THE ADVENTURES OF SEUMAS BEG

JAMES STEPHENS

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THE ADVENTURES OF SEUMAS BEG THE ROCKY ROAD TO DUBLIN



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THE ADVENTURES OF SEUMAS BEG

THE ROCKY ROAD TO DUBLIN

BY

JAMES STEPHENS

AUTHOR OF

"THE CHARWOMAN'S DAUGHTER," THE HILL OF VISION,"
THE CROCK OF GOLD," ETC.

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THE ADVENTURES OF SEUMAS BEG

THE CHERRY TREE

- Come from your bed my drowsy gentleman!
 - And you, fair lady, rise and braid your hair,
- And let the children wash, if wash they can;
 - If not, assist you them, and make them fair
- As is the morning and the morning sky, And every tree and bush and bird in air.
- The sun climbed on the heights three hours ago,
 - He laughed above the hills and they were glad;

4 THE CHERRY TREE

With bubbled pearl he made the rivers flow

And laced their mists in silver, and he clad

The meads in fragrant pomp of green and gold,

And bade the world forget it had been sad.

So lift yourself, good sir! and you, sweet dame,

Unlash your evening eyes of pious grey;

Call on the children by each loved name, And set them on the grass and let them play;

And play with them a while, and sing with them

Beneath the cherry bush a roundelay.

BREAKFAST TIME

THE sun is always in the sky Whenever I get out of bed, And I often wonder why It's never late.—My sister said She did not know who did the trick, And that she did not care a bit, And I should eat my porridge quick.

IN THE ORCHARD

- THERE was a giant by the Orchard Wall
 - Peeping about on this side and on that,
- And feeling in the trees: he was as tall
 - As the big apple tree, and twice as fat:
- His beard was long, and bristly-black, and there
- Were leaves and bits of grass stuck in his hair.
- He held a great big club in his right hand,
 - And with the other felt in every tree

- For something that he wanted. You could stand
 - Beside him and not reach up to his knee
- So mighty big he was—I feared he would
- Turn round, and trample down to where I stood.
- I tried to get away, but, as I slid Under a bush, he saw me, and he bent
- Far down and said, "Where is the Princess hid?"
 - I pointed to a place, and off he went—
- But while he searched I turned and simply flew
- Round by the lilac bushes back to you.

DAY AND NIGHT

When the bright eyes of the day
Open on the dusk, to see
Mist and shadow fade away
And the sun shine merrily,
Then I leave my bed and run
Out to frolic in the sun.

Through the sunny hours I play
Where the stream is wandering,
Plucking daisies by the way;
And I laugh and dance and sing,
While the birds fly here and there
Singing on the sunny air.

When the night comes, cold and slow, And the sad moon walks the sky, When the whispering wind says "Boh,
Little boy!" and makes me cry,
By my mother I am led
Home again and put to bed.

THE DEVIL'S BAG

- I saw the Devil walking down the lane Behind our house.—There was a heavy bag
- Strapped tightly on his shoulders, and the rain
- Sizzled when it hit him. He picked a rag
- Up from the ground and put it in his sack,
- And grinned and rubbed his hands.
 There was a thing
- Moving inside the bag upon his back— It must have been a soul! I saw it fling
- And twist about inside, and not a hole

- Or cranny for escape! Oh, it was sad!
- I cried, and shouted out, "Let out that soul!"
- But he turned round, and, sure, his face went mad,
- And twisted up and down, and he said "Hell!"
- And ran away. . . . Oh, mammy!
 I'm not well.

A VISIT FROM ABROAD

- A SPECK went blowing up against the sky
 - As little as a leaf: then it drew near
- And broadened.—"It's a bird," said I, And fetched my bow and arrows. It was queer!
- It grew up from a speck into a blot, And squattered past a cloud; then it flew down
- All crumply, and waggled such a lot I thought the thing would fall.—It was a brown
- Old carpet where a man was sitting snug
 - Who, when he reached the ground, began to sew

- A big hole in the middle of the rug, And kept on peeping everywhere to know
- Who might be coming—then he gave a twist
 - And flew away. . . . I fired at him but missed.

THE WOOD OF FLOWERS

I went to the Wood of Flowers (No one was with me);
I was there alone for hours.
I was happy as could be
In the Wood of Flowers.

There was grass on the ground,
There were buds on the tree,
And the wind had a sound
Of such gaiety,
That I was as happy
As happy could be,
In the Wood of Flowers.

THE WHITE WINDOW

The moon comes every night to peep
Through the window where I lie,
And I pretend to be asleep;
But I watch the moon as it goes by,
And it never makes a sound.

It stands and stares, and then it goes
To the house that's next to me,
Stealing on its tippy-toes,
To peep at folk asleep maybe;
And it never makes a sound.

MIDNIGHT

- And then I wakened up in such a fright; I thought I heard a movement in the room
- But did not dare to look; I snuggled right
 - Down underneath the bedclothes—then the boom
- Of a tremendous voice said, "Sit up, lad,
 - And let me see your face." So up I sat,
- Although I didn't want to. I was glad
 - I did though, for it was an angel that

- Had called me, and he said, he'd come to know
 - Was I the boy who wouldn't say his prayers
- Nor do his sums, and that I'd have to go
 - Straight down to hell because of such affairs.
- . . . I said I'd be converted and do good
- If he would let me off—he said he would.

BEHIND THE HILL

- Behind the hill I met a man in green Who asked me if my mother had gone out?
- I said she had. He asked me had I seen
 - His castle where the people sing and shout
- From dawn to dark, and told me that he had
 - A crock of gold inside a hollow tree,
- And I could have it.—I wanted money bad
 - To buy a sword with, and I thought that he
- Would keep his solemn word; so, off we went.

- He said he had a pound hid in the crock,
- And owned the castle too, and paid no rent
 - To any one, and that you had to knock
- Five hundred times. I asked, "Who reckoned up?"
- And he said, "You insulting little pup!"

THE SECRET

I was frightened, for a wind Crept along the grass to say Something that was in my mind Yesterday—

Something that I did not know
Could be found out by the wind,
I had buried it so low
In my mind.

APRIL SHOWERS

THE leaves are fresh after the rain,
The air is cool and clear,
The sun is shining warm again,
The sparrows hopping in the lane
Are brisk and full of cheer.

And that is why we dance and play,
And that is why we sing,
Calling out in voices gay,
We will not go to school to-day
Or learn anything:

It is a happy thing, I say, To be alive on such a day.

THE TURN OF THE ROAD

- I was playing with my hoop along the road
 - Just where the bushes are, when, suddenly,
- There came a shout.—I ran away and stowed
 - Myself beneath a bush, and watched to see
- What made the noise, and then, around the bend,
 - I saw a woman running. She was old
- And wrinkle-faced, and had big teeth.

 —The end
 - Of her red shawl caught on a bush and rolled

THE TURN OF THE ROAD 23

- Right off her, and her hair fell down.—
 Her face
 - Was awful white, and both her eyes looked sick,
- And she was talking queer. "O God of Grace!"
 - Said she, "where is the child?" and flew back quick
- The way she came, and screamed, and shook her hands;
- . . . Maybe she was a witch from foreign lands.

THE CORAL ISLAND

- His arms were round a chest of oaken wood,
 - It was clamped with brass and iron studs, and seemed
- An awful weight. After a while he stood
 - And I stole near to him.—His white eyes gleamed
- As he peeped secretly about; he laid The oaken chest upon the ground, then drew
- A great knife from his belt, and stuck the blade
 - Into the ground and dug. The clay soon flew
- In all directions underneath a tree,

- And when the hole was deep he put the box
- Down there, and threw the clay back cunningly,
 - Stamping the ground quite flat; then like a fox
- He crept among the trees. . . . I went next day
- To dig the treasure up, but I lost my way.

THE COW

Cow, Cow!
I and thou
Are looking at each other's eyes:
You are lying on the grass
Eating every time I pass,
And you do not seem to be
Ever in perplexity:
You are good I'm sure, and not
Fit for nothing but the pot:
For your bearing is so kind,
And your quietness so wise:

Cow, Cow!
I and thou
Are looking at each other's eyes.

THE OLD MAN

An old man sat beneath a tree
Alone;
So still was he
That, if he had been carved in stone,
He could not be
More quiet or more cold:
He was an ancient man
More than
A thousand ages old.

WHAT THE SNAKE SAW

- A LITTLE girl and a big ugly man Went down the road. The girl was crying
- And asking to go home, but when she ran
 - He hit her on the head and sent her flying,
- And called her a young imp, and said he'd break
 - Her neck unless she went with him, and then
- He smacked her on the cheek.—I was a snake
 - At that time crawling through a robber's den,

- And diamonds were sticking to my tongue—
 - (That's the best dodge), but when I saw the way
- He beat the little girl I up and flung A stone at him. My aim was bad that day
- Because I hit the girl . . . and she did sing!
- But he jumped round and cursed like anything.

THE HORSE

A sparrow hopped about the street,
And he was not a bit afraid;
He flew between a horse's feet,
And ate his supper undismayed:
I think myself the horse knew well
The bird came for the grains that fell.

For his eye was looking down,
And he danced the corn about
In his nose-bag, till the brown
Grains of corn were tumbled out;
And I fancy that he said,
"Eat it up, young Speckle-Head!"

The driver then came back again, He climbed into the heavy dray; And he tightened up the rein,
Cracked his whip and drove away.
But when the horse's ribs were hit,
The sparrow did not care a bit.

THE APPLE TREE

- I was hiding in the crooked apple tree, Scouting for Indians, when a man came;
- I thought it was an Indian, for he Was running like the wind.—There was a flame
- Of sunlight on his hand as he drew near,
 - And then I saw a knife gripped in his fist.
- He panted like a horse; his eyes were queer,
 - Wide-open, staring frightfully, and, hist!
- His mouth stared open like another eye,

- And all his hair was matted down with sweat.
- I crouched among the leaves for fear he'd spy
 - Where I was hiding, so he did not get
- His awful eyes on me, but like the wind
- He fled as if he heard something behind.

THE APPOINTMENT

TREE! you are years standing there,
Gripping tight to the side of the hill,
And your branches are spread on the
air,

While you stand so sad and so still,
And you do not complain
When you're wet with the rain,
Though I think you have often
been ill.

I would like (but it could not be done, So you must not keep me to my word)

To take you away when the sun Goes down, and the breezes are stirred, And hug you in bed With myself, till you said That to sleep on a hill was absurd.

O beautiful tree! when the night Is dark, and the winds come and scold,

I would love then to cuddle you tight, For I fear you will die of the cold;

But you are so tall,
And my bed is so small,
That it could not be done, I am
told.

My mother is calling for me,
And the baby is wanting to play,
I shall have to go home now, you
see.

But I'll give you a kiss if I may:
I would stay if I could,
But a child must be good,
So I must, darling tree, go away.

36 THE APPOINTMENT

I will leave you my pencil and slate,
And this little pin from my frock;
But now I must go, for it's late,
And my mother is rattling the lock:
So good-bye, darling dear,
I'll come back, never fear,
In the morning at seven o'clock.

CHECK

THE night was creeping on the ground; She crept and did not make a sound Until she reached the tree, and then She covered it, and stole again Along the grass beside the wall.

I heard the rustle of her shawl
As she threw blackness everywhere
Upon the sky and ground and air,
And in the room where I was hid:
But no matter what she did
To everything that was without,
She could not put my candle out.

So I stared at the night, and she Stared back solemnly at me.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG

I will not know when I am dead
If sun or moon is overhead;
I'll stretch out flat without a sound
Inside a box beneath the ground,
And never rise again to see
Branches lifting on a tree,
Nor hear the song the finches sing
In the spring.

I'll not, while sunny ages go,
Lift a hand or wag a toe;
But in a wooden box will be
Hidden for eternity
From sea and sun, from sight and
sound,
From touch of people, voice of friend,

From all that makes my heart to bound,

Denying such an end:
It is so strange—I wonder why
People die!

THE ROCKY ROAD TO DUBLIN

THE PATRIOT'S BED

When a son you shall desire, Pray to water and to fire; But when you would have a daughter, Pray to fire and then to water.

GRAFTON STREET

AT four o'clock, in dainty talk, Lords and lovely ladies walk, With a gentle dignity, From the Green to Trinity.

And at five o'clock they take, In a Café, tea and cake, Then they call a carriage, and Drive back into fairyland.

PORTOBELLO BRIDGE

SILVER stars shine peacefully,
The Canal is silver, the
Poplars bear with modest grace
Gossamers of silver lace,
And the turf bank wears with glee
Black and silver filigree.

YORK STREET

If in winter you shall driveBirds from crumbs, you shall not thrive;But if you feed them, they will flyTo sing it sweetly on the sky.

So throw up the window, and Scatter with a lavish hand, Taking care you do not spill Flower-pots from the window-sill,

Singing, "Ireland shall be free From the centre to the sea"; Singing bravely once again, "We are Dan O'Connell's Men."

THE FIFTEEN ACRES

I cling and swing
On a branch, or sing
Through the cool, clear hush of
Morning, O:

Or fling my wing
On the air, and bring

To sleepier birds a warning, O: That the night's in flight,

And the sun's in sight,

And the dew is the grass adorning, O:

And the green leaves swing

As I sing, sing, sing,

Up by the river,

Down the dell,

To the little wee nest,

Where the big tree fell, So early in the morning, O.

48 THE FIFTEEN ACRES

I flit and twit
In the sun for a bit
When his light so bright is shining, O:
Or sit and fit
My plumes, or knit
Straw plaits for the nest's nice lining, O:
And she with glee
Shows unto me
Underneath her wings reclining, O:
And I sing that Peg
Has an egg, egg, egg,
Up by the oat-field,
Round the mill,
Past the meadow,
Down the hill.

So early in the morning, O.

I stoop and swoop
On the air, or loop
Through the trees, and then go soaring, O:
To group with a troop
On the gusty poop
While the wind behind is roaring, O:

I skim and swim
By a cloud's red rim
And up to the azure flooring, O:
And my wide wings drip
As I slip, slip, slip
Down through the rain-drops,
Back where Peg
Broods in the nest
On the little white egg,
So early in the morning, O.

COLLEGE GREEN

When you meet an ancient man, Be as silent as you can; So when old age comes to you, Courtesies shall gather too.

And King Billy's horse will start
From our street and from our heart,
When each Irishman shall be
Perfected in courtesy.

MOUNT STREET

HERE and there on the wings of night A fleck of blue and purple light, A scrap of cloud, a bird, a star, A comet hurrying afar On the abyss, and the moon Standing in her silver shoon.

On the summit of the sky,
Delicate and proud and high,
The silver moon on a silver sea
Spins her silver broidery
While the stars send down a light
Here and there on the wings of night.

WESTLAND ROW

EVERY Sunday there's a throng Of pretty girls, who trot along In a pious, breathless state (They are nearly always late) To the Chapel, where they pray For the sins of Saturday.

They have frocks of white and blue, Yellow sashes they have too, And red ribbons show each head Tenderly is ringleted; And the bell rings loud, and the Railway whistles urgently.

After Chapel they will go, Walking delicately slow, Telling still how Father John
Is so good to look upon,
And such other grave affairs
As they thought of during prayers.

THE COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

Who knows a thing and will not tell Shall spend eternity in hell; But he who learns and teaches free In heaven spends eternity.

Around the Leinster Lawn we go Into Molesworth Street, and so To Saint Stephen's Green, where we Hang a banner on a tree.

THE CANAL BANK

I know a girl,
And a girl knows me,
And the owl says, what?
And the owl says, who?
But what we know
We both agree
That nobody else
Shall hear or see,
It's all between
Herself and me:
To wit? said the owl,
To woo, said I,
To-what, to-wit, to-woo!

BY ANA LIFFEY

If you come to live with me, I will sing so heartily In your honour that you will Stay to wonder at my skill.

In your honour I will fill
The world with songs of triumph, till
You and I and Time are old
Pipers of the Age of Gold.

Time and you and I will hold, Everywhere by field and fold, Concerts of content, and be Known afar for jollity. Everywhere by fold and field We will wander well-agreed; So I sing right heartily, Come along and live with me.

FROM HAWK AND KITE

Poor frightened, fluttered, silent one!

If we had seen your nest of clay
We would have passed it by, and gone,
Nor frightened you away.

For there are others guard a nest From hawk and kite and lurking foe, And more despair is in their breast Than you can ever know.

Shield the nests where'er they be, On the ground or on the tree; Guard the poor from treachery.

THE GOMBEEN-MAN

I PUT the sky into my pocket, And the sea into my locket, And into my breeches-band I put the land.

So I was trotting off to share, Among my comrades in the lair, Our profits, when a peeler came And took my name.

And now I'm in the County Gaol!
Will anybody be my bail?
Will anybody be my bail
And take me from the County Gaol?

BERESFORD PLACE

The man who has and does not give Shall break his neck, and cease to live;

But he who gives without a care Shall gather rubies from the air.

AT THE FAIR

THE lark shall never come to say To a gombeen-man, "Good day," And the lark shall never cry To a kindly man, "Good-bye."

See the greedy gombeen-man
Taking everything he can
From man and woman, dog and
cat—
And the lark does not like that.

THE FUR COAT

I WALKED out in my Coat of Pride,
I looked about on every side,
And said the mountains should not be
Just where they were, and that the
sea

Was badly placed, and that the beech Should be an oak—and then from each

I turned in dignity as if

They were not there: I sniffed a sniff,

And climbed upon my sunny shelf,

And sneezed a while, and scratched myself.

DUBLIN MEN

A DUBLIN man will frown when he Hears a tale of villainy; But when a kindness you relate, He swings and whistles on the gate.

O'CONNELL BRIDGE

In Dublin town the people see Gorgeous clouds sail gorgeously, They are finer, I declare, Than the clouds of anywhere.

A swirl of blue and red and green, A stream of blinding gold, a sheen From silver hill and pearly ridge Comes each evening on the bridge.

So when you walk in a field, look down, Lest you tramp on a daisy's crown, But in a city look always high And watch the beautiful clouds go by.

CHARLOTTE STREET

Inside a soap shop, down a lane, A big bee buzzed on a window-pane,

Climbing the cold glass up and down; Bee, what brought you into town?

You are tired and hungry and scarce alive,

Poor old Shaggy-Tail! where's your hive?

F

GEORGE'S STREET

LISTEN! if but women were Half as kind as they are fair, There would be an end to all Miseries that do befall.

Cloud and wind would run together In a dance of sunny weather, And the happy trees would throw Gifts to travellers below.

Then the lion, meek and mild, With the lamb would, side by side, Couch him friendly, and would be Innocent of enmity. Then the Frozen Pole would go, Tossing off his fields of snow, And would shake delighted feet With the girls of George's Street.

These, if women only were Half as kind as they are fair.

HOLLES STREET

Through the air,

Everywhere, the rain is falling;

Brawling on house and tree:

On every place that you can see

The rain drops go;

The roofs are wet, the walls, the ground below.

Midnight has come;
Now all the people stretch them blind and dumb
Each in a bed
Save I, who sit and listen overhead
Unto the rain
Splashing upon the roof and window-pane.

Midnight! and I
Can get no sleep, nor can the sky.

KATTY GOLLAGHER

The hill is bare: I only find
The grass, the sky, and one small tree
Tossing wildly on the wind;
And that is all there is to see:
A tree, a hill, a wind, a sky
Where nothing ever passes by.

CORK HILL

Come all ye happy children, and Gather round me hand in hand, Dancing to the merry cry, "See the Robbers Passing By."

Past the Castle we will dance To the Mansion House, and prance Back by George's Street and cry, "See the Robbers Passing By."

Gather then ye children all Into ranks processional, Marching to the merry cry, "See the Robbers Passing By."

THE PIPER

Shepherd! while the lambs do feed, And you rest beneath a tree, Pipe upon an oaten reed Merrily and merrily.

Should it rain do not forbear—
Rain comes from the happy sky—
Tune us now a quiet air
Till the shower passes by.

Back the sun will come in gold!

Pipe away, my dear, until

Evening brings the lambs to fold—

You may weep then if you will.

THE SHADOW

SILENCE comes upon the night,
Gone is all the cheerful day,
The moon has disappeared from sight,
Every star has gone away.

Sinking through the void, and thence Disappearing, star and sky, In the stern and black immense That has blinded every eye.

Silence crouches on the land, In the street a shadow lies Cloaked in velvet wrappings, and With a mask upon her eyes. Anonymous and terrible

Mother of the primal ray,
Only night because thou art
In thyself excess of day.

CUSTOM HOUSE QUAY

When a Dublin man shall say, "Give me a little bread, I pray," If you do not give him bread You will be hungry when he is fed.

And let no priest or magistrate Scowl upon the poor man's plate, Asking him the question sly To which no one can reply.

STEPHEN'S GREEN

The wind stood up and gave a shout;
He whistled on his fingers, and
Kicked the withered leaves about
And thumped the branches with
his hand,
And said he'd kill, and kill, and kill,
And so he will, and so he will.

THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

As I stood at the door Sheltered out of the wind, Something flew in Which I hardly could find.

In the dim, gloomy doorwayI searched till I foundA dry withered leafLying down on the ground.

With thin, pointed claws
And a dry dusty skin,—
Sure a hall is no place
For a leaf to be in!

COLLEGE OF SURGEONS 77

Oh where is your tree,
And your summer and all,
Poor dusty leaf
Whistled into a hall?

MERRION SQUARE

GREY clouds on the tinted sky, A drifting moon, a quiet breeze Drooping mournfully to cry In the branches of the trees.

The crying wind, the sighing trees, The ruffled stars, the darkness falling Down the sky, and on the breeze A belated linnet calling.

THE BARE TREES

Unfortunates, on the bare tree!
I mourn for ye
That have no place to house,
But on those winter-white cold boughs
To sit,
(How far apart ye sit)
And brood
In this wide, wintry solitude
That has no song at all to hearten it.

Fly away, little birds!

Fly away to Spain,

Stay there all the winter

Then come back again;

Come back in the summer

When the leaves are thick;

Little weeny cold birds

Fly away quick.

DUNPHY'S CORNER

Pacing slowly down the road Black horses go, with load on load Of Dublin people dead, and they Will be covered up in clay.

Ere their friends go home, each man Will shake his head, and drain a can To Dublin people we will meet Not again in Grafton Street.

THE DODDER BANK

When no flower is nigh, you might Spy a weed with deep delight; So, when far from saints and bliss, God might give a sin a kiss,

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WHITE FIELDS

In the winter children go
Walking in the fields of snow
Where there is no grass at all,
And the top of every wall,
Every fence, and every tree
Is as white as white can be.

Pointing out the way they came, (Every one of them the same)
All across the fields there be
Prints in silver filigree;
And their mothers find them so
By the footprints in the snow.

THE PAPS OF DANA

THE mountains stand and stare around,

They are far too proud to speak;
Altho' they're rooted in the ground,
Up they go, peak after peak,
Beyond the tallest tree, and still
Soaring over house and hill
Until you'd think they'd never stop
Going up, top over top,
Into the clouds—

Still I mark

That a sparrow or a lark
Flying just as high, can sing
As if he'd not done anything.

I think the mountains ought to be Taught a little modesty.

DONNELLY'S ORCHARD

HE who locks a gate doth close Pity's heart against his woes; But who opens one shall find God is standing just behind.

DONNYBROOK

I saw the moon so broad and bright Sailing high on a frosty night:

And the air swung far and far between The silver disc and the orb of green:

While here and there a wisp of white Cloud-film swam on the misty light:

And crusted thickly on the sky, High and higher and yet more high,

Were golden star-points dusted through
The great, wide, silent vault of blue:

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Then I said to me—God is good And the world is fair—and where I stood

I knelt me down and bent my head, And said my prayers, and went to bed.

THE END

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