

My Sweet Connemara

Eyre Evans Crowe

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It was upon a beautiful summer's morning, in one of those halcyon years when Ireland has a summer, that a tall-masted shallop, with more sail than hull, and with a very plentiful cargo of queasiness on board, entered the bay of Dublin,—that boasted scene, what tourist has left undescribed, or what son of Erin mentions it without an immediate comparison between it and the bay of Naples ? As no two places, however, on the earth's surface are more unlike, we shall spend no time in comparing them ; but depict, such as it is, our opening scene. To the right of the vessel arose the hill of Howth ;—a pretty hill, wanting but height, outline, wood, or cultivation, to render it a very beautiful object indeed. Across the isthmus that unites it to the city, the view extended—extended certainly, for there was not either hill, or village, or variety, to obstruct its range over the bleak flat. The visitor who had formed a pre-conceived idea from the mention of Naples, would have hoped to see the proud metropolis of Ireland rearing itself at the extremity of the bay which it commanded, up and upon the ascent of an eminence, attracting by its white walls the eye of the mariner from afar, and seeming to lord the ocean from whose brink it rose. There is nothing, however, of all this : Dublin is sunk in the lowest possible level, and is hidden from the distant eye, as much by its situation as by its hovering canopy of fog and smoke. On near scrutiny, a few steeples are seen to peep forth, and designate the city they adorn ; and, if it were not for these, and for the few masts that congregate in her river for the purposes of a scanty commerce, the discovery ships of China, if we can imagine the Celestial Empire to undertake such an enterprise, might visit the bay, without entertaining any suspicion of a city lurking at its extremity.

So much in revenge for the audacious and hackneyed comparison between this bay and Naples. By itself the southern shore of Dublin gulph is far superior, and altogether different in its kind from any scene that either Naples or Italy has to boast. The wide extent of a richly adorned and inhabited country ; its dark groves interspersed with shining villages and villas, rising gradually from the beach and sea, that form its foreground ; and bounded, behind and afar, by a most noble chain of mountains, contrasting their sterility with its richness, and their rugged outline with its green sinuosities, forms of itself one of the finest landscapes in the world. But, in speaking of the collective beauty of the bay, the less allusion that is made to that of Naples will be for the better.

The passengers, for the vessel in question was simply a packet-boat, consisted of the general kind and proportion of Irish live imports :—members of parliament from their garrets in Fludyer-street, and Great Suffolk-street, hurrying home, after the late dissolution, to be, if possible, re-elected ; law-students from their dinners ; pig-drivers returning from selling their lean stock to English fatness ; a pair of English country-tradesmen, lately metamorphosed into English militia-officers, coming to join their corps in Ireland, not a little strange and proud of their military foraging-caps ; with the usual complement of sick ladies and gentlemen. There was one passenger, in particular, deserving of notice, most obnoxious to the rest ; so much so, that, had his presence been known generally on board previous to sailing, few would have put to sea in such company. This was no other than the mortal remains of Lord Manvers, as the mourning domestics attendant on the coffin declared,—a young Irish nobleman lately deceased, and now returning to the family-vault of his ancestors. The oblong tenement of death, at first concealed beneath a piece of sail-cloth, had been, in the course of the voyage, laid out with all honour upon the deck, abhorred by its fellow-

passengers, and shunned even by the sailors, who were paid an enormous sum for thus acting Charons over the English channel.

“ Manvers ! Manvers ! Manvers !” muttered an old gentleman, seated on deck, and recovering a little from the manifest discomposure of his stomach ;— “ I can’t say I recollect that name in the peerage.”

The domestic of his late lordship seemed much inclined to reply to this ejaculation, but he checked himself for some reason or other ; perhaps he thought an altercation of the kind might not become the mournful haviour of his visage :—and certainly he did look most intensely lugubrious ! He was an immense, stout, broad-shouldered valet as ever had filled up, with the roast-beef of old England, a skin born but to the slender nutrition of potatoes. By extending and ruddying his cheeks, this his good condition increased much the width and good humour of his grin :—the face of the fellow had been Englified by fulness and expansion ; yet the humour of the Irishman still lurked in the few crannies of his countenance that his fatness had left, and redeemed it from the mere pinguitude of expression that beams unmingled with aught deeper than honest good humour in the countenance of John Bull. This visage composed to decorous dolour, looked the ludicrous itself ; and his appearance did not contradict what his countenance betrayed. His nether garments were of no mourning hue, yet his hat was enveloped by an enormous crape, and his coat was evidently part of a mourning suit, though, how he could have got into it was matter of surprise :—by a dint of stretching, that its thread-bare texture seemed likely not long to allow, it spanned his shoulders, doing them little justice, holding his arms back in a pinioned attitude, leaving his huge wrist-bones uncovered ; its shoulder-knots in his ears ; and altogether giving him the appearance of a plucked as well as of a pinioned fowl.

As the old gentleman continued his “ Manvers ! Manvers !” the domestic grew impatient. “ By my soul, I’ll give him something else to think of !” remarked he to his comrade as he moved to the further end of the ship. The means Barney, for such was his name, put in practice to give the old gentleman something else to think of, soon became evident. The fellow had procured some slices of bacon, and was busied frying them in the forepart of the ship, to the deadly annoyance of every passenger, whose stomachs took new qualms at the unwelcome odour that steamed from Barney’s unrelenting cookery to their nostrils. They protested, and Barney concluded by devouring his bacon : but the point was gained ; and the old gentleman was thenceforward too much occupied by the fresh uneasiness of his stomach to trouble the sable-clad domestic by any more of his incredulity.

The vessel, in the mean time, neared the Pigeon-House ; and its approach attracted at once to the quay all the population of that artificial peninsula :—idlers, porters, boatmen, and custom-house-officers ; whilst a flock of cars and jingles, for they looked in gait and appearance more like huge ragged birds than like Christian vehicles, fluttered to the spot, and kept hovering round. The live passengers were soon landed and carried off, many per force, by those vulture-like vehicles we have described ; and the remains of the late Lord Manvers were at last slung ashore with some difficulty. A proper hearse was in readiness, and thither Barney and his friends were preparing to bear their late master ; when the gentlemen of the custom-house, who seemed to have less reverence for the dead than even for the living, interfered, and declared not only their right, but their determination, to pry into the coffin, lest it might contain contraband goods. Loudly did Barney protest against the sacrilege ; but the gentlemen of the revenue were, as usual, politely obstinate on the point, and the coffin was borne in for examination.

“ Any how, Mr. Raspberry ; you wouldn’t be uncovering my master, rest his soul ! afore these spalpeens, to be makin’ a show of him ?” said Barney.

“Certainly not, my good fellow ! We’ll take quiet and decent peep at the old gentleman, for fear, you know, lest he should have gone to steep with a bottle or two of French brandy under his head. I’ve known corpses come in here well stored with that sort of provision.”

“And what if there war a bottle of brandy inside, Mr. Rasberry?” said Barney, alarmed, “where would be the harm ?”

“The harm !—where’s the harm in defrauding his Majesty’s revenue ? The harm would be, that we should seize bottles, coffin, body and all, my tight lad,” said Rasberry, who was a joker.

“Body and all !—saze the body ! Gob ! I’d like to know what law you have for that, anyhow.”

“The *Habeas Corpus* Act, Sir,” answered Rasberry, laughing at a jest lost unfortunately on the illiterate serving-man.

Sam Rasberry was a character, and deserves a paragraph. He was a man of about six feet six inches in height, with shoulders and protuberance in proportion, and with humour and goodness just as his size. Conceive this man-mountain dressed out as a child of four years old, in cap and frock, with a coral and bells about his neck, and some similar plaything in his hand, acting the infant inimitably, blubbering and scarce able to walk ;—such was the character in which Sam Rasberry chose to appear at a city masquerade, to the everlasting laughter of almost the whole metropolis there congregated. Such freaks on the part of Sam were numerous : another delight of his was to parade the streets, linked to the smallest possible man he could lay hold on, like a seventy-four with her jolly-boat in tow.

Sam had another peculiarity, whence he derived the name, under which he went more generally than under any other, of the Sturdy Beggar. He was sadly given to charity ; and not only charitable himself, but the cause of it in others—in that he was indefatigable, importunate, impudent, and humorous in collecting for the poor. It being a rule in political economy, that a supply always creates a demand, Sam was never without supplicants and objects, which led him a life of continual supplication and begging. Thus came it, that he was the pleasantest fellow in the world after dinner, and the greatest bore before it ; and as welcome a guest at the one time as he was a dreaded dun at the other.

Such was the officer of his Majesty’s customs, that stood over the coffin of Lord Manvers, hammer and turnscrew in hand, resolved to face the sight of death—nay, of putrefaction, in the discharge of his duty. Barney alone, according to his request, was present, and seemed in very uneasy expectancy of the operation. Sam Rasberry’s powerful hand was not long in unscrewing the lid,—he raised it, and fell back : —

“Whe’ten the divil run a-hunting with your curiosity, Sam Rasberry,” said the defunct Lord Manvers, raising himself upon his elbow, “you can’t let even the dead rest.”

“I beg ten thousand pardons, Mr. M’Loughlin, I had not the least thought in life of disturbing you. I was thinking of French brandy, and nothing else, when your head popt up.”

“Faith, then, if it wasn’t a right guess, ’twas a near one, for some such contraband article was here with me.”

“So I guessed,” said Sam, “from your honest servant’s alarm.”

“Here, Barney,” said Mr. M’Loughlin, holding forth a couple of bottles, that had lately contained the object of Mr. Rasberry’s search ; “it was a stifling birth, in spite of all the

augur holes you bored ;—cleanse me of these chicken bones ;— G— ! the next time I go into a coffin, I'll die of a dropsy, and have more room.”

“ And why ! what, in the name of G—! Mr. M'Loughlin !” cried the astonished Raspberry, “ is the cause of all this ?”

“ The cause !—why, isn't Parliament dissolved these six weeks, Sam ?—and isn't there an army of bailiffs up in every county to intercept my journey to my own sweet Connemara ? so I am travelling, like other great folks, incog ; and though my equipage is not of the gayest, nor the most roomy, still I hold it both freer and gayer than any apartment in the Marshalsea.”

“ Well, if that trick doesn't bang me out and out !” said Sam.

“ Come, nail me down once more, old boy, for fear the rogues would smell a rat, before I'm off this cursed long wall of yours.”

The officer of the customs was about to obey, till he bethought him of the noble opportunity offered for his favourite hobby of collecting. “ Allow me. Sir,” said he, “ to solicit a pound note from you for the Female Penitentiary.”

“ The devil take your conscience, Raspberry, t' ask a man in a coffin to subscribe for another penitentiary, as if this wasn't as nate a little one as ever debtor crept into, without subscribing for any other.”

Sam, however, was positive in behalf of his Penitentiary, and refused to screw down Mr. M'Loughlin into the late Lord Manvers, till he got his solicited subscription. That pocketed, all was well : his lordship's coffin was marked with the chalked permit of the custom-house, borne to the prepared hearse, and so conveyed to an hotel in the city.

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“ From Cork and Kerry to Londonderry,” as O'Doherty hath it, “ there never was a better fellow than Dick M'Loughlin. He was a very prince ; ay, every inch a king” in his own domains ; where none durst approach within fifty yards of his majesty without hat in hand ;—his word was a law to the bogs, his smile sunshine, that would make even a clamp of black turf rejoice with gladness ; and as to his frown, it was withering, 'twas annihilation. Philosophers say, that the possession of absolute power will corrupt the purest heart, and infect with the bile of tyranny even the most benign disposition :—a fig for such philosophy,—the monarch of Connemara was a living lie to the proposition. For, in all the plenitude of his power, against which the very waves of his neighbour and well-beloved cousin the Atlantic might rise in vain, Dick was the most generous, most benevolent, tender-hearted, and philanthropic of mankind. Have my readers ever beheld that ingenious work of art degraded, in the beautiful city of Cloyne, into the sign of a *shebeen* ?—but let that pass ; there is the parson, who saith, *I pray for all* ; the red-coat who fights ; the ruddy visage of John Bull that declares, in a circular space resembling the puff of a tobacco-pipe, *I pay*. Now Dick should be the sixth *all*, next in rank to John, not that he pays for all or any ; *that*, for some reason or other, not being his *forte* ; but this being his superscription, *I feel for all*, his right hand pressed upon his left breast.

And never could the flattering art of limning hit upon attitude or expression more just,—for Dick was a philanthropist *par excellence*, one that did not confine his sympathies to the limited and biped portion of humanity, but extended them, with the impulse of a true Irish heart, throughout the whole sentient kingdom of Nature. That “ noble animal the horse,” as a brother potentate of Dick's would say, was the object of his prime regard ; bulls and bullocks he protected ; and for cows, his breast overflowed with the milk of human kindness. In

short, he was the very Saturn of the hoofed tribe ; and the golden age of horseflesh and of cowflesh is to be dated from the commencement of the nineteenth century. The canine and the feline species also went not without his protection ; and his statesman-like views extended to the amelioration of the condition of caterpillars, and the introduction of *enseignement mutuel* amongst the oyster beds of Carlingford.

The Irish, though “ a persecuted and a hard drinking people,” are, nevertheless, a sentimental one, especially after dinner. And at such seasons, which they boast as “ the feast of reason and the flow of soul,”—in the interpretation of which you may read, a devilled drumstick for reason, and whiskey for soul,—they are very fond of instituting a comparison between Dick M'Loughlin and Rousseau. I cannot say but that this Frenchman is a most convenient personage to all character-limners, whether historians, critics, or essayists. There is no genius under the sun that cannot be compared or contrasted with him. Thomas Moore found out Byron, one day, to be a ditto of him ; and Lord John Russell, but the other, discovered his fellow in Burke, Now let me try my hand at a comparison between the French Philosopher and the Irish monarch. “ Both were men whose imagination outstripped their judgment.” Both were eminent philanthropists, and both encountered, for their philanthropic schemes, the ridicule of their more hard-hearted fellows. Both were great men, bestowed by a remote and provincial state to the metropolis, that their presence from time to time adorned.

Their situations in life, though different, were not dissimilar ;—the monarch ruled over a rude and uncivilized state ; and the philosopher took care to uncivilize every subject that entered under his intellectual sway. One persecuted the cruel mob of the English metropolis ; the other was persecuted by the unfeeling mob of the French. One, to be sure, was an orator ; the other a writer,—but both were equally eloquent ; and one, in despite of blunder, and the other, in despite of paradox, seldom failed in the end to convince and win over all hearers to their opinion. In love—but let us draw a veil over the foibles of great men. In debt—why let us do the same. And my comparison is already complete.

It was in a small hotel in Great Britain-street, Dublin, that our philanthropist emerged from his coffin, and took breath.

“ Barney,” was his first word, “ begone to Cooke-street, and dispose of this travelling-carriage ; for, by St. Patrick ! I'll never enter it more while living, to 'scape all the sheriffs in Leinster.”

“ And the bet, your honour !”

“ Oh ! bad luck to the bets,” said Dick, “ I never won one of them but I lost.”

“ That's mighty quare, any how—but what's the rest of it ?”

“ Why the bet, Barney, was not to land in Ireland at any place but the Pigeon-House, and to enter Connaught by no passage but Athlone bridge.”

“ Athlone bridge !” said Barney, “ by gemini ! that's a wicked spot. That rascally town's alive with bailiffs, magistrates, writs, and summonses.”

“ Eels, priests, prostitutes, and soldiers,” added his master.

“ Alas ! do what we will,” said the serving-man, “ you'll never cross the bridge.”

“ I will, by G—!” cried Dick M'Loughlin, swearing with all the vehemence at least, if not with the feeling, of my Uncle Toby.

But my readers must be informed respecting this celebrated wager.

Heaven knows what Dick had been doing, but the dissolution of Parliament took him quite by surprise ; and whether it was that he was in love, or in drink, or had not the mopusses ready, Dick despaired of getting over the herring pond in time to pass safe to his kingdom from the clutches of the law. The worthy member at this was wroth, and expostulated with my Lord——in terms both hot and hearty. The bland firmness of his lordship soon, however, smoothed down the ruffled plumage of Dick's choler.

“ A man of your talent and knowledge of the world, Mr. M'Loughlin,” said his Lordship, “ ought to turn this *contre-temps* to his advantage.”

“ I haven't the honour,” said Dick in reply, “ to know Counter-Tom. But being of your Lordship's intimacy he must be a clever fellow ; and if he would help me through——”

“ Nay ! you mistake, Mr. T——”

“ I mistake ! blood and ——! I have you to know, my Lord, that I never made a mistake ; no, nor a blunder, in the whole course of my life.”

“ Come, come, my Connaught Ranger !” said his Lordship, “ don't bluster,—we are too old stagers now to blow one another's brains out. As to Counter-Tom, whom you did not mistake, you shall know him one of these days.”

“ I know him already, and no thanks to you,” said Dick, still wroth at being informed he was under a mistake ; “ he is Pozzo di Borgo's secretary.”

“ He is,” replied his Lordship ; “and, moreover, a Siberian Prince. But, touching your dilemma, have you ever been at Newmarket ?”

“ No !” said Dick ; “ I never attend the inhuman sport of horse-racing.”

“ A hem !—but you've been of old upon the Curragh, and know what folk there mean by covering a man's losses.”

“ Yes, I've some idea o' that.”

“ What think you of trying it now ? You owe a little, Mr. M'Loughlin.”

“ Owe a little !” said Dick, angry at having his debts degraded in sum ; “ I'd have you to know, my Lord, that I owe as much as any man in Great Britain.”

His lordship was not inclined to dispute the amount of Dick's negative property ; so he waved that argument, and proceeded with his counsel.

“ How many chances against your escape ?”

“ An hundred to one against any man, barring my own proper self,” replied Dick.

“ Make the chance more against you, then, by fixing places of landing and passage, and bet any gull a few cool thousands that you escape in despite of these obstacles, and it makes the risk worth running.”

Dick shook forcibly his Lordship's hand, and swore his gratitude. He turned westward ; and in two days had secured his bet, as we have given it, ordered his coffin, and set out.

Half of the wager was, as our readers have perceived, won by the landing securely at the Pigeon-House. To travel through by-roads to Athlone was not very difficult and dangerous, and required very little exertion of invention ; but how to get across that *pons asinorum*, as Dick might have called the bridge, from the puzzle it put him into, as well as from other reasons. It was the direct road to his home ;—his passage was, of course, expected, and divers broad-shouldered men, armed with divers powerful strips of parchment, attended to intercept the further march of the monarch. It was the only bridge, too, that spanned the Shannon for some forty or fifty miles on either side of it, and was thereby the only and the very key of Connaught. St. Ruth defended it as such in days of yore ; and Ginkell, unable to force it, forded the rapid river below ; but this was an act of prowess that the wager forbade our friend to try. A *boná fide* passage of the bridge was to be effected, and disguise seemed the only means.

“ I must invent,” said Dick, tapping his forehead in the style of Kean ; “ Barney, get me a bottle of the mountain-daisy. And as to the coffin, you’d better leave it where it is, or send it on before us ; for elections are approaching in the county Galway, and if I don’t myself, a friend, at least, will be sure to want it. Indeed, Barney, if you could get another, a nate little one, that would fit in that (the other candidate’s a little man)—two coffins, Barney—do you hear me ?—the market would not be over-stocked with the commodity.”

Barney listed to this very grave advice, touching an importation of coffins into the county Galway ; but first of all he brought the mountain-daisy. Lord Byron says, that “ an Irish peasant, with a little whiskey in his head, will invent and imagine more than would furnish forth a modern poem.” Perhaps so,— I wish some of our very best poets, now-a-days would bribe the said peasant with a little whiskey, to furnish them with some little of the imagination and invention that the sons of the Muse are so beginning to lack. If the peasant, however, can imagine by the aid of drink, what must not the prince be able to effect by the same agency ? Before the mountain-daisy had travelled half down the bottle’s side, Dick’s invention had hit upon a plan for crossing the Ass’s Bridge of Athlone. He called forthwith his trusty valet, and communicated to him the disguise under which he intended to defy the keen eye of the under-snappers of the law. The prime minister, in the tight mourning frock, shook his head at the idea, like Lord Burleigh, and thought it perilous. Dick, however, upheld his resolution ; and as, in this case, the minister was not responsible, the sovereign had his way.

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The fattest man in Ireland, if not in Great Britain, was Arthur Kelly. His dimensions I cannot exactly give ; but there can be no doubt they would, in numerals, have looked prodigious upon a booth in Bartholomew Fair, and gathered a little fortune from the curious. He was, in fact, of such a size, that the scope of one’s imagination would not contain it ; and if you parted with him yesterday, so much did your recollected idea of him ever fall short of the original, that your amazement on beholding him the next day was as great as when you first saw him, eclipsing, either two sides of a room and half its furniture, or the better part of the landscape, if ye were in the open air. Any Falstaif that the stage ever stuffed, was but a child to him ; such a moving enormity was he.

Arthur was a boon companion, well known over all the West of Ireland, welcome every where for his size and good humour ; if, indeed, it required any requisites whatsoever to make any one welcome in that most hospitable of all tracts. This hospitality of all and every one, Arthur took care to have yearly recourse to : he fell away sadly, he complained, if he stayed more than a fortnight in any one neighbourhood,—so that if he over-ate, or overdrank his welcome, he at least never outstaid it. He was a lie to the proverb, being a rolling stone that gathered an enormity of moss ; and neither in flesh nor pocket was he the worse for his continual peregrinations. Arthur, too, was esteemed throughout the whole circuit of his

rambles as a wit and a wag of the first order,—why, I never could discover. But since the age of Shakspeare, who, by his Falstaff, reversed the old Grecian proverb of “A large stomach produceth not a subtle mind,” not mere corpulency, perhaps, but the extreme of it is accounted synonymous with wit ;—it implies the necessity of it, and ever so sorry a joke issuing from so large a reservoir, is thereon esteemed a good thing. For this reason certainly, and for no other, could Arthur have gained the character of a wit ; for, in truth, he was the most blundering punster, that ever lived by putting the King’s English out of joint. His fame long ago reached the ears of Miss Edgeworth ; and she, the fair and powerful magician, struck into life her idea of him under the title of Sir Terence O’Fea ; but no sooner did she see this Falstaff of Connaught, than she regretted her misrepresentation, and acknowledged that not the least similitude existed between Arthur and Sir Terence.

Under this character, and in the disguise of Arthur Kelly’s corpulency, was it Dick M’Loughlin’s resolution to cross the bridge of Athlone ; and Barney was commissioned forthwith to get stuffing and wadding sufficient, with the enormous boots, like buckets, and other spacious habiliments, which could belong to no other man in either Connaught or Leinster, than Arthur Kelly. These took a day or two to procure, and with them among his effects, Dick journeyed by quiet roads towards Athlone; much in the curved line that Irish fire-arms are said to shoot, *i.e.* round a corner. I believe it has not been set down as part of the bet, which it nevertheless was, that the passage of the bridge by our worthy should take place by daylight. However, there was half an hour after sunset and before sunrise allowed in the day ; but Dick scorned, as he said, to be either a peep-o’day-boy, or a twilight skulker ; and relied on the august character of Arthur Kelly to protect him through at mid-day. He had, moreover, chosen well his time,—it was the week of the famous fair of Ballinasloe, whither myriads, both of vehicles and foot-passengers, biped and quadruped, were every hour hurrying over the stipulated bridge. Nor did Dick’s countenance much irrembrace Arthur’s, being both stamped potatoes, disks broad and ruddy, like the setting sun, with little idle penciling of feature thereon.

The sensation was great when the form of Arthur Kelly made its appearance in the streets of Athlone. The man with the nose, had he returned to Strasburgh, could not have caused a greater uproar in the Rhenish city. Not a window was untenanted ; pig and bullock drivers ceased to goad, and stopped to gaze ; and the very prize oxen lowed at an animal more enormous than themselves. The fat man rode on, not at all at his ease under this general attention. He committed several blunders ; one was, nodding to the sovereign of Athlone, a most important personage, who stood regulating the march of the oxen, and magisterially lording their drivers. The monarch of Athlone returned not the salute of the monarch of Connemara, disdainful, as he deemed it, to return the salute of fat Arthur Kelly ; for the sovereign, like his brother in brains and dignity, the Mayor of Garret, stood upon his dignity. The regent (my readers are astonished at all these crowned heads and princes of the blood) followed the dignified example of his august Sire. Dick was wroth ; but he swallowed the oath that had already gotten as far as his lips, and spurred his overloaded steed, even to stumbling down, to the fated bridge. There was a bailiff in every filthy recess of it, and a posse of them leaning in wait upon the Queen’s arms, as some monument of Elizabeth’s days upon its battlements is called ; but they knew not the wolf in the fat sheep’s clothing, and in five minutes Dick’s wager was all as won as if it had been in his pocket.

Having refreshed him self at the Three Blackamoor’s Heads, Dick pushed on, still in his assumed size and character, for Ballinasloe ; once there, he knew himself as safe as in the wilds of Connemara, as shepherds and other peasantry from that savage region were in myriads at the fair, and would protect him ; nay, lay the town level at his command. It was a wearisome and a sweltering journey both for horse and man ; and for the latter not least, considering the immense mass of feathers, tow, flannel, and outer garments in which he was enveloped. Still, to get rid of them prematurely might have been attended with danger, as the county Roscommon, which he traversed, was not without its law-officers and strips of parch-

ment. And so in “durance vile” Dick trudged along, until the picturesque town of Ballinasloe appeared in view, its outskirts thronged with the beggars that were exorcised from its streets, and who are, in my mind, the very *moral* of perfect begging. By the Virgin ! and by all the Saints !—the mother that bore you ! and an hundred such mixtures of supplication and implication, they literally frighten alms from the stoutest-hearted wayfarer. “ Hurrying to and fro” there was, with a vengeance, of every vehicle under the sun ; sheep, bullocks, pigs. Connaught-men. and other heads of cattle. Bur this was not the fair side of that sweet town, so I must defer my description. Welcome was the sight of the town to Dick, and the ivy-grown ruins that skirt the bridge : they might pass for the remains of an ancient palace, or castle, tenanted by Ollum Fodlah, or some such worthy: yet I doubt if the miller that ground the country corn there, lies as yet cold in his grave.

Dick rode over the bridge in his corpulent disguise, and was welcomed by all the graziers as the pride of the prize show ; he was even greeted with acclamations. But on entering the main street, his appearance evidently excited other sensations. The first beholders started at his sight, gazed with their eyes unwinking, or turned them up street in search of some other object ;—anon, the passengers began to flee, and the whole throng grew strangely discomfited at Dick in disguise ;—at last an old hooded hag stopped opposite to him, clapped her hands and cried,

“ Och wirra ! Arthur, Arthur Kelly ! my darlint boy, that I’ve been seeing in beauty and increse these twinty year, is there an end o’ ye at last ? Holy Vargin ! safe us ! but it’s the plainest body-like *fetch* I ever seed in my life.”

The fact was, Arthur Kelly himself had been at the fair, as was usual with him, from the commencement ; and was, at the very moment, in *propria personá* at the other end of the street, remarked, for who could pass him without remarking, by all the crowd ; who now beheld in Dick another Arthur all as fat as he. In such enormity of size, features pass for nothing—no one dreamed of the possibility of any man existing different from Arthur Kelly, and his rival in size, yet unknown and unheard-of. In short, Dick was set down by all as Arthur’s *fetch*, and this foreboded certain disaster and death to the fat Connaught-man. Half Ballinasloe was sunk in pity and in fright.

It is a maxim generally found to hold true in life, that however deeply others feel for us, and sympathize in our misfortunes, we are apt to be, after all, more deeply interested and affected for ourselves. So at least it proved in this case. The inhabitants and visitors of Ballinasloe felt for Arthur’s foretokened fate ; but Arthur himself, on beholding his own *fetch* ambling down street on a nag the very *moral* of his own, as he would have said, was by far the most alarmed personage in the parish. Had he been a-foot, so completely was he petrified, that he must have awaited the coming of his ghostly semblance ; but being a-horse, his flight was instinctively produced by a turn of the bridle and a pressure of his heel, so very forcible and unusual, that his steed set off with the mightiest attempt at a gallop, certainly, that steed ever made under Arthur Kelly. Even the trot effected was lamentable, being that of a boy endeavouring to carry his elder by ten years, disjointed and top-heavy, every step achieved in the very teeth of all probability. The gaze of the spectators was thus averted from Dick to his hapless prototype; and it was curious to observe the interest each beholder took in the fat man’s career, veering involuntarily their arms and attitude on the opposite side to that on which Arthur’s weight, for the moment, preponderated. But this did not serve ; for after traversing a rood with a speed that he had not known for at least a score of years, down came Arthur and his steed, rolling one over the other. Luckily, it was the grass of the fair-green ; at any rate the horse had the worst of it when undermost, and Arthur was uninjured, when the steed was uppermost.

Dick was, by this time, aware of the cause of his terrifying appearance ; and immediately, to the great consolation of Arthur and the whole crowd, he uncased him, delivered himself

from the incumbrance of buckets, tow-bags, and pillows, and stood, though strangely accoutred, at once confessed the original and undeniable Dick M'Loughlin. There was a shout of joy and welcome then, indeed ; for great had been the anxiety and fear amongst his subjects, that they should not have the honour of his presence amongst them this season, so numerous and imminent were known to be the perils that beset his path. Amongst the first that paid obeisance to the monarch, was Arthur Kelly, the Falstaff of his court ; who readily asserted to Dick, and backed it moreover with an oath, that for no earthly purpose had he eaten and drunk for the last twenty years, and got himself into such unexampled condition, but to be of use to Mr. M'Loughlin, in the way that he had been, by affording him so secure and comfortable an envelope. But laughter is short-winded ; and, therefore, in this my comic, or my would-be comic tale, I cut my chapter according to my breath.

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There is not a fair in Christendom, except perhaps Leipzig, that, compared with Ballinasloe, can be considered as more than a market. The whole west of Ireland, a rude tract of pasture and of pastors, hurry thither with their flocks and herds ; and the men of the East betake themselves to truckle and barter with these savages, giving them in exchange for their sheep and oxen, all the knick-knackery and conveniences that the manufactories of their more civilized district supply them with. For a month previous to the fair, the rocky hills and swampy morasses of Connaught are in motion ; not a man nor an ox, nor an animal of any sort, will be left behind : it is like the emigration of an immense tribe,—the Vandals or the Huns, moving with flocks, wives, chattels, and all. On the other side, Leinster is in an equal bustle : its population proceed to the yearly rendezvous in gig and dog-cart, or, the most of them, on the tops of stage-coaches. Of these there will be not only the dealers in useful and necessary merchandize, clothiers, hatters, grocers, *et cætera*, who all erect their temporary booths in the town ; but even goldsmiths, toymen, and gingerbread manufacturers, make it a speculation to open business for the fair-week in Ballinasloe, and attract by their gewgaws a considerable portion of cash from the pockets of the better order of the western savages. It is, indeed, the only opportunity that these Connaught proprietors have of purchasing a piece of good cloth for their backs, or a beaver hat, or muslins and trinkets for their wives and daughters, unless they submit to be robbed by the wandering pedlar, that, all the rest of the year having the market to himself, extorts the price he wills, most unpoetically, in despite of his poetical fame.

There has always appeared to me something very primitive and oriental in this scene ;—two numerous and different nations, as it were, meeting for the purposes of exchange—a caravan of Syrian merchants trafficking with an Arab tribe, both people contrasted in garb and tongue ; and those Easterns not more so, than the gaunt, stolid, mighty-mouthed and mighty-muscled Connaught-man, with the snug, keen, easy rogue of a Leinster chapman,—or than the wild Irish that the one flings from his mouth, with the sly, insidious slang that runs like oil from the tongue of the other. The days set apart for the sale of sheep offer the most picturesque view of the fair : the town itself, with all its dependencies, could not contain the countless multitude of its fleecy visitors :—Lord Clancarty, however, accommodates them with his ample domain. To overlook this tract, covered with the white and bleating multitude, is a fine sight—each flock surrounded with its guard of Patagonian shepherds, all armed with crooks, twice as gigantic as themselves, with which they are inconceivably active in catching any straggler from their care, however confounded in a crowd of its neighbours. Upon the night preceding the fair the sight is not unpicturesque, viewed from the lofty wall that surrounds his Lordship's park : if it be dark, the murmur of the hushed multitude, produced merely by the breathing of so many living creatures, is heard, broken, perhaps, by a solitary bleat, or Irish ejaculation; whilst the numerous watchfires of each bivouac of shepherds unite the appearance with the hum of a camp : if it be moonlight, the snow-white park beneath her beam is more beautiful still ; the figures are seen in standing or reposing attitudes by their

fires, and the slumber of so immense a mass is contrasted with the wakefulness of such a night.

Although I thus act Cicerone to my readers in pointing out to them the sentimentalities of this great Irish fair, my present hero was a man who “cared for none of these things,” and who had rather discuss a jug of pothien punch at the hour of moonlight, than stir to contemplate even Mucruss or Melrose. Once amongst the Connaught-men, Dick snapped his fingers at the law, and gave himself up wholly to the care of the approaching election for his county. For this purpose, he circumambiated the fair, and blandly addressed every acquaintance high and low. He attended a sitting, or rather standing, of the farming society, met to consider of a new mode of putting an end to bullocks by dirking them in the spine. The experiment was tried in an assemblage of farming prelates, nobles, and amateurs ; but the ox, it seemed, preferred being knocked on the heady for he broke loose after an ill-directed stab, and dissolved the farming jury from around him most abruptly, flinging a tall bishop, canonicals and all, into a volcano of hissing lime, and making Arthur Kelly run, for the second time in his life and in one day.

Having done all these and divers other pretty things, Dick M'Loughlin resolved to set out next morning for his castle ; not, however, till he had collected as large a suite of guests and courtiers, as hard Irish pressing and the certainty of an Irish welcome could allure from other hospitable mansions to his. He succeeded in this pretty well, having collected about four-score guests, either coming, or about to come, to Ballycarrigaclunah Castle. To enumerate them even, far less describe them, would make this chapter rival Homer's second book ; but I could not think of taxing the jaws of my English readers to such an Herculean task of pronunciation. Dick had just returned to his lodgings, when Barney came in to say, that a “Frinchman had been after his honour oncet or twicet—a black, wicked-looking dog, widout e'er a collar to his shirt.” Dick smiled ; but nevertheless partook of his domestic's suspicions of the visitor, for his want of collar. At this moment his rap was heard, and a fine, tall, commanding foreigner was ushered into the room. Dick eyed him from top to toe, and then from toe to top. He was young, and what an Englishman would call sallow, although the unvarying brown of his cheek was but where warfare had outbronzed the blush of boyhood. Over his long visage of manly traits fell, like a weeping willow, on one side a world of hair, to which his brawny hand, wonderfully muscular for so slight a person, acted every second minute the friendly part of pocket-comb. The Mounseer handed a note to Dick, who opened it, and read as follows : —

“Dear Dick, the bearer is a gentleman, and a soldier.”

“How d'ye do, Sir ? I am very happy to see you,” said Dick, starting up and seizing the Frenchman by the hand ; “sit down ;—when did you come to this part of the country ? By the powers ! ye're welcome !—You'll come to Ballycarrigaclunah with me to-morrow, and stay a month, a year, ay, or twenty years, if ye will !”

The Frenchman, who understood the English language not too well, and comprehended still less the alacrity with which an Irish heart runs to hospitality, was amazed ; and thinking it was explanation Mr. M'Loughlin demanded, he said, “*Voilà, Sire,*” Dick read on : —

“The bearer is a gentleman and a soldier—sufficient introduction to you, even from me, abhorring, as we do, each other's principles—*mais vive notre ami ! —l'ennemi !*—as they say here, was one of Nap's young guard, and a gallant fellow, to whom Paris at present would be just as agreeable an abode as Castle-street, Dublin, to me. Seeing which, he is bent on travel ; above all, desires to penetrate into the kingdom of Connemara ;—why, I know not, but 'tis his whim—most likely to ascertain the military strength, &c. of your little empire. More seriously speaking, he is somewhat of a geologist ; and is, I believe, empowered by a

mercantile house to contract for a supply of your purest marble from your lately-discovered quarry.

“Independent of all this, Captain St. Roque is the friend of,

“Your, as of old,

“A. O’C.”

“Paris, Rue Neuve de Mathurins.”

“Caed millia faltha, you’re as welcome as the flowers in May !” cried Dick to the young stranger; “and how is Arthur ?”

“*Gai comme wi François* ; as gay as a Frenchman !”

“As an Irishman, you mean !”

“*C’est égal.*”

“You’re welcome at any rate. Captain Rock, or St. Rock ; od ! it’s a bad name you travel with, and not much better for being sainted. But we care little for these things in Connemara.”

Suffice it for the present, that the young Frenchman became instantly one of Dick’s suite; and it was arranged that they should all set forth on the following morning.

The procession that did set forth at the appointed time, well deserved description from the pen of Chaucer, and the pencil of Stothard. Preceded by a strong van-guard of his pedestrian subjects, rode the monarch surrounded by a most motley court, all ambitious of the honour of cavalcading near to his person : this honour was enjoyed by all who had the good luck to be mounted on their own good steeds. The rest were accommodated each on the back of a little ragged poney, a race indigenous of the wilds of Connemara, threescore of which had been ordered by Dick to the fair, for the conveyance of his guests thence to Ballycarrigaclunali Castle. They were almost as small as sheep ; and the Frenchman, who was mounted, or rather descended, on the back of one of them, could exclaim with the Irishman, who trotted through the mud to a party, enclosed in a bottomless sedan-chair, that, “but for the honour of the thing, he might have walked.”

Thus the gay caravan journeyed through the bogs and wilds of Connaught, troubling no inn, there being, in truth, no inn to trouble ; but remaining, I cannot say always reposing, for the night at some hospitable mansion, the owner of which failed not to welcome this tribe of locusts with the greatest delight. And did the next morn happen to look lowering, a case of very frequent occurrence even in the summers of our dear Western Isle, this was excuse sufficient for pressing the caravan to another day’s stay, and another night’s carouse. Thus the progress was somewhat tedious ; and more than a week had elapsed ere Dick had entered his dominions, and set up his court once more in Carrigaclunah Castle.

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It was with mighty expectations that Ernest St. Roque found himself within a few hours’ journey of Ballycarrigaclunah. So much had he been impressed throughout his progress by his host’s majesty and importance, visible in the obsequiousness of all who approached him, that the young Frenchman, if he looked not exactly for Fontainbleau or Compiègne, expected, at least, a feudal fortress, whose battlements were to be seen relieved against the glowing sky of the west, and which was to be entered, after a world of parley and military ceremony, over lowered draw-bridge, and beneath a well-flanked and buttressed portal. The country they

traversed was wild even to sublimity ; not from the height of mountains in view, which, in fact, were dwarfish, nor from any of those vulgar causes of the sublime ; the effect being produced, as in the desert, by the intense feeling of solitariness that prevailed. Here the road traversed a moving bog, that shook for a rood all round the tramp of the passing party, causing the dykes on each side to bubble and rise over the tops of the reeds, by the pressure of the road. There it mounted over limestone rocks, bursting at intervals from the soil, on which the grass lay green and short, shorn, as it appeared, more by the western wind, than by sheep. Lakes were visible in every hollow ; but no appearance of tree or copse skirted their marshy banks, to give them the least title to beauty. St. Roque was left to enjoy, perfectly uninterrupted, the contemplation of this wild scenery. The Erse was the language most generally spoken around him, or English to him as unintelligible ; and if he ventured on a query respecting any object that struck him, the only answer that such ever produced was " Anan."

At length a turn of the road brought into view a castle, surrounded by, or rather sunk in, a lake. It was evidently a ruin, and a strikingly picturesque ruin, reflected, as it was, in the sheet of water on which it reposed. " That's Ballycarrigaclunah castle," said some kind informant to the young Frenchman.

" That !" said the young soldier, who would at the moment have exchanged all his dreams of hall and battlement and castlery, for a comfortable lodging upon dry land.

" That same, in troth, is Ballycarrigaclunah ; and many a merry day, and many a sore one, the ould walls have seen."

As the cavalcade approached the lake, it became the wonder of the Frenchman how such numbers were to reach or inhabit such a place ; which, on a nearer inspection, he discovered to be a ruin more forlorn than even he had imagined. Two snow-white and majestic swans issued at the moment from the portal to welcome, as it were, the chief, for whom they seemed to hold the fortress in possession. A fairy tale might be built upon the circumstance. This reassured St. Roque, whose better hopes were fulfilled by the cavalcade's turning from the lake and its ruined castle, towards an habitation,—thatched certainly, mean, and by no means picturesque ; still its white-washed walls, and snugly thatched roof, promised comfort and homely welcome.

" Yon's the ould castle, but this is the new," said his old informant to the Frenchman ; who had not made allowance enough for Irish exaggeration, and could not conceive why a thatched house should be called a castle.

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