

Knockarney : The Rale Thing

Penelope's Irish experiences

Kate Douglas Wiggin

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WE are in the province of Munster, the kingdom of Kerry, the town of Ballyfuchsia, and the house of Mrs. Mullarkey. Knockarney House is not her name for it ; I made it myself. Killarney is church of the sloe-trees ; and as kill is church, the “ onderhanded manin” of “ arney” must be something about sloes ; then, since knock means hill, Knockarney should be hill of the sloe-trees.

I have not lost the memory of Jenny Geddes and Tarn o' the Cowgate, but Penelope O'Connor, daughter of the king of Connaught, is more frequently present in my dreams. I have by no means forgotten that there was a time when I was not Irish, but for the moment I am of the turf, turf. Francesca is really as much in love with Ireland as I, only, since she has in her heart a certain tender string pulling her all the while to the land of the heather, she naturally avoids comparisons. Salemina, too, endeavors to appear neutral, lest she should betray an inexplicable interest in Dr. La Touche's country. Benella and I alone are really free to speak the brogue, and carry our wild harps slung behind us, like Moore's minstrel boy. Nothing but the ignorance of her national dishes keeps Benella from entire allegiance to this island ; but she thinks a people who have grown up without a knowledge of doughnuts, baked beans, and blueberry pie must be lacking in moral foundations. There is nothing extraordinary in all this ; for the Irish, like the Celtic tribes everywhere, have always had a sort of fascinating power over people of other races settling among them, so that they become completely fused with the native population, and grow to be more Irish than the Irish themselves.

We stayed for a few days in the best hotel ; it really was quite good, and not a bit Irish. There was a Swiss manager, an English housekeeper, a French head waiter, and a German office clerk. Even Salemina, who loves comforts, saw that we should not be getting what is known as the real thing, under these circumstances, and we came here to this—what shall I call Knockarney House ? It was built originally for a fishing lodge by a sporting gentleman, who brought parties of friends to stop for a week. On his death it passed somehow into Mrs. Mullarkey's fair hands, and in a fatal moment she determined to open it occasionally to “ paying guests,” who might wish a quiet home far from the madding crowd of the summer tourist. This was exactly what we did want, and here we encamped, on the half-hearted advice of some Irish friends in the town, who knew nothing else more comfortable to recommend.

“ With us, small, quiet, or out-of-the-way places are never clean ; or if they are, then they are not Irish,” they said. “ You had better see Ireland from the tourist's point of view for a few years yet, until we have learned the art of living ; but if you are determined to know the humors of the people, cast all thought of comfort behind you.”

So we did, and we afterward thought that this would be a good motto for Mrs. Mullarkey to carve over the door of Knockarney House. (My name for it is adopted more or less by the family, though Francesca persists in dating her letters to Ronald from “ The Rale Thing,” which it undoubtedly is.) We take almost all the rooms in the house, but there are a few other guests. Mrs. Waterford, an old lady of ninety-three, from Mullinavat, is here primarily for her health, and secondarily to dispose of threepenny shares in an antique necklace, which is to be

raffled for the benefit of a Roman Catholic chapel. Then we have a fishing gentleman and his bride from Glasgow, and occasional bicyclers who come in for a dinner, a tea, or a lodging. These three comforts of a home are sometimes quite indistinguishable with us : the tea is frequently made up of fragments of dinner, and the beds are always sprinkled with crumbs. Their source is a mystery, unless they fall from the clothing of the chamber maids, who frequently drop hairpins and brooches and buttons between the sheets, and strew whisk brooms and scissors under the blankets.

We have two general servants, who are supposed to do all the work of the house, and who are as amiable and obliging and incapable as they well can be. Oonah generally waits upon the table, and Molly cooks ; at least she cooks now and then when she is not engaged with Peter in the vegetable garden or the stable. But whatever happens, Mrs. Mullarkey, as a descendant of one of the Irish kings, is to be looked upon only as an inspiring ideal, inciting one to high and ever higher flights of happy incapacity. Benella ostensibly oversees the care of our rooms, but she is comparatively helpless in such a kingdom of misrule. Why demand clean linen when there is none ; why seek for a towel at midday when it is never ironed until evening ; how sweep when a broom is all inadequate to the task ? Salemina's usual remark, on entering a humble hostelry anywhere, is : “ If the hall is as dirty as this, what must the kitchen be ! Order me two hard-boiled eggs, please !”

“ Use your science, Benella,” I say to that discouraged New England maiden, who has never looked at her philosophy from its practical or humorous side. “ If the universe is pure mind and there is no matter, then this dirt is not a real thing, after all. It seems, of course, as if it were thicker under the beds and bureaus than elsewhere, but I suppose our evil thoughts focus themselves there rather than in the centre of the room. Similarly, if the broom handle is broken,—deny the dirt away, denial is much less laborious than sweeping ; bring the science down to these simple details of everyday life, and you will make converts by dozens, only pray don't remove, either by suggestion or any cruder method, the large key that lies near the table leg, for it is a landmark ; and there is another, a crochet needle, by the washstand, devoted to the same purpose. I wish to show them to the Mullarkey when we leave.”

Under our educational régime, the “ metaphysical” veneer, badly applied in the first place, and wholly unsuited to the foundation material, is slowly disappearing, and our Benella is gradually returning to her normal self. Perhaps no thing has been more useful to her development than the confusion of Knockarney House.

Our windows are supported on decrepit tennis rackets and worn-out hearth brushes ; the blinds refuse to go up or down ; the chairs have weak backs or legs ; the door knobs are dissociated from their handles. As for our food, we have bacon and eggs, with coffee made, I should think, of brown beans and licorice, for breakfast ; a bit of sloppy chicken, or fish and potato, with custard pudding or stewed rhubarb, for dinner ; and a cold supper of—oh ! anything that occurs to Molly at the last moment. Nothing ever occurs either to Molly or Oonah at any previous moment, and in that they are merely conforming to the universal habit. Last week, when we were starting for Valencia Island, the Ballyfuchsia station master was absent at a funeral meantime the engine had “ gone cold on the engineer,” and the train could not leave till twelve minutes after the usual time. We thought we must have consulted a wrong time-table, and asked confirmation of a man who seemed to have some connection with the railway. Goaded by his ignorance, I exclaimed, “ Is it possible you don't know the time the trains are going ?”

“ Begorra, how should I ?” he answered. “ Faix, the thrains don't always be knowin' thimselves !”

The starting of the daily “ Mail Express” from Ballyfuchsia is a time of great excitement and confusion, which on some occasions increases to positive panic. The station master, armed with a large dinner bell, stands on the platform, wearing an expression of anxiety ludicrously unsuited to the situation. The supreme moment had really arrived some time before, but he is waiting for Farmer Brodigan with his daughter Kathleen, and the Widdy Sullivan, and a few other local worthies who are a “ thrifle late on him.” Finally they come down the hill, and he paces up and down the station ringing the bell and uttering the warning cry, “ *This thrain never shtops ! This thrain never shtops ! This thrain never shtops !*”— giving one the idea that eternity, instead of Killarney, must be the final destination of the passengers. The clock in the Ballyfuchsia telegraph and post office ceases to go for twenty-four hours at a time, and nobody heeds it, while the post man always has a few moments leisure to lay down his knapsack of letters and pitch quoits with the Royal Irish Constabulary. However, punctuality is perhaps an individual virtue more than an exclusively national one. I am not sure that we Americans would not be more agreeable if we spent a month in Ireland every year, and perhaps Ireland would profit from a month in America.

At the Brodigans (Mr. Brodigan is a large farmer, and our nearest neighbor) all the clocks are from ten to twenty minutes fast or slow ; and what a peaceful place it is ! The family doesn’t care when it has its dinner, and, *mirabile dictu*, the cook doesn’t care either !

“ If you have no exact time to depend upon, how do you catch trains ?” I asked Mr. Brodigan.

“ Sure that’s not an everyday matter, and why be foostherin’ over it ? But we do, four times out o’ five, ma am !”

“ How do you like it that fifth time when you miss it ?”

“ Sure it’s no more throuble to you to miss it the wan time than to hurry five times ! A clock is an overrated piece of furniture, to my mind, Mrs. Beresford, ma’am. A man can ate whin he’s hungry, go to bed whin he’s sleepy, and get up whin he’s slept long enough ; for faith and it’s thim clocks he has inside of himself that don’t need anny winding !”

“ What if you had a business appointment with a man in the town, and missed the train ?” I persevered.

“ Trains is like misfortunes ; they never come singly, ma’am. Wherever there’s a station the trains do be dhroppin’ in now and again, and what’s the differ which of thim you take ?”

“ The man who is waiting for you at the other end of the line may not agree with you,” I suggested.

“ Sure, a man can always amuse himself in a town, ma’am. If it’s your own business yo’re coming on, he knows you’ll find him ; and if it’s his business, then begorra let him find you !” Which quite reminded me of what the Irish elf says to the English elf in Moira O’Neill’s fairy story : “ A waste of time ? Why, you’ve come to a country where there’s no such thing as a waste of time. We have no value for time here. There is lashings of it, more than anybody knows what to do with.”

I suppose there is somewhere a golden mean between this complete oblivion of time and our feverish American hurry. There is a “ tedious haste” in all peoples who make wheels and pistons and engines, and live within sound of their everlasting buzz and whir and revolution ;

and there is ever a disposition to pause, rest, and consider on the part of that man whose daily tasks are done in serene collaboration with dew and rain and sun. One cannot hurry Mother Nature very much, after all, and one who has much to do with her falls into a peaceful habit of mind. The mottoes of the two nations are as well rendered in the vernacular as by any formal or stilted phrases. In Ireland the spoken or unspoken slogan is, "Take it aisy;" in America, "Keep up with the procession;" and between them lie all the thousand differences of race, climate, temperament, religion, and government.

I don't suppose there is a nation on the earth better developed on what might be called the train-catching side than we of the Big Country, and it is well for us that there is born every now and again among us a dreamer who is (blessedly) oblivious of time-tables and market reports; who has been thinking of the rustling of the corn, not of its price. It is he, if we do not hurry him out of his dream, who will sound the ideal note in our hurly-burly and bustle of affairs. He may never discover a town site, but he will create new worlds for us to live in, and in the course of a century the coming Matthew Arnold will not be minded to call us an unimaginative and uninteresting people.

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Life At Knockarney House

"See where Mononia's heroes lie, proud Owen More's descendants,
'T is they that won the glorious name and had the grand attendants!"

James Clarence Mangan.

IT was a charming thing for us when Dr. La Touche gave us introductions to the Colquhouns of Ardnagreena; and when they, in turn, took us to tea with Lord and Lady Killbally at Balkilly Castle. I don't know what there is about us: we try to live a sequestered life, but there are certain kind forces in the universe that are always bringing us in contact with the good, the great, and the powerful. Francesca enjoys it, but secretly fears to have her democracy undermined. Salemina wonders modestly at her good fortune. I accept it as the graceful tribute of an old civilization to a younger one; the older men grow the better they like girls of sixteen, and why should'nt the same thing be true of countries?

As long ago as 1589, one of the English "undertakers" who obtained some of the confiscated Desmond lands in Munster wrote of the "better sorte" of Irish: "Although they did never see you before, they will make you the best cheare their country yieldeth for two or three days, and take not anything therefor. . . . They have a common saying which I am persuaded they speake unfeinedly, which is, 'Defend me and spend me.' Yet many doe utterly mislike this or any good thing that the poor Irishman dothe."

This certificate of character from an "under taker" of the sixteenth century certainly speaks volumes for Irish amiability and hospitality, since it was given at a time when grievances were as real as plenty; when unutterable resentment must have been rankling in many minds; and when those traditions were growing which have colored the whole texture of Irish thought, until, with the poor and unlettered, to be "agin the government" is an inherited instinct, to be obliterated only by time.

We supplement Mrs. Mullarkey's helter-skelter meals with frequent luncheons and dinners with our new friends, who send us home on our jaunting car laden with flowers, fruit, even with jellies and jams. Lady Killbally forces us to take three cups of tea and a half dozen

marmalade sandwiches whenever we go to the Castle ; for I apologized for our appetites, one day, by confessing that we had lunched somewhat frugally, the meal being sweetened, however, by Molly's explanation that there was a fresh sole in the house, but she thought she would not intrude on it before dinner !

We asked, on our arrival at Knockarney House, if we might breakfast at a regular hour,—say eight thirty. Mrs. Mullarkey agreed, with that suavity which is, after her untidiness, her distinguishing characteristic ; but notwithstanding this arrangement we break our fast sometimes at nine forty, sometimes at nine twenty, sometimes at nine, but never earlier. In order to achieve this much, we are obliged to rise early and make a combined attack on the executive and culinary departments. One morning I opened the door leading from the hall into the back part of the establishment, but closed it hastily, having interrupted the toilets of three young children, whose existence I had never suspected, and of Mr. Mullarkey, whom I had thought dead for many years. Each child had donned one article of clothing, and was apparently searching for the mate to it, whatever it chanced to be. Mrs. Mullarkey was fully clothed, and was about to administer correction to one of the children, who, unhappily for him, was not. I retired to my apartment to report progress, but did not describe the scene minutely, nor mention the fact that I had seen Salemina's ivory-backed hairbrush put to excellent if somewhat unusual and unaccustomed service.

Each party in the house eats in solitary splendor, like the MacDermott, Prince of Coolavin. That royal personage of County Sligo did not, I believe, allow his wife or his children (who must have had the MacDermott blood in their veins, even if somewhat diluted) to sit at table with him. This method introduces the last element of confusion into the household arrangements, and on two occasions we have had our custard pudding or stewed fruit served in our bedrooms a full hour after we have finished dinner. We have reasons for wishing to be first to enter the dining-room, and we walk in with eyes fixed on the ceiling, by far the cleanest part of the place. Having wended our way through an underbrush of corks, with an empty bottle here and there, and stumbled over the holes in the carpet, we arrive at our table in the window. It is as beautiful as heaven outside, and the tablecloth is at least cleaner than it will be later, for Mrs. Waterford of Mullinavat has an unsteady hand.

When Oonah brings in the toast rack now she balances it carefully, remembering the morning when she dropped it on the floor, but picked up the slices and offered them to Salemina. Never shall I forget that dear martyr's expression, which was as if she had made up her mind to renounce Ireland and leave her to her fate. I know she often must wonder if Dr. La Touche's servants, like Mrs. Mullarkey's, feel of the potatoes to see whether they are warm or cold !

At ten thirty there is great confusion and laughter and excitement, for the sportsmen are setting out for the day and the car has been waiting at the door for an hour. Oonah is caroling up and down the long passage, laden with dishes, her cheerfulness not in the least impaired by having served seven or eight separate breakfasts. Molly has spilled a jug of milk, and is wiping it up with a child's undershirt. The Glasgy man is telling them that yesterday they forgot the cork screw, the salt, the cup, and the jam from the luncheon basket,—facts so mirth-provoking that Molly wipes tears of pleasure from her eyes with the milky undershirt, and Oonah sets the hot-water jug and the coffee-pot on the stairs to have her laugh out comfortably. When once the car departs, comparative quiet reigns in and about the house until the passing bicyclers appear for luncheon or tea, when Oonah picks up the napkins that we have rolled into wads and flung under the dining table, and spreads them on tea trays, as appetizing details for the weary traveler. There would naturally be more time for house work if so large a portion of the day were not spent in pleasant interchange of thought and speech. I can well understand Mrs. Colquhoun's objections to the housing of the Dublin poor in

tenements,—even in those of a better kind than the present horrible examples ; for wherever they are huddled together in any numbers they will devote most of their time to conversation. To them, talking is more attractive than eating ; it even adds a new joy to drinking ; and if I may judge from the groups I have seen gossiping over a turf fire till midnight, it is preferable to sleeping. But do not suppose they will bubble over with joke and repartee, with racy anecdote, to every casual newcomer. The tourist who looks upon the Irishman as the merry-andrew of the English-speaking world, and who expects every jarvey he meets to be as whimsical as Mickey Free, will be disappointed. I have strong suspicions that ragged, jovial Mickey Free himself, delicious as he is, was created by Lever to satisfy the Anglo-Saxon idea of the low-comedy Irish man. You will live in the Emerald Isle for many a month, and not meet the clown or the villain so familiar to you in modern Irish plays. Dramatists have made a stage Irishman to suit themselves, and the public and the gallery are disappointed if anything more reasonable is substituted for him. You will find, too, that you do not easily gain Paddy's confidence. Misled by his careless, reckless impetuosity of demeanor, you might expect to be the confidant of his joys and sorrows, his hopes and expectations, his faiths and beliefs, his aspirations, fears, longings, at the first interview. Not at all ; you will sooner be admitted to a glimpse of the traveling Scotsman's or the Englishman's inner life, family history, personal ambition. Glacial enough at first and far less voluble, he melts soon enough, if he likes you. Meantime, your impulsive Irish friend gives himself as freely at the first interview as at the twentieth ; and you know him as well at the end of a week as you are likely to at the end of a year. He is a product of the past, be he gentleman or peasant. A few hundred years of necessary reserve concerning articles of political and religious belief have bred caution and prudence in stronger natures, cunning and hypocrisy in weaker ones.

Our days are very varied. We have been several times into the town and spent an hour in the Petty Sessions Court with Mr. Colquhoun, who sits on the bench. Each time we have come home laden with stories “ as good as any in the books,” so says Francesca. Have we not with our own eyes seen the settlement of an assault and battery case between two of the most notorious brawlers in that alley of the town which we have dubbed “ The Pass of the Plumes.” [1] Each barrister in the case had a handful of hair which he introduced on behalf of his client, both ladies apparently having pulled with equal energy. These most unattractive exhibits were shown to the women themselves, each recognizing her own hair, but denying the validity of the other exhibit firmly and vehemently. Prisoner number one kneeled at the rail and insisted on exposing the place in her head from which the hair had been plucked ; upon which prisoner number two promptly tore off her hat, scattered hairpins to the four winds, and exposed her own wounds to the judicial eye. Both prisoners “ had a dhrop taken” just before the affair, that soft impeachment they could not deny. One of them explained, however, that she had taken it to help her over a hard job of work, and through a little miscalculation of quantity it had “ overaided her.” The other termagant was asked flatly by the magistrate if she had ever seen the inside of a jail before, but evaded the point with much grace and ingenuity by telling his Honor that he could'nt expect to meet a woman anny where who had not suffered a misforchin somewhere betwixt the cradle and the grave.

Even the all too common drunk-and-disorderly cases had a flavor of their own, for one man, being dismissed with a small fine under condition that he would sign the pledge, assented willingly ; but on being asked for how long he would take it replied, “ I mostly take it for life, your worship.”

We also heard the testimony of a girl who had run away from her employer before the completion of her six months' contract, her plea being that the fairies pulled her great toe at night so that she could not sleep, whereupon she finally became so lame that she was unable to work. She left her employer's house one evening, therefore, and went home, and curiously enough the fairies “ shtopped pulling the toe on her as soon as iver she got there !”

Not the least enlivening of the prisoners was a decently educated person who had been arrested for disturbing the peace. The constable asserted that he was intoxicated, but the gentleman him self insisted that he was merely a poet in a more than usually inspired state.

“ I am in the poetical advertising line, your worship. It is true I was surrounded by a crowd, but I was merely practicing my trade. I don t mind telling your worship that this holiday time makes things a little lively, and the tradesmen drink my health a trifle oftener than usual ; poetry is dry work, your worship, and a poet needs a good deal of liquid refreshment. I do not disturb the peace, your worship, at least not more than any other poet. I go to a grocer’s, and standing outside I make up some rhymes about his nice sweet sugar or his ale. If I want to please a butcher,—well, I’ll give you a specmen :

Here’s to the butcher who sells good meat—
In this world it’s hard to beat ;
It’s the very best that’s to be had,
And makes the human heart feel glad.
There s no necessity to purloin,
So step in and buy a good sirloin.

I can go on in this style, like Tennyson’s brook, forever, your worship.” His worship was afraid that he might make the offer good, and the poet was released, after promising to imbibe less frequently when he felt the divine afflatus about to descend upon him.

These disagreements between light-hearted and bibulous persons who haunt the courts week after week have nothing especially pathetic about them, but there are many that make one’s heart ache ; many that seem absolutely beyond any solution, and beyond reach of any justice.

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“ O ! The Sound Of The Kerry Dancing”

“ The light-hearted daughters of Erin,
Like the wild mountain deer they can bound ;
Their feet never touch the green island,
But music is struck from the ground.
And oft in the glens and green meadows,
The ould jig they dance with such grace,
That even the daisies they tread on,
Look up with delight in their face.”

James M’Kowen.

ONE of our favorite diversions is an occasional glimpse of a “ crossroads dance” on a pleasant Sunday afternoon, when all the young people of the district are gathered together. Their religious duties are over with their confessions and their masses, and the priests encourage these decorous Sabbath gayeties. A place is generally chosen where two or four roads meet, and the dancers come from the scattered farmhouses in every direction. In Ballyfuchsia, they dance on a flat piece of road under some fir-trees and larches, with stretches of mountain covered with yellow gorse or purple heather and the quiet lakes lying in the distance. A message comes down to us at Ardnagreena—where we commonly spend our Sunday afternoons—that they expect a good dance, and the blind boy is coming to fiddle ; and “ so if you will be coming up, it’s welcome you’ll be.” We join them about five o’clock,—passing, on our way, groups of “ boys” of all ages from sixteen upwards, walking in twos and threes, and

parties of three or four girls by themselves ; for it would not be etiquette for the boys and girls to walk together, such strictness is observed in these matters about here.

When we reach the rendezvous we find quite a crowd of young men and maidens assembled ; the girls all at one side of the road, neatly dressed in dark skirts and light blouses, with the national woolen shawl over their heads. Two wide stone walls, or dikes, with turf on top, make capital seats, and the boys are at the opposite side, as custom demands. When a young man wants a partner, he steps across the road and asks a colleen, who lays aside her shawl, generally giving it to a younger sister to keep until the dance is over, when the girls go back to their own side of the road and put on their shawls again. Upon our arrival we find the “ sets” are already in progress ; a “ set” being a dance like a very intricate and very long quadrille. We are greeted with many friendly words, and the young boat men and farmers sons ask the ladies, “ Will you be pleased to dance, miss ?” Some of them are shy, and say they are not familiar with the steps ; but their would-be partners remark encouragingly : “ Sure, and what matter ? I’ll see you through.” Soon all are dancing, and the state of the road is being discussed with as much interest as the floor of a ballroom. Eager directions are given to the more ignorant newcomers, such as, “ Twirl your girl, captain !” or “ Turn your back to your face !”—rather a difficult direction to carry out, but one which conveys its meaning. Salemina confided to her partner that she feared she was getting a bit old to dance. He looked at her gray hair carefully for a moment, and then said chivalrously : “ I’d not say that that was old age, ma’am. I d say it was eddication.”

When the sets, which are very long and very decorous, are finished, sometimes a jig is danced for our benefit. The spectators make a ring, and the chosen dancers go into the middle, where their steps are watched by a most critical and discriminating audience with the most minute and intense interest. Our Molly is one of the best jig dancers among the girls here (would that she were half as clever at cooking !) ; but if you want to see an artist of the first rank, you must watch Kitty O’Rourke, from the neighboring village of Dooclone. The half door of the barn is carried into the ring by one or two of her admirers, whom she numbers by the score, and on this she dances her famous jig polthogue, sometimes alone and sometimes with Art Rooney, the only worthy partner for her in the kingdom of Kerry. Art’s mother, “ Bid” Rooney, is a keen match maker, and we heard her the other day advising her son, who was going to Dooclone to have a “ weeny court” with his colleen, to put a clane shirt on him in the middle of the week, and disthract Kitty intirely by showin her he had three of thim, annyway !

Kitty is a beauty, and does’nt need to be made “ purty wid cows,”—a feat that the old Irish-man proposed to do when he was consummating a match for his plain daughter. But the gifts of the gods seldom come singly, and Kitty is well fortunèd as well as beautiful ; fifty pounds, her own bedstead and its fittings, a cow, a pig, and a web of linen are supposed to be the dazzling total, so that it is small wonder her deluderin ways are maddening half the boys in Ballyfuchsia and Dooclone. She has the prettiest pair of feet in the County Kerry, and when they are encased in a smart pair of shoes, bought for her by Art’s rival, the big constable from Ballyfuchsia barracks, how they do twinkle and caper over that half barn door, to be sure ! Even Murty, the blind fiddler, seems intoxicated by the plaudits of the bystanders, and he certainly never plays so well for anybody as for Kitty of the Meadow. Blindness is still common in Ireland, owing to the smoke in these wretched cabins, where sometimes a hole in the roof is the only chimney ; and although the scores of blind fiddlers no longer traverse the land, finding a welcome at all fire sides, they are still to be found in every community. Blind Murty is a favorite guest at the Rooneys’ cabin, which is never so full that there is not room for one more. There is a small wooden bed in the main room, a settle that opens out at night, with hens in the straw underneath, where a board keeps them safely within until they have finished laying. There are six children besides Art, and my

ambition is to photograph, or, still better, to sketch the family circle together ; the hens cackling under the settle, the pig (“ him as pays the rint”) snoring in the doorway, as a proprietor should, while the children are picturesquely grouped about. I never succeed, because Mrs. Rooney sees us as we turn into the lane, and calls to the family to make it self ready, as quality’s comin’ in sight. The older children can scramble under the bed, slip shoes over their bare feet, and be out in front of the cabin without the loss of a single minute. “ Mickey jew’l,” the baby, who is only four, but “ who can handle a stick as bould as a man,” is generally clad in a ragged skirt, slit every few inches from waist to hem, so that it resembles a cotton fringe. The little coateen that tops this costume is sometimes, by way of diversion, transferred to the dog, who runs off with it ; but if we appear at this unlucky moment, there is a stylish yoke of pink ribbon and soiled lace which one of the girls pins over Mickey jew’ls naked shoulders.

Moya, who has this eye for picturesque propriety, is a great friend of mine, and has many questions about the Big Country when we take our walks. She longs to emigrate, but the time is not ripe yet. “ The girls that come back has a lovely style to thim,” she says wistfully, “ but they’re so polite they can’t live in the cabins anny more and be contint.” The “ boys” are not always so improved, she thinks. “ You’d niver find a boy in Ballyfuchsia that would say annything rude to a girl ; but when they come back from Ameriky, it’s too free they’ve grown intirely.” It is a dull life for them, she says, when they have once been away ; though to be sure Ballyfuchsia is a pleasanter place than Dooclone, where the priest does not approve of dancing, and, however secretly you may do it, the curate hears of it, and will speak your name in church.

It was Moya who told me of Kitty’s fortune. “ She’s not the match that Farmer Brodigan’s daughter Kathleen is, to be sure ; for he’s a rich man, and has given her an iligant eddication in Cork, so that she can look high for a husband. She won’t be takin up wid anny of our boys, wid her two hundred pounds and her twenty cows and her pianya. Och, it’s a thriminjus player she is, ma am. She’s that quick and that strong that you’d say she wouldnt lave a string on it.”

Some of the young men and girls never see each other before the marriage, Moya says. “ But sure,” she adds shyly, “ I’d niver be contint with that, though some love matches does’nt turn out anny better than the others.”

“ I hope it will be a love match with you, and that I shall dance at your wedding, Moya,” I say to her smilingly.

“ Faith, I’m thinkin my husband’s intinded mother died an old maid in Dublin,” she answers merrily. “ It’s a small fortune I’ll be havin , and few lovers ; but you’ll be soon dancing at Kathleen Brodigan’s wedding, or Kitty O’Rourke’s, maybe.”

I do not pretend to understand these humble romances, with their foundations of cows and linen, which are after all no more sordid than bank stock and trousseaux from Paris. The sentiment of the Irish peasant lover seems to be frankly and truly expressed in the verses :—

“ Oh ! Moya’s wise and beautiful, has wealth in plenteous store,
And fortune fine in calves and kine, and lovers half a score ;
Her faintest smile would saints beguile, or sinners captivate,
Oh ! I think a dale of Moya, but I’ll surely marry Kate.

Now to let you know the raison why I cannot have my way,
Nor bid my heart decide the part the lover must obey—

The calves and kine of Kate are nine, while Moya owns but eight,
So with all my love for Moya I'm compelled to marry Kate !”

I gave Moya a lace neckerchief the other day, and she was rarely pleased, running into the cabin with it and showing it to her mother with great pride. After we had walked a bit down the breen she excused herself for an instant, and, returning to my side, explained that she had gone back to ask her mother to mind the kerchief, and not let the “ cow knock it” !

Lady Killbally tells us that some of the girls who work in the mills deny themselves proper food, and live on bread and tea for a month, to save the price of a gay ribbon. This is trying, no doubt, to a philanthropist, but is it not partly a starved sense of beauty asserting itself ? If it has none of the usual outlets, where can imagination express itself if not in some paltry thing like a ribbon ?

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Mrs. Mullarkey's Illigant Locks.

“ Where spreads the beautiful water to gay or cloudy skies,
And the purple peaks of Killarney from ancient woods arise.”

William Allingham.

MRS. MULLARKEY cannot spoil this paradise for us. When I wake in the morning, the fuchsia tree outside my window is such a glorious mass of color that it distracts my eyes from the unwashed glass. The air is still ; the mountains in the far distance are clear purple ; everything is fresh-washed and purified for the new day. Francesca and I leave the house sleeping, and make our way to the bogs. We love to sit under a blossoming sloe bush and see the silver pools glistening here and there in the turf cuttings, and watch the transparent vapor rising from the red-brown or the purple-shadowed bog fields. Dinnis Rooney, half awake, leisurely, silent, is moving among the stacks with his creel. How the missel thrushes sing in the woods, and the plaintive note of the curlew gives- the last touch of mysterious tenderness to the scene. There is a moist, rich fragrance of meadowsweet and bog myrtle in the air ; and how fresh and wild and verdant it is !

“ For there's plenty to mind, sure, if on'y ye look to the grass at
your feet,
For 't is thick wid the tussocks of heather, an blossoms and herbs
that smell sweet
If ye tread thim ; an maybe the white o the bog-cotton waves in
the win',
Like the wool ye might shear off a night-moth, an set an ould
fairy to spin ;
Or wee frauns, each wan stuck 'twixt two leaves on a grand little
stem of its own,
Lettin on 't was a plum on a tree.” [2]. . .

As for Lough Lein itself, who could speak its loveliness, lying like a crystal mirror beneath the black Reeks of the McGillicuddy, where, in the mountain fastnesses, lie spell-bound the sleeping warriors who, with their bridles and broadswords in hand, await but the word to give Erin her own ! When we glide along the surface of the lakes, on some bright day after a heavy rain ; when we look down through the clear water on tiny submerged islets,

with their grasses and drowned daisies glancing up at us from the blue ; when we moor the boat and climb the hillsides, we are dazzled by the luxuriant beauty of it all. It hardly seems real,—it is too green, too perfect, to be believed ; and one thinks of some fairy drop scene, painted by cunning-fingered elves and sprites, who might have a wee folk’s way of mixing roses and rain bows, dew-drenched greens and sun-warmed yellows; showing the picture to you first all burnished, glittering and radiant, then “ veiled in mist and diamonded with showers.” We climb, climb, up, up, into the heart of the leafy loveliness ; peering down into dewy dingles, stopping now and again to watch one of the countless streams as it tinkles and gurgles down an emerald ravine to join the lakes. The way is strewn with lichens and mosses ; rich green hollies and arbutus surround us on every side ; the ivy hangs in sweet disorder from the rocks ; and when we reach the innermost recess of the glen we can find moist green jungles of ferns and bracken, a very bending, curling forest of fronds :—

“ The fairy’s tall palm tree, the heath bird s fresh nest,
And the couch the red deer deems the sweetest and best.”

Carrantual rears its crested head high above the other mountains, and on its summit Shon the Outlaw, footsore, weary, slept ; sighing, “ For once, thank God, I am above all my enemies.”

You must go to sweet Innisfallen, too, and you must not be prosaic or incredulous at the boat man’s stories, or turn the “ bodthered ear to them.” These are no ordinary hillsides : not only do the wee folk troop through the frond forests nightly, but great heroic figures of romance have stalked majestically along these mountain summits. Every waterfall foaming and dashing from its rocky bed in the glen has a legend in the toss and swirl of the water.

Can’t you see the O’Sullivan, famous for fleetness of foot and prowess in the chase, starting forth in the cool o’ the morn to hunt the red deer ? His dogs sniff the heather ; a splendid stag bounds across the path ; swift as lightning the dogs follow the scent across moors and glens. Through out the long day the chieftain chases the stag, until at nightfall, weary and thirsty, he loses the scent, and blows a blast on his horn to call the dogs home-ward.

And then he hears a voice : “ O Sullivan, turn back !”

He looks over his shoulder to behold the great Finn McCool, central figure in centuries of romance.

“ Why do you dare chase my stag ?” he asks.

“ Because it is the finest man ever saw,” answers the chieftain composedly.

“ You are a valiant man,” says the hero, pleased with the reply ; “ and as you thirst from the long chase, I will give you to drink.” So he crunches his giant heel into the rock, and forth burst the waters, seething and roaring as they do to this day ; “ and may the devil fly away wid me if I’ve spoke an unthru word, ma am !”

Come to Lough Lein as did we, too early for the crowd of sightseers ; but when the “ long light shakes across the lakes,” the blackest arts of the tourist (and they are as black as they are many) cannot break the spell. Sitting on one of these hillsides, we heard a bugle call taken up and repeated in delicate, ethereal echoes,—sweet enough, indeed, to be worthy of the fairy buglers who are supposed to pass the sound along their lines from crag to crag, until it faints and dies in silence. And then came the Lament for Owen Roe O Neill. We were thrilled to the very heart with the sorrowful strains ; and when we issued from our leafy covert, and rounded

the point of rocks from which the sound came, we found a fat man in uniform playing the bugle. "Blank's Tours" was embroidered on his cap, and I have no doubt that he is a good husband and father, even a good citizen, but he is a blight upon the landscape, and fancy cannot breathe in his presence. The typical tourist should be encouraged within bounds, both because he is of some benefit to Ireland, and because Ireland is of inestimable benefit to him ; but he should not be allowed to jeer and laugh at the legends (the gentle smile of sophisticated unbelief, with its twinkle of amusement, is unknown to and forever beyond him) ; and above all, he should never be allowed to carry or to play on a concertina, for this is the unpardonable sin.

We had an adventure yesterday. We were to dine at eight o'clock at Balkilly Castle, where Dr. La Touche is staying the week end with Lord and Lady Killbally. We had been spending an hour or two after tea in writing an Irish letter, and were a bit late in dressing. These letters, written in the vernacular, are a favorite diversion of ours when visiting in foreign lands ; and they are very easily done when once you have caught the idioms, for you can always supplement your slender store of words and expressions with choice selections from native authors.

What Francesca and I wore to the Castle dinner is, alas, no longer of any consequence to the community at large. In the mysterious purposes of that third volume which we seem to be living in Ireland, Francesca's beauty and mine, her hats and frocks as well as mine, are all reduced to the background ; but Salemina's toilet had cost us some thought. When she first issued from the discreet and decorous fastnesses of Salem society, she had never donned any dinner dress that was not as high at the throat and as long in the sleeves as the Puritan mothers ever wore to meeting. In England she lapsed sufficiently from the rigid Salem standard to adopt a timid compromise ; in Scotland we coaxed her into still further modernities, until now she is completely enfranchised. We achieved this at considerable trouble, but do not grudge the time spent in persuasion when we see her *en grande toilette*. In day dress she has always been inclined ever so little to a primness and severity that suggest old-maidishness. In her low gown of pale gray, with all her silver hair waved softly, she is unexpectedly lovely, —her face softened, transformed, and magically "brought out" by the whiteness of her shoulders and slender throat. Not an ornament, not a jewel, will she wear ; and she is right to keep the nunlike simplicity of style which suits her so well, and which holds its own even in the vicinity of Francesca's proud and glowing young beauty.

On this particular evening, Francesca, who wished her to look her best, had prudently hidden her eyeglasses, for which we are now trying to substitute a silver-handled lorgnette. Two years ago we deliberately smashed her spectacles, which she had adopted at five and twenty.

"But they are more convenient than eye glasses," she urged obtusely.

"That argument is beneath you, dear," we replied. "If your hair were not prematurely gray, we might permit the spectacles, hideous as they are, but a combination of the two is impossible ; the world shall not convict you of failing sight when you are guilty only of petty astigmatism !"

The gray satin had been chosen for this dinner, and Salemina was dressed, with the exception of the pretty pearl-embroidered waist that has to be laced at the last moment, and had slipped on a dressing jacket to come down from her room in the second story, to be advised in some trifling detail. She looked unusually well, I thought : her eyes were bright and her cheeks flushed, as she rustled in, holding her satin skirts daintily away from the dusty carpets.

Now, from the morning of our arrival we have had trouble with the Mullarkey door-knobs, which come off continually, and lie on the floors at one side of the door or the other. Benella followed Salemina from her room, and, being in haste, closed the door with unwonted energy. She heard the well-known rattle and clang, but little suspected that, as one knob dropped outside in the hall, the other fell inside, carrying the rod of connection with it. It was not long before we heard a cry of despair from above and we responded to it promptly.

“ It’s fell in on the inside, knob and all, as I always knew it would some day ; and now we can’t get back into the room !” said Benella.

“ Oh, nonsense ! We can open it with some thing or other,” I answered encouragingly, as I drew on my gloves ; “ only you must hasten, for the car is at the door.”

The curling iron was too large, the shoe hook too short, a lead pencil too smooth, a crochet needle too slender : we tried them all, and the door resisted all their insinuations. “ Must you necessarily get in before we go ?” I asked Salemina thoughtlessly.

She gave me a glance that almost froze my blood, as she replied, “ The waist of my dress is in the room.”

Francesca and I spent a moment in irrepressible mirth, and then summoned Mrs. Mullarkey. Whether the Irish kings could be relied upon in an emergency I do not know, but their descendants cannot. Mrs. Mullarkey had gone to the convent to see the Mother Superior about something ; Mr. Mullarkey was at the Dooclone market ; Peter was not to be found ; but Oonah and Molly came, and also the old lady from Mullinavat, with a package of raffle tickets in her hand.

We left this small army under Benella’s charge, and went down to my room for a hasty consultation.

“ Could you wear any evening bodice of Francesca’s ?” I asked.

“ Of course not. Francesca’s waist measure is three inches smaller than mine.”

“ Could you manage my black lace dress ?”

“ Penelope, you know it would only reach to my ankles ! No, you must go without me, and go at once. We are too new acquaintances to keep Lady Killbally’s dinner waiting. Why did I come to this place like a pauper, with only one evening gown, when I should have known that if there is a castle anywhere within forty miles you always spend half your time in it !”

This slur was totally unjustified, but I pardoned it, because Salemina’s temper is ordinarily perfect, and the circumstances were somewhat tragic. “ If you had brought a dozen costumes, they would all be in your room at this moment,” I replied ; “ but we must think of something. It is impossible for you to remain behind ; we were invited more on your account than on our own, for you are Dr. La Touche’s friend, and the dinner is especially in his honor. Molly, have you a ladder ?”

“ Sorra a wan, ma am.”

“ Could we borrow one ?”

“ We could not, Mrs. Beresford, ma am.”

“ Then see if you can break down the door ; try hard, and if you succeed I will buy you a nice new one ! Part of Miss Peabody’s dress is inside the room, and we shall be late to the Castle dinner.”

The entire corps, with Mrs. Waterford of Mullinavat on top, cast itself on the door, which with stood the shock to perfection. Then in a moment we heard : “ Weary’s on it, it will not come down for us, ma am. It’s the iligant locks we do be havin in the house ; they re mortal shtrong, ma am !”

“ Strong indeed !” exclaimed the incensed Benella, in a burst of New England wrath. “ There’s nothing strong about the place but the impidence of the people in it ! If you had told Peter to get a carpenter or a locksmith, as I’ve been asking you to these two weeks, it would have been all right ; but you never do anything till a month after it s too late. I’ve no patience with such a set of doshies, dawdling around and leaving everything to go to rack and ruin !”

“ Sure it was yourself that ruined the thing,” responded Molly, with spirit, for the unaccustomed word “ doshy” had kindled her quick Irish temper. It’s aisy handlin the knob is used to, and faith it would a stuck there for you a twelvemonth !”

“ They will be quarreling soon,” said Salemina nervously. “ Do not wait another instant ; you are late enough now, and I insist on your going. Make any excuse you see fit : say I am ill, say I am dead, if you like, but don’t tell the real excuse,— it is too shiftless and wretched and embarrassing. Don’t cry, Benella. Molly, Oonah, go downstairs to your work. Mrs. Waterford, I think perhaps you have forgotten that we have already purchased raffle tickets, and we’ll not take any more for fear that we may draw the necklace. Good-by, dears ; tell Lady Killbally I shall see her to-morrow.”

[1] The original Pass of the Plumes is near Maryborough, and was so called from the number of English helmet plumes that were strewn about after O’Moore’s fight with five hundred of the Earl of Essex’s men.

[2] Jane Barlow.

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