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MEARING STONES

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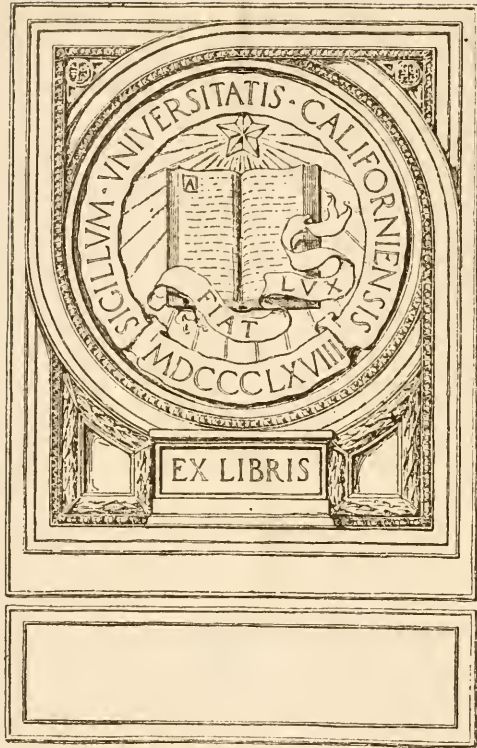
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JOSEPH CAMPBELL

(Author of "The Rushlight," "The Mountainy
Singer," etc.)

MAUNSEL AND COMPANY LTD.

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MEARING STONES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE RUSHLIGHT.

THE GARDEN OF THE BEES.

THE GILLY OF CHRIST.

THE MOUNTAINY SINGER.



THE WALL OF SLIEVE LEAGUE.

MEARING STONES

Leaves from my Note-Book on Tramp
in Donegal, by JOSEPH CAMPBELL
(SEOSAM MAC CAZMAOIL), with Sixteen
Pencil Drawings by the Author.

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MEARING STONES

IN THE
MOUNTAINS

“IN the mountains,” says Nietzsche, “the shortest way is from summit to summit.” That is the way I covered Donegal. Instead of descending into the valleys (a tedious and destroying process at all times), I crossed, like the king of the fairies, on a bridge of wonder :

With a bridge of white mist
Columcille he crosses,
On his stately journeys
From Slieve League to Rosses.

What seems in places in this book a fathomless *madhm* is in reality bridged over with wonder—dark to the senses here and there, I grant you, but steady and treadable in proportion to the amount of vision one brings to the passage of it. All, I know, will not follow me (the fairies withhold knowledge from the many and bestow it on the few), but if blame is to be given let the fairies get it, and not me. And I may as well warn the reader here that it is unlucky to curse the fairies. Rosses is but a storm’s cry, and—the curse always comes home to roost !

With regard to the pictures illustrating the book, several

people who have seen them in the original have criticised their darkness, as if they were all drawn "in twilight and eclipse." But the darkness of Donegal was the first thing that struck me when I crossed the frontier at Lifford, and the forty miles' journey through the hills to Ardara bit the impression still more deeply into me. And if I were asked now after a year's exile what I remember most vividly of the county, I should say its gloom. I can see nothing now but a wilderness of black hills, with black shadows chasing one another over them, a gleam of water here and there, and just the tiniest little patch of sunlight—extraordinarily brilliant by contrast with the general darkness—on half a field, say, with its mearing-stones, to relieve the sense of tragedy that one feels on looking at the landscape.

SEA-RIBBONS have I cut, and gathered
THE WANDER- ling ; talked with fairies ; heard Lia
 LUST Fail moaning in the centre, and seen
Tonn Tuaidh white in the north ; slept on hearth-flags
odd times, and under bushes other times ; passed the mill
with the scoop-wheels and the house with the golden door ;
following the roads—the heart always hot in me, the
lights on the hills always beckoning me on !

WE were talking together the other
THE DARK morning—the publican and myself—out-
 WOMAN side the inn door at Barra, when a dark
woman passed. "God look to that poor creature," says
he ; "she hasn't as much on her as would stuff a crutch."



CLADY RIVER, NEAR GWEEDORE.

“Stuff a what?” says I, for I didn’t quite understand him. “The bolster of a crutch,” says he. “And she knows nobody. Her eye-strings is broke.”

BY LOCHROS A WASTE of blown sand. The Atlantic breakers white upon its extremest verge.
BEAG

A patch of sea-bog before, exhaling its own peculiar fragrance—part fibre, part earth, part salt. Ricks of black turf stacked over it here and there, ready to be creeled inland against the winter firing. The dark green bulk of Slieve a-Tooey rising like a wall behind, a wisp of cloud lying lightly upon its carn. The village of Maghery, a mere clachan of unmortared stone and rain-beaten straw, huddling at its foot. A shepherd’s whistle, a cry in torrential Gaelic, or the bleat of a sheep coming from it now and again, only to accentuate the elemental quiet and wonder of the place. The defile of Maum opening beyond, scarped and precipitous, barely wide enough to hold the road and bog-stream that tumble through it to the sea. The rainbow air of our western seaboard enfolding all, heavy with rain and the fragrance of salt and peat fires.

COACHING BY COACHING by the stars, night-walk-
THE STARS ing—all my best thoughts, I find,
come to me that way. Poetry, like
devilry, loves darkness.

A RAINBOW I WAS watching a rainbow this after-
noon—a shimmering ring in the sky
between the fort at the mouth of the Owentocker river

and Slieve a-Tooeey beyond. "That's a beautiful sight, now," said a beggar, stopping on the road to have a word with me—the sort of person one meets everywhere in Ireland, friendly, garrulous, inquisitive, very proud of his knowledge of half-secret or hidden things, and anxious at all times to air it before strangers. "We do have a power of them this speckled weather." He looked into the sky with a queer look, then started humming over the names of the colours to himself in Irish. "And they say, sir, it's unlucky to pass through a rainbow. Did you ever hear that?"

CHANGE My heart goes out to the playing and singing folk, the folk who are forever on the roads. Life is change; and to be seeing new wonders every day—the thrown sea, the silver rush of the meadow, the lights in distant towns—is to be living, and not merely existing. I pity the man who is content to stay always in the place where his mother dropped him; that is, unless his thoughts wander. For one might sit on a midden and dream stars!

PROPHET'S
FOOD A MAN hailed me on the road, and we were talking. . . . "If one had nothing but fraochans to eat and water to drink, sure one would have to be satisfied. And remember," says he, "that a prophet lived on as little." "Who was that?" says I. "John the Baptist," says he. "You'll read that in the books."

THE TRANSIENT ONLY the transient is beautiful, said Schiller ; and Nature, in the incessant play of her rising, vanishing forms, is not averse to beauty. Beauty, said Turgenev, needs not to live for ever to be eternal—one instant is enough for her.

WOMEN AND HARES IT'S curious in Donegal sometimes, when going along the road, or crossing a footpath through the fields, to see a shawled woman, a perch or so off, dropping over the edge of a hill, and then when you get up to the edge there is no sign of her at all. And, maybe, a pace further on you will start a hare out of the hollow where you think the woman should have been, and you begin to wonder is there any truth in the story about women—that have to do with magic and charms and old freets, and the like—changing into hares, after all! I have had many experiences like that in my travels through the county, and in not a few instances have I been puzzled how a figure—silhouetted sharply against the skyline, and only a few yards off—could disappear so quickly out of view.

THE SMELL OF A WOMAN said to me to-day:
THE TOWN “You'll get the smell o' the town
blowed off you in the Donegal hills !”

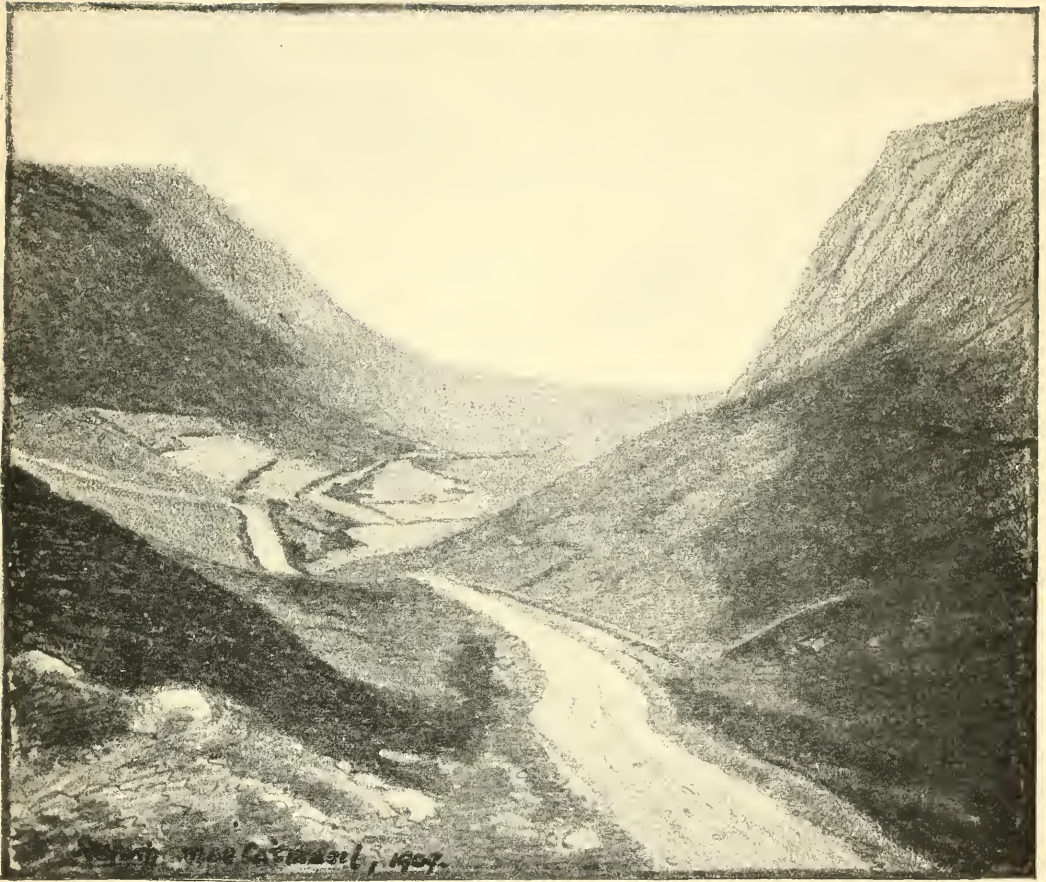
GLENGESH Darkness and austerity—those are the notes I carry away from this wild glen. Its lines have something of the splendid bareness of early architecture ; its colour suggests time-stained walls, with

quiet aisles and mouldering altars where one might kneel and dream away an existence. When you meet a stranger going the road that winds through it, like a coil of incense suspended in mid-air, you expect him to look at you out of eyes full of wonder, and to speak to you in half-chanted and serious words, stopping not, turning neither to left nor to right, but faring on, a symbol of pilgrimage :

*Le solus a chroidhe,
Fann agus tuirseach
Go deireadh a shlighe.*

CLOG-SEED “WHAT are you sowing?” “Oh, clog-seed, clog-seed. The childer about here is all running barefoot, and I thought I might help them against the winter day!”

HERBS AND FLOWERS *Lusmór, lus-na-méarachán, sian sléibhe,* foxglove, or fairy-thimble—whatever you like best to call it—it, I think, is the commonest herb of all. One sees it everywhere with its tall carmine spray, growing on ditches in the sun, in dark, shady places by the side of rivers, and under arches. Then the king-fern, the splendid *osmunda regalis*; the delicate maidenhair and hart’s-tongue, rooted in the crannies of walls; bog-mint and bog-myrtle, deliciously fragrant after rain, and the white tossing *ceanabhán*; brier-roses and woodbine; the drooping convolvulus; blue-bough; Fairies’ cabbage, or London Pride; pignuts and anemones; amber water-lilies, curiously scented; orchises, purple and white; wild daffodils and marigolds, gilding



PASS OF GLENGESH.

the wet meadows between hills; crotal, a moss rather than a herb, but beautiful to look at and most serviceable to the dyer; eyebright and purple mountain saxifrage; crested ling; tufts of sea-holly, with their green, fleshy, spiked leaves; and lake-sedge and sand-grass, blown through by soft winds and murmurous with the hum of bees. Donegal, wild though it be in other respects, is surely a paradise of herbs and flowers.

A YOUNG GIRL A YOUNG girl, in the purr and swell of youth. Her shawl is thrown loosely back, showing a neck and breast beautifully modelled. She is barefooted, and jumps from point to point on the wet road. At a stream which crosses the road near the *gallán* she lifts her dress to her knees and leaps over. She does not see me where I am perched sunning myself, so I can watch her to my heart's content.

THE GENERAL
LIGHT AND DARK "THE words of the maker o poems are the general light and dark." One feels the truth of this saying of Walt Whitman's in a place like the Pass of Glengesh, or the White Strand, outside Maghery. Chanting a fragment of the "Leaves" one night in the Pass, when everything was quiet and the smells were beginning to rise out of the wet meadows below, I felt how supremely true it was, and how much it belonged to the time and place—the darkness, the silence, the vibrant

stars, the earth smells, the bat that came out of the shadow of a fuchsia-bush and fluttered across a white streak in the sky beyond. And I have tried Wordsworth's sonnet beginning, "The world is too much with us," by a criterion no less than that of the Atlantic itself, tumbling in foam on the foreshore of Maghery when daylight was deepening into twilight, and the moon was low over the hills, touching the rock-pools and the sand-pools with flakes of carmine light. When I said the sonnet aloud to myself it seemed to rise out of the landscape and to incorporate itself with it again. as my voice rose and fell in the wandering cadences of the verse. Nature, after all, is the final touchstone of art. Tried by it, the counterfeit fails and the unmixed gold is justified.

SOUL AND
BODY

"It's a strange world," said a tramp to me to-day. I agreed. "And would you answer me this, gaffer?" said he. "Why is it when a man's soul is in his body, and he lusty and well, you think nothing of kicking him about as you would an old cast shoe? And the minute the soul goes, and the body is stiffening in death, you draw back from him, hardly daring to touch him for the dread that is on you. Would you answer me that, gaffer?" I was silent. "It's a strange world, sure enough," said the tramp. He rose from the gripe where he lay making rings in the grass with his stick. "Good-day, gaffer," said he. "God speed your journey." And he took the road, laughing.



LOCHROS BEAG.

A MAN ON
SHELTY-BACK

A MAN on sheltly-back. He has come in from the mountains to the cloth fair at Ardara. He is about sixty-five, black on the turn, clean shaven, but for side whiskers. He wears the soft wide-awake favoured by the older generation of peasants, open shirt, and stock rolled several times round his throat and knotted loosely in front. His legs dangle down on either side of his mount, tied at the knees with sugans. His brogues are brown with bog mud, very thick in the sole, and laced only half-way up. He has a bundle of homespun stuff under his left arm. A pipe is in his teeth, and as I approach he withdraws it to bid me the time of day. "*Lá maith,*" he says in a strong, hearty voice. I return the greeting, and pass on.

THE FAIRIES

I WAS in a house one night late up in the Gap of Maum, a very lonely place, yarning with two brothers—shepherds—who live there by themselves. I had sat a long time over the *griosach*, and was preparing to go, when the elder of them said to me: "Don't stir yet a bit. Sit the fire out. A body's loath to leave such a purty wee fire to the fairies."

STRANORLAR
STATION

IN a quiet corner, seated, I see a woman come in from the mountainy country beyond Convoy. She is waiting for the up-train. She is dark. Her hair and eyes are *very* dark. Her lips are threads of scarlet. Her skin is colourless, except for a slight tanning due to exposure

to sun and weather. She has a black shawl about her shoulders, and a smaller one of lighter colour over her head. She moves seldom. Her hands are folded on her knees. She looks into space with an air of quiet ecstasy, like a Madonna in an old picture. Her beauty is the beauty of one apart from the ruck and commonness of things. . . . She spits out now and again. I cannot help watching her.

STONES “DONEGAL is a terrible place for stones.”
 “Heth, is it, sir—boulders as big as a house. And skipping-stones? Man dear, I could give you a field full, myself!”

THE STRAND- I COULD sit for hours listening to the
BIRD “bubbling” of the strand-bird; but that’s because I am melancholy. If I weren’t melancholy I’d hardly like it, I think. The tide’s at ebb and the bollans and rock-pools are full of water. Beyond is space—the yellow of the sand and the grey of the sky—and the pipe-note “bubbling” between. A strange, yearning sound, like nothing one hears in towns; bringing one into touch with the Infinite, and deep with the melancholy that is Ireland’s . . . and mine.

SPACE IN towns the furthest we see is the other side of the street; but here there is no limit to one’s prospect—Perseus is as visible as Boötes—and one’s thought grows as space increases.

RABBITS AND
CATS

DONEGAL is over-run with rabbits; and sometimes on your journeys you will see a common house-cat—miles from anywhere—stalking them up the side of a mountain, creeping stealthily through the heather and pouncing on them with the savagery of a wild thing. The cats, a stonebreaker told me, come from the neighbouring farm-houses and cabins, “but they are devils for strolling,” says he, and in addition to what food they get from their owners “they prog a bit on their own!”

THE GLAS
GAIBHLINN

“THAT’S a very green field,” I said to a man to-day, pointing to a field, about two furrow-lengths away, on which the sun seemed to pour all its light at once. “Is there water near it?” “There’s a stream,” says he. “And the Glas Gaibhlinn sleeps there, anyway.” “And what’s that?” “It’s a magic cow the old people ’ll tell you of,” says he, “that could never be milked at one milking, or at seven milkings, for that,” says he. “Any field that’s greener than another field, or any bit of land that’s richer than another bit, they say the Glas Gaibhlinn sleeps in it,” says he. “It’s a freet, but it’s true!”

A HOUSE IN THE
ROAD’S MOUTH

A HOUSE in the road’s mouth—it is no roundabout to visit, but a short cut. Often I go up there of an evening, when my day’s wandering is done, to meet the people and to hear the old Fenian stories told—or, maybe, a tune played on the fiddle, if Donal O’Gallagher,

the dark man from Falcarragh, should happen to be present. It is as good as the sight of day to see the dancers, the boys and the girls out on the floor, the old people looking on from the shadow of the walls, and Donal himself, for all his blindness, shaking his head and beating time with his foot, as proud as a quilt of nine hundred threads!

THE Where am I going? Looking for the dew-
QUEST snail? No, but going till I find the verge
of the sky.

MUCKISH “WHEN you see Muckish with a cap on,”
said a man to me one day, “you may lay
your hand on your heart and say: ‘We’ll have a wet
spell before long.’” This mountain, like Errigal, has a
knack of drawing a hood of grey vapour round its head
when the rest of the landscape is perfectly cloudless—
like the peaks of the Kaatskills in *Rip Van Winkle*.

THE MAY- The May-Fire is still kindled in some
FIRE parts of Donegal. It is a survival of a
pagan right of our forefathers.

“And at it (the great national convention at Uisneach
in Meath) they were wont to make a sacrifice to the arch-
god, whom they adored, whose name was Bél. It was
likewise their usage to light two fires to Bél in every dis-
trict in Ireland at this season, and to drive a pair of each
herd of cattle that the district contained between these
two fires, as a preservative, to guard them against all the
diseases of that year. It is from that fire thus made that



MUCKISH, WITH A 'CAP' ON.

the day on which the noble feast of the apostles Peter and James is held has been called Bealteine (in Scotch Beltane), *i.e.*, Bél's fire."

The boys and girls of a whole countryside repair to these fires, which are usually lit upon a high, commanding hill, and they spend the night out telling stories, reciting poems, singing, and dancing to the accompaniment of pipes and fiddles. The May-Fire is not quite so generally observed as the John's-Fire, which is kindled on the night of the 23rd of June, St. John's Eve.

BLOODY FORELAND BLOODY Foreland. An old woman comes out of the ditch to talk to me. . . . "It's a wild place, sir, God help us! none wilder. And myself, sir—sure I've nothing in the world but the bones of one cow!"

TWILIGHT AND SILENCE SOME places in Donegal seem to me to brood under a perpetual twilight and silence—Glen-Columcille, for instance, and the valley running into it. And mixed up with the twilight and silence is a profound melancholy that rises out of the landscape itself, or is read into it by the greyness of one's own experience. Those dark hills with the rack over them and the sun looking through on one little patch of tilled land, and the stone mearings about it, figure forth the sorrow that is the heritage of every Irishman; the darkness the sorrow, the sunshine the hope, iridescent and beautiful, but a thing of moments only and soon to fade away. I stand on the

bridge here where the road forks, Slieve League to the left of me, a dim lowering bulk, and the road to Glen reaching away into the skyline beyond. The water of a hillstream murmurs continually at my feet. A duck splashes, and flaps dripping into the greyness overhead. Not a soul is in sight—only a blue feather of turf-smoke here and there to show that human hearts *do* beat in this wilderness; that there are feet to follow the plough-tail and hands to tend the hearth. The sense of wonder overmasters me—the wonder that comes of silence and closeness to the elemental forces of nature. Then the mood changes, and I feel rising up in me the sorrow that is the dominating passion of my life. Do many people go mad here? I have heard tell that they do, and no wonder, for one would need to be a saint or a philosopher to resist the awful austerity of the place.

THE POOR HERD THERE is a poor herd at Maghery—a half-witted character—who lives all his days in the open, with nothing between him and the sky. He was herding his cows one evening in a quiet place by the caves when I happened on him. “What time o’ day is it?” says he. “Just gone four,” says I, looking at my watch. “What time is that?” says he, in a dull sort of way. “Is it near dark?”

A MOUNTAIN TRAMP BEARING south by the Owenwee river from Maghery, we strike up through Maum gorge. Outside Maghery we come on two men—one of them a thin, wizened old

fellow with no teeth; the other a youngish man, very raggedly dressed, with dark hair and features like an Italian. The old man tells us in Irish (which we don't follow very clearly) to keep up by the river-bed, and we can't possibly lose our direction. A quarter of a mile further on we meet another man. He bids us the time of day in passably good English. I answer in Irish, telling him that we are on the road for Glen-Columcille, and asking him the easiest way over the hills. He repeats what the old man told us, viz., to keep to the river-bottom, and to cut up then by the fall at the head of Maum to Laguna, a cluster of poor houses in the mountain under Crockuna. "When you get there," he says, "you cannot lose your road." He comes a bit of the way with us, and then we leave him at a point where the track ends in the heather, and where a squad of navvies is engaged laying down a foundation of brushwood and stones to carry it further into the hills. It gives us a shock, in a way, to come on this squad of wild-looking men in so lonely and desolate a place.

We are now well into the gorge, and a wild place it is! Half-way up we come on a house—if one could call it such—with a reek of blue smoke threading out of a hole in the thatch. No other sign of life is visible. The walls of the gorge close in darkly on every side except the north. On that side is the sea, white on Maghery strand, and stretching away, a dull copper-green colour, into the sailless horizon beyond. Hearing the voices, a young man comes out from

between two boulders serving as a sort of gateway to the house. His face is tanned with sun and exposure, and he is in his bare feet. We greet him in Irish and he answers—a little surprised, no doubt, at hearing the language from strangers. Then another man comes forward—a brother, if his looks don't belie him. He is in his bare feet also, and hatless, with a great glibbe of black hair falling over his eyes. "You have the Irish?" he says. "It's newance to hear it from townsfolk." We talk for a while, enquiring further as to our direction over the hill, and then we push on. Near the head of the gorge we sit down to have a rest, sitting on a rock over the stream, and bathing our hands and faces in the brown, flooded water. All the rivers of Donegal are brownish in colour, and the Owenwee (*recte* *Abhainm-bhuidhe*, "yellow river") is no exception. The water stains everything it touches, and I have no doubt but that the dark colour of the people's skin is due, partly, to their washing themselves in it. Coming through one's boots, even, it will stain the soles of the feet.

We resume our journey, and after some rough and steep climbing reach the plateau head. Loch Nalughraman, a deep pool of mountain water, lies to the east of us, shimmering in the grey morning light. All around is bogland, of a dull red colour, and soaking with rain. We make through this, jumping from tuft to tuft, and from hummock to hummock, as best we can, going over the shoe-mouth occasionally in slush. In an hour or so we come on a bridle-path of white limestones, set on



ON THE ROAD TO DOON WELL.

their flat in the spongy turf. We follow this for a while, and in time reach the poor village of Laguna. Entering into one of the houses I greet the bean-a'-tighe in Irish. She rises quickly from her seat by the hearth where she has been spinning—a crowd of very young children clinging to her skirts. She is a dark woman, with mellow breasts, and fine eyes and teeth. She is barefooted, as usual, and wears the coloured head-dress of her kind, curtseying to me modestly as I approach. She answers me in Irish—the only language she knows—and bids me come in. “*Beir isteach,*” she says. A young man of five-and-twenty or thereabouts is weaving in the room beyond. (I recognised the heavy click-clack, click-clack, click-clack of the loom as I entered.) Hearing my enquiry he rises up from his seat, drops his setting-stick, and offers to guide us as far as the southern edge of the hill. “You will see the Glen road below you,” he says, coming out in his bare feet into the open, and speaking volubly, like one used to good speech. “Look at it beyond,” he says, “winding from the Carrick side. Keep south, and you will strike it after two miles of a descent.” The woman brings a bowl of goat’s milk to my sister. She drinks it readily, for she is thirsty after her climb. Then, thanking the poor people for their hospitality, we say, “*Slán agaibh,*” and press forward on our journey to Glen-Columcille.

We reach the high-road in about half-an-hour, near a school-house, shining white in the sun, and busy with the hum of children singing over their lessons. Things look

more familiar now. We pass many houses, with fleeces of dyed wool—green and blue and madder—drying on bushes outside the doors, and men busy stacking turf and thatching. Here and there on the road flocks of geese lie sunning themselves, head-under-wing. As we draw near they get up and face us with protruding necks, hissing viciously. Dogs bark at us occasionally, but not often. (I had heard ill accounts of the Donegal dogs from travellers, but on the whole, my experience of them has not been quite so bad as I had been led to expect.) Slieve League rises on our left, a dark, shadowy bulk of mountain, shutting off the view to the south. All around is moorland, with a stream in spate foaming through a depression in it, and little patches of tilled land here and there, and the inevitable brown-thatched cabin and the peat-reek over it. After some miles' travelling we come on a little folk-shop by the road—a shop where one might buy anything from a clay-pipe or a lemon to Napoleon's Book of Fate. The window looks tempting, so we go in. The shopkeeper is a quiet-mannered little man, not very old, I would think, but with greyish hair, and eyes that look as if they were bound round with red tape—burnt out of his head with snuff and peat-smoke. We ask him has he any buttermilk to sell. He hasn't any, unfortunately—he is just run out of it—so we content ourselves with Derry biscuits, made up in penny cartons, and half a dozen hen-eggs to suck on the way. Some people may shiver at the idea of it, but raw eggs are as sustaining a thing as one could take on a journey! We

pay our score, and get under way again. At a bridge where the road forks we sit down and eat our simple repast. A bridge has always a peculiar fascination for me—especially in an open country like this where one's horizon is not limited by trees and hedges—and I could spend hours dawdling over it, watching the play of sun and shadow on the water as it foams away under the arches. Here there is a delightful sense of space and quietness. The heather-ale is in our hearts, the water sings and the wind blows, and one ceases to trouble about time and the multitude of petty vexations that worry the townsman out of happiness. Did I say one ceases to trouble about time? Even here it comes, starting one like a guilty thing. We reach Meenacross Post-office at four-thirty, and an hour later see the Atlantic tumbling through rain on the age-worn strand of Glen-Columcille.

THE FESTIVAL OF DEATH I MET an old man on the road, and his face as yellow as dyer's rocket:
"Walk easy past that little house beyond," says he in a whisper, turning round and pointing with his staff into the valley. "There's a young girl in it, and she celebrating the festival of death."

IN GLEN-COLUMCILLE THROUGH blown rain and darkness I see the Atlantic tumble in white, ghost-like masses on the strand. Beevna is a shadow, the crosses shadows. Only one friendly light burns in the valley. The patter of rain and the dull boom of the surf ring ceaselessly in my

ears. The hills brood: my thoughts brood with them. I stare into the sunset—a far-drawn, scarlet trail—with mute, wondering eyes. Remoteness grips me, and is become a reality in this ultimate meaning of a grey, ultimate land.

THE BRINK OF WATER

I HAVE often heard it said that what passes for folk-lore is in reality book-lore, or what began as book-lore got into the oral tradition and handed down through the generations by word of mouth. A young Ardara man, a poet and dreamer in his way, told me that poetry most frequently came to him when he was near water; wandering, say, by the edge of Lochros, or looking down from Bracky Bridge at the stream as it forced its way through impeding boulders to the sea. I asked him had he ever read “The Colloquy of the Two Sages*”? He said that he had not. I told him that in that MS. occurred the passage: *ar bá baile fallsigthe éicsi dogrés lasna filedu for brú uisci, i.e.*, “for the poets thought that the place where poetry was revealed always was upon the brink of water.” Nettled somewhat, he confessed that he got the idea from his father, a *seanchaidhe*, since dead, who knew something of Irish MSS., and who perhaps had read the “Colloquy,” or at all events, had heard of it. But apart from the fact of the thing having been given him by his father, he felt that it was true in his own experience—that poetry always came to him more readily when he was near water.

* Book of Leinster.



NEAR ALTON LOCH.

A DARK MORNING A DARK, wet morning, with the mist driving in swaths over the hills. I met an old man on the road. "There's somebody a-hanging this morning," says he. "It's fearful dark!"

THE SWALLOW-MARK THERE is a lot of the wanderer in me, and no wonder, I suppose; for I have the swallow-mark—a wise man once showed it to me on my hand—and that means that I must always be going journeys, whether in the flesh or in the spirit, or both. "The swallow-mark is on you," says he. "You will go wandering with the airs of the world. You will cheat the Adversary himself, even that he drops his corroding-drop on you!" And as I am a wanderer, so the heart in me opens to its kind. I love a brown face, a clear eye, and an honest walk more than anything; if in a man, good; if in a woman, better. And why people look for the cover of a roof, and the sun shining, I never can make out. Sunshine and the open, the wind blowing, travelling betimes and resting betimes, with my back to the field and my knees to the sky, a copy of Raftery or Borrow in my pocket to dip into when the mood is on me—and I am supremely happy!

WOMEN BEETLING CLOTHES I SEE three women by a river: they are so close to me that I can hear them talking and laughing. One of them is an oldish creature, the other two are young and dark. They are on their knees on the

bank, beetling clothes. One of them gets up—a fine, white-skinned girl—and tucking her petticoats about her thighs, goes into the stream and swishes the clothes several times to and fro in the brown-clear water. Then she throws them out to her companions on the bank, and the beetling process is repeated—each garment being laid on a flat stone and pounded vigorously until clean. The women do not see me (I am standing on a bridge, with a rowan-bush partly between them and me), so I can watch them to my heart's content.

THE SEA THE sea is one of those things you cannot argue with. You must accept it on its own terms, or leave it alone. And I like a man to be that way: calm at times, rough at times, kind at times, treacherous at times, but at heart unchanging: *not to be argued with, but accepted*. Is not the comparison apter than one thinks? Is not a man and his passions as divine and turbulent as anything under the sun?

A BALLAD- A BALLAD-SINGER has come into Ardara.
SINGER It is late afternoon. He stands in the middle of the Diamond—a sunburnt, dusty figure, a typical Ishmael and stroller of the roads. The women have come to their doors to hear him, and a benchful of police, for lack of something better to do, are laughing at him from the barrack front. The ballad he is singing is about Bonaparte and the Poor Old Woman. Then he changes his tune to “The Spanish Lady”—a Dublin street-song:



A STREET IN ARDARA.

As I walked down thro' Dublin city
At the hour of twelve in the night,
Who should I spy but a Spanish lady,
Washing her feet by candlelight.

First she washed them, and then she dried them
Over a fire of amber coal :
Never in all my life did I see
A maid so neat about the sole !

Finally he gives "I'm a Good Old Rebel," a ballad of the type that became so popular in the Southern States of America after the Civil war :

I'm a good old rebel—that's what I am,
And for this fair land of freedom I don't care a damn ;
I'm glad I fought agin it, I only wish we'd won,
And I don't want no one-horse pardon for anything I done.

I followed old Marse Robert for four years nigh about,
Got wounded in three places and starved at Point Look-Out :
I cotched the rheumatism a-campin' in the snow,
But I killed a chance of Yankees, and I'd like to kill some moe.

Two hundred thousand Yankees is stiff in Southern dust,
We got two hundred thousand before they conquered us :
They died of Southern fever and Southern steel and shot—
I wish it was two millions instead of what we got !

And now the war is over and I can't fight them any more,
But I ain't a-goin' to love them—that's sartin shor' ;
And I don't want no one-horse pardon for what I was and am,
And I won't be reconstructed, and I don't care a damn !

He howls out the verses in disjointed, unmusical bursts. He acts with head and arms, and at places where he is worked up to a particular frenzy he takes a run and gives

a buck-jump in the air, blissfully unconscious, I suppose, that he is imitating the manner in which the *ballistea*, or ancient dancing-songs, were sung by the Romans. At the end of each verse he breaks into a curious chanted refrain like: "Yum tilly-yum-yum-yum-yum-yum"—and then there are more sidlings and buck-jumps. Some of the women throw him money, which he acknowledges by lifting his hat grandiosely. Others of them pass remarks, quite the reverse of complimentary, about his voice and ragged appearance. "Isn't it terrible he is!" says one woman. "Look at him with the seat out of his trousers, and he lepping like a good one. I could choke him, I could!" Another woman comes out of a shop with a crying child in her arms, and shouts at him: "Will you go away, then? You're wakening the childer." "Well, ma'am," says he, stopping in the middle of a verse, "you may thank the Lord for His mercy that you have childer to waken!" The ducks quack, the dogs howl, the poor ballad-singer roars louder than ever. I listen for a while, amused and interested. Then I get tired of it, and pass on towards Bracky Bridge.

SUNLIGHT UNLESS you have seen the sun you cannot know anything. Sunlight is better than wisdom, and the red of the fairy-thimble more than painted fans.

TURF-CUTTING IN the Lochros district, when the weather begins to take up, about the middle of May, the farmers repair to the moss on the north side of the Point, and start cutting the banks.

The turf is then footed (sometimes by girls) along the causeway ditches, and when properly seasoned—say about the middle of July—is piled in stacks on high ground convenient to the moss, and covered on top with a lot of old mouldering “winter-stales,” to keep the rain off it. “Winter-stales” are sods that have been left over from the previous season’s cutting—the wet setting in and leaving the bog-roads in such a state that no slipe or wheeled car could get into them. Of course, most of the carrying in Donegal is done by creel or ass-cart; but in the Lochros district turf is scarce, and the farmers on the Point are obliged to keep horses to draw the turf in from the moss on the north side of the Owenea river, some miles off, and over roads that are none too good for wheeled traffic. In some cases I have noticed the “winter-stales” built up in little beehive-shaped heaps on dry ground, to be carted or creeled away as soon as the weather begins to mend. But it is only the more provident farmers who do this.

HIS OLD “My old mother’s ailing this twelvemonth
MOTHER back,” said a man to me to-day. “I’m
afeard she’ll go wi’ the leaves.”

A DAY OF WIND A DAY of wind and light, blown
AND LIGHT, rain, with the sun shining through
BLOWN RAIN it in spells. Aighe river below me,
 brown and clear, foaming through
mossed stones to the sea. Trout rising from it now and
again to the gnats that skim its surface. Glengesh

mountain in the middle distance—a black, splendid bulk—dropping to the Nick of the Bealach on the left. Meadows in foreground bright with marigolds, with here and there by the mearings tufts of king-fern, wild iris and fairy-thimble.

LYING AND WALKING To lie on one's loin in the sun is all very well, but walking is better. It is over the hill the wonders are.

GLEN-COLUMCILLE TO CARRICK SATURDAY. It is about half-past seven o'clock in the evening. The rain, which kept at it pitilessly all the afternoon, has cleared off, and we have left the little whitewashed inn at Glen-Columcille refreshed, and in high fettle, for the further six miles that has to be done before we reach Carrick, where we mean to spend the night. We had arrived at Glen two hours before in a weary enough condition physically after our tramp over the hills from Ardara, and we had almost resolved on the advice of the hostess of the inn—a slow, deliberate, slatternly sort of woman—to put up with her for the night; but it is wonderful what a rest and a meal and, incidentally, a slatternly hostess does, and so we finally decided to go on to Carrick. We follow the road up by the telegraph posts, and after a stiffish climb of half a mile or more, reach the plateau head. We are now about five hundred feet over sea level. Turning round to have a last look at the place, we see the chapel—a plain white cruciform



FALLING WATER.

building, with a queer detached belfry—the little grey, straggling village street (some of the houses with slate roofs, some with thatch), the crosses standing up like gallan-stones on every side of it, the deep valley-bottom green as an emerald, Ballard mountain silhouetted against the sunset, and the vast Atlantic tumbling through mist on the yellow strand beyond. The air smells deliciously of peat. In Donegal one notices the smell of peat everywhere; in fact, if I were asked to give an impression of the county in half a dozen words I should say: “Black hills, brown rivers, and peat.” The road is fairly level now, and we continue our course in a south-easterly direction. A wild waste of moorland stretches on every side of us, brightened here and there by little freshwater lakes, out of which we see the trout jumping in hundreds—Loch Unshagh, Loch Unna, Loch Divna, and another quite near the road, where we got, at the expense of wet feet and knees, some lovely specimens of the *lilium aureum*, or golden lily, which grows, I think, on every little shallow and flat and bywater in South Donegal. After an hour of pleasant walking the road begins to drop and the rain to fall again. Slieve League is on our right, but we can only see the lower slopes of it, for the cairn is completely covered with driving mist. The wind has risen, and the rain beats coolingly on our cheeks, and exasperatingly, at times, down our necks. We pass a shepherd on the road making for Malin Mór, a shawled figure with a lantern, and several groups of boys and asses with creels bringing turf into the stackers; and farther

on a side-car zig-zagging up hill on its way to the Glen. There are two occupants, a priest—presumably the curate of Glen parish going over for Sunday's Mass—and the driver. It is quite dark now, and the rain increases in intensity. Tramping in a mountainy country is a delightful sport—none better! But it is on such a night and at the end of such a journey as this that one begins to see that it has a bad as well as a good side to it. The rain is coming down in sheets, our clothes are soaked through, the darkness is intense, the roads are shockingly muddy, we are tired out walking, and still we have another stiff mile to go before we see the friendly lights of the inn at Carrick. Two of us—R. M. and myself—stop at a bridge to have a look at the ordnance sheet which has stood us in such good stead all through our journey. Torrential rain beating on a map—even a “cloth-mounted, water-proofed” one like ours—doesn't improve it; but we have qualms about our direction. We think we should have arrived at Carrick ere this, and we just want to make sure that our direction is right, and that we haven't taken a wrong turning in the darkness. After some trouble we manage to get a match lighted. The first misfires on the damp emery, the second blows out, the third is swallowed up in rain pouring like a spout through the branches overhead, the fourth “Carrick! Carrick! Carrick!” The frenzied cries of the advance guard tell us that the town is in view. We put up our map resignedly, shaking great blabs of water out of it, and push ahead. In five minutes we have passed the chapel, with

its square tower looming up darkly in the fog, and in another two we are safe in the inn parlour, enjoying a supper of hot coffee, muffins, and poached eggs.

ORA ET LABORA NOON of a summer's day. I see a man in the fields—a wild, solitary figure—the only living thing in sight for miles. He is thinning turnips. Slowly a bell rings out from the chapel on the hill beyond. It is the Angelus. The man stands up, takes off his hat and bows his head in the ancient prayer of his faith. . . . The bell ceases tolling, and he bends to labour again.

TWO THINGS I MET a woman up Glengesh going in
THAT WON'T the direction of the danger-post. She
GO GREY seemed an old woman by her look,
 but she more than beat me at the
walking. When we got to the top of the hill I complimented her on her powers. "'Deed," says she, with a deprecating little laugh, "and I'm getting old now. I'm fair enough yet at the walking, but I'm going grey—going fast. A year ago my hair was as black as that stack there"—pointing to a turf-stack out in the bog—"but now it's on the turn. And I tell you there's only two things in the world that won't go grey some time—and that's salt and iron."

RUNDAL I SEE a green island. It is hardly an island now, for the tide is out, and one might walk across to it by the neck of yellow-grey sand that connects it with the mainland. It is held in rundal by a score of

tenants living in the mountains in-by. Little patches of oats, potatoes, turnips, and "cow's grass" diversify its otherwise barren surface. There are no mearings, but each man's patch is marked by a cairn of loose stones, thrown aside in the process of reclamation. The stones, I see, are used also as seaweed beds. They are spitted in the sand about, like a *cheval de frise*, and in the course of time the seaweed carried in by successive tides gathers on them, and is used by the tenants for manure.

PÚCA-PILES "WHAT are these?" I asked an old woman in the fields this morning, pointing to a cluster of what we in the north-east corner call paddock-stools, and sometimes fairy-stools. "Well," said she, "they're not mushrooms, anyway. They're what you call Púca-piles. They say the Púca lays them!"

THE ROSSES BOG and sky: a boulder-strewn waste, with salt lochs and freshwater lochs innumerable, and a trail running up to a huddle of white clouds.

A COUNTRY FUNERAL DEATH, as they say, has taken somebody away under his oxter! I was coming into Ardara this morning from the Lochros side, and as I came up to the chapel on the hill I heard the bell tolling. That, I knew, was for a burying: it was only about ten o'clock, and the Angelus does not ring until midday. Farther on I met the funeral



Scopim mac. lachmanni, 1907

BOG AND SKY.

procession. It was just coming out of the village. The coffin, a plain deal one covered with rugs, was carried over the well of a side-car, and the relatives and country people walked behind. The road was thick with them—old men in their Sunday homespuns and wide-awakes, their brogues very dusty, as if they had come a long way; younger men with bronzed faces, and ash-plants in their hands; old women in the white frilled caps and coloured shawls peculiar to western Ireland; young married women, girls and children. Most of them walked, but several rode in ass-carts, and three men, I noticed, were on horseback. The tramping of so many feet, the rattle of the wheels and the talk made a great stir on the road, and the movement and colour suggested anything but a funeral. Still one could see that underneath all was a deep and beautiful feeling of sorrow, so different to the black-coated, slow-footed, solemn-faced thing of the towns. As the coffin approached I stood into the side of the road, saluted, and turned back with it the *tri cèimeanna na trocaire* (three steps of mercy) as far as the chapel yard.

YOUTH AND AN old man came dawdling out of a
AGE gap by the road, and he stopped to
have a word with me. We were talking for some time when he said: "You're a young man, by the looks of you?" I laughed and nodded. "Och," says he, "but it's a poor thing to be old, and all your colt-tricks over," says he, "and you with nothing to do but to be watching the courses of the wind!"

SUMMER DUSK SUMMER dusk. A fiddle is playing in a house by the sea. "Maggie Pickens" is the tune. The fun and devilment of it sets my heart dancing. Then the mood changes. It is "The Fanaid Grove" now, full of melancholy and yearning, full of the spirit of the landscape—the soft lapping tide, the dove-grey sands, the blue rhythmic line of hill and sky beyond. The player repeats it. . . . I feel as if I could listen to that tune forever.

A NOTE DARKNESS, freshness, fragrance. Donegal fascinates one like a beautiful girl.

THE PEASANT IN LITERATURE It has been said before that there is "too much peasant" in contemporary Irish literature, especially in the plays. The phenomenon is easily explained. Ireland is an agricultural country, a country of small farms, and therefore a nation of peasants; so that a literature which pretends to reflect the life of Ireland must deal in the main with peasants and the thoughts that peasants think. And peasants' thoughts are not such dead and commonplace things that I, who have learnt practically all I know from them, can afford to ignore them now. The king himself is served by the field. Where there is contact with the unseen in this book, with the mysteries which we feel rather than understand, it is because of some strange thought dropped in strange words from a peasant's mouth and caught by me here, as in a snare of leaves, for every-one to ponder. Impressions, with something of the

roughness of peasant speech in them and something of the beauty, phases of a moment breathless and fluttering, the mystery of the sea, the thresh of rain, the sun on a bird's wing, a wayfarer passing—those are the things I sought to capture in this book.

AN INSLEEP WE were talking together the other evening—an old woman and myself—on a path which leads through the fields from Glengesh mountain to Ardara wood. We had got as far as the stream which crosses the path near the wood when she stopped suddenly. She looked west, and scratched her eyebrow. “I've an insleep,” says she. “I hadn't one this long time!”

WATER AND WHAT is more beautiful than water
SLÁN-LUS falling, or a spray of *slán-lus* with
its flowers?

BY LOCHROS THE heat increases. The osmunda
MÓR droops on the wall. The tide is at
full ebb. A waste of sea-wrack and
sand stretches out to Dawros, a day's journey beyond. I see two figures, a boy and a girl, searching for bait—the boy digging and the girl gathering into a creel. The deep, purring note of a sandpiper comes to me over the bar. It is like the sound that air makes bubbling through water. I listen to it in infinite space and quietness.

RIVAL FIDDLERS

I WAS talking with a fiddler the other evening in a house where there was a dance, up by Portnoo. I happened to mention the name of another fiddler I had heard playing a night or two before in Ardara. "Him, is it?" put in my friend. "Why, he's no fiddler at all. He's only an old stroller. He doesn't know the differs between 'Kyrie Eleison' and 'The Devil's Dreams'!" He became very indignant. I interrupted once or twice, trying to turn the conversation, but all to no purpose; he still went on. Finally, to quiet him, I asked him could he play "The Sally Gardens." He stopped to think for a while, fondling the strings of his instrument lovingly with his rough hands; then he said that he didn't know the tune by that name, but that if I'd lilt or whistle the first few bars of it, it might come to him. I whistled them. "Oh," says he, "that's 'The Maids of Mourne Shore.' That's the name we give it in these parts." He played the tune for me quite beautifully. Then there was a call from the man of the house for "The Fairy Reel," and the dancers took the floor again. The fiddlers in Donegal are "all sorts," as they say—farmers, blacksmiths, fisher boys, who play for the love of the thing, and strollers (usually blind men) who wander about from house to house and from fair to fair playing for money. When they are playing I notice they catch the bow in a curious way with their thumbs between the horsehair and the stick. At a dance it is no uncommon thing to see a "bench" of seven or eight of them. They join in the applause at the end of each item, rasping their



MOUNTAINY FOLK.

bows together on the strings and stamping vigorously with their feet.

NATURE A POOR woman praying by a cross; a mountain shadowed in still water; a tern crying; the road ribboning away into the darkness that looks like hills beyond. Can we live every day with these aspiring things, and not love beauty? Can we look out on our broad view—as someone has said of the friars of the monastery of San Pietro in Perugia—and not note the play of sun and shadow? Nature is the “Time-vesture of God.” If we but touch it, we are made holier.

SUNDAY UNDER IT is Sunday. The dawn has
SLIEVE LEAGUE broken clear after a night's rain.
The sunlight glitters in the soft morning air. The fragrance of peat, marjoram, and wild-mint hangs like a benediction over the countryside. A lark is singing; the swallows are out in hundreds. The road turns and twists—past a cabin, over a bridge—between fringes of wet grass. It dips suddenly, then rises sheer against a wisp of cloud into the dark bulk of Slieve League behind. I see the mountainy people wending in from all parts to Mass. I am standing on high ground, and can see the hiving roads—the men with their black coats and wide-awakes, and the women with their bright-coloured kerchiefs and shawls. Some of them have trudged in for miles on bare feet. They carry their brogues, neatly greased and cleaned, over

their shoulders. As they come near the chapel they stop by the roadside or go into a field and put them on. The young girls—grey-eyed, limber slips from the hills—are fixing themselves before they go in of the chapel door. They stand in their ribboned heads and shawls pluming themselves, and telling each other how they look. The boys are watching them. I hear the fresh, nonchalant laugh and the kindly greeting in Irish—“*Maidín bhreagh, a Phaid,*” and the “*Goidé mar tá tú, a Chait?*” The men—early-comers—sit in groups on the chapel wall, discussing affairs—the weather, the crops, the new potato spray, the prospects of a war with Germany, the marrying and the giving in marriage, the letters from friends in America, the death and month’s mind of friends. The bell has ceased ringing. The men drop from their perch on the wall, and the last of them has gone in. The road is quiet again, and only the sonorous chant of the priest comes through the open windows—“*Introibo ad altare Dei,*” and the shriller response of the clerk, “*Ad Deum, qui lactificat juventutem meam.*”

THE NIGHT HE
WAS BORN

WE were talking together, an old man and myself, on the hill between Laguna and Glen. The conversation turned on ages—a favourite topic with old men*—and on the degeneracy that one noticed all over Ireland, especially among the young. “And what age would you take *me* for?” said he, throwing his staff from him and

* He had the Old Age Pension.

straightening himself up. "Well, I'm a bad hand at guessing," said I, "but you're eighty if you're a day." "I'm that," said he, "and more. And would you believe it," said he, "the night I was born my mother was making a cake!"

THE LUSMÓR THE *lusmór*, or "great herb"—fox-glove,

That stars the green skirt of the meadow,
is known to the peasantry by a variety of other names, as for example, *sian sléibhe*, "sian of the hills" (it grows plentifully on the high, rough places); *méarachán*, "fairy-thimble"; *rós gréine*, "little rose of the sun"; and *lus na mban-sidhe*, "herb of the elf-women, or witch-doctors," etc., etc. It is bell-shaped, and has a purplish-red colour. As Dr. Joyce observes, it is a most potent herb, for it is a great fairy plant; and those who seek the aid of the *Daoine Maithe*, or Good People, in the cure of diseases or in incantations of any kind, often make use of

Drowsy store,
Gathered from the bright *lusmór*,

to add to the power of their spells. It is a favourite flower in Highland, otherwise Gaelic Scotland; and the clan Farquhar, "hither Gaels," have assumed it for their badge.

DERRY PEOPLE DONEGAL is what I call "county-proud." Speaking of Derry—the marching county—an old woman said to me the other day: "Och, there's no gentility about the Derry people. They go at a thing like a day's work!"

A CLOCK I WAS going along the road this evening when I came on a clock (some would call it a black beetle), travelling in the direction of Narin. The poor thing seemed to have its mind set on getting there before dark—a matter of three miles, and half an hour to do it in! The sense of tears in me was touched for the clock, and I stooped down to watch it crawling laboriously along in the dust, over a very rough road, tired and travel-stained, as if it had already come a long way; climbing stones (miniature Errigals) twenty times as high as itself; circumventing others, falling into ruts headlong, and rising again none the worse for its awful experience; keeping on, on, on, “with a mind fixed and a heart unconquered.” I couldn’t help laughing at first, but after five minutes I felt a sort of strange kinship with the clock—it was a wayfarer like myself, “a poor earth-born companion and fellow-mortal”—and I stood watching it, hat in hand, until it disappeared out of view. The last I saw of it was on the top of a stone on rising ground, silhouetted against the sunset. Then it dropped over . . . and I resumed my journey, thinking.

CARRICK GLEN Here there is quiet; quiet to think, quiet to read, quiet to listen, quiet to do nothing but lie still in the grass and vegetate. The water falls (to me there is no music more beautiful); a wayfarer passes now and again along the road on his way into Carrick; the sea-savour is in my nostrils; the clouds sail northward, white and luminous, far up in the sky;



A WAYFARER.

their shadows checker the hills. If the Blue Bird is to be found this side of heaven, surely it must be here !

A SHUILER I WAS talking to a stonebreaker on the road between Carrick and Glen when a shuiler passed, walking very fast. "A supple lad, that," says the stonebreaker. "The top o' the road's no ditch-shough to him. Look at him—he's lucky far down the hill already." He dropped his hammer, and burst into a fit of laughing. "He's as many feet as a cat!" says he.

TURKEYS IN THE TREES ONE of the gruesomest sights I ever saw in my life—turkeys roosting among the branches of the trees at a house above Lochros. You would think they were birds with evil spirits in them, they kept so quiet in the half-darkness, and looked so solemn.

A PARTY OF TINKERS A PARTY of tinkers on the high road—man, wife, children, ass and cart. A poor, back-gone lot they are surely. The man trails behind carrying one of the children in a bag over his back. The woman pushes on in front, smiling broadly out of her fat, drunken face. "Oh, God love ye for a gentleman," she whines in an up-country *barróg* which proclaims her a stranger to the place. "Give us the lucky hand, gentleman, and may the Golden Doors never be shut against ye. Spare a decent poor body a copper, and I'll say seven 'Hail Mary's' and seven 'Glory

be to the Father's, for ye every night for a week. Give us the lucky hand, gentleman." I throw her a penny, not so much out of charity as to get rid of her, and the cavalcade moves on. Over the hill I hear her voice raised in splendid imprecation on the husband. Such coloured speech one only hears from peasants and strolling folk, who are in touch with the elemental things—the wonders and beauties and cruelties of life.

TEELIN, BUNGLASS,
AND
SLIEVE LEAGUE

It is a lovely summer's day, warm and fragrant and sunny. We have just come from Mass at Carrick chapel, and are following the road that leads south by the harbour up to Teelin village. Numbers of people are on the road with us—mostly women and girls, for the men have remained behind to smoke and to talk over the week's happenings in the different ends of the parish. The groups go in ages—the old women with the old women, the marriageable girls with the marriageable girls, the younger girls with the girls of their own age. There is a crowd of little boys, too—active as goats, dressed in corduroys or homespuns, and discussing in Irish what they will do with themselves in the afternoon. Some will go bathing in the harbour, others will go up to the warren by Loch O'Mulligan to hunt rabbits, others will remain in the village to watch the men and bigger boys play at skittles in a cleared space by the high road. I pick up with a quiet-eyed lad—the makings of a priest or a scholar, by his look—and in a short time I am friends

with the crowd. If one could see me behind I must look like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, so many children have I following alongside me and at my heels. They come to know by my talk that I am interested in Irish—an enthusiast, in fact—and they all want to tell me at once about the Feis at Teelin, and about the great prizes that were offered, and how one out of their own school, a little fellow of eight years, won first prize for the best telling of a wonder-tale in the vernacular. The quiet-eyed lad asks me would I like to see Bunglass and the great view to be had of Slieve League from the cliff-head. I tell him that I am going there, and in an instant the crowd is running out in front of us, shouting and throwing their caps in the air—delighted, I suppose, at the prospect of a scramble for coppers on the grass when we get to the end of our journey. For boys are boys the world over, let the propagandists carp as they will! and when I was young myself I would wrestle a ghost under a bed for a halfpenny—so my grandmother used to tell me, and she was a very wise and observant woman. We have come to Teelin village—a clean, white-washed little place on a hill, built “all to one side like Clogher”—and from there we strike up to the right by a sort of rocky, grass-covered loaning which leads to the cliffs. We pass numbers of houses on the way, each with a group of gaily-dressed peasants sunning themselves at the door. The ascent is gradual at first, but as we go on it gets steeper, and after a while’s climbing we begin to feel the sense of elevation and detachment. The air is

delightfully warm, and the fragrance of sea and bracken and ling is in our hearts. In time we reach Carrigan Head, with its martello tower, seven hundred feet odd over the Atlantic. Southwards the blue waters of Donegal Bay spread themselves, with just the slightest ripple on their surface, glinting in the warm sunlight. In the distance the heights of Nephin Beag and Croagh Patrick in Mayo are faintly discernible, and westwards the illimitable ocean stretches to the void. From Carrigan Head we follow a rough mountain trail, and in a short time reach Loch O'Mulligan, a lonely freshwater tarn, lying under the shadow of Slieve League. Back of the loch a grassy hill rises. We climb this, the younger boys leading about fifty yards in front, jumping along the short grass and over the stones like goats. Arrived at a point called in Irish *Amharc Mór*, or "Great View," a scene of extraordinary beauty bursts on us. We are standing on Screeghter, the highest of the cliffs of Bunglass. A thousand and twenty-four feet below us, in a sheer drop, the blue waters of Bunglass advance and recede—blue as a sapphire, shading into emerald and white where they break on the spit of grass-covered rock rising like a *sceilg-draoidheachta*, or "horn of wizardy," out of the narrow bay. Right opposite us is Slieve League, its carn a thousand feet higher than the point on which we stand. In the precipitous rock-face, half-way up, is a scarped streak called *Nead an Iolair*, or the Eagle's Nest. The colouring is wonderfully rich and varied—black, grey, violet, brown, red, green—due, one



THE HORN.

would think, to the complex stratification and to the stains oozing from the soft ores, clays, and mosses impinging between the layers. We step back from the cliff-edge, and sit down on a flat slab of stone, the better to enjoy the view, and the boys spread themselves out in various attitudes over the short grass before and behind us. They are conversing among themselves in Irish, speaking very rapidly, and with an intonation that is as un-English as it can possibly be. The thickened l's and thrilled r's are especially noticeable. To hear these children speak Irish the way they do makes one feel that the language of Niall Naoi Giallach is not dead yet, and has, indeed, no signs of dying.

One could spend a day in this place sunning oneself on the cliff-head, or loafing about on the grass, enjoying the panorama of mountain and sea and sky spread in such magnificence on all sides. But we have promised to be back in Carrick for lunch, and already the best part of the forenoon is gone. "*Cad a-chlog é anois?*" I ask one of the boys. He looks into the sky, calculates for a while, and answers: "*Tá sé suas le h-aon anois. Féach an ghrían.*" (It is upwards of one o'clock now. Look at the sun.) In a remote, open country like this the children are wonderfully astute, and well up in the science of natural things. Coming up the hill I had noticed a number of strange birds, and when I asked the crowd the names of them in Irish they told me without once having to stop to think. We are ready to go now, but before setting out we decide on having a scramble. My friend, R. M., takes a sixpence

from his pocket, puts it edge down on the turf, and digs it in with his heel, covering it up so that no sign of it is visible. He then brings the boys back over the grass about a hundred yards, handicapping them according to age and size. One boy, the youngest, has boots on, and he is put in front. At a given signal—the dropping of a handkerchief—the race is started, and in the winking of an eye the crowd is mixed up on the grass, one boy's head here, another's heels there, over the spot where the sixpence is hidden. Five minutes and more does the scramble last, the boys pushing and shoving for all they are worth, and screaming at the top of their voices. Then the lad who reached the spot first crawls out from underneath the struggling mass, puffing and blowing, his hair dishevelled, the coat off him, and the sixpence in his hand!

We have got back to Carrick, an hour late for lunch, and with the appetites of giants. We met many people on the road as we returned, all remarkably well-dressed— young men in the blue serge favoured by sailors, and girls in white; a clerical student, home on holidays from Maynooth, discussing the clauses of Mr. Birrell's latest Land Bill with a group of elderly folk; big hulking fellows with bronzed faces, in a uniform that I hadn't seen before, but which a local man told me was that of the Congested Districts Board; and pinafores children. One young man we noticed sitting on a rock over the water with his boots off, washing his feet, and several boys sailing miniature boats made out of the leaves of flaggers.

THE SHOOTING
STAR

I WAS out the other evening on the shore to the northward of Lochros, watching the men taking in the turf from the banks where it had been footed and dried. The wind was quiet, and there was a great stir of traffic on the road—men with creels, horses and carts, asses and children driving them. An old woman (a respectable beggar by her look) came by, and we started to talk. We were talking of various things—the beauty of the evening, the plentifulness of the turf harvest, the sorrows of the poor, and such like—when she stopped suddenly, and looked up into the sky. She gripped my arm. “Look, look,” she said, “a shooting star!” She blessed herself. There was a trail of silver light in the air—a luminous moment—then darkness. “That’s a soul going up out of purgatory,” she said.

SUNDAY ON THE
ROAD BETWEEN
CARRICK AND
GLENGESH

SUNDAY on the road between Carrick and Glengesh. It is drawing near sunset. We pass a group of country boys playing skittles in the middle of the road—quite a crowd of them, big, dark fellows, of all ages between twenty and thirty-five. Some are lolling on the ditch behind, and one has a flute. Farther on we come on a string of boys and girls paired off in twos with their arms about each other’s waists, like a procession on Bride’s Sunday. The front pair are somewhat ill-matched. The man is old and awkward in his walk, yet cavalierly withal; the girl is young and pretty, with a charming white

laundered dress and flowers in her hair. As our car passes they wave their hands to us as a sign that they are enjoying the fun quite as much as we are. We are rising gradually towards the Pass. Below us the road ribbons away through miles of bog to Slieve League. There is a delightful warmth and quietness in the air. The smoke of the cabin chimneys, as far as one can see, rises up in straight grey lines, "pillaring the skies of God." The whole landscape is suffused with colour—browns and ambers and blues—melting into infinity.

A ROANY BUSH "Do you see that bush over there?" said an old man to me one day on the road near Leckconnell—a poor village half-way between Ardara and Gull Island. "It's what they call a roany bush. Well, it's green now, but in a month's time it'll be as red as a fox's diddy, and you wouldn't know it for berries growing all over it."

AUGUST EVENING AUGUST evening, moonrise. A drift of ponies on the road. I heard the neighing of them half an hour ago as I came down the glen, and now I can see them, a red, ragged cavalcade, and a cloud of dust about their heels. There are some fourteen ponies in the drift, and three young fellows with long whips are driving them. They give me the time of day as I pass. One of them turns back and shouts after me: "Would you happen to have a match on you, gaffer?" He is a stout-built lad, with a red face, and a mat of black hair falling over his eyes. I feel in my pocket for a box, and give him share of what I have.

He thanks me, and I pass on. The air is damp and fragrant, and wisps of fog lie along the ditches and in the hollow places under the hills. The newly-risen moon touches them with wonder and colour.

NEAR INVER A YELLOW day in harvest. A young girl with a piece of drawn-thread work in her lap, sunning herself in the under wisp of her father's thatch. I come on her suddenly round a bend in the road. She is taken by surprise (almost as completely as I am) . . . draws her legs in, settles her clothing, half smiles, then hangs her head, blushing with all the *pudor* of abashed femininity. I pass on.

ALL SUBTLE, SECRET THINGS ALL subtle, secret things—the smell of bees, twilight on water, a woman's presence, the humming of a lime-tree in full leaf, a bracken stalk cut through to show the "eagle" in it—all speak to me as to an intimate. I know and feel them all.

A MADMAN I PASSED an old fellow to-day between Ardara and Narin, doubled up in the ditch with his chin on his knees, and staring at me out of two red eyes that burned in his head like candles.

"Who's that old fellow?" I asked of a stonebreaker, a perch further down the road.

"Oh, never heed him," says he—"he's mad. This is the sixth. There's a full moon the-night, and he ever goes off at the full o' the moon. Was he coughing at you? God, you'd think he was giving his last 'keeks,' to hear him sometimes!"

LAGUNA UNDER Crockuna; a thousand feet up. Interminable red bog. A cluster of hovels on the tableland; one set this way, another that, huddling together for company sake, it seems, in this abomination of desolation. A drift of young children play about on a green cleared space between the holdings. (In Donegal one sees young children everywhere.) They run off like wild-cats at our approach, screaming loudly and chattering in Irish as they run. A rick of turf, thatched with winter-stales; a goat tethered; a flock of geese; tufts of dyed wool—red and green and indigo—spread on stones to dry; the clack of a loom from the house nearest us; a dog working sheep beyond.

NEAR LETTERKENNY A sheepdog with a flock of geese (a most unusual charge, I'm sure) halted by a bridge on their way to market. The owner squats smoking under the parapet—a darkavis'd man, with the slouch hat, slow eye, and wide, mobile mouth of Donegal. I greet him, and pass on.

SHAN MAC ANANTY UP Glengesh. The hills of the Pass close in darkly on either side of me. The brown road rises between them in devious loops and twists to the sky beyond. There is the smell of bog-myrtle and ling in the air, and the sound of running water. The silence is awful. I am going along quiet and easy-like, with hardly a thought in my head, when near a sodded shelter, almost hidden



A CLACHAN OF HOUSES.

from view in a cluster of fuchsia bushes, I come on a little lad of about three years of age. He can't be older, I fancy, he is so small. He runs out in front of me, scared somewhat at my approach, as quaint a figure as ever I looked at. I shout at him and he stops, pulling the hat which he wears—and it is big enough to be his father's—over his face, and laughing shyly at me out of one corner of it. His hands are wet, I notice, a blaered colour, and sticking with grass—as if he had been “feeling” for minnows in the stream which runs alongside the road. He has a pair of homespun jumpers on, very thick, and dyed a crude indigo colour, a shirt and vest, and his legs are bare and wet up to the knees. I ask him in English “where he comes from,” “who is his father,” “who is his mother,” “where he lives?” He doesn't answer, only pulls the hat deeper over his head, and laughs into it. I put the question to him then in Irish. . . . The words were hardly out of my mouth when he gave a leap in the air. I felt as if something had struck me in the face—something soft and smothering, like a bag of feathers—and I was momentarily blinded. When I looked again who should I see but Shan Mac Ananty, my *leaprachán* friend from Scrabo in Down, running out in front of me, in a whirl of dust, it seemed—a white, blinding cloud—giving buck-jumps in the air, and dancing and capering about in the most outlandish fashion possible.

“So it's you, Shan?” I said, when I had recovered my breath. I wasn't a bit afraid, only winded.

“Ay,” says he. “I didn’t know you at first. The English is strange to me.” Then with a quaint grimace : “What are *you* doing up here ? ”

“And what are you doing up here yourself, Shan ? ” says I. “I thought Scrabo was your playground.”

“You’re right, son,” says he. “The old fort *is* my playground, but the smoke—the smoke from the mill chimneys—chases me away at times, and I come up here for an airing. And, anyway, you mustn’t forget that I’m king of the fairies of Leath-Chuinn,” says he.

“And so you are,” says I. “I clean forgot that. And do you be in Donegal often ? ” I asked.

“Once in a spell,” says he. “I travel the townlands in turn from Uisneach to Malin,” says he, “and it takes me a year and a day to do the round. I saw you at Scrabo in June last,” says he, “but you didn’t see me.”

“When was that, Shan ? ” says I, thinking.

“On the night of the twenty-third,” says he. “There wasn’t a fire lighting as far as I could see ; and I could see from Divis to the Horns of Boirche, and from that over to Vannin.”

A shadow darkened his queer little face. “Ah,” says he, “they’re changed times. I was an old man when Setanta got his hero-name,* and look at me now,” says he, “clean past my time. No one knows me, barring yourself there. No one can talk to me ; and at Scrabo

* Cuchulain, the Hound of Ulster, a contemporary of Conchubhair MacNeassa, who was—so tradition has it—born on the same night as Christ.



A GAP BETWEEN THE HILLS.

it's worse than here. They're all planters there," says he, "all strange, dour folk, long in the jaw and seldom-spoken, and with no heart in the old customs. Never a John's-Fire lighted, never a dance danced, never a blessing said, never a"

He stopped, and I turned to answer but Shan was gone! Nothing in sight for miles—nothing living—only a magpie walking the road, and a *toit* of blue smoke from a cabin away down in the glen.

A POOR CABIN A POOR cabin, built of loose whin rubble; no mortar or limewash; thatch brown and rotting. Dung oozing out of door in pig-crew to north, and lying in wet heaps about causey stones. A brier, heavy with June roses, growing over south gable-end; rare pink bloom, filling the air with fragrance.

THE FLAX- OUTSIDE nearly every house in Donegal—
STONE at least in the north-western parts of it—is the *Cloch Lin*, or "Flax-Stone." This is a huge wheel of granite, half a ton or more in weight, revolving on the end of a wooden shaft which itself turns horizontally on an iron spike secured firmly in the ground. The purpose it serves is to "break" the flax after it has been retted and dried. On the long arm of the shaft tackling is fixed for the horse supplying the motive power—much in the same way as it is in a pug-mill or puddling machine used in the old days by brick-makers. The flax is strewn in swaths under the wheel, which passes over

it repeatedly, disintegrating the fibre. The scutch-mill, of course, is a more expeditious way of doing the work, but Donegal folk are conservative and stick to the old method—which must be as old, indeed, as the culture of flax itself is in the country.

AFTER SUNSET I WAS coming through Ardara wood the other evening just after sunset. There was a delightful smell of wet larch and bracken in the air. The road was dark—indeed, no more than a shadow in the darkness; but a streak of silver light glimmered through from the west side over the mountains and lay on the edge of the wood, and thousands of stars trembled in the branches, touching them with strangeness and beauty. As I approached the village I met an old woman—I knew she was old by her voice—who said to me: “Isn’t it a fine evening, that?” “It is,” said I. “And look,” said she, “at all the stars hung up in the trees!” Farther on I came on a number of women and girls, all laughing and talking through other in the half-darkness. I was out of the wood now and almost into the village, and there was light enough to see that they were carrying water—some with one pail, others with two—from the spring well I passed on my way up. This, I believe, is a custom in Ardara.* The grown girls of the village go out every evening after dark-fall, if the weather happens to be good. They meet at the well, spend half an hour or so chatting and

* In fact, a “go of water” is a byword there—“Many a girl met her man in a go of water!”

talking together, and then saunter home again in groups through the darkness, carrying their pails, just as I saw them on this particular evening. When I got to the village the windows were nearly all lit up. The white and white-grey houses looked strange and unearthly in the darkness. The doors were open, and one could see a dark figure here and there out taking the air. Over the roofs the stars shone and the constellations swung in their courses—the Dog's Tail, the Dragon, the Plough, the Rule, and the Tailor's Three Leaps; and although there was no moon one could see the smoke from the chimneys wavering up into the sky in thin green lines. The fragrance of peat hung heavily on the senses. There wasn't a sound—only a confused murmur of voices, like the wind among aspen-trees, and the faint singing of a fiddle from a house away at the far end of the street. Even the dogs were quiet. I passed through the Diamond, down the long main street next the shore, and like Red Hanrahan of the stories, into "that Celtic twilight, in which heaven and earth so mingle that each seems to have taken upon itself some shadow of the other's beauty."

THE DARKNESS
AND THE TIDE

"WHAT time o' day is it?" My interrogator was an old man I met the other evening in a looney running down from the back of Lochros to the sands of Lochros Beag Bay, near where the old fish-pass used to be. I looked at my watch, and told him it was five-and-twenty past seven. "Oh," said he, "is it so much as that? The darkness and the tide 'il soon be coming in, then."

ERRIGAL THE hill of Errigal climbs like a wave to the sky. A pennon of white cloud tosses on its carn. Its sides are dark. They slope precipitously. They are streaked and mottled here and there with patches of loose stone, bleached to a soft violet colour with rain. Not a leaf of grass, not a frond of fern roots on these patches. They are altogether bare. Loch Nacung, a cold spread of water, gleams at the bottom, white as a shield and green at the margin with sedge. Dunlewy chapel, with its round tower—a black silhouette in the 'tween-light—and the walls of the Poisoned Glen beyond.

THE SORE FOOT "It's a provident thing," a tramp said to me the other day, "to lay something by for the sore foot."

ASHERANCALLY A ROAR, as of breaking seas. We are approaching the open Atlantic, but though its salt is bitter on our lips, our view is obscured by sand-dunes. Then, as we round a bend in the road, the Fall of Asherancally breaks suddenly on us, tumbling through a gut in the mountainside—almost on to the road it seems. We stand under it. We watch the brown bulk of water dropping from the gut-head and dancing in foam on the rocks a hundred feet below. The roar is deafening. One might shout at the top of one's voice, and yet not be heard. The air is iridescent with spindrift, which shines in the sun and sprays coolingly on our cheeks. We lean on the bridge parapet, watching and listening.



Japan, MacGillivray, 1907.

LOCH NACUNG—MOONRISE.

ORANGE I CAME across an old man to-day out in
 GALLASES Lochros—a shock-headed old fellow in
 shirt and trousers, carrying water from a
 spring well near the Cross, and a troop of dogs snapping
 at his heels. “You don’t seem to be popular with the
 dogs?” says I, laughing. “Oh, let them snap,” says he.
 “It’s not me they’re snapping at, but my orange gallases!”

THE HUMAN THE human voice—what a wonder
 VOICE and mystery it is! “All power,” said
 Whitman, “is folded in a great
 vocalism.” I spoke to a man to-day on the roadside,
 near Maghery. He was a poor, raggedy fellow, with a
 gaunt, unshaven chin and wild eyes, and a couple of
 barefooted children played about the mud at his feet.
 He answered me in a voice that *thrilled* me—deep, chest-
 full, resonant; a voice, that had he been an educated
 man, might have won fame for him, as a politician,
 say, or a preacher, or an actor. And voices like his are
 by no means uncommon along the western seaboard
 of Ireland. Men address you on the road in that frank,
 human, comrade-like way of Irishmen, out of deep lungs
 and ringing larynxes that bring one back to the time
 when men were giants, and physique was the rule rather
 than the exception. In such voices one can imagine the
 Fenians to have talked one with the other, Fionn calling
 to Sgeolan, and Oisín chanting the divine fragments of
 song he dreamed in the intervals of war and vengery.
 Will Ireland ever recapture the heroic qualities—build

personality, voice, gesture—or, as Whitman puts it: “Litheness, majestic faces, clear eyes”—that were hers down to a comparatively late period, and in places have not quite died out even yet? I believe she will.

LOCH ALUINN A grey loch, lashed into foam by wind from nor' westward, lapping unquietly among reeds that fringe its margin. Boulders everywhere—erratics from the Ice Age—bleached white with rain. Crotal growing in their interstices, wild-mint, purple orchises and the kingly osmunda fern. A strip of tilled land beyond—green corn, for the most part, and potatoes. Slieve a-Tooeey in the distance, a blue shadowy bulk, crossed and recrossed by mist-wreaths chasing one another over it in rapid succession. A rainbow framing all.

THE OPEN ROAD THE open road, the sky over it, and the hills beyond. The hills beyond, those blue, ultimate hills; the clouds that look like hills; the mystery plucked out of them, and lo, the sea, stretching away into the vast—white-crested, grey, inscrutable—with a mirage dancing on its furthest verge!

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