of Charing Cross just as the Liffey panorama is wrecked by the Railway and Butt bridges above the Custom House. It is low violence thus for a convention of trade to destroy that “ vision” out of which, elementally, the impulse of all trade must arise. And it is not “ economic” either in any sense.

For here in Dublin is a little crescent of river with the Custom House set therein, dignity, strength, restraint, and fine proportion in its lines and altitudes. So that the citizen *en route* across his capital may, looking down stream, worship a moment as he passes. Until vandal nineteenth century comes with the Procuress, Science, and out of that are born the blind and crippled bridges ; and no citizen at all may any more look from the Central town east along his shining stream, castaway east where hope is born and the great sun rises to the day. And how we have lost you may see any night too that you go down to the port side of that Butt Bridge (so aptly named !) There past the North Wall and Ringsend is the cavalcade of ships, and out on the sea-line—for there is sea-vision as well as river-vision now—the little light-towers leap red and white from the water with wavings of hail and farewell for the vessels of Ultima Thule.

In Antwerp where a railway has invaded the city the causeway that carries it shines like a battlement over the street. At Edinburgh they have buried their trains deep in a glade in the heart of the town. London, scourged of her scorings by the lashes of the new day, is uneasy for a little beauty such as these lesser cities have. Soon they will take their railway bridge from off the Thames and leave the ancient “ford of Westmynstere” free again.

So Dublin in her new time will have to achieve a like task. The Butt Bridge and the beetle bridge above it must be dropped away into the abyss. Ancient Ireland recovering her majesty in a world so long strangely and savagely unjust must carry herself heroically in the time of redemption. The first work of the first Ministry of Public Works in Dublin must be a front and flank attack on the ignoble bridges, so that all of us again from the central city may look eastward where the free stars rise.

Pre-Historic Dublin.

ON this modern O’Connell Bridge, moist and muggy of a late autumn day, let us pause and lo ! the city is become a hermitage again. We are back long ages in thought to a time when none at all were born here for their ant-hour upon earth, ages beyond the calculators when this river valley and all about were solid ice moving stealthily in half-mile deep formation to the sea. For everywhere, as the geologists can prove, the glaciers came “secret and serene” to the channel-tides, and later again this old harbour of ours, they know, was heaved up and sucked under and once again cast forth in the titan-writhings of the years. So that even now within the present shore-line of Dublin Bay you can see an older shore-line where the boulder-clay was denuded earlier by wave-erosion. Then the tide flowed up into Rutland Square and over College Green, while Howth was yet an island with Pembroke and Sutton flat and sandy beneath the sea.

The Abbey Theatre.

AND here at hand now is the Abbey Theatre, in its own little way a wonder of Europe. For even as Steele first, and later Goldsmith and Sheridan, and again Shaw came to the rescue of an English drama periodically in decay from a low national culture, so in the early twentieth century a stimulus has come out of a dingy place beside the Liffey in Middle Abbey Street, wherein W. B. Yeats, a poet-errant, one William Fay, a Coffee-palace actor, and George Russell, the bearded Plato, who had long been functioning apart, met and created the new art. Though indeed the intense little movement was in danger from want of funds until that great Aberdonian, Miss Horniman, who had made her hobby in the theatre, came to the help of Ireland, and out of her generosity and enthusiasm the Dublin House was purchased and subsidised for its cause. From which conjunction soon a full immortal arrived, a strange, scrubby fellow, J. M. Synge, with his “Riders to the Sea,” one of the master pictures of life in the whole dramatic literature of the world ; and, further, that “Kathleen ni Houlihan,” the patriot’s prayer, and the “Rising of the Moon,” so rich and deep, and “Birthright” with its fighting horror—these alone sufficient prelude to the great future Irish Theatre in Dublin town.

Liberty Hall.

Larkin And Connolly.

IN the little back room off the landing they are talking it over, Jim Larkin and James Connolly, good old Irish names, very disturbing to the observant world just now, as you may read in a Geneva daily paper or in a stop press in Tokio. For in this world where Feudalism has as yet been only exchanged for Capitalism, there is universal curiosity, a kind of love even, whenever a man cries out against the bargain be he ever so blind in his method of protest. And so this Jim Larkin who roars his indignation against Dublin's slums and the slave wages of half of the people in them is not without sympathy far and near : a truculent talkative fellow who drops his H's a little, behind his half-cruel, half-Caronesque face he has a brain full of adventurous ideas, and a whirl of longed-for lime-lights burns in his eyes. Gesture and rhapsodies are his normal outward mood, so different from James Connolly, restrained and benign, knowing well how this herculean hysteria of Larkin's can be the motive power of great causes. And so now in this Dublin, city of receptivities in the emotional progress of man, Larkin will launch the sympathetic strike and hold up the town, social reformer and highwayman, happiest in his shirt-sleeves hammering up a platform for Labour, wielding the hammer figuratively all the time too, his work prospering, he believes, so long as another nail is driven in the "coffin of capitalism." So these two, Connolly and Larkin, in the ramshackle corner house by Butt Bridge win fame. Liberty Hall they have christened it in a mood of boulevardier of the French Revolution, and so insistently will it demand Liberty that in Easter 1916 Imperialism, angered by the challenge, will despatch a little gun-boat at once to blow it away, Connolly taking the laurel from a firing-squad a few days later, and Jim Larkin hearing the fiery fame in his exile in the Southern Seas. One victor left behind in Dublin to survey the passing of the master-anarchists—if victor be the word this William Martin Murphy, plutocrat, who, frankly and fiercely, if against the bias of instinctive justice, has fought the proletarians back to their burrows : William Murphy, the sphinx-bearded, pale man, past sixty, thin-spare with a delicate æsthetic stoop of his head, walking in and out of the young men's Cafes in this Dublin, the half of whose newspapers, dry-goods, tramways and transports he owns.

Trinity College, Dublin.

The Magical Wicket-Gate.

PASSING out from College on a day when only the little wicket of the great main door is open, a magical scene unfolds as you come into the arch, a view only of the pillared Parliament House across the way, with the green trees like a ribbon about it, the very air and ease of classical Greece in the stateliness out of which one goes to this picture of dignity hung outside. Plato indeed might move untroubled over such a scene and halt for his Socrates by the porters' lodge, until, emerging, there is eclipse. For Dame Street widens into view and that brazen infirmity of King William on his horse abolishes beauty by its imperial conceit.

Aston's Place.

The Poet's Revue.

ASTON'S PLACE, they call it, and many barges tie up there with freightage of books, the colouis of them deep and crowded as the souls of the authors who made them. For nothing so mellows a book as a little exposure to wind and rain, and faded bindings are sesame to romance in the eyes of the customers there. And Aston's Place is the second-hand book street of Ireland, whence for sixpence or less you may purchase all that Homer and the "poets of Dingle Bay" invented in their hours of inspiration. If, too, you be in the confidence of the barrow-man, he will tell you the names of his patrons as they take the Saturday afternoon salute : Professor Dott, the eccentric from the University ; Mr. Flame, the poet who sets the heather on fire with his sonnets over Howth ; Sharp, the critic, not granted the " Mr." because of the vitriol he throws ; Crape, the dramatist, who practises in death-agonies at the Abbey, a motley revue of the literary town turned bargainer of books on its Saturday voyage through Aston's Place.

Via Dame Street.

To reach the heart of old Dublin you must set out by way of Dame Street and along past Napper Tandy's house into Thomas Street. You will see Lord Edward Street take a Continental aspect with its modern buildings and the shining trees alongside that need only a cafe-table for illusion of France. By contrast then the square towers of Christ Church above make a monastic calm in the midst of the rookeries of slums. Passing on you will catch glimpses of Oxmantown across the river with the dome of the Four Courts, the belfry of St. Michan's, and the pointed shaft of the great Capuchin Church. It is a five minutes' panorama of a welded city with all its religion and old dignity in microcosm there. And for the moment you may forget how abandoned a place this Dublin new and old really is with its barracked tenements the most squalid in Europe, and such cellar-shelter for the working folk as snails might crawl out of in contempt of man ; and, by a splendid irony, here too within sound of the anthems in stately Christ Church and within scent of the huddled poor in their dens is the vast and fuming Guinness's Brewery at St. James's Gate !

" So breed and burrow, eke existence out,
Though life be muddied, lustrous is the Stout."

Aungier Street.

Tom Moore

" O LOOK, look at the moon and it shining like father's watch !" and "Won't it be grand at Sandymount to-morrow and it making six-pences in the sea!" And again, " Such stars ! more colours than all the bottles on the shelves in the shop." Until, for answer, one cries, "I'll put you up in the stars, I tell you, if you don't stop that talk" ; and another, too tired for argument, rises and aims a pillow at the child's head ; and a third, with cabalistic mutterings against the disturbers, covers himself deep in the cloths. Whereupon Puck and Aladdin and Tytyl that are hid in the boy's heart rise up and bid him back to his bed. So there is peace in the second floor room of the grocery, of No. 12, Aungier Street, where Tommy Moore, the ten-year-old restless quicksilver lad shares quarters, because of his camaraderie, with the three gallant

fellows, his father's assistants, who all day manœuvre with the tea-scoop or dare the perils of cork-drawing for the thirsty town.

Dame Street.

Peg Woffington.

GEORGE'S COURT is deep in a swamp of slums. Hope ends at the confines of such a place and hell is near. In the one-room flats around children learn by observation such mysteries of existence as pass comfortable folk by till manhood or sudden disaster is at hand. Birth and death are too hackneyed even for a joke since you sleep so often in the odour of them here. So this little girl of ten is as cute in the year of grace 1728 as half the psychologists in the colleges elsewhere. For she has happened into a world egregiously full of misery and hunger. That bricklayer father of hers, an honest dullard fellow, is dead already these five years, and this elder girl must set out and be day-labourer herself, dragging water from the Lifrey to the houses of wealthy folk, a darling little face and flowing hair for ever smiling under her pitcher of red-brown ware, until the Court knows her as the "brave little woman," and rich customers of hers, seeing the cherub-cheeks at their kitchen window, silently lament the saving ugliness of their own well-groomed girls. So the Greuze picture shines to and fro, until one day, in Fownes Street, a certain tight rope dancer catches sight of the seraph, and, scenting profit in the face, hires her for the troupe of small children out of whom a new vogue of drama is about to spread in Dublin. And behind Lord Justice Whiteside's house in a booth in Fownes Street here is the ex-water carrier, aged ten only, Polly Peachem in "Beggar's Opera," one of the sensations of the theatrical hour. A rare little diva she is, joining her mother, the orange-seller, after the "show," at the corner of Fownes Court, counting and packing the unsold oranges and helping home with the burthen then. Gallant, lofty little soul, those dancing curls supple and sweet about thy head, no serpents coiling in them yet, nor meshes spread for men's eyes. Though later via Smock Alley, and Drury Lane, and the Salons of London town, Fame will track thee down, and infamy wait like a jackal for the dead. Poor Peg Woffington, indeed, Dublin stonemason's daughter, who soon shall need the builder's skill again. For down there at Teddington-on-Thames, nor yet forty years old, at the end of all thy exotic nights the carved tomb claims thee :

Oh shining hair, and mouth of all delight,
Not love nor glory shorten now the night !

Dublin Castle.

HALT here, stranger, and brace your heart. For this is the bottomless pit with dregs of a hundred tyrannies, and on it such a scum of bigotry and mere misunderstanding as no sun may pierce, and the gate thereto dark and sinister as one of the locks on the styx itself ; with a stygian fitness too. For here above it is a stone Justice with her balance and her blinded eyes, aloof and indifferent to the city's welfare, though the gutter grumbles down on this night when rain and wind issue like snakes out of the bursting sacks of cloud. Aloof and callous, indeed, she is, the most cunning intelligence in that figure of hers thus with her back turned to the street, Justice surely here most literally turning her back these long years upon the people, her balance only for the eyes of the supreme Ambassadors and Lords Governors imported into the Throne-room from that queen city of shopkeeping on Thames. Though now from her

stone eyes she can almost look rebuking at this final infamy. Over there across the Upper Castle Yard the windows of the State apartments are lighted up and shadows grow and vanish as the two plotters rise and pace the room and re-settle again into their chairs with sharp staccato speech :—

“ He wants a bigger bribe ?”

“ Yes, £5,000 at least.”

“ Could we not try another way ?”

“ You mean the woman from Kildare ?”

“ To give her a title—whose mistress is she ?”

Poor Justice ! how art thou prostituted now. For these two are Cornwallis and Castlereagh, and the time is December, 1799, and in a month or so the great bribe will have achieved the great betrayal, and the Union of England and Ireland will be complete. So haste thee in, Mistress, and summon thy dancers, O Peer, for now the Levee is prepared and all who sold their country to the gifts of Cornwallis and Castlereagh may trip it featly with their foreign seducers in the routs of Empire at Dublin Castle here.

Swift And Stella.

SUCH a night with clouds falling from the stars like hair unbound, and a lamenting wind moping and wandering over the city till even he shudders in that lamplit room, poring strangely over his papers, noting down and stopping with a start to drop his pen and strike with his palms upon the table and recover from an agony and so write again. Here in his Dean's House, now fallen to be Police Station, is Swift the satirist, Swift the vitriol-tongue who can burn a parliament away with a phrase, Swift whose fame all envy but whose self there is none more to love. For over there by those torches and tapers they are laying her deep to-night in the Cathedral corner, out of his reach entirely now who has tortured her with riddles too long. No music at the end nor sunlight streaming through a painted window, no plumes but the smoke-wreaths of the pine, no tender organ notes to dim the dry coughing of the older clergy, and the “ clatch, clatch” of shovels struck into the clay. So lay her down and leave her to the pitying dark, poor Stella who has been beguiled and baffled and wrecked by this intellect and enigma of the awful Swift. And for him as he drops his head upon his crossed palms while the lamp gutters out on the deanery room a little pity too ! For, colossus of his day, yet does malign Fate stride him down with a fearful physical ill. And from his gloom and his secret hide, ye kind stars ! and pass quickly telling it not to his neighbours, thou lamenting wind !

York Street

J. C. Mangan.

AT No. 6, in that Scrivener's office on the first floor back, himself papyrus-cheeked amid the bleached folios all about him, copying, copying for his couple of shillings a day, as desperate and more pathetic even than Rousseau in his Genevese garret, here is Mangan, that voice of ultimate grief out of his generation, Mangan the shattered fool now after his fearful

days in heaven ! For he has been a fool, in the poet's way, and he has no longer the strength to outlive his chastisement. Those hospitable sisters, one of whom he loved, the three Graces of his dream, have made his life a bitter book however sweet the melody heard long after ; " friends," indeed, who had played upon him for an emotion that sang upward like a flame in one of the still places of Paradise, and who, for the conceit of his company, had sacrificed their immortal name ! and thus to hallsteps and open porches the " lonely one" wended his way, stretching out with roués and knowing not the company at all, since Grief only and torturing memories were beside him. So drink your opium down and stagger on, poor fool, on and away from this town and this world into which you strayed, dreaming it was a star, on and at last home to a kind and waiting Master some where beyond the horizon who welcomes the singing outcasts in !

Harcourt Street

W. B. Yeats.

AND farther down there jostled by a laundry and a railway station is the High School of Dublin, a spread-eagle of a place with a wide arid playground made bleaker by reason of the big hawthorn tree stuck in the middle of it. Puritanism railed in you would say to look at the pit-brow sort of buildings hiding away a quadrangle of cobble-stones and the relics of a mews. But, in defiance of the environment, great pupils have happened there. As behold that willowy paste-coloured fellow in the corner ! The despair of his masters, poor devils trained to the commonplace themselves, the joy and often the wonder of his fellow pupils, he is busy with his beetles hidden in old matchboxes or creeping over the desk while Mathematics are on blackboard and the discipline is lax. " We worked amid a babel of voices," he says in his own story of the school, and fortunately for the boy himself, since amid the disorder he was able to escape unnoticed and divert himself in the mysteries of his own mind. For this youth is soon to be the master-poseur of his generation and a very considerable poet therewith, William Butler Yeats of Dublin and Innisfree, expert in fairies, very pallid, affecting the sombrero, a genius, quite conscious always of his title to fame.

Merrion Square.

Oscar Wilde.

HERE at the north-western corner in that house with the glass gallery along its second floor lived an Irishman, immortal now by many tests, son of Sir William and Lady Wilde, a " child of decay," one Oscar, at whose birth, they say, the exotics in the glass-house drooped with a new perfume ; and fitly and mystically so, for here, indeed, was one of the enchanted gardens of Dublin's post-Georgian town, Lady Wilde herself a poetess of resurgent Ireland, and Sir William, her husband, already noted for his skill as a Medical Specialist no less than for secret rumours of his spirit and Faith. All Merrion Square was then a rout of balls and parties and echoes of earlier days, and the torches of the link-boys were not too long borne by for a little scent of the pitch to hang about the porches still. And this poet-pale young fellow, six feet high, with the intensely supercilious mouth and an abominable condescension in the set of his chin, on his way with his brother and mother every Sunday to Grangegorman Church annoys the neighbours greatly by his calculated pose ; Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty Wilde, maniac and artist, the most distinguished outcast after MacMurrough that Dublin has ever yet known.

Ringsend.

Oliver Cromwell.

HERE, on a wild day in July, 1649, came ashore from his armed sloop in a small boat to the strand the master-villain of Irish story. And look, as he steps down, the sailors smother their curses awhile at being cast on this cursed isle, and his soldiers are more steel-faced now in the menace of massacre that is in his eye. For this is the fiend Cromwell, who can play silly pranks in his own home like all disguised hedonists and unimaginative fellows ; Oliver Cromwell, who once put a whole new-baked meat pie on a guest's chair and chuckled when his victim rose smeared with mutton fat, the very Oliver Cromwell who, a week before had started in a pageant of "pressed" aristocrats from Whitehall, in London, with a hymn to the Lord to look upon his high emprise and to be with him even within the walls of Drogheda when "women and friars" should be "knocked upon the head." The fearfulest visitor who ever yet stepped ashore, surely, at old Ringsend, as yet a little place of a hundred inhabitants, with a great loop of water about it between Irishtown and Beggar's Bush, where the "wood of the highwayman" was. For Cromwell looking westward could see but a watery Dublin, with the tide lapping along a line from Denzille Street and by Great Brunswick and Townsend Streets to T.C.D. ; almost even to Merrion Square, that pool later of Georgian decorum and doctor's houses, though yet a beach with flotsam of the waters and children picking their way about it in search of strange finds from the mermen of the Irish Sea.

The Whitworth Bridge

St. Patrick.

STAND awhile, friend, respectful and contained as this pilgrim goes by. A simple bedesman truly with down-looking eyes that meditate a great hereafter, quiet-gowned and sandalled in the humble palmer's way, though under his mean apparel somewhere the "looms of heaven are moving over his heart." And as he picks his steps over the ford of Baile Ath Cliath there by the Whitworth Bridge of our day see that aged boatman bow and cross himself thus by some divine premonition enlightened of God, and knowing as the palmer moves up and away through Oxmantown by the Tara road that he indeed is Patrick yet to touch the heart of Kings and so to be sung forever by river folk and mountainy men in this Ireland that he will sanctify to all her shores.

North King Street.

A Duchess-Nun.

THIS North King Street has ever been an ascetic and awful place, even down to our Rebellion of 1916. For here it was that Fanny Jennings of the "fairy face" turned her eyes at last from the town and dressed for doom. You will read of the two sisters, one, Duchess of Marlboro' herself, in England, and the other our Duchess of Tyrconnell, in Ireland, and how this latter loving and beloved, and rejoicing and being flattered, passed from triumph to triumph in the social town until, at last, in her seventieth year, Peace came to her in a wondrous way. For in this bare convent just opposite that modern St. Paul's Church my lady takes the habit and is Abbess soon with her sloped deal bed and her naked feet in this house of the Irish Poor Clares. So all her high memories of the pageantry of Whitehall with the

second James and of the lure of Dublin Courts with her mighty Tyrconnell fade and fall, and nothing is left but the image of the stable and the bare walls that are near to Bethlehem,

Parnell Street.

The Beautiful Gunnings.

THE beautiful Gunnings once indeed graced this purlieu of old shops and battered flats, widow and two daughters half-paupers now that their father the Roscommon landlord has died leaving them a strange inheritance. For, loose from decorum, dizzied perhaps too by the utter loveliness of these children of his, he had rioted his estates away. And for this Maria, only six, and her sister five at his death, Britain Street was the Limbo until their own effulgence found heaven again, though slowly to be sure, as that bailiff sitting down by the table could tell, if he cared to, while the seraphim cling to their mother's skirts. Saved from eviction this time, however, behold the babes grown now to decoy-duck stature ! And who is this benefactress in a dressing-room of the Smock Alley Theatre on a night after the show ? Peg Woffington herself, queen of the people's eyes, who hears of the adorable girls and so robes them with her own stage-silks, fitting and tucking and taking in till they emerge to the viceregal ball the two best-tailored, most angel-faced debutantes ever seen upon the sardonic floors of viceregalty in Erin's Isle. And so away with that skilled pilot of a mother, away they are swift on the admiring flood until soon in 1752 Elizabeth, but eighteen, and Maria, just a little more, Duchess of Hamilton and Countess of Coventry, they are English aristo-crats, bought for their beauty by coronets and swift desire, the bailiff far to windward of them now, the fortunate isles everywhere, prosperity aflame—sunrise or set, what matters so long as the colour is bright and Venus and all the other illusions are aloft ! Mean, miserable, noxious Gunnings, who never paid Peg Woffington the pounds she lent you when you were very poor ! Beggars on horseback, beautiful, aye ! but whither did you ride ?

Belvedere House.

Mary Molesworth.

HERE the whirligig has made strange turnings. For this Belvedere House that now is a secret, stately home of the Jesuit Fathers had once less seemly company. And up this grand staircase with the flowery stucco walls, and into its rooms lush with painted Cupids, and down those curtained corridors through which the music of the great organ seemed to flow like a river of balm well, what should follow after save the eternal sequel ? Love and passion, and the bacchanal surge ; and shame, and forgiveness and death ; and song, a halo to end the tale ! So you may see her on a landing now when the moon is full, or on Hallow E'en and she passing the windows in her luminous shroud, Mary Molesworth, a girl whom this old English debauchee Colonel Rochfort claimed for tribute, and, shy, graceful, as she was, made bold and indecorous by his unwelcome assault. And so she must marry him since her Irish parents compel it too, and lie upon the rack many times in childbirth for one who keeps her as a provincial concubine is kept and passes easy hours far off in London town himself. Until one day news and a dossier of letters are delivered to him at the second George's Court in Whitehall, this harem-wife of his, a woman for all, he finds, with the daring of a woman who is long ill-used. So Rochfort reads and sickens and vows revenge. And next month and for seventeen years more until he dies, her children torn from her, and with twenty servants to mock her with their eyes, she is shut up in a house at Gaulstown, at Westmeath, who dared think and be faithless while her old reprobate husband lived in London and forgot

her at the Court of the King. So draw the curtains close and dim the lights, for the moon is full to-night, and lo ! she comes working her Purgatory again.

Amiens Street.

Belfast In Dublin.

AND for the other civilisation that is in Ireland, the composite, intensive, “ practical,” narrow, immediately successful civilisation, you must travel due east from the focal ugliness of Nelson’s Pillar, to the Great Northern Railway Station at Amiens Street. Thereabout is a little teeming thoroughfare of shops, such as you would step straight into in a roaring mill-city of Lancashire, or in a wool-town of Yorks. The Ulster man sets out and arrives right here, and the crowded prosperity of his character is already reflected in this toy town of Belfast-in-Dublin, from Talbot Street to the Great Northern terminus.

The railway station itself, indeed, is the finest, cleanest, and best appointed out of Belfast, and if the stern and unbending “ North” is to be maligned it must receive its honours, too, for the neatness and the disciplined proportions of much of its life as exemplified in the railway headquarters in Dublin. And a great glory too hallows all this region of shops and teeming streets. For east along they marched this way from Kilmainham long ago on those nights when death was preparing for the Danes, and north of that railway arch, hear the sentry’s challenge again : “ For Brian ?” “ Aye, Brian !” “ Pass, friend. Yonder is Clontarf.”

The North Wall.

The Coffin-Ships.

AT Clifton and Renvyle dogs are dragging the half-buried dead from the churchyards, the living people in their mud-hovels turn mud-colour themselves and swell up like slugs, dysentery runs in a scour through the land. So that those saints of charity, the Quakers from Dublin and England, are too appalled to finish their relief. “ It was late, almost dark,” writes one, “ a mob of men and women like famished dogs were at our heels. ‘ All the medicine we want,’ they cried, ‘ is food,’ and again, ‘ Sé an tocras’ (it is the hunger) till our hearts nearly broke.” So Avatar is upon them in the West, and when fathers and sons are in despair or dead, mothers work at road-building while their children starve round turf fires in the butt of the ditch. Farther away in London and the home counties, there are discussions and protestations of God’s vengeance on the “ barbarous Irish.” In Dublin, even, parties and balls are proceeding as before. So that any with a spark of courage or strength begin to fly from the West. The wild mountains are going from them now where the furze would be putting on and taking off its golden crown in the visits of the sun ; brown rivers no more will be waving a hand of foam to lovers and they close in the shelter of the bank. For tortured and turbid as the waters they move East themselves this time, women trailing their little children behind, fathers, the colour of death in their faces, helping an aged parent along, all staggering through puddles or stopping with questioning eyes and the silence of despair at those unending cross-roads. Until, here in Meath, there are only a few scattered groups ; and, in clots, one holding to the other at last they stumble into Dublin unknown, neglected, with this mockery of the sunlight kissing and caressing from Howth to Bray. Oh, bitter singing breeze, and raillery of the waters ! Oh, beauty, beauty, on the hills of Howth and Wicklow that are galleries of light as though the gods sat here within their amphitheatre set for the drama below. Drama indeed with frightful Sophocles upon the decks. For tumbled in a drift by that reeking hatchway they

lie, sex with sex, children heaped in the midst with patchy white cheeks as though white wings were gathering above the Connaught roses faded irrevocably now. So pass the moving tombs ; some for Baltimore and Boston River, with, every night, a sheaf of dead too weary for harbour dropping roped and weighted overboard ; others for the nearer living death in the coal mines of Lancashire and Yorks, there to win an hour of fiery report when a casualty list at the pit-brow takes its toll of O'Connors and Dunnes :—

“ Oh, the flame of the Lord, red beak
Of the bird of furious doom
And the cry of his prey, the shriek
And the panic of feet in the tomb.”

Clontarf.

Brian Boru.

APOSTOLIC and almost without a tremor, although he is now seventy-four, all night he passes in and out of the bivouac-lines, Brian, a King out of the borderland of miracle, astride his grey horse, a sword in one hand “ like a flame erect” and in the other a crucifix—a picture to equal any in the galleries of the fighting saints. And at the zenith of the battle next day see him apart on the rising ground watching and praying within his tent while the fight sways to the strand below. Till suddenly the wave of massacre is up to his tent door, and “ Fly, King ! To horse !” they shout ; but Brian, “ It was to conquer, not to die I came here.” And all his palsy is abolished in a sudden leap of his blood. For the Danes are in upon him, and with a swing of his gold-hilted sword he is miraculously young again. He hacks the first assassin down from the knees, slashes off the head of a second, and then, his own skull smashed, he lunges into the third enemy, so that gallant, fighting fellow, he goes down proudly and fitly with his assailant dead beneath him—a magical King indeed, Ireland's bravest and dearest immortal.

The Pine Forest.

Hugh P'Donnell's Vision.

“ HUGH ROE has escaped ! He's making for the hills !” So the story flies, every household gathering round when a neighbour whispers it in ; with “ Thanks be to God,” the answer everywhere. For this news indeed is the grandest thing that you could give for a present to any in Ireland this holy Christmas Night. So Dublin lights the blessed candle with a faith freshened by the tidings. For Red Hugh has been these four years, since he was a boy of fifteen, a prisoner in the Birmingham Tower, and with him escaping again goes love like the wind out of every Irish heart. And they are free, these two with him, sons of Shane O'Neill, who have crept through the sewer and over the moat clad only in trousers and shirt the swifter to squeeze their way. And outside the walls of this castle, itself since a gutter only in the history of Ireland, a trusty fellow is by—a horseboy, mean and humble by test of his calling, but radiant for ever by his deed. As you shall see by the signal he gives, heading away then for Rathfarnham and the Three-Rock Road, mists rising off the little lighted windows as though for recognition as they pass, and in the log-lights and dip-flames soft-sparkling signals, “ God-speed !” “ God-speed !” Until, climbing, they are up to the Pine Forest with Atha Cliath flickering out window by window as the night deepens below. A sacramental night truly, with Hugh Roe accompanied about by the mighty dead. For, as he helps the fainting

Art O'Neill along, see who advances shining with gold and saffron against the ermine of the snow ! And " On with thee ! On for Brian's sake! Farewell !" as the phantom waves itself away. And again, a light wind shaking down powder of snow from the branches for her feet, Banba herself, " I am watching thee ! Go !" until Red Hugh reels and will almost bring his tottering companion to the ground ere they pass from the visional wood, while the moon, with sudden entrances and flights of stars, works fire upon the mica-tips quenched momentarily in gusts of their elemental enemy, the snow.

All so confusional that Henry O'Neill, strayed or wrapt away by the Faed Fia themselves, is lost. And poor Art beaten now and Red Hugh can only struggle to a cave while this horse-boy speeds forward to Fiach Mac Hugh of Glenmalure who has never yet been known to neglect a fugitive's call Though it is too late this time to save Art ; and even Red Hugh himself swollen and frostbound will have to be taken tenderly on a saddle-horse along the glen, and swathed in bandages by the good man Fiach and nursed well ere he can again stride a hunter with O'Hagan, a daring Dubliner, to guide him back to the far west ; a journey hardly for its glamour at all to be followed in words. By the straight white roads of Meath (God speed them!) round Baile's Strand and over the Hill of Armagh (Saint Patrick be with them !) and to horse for the western sea again (God and Mary preserve them !) and home ! home ! (Oh, glory and praise !) home for the centuries now till he rallies his own, and the strangers are driven from his land. A dream ? Aye—and splendid, and yet to come true.

Carrickmines.

Rebellion Again.

FOR a perfect sermon in stone you must go out to Carrickmines and just by the Railway Station there you will see a fragment of an old building now fallen to be gable-end and window of a piggery. Here, upon a time,

“ There was laughter and longing,
Glances of lovers and chivalry thronging.”

For this pig-sty is sole relic of the Castle of Carrickmines, built after the English Conquest to protect the South Marches of the City of Dublin, a presumptive fortress against the Irish, garrisoned in truth by utter " loyalists," but destined, like so many other attempts at subjection finally to turn its guns on the English themselves. For no sooner is the Great Rebellion of 1641 ablaze than the Walshes of Carrickmines declare for the native cause, and, driven back past Dean's Grange, they man the old castle itself for its last and most glorious date. Sir Simon Harcourt, ancestor of the British political Harcourts, is at the head of the Royal Forces. By sunset the Walshes' stronghold is isolated and the English suspend the conquest until dawn. High up on the turrets the Irish set their torches alight. Other fires answer back from the hills. Harcourt, stampeded by the signals, hastens to rouse his men, when a musket shot reaches him from the keep. They bear him off to Lord Fitzwilliam's castle at Merrion, there to die on the following day. The panic of his death spreads. Forces are rushed up and further cannon. The terror of the Walshes flies across the marshes and into Dublin itself. Until a vast army is storming Carrickmines and the Castle falls, Lieutenant Hammond, afterwards Keeper of Charles I. at Carisbrook, the first to pass through the breach. The defenders, men, women, and boys all are put to the sword, and, with a mine and a tinder struck, old Carrickmines Castle leaps into the air. So now more magical and more wise than the skull of Yorick even in Elsinore churchyard this piggery window shines, Carrickmines

Castle that was built to defend the English cause home only for swine, and rebellion still hiding in every hill and vale about it.

Conclusion.

AND of the future—if one may indulge a dream ! what destiny of stars and shining pinnacles may unfold ? For here amid the shock and onset of all the tyrannies of flesh and spirit, alone amidst the gross batterings of material things, she stands patient with her strange old sacred civilisation a reverence for youth, a worship of womankind unique in an age of apostacy, a devotion to lost causes that are so often but virtue herself in distress—all these the stigmata of her martyred but indestructible soul.

“ And we love thee, O Banba !
Though the spoiler be in thy hall,
And thou art bereft of all,
Save only that Spirit for friend
Who shapes all things in the end :
Though thine eyes are a sword that has
slain
Thy lovers on many a plain,
When, glad to the conflict they pressed
Drunk with the light of thy breast
To die for thee, Banba !

The glamour of Dublin (1919)

Author : Kelleher, D. L. (Daniel Lawrence)

Publisher : Dublin : Talbot Press ; London : T. Fisher Unwin

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : MSN

Book contributor : University of California Libraries

Collection : cdl ; americana

Source : Internet Archive

<https://archive.org/details/glamourofdublin00kelliala>

Edited and uploaded to www.aughty.org

December 6 2013