Mackenzie Robert Shelton

Bits of Blarney

Robert Mackenzie

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Mackenzie R.

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Содержание

R. Shelton Mackenzie
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TO J. S. REDFIELD, ESQ

My Dear Sir: – The deified heroes of the Norse mythology are believed to spend their afternoons in drinking something stronger than lemonade out of their enemies' skulls, and some ill-natured persons, seizing on the idea, have declared that publishers use the skulls of their authors as drinking-cups, in the same manner. For my own part, I discredit the assertion – as far as my relations with yourself enable me to judge; I suspect that the time has gone by when Napoleon's health was drank as "a friend of literature," because he had shot a bookseller; and I give you unlimited permission to use my skull, in the Norse fashion, provided that you wait until "in death I shall calm recline," when I shall have no further occasion for it. In such case, the least you can do will be to drink my memory, "in solemn silence" – the beverage being whiskey-punch, as a delicate compliment to my country.

Seriously speaking (or writing), however, I take leave to dedicate this volume to you, with the solemn assurance that my doing so must not be taken as – a Bit of Blarney.

The book is Irish – to all intents and purposes, and is put forth with the least possible pretence. It contains Legends – familiar to me in my youth; Stories, which, more or less, are literally "founded upon facts;" recollections of Eccentric Characters, whose peculiarities it would have been difficult to exaggerate; – and Sketches of the two great Irish leaders of the last and present century, Grattan, who won National Independence for Ireland, and O'Connell, who obtained Emancipation for the great majority of his countrymen. The Sketch of the great Agitator has extended almost to a biography – but I knew the man well, and write of him on that knowledge. In *this* volume he is certainly entitled to a niche, having been the greatest professor of "Blarney" these later days have seen or heard.

Yours faithfully,

R. Shelton Mackenzie

New York, *August 20, 1855*.

LEGENDS

BITS OF BLARNEY

How many have heard of "Blarney," and how few know how and why this appropriate term has originated! How could they, indeed, unless they had made a pilgrimage to the Castle, as I did, in order to manœuvre Tim Cronin into a narration of its legends? – They may go to Blarney, whenever they please, but the *genius loci* has vanished. Tim Cronin has been gathered to his fathers. By no lingering or vulgar disease did he perish; he died – of a sudden.

Scarcely any part of Ireland has attained more celebrity than the far-famed village of Blarney, in the county, and near the city of Cork. At Blarney may be seen the mysterious talisman, which has the extraordinary power of conferring remarkable gifts of persuasion on the lips which, with due reverence and proper faith in its virtues, invoke the hidden genii of The Stone, to yield them its inspiration. The ceremony is brief: – only a kiss on the flinty rock, and the kisser is instantly endowed with the happy faculty of flattering the fair sex *ad libitum*, without their once suspecting that it can be flattery. On the masculine gender it is not less effective. Altogether, it enables the kisser, like History,

"To lie like truth, and still most truly lie."

Immortal poesie has already celebrated the locality of Blarney. The far-famed *chanson*, written by Richard Alfred Milliken,[1] and called "The Groves of Blarney," has been heard or read by every one: – in these later days the polyglot edition, by him who has assumed the name of Father Prout, is well known to the public. There is an interpolated verse, which may be adopted (as it sometimes is) into the original *chanson*, on account of the earnestness with which it declares that

"The stone this is, whoever kisses,
He never misses to grow eloquent:
'Tis he may clamber to a lady's chamber,
Or become a member of Parliament."

Blarney Castle is surrounded by the Groves mentioned in the song. It stands four miles to the northwest of "the beautiful city called Cork," and, of course, in the fox-hunting district of Muskerry. All that can now be seen are the remains of an antique castellated pile, to the east of which was rather incongruously attached, a century ago, a large mansion of modern architecture.

The Castle stands on the north side of a precipitous ridge of limestone rock, rising from a deep valley, and its base is washed by a small and beautifully clear river called the Aw-martin. A large, square, and massive tower – a sort of Keep, – is all that remains of the original fortress. The top of this building is surrounded with a parapet, breast-high, and on the very summit is the famous Stone which is said to possess the power, already mentioned, of conferring on every gentleman who *kisses* it the peculiar property of telling any thing, in the way of praise (commonly called flattery), with unblushing cheek and "forehead unabashed." As the fair sex have to receive, rather than bestow compliments, the oscular homage to the Stone conveys no power to *them*. From the virtues which it communicates to the masculine pilgrims, we have the well-known term *blarney* and *blarney-stone*.

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[1] In Lockhart's Life of Scott, this renowned Song is attributed to "the poetical Dean of Cork" (Dr. Burrowes, who wrote "The Night before Larry was stretched"), but really was written by Milliken, a poetical lawyer of whom Maguire says (O'Doherty Papers, vol. ii., p. 181) that not even Christopher North himself —

The real Stone is in such a dangerous position, from its elevation, that it is rarely kissed, except by very adventurous pilgrims of the Tom Sheridan class, who will *do* the thing, and not be content with saying they have done it! The stone which officiates as its deputy, is one which was loosened by a shot from the cannon of Oliver Cromwell's troops, who were encamped on the hill behind the Castle. This stone is secured in its place by iron stanchions, and it is this that the visitors kiss, as aforesaid, and by mistake. The Song, it may be remembered, speaks of the Cromwellian bombardment of the Castle:

"'Tis Lady Jeffreys that owns this station,
Like Alexander, or like Helen, fair.
There's no commander throughout the nation
In emulation can with her compare:
Such walls surround her, that no nine-pounder
Could ever plunder her place of strength,
Till Oliver Cromwell he did her pummel,
And made a breach in her battlement."

Between Blarney Castle and the hill whereon Cromwell's troops *bivouacked*, is a sweet vale called the Rock Close. This is a charming spot, whereon (or legends lie) the little elves of fairy-land once loved to assemble in midnight revelry. At one end of this vale is a lake of unfathomable depth, and Superstition delights to relate stories of its wonders.

When Sir Walter Scott was in Ireland, he visited Blarney, accompanied by Anne Scott, Miss Edgeworth, and Mr. Lockhart. A few days after he was there, it was my fortune to tread in his steps to the same classic shrine.

The barefooted and talkative guide who *would* accompany me over the Castle, thus described "the Ariosto of the North," and his companions: – "A tall, bulky man, who halted a great deal, came here, with his daughter and a very small lady, and a dash of a gentleman, with a bright keen eye that looked here, and there, and everywhere in a minute. They thrust themselves, ransacking, into every nook and cranny that a rat would not go through, scarcely. When the lame gentleman came to the top of the Castle, wasn't he delighted, and didn't he take all the country down upon paper with a pencil, while one of us sang 'The Groves of Blarney.' He made us sing it again, and gave me a crown-piece, and said that he'd converse a poem on the Castle, himself, may-be!"

While I am thus gossiping, I am neglecting Tim Cronin, "the best story-teller" (to use his own words) "within the whole length, and breadth, and cubic mensuration of the Island."

After my visit to Blarney Castle, I met this worthy. I had struck from the common path into that which led through the Rock Close. This valley is divided into several fields, all of which are extremely fertile, except that immediately washed by the waters of the lake. It was now far in the summer; and, although the mowers had to cut down the rich grass of the other fields, there was scarcely a blade upon this. It was as smooth, green, and close-shaven as the trim turf before a cottage *ornée*. While I was remarking this, I was startled by a sudden touch upon the shoulder, and, turning round, I found myself *vis-à-vis* with a Herculean-built fellow, who doffed his hat, with a sort of rude courtesy, made an attempt at a bow, and, before I could say a word, struck into conversation.

"Wondering at this meadow being so bare, I warrant you, sir?"

I confessed that it had surprised me.

"Didn't know the why nor the wherefore of it, may-be? It's Tim Cronin – and that's myself – that can tell you all about it, before you have time to get fat."

I ventured to exhibit my ignorance, by asking who Tim Cronin might be?

"Faith, sir, you may know a great deal of Latin and Greek – and 'tis easy to see that the College mark is upon you – but you know little of *real* literature in old Ireland, if you don't know *me*. Not know Cronin, the renowned Philomath, that bothered the Provost of old Trinity in Algebra – from

the Saxon *al*, noble, and the Arabic *Geber*, the philosopher? Never once heard, perhaps, of the great Cronin that does all the problems and answers, for the Lady's Diary, in mathematics – from the Greek *mathema*, instruction? Nothing like getting at the roots of words – the *unde derivatur?*"

Even at the hazard of appearing as an ignoramus in the eyes of Mr. Cronin, I was fain to admit that I had not previously heard of his name and erudition. I ventured to intimate, as a sort of half-apology, that I was a stranger in that part of the country.

"Strange enough, I'll be bound," said he, with a shrug of the shoulders. "Know, then, that I am that same Tim Cronin, – 'our ingenious correspondent,' as the Mathematical Journal calls me, when it refuses one of my articles, 'from want of space,' – bad luck to 'em, as if they could not push out something else to make room for me. Curious, sir, not to have heard of me, that keeps one of the finest academies, under a hedge, in the Province of Munster! Just sit down on the bank here, and I'll soon enlighten you so, about that good-looking lake before your two eyes, that I'll be bound you won't forget me in a hurry."

Complying with the request of this august personage, I had the satisfaction of listening to his legend, thus:

LEGEND OF THE LAKE

Once upon a time, and there was no lake here, at all at all. In the middle of the place where that lake is, there stood a large castle, and in it dwelt an unbaptized giant – it was before blessed Saint Patrick came into the country, Heaven rest his soul – and this giant had martial rule over all the country, far and near.

In his time, the Aw-martin, nor any other river, did not flow near us. Indeed, though there was plenty of wine in the Castle, there was a great want of water. This was very inconvenient for the ladies – the fellow had as many wives as a Turk – because they were always wanting to wash their clothes, and their pretty faces, and their white hands, and their well-shaped bodies; and, more than that, they could not make themselves a raking cup of tea, by any means, for the want of good soft water. So, one and all, they sent a petition to the giant, praying that he would have the kindness to procure them a well of water. When he read it, he made no more ado but whipped off through the air – just like a bird of Paradise – to his old aunt, who was a fairy, and had foretold that, some day or other, water would be the death of him. Perhaps that was the reason that he always took his liquor neat.

Well, he told her what he had come about, and after a world of entreaty – for she had a foreboding that something unfortunate would come of it – the old fairy put a little bottle into his hands. "Take this," said she, "and drill a hole in the rock at the foot of the Castle barbican, where the sun throws his latest ray before he sinks into the west. Make a stone-cover for the top of it – one that will fit it exactly. Then pour the water from this bottle into that hole in the rock, and there will be a well of pure water, for the use of yourself and your family. But, when no one is actually taking water out of this well, be sure that the close-fitting stone-cover is always left upon it, for it is the nature of the liquid to overflow, unless it be kept confined."

He gave her a thousand thanks, and home he went. The first thing he did was to drill a hole in the rock (and he did not find *that* a very easy job), then to fit it with an air-tight stone-cover, and, lastly, to pour in the water out of the little bottle.

Sure enough, there immediately bubbled up an abundance of bright, clear, and sparkling water. The giant then assembled all his family, and told them how the stone-cover must always be kept over the well when they were not using it. And then his wives agreed that, as they had been so anxious to get this water, one of them, turn about, should sit by the well, day and night, and see that no one left it uncovered. They were content to submit to this trouble, rather than run the risk of losing the water.

Things went on very well for some time. At last, as *must* be the case when a woman is to the fore, there came a tremendous blow-up. One of the giant's ladies was a foreigner, and had been married,

in her own country, before she fell into his hands. Mild and pale she always was, pretty creature! lamenting the land she had left and the lover she had lost. It happened, one day as she sat by the well, that an old pilgrim came to the gate, asked for a draught of water, in God's name, and held out his pitcher for it. Her thoughts were far away, never fear, but she had a tender heart, and she raised the cover from the well to fill his vessel. While she was doing this, the pilgrim pulled off his gown and his false beard, and who should he be but her own husband! She sprang off her seat towards him, and then, faint with joy and pale as death, she sank back into the oaken chair on which she had been sitting, as the guardian of the well. A bird never flew through the air faster than *he* flew towards *her*. He seated himself beside her in the chair, held her lovingly in his arms, kissed her cheeks and lips twenty times over, called her all manner of fond names, and sprinkled her with water until the fresh color came again into her face, and the warm life into her heart.

All this time the well was left uncovered, and the waters rose – rose – rose, until they surrounded the Castle. Higher and higher did they rise, until, at last, down fell the gates, and then the stream rushed in, drowning every living soul within the place, and settling down into the very lake that we sit by now.

The moral of the story is, that the lady and the pilgrim escaped – for the oaken chair supported them and floated them until they safely put their feet on dry land. All the rest perished, because they had willingly consented to live in sin with the giant; but this one lady had been kept there entirely against her will. The two thanked God for their escape, and returned to their own country, where they lived long and happily. It had been the giant's pride to put all his best jewels on whoever kept watch over the well, in order that all who passed might notice them and pay respect to his wealth. As this lady had them all upon her when the Castle was swallowed up, she and her husband had money enough, out of the sale of them, to keep them in a very genteel way of life at home. Some people say that, at times, the walls of the drowned Castle can be seen through the waters of the lake, – but I won't swear to the fact, as I never noticed it myself.

Such was Tim Cronin's account of the formation of the lake – a version more pleasant than probable. I ventured to inquire how the meadow next the waters came to be so bare, while all the others bore such luxuriant grass and grain? Mr. Cronin asked me, whether I saw a gray rock on the left, with three pines on its summit. I noticed them, as required. "Then," said he, "look well at the place all around, and I shall tell you another story or two about Blarney."

Thus admonished, I took a closer survey of the place. The rock rose with a gentle swell in the distance, but its front was so precipitous as to be nearly perpendicular; and it was thickly covered with ivy, tangled like network, with which were mingled wild honeysuckle, dog-rose, and other parasites. There was a sort of rugged entrance at its base, over which the wild-brier and honeysuckle had formed a natural arch. Except this, the rock had a commonplace aspect.

THE LEGEND OF CORRIG-NA-CAT

We call that rock by a strange name – from a strange circumstance, said Cronin. Upon the top, some hundreds of years ago, there stood a castle, belonging to the old Kings of Muskerry. Some cousin of theirs lived in it with his family, and was as happy as the day is long. How it happened, never could be ascertained; but happen it certainly did, that, one night, castle and people and all suddenly disappeared. I misdoubt that there were bad spirits at work. However, the general belief is, that the rock opened and swallowed all up, and that the lord and lady are kept there, spell-bound, as it were, in the shape of cats. From this, the rock is called Corrig-na-cat, or the Cat Rock. 'Tis a mighty pretty derivation.

Whether the castle were swallowed up in that manner, or not, strange sights have been seen, by the light of the full moon, about that place. There is a little green spot on the brow of the hill, where there is a fairy-circle; on that spot sweet music has been heard by night, and the good people (as well

as the fairies) have been seen dancing on the green turf, dressed in green and gold, with beautiful crowns upon their heads, and white wands in their little hands. Ah, sir, you may smile, but that's the belief in this part of the country, and he'd be looked upon as no better than a heathen who'd venture to say a word against it.

My grandfather, although a trifle given to drink, was as honest a man as ever broke bread. One summer night, while he lay in bed, between asleep and awake, he heard a strange deep voice speak to him. It said, " The words of fate! heed them. Go, at midnight, to Corrig-na-cat; take with you a box of candles and a hundred fathoms of line; fasten one end of the line to the tree that grows just outside the mouth of the cave, and, tying the other end round your waist, boldly advance with a pair of lighted candles in your hands: the use of the line is, that you may roll it up as you come back, and not lose your way. Keep to the right-hand side, and go on until you come to a large room with two cats in it. In the room beyond that, there is as much gold as would buy a kingdom. You may take with you a bag to carry away as much of it as you please; but, on your peril, do not touch anything else; your life will not be worth a brass sixpence, if you do."

You may be sure, sir, that this piece of information astonished my grandfather. But he was a sensible man, and, doubting whether two heads would be better than one in such a serious matter, nudged my grandmother with his elbow, to know if she was awake. She slept – sound as a top; so he let her sleep on. He was rather too knowing to let *her* into the secret. He thought over all that he had ever heard of Corrig-na-cat; he called to mind how his mother had always said that our family were the real descendants of the lord and lady of the castle. He began to fancy that this was some great oracle that had come to visit him, in order that *he* might break the spell that kept the castle and its inhabitants closed up in the rock. Indeed, he was very much perplexed, but determined to wait a bit, and carefully keep his own counsel.

A warning from the world of spirits is worth nothing, if it is not repeated. The next night, my grandfather again was cautioned to listen to the words of fate. The third night the visitation was repeated. He knew, then, that the thing was no feint; and on the fourth night, he stole out of the house to go on the adventure.

It was as pitch dark as if light had never been invented. He took the hundred fathoms of line, the box of candles, a sack to bring home a supply of gold, and a good-sized flask of strong whiskey. When he reached the rock, his heart began to fail him. The night was so still that he could hear the beating of his heart – thump, thump, thump, against his breast. He could hear the bats flying about, and he could see the owls looking on him with their great, round, brown eyes. Swallowing most of the contents of the flask at one pull, he found his spirits wonderfully restored, and he pushed forward to the mouth of the cave. He fastened one end of the line to the tree; he said an *Ave* or two – for we are all of us a pious family – he drained the flask, and then he dashed forward.

The way was as straight as an arrow for about thirty yards, but, after that, it took as many turnings and twistings as a problem of Euclid in the sixth book, and branched out into many directions. My grandfather followed on the right-hand side, as he had been told, and soon found himself at the gateway of an old hall. He pushed open the door, and saw that there were doors upon doors, leading off to many a place. He still kept to the right, and in a few minutes found himself in a state-chamber. Pillars of white marble supported the roof, and, at the farthest end, the hall opened into an apartment, through which there beamed a soft and beautiful light, as if it came from a thousand shaded lamps.

Here was the end of his journey. A carved mantel-piece of white marble was over the fireplace, and there lay two beautiful white cats, on crimson-velvet cushions, before the fire. Diamonds and rubies, emeralds and amethysts, pearls and topazes, were piled on the ground in heaps, and ceiling and walls were covered all over with them, so that rays of light gleamed down upon him, wherever he looked.

There was no living thing in the room with my grandfather but the cats. The creatures had golden collars, embossed with diamonds, round their necks; and to these were fastened long gold

chains, which just gave them liberty to move round the room, being fastened to the walls, one at each side, by golden staples. He noticed that the animals steadily kept their eyes upon him, and appeared to watch every motion of his.

My grandfather passed on into the inner room. The gold lay on the floor like wheat in a miller's store. He filled his sack with the coin to the brim, until, though he was said to be the strongest man in the whole barony, he had some difficulty in lifting it. As he passed through the room in which the cats were, he paused for a moment, to have a parting glance at all the treasures he was leaving. There was one golden star, studded with diamonds as big as walnuts, and blazing like a lamp, hanging down before him from the ceiling. It was too tempting. He forgot the advice not to touch anything but the gold in the inner room, and reached out his hand to seize the sparkling prize. One of the cats, who had eagerly watched his motions, sprang forward as he touched the jewel, and quick as a lightning-stroke, hit out his right eye with a sharp dash of his paw. At the same moment, an invisible hand whipped off the sack of gold from his shoulders, as if it were only a bag of feathers. Out went all the lights. My grandfather groped his way out as well as he could, by the help of the guiding-line fastened to his wrist, and cursed his greediness, that would not be content with enough. He got home by daybreak, with only one eye in his head, and that, without meaning to joke on his misfortune, was the *left* one.

Next day he sent for the priest, and told him what had happened. My grandmother said that all the misfortune was owing to *her* not being in the secret. The priest said nothing. Before long, all the country heard of the story, and half the country believed it. To be sure, as my grandfather was rather addicted to liquor (and there was a private still, in those days, in almost every corner), it was a chance that he might have dreamt all this: – but then, there was his right eye absent. There were some malicious people, indeed, who hinted that he fell over the cliff, in a drunken fit, and that his eye was scratched out in that manner. But it would ill beseem me to make a story-teller of my dead-and-gone grandfather, and so I maintain the truth of his own statement. If it is not true, it deserves to be.

In this conclusion I fully agreed, and the Philomath, proud of the display of his legendary lore, and happy on having fallen in with a patient and willing auditor, next proceeded to acquaint me with the accredited legend of the meadow next the lake. As before, I shall endeavor, in repeating it, to adhere to the very words of my informant.

LEGEND OF THE ROCK CLOSE

About a thousand years ago, or so – but, of course, *after* this lake was formed, to fulfil the old fairy's prophecy, that the giant would come to his death by water – there was a man who owned all the fields in the Rock Close. He was a farmer – a plain, honest man. Not long after he had purchased the place, he noticed that, though this very field we are now sitting in had the same cultivation as the others, it never gave him any return. He had no idea of having a meadow look like a lawn in front of a gentleman's country-house, and lost no time in speaking about it to his herdsman, a knowledgeable man, who said it might be worth while to watch the place, for, although he often saw the blades of grass a foot high at night, all was as closely shaved as a bowling-green in the morning. His master, who was one of the old stock of the Mac Carthies, thought there was reason in what he said, and desired him to be on the watch, and try to find out the real facts of the matter.

The herdsman did his bidding. The next morning he told Mac Carthy that he had hid himself behind an old gateway (you may see the ruins of it there to the left), – that, about midnight, he had seen the waters of the lake very much disturbed, – that six cows came up out of the lake, and set to, eating all the grass off the field, until, by daybreak, they had made it as smooth as the palm of my hand, – and that, when the day dawned, the cows walked back into the lake, and went down to the bottom, as much at their ease as if they were on dry land.

This was strange news for Mac Carthy, and set him quite at his wits' ends. The herdsman was a little man, with the heart of a lion, and he offered to watch again on that evening, to seize one of the

cows, and either put it into the pound, or go down into the lake with it, and make a regular complaint of the trespass. Aye, and he did it, too. At dusk he went again, hid himself, as before, and waited to see what would happen.

The six cows came up out of the lake, as before, and nibbled off the grass, until the field was quite smooth. They could not get into any other field, because they were surrounded by high, quickset hedges, and I have noticed that cows are not very fond of taking flying-leaps.

Just at dawn, as the last cow was passing by him, on her return to the lake, the herdsman made a dart at her tail, and took a fast hold of it. The cow walked on, as if nothing had happened, turned her head, winked one of her large eyes at him in a knowing manner, and the herdsman followed, still holding the tail.

Down dashed the beast into the waters – but the herdsman still kept his grasp. Down they went – deep, deep, to the very bottom of the lake. Sure enough, there was the giant's castle, that had been drowned centuries before. A little boy was in the court-yard, playing with a golden ball. All round the yard were piles of armor – spears and helmets, swords and shields, – all ornamented with gold. Into the court-yard dashed the cows, and with them went the bold herdsman.

Out came a lady, richly dressed up in velvets and jewels, and her eyes as bright as the sunbeams that dance on the wall on the morning of Easter Sunday.[2] She carried a golden milk-pail in her hand. Loud and shrill was her cry when she saw the herdsman.

I should have told you that, as they were going down, the cow whispered to him, "I want to speak a word with you, in confidence." – "Honor bright," said the herdsman. – "I think," said the cow, "that I'd like to graze on that meadow of your master's, by day as well as by night, for the grass is mighty sweet, and I don't think it agrees with my digestion to be driven up and down the lake as I am. If I will you go bail that the master will never put me into any other field but that?" – The herdsman answered, "I'll promise you, by the holy poker, and that is as good as if I was to swear by the blessed mud." – "Then my mind is at ease," says the cow. "For the life of you, don't let go my tail, whatever you may hear and see."

When the young lady shrieked with surprise at seeing a herdsman in that place, out rushed a whole regiment of soldiers, with their cheeks as red as the kitchen-fire five minutes before the dinner is done, and the looks of them as fierce as if they were in the heat of battle – a little fiercer, may-be. – "Oh, that villain!" says the lady, pointing to the herdsman. – "Come here, and be killed," shouted the dragoons. But the herdsman knew better. "Send your master to me," says he, as bold as brass. "I always like to do business with principals."

They wondered, as well they might, at the fellow's impudence, but they thought it best to call out their master. He came, with a golden crown upon his head, and a purple velvet cloak on his shoulders, and a beautiful pair of Hessian boots on his feet. – "I demand justice," said the herdsman, "for the trespass that your cows have been committing on Mac Carthy's field; and I seize this cow until the damage be ascertained and made good."

He was firm as a rock, and neither coaxing nor threatening could make him yield as much as a pin's point. He stood upon his right, and they could not get him off it. The cow had been seized in the very act of trespass, and all they dared do was to tempt the herdsman to surrender her. He knew better. At last the master of them said, "We must compromise this little matter. Leave the cow here, make out your bill for damage, and if I don't pay it to you either in sterling money, or notes of Delacour's bank at Mallow, or Joe Pike's in Cork, you can have your remedy at law, and summon me, on a process, before the Assistant Barrister and the bench of Magistrates at the next Quarter Sessions." – But the herdsman knew better than that, and said he'd prefer leaving matters as they were. "A cow in the hand" – says he. Then the master of them said, "Take that golden ball that the

[2] There is a popular belief in Ireland that the sunbeams dance on the wall on Easter Sunday morning. In my youth I have often got up at early dawn to witness the phenomenon.

child has, and leave us the cow." – "Hand it over to me," says the herdsman. – "Come for it," said they, in the hope that he'd leave the cow. – "I've a touch of the rheumatism in my knee," says he, "and 'tis ill-convenient to move the limb." – With that, they handed him the ball, and, as soon as he saw that it really was gold, he put it into his breeches pocket, and said it was not half enough.

Then they began to whisper among themselves, and he could hear them proposing to get out a bloodhound – one of the breed that the Spaniards had to hunt down the Indians in America – and he thought it full time to make himself scarce. So, he whispered to the cow: – "My little cow," said he, "I'd like to go home." The cow took the hint, like a sensible animal as she was, and stole backward through half the lake before they missed her. "If we get safely back on dry land," says she, "neither you nor any one else must swear in my presence, for the spell is upon me, and then I shall be obliged to return to the lake."

Just then the hound was slipped, and he cut through the water like a dolphin. But the cow had the start of him, by a good bit. Just as she set her foot on land, the dog caught hold of the herdsman, and his bite tore away part of the skirt of his coat. Indeed, it was noticed for some days that the herdsman declined sitting down, just as if he had been newly made a Freemason, so I won't say that the dog did not bite more than the garment.

Mac Carthy had been cooling his heels on the bank of the lake all the while that the herdsman was away, and glad enough he was to see him come back, in company with the little cow. The herdsman told him all that happened, and handed him the golden ball, which, people say, is in the Jeffreys' family to this day. The hound runs round the lake, from midnight to sunrise, on every first of July, and is to run, on that day, until his silver shoes are worn out, – whenever that happens, Ireland is to be a great nation, but not until then.

The field was not visited any more by the cattle from the lake, for their master, below there, thought that though gratis grazing was pleasant enough, it was not quite so pleasant to have the cows impounded for trespass. From that time, never another field in all Munster gave such produce; sow it, or sow it not, there was always a barn-full of grain out of it. About half an acre of it was kept under grass, and on that the cow from the lake had constant feeding.

In due season, the cow had young ones – the same breed that we now call Kerry cows – those cattle, small in size, but good in substance, that feed upon very little, yield a great deal of milk, and always fetch the best of prices.

Mac Carthy was in a fair way of making a little fortune out of that cow of his, she gave such a power of milk, but that, one day as a nag of his was leaping over a hedge into the pasturage where the cow was, Mac Carthy burst out with a rattling oath. The moment the words left his lips, the cow cocked her ears, winked her eye knowingly at him, gave her tail a toss in the air, and made one spring down into the lake. The waters closed over her, and that was the last that mortal eye ever saw of her.

From that time forth the field was again visited by the cattle from the lake, and that's the reason why it is as smooth as you see it now. It is supposed that so it will continue until somebody has the bold heart to go down again and make another seizure for trespass.

Mr. Jeffreys, hearing a great deal of the treasures which are said to be at the bottom of the lake, laid out a power of money in trying to drain it. But it filled faster than the men could empty it. They might as well think of emptying the Atlantic with a slop-basin.

Having thanked Mr. Tim Cronin, Philomath, for his legends, I took the liberty of asking if he believed them? "Well," said he, "that same question is a poser. If I am pressed on the point, I must admit that I do not believe them *entirely*; but, when I meet curious gentlemen, I am proud to tell them these stories – particularly when they invite me to spend the afternoon with them at the little inn at the foot of the hill beyond there."

The hint was taken – as far as enabling him, as he said, to partake of his own hospitality, for my own time was limited, as I had to return to dine in Cork. Thus, I was unable to judge whether Mr. Cronin was as conversable after feeding-time as before it. He died some two years ago, I have

been told, and it will be difficult to meet with a Cicerone so well qualified to describe and illustrate Blarney Castle and its dependencies.

CON O'KEEFE AND THE GOLDEN CUP

In Ireland, as in Scotland, among the lower orders, there is a prevalent belief in the existence and supernatural powers of the gentry commonly called "fairies." Many and strange are the stories told of this mysterious and much dreaded race of beings. Loud and frequent have been the exclamations of surprise, and even of anger, at the hard incredulity which made me refuse, when I was young, to credit *all* that was narrated of the wonderful feats of Irish fairies – the most frolicksome of the entire genus. The more my disbelief was manifested, the more wonderful were the legends which were launched at me, to overthrow my unlucky and matter-of-fact obstinacy.

I have forgotten many of the traditions which were thus made familiar to me in my boyhood, but my memory retains sufficient to convince me to what improbabilities Superstition clung – and the more wonderful the story, the more implicit the belief. But in such cases the fanaticism was harmless, – it was of the head rather than of the heart – of the imagination rather than the reason. It would be fortunate if all superstitions did as little mischief as *this*.

It is deeply to be lamented that the matter-of-factedness of the Americans is not subdued or modified by any – even the slightest – belief in the old-world superstitions of which I speak. Of fairy-lore they cannot, and they do not, possess the slightest item. They read of it, as if it were legendary, but nothing more. They feel it not – they know it – they are, therefore, dreadfully actual. So much the worse for them!

Having imbibed a sovereign contempt for the wild and wonderful traditions which had been duly accredited in the neighborhood, time out of mind, I never was particularly chary in expressing such contempt at every opportunity. When the mind of a boy soars above the ignorance which besets his elders in an inferior station, who have had neither the chance nor the desire of being enlightened, he is apt to pride himself, as I did, on the "march of intellect" which has placed him superior to their vulgar credulity.

Many years have passed since I happened to be a temporary visitor beneath the hospitable roof of one of the better sort of farmers, in the county of Cork, during the Midsummer holidays. As usual, I there indulged in sarcasm against the credulity of the country. One evening, in particular, I was not a little tenacious in laughing at the very existence of "the fairy folk;" and, as sometimes happens, ridicule accomplished more than argument could have effected. My hosts could bear anything in the way of argument – at least of argument such as mine – they could even suffer their favorite legends and theories about the fairies to be abused; but to *laugh* at them – that was an act of unkindness which quite passed their comprehension, and grievously taxed their patience.

My host was quite in despair, and almost in anger at my boyish jokes upon his fairy-legends, when the village schoolmaster came in, an uninvited but most welcome guest. A chair was soon provided for him in the warmest corner – whiskey was immediately on the table, and the schoolmaster, who was a pretty constant votary to Bacchus, lost no time in making himself acquainted with its flavor.

I had often seen him before. He combined in his character a mixture of shrewdness and simplicity; was a most excellent mathematician and a good classical scholar – but of the world he knew next to nothing. From youth to age had been spent within the limits of the parish over which, cane in hand, he had presided for more than a quarter of a century, – at once a teacher and an oracle! He was deeply imbued with a belief in the superstitions of the district, but was more especially familiar with the wild legends of that rocky glen (the defile near Kilworth, commonly called Araglin, once famous for the extent of illicit distillation carried on there), in which he had passed away his life, usefully, but humbly employed.

To this eccentric character my host triumphantly appealed for proof respecting the existence and vagaries of the fairies. He wasted no time in argument, but, glancing triumphantly around, declared that he would convert me by a particularly well-attested story. Draining his tumbler, and

incontinently mixing another, Mr. Patrick McCann plunged at once into the heart of his narration, as follows:

"You know the high hill that overlooks the town of Fermoy? Handsome and thriving place as it now is, I remember the time when there were only two houses in that same town, and *one* of them was then only in course of building! Well, there lived on the other side of Corran Thierna (the mountain in question, though *Corrig* is the true name) one of the Barrys, a gentleman who was both rich and good. I wish we had more of the stamp among us now – 'tis little of the Whiteboys or Ribbonmen would trouble the country then. He had a fine fortune, kept up a fine house, and lived at a dashing rate. It does not matter, here nor there, how many servants he had; but I mention them, because one of them was a very remarkable fellow. His equal was not to be had, far or near, for love nor money.

"This servant was called Con O'Keefe. He was a crabbed little man, with a face the very color and texture of old parchment, and he had lived in the family time out of mind. He was such a small, dwarfish, deeny creature, that no one ever thought of putting him to hard work. All that they did was, now and again, from the want of a better messenger at the moment, or to humor the old man, to send him to Rathcormac post-office for letters. But he was too weak and feeble to walk so far – though it was only a matter of three or four miles; so they got him a little ass, and he rode upon it, quite as proud as a general at the head of an army of conquerors. 'Twas as good as a play to see Con mounted upon his donkey – you could scarcely make out which had the most stupid look. But neither man nor beast can help his looks.

"At that time Rathcormac, though 'tis but a village now, was a borough, and sent two members to the Irish Parliament. Was not the great Curran, the orator and patriot, member for Rathcormac, when he was a young man? Did not Colonel Tonson get made an Irish peer, out of this very borough, which his son William is, to this very day, by the title of Baron Riversdale of Rathcormac? Does not his shield bear an open hand between two castles, and is not the motto, 'Manus hæc inimica tyrannis' – which means that it was the enemy of tyrants? Did not the Ulster King of Arms make the Tonsons a grant of these arms, in the time of Cromwell? But here I have left poor little Con mounted on his donkey all this time.

"Con O'Keefe was not worth his keep, for any good he did; but, truth to say, he had the name of being hand and glove with the fairies; and, at that time, Corran Thierna swarmed with them. They changed their quarters when the regiments from Fermoy barracks took to firing against targets stuck up at the foot of the mountain. Not that a ball could ever hit a fairy (except a silver one cast by a girl in her teens, who has never wished for a lover, or a widow under forty who has not sighed for a second husband – so there's little chance that it ever will be cast), but they hate the noise of the firing and the smell of gunpowder, quite as much as the Devil hates holy water.

"'Tis reckoned lucky in these parts to have a friend of the fairies in the house with you, and that was partly the reason why Con O'Keefe was kept at Barry's-fort. Many and many a one could swear to hearing him and 'the good folk' talk together at twilight on his return from Rathcormac with the letter-bag. My own notion is, that if he *had* anything to say to them, he had more sense than to hold conversation with them on the high road, for that might have led to a general discovery. Con was fond of a drop, and, when he took it (which was in an algebraic way, that is, 'any *given* quantity'), he had such famous spirits, and his tongue went so glibly, that, in the absence of other company, he was sometimes forced to talk to himself, as he trotted home.

"One night, as he was going along, rather the worse for liquor, he thought he heard a confused sound of voices in the air, directly over his head. He stopped, and, sure enough, it was the fairies, who were chattering away, like a bevy of magpies; but he did not know this at the time.

"At first he thought it might be some of the neighbors wanting to play him a trick. So, to show that he was not afraid (for the drink had made him bold as a lion), when the voices above and around him kept calling out 'High up! high up!' he put in his spoke, and shouted, as loud as any of them, 'High up! high up with ye, my lads!' No sooner said than done. He was whisked off his donkey in a

twinkling, and was 'high up' in the air, in the very middle of a crowd of 'good people' – for it happened to be one of their festival nights, and the cry that poor little Con heard was the summons for gathering them all together. There they were, mighty small, moving about as quickly as motes in the sunshine. Although Con had the reputation at Barry's-fort of being well acquainted with them all, you may well believe that there was not a single face among the lot that he knew.

"In less than no time, off they went, when their leader – a little morsel of a fellow, not bigger than Hop-o'-my Thumb – bawled out, 'High for France! high for France! high over!' Off they went, through the air – quick as if they were on a steeplechase. Moss and moor – mountain and valley – green field and brown bog – land and water were all left behind, and they never once halted until they reached the coast of France.

"They immediately made for the house (there it is called the *château*) of a great lord – one of the Seigneurs of the Court – and bolted through the key-hole into his wine-cellar, without leave or license. How little Con was squeezed through, I never could understand, but it is as sure as fate that he went into the cellar along with them. They soon got astride the casks, and commenced drinking the best wines, without waiting to be invited. Con, you may be sure, was not behind any of them, as far as the drinking went. The more he drank, the better relish he had for their tipple. The 'good people,' somehow or other, did not appear at all surprised at Con's being among them, but they *did* wonder at his great thirst, and pressed him to take enough – and Con was not the man who'd wait to be asked twice. So they drank on till night slipped away, when the sun – like a proper gentleman as he is – sent in one of his earliest beams, as a sort of gentle hint that it was full time for them to return. They had a parting-glass, and, in half an hour or so, had crossed the wide sea, and dropped little Con ('pretty well, I thank you,' by this time) on the precise spot he had left on the evening before. He had been drinking out of a beautiful golden cup in the cellar, and, by some mistake or other, it had slipped up the sleeve of the large loose coat he wore, and so he brought it home with him. Not that Con was not honest enough, but surely a man may be excused for taking 'a cup too much' in a wine-cellar.

"Con was soon awakened by the warm sunbeams playing upon his face. At first, he thought he had been dreaming, and he might have thought so to his dying day, but that, when he got on his feet, the golden cup rolled on the road before him, and was proof positive that all was a reality.

"He said his prayers directly, between him and harm. Then he put up the cup and walked home, where, as his little donkey had returned on the previous night without him, the family had given him up as lost or drowned. Indeed, some of them had sagaciously suggested the probability of his having gone off for good with the fairies.

"Now, does not my story convince you that there *must* be such things as fairies? It is not more than twenty years since I heard Con O'Keefe tell the whole story from beginning to end; and he'd say or swear with any man that the whole of it was as true as gospel. And, as sure as my name is Patrick McCann, I *do* believe that Con was in strange company that night."

I ventured to say to Mr. McCann that, being yet incredulous, I must have better evidence than little Con's own declaration.

"To be sure you shall," said he. "Was not the golden cup taken up to Barry's-fort, and to be seen – as seen it was – by the whole country?"

I answered that, "Certainly, if the cup is to be seen there, the case is materially altered."

"I did not say that the cup *is* at Barry's-fort," said McCann, "only that it *was*. The end of the story, indeed, is nearly as strange as the beginning. – When Con O'Keefe came back from his wonderful excursion, no one believed a word of what he said; for though it was whispered that he was great with the fairies, yet, when the matter came tangibly before them, they did not credit it. But Con soon settled their doubts; he brought forward the cup, and there was no gainsaying *that* evidence.

"Mr. Barry took the cup into his own keeping, and, the name and residence of the French lord being engraved upon it, determined (as in honor bound) to send it home again. So he went off to

Cove, without any delay, taking Con with him; and, as there luckily was a vessel going off to France that very day, he sent off little Con with the cup and his very best compliments.

Now, the cup was a great favorite with the French lord (being a piece of family plate, given to one of his ancestors by one of the old kings of France, whose life he had saved in battle), and nothing could equal the hubbub and confusion that arose when it was missing. His lordship called for some wine at dinner, and great was his anger when the lackey handed it to him in a glass, declaring that they could not find the golden goblet. He threw glass, and wine, and all, at the servant's head – flew into a terrible passion – and swore, by all that was good and bad, that he would not take anything stronger than water until the cup was on the table again; and that, if it was not forthcoming in a week, he'd turn off every servant he had, without paying them their wages, or giving them a character.

"The cup was well searched for, but all to no purpose, as you may suppose. At last, the week came to an end – all the servants had their clothes packed up, to be off in the morning. His lordship was getting dreadfully tired of drinking cold water, and the whole house was, as one may say, turned topsy-turvy, when, to the delight and admiration of all, in came Con O'Keefe, from Ireland, with a letter from Mr. Barry and the cup in his fist.

"I rather think they welcomed him. His lordship made it a point to get 'glorious' that night, and, as in duty bound, the entire household followed his example, with all the pleasure in life. You may be certain that Con played away finely at the wine – you know the fairies had made him free of the cellar – so he knew the taste of the liquor, and relished it too. There can be no doubt that there was a regular jollification in the château that night.

"Con remained in France for a month, and was perfectly in clover, for, from the lord to the lackey, every one liked him. When he returned, he had a heavy purse of gold for himself, and many fine presents for his master. Indeed, while the French lord lived, which was for fifteen good years longer, a couple of hogsheads of excellent claret were annually received at Barry's-fort, as a present from him, and there was no wine in the country to equal it. As for Con O'Keefe, he never had the luck to meet the fairies again, a misfortune he very sincerely lamented. And that's the whole story."

I asked Mr. McCann, whether he really believed *all* of it? That worthy replied in these words: —

"Why, in truth, I must say, some parts of it require rather an elastic mind to take in; but there's no doubt that Con *was* sent over to France, where, it is said, there was a great to-do about a golden cup. I am positive that Mr. Barry used to receive a present of claret, every year, from a French lord, for I've drank some of the best claret in Ireland from Mr. Barry's cellar. If the tale *be* true – and I have told it as I have heard Con O'Keefe tell it, especially when overcome by liquor, at which time, the truth is sure to come out – it is proof positive, that there have been fairies in this neighborhood, and that within the memory of man!"

Such a logical conclusion was incontrovertible, especially when enforced by a facetious wink from the schoolmaster; so, I even left matters as they were, and listened with all proper attention to other stories in the same vein, and to the same effect. If the narrator did not credit them, most of his auditors did, which amounts to much the same in the end. Some other time, perhaps, I may be tempted to relate them.

LEGENDS OF FINN MAC COUL

There is a similarity, all over the world, between the popular legends and traditions of different nations. They are reproduced, with slight differences of circumstance and costume, to suit each new locality. For example, the Maiden Tower at Constantinople, actually built by the Emperor Manuel, centuries ago, for the purpose of a double communication – with Scutari, on the Asian side, and with the point of coast occupied by the Serai Bournou on the Asian. Whenever the hostile visit of a Venetian fleet was anticipated, a strong iron chain used to be drawn on both sides, across the entire breadth of the strait. Respecting this are several legends, all of which have their prototypes in the West.

The generally received account has appropriated it as the place in which, for safety, a damsel was held in close retirement until the fatal time named in a prediction should have passed away; but a serpent, accidentally brought up in a basket of fruit, caused the maiden's death. Here is a striking illustration of the similarity between the legends of the East and those of the West. In the Third Calendar's Story, in the Arabian Nights' Entertainments (which have charmed all of us in youth, and rarely fail to delight us when we return to them in maturer years), the whole interest turns on an incident of the same character. Both stories appear deeply imbued with that fatality which forms the distinguishing feature in Eastern belief and practice. Near Bristol, also, are the remains of a tower, called Cook's Folly, erected to be the dwelling-place of a youth of whom it had been predicted that (like the heroine of the Turkish legend) his life would be in peril from a serpent until the completion of his eighteenth year. The dangerous time had nearly expired, when the youth died from the venomous bite of an adder, which had been accidentally conveyed to his isolated abode in a bundle of fagots.

In the south of Ireland, on the summit of a mountain called Corrig Thierna (Athe Chieftain's Rock), is a heap of stones which, if there be truth in tradition, was brought there to build a castle in which was to dwell a son of Roche, Prince of Fermoy, of whom it had been predicted that he would be drowned before his twentieth year. The child, when only five years old, fell into a pool of water which had been collected, on the top of the mountain, to make mortar for the erection of the tower, in which it was intended he should be kept "out of harm's way," until the perilous period had elapsed. The child was drowned. In each case, the prophecy appears to have brought about its own fulfilment. There is a moral in these old traditions, did we but know how to seize and apply it.

Washington Irving has localized several legends as American, but his Rip Van Winkle has been traced to a German origin, and many of his other legends appear to be old friends in a new attire. Who can say whence any traditional stories are derived? Some years ago, a supplement to the Thousand-and-One Nights, containing an Arabian tale called the Sage Heycar, was published at Paris, and the translator noted the curious fact that this Oriental story contained many incidents exactly similar to passages in the life of Æsop: such as sixteen pages of details of a visit made by Heycar to the court of Pharaoh, which are the same, word for word, with the account of the like visit made by Æsop. So, too, the challenge which Pharaoh sent to the King of Abyssinia, demanding him to build a palace in the air, and the ingenious means to which Æsop had recourse, are transferred to Heycar. Even the fables of Æsop, the Phrygian, have been claimed for Lokman, the Arabian philosopher, and now the very incidents of his life are taken from him by Heycar.

The Coventry legend of Lady Godiva is claimed by the Arabians. In Von Hammer's new Arabian Nights is the story called Camaralzeman and the Jeweller's Wife, founded on an incident precisely similar to that in which the English heroine appears.

The truth is, it is impossible to ascertain what coincident mythology connects the East and the West. We know not what relation Thor of Scandinavia may have with Vishnu of Hindostan. The oldest English and Irish stories appear to have corresponding legends among the Celts, Danes, Scandinavians, and Normans, and, again, these have wandered either to or from the East. Even such

thoroughly English stories as Tom Thumb, Jack the Giant Killer, and Whittington and his Cat, are claimed as aboriginal in foreign countries. The Wise Men of Gotham, one of the oldest English provincial legends, is given, nearly verbatim, in one of the German popular stories, collected by the Brothers Grimm, and its incidents may be found in the Pentamerone (in the story of Bardiello), but has been translated from the Tamul tongue, which is a dialect of Southern India, as the "Adventures of Gooroo Noodle and his Five Disciples."

The Germans are very fond of legendary lore. Like the Irish, they have their cellar-haunters, who invariably tap the best wine, and make themselves merry with whatever the cellar and larder can supply. Like the Irish, too, they have traditions of gigantic dwellers in the land, in days gone by, and they re-people the Hartz with men of enormous stature and strength, capable of daring and doing any thing, yet who differ from the Genii, in the Arabian Tales, who are spoken of as possessing supernatural powers, while the giants of Western tradition, having nothing remarkable, except their size and strength, and so far from being endowed with more than human powers, may be noticed, on the contrary, as being slow-witted and rather dull of comprehension, – for, like most very tall people of the present day, their upper story is unfurnished. Such were Finn Mac Coul, and his great rival, Ossian, neither of whom can be named as remarkably bright "boys." There are a few instances of this which may be worth recording. For example: —

FINN AND THE FISH

In the good old times, "when Malachi wore the collar of gold, which he won from the proud invader," no Irish hero was more celebrated than Finn Mac Coul. What cabin is there, from the Giant's Causeway to Cape Clear, which is not full of his glory?

Finn Mac Coul was famous for his strength of mind and body, for his wisdom and his might. The Saxons fled before him when he unfurled Ireland's ancient banner – which bore the poetical name of The Sunburst – and thousands arrayed themselves around it; mountain and vale, plain and tarn, hall and bower, were full of the glory of his graceful deeds of gentle courtesy. His mighty mind was suitably lodged, for he was tall as one of the sons of Anak, and might have passed for own brother to him of Gath.

Before relating any of his wonderful bodily achievements, it may be as well to mention the mysterious manner in which his wisdom, like a tangible revelation, fell upon him.

In the ancient days of Ireland's glory, the province of Munster was a Kingdom, and was called Momonia. One of the Mac Carthy family had sovereign sway. He was a good-natured, soft-hearted, fat-headed sort of neutral character – one of that class, still too common in Ireland, known by the apologetic *sobriquet* of "nobody's enemy but his own." He kept open house for all comers, and the effect of his undiscriminating hospitality was, that, a monarch in name, he was next to a pauper in reality, living, as the saying is, quite "from hand to mouth." This he could have borne, for, like the eels, he was used to it, but the empty state of his exchequer rendered him unable to pay for the military services of his subjects, and the result was, that his dominions gradually fell into a state of partition among his brother monarchs of greater power, richer treasury, and smaller hospitality.

It happened that one of these, named Mac Murragh – an ancestor of him whose daughter's frailty led to the subjugation of Ireland by Henry II. – ruled over Leinster, while poor Mac Carthy was enjoying nominal empire over the rich plains of Munster. Mac Murragh was ambitious. He saw what an easy prey Momonia might be. He wished to feed his herds upon that beautiful tract of land intersected by the river Suir, which even yet is called "The Golden Vale," and he declared war to the knife against King Mac Carthy.

It happened that Mac Carthy was fully aware of the value of the golden vale – indeed, it was the very pride of his heart. He determined to resist his foe, as best he could. But before taking up arms, on the defensive, he resolved to have recourse to other than mortal aid.

It was some time before the avatar of Saint Patrick – that redoubted patriarch whose mission it was to teach the benighted Irish the benefits of religion and the blessings of whiskey. Therefore, under King Mac Carthy, Druidism was the "established church." One of the most ancient Arch-Druids in Munster resided in a cave near Mitchelstown, dug by his own hands in one of the Galtee Mountains, and to him, in this emergency, King Mac Carthy betook himself for advice and aid.

The Arch-Druid was noted, far and near, as an interpreter of dreams, a diviner of auguries, an unraveller of mysteries, and a reader of prophecies. Common rumor declared that he was master of enchantments, – that the thunder rolled and the lightning flashed at his command, – that he had communion with spirits from another world, and could compel them to obey his bidding.

After the performance of many rites and ceremonies, some penance and much prayer, the Arch-Druid asked the King of Munster whether he knew that part of the West which we now call Mayo? Mac Carthy replied that he ought to know it, for he had been brought up there. "Then," said the Arch-Druid, "thither we must go. For in one of the rivers which run through that district, by the foot of a lofty mountain, there is a salmon, which, if caught, cooked, and eaten, will bestow long life and health, wisdom and valor, success in arms and love, upon him who eats it."

The King thanked the Arch-Druid for his information, and gave him a liberal largess, when he added that in the book of the future it was written that this wonderful fish was predestined to be caught by his own royal hands. This put him into excellent spirits, and he proposed to the Arch-Druid that they should "make a night of it," which they did, upon mead or metheglin – for, in those days, whiskey had not been invented.

The next day they set off on their fishing-tour. The way was long, the roads bad, and travelling rather dangerous. But, seating themselves on the Arch-Druid's cloak, its wizard-owner muttering a few cabalistic words, forthwith they were wafted, men and cloak, through the air, on the swift wings of the wind, to the precipitous ridge of hills surrounding the lofty rock now called Croagh Patrick. The cloak and its two passengers finally dropped down on the bank of the river of which the Arch-Druid had spoken.

They followed the course of the stream through one of the most fertile valleys that sunshine ever glanced upon, until they reached a dark cavern where the struggling waters sink suddenly into the earth. No one has yet been able to ascertain whither the stream finally goes – whether it again rises to the earth – whether it runs through a subterranean channel, or is sucked in to quench the Phlegethon of this world's central fires. No one knows – nor would it much matter if he did.

Close by the mouth of this cavern is a dark, deep hollow, over which the gloom of eternal night ever seems to rest, and into which the stream falls before it sinks into the abyss, whirling in foaming eddies, warring as in agony, and casting up a jet of spray into the air. Loudly the waters roar as they fall on the rugged rock beneath – they are whirled round and round, until, at regular intervals, they descend into the yawning gulf beneath.

In this pool, among thousands of fishes, of all sorts and sizes, was the Salmon of Knowledge, the possession of which was to make King Mac Carthy amazingly wise, and irresistibly mighty. By this pool he sat, in company with the Arch-Druid, day after day, for a whole month, until their patience was nearly, and their provisions wholly, exhausted. They had sport enough to satisfy Izaak Walton himself, for they were perpetually catching fish. There was a little hut hard by, and in it the King and the Arch-Druid alternately officiated as cook. Still, though he was latterly on a fish diet, the King grew never the wiser. He got so tired of that kind of food that historians have gone the length of asserting that even a Hoboken turtle-feed would have had no charm for his palled appetite. Amid the finest fish that Royalty ever feasted upon, he sighed for the white and red of his own fine mutton from the green fields of Munster.

To add to his misfortune, though he wanted only one salmon, fish of all sorts *would* hook themselves on to his line. There was perpetual trouble in taking them off the hook. They determined to judge of the salmon, as Lavater did of men, by their looks. Therefore the fat and plump fish

obtained the dangerous distinction of being broiled or boiled, while the puny ones were thrown back, with the other fish, into the water.

Thus it happened that, one evening at dusk, a lank, lean, spent salmon having been caught, they did not think it worth cooking, and the King took it up to throw it back into the water. He did not cast it far enough, and the poor fish remained on the bank. It was quietly wriggling itself back into its native element, when it was espied by a little boy who had a special taste for broiled fish. He seized it, took it home, made a fire, and set about cooking it.

This youth was the famous Finn Mac Coul: – but he was not famous *then*. He had fled from the South, from some enemies of his family, and, being hungry, the salmon, poor and lean as it seemed, was better to him than nothing.

The fire being red, he put the salmon upon it. The poor fish, not quite dead, writhed on the live coals, and the heat caused a great blister to swell out upon its side. Finn Mac Coul noticed this, and, fearing that the fish would be spoiled if the blister were to rise any more, pressed his thumb upon it. The heat soon made him withdraw it. Naturally enough, he put it into his mouth to draw out the pain. At that moment, he felt a strange thrill throughout his whole frame. He was suddenly changed in mind. The moment that thumb touched his lips he had increase of knowledge. *That* told him that he could do no better than devour the salmon. That done, he was a changed Finn – a new and enlarged edition, with additions; quite a tall paper copy.

That night, Finn Mac Coul quietly strayed down to the cavern, and found the King and the Arch-Druid at high words. His majesty had dreamed, in his afternoon nap, that the Salmon of Knowledge had been on his hook, and that the Arch-Druid had coaxed it off, and privily cooked and eaten it. Finn told him that the Arch-Druid knew that the salmon could be caught only by a King's hand, but had intended, even before they left Munster, to cook and eat it himself, and then to usurp the crown. The Arch-Druid, who had a conscience, had not a word of explanation or excuse. The King immediately ran him through the body, and engaged Finn (who, by this time, had shot up to the height of twelve feet) to lead his armies against the invading King of Leinster, and the result was that, so far from conquering Munster, and appropriating the Golden Vale, King Mac Murragh was obliged to pray for pardon, and to pay tribute to King Mac Carthy, who thenceforward, with the aid of Finn Mac Coul's strength of mind and body, was the most powerful of all the monarchs of Ireland.

THE BREAKS OF BALLYNASCORNEY

Contemporary with Finn Mac Coul, was the renowned giant, called Ossian. There has been a question whether he were Scotch or Irish. But as Ossian certainly came all the way from Scotland to compete with Finn Mac Coul, it is not likely that they were countrymen.

That contest – it was of the description given by Ovid of what took place between Ajax and Ulysses. Go to that wild and beautiful district near Dublin, that patch of mountain scenery, so splendid and romantic, known as the Breaks of Ballynascorney and learn, as I did, what tradition now reports of the contest between Ossian and Finn Mac Coul.

A mountain road winds through these Breaks, like a huge snake. By the road-side there stands a tremendous rock of granite – perfectly isolated. Many such are to be seen scattered over the island, and the general belief is, that each column-stone marks the spot where some noted warrior had fallen in the old contests between the Irish and their Danish invaders. A different legend belongs to *this* rock.

The day had been beautiful – one of those brilliant days of softness and balm so prevalent in Ireland. The noontide sun may have been a little too sunny, but this could be remedied by reposing in the pleasant shadow of some of the lofty cairns which abound in that place. The day gently glided on, until, when a summer-shower made the heath glitter with its diamond drops, we sought shelter in a rustic cabin by the wayside.

No one was within, but an old woman, remarkably talkative. She paid us a world of attention – insinuated a world of compliments on the beaming beauty of the fair lady who accompanied me – would "engage that one so pretty was not without a sweetheart," and, with a smile at myself, "would not be long without a husband" – hoped that she "would be happy as the day was long, and live to see her great-grand-children at her feet," – was certain she was an Irishwoman, "for she had the fair face, and the small hand, and the dark blue eye, and the long black lash, and the bounding step," and prophesied more good fortune than (to one of the party, at least) has yet been fulfilled.

This old woman was a good specimen of a shrewd Irish peasant. Her compliments were insinuated, rather than expressed; and, *malgré* the brogue, I question when more delicate flattery – pleasant, after all, to one's *amour propre*– could be more dexterously conveyed in the circles which we call brilliant. This tact in the matter of compliment appears intuitive.

Allusion having been made to the granite column in the neighborhood, our hostess asked whether we should like "to know all about it." The answer was in the affirmative, and then – happy to hear the tones of her own voice, proud of giving information to persons above her own station, and in pleased anticipation of a *douceur*– she told us a legend which, as she was rather prolix, I shall take leave to give you in my own words.

FINN MAC COUL'S FINGER-STONE

Finn Mac Coul went hunting one day on the Curragh of Kildare. His sport was indifferent, for he brought down only a leash of red deer, and a couple of wolves. He came back to his house, on the hill of Allen, in such bad spirits, that his wife asked him what was the matter, and said that, no doubt, he would have better sport another time. Heaving a deep sigh, he told her that it was not his bad sport that annoyed him, but that news had that morning reached him that Ossian, the Scotch giant, was coming over to challenge him to a trial of strength, and if he lost the day – for he could not decline the contest – his credit, and the credit of Ireland, would be gone forever.

At this news, Finn's wife became as low-spirited as himself. They sat by the fire, like Witherington, "in doleful dumps," and their thoughts were the reverse of happy.

Suddenly, the lady – for the life of me I cannot bring myself to designate her as plain "Mrs. Mac Coul" – asked her disconsolate lord and master at what time Ossian was expected to arrive? Finn told her that the Scottish Hercules had intimated his intention of paying his visit at noon on the following day. "Oh! then," said she, brightening up, "there's no need to despair. Leave all to me, and I'll bring you through it like a Trojan. A blot is no blot until 'tis entered." This remark, showing at once her philosophy and her knowledge of backgammon, was very consolatory to Finn Mac Coul, who, like men before and since, was rather under what is called petticoat government. His mind was relieved when his wife saw daylight.

After breakfast, the next day, Finn (by his wife's direction) went into a huge child's-cradle, a feat which he had some difficulty in accomplishing. There he lay, crumpled up uneasily, while she kept busy in the kitchen, baking some cake or griddle-bread.

By-and-bye, up came Ossian, who knocked at the door, and civilly inquired whether Finn Mac Coul lived there, and if he were at home? "No," said his wife, "he's gone to the fair of Bartlemy; but I am his wife, and, perhaps, I can answer for him."

"What!" said Ossian, "did not he hear that I, Ossian of Scotland, was coming over for a trial of strength with him? I hope he does not mean to skulk. Wherever he may be, I shall not return home until I *see* him, and until he *feel* me."

When the wife found that Ossian was too far North to be put off by a "not at home," she put the best face on it, welcomed him to Ireland, hoped he had a pleasant passage, and that the tossing on the salt-water did not disagree with him, invited him into the house, and said that Finn would soon be back, and ready to indulge him in any way he pleased.

Ossian sat down by the fire, quite at his ease. He had a great conceit of himself, and was, indeed, the strongest man in Europe at that time. He noticed the large cakes that were baking in the oven, each of them taking two stone weight of flour, and asked why she made them of such a size. "They are for that little creature in the cradle, there," said she, pointing over her shoulder to Finn. Then Ossian looked round, and noticed the cradle, with Finn in it, and a night-cap on his head, and tied under his chin, and he pretending to be fast asleep all the time.

Astonished at the immense bulk, Ossian called out, "Who's there? What man is that in the cradle?" "Man!" said Finn's wife, with a pleasant little laugh, "that's our youngest child. I am weaning him now, and I sometimes think the fairies have overlooked him, he's so dwarfed and small, and does not promise to be half the size of his father and his brothers."

Ossian never said a word to that; but he could not take his eyes off the cradle, thinking, no doubt, if the undergrown baby was such a bouncer, what must the father be.

By-and-bye, Finn's wife told Ossian that, as he had a long journey, and Finn was staying out longer than she expected, he might as well take some refreshment, without waiting for him. The cakes were nice and brown by this time, and she asked him to break his fast with one of them. He took it, and when he made a bite in it, he roared again with pain, for his two best front teeth were broken. "Oh!" he cried out, "it is as hard as iron," – and so it might be, for she had put an iron griddle into it, and baked it with it in. "Hard?" said she. "Why, that child there would not taste it if it were a bit softer."

Then she recommended Ossian to wash the pain away with a sup of the finest whiskey in the province; and she fetched a wooden *piggin*, that would hold about a gallon to a gallon and a half, and filled it to the brim. Ossian took a long pull at it; as much as a quart or so. Then Finn's wife laughed downright at him for taking so little. "Why," said she, "the child there in the cradle thinks nothing of emptying that *piggin* in one draught." So, for shame's sake, and because he did not like to be thought a milk-sop, Ossian took a little more, and a little more yet, until, before long, the liquor got the better of him.

Now, this was the very pass that the good wife wished to bring him to. "While his father is out," said she, "and I wonder why he is not home before now, may-be you'd like to see the child there throw a stone, or try a fall with you, or do any of the diverting little tricks that his father teaches him." Ossian consented, and she went over to the cradle and gave Finn a shake. "Wake up, dear," said she, "and amuse the gentleman."

So Finn stretched himself, and Ossian wondered at his black beard, and his great bulk. "'Pon my word," said he, "you're a fine child for your age." Then, turning to Finn's wife, he asked, "Has he cut any of his teeth yet?" She bade him feel his gums. Then Ossian put two of his fingers into Finn's mouth, and the moment they were there Finn bit them to the bone. Ossian jumped round the room with pain. "Ah!" said Finn's wife, "you should see his father's teeth; he thinks nothing of biting off the head of a two-shilling nail, when he uses it for a tooth-pick."

By this time, Ossian was far from comfortable. But he thought he must put the best face on it; so he said to Finn, "Come, my lad, let us see how your father teaches you to wrestle."

Finn did not say a word, but grappled Ossian round the waist, and laid him sprawling on the ground before he could say "Jack Robinson." Ossian picked himself up, very sulkily, and rubbed the place that had come in contact with the hard floor of the kitchen.

"Now," said Finn's wife, "may-be you'd like to see the child throw a stone." And then Finn went in front of the house, where there was a heap of great rocks, and he took up the very identical stone which now stands in the Breaks of Ballynascorey, and flung it all the way from the hill of Allen. To this day it bears the marks of Finn's five fingers and thumb – for his hand was not like an ordinary hand – when he grasped it; and to this day, also, that stone bears Finn's name.

Ossian was greatly surprised, as well he might be, at such a cast. He asked, "Could your father throw such a stone much farther?" – "Is it my father?" said Finn: "faith, he'd cast it all the way to America, or Scotland, or the Western Injes, and think nothing of it!"

This was enough for Ossian. He would not venture on a trial of strength with the father, when the son could beat him. So he pretended to recollect some sudden business that called him back, posthaste, to Scotland, thinking he never could get away half quick enough. And the stone remains where Finn threw it, and, if you only go that way, any one on or near the Sigham mountain will show you Finn Mac Coul's Finger-Stone.

IRISH STORIES

THE PETRIFIED PIPER

CHAPTER I. – WHO THE PIPER WAS

Irish Legends almost invariably remind me of the Field of Waterloo. When our tourists rushed *en masse*, to behold the plain on which the destinies of Europe had been decided, they exhibited the usual relic-hunting and relic-buying mania. Bullets and helmet ornaments, rusty pistols and broken swords, buttons and spurs, and such things-actually found on the battle-field-were soon disposed of, while of the tourists it might be said, as of the host of Dunsinane, "The cry is still 'they come!'" So, the demand exceeding the legitimate supply, the Belgian peasantry began to dispose of fictitious relics, and a very profitable trade it was for a long time. To this day, they are carefully manufactured, "to order," by more than one of the hardware makers of Birmingham.

In the same manner, Irish legends having become a marketable commodity (Carleton and Crofton Croker, Banim and Griffin, Lover and Whitty, having worked the vein deeply), people had recourse to invention instead of tradition-like George Psalmanazar's History of Formosa, in which fiction supplied the place of fact. Very amusing, no doubt; but not quite fair. More ingenious than honest. Therefore, the Irish story I shall relate, if it possesses none other, shall have the merit, at least, of being "founded on facts."

Fermoy is one of the prettiest towns in Ireland. It is not very remote from that very distinguished Southern metropolis-of pigs and porter-known as "the beautiful city of Cork." Midway between city and town lies Water-grass-hill, a pretty village, located on the highest arable land in Ireland, and now immortal as having once been the residence of the celebrated Father Prout. Some people prefer the country-town to the crowded city: for, though its trade be small, its society rather too fond of scandal, its church without a steeple, and its politicians particularly intolerant, Fermoy is in the heart of a fertile and picturesque tract, and there flows through it that noble river, the Blackwater, honorably mentioned by Spenser, and honored in later song as the scene where might be beheld

> "The trout and the salmon
> A-playing backgammon.
> All on the banks of sweet Castle Hyde."

The scenery around Fermoy is indeed most beautiful, and *above* all (in more meanings than one) towers Corrig Thierna-the Lord's rock, commonly spoken of as Corran-which, to such of the inhabitants as have not seen greater elevations, appears a mountain entitled to vie with what they have heard of the Alps, Appenines, or Andes.

Although Fermoy now contains fully seven hundred houses (exclusive of stables and pigsties), and a population of nearly seven thousand souls, men, women, and children-to say nothing of horses, oxen, sheep, mules, donkies, cats, dogs, and such other creatures as have no souls-it was not always so extensive and populous.

In every town a high traditional authority is constantly referred to as "within the memory of the oldest inhabitant," and it may be stated, on this antique authority, that, not much more than half a century since, Fermoy was a very small and obscure hamlet, consisting of no more than one little pothouse and half a dozen other mud-cabins, luxuriantly located, with some ingenuity, so as to enjoy, front and rear, a *maximum* of the morning and afternoon sunshine. These domiciles were ranged in a

row, and hence arose the figurative saying, "All on one side, like the town of Fermoy." The energy, ability, and capital of one man (the late John Anderson, who introduced mail-coaches into Ireland), raised the village of Fermoy into a populous and thriving town, which, in 1809, was a merry place-partly owing to the mirth whose chief minister was Remmy Carroll, son of old Carroll, the piper.

As Remmy is the hero of my tale, it is only proper that I should describe him. Irish parlance emphatically distinguished him as "a mighty clever boy," which did not mean a compliment to his capacity or acquirements, but was simply a figure of speech to declare that this Hibernian Orpheus stood about "six feet two in his stocking-vamps." Remmy Carroll's personal appearance was not quite as *distingué* as that of his great contemporary, Beau Brummell. His coat, originally of blue frieze, had worn down, by age and service, to a sort of bright gray, tessellated, like mosaic-work, with emendations of the original substance carefully annexed thereto by Remmy's own industrious fingers. The garment, like the wearer, had known many a fray, and Remmy was wont to observe, jocularly, when he sat down to repair these breaches, that then, like a man of landed property, he was occupied in "taking his rents."

Care is not very likely to kill a man who can jest upon his own poverty. Accordingly, Remmy Carroll was as light-hearted a fellow as could be met with in town or country. He was a gentleman accustomed to live how and where he could, and he was welcomed everywhere. It was mentioned, as an undoubted fact, that where men of substance-rich farmers and thriving shopkeepers-had been very coldly received by bright-eyed angels in petticoats, looks and even words of encouragement had been extended to Remmy Carroll. The fair sex are proverbially of a kind nature, especially towards young men, who, like Carroll, have handsome features and jocund speech, lofty stature and winning smiles, that symmetry of limb which pleases the eye, and that subduing conversation which pleases the ear. What was more, Remmy Carroll knew very well-none better! – that he was a favorite with the rose-cheeked Venuses of Fermoy and its vicinity. It may be mentioned also-as *sotto voce* as type can express it-that he was also perfectly aware that he was a very personable fellow, what Coleridge has described as "a noticeable man." Was there ever any one, no matter of what age or sex, possessing personal advantages, who was not fully aware of the fact?

It would be tedious to expatiate very particularly upon the extent and variety of Remmy Carroll's accomplishments. He followed the hereditary profession of his family, and was distinguished, far and near, for his really splendid execution on the Irish pipes-an instrument which can be made to "discourse most excellent music," and must never be confounded with the odious drone of the Scottish bag-pipes. Remmy's performance could almost excite the very chairs, tables, and three-legged stools to dance. One set of pipes is worth a dozen fiddles, for it can "take the shine out of them all" in point of loudness. But then, these same pipes can do more than make a noise. The warrior, boldest in the field, is gentlest at the feet of his ladye-love; and so, the Irish pipes, which can sound a strain almost as loud as a trumpet-call, can also breathe forth a tide of gushing melody-sweet, soft, and low as the first whisper of mutual love. You have never felt the eloquent expression of Irish music, if you have not heard it from the Irish pipes.[3] It is quite marvellous that, amid all the novelties of instrumentation (if I may coin a word) which are thrust upon the patient public, season after season-including the Jews'-harping of Eulenstein, the chin-chopping of Michael Boiai, and the rock-harmonicon of the Derbyshire mechanics-no one has thought of exhibiting the melodious performance of an Irish really were a first-rate performer, he could not fail to please, to

[3] This praise of the Irish pipes is by no means exaggerated. The last performer of any note, in Fermoy, was an apothecary, named O'Donnell, who certainly could make them discourse "most eloquent music." He died about fifteen years ago. It was almost impossible to listen with dry eyes and unmoved heart to the exquisite manner in which he played the Irish melodies-the *real* ones, I mean-not those which Tom Moore and Sir John Stevenson had "adopted" (and emasculated) for polite and fashionable piano-forte players and singers. There is now in New York a gentleman, named Charles Ferguson, whose performance on the Irish pipes may be said to equal-it could not surpass-that of O'Donnell.

delight, to astonish. But, again I say, do not confound the sweet harmony of the Irish with the drony buzz of the Scotch pipes.

Remmy Carroll's accomplishments were not limited to things musical. He could out-walk, out-run, and out-leap any man in the barony of Condons and Clongibbons; aye, or of any five other baronies in the county of Cork, the Yorkshire of Ireland. He could back the most vicious horse that ever dared to rear and kick against human supremacy. He had accepted the challenge scornfully given to the whole world, by Big Brown of Kilworth, to wrestle, and had given him four fair falls out of five, a matter so much taken to heart by the said Big one, that he emigrated to London, where, overcome with liquor and loyalty, he was tempted to enlist in an infantry regiment, and was shot through the head at the storming of Badajoz some short time after.

Remmy Carroll could do, and had done more than defeat Brown. He could swim like a fish, was the only man ever known to dive under that miniature Maëlstrom which eddies at the base of The Nailer's Rock (nearly opposite Barnäan Well), and, before he was one-and-twenty, had saved nine unfortunates from being drowned in the fatal Blackwater.[4]

No man in the county could beat him at hurly, or foot-ball. He was a crack hand at a faction-fight on a fair day-only, as a natural spirit of generosity sometimes impelled him, with a reckless chivalry, to side with the weaker party, he had, more than once, been found magnanimously battling against his own friends.

Yet more. – Having had the advantage of three years' instruction at Tim Daly's far-famed Academy, Remmy Carroll was master of what a farmer, more alliterative than wise, called "the mystery of the three R's: – Reading, 'Riting, and 'Rithmetic." He knew, by the simple taste, when the Potheen was sufficiently "above proof." He had a ten-Irishman power of love-making, and while the maidens (with blushes, smiles, and softly-similated angers) would exclaim, "Ah, then, be done, Remmy! – for a deluder as ye are!" there usually was such a sly intelligence beaming from their bright eyes, as assured him that he was not unwelcome; and then he felt it his duty to kiss them into perfect good-humor and forgiveness. – But I am cataloguing his accomplishments at too much length. Let it suffice to declare, that Remmy Carroll was confessedly the Admirable Crichton of the district.

He was an independent citizen of the world-for he had no particular settled habitation. He was a popular character-for every habitation was open to him, from Tim Mulcahy's, who lived with his wife and pig, in a windowless mud-cabin, at the foot of Corran, to Mr. Bartle Mahony's two-story slated house, on a three hundred acre farm, at Carrigabrick, on the banks of the Blackwater. At the latter abode of wealth, however, Remmy Carroll had not lately called.

Mr. Bartholomew Mahony-familiarly called "Bartle" – was a man of substance. Had he lived now, he might have sported a hunter for himself, and set up a jaunting-car for his daughter. But the honest, well-to-do farmer had at once too much pride and sagacity to sink into the *Squireen*. He was satisfied with his station in life, and did not aspire beyond it. He was passing rich in the world's eye. Many, even of the worldlings, thought less of his wealth than of his daughter, Mary. Of all who admired, none loved her half so well as poor Remmy Carroll, who loved the more deeply, because very hopelessly, inasmuch as her wealth and his own poverty shut him out from all reasonable prospect

[4] There really was a person named Carroll residing in Fermoy at the date of this story. He was of gigantic stature and strength, with the mildest temper ever possessed by mortal man. He was noted for his excellence in swimming and his remarkable skill as a diver. Whenever any person had been drowned in the Blackwater, (which runs through Fermoy,) Carroll was sent for, and never quitted the river until he had found the body. There is one part considered particularly dangerous, opposite Barnäan Well, in which a large projection, called the Nailer's Rock, shelves out into the water, making an under-current of such peculiar strength and danger, that even expert swimmers avoid it, from a fear of being drawn within the vortex. Many lives have been lost in this fatal eddy, into which Carroll was accustomed to dive, most fearlessly, in search of the bodies. It was calculated that Carroll had actually saved twenty-two persons from being drowned, and had recovered over fifty corpses from the river. When he died, which event happened at the commencement of the bathing season, a general sorrow fell upon all classes in the town of Fermoy, and for several weeks no one ventured into the river. It was as if their guardian and safeguard had departed. In my youth, passed on the banks of the Blackwater, there was a belief that whenever one person was drowned in that river, two others were sure to follow, in the same season.

of success. He admired-nay, that is by far too weak a word: he almost adored her, scarcely daring to confess, even to his own heart, how closely her image was blended with the very life of his being.

Mary Mahony was an Irish beauty; that most indescribable of all breathing loveliness, with dark hair, fair skin, and violet eyes, a combination to which the brilliant pencil of Maclise has often rendered justice. She had a right to look high, in a matrimonial way, for she was an heiress in her own right. She had £500 left her as a legacy by an old maiden-aunt, near Mitchelstown, who had taken care of her from her twelfth year, when she left the famous Academy of the renowned Tim Daly (where she and Remmy used to write together at the same desk), until some eight months previous to the date of this authentic narrative, when the maiden-aunt died, bequeathing her property, as aforesaid, to Mary Mahony, who then returned to her father.

With all her good fortune, including the actual of the legacy, and the ideal of inheritance to her father's property-with beauty sufficient to have turned the head of any other damsel of eighteen, Mary Mahony was far from pride or conceit. She had the lithest form and the most graceful figure in the world, but many maidens, with far less means, wore much more showy and expensive apparel. Her dark hair was plainly braided off her white brow, in bands, in the simplest and most graceful manner; while, from beneath, gleamed orbs so beautiful, that one might have said to her, in the words of John Ford, the dramatist,

> "Once a young lark
> Sat on thy hand, and gazing on thine eyes,
> Mounted and sung, thinking them moving skies."

The purple stuff gown (it was prior to the invention of merinos and muslins-de-laine), which, in its close fit, exhibited the exquisite beauty of her form, and set off, by contrast, the purity of her complexion, was also a within-doors article of attire: when she went out, she donned a long cloak of fine blue cloth, with the sides and hood neatly lined with pink sarsnet. Young and handsome Irish girls, in her rank of life, were not usually satisfied, at that time, with a dress so quiet and so much the reverse of gay.

But Mary Mahony's beauty required nothing to set it off. I do not exaggerate when I say that it was literally dazzling. I saw her twenty years after the date of this narrative, and was even then struck with admiration of her matured loveliness; – how rich, then, must it have been in the bud!

Mary, as Remmy Carroll said *before* he knew that he loved her-for *then*, he never breathed her name to mortal ear, – was "the moral of a darling creature, only t'would be hard to say whether she was most good or handsome." Her hair, as I have said, was dark (light tresses are comparatively rare in Ireland), and her eyes were of so deep a blue that nine out of ten on whom they glanced mistook them for black. Then, too, the long lashes veiling them, and the lovely cheek ("oh, call it fair, not pale"), on which their silky length reposed, – and the lips so red and pouting, and the bust whose gentle heavings were just visible behind the modest kerchief which covered it, – and the brow white as snow (but neither too high nor too prominent), – and the fingers tapering and round, and the form lithe and graceful, – and the feet small and well-shaped, and the nameless air which gave dignity and grace to every motion of this country-girl! Oh, beautiful was Mary Mahony, beautiful as the bright image of a poet's dream, the memory of which shadows he forth in the verse which challenges immortality in the minds of men.

The *contour* of her face was neither Roman, nor Grecian, nor Gothic; – it was essentially Irish, and I defy you to find a finer. The only drawback (for I must be candid) was that her nose had somewhat-just the slightest-of an upward inclination. This, which sometimes lent a sort of piquancy to what would otherwise have been quite a Madonna-like face, only made her not too handsome; at least, so thought her admirers. Lastly, she had a voice as sweet as ear ever loved to listen to. No doubt, it had the distinguishing accents of her country, but with her, as with Scott's Ellen, they were

"Silvery sounds, so soft, so dear,
The listener held his breath to hear."

CHAPTER II. – WHAT THE PIPER DID

It was in the summer of 1809, that, for the first time since both of them were children and schoolmates, Remmy Carroll spoke to Mary Mahony. Often had he seen her at the dance, which without his aid could not be, but in which, alas, *he* could not join-a dancing piper being almost as anomalous as a hunting archbishop! Often had he admired the natural grace of her movements. Often had he been struck by the bewitching modesty of mien and motion which had the power of suddenly changing the rakish, rollicking gallantry of her followers (for she was a reigning toast) into a most respectful homage. Often had he noticed her at chapel, whither she came to pray, while others flaunted and gazed as if they had come only to see and to be seen. Often had he followed her very footsteps, at a distance-for the very ground on which she trod was hallowed to this humble lover-but never yet had he dared to hope.

The shortest way from Fermoy to Carrigabrick is by the banks of the Blackwater, and this way, on Whitsunday, 1809, was taken by Mary Mahony and a merry younger cousin of hers on their homeward route. There are stiles to be crossed, and deep drains to be jumped over, and even a pretty steep wall to be climbed.

Remmy Carroll, who knew that they would thus return home, had followed the maidens afar off, – sighing to think, as they crossed the stiles, with a world of gentle laughter, that he must not dare to think of proffering them any assistance. With all his love-perhaps, indeed, because of it-he had hitherto been careful to avoid the chance of even a casual notice from the subject of his untold passion, *She* was wealthy, *he* was poor; and, therefore, he shrunk from the object of his unuttered passion. Her feelings towards him at this time were rather kind than otherwise. She knew, what all the parish were unacquainted with, that Remmy devoted the greater portion of his earnings, not only to the support of a bed-ridden old aunt, who had neither kith nor kin save himself in the wide world, but even to the procuring for her what might be esteemed rather as luxuries than mere comforts. Whatever might be the deficiencies in Remmy Carroll's wardrobe, his old aunt never went without "the raking cup of tay" morning and evening. Was it because she had noticed how carefully Remmy Carroll avoided her, that the bright eyes of Mary Mahony rested upon him with some degree of interest, and that she even liked to listen to and encourage her father's praises of his conduct towards his aged relative, for whose comfortable support he sacrificed dress-the natural vent for youthful vanity in both sexes?

Mary and her merry cousin went on, through the fields, until they reached the most difficult pass. This was a deep chasm separating two meadows. A deep and rapid stream flowed through the abyss, whirlingly pouring its strong current into the Blackwater. The maidens lightly and laughingly tripped down the steps which were rudely cut on the side of the chasm. It was but a quick, short jump across, Hark! – a sudden shriek! He cleared the wall at a bound-he dashed across the meadow-in one minute he was plunging down the abyss. He saw that Mary's cousin had safely reached the other side, where she stood uselessly wringing her hands, and screaming in an agony of despair, while Mary (precipitated into the deep and swollen stream, her foot having slipped) was in the act of being hurried into the eddies of the Blackwater. There was no time for delay. He plunged into the stream, dived for the body, which had just then sunk again, and, in less time than I have taken to tell it, had placed his insensible but still lovely *treasure trove* on the bank which he just quitted. The other maiden no sooner saw that her cousin had been rescued than-according to womanly custom in such cases, I presume-*she* immediately swooned away, leaving poor Remmy to take care of Mary Mahony.

With the gentlest care he could employ, he exerted his best skill to restore her, and, in a short time, had the inexpressible delight of seeing her open her eyes. It was but for a moment; she glanced wildly around, and again closed them. Soon the bloom returned to her cheek-and now she felt, though she saw not, that she lay supported in the arms of Remmy Carroll; for, as he leant over her, and her breathing came softly and balmily upon his face, his lips involuntarily were pressed to hers, and the maiden, through whose frame that stolen embrace thrilled, with a new and bewildering sensation, might be forgiven, if, at that moment, she intuitively knew who had thus brushed the dewy sweetness from her lips; might be forgiven, if, from that epoch, there gushed into her heart a feeling more kind, more deep, more pervading, than ordinary gratitude.

By this time, the pretty cousin had thought proper to recover; nor has it yet been accurately ascertained whether, indeed, she had or had not beheld the oscular proceeding which I have mentioned. Now, however, she hastened to pay the feminine attentions, more suitable to the situation of a half-drowned young lady, than those which Remmy Carroll had attempted to bestow. He had the satisfaction, however of carefully taking Mary Mahony across the stream in his arms. Nay, before he departed, she had softly whispered her gratitude; and in her tone and manner, there was that which breathed hope to him, even against hope. Though he quitted them, he loitered about while they remained in sight, and just as Mary Mahony was vanishing through the stile which opened into her father's lands, she turned round, saw her deliverer watching her at a distance, and she kissed her hand to him as she withdrew.

From that hour the current of his life flowed on with a fresher bound-the fountain of hope welled out its sparkling waters, for the first time, from its depths. To the world-to no living soul, would he have dared to avow his new-born feeling, that Mary Mahony might one day be his own. Within his heart of hearts it lay, and with it was the consciousness, that to win her he must merit her. *How*, he knew not; but the resolve is much.

Three months glided on. Carroll continued to pursue his calling as a music-maker, and not a wedding nor christening passed by, or, indeed, could pass by, without the assistance of his "professional" powers. But he now became what a young and gay Irishman seldom is-a hoarder of his earnings. He laid aside much of the wild and reckless mirth which had made him, despite his poverty, the king of good fellows. Remmy was, in many respects, above the generality of his class; for he had got a tolerably good education; he was quick at repartee, and not without a certain manly grace of manner; his conversation was never garnished with expletives; he had a good voice, and could sing with considerable effect; he was an adept in fairy lore and romantic legends; and he was accustomed to retail news from the newspapers to a wondering auditory, so that the marvel was how he could be "such a janius entirely." Hence his popularity with all classes. But now, as I have said, he laid aside all mirth that might involve outlay. His manners became sedate, almost grave, – nay, if we dared to apply such high words to a man of such low degree as an Irish piper, it might be added, that a certain degree of quiet dignity became blended with his speech and actions. Like the wedding guest described by Coleridge, he seemed "a sadder and a wiser man." Such a change could not pass unobserved, and while one-half the circle of his acquaintance shook their heads, and ominously whispered, "Sure the boy must be fairy-struck," the fairer moiety suggested that the alteration must have been produced by Love, though even their sagacity and observation failed to ascertain the object of his passion.

CHAPTER III. – HOW THE PIPER GOT ON WITH MARY MAHONY

The aim and the result of Remmy Carroll's newly-acquired habits of economy and self-denial became evident, at length, when his appearance, one Sunday, in the Chapel of Fermoy-it was the Old Chapel, with mud walls and a thatched roof, which stood in that part of Cork Hill whence now diverges the narrow passage called Waterloo Lane-caused a most uncommon sensation. It was

Remmy's first appearance, on any stage, in the character of a country-beau. His ancient coat was put into Schedule A (like certain pocket-boroughs in the Reform Bill), and was replaced by a garment from the tasty hands of Dandy Cash, at that time the Stultz of Fermoy and its vicinity. This was a broad-skirted coat of blue broadcloth, delicately embellished with the brilliancy of shining gilt buttons, each not much larger than a half-dollar. A vest of bright yellow kerseymere, with a double-row of plump mother-of-pearl studs; a new pair of closely-fitting unmentionables, with a liberal allowance of drab ribbons pensile at the knees; gray worsted stockings, of the rig-and-furrow sort, displaying the muscular calf and the arched instep; neat pumps, with soles not quite half an inch thick, and the uppers made "elegant" by the joint appliances of lampblack and grease (considered to *nourish* the leather much better than "Warren's jet blacking, the pride of mankind"); – a well-fitting shirt of fine bandle-linen, bleached to an exquisite whiteness, and universally looked upon as a *noli me tangere* of provincial buckism, with a silk *grinder* "round his nate neck," and a tall Carlisle hat, encircled with an inch-wide ribbon-such were the component parts of Remmy Carroll's new costume. True it is, that he left a little too much to the taste of Dandy Cash, the dogmatic and singularly conceited Snip; but still, Nature had done so much for him that he appeared quite a new man, the handsomest of the whole congregation, gentle or simple, and many a bright glance fell upon him admiringly, from eyes which had looked scorn at his chrysalis condition; and not a few fair bosoms fluttered at the thought, "what a fine, handsome, likely boy is Remmy Carroll, now that he is dressed dacent." He was not the first man whose qualifications have remained unacknowledged until such an accident as fine apparel has brought them into notice.

Mary Mahony was at Chapel on that Sunday when Remmy Carroll shone out, like the sun emerging from behind a rack of heavy clouds. A casual looker-on might have fancied that she was one of the very few who did *not* mind Remmy Carroll. Indeed, she rather hung down her head, as she passed him, – but that might have been to hide the blushes which suffused her face when she met his eye. Her father, a kind-hearted man, who had a cordial salute for every friend, insisted that they should not hurry away without speaking to the piper. Accordingly, they loitered until nearly all the congregation had left the chapel, and, among the last, Remmy Carroll was quietly stealing away. Bartle Mahony accosted him, with a hearty grasp of the hand, and warmly thanked him for having saved Mary's life, adding, "It is not until now I'd be waiting to thank you, man-alive, but Mary never let me know the danger she'd been in, until this blessed morn, when her cousin, Nancy Doyle, made me sensible of the ins and outs of the accident. But I *do* thank you, Remmy, and 'twill go hard with me if I don't find a better way of showing it than by words, which are only breath, as one may say."

Then Bartle Mahony slapped Remmy on the back, in a familiar manner, and insisted that he should walk home with them and take share of their dinner. "Don't hang down your head like a girl, but tuck Mary under your arm, and off to Carrigabrick, where I follow in less than no time, with the heartiest of welcomes. Don't dawdle there, man-alive, like a goose, but walk off like a man."

So through the town of Fermoy did Mary Mahony walk with Remmy Carroll-down Cork Hill and King-street, and across the Square, and along Artillery-quay, and by Skelhorne's paper-mill, and Reid's flour-mill, and then, on the Inches, by the Blackwater. History has not recorded whether Mary did actually take Remmy's arm-but it is conjectured that he was too shy to offer it, deeming *that* too great a liberty-but it is said that it was she who took the field-route to Carrigabrick, and, though she blushed deeply the while, she did not make any very violent objection to his taking her in his arms across that chasm, the passage of which, on a former day, had so nearly proved fatal to her. If I said that, while performing this pleasant duty, Remmy Carroll did *not* press her to his heart, I am pretty sure that no one would believe me. Well, then, there *was* this gentle pressure, but of course Mary Mahony believed he could not help it. – Do you think he could?

They proceeded to Carrigabrick, but the short cut through the fields proved the longest way round on this occasion. Bartle Mahony had reached the house fully half an hour before they did, and yet he had gone by the road, which, as every one knows, is nearly a mile round. They had exchanged

few words during their walk; it was not quite the lady's place to make conversation, and Remmy's thoughts were all too deep for utterance. In the earlier stage of love, passion is contemplative, and silence often has an eloquence of its own.

Remmy Carroll had the good fortune to win the particular favor of Mr. Bartle Mahony, who, as he was retiring to rest, kissed his fair child, as usual, and emphatically declared that Remmy Carroll was "a real decent fellow, and no humbug about him." He added, that as he had found his way to their hearth, he must be a stranger no more. And it came to pass, thenceforth, somehow or other, that Remmy paid a visit to Carrigabrick twice or thrice a week. These visits were ostensibly to Mr. Mahony, but it usually happened that Remmy had also a glimpse of Mary, and sometimes a word or two with her. It came to pass that Bartle Mahony, at length, fancied that a dull day in which he did not see his friend Remmy. Finally, as by a great effort of ingenuity, and in order to have a legitimate excuse for having his favorite frequently with him, Bartle Mahony announced his sovereign will and pleasure that Mary should learn music. Accordingly, when Remmy next came, he communicated this intention to him in a very dignified manner, and appointed Remmy forthwith to commence instructing her. But Remmy could play only upon one instrument, and the pipes happen to be so unfeminine, that he ventured to doubt whether the young lady would quite approve of the proposition. Having hinted this difficulty to Bartle Mahony, that worthy was impressed with its force, but, rather than relinquish his project, declared that, all things considered, he thought it best that he himself should be the musical tyro.

If the truth were known, it would have appeared that the poor man had no desire to learn, and certainly no taste. But as Remmy Carroll, proud as he was poor, had peremptorily refused the money offered as a substantial mark of gratitude for having saved Mary Mahony's life, this was her father's indirect and rather clumsy mode of rewarding him. Very magnificent were the terms which he insisted on making with the piper: he could have been taught flute, harp, violin, psaltery, sackbut, and piano at less cost. Very little progress did the kind old man make, but he laughed soonest and loudest at his own dulness and discords. However, if the pupil did not make good use of his time, the teacher did. Before the end of the first quarter, Mary Mahony had half confessed to her own heart with what aptitude she had involuntarily taken lessons in the art of love.

It would make a much longer story than I have the conscience to inflict upon you, to tell how Mary Mahony came to fall in love with Remmy Carroll-for fall in love she certainly did. Perhaps it was out of gratitude. Perhaps it might have been his fine person and handsome face. Perhaps, because she heard every girl of her acquaintance praise him. Perhaps, because he was her father's favorite. Perhaps, because they were so constantly thrown together, and he was the only young man with whom she frequently associated. Perhaps she loved him, because she could not help it. Why strive to find a reason for woman's love? It is like a mighty river springing up one knows not where-augmented one knows not how-ever sweeping onward, sometimes smoothly, sometimes in awful rapids, and bearing on its deep and constant current, amid weeds and flowers, rocks and sands, many a precious freight of hope and heart, of life and love.

Fathers and husbands are so proverbially the very last to see the progress which Love clandestinely makes under their roof, that it will not be considered a special miracle, if Bartle Mahony noticed nothing of the game which was in hand-hearts being trumps! Mary's merry cousin, Nancy Doyle, quietly smiled at the flirtation, as "fine fun," but did not seriously see why it should not end in a wedding, as Mary had fortune enough for both.

Winter passed away, and Spring waved her flag of emerald over the rejoicing world. Mary Mahony was walking in one of her father's meadows, for Remmy Carroll was expected, and he was now-though she blushed with a soft consciousness-the very pole-star of her constant thought. He came up, and was welcomed with as sweet a smile as ever scattered sunshine over the human heart. They walked side by side for a little time, and then, when the continued silence became awkward, Remmy stated, for the maiden's information, what she knew very well before, that it was very fine weather.

"True for you, Remmy," answered she: "see how beautiful everything looks. The sunbeams fall upon the meadow in a soft shower of light, and make the very grass look glad."

"It *is* beautiful," said Remmy, with a sigh, "but I have too heavy a heart to look upon these things as you do."

"Surely," inquired Mary, "surely you've no real cause to say that? Have you heard any bad news?"

"No cause!" and here the pent-up feelings of his heart found utterance: "Is it no cause? – Oh, Mary dear-for you *are* dear to me, and I may say it now, for may be I may never be here to say it again-is it no cause to have a heavy heart, when I have nobody in this wide world that I can speak to about her that's the very life of my life, while I know that I am nothing to her, but one that she sees to-day and will forget to-morrow! Is it no cause, when I know that the little linnet that's now singing on that bough, has as much chance of becoming an eagle, as I have of being thought lovingly of by the one that I love? Haven't I cause to be of a heavy heart, knowing that I would be regarded no more than that little bird, if I were to try and fly beyond the state I'm in, when I know that I am not many removes from a beggar, and have been for months dreaming away as if I was your equal? You are kind and gentle, and when I am far away, perhaps you may think that I would have tried to deserve you if I could, and then think well of one who loves you better than he loves himself. Oh, Mary Mahony! may God's blessing rest upon you, and keep you from ever knowing what it is to love without hope."

Overcome by his emotion-aye, even to tears, which flowed down his comely cheeks-poor Remmy suddenly stopped. Mary Mahony, surprised at the unexpected but not quite unpleasing matter of his address, knew not, for a brief space, what answer to make. But she was a woman-a young and loving one-so she let her heart speak from its fulness.

"May-be," said she, with a blush, which made her look more beautiful than ever, – "may-be, tis a foolish thing, Remmy, to love without hoping;" and she looked at him with an expressive smile, which, unfortunately, he was unable to distinguish through the tears which were now chasing each other down his face, as round and nearly as large as rosary-beads.

"It's of no use," he said, not perceiving the nature of her words; "it's of no use trying to banish you from my mind. I've put a penance on myself for daring to think of you, and it's all of no use. The more I try not to think, the more I find my thoughts upon you. I try to forget you, and as I walk in the fields, by day, you come into my mind, and when I sleep at night you come into my dreams. Wherever I am, or whatever I do, you are beside me, with a kind, sweet smile. Every morning of my life, I make a promise to my heart that I will never again come here to look upon that smile, far too sweet and too kind for such as me, and yet my steps turn towards you before the day is done. But it's all of no use. I must quit the place altogether. I will go for a soldier, and if I am killed in battle, as I hope I may be, they will find your name, Mary, written on my heart."

To a maid who loved as well as Mary Mahony did, there was a touching pathos in the simple earnestness of this confession; – aye, and eloquence, too, for surely truth is the living spirit of eloquence. How long she might have been inclined to play the coquette I cannot resolve, but the idea of her lover's leaving her put all *finesse* to flight, and she said, in a low tone, which yet found an echo, and made a memory in his heart: "Remmy! dear Remmy, you must not leave me. If you go, my heart goes with you, for I like you, poor as you are, better than the richest lord in the land, with his own weight of gold and jewels on his back."

What more she might have said puzzles conjecture-for these welcome words were scarcely spoken, when all further speech was arrested by an ardent kiss from Remmy. Oh! the first, fond kiss of mutual love! what is there of earth with so much of the soft and gentle balm of heaven?

There they stood, by the ruins of that old castle, the world all forgot. There they whispered, each to each, that deep passion with which they had so long been heart-full. The maiden had gentle sighs and pleasant tears-but these last, Remmy gallantly kissed away. Very wrong, no doubt, for her

to have permitted him to do so, and, in truth, she sometimes exhibited a shadow of resistance. There was, in sooth,

"A world of whispers, mixed with low response,
Sweet, short, and broken, as divided strains
Of nightingales."

"And you won't think the worse of me, Remmy, for being so foolish as to confess how I love you?"

"Is it me, life of my heart? not unless you say that it was foolish to love *me*. Sure, they were the happiest words I ever heard."

"And you will love me always, even as now?"

"Ah, Mary, I see that you are joking now."

"And you won't go as a soldier?"

"Not I, darling; let those who have heavy hearts, and no hope, do that same."

Much more, was spoken, no doubt. Very tender confessions and confidences, in truth, which I care not to repeat, for such are of the bright holidays of youth and love, and scarcely bear to be reported as closely as an oration in the Senate, or a lawyer's harangue at Nisi Prius, in a case of Breach of Promise. Such tender confessions and confidences resemble those eastern flowers which have a sweet perfume on the soil to which they are native, but lose the fragrance if you remove them to another clime.

At last, with many a lingering "one word more," many a gentle pressure of the hands, and several very decided symptoms, belonging to the genus "kiss," in the sweet botany of love, Mary and Remmy parted. Happy, sweetly and sadly happy (for deep love is meditative, rather than joyful), Mary Mahony returned home. She hastened to that apartment peculiarly called her own, threw herself on the bed, and indulged in the luxury of tears, for it is not Sorrow alone that seeks relief in tears, – they fall for hope fulfilled as truly, though less often, as for hope deferred. Weep on, gentle girl, weep in joy, while you can. Close at hand is the hour in which, ere you have done more than taste it, the sparkling draught of happiness may be snatched from your lips.

CHAPTER IV. – HOW THE PIPER BECAME A PETRIFACTION

Alike delighted and surprised at thus finding Mary Mahony a sharer in the emotions which so wildly filled his own heart, Remmy Carroll returned to Fermoy, in that particular mood which is best denoted by the topsy-turvy description – "he did not know whether he stood upon his head or his heels." He rested until evening at a friend's, and was not unwilling to have some hours of quiet thought before he again committed himself to commerce with the busy world. About dusk, he started with his friend for a farmer's, on the Rathcormac side of Corran Thierna, where there was to be a wedding that night, at which Remmy and his pipes would be almost as indispensable as the priest and the bridegroom.

As they were passing on the mountain's base, taking the soft path on the turf, as more pleasant than the dusty highway, a little lower down, Remmy suddenly stopped.

"There's music somewhere about here," said he, listening.

"May-be it's only a singing in your head," observed Pat Minahan. I've known such things, 'specially if one had been taking a drop extra overnight."

"Hush!" said Remmy, "I hear it again as distinctly as ever I heard the sound of my own pipes. There 'tis again: how it sinks and swells on the evening breeze!"

Minahan paused and listened. "Sure enough, then, there is music in the air. Oh, Remmy Carroll, 'tis you and the lucky boy, for this must be fairy music, and 'tis said that whoever hears it first, as you did, is surely born to good luck."

"Never mind the luck," said Remmy, with a laugh. "There's the fairy ring above there, and I'll be bound that's the place it comes from. There's fox-glove, you see, that makes night-caps for them; and there's heath-bells that they have for drinking-cups; and there's sorrell that they have for tables, when the mushrooms aren't in; and there's the green grass within the ring, as smooth as your hand, and as soft as velvet, for 'tis worn down by their little feet when they dance in the clear light of the full moon. I am sure the music came from that fairy-ring."

"May-be it does," replied Minahan, "and may-be it doesn't. If you please, I'd rather move on, than stand here like a pillar of salt, for 'tis getting dark, and fairies aren't exactly the sort of people I'd like to meet in a lonely place. 'Twas somewhere about here, if I remember right, that Phil Connor, the piper, had a trial of skill with the fairies, as to who'd play best, and they turned him into stone, pipes and all. It happened, Remmy, before your father came to these parts, – but, surely you heard of it before now?"

"Not I," said Remmy; "and if I did, I wouldn't heed it."

"Oh, then," said his companion, with an ominous shake of the head at Remmy's incredulity, "it's all as true as that you're alive and kicking at this blessed moment. I heard my mother tell it when I was a boy, and she had the whole of it from her aunt's cousin's son, who learned the ins and outs of the story from a faymale friend of his, who had it on the very best authority. Phil Connor was a piper, and a mighty fine player entirely. As he was coming home from a wedding at Rathcormac, one fine moonshiny night, who should come right forenenst him, on this very same mountain, but a whole bundle of the fairies, singing, and skipping, and discoursing like any other Christians. So, they up and axed him, in the civilest way they could, if he'd favor them with a planxty on his pipes. Now, letting alone that Phil was as brave as a lion, and would not mind facing even an angry woman, let alone a batch of hop-o'-my-thumb fairies, he never had the heart to say no when he was civilly axed to do anything.

"So Phil said he'd oblige them, with all the veins of his heart. With that, he struck up that fine, ancient ould tune, 'The Fox-hunter's Jig.' And, to be sure and sartain, Phil was the lad that could play: – no offence to you, Remmy, who are to the fore. The moment the fairies heard it, they all began to caper, and danced here and there, backward and forward, to and fro, just like the motes you see dancing in the sunbeams, between you and the light. At last, Phil stopped, all of a sudden, and they gathered round him, the craturs, and asked him why he did not go on? And he told them that 'twas dying with the drought he was, and that he must have something to wet his whistle: – which same is only fair, particularly as far as pipers is concerned.

"'To be sure,' said a knowledgeable ould fairy, that seemed king of them all, 'it's but reasonable the boy is; get a cup to comfort him, the dacent gossoon.' So they handed Phil one of the fairy's fingers full of something that had a mighty pleasant smell, and they filled a hare-bell cup of the same for the king. 'Take it, me man,' said the ould fairy, 'there isn't a headache in a hogshead of it. I warrant that a guager's rod has never come near it. 'Twas made in Araglyn, out of mountain barley, – none of your taxed Parliament stuff, but real Queen's 'lixir.' Well, with that he drank to Phil, and Phil raised the little dawny measure to his lips, and, though it was not the size of a thimble, he drank at laste a pint of spirits from it, and when he took it away from his lips, that I mightn't, if 'twasn't as full as 'twas at first. Faith, it gave Phil the boldness of a lion, that it did, and made him so that he'd do anything. And what was it the *omadhaun* did, but challenge the whole box and dice of the fairies to beat him at playing the pipes. Some of them, which had tender hearts, advised him not to try. But the more they tried to persuade him, the more he would not be persuaded. So, as a wilful man must have his way, the fairies' piper came forward, and took up the challenge. Phil and he played against each other until the cock crew, when the lot all vanished into a cave, and whipped Phil away with

them. And, because they were downright mad, at last, that Phil should play so much better than their own musicianer, they changed poor Phil, out of spite, into a stone statute, which remains in the cave to this very day. And that's what happened to Phil Connor and the fairies."

"You've made a pretty story of it," said Remmy; "it's only a pity it isn't true."

"True!" responded Minahan, with tone and action of indignation. "What have you to say again it? It's as true as Romilus and Ramus, or the Irish Rogues and Rapparees, or the History of Reynard, the Fox, and Reynardine, his son, or any other of the curious little books that people do be reading – that is, them that *can* read, for diversion's sake, when they've got nothing else to do. I suppose you'll be saying next, that fairies themselves ain't true? That I mightn't, Remmy, but 'twouldn't much surprise me in the laste, to hear you say, as Paddy Sheehy, the schoolmaster, says, that the earth is round, like an orange, and that people do be walking on the other side of it, with their heads downwards, and their feet opposite to our feet!"

"And if I did say so?" inquired Remmy, who – thanks to his schooling from the redoubtable Tim Daly – happened to know more of the Antipodes than his companion.

"Faith, Remmy, if you did say so, I know one that would misbelieve you, and that's my own self. For it stands to reason, all the world to a Chany orange, that if people was walking on the other side of the world, with their feet upwards and their heads down, they'd be sure to fall off before one could say 'Jack Robinson.'"

To such admirable reasoning as this, Remmy Carroll saw it would be quite useless to reply, so he allowed Minahan to rejoice in the advantage, usually claimed by a female disputant, of having "the last word."

They proceeded to the farmer's, Minahan, as they went along, volunteering a variety of particulars relative to the Petrified Piper – indulging, indeed, in such minuteness of detail, that it might have been taken for granted that he had, personally, seen and heard the matters he described.

It is to be feared that Remmy Carroll was but a so-so listener. He had no great faith in fairies, and his mind was just then preoccupied with thoughts of his own darling Mary Mahony. At last, Minahan's conversation ended, for they had reached the farmer's house, where Remmy and his pipes received the very warmest of welcomes.

You need not fear that I have any intention of inflicting a description of the marriage upon you. It is enough to say that the evening was one of thorough enjoyment – Irish enjoyment, which is akin to a sort of mirthful madness. Perhaps Remmy was the only person who did not thoroughly enter into the *estro* of the hour, for though successful love may intoxicate the mind, it subdues even the highest spirits, and embarrasses while it delights. There is the joy at the success – the greater if it has been unexpected – but this is a joy more concentrated than impulsive. Its seat is deep within the heart, and there it luxuriates, but it does not breathe its secret to the world, – it keeps its treasure all to itself, at first, a thing to be thought of and exulted over privily. Love, when successful, has a compelling power which subdues all other feelings. The causes which commonly move a man, have little power when this master-passion fills the breast.

In compliance with the custom at all wedding-feasts in Ireland, the company freely partook of the national nectar (by mortals called whiskey-punch), which was as plenty as tea at an ancient maiden's evening entertainment, where sally-lun and scandal are discussed together, and a verdict is given, at one and the same time, upon character and Souchong. Remmy, of course, imbibed a fair allowance of that resistless and potent mixture, the boast of which is, that "there is not a headache in a hogshead of it." Blame him not. The apostle of Temperance had not then commenced his charitable crusade. How could mortal man refuse the draught, brewed as it specially had been for him by the blushing bride herself, who, taking a dainty sup out of the horn which did duty for a tumbler, had the tempting gallantry to leave a kiss behind – even as "rare Ben Jonson" recommends. What marvel, if, when so many around him were rapidly passing the Rubicon of the cup, Remmy should have taken his allowance like "a man and a brother" – no, like a man and a piper, – particularly, when it is

remembered that Love, as well as Grief, is proverbially thirsty. Still, Remmy Carroll had not exceeded the limits of sobriety. He had drank, but not to excess – for his failing was not in that wise. And even if he had partaken too freely of the charmed cup, it is doubtful whether, with strong passion and excited feeling making a secret under-current in his mind on that evening, any quantity of liquor could have sensibly affected him. There are occasions when the emotions of the heart are so powerful as to render it almost impossible for a man, even if he desired it, thus to steep his senses in forgetfulness.

Remmy, therefore, was not "the worse for liquor" – although he certainly had not refrained from it. Minahan, on the other hand, who was quite a seasoned vessel, most buoyant in the ocean of free-drinking, and to whom a skinful of strong liquor was quite a god-send, had speedily and easily contrived to get into that pleasant state commonly called "half-seas-over," – that is, he was not actually tipsy, but merry and agreeable; and as he insisted on returning to Fermoy, though he was offered a bed in the barn, the trouble of escorting him devolved on Remmy.

They left the house together, lovingly linked arm-in-arm, for Minahan then had a tendency to zig-zag movements. The next day, Minahan was found lying fast asleep, with a huge stone for his pillow, near the footpath, at the base of Corran Thierna. It was noticed by one of those who discovered him, that his feet were within the fairy-ring which Remmy had observed on the preceding evening. But of Remmy himself there was no trace. If the earth had swallowed him up, he could not have vanished more completely. His pipes were found on the ground, near Minahan, and this was all that remained of one who, so often and well, had waked their soul of song.

The whole district became alarmed; for, independent of regret and wonder, on account of Remmy's personal popularity, a serious thing in a country district is the loss of its only Piper. At length, Father Tom Barry, the parish priest of Fermoy, thought it only his duty to pay a domiciliary visit to Minahan, to come at the real facts of the case, and solve what was felt to be "a most mysterious mystery."

Minahan was found in bed. Grief for the sudden loss of his friend had preyed so heavily upon his sensitive mind, that, ever since that fatal night, he had been drowning sorrow – in whiskey. It was now the third day since Remmy Carroll's disappearance; and when Father Tom entered the house, he found Minahan sleeping off the combined effects of affliction and *potheen*. He was awakened as soon as could be, and his first exclamation was, "Oh, them fairies! them thieves of fairies!" It was some time before he could comprehend the cause of Father Tom's visit, but even when he did, his words still were, "Oh, them fairies! them thieves of fairies! they beat Bannagher, and Bannagher beats the world!"

A growl from the priest, which, from lay lips, might have been mistaken for an execration, awoke Minahan to his senses – not that he was ever troubled with a superfluity of them. He testily declared his inability to tell his story, except upon conditions. "My memory," said he, "is just like an eel-skin, your Reverence. It don't stretch or become properly limber until 'tis wetted." On this hint, Father Tom sent for a supply of Tommy Walker;[5] and after summarily dispatching a noggin of it, Minahan thus spoke: —

"'Twas Remmy and myself, your Reverence, that was meandering home together, when, as bad luck would have it, nothing would do me, being pretty-well-I-thank-you at that same time, but I must make a commencement of discourse with Remmy about the fairy people: for, your worship, I'd been telling him before, as we went to the wedding of Phil Connor, who was transmographied into a stone statute. Well and good, just as Remmy came right forenent the fairy-ring, says he, 'Faith, I would not object myself to have a lilt with them!' No sooner had he said the words, your honor, than up came the sweet music that we heard the night before, and with that a thousand lights suddenly glanced up from

[5] At that time, the two great whiskey-distillers in Cork were Thomas Walker and Thomas Wise, – respectively carrying on their business in the South and North suburbs of the city. Both are alluded to in Maginn's celebrated song, "Cork is the Aiden for you, love, and me." The verse runs thus: —

the fairy-ring, just as if 'twas an illumination for some great victory. Then, the music playing all the while, myself and Remmy set our good-looking ears to listen, and, quick as I'd swallow this glass of whiskey – here's a good health to your Reverence! – a thousand dawny creatures started up and began dancing jigs, as if there was quicksilver in their heels. There they went, hither and thither, to and fro, far and near, coursing about in all manner of ways, and making the earth tremble beneath 'em, with the dint of their quickness. At last, your Reverence, one of them came out of the ring, making a leg and a bow as genteel as ould Lynch, the dancing-master, and said, 'Mister Carroll,' says he, 'if you'd please to be agreeable, 'tis we'd like to foot it to your pipes (and you should have seen the soothering wink the villain gave as he said the words), 'for,' says he, "tis ourselves have often heard tell of your beautiful playing.' Then the weeny little mite of a fairy fixed his little eyes upon Remmy, and, that I mightn't, if they did not shine in his head like two coals of red fire, or a cat's eye under a blanket!

"'I'm no player for the likes of ye,' says Remmy, modest-like. But they'd take no excuse, and they all gathered around him, and what with sootherin' words, and bright looks, and little pushes, they complately put their *comehether* upon him, and coaxed him to play for them, and then, the cajoling creatures! they fixed a big stone for a sate, and he struck up *Garryowen*, sharp and quick, like shot through a holly-bush. Then they all set to at the dancing, like the blessed Saint Vitus and his cousins, and surely it was a beautiful sight to look at. The dawny creatures worn't much bigger than your middle finger, and all nately dressed in green clothes; with silk stockings and pumps, and three-cocked hats upon their heads, and powdered wigs, and silk sashes across their breasts, and swords by their sides about the size of a broken needle. 'Faith, 'twas beautiful they footed it away, and remarkable they looked.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.