

A Story-Teller's Holiday

George Moore

1918

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THE Irish mail passes out of Euston Station with the easy movement of a deep, smooth river, or of a reptile gliding over soft grass, and the feeling of contentment and well-being, almost of happiness, produced by the vague rhythm of the train is augmented by the beauty of the fields and their hedgerows unfolding mile after mile under the languor of a June sunset. And all this while the traveller perceives the elms showing fine design on the fading day, rising out of the may with noble gesture, almost like sculpture, he murmurs, as he yields himself to admiration of the trees advancing and retiring, forming into groups at the corners of the fields and collecting into woods on the hill-sides. And no sooner have they collected themselves into woods, he says, than they disperse to gather themselves again into thickets, shaws and copses. Going to Ireland, he continues, is like travelling through a forest with clearings in it. The word forest, however, does not satisfy him ; it is too evocative of wild and uncouth nature such as we have not here, he adds. A chase, perhaps, but even a chase conveys an idea of almost wild landscape, and this one is deliberately wooded ; it is a well-ordered domain through which the train carries us like a smooth river. And the feeling of contentment and well-being, almost of happiness, that began to take possession of him soon after the train left London returns now exalted by what remains of the sunset ; a faint flush seen through grey clouds ; a bygone sunset, the traveller remarks, taking pleasure in the words. We pursue the sunset, he mutters to himself, and, amused by the thought that himself and his fellow-travellers are raiders in pursuit of the sunset's gold, he begins to dream a romantic fable, and the paragraphs end so prettily in his dream that he thinks he has written the story, and experiences on arriving at Rugby some faint surprise when the newspaper boy does not offer to sell him a book entitled *Sunset's Gold*, with his name upon it just published, sir.

The dreaming traveller is none other, O reader, than thy friend George Moore, come to entertain thee once more ; and having robbed the sunset's gold, reader, we are now flying through the night, pursued by the Dawn, who would recover the gold robbed of her sister. Thou'lt forgive this attempt to entertain thee with a literary sequel as false as such things usually are, and thou shalt not be imposed upon. Between London and Rugby we did seem like travellers in pursuit of the sunset, but when the train rolled out of Rugby we became commonplace travellers on our way to Dublin, myself ashamed of my fable, at least of the second part of it, and glad to know that nobody need ever hear anything about it, not even my publisher.

The evening paper was opened, but it proved itself to be so eventless that I was compelled into a deep scrutiny of the man sitting opposite to me, but despite my study of him, he has passed out of my mind I fear for ever. All I can recall in present time is a tall man of rather common appearance, who spoke with a brogue and told me that he travelled for —— Again my memory is at fault, I cannot remember if he was in the dry goods or the whisky line, but am persuaded that our conversation began with : I hope, sir, we shall have a fine crossing.

Of course, I answered, we shall have a fine crossing, how can you doubt it ? At which my fellow-traveller's face became overcast, and after a pause he said : may I ask, sir, why you're sure we shall have a fine crossing ? Because I am I, an alarm-provoking remark that I sought to quieten later, saying that having crossed the Irish Sea so many times without seeing anything like a wave I had come to regard the Irish Sea as waveless. Elsewhere there are waves,

no doubt ; we read of waves in the newspapers and in books, and my friends have spoken to me about waves, but so far as my own experience goes waves do not exist. And after all, I added, one must be guided by one's own experience rather than by what one reads and hears ; isn't that so ?

My fellow-traveller looked at me inquiringly, and as if dissatisfied with his examination of my face returned to his newspaper. But soon after I began to notice that he was watching me again over the rims of his spectacles, and like one who is unable to conquer his curiosity he said : I believe you when you say that the Irish Sea is always calm when you cross it, and that you have crossed it some hundreds of times, but will you tell me what conclusion you draw from the uninterrupted good luck which has attended you ? I answered that I submitted the facts to him and that it was for him to draw conclusions, and he asked me if he would have my approval if he concluded from the facts before him that the sea did not wish to destroy me. On the contrary, I answered. The sea is kind to those whom it has selected to destroy. My life will end in the sea, but not necessarily in the Irish Sea. It is a relief, however, in a way to know what one's end will be. Have you never received tidings ?

My fellow-traveller returned to his newspaper and it was some time before he made another remark. You believe then, sir, that life and death is determined at birth and that none can escape his fate ? Before I can answer you I must ask if you're a Protestant or a Catholic. But it doesn't matter which, in either case you believe that not a sparrow falls to the ground without it is his will. Isn't that so ? He answered that he believed God to be all-knowing, and again returned to his paper. At Crewe, however, he laid it aside and poked his head out of the window. I think you're right, sir, we shall have a fine crossing. Didn't I tell you, sir, that there are no waves when I cross the Irish Channel ? You're unbelieving and incredulous, yet you wear the credulous Catholic face.

As my fellow-traveller admitted himself to be a Catholic it seemed to me pleasing to relate that Protestantism and Catholicism were founded the same day at Antioch, and till the Menai Bridge interrupted my narrative, I made plain the differences that existed between Peter and Paul. But as no trace of the objections he raised to my theology between the Menai Tunnel and Holyhead is discoverable, however diligently I search my memory, I presume that we wearied a little of each other during the journey across Anglesea : or else we became so absorbed by the beauty of the twilight that we forgot Peter and Paul, as excellent a thing to do as it is to remember them, for had it not been for Peter and Paul I might not have been able to abandon myself wholeheartedly to the beauty of the almost transparent veil that falls across the sky in June, dividing night from day by not more than two or three hours, and to the almost equal beauty of the twilit sea.

In another hour the first gulls will be flying round us, I said to myself, and sat with my eyes fixed on the east till I beheld bars of silver and a great phantom ship looming through the dusk. The night, I said, has begun to evaporate like a pale curl of blue smoke ; it was not much more, I added, and dropped into dreams of the romance of sails rising, yard after yard, the top-gallant yard melting into clouds and the sails drawing the great ship charged with many destinies away, whither ?

Perhaps to end by the firing of a German torpedo. At these words I felt for the tube whereby my life-belt was inflated, saying, and saying well : if we be torpedoed I have as good a chance to be saved as another, for as soon as the torpedo crashes into us I shall blow out the life-belt and shall be picked up in not less than an hour or two of immersion in the cool sea, somewhat exhausted but alive.

IT must have been soon after this pleasing thought that the gentleman in the dry goods or the whisky line who had travelled with me from Rugby took the seat beside me, and began : well, sir, as is usual the sea is waveless, and I answered him that if he wished it to be waveless when he returned he had better return with me. The suggestion seemed to appeal to him, but from a certain embarrassment in his manner I judged that he was minded to put a question.

Have you ever been for a long sea voyage ? he asked, and I answered him that I had never been across the Atlantic, but that I had been six days out to sea from Marseilles to Port Said. And never seen a wave ? he inquired. At most a slight swell, a wave implies a white crest, I replied, and seeing that he was not averse from hearing an account of my voyage I began to tell a dream that has murmured in me ever since my father took me on his knee to tell me his travels. As far back as I can remember, I said, the Mediterranean has appeared always in my imagination as the bluest of seas and as the birthplace of all beautiful legends and stories. The bluest and beautifullest of seas, I said, hoping to cow my fellow-traveller with alliteration. But he was eager for some information regarding Marseilles, and I told him briefly of the strange white shore that we sailed past, chalk cliff or salt, ghostly shores, I said, on which nothing grows. A rabbit could not pick up a living, I interjected. But weren't you curious to know if it was a promontory or an island that you sailed past ? I had no mind for geographical details, I was thinking of Sicily, for it was in Sicily that rugged Polyphemus peering over some cliffs discerned Galatea in the foam, and it was on the Plain of Enna that Proserpine was raped while gathering flowers with her maidens ; but none of my fellow-travellers could be persuaded to listen to these stories, and I swore that when I descended to the dusky halls where she sat beside Pluto I should not forget to bring her a bunch of asphodels to remind her of this world's beauty, almost forgotten by her. None, I continued, had a thought for these beautiful legends ; they were interested to see a vulgar volcano eruptive on the horizon. I begged of them to remember that we should soon be passing the very place where Jupiter disguised in the form of a bull carried away Europa for his pleasure and for hers. But you, sir, are perhaps as indifferent to these stories as they, yet the garlanded bull, stemming the waves, Europa keeping her seat on one shoulder by the help of a horn, the sea nymphs singing hymns and throwing their tresses for joy in the air while Tritons blew conch shells, was a finer sight than a volcano. But, said my companion, you don't believe in these legends ? Nobody knows what he believes, I replied, and nothing is certain but our attachment to the legends that represent our ideas and help us to live. Moreover do not all mythologies rely upon the union of divinity with the mortal ; and does not Deity in all the mythologies take the form of some beast or bird ? In one story the Deity is a bull, in another an eagle, in a third a dove, two women at least were trodden by birds. I looked into my companion's eyes and waited for an outburst. But he sat unmoved. Have I said anything that seems unreasonable to you ? I asked. I'm thinking, he rejoined, that you'll not find many in Ireland that will appreciate the stories you've been telling me. You're not going there preaching, are you ? for if you are be advised by me and turn back. No, I answered, I'm not going to preach anything. Then you're going to Ireland to see the ruins ? And I answered that I always took an interest in ruins wherever I might find them and that it was for its ruins that we all loved Ireland. And this remark led us straight into the Ulster question.

Without Ulster, my companion said, there can be no Home Rule, and I asked him if he could tell me why the Catholics were so anxious to get Ulster, and if he could explain how Ireland could be free if Ulster was to be coerced. My fellow-traveller stiffly repudiated any desire on the part of the Nationalist Party for help to coerce Ulster, and begged me to believe that the National Party only desired Ulster because Home Rule would be impossible without Ulster. Neither coercion nor cajolery, he cried ; let them come in like men and help us to build a new Ireland. We became strenuous, and continued strenuous till I began to perceive

we were missing the sunrise. The dawn is breaking, I said ; tell me if you think there are tones as beautiful as those flower-like blues on any painter's palette, or a rose as pure as those little puffy clouds like Cupids. I agree with you, he replied ; but without Ulster there can be no Home Rule ; we must have a business head.

Let us not talk of Home Rule, but admire the morning sun. And now a word of advice : if Roman Catholics could think more of the sunrise and less about Ulster there might be a sunrise in Ireland. Look, I said, how the sun flashes above the horizon. You don't believe then, he asked, that through a rising tide of discontent Mr Asquith will bring about a settlement ? You'll have to define the word settlement before I can answer you, I said. Nothing is ever settled in this world. Everything is becoming. We can have no knowledge of anything, for nothing in this world is permanent, unless talk. In Ireland talk is permanent and yet—— But I have no wish to criticise, I withdraw that last remark. And you'll do well to withdraw the remark you made about Mr Asquith who visited a hospital and addressing himself to a wounded Sinn Feiner said : what do you think now of the rebellion ? The wounded boy's answer was : well, I think it was a grand success. And why do you think that ? was the unabashed Minister's next question. Well, sir, because you're here. You must admit that the Irish have not lost their wit ? But are you sure that the boy's answer did not come out of an innocent heart ? I inquired, and my fellow-traveller no doubt gave an answer, but it must have been a flat one else I should have remembered it, and bidding my fellow-traveller good-bye I said to myself : I'll consult the jarvey that drives me from the station.

What will content you ? I asked.

Sure we don't want to be contented, he replied, and it seemed to me that he had, unwittingly, expressed a human feeling.

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A FEW hours later the young doctor who supplies Dublin with jokes entertained me on the steps of the Shelbourne Inn with his views, telling me that it was the rebellion in Dublin that had given the English army a chance of redeeming its credit. In every other encounter it has come off second-best, he said, but in Dublin it can claim a victory, a plausible set-off for the defeat of Kut. He, too, represents another phase of the Irish mind, the one that sees a joke or an epigram in all circumstances, thereby contriving to survive an habitual discontent. But are there no ruins in Stephen's Green ? I asked, and he told me the finest were to be seen in Sackville Street, adding, that the oven changes many an ugly carcass into a sweet-smelling roast. The oven improves us all houses as well as men and beasts, fishes and birds, and potatoes are better baked than boiled. Good-bye till dinner-time. And after dinner ? I said, I will go to see the ruins ; they will be looking their best after sunset, I interjected, catching something of my host's flippancy.

But dinner was prolonged with conversation until the moon rose, and then, remembering a phrase of Balzac's, " In the moonlight the Place de la Bourse is a dream of old Greece," I said to myself : ruins are best by moonlight. But my host continued to talk on many subjects till long after midnight, and the moon was waning and *The Irish Times* was printing when I reached the Liffey and saw the great skeleton façades lifting themselves up in the night.

Many of the buildings, the Imperial Hotel and the Post Office, appeared at first sight uninjured, but at second sight it was plain that they were but empty shells. I shall have, I said, to wait for the sunrise to see these ruins. At present they are but phantoms, a city that has passed away—shapeless mounds that might be of Babylon. I shall have to wait for another hour for some traces of Dublin to appear, ruined portico or broken column, which ? But

martial law still prevails, I continued, and arrest, though it lasts but a minute, is unpleasant. I will adjourn to the office of *The Irish Times* and write paragraphs till dawn ; and though rubble heaps afford but slight pasture for the picturesque pen, it may be that I shall discover something. Nature is so various that I cannot fail to find something unexpected and significant if I search long enough. Even if the space in to-morrow's paper be filled he might like an article—on what ? I asked myself. And in the hope that a subject would come into my mind while talking I went upstairs unabashed (the editors of Irish papers receive visitors while waiting for proofs), and it was not till one o'clock that I began to notice that the editor began to weary of conversation. My proofs are late to-night, he said, but they cannot be long delayed ; and the finest ruins are beyond Rutland Square. You might walk round that way ; and his last advice to me was to look out for a building that had been shelled near Amiens Street Station.

Ten minutes' walk took me there. But how am I to describe picturesquely a wall twenty feet high by forty feet long with a hole in it ? I asked myself, and returned to Henry Street wondering what the descriptive reporters attached to the newspapers had written about the ruins. They can describe anything, even a boat race, I said ; it's their business. And it was while thinking about their art and Marius among the ruins of Carthage that I escaped as by a miracle from falling into a cellar in which I should certainly have died, discovered by my stench at the end of a week, and whoever found me would go back to the office of the *Times* with excellent copy. A lugubrious story truly of a reporter who died in a cellar in Henry Street, and one that soon changed to a story of a reporter who committed suicide amid the ruins because he could not describe them. Not being able to produce copy he became copy, I said, and I'm minded to follow his example, for have I not promised to write an article and up to the present have discovered only a strip of wall-paper hanging from a ruined wall which I could have seen in London any day : pathetic, no doubt, but poor pasturage for the picturesque pen. All the same, the mantelpiece up above is a fine specimen ; and with much literary sympathy I fell to examining a broken mantelpiece over which hung an overmantel, its mirror still intact and a piece of ornamental crockery and a little French clock still upon its shelves. Here is my symbol, I said, somewhat commonplace, but the best I shall find. A pleasant home, no doubt it once was, and in my imagination I saw a family collected round the fender after the evening meal, mother reading a tale from a popular magazine to the children, the cat purring upon her knees. A somewhat commonplace subject for an article, I said, but one that will please the readers of *The Irish Times*. A plaintive "Miaw" reached me, and a beautiful black Persian cat appeared by the fireplace. A cat is almost articulate, and Tom asked me to explain to him the meaning of all this ruin. He has found his old fireplace, I said, and tried to entice him ; but, though pleased to see me, he would not be persuaded to leave what remained of the hearth on which he had spent so many pleasant hours, and pondering on his faithfulness and his beauty I continued my search among the ruins, meeting cats everywhere, all seeking their lost homes among the ashes and all unable to comprehend the misfortune that had befallen them. It is true that the cats suffer vaguely, but suffering is not less because it is vague, and it seemed to me that in the early ages of the world, shall we say twenty thousand years before Pompeii and Herculaneum, men groped and suffered blindly amid incomprehensible earthquakes seeking their lost homes, just like the cats in Henry Street. We are part and parcel of the same original substance, I said, and then my thoughts breaking off suddenly, I began to rejoice in Nature's unexpectedness and fecundity. She is never commonplace in her stories, we have only to go to her to be original, I muttered, as I returned through the silent streets. I could have imagined everything else, the wall-paper, the overmantel, and the French clock, but not the cats seeking for their lost hearths, nor is it likely that Turgenieff could, Balzac still less.

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A WEEK goes by easily amid renewals of friendship, and verifications of the people of “ Hail and Farewell,” one after the other—a roll-call in fact, all answering their names except Bailey and Yeats ; Bailey died a few months ago of a gun-shot wound, and already Dublin society has forgotten him. His gift was atmosphere. He brought an atmosphere of happiness into the room ; a precious gift truly for the conduct of life, but one so easily appreciated that it is forgotten as easily as the passage of a pleasant breeze coming and going in and out of a garden. Yeats now lives, or is going to live, in a ruined castle in Galway, for the sake of the spectres—such is the report, which, however untrue, is an acceptable explanation of his strange choice of dwelling—himself having become a myth from too long brooding on myths, and myths being, if not spectres, at least of the same kin. Another report avers that his retirement may be attributed to his belief that the poet should apply himself as soon as his poetry is written to the weaving of a “ Poetic Personality.” And at once the ruined castle rises before our eyes, for has it not been said that a poet must live in a cabin or a castle, these two dwell-ings representing the poles of humanity ? Yeats’ belief in his relationship to the Duke of Ormond precludes the cabin, and piecing the two reports, or shall we say the two myths, together, we seem to be justified in imagining him in the vaulted hall of the castle of Ballylee—weaving the myths that will preserve his works when all life has departed from them, passing the shuttle to and fro, weaving industriously, Lady Gregory standing by him, distaff in hand.

And these twain visionaries recall my old friend, the Comte Villiers de L’Isle Adam, for Villiers believed himself to be the heir to the great name, and the conviction strikes root immediately that he would have welcomed Yeats as a dream for himself or as a subject of a story for others, summarising our poet in some melancholy and ornate phrase spoken by Yeats as he rises from the loom of poetic personality one sultry summer afternoon before going down to Coole. Though my heart be empty of all else, he would say, his eyes wandering over the escutcheoned walls (escutcheoned in his imagination), though my heart be empty of all else, I bear in it at least the sterile glory of many forgotten dukes.

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YOU are going by the Limited Mail, sir ? the porter asked overnight, and I answered that I hoped there would be in me the needful strength of will to turn out of bed before six ; but it was doubtful. No fear of that, sir, the porter replied ; I’ll get you up, and if you leave here at twenty minutes to seven you’ll be in time. But it will be as well to order the car for half-past six ; these carmen are always late and the horses on the night shift are a sorry lot, hardly able to pull the cars behind them.

There’ll be neither breakfast nor bath, I murmured, and went to my room dreading the mental struggle that would befall me in the morning.

Nor was it a less tough one than I had imagined it, and had not the porter stood over my bed I should have slept for hours. My father was the same before me, one to whom an early rise was intolerable, only to see a horse gallop could he manage it.

At last I threw my legs out of bed and began to seek my clothes. The worst moment is over, I said, and at seven minutes past the half-hour a car arrived drawn by a horse that only a goat-herd could distinguish from a goat ; and seeing that his horse, for it was one, did not inspire belief in his power to reach the station in time, the driver began to condone his appearance, saying it was the worst part of him, and amid many assurances we drove away, leaving the last glimpse of the flowering green behind us when we turned into Grafton Street, a desert as all streets are at seven in the morning. But the emptiness of Grafton Street surprises us more than the emptiness of any other street, so accustomed are we to see it filled

with thronging passengers. Its faint descent tried the power of the horse to keep back the car, and so feeble were his totterings that I began to fear we should miss the train, but forgot my fears as soon as we emerged from its narrowness, for the beauty of the day appeared in a delightful blueness overhead and in shadows falling westward from the pillared porticoes of the noble bank. How delightful it will be in Kildare, I said to myself, if we catch the train, and to the jarvey, that no more than a dozen minutes remained before the train started.

We'll be there in time, he said, and I contemplated once more the destruction of many a back-yard. A more than usually foolish revolution, I muttered ; truly Catholic, I added, and was about to beg the jarvey not to whip his horse so cruelly, but before the words could be spoken the thought crossed my mind that if he did not urge his heavily laden horse up the hillside I should be confronted to-morrow with the necessity of rising at six. It behoves him to suffer, I said. We suffer differently, but we all suffer. It is my suffering to witness his ; he will forget but I shall remember ; and as soon as we arrived at the station I applied myself to the elucidation of many irrelevant matters connected with my journey westward, and helped by the almost impenetrable dullness of the railway porter succeeded in ridding myself of all memory of the scarecrow horse. But no sooner had I comfortably settled myself in a seat than his pitifulness reappeared, and remained with me till the train had rolled some little distance into the country, and it might have remained with me all the way to Mullingar if a sudden memory of the beautiful flowering country we should soon be passing through had not blotted out his unwelcome image. After all, I said, we arrived, and by getting me to the station he achieved his destiny ; and with the same industry that he applied himself to his, let me apply myself to mine, which is clearly to recall the city as it was all last week engarlanded with chestnut, laburnum and lilac bloom ; yes, and with hawthorn trees leaning over every railing. White, pink and rose hawthorn, one as beautiful as the other, I continued, and fell to thinking how last year travelling through the same country it had pleased me to imagine myself in the part of Paris ! with this difference, that my trouble was not to discriminate between three beautiful women, but three beautiful trees—a more difficult task than the one accomplished on Mount Ida. . . . The white may be the beautifullest, but which smells the sweeter, the pink or the rose ? I asked myself. And mile after mile of hawthorn bloom passed by unobserved, the reality blotted out by the potent remembrance of the hawthorns that had bloomed ten years ago in my garden in Ely Place. The blooms in memory are always sweeter than the blooms on the bough, I said ; and on awaking fully from my meditation, I saw.

A country passing by me and in such incomparable bloom that it seemed like madness. The madness of May, I said, for the 6th of June is as much May as June, and on this remark or aphorism, whichever it may be, my thoughts fled away like the cuckoo at the end of June. Whither they went I know not, nor do I know whither the cuckoo goes or the salmon, only that bird and fish return, and that our thoughts return too, sometimes bearing in their beaks new thoughts, if thoughts have beaks, and who will say they have not, and sharp claws.

And presently my thought of May returned, bearing in its beak a memory of Rossetti : one from the Blessed Damozel, the lady who leaned out of heaven with three lilies lying asleep along her bended arm—a gift for the Virgin. A better gift for the Virgin would have been a wreath of hawthorn, one that would have reminded her more intimately of the beauty of earth than the lilies. An oversight on the part of Rossetti. . . . But, no, there are no hawthorns in ruined Galilee, and as likely as not that is why everybody was so discontented with his life in Galilee and failed to understand that our life is beautiful because it is transitory, and that the joys of heaven would weary us before we had been listening to sonatas for ten thousand years. But if there had been hawthorn in Galilee all might have been different, March in Galilee is May in England and had there been hawthorn in Galilee I should have noticed it at once.

And then, a little cross with myself for thinking of Galilee, a country that is responsible for more wasted time than any other, I said : the white, no doubt, is more beautiful than the pink, and yet the pink tree that has just fled past is extraordinarily beautiful. I remember it from last year, and in my memory it exhales a more subtle scent than perhaps the white. But am I sure that this preference is not a prejudice sprung from the fact that a large tree of pink grew in my garden when I lived in Upper Ely Place ? And once again I fell to thinking of the hawthorns that had bloomed for me ten years ago in my garden. The blooms of yester year haunt us, I cried, and awaking suddenly I saw a country passing, beautiful as antiquity. And my thoughts turning to Thessaly I said :

Thessaly is too hot in June. Its nymphs and fauns, and Silenus, should migrate here at the end of April and tempt the druids of Maynooth out of their celibacy ; and then, imagination taking the place of reason once again, I began to believe that a nymph would reveal herself to me if I were to keep my thoughts fixed on those dim sunny fields passing by, and sure enough I very soon espied one reclining in a drift of haze that curled and went out along the edge of a pond.

Goddess or cloud, God knows which, I cried, and asked myself if I should allow the occasion to pass without stopping the train to inquire, for to let such an occasion pass without inquiry, I meditated, would be folly surely. But, alas, at the moment of starting to my feet to pull the cord of communication I foresaw the guard's face and the faces of many passengers agleam with various anger at the only worthy reason ever given by a passenger for the stopping of an express train—that he had been vouchsafed a glimpse of a goddess in a garment of drifting haze. And almost as distinctly as the altercation between me and the guard, the scene in the police court appeared to me, with myself in the dock pleading justification for my action, saying, and saying well, if a man may not stop the Limited Mail to see goddesses in drifting haze, for what may he stop the train ? A belief in goddesses being essential for the maintenance of the world. If that were so the world would have ended long ago, his Worship raps out. But your Worship saw a goddess in the haze. Never saw such a thing in my life, his Worship answers. But I thought that your Worship married beautiful Miss Lynch from Partry. At which remark a cloud gathers in his Worship's face, and he declares that I am wasting the time of the Court, but not before I succeed in interjecting : your vision vanished like mine, and am I to understand that because yours endured a little longer than mine I am to be condemned to the cells while you go scot free ?

Forty shillings or a month, the magistrate cries, inwardly pleased but unable to escape from the toils of the law.

And in such characteristic Irish fashion the adventure would have ended : forty shillings or a month ! But forty shillings have often been wasted on things as unimportant as the stopping of a train to see a goddess. My thought melted into a dream of the subsequent assemblage of the passengers, many of whom have been prone to search the hedge-rows. Too late, too late, I cried ; my goddess is now many hundred yards behind me . . . drunken up perchance by the sun.

As if to console me, a poem arose out of my very legitimate despondency, and in it Pan as he went down the Vale of Mænalus singing pursues a maiden and discovers a flute in one of the reeds into which he could pour his grief ; and then I fell to thinking of the name Mænalus, but Mænalus is not a more beautiful name than Avoca ; Greece lacks our incomparable haze the only fitting garment for a goddess if she be not wholly ungarmented. Ah ! if it were not for our incurable love of druids, Ireland would be teeming with nymphs and dryads. The last

one was Etain, and we are told that the sweetness of her legs pierced one of our elder poets to the heart, and Mary whom we received in exchange has no legs, being a virgin, or if she had any, nobody saw them, not even her husband, so does a majority in this county aver, whereas the majority in the county I have come from says he did. An important question truly and one not less difficult to decide than the hawthorn.

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I SUPPOSE the climate is answerable for the virginity of our goddess, I said to myself, and the words might have given rise to some pleasant fancies if my eyes had not caught sight of a man in gaiters following a path through a field in which a long herd stood up to their knees in buttercups : one of our immemorial herdsmen, I said, and some thought concerning him expressed in *Salve* came upon me suddenly, and for a long time I sat chewing the cud of it, that the Irish herdsman divined the steak in the bullock's rump with the same intuitive perception as the Greek did the statue in the marble. A long passage followed, one of my best, the point of it being that the Irish should be content with having produced the finest herdsmen in the world. And the witticism was continued into the sauce, for though the Irish had discovered the steak the sauce Bernaise was beyond the genius of the race.

A truly admirable appreciation of one's own country and countrymen, and after having enjoyed it I cannot do else than lose myself in admiration of the man's measured gait, and approve his project, which doubtless was to change the pasture of his herds. And having chosen the field in which his cattle are to graze, I said, he will stand leaning over a gate till dinner-time, an unending exemplar of Ireland. He was in the beginning and ever shall be, world without end. A race, I continued, that does not change ; and at that moment an indolent priest was being driven swiftly along a pleasant road bending round a hill-side, and I added : he, too, is an exemplar of the Irish race as it always was and always will be, world without end. And whither goes he ? To a convent to shrive some helpless nuns, or is he on his way to Maynooth, where the meals are in accordance with long ecclesiastical usage ; or to some rich farmer's house chosen by him for stations ?

The priest to his nuns and I to my reveries in a train that jolts and hurtles along at a fine rate by the side of an old canal full of reeds and rushes. We passed a lock-house seemingly in ruins. MacCan, I said, believed in the revival of the waterways, but since his death the canals have fallen into idleness, which is a pity, for the life of the canal is in keeping with our unaccentuated climate. But the ruin of the canal is not complete, I cried ; for yonder comes a horse urged forward by a sapling freshly torn from the hedge. In Ireland nothing disappears, all is that ever was ; and pleased with the raciness of my thoughts, my eyes return to the landscape. England, I said, does not fade out of Ireland until we reach Mullingar, and after leaving Mullingar behind us we pass many spots almost undistinguishable from English scenery, for wherever the land rises out of bog rich fields begin and the trees emerge like vapours. Corot should have painted an Ireland. But why should his name have come into my mind, for I am weary of spinnage and vapour.

A lonely country, sir. The words startled me, and I could only answer my fellow-traveller : yes, sir, a lonely country. But gathering from his face that he seemed to expect something more from me than a mere repetition of the words he used, I roused into some sort of mental activity. The cattle aren't lonely ; they're always in company like the monks and the nuns, I said, for in Ireland the first thought in a railway carriage is—am I travelling with a Protestant or a Catholic ? His smile told me he was a Protestant, and from his speech and appearance I began to guess a landlord's agent, a man between fifty and sixty, tall and lean, reminding me of Don Quixote, and the Don's appearance is but the symbol of the Don's credulous soul ; whosoever has been given the body has received the soul, or some part of it ; and I was

therefore grateful to hear before we reached Mullingar that he, too, had projects for the advancement of Ireland, all of which I had heard before, but which he seemed to exalt a little in the telling. And giving my ear to him I heard again the project for the establishment of factories for the compression of peat, which when compressed would yield as much heat as coal ; with compressed fuel Ireland will become a great industrial nation, he said, and I answered that Ireland is so winning among her ruins that it would be a pity to reform her. She has rejected so many reformatations that it would be a pity if she now—I was going to say if she put off her Catholic rags and appeared in clean Pauline linen ; but a cloud seemed to gather in my fellow-traveller's face, and instead of continuing my native protestantism, with a deft turn of words I whisked the conversation back to economic difficulties and professed sympathy with the building of piers, the laying down of oyster beds and a tunnel under the sea uniting Scotland with Ireland. Portpatrick and Galway, I said, could be connected by a line of railway and the bay thereby turned into a great Transatlantic port. A big job, he said. True, quite true, I answered, but realisable in the end. It might, however, be better to begin by setting up a bacon factory in Castlebar.

Every pig breeder, he said, could take a ten-pound share, and in Mayo, he continued, every cottager owns a pig. But can cottagers afford a ten-pound share ? I interjected ; and will you guarantee a minimum price for the pigs ? and of all is the Mayo pig the kind of pig that produces the London rasher ?

My questions seemed to vex him, and we might not have spoken again during the journey had it not been for the rashers. It was their succulence that prompted him to address me again on the advantage a bacon factory would be to Castlebar and to Mayo generally, and wishing to hear his views I assumed so pleasant an air of acquiescence that before long the bacon factory was lost sight of and we were talking of the great changes that had come over the country since we were young men.

In former times, my traveller said, there was the big house, and the villagers always coming and going on some errand or another ; the women coming up at midday with their husbands' and sons' dinners. A poor one, it is true, five or six potatoes tied up in a cloth, and a noggin of buttermilk which they would get from the dairy-maid. But in those days the people were contented with very little, they never tasted meat but once a year and that at Christmas time, which they boiled in a pot, the only knowledge of cooking they knew. When the potatoes rotted in the famine years, the people had nothing, there never having been any factories for the making of cheese in Ireland. For some reason or another the Irish are not cheese eaters. The Welsh, I believe, are, and work all day nourishing themselves from time to time with a bite of cheese and a sup of beer. And then the Welsh are dissenters and radicals, whereas the villagers here are Catholic and like the big house for the hum of life always going on : the smithy with its clanging anvil and snoring bellows ; the carpenter's shop, its threshold heaped with shavings—Micky Murphy in the background making a door or a window sash, and more ready than the smith himself to pass the time of day with whosoever might have a moment to spare. And I mustn't forget the sawyers, one of them in the pit and the other above him, sawing some balks of timber for Micky Murphy, who wanted timber for gates and door-posts. Always something going on, you see. And as likely as not some of the house servants had come up from the village : their fathers and mothers and their sisters and brothers were all welcome. And then there was the landlord hanging about the stable-yard with a couple of setters at his heels, and he always willing to speak to the tenants on Saturdays, hearing all their complaints, and when they had no complaints, which very often happened, they came up just for the sake of a talk. You see with all those things going on the country was never lonely, but now all I am telling you about has passed away and the people are beginning to feel the loneliness of the country very sore upon them.

But it was the tenants who wished to get rid of the landlords, I interjected. Yes, that is so, my friend replied, but you see the rents in former times were too high and they couldn't pay them. But they'd like to have their landlords back again, with smaller rents, mind you. Yes, they would and leppin'. They'd sooner be bringing up their notes as in old times to the big house than sending them to the Board, which is a harder task-master than ever Clanricarde was, and altogether without consideration of special cases and circumstances. The way it is now is that the tenant just pays and if he fails to pay he goes, eviction in Ireland being easier than ever it was, without police and sub-sheriff. For you see if the Bishops agree, and there are a dozen on the Board, that a man must be put out, out he is put, for there isn't a man in Ireland that would dare to raise his voice against a Bishop. Out he goes and there's an end of it. Well, all that is contrary to the spirit of the Irish people, who have no taste for offices and clerks and routine work, and who like to know with whom they are dealing, as they have always done, and as their fathers before them : a clannish people, sir, who have not yet forgotten the chieftain they have gone to battle for. As I was saying to you, sir, the people miss the hum of life that was always going on around the old country houses. In exchange they've got the land.

Well, a very fair exchange, I interjected. But how long will they keep the land ? Isn't it always passing from them again and again, for the Irish are a religious people and every man will leave a sum of money to the priest to say masses for his soul to keep it out of purgatory, though this much must be said, it isn't the peasant class that gives away to the priest but the small shopkeeping class ; and the land it has gotten from the peasant goes in masses for the repose of souls.

The news that the land of Ireland had been wrenched from the landlords with so much trouble and was passing into the hands of the clergy interested me deeply, putting into my mind the thought that a third of the land of England was Church property in Reformation times. It was, I said, the riches of the clergy that had set the people saying—the kingdom of heaven may be for us, but the kingdom of earth is for them. On that they began reading the Gospels, and it would be a wonderful thing surely if the avarice of the clergy turned the Irish into Protestants, the same as it did the English. Be this as it may, what Ireland needs is a new religion, and I pray that she may get one. Which ? It matters not, but let her get one quickly, I muttered, and almost immediately after my traveller's voice awoke me from my reverie, and the truth became apparent that all the while I had been dreaming he had been telling a story.

It behoved me to reconstruct the first half from the beginning, for it was beyond my courage to say : what you told me about the passing away of the Irish land from the tenants to the clergy interested me so profoundly that I missed a good deal of the story you are telling : would you be kind enough to repeat it all over again ? He might very well answer my request : if you didn't care to listen you must go without, and return to his paper, leaving me looking out of the window at the landscape regretting I had entered into conversation with him. All the same, I said, it was stupid of me to miss the beginning of his story ; and it will be more stupid still if I do not give my ears at once to what he is telling about Joseph Appley.

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I'M sure I heard him say that Joseph Appley was from Wiltshire, my fellow-traveller repeated, and I tried to look as if the evidence pointed to Wiltshire. I have often heard Sir Hugh say that he picked him up in Wiltshire. Joseph was a boy at the time, he said, and a boy is picked very much like a berry from a hedge, like a berry ; I've often heard Sir Hugh say that he picked him from the hedge and that he became immediately after the best cab-boy in

London. No matter what time Sir Hugh came out of a theatre his cab drove up, Joseph on the box ready to hop off it on the instant to open the door for Sir Hugh. I have heard Sir Hugh say that he couldn't understand by what process of thought Joseph divined his movements. He seems to know them instinctively, were Sir Hugh's very words to me.

But not having heard the beginning of the story I did not know who Sir Hugh was ; an Irish landlord, I judged him to be by inference, but could not tell in what county till my fellow-traveller mentioned that Sir Hugh had won the Chester Cup with Tomboy, and the Cambridgeshire with Makebelieve. You must have heard of these horses, he said, and I answered that the names recalled a past time to me. A few moments after I remembered that Makebelieve had won the race carrying nine stone, which was considered in those days an extraordinary performance for a three-year-old. In those days, my fellow-traveller continued, Sir Hugh was coining money on the race-course. There was Chimney Sweep, another great horse of his, and Bayleaf was a fast mare, that won a great deal of money, and would have won a great deal more if she had been able to get the mile, but she always began to stop at the three-quarters. Joseph Appley was doing pretty well too, not a long way behind his master, not farther than a valet should be ; a great pair surely in the old days, looked out for at the cock-pit, the prize-ring and the race-course. Sir Hugh thought the world and all of Joseph Appley, who began, as I have told you, as a cab-boy and afterwards became the best valet Sir Hugh ever had in his life. A little extravagant, Sir Hugh would say, Joseph's maxim always being that the best was good enough for me. Nor was Joseph quite satisfied even with the best ; he'd always tell the tradesman : now if you do this extra well, I'll give you a little more. But, said my fellow-traveller, at the time I am telling of, a little extravagance more or less didn't matter ; a few pounds one way or the other make no difference when you're winning big handicaps. But the day came when Sir Hugh's horses were not so fast as they used to be, and perhaps that was the reason he took to himself a wife ; her fortune paid some of his debts and allowed him to run horses again, for at the time of his marriage he hadn't paid off his forfeits ; he owed money to Weatherby ; and after his marriage—well, there were politics, and in those days elections cost a lot of money ; Sir Hugh's politics were not very popular, and he had to spend a great deal in making himself popular : the stud was expensive, and his lady wasn't content to live at Muchloon alone while her husband was away in England. She had people staying in the house all the time, and with Joseph running the house on the principle that the best of everything was good enough for Muchloon, it is easy to imagine the great hump of debt that began to rise up on Sir Hugh's shoulders. At last the day came. I'm going back to London, Appley, to economise. Joseph muttered (he always muttered a little) that he had never heard of anyone going to London to economise before. But wouldn't you like to come to London with me ? he asked. Joseph said he was too old. But I should have thought that he would have liked to return to his own country, I interjected. My fellow-traveller rapped out that England was far behind Joseph by this time and Ireland as far as ever ahead of him, though he had married the lady's maid, a Catholic, who, of course, couldn't marry him unless he promised to bring up his children Catholics, which he did ; and when the family left him alone in charge of Muchloon he made the last effort to become an Irishman that an Englishman can make : he became a Catholic ; but this change didn't alter matters, for I think he was more English after the change than before it.

What sort of woman was his wife ? I asked, for Joseph's unfortunate life began to interest me. A long, melancholy woman, my fellow-traveller answered, and her daughter as lank and melancholy as herself. The son was a bit podgy like his father—well-meaning but good-for-nothing. I think Joseph was always ashamed of his family, the females especially : for I remember it always seemed to irritate him if his wife and daughter were met on the kitchen stairs on their way to the pantry. A pair of long-faced, cringing women were the two of them ; and the wife couldn't have been different from the daughter; yet Joseph was mad to get her.

A strange infatuation that refusals couldn't cool. Propinquity I suppose it was, she being the lady's maid at Ardath and Sir Hugh always going to Ardath— Master after mistress and valet after maid, I jerked in. Something like that, my travelling companion answered. I don't want to revive old scandals, but there was a story going that one of the ladies there loved Sir Hugh in his bachelor days, and this I know for certain, that she was the only untitled lady at the great dinner he gave after winning the Cambridgeshire.

A curious piece of evidence to adduce, and altogether insufficient it seemed to me to be ; I should have liked to put a few questions, but withheld them, afraid to lose the tale of Joseph Appley's misfortunes.

Well, one of his misfortunes was this : you see when Sir Hugh died, the heir was a minor and wanted money to spend on his pleasure in London, and to get this money he applied to Joseph, who negotiated a loan from one of the tenants, and when her ladyship heard that Joseph had done this, she sent him packing into the village, and Joseph in an Irish village was a sad spectacle. Everybody liked Joseph, but an alien he was, never was there such an alien before as Joseph, and to this day I'm wondering how he endured the two years he spent in the village, and he was fully two years in Ballyholly before the heir, who was then the owner of Muchloon, restored him to his pantry. It was pleasant to see him back in it ; he put him back into his pantry, paid him his wages, and these were spent on the farm, which was a failure, for his two sons were, as I have said, helpless boys, wastrels I suppose you'd call them. Some sort of misfortune was always falling upon them, and it was always some new misfortune they had to tell. The Irish are very fond of sad stories, and the Appleys could tell how the mare and foal had died on them, but they always forgot to tell they were leaving their old father to starve in the great Georgian mansion. Poor boys, they were starving themselves ; and it was fortunate that I went there one day else Joseph might have died of hunger. What's the matter, Joseph ? says I. You're looking thin and pale. I'm starving, sir, was all he answered. What could I do but put my hand into my pocket and give him five pounds ? But, on looking closer, his face told me he needed food at once, and remembering I had brought some luncheon with me I sent down to the stables for it and shared it with him in his pantry, on the table on which he used to brush his old master's clothes and clean his boots. He wanted to open up the dining-room, but I wouldn't let him. We'll just have a snack together, said I, and a talk about the horses and the spring handicaps. Have you seen the weights for the City and Suburban ? Joseph said he hadn't seen a newspaper for a long time, and I took one out of my pocket, a copy of *The Sportsman*, a paper he knew nothing about. Joseph's paper was *Bell's Life*. If I came into the pantry unexpectedly he'd put the paper into his press, into his wonderful press, out of which everything seemed to come. You couldn't ask Joseph for anything he couldn't produce from that press. His press was a great wonder to me when I was a boy ; I used to try to peep over his shoulder when he opened it. But Joseph was careful never to allow anybody to look into his press. He'd just give what he was asked for and lock the press abruptly. But one day I espied a packet of newspapers, not one packet but many, and all tied up with string very carefully. So you keep the file, Joseph, if not all of it of the time when you and Sir Hugh were about together and when you very nearly challenged the Game Chicken to a fight you not knowing who he was ? You see I remember everything you tell me. Even Joseph could be flattered, but it required a little pressure to get him to admit that he had a complete *Bell's Life* ; why he kept it God knows. I've often imagined him reading the prize-fights and the race-meetings and the cock-fights all over again in the long evenings at Muchloon. I supposed that was it, but he never told me that was why he kept them, the most secretive little man ever known : you might tell him anything and be sure that he would not repeat it.

A little man ? I said. I imagined him as a tall, lean hungry man. You got that idea, my fellow-traveller replied, from what I told you of his wife : a tall, melancholy woman. No, he married the very opposite to himself. Joseph was a short-necked, full-bodied, white-faced little man, rotund in later life. Don't I remember, my fellow-traveller continued, the short fleshy nose and his running walk ? And did he live all alone in Muchloon ? Did all the servants go away with Sir Hugh to London ? I asked. Not all, my fellow-traveller answered. The old cook and housemaid remained with him, but they were very old and died a few years afterwards, blessing the master because he left them on board wages. Servants were very grateful in former times and thought a great deal was being done for them if they were not left to starve. And there were no complaints about the dinners they were given, nor the rooms they were put to sleep in. The servants always slept in large roomy subterranean dwellings in Muchloon, at the end of the kitchen passage ; the eighteenth century in Ireland, and perhaps elsewhere, did not look after their servants as well as the nineteenth.

Is Joseph still alive ? I asked, for my imagination was now filled with the personality of the old servant, whom I could see in my mind's eye taking the air on the weed- grown terrace, and in my mind's ear was the peacock, the last of a hundred, uttering doleful cries from the branches of a great cedar.

No, said my companion, Joseph is dead ; he died in his pantry five years ago. I saw him three weeks before his death ; he was then eighty but still thinking of the autumn handicaps, and as he fancied a horse for Cesarewitch I said : Joseph, I'll put you on ten shillings. The horse won, but Joseph was not here to receive it. I'm sorry, for I'd have liked him to have won his last bet, I said. It didn't matter. The ten shillings that I put him on at twenty-five to one illuminated the last day of his life, and perhaps he died seeing in a vision his horse passing first beyond the post. An honest death-bed vision that would be. A man's death should be part and parcel of his life. So Joseph died English to the last ? Yes, my companion answered, Ireland failed to assimilate him, and then, anxious to make amends at the end of the story for my inattention at the beginning, I asked for news of Joseph's sons, and learned that they had sold their interest in the farm and purchased some cars and horses. They were now car-drivers in Athenry, and Muchloon stands empty on its green hill top, the present owner not being rich enough to live there. The most he can do, continued my fellow-traveller, is to keep a caretaker in the house. When he goes the next man will sell the lead off the roof, and Muchloon will be added to the ruins of all sorts that encumber Ireland. The finest assortment of ruins the world can show. From the fifth century onwards every century is represented ; English and Irish ruins, ruined houses and ruined lives.

At the next station I was bidden good-bye, and lay back in my seat with a very vivid impression in my heart of a man that lived in the world unhappily.

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