A BOGLAND SCHOOLMASTER

Clifton Johnson

1912

FORMERLY the school-house had been a dwelling, and a family still lived in one end. It was close by the roadside, a low, thatched building, just like any peasant's cabin, save for a small wooden sign on its front, lettered in bold type, " Luckawn National School." The day was dull and threatened rain. Indoor shelter seemed more desirable than outdoor rambling, and, enticed by the drone of child voices, I rapped on the patched and decrepit schoolhouse door. The schoolmaster opened it. He was a tall lank man with tumbled hair and a ragged brown beard, and looked as if he had been having exciting times. He wore an overcoat that hung limply from his sloping shoulders ; there was a great square patch on one knee ; his collar had long been a stranger to water and starch, and his necktie was frayed and out of place. He peered at me through his spectacles from the low doorway, and when he had recovered from his surprise at so unusual an occurrence as the advent of a visitor, he made me welcome.

The school occupied a single small room, and had to get along without a hall or even a closet. Such of the boys as wore caps and such of the girls as wore shawls, a garment commonly serving the double purpose of wrap and head-covering, bestowed these articles of raiment in an aperture where once had been a window. Overhead was no ceiling other than the rafters and cross strips supporting the thatch, shadowy and begrimed, and draped with sooty cobwebs. Three small windows admitted light through the thick walls, but were far from successful in coping adequately with the gloom of the apartment. They had cracks about them, and so had the shabby door, and the smoky little fireplace could hardly have done more than mitigate the chill of the room in really cold weather.

Long, rude desks, with accompanying backless benches, filled about half the floor space. The children were nearly all barefoot, and their clothing was ragged and much patched. The master said he encouraged them to go barefoot, and he wished they all did. He believed it was healthier, but his chief reason was that the expense of shoes was too great for some ; and yet if the habit of wearing them was general among the more prosperous, pride would force the others to have them also. A few came barefoot to school right through the winter, but all of the children and the women of the region, too, had shoes for wear to Sunday mass, though many of them ought not to have been guilty of such extravagance.

In one corner stood the master's small, much-battered desk, that, after all, was less a desk than it was a cupboard to hold the lesson books, slates, and other school materials. What the space underneath the desk failed to accommodate was stowed close by in a box, or leaned against the wall, or was heaped up on the floor. The school supplies were of the cheapest possible description, usually much the worse for wear. Most of the books were thin little affairs in limp cloth covers that cost only a cent or two. The paper was coarse, the illustrations rude, and the printing very bad. Their literary and pedagogic merits were not much better. Books and other necessaries were bought by the master, and the children were supposed to pay him for what they used. But it was a very poor district, and those who reimbursed him were the exception rather than the rule.

The master had brought the only chair the room contained from behind his desk for me when I entered, and I sat down to look on while the school continued its work. My knock had interrupted the roll-call. This was resumed, and the master checked off the remaining names on his register. At the same time one of the boys stood on the floor with a slate in his hands and counted those present eighteen boys and fourteen girls. That done the master made a reckoning to be sure his register and the boy's figures agreed, and then noted down the numbers and the total on a small blackboard hung near the fireplace next to a silent, broken-glassed clock. The attendance was about the average for that time of year ; but in winter, when the young folks, who during the summer are off to service in richer and more fertile sections, are home, he often had a school of sixty. That was too many for one person to instruct effectively in so small a room, and he did not try to do much teaching. His efforts were absorbed in the attempt to keep them employed and out of mischief. Some of the winter scholars were eighteen years old, but none came over thirteen in summer. Two hundred days made a school year. Few of the pupils, however, were present more than half the time, the master said, for neither they nor their parents cared whether they got any education or not.

In their studying the children were noisy, restless, and chaotic. They conned their lessons in whispers or aloud ; they moved about and even stood on their benches ; they played, and they drew pictures on their slates, and they spoke to each other freely and sometimes had sharp-voiced disputes. One of the smaller boys spent most of his time crawling about on the floor.

The teaching and keeping of order were in part intrusted to several of the older scholars, who took turns in trying to make the children in the seats attend to their studies and in putting questions to classes on the floor. Often there were two such classes out at the same time, one in a far corner studying a dingy wall chart or map, and another standing in a little group near a window, reading or spelling, or going over an arithmetic lesson. The members of these classes were an unruly lot, and cared little for the authority of their schoolmate teachers. The monitors did their best to live up to their positions by rapping the delinquents over the head with a pointer ; but such treatment was not always meekly tolerated, and I noticed in particular one spunky little girl who never failed to slap back. Yet she and all the rest were afraid of the master and quailed before him. Most of them had a worried, harassed look, as if in constant fear of impending disaster, and not without reason.

The master was naturally kindly, fond of children, and had the welfare of the neighborhood much at heart. But from old-fashioned habit and theory he was a tyrant in his petty realm, though he may have been that day more autocratic than usual, with intent to impress on me his earnest purpose to do his work thoroughly. His voice and manner were severe and explosive, and the children seemed to regard him as a perfect ogre. In an intermittent way he made the whole school feel the rigor of his rule, and the poor monitors, whose trials I thought were heavy enough already, came in for a generous share of his contumely.

“ Are they working, girl ?” his rasping voice inquires of a barefoot thirteen-year-old with a ragamuffin geography class. “ They are not, indeed !” and he makes a hop to her across the floor like a Jack-in-the-box, and administers a cuff on the ear. Then he skirmishes about with flying arms and gives the whole class a disciplining.

“ Now, boy,” says he, returning to his own class and indicating a youngster before him, who had neglected his book to watch the descent on the geography students, “ what are you doing ?”

He gives the boy a push, and taps him on the side of the head with a pointer. That pointer was the master’s sceptre. He could give most startling raps with it on his desk, he could rattle it with ominous warning on the covers of the book he held in his hand, and he was constantly using it more or less energetically on his scholars’ craniums. Physical force in the form of a shove or a slap was his favorite method of straightening the pupils into position, and he often accelerated an individual’s progress to and from class by reaching out his hand to the back of the culprit’s head, and making him or her break into a little run.

“ Blow up that fire, boy !” he commanded of a sudden. The lad chosen for the task dropped as if he had been shot, and so escaped the hastening hand which was about to catch him. On his knees, with cheeks distended he blew brightness into the smouldering coals on the low hearth, and then added fresh fuel from a little heap of peat blocks lying near on the broken and patched floor. This peat was supplied the year through by the children themselves, who brought it from home, a few sods at a time, in their hands. The replenished fire began to blaze and to smoke, and the room grew so hazy that the master had the boy open the door, and put a stone against its base to keep it open for a time.

The youngest child in the squad lined up before the master was a boy of six, in skirts, who did himself credit by reading a lesson of four-letter words without a mistake. On the strength of this success, the master tried him on something harder, and he soon struck a word that brought him to a full stop.

“ Go on now, like a man,” encouraged the master, looking over the rims of his spectacles with his head a little on one side.

The boy regarded his book attentively, and scratched the back of one foot with the toes of the other, all to no purpose.

“ You’re stuck !” cried the master.

The boy sounded the first letters of the word, and stopped again.

“ That’s right !” the master exclaimed, leaning forward with hopeful intentness. “ You have it in your lips speak up !”

But the boy failed his instructor at this crisis, and the master turned regretfully away. “ Tell him, any one in the class,” he said.

Just then he noted that a girl in the seats was the centre of a small riot, and he called out, “ Mary Ann, will you conduct yourself ?”

Mary Ann conducted herself, and the reading lesson proceeded. One of the older boys took a turn, but he stumbled over his words sadly, and the master’s wrath promptly rose. “ You are not watching, you sleepy thing, you !” said he, and he gave the lad a punch by way of emphasis. “ Put some life into it, sir ! Begin again, and read that as a Christian should !”

The boy did as he was bid, but in his fright stammered worse than ever. “ You must do better than that” the master ordered, “ or I'll pitch the nose off from you ! Put your finger on the words, now !”

After the reading came spelling, beginning with the word “ larch,” which fell to one of the girls. She looked around doubtfully.

“ Spell it like a good girl,” coaxed the master ; and she responded in hasty falsetto, “ L-r-r-c-hetch.”

That was correct, for the Irish pronounce *a* and *r* exactly alike. Their *b* also has an un-American individuality, while the final letter of the alphabet they call zed. But nothing in the spelling-lesson seemed to me quite so astonishing as to have the master presently give out whole sentences for the children to spell through, as, for instance, “ All birds come from eggs.” This, and other sentences, even longer, were wrestled with more or less successfully, just as if they had been many-syllabled words.

The master handed me one of the books from which the children had been reciting. It was a fresh copy from a small grocer’s box behind his desk, and its only blemish was a corner that had been nibbled by the schoolroom mice. The cover was of flexible red cloth, and looked bright, modern, and attractive. On it was stamped the name, “ First Book of Lessons,” and the price, “ one half-penny.” The tide-page showed that it was “ printed and published by direction of the Commissioners of National Education, Ireland.” It was not then a local schoolbook, but one prepared for general use, and I was a little astonished when I turned over the leaves to find it reminiscent of our American schoolbooks of fifty or seventy-five years ago. I noted that it had a flavor of unconscious Irish humor, and that the dry educational method adopted for its framework was clothed with a phrasing and an uncertainty of what was coming next, that, to a reader not a native, was full of surprise and entertainment.

Lesson I. contained the picture of an ox, above which was a line of disconnected letters that looked like some mystic word — a i m n o s t x y. Below the picture were the following remarks :

> an ox, my ox, is it an ox ?
>
> it is, is it so, is it my ox ?
>
> no ox, so it is, is it so ? no.

The ox was honored with a first place in the book because it could be spelled with two letters, while none of the other animals at all familiar can be spelled with less than three. In the first four lessons no word of over two letters was allowed. Then followed eight lessons where the limit was three-letter words, and not till more than fifty of the sixty-four pages were passed was there any word exceeding one syllable.

Such sentences as the following were characteristic of Lessons II. and III. :

> is he up or no ?
>
> lo, we go.

And there was this odd dialogue concerning j, z and certain of the other letters :

> is he at j, or at z?
>
> he is at z ; I am at j.
>
> is it q ? no, it is p.
>
> is it v ? no, it is u.

The comments on these last four letters sound contradictory and too much like juggling with the truth, but I suppose the intention was simply to furnish a clever devise for making a child recognize the difference between letters that resembled each other closely. It seemed to be the compiler’s idea that this sort of thing was a most valuable educational principle, and right through the book no effort was spared to bring near together words that were similar in length, sound, and look, no matter how unrelated the sentences.

On page 5 I found that time-honored statement, “ The cat has a rat,” beginning a paragraph which went on and seemingly spoke of the rat thus “ Can it be Sam or Pat ? It is Sam.” The reason why it was Sam and not Pat was apparently explained in the next two sentences, which affirmed that “ Pat had on a hat. He sat on a mat.” If that does not satisfy you that Pat was not the rat, what will ?

Pat was a favorite hero of these little lessons, though he had to share prominence with Joe, Ned, Tom, Mat, and a number of other boys whose names were shortened in the same way. Leading characters among the girls were Bess, Jane, Eva, and Rose.

The book did not fail to inculcate good principles. In one of the earlier lessons, for instance, after inquiring, without any preliminary reference to the article mentioned, " Is it a pin or a pen ?" as if you would be likely to confuse the two, the text abruptly declared, " I will do no sin." This skipping from one topic to another in the patchwork of the paragraphs was further exemplified in the following mixture of milk, tar, and morals in three consecutive sentences : " There is milk in the jar. Tar is put on a rope. It is sad to be at war."

Like plums in a pudding religious maxims were scattered all through the book — not in any discernible order, but as if the compiler had tucked them in here and there by chance whenever the idea occurred to him. The theology, like the pedagogy of the book, gradually developed, and on page 24 I found at the end of a purely secular lesson a complete paragraph devoted to the subject : —

" God loves us, and sent his Son to save us. The word of God tells us to love him. If we are bad God will not love us, and we shall not go to him, when we go from this world."

It seemed a pity to present God to the child mind in so forbidding an aspect. The sequence and connection found in the above were lacking in most parts of the book, and the religious element was usually minimized by what followed or preceded it, as in this : " To do ill is a sin. Can you run far ?" Or this : " Sound the horn. A child of the dust should not be proud." Running may have some vague connection with sinning, but what has sounding the horn to do with pride ? Here is still another example of the same sort : " Is he friend or foe ? Have you hurt your toe ? A good boy will not tell a lie. Sin is the cause of all our woe."

Science found a place in the book in random remarks like : " Gold is not white as tin is," " A snail can put out his horns and draw them in," " The moon gives light by night, and the sun by day."

The primer had frequent pictures which, while not without interest, were uniformly rude and blotty. The text below the picture of the ox, to which I have referred, though a trifle uncertain in its comments on the creature, sticks to the one subject. The more usual relations of the picture to the text are better illustrated by another lesson a few pages farther along. The cut represented a man in a big coat, carrying a basket on his arm, and hobbling along with the aid of a cane. He had his dog with him, while two goats were feeding on the near hillside, and in the distance there was a small house. The first sentence, apparently speaking of the man, said, " He was born in a house on the hill." Then came the question, " Is rice a kind of corn ?" Afterward, so far as one can judge, we return to the man with the remark, " He wants a firm kind of cord." Why he wants a firm kind of cord is left a mystery, for the rest of the lesson is : " Get me a cork for the ink jar. The morn is the first part of the day. This is my son ; I hope you will like him. My son, sin not, for God hates sin."

I will quote one more full lesson to show the capacity of a paragraph for condensed chaos and picturesque variety.

" Can a worm walk ? No, it has no feet ; but it can creep. The child is sick ; tell her not to cry ; let her stay in bed and sleep. This cliff is steep, and I feel my head light as I look down. Did you meet Fred in the street ? Weep no more. My boot is too tight; it hurts my foot, and I am lame. Will you drive the sheep home for me ?"

In the last third of the book the lessons changed in style and each confined itself to one subject. A fair example of this was the lesson about

“ The cow is one of those beasts that chew the cud. She is of great use to us. She gives us nice milk to drink ; her flesh, which we call beef, is good for food, and her hide makes us shoes and boots. Of the bones of the cow we make combs and spoons ; and of her fat we make soap, so that each part of her is of use. We ought to be kind to the cow which gives us such good things.”

That is realism with a vengeance. Just think of the milk we have now from the cow, and of the beef and leather, spoons and soap, that are in prospect !

The volume as a whole did not seem to me calculated to stimulate very much a child’s love of knowledge or literature, yet it seemed to serve the purpose of unlocking the doors of learning to these Luckawn youngsters, and I fancy there may have been something in its style peculiarly adapted to the Irish temperament.

The pupil who had the most distressing experience during my school visit was a mild, red-headed boy about eleven years old. He failed in his grammar, and the master set him to doing his task over again a dreadful purgatory of parsing. Half an hour later the boy’s ideas proved to be as hazy as ever. There he stood, with his hanging head, alone before the master, who called him a “ villain” and a “ scoundrel” and added, “ You’re the laziest feller ever I met ! Now, try that again ! Ah, worse and worse ! That’s terrible ! That’s the way ye’ll do with the inspector,” and he mocked the boy with cutting sarcasm.

“ Now, answer me this !” he continued. “ Is that worrud a verrub or isn’t it a verrub ?”

But the boy, breathless, and half scared to death, stood like a confessed criminal awaiting sentence. The master’s rage waxed keener, and his voice rose stormily, “ Say it out !” he shouted, “ or I’ll put your head on the other side of your face ! I'll throw you out of the door for disgracin’ the school !” and he knocked the grammar out of the lad’s hand onto the floor.

“ Now, pick that up and give it to me !” was his next command ; “ quickly, quick !”

The boy obeyed. He was crying and the tears were trickling down ; but the master hushed him up and said, still wrathfully, “ Clean your nose, boy ! Hurry, or I’ll get Anthony Kelly to come up and clean it !”

Then the master once more had his pupil try the grammar lesson, and that not availing, he in despair dashed the book in the boy’s face, and sent him weeping to his seat.

It was the most volcanic performance I had ever seen in a schoolroom, and I was a good deal disturbed. Perhaps the master noticed this, for he hastened to explain that the boy was his own, or he would not have been so sharp. I left soon afterward, but not before the master had given me an urgent invitation to call on him in the evening. He wanted to talk about America. That boy of his, he was afraid, with all his teaching, would be no scholar. He did not seem to take to book-learning, and he would have to work with his hands for a living, and his father was thinking America would be the best place for the lad.

I accepted the master’s invitation, and on my way to his home that evening was passing the schoolhouse, when someone rapped to me on a window. It was the master. He said he often worked there at his desk, after school hours, as long as he could see, for he was going to take examinations soon, in the hope to gain a promotion. As a younger man he had been too fond of the drink, and he keenly regretted those years wasted in dissipation, and felt he must now make up for lost time.

He gave up drinking to become a member of the Father Mathew Total Abstinence Society — an organization which has branches, not only throughout Ireland, but in all parts of the world to which the Irish have emigrated. Its founder, born in 1790, was a priest of the order of Capuchins in the city of Cork. His disposition was singularly charitable and benevolent, and his gentleness and affability, his simple and effective eloquence, and the zeal with which he discharged the duties of his ministry, won for him the universal love and respect alike of rich and poor. He is described as a man somewhat above the middle size, his features handsome and expressive, and at the same time peculiarly mild and gracious, his manner persuasive and easy, and humble without a shadow of affectation, his voice low and musical. No one could have been better fitted to obtain influence over a people proverbially swayed by the affections.

Previous to Father Mathew's time drunkenness lacked little of being esteemed a positive virtue in Ireland. Among the higher classes the host who suffered one of his guests to leave his table sober would have been considered mean and inhospitable. Ingenious devices were invented for compelling intoxication, such as glasses and bottles so formed that they could not stand, and must be emptied before they were laid on the table. If it was thought that a departing guest in " the good ould times" would be able to mount his horse without assistance, he was presented at the door with a quart glass which he was forced to drain, seldom against his will. An Irishman drunk was an Irishman " all in his glory," and the more whiskey he could carry the greater the distinction. The lower classes were by no means behind the gentry in their love of strong drink, and few of their popular songs were without some reference to whiskey, while its praise was the sole theme of many of their ditties.

Such was the situation when Father Mathew, at the age of forty-eight, inaugurated the temperance movement associated with his name. At first the society was wholly local, but Father Mathew's marvellous success in Cork led to the suggestion that he should visit other cities. He made a tour of Ireland, and later crossed the channel and made his plea in the larger centres of Irish population in England and Scotland. Everywhere he won followers in great numbers. The formalities of joining the society partook of the religious, and were accompanied by the presentation of a medal, to which the utmost reverence was attached by the recipient ; and an opinion prevailed among the more ignorant that the mission of the " apostle of temperance" was marked by many miraculous manifestations of the assistance of heaven. It was believed he had the power to heal diseases and preserve his followers from all spiritual and physical dangers.

The association included a large proportion of the adult population of Ireland, without regard to rank, creed, or sex ; and so complete was the revolution in the habits of the people, that numerous distilleries and breweries ceased working. Among those who suffered loss for this reason were the members of Father Mathew's own family, who were largely interested in the distilling trade. Father Mathew himself in his latter years was pecuniarily embarrassed by engagements into which he entered in the course of his philanthropic labors. Very large sums of money passed through his hands, but the munificence of his charities and the enormous expenses connected with his various missions, and perhaps his own unworldly and improvident habits involved him in painful difficulties. He died in 1856, but the fruit of his labors is still visible. Many of those enrolled in the association have not kept their pledges, yet they rarely relapsed into the extreme of drunkenness, and the general tone of public opinion as regards the use of intoxicating drinks underwent a complete and enduring change.

The home of the Luckawn schoolmaster was a half-mile up the road from the hovel in which he taught. In outer appearance it was very like the cottages of his neighbors —whitewashed stone with a thatch roof. Inside it was neater than the average, and the furniture was better, and there was more of it. Still, the house, in all its belongings, was about as humble as it could be with any comfort. Its two rooms were both open to the rafters, and their floors were of uneven cement. I met the master's half-dozen children, most of whom I had previously seen in school, and I met his wife, who wore over her head a kerchief after the manner common among the peasant women of the region.

She set forth a lunch for the master and me in the bedroom adjoining the kitchen tea, and goat's milk, and bread with caraway seeds in it. After we had eaten, and the master had crossed himself, he called for his pipe and sat down on a low bench by the kitchen fireplace for a smoke. That finished, he was ready for a walk.

We went in the waning evening light a mile or two up the valley. On ahead, looming hazily against the horizon sky, was one blue peak, but the view otherwise was of a bogland glen, barren and craggy, with a little river wandering through it, and scattered farm cabins clinging along the slopes. The master had a real affection for the valley, and was continually calling my attention to some phase of it — a glimpse of the stream, a curve of the road, or a green bush on a hillside — and asking if it was not beautiful. He seemed to be convinced that few landscapes could be more fair. We talked of America, and we talked of Ireland, and we talked of the master's own trials and troubles. He complained resignedly of the monotony of his work, of the pay, which was only about £60 a year, and of his having no associates but his few books. One of these books which had recently come into his possession was a cheap reprint of Bacon's " Essays," and he was much impressed with the wisdom of the old philosopher and his quaint but forcible expression.

He had begun teaching when he was eighteen, and had moved about here and there through the country, teaching ever since. The buildings he had taught in varied. Some were far better than this at Luckawn, and he mentioned one fine enough to cost £200. On the other hand, in his earlier experiences, he had been much worse provided for, especially those times when he had taught a " hedge" school — that is, had boarded around at the cottages, and made the kitchen of whatever house he happened to be living in serve for a schoolroom.

He was not wholly correct in his use of the term " hedge school." The real article dates back to the days of William of Orange, who, having found the Catholics in Ireland entirely on the Stuart side, was moved by the rancor of this fact, and zeal for his own religion, to make Ireland Protestant by penal laws. Among other provisions these laws excluded the Catholics from the army and navy, the magistracy, the bar, and the grand juries. They could not be sheriffs or gamekeepers or constables, and were forbidden to own arms. They could not possess a horse worth more than £5, and any Protestant tendering that sum could compel his Catholic neighbor to sell his steed. Worst of all, no education whatever was allowed to Catholics. A Catholic could not go to the university, he could not be the guardian of a child, or keep a school, or send his children to be educated abroad. The list of partisan and oppressive laws was a long and shameful one, and it was all too rigorously enforced, but the country clung to its prescribed faith nevertheless. To escape the ignorance to which the people were condemned, the priests established what were known as hedge schools, and taught the children in secret by the roadsides, on the hilltops, and behind stone walls and hedgerows. The necessity for secrecy is long past, but there have been many schools in the nineteenth century existing under such untoward circumstances that the term " hedge school" could hardly be considered a misnomer. Still, it commonly means, as used now, any school taught in a very rude place never intended or prepared for the purpose.

After my evening walk with the Luckawn school- master, the only time I saw him was several days later, when I called one afternoon at the schoolhouse. Lessons were over, and the master was marking in the scholars' books their tasks for the morrow. That finished, he told them to " Begone !"

It was raining, and the boys put on their caps and buttoned their tattered coats closer, and the girls pulled their faded shawls over their heads. Then they all ran out into the storm with whoops of rejoicing. The master gave me the one chair. On his desk lay a paper printed in

Irish. “ Ah,” he remarked, picking it up, “ that is as easy to me as English” and he read a half-column aloud, in proof of his assertion. He sometimes wrote for the paper himself, both prose and poetry, he confided, taking a tin snuff-box from his pocket and indulging in a generous pinch ; and he asked what I thought of blank verse, double rhymes, etc.

At present he was composing a speech and a long poem, with the intention of journeying to Dublin a month or two later to recite them at the Annual Irish Literary Festival. Perhaps I would like to hear them. He was evidently much pleased when I affirmed that I would, and said that to rehearse them before a stranger would help give him courage for the great occasion to come. He cleared his throat and adjusted a red handkerchief in the outer breast pocket of his overcoat so that the corner showed ; he felt of his necktie, and he pulled his spectacles down on his nose from where they had been reposing amid the ruffled hair on the top of his head. Then a doubt occurred to him. “ What do you think ?” he inquired, “ would it be better to wear or not to wear specs ?”

I expressed the opinion that it would be all right either way, and he said personally he preferred to wear them. He was not used to speaking in public, and through his “ specs” he saw the audience more dimly and was less timid ; but he believed the impression on his hearers was better with them off. The latter thought was conclusive, and he laid them on his desk. Then he drew himself together and began. His voice changed with the changing sentiments of the words, but his prevailing tones were gentle and melancholy. In the attitude assumed at the start he stood looking straight ahead, with hands interlocked and at rest before him. Gestures, however, soon began to come thick and fast, that which recurred most frequently consisting in clasping one or both hands to his heart.

The speech was on the revival of the Irish language, the poem a general glorification of Erin. At least, so the master described them. I had no other clew, for they were in the ancient Gaelic. At the close of each peroration he inquired with concern, Was it slow enough, was I pleased with the sound of it, and could I tell just how long it had taken by my watch.

When I left the schoolhouse a little later I bade the schoolmaster a final good-by, and the next morning I resumed my journey but I never shall forget him. He was a simple and earnest soul, mistaken perhaps in his conception of the necessity of sternness and violence in teaching, yet at heart sound. It is not, however, so much the teacher that I recall as the literary enthusiast and scholar rehearsing his Irish speech and poem in the dusk of his old battered schoolroom. He made a pathetic figure tall and hollow-chested, his shabby clothes hanging limply about him, and in his eyes a vague far-away look, showing that in spirit he was declaiming before the Dublin audience. After all, the golden glow of hope and aspiration can shine amid the boglands just as brightly as anywhere else in the world.

The isle of the shamrock; (1912)

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