DOWN WEST:
SKETCHES OF IRISH LIFE

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AND OTHER SKETCHES
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BY

ALICE DEASE

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PREFACE.

THE authoress of the following interesting sketches of the life of the Irish peasantry has asked me to write a brief preface. I do so with pleasure, both because I consider it much to be desired that English people, both Catholic and Protestant, should know the truth about the habits and customs of the Irish poor, and because it is through such life-sketches as these that this knowledge may be gained.

In spite of the difference of language, there is undoubtedly greater affinity between the Irish and the Italian peasant than between the Irish and English of the same class; hence it is difficult for an ordinary Briton, even of the peasant rank, to enter into the mind and feeling of his neighbouring Irish brethren. English people usually consider the Irish as sentimental, perhaps as unpractical dreamers; and doubtless there is much of sentiment in the character of every Celt. On the other hand there is far less of dead materialism in

Ireland than in England, far more respect for religion and religious observances. In Ireland, even among non-Catholics, it is the exception rather than the rule not to attend a place of worship; a man who shirks this duty is a marked man. In England, on the contrary, the majority are, I fear, if not absolutely indifferent, certainly not church-goers.

Miss Dease's Irish sketches are true to the life, and give evidence of that charm which comes so forcibly home to the stranger who visits Ireland for the first time and first comes into contact with all classes of its people. The South and West are, of course, pre-eminently remarkable for their courtesy and refinement, and for their manner of expressing their mind; but even in the East and North, where the mixture of races is greater, the manners of the peasant are less uncouth than in country districts in England. Generally speaking, it is impossible not to recognize in the Irish peasant one of nature's born gentlemen. Amusing and suggestive reminiscences of what they have said and done are to be found in the works of many writers, but in Miss Dease's work there is greater detail and greater originality than is usual, and without any doubt she is intimately acquainted with the subject she has taken in hand.

And in matter of fact the true Irish character can only be explained by a Catholic. Its depths are so hidden from outsiders by the reticence and reserve of our people that nothing but its superficial aspect can ever be grasped by those of another faith. For this reason most who have written for English readers have been either misleading or misunderstood. No matter how sympathetic they may have been, they could not divine qualities and ideals that have been systematically hidden from their eyes by those whom they were trying to portray. In so far as Miss Dease has lifted the veil, in these very true and charming sketches, she will have conferred a benefit on English and Irish alike.

HENRY BELLINGHAM.

Castle Bellingham,
Ireland.

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DOWN WEST.

IN the wild tracts of country that lie to the north and west of Galway, there are, in addition to huge stretches of bog and mountain, numberless rocky hillsides, some of which are bare and deserted, whilst others have been cultivated in an almost incredible way, and white-walled houses stand in such close proximity among their granite boulders that they have earned for themselves the title of congested districts.

The greater number of these lie near the sea, and are so like each other that familiarity with one gives a general knowledge of them all.

The country, backed in the distance by the Twelve Pins of Connemara, though bare, wild and stony, is curiously beautiful, for between its grey walls the hillsides are vividly green, with purple-red of sedge-willow, and creamy white of meadow-sweet showing in patches upon it.

For a mile or more the ground rises gradually from the sea, and as one looks up hill the whole seems grey, for, to clear the land of stones, broad walls have been crowded so closely on it that from

below, the top of one often seems to overlap the next, making the hillside appear as though covered with the ruins of a city. From the rising ground these apparent ruins show in their true light, and tiny fields are disclosed. They are wonderfully fertile, every yard of ground being utilized and carefully tended by its owners, who work patiently, early and late, supplementing their limited supply of farmyard manure with much seaweed. Potatoes and cabbages grow near all the houses, a few rows of turnips edge the patches of corn, whilst strips of beet and mangolds show that the little, skinny cows have more for winter keep than their appearance would lead one to suppose. Numberless streams trickle seaward, from the upland bog, with willows growing in their beds, from which creels for turf and baskets for potatoes are made.

The sea itself, at first a silver ribbon between the foreground and the coast of Clare, widens out to where a purple haze hangs over the cliffs of Moher. When the sun shines on the rocks, the quartz in them glints like diamonds against the grey, but at nightfall, when it sinks through flaming clouds to the horizon, a bluish mist creeps up and shrouds the shore like a mantle, with reflected lights upon it from the sparkling waters of the bay.

Inland the country is more level, brown and boggy, with red and white figures working amongst

the turf. The men are clad in white suits, loosely made of coarse, white homespun. The women wear crimson flannel petticoats, with bright-patterned kerchiefs round their throats, whilst a second petticoat is drawn over the head to the shoulders when an extra wrap is needed. The crimson of these flannel garments makes spots of vivid colour, a typical note in the grey of the landscape.

In some of the congested districts the houses are certainly crowded together, yet each one stands on its own piece of ground, with a potato garden round about it; other groups of houses form hamlets, skirting the roads more or less irregularly, whilst a few, boasting the possession of a mud-walled chapel, are dignified by the name of villages.

In one of these villages, which is a good specimen of the general type, the houses are tidily thatched, with roofs well secured by straw ropes against the storms of winter; their walls are spotless with whitewash, for lime is cheap, and typhus never far away. There is not the vaguest attempt at order in the laying out of these villages, and though some of the houses are larger than others, they are mostly built on the same plan. As to the place that each one occupies, it must have been determined by the way the wind was blowing on the day its foundations were laid.

The chapel stands parallel to the road. The dwellings show their gables or their backs to passers-by, or possibly a part of each with a corner abutting on the highway. They all possess two doors, so that the one standing to the side where the wind blows can be kept shut; for all window the older houses have is a single pane let into the mud of the walls. There are three exceptions to the general rule of architecture: the chapel, of course, and two beehive dwellings, relics of very ancient times, which lie hidden away amongst their neighbours. One-roomed, and almost round, these beehive dwellings are quite windowless, with cone-shaped roofs, tightly bound to the inside edge of the walls.

Dan O'Malley lives in one of these dwellings. He is very old, claiming himself to be over a hundred, or at any rate, "divil a much less"; yet he can still take such care of his garden and his live-stock that his pig is universally spoken of as the finest in the parish.

"An' why wouldn't he?" says Dan. "Hasn't he every convenience a pig could ask?"

Dan is the only man who still makes use of the old Irish prayer that once was universally used when passing the chapel.

"Jesus Who bought us!
Jesus Who taught us!

> Do not forget us, now, nor at the hour of
> our death."

According to custom, the chapel stands with locked doors from Monday to Saturday. As a rule customs die hard in the West, but the death of this one would be gladly welcomed, though other reforms are stubbornly resisted.

In that very chapel, the Bishop's order forbidding drink at wakes, was received with groans of disapproval, one shawled figure declaring audibly that she thanked God her Mick was "dead and buried dacent."

But to go back to the beehive dwellings.

The second also houses a solitary inmate, a widow woman whose husband had—considerately—died when comparatively young.

Dinny, locally known as "The Trick," had not been a popular person, in fact he was generally disliked, except perhaps by Mrs. Dinny. Long ago, with the appalling indiscretion of childhood, we had questioned her on this point.

"Like him is it?" she had replied; "Musha, agra why wouldn't I like him? Isn't he me husband?"

Dinny's ill-treatment of his donkey had been the primary reason for our addressing her that day, but it seemed as though our appeal was to be useless.

" I'm wore speakin' of it to him," she assured us. " An' mustn't he be the wicked man to ill-treat the blessed beast an' she wearin' the mark of the cross upon her shoulders?"

Going home we met " The Trick " belabouring his donkey as usual. This time, he explained, it was to make her get out of our way. " 'Tis the contrāry beast she is," he remarked; " for not content with half of the road to herself she must needs take one third."

In spite of his unpopularity Dinny had managed to become a district councillor, and the prominence that this brought to him in death was a great comfort to Mrs. Dinny.

" I can't complain," she said, " when God took him, he who got his funeral so comfortable an' so nice, and then the great charācter they gave him on the paper."

Now that she is alone, the widow often gives the shelter of her beehive roof to travelling women, poor creatures, who with no homes of their own, get a living for God's sake from those who are but little less poor than themselves.

There was one who came regularly to the beehive dwelling, and it used to be our joy to listen to her prayers as she knelt before the altar in her rags when Mass was over and she thought herself alone.

"Me poor Friend, Lord Jesus!" With these words her weekly prayers began. "You've always been the good Friend to me. You've never let go Your hold on me, an' You've never let me want for nothing."

One Easter time this wandering woman fell sick at Mrs. Dinny's, and daily gifts of the milk and soup, which was all she could take, were gratefully received. Only in Holy Week were these offerings refused, and on Good Friday nothing but water passed the invalid's lips.

"Is it satiate and inebriate me poor carcase," she said reproachfully, "on the day that me God hung on Calvary's cross for me sins?"

Life in a congested district is so little influenced by contact with the outer world that it would not be surprising to find a smallness of mind, a likeness to each other in the people, yet this is not the case; their individuality is one of their attractions and the philosophy of their outlook is often amazing.

It is seldom that a migration takes place in these parts, for those who have land cling to it tenaciously, whilst those who have none go, not to some neighbouring parish, but to Scotland or America. Phelim Counihan was an exception to this rule, he was a gamekeeper by profession, a sportsman by instinct, and a farmer only because his father before him had cultivated the land.

The house he had inhabited in our parish was not his own, and we missed his quaint, wise sayings when he went away to live in the mountains beyond Currusmaun, taking with him a promise that we would visit him in his new home.

The road runs straight inland for nearly three miles, sloping gradually up from the shore, and changing from sandy yellow near the sea to a creamy grey in the uplands with patches on it, white and pink, where the local marbles have been broken and used for mending purposes.

Then the ground rises suddenly, and the fields look vividly green after the dull browns of the wind-swept low lands.

Cutty's Gulch is not unlike a bit of Switzerland cut away from its mountains. Hills rise abruptly, and a turn in the road enables them to block out all view of the sea. The road is grey, stained here and there where streamlets trickle across it. Huge clumps of osmunda fern clothe the cliffs that overhang the way, and maidenhair and dark shining hartstongue grow in the crevices.

A trout stream runs along the valley, and beyond it there are cottages with cultivated patches round them, whilst higher again, the mountain is given over to the cattle and small sheep which pick up a living on the grass and herbs that grow there, in spite of rocks and bracken and spreading heather.

At the head of the gulch the Swiss scene ends, and as the road still mounts the incline, one becomes aware of a wide, flat space that, until reached, seems to stretch away to the horizon. It is a great circular bog with green edges of streams marked upon its brown surface.

Here again the willow weed grows rankly, and its purple tints, the pink of giant bell heather, and the brilliant yellow of the golden rod, brighten the rather sombre scene.

In front, though far away, the mountains rise, one behind the other, in varied coloured tiers, till they lose themselves in clouds, and over all is that shimmer like mother of pearl, that is only seen in Connemara, atmospheric yet impossible without the varied purples, greens and yellows of the foreground and the grey of the granite on the hills further away.

The Counihans' new home lay on the lower slopes of these mountains, and climbing, we paused to look down on the bog we had lately crossed. It seemed much greener from above, with only here and there a dash of brown, for the yellow grasses of autumn had not yet begun to turn their colour, and in the distance we caught a glimpse of the sea, with a grey haze hanging over it, and creeping landwards.

We found Mrs. Counihan up to the elbows in

flour and buttermilk, with the pot oven heating in a bed of turf under the hearth.

"Who is it I have? Glory be to God, dear and darlin'! an' how's every bit of you?"

There were many inquiries to be made about herself and her health, which in spite of appearances, we were given to understand was not good.

"I'm gone," she assured us, "gone to nothin', for didn't the poor stomach go leave me at the Chrisemas an' me never the better of it since."

Phelim was as usual out on the mountain, but he had seen us arriving, and as we turned to go we met him coming towards us. His long, solitary tramps gave him time for thought, and he now gave us his opinion of his late employer, whose extravagance had led to utter disaster.

"'Tis a good few years now since he commenced comin' to this country," said Phelim, "an' I known him well, none better. I've walked the bogs with him, an' I fished the streams with him, an' I never known him but civil and decent. If only he'd had sense—but there, it was pride that had him bet. The best wasn't good enough for him, an' that's foolishness, for where's the use of bein' proud, when there's One above who can humble the highest? I mind one evening he sent for me to the dinner table an' had me there, discoursin' as pleasant as you please. But to see the weight of what

them gentlemen eat! 'Twould terrify a savage."

I don't know if it was that evening or another he had watched some dancing at the Lodge, very unlike the rhythmic Connaught jigs to which he was accustomed.

"Miss Mollie was that limber," he told us. "She'd pick your pocket with her foot, an' she without as much on the two shoulders as you'd take to dust a fiddle."

He spoke of his work, of the prospects for the coming season.

"If the weather keeps good, we'll have plenty, please God, but there's a sea mist creepin' in to-night that's bad. A week of that an' every garden'll be blighted."

We expressed a hope that it would rise when the sun had set, and that the whole summer might be fine.

"You're wrong then," he corrected us; "for the way God Almighty has it fixed is best, after. If the weather was always fine the people would go ahead an' never a thought for Him, but now isn't there fifty 'Please Gods' for to-morrow, when there's barely the one 'Thank God' for to-day."

We admired his sentiments and told him he was lucky to be contented.

"The man who is content," he replied, "has everything the world can give. I never was one

to worry. I don't like it. It doesn't agree with me."

We referred to the prayers ordered by the Bishop for fine weather, but these did not meet with the philosopher's approval.

"I was never one to worrit God Almighty," he said. "He knows the best, an' can't we trust Him? Never did I know Him to spill a drop more nor He can dry."

Going down the hill with us he inquired how we had come, and hearing we had ridden our bicycles, he gave us his opinion upon them.

"I'd sooner see you on the back of a good horse any day," he said. "Useful? I don't say but they're useful enough to go fetch the priest or the doctor, or suchlike, but my opinion is they'll end by having the country destroyed. Do you think there's a girl in the barony who could darn your stockings for you? Believe me, not one. But ask her to patch her own bicycle! That's another matter."

Leaving the mountains, we recrossed the bog, and reaching again the head of the valley we paused, at the turn of the road, to look over bog and lake and lower hills, over rocks and houses, to the crimson glow of the sun, before it fell into the Atlantic, which now, a wide glimmering stretch, formed the horizon.

"The man who is content," we repeated softly, "has everything the world can give."

And who is there in all the world who would not be content during the short, lovely, changeable moments of a sunset down West?

DEVIL'S MONEY.

SHANE MCGARRAGHER and his wife stood together at the kitchen door, she in the fawn shawl and velvet-banded petticoat that denoted Sunday, he in his workday suit of mottled bainin.

" 'Tis full early yet for you to be goin'," he said, looking down at her, but she answered without raising her eyes.

" It is so, but then it is mission-time."

Her face, under the soft frills of her white cap was drawn and lined, but neither age nor illness were written upon it. Unlike her neighbours Mrs. McGarragher had never been obliged to fight with want and hardship, but unlike them too, a cross heavier than poverty had lain upon her many a year.

Her husband looked at her once again sharply, then turned away his head. He had staked everything, everything to his very soul, to win and make her happy, and one glance at her face was enough to proclaim to all the world the measure of his success.

There were moments like the present when he

would have given all he possessed to see an answering smile on the lips he had loved for nigh on thirty years, and yet the joy of his possessions was the only joy that life still held for him.

He watched her for a moment as she went from him down the stony path, his eyes fixed mechanically on the hand that held her prayer-book, till the clean kerchief folded about it was only a speck of white against the crimson of her skirt. Then, whilst she still went downwards, he turned and climbed the mountain-side.

There, unseen from below, he could look not only on to his own thriving possessions, but into the valley, where on a road that wound like a ribbon through the green, the rest of the parish were wending their way to church. His eyes followed the figure of his wife, solitary not only on the hill-side, but even after she had reached the road. He noted, with hands and teeth clenched in fierce impotence, how the others passed her by, some with scarcely a greeting, none with more than the barest "God save ye." And yet he knew as well as if he had heard them speaking, that at sight of her, two other words had come to them, and under their breath they had murmured, "Devil's money."

Looking away from the church-going stream, sharply, as just now he had turned from his wife, he fixed his eyes resolutely on his crops. The

potatoes, whose stalks grew tall and green and healthy, gave promise of the crop that lay under the soil, ripening for a rich harvest.

There was no taint of blight here: it was a sight to do good to the heart of any farmer. Yet as Shane McGarragher looked, the wind came whispering through the plants, and the sounds that it bore to his ears formed once again those two hateful words, " Devil's money."

Far below, too far for any whispering voice to reach him, lay the cornfield that was the pride of his heart. The ears were already heavy with grain, soft still, and of the tender grey green that must harden and darken before the gold comes.

For a full minute the watcher forgot everything in calculating how many bags of grain that field would yield. Then from its edges, where wild flowers grew amongst the tangled grasses of the headland, a bird soared up, a lark who sang as it flew, and whose joyous notes trilled and rippled as it rose higher and higher into the deep blue of the sky.

"Devil's money," it sang; "devil's, devil's, devil's money."

With a curse McGarragher turned to the mountain: there, where sweet short herbage showed in green patches amongst the heather, some of his cattle were lying in the sun, fine healthy beasts,

whose glossy black coats told of care in the breeding as well as in the feeding of them.

Further off a group of ponies showed that their owner was a man who could afford to keep a good beast till it came to its full value. There had been no forced sales of promising foals in this lot. Then, for no reason, they started off at a gallop, manes and tails streaming, chasing each other past the sleepy cows, and hunting before them the little calves, who joined in the frolic with awkward gambols and uncouth lowings; and the beating hoofs and the lowing voices, wafting back to the watcher by the rock, spoke yet again the selfsame words, "Devil's money, devil's money."

As the ponies' footfall died away, another sound made itself heard. Looking down, McGarragher saw a tall figure clad in brown toiling upwards. He understood who it was before his eye told him what his instinct already knew—this brown figure was about his Master's business.

From his hiding place Shane could see him throw back his cowl and wipe his brow, for the sun was fierce on the stony path. He could hear Rory's low growl turn to a furious barking as a strange hand moved the latch of the kitchen door. He could almost have laughed to himself, so safe did he feel in his place of vantage, till, with a long look all about, around and below him, the Friar started to mount higher still.

With sudden, unreasoning panic McGarragher felt that he could not meet and resist this Friar. There was no reason why he should not refuse to heed him, just as he had refused to listen to other priests, but something told him that to-day it must be flight or else capitulation.

After all these years must he give up his secret at last? From below he was securely hidden, but anyone coming up the path would see him plainly, and there was no other place of hiding at hand, only at his feet the potatoes grew tall and thick and laden with heavy foliage. Between each ridge of them, dug by his own hands, there was a deep, black furrow. He fell on his knees, and dragged himself into shelter, and as he felt the earthy walls at either side of him, he remembered death, and the time when every man must be laid in just such a bed as this.

The sandalled feet fell lightly on the soft turf, and it was only the swish, swish of the brown serge habit against the potato plants that told of the coming of the Friar. When he reached the rock where Shane had been standing, he too stood, as the other had done: so also did he look down on the scene below him. Nearest of all was the trim homestead he had just visited. Everything about it spoke of the same prosperity that the fields above it showed. Beyond the rich cornfields there was

another house—a medley of falling walls, of propping posts and rotting roofs, showing green and brown and every colour except the clear rich gold of freshly laid-on straw. Further off were other dwellings, none so trim as the first, none so wretched as the last, and furthest of all, where the valley widened out and the road divided in two, a ring of brown rock, a circular stretch of sand, marked the head of a little bay, an offshoot of the wide, glistening sea that stretched out and out and away, till at last it rose to the far horizon.

The Friar gazed around him leisurely and long. It was a scene of peace and beauty, yet he sighed. The thought of a soul that shunned and neglected God in the midst of such surroundings was a blot upon the landscape. And where was the man who owned this soul? His wife had said that he would surely be in one or other of his fields. Perhaps he had gone up the mountain and might yet return. The Friar opened his breviary and laid it on the rock before him.

So thick were the plants that light came dimly through, but the sun, coming out from behind a cloud that had drifted across it for a moment, sent a long slanting shaft between the stalks. Outside, where there was no shade, it played upon something—a human foot, the foot of a strong young man, bare except for the strap of leather that lay

across the instep from sole to sole of the sandal. Its owner was a young man, strong of limb, well educated, a priest. And he thought—he knew—that God was worth the choice he had made. The Office was only half said when something impelled the reader to turn his head. There, close beside him, so close that by merely stretching out his arm he could have touched the upturned face, was the head of a man. His body was crouched amongst the furrows. One hand held apart the plants that would otherwise have kept his secret.

For one second their eyes met, the priest's and the fugitive's. A moment later Shane McGarragher was on his knees, the plants all crushed and broken around him, his face hid closely against the rough, harsh serge of his companion's habit.

. . . .

Early as his mother was in starting for the mission, Johneen had been earlier still. When he came to an angle wall of the ruined outhouses that sheltered the crumbling dwelling which was next their own, he turned off the path, and standing where no passer-by could see him, he called gently "Ailes," and again, "Ailes."

No further repetition was needed, for at the second sounding of her name, a girl came quickly to the door of the hovel. From the crown of her

glossy head down to her bare, brown feet, she was spotlessly neat and clean. Hopeless poverty had made the outside of her dwelling what it was, but inside, despite its bareness, there were more signs of cleanliness and care than could be found in half the kitchens of the parish.

"I'm not comin' the day, avick," she said, going over to Johneen, and speaking low. "Oh, he's terrible bad on me. I doubt but he'll be gone by sundown." And the tears sprang into her eyes at the thought of her father's flickering life. "But shouldn't I be the happy girl after he had the missioner, and since ever then, he's that contented, only waitin' on the will o' God to go. Johneen avick, you well know the bad hate he had to your father." Johneen nodded. That there had been something between the dying man and his father he had known for years, and lately, since the girl Ailes had grown up, he had guessed that the hate was not onesided.

"Well then, 'tis gone." There were mingled notes of sorrow and of gladness in the girl's rich voice. Sorrow for her coming loneliness, gladness at so peaceful an end to the poor, wasted, ill-spent life.

"What matter now, agrah," says he to me. "Rich or poor, musn't we all come to be the same before God's judgment? Him an' me, one and

t'other. 'Tis for the sins of us, and not the cattle or the crops that God Almighty will be askin' then."

"If that's so," said Johneen, "he'll not be troublin' that 'tis me as will be mindin' you, an' him gone?"

The girl looked up in quick surprise.

"But your father, avick?" she questioned.

"Look to here, astore." Johneen pulled a steamship envelope from under his jersey. "I've worked these years for my father, but I'm a man now, an' 'tis you as needs me most. I've two tickets here, one for you an' one for me. There's many another who has made his fortune over the water, with no more than the work of his two hands at the start. When— when——." He looked towards the door of the cabin where Andy Leary lay dying. "We'll get married, please God. I'll make you a home in America better even than what my father would forbid me bringing you to here."

The girl began a feeble protest. Was she worth to him all that he was willing to give up? Father, mother, home, comforts, rough maybe, yet plentiful? He would have said yes, yes a thousand times, for he loved the daughter of his father's enemy with the same strong love that had bound his father all these years to his own wife, but there was not

time for protest or reply. A feeble, moaning voice called the girl back to her post of duty, and with the chapel bell warning him that Mass-time was drawing near, Johneen went out to the bohreen, and away down to join the stream of church-goers on the public road.

Ailes had moistened her father's lips, had settled his tossed pillows, and time and again she had replaced the beads in his weak, nerveless fingers. He lay in the fourpost bed beside the open hearth, and for all his weakness it was he, and not Ailes, who first saw the coming of a visitor. A tall man, but bent low, and bent with what? Was it age, or sorrow or shame? A figure that for eight and twenty long years had never crossed that threshold. A figure that the dying man had hated with deep, jealous, unreasoning hate, until the mercy of God and the light of death had drowned or burnt that hate away. The newcomer bared his head, and two steps across the poor kitchen brought him to the bedside.

"Are you livin' yet, an' can you tell who's this I am that's speakin', Andy Leary?"

"Aye."

The hate was dead, but at sight of the face and figure round which it had raged so long, the freshly-healed wound of it gave a throb as though of returning life in the dying man's heart, and he clutched the cross of his beads as his defence.

Deliberately then Shane McGarragher knelt on the earthen floor, as just now he had knelt upon the mountain-side, but here he knew he had two listeners. It was to Ailes, the girl who would live, as well as to the man with death upon his face, that he made his confession.

"I've come to tell you that 'twas me stole the money you lost comin' from the fair o' Glanorena, 'twill be eight and twenty years, come Holland-tide. 'Twas true, then as now, I'd never been next or nigh the town that day, but comin' home from heapin' the sea-wrack there below, I crossed the main road by Cheasalty's mearin'.

"There was a lump o' paper lyin' in the dust. I took it up, an' there was twenty golden pounds within in it. I looked up and down, an' not a soul was on the road. 'Twas late, an' a long piece in to the barracks, so I took the money home with me, yet with never a thought but to bring it to the sergeant in the mornin'. Then, goin' home, the devil himself came to me and says he, 'If you'd that bit o' money to buy Shamus Mor's plot o' tillage you'd get the loan upon it of what'd raise a cow an' a couple o' calves to eat the grass that's wastin' on the mountain above. An' you with that, why wouldn't Daniel Morrisroe take back the answer he's given you, time an' again, an' you askin' him for Mary. 'Twas that what done

it. Just for Mary I took it, an' they say well who called it 'devil's money,' though never a one at all went nigh fixin' your loss on me. They thought 'twas me immortal soul I'd sold, an' faith they were like to be right. 'Twas yourself told me in the mornin' how they got you in the ditch below, an' you with no more sense in you, but what the drink had taken from you. Aye, you told me that, an' me with the twenty pounds the police had the country searched for, lyin' under me own hearthstone. Aye, 'twas 'devil's money' right enough, an' it prospered as the devil's work does thrive. You lost heart after that money went from you, an' the taste for the drink had you fair destroyed. I ruined you, body an' soul. I killed the wife on you. I made this lassie here know want an' hardship before ever she grew to be a woman. As you got poor, so I got rich. I bought the land you had to sell, an' we hated each other, you, because you was poor, an' I was rich; me, because I knew well your money had made a thief of me, an' the devil had me immortal soul because of what I'd done. An' now with you dyin' I come to ask you to forgive. No livin' man, without he were a saint, would do what on me two knees I'm askin' you, but if the love o' God, Who'll judge us both, you an' me, is in your heart, for His sake, for God's sake, I'm askin'."

There was silence unbroken in the dark, bare room. Had the dying man heard and understood? The one who knelt never looked at the girl, and the dim eyes, the only sign that life was still in the prostrate figure, said nothing to him. There was no hate or anger in them, but neither could he read forgiveness.

Then McGarragher thought his story had not reached the tired, worn-out brain, but in truth, that was not the reason for the silence.

It was so wonderful, such an easy, yet such an unthought-of solution to this eight-and-twenty-year old mystery. It was the tragedy of four lives. Shane himself and his wife, who had never guessed the truth of his secret, O'Leary whom he had robbed, and O'Leary's wife, who had died from want and hardship—a tragedy so badly expressed that the power of speech had gone from the dying man as he listened.

" 'Tis not for nothin' I'd be askin' you this," went on McGarragher, and a listener might have noticed from his voice how nearly he himself was spent. " The girl there shall have every penny. The house an' bit that was my own before, that will do the old woman an' me. Johneen must go," and here his voice failed him. " He's not the only one the sins of a father has driven overseas. An' the rest, the fields, the beasts, your own farm, all that'll

be for Ailes. Andy, Andy, an' you goin' before God's judgment give me the word, the one word ——"

He broke off, and the girl, looking in dazed astonishment from one face to the other, saw the bitterness of death on the living face, but on the other, only peace.

"Father." She bent low over him and raised his head, but even in her own ears her voice sounded strange. "Father avick, won't you speak. Tell him what you're after tellin' me. Say the hate is all gone. Say you forgive." He moved his hand, it was nerveless now, and even the weakest movement was laboured. Ailes put out her own firm fingers, and his closed weakly around them. Again he moved and the girl's hand went with his. His enemy, kneeling beside him, had stretched out his own hands, in passionate appeal—a third effort, and the three hands touched. He could not speak, but now there was full understanding in the dim eyes, and Ailes, raising her hand, with his above it, laid them both on those of Shane McGarragher, but even as she did so, she felt the tiny pulse of life under her fingers weaken, and the dying lips moved.

"Mercy." That was all. Mercy for them both, the dying and the living. But as Andy Leary's ill-spent life flickered out, his hand lay in his enemy's

clasp, and between them was the hand of the girl who had witnessed all, the confession and the promise of restitution, the entreaty and the fulfilment of forgiveness.

The girl laid down her father's head and closed the eyes that now were dulled for ever. She moved quietly to and fro, working mechanically, too dazed to realize as yet the truth of what she had heard, and all the while Shane McGarragher knelt on, motionless, at the dead man's side. He had come straight down from the mountain, fearful of a moment's delay lest his courage should give way. Up in the potato field he had, at last, asked forgiveness for what he had done, and the answer had been: "First go and reconcile yourself to your brother."

And now, as the softening power of death had brought him so easily the forgiveness he had scarcely dared to hope for, he knelt there whilst the floodgates of bitter regret and unavailing remorse swept over him and took from him all power of thought or speech or movement. Then, at length, Ailes came to him. She spoke, but what she said conveyed no meaning to his brain. She laid her hand upon his shoulder, and, mechanically obeying her, he staggered to his feet. He had not paused before to think how this restitution could be made. He had not thought what it would

be to live in poverty where he had been a rich man, to be known as a thief by all the neighbours maybe and now—a shudder of horror ran through him at the thought—maybe to go to jail for robbery.

" Shane,"—the girl's voice was soft, but so decided, that he had to make the effort to listen to her words—" do you mind that I was in it whilst you told him all?"

Even yet he could not speak, but his head moved in sign of assent.

" You told him," went on Ailes, with a gesture towards the bed, " that I would have it all, the farm above, the beasts, the crops. Well, listen here. I wouldn't take one penny piece that'd tell the neighbours how—how Johneen's father was a thief." Her voice sank low, but in her listener's ears it rang clear and firm, and her words smote him hard, cut him like a knife. " No one knows this thing, but only me an' you?"

It was a question, and in silence again McGarragher answered, " Not a one."

" Then let it be," went on the girl. " 'Twas twixt you and him it lay. Let it go where he has gone, an' may the Lord have mercy on his poor soul."

The man was stupid still, and stupidly he turned his eyes on Ailes.

" I've got to give it back," he said, in the tone of one who had learnt a lesson, " I stole the money, an' the missioner said ——"

" Give it to Johneen, then," whispered Ailes, and now her eyes fell, and she looked away as she spoke.

" To Johneen?" McGarragher knew nothing of what there was between his son and the daughter of the man he had so deeply injured.

" To Johneen—and me," she said, and looking up, he read the truth in the rich, red colour that flooded her bent face, in the shy eyes that now looked for a moment in his own.

" You—and Johneen!" he faltered, scarcely daring to understand aright.

" Johneen—and me," replied Ailes, and she saw that at last her meaning was made plain.

" God of mercy!" cried the man, and he staggered forwards, stumbling so heavily, that strong and quick as Ailes was, she could not stop him before he fell.

For eight and twenty years his life had been one long offence to God, only, without ceasing, his wife had prayed for him, and this was what he got in place of punishment.

To Ailes it was horrible to see the anguish of the sobs that rent him as he lay, prone and helpless, across the feet of the dead man whom he had wronged, but Shane himself knew that there was sweetness even in the bitter spring of his anguish, and this touch of sweetness was a reflex of the mercy of God.

BETWEEN THE SANDHILLS AND THE SEA.

IT is nowhere easier to lose one's way than amongst sandhills. Even in the comparatively small stretch that lies between Dangonnel and Tullaroan land-marks are difficult to recognize, and wandering there one day in search of the old Abbey, we found ourselves circling round instead of keeping on-ward. Below us on the shore, a man was driving a donkey laden with dripping seaweed, and as they were following a path leading in our direction, we waited to ask our way till they were within hail. "The Abbey is it? Faith then, 'tis a contrary way to be goin' from this." The old man, shrivelled and bent, pulled himself upright on his stick to answer our questions. "May be 'twould be best for yees to come along of me to the high road above, and I'd set you on the way. Without that ye'll be wantin' to go climb them banks till ye see Con Tierney's fishing cot lyin' on the shore, then, when ye come to the last toepad on the right, ye'll not take it, but wheel to the left a bit further on an' ye'll see the ruin foreninst yees; only there's an ugly gripe an' a couple o' walleens ——"

But we decided the longer way round was certainly more desirable, and turning, followed Peter Keane, as we learnt the old man's name to be, in the direction we had come. He was the holder of five acres of land, for which he paid fifty shillings a year to the agent. Landlords are merely names in those parts, all are absentees, most of them having never even set eyes on the place or the people who supply the incomes that are spent elsewhere, indeed it might well have been at Tullaroan that the man, when asked if there were many absentees, replied with conviction, " Absentees is it? Troth then the place is full of them."

From our guide we learnt that there was a Mrs. Keane, and that a " long " family had been reared in the cabin which was pointed out to us " over beyond." They were all dispersed now, ten sons, and a gartlaher. " An' ye may be talkin' of the screeches her mother let when that one was for to go! Didn't they hear them every step of the way from this to Dangonnel?"

" But had she to go?" we asked. " Couldn't you have kept her when you only had the one daughter?"

" Kept her? Kept her is it? Wouldn't we have kept her, an' heart welcome, only she had no taste for poverty and hardship, the creature, an' what else had we to offer her? There was no had in it,

but just her own free will. 'Bless me, mother,' says she, 'an' let me go,' says she, 'but don't ask me to stop any longer in slavishness an' want.' So we took the cross that herself had bought the time the mission was in Bullhaun, and the gartlaher knelt down till we raised it up over her head, an' called down the blessin' of God upon her, mornin' an' evenin' at home an' abroad; an' after that she quits out of it, an' legs it down the road, an' never an eye did we lay on the one of them from that good day—nor never will."

"Do they write to you?" we enquired.

"Well then they do, an' never forgets us at the Chrisemas. How could we live, else?"

That might be said, I think, in every family along the coast. How could any of them live on their barren bits of holdings if it were not for the money that comes to them from abroad?

On reaching the highway, we waited to receive instructions before parting with our guide, but having come so far he announced his intention of accompanying us all the way.

"G'wanomerat!" He emphasized his parting word to the donkey with a whack of the stick, mercifully in a place where there was a comfortable padding of seaweed. Evidently the animal understood this adjuration, for it proceeded immediately to "go along home out of that," whilst its master led us once more in the direction of the sea.

A dull haze hung over the islands that blocked the full stretch of the Atlantic, but between them the waves showed grey and leaden, with angry ridges of white foam. The islands themselves are merely stretches of rock, bleak and rugged, without vegetation or sign of human life. In the bay, where gulls and terns had come for refuge, there was a big heaving swell on the incoming tide, and even where we stood, the dash of water sounded on the rocks with sullen roar.

The founders of the Abbey had done well in choosing their site, if they wished to live remote from the world. With the sandhills behind, and the broad seas before, the rest of Ireland seemed no nearer than the country across the ocean, and one really felt the graveyard to be on the brink of eternity.

The builders of old did not lay their foundations in the sand: they chose the only head of rock for many miles, and piled their masonry upon it, at the point where it juts furthest into the sea. Then the westerly gales blew in, flying sand gathered in layers round the walls, and when graves came to be needed, it was in the sand, hardened by time, and bound to firmness with bent-grass roots, that the bodies were laid to rest. Nothing remains of the monastery that once was there, little even of the Abbey itself. There are two gable ends pierced

with early Norman windows, where ivy has grown up, and sea and land birds meet and quarrel and finally nest; and between these ends, with a broken wall around it, is a great grey altar slab, weather-stained and worn, but with the five crosses of consecration still imprinted upon it.

Newer graves seem to have been dug over the old ones, but all are now smothered in weeds and nettles. Some of the mounds have bare crosses over them, some, slabs and heavy ugly monuments, but many, nay most, of the graves are nameless.

One reason for our visit was to seek the originals of some epitaphs we had seen in a magazine, said to have been copied from tombs at Dangonnel; on paper they were delightful, but truth compels us to acknowledge that they did not exist on stone.

One of the best ran as follows:

"Here lies Luke O'Neill, who was drowned off Boffin, and buried at sea, without ever a coffin."

The nearest to this that we could find was a slab put up to the memory of one Patrick Melia, of whom it was recorded that he was washed off the fishing smack, *Rose of Carna,* and his body was never found; underneath, in newly-carved letters, was added, "And of Anne Melia, his wife, who also lies buried here."

Outside the ruin, and almost hanging over the sea, is a great lichen-covered stone, so old that its

lettering is illegible; here we sat to rest ourselves and to listen to our old guide's talk.

A commonplace modern headstone was beside us, with a long inscription on it, lavish of adjectives.

"That's the schoolmaster's grave, an' he's as proud out of it, as you please," we were told. "Never a Sunday all summer through but he comes walkin' out from Tullaroan to see is it still in it. He'll know the road well, when they come to bring him along, feet first, on the sticks."

With languid interest we read the praises of the late lamented Mr. and Mrs. MacManus, as set forth by their sons, but before the end our perseverance was rewarded.

"This stone is erected by Thomas John MacManus in memory of the above, also of their posterity back to 1641, when the family vault inside the Abbey, was closed to them."

But the nameless graves were those that Peter Keane could tell us most about.

"It's a many I've seen comin' here," he said cheerfully. "The Lord have mercy on their souls! There's not much place left in it now. That's where me an' herself'll lie, over beyont, where the Widow Duggan does be buryin' her husbands."

"Husbands! but how many?" we asked in surprise, with sudden thoughts of a female Bluebeard.

"There was Thomas Finlay,—but he's gone these twenty years—an' Neal McCabe, an' poor Jim Duggan himself—God give him rest, for its little of it he got from his wife. Three of them she has there, an' maybe she'll get a fourth yet, before she's done. Up to this, no sooner does God Almighty take one, than she takes another."

"Isn't she getting rather old? But perhaps she's pretty still?"

"Pretty?—ach, you may be talkin'—a low-sized dark little patch."

"Then has she a farm or a fortune?"

"Divil a penny did she bring the one of them, only the old cabin above. I'll tell ye, now what got them for her. 'Twasn't looks that done it, an' 'twasn't money that done it, but she just had the 'comether' in the eye."

Was ever the nameless charm we all know so well defined more aptly?

"Poor Jim, 'twas the unchancy choice he made; an' I know that same, him bein' a friend[1] of me own. She was only after buryin' Neal McCabe over beyont when big Tom O'Hale came on her, an' she goin' home out of this. He asked her would she have him when Seraft was comin' round, but, 'Wirra, wirra, Tom dear,' says she, 'why didn't you speak sooner?' says she. For wasn't she after

[1] *Anglice*—a relation.

fixin' up the match with Jimmy Duggan when he'd been to shave the corpse."

Such ghastly precipitance was rather startling, but Peter took it very calmly.

"That'll be six years come Hollandtide[1] and 'twas only in the Big Wind a while back that he went. I won't deny but that he did ought to have roped the roof down safer, but Jim was a bad hand on the ropewalk, from him a gossoon, then again he couldn't well fix it himself—for he'd been complainin' this long while, backwards and forwards, of a heavy lightness in the head, had Jimmy. When the storm came in under the old thatch, it went for to lift the roof of the cabin, and herself was actually mad when she seen it rise up, and it with no ropes but the old ones, where she'd bid Jimmy bind it. So out into the black night she sent him, an' up on the roof she bid him lie, to keep the straw from flying till ever the storm was done. 'Twas perished he was, an' she lettin' him down, an' never a stir out of him till she had him fixed up in bed. There was an ormous[2] draw on the chest of him; an' me goin' in in the mornin'."

"'You'd best be sendin' for the priest,' says I, seein' how it was."

"'Go yourself,' says she, 'if you think that's the way it is with him.'"

[1] *Anglice*, Shrovetide. [2] An enormous.

"'What'll I get him, Father dear?' says she, after the priest attendin' him.

"'His coffin,' says Father Mullarkey, 'for it's all he'll be needin'.'"

"He'd got the new ammonia, had Jim, an' got it double, God help him. Well with that, what does herself do, but get the cup of blessed water, an' puts it to his hand, an' away with her to fetch home a habit for him, out of M'Keowin's in the town. There wasn't one with Jim only himself, an' she with the door-key in her pocket. Well, he was dead an' gone an' she comin' in, God rest him. They do be sayin' she has the habit put by in chance she gets another man; still I doubt but she did bury him in it after all."

He was so loath to blame her that it seemed, in spite of everything, as though the "comether" was still there!

There was another grave beyond the burying-place of the widow's husbands, with nothing to distinguish it from those around, but Peter told a real romance of the sea about it.

North of Tullaroan, between the gravelly shore of Killawurity and the sands of Dangonnel, a high mass of cliff stands boldly facing the Atlantic. Even at low tide the waters swirl and eddy round its feet, but when the waves come dashing in, breaking against the granite walls and thundering

through the caves that pierce their rugged sides, they form a sight not easily forgotten.

There are great blocks too, detached from the cliffs themselves, cruel jagged points, that in a storm are hidden by the angry waves.

Since we have known the cliffs of Tullaroan, a lighthouse has stood upon their heights, warning passing ships to keep away. Sailors travelling that coast know they cannot seek the shelter of the bay without a local pilot to guide them through the narrow channel, seemingly so fair and wide, yet holding death at every point but one, in the merciless rocks that lie beneath the water.

The village stands sheltered by the headland, and when the fishing boats are out, it is only an abode of women and of children. Thus it was on the night that Owen Colohan lost his life. He happened, for some reason, to be at home just then, but there was not another seafaring man in the place, except Dan McGlinchy. Daniel, in his day, had been a first-rate seaman, but he was one of those who do not care for work, and when the others went away to fish, he preferred to remain behind, ostensibly to mind his lobster-pots, but incidentally to be within convenient reach of a public-house. A storm had sprung up early in the afternoon, and when evening fell, it was raging so wildly that not an eye was closed in all the village; women

and children had to keep awake to pray for those who were at sea.

Fierce as was the gale, there was always a hope that their own were away beyond it; but that some-one was in danger became known in the village early in the night.

Sounds of distress came moaning through the darkness, and at intervals, the light of fireworks told those on shore that a ship had tried to run for the Bay of Dangonnel, but missing the channel, now lay close to the hidden reef, and God only knew how long they could keep from drifting on to it.

Still, a man who knew the coast could even yet have saved the ship, and fragile as a curragh is, it has been known to live where other boats were useless. There were curraghs in plenty on the strand, the question was who would dare to risk his life on such a quest? A narrow question, embracing only two men, Owen Colohan, strong, with a lad's strength, and Dan McGlinchy—than whom no one better knew the coast.

Which would it be?

"Toss," said Dan, hoarsely: "heads!"

A coin was thrown, turned in the air, and fell. Some one struck a light, and the boy bent forward. The flick of the match lit up two anxious faces. Owen's young, keen, cleanly, little touched by the

passing of eighteen blameless years. And the other—there was one black sheep in the parish, and his face it was that now showed grey and livid before the match died down. For an instant their eyes met above the coin that lay, with head upturned; then young Owen's hand went lightly to it.

"Tails," he said quietly: "'tis me!"

Then in the dark they moved towards the curraghs, loosened one and carried her across the shingle. A lantern was set in her bows, and close beside it was the bottle of holy water, without which no man from thereabouts will ever put to sea.

Quick as the toss had been, some besides the two concerned had seen what happened. If the lad chose to go why should they prevent it? Dan had his wife and children, all still young, and Owen's mother was an ageing woman, God help her!—Owen knew that she was among the crowd that was gathered round, and having tested both his oars, he turned to say one word to her. There was no fear in his face, for the call of the sea was upon him. She would have let him leave her with a whispered blessing from her strained, white lips, although she felt that death was almost certain. Then, with sudden instinct—or did some murmur warn her of what he had done?—she seized his arm.

"Is it you to go?" she questioned, with sudden fierceness. "Clean and honest, is it you?"

"Let me go, mother." But he left her cry unanswered.

"Is it you?" she repeated, clenching her strong hands about his arms. "Don't dare to go before the throne of God with a lie upon your lips."

And all this while the precious moments were slipping by.

"Let me go, mother agrah! he has his wife and the childer at home."

"And no good he is to them! Owen avick, come back out o' that." She was pleading now, but yet she held him strongly. "I wouldn't say you nay had it been the will o' God."

Then he bent his head and whispered in her ear, and even those about them could not hear the words he said. Afterwards the people learnt them, and Peter told us what they were. He was ready to go: less than a week before he had been to the priest, when the station was in Shane Devine's, but Dan—Dan wanted time. She loosed her hands and turned upon McGlinchy.

"Have you done your Easter? Are you ready to meet your God?"

As far as animal courage went Dan was no greater coward than his neighbour, but now, in the dim light, the Widow Colohan saw there was awful terror in his eyes. Then she went again to Owen.

"Go then, avick," she said. "God love you, now and forever."

For a minute or more they watched the tiny light cresting the huge waves, then, as it disappeared in the darkness, the agonizing "keen" of a heart-broken mother was taken up by the winds and carried sobbingly to Heaven.

Meanwhile the ship was drifting nearer to destruction. Hope had almost died away, when Owen's light, the merest speck, gave it sudden life again. Twenty pairs of eyes were strained into the darkness, twenty pairs of ears sought for sound of human voice.

"Lower a rope!" The captain's order was obeyed almost before it had been spoken. The dot of light was close to now, tossing up and down in the black chasm of waters. Owen dared not go too close, and over and over again they flung the rope towards him, but never near enough for him to grasp it. When at last it hit the curragh the force of the blow made the frail craft shiver, but Owen had it safely held. Keeping only a single oar, he made the line fast about his body.

"Heave to,"—very faintly they heard his call. The cord tightened; the spray flew from it on his face; a second pull, and he felt the curragh glide from under him. He was hanging in space against the side of the ship, clasping his oar with both his hands to protect himself from crashing against the timbers. Once he flew out, but as he came back, the oar received the shock.

A second time the lurching vessel flung him from her—and those on deck heard a splintering crack, a crash, and the burden at the rope end hung limp and inert, as hurriedly they drew it in. His chest was bare and wet, but not with the cold sea waves. A warm, crimson flood told its own tale, and the broken oar that had failed in its task was floating in splinters on the waves below. Once again the thought of safety passed away from the crew; then the lad opened his eyes.

"Hold up my head," he said.

They did his bidding pityingly, not yet daring to hope that he could guide them.

"Turn sharp to the right," he went on faintly. "Keep straight on. Now to larboard, but quickly. Put up a bit of sail if you can."

It almost seemed that he was wandering—but desperate men try desperate remedies, and with the sail up, the ship bounded through the darkness.

"Can you see the lights of the village yet?" he asked, and when they answered "No," he bade them keep ahead.

"We see them now."

"Then turn, turn right about to face them."

A moment later the sailors did not need to be told that they were saved. The great jagged rocks that had threatened their destruction stood up now a solid breakwater between them and the storm.

He was still breathing when they laid him in his mother's arms, and all the long hours, whilst a barefooted lad of Dan McGlinchy's was away over the mountains for the priest, she half knelt, half sat, holding him to her and wiping the lips from time to time, through which his life-blood was slowly draining. With the dim light of early dawn, the priest came in and spoke the words of absolution over him. It was peace already, and very soon came rest.

And they had buried him there only a few feet from where we sat listening to his story.

One question we had to ask, and that was—whether the time he gave to Dan McGlinchy had been made use of to good purpose.

"Didn't herself see to that?" said Peter. "I was only a gossoon meself that time, but the old folk did use to be sayin' he went to the priest that very mornin'. Anyways 'twas a good day for his wife and childher, for wasn't he the changed man with the fret he had had; an' many's the blessin's the widow woman got for the hand that she had in it."

"'Didn't my Owen give his life for that one to get time?' says she, 'an' 'tisn't me that'll see him lose his immortal soul after.'" "Me Mother, God be good to her, used to be sayin' that she'd seen her huntin' Dan along the road home, when she seen

him next or nigh the public-house, an' never would a station be from this to Killawurity but the Widow Colohan was in it, an' who would it be takin' her along on the ass' back but Dan himself, an' he beside her with the priest as well."

We crossed the stile leading back to the sandhills and turned for a last look at the graveyard by the sea. It stood out against the sky with the waters lying on either side of it. The sun, sinking towards the horizon, was vainly struggling to pierce the heavy clouds, but it only succeeded in showing a faint light, just enough to recall the radiance beyond.

Behind us Peter Keane had gone on his knees, and a glimmer of brightness seemed to fall upon his upturned face. His shapeless hat and the blackthorn stick lay on the grass before him, his head was bare, his hands joined, and his lips moved in supplication to Heaven, for the souls who still were waiting.

A WESTERN ISLAND.

THERE is an island out in the western seas, that in the distance looks like the side of a great whale, heaved out of the depths, and sunning itself on the waters of the Atlantic.

Drawing nearer, fissures appear in the grey rock, and in them is a show of vegetation, but taken as a whole, it is a great, grey slab, washed for more than half the year by a leaden sea, only a shade less dark in colour than the rock itself. There is no quay on its shores. Elsewhere along the coast the Congested District's Board has made harbours and built piers, more or less useful for the fishing fleets, but our island has not been favoured thus. True there is not a man upon it who owns a fishing ketch, but whether the fact that no boat drawing more water than a curragh approaches the shore is the cause or the effect of the deficiency is hard to say.

A steamer from Galway passes once a week: a little, puffing, plunging mail-boat, which anchors in the sandy bay to the east and disgorges her cargo into coracles that crowd to meet her.

They are quaint little craft, these island curraghs, made of interlaced laths thin enough to be pliable, and covered with a tarred coating of tightly-drawn canvas. There is no difficulty in moving them, they are so light that a man can carry one on his shoulders, and when out of use they lie in rows, turned upside down, well beyond high-water mark. A flat, wooden dipper is fastened in the bows, as one knock against a jagged rock would open the frail, canvas-covered sides, and the safety of the crew depends on the use of this bailing dish. Not perhaps the whole safety, for in every boat, close beside the dipper, and as universal as that indispensable article itself, hangs a bottle of holy water, blessed by the priest for fishermen whose hope is in God Himself, more surely than in their own skill, or in any merely human means of rescue from a watery grave.

The curraghs range themselves broadside along the steamer, near enough to catch the sacks and barrels they have come to fetch, yet out of danger in case of a sudden lurch from the larger vessel. As each curragh receives its cargo it shoots out of the line, the next one taking its place, and makes for the shore, bobbing like a cork on the crest of the swell at one moment, and hidden the next in a trough of shimmering blue-green water.

Flour and salt and Indian meal, barrels of porter

not a few, and bundles of every shape and size were thus thrown out on the day of our arrival, amidst such noise and bustle that it was some moments before we realized why we understood no word of the islanders' talk. They were speaking in Gaelic, a language of which we barely knew a dozen words.

That was on the day of our arrival, when in a moment of agonizing terror, we, as well as parcels, provisions and porter, were cast out of the mail boat into a waiting curragh, passing from blue-clad arms, reminiscent of fish and tar, to white-clad ones to which the aroma of kelp and turf-smoke clung, and under us were green and glimmering depths.

Before the day came for us to be cast back on to the deck of the steamer our ignorance was somewhat less. The language itself remained beyond our powers of comprehension, but the greetings were too graceful and too touching to be altogether unlearnt.

Soon when we met our friends,—and after the first day we had many friends on the island,—we were able to greet them as we ourselves were greeted.

"God and Mary with you. Also Patrick."

"Blessings on you."

"Greetings to you."

"God be with you."

Or when we entered a house, "God bless all

here" soon came to our lips as naturally as the words that were expected in the field or on the shore: "God's blessing on the work."

The best Irish speaker was also the most interesting person on the island. He had travelled and read and thought; he was a bachelor and a philosopher, and as befits an old sailor, a handyman all round. If we spoke of boats and nets and sails, then so did he, but when we questioned him his tongue was loosened and he talked on an infinite range of subjects. Our landlady had told us we spoke the Beurla, but the old sailmaker indignantly denied our right to call the English language by this title.

"Beurla," he explained, "means a language—any language—but when the English came they told the Irish that Gaelic was nothing but a dialect. English was the language of the world, and to curry favour with the conquerors some Irish pretended to believe this story, and so the abuse crept in."

There was a rival teacher even in the small place, a young man who also claimed to have travelled.

"So far as Galway, maybe," said our old friend, with the contempt of a man who has been twice round the world, for one who vaunts a three hours' journey. "He has the Irish, an' why wouldn't he, born and bred and reared on the island? but sorra beauty of the old tongue has he in it. God help them that's too ignorant to know their own loss."

Learning that the younger man was a Patriot, we discreetly avoided politics; nevertheless, unasked, he expounded to us his views on Home Rule.

"Will it make much difference on the island when we get it?" we inquired.

"Difference is it? You may be talkin'!"

Instinctively we felt he was assuming his platform manner. "When we have Home Rule, won't every man in the place do as he likes? An' if he don't, we'll make him do it."

Whatever the extent of the island's benefits will be, certainly English rule, as shown to us on session day, is carried out under difficulties.

The court, a room about fifteen feet square, was crammed with eager listeners, and it was only through the intervention of a huge and kindly policeman that we were able to make our way at all. Once inside we were told to seat ourselves on stools within the railing which enclosed the two magistrates, one local and one imported, the people they were examining, and the interpreter.

"Do you understand English?" was the first question, asked of an old man with a beard like a venerable goat.

"Not one word, your worship," rolled out the answer, which called forth an excusable exclamation from the magistrate who was trying to get through two hours' work in the short hour allowed

him by the steamer on which he had to return to the mainland.

The goat-like offender's words could not be taken as literally true; nevertheless, though scarcely any of the islanders, except the very old women, "have no English," few if any of them could undertake in a foreign tongue the special pleading needful in the cases of trespass—where no boundary marks are visible—or of assault, following on the arrival of a fresh supply of porter, which principally occupy the bench.

The case of the day was one of the latter. Even the windows were blocked with eager faces when it was brought up for hearing.

"Was the language—that was uttered—upon this occasion, of a nature—calculated to prove defamatory to the—young lady's—good character?" The bland stipendiary examined the solitary witness himself.

"I'm sure I couldn't say, your honour," came the answer, without hesitation.

"Bad scran to him and his English!" We were close behind the interpreter, so had the benefit even of his asides.

"Was it bad, ugly names he was calling her?" He put the amended form of question aloud.

This threw more light upon the case, and the witness replied with precipitation, for understand-

ing, he was now only too anxious to tell us all he knew.

" Troth an' he did that right enough, your honour. He called her a ——"

But the magistrate too was roused, and quickly he interposed.

" Thank you, thank you," he cried, motioning to the man to stop. " It is quite unnecessary for you to repeat the words he used."

The fate of what had once been a cuckoo-clock next occupied the attention of the bench. The mangled remains, gathered up in a woman's apron, were laid before the magistrates, and the accuser and accused were called to have their say.

Bartle Costelloe began by denying the offence, but being put on oath, he changed his plea, and said if he did give the clock a tip, in any case it was no good.

" It was good enough for you yourself to send into Galway for four pennyworth o' copper wire to make a pendulum," interrupted the owner, angrily.

" 'Twas no good, your worship," repeated Bartle, unmoved. " 'Twas moth-eaten, that it was, an' you'd want to warm it at the fire e'er ever you'd make it go."

Then came Colman Flagherty's statement.

" It was me own clock, your worship, that's before you now, an' isn't it a show after him? 'Twas

a wag, that's what it was, an' doesn't Bartle come in, an' it hangin' on the wall. 'What's the bright face thing?' says he. 'What is it but me wag o' the wall,' says I. An' with that he went for it, me darlin' bright face coo-coo an' he pegged it on the floor, an' kicked it round the kitchen. 'Bartle,' says I, 'you'll pay for this.' 'When I have to pay for it,' says he, 'I'll kick the stuffin' out of it.' He did indeed your worship, an' worse, savin' your honour's favour, 'I'll kick the devil out of it,' says he. An' with that he sets to, an' he kicked it, back body an' sides, an' makes bits of the lovely face an' glass of it. Not a hand did he leave on it, no, nor an arm neither."

Finally the magistrates decided to impose a fine, with compensation for the clock.

"Have you the money to pay?" the offender was asked.

"Musha, devil a penny, not till the kelp boat comes in," replied Bartle, unconcernedly. "I must introud upon your honour for it, until then."

"Nothing of the kind," retorted the magistrate, testily. "If you can't pay you must go to jail for a week."

We thought the sentence somewhat severe, but the magistrates knew their people best. From a dozen pockets and more, including that of the clock owner himself, came the sum required, in coppers

and sixpences. So the fine was paid, and the magistrate steamed back to Galway without his prisoner. Ten days later the boat came from Glasgow to take away the kelp, and Bartle Costelloe was the owner of ready money. Then the loan was repaid to the last farthing, probably with the interest of a glass of whiskey for each one concerned.

Business at the public-houses, however, was slack during our stay, and from an old man in a lone cottage across the island we learnt the reason.

"I haven't been into town this long time," he told us. "We had a mission here, this while back." As "the town" consisted of a public-house and half a dozen cottages we were able to put our own connection between these apparently irrelevant sentences.

"Did many take the pledge?" we asked.

"Many! you may be talkin'. Didn't we all take it?" The remembrance was seemingly not altogether a happy one.

"Did they take it for long?"

"Some did and some didn't. I took it for life. I usually does take it for life," he added, candidly.

Judging by the fervour of the congregation on Sunday, the work of the mission had been successful. As the long sermon was preached in Irish, we had time to notice the rapt attention on the upturned faces of the listeners who sat and stood on the mud

floor whilst the priest spoke, never hesitating for a word, for over half an hour. The women, red-petticoated, shrouded in fawn-coloured shawls, were to one side. The men and boys stood at the other. It looked as though they wore some uniform, so universal was their clothing. A navy blue jersey, a cream-coloured sleeveless coat, made of the island flannel, a wide sash round the waist, preferably of red and yellow stripes, and trousers of white or speckled homespun. Almost everyone on the island wears a curious kind of footgear called "pampooties," which is a corruption of the Spanish word for slippers. They are made of cowhide, moulded to the shape of the foot when wet with sea-water, and bound together with a narrow strip of leather, and so fastened round the ankle. The hair is left on the outside of the hide, and though the "pampooties" are soft and pliant to the foot, they are a great protection when the ground is rough and stony. And all the island is not one smooth rock.

To the east there is a fringe of white coral, carried hither on the gulf stream and ground down on the rocks and sand and shingle, whilst westward the land rises into high cliffs which, straight and cleanly cut, drop down hundreds of feet into the Atlantic. Then the silvery waters stretch away to the horizon, for there is nothing but air between our western island and America.

The poorest family on the island had made their home about halfway between these cliffs and the village. The father, belonging to the numerous tribe of Costelloe, was the only man we came across who did not work on his own bit of land. He certainly had a bit of garden where cabbages and potatoes played hide and seek amongst the rocks, but as his wife expressed it, " the weight of his time " was spent working for others of his clan.

" The least thing in life gets his mind riz," she explained to us on the last day of June, when we made her acquaintance. " He quit workin' for John Michael—an' a bad day that was for me—when Owen John Owen made mention o' a coat an' trousers, and now he's in Owen's the feedin' he gets wouldn't serve a wran, much less a chap like Stephen."

There was no begging, but our offer to make some baby clothes was gratefully accepted. Two days later a wild-looking boy handed us a note which recalled our promise.

" May it please your honour," it ran, " Mrs. Costelloe has the twinnies. Send the cloths for God' sake. The is nakked. Yours truly Stephen Costelloe." And the date was inscribed as " Julia the 2."

Though the materials procurable were limited, a couple of hours' sewing enabled us to answer this

appeal in a sort of way, and when we reached the cottage by the cliffs we were invited to enter.

In the dark and smoky room we could just discern two tiny heads resting on a bundle of rags beside their mother in the four-post bed, and despite our protests, the father insisted on holding first one and then the other to the light of the doorway for our inspection.

It was almost literally true that they were " nakked." One wore a skimpy wrapper, made of flannelette, and she was exhibited the first. To the other's share a diminutive shirt had fallen. The mother had an old shawl about her shoulders, evidently the only moveable covering in the house, for had the rags been touched they would certainly have fallen to bits. Looking round him, Stephen could find nothing to serve his purpose but a piece of paper, the coloured cartoon from an ancient number of the *Weekly Freeman.* The picture had already been used to wrap a parcel in, and now, most dexterously, he twisted its crumpled folds round the baby's limbs. It was at once pathetic and ludicrous to see the tiny body wearing for all garment the gaudy daub of paper, on which Mr. Redmond's portrait was unmistakable.

" This is the Mary one, your honour," explained Stephen, proudly. " An' she's doin' nicely, praises be; but the Biddy one" (with a look towards the

other, and a half sigh), "we're thinkin' she's only waitin' on the will o' God, the creature."

Returning from the Costelloes, we were struck anew by the beauty and variety of the wild flowers that grew in every crevice of rock; even on the face of the cliffs there were clumps of sea-pinks, and big, blushing convolvulus, whilst the deep, brilliant crimson of the wild geranium showed everywhere above the creeping briar-rose.

Besides innumerable others there are two plants growing wild on the island that are not found uncultivated elsewhere, the flowering leek and a small hop. Antiquarians maintain that these are the descendants of plants which once flourished in the gardens of the monks who in bygone ages lived and prayed and studied here. The ruins of their cells and chapels still remain. It seems as though the nameless attraction of the island was felt and appreciated all those centuries ago—or perhaps it may be that some fragrance from those lives of mortification and praise of God still lingers, and creates the atmosphere of fascination.

Added to this there is freedom in the very air one breathes; such sweet, soft air, which even when it rises to a gale never buffets one like eastern winds. When breakers are dashing on the rocks below, and Black Fort, and the distant cliffs of Moher are white with foam, the wind, even in its strength, is soft and invigorating.

Thus it was on the day before we left. The cliffs, usually grey and dreary, were clad in the white of foam, whilst breakers dashed and roared, swirling in caverns at our feet, and beating with thunderous cadence underground. There was a ray of sunshine—the watery sun that comes after a storm—and the mountains of water glimmered silvery and green before they broke to white and fell away in foam.

So our real goodbye was said in presence of this magnificence. Next morning all was changed. Sunshine bathed the coast of Galway, glistened on the blue-green of the bay, lighted the greyness of the island, and all the world looked glad.

No one said goodbye to us as we took our seats regretfully, for the last time, in Coleman Corneally's curragh. The parting wishes of our friends have no exact translation in English. The French *au revoir* and the *auf wiedersehen* of the Fatherland express their meaning more nearly.

" God have you in his keeping," they said, " until you return to us once more."

A SECOND-HAND MISSION.

WE called her the Friday woman, for she had made it a custom to come to us for her dinner on the fifth day of every week; and in course of time her right to the name of Mrs. Gillivan was almost forgotten. She was a tall old woman, and wore one of the big black cloaks that are no longer the fashion, except in Waterford and parts of Galway. It fell, I remember, in severe lines about her, shrouding the stains that besprinkled both her blue check apron and her red flannel petticoat. Her feet, hardened by much walking, were bare, but she always swathed her ankles in many-coloured rags. The outlines of her face, once beautiful, but hardened now by exposure—and maybe by other things—were shaded by the frill of her cap which, though not spotless, was usually fairly clean; and in bad weather a small head-shawl completed her attire.

She always came empty-handed to the door; but if anyone had gone down the avenue whilst she was eating her dinner, they would have found a bundle under the laurel bushes near the gate, with

a small lidded tin can beside it. These comprised, as far as I know the Friday woman's earthly goods; at least they were all she brought with her on her rounds. "And what roof have I, saving only the roof of Heaven?" was the sole reference I ever heard her make to a home.

I knew the reason for her homeless state; but there are things that must be ignored, and this was one of them. I also knew that, because of this reason, the poor Friday woman had, in practice at least, given up her religion for years. So it surprised me not a little when she spoke of the mission, lately given at Ballaun, as though she had taken part in it. The mission had closed on the previous Sunday, and since then we had had almost incessant rain. The sun was struggling out for the first time that day as the Friday woman took her seat on the second of the three steps leading to the porch; and when her dinner was over I saw by the way she laid down her plate, after wiping it carefully on a not over-clean apron, that she had no intention of taking her leave at once.

Sitting on the parapet of the terrace, I made an uncomplimentary remark on the recent weather; but the Friday woman looked reproachful.

"Isn't it God's weather?" she said, in an apologetic tone; "though maybe it isn't His best," she added. "But last week! oh wasn't that the

week! an' we having a mission over beyond in Ballaun."

"Yes, they had fine weather for the mission," I agreed; "and was the attendance good?"

"Good! you may say it was good. And, why wouldn' it be good, with the beautiful missioner we had in it? 'Tis thronged it was, no less."

I saw her hand go instinctively to the bosom of her ragged dress; but as her fingers touched the thing they sought, they fell again to her lap. I knew she was longing for her after-dinner smoke, but this was another thing to be ignored. Politeness bade us both be silent concerning the cherished clay pipe that, when not between her lips, lay close above her heart.

"'Twas the second day of the mission," she went on, "that I went into Corny Farrell's, looking for a light for my pi—, for an air of the fire, when who should come in, an' me sittin' there, but the missioner himself. A lovely man, God bless him! an' a beautiful father confessor. I'd had no idea to stop in the place, God forgive me; but the missioner—Father Angelus they called him—would have me stop, good, bad, or indifferent. You've heard daughter, what's kept me back these years?" Her voice sank to a whisper, for this was the nearest approach to the ignored topic that had ever passed between us. I nodded a silent affirmative.

" 'Twas the purpose of amindment," she went on, almost as though she were talking to herself; " the firm purpose of amindment. He kept on at me, howsomedever, till I got vexed like, an' God forgive me for that too. ' Amn't I old enough to mind me own soul?' says I."

" ' You're not, then,' says he, sharp like. ' True, you are old enough an' near enough to death not to go tempting Providence this way. Where'll you go to, you misfortunaté creature,' says he, ' an' you to die in your sins?'

" ' I'm an old woman,' says I, an' me fairly riz, ' I'm an old woman, an' I likes a warm corner.' O cushla dear, I did say that to him. And with that he ups an' the two eyes of him went through me, for all the world like a pair of skewers.

" ' A bad old man is bad enough,' says he, ' but a bad old woman is the very devil.' That's what he said, no less—' the very devil.' An' me sixty-seven years of age."

The ever useful apron that had lately performed the task of a dish-cloth, was now called into use as a pocket handkerchief. Then suddenly she looked up at me.

" It's the grand father confessor he is, acushla," she said, " the grand father confessor, and me not next or nigh the Sacraments—God forgive me that same!—these sixteen years. Confession indeed I'd

often had long ago, and contrition; but satisfaction—oh daughter dear, I'd never had such satisfaction before." She drew a long breath, and paused before continuing.

"'Twas night, and me finished, for wasn't it only right that the likes of me should go last of all?"

"'Is there e'er a one in the chapel yet?' says he, and he leavin' the box.

"'Sorra one but meself, Father dear,' says I.

"Who's that?' says he, for 'twas dark an' black, with nothing but the weenchy glimmer from the altar-lamp above us, and the cloak was over me, head and face. He riz it back with his hand, that tender, an' oh! the beautiful words he says: 'It's you is it?' says he; 'go, then, me child, me poor child,' says he, 'go and sin no more.'"

Once again the apron was called into use, and there was silence.

I should like to have heard something of the next morning, but so much was vouchsafed that I felt I could not ask for details that were not freely offered. I know the chapel at Ballaun, bare and benchless, with all but the sanctuary floored with mud. I have seen it on a Sunday morning, and so can fancy what the crowd would be during a mission,—barely room to kneel, little air to breathe; yet filled with a patient, waiting throng, from the grey dusk of dawn—until Mass.

" What sort of priests were they who gave the mission?" I asked.

" The grandest kind," she answered, " and Father Angelus the grandest of any."

" I meant to ask what order he belonged to," I explained meekly. " Was he a Redemptorist—or a Passionist?"

" I'll tell you the kind he was," she replied. " The two feet of him was bare, and there was no hair on him, but he wears his full whisker."

The answer was explicit enough, for no one could fail to recognize a Capuchin, and I knew then that temperance had taken its full share in the mission time.

" I suppose the other missioner was the best preacher," I ventured to say. Favour is usually divided so at missions. If one missioner is sought after more in confession, the other is considered the better at preaching. But even this Mrs. Gillivan would not allow.

" Not at all," she said quickly, compassionating my ignorance. " He was good enough, I dare say; but he was only the second-best priest all round this time. Father Angelus, he was the great speaker. Oh, daughter dear, 'twould do your heart good to hear the sermon he gave on Hell."

" I think I'd rather hear him preach about Heaven," I said. " Wouldn't you sooner hear of God's mercy than His justice?"

" Wisha, haven't we His mercy with us every day?" she replied, contemptuous at my stupidity. " It's not the likes of us that needs to be put in mind of the mercy of God; for where would we be at all without it? But the fires of Hell! God help us! Don't we forget them in our sins?"

" Was it on the closing night Father Angelus preached on Hell?" I asked.

" Not at all," replied the Friday woman. " 'Twas the other priest that spoke that night; but wait now till I tell you how Father Angelus had the fellows caught." She chuckled to herself at the remembrance, and once again her fingers sought her pipe.

" ' Hold up your rosary beads,' says he—an' devil a man, but very few, had beadses with them to hold up. ' Is that all?' he says, and again he says it. Then ' hold up your pipes,' says he—and every hand of man or boy in all the throng was held up as he did, though not a know did they know the reason why he asked it. ' Shame,' says he, and you'd a heard a pin fall, only there wasn't room, acushla, in the throng, for even a pin to stir. ' Shame,' says he, in a still sort of voice. ' There's ne'er a one forgets his pipe, but the rosary beads that helped your fathers to keep their faith in God, troth! I suppose they're too heavy for the likes o' yous to carry.'

" I was the last to get home of an evening, and

there wasn't a beads left on the stalls, and me passing that night, though goin' in I'd seen them there in heaps."

"Was it last Sunday that the mission closed?" I asked her.

"Aye, but 'twas the feast was the grand day," she replied. "I mind well; for the second-best priest had great things to tell us about the Saints. Didn't he tell how one of the poor gentlemen took a terrible fall, an' he ridin' a horse baste?"

"Which gentleman?" I asked, not understanding the sudden turn the conversation had taken.

"Well, I disremember which one it was," she replied. "Whist now, but it was Saint Paul, for Saint Peter is the gentleman that has the locking of Heaven's gates. Didn't they lock him in jail himself too, the rascals; only between him and the angel they had them finely caught, after."

"I — I don't exactly remember about Saint Paul," I said, not wishing to appear too ignorant, yet anxious to extract a further *résumé* of the sermon.

"Didn't the horse go trip," explained the Friday woman, "and Paul got pitched, right on top of his head, and when he got up he couldn't see a stim. So he got converted after, and became the great Saint entirely."

"And Saint Peter," I questioned; "won't you tell me what was said of him?"

" 'Twas him they put in prison, away in foreign parts," she continued, quite eager to impart her information. " I couldn't tell you why, but I know he was tired, poor gentleman, tired an' weary, and when he went for to take off him he fell asleep on the straw they'd left there in prison. Well, after a time in comes an Angel. 'Peter!' says the Angel. 'Sorr!' says Peter, wakin' up. 'Put on your trousers, Peter,' says the Angel, 'and follow me.' And with that the two of them quits out, and away with them. And when the low rascals that had had him caught, came in, wasn't he gone from them, clean and clever."

She chuckled to herself over the discomfiture of Saint Peter's captors.

" Wasn't that the grand trick to play them?" she said; and as she spoke I saw her feet appear below her ragged skirt, and I knew that our interview was drawing to a close.

" Well now, I've been keeping you," she said, " an' I'd best be movin' on."

I felt some word of congratulation was necessary, and I tried to say how truly glad I was of what she had told me about herself.

" I am sure you must feel very glad yourself, Mrs. Gillivan," I concluded. " And—and very happy now."

" It isn't happy, acushla," she explained.

"There's two parts in me, and one is just Heaven in me heart. But the other ——," she paused a minute and pulled back her cloak. "There's me pledge badge," she said. "Taken for life, an' with God's help I'll keep it. But there's only one way, daughter, and it's a terrible hard way for me, after seven-and-thirty years under the free air of God."

She saw I did not understand, and went on quietly.

"In summertime, with God's help, I'll keep temptation from me, but when the days is cold, and the nights are dark and long, and there is light and warmth where the whiskey is, daughter, I couldn't live without the drop that's brought me where I am to-day; so I promised Father Angelus, on the first of winter to the poorhouse I'd go. God help me! The thought of it has me well nigh killed. 'I'd sooner die,' says I to him; 'I'd sooner die on the roadside, now the peace of God is on me!'

"'You weighted down the cross of Christ,' says he; 'but you don't care now to lift it from Him, even though He'll pay you with a crown of glory in Heaven.'

"For sixteen years that's what I'm doin', weighting down His cross; and think, daughter, think, He's after forgivin' me!"

Her face, on a level now with my own, was white and drawn.

"Sixteen years," she murmured, "if it is His will. Sixteen winters to be spent in the poorhouse, just to pay Him what I can." She shuddered even at the thought, and yet she faced it willingly, knowing that therein lay her hope of safety from offending God again. "It's a long while, daughter," she went on; "a long while. Sixteen years an' me an old woman this minute. May be—I wouldn't be asken' it of Him, but He's very good,—an' maybe He'd not be countin' every one."

I picked up her stick and put it in her hand.

"God's good, acushla," she said; "God's good, an' may He shower His blessings upon you, this minute and forever."

THE FLOWER MISTER.

WHEN Cuthbert Cramlington brought his botanical wanderings in Connemara to a close by taking some land on the slopes of Currusmaun, and building himself a three-roomed cottage in the highest corner of his property, he showed himself possessed of the soul of an artist.

Some branch of gardening had been his profession. He was a Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society, a botanist, in his old age a man of independent, though probably slender means: and he had chosen for his home, in the heart of the wilds, a site of beauty almost unimaginable, at least when the lights and shades of summer sun and clouds were on it.

The ground fell steeply from his doorway, covered before his coming with intermingled heath and bracken, till, at the foot of the mountain, reeds and watergrasses showed vividly green where the river widened to a lake, a long, winding lake that followed the curves of the surrounding mountains. These, near at hand, were grey and green, grey with granite rocks and patches of gravel, green

with grass and fern and heather not yet in bloom, but further off, as tier after tier of mounds and peaks rose to the far horizon there was every shade of that most beautiful of greys, formed by the soft western air on the purple of heather or of loosestrife, the yellow of gorse, and the blue of scabious, with grass and turf and granite; and where clouds in places cast shadows on the sunshine there was the delicate shimmer of mother of pearl.

These mountains lay to the south and west. Eastward the land spread out in wide stretches of brown and yellow bog, with glittering divisions that the river and its tributaries made, and a single winding thread of grey, just the road that led, after many miles, to Galway.

The unusual sound of the old man's name proved too much for his new neighbours, and as, with open-eyed amazement, they saw the garden beds appearing on the rough mountain side, they christened him anew, the Flower Mister.

Close beside the cottage nature had provided the most perfect setting for a rock and water garden, a deep glade, wide enough to be sunny during the midday hours, cool enough for ferns to grow luxuriantly beside the mountain stream that trickled over a bed of dark green moss, here gathering into smooth brown pools, there falling into a miniature cascade, and making tiny rills of white and yellow foam.

In the garden round the house all kinds of annuals and herbaceous plants grew up, but the Flower Mister kept his rock garden only for blooms of local growth. He had taken toll of all the countryside to deck this dell in natural loveliness. Heather blossoms, big and small, harebells, mingling the brightness of their blue with the creeping growth of yellow rock roses, the deeper blue of a late flowering gentian, the common yellow asphodel in clumps, pale primrose orchises, smelling sweetly, tiny violet heads of butterwort with their starlike leaves, the long, slender stalks and delicately-veined white flowers of grass of Parnassus, and all the botanical treasures of bog and lake and mountainside, had yielded themselves to one who knew the place to find them.

Outside the dell he had planted shrubs and trees as well as flowers, lilacs and laburnums, apples, pears and plums, and as they grew they formed shelter for the blossoms that showed more brilliantly every season in the soft air, and the soil made congenial to them by the Flower Mister's care.

For years after his coming to Currusmaun he had owned to no interest, no tie outside his garden. Then, to the surprise of all, a new flower had come to bloom upon the mountainside.

Rose, the well-named daughter of such a father, was the child of Cuthbert Cramlington's old age,

but what the story of his life had been, he never revealed. On coming to Ireland he had left her to be brought up by an aunt, and when at last she was sent to rejoin him, it seemed as though his inanimate children, the flowers, had crowded out his little daughter from his heart.

He was more like a grandfather than a father to the pretty seventeen-year-old white rose, and though they were good friends enough when they met, she was no rival to the garden where he spent his time from dawn to dusk.

The summer was coming in when Rose made her appearance on Currusmaun. The mail-car dropped her at the riverside, where her father had remembered to send Martin Faughran to meet her. It was all new and very lovely to the town-bred girl used to something so very different, and before they had mounted the steep bohreen, which, true to its name, was indeed no wider than a cow, she had secured a promise, eagerly given by Martin, that he would take her on the lake at the first opportunity. His father tended the salmon weirs that lay east and west of the lough, so Martin was able to combine business and pleasure when keeping his promise to the Flower Mister's Rose. She was utterly unlike the other girls about, and whilst they gazed in wonder at her simple muslin frocks and wide-brimmed shady hats, she returned their interest

with frank curiosity at their bare heads and feet and short scarlet petticoats. The boys' opinion of Rose Cramlington was unanimous, though the fact that Martin Faughran had made himself her silent watchdog prevented them from showing her their admiration.

She was really little more than the child her father took her for, and something of childhood lingering in Martin's own heart made him understand her; so with innate, unconscious chivalry he determined that womanhood should not be thrust upon her by any word or look of his companions. The Flower Mister was too deeply engrossed in his garden to heed the comings and goings of his daughter. In the morning she played at housekeeping for a while, and then, so long as the days were fine, she went away, down to the lake, to the clumsy flat-bottomed boat in which the Faughrans, father and son, went fishing and tending the weirs.

Now and again at distant intervals a minister came from some far-away place to hold a service for the English coastguards, and though the Flower Mister had never frequented these meetings, his daughter attended them, and they were the only times when Martin Faughran relaxed his guard.

It was towards the middle of autumn. The garden was one blaze of colour, and the mountain rivalled it, though soberly, with the splendour

of its heather. Rose had gone to the coastguard station at Nautamene, and coming back she met Michael Faughran on the road. He was Martin's brother, yet at Currusmaun he was something of a stranger, having been brought up by an uncle in Galway, where as he grew up he found employment, and where he had learnt to dress and talk and act in a manner strange to dwellers on the mountain-side.

None of all this had come to us of our own knowledge. The only time we saw the Flower Mister he was an old, old man, wanting only four years of a hundred, and very near his end. A little old man, large-headed, bowed under the weight of years, and very deaf, with white hair, bare and falling in curls on the collar of his coat and mingling at the sides with his flowing beard. Horn-rimmed glasses, tied with a black string round his head, enabled him to see and tend his seedlings.

His garden, an oasis of beauty in the wild grandeur of bare mountains, was so amazing that we accepted the even more amazing story (told in mere bald facts by the woman whom we took to be his housekeeper) as unquestionably true, though indeed it seems scarcely less incredible than the legends of ploukas and phantoms that the old folk tell.

She told of Mr. Cramlington himself, of the coming of Rose—" a pretty, tender little piece "

she called her—of Martin Faughran, and lastly, of the meeting with Michael on that autumn Sunday afternoon.

"There was no harm in the gartiaher," she told us, as we stood at the garden gate, where we had stopped to ask an explanation of the marvel that we had come upon without warning in our rambles. "An' she never thought but that this lad was like the others. I couldn't tell yous what passed between them, only doesn't the fellow stoop over the gate, an' she goin' from him, an'—savin' your honour's favour—he takes a kiss from off her cheek. 'Twas the devil, no less, that brought out the Flower Mister at that minute. Anyways—God forgive him that same—he turned on the child, for indeed she was little better, an' put her from him for what he had seen. 'Twas the bad, cruel act, an' only that the devil himself was in him, I doubt he ever could have done it. And she——. Well she had her father's own spirit within in her, God help the misfortunate child, an' she takes him at his word an' off with her. And Michael, only proud and pleased to get her anyways. They waited for the mail-car on the cross-road beyond, herself and Michael—the sorrow take him—and drove all the night through into Galway, and in the morning they got married by the Government some way, for no priest nor parson would have done it that quick and them differing in faith.

"And then?" we asked, hardly crediting our ears.

"He took her off to America where he was going himself, in any case; and many's the long day she's had to repent her what she did. They never wrote theirselves after, but the neighbours did be saying that things went against them, God help the creatures, and may He forgive Michael who ought to have known better."

"Did she not try to explain to her father?" again we questioned.

"There never was much nature between them, and I don't believe, daughter, that one line ever passed from that day. God only knows is she livin' yet. Me mother, God be good to her immortal soul, she did let him know, time and again, a part of the news that came, but there wasn't a show out of him that he heard a word she said."

It hardly seemed possible that the beautiful scene around us could have witnessed such a tragedy, and yet be fair and peaceful as it was. Poor Flower Mister, what a burden to carry in silence for over thirty years. Poor father and poor little neglected stricken daughter. Then we remembered another who must have suffered in that tragedy.

"And Martin?" we asked.

"Sure it was the death of him, daughter."

Baldly the woman stated the simple fact. " Martin, he never held his head up after she goin'. 'Twas not three months before the hots and colds got him, and though they talked of it only bein' a turn, I seen death between his two eyes from the very start. His mother wouldn't have it, nor his father neither, though the clothes, they'd gone on him, they'd lap on him now, he that was so good on the body: and he was the third boy for the Faughrans to lose. Mustn't God Almighty have had the powerful wish for the family to leave them that troubled? Well, 'twas not till Father Hugh Jane[1] came back from his holidays that they would allow at all what was on him. He always had a horrid likin' for Martin, had Father Hugh Jane. You can fancy the feeling he had, for when he saw the way it was with him, didn't he take the three colours. 'Martin,' says he, an' I heard him with me own ears, 'it's heart-sorry I am to see you that reduced.'

" 'It can't be helped, Father dear,' says Martin. " Isn't it God's will, whatever way it takes us?"

" 'Tis a bitter long road from this to Killawurrity, but Father Hugh Jane, he came every step of it once in the week, after, so long as the poor boy was in it. 'Twas of a Tuesday the change showed out in Martin. The cough had left him terrible

[1] *Anglice:* Eugene.

weak and poor, but he had his senses up to the time he went. The night came in on him hard enough, till about ten o'clock, when he seemed to be restin' and 'twas an hour or more e'er ever he spoke again.

" 'Why aren't yees prayin'?' says he, all at once.

" 'What prayers will we say, astore?' says his mother.

" 'The prayers for the dyin'. What else?' says he.

" So we all set to, and worked at the prayers considerable, and he seemed to enjoy that most comfortable.

" 'Where's the candle?' says he.

" 'There's two on the table, avick," says his mother.

" 'The blessed candle, mother,' says he. ' 'Tis dark where I'm goin' without I have the blessed light, to show me the gates of the kingdom of God.' 'Twas myself that lit it, but the two poor hands of him was that weak he couldn't clasp it, and I held them steady between my own."

She had forgotten us, in the scene that filled her mind, and there was something in her face that told us, all at once, why every detail of that death-bed, past now for over thirty years, was still as fresh as ever in her mind.

" 'I'm goin',' says he.

"'The blessin' of God be about us!' said his father, and he with the tears running down upon his face.

"'They said that Martin never spoke again, but I seen the 'Amen' that lay upon his lips. Daughter, it was penetratin'."

Then, after a moment's pause, she spoke again in a different tone, and her words confirmed our previous conclusion.

"I was only a gartlaher that time," she said, "and 'tis the good man of my own I've had this many a year, thanks be to God, and Martin, he never had a thought for any one, only the Flower Mister's Rose. May the Lord have mercy on his soul."

Many changes come to places and to people in the course of four years' time, and lately we have visited Currusmaun again, but the oasis has almost disappeared, and the place is fast returning to its original wild.

The Flower Mister is dead. The woman who had loved Martin Faughran was away in her own home over the mountain. The house is roofless and the garden neglected, abandoned, torn up in parts, with cattle grazing ruthlessly amongst the remains of what had once been flowerbeds. A carved mahogany bedstead, which we had seen and admired

at the time of our first visit, had been broken up and used to stop a gateless opening, and so prevent the beasts from straying on the road. Some hardy plants still persist in blooming here and there, and the trees and shrubs that were big enough to escape the cattle, have grown and spread unchecked.

No one knows or cares for what is fast becoming ancient history, no one can tell us if the exiled Rose is living or dead.

Over all the sun shines pitiless and unchangeable, but magnificently beautiful, over the grand scene of bog and lake and mountain that the Flower Mister must have loved, though his heart was hard to human pity, and let us hope that it was some comfort to him until his lonely end.

A DISTRICT DERELICT.

BEYOND the village of Tullaroan the coast line is so much indented that it does not belie the name of Connemara, which in Irish means the bays of the sea. High, narrow peninsulas and deep, land-locked bays alternate, and the road runs steadily northward at the heads of these bays. Passing through a belt of fairly good land, dotted here and there with houses, it makes towards rocks and heather and true congestion, but it leaves to the left a great tongue of land, physically no different from its neighbours, yet which is becoming practically deserted.

It is four to five miles in length and less than half as much in width, even at its widest point. A backbone of grey rock runs along it, for it is in reality a spur from one of the great Twelve Pins, and the ground is hunched up in places so as almost to justify the title of mountain which is given to it locally. Between the rocks there are stretches of bog land on which the few inhabitants depend for all their fuel. There are lakes, too, sunk into the rock or sheltered with sedges, and thus smooth

enough for waterlilies to thrive, starring the still surface with white and yellow blossoms.

The heights are heather-clad, but with plenty of rough grass for the cattle and ponies that wander over them, and in the hollows the land is cultivated industriously, potato plots and patches for corn being built up on the side of the mountain or drained, with deep furrows, from the bog.

On the peninsulas that lie to north and south, such arable plots are attached to yellow-roofed cottages, but on Gortněighra it is not so. There are houses indeed near most of its gardens, but they stand in silence undisturbed, grey and roofless, their bare gables pointing drearily to the sky. The tillers of the soil live under shelter of the mountain, facing the open sea. As one by one the families die off or drift away to America, those who remain strive with feeble, greedy hands first to seize, and then to till their scattered holdings.

"We've something better nor twelve acres at home here, but the weight of that is on the mountain," was the reply one woman gave when asked the extent of her husband's holding. "Then there's four acres of bog away in Bracklagh, an' a couple or three more in Aghnagar, where we grow the potatoes in Martin Leary's garden." The amount of land and the names of the townslands would differ, but otherwise she unconsciously des-

cribed her neighbours' property as well as her own. Her household, following the universal rule of the district, consisted of herself and her husband, and one child, in this case a son, who remained at home under protest, either because his brothers and sisters would not pay his passage to America or because some lingering feeling of filial duty forbade his deserting the old couple at the last.

"At least you have a good son in Michael," we said to Mrs. Devine.

"I have indeed. I have, astore." She looked round the kitchen as she spoke. "But then the father an' meself, we always have the fear upon us."

And in every home on Gortneighra that same fear dwells, fear of the all-powerful, irresistible magnetism of America.

"Delia came home to us, 'twill be seven years come Hollandtide, and she was for stayin' while Michael got his turn, over beyond. 'Twas Sunday the passage come." Her eyes went over to the dresser by the hearth. "An' he couldn't walk, for leppin' an' he goin' in to Mass. He couldn't leave the passage neither, but twenty times a day he'd have it from the pocket, just for to be looking at the writin' on it. Me heart was broke entirely an' him goin' from us, but 'twas then the father took a turn that frightened the lives out of us and

Michael had to set the passage on the dresser beyond, for sorra foot could he be leavin' us that while. Then on the first o' spring me fine Delia went out to milk the cows, by the way, but she not comin' in, an' the calves bawlin' for a taste o' milk, out I goes meself, an' there the cans was, lyin' empty on the mountain, an' herself quit out of it, an' off again to the States. 'Mother,' says she, an' she writin' home after, 'I couldn't stop in it,' says she, 'but tell Michael to content himself,' says she."

Good advice, and easily given, though she did not practice her own precept.

"And did Michael content himself?" we asked.

"Well he stopped in it," the mother replied, with caution, "but content! Dear an' darlin'," she went on, with sudden earnestness, "there's times he has me scandalized and scalded with the Fear that is upon me. Never a time did I leave this house summer nor winter these seven years, but comin' in 'tis to the dresser I do be goin' straight." She moved across the room as she spoke and lifted up a small tin box. "There's the passage," she said, holding out a smoke-grimed envelope, with fingered sides, and edges frayed. "There it lies. Oh I've had hundreds o' minds to throw it in the fire, but I didn't after, an' maybe it has him more content. There's nights I do hear him, an' me gone

to bed, creepin' over to the dresser an' takin' it down. He'll sit by the hearth there, an' read every word on it, his own name an' all; an' after I'll find it back in the one spot again."

What castles must the boy have built, in the red heart of the dying embers, sitting in the darkened kitchen, the passage to his land of dreams lying open in his hands. All the toil and dulness and hardship of daily life forgotten, swallowed up by glowing visions that might be fancies, turned to golden reality any day, were it not for his own rendering of just six words of God:

"Honour thy father and thy mother."

But although Mrs. Devine's story could, with variation, be told of every house on the peninsula, the American drainage is not the only reason for the dereliction of the district. Scotland claims a goodly number of boys from Gortneighra, not for a few months as harvesters or potato-pickers, but permanently as navvies or as dock-hands in Glasgow. To the mothers at home this is an exile no less hopeless than the other, with as little prospect of return and no likely end but death.

"Deed, an' it is Johneen that's gone," a woman told us, when the news of her son's death had come to her from a Clyde shipyard; "an' why wouldn't it? The first gossoon ever I had, an' the best. Nice, is it? You may well be sayin' he was nice, an'

there's the whole of it. He wasn't too nice for God Almighty. I reared me children well, none better, an' what good ever would they have been, to themselves to myself, if they hadn't Ma'am'd me, and Sir'd the father; but John, if he rose up out o' the grave, he'd Ma'am me, like the youngest little babby this minute,—if I wished it. Well, 'twill be two weeks to-morrow the letter come, but he's gone another week an' more than that. I'll tell you how I know it. I was sleepin' inside in the bed there, 'twas a Tuesday night, somewheres about two o' the morning. Well I was waked with the horridest cold skelp on the elbow, for all the world like ice, an' wakin', I thinks o' me mother. You know the mother always means trouble. 'Who is it?' says I, an' I rose up out o' the bed, an' went down on me two knees on the flags. 'Me father an' me mother,' says I, 'me sisters and me brothers,' says I, 'himself that's dead an' gone, and me own, me two ladies, an' Micky over in Killawurrity,'—for never a day passes, but that boy brings me a can o' spring water home to me here.—Then I says three Hail Marys for the whole of yous, an' whether it was help in this world or in the next, that was wantin' of me, I left it for the Mother of God to ask it. An' after, 'twas that very night the call came to poor Johneen, may the Lord have mercy on him, an' shelter the souls of all belongin' to us."

We said "Amen" to her prayer, but suggested that if John was so good perhaps he was better off now than he had been in Scotland.

"Maybe so, daughter," replied his mother. "Still an' all one can't but be wishful that them one has a feelin' for, should have their full weight o' good years to take with them when they go."

Then too, there is an idea, not noised abroad, yet very firmly held, that Gortneighra, in parts at least, is unlucky. Only one woman who lived high on the mountainside spoke to us of this curious fancy. She was complaining of the "backwardness" of her cottage and of the rough way that led to it from the bohreen below, and we wondered, seeing that the place was newly built, what had made them choose so inconvenient a situation.

"True for you it isn't long we're in it." She pointed down the slopes to where a deserted house was crumbling to ruin. "Within in those four walls, the children was born, bred an' reared, every one o' them. Six fine boys there was, God bless them, an' two little gartlahers, but 'twas the mis-chancey place, whatever, an' only we moved out of it I doubt the lad we have itself would have been taken."

"How was it 'mischancey?'" we asked, some-what mystified.

"Well, He who gave, took them from us, may

His holy will be done! First 'twas Martin, he got hurted with the little horse baste, an' never left the settle-bed after, till they carried him out on the sticks. Then Brian took a nervous fever an' lay fifteen months before going to his long rest, an' Nance she took it from him, an' we laid the two under the one daisy quilt. 'Twas after that the father got a notion there was something not right in the place, an' when Bridie, away in America, got them basilicas[1] an' came home to us, only to go on to God, he spoke of it to a wise woman who comes travellin' the roads, an' she says, says she, 'Go out of this,' says she, 'an' make a home above in the mountain.'

"So he built the house, just as you see it, only it bein' an ugly place for cattle he thought to leave one room roofed there below, for the cows to shelter o' nights. But didn't the beams give in, an' the finest mwheelin in the two parishes buried below them? He didn't ought to have left a foot o' the roof standin', sure he didn't. 'Twas the whole place was mischancey, that's what it was."

Vainly we tried to reason against such superstition, but nothing could disturb her rooted conviction.

"Why should it be mischancey, is it? Well I'll

[1] *Anglice:* bacilli.

tell you that," she retorted, driven to bay. "You've heard tell o' the fallen angels? I'll be bound you did." She pointed impressively to the ruin. "'Twas there below that one o' them fell."

It was useless to assure her that the manner of the angels' fall was not what she imagined it to be.

"I couldn't say for the rest of the country," she persisted; "but I know a power o' them fell in Connemara."

Our conversation took place on an inland road that winds over the mountain and through the bog, and eventually leads to town. It was market-day, and in talking, we found a neighbour had warned her that her husband had succumbed to the temptations of the public-house, and she was on her way to meet, and help him home.

"But why are you going this way?" we asked. "Isn't it four miles nearer to go by the coast road?"

"It is so, your honour," she replied; "but I'll tell you the way it is with him. 'Tis a fashion we have, comin' out of town, to call in to the chapel as we pass it by, but when there's drink on himself, he wouldn't go for to insult the Son o' God goin' in to His house, so 'tis over the bog he will be comin', an' not up the chapel street at all."

He got drunk, badly drunk, but he chose to add four miles to his troublesome homeward journey,

sooner than pass the church which he knew himself unfit to enter.

The woman spoke in a curiously impassive way. Evidently this errand was one that had claimed her time so often she was more or less accustomed to it. Yet some of the women do recognize the hardness of their lives, though they never seem to complain.

" You don't come from these parts," another woman said one day, not questioning, but merely stating a fact.

" What makes you say that?" we asked.

She looked up in our faces a moment: " You're purty an' fair," she said, quietly; " an' them eyes o' yourn has never seen trouble."

It was pitiful, yet I suppose it is the very hardness of their lives that makes them look so securely to Heaven.

" Aye, I'm at the beads," an old woman said, whom we found crouched under a great rock, minding a couple of calves and a goat or two. " They're me whole dependence, till sometimes I do wonder if it's not too free I'm makin', takin' the attention of the Blessed Mother so often from her Son."

The attention of Almighty God must often be called to Gortneighra by the prayers of survivors for those who are gone, as in the diminishing popu-

lation one must also count the toll taken annually by the sea. It is only in part of spring and summer that the people on the peninsula turn farmers; there are long months of the year when, were it not for the harvest of the sea, the place would indeed be what its Gaelic name implies, a hungry little bog; and the fishing-boats do not always bring home the crew that they took out. Even the kelp costs an occasional life in its gathering. There is an empty house on Inisgrotty—an island only when the tide is up—where some years ago one of the only young families of Gortneighra was living. Then in a sudden storm the father and three sons were drowned, and the mother, with four little girls, went away to her own people near Oughterard. Only the granny was left behind, an old, old woman, spotlessly clean, with never a speck on her cap and every shining silver hair in its place. The Morrisseys gave her an outhouse to live in, whitewashing it for her and putting a bolt to the door.

Her spinning-wheel is on the wall, and she sits on the threshold of her windowless dwelling, carding wool for the neighbours or knitting the yarn that she has spun for them.

We asked her last year if she was to get the old age pension.

" I have three score an' a half of years, aye, an'

well nigh four score," she said; "an' the priest, he bid me put in for it, whatever, but how would a poor old creature be gettin' it? Hasn't the King got plenty of others to be thinkin' of besides the likes o' me? God help the poor man, how could he give to all that's lookin' for it?"

Later, however, she did get her pension.

"Is it how am I, astore?" So she answered our inquiries. "The grandest ever I was. Daughter dear, amn't I on the King's list? God bless and protect him; an' all that's troublin' me now is, why didn't I go see him an' he in Recess! If I'd known what he was to do for the poor, wouldn't I have stepped every step of the road to give him thanks an' welcome?"

Many from Tullaroan and Gortneighra had gone to see the King when, about ten years ago, he visited the marble quarries near Recess, and we asked Mrs. Aherne why she had not been of the number.

"Well now, to tell you no lie," she explained; "I never was one for the boys! 'Deed, an' I might have gone to see the Queen, but the King—ach! I make no differ on men!"

She had no story to tell of the loss of her son and grandsons.

"God took them, astore," was all she said. "'Twas a terrible wild night an' many a prayer

was said for them at sea, God rest the whole of them! an' while His holy will is done we can't complain."

Mrs. Cahalan, who has lost husband, and brother and sons, had more to tell, and told it graphically.

"They were all in it, the three lads and the brother's son," she said, "an' they went for to ride a breaker, away behind the coastguard station on Banaghown, but the boat, she was old an' shook, an' the seas cut her clean in two, as though you took a knife to her. They got little Johnnie over beyond the bay, an' Bartle, and Peter's Paddy weren't they laid as quiet as you please on the churchyard in Dangonnel, but Andy they never got." She wiped her eyes on her apron: "Oh! daughter, it went through me so much to see the father an' he searching the shore for his son, the fine makings of a boy, upstandin' an' warm, an' he better nor sixteen years of age. I had no walk meself that time or maybe I'd have found him. They do come back to a mother, whiles, when even for the father there's no sign. God's will be done anyways. Maybe He took them from sin an' sorrow."

We did not ask of the father's fate, though we knew that he and his brother-in-law had gone like the boys, but after a pause, she told us herself.

"I never thought to let one belongin' to me on

the water after. But what can the poor do, but be satisfied? 'Twas a storm that took the father an' poor brother Peter along with him. The coast-guards got them away in Coolagurragh, and they sent a letter home to Christy.

" 'What's the news, avick?' says I, an' him readin' it, for didn't I think it was the gartlahers away in America who'd wrote? 'Sorra news, mother,' says he, shortlike, an' he out with him.

" ''Twas evenin' an' him comin' in.

" 'Mother,' says he, leavin' his hand on me shoulder, ' 'tis the great old woman you are.'

" 'Is it, avick,' says I. He always had the sootherin' ways, had Christy.

" ''Tis indeed,' says he, 'an' you'll see us all out yet.'

" 'God forbid, astore,' says I, 'He wouldn't be askin' that of me with the pains I do be gettin' in me bones. Times now they do be a holy terror.'

" 'You seen Bartle out, mother?' says he.

" 'I did, avick; may he have glory everlasting.'

" 'An' Andy, mother, you seen him out?'

" 'True for you,' says I. 'God rest them all,' an' then I set to wonderin'.

" 'An' little Johnnie, mother,' says he, an' his voice was choked-like, an' he speakin'.

" 'What is it, Chris?' says I.

" 'Mother, you seen father out, an' uncle Peter.'

"Oh wirrah! wirrah! wirrah! I never thought to hear the likes."

She sobbed again to think of what was passed, but soon regained her composure, with the wonderful resignation and conviction that God knows the best, which is the greatest test of faith that can be made.

She still had Christy, and her perfect confidence in him had chased away the usual Fear. "He promised straight an' honest he'd never go from me till he put me under the clay with his own hands," she said; "an' please God it won't be too long he'll have to wait now."

He would not break his promise, but he was waiting, waiting and longing for the wider, gayer life of over the seas.

How will it be as the years go on? One wonders and cannot guess. Will a few remain, helped from America, to live in comfort and be content, or will the present drainage continue till the lowlands are bare as the uplands, till every house is roofless and deserted, till cultivation reverts to bog and mountain, and the cattle of the grazier and the free wild birds become the only living things on all the peninsula of Gortneighra?

THE MEARING FENCE.

" I WILL not."

The words were spoken quietly and firmly, so quietly and so firmly that had not the men facing Denis Deegan been blind with passion they would have seen that argument was useless.

" You will then,—you. I'll see to it that you will." Timothy Conor's voice was choked with fury. " An' if you won't, by God then, I'll make you."

" I will not," repeated Deegan, quietly. " An' whilst I'm living, Timothy Conor, you'll never make me give up one sod of what my father left to me, and what, if I were dead, my boys would hold, just as I hold it to-day."

" You don't hold it," blustered another Conor, Black Thady Conor they called him in the district. " Your mearin' never went a yard west o' the cuttin', an' if it did, who's to prove it? Isn't it only reason that the two places got their divide by the hand o' God?" And he pointed to the sluggish stream known locally as " the cuttin'," and that did indeed seem to cut the wide expanse of bog on which the four men stood, into two natural parts.

But west of this stream ran a strip of land distinguishable from that around it, because in the midst of a wilderness of turf and heather it made foothold for low-growing bushes which showed that under the sod was something of a firmer nature than the soft bog mould spreading for miles on either side.

Within man's memory no question had arisen as to the exact boundaries of the holdings owned by Deegan and the Conors. The land had been of no value. It was not even needed for the cutting of turf, because there was plenty nearer the uplands, so it seemed likely that the strip along the mearing would remain unclaimed.

Owing to the natural division, it had been the Conors' cattle that, when an exceptionally dry season came, picked the few tufts of grass from the roots of the myrtles and willows on the piece of land now in debate. But when question arose of making a road upon it, Denis Deegan's right had been accepted by the county. He was an honest man, quiet and hardworking, and to back his word he had an old ordnance survey map, on the border of which his father had described the boundary of his holding as being fourteen perch west of the cutting. On the map itself an official pencil had drawn a blue line the right distance from the stream on that side, and on the others along the un-

disputed boundary of Deegan's holding. The surveyor had initialed his work, and his successor did not dispute it, but when it came to the Conor's ears that Deegan was to get two ten-pound notes for that strip of land, they also had laid claim to it, maintaining that their cattle would never have grazed upon it, had it not been theirs.

Beyond this they had no evidence, and their only hope of getting what they called their right was to persuade Denis Deegan to renounce his in their favour. Really convinced their claim was right, they started to argue and explain, then they had lost their heads and their tempers, and finally, when to all demands and threats Deegan's calm refusal was repeated, they called on God to witness that the land would be theirs even if blood were spilled in getting it.

But Deegan, no man's enemy, and everybody's friend, let pass their threats and went home, satisfied that the twenty pounds promised as compensation by the county for the use of that bit of bog would soon be his.

The Conors were a rough lot, three old bachelor brothers, with no one to come after them; yet every bit as covetous of land as if each had a big family to provide for. They came of good stock, and though Deegan knew he had earned their enmity, he had no real fear of its consequences. Only his

wife, to whom he recounted his passage-at-arms by the mearing, was afraid. Sober, the Conors might persecute and annoy in a thousand petty ways, but drunk——! and lately all three brothers had been drinking hard.

It was by no means the first dispute that had arisen over this bit of land since the idea of the road had been discussed, but as the County Council was to make the order for payment on the morrow, Deegan considered it the last that mattered. In twenty-four hours the money that was his by right would be his by deed, and as he sat, according to his custom, when night had fallen, with his family about him, he spoke confidently of all the welcome notes would do.

His place was at one side of the big, open hearth, and the three younger children had drawn their stools close beside their father's knee. The spinning-wheels stood idle. Kit, the eldest boy, was busy whittling a pin to make some slight repair to one of them, while his mother and Bridie were carding the fleece that lay between them.

It was Bridie who first heard the footsteps outside, and she turned wonderingly to her mother. The dog sleeping by the fire growled uneasily, and then, as a hand was laid upon the latch, burst into noisy barking. They all looked up as the door opened. Denis Deegan was not a man given to

caile housing, and it was seldom people came unasked at such a time of night.

With the fresh rush of the outer air the fumes of raw whiskey came reeking into the kitchen, and Mrs. Deegan, with a quick presentiment of coming trouble, bent down and took the youngest of the children to the shelter of her arms.

There were four men standing on the threshold. Three Conors, so Denis and his wife knew well, and another, bribed with a bottle of whiskey, and brought to make the others' identity less clear. Every one of the intruders had the disguise of partially hidden features.

"We've come." The voice was thick and hoarse, but the Deegans knew it was the stranger, not one of the Conors who spoke. "We've come to get that bit of paper you call the proof that an honest man's bit o' land is yourn, give it up now, or keep it—an' there's no room in this parish for a land-grabber."

"Give it up?" repeated Deegan, in his quiet voice. "I—will—not."

There was the flash of a cold steel muzzle, but the hand that held the old-fashioned gun was shaking and clumsy. Waveringly it aimed at Deegan, and seeing this, the boy Kit sprang to his feet. He meant to dash the weapon, seemingly their only one, from the hold of the black-faced man, but the

threatener was drunk, and unused to the handling of firearms, and between whiskey and sudden panic he went even further than the Conors intended. Before the boy could reach his hand there was a spurt of flame, a loud report, and when the cloud of smoke had cleared away, the kitchen was empty, save for the family who owned it.

For a moment they sat stunned and still. Mrs. Deegan saw that her husband's face was deathly white, as his head fell back against the woolsack in the corner, but even then she was too dazed to move, and slowly her eyes travelled down to see the reason of his faintness.

One foot had been shot away, and a big, dark pool of blood was circling on the kitchen floor.

The child nearest to his father's knee put out his little hands and tried to put the blood back into the wounded limb. But seeing the cruel red that dyed his fingers, he shrank back crying, and hid his curly head against the rough frieze coat, clinging with his arms around the unmoving figure, till it was all that Bridie could do to separate them.

It was Kit's voice that roused Mrs. Deegan, for the horror of it all had nearly taken her senses from her.

"I'd best be goin' for the priest."

Then she was at her husband's side, trying to staunch the blood that ran and ran and carried his

life away with it. She put her arms about him where he sat in the chair, and there was wild fear in her eyes.

"Denny, Denny astore, listen here to me." The anguish in her voice smote the dulled ears and the white lids fluttered a moment, and he looked at her.

"Denny, you'll forgive them! You won't go before your God with sin upon your soul. Oh, for Christ's sake say you forgive them what they've done!"

She bent, so that the merest whisper would have reached her ears, and for the moment the terror lest he should die without forgiving those who caused his death, left no room for the fear of her own approaching loss. He looked up at her, but she doubted he had understood her words.

"May—Christ—forgive us all," he said. She turned to one of the frightened children. "Run, alanna," she whispered, "an' bring the holy picture hangin' by the bed within."

It was a gaudy representation of the death of our Lord upon the Cross, but its vivid colouring held the fast dimming eyes, and made the dying man understand his wife's appeal.

"Denny, avick, you must forgive them before you die! For Christ's sake, Who died for us and forgave us all our sins."

He moved his head so that it rested on her shoul-

der, and his eyes were level with the picture of our Saviour that she held.

"Aye," he said, and again, "Aye"; and then, "God forgive them!"

She felt him heavy and helpless in her arms, but there was a wonderful light of gladness in her face as she motioned to Bridie for help to lay him down.

Like Christ Himself Denny had forgiven his murderers, for hadn't he prayed to God for them? and she had the sure and certain hope that his own sins would be forgiven him. Once, twice, she thought he was gone, for despite their efforts to stop the bleeding, it kept bursting out again at intervals. Then a horse's footfall reached their ears and a moment later the priest entered the house. Father Merlehan was fortunate in having learnt the principles of first aid to the injured (a branch of useful knowledge which is not included in the national school curriculum) and a few deft touches remedied the worst defects in Mrs. Deegan's bandaging. Then he went on one knee beside the wounded man.

"Denny avick, it's the priest that's come to you."

He did not move nor answer his wife, but when, after moistening his lips, the curate asked if he knew who was speaking, a weak pressure of the hand answered, "Yes."

Later, when the priest rose to give place again

to Mrs. Deegan, she bent over her husband and laid her face down to his, but she felt his lips were cold as clay.

"He's gone. He's gone. God help us all!" she moaned, with the first thought she had given to their own loss.

The priest laid his hand on the still flickering pulse.

"There's life yet," he said; "the soul came first—and God bless you for that, Mrs. Deegan!—but we'll save the body too this time, please God."

He perfected his hasty arrangement of bandages and gave directions, which, though not yet daring to hope, the woman followed blindly.

The hours passed and still the priest stayed on, in his character of doctor now, for the real doctor's home was miles and miles away over the mountain. At last the greyness of coming dawn told that the hour when vitality is lowest was at hand.

Suddenly, outside a cock began to crow. The watchers held their breath, as the sick man turned his head.

Slowly and uncertainly his heavy eyelids rose. He sighed and looked for a moment at his wife. She laid her hand upon his forehead and bent down as he tried to speak.

"I'm tired, astore." They could hear the words,

though his voice was very weak. "I think I'll sleep."

And the sun, looking in through the shutterless windows saw yet another soul brought back by nature's remedy from the valley of the shadow of death.

VESPERS—AND COMPLINE.

FATHER FLAVIN yawned long and loudly, and his chin nodded down to where the snuff rested in little rills upon his chest. But his head did not stay still: it nodded again, up and down, and the spectacles slipped to an impossible angle on his nose. Unconsciously the knotted old hands had kept hold of the Office-book, but after a time, they too relaxed, and the thumbworn breviary fell with sufficient force to arouse the dozer. He started then, and opened his eyes, and stooping, gathered up the book and its scattered contents and opened the leaves at the Office of the day.

Vespers had been said, of that he had no doubt: it was only before beginning Compline that he had paused for a moment, and the involuntary interlude of slumber was the result.

Certainly it was terribly hot. Even in the shade of the garden trees where the old man sat it was unlike anything an ordinary summer produces within reach of such Atlantic breezes as usually swept the parish. The season was altogether unprecedented; no summer in the memory of man had

brought with it such burning sun, so universal a drought. There had been a good deal of sickness too, one way and another. More than one young girl had gone out to the weary task of water-drawing with hair only covered, as is the custom, by a loose handkerchief or the corner of a shawl, and had come in to rest a wildly aching head on a pillow, from which it was never to be raised again.

Then, too, the stagnant pools had been irresistible where the wells were dry, both to children and to workers, in whom common sense and self-control were equally wanting, and the consequences had been, not only frequent visits of the union cart, but also sudden inroads of fever, that carried off a patient before doctor could be summoned or van requisitioned. Only the priest had been sent for, and his ministrations were all that had been needed or obtained.

Father Flavin decided that he would not attempt the psalms for the closing of the day just yet. It was early still, as the glaring heat in the garden testified. He would wait and rest now, and when evening came, he would pray. So now, with book laid safely on the bench beside him, his head dropped down again in sleep.

The birds twittering about him—lazily, for they too felt the heat—did not disturb him: they were old friends all and their voices were a soothing

lullaby. Biddy, calling to the boy to "go, for the love o' God an' fetch another taste o' water from the chapel tank beyond, for them ducks that was fairly perished with the drought," Biddy disturbed him no more than the birds. Indeed, her requests for water had become almost as incessant as the chirping of the sparrows or the quacking of the thirsty ducks. But later, another voice, not that of the boy, reached his slumber-dulled ears, a voice that alternated from entreaty to indignation, and the sleeper moved uneasily, feeling there was something going on in which he ought to have his say. Then he went back to dreaming, and he saw again, in sleep, a scene that had been enacted under his waking eyes only a few weeks before, and that had dwelt with him since, as something infinitely tender, infinitely consoling, a token of love that repaid much weary service and many a dark ride through wet and storm on winter nights.

He had been in the garden, then as now—indeed, one of Biddy's perennial grievances was the fact that, as she expressed it, "every moment he's in the house, God help him, he's in the garden"—resting, too, after a long and sad day's work.

Three children had died of fever in the same house. True, three little souls had gone to Heaven, unafraid, for Father Flavin had reminded them that Jesus was waiting; yet three little bodies had

lain still in a lonely house, where a lonely mother sat and watched till daylight brought the digger of three little graves.

Then, as now, a voice had reached him, and through the gathering dusk of a short summer's night a shadowy figure had risen up beside him, a figure whose bare feet had made no sound on the softness of the turf, and a low, husky voice had asked him to raise his hands in absolution over a head that death was claiming for its own.

" Where was the dying man?" He had not been able to keep a tone of utter weariness out of his voice as he questioned; the answer came, huskily again, but quickly, reassuring though amazing. It was no man who sought him, but a woman, the woman who now fell on her knees a pace away from him. Yes, she was dying. She knew it, felt it, and as the shawl slipped to her shoulders and the moon shone on her grey, drawn face, Father Flavin could not say her nay.

She had left the children—God give them rest in glory, sure they didn't need her now!—and had come for the comfort of which, a few hours earlier, when the priest had been in her own house, she had not felt the need. The sickness, this summer, had been quick and very sure.

" Why had she not sent for him?" The priest spoke almost sharply. " Surely the fever had not made every man in the parish a coward?"

" Because "—the answer came simply, for the woman had no thought that her act was anything but the most natural. She had never heard, in modern Gaelic, at all events, the word heroine. " Because, hadn't his reverence spent himself entirely that day? an' weren't the children, God rest them, lyin' round the kitchen these hours? The doctor had said to go into such a house, an' you drunk or tired was certain death."

And so when she felt it creeping on herself she unspancelled the ass, and started two miles and more of a rough bog road, and here she was. "The ass, savin' his honour's favour, was standin' at the gate."

She was quite peaceful. Wasn't she " goin' to God Almighty to be with the childer an' himself who'd lost his life three years ago at sea?" Only she was very weary, and when, in a voice more husky than her own, the priest had said the prayers, had anointed her, there in the garden (creeping in for what was needed, like a thief in the night, for fear of Biddy), she had insisted, nay, she had even spoke angrily to the priest to let her go her own way. So perforce she had her will, though unknown to her the old man had followed even into the shadows of the hillside, till the doorway of her own house had swallowed her up. Then the tears that had hardened into a ball in his throat,

came to his eyes, and flowed down the ruts and furrows of his cheeks.

And in his sleep, as he dreamt over again the story of the woman whom he had buried with her children by her side, the tears came as before and choked him, till between them and the voices which were still wrangling in the kitchen, he awoke.

It was the usual thing, an altercation between Biddy and someone, who, for all answer to a declaration that their sick call was urgent, was met with the information that the curate was out. He would be in for dinner, and the messenger might rely upon her, Biddy's, word that "Mrs. Costello wouldn't go—God be good to her!—till the turn o' evening." That was the time they went mostly, without they lasted to the dusk before the dawn.

But the voice of the messenger told the now fully awakened listener which of the many Costellos was seeking his priestly ministrations.

Mary from Loughee, they called her. For over fifty years ago she had come over the mountains to marry one of the sea-going Costellos. And from that same parish had come the priest who, an exception to usual diocesan procedure, had long laboured, first as curate, then as pastor in the home of Mary's husband.

Father Flavin had only lately had a curate, and the habit of making use of younger bones was one

he did not easily acquire. In other parishes the curate was fully occupied. Here, assistance was certainly welcome on Sundays, and during the week the school attendance had risen considerably, for according as the speaker was only an irregular attendant or a systematic "mitcher," Father McMurrough was either "a bit wicked," or "horrid mad entirely."

But except when Biddy absolutely forbade it, and refused to disclose her hiding-place for hat and stick, Father Flavin clung to his old habits, and did his visiting and most of his sick-calls himself.

Then the curate complained there was nothing to do, and so his bicycle carried him further afield. Had he been at home now, or had the sick call come from anyone but Mary from Loughee, Father Flavin would willingly have let the young man go in his place. But he was not at home, and it was Mary.

It was seldom, very seldom now, that he was peremptory with Biddy, but when he was, there was not a word to be said. It was no use speaking of the heat, no use reminding him that he was tired, no use even using the last and biting weapon of a reference to his age. He was going. That was all. The pony was away being shod. This was a triumphant fact. Very well, he would walk, and walk he did.

Certainly it was not very far, and the road all the way led downhill. But the sun was very, very hot, and the white dust seemed almost to burn his feet as he dragged them along, for he was tired, and he was old, although in Biddy's hearing he would own to neither.

There was no coolness, even in the Costellos' kitchen, with its hearth bare of firing. Here again it seemed as if Biddy was right. The sick woman certainly would not go before the turn of the night, and judging by the strength of her voice, there was great probability of her lasting till the dusk of the morning. She received the Food for the journey on which she was about to start, fully conscious, and followed the prayers that the priest read slowly and clearly. Time was when he had read them quickly enough, but now with the tired aching of his own head and limbs, he seemed to find ease and comfort in the familiar words: "Depart, oh Christian soul!"

Ah, well! and why not? Another sentence came to his mind.

"The night cometh, when no man can work." What use would he be if the night came upon him—would it not be easier to pass out into light everlasting? Somehow to-day, for the first time in all his life, the wish to go on living burnt low within him.

"Well, Father James." Mary from Loughee

spoke thus to him with a familiarity that none of his other parishioners used. "So, after all, 'tis me to go the first of us; but you have a good six years more than I have to carry to the grave, an' maybe it won't be long till God Almighty has a place ready for yourself as well."

"Maybe not, Mary, maybe not. I believe you're right. I'm getting an old man."

"Getting an old man!" In all eyes but his own he had been an old man for years, and yet he remained so active that now, as he went out, into the great heat, not one of the Costellos thought of it being more than such an old, old man could bear.

The road coming had been downhill. Therefore returning it mounted, mounted wearily, and all the while the sun burned and burned, through the thin fringe of hair, and the blood was pumped too violently through the old veins for an old heart to bear.

At long, long last, he regained the garden. Biddy had for a moment forsaken her lookout, and so she missed him. His lips were parched: he wanted a drink so badly, but—but—. Involuntarily his limbs relaxed, and he sank back on the seat he had quitted not so long before.

He had said his Vespers. Yes, that he remembered, but not Compline, and —it was curious, for the sun had certainly been shining a few moments ago—it was getting dark.

He began the familiar psalms, holding his book open from long continued habit, but praying from memory only.

The darkness was gathering. Still he went on with his Office. He was very, very tired, but God knew he meant no inattention. Then there were voices. Biddy's again and Father McMurrough's.

" But he has come back. He is sitting there in the garden."

He knew the quick, incisive young voice that had earned for its owner the reputation of being "a bit wicked." He saw the short, slight figure, the long black coat, grey now with dust; and as his eyelids fell he caught the glimmer of the sunset, shining on bicycle-clips. Then it was dark. But again he opened his eyes. He saw a startled young face. The quick flash of a purple ribbon from a dusty pocket. A figure kneeling beside him with bared head. An upraised hand.

But his Office. He was forgetting it.

" *Salva nos, Domine, vigilantes, custodi nos dormientes.*" Yes, he would soon be ready to sleep.

" *Ut vigilemus cum Christo, et requiescamus in pace.*" His words must have been audible, for a voice answered him: " Amen."

Then again it was dark, quite dark. But he had said his Compline.

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