

SPORTING
REMINISCENCES

DOUGLAS CONYERS



JOHN A. SEAVERNS

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SPORTING REMINISCENCES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE STRAYINGS OF SANDY
THREE GIRLS AND A HERMIT
TWO IMPOSTORS AND TINKER
THE CONVERSION OF CONGREGAN
AUNT JANE AND UNCLE JAMES
LADY ELVERTON'S EMERALDS
SOME HAPPENINGS OF GLENDALYNE
THE BOY, SOME HORSES, AND A GIRL
SALLY
SANDY MARRIED
OLD ANDY
A MIXED PACK
THE BLIGHTING OF BARTRAM
B. E. N.
TIRANOGUE

SPORTING REMINISCENCES

BY
DOROTHEA CONYERS

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SPORTING REMINISCENCES

CHAPTER I

VERY EARLY HUNTING DAYS

I THINK I should like this book to consist of about a dozen words and then a toast. Chapter I—Fox hunting with all the honours. Chapter the last, a toast—Fox hunting; but perhaps my funds for fox hunting next year might be curtailed if I simply sent that to my kindly publishers.

I cannot remember how old I was—probably about three, if one can recall oneself at that age, when I was first lifted on a horse in one of the stables at home—but I remember it quite well. My joy in the life I felt under me, my mischievous little heels drumming at a big sleek side; my fury because they would not let me ride out of the box.

My mother, a very fine rider herself, taught me to ride (sideways) without a saddle. We were allowed a girth to hold on to and very long hair, because my stud consisted of an ass called Donna Inez, and a milk pony; but my mother believed in balance. I could gallop and trot, and in the end even jump

something small before she gave me a saddle. She could ride anything herself and spent her days on wild two and three year olds which tied themselves into knots as they bucked in the early mornings.

In her hunting days, before she married, there were only two ladies riding across country, the County Limerick Hounds, Lady Humble and herself. Later Miss Massey made a third.

I am afraid I was born to love horses too well. How much my patient ass endured I never like to think of. With Peter, a youth who followed me at a gasping trot, I was always off somewhere. Without Peter I was also off, but not so decorously. I can recall the day now, I was seven then, when I saw one of the jennets tied up in the yard, and immediately took it away.

It was a very spirited and willing jennet, but its efforts to jump the boggy garden trench, a small ditch with crumbling peaty edges, were not crowned with success. When my father came out after the men's dinner hour, the jennet did not, and it was hay-making time.

Where was it? Had Miss Dora seen it?

Miss Dora in a very small voice thought that she had . . . quite lately . . . where? "At the bottom of the boggy garden trench, Papa. It is lying in the cool there."

"What a very peculiar place for a jennet to stray to,"

No one betrayed the fact that Miss Dora had spent twenty minutes schooling it there as she had seen the grooms school the youngsters, before she succeeded in knocking it into the deep trench.

My walk in the procession to rescue the jennet was tempered with remorse, and later I confessed my sins. I can see now a kindly but peppery father looking for his lost jennet, and a small child listening to the men as they discussed its disappearance.

“She has the reins broke, Johnny Kennedy. She has not, Jim Mack. Let ye have sinse. Is there a trace of a broken rein on the post she was tied to? Thin someone loosed her. She is that crabbed some maybe she loosed herself.”

My father told me with decision that I was not to grow up into a jockey and nothing else, but we were soon picking the spotted white moss apples together to throw to the labourers, and before tea-time I was hammering old Grampus the bay farm horse backwards and forwards from tram cock to wynds. Why does hay never smell now as it did then, and why is everything done by machinery, too quickly and easily? No one ever knows the joy of a ride on the top of a moving mass of hay, and the surreptitious delight of working forward until it overbalances and one goes buried in sweet hot grass out under the big horse's heels.

“I toul't ye that tram was too high entirely,

God save us an' the Colonel with his eye on us. Miss Dora will be thrampled below. Lift the hay an' don't be talkin', ye bosthoon," would go the chorus. I wonder if they knew that I used to get over on purpose.

There was one old man, Johnny Kennedy, who always built his haycocks crooked, and I remember how all the others used to laugh at him.

I suppose I learnt something in those days, but I can only remember being always out in the garden or on the farm, and generally alone.

I believed in the Fairies firmly. My old nurse taught us to. I used to creep out to the Forths and watch there to see little men ride out on white horses, and to hear the fairy cobbler tap tap at his shoes, and then go racing home wild with terror if a blackbird flew out of the thick thorn trees.

There was a black dark walk too where Fear lived, which I could never pass through except at a run, and even up to the time we left the farm, a big girl would take to her heels and scurry through the gloom from the new garden door.

As to my efforts to kill myself, fortunately nothing alarmed my mother. I used to run round the high garden walls, to swing from end to end of a wood without touching ground, and jump from the highest section of a half-full haybarn to the lowest, and drop from the bathroom window.

My father drew pictures for us, and mine, I remember, always had to be on some animal. To tease me he generally depicted me side-saddle upon a pig, my small form comically attired in top hat and tight habit.

No perfectly cut garment from Scott will ever give me the keen joy of my first cut down habit, an old one of my mother's. A light blue thing, with black braid on it and little coat tails. This lapped across me somehow, and the tail twisted round my small legs, became mine when I was eight, together with a saddle resembling the Beast in Revelation—a thing of many horns. It materialised out of the gloom of a chill November morning, put into my room when I was asleep, and I think I turned every buckle, and knew every line, and its smell of dressed leather was as incense.

Children did not get everything they wanted in those days, and I had dreamt of a saddle as a far-off possibility. Poor Topsy, she must have regretted its arrival.

My father and mother both hunted, though she never had a trained hunter. I have always seen her on raw three year olds, and even her iron nerves gave way. Curiously, just before she died, her mind affected by a stroke, her one idea was to ride again and she was always begging, childishly, to be taken out for a hunt.

My father was fond of it too in a milder way.

He had a very fine thoroughbred called Sarsefield, which was given to him and which caused, when I was aged seven, a real scare about a horse-demented little girl.

Sarsefield was bred, so far as I can remember, by Colonel Jesse Lloyd of Ballyleck, and ran in the Derby, but, upset by the crossing, only finished fifth. He was supposed to have had a good chance.

He then turned savage and ate a man or two, one certainly, and was given to my father to see what he could do with him.

He was put out on grass on the lawn. All the men doubtless warned but the small child forgotten. I saw a horse loose. How I made overtures I don't know. My favourite playground was the plantation bordering the lawn. There was a hollow in a tree there which I was sure held a fairy, and I used to build little houses there and dwell alone. I was years younger than the others, who were mysterious big people to me.

Probably I marched straight out to the savage. I don't know. I can remember that we became instant friends. Probably he did not think me worth eating, and a few days after he came I know I was out petting him when there came a heavy shower, so I calmly sat there to shelter under his chest with an arm round each fore leg and Sarsefield looking down benignly.

It was just then that my poor mother came along the avenue and saw me. The wild shrieks which

I heard interested me so that I moved a little, but still keeping close to the chestnut. Presently I began to connect the shrieks with myself as I saw Hewitt, the English trainer, flying along at his hobbling run, and several men armed with sticks behind.

Then I suppose I got out and explained. Sarsefield, head hanging over me, knew that he was quite reformed. What they told me I can't remember, how he let Hewitt come up, and, though he laid back his ears when they dragged me away, directly I came back he was quite good-humoured again. I believe they got me to lead him in when he was stabled, but he ate no more men, and learnt to be a brilliant if not a bold hunter. There was always a stop in him if he was not going fast. The only remnants of his evil mind consisted in blocking anyone's hat who was taking up his forelegs. He used to do it so neatly and quietly, and never brought his old hoof forward if a man was bare-headed.

This same Hewitt, a crippled little creature who had broken almost every bone in his body, used to hunt old Sarsefield, and I could show anyone a mad jump he took on him. It is close to Fedamore. A low hedge which one drops over in a boreen with a broad shallow ditch fencing the boreen at the far side.

But Mr. Hewitt thundered at it down hill, with

his horse extended ; he was riding at a stranger who was out. He must have known quite well that it was a fence to take at a trot, and I think if he had been my man he might have returned to England. Full gallop, the horses side by side. Old Sarsefield took hedge, lane and far ditch, clearing $27\frac{1}{2}$ feet. The horse beside him got as far as the ditch and broke his neck.

That was later on when I used to ride Sarsefield myself, and I had been promoted to the side-saddle. He took great care of me.

My mother's side-saddle was quite a wonderful thing and weighed two stone. It had pockets, about three lots of horns, and quiltings and pad-dings innumerable. Mine, which, as I have said, appeared in my room on my eighth birthday, would have held two little girls of my size, but I know that my Champion and Wilton or Owen saddles have never given me so much joy as this wadded second-hand lump of leather and iron. The saddle came at our little cottage Ardsollus, in Clare, a place I looked on as an earthly paradise. A trout stream ran close to it, preserved in those days. The crags where one could get lost stretched beyond the railway line to Ennis. Crags which held wild strawberries, and what the men called harts ; then in autumn nuts in thousands. But directly the saddle appeared, Hewitt taught me to sit in over fences ; this strictly against all orders.

“ You sit back, Miss, and you'll drop down to

Jerusalem," he directed and I obeyed, with the result that I greatly surprised my mother by flying across the low banks all round the cottage and that I now considered myself fit to hunt with any pack.

The bad times fell on Ireland when I was very small. I can remember going to church and seeing a fox nailed on the door—and the buzzing of excitement and horror.

Such a weird little church with only ten pews in it. Shut up, I think, now or only used once a year or so.

I can remember Mr. Jack Gubbins's staghounds. I was too small to hunt with them, but if they enlarged near I was allowed to let out the deer. Such a thrill of delight when the big beast hopped out. They used to have mild little gallops of twelve and fifteen miles in those days, I believe. They are only a dim memory to me.

There is one hunt recorded when they enlarged at Rathmore; the deer jumped the demesne wall at Carass and at about five o'clock went through Nartenan, quite a fifteen-mile point from Rathmore, on to Mellon and swam the Shannon. Mr. Gubbins came through about half an hour afterwards and finally followed in a boat, but the deer, taken in Clare, either died of exhaustion or was drowned coming back.

Hunting days were coming now. Had I not got a saddle? Something which covered me was

yclept a habit, and I was promised days on Topsy, the most wonderful of ponies. I have her picture now. She was only fourteen hands, and cleared a five-foot wall in her time.

My first day's hunting is a mere foggy blur of bliss; it was with horses and there was jumping, people fell, and hounds yelled and the hares escaped; what more could the heart of a child desire?

The foxhounds were a keener joy, though I fancy that a zealously careful groom saw that I did not see much of them, for I can remember a great deal of galloping on the roads and gaining my first brush by coming up on the road just as they killed near Islandmore. I am sure that I thought I had earned it thoroughly. Nothing would induce me to go home that evening until the hounds did.

The bad times must have come just about then, before my hunting had gone far. The meet at which they finally stopped Mr. Gubbins, he had taken the foxhounds then, was at our gate. They would not let Mr. Delmege hunt just then.

I was walking. I can see still the big determined Master with his cap off, a habit of his when he was perplexed, sitting on his weight carrier with a crowd round him. They wanted to temporise, to let everyone else hunt if one was stopped.

There was no temporising about Mr. Jack

Gubbins. Everyone else discussed and talked. He sat there thinking.

Then it was over.

"We'll all hunt or we'll none of us hunt," he shot out, and I remember the hounds jogging away towards Glenogera, the black caps bobbing until they were all lost to view.

Hunting was in a poor way after Mr. Gubbins left. The country seethed all round and everyone slept with some species of fire-arm near them.

My sister's was a gun called Brown Bess, which she was to fire off as a signal for the police to come down. My brother had a rifle, and my mother a single-barrelled pistol, which was called Long Tom. Long Tom in the hands of an excitable and completely intrepid lady nearly dealt death.

The house awoke one morning to a valiant "Stand or I fire," from the back stairs, and we went rushing out to find my mother in a pink dressing-gown and a rigid attitude levelling Long Tom at something which grovelled and prayed.

"They have come at last," said my mother calmly.

Boom went Brown Bess from my sister's window, the explosion followed by a shriek; out came my younger brother with a rifle.

"For the love of God, Masther Arthur, will ye tell the missus to put down the gun," wailed the well-known accents of Davy Walsh, the old car-

penter. "Not a word would she listen to, an' I crouchin' down thinkin' with the help of God she would miss me, but that ache minnit 'd be me lasht. An' I but in to mend the edge of the bath before ye'd want washin'," said old Davy rising, indignantly.

My mother, who was never at a loss, merely said that he really might have been a land leaguer and how could she tell. I was severely reprov'd for appearing with a poker, as I was not allowed a weapon, and then sliding down the banisters in a short night garment, and all would have been calm if the sergeant and a constable had not come racing to help and taken the explanation with some annoyance. My private belief is that we were never in any danger from outsiders (my father was away at the time), but that we were from loaded fire-arms in the house. The crack of a revolver bullet and the wail of a faulty housemaid who, dusting a fully loaded weapon, fired it off through the wall into the next room, where the bullet missed someone by an inch. And another crash of glass and the wail of old Corbett, the herdsman, as he sat down and bemoaned his death by shot, were mere items in the adventures of loaded weapons left about the boys' rooms.

Poor old Jim Corbett, he was a man who never, according to himself, missed his mark when he fired. He always "med three halves of a crow," and when little brown snipe scattered away after

he had fired he used to remark with dignity that they were gone with the legs hangin'.

The number of ancient men who came paddling into the yard at eight o'clock might have made Lloyd George think twice of old age pensions. My father never sent them away until, as the steward said, "they had no breath to come to work agin, bein' dead."

The present day labourer would have a fit if he saw that old wages book. I have it still. One shilling a day and no house, to the ordinary men, five shillings a week if they had a house. And the herd had only four shillings a week, but he had a house and potato ground and grass for a cow.

They wore corduroys then, one suit seeing them through a lifetime, and the women were bare-headed or with shawls, but I don't think they ever wanted. They were a splendid sturdy race, and consumption was but little known. Butter-milk and potatoes, with a piece of "mate" (bacon) on Sundays contented them, and the "mate" was not American.

This marked the end of good hunting in Limerick for some time, and I have no idea of how many thousands a year taken out of the country, for Mr. Gubbins sold all his horses and left Bruree.

I never really hunted with him, so he cannot come under the heading of Masters I have known, but I believe he was absolutely fearless and a very fine huntsman.

I know that our fat cook's brother, it must have been just before this final burst up, was always called the robbineen. He tried to stop Mr. Gubbins one day, with hounds running out of Tory Hill, and threatened him with a big stick. Out came the hunting horn.

"Drop that now or I'll shoot you as if you were a robbineen," thundered John Gubbins, just showing the nozzle. At this Martin lowered the reins with a yelp, the Master put the horn back, and unfortunately there were witnesses whose zeal in politics did not prevent them rushing to Croom with their tale.

The cook's brother, a soured man, went to America. He was a giant and had pledged his reputation to stop the Master. Limerick had two packs when the deerhounds were hunting. Now it has one, and some Harriers.

There is a story told of my father on that same old horse Sarsefield,—I believe he never cared for anything else,—when the deer was coming across near Tory Hill.

First the deer, next my father who had nicked in, and was flying along blissfully ignoring that the next things were the hounds and Mr. Gubbins using truly Master-like language.

I think there is only one man alive and hunting now who hunted with those deerhounds. A Mr. Ryan who comes from Bruree and who rode like a demon. He came alone down William Street

in Limerick with hounds one day, and took the deer across the Shannon, in Clare, just beyond the town.

A great scare in that wild solitary youth of mine was that of mad dogs. The country was full of them. People, sheep, pigs, were constantly bitten and a strange dog was a terror, for the death was a hideous one.

Some people at Kilrush had a cure. It was, I believe, a Red Indian cure for snake bite, but it never failed. A Clare neighbour of ours, a Mr. Studdert, procured it (one had to say that it was for a human being) and tried it with two pigs. One which took the stuff was absolutely well, the other died. Kennedy, the huntsman's children, were bitten, took it and recovered.

It was a terrible scare which small as I was I could understand—and I was in the yard one day when a mad brute came racing through and tumbled over Venom, my brother's terrier. Of course he rushed into the fray and got bitten; he cauterized the wound, but he got the cure and *gave it to the dog*, and she was going mad at the time. She had begun to tear the carpet, to see imaginary objects and she refused drink. He put the stuff down her throat, and she lived to fourteen—a venerable and snappish matron. The secret died with the owner; perhaps he had not much of the powder, for it seemed a strange thing to allow to be buried in oblivion,

From the time the wonderful saddle came I lived out riding. I was promoted to exercising the young horses, a dubiously safe but fearful joy, and perhaps no one but a child could realise the depths of despair when Petworth, a valuable brown, bred from one of Lord Leconfield's mares, fell and broke her knees.

Then the waiting on a narrow bog road in a bitter wind for my father to talk to the workmen of the relief works. He was riding old Sarsefield. I was on this same flighty Petworth, and the groom on another three year old. There were yawning bog ditches on either side, but the youngsters merely stood and shivered until a start was made. Then there were perhaps just a few things they did not do—I don't remember them—with my father mildly wondering why they were not properly exercised. Finally one day mine ran away, or rather galloped away, with Hewitt urging me to let 'im go or 'e'd kill me, and bitterly reproaching my father for keeping the 'osses standing as if they was donkeys.

About this time I was promoted to the hunting of Fanny, a black mare with contracted feet; she used to take me where she chose, and I have often been told how a stranger out with the foxhounds was asked whom he noticed.

“A bundle of clothes on a nice black mare going like mad,” he said.

This was a small child of eleven in her mother's

old habit, and the mad going I expect Fanny saw to. All fences were alike to me in these days, and hounds merely things which encouraged people to gallop over green fields.

Before my father's death, when we still had the little cottage in Clare, my sister and I had a nasty experience and perhaps a narrow escape. My father was evicting a labourer then, Mack, a very bad character. He wanted the house for another man, but Mack would not go.

My sister and I drove up to Ardsollus alone to stay there. We came unexpectedly and the caretaker and his wife were sleeping at their own cottage about three hundred yards away.

The place was only an ordinary thatched cottage, with an addition and long passage built on at the back. We were left with Snap, a black and charming cur, to mind us. The hall door opened with a latch from the outside, but there was a little catch which held it, and prevented anyone coming in unless the catch was down. This catch was not often thought of. I suppose it was about ten when my sister said to me, "Dora, put up the catch of the door. I'm feeling nervous."

I reached up and fastened it and came back and settled to my book. Not five minutes later stealthy footsteps pounded up the little path and the door was tried sharply, Snap hurling himself out with a grunting growl. We heard the shake again. My sister flew to hasp the window and

sent me flying to do the same in the bedrooms, and locked the door of the kitchen. Just in time, for next minute Snap went growling out there and that door was shaken.

We put out the lights in the front, but crept to the kitchen looking for a gun to fire, so as to alarm the caretaker. We found one, but no cartridges, and the man outside continued to walk round trying the windows.

I was too small to be frightened, but my sister muttered "Mack!" and was thoroughly scared. He walked round and round and we walked round and round until about two o'clock, when we heard him walk away.

He may have only intended to frighten us, but if he had come in one can never tell, especially if he was drunk.

It was in late autumn, and almost before there was a glimmer of light the Conlons were over. In some way they had already heard of it. Irish people will never tell you how they hear, and they will always shield each other; very likely our friend rattled at their door before he went home.

I spent a happy day by my beloved river, my sister, I think, an uneasy one, because there Mack had friends and they were what the people called 'very bither agin us,' but unexpectedly my extremely wild brother Frank turned up, walking down from the station. He sent us off back by train to Limerick, made the Conlons sleep out

again, and watched the house by himself. At about the same hour he heard footsteps, but he went flying out with a clatter; also it might be said with a Winchester repeater, fully loaded. He was quite a mad boy.

Crack, crack, went the rifle. Yowl! Mr. Mack and his friends were there, three of them this time. Bow-wow, Mr. Snap, and various Holy Wars and Vo's starting across the old wall for the Conlons, who were sitting up.

One of the men broke the little green paling in his flight and "then I nearly had him against the light," my wild brother told us calmly, but with manifest regret. When we came back to Clare the old Conlons told us that "Masther Frank had the Divil's gun for it fired without loading and that the Macks had it med up with the Colonel and were goin' payceable."

Another time driving up to Clare—I was there, but cannot remember it—they were lying out to shoot an agent and my father was whistled safe all the way up. Men jumping out whistling and slipping back. The agent was shot at an hour later.

All those days, if I could only remember them, there were stories of evictions and of want. Of houses levelled to the ground, and of victories won too hardly.

Life was a thing for land agents to carry lightly in their hands. I remember hearing my father

tell the story of one living near Bruff who was taking his wife away when a man stopped him at the gate.

“Are you Mr. ——?” he said carelessly and shot the agent dead. He was never caught.

No one was caught for a long time and murders were everyday affairs. Force had been used successfully, but the misguided peasants were up for vengeance.

They shot old herdsmen, agents, landlords, but they are curious people. Soldiers or policemen were safe. They were doing their duty.

I can just remember two Mr. Studderts driving up to Quin Church with soldiers on the back seat of their dogcart. These two land-agents were absolutely fearless and reckless, and slipped away alone whenever they could.

That Quin Church recalls a very gruesome entertainment. Lord Dunboyne, who made a great pet of me, used to take me down after church to see the family vault. Why I was allowed to go I cannot imagine, for I used to go home to dream of coffins and dead Butlers on their shelves.

My father belonged to the Militia in Clare, so we were there every year for the training, and I have heard him tell the story of how Bidy, the old orange woman, once drilled the regiment.

Someone at an inspection clubbed them hopelessly. The General was looking glumly at the muddle, the officer in command was barking out

fresh confusion when from an ass cart near the gate rang a shrill "As ye were, men." Biddy standing up in her cart to gain better hearing.

The Clare Militia were a regiment in proper position almost before the words were uttered and the General's attempts not to choke must undoubtedly have taken a span off his life.

My poor father's illness and death ended my young days. I was very small when he went, but afterwards there were no young horses to ride or visits to Clare, days among the hay or endless trappings to see foals and yearlies and two year olds out at grass.

Everything was sold except one cream-coloured hack, and the problem which I have had to try to solve ever since, how to live on what you have not got, was written on the page of life to be worked out.

CHAPTER II

SOME PACKS I HAVE HUNTED WITH AND THEIR MASTERS

FIRST of course the County Limerick Foxhounds—though my opening day was with the Harriers, their Master, Mr. George Furnell of Abbeyville.

I cannot remember Sir David Roche as a Master. My sister could, and asked him gravely one day why he was so nice in a grey coat, she said, and so cross in a red. I knew him afterwards, and saw a sad little picture which he drew himself when he gave up his beloved hounds. Empty boots, rusting spurs, horn and whip flung down. He never forgot them or ceased to regret them.

Mr. John Gubbins I have dim memories of. As I have said, he was finally stopped at a meet at our gate and never hunted again. He rode splendid weight carriers, and went hard. A man better known afterwards as owner of the celebrated horse, Ard Patrick. I can just remember him driving his huge van, with three horses abreast in it into the yard at Fedamore, the hounds inside. And I remember letting out the deer. He hunted the county hounds until he was stopped, and was a loss irreparable to the country.

I remember Mr. Nugent Humble taking the hounds and striving with days of opposition. His brother, Mr. Charles Nugent Humble, afterwards Master of the Waterfords, whipping to him. I hunted as much as I could in those days on Dandy, a grey horse which my mother bought out of a cart, and which was afterwards sold for £400. It was hunting under real difficulties and one could not do it now.

Mr. Humble had to contend with the hideous hitting below the belt of poison. I've seen many a good hound drop in his time, particularly round Ballingary where a bitter enemy to fox-hunting used to live.

I have seen the horror of hounds dropping on the road to be carried away dead in a few minutes. Mr. Humble's work was through stony ground and we reap the harvest, for a pack once given up is not easy to get together again.

We would meet them at one place, say Ballyneety, having all the coverts stopped there, and at the same time have another lot of coverts stopped some way off. All the people would be out at Cahernarry gorse ready with stones,—I've seen them flying there—but we used to jog away fast and get a hunt somewhere else. It was not dignified, but it carried hunting on at an almost impossible time until the feeling against it wore out. And in the end it did completely.

Mr. Humble had a gentle and almost weary

vein of sarcasm which kept a field in great order, and one of the greatest hunts known in Limerick, from Heathfield to some miles beyond Drumcollogher, took place in his time.

He used to draw away from Limerick, so we found ourselves late one afternoon at Heathfield, twenty-two miles from Limerick. I was riding Dandy, my grey roan. A fox was out almost as soon as hounds were in and crossed the road below the covert. I don't suppose anyone took it seriously, as the hill foxes are generally expected to turn up again, but this one held straight across the valley.

My experience of the hunt ended three miles further on, when poor Dandy put his foot into the hidden bough of a tree or a hole, and turned over on landing. Worse still, he got up and went on, leaving me there, fourteen or fifteen miles from home. We were still living at Fedamore.

Of course I thought I should find him, and I remember sitting on the bank watching the field, which had waited for the hill hunt, come by. There was even then a trail of over a mile. One of their last, she had got a shocking start, was Mrs. Arthur Russell, who finished afterwards quite alone with hounds. On old Tally Ho she was very hard to beat.

Dandy was not for being caught. He went as far as Springfield, an eight-mile point from Heathfield. Here everyone had had nearly enough,

but hounds ran on to Drumcollogher with Mrs. Russell, Mr. Humble and the whip, the only three left. Mr. Humble, I think, had a fall before the end, and the whip's horse was done, leaving Mrs. Russell quite alone. A kindly gunner insisted on my riding his horse to Croom, only twelve miles. He walked wearily in riding boots. Dandy was discovered next day with his saddle and bandages still on, but with the best quilt spread over him to keep him warm. I got a car from Croom, and drove on, six miles, finding my mother nearly wild, out on the road waiting for me. Several people never got home at all that night; they were twenty and thirty miles from home on dead-beaten horses. There was also quite a curious ending to the day's sport when Kennedy, Mrs. Russell and Mr. Humble were coming back with hounds. It was then pitch dark. A fox jumped up out of the laurels at Odelville, close to Ballingarry, and away went the pack on top of him. It was half an hour before the weary men could get them together again.

My Dandy, I have been told, was first up at the check on the road (the only one as far as Springfield) which led the scattered field up. It was the only time my big three-cornered grey roan put me down, he was practically running away with me, for he reared so badly that I always had to ride him in a light snaffle. He was a most evil-tempered horse, but a wonderful hunter.

One Master I have hunted with I must really not forget—Thady Cooney.

Thady had a contract for the mail and two horses. Hence the opportunity. These unfortunates came out of the mail car after a twenty miles' jog, and had a rest out hunting. He kept a pack of dear dogs—he spelt it dear—and we had the wildest gallops with him. The hounds—the usual collection of Spinsters, Girlies, Beauties, and Darlings—lived in the back streets of Limerick (Boher Bui, the yellow road, and Queen Street near the station) where they existed on the dustbins and on calls on inhospitable and irate butchers' stalls. Regular food they had none, so invariably tried to eat the “dears” if they caught them.

The “dears” subsisted on cast-off cabbage leaves and any other green refuse which Thady could gather up—for nothing.,

He was a big bony man with a flaming red beard, always riding in a frock-coat, and a dilapidated topper which he perched on three hairs on the side of his head. Thady generally rode Gay Boy, a raw-boned three-cornered screw with lumps and blemishes all over him, trace marked, collar marked, his ribs sticking through his dry skin, but when he was fairly fresh both a galloper and a leaper.

Poor old Thady, he had a subscription as small as his desire for sport was large.

But he did a lot of good. The country people of course admired him, and more than once with a crowd round a covert and things in a very bad way I have seen Thady settle the question.

Out he would come, the big man on his raw-bones Gay Boy, the red beard cocked truculently, the hat put on half a hair.

“Who dares to sthoph Thady Cooney? Who dares now among ye?”

A laugh. There is no crowd so easy to win to good humour or to drive to fury as an Irish one. Another laugh—then—“Begob, we will not, Misther Cooney. Hunt away for yerself.”

“Can I hunt without the hounds, ye vilyins, an’ me out for me day’s sphort? Is it home I’m to go to send Gay Boy out with the mails or to dhraw a corpse for recreation?”

“Hunt away thin all of ye, for to-day.”

Tight habits shocked Thady greatly when they began to get really skimpy in Limerick. His second string went by the name of the Missus’s mare, and someone asked him one day why it bore its name.

“Isn’t it the Missus’s own?” said Thady, looking hard at a couple of ladies. “And isn’t she comin’ out directly her habit is casht for her be Harrison an’ Lee.”

A big iron foundry firm.

The Worcester Regiment loved Thady, and

practically kept him going. I think the wildest rides I have ever had have been with three of them in pursuit of Thady's "dears." One led us once over all the coped walls round the Model School. When exhaustion finished poor Gay Boy, there would be a wail of "Save her for me. Save the dear." Save her coming from behind, and one could not stop.

Nearly all killed in this war now, those boys who rode with Thady.

But in the beginning of a hunt when Gay Boy was fresh, Thady was jealous as a girl. If he felt we were sure to hear a shout of "Give the dogs a chance, gentlemen. Give them a chance,"—then as Thady plunged back to the saddle—"Ride on now ye divils and catch thim if ye can."

Mr. Chichester had an absolutely wonderful horse called the Stag. It could jump wire, go in and out of quarries, had no fore legs, but drops into roads were as nothing to it; and I had a wild and undefeated four year old, Thin Legs, not my own, belonging to Mr. White, with a bad temper and a big heart.

Thady gave it up when as he put in the *Limerick Chronicle* he lost "Two dears in one day, both drouned." But as he would enlarge near Limerick when we ran over a country which was almost unrideable with the big semi-tidal trains running up from the Shannon, he had himself to blame. The unfortunate quarry came to the meet

in a borrowed bread van and I doubt if they had anything to eat either.

Thady's hounds would run anything when they came out, blackbirds, goats, cows, pigs, and especially food.

"Ware blackbirds there ye divils ye. On, ride on, Sir. Run on, Pat. They have Cassidy's pig again," were common hunting calls, but when they settled down there were two couple which could hunt, and we went blithely with these—one had a cropped tail—leaving the various Spinsters and Beauties weighed down by the cares of families to follow as best they could. Thady was exceedingly like Lord Spencer to look at—people often noticed the likeness.

The Worcesters promised to have his photograph taken—I have one—on Gay Boy, with the most motley collection of hounds which have ever met the eye of man round him, but they gave poor Thady a little trouble before they let him pose proudly in the barrack square.

They laid a drag and away went Thady's pack, mad for anything they could run down—in and out of barrack rooms, up and down stairs, with Thady tearing after them, whip in hand, and shouting wildly.

I was nearly killed out with his hounds on a runaway brown mare. Thady always declares that he saved my life, by loosing my collar stud.

Several people had declared me dead and were

keeping my mother away when Thady said the 'dear was cot,' and tore up—to look after me.

“Chokin' the young lady,” said Thady ripping open the stud, and lifting my head, “an' she not dead at all.”

· Thady Cooney is dead himself now for many years. He lost all his money and fretted sorely without either Gay Boy or the missus's mare to go out to see the hounds on.

We were still at Fedamore in Mr. Humble's day and had an extraordinary fox in our covert there. Mr. Humble called him the Old Customer. He was a very long dark fox and I really believe he liked being hunted. Day after day he took hounds the same lines, he had two, and seemed to beat them when he liked.

One hunt was over Fedamore Hill, across the Commogee River, at which the riding people had to make for the bridge, and as far as Cahir Gullamore, when he used to disappear. Hounds would run it to the wall there and no further. I believe he knew of some hole in the old wall. The other was from the covert right across one lair, over the Corcas into Grange, up to the old caves at Lough Gur—when he used to disappear. Of course there was never anybody with hounds in Grange, as horses could not cross the Corcas. I saw that fox myself turn and break one greyhound's leg on our lawn. Someone loosed the brute, and the Old Customer took it quite coolly,

twisted and snapped and there was one greyhound the less in the world.

He got me into very hot water once by his extraordinary behaviour. The 3rd Hussars had a pack of drag hounds, and we were asked to lay one round Fedamore for them. We never laid it within five fields of the gorse. My brother and I chose it all, and gave it to Peter the Faithful to run, but that ruffianly fox must needs march out to be hunted.

Gleeson the old covert keeper declares that he "lepped above on the bank when he heard the dogs nisin' an' away with him to see what was up."

This I cannot vouch for, but he crossed right in front of the hounds and led them his dance to Lough Gur, into which a Master on an exhausted horse toiled, asking me if this was my idea of a four-mile drag over a nice country. The Corcas were of course included in the Old Customer's line. Several unwary people tried to cross and got bogged.

I, who was out on a carriage horse to look on and got to Grange by the road as quickly as anyone, said nothing, but Mr. Nugent Humble said a good deal to me later on. I could never persuade him that we had not drawn the covert.

Hounds never killed the old fox. I suppose he died naturally or was retaliated on by some brute of a greyhound.

When we left Fedamore his meals of crows were

curtailed, and he had no more peacock chicks to come and steal. All the foxes were honourable as to chickens and ducks, but peacock chicks were outside their code of morals.

Fedamore was an ideal little gorse in those days, sheltered and quiet, with a good country all round ; now a crop of allotments makes the riding one side quite hopeless. Fortunately the line across the allotments is one a fox does not often take now, though twenty years ago almost all of them except the old fox used to scatter off for Ballinagarde, and the chances of its many rabbit holes giving safety.

Mr. Humble was brave to hunt at all. He had had a fall racing, and was badly crushed, but he held on gallantly to the last, preferring to ride out rather than dream out his last days in the sunshine.

There are very few people hunting now who were out in those days. Of the ladies, I think, only three. Girls had to have a chaperon then even out hunting, and Mrs. Wyndham Gabbett used to look after us. The finest of riders, the most charming of women, riding with a curious dash which was all her own ; a landmark gone in the Limerick hunt. She was out one year riding as hard as ever and gone the next, always missed and always regretted.

I must speak of a few of the hunting field of over twenty years ago, because people who have

long lost sight of Limerick may be glad to read of their friends. No one to my mind ever looked quite so well on a horse as our beloved Mrs. Wyndham, except perhaps our present Master's wife, and Mrs. Banatyne, then Miss Phelps, who was only stopped by an accident two years ago, but with a worthy successor in her young daughter. Mrs. Hunt, who is going as hard as ever, and Mrs. McDonnell and myself are the only ones left, and as my candid friend Con. Magner, a hard riding farmer, told me two years ago—"Sure you can't lasht much longer."

One of the men, fewer still, Mr. Banatyne, and with a page or so to himself Mr., now Captain, O'Grady Delmege, and Colonel Reilly, but he was not there with the Humbles.

Anyone who has hunted in Limerick, or raced in Ireland will remember J. O'G., quite the best whip, probably in the world. I had a gate through which even a short motor had to come through with the delicacy of Agag, but he dashed in his coach and four at full trot, an acute left-angle turn. His drive over the bog bridge leading to Water Park with a ten foot drop in front will be recalled with a shiver by those who were in the coach. He drives a car now, but for my part I like to see him with four horses (some of which may or may not have been in harness before being tooled along until they began to believe they had been in a coach all their lives).

Captain O'Grady Delmege has won too many point-to-points for me to remember. To see him out hunting riding at Tiger (Colonel Reilly, who is here now and no better man to hounds, a real old-fashioned "thruster") in a fast hunt, was a nervous sight for onlookers. J. O'G. showed me a drop over a coped wall on to the road near Adare which they galloped at together one day, and "hopped off the road like peas," as he put it.

One story I must tell to show Captain Delmege's quickness with the people.

It happened quite lately, at Listowel races, where an English prize-fighter, rather loudly garmented, having come over to Ireland, thought he would take in an Irish race meeting as an experience. He did so with due contempt for the somewhat ragged crowd outside. Unfortunately for him and other people a hot favourite won, and an outside bookie who had laid against it beyond that which he was able melted discreetly into space when he saw the horse coming home alone. The stranger mounted his stool to watch the race, next minute he found himself surrounded by an over anxious crowd of people who had backed the winner. Tickets were thrust into an astonished hand. Denial and exceeding pungent language was in vain. Both men wore check suits and both were what the Kerry men called "furriners."

From a mistake it grew to be a struggle for life,

with the ever ready R.I.C. coming to the rescue and gradually edging the mobbed and battered man to the stand. Here he ought to have been safe, but was not. The racing crowd, some two thousand, are not easy to deal with. Shoulders were bent against the woodwork. Ominous voices thundered that they'd have the man out if they smashed the stand to pieces.

The woodwork began to crack and bend, and the pleasant prospect of a free fight to protect the unoffending stranger lay in front of the race-goers.

Crack ! Crack !

"The place will be down in two minutes," said someone philosophically.

"Will it ?" said Captain Delmege piling up boxes until he was enabled to get his head over the palings, to be greeted with a roar. But he could roar too, and was too well known not to gain a hearing.

"You are all mad," he shouted. "Stop that or you'll never get a licence for a meeting again."

An ominous but dubious murmur.

"Is Kiss Katchewan running?" shouted someone mockingly.

"She is, you fools," thundered J. O'G. "And she'll win. But if the course is not clear in five minutes *I'll send her home!*"

From howling, bloodthirsty furies the people changed to sportsmen.

“Three cheers for Delmege. Set the numbers up. His mare is to win.”

The tension was over, the situation saved.

The crowd hurried off good-humouredly. The mare, fortunately, won easily, and a battered stranger hurried back to England holding quite new views as to Ireland. Amongst them that scientific boxing in an Irish crowd was certainly not a success.

Captain Delmege is still hunting regularly with sons, and a daughter with him now. He had for years a big white horse, and one more story to show the country people insist on their fixed opinions. I was completely left behind about four years ago in a hunt from Cahernarry, and took up a position on a hill to watch them come back to me. They ran a ring. Very few people had got away, and one man on a white horse was alone with hounds.

“That is Delmege,” said a farmer to me. “Success to him.”

Now I knew that J. O’G. was not out, and it was Major Tremayne on his flea-bitten grey, and I said so.

“It *is* Delmege,” was the reply. “Hasn’t he a white horse, and isn’t he always out away in front. I tell ye it *is* Delmege.”

I said no more.

I have spoken of point-to-points, and the very first point-to-point in County Limerick was got

up by Captain Delmege in 1879. He was helped by my father and Tiger Reilly, but the subscription to it, £1, was considered expensive, and one well-known hunting man declared that all the hunters in the country would be spoilt or broken down!

I cannot recall it as I was a tiny mite. I have the account. The first race was won by Mr. de Ros Rose's Charlie, ridden by Captain Delmege; the second by Captain Mark Maunsell's Senior, ridden by Colonel Reilly.

Names which again recall the leisurely coaching days, each of these owners drove one. The swing and clank of the bars, the clink clonk of the four horses' hoofs, the country slipping gently by.

In 1891, after my marriage, I had a few days hunting in Cork on a dreadful little chestnut thoroughbred which could not or would not jump a fence. I lighted on some of their worst country there at first, glen and mountain, but as most of my time was spent on the road, it did not matter.

Then Mr. Donovan the horse dealer, lent me a black mare which he had bought with a great character and which ran away with me even on close country for three miles until she turned turtle at a high bank.

Mr. Phelan picked me up and just as I was getting to my feet another horse appeared on top of the bank. He must have hit me, I think, if

Phelan had not jumped up, caught the bridle while the horse was in the air, no easy thing to do, and pulled him out of my way.

The man who had ridden too close this meeting held two horses while Phelan told him what he thought of him, and the country people remarked, referring to the language, that " 'twas fine begob."

I was sent home. It turned out that the mare was a determined runaway and had nearly killed her previous owner. Donovan, then, lent me his own cob, a piece of absolute perfection, on which I had two nice days with the South Union.

Mr. Russell, Master at the time of Staghounds near Athlone, was the next Master I hunted with. I had only two days there before I caught cold, got laid up, and though I believe it is the worst of countries, my hunts were over nice banks and fair going. The Master, on a big black, was a good man to follow if you liked the biggest place in every fence. High straight banks and not very firm.

I had no more hunting at Athlone ; it was then March, and the regiment left there in May, going out to camp.

Next winter I was at the Curragh in a hut with two doors, two windows and two fire-places in every room, a kitchen down a passage and perpetual drums bumping everywhere. Winds roared up and down the desolate little roads between the huts, and also roared everywhere inside, so that one was either roasted or blown away.

I had two horses to ride. My mare, the Witch, then only four, and her companion the Wizard, and in my zeal I nearly rode them to death in the limitless Curragh. Major St. Leger Moore was Master then, I remember he rode a very handsome grey, and my first meet was at Sallins, where to eyes used to a field of seventy or a hundred I sat and wondered how one ever saw hounds.

I certainly did not. I was swept away in a crowd, we got wired and canalled and railwayed and we could hear hounds hunting somewhere, once people said De Robeck was with them. They were a splendid pack, and I wish I had known who to watch so as to get a chance of getting away. A meet at Dunlaven, a glorious country where we had a poor day in torrents of rain, and another near Kildare, where we had a very nice hunt over in small easy country were my last experiences of Kildare. This was another very wet day, and hounds hunted beautifully into the Curragh gorse and out again when he beat them in a downpour.

Two days afterwards I left for Kilkenny to hunt with the cheeriest of Masters, Mr., now Sir Hercules Langrishe, and with Mr. Richard Burke occasionally, in Tipperary.

We took a small cottage at Kilkenny, which was never intended to have horses in its yard. Yet with planks and nails and trust in Providence we made room for four. Their heads almost

touched the wood, the roofs leaked, and had to be lined with felt, but horses never looked so blooming or did so well.

The first meet at Kilkenny is always at the Club House Hotel in the town. It is delightful hunting for a poor man living in Kilkenny itself, as the farthest meet there was eight miles off. Freshford is the best of stone-wall countries the meet boasts.

The Kilkenny hounds were hard to live with in those days, on good scenting days. For Mr. Langrishe had them out of covert in a few seconds, went away with a few couple and let the tail hounds take care of themselves. There was no stopping of the leaders. The county is not big taking it all round, but trappy, light going, and carries a wonderful scent.

Down near Tory Hill Mr. Langrishe took the Waterford county for a time. With nothing to stop hounds, we used to run at a terrific pace, over fly banks and light pasture.

The country round Upper Killeen is almost perfect, and we had some great hunts from that covert.

Mr. Langrishe was a light weight, riding small well-bred horses, all of them fast. Blazes, a little chestnut which was almost perfection, dropped dead with him one day near Callan. I cannot remember the name of the gorse. He was a wonderful huntsman, patient as well as

quick, and kept his field in order by biting sarcasm.

“Well done, sir. Cheer 'em on for me, sir,” would bring an offender sneaking back faster than any flow of language.

I made so many cheery sporting friends down there, many of them dead. Amongst them, Mr. Eddy Smithwick who has passed away, a well-known racing man and the kindest of friends. He was once one of their hardest men, but had had a very bad fall before I went there and only came out on a cob to look on. He was the owner of Lesterlin, the horse which had the extraordinary experience at the Curragh, of swerving and then coming in first close up to the stands, while the judge was watching a ding-dong struggle between two horses in the middle of the court. A certain prince losing ten thousand over the race which he had laid ten thousand to one on as an absolute certainty.

Whyte Melville used to hunt with the Kilkennies in his day, and killed the “gallant grey” riding a very good hunt from Killeen close to Mr. Eddy. The horse was staked and went on for two fields absolutely ripped up before it fell. They had one of the hoofs at Kilcrene House, with an inscription written by the famous owner. There was Commander Forbes, author of that delightful book, *Hounds, Gentlemen, Please*, who came from Carlow, whom Whyte Melville might

have written of as a good one to follow, a bad one to beat. He used to write then a series of very charming Hunting Notes in *Land and Water*, embracing four packs.

Hounds, Gentlemen, Please, has made me think of many sins that I've committed myself. Talking at checks, riding on forgetfully, and a great many more.

The Kilkennies meet three days a week—three days a fortnight was meant to be my portion, but—with planks and nails and Irish recklessness, we stretched the little stud to four. I had my Witch, she never fell with me, and a cob nearly pure Arab called Nelly Grey, and there was the Wizard and something hired, four for two of us, but they worked hard.

Dawson was first whip, and Ned, who took to drinking and whose last episode with the Kilkennies was insisting on flying up Tory Hill in a thick fog to get his hounds when they had all gone home, was second.

The trappy country round Barneglessauny (I did not invent the name) was too much for my Limerick horse. He put me down twice my first day out, over fences we don't have—very low banks with straggling thorns on top and wide ditches.

Mrs. Langrishe had a wonderful little mare, Waterproof, only a pony, but practically a thoroughbred, and another a grey, a thoroughbred which had not grown, both of which with their

feather-weight owner up were hard to beat in any country. I rode the grey one in Tipperary and he flew a Tipperary double. He felt as powerful as a fourteen-stone hunter. Knocktopper is a lovely old place, part of it once a church with the old east window of the abbey still in the ball-room there.

I believe there is supposed to be a superstition that some monks prophesied that if they ever danced in the ball-room a death should occur among the revellers, and I have heard that twice it was fulfilled, but I think they have danced it to death now. Mrs. Crofton, who was killed out hunting just after I left, was a great friend of mine in Kilkenny, a plucky woman who loved her hunt.

Kilkenny was the cheeriest of places, always something going on and the best of sport. The country is split up now.

We had a very curious hunt once from a gorse near Gowran. Two couple of hounds slipped out of covert right on top of their fox and with them slipped two men, whom it happened were deadly enemies and had not spoken for fifteen years.

The Master put the body of the pack on, using all the language he had breath for. Hounds fairly flew over a particularly open piece of country fenced by low stone walls, so that you could see for a mile and a half ahead. We could see the fox barely half a field in front of the two couple, who were racing, practically in view, then the two

sportsmen, oblivious of Master or anyone else. Then the rest of the hounds driving ahead, but not running nearly so fast, and the field. The vista in pink disappeared into a wood. We followed. To find Patience and her companions tearing that fox to pieces and the two offenders off their horses dancing up and down shaking hands rapturously.

It had been too much for them. "Never had such a hunt," one said to the woods; he was panting for sympathy.

"Glorious!" said the other. "All alone too," echoed no one to a beech tree. "Worry, Worry. No check . . . That big ditch . . ."

Both turned. "Hang it all, old fellow, we must make it up—after riding that together."

We came on them the firmest friends on earth, and Mr. Langrishe buried his wrath as he pulled back to have his laugh out.

We had some fine hunts during my three seasons at Kilkenny from Upper Killeen. One fox used to run a wide half-circle of about ten miles over the very best of the country and beat us in the end, close to a covert called, if I can remember, Booleglass, a small gorse in a hollow. I remember seeing Phelan who hunted a lot with the Kilkennies coming up from Tipperary, on a young blood horse, at the end of the second of three gallops, the horse so absolutely done that it fell into the field, tumbled down over a blind drain in the

middle, and fell out of it. After that he pulled up.

Phelan and I had hounds to ourselves once from the same gorse, Killeen, everyone taking a wrong turn, or fallen into a deep ditch with a bad take off near covert. We had a nice hunt quite alone for about five miles, when it began to freeze and scent failed completely; we lost him before the Master caught us.

There were occasional difficulties at Kilkenny even in those days. In the Freshford country one man had made himself very disagreeable and had twice stoned people who rode over his land.

Of course foxes made a point of crossing it. One rather good hunt we found ourselves there again, with our friend at his gate armed with rocks, wire all round except one very high narrow bank which fenced the angry gentleman's wheat field.

Mr. Langrishe was with me, he put his horse at the bank and heard all the farmer had to say during a determined refusal.

"Open the gate?" "The devil an' open? Back we could go the way we come, ourselves an' our likes of the Hunt Club."

The Master muttered something to me, then he murmured still more softly. Wheat . . . horses do run away, sometimes.

I was riding the Wizard, who was never a greedy horse for a big fence, but he was doubtless

shocked, for he scrambled over the high place flippantly and ran away three times . . . round that field . . . I seemed only able to turn him and I even called for help.

By the time I had finished the second round, the rocks were abandoned and one of the angriest men in Ireland was yelling to Patsy or Miky for the love of God above to hurry on with the key of the gate or he'd be rooned.

The Master and some people who had come up were allowed to go through just as the Wizard now chose, under my directions, to run away across the road and up to where hounds were at fault, and as far away from that man as he could.

We had one very sad incident during my stay at Kilkenny when Mr. John Smithwick died on his way to the meet. He had given up hunting but was driving to look on. Driving himself too.

Then we had a veritable world turned upside down day once—one man being actually blown off his horse, and no one, I think, took home a hat. It was a solid roaring storm and we wanted Mr. Jorrocks to counsel as to not taking hounds out on "a werry windy day."

A 'werry' snowy day is nearly as bad. I went out with the Tipperarys my last year at Kilkenny to find snow thick in the ditches.

"Such fallin' never ye see," as the country people said. Horses did not know where to take off or land and we went flounder in and flounder

out, and more impetuous hunters stood on their heads at the taking off side. I had three falls myself, though we scrambled up together, and people who went fast at their fences had about a dozen each.

I shall never forget down there, Lady Beatrice Butler, now Lady Beatrice Pole-Carew, coming on a small pony which had never seen a fence, and cramming him through a five-mile hunt. We crossed one river three times, and each time she fell in. It was a particularly nasty line, with high blind banks, but the pony had to get every yard of it on his head or his tummy or his knees. Absolutely fearless and a perfect rider, his owner did not care.

If the pony did not die he stayed in his stable for a month at least. He had been taken out for a quiet ride off soft feeding.

I got a few days with the Tipperarys, hunted then as now by the well-known Mr. Richard Burke. Magnificently mounted and absolutely fearless, he had a splendid pack there. We only got to probably the best of the country near Kilcooley Abbey, and what a country it was. Mr. Burke tells me it is more overgrown now. I had some glorious gallops with the Tipperarys and seen three black caps. Mr. Langrishe, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Nugent Humble riding at each other like demons over three big green banks. Mr. Langrishe on Blazes, or a brown, Scraps I think he called it.

Mr. Humble on Rose, a chestnut mare, and Mr. Burke on something which was sure to be good.

The Wizard, if I rode him, wasn't quite fast enough across the more open country down there. The Witch was all right. I never went down to Carlow to have a day with old Mr. Robert Watson, he used to come to Kilkenny. People often asked us to, but we had not many horses.

Mr. Watson came down one day in spring, a day with a blazing sun, with the ground ringing like iron under horses' feet, with the roads clouds of dust, and March's hunting shroud spread dryly over everything. No one thought or hoped for a hunt, we stood about longing for straw hats and covert coats. I had come out on a grey three year old just to show him hounds, when the unexpected happened ; we found in a wood, hounds ran fairly fast out across the grass and they ran on, not fast after the beginning but going. They were at fault more than once over plough. Twice Mr. Langrishe lifted them and was right. It was one of the best bits of the country, big sound banks and going which would have been unpleasantly heavy in wet weather but carried a scent now. Old Mr. Watson absolutely beamed, his grey hair flying out under his hunting cap, going at his fences with a schoolboy's zest. We ran for about six miles at quite a fair pace and we killed our fox close to Gowran just before he got to the woods.

“Never,” I heard the veteran Master say, “have I seen a fox more perfectly hunted.”

That is twenty-two years ago, but he must have been an old man then, and he rode like a boy.

CHAPTER III

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ODDS AND ENDS

I HAD three seasons at Kilkenny, loving it better as I got to know it. One season was quite spoilt by a six weeks' frost, but the skating was excellent to make up for it.

I sold my Witch at the end of my second year there to Mrs. Cavanagh. Hunting really cost more than we could afford, but I replaced her with something almost as good, Victory, if not so fast. . . . The Witch never came down with me.

Fell the blank years after that—Armagh with only harriers over a poisonous country, such sheer waste of my big mare that I sold her to come down to Limerick. Then Colchester, where I had no horses, and could only watch the people going out. The regiment had beagles which I ran with, to the great detriment of my health and weight. Essex looked very like Ireland save for the plough, plenty of banks.

I had a few days in Wales with the Flint and Denbigh and Sir Watkyns and one day with the Cheshire.

The Flint and Denbigh, drawing along a smooth grassy slope with the sea winking at you at its

foot and a horse which will buck was not pleasant. It was a weird little country, tiny banks and tiny fly fences, but such a lot of wire that a kindly sportsman warned me never to jump a hedge without hitting it first with my whip.

Hounds were always getting lost in that country; they ran from hill to hill, and we scrambled across the valleys guessing which hill they were at, and generally guessing wrong. But I saw one quite nice hunt from somewhere near Prestatyn, over a line of little banks in which I got a bad start and was hopelessly left.

My mount was my old Sally, which I had sold to a friend, but she had to do so much driving that she was not in hunting humour.

I had some hunting in Ireland after that, a few days with Mr. Charteris.

And one day in particular which laid me up for years. I was back for three weeks, and a very kind friend gave me his own best horse so that I could have a really good time.

Tearing down a lane a young farmer turned across me suddenly, I had either to crash into him or pull hard aside. I pulled my horse, slipped and went down, turning back my foot so far as he fell on me that my thick hunting boot was torn open like paper.

Curiously enough I got up, though four little bones and two toes were broken and the tendon Achilles snapped.

But I soon came down again in agony. Morphia to dull the pain was my miserable fate for days and I have never danced properly since then.

I have seen the Essex out, but my only riding there was on a lovely grey mare, Safety, belonging to Mr. Robinson, now Lord Rosmead, and I rode her with one Master I had almost forgotten, Lord Lonsdale of the Queens near Ascot.

I was staying at Ascot, where there were two carriage horses, christened for a joke Blood Royal and Royal Ascot, and Lady Rosmead and I thought we must see a meet on them. Two nearly clean-bred bays, they were about the most excitable mounts one can imagine. We missed the meet, but found the Master wandering among the fern looking for his hounds.

We even compassed some small drains on our fiery steeds, but we saw very little of what to me seemed a nightmare of hunting, through endless woods, up and down rides and through bracken. I was living at Guernsey then, where I published my first book *The Thorn Bit*, and the Boer War cloud fell as a fog on its possible success.

I wonder if the kindly reviewer who writes for *Punch* could guess the wild joy which his first review of *The Thorn Bit* gave. How it was treasured and kept and studied with wild hope.

I think that what success I have had I really owe to the great kindness of Mr. Alfred Watson of the *Badminton*. With great diffidence I sent

him a little sketch, which he did not accept in the usual chill way, but wrote me a personal letter, even taking the trouble to point out faults. I lunched with him when next I went to London, and can never forget all his advice did for me, and how his advice and encouragement practically made my career.

Also I must thank the late Mr. A. P. Watt, the literary agent, who took my books in hand out of pure good nature, and helped me in every way.

Before my horseless days at Colchester I was at Aldershot ; it was Jubilee year and I saw the big review.

A friend of mine and I having had bad places, scuttled away to get a glimpse of the Queen as she drove back. We climbed on a bank near Government House, to be immediately told that the public must not stand on banks or any bomb-throwing position when Royalty passed.

Promising sweet obedience I asked the policeman, who did not know the Irish, how if we did not stand on banks we were to see, and he gave it up with a friendly grin.

The old Queen was crying softly as she drove past. Aldershot was all dust and glitter and tramp before that review. It was a wondrous sight.

I had lodgings at Farnborough with a thin maiden lady who had of course seen better days, and I hope remembered better humour.

I remember bicycling to the library one day for books with a very shy man and as we came back seeing the Duke of Connaught and his staff riding across.

“He may want to speak to me, fly,” said the shy soldier, and he flew, but so did the thing holding the books.

Out they flopped under the feet of the horses, and the good-looking Duke pulled up while a hot and blushing man dived in and out collecting them.

I met such a charming Russian at the Hotel there that year, wife of the ambassador or attaché in Paris, I cannot remember which. She spoke at least six languages and was so amusing. She told me the worst moment of her life was at her first big dinner in Japan when they were there and a little pink live fish was put on her plate and she had to eat some.

We took seats to see the procession in London, but the crowd rushed the place, so in company with a friendly charwoman and a sweep we had a bird's-eye view from the roof.

From Colchester I had my first experience of English racing at Newmarket, when I saw the Two Thousand. The complete impossibility of seeing anything except the horses in the paddock was my difficulty. Lord Durham took off Lord Rosmead to some place where he could see, but we wandered out on the course, and being Irish

who fall on their feet, began to talk to a trainer who took us to where we saw the race splendidly.

Now, the only English race which I see and never miss is the National.

When the South African War was on I spent a great deal of time at the War Office worrying friends there for news.

I remember so well one very high official reading over some papers with bitter resignation and looking across at me with a dry smile as he said, "Diogenes might search this place with an electric light for an honest man and not find him."

We are taking this really great war without the hysterical gloom that London plunged into then. After Colenso it was unsafe even to talk to a bus conductor without the fear of having to offer him a pocket-handkerchief so as to weep decorously. Two broke down over it to me one day.

The most awe-stricken bus conductor I ever encountered was on my way to Liverpool Street when the bicycling craze was at its height. He was shivering and incoherent, so much so that I asked him if he was ill.

"No, laidy, but we've just taken off a woman's head."

A girl of only twenty, her bicycle had side-slipped and thrown her out under the wheels.

I was in England all the Coronation summer when it took about an hour sometimes to get down

Bond Street, and the Indian Princes, especially on horseback, were people to remember.

They seemed actually part of their fiery Arabs. One came to a cricket match where I was staying at Windsor. He was high breeding impersonified. I remember he wore black kid gloves and would not eat anything at tea, and he moved more like a thoroughbred racer than anything else.

He used to talk a good deal to an English girl, and they were so typical of East and West. She showed as much high breeding as he did ; a tall fair girl, rather pale and with finely cut features, and he taller still, handsome in his Eastern type.

It was a summer of sunshine and splendour cut across with its thunderstorm of gloom and anxiety.

Ascot that year was a medley of colour and display, with the Indians in their Indian kits, Chinese, Japanese, French, Germans, a babel of tongues and a positive glory of colour. One really seemed to absorb riches from other people and forget one's own small place in the world.

After this I came back to Ireland to hunt regularly again, on anything which I could pick up to ride. I was writing hard, but my first book only brought me in £10 ; it makes far more yearly now, and my next was a dead failure, so a few short stories were all I had to help then.

I wonder if other people who write were as overjoyed as I was when I won the prize offered in a Dublin paper for the best short sporting story. I

wrote it on Lesterlin's curious defeat at the Curragh and no cheque has ever looked so glorious again. Unfortunately I shall never be a popular short story writer; I do something just wrong.

Mr. Higgins was hunting the Limericks then for Major Wise, who was at the war, and I began hunting regularly again when he came back from it.

A very fine rider, with an extraordinary eye for hounds. If he took a wrong turn he seemed to know by some instinct exactly where to go to pick them up. The Limerick pack had deteriorated greatly in these days and Major Wise worked hard with them, leaving a really fine lot when he gave them up. He was very popular with the farmers. Their liking for his cheery voice and manner pulling the Hunt through some troublous times. It was touch and go more than once during those years. His best season was his last, which was one of those record years when good hunt follows good hunt so fast that one is almost wiped out by the other. We had the Ballyregan to Tervoe hunt that year almost a record, I believe, for pace, an eight-mile point in thirty-five minutes, only one man with hounds and two people close behind when we killed at Tervoe. I was the third, a long way in the rear.

I was out one day in the stone-wall country when he did a rather wonderful bit of hunting. We were simply trailing a very stale line and

everyone told him he was wrong. That our fox must be back, had never gone that way, that hounds were over some old line. Major Wise listened and smiled, but he held on until up jumped our fox, right out of the ordinary country, and we either killed him or put him to ground close to the Deel, and I had to gallop for my train.

Some of his sayings will never be forgotten. Since writing this Major Wise was killed in an accident. He was a personality never to be forgotten and ever to be regretted.

When he went away several years ago to his own place in Tipperary our present Master, Mr. Nigel Baring, on giving up the Duhallows took the Limericks, and I always hope that before he gives up my hunting days may be over.

Like Mr. Langrishe it is short life for a fox who does not bustle out of covert; he is not given much time. Mr. Baring rides a beautiful stamp of horse, well bred, fast and powerful, and fear was left out in his composition. He will take the best place in a fence if there happens to be a best, but anything between him and his hounds has to be got over, and the worst on earth must suffice if there is nothing good. The country people are devoted to him.

“ I wouldn't care to be the fox facin' out an' himself afther me,” as I heard one say, and “ If I were a fox I'd rather have the devil after me than Nigel Baring and his bitch pack.”

Interludes of acting came into many seasons. Hunt Theatricals, got up for the ever open mouth of the Fowl Fund.

When the amateurs gather together strange things happen. One of the strangest perhaps was casting me in my first effort on the stage for the part of the Witch in "Creatures of Impulse." I could not sing a note!

When the principals arrived just before the play came off they were somewhat surprised.

Miss Henry, now Mrs. Owen Lewis, a completely charming amateur, who could have been a professional at any time, took the chief part.

I acted with her twice, and she was that wonderful thing the leading lady who only thought of everyone else. Very young herself, she was a kind of Fairy Godmother to the beginners, helping them in every way. No trouble was too great for her to take with the raw entry, she coached and encouraged, and with her a play had to go. She could sing and dance charmingly, and could at any time have gone on and seen London applaud.

I saw a case of stage fright with a brave young soldier, Mr. Lloyd, killed in South Africa, and no one in front noticed anything.

One memorable night when doing "Dandy Dick," and the thunder was to have rattled off the tea-tray, it was silent.

Round rushed Mr. Dick Burke, looking for the blood of all missing thunder to find Jack, our

super, pleasantly drunk and quite disinclined to produce any noise save a snore—and he was sitting on the tray. Then the thunder rang feverishly about four lines too late, the stage manager banging furiously and reducing the leading lady, myself, to nervous hysteria.

Murmurs from the wings concerning the slaying of Jack not improving it.

In that play, "Creatures of Impulse," I had to tumble backwards out of a trap-door with what grace I could, Lord Limerick and Captain Murray being deputed to catch me. But when each man told the other that one could catch me easily and he would be back in a moment, and I took my header backwards on to a very hard floor, if I had been really endowed with magical powers it would have gone ill with them. Fortunately at eighteen one falls lightly.

I acted in real Amateur Theatricals once, got up by the regiment, when no one came to rehearsals and no one knew their part or where to stand, and the audience looked on in pained amazement.

Looking back now I remember all the great people whom I have seen.

Mary Anderson, when I was a tiny child, and was anyone so beautiful? Small as I was I have never forgotten her in the "Winter's Tale" and as Juliet. Irving I never saw in his earlier days, and I was one of the people who could not follow his voice. And marvellous Ellen Terry. I was

lucky enough to see her as one of the Merry Wives with Tree as Falstaff. Wyndham, with his complete ease merely playing himself and always fascinating. And best of all Cocquelin Ainé, incomparable, inimitable in "Cyrano" and other plays. I only saw him a year or two before he died. His voice was quite wonderful, one never lost a word and every gesture and movement was art. Gone are the snows of yester year. There will never be such another Cyrano de Bergerac.

M. Guitry in the "Chant du Cygne" is also something to remember. When he cures his nephew of an undesirable attachment by completely cutting him out. It is a beautiful play. They are part of their parts in France down to the holder of the smallest.

"S'occupe Toi D'Amelie" and "Le Roi" are the two funniest plays I have ever seen—ever excepting "Charley's Aunt" with Penley in it. I was sore for a day after I had seen "Le Roi" and "Zou Zou" and it was never vulgar.

Then there are the thrills of the Grand Guignol, the one-time church. Where the same actors go from farce to tragedy, and such tragedy, realistic and appallingly real. Memories of really good plays hang long with one.

The magnificent impudence of the amateur is beyond that of any Germans. They attack a three act play, and undertake to produce in a month what professionals would take four at. We are

at the dress rehearsal before the first act is going smoothly. When Mr. Edmund Burke and Mrs. Owen Lewis were there to help the unwary it worked wondrously, but I have seen it go rockily indeed. A hunt in spasms.

I have also acted with Lady Gooch, a well-known amateur ; one of her greatest successes was in "Lady Frederick."

To anyone who loves to act, an audience, held, is almost as keen a joy as a gallop.

CHAPTER IV

THE BEST RUN I HAVE EVER HAD

THE best hunt in the world is always in the glow of the moment's joy at the last . . . until one looks back and thinks it over. So much depends on one's horse, and on that great element luck. . . . You may come to the end of a really fine hunt which other people have loved . . . weary of trying to get a turn, sick of seeing top hats bob up and down in front of you, of sometimes hearing hounds, of going to the right and finding they have swung left, of holding off for Dromin and seeing them go in to Kilmallock. In one of the very finest short gallops they ever had out of Bruree, practically without a check for six miles, I got badly away watching hounds in the distance and I was prepared to say at the end that it was a horrible hunt, when I came up to see all the smiling faces of the people who had got away.

A Master thinks no hunt really perfect if he does not catch his fox. Some people like it slow enough to watch hounds comfortably, others only want a steeplechase and the most patient piece of hound work will not please them without pace. A crowd

is my fear, I get frightened and muddled if I cannot get by myself, or with a few people, so my perfect hunts in my own mind are those when only a few have been my way.

The push to your hat—no one could start without that—the taking up of reins, the pricked-ear excitement of the good hunter you ride, the hounds slipping out of cover and the short sharp twang of gone away—is there anything like it on earth as one gallops up the first field with one's finger groping in the lucky bag of hunting?

Which way will he turn? Will we do right or wrong? Is scent, the ever-mysterious, good or bad?

Flinging themselves at it, settling down and away, as well stand on a hill and be safe as hope to see it to-day, or a cock-tail, or after a burst heads up, an anxious wait, or again another check, this is to be no burst but slow hunting. And this again who knows? How often have we been held hard and gone on and done grievous wrong by pressing hounds, for three or four miles, and then gone quietly believing that all we can do is to jump away from the crowd and watch the hounds puzzle it out. And then, what's happening—the sudden bobbing of the top hats who have kept close, hounds running like pigeons three fields away and the whole of the crowd between us and them? Another hunt lost unless we are lucky. Pray now for the checks—for the chancy

scent one cursed heartily a few minutes before. Pray, but you will probably not be answered.

I did that near Ballinacura three seasons ago, we walked in a semicircle for quite twenty minutes, and just as I had begun to talk of something interesting to some as foolish as myself, there they were racing for Bulgerton, and there was only a thoroughbred horse to thank when I caught them.

But the best hunts on one's best horse, like the hunt, the one of the moment is the best until he fails you and reminds you that they don't breed horses, or, like port, have deteriorated.

One of the hunts I loved best was from Grange in Major Wise's time, it was no point, we killed coming into Grange again, but it was over a glorious country at a nice pace and a beautiful bit of hunting. Half-way through one of the soldiers quartered here narrowly escaped destruction as his horse swerved on a bank and ran along and then disappeared on the far side just when I had picked a place. The mare I was riding took her fences far too fast. I had a vision of someone who was looking up from a ditch as she fled out over him.

The end of that hunt, though horses were tiring, was as near perfection as hunting can be. Hounds running hard close on their gallant but beaten fox over flat green fields with big double banks at which one could gallop. There was no plough,

no hedges, you could see all the time hounds absolutely pouring on, and this after eight miles with part of it fast. I can feel my old mare now as she swung into those banks, as gamely as when we left Grange, and galloped as resolutely across the big fields.

The fastest hunt I shall probably ever see was in the same year from Ballyregan to Tervoe. All over a fly country, stone walls, but spoilt by railway gates which gave hounds a tremendous advantage. They went racing up into Tervoe as if they were finishing a Dogs' Derby. I was just near enough to see, having got a lucky turn after the railing, one man with them, and one close up, and we killed just inside the front gate. Horses were absolutely done up after that gallop, one which kept with them all through was not out for two months, the second was a thoroughbred, and my little horse, a borrowed mount, had to have a fortnight's rest, though he was on the top of the ground and a fast fencer and I never pressed him.

The longest hunt I ever remember was in the stone-wall country. I was riding the same little brown, Little Barry, then a four year old. It was twenty-two miles and eleven of it fast. We ran a wide ring of quite eleven miles, coming back having had more than enough to Cahermoyle when we had found, but just as our dead-beat fox trailed past Meade's fort, a fresh one jumped

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up. They changed and we ran on past Cahermoyle past Rathkeale, where I left them; horses were then absolutely beaten, and they hunted on slowly to under Ballingary Hill when they were stopped in the dark.

It was quite twenty-two miles, a record, I believe, for that year's fox hunting in the United Kingdom. Personally I think a long hunt is greatly over-rated. It constantly means a change of foxes, horses lose their keenness and their spring even if they do not actually tire out, hounds are not untirable and so often in these long hunts do not kill. It is of course very pleasant to get to the end of one if one has not really got to the end of one's horse.

The other very long hunt which I have known here, I did not finish. It was seventeen miles, one fox, with a kill. We found at Boskill Bog close to Caherconlish, and at first as we hunted slower over the hills towards Inch St. Laurence, scent was poor and catchy. I saw our fox there sloping leisurely down a very steep hill, a grey old customer. He must have lain down in the bottom of one of the very thick hedges there, for suddenly they fairly raced away running for six miles without the semblance of a check across hills and deep holding bottoms straight to Cahermory gorse, where there was a welcome breather on the road. Here he never went into the gorse but ran on, fortunately, more slowly now to Roxboro,

up to Friarston and back again. Here I was within three miles of home with a fourteen-mile hunt behind me and I gave up ; it was also getting very dark. I remember after we had left Cahermarty coming to a boggy river near Licadoon. Three gallant men rode at it. Splash, splash, splash, they went in. Then another and then someone found an easier place. I got in and out. As I was riding home past Roxboro the fox crossed under my feet tired but running gamely, and I suppose I ought to have gone on, but there was an old gorse close by, full of holes where I thought he must save himself. He tried to get home. For the last mile the three who kept on only rode by sound and he was run into two miles from where he started from, after seventeen miles with six of it a steeplechase. I never saw so many horses lame and cut about as when I left them. It was a wonderful bit of hunting, if not over the best of countries.

We had a very fine short hunt in the same country four seasons ago in which I was riding a four year old. He went very well but he tired in heavy going just before the end and we came to a wide ditch with the landing higher than the take off. I guessed that he would just not do it, and he did not. We were tumbling backwards slowly when whack ! I felt a blow on my back and a horse hitting me hard from behind righted Little Bendigo so that he came on his feet into the drain.

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“But for me you were over backwards,” said the voice of the man who had ridden so close. “It was very advantageous now that I hit you.”

It was a hard riding farmer who rides harder when he has passed *and* halted at a public-house.

We were both in the bottom of the drain, which had a sound bottom.

“And it’s all well enough, but how is yourself an’ meself to get out,” he went on, “an’ when we are out ’twill be the wrong side, God help us.”

To be told that jumping on you is all for your advantage is certainly novel.

We rode along looking for a cattle track.

“That was such a great sort of a little horse I’d never have said he’d fall,” confided my friend, “trustin’ him for a lead I was. Here ye are. An’ the dogs checked outside.”

This time we both got over quite safely.

I think a hunt which I enjoyed as much as any was from Grange in Major Wise’s time. The end of that gallop was as near perfection as a hunt can be. Big fields, big sound fences, hounds driving ahead without the slightest check, no wire and no looking for places.

We had a very fine hunt last season from the Bruree sticks to Ard Patrick just under the Galtees. The first part fast over the best of Limerick, the last at a nice pace over a huge country and put him to ground in a glen.

Recording hunts to anyone who has not ridden

them is perhaps not interesting. So I have only just mentioned a few which were in their way, records.

Hunting will go on when I shall be a mere memory myself. Someone perhaps, spoken of as having ridden in her time, and written a lot of rot.

But I think when I get old, as Magner says, "terrible ould," that I shall sit in the warmth and say the weather is much colder now than it used to be when I hunted, and the country must be all wire, and the hounds too fast for amusement, and believe there are no hunters alive now such as Blackie and Cherry Boy. And no runs such as I rode and loved.

Though deep in my heart I hope I may go away for good before that day comes to me, for somehow I cannot imagine any life without hunting in it. Ireland with her green fields and brown bogs, her grey skies and lonely beauty, will be there to look at and ride over. When the saddles are used no more, when even the pen is laid down and she spares me a little corner to rest in until the end of time.

CHAPTER V

STRAY MEMORIES OF THE COUNTRY PEOPLE

THE Irish peasantry are the most charming hosts on earth. They will ask you in and give you the best they have and never make you uncomfortable by apologising. Always most expensive tea and good home-made bread, often no butter, but whatever it is it is put before you and you know your greatest offence is not to eat. They have no buttermilk now, and are a weaker race than the sturdy boys and girls who were brought up on the sour stuff and potatoes. Also the old thatched roofs helped to make them stronger, as none of them would have a crack of window or door open at night, but the thatch did not shut in foul air as the new slated cottages do.

The old open grates with a great fire, the huge sooty kettle or pot on its hook and the wheel which made a draught blowing the turf to glowing gold. I used to love to slip away to have tea with the herd's wife when I was a child, and to turn that wheel was pure joy. Little fluffy ducks or chickens were often pecking on the earthen floor,

probably the hens laid in some corner, but the cups were always spotless and everything brass in the kitchen was polished to shining point, and no bread baked in a big oven is ever like the loaves which come out of the "bastible" with its sods of turf above and below.

"Sickness is the will of God. If you are to go you are to go and there is an end of it." As the coachman's wife said when someone admired her twins, "If the Lord happened to take a fancy to one of them she would not say agin Him, for she only had clothes for the one."

A tremendous change has come upon the Irish peasants ever since I was a child. The spirit of the luxurious age has descended upon the country. When I was very small all the women who could worked at the harvest, small children thinned turnips and did light work. The women wore no hats and stout homespun skirts. Now these same women, wives of poor labourers or farmers, must have smart coats and hats and skirts and would never dream of turning out to work, the children "get more schooling," as the saying goes, and then probably emigrate while still quite young. Consequently double the wages they got then barely suffices, and for these wages they live no better. It goes on the respectability which they must present to the world.

In the middle of the busy harvest times now, the women are all in the towns on market days

buying hats and yellow shoes. It was possible to get men for the harvest then for 1s. 6d. a day or 2s. Now here near Limerick it is five shillings a day and two drinks, and in the country three and six to four shillings a day also with drinks. So tillage is practically given up, and the farmers go in for what they call " dhry sthock " and hiring as little labour as possible.

You will still see the shawled women working in the west ; in Clare and Galway where it is difficult to pluck a living from the stony poor land, but in the richer pasture countries all that is dead.

One thing which they will never lose is their sense of humour. " It's the fair price of him," will be an expression which will never die.

Near Glenwilliam one farmer was giving trouble. He had just a couple of fields which the Hunt often crossed, and he came blustering to the diplomatic keeper of that country swearing vengeance if " his fences were knocked on him agin or his land thrampled."

Next to his little patch was land belonging to the owner of the " Great House." So our friend, on being informed that foxes were free agents and could not be warned overnight as to their choice of line, went home to ruminate on vengeance.

Hounds found on the hills next day and ran hard but keeping away from this Conolly's land so that the muchly harried Field Master drew a

breath of relief as he reflected that the farmer would not be on his doorstep next morning.

But the leading hounds were at fault, they swung at right angles, they poured through the one patch of land which they should have avoided with a zealous field pounding after them. The rotten peaty bank spurted up earth under quick changes and slow. Holes appeared which the more careful people followed each other through. The loose stone wall at the far end of the field rolled down with clink and crash. Everyone went through that forbidden field.

The Field Master and keeper of the country rode home gloomily, wondering what he could say in the morning. Merely riding across fields does not constitute a legitimate claim for damages. When the postman rang the bell next day there was a groan of Conolly, but no Conolly appeared. Not that day or the next and then a puzzled man rode up to the little farm wondering what vengeance could be brewing.

He found a man patching his bank with sods and bushes.

“Sorry to see—er a few places,” began the keeper of the country nervously.

A face was raised slowly, a face with twinkling eyes and a mouth set with grim humour.

“The fair price of me yer honor,” said a philosophical voice. “I couldn’t lave it to the fox’s scent, but interfarin I musth be. Wasn’t I deter-

mined I'd nesht below in the bushes and beckon at the vilyin so that he'd be across ye're own new grass and so I waited. Out he come, sthealin' along for himself an makin' sthaight for ye're field of his own accord, not goin' me ways at all. An' suddenly he seen me. He sthud up with a puss on him like a Christian an' he turned around with a soort of a grin on him like that he a say, 'Here's for ye now with ye're interfayrance' an' he med right-handed across, it was a half a mile of a round on him and sthaight over to me fields that he'd have left if I'd left him. Wasn't it the price of me," said Conolly flinging a bundle of bushes across a scarred oozing gap, "for the bad thoughts that was at me."

"Divil mend then for foxes," he added with heat. "Let them go where they likes an' the Hunt at their heels. I won't be saying this or that to them I tell ye again, yer honor."

He was left a completely resigned man.

"Success. Well over. Good begob." This, though one may be jumping into a man's small patch of land with the grass beginning to grow on it. If you get over with a foot to spare no Irishman will mind what damage you do, but a bad jump is another pair of shoes. Their hearts are with the "sphort," which I cannot believe they would ever like to see done away with.

Whenever there is a hunt they are out to see

it, and when a fox goes away the Derby roar is nothing to the uneven chorus which arises.

Watch if a horse refuses. Men and boys drop from nowhere. While your heated bitterness is simmering they are all around you giving help and advice.

“Clout him on the tail, Mikey. Draw the kippin over the fat of him. Mind his heels man, I tell ye. Keep him at it. Success. He'll do it. He will not. He is a coward, I tell ye. He is in to it. He is not.”

The furious rider has no further say. His heart may ever fail when he sees the size of the ditch and its depth and philosophically realises that the refuser maddened by blows may jump in, but the die is cast, on his tail or his head or his legs that horse must jump.

“Straighten him, Con Nolan. Beckon at him then, the whilst I'll draw another blast of a sthick on him. If he goes down then I tell ye it will larn him, the bottom is boggy. Nolan's cow was drouded there, till they had to kill her below to save her.”

This as the refuser all but overbalances, and a ditch never looks so appallingly alarming as when a horse slides and quivers on its brink.

“Have ye a few sthones, Pat Maguire? There now.”

Rattle, rattle go stones in a hat fearlessly banged under your animal's very tail, whack and

swish go the sticks. Con Nolan beckons open armed.

“Success. Over ye go, that’ll tache him an’ his likes, the dirty sort of a coward he is.”

If the hounds are not hunting and you walk across the next field some spokesman will follow to give advice and to pocket the shilling necessary in return for so much exertion.

“Thim class of pony horses is often cowards,” he will confide. “He has a sunken sort of an eye on him. If we had to shove him off the bank now an’ into the dhrain he’d be near choked below an’ he might be afraid to stop agin.”

You breathe a faint sight of thanksgiving.

“Me Uncle Tom Nolan used to folly the hunt reg’lar, an’ he had a black cob that wouldn’t face wather. So what did me uncle do but he tipped him into the Commogue where the banks is stheep and cruisted him down the sthrame, an’ I declare to the Hivins that vilyin ’d lep even a puddle in the road afterwards for the resht of his days. He broke two sets of shafts an’ he doin’ it, an’ he trappin’.

“What’s that, yer honor? Did it make him a great wather jumper,” Mat Nolan scratches his head.

“That I could not say,” he adds cheerily, “for he was put to postin’, he went in the wind I think from the could he tuk in the Commogue. It was a great way to larn him. There’s the road,

sir, and they off to Grange. Long life to yer honor." A last run after you, and a hail—

"Ye might put that one postin' too, thim cowards is no use at all. Andy Naylor above at Ballaghtubot has a nate hunther if ye're lookin' for one. Five years ould, an' Andy was out all summer runnin' to find him in other min's fields. Lookin' for leps he is, not lookin' in to them. He knocked the load of hay he was carrying in September taking a motor horn for a hunting one, an' signs by, there's a skelp in his knee where he met the wall the same day. A nate horse entirely. Breedy is it? Didn't his gran'dam win a pint-to-pint. Aisy as ye plaze. There wasn't a horse but herself that didn't fall more be token."

If one goes to look at this equine treasure you probably find a lumpy black harness horse, with some spurious quality introduced by a hackney cousin or grandfather, a large piece out of one knee and what his owner calls a hoppity way he has of going behind, an unbiassed observer might say lame from a spavin.

Coming home from hunting if one is riding, everyone wants to know—"Had ye a good hunt?"

It is five minutes well spent to pull up and tell them all about it, or if there is nothing to tell, invent something.

"That was a great hunt entirely. Did ye kill him? Earth-ed was he? Safe home to ye."

In the old days rides home were nothing. I have ridden in from Dromard, seventeen miles off, and from Ballingarry. We worked for hunting then. Came a black cold morning with a dog-cart at the door. Eighteen miles to Ballingarry, and a ride of six on. My old black mare used to trot down in an hour and three-quarters. My one horse, probably only a four year old, was on overnight to lodge in close stables and eat indifferent forage at some pub.

I remember sending on once and finding my horse absolutely unfit next morning. He panted and puffed and lathered as he toiled up a hill. Down I came to my ubiquitous groom, we were only running round the hill.

“Cuthbert, what’s wrong with Jerry? Didn’t he feed?”

“Feed is it,” said Cuthbert. “Indeed he did, mam. It was butiful new soft oats an’ he ate a power of it.”

Luxurious motorists now. How should we like to get off a horse at four o’clock and into a dog-cart, with storms of bitter rain teaming down and drive eighteen miles to Limerick. But we had merry teas then before we all started, now we race home for these as often as not—until the days lengthen.

It was in one of our haunts, some time ago—which, I shall not say—that the landlady hearing the huntsmen coming in, bundled the dead man

they were holding an inquest on, under the sofa and kept the jury waiting downstairs until everyone had left.

I have put this in a book, and it is *true*. I could give the well-known name of the man who sat on the sofa, and little knew what his spurred heel might have touched. The jury, needless to say, gave it away afterwards to everyone they met.

That little hotel, except the very tidy room in which they give you tea is rather like a rabbit warren, an endless collection of painfully dirty little rooms stacked with odds and ends of even more painfully dirty furniture, but they can all give you the best of tea, and buttered toast, and it is better not to think of where it comes from.

When I came over for a season I hired from another keeper of hotels—they call them so—a great sportsman, but the most inhumane man with horseflesh perhaps, in the world. He had a very nice black cob which has a happy home with one of my cousins now, and this used to take the mail car six miles and back in the morning, to have the harness pulled off and be hired out. My mount was a huge raw-boned bay, just not in the book. He stood on a manure heap, it was cleaned about every month or so, waste of straw his owner said to be muckin' out every week. He carried me two long days a week, and if I did not write to say I wanted him, he did extra days with the Duhallows in between just to freshen him up, this was if I

thought of giving him a rest. He pulled more than a little, and if you touched his head at a fence he came down, but when one learnt to ride with a flapping rein and a trusting heart, he was the best of hunters.

He came to Caherconlish Meet for me one day, fourteen miles from his stable, and the poor beast was really spiritless. I rode him a short way and then came to the road disgusted.

“What’s wrong with this horse?” I said. “He’s dead tired.”

“Tired is it. He that should be in the very best of fettle an’ I to ride him forty mile on the road yestherday to have him clean in the wind for ye.”

The poor bay went home for that day. They killed him afterwards racing him.

Our special trains from Limerick are often quite amusing. Some time ago when the station-master was new to it, he saw a stranger with two red setters about to travel on our train. Up he came bustling. “No one but huntsmen were to travel. No one and not them dogs.”

“Specially going out for Major Wise,” said someone sweetly and quickly. “Deerhounds.”

Our station-master eyed the red setters. “Huntin’ dogs,” he said. “Into a first class with thim, Johnny, straight away. All that belongs to the hunting party can go an’ welcome.”

I have seen the signals against us, until the

signalman came back from his breakfast, peevishly wanting to know why we couldn't hunt on the eleven-thirty like Christians. One day I was on the platform stamping my feet from cold when a friendly engine-driver invited me in to his fire.

"For I was a sportin' man myself onst," he said proudly. "Didn't I drive the Hunting Special for a year."

There is an old farmer at Caherconlish who cannot see the good of hunting. He talked to us earnestly one day as I waited for the pony to be harnessed.

"Min of ye're vast wealth," he said captiously, "ridin' mad across the counthry. An' a very ondependint horse ye'd want too, to bring ye safe."

We asked him what he would do if some of our vast wealth—he was probably far richer than we were—came his way.

"Isn't there the chimbly corner if ye had no call to be workin' outside," he said. "An' pigs—good pigs—an' good dhrink. Not facin' obstacles with ditches I tell ye . . . No . . . But afther all if ye were gone we'd miss the sphots of red," he said as we drove away, a twinkle in his eyes.

I remember when hunting trembled in the balance someone being stopped near Fedamore and my father happened to be close by.

He had done something, for the man sent an abject message that evening to say how sorry he was and that, "Faix the Colonel an' his friends

could folly the dogs through his haggard an' in across his bed if they liked."

A somewhat curious idea of a line.

Damage done in fair flight they seldom object to. In one of the letters I published in the *Badminton* a farmer writes: "As it is not the foremost sportsmen that do the harm, but them follyin' through gaps an' openin' gates . . ."

A furious claim came into one of the committee a couple of years ago—for a haggard of cabbages.

"An' it wasn't the hunt he minded, but that Hanley from ——— on his great Gevaul of a horse, an' that Miss O'Connor, that long lean scrag of woman that would not go on or back, but hither an over among me cabbages."

The said lady owned a cob which was given to the trick of rushing up and down when it did not want to jump.

Last year a farmer wrote asking the Master to come at once to kill a fox that was doing great mischief.

"For I have not made claim yet," he wrote, "nor me neighbours, but there isn't a hin or a duck he'll leave an' I'd ask the Master to come to see to him, or he'll be a very dear fox on the Hunt Club."

We had a hard riding farmer in the West whose sayings would fill a book in themselves. Unfortunately they are punctuated by what is to him everyday language but what does not sound pretty as it rolls out.

Nothing was too big for him in his day; he has no good horses now, only three year olds.

A man from Galway Hunt came here a long time ago and was introduced to Mat as a noted hunter.

Mat only nodded his head.

“Whin the dogs break away,” he said, “let ye take the Est road an’ I’ll take the Wesht road an’ we’ll see which of us is the betther man.”

Mat—that is not his name—proved that for that hunt he was.

Someone asked him one time how he saw so many hunts, and Mat grinned contemptuously.

“There is but one way to ride a hunt,” he said—“When the dogs goes away let ye ride out either to the Est or the Wesht of thim an’ take the finces as they come at you.”

He told me one day that the Major’d need a very ondependint horse for he ran a coorse of his own.

Ondependint is a favourite word of Mat’s. In his very hard riding days he took out a raw four year old which refused and left him behind.

Mat looked exceedingly bitter when he was asked where he had been.

“When I took him his own coorse didn’t he refuse with me,” he grunted. “An’ then an’ I left alone he was nosin’ everythin’. I tell ye, ye’d need a very ondependint horse to go an unsighted hunt.”

I bought a very wonderful mare from him, but

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of course once he had parted with her he had a better one. This was a whistling grey which he lent to a friend of mine.

There was a very stout fox at Castle Hewson during the winter which had run the same line four or five times, and beaten us in a network of crags about five miles away.

After the fashion of fox hunters we had grown quite to rely on this fox to do it again. The line was over flying stone walls and nearly all grass. Mat was all for explaining that his young mare was better than the old, so I chaffed him by offering to bet that I would finish in front of him, if we had the good hunt.

Our fox did not disappoint us, and a lucky turn coupled with the best stone-wall jumper in Ireland left me in front going into the crags—next curiously, was Mat's grey.

“Now didn't I tell you the old mare was the better of the two,” I said laughing to Mat, when he came up.

“An' why wouldn't she,” he growled, “nothing but a sop of hay above on her back—that's the weight of ye.”

Last year he told me I was getting “ould.” “Six year now 'll see the rid of ye,” said Mat candidly.

“Give me ten, Mat.”

“No, but six. Haven't ye a son an' he in the Army.”

Foxes have some very bad habits. If anyone is

dead they invariably run right through the farm where the funeral is. They will even take a completely new line to do it.

We went slap through a funeral near Glenwilliam once, and not even slap through it but checked by the house. It was too much for the mourners, who put down the coffin, they were just carrying it out, and rushed to see the hunt.

One of the officiating clergymen rode up to direct, to find himself suddenly off the road in the field with the hounds, carried there by his impetuous cob. We had to force our way through the waiting stream of traps and carts with everyone watching pleasantly.

Deep apology tendered next day only brought forth the answer that it was a fine spoortin' funeral the ould man had an' what he'd have liked, an' he there.

Two seasons ago we were warned, near Bruree that the wife of a very influential farmer had died and we were pointed out the house, so that we might keep away from it.

Not once but *three* times did the fox cross that farm, while strangers who had not heard the warning clattered through the very yard, amid the groans of the Field Master.

There was a very big funeral here a couple of years ago, with a lunch and champagne. A man told me he was close to one of the farmers, who

sipped a glass of champagne very dubiously. He tried again, then he sighed.

“These mineral waters are very tayjous,” he said. “I wondther whin they’ll get on to the whisky.”

I heard a very funny story this year of a steward who is given to using long words.

He has a telephone to his master’s house and rang up one night. His voice trembling with wrath.

He wished to know if he could not instantly dismiss or deal summarily with one Nat Donellan.

. . . Why? . . .

“Because he was just afther comin’ into the kitchen, an’ oberight me wife didn’t he call me a vilyin an’ a murtherer an’ a thief and many other appropriate names that I could not lay me tongue to.”

They never mean to be witty.

Up near the station I waited to listen to two old men discussing a neighbour.

“An’ what sort of man is he there?”

“He is the sort of a man that would pick the money out of God’s pockets.”

The guard on the line to Miltown, reproached by me as to delay, grinned pleasantly at me as he looked at his watch.

“Late—we are so—But sure what is the mather of a hanful of minnits,” he said going off cheerily.

I travelled in with a bride and bridegroom one day two years ago.

He had a black bottle with him from which he took a pull, confiding to his wife that there was nothin' like a "dhróp of dhrink to make the journey jump."

Later he began to talk to me, he was a particularly respectable-looking man, and told me that he had met herself for the first time the day before, it being all settled up betune the ould people, an' now they must give or take together till the end, an' that was the way of it.

Marriage is always a matter of bargain. So much laid down, so many cows or pigs or bags of feathers, and constantly the pair do not meet until the actual day of the wedding.

I told the story in one of my books, but it may bear repeating, of the breach of promise case heard here in Limerick.

The bride had been to America. The bridegroom was a young farmer from Clare. He turned up at the bride's house in time to drive to the chapel with her, never having seen her before.

She was young, nice-looking, and he got up on the side-car—well pleased.

"Fine day," he remarked.

"Vury," said the bride, all twang.

The bridegroom started.

Another remark and another all answered with "I guess that's so—or certainly—" in strong American.

The bridegroom lapsed into silence. He got

down at the chapel door and slouched round to his prospective father-in-law.

“Misther Horrigan,” he said placidly, “ye niver mentioned to me that your dather was a say Rambler an’ I will not marry her.”

He did not.

The sea Rambler received damages fifty pounds but the Clare man took a wife from home, not one who had rambled across the water to America.

One of the barristers here often says very witty things. He stood up one day to plead for a client who had bought a public-house and found the licence had just been taken away.

“I appeal to you for my unfortunate client,” said the barrister, “who bought this public-house, but what is it now, but the corpse of a public-house with the living breathing spirit of the licence taken away from it.”

I was cross-examined by this same barrister myself once, but he let me down lightly. It was before the well-known Judge Adams, and a case of breach of warranty. I had bought a horse on a man’s word and found it had sidebones and unsoundness I had been ignorant of.

The judge called them sideboards all through. I remember Mr. Preston my vet. asking to have the case heard as he had to catch a train and it was brought on at once.

“Call the horse case.”

“Up got an old lady in the back of the court.

“ Me lord ! I am here all day an’ I have fourteen mile to go with the ass.”

“ Usher, put her on the first mile of it . . . ” the old lady had done no good for herself.

I won my case, but it cost me as much as if I had lost, but they appealed and then settled it.

The only searching question my cross-examiner asked me was as to the size of the sidebones and if they were as big as my hat. Its circumference would have been remarkable as a blemish on a horse’s foot.

The patience of officials on the stations I often think is wonderful. I was waiting for my train this year ; our clocks are never right and a huge giant lurched in very drunk, up to the barrier ; he had no ticket.

“ I want the four to Nenagh. She is gone. But I want her. I’ll pay ye, young man,” a purse produced. “ I’ll pay ye, but I must go home.”

“ There is no train until six.” The big man lurched unsteadily as he heard the answer.

“ But I’ll pay. I tell ye I’ll pay. Look at me money . . . isn’t it as good as another’s. . . . Look at it.”

The difficulty of persuading him that money will not catch a train which had gone for three minutes took two porters ten minutes. They piloted him to a bench and advised him to go to the men’s waiting room.

But remarking that he was well there he wen

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off to sleep placidly, possibly to miss his next train as well.

With a large proportion of what one might term crude intelligence and quickness they combine a deep substratum of equally crude stupidity.

Our old steward at home, a very able man, came in to see me two years ago to tell me quite gravely that half the people were away from the bog because they had it good that the Germans were surely coming.

Pat someone read it on a paper an' there was four families away to the Sthates because they wouldn't be undther foreigners.

The "Sthates" have drained Ireland of her young blood, every boat carries off men and girls going in search of a quicker but less sure fortune than they might find at home. At Patrick's Well, a tiny station next to Limerick, where the emigrants from Kerry change on to the train for the boat, the porter there used to call out "Change here for America. Change here for America," up to quite a short time ago.

The days of 'howlding trains' and people have been more or less swept out by the absorbing of the smaller lines by big and business-like companies, but I remember quite well my father sending notice to flag the night mail at Ardsollus as he was going to Limerick, and then changing his mind and forgetting to tell the station-master.

The station was out a quarter of a mile away

and after wild whistlings and shrieks the porter came breathlessly pounding at the door to ask if the Colonel was ready for they could not howld the mail much longer, an' as it was divil a lether they'd have in Dublin the next day. He had to fly back to explain that my father had forgotten all about it.

"Let her off. Give her the bell," is a common expression as they are starting.

They had a very old porter at Dromkeen in the days of the Waterford and Limerick, whom they moved to Boher. Dromkeen was all he had ever known. When his first train came in to Boher he wandered up and down desolately ringing his bell and singing out "Dromkeen, Drhromkeen. . ."

"Boher," shrieked an irate station-master.

"Boher I mean, Boher I mean," without any change of voice, then looking peevishly at his superior. "An' sure isn't it all akel whin there's none of them gettin' out."

The good humour of the porters when a race crowd or excursion floods the carriages would make English porters stare.

"Out of that, third class, ye are. Akil is it. Out now, let ye very well go, I tell ye there's a fine on it." An', "Young man, is this the Caher thrain? Does that same go to Limerick? God save us, is this the Cork an' I for Pallas? Wouldn't she carry me around—if I sthayed in her."

We were all coming up from Cork races one day when a very large farmer, good-temperedly drunk got into the carriage. Except to produce a bottle of neat whisky from which he drank, he was quite inoffensive, but one of the ladies in the carriage was afraid, and deputed her male companion whose weight was about ten stone, to order the man to leave at Blarney.

"Leave is it. I will go on to Mallow where I'll be changin'." A peppering of abuse fell on unmoved shoulders. Threats were resorted to vainly.

"'Twill cheer ye. Have a dhrop," remarked the giant blandly proffering the black bottle. "Jameson's best, or if the lady'll take a dhrain . . . an' welcome."

A second man now joined the first, they slowed down, and the big man was ordered to go at once or he'd be put out.

A twinkle rose in the good-humoured eyes. Possibly he might have gone for persuasion.

"Put me out," he said softly, leaning back, "an' welcome. *If ye can.*"

He was at least seventeen stone, and he simply lolled back master of the situation, they could not stir him. There he remained until Mallow, kindly offering drinks to everyone, saying it would strengthen them, when he went like a lamb for the first porter who spoke to him.

"The ginthry is sorrowful wakely," was his mild parting shot as he lurched off. "An' any-

ways I should be lavin' here as it is me station, though I am regretful to be part with such pleasant company."

They will fight like demons sometimes in a railway carriage, the compartments on the West Clare do not go to the top and I remember seeing sticks whirling and heavy blows falling next door to us one day, but the whole lot staggered off, cut and bruised arm-in-arm at Ennistimon to get a dhrink together.

Mr. Westropp told me he saw two very drunken men who had had a row at a fair. One had reached the helpless stage and the other was lifting him up on his cart.

"Just putting him there to hit him a belt or knock him out me own convayance," he explained thickly.

"Did you strike the man?" a judge asked the defendant in a violent assault case, the plaintiffs whole head had been crushed in.

"I did not, me lord. Argyin' we were, an' maybe I beckoned me sthick at him, there's some has terrible tendther skulls on them that the wind of a sthick'd do for."

The judge looked very severely towards the bound up plaintiff and sighed. It appeared to have been almost a storm, that wind.

To take direction of route from anyone in the stone-wall country requires thought. There is no right or left, nothing but est and wesht.

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“Go back wesht till ye meet Naylan’s public, turn esht be the clump of trees, and wesht agen at the third next cross-roads and make sthstraight on for the station.” Then as an afterthought, “Ye will meet three cross-roads afterwards but keep straight on.”

When you do meet the three cross-roads stretching greyly through the lonely stony country none of them go straight on—and probably after a mile jog through the dusk someone will tell you blandly that “ye are asthray an’ if ye do not hurry on the thrain will be gone or ye, unless God’d send she’d be delayed.”

Some people say that the Irish people are cruel to animals. If they are it is without thought that dumb beasts feel pain.

I have seen a man who had beaten a poor little donkey along unmercifully, tend a sick puppy all night, or rush off to cut a blackbird out of the strawberry nets, tenderly, for fear he would ruffle a feather.

But the donkey was made to be beaten. It is a beast of burden. Horses are meant to endure ; they are “schamers” if they give up.

Mr. Kough at Kilkenny, met a man coming into the town, beating a thin donkey cruelly. Mr. Kough was walking with a priest who promptly stopped to remonstrate.

“Shame, Martin Casey,” he said, “beating the poor beast like that ; don’t you know it was

the good kind animal which carried our Lord into Jerusalem ? ”

Martin poised his stick, his face unmoved.

And then “ Indeed, your reverence,” he said—whack came the stick, “ If He had to be above on this wan, He’d niver have got there.”

Further comment seemed useless.

They pull coal down there from the anthracite collieries at Castlecomer to Kilkenny, and one day we met a man, his horse absolutely exhausted stuck at the hill just going into the town.

We stopped to tell him to give the poor brute a rest, and then try him again.

“ An’ oughtn’t he to be well able to do the hill,” he said sombrely, “ an’ he to have twelve mile of a run at it.”

I know two racing men who have both probably forgotten more crooked ways than most people ever knew, and they had quarrelled over a sporting bone which both desired to pick. They were going off to Cork races.

“ Good morning, Honest Man,” spat one out bitterly.

“ Good mornin’ . . . Brother,” came the sweet undisturbed response.

We have an old horse dealer here, stone deaf—if he does not want to hear—and yet a better judge of horses’ wind than most vets., who went one day to Ennis and was taken by a friend into one of the bigger hotels for luncheon.

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An array of spoons and forks and knives marked his place, but the busy waitress brought no filled plate to put between them. The old dealer fumbled at the spoons and the forks, then he crooked a finger beckoning, while his other hand pointed to the spoons, and his mysterious whisper hissed across the room.

“ Miss, Miss,” the maid turned, “ Miss ” very apologetically and softly. “ Would you take away this joolery now and get us a bit to ate.”

At Rathkeale one man who had come into money entertained a friend and considering whisky too ordinary ordered a bottle of the best claret.

“ Isn’t it fine sthuff ? ” he questioned, watching his friend drink.

The friend tasting again remarked feelingly that for his part he’d say “ ’twas like ink, but faix it mightn’t be bad at all if ye ran a blasht of whisky through it,” he added with kindly desire to please.

An Irishman is very seldom short of an answer and never of an excuse. He will always have half a dozen good reasons as to why he did not do what he was told to, or why he had done something he was never told to, and you may corner him and apparently prove things to him, and he will have the last word.

Picture a poor lady who loves her garden, and has directed that certain tender plants shall be carefully covered every night.

A bitter afternoon in May with a pelting hail-shower, followed by four degrees of frost. Next morning a row of black ruins which had been plants.

“Why didn’t you cover them?” the lady’s temper is not seraphic—it is myself—“Why? Cuthbert, are you mad?”

“Didn’t I hurry out to take the pots off to let the fine warrum rain into thim, an’ it dhry weather for so long.”

The warm rain—large hail-stones.

“Hail! Hail! To leave them out in that.”

“I’d say it was rain, ma’am, with a gran’ sun behind it that med it shine. Sure, that little blackenin’ ’d only strengthen them.”

A fresh outburst of wrath.

“An’ wasn’t ye playin’ tennis abroad the same as if it was summer. How could I think it would freeze an’ ye playin’?”

Give it up. It’s the only thing. But we have to wait until next year for these plants again.

Another morning and the fan-lights left off tender seedlings.

Hurried comment from the underling who has not been gardening long.

“The lights”—they did not see me—“that’s what will make them hardy,” in the tones of one who knows. Then a change of voice—he has seen me. “Here is the missus. Make as if ye were pullin’ them off, not to be vexin’ her,”

“ I forgot it ” they will never say, or “ it’s lost.”

“ But I was thinkin’ it was bether not to do it lasht night.” Or “ I’ll be afther doin’ it next time.” For ‘ lost ’ it is “ Led down out of me hand. I did not see it lately.”

Answer is nearly always ready, especially from the old people who look upon you as a child for your life because they once knew you as one.

A well-known racing and hunting man here had an old gardener who was the bane of his life. Old Tom would do just as he liked and when he liked, and disobey orders blandly.

One day patience gave way. Tom was told that he must leave the garden.

Tom earthed up potatoes, and remarked stolidly that he considered it his place to remain.

“ Go to H—— out of that,” stormed his master.

The old man leant on his spade handle.

“ An’ if I do go, Masther Harry,” he said, “ I’ll just tell ye’re father how ye’ve treated me.”

Master Harry, a beaten man, made for the house. Tom earthed up his potatoes and muddled on in peace for the rest of his life.

Another old gardener was told to lime all the slugs which were devastating the place : that day they had about finished enough.

“ Sure the craythurs must ate,” he said unmoved.

They are always quick at retort and excuse. We were travelling third class to Miltown one day

when two men got in and hung at the window waiting for someone.

“He will be late on us. Here he is at the last. Hurry on, Mikey.”

Mikey appeared with a black bottle, and breathless. “Here it is for ye.”

One of the men took the bottle. “What is it, Mikey—three sthars? There is no label. I do not see the label. Not a sign of three sthars do I see, Mikey.”

“Let ye dhrink enough of it an’ ye’ll soon see three sthars,” said Mikey, melting away with a grin.

A nation of grown-up children with children’s warm hearts and sensitiveness, easily led into folly, as easily led to success; perhaps the finest soldiers anywhere. Improvident, yet the hardest of workers, and now a prosperous nation and a contented one.

But to the end of time do not expect an Irishman to talk crude common-sense, or to talk non-sense without his own reason for what he has said deep in his mind.

When Cuthbert tells me that the groundsel overrunning a plot are a lot of gran’ little weeds, he knows that he means they are easily got rid of.

Just as I write the fever of war and the fear of invasion holds them. My gardener no longer tells me contemptuously that he does not mix himself up in them kind of things, but comes anxiously

to hear news of the war. A clap of thunder sets them muttering. "Big guns, God help us." The soldiers they frowned at two weeks ago are heroes now, and the town echoes to the sound of hoofs as the endless stream of remounts pour in.

"Sure, the soldiers need it for the Germans to kill them. Some of the horses they has bought 'll do it furst," says a car-driver who knows the brutes which have been bought up.

There are many fine useful horses bought by good judges, but some—as one of the remount officers said dryly yesterday.

"He's resting the good leg now, he's got so tired of standing on it. What will it be like when he begins to rest the bad one."

And they are solemnly amusing even in their panic—amusing and grimly determined to fight.

"The big hay fork should be good entirely," one said to the other as they made up hay.

"I would not say they could even land," from the other. "The missus towlt us there was bombshells sot below in the say, an' a man waitin' with his finger on a string to pull and let them off."

"H'm. Wouldn't the say dround the powder now? I'd rather thrust to the volunteers."

A very pitiful side to it also even in a fortnight's war. Old women in the streets talking to each other. "We cannot live, ashore—we cannot. Fourpince now for the sthone of coal, and six-

pince for the quarther sthone of male, an' the mate up an' all. God help us—we cannot live.”

The very small shops are making their harvest and the poor must suffer bitterly.

A good many of the priests hunt and go very hard ; one has got a yellow hunter which I envy sorely, but he would not sell.

I have a friend who lives about ten miles off and who is particularly amusing in his solemn way. His brother rides a gay grey horse ripe in years, taken reluctantly from the cart for a day's hunting. This grey sits up at every wall, it never comes out in the banks, paws any stones it can off and then heaves over.

We met at Adare one day lately, and Johnny asked me who a stranger lady was. “She there with a sphur tackled to her heel.” I told him.

“Because she hit Dan a cruist down at Castle Hewson. She met him an' the grey as she put them rowlin' rowlin' up the field. Over and over. An' if he had to rowl another fifty yards he was into a trench that has no bottom, the craythur.”

“Fifty yards, mark you !” Johnny's face was quite grave as he explained what in his opinion might have happened.

We have a very cross farmer who lives near Grange and who objects to our riding across his land. Of course the fox makes a point on it. This year, he stormed out furiously quite unheeded until he encountered one man who had been late

for the meet and had ridden along the road to look for us. This sportsman tried the power of gentle speech as he jumped the gap to try to follow the hacks of the hunt.

“An’ if it is that ye are unable to folly the hunt, ye might have the dacency to remain upon the road,” roared the irate landowner, thunderously.

At this point the whole hunt came back, of course across that field and we were told the story.

We were at Fedamore Gorse last week and did not find. A friend of the old covert keeper’s volunteered explanation. He got no notice to close the doors in time, he said irritably; “they are but shut this hour back.”

The “back thrail” is heel. They always call it by that illuminating name. Great critics always on hunting should carry their dogs on. That is the back thrail.

“Did you see him, boys?”

“We did so. Twenty minutes ago. What time is it to be bringin’ the dogs now an’ he earth-ed above in Michael Power’s Gullet.”

Horse dealers’ expressions are very curious. Good morning from one to another means that a horse is lame in front. Good night that he is going tender behind. My dear old friend seeing a weary remnant of horseflesh dozing in an archway at Rathkeale enquired the price.

“Three pounds.”

“I’ll give ye tin shillin’s.”

“ I wouldn't wake him for that,” said the owner laying down the stick which he had taken up.

The inherent reverence and fear of the law has been left out of Irish dispositions. To them it is something to evade and break if possible, though they never bear a grudge against its enforcers. Consequently in England and other countries they tumble against and through its meshes with such an engaging smile that probably they walk away unnoticed.

“ No light on your bicycle.”

“ This very minnit it went out on me. Smhell the lanthorn, there's hate in it yet.”

“ You have no oil,” from a sceptical policeman.

“ God save us, and if I had wouldn't I have the light. Didn't it drip away through a lake in the lanthorn. If ye smhell that too——”

“ Oh go on, an' let me catch you again.”

I heard this controversy between my Irish manservant and the policeman at Colchester. He got so used to no lights, poor man, in the end, that he used to study the sky when we were coming home late. He was smiled at so sweetly he never had the heart to be severe.

Half children with a child's simple faith, half savage, too easily roused, wholly engaging and unreliable, kind-hearted and quick-tempered. The country people until they go to America never really change. The shrewdness they learn there spoils them.

CHAPTER VI

CASES AND RACES

I OFTEN wish that I had seen more of the Courts of Law. Not as a litigant—I had quite enough of that in my one breath of warranty case.

There was a case in Kerry before a well-known judge, now dead, and a very elderly woman giving evidence.

She was, she said, a witness to some event in the markets, where other people said they never went. The judge tried mildly to find out why she was there on that particular day.

“Why were you down there, ma’am?” he asked.

“An’ why not I go down there?” returned the witness shrilly.

“But why were you down there?” again.

“An’ why not I go down there?” still more shrilly.

“But,” this roared out so that Her Majesty’s judge should have an answer, “what *took* you down there. Answer.”

“Th’ ass,” piped the old lady happily, as the

court choked in its endeavour not to laugh too loudly.

I went into a well-known solicitor's office the other day to find him refuting some claim made by a non-suited opponent who wanted money.

"Tell her to go to blazes," this quite good-humouredly.

A fresh murmur from the messenger.

"Tell her to go to ——" it was not 'blazes' this time, and the reply was more heated.

"Oh, you want it still, do you? Weren't you utterly beaten and costs against you and didn't the judge tell you to go to Hongkong?"

He amended 'blazes' and its other variety.

This reminder of judicial outlawing was too much, the man left murmuring he could not recall it himself, but not daring to contradict an eminent solicitor.

This week the question arose during a case, of why some farmer had not sent a son to enlist.

"Isn't he too young?" snapped the witness. "Howould is he? He is three year."

"Oh, then he is too young even for the infantry," said the barrister, sweetly.

This same barrister was pleading a case one day for renewal of licence of a public-house. It had been sold to his client who had no idea naturally when he bought it that the licence was about to be withdrawn.

"My unfortunate client, me lord," he pleaded,

“what has he bought but this corpse of a public-house if the living breathing spirit of the licence is taken out of it.”

He got his case, after a roar of laughter.

The case of the inquest held in a loft near Naas, I had in a book. The jury, twelve men true and stout, gathered to hold an inquest on a servant who had died suddenly. They were consulting, when the floor of the loft gave way, and down they fell among a herd of bullocks which were fattening in an outhouse underneath.

The result, as may be imagined, was a noisy one. I have the cutting from the newspaper. It runs :

“Between the cattle roaring and the jury bawling the noise was terrible.”

But the local paper here, reporting the case added a comment of its own.

“Fortunately for itself the corpse remained above.”

The swearing at horse cases is so hard and decided that it is taken very little notice of. It is looked upon as a species of natural event that both sides should lie as best they are able.

A barrister told me how he had a man come up to claim damages for injury who did not appear to be ill.

“But were you hurt?” thundered counsel.

“I was not to say hurt but fatally twisted,” responded the claimant with dignity.

Another witness when asked if a certain party was drunk when he saw him, replied, "No, begob, the man was miraculously sober."

In another case an old farmer who had not married until he was sixty and was the father of ten children was brought up and was too obviously guilty, so much so, that there really seemed nothing to say, but up got his counsel, referred to his client's family history and thundered appeal.

"Would ye now punish this prolific old man with jail." Amid a great deal of laughter the old sinner got off.

A question as to some land came up here once, and the judge asked, "Is there anything on this land?"

"There is, sir," replied the witness.

"Yes? What? I thought not."

"There is a cottage, yer honour; but it isn't built yet."

I wonder if a well-known story in the great Dan O'Connell's time is remembered. Once, when at Ennis, the old usher or crier declaimed loudly, "Let all blackguards now that isn't lawyers clear out of the court."

I saw a very curious race once at a small country meeting where by sheer recklessness a well-known gentleman rider banished misfortune.

It was the kind of meeting at which everything was objected to.

In fact, as I heard one man say, "the horse that

won it was bate, an' the third horse took the race be raison of the fine liar he had above on him."

This course might really have been laid out for a bending race. It rounded about unguarded posts, and the turn for home was almost at right angles with the winning-post. So much so, that with a hard-mouthed horse and the crowd clearing off in leisurely fashion, one might miss the ropes and find oneself outside among the people.

To avoid this it had become the settled fashion at this meeting for the jockeys to swing out wide and so come opposite the straight before they got whips up to make their final effort.

There were only two horses in the race; the rider of the winner gave me a full account of it afterwards. His was an old horse, stiff, past flat racing, but very handy. The favourite, a flashy chestnut mare, would find it difficult to lose even if she wanted to, people said.

But our friend on the old horse meant to have a try. He was a favourite with the crowd, who had long shots on him and shouted his name and his horse's as he went out.

The rider of the chestnut eyed it all with disgust, making sundry remarks as to circus riding, and taking posts on one leg.

They started, the old horse moving like a badly oiled mechanical toy, the mare dashing away as if death was at her heels. The ruck bustled and bumped and swore.

Now the crowd had made a custom as fixed as the riders. They used to surge across the course proper where the turn for home was marked by a tottering post, and never dreamt of getting out of this part of the course.

The rider of the favourite was in ill-humour, and was pleased to make disparaging remarks about the old horse ridden by the too popular hunting man.

Something concerning "he might make a good last if he was shook up," and sarcastic hopes that his mare had been backed.

My friend had gallantly put money on his old stager, and so had crowds of his friends, tempted by the odds of six to one and the off chance.

The race was, as it was expected to be, a procession with the chestnut mare hard held so as to save her next handicap, but ready to come away and win at any moment.

The old horse, softening out, plugged along stolidly well up . . . he gained at every bend.

As they pounded along bending and twisting, the crowd surged as usual across the place where the horses ought to have turned for home; they were yelling, cheering, howling, and it was at this point that inspiration came in.

Running the chance of missing the roped-in straight, or of killing someone, my friend wheeled the horse right into the crowd, shouting wildly, letting others run on wide,

No other people on earth could have saved themselves, and done it with hearty good humour.

“Here is one! Run, Mikey! Mrs. Malone is dead. God save her. Sthop her shoutin’!”

“Hurry on, Success,” from a backer who saw the colours and the rider’s face. “Bravo.”

Almost to his surprise, with people absolutely plucked out of his way, and the old horse threading his path with care, he found himself just at the beginning of the straight with a ten-length lead. Then he called on his horse, with heel and hand and whip, and with a vision of the most astounded face on earth coming up like an avenging angel behind him, the chestnut mare actually extended.

When the old horse got home by half a length amid howling cheers, the professional cast one bitter blighted glance before he remarked that it was the dirtiest trick he ever saw, and that naturally he would object and get the race.

This the owner forebore to do, afraid of the popularity of the winner and also philosophically remarking that even them thieves in Dublin could not put more weight on his mare now for Galway.

This is quite a true story and perhaps Captain Delmege could tell it better than anyone, as he rode the winner, his own horse.

We were at a small meeting one day when it was whispered that the principal event of the day was to be won by an outsider, a long, low mare

with a shifty eye. Distinctly overtrained, but a bloodlike-looking animal with great scope about her.

She was the daughter of a celebrated old racing mare bought for a song as not in foal, but proving to be, and the farmer had brought up the progeny with pride.

His only fears were for the rider, a lanky youth with an eye as restless as the mare's, and clearly nervous.

To overcome this his friends plied him with a nerve settler. The contents of a bottle of the syrupy brandied stuff called 'port wine' by the grocers.

He had asked for it, saying that it "stheadied him" better than anythin' else. If he got strong drink it was ridin' mad he would be. A broth of a boy like himself.

His looks were a blend of fright and bravado, when he staggered across the paddock, was given a leg up on to a small saddle, and "directed to perch forward to aise her." We watched the saddling.

"Let ye rise her at the big leps, Timsy," commanded the owner. "An' howld her on the flat with an odd paste of the sthick, for she has a touch of sourness in her. But rise her, let ye rise at the regulation."

Timsy merely observed thickly that he was the dam fool to be above on her at all, commenced

to shiver, and readily absorbed the proffered dregs of the port wine. He put the bottle to his mouth and finished it, a fresh flush coming as fiery dawn to his already overheated cheeks, and his eyes taking a new look of angry fear.

Someone said that he was rowlin' above on her. And then the start was bustled by wildly audible appeals from the mare's owner to the starter.

His voice rose above the din. They were starting opposite the stand.

"For God's sake, Captain, will ye let them off before the drink is out of Timsy."

"An' rise her, Timsy, rise her," was his last shout.

The starter, grinning, let them off in a bundle, and we ran across to the regulation to see Timsy take it.

From the first it was too evident that the mare was being cruelly handled.

Timsy let her out and dragged her back, and all but fell off at the fences.

As they came up his courage seemed to give way completely.

He sat up and dragged at the reins; then he loosed them, as if he prayed for a swerve, which came, but at the last moment the poor mare dashed after the leaders all out of hand and quite across the fence, as she took off.

The result was that she caught her fetlocks in the rail taking off and turned right over, flinging

out Timsy on to his back ; he came down with a thump which stunned him.

This and grocer's port were the climax. To put it mildly the bedraggled jockey was extremely sea sick.

We were just running away when the mare's owner, wild with wrath, darted up to the convulsed man.

"It is the lungs," said a sympathetic but unmoved spectator. "They are broke with the belt he hit the ground. He will die, I'd say, shortly."

"Run for a priest," yelled the outraged horse owner. "Oh, but the price of ye, the price of ye. Ye riz her three times before ye came to the fince, an' whin ye did come to it ye didn't rise her at all, an' now ye're throwin' up ye're heart's blood !"

Timsy merely groaned.

We saw him arm-in-arm with the owner drinking neat whisky a little later.

"He is a poor fool of a boy, an' not even rich enough to be worth robbin' him," I heard a racing man sum up a young lordling who had bought a couple of race-horses.

The sins which are done and the plans which are made in the name of that same racing would fill three books if one knew them. If you can't stop the horse coming up any other way, flourish your whip in his face, and then say you've never seen him, is the favourite axiom of one jockey I know of.

“*Obbjection*” and an innocently injured expression coupled with explanations which defeat any body of stewards.

The bookmakers are up against a great deal, but I think in the end they could show their bank balances against the plotters of their financial destruction. When Greek meets Greek sometimes stray Romans come in and take the stakes.

I remember seeing a race here in Limerick when a certain mare was not wanted to win, and the stable money was on another horse in the race. He upset himself and calculations at the regulation. The only other horse in the race was half a mile behind and the mare was left alone.

Before the fallen horse was remounted and ridden on, the mare was then at the turn of the straight.

“*Begonnes*, he can only lose it now be running out,” I heard an agitated voice breathe close to me. And *he did it*. The chestnut mare after a three-mile chase swung from the straight into the course, coming down on the fly fences in front of the stand with her rider enacting the part of a man who cannot possibly hold a fresh and fiery steed. When he turned her, amid hoots and yells, the other horse had crawled up to the turn for home and was coming in.

Back with the chestnut mare, the whip singing off her ribs, she was swung into the straight, a highly bewildered animal, and narrowly escaped

winning in the end. But what was to be said? Had she not overpowered her jockey and bolted. She had started at evens. The other at four to one.

I was at Kilkenny races one very hot summer—'94—when the regulation took fire. Someone threw a lighted match away and the brushwood broke into a blaze. Six horses scattered in different directions frightened out of their lives. Behind them—it was the second round—toiled an exhausted beast without a chance of his race—I don't think anything much mattered to him—and swept through the crackling flames and on to victory.

“That's the horse to ride to hell on,” remarked a farmer beside me.

By the time they extinguished the flames and brought back the terrified horses that brown horse was a winner all over, plodding wearily homewards alone. I was at the same races the day of the Master Joe Case, when all the book-makers left their stands and declined to bet again for the day. I remember a cousin of mine, who put his fifties on, and put so many that he ruined himself, going out to proffer a sovereign to one of the outside fraternity, believing he was having the smallest of wagers, and the contemptuous, “Here! D'ye want me to lay you in bloomin' fortins?” as the bookie rejected the bet. The outside crowd were financed afterwards by the

raging men from Dublin, and would take anything up to five pounds.

One of the two ' Brothers ' who bade each other good morning, is not a French scholar ; he had a mare, as yet unnamed, out of Faux Pas.

" Brought out that Fox Poo filly ? " he said to the helper, when one went to see her. " Just out to enjoy himself," is his expression when one of his horses is not for a win, and he does not mind your knowing.

They had a very funny experience at a certain small meeting in a southern county a few years ago.

A practical joke had been played for a bet in very high places—in fact, on the Fleet. A reward was even offered for the apprehension of the man who forged false orders and sent a ship steaming off to Malta ; but who in Ireland would give away a joke for money ? Yet, of course, it leaked out.

At this meeting, in a steeplechase, one horse had been backed for all the money which could be got on by stewards and general public.

Unfortunately, a ragged, half-clipped beast, never heard of before, ridden by a man with his trousers tied round his knees, and a flannel shirt for a racing jacket, ran away from the fancied candidate and won by a length.

Obbjection, then ; there was nothing else for it. Bumping and boring even if he had been in front

for the last half-mile. His case was "already pre-judged and the verdict already secured."

But not quite.

"Ye have no call to *object* to me," said the owner and rider, "I won it fair. An' if you do maybe I could say——" He fixed the most influential of the stewards with a stern eye, "—— maybe I could tell some who sent th' ordthers to the sh—sh——"

He got no further.

"Frivolous objection," broke in that steward frantically. "Can't possibly uphold it. Give the all right for this man's horse."

"He was a decent sort of a fellow," added the steward breathing a little fast, "an' ye had no right to object, Pat, none at all." He talked in a very loud voice.

Pat, recalling who had counselled the objection, said "Cripes!" very feelingly as he went out into the paddock.

CHAPTER VII

HOTELS AND OTHERWISE

PEOPLE talked a great deal about the discomfort of Irish hotels.

The smaller ones are primitive, with queer little poky bedrooms, yet they are generally clean and quite comfortable, but—there are one or two—of the pretentious class, and otherwise, which are not sweet to remember.

There is one on the south coast which I was recommended to go to. Two pretty houses with nice rooms, if they had been cleaned for years—or even dusted.

One maid endeavoured to wait on and do housemaid for fourteen people, to make the beds in both houses, and lay the tables—three overdressed daughters of the house gave no help.

A look into the black hole representing a kitchen made me never want to eat again.

In the morning we counted, shamelessly, our bag of active little animals, and I remember the eldest of the party, a very gentle old lady, proudly remarking once that she had beaten us all with ten.

Such a lovely little place, mountains at the back, a deep quiet bay in front, fuchsias and honeysuckles trailing and dipping in the water, fuchsias scarlet on the hedges, good fishing and soft, sweet air.

But the place is deserted now, and the landlady's three useless daughters are doubtless married, or more overdressed than ever.

They had the strangest wedding custom in that part of the world.

A couple were married as early as possible. Then the wedding party hired cars and did a kind of tour from hotel to hotel, getting off to drink and eat at each one. The bride and bridegroom with a bridesmaid and a friend on the first car, the others bringing up the rear.

They drove until about ten at night, when they returned to the bridegroom's house to face more drink and dance until midnight.

Another hotel is something almost impossible for sober England to realise. It is a ruin now at Miltown Malbay.

A great gaunt, bleak place, poised on the very edge of the sea. Waves almost dashing in at the lower windows, wild waters churning and lashing, an ever-present gale whining outside. At low tide smells indescribable.

And rooms—many and big, grey places, ghosts of rooms, with scraps of battered, mouldy furniture here and there, with echoing carpetless

corridors leading to them. A dining-room where forty people could have dined, echoing in its emptiness, a huge table and a waiter, ghostly as the place, creeping forlornly about, staring at three or four chairs drawn up to the vast table.

“Ye might have mutton for the dinner—the butcher brought it. Anyways, there was then two grey cocks outside, an’ lashins of time to knock the heads from them. Look at them on the wall.”

Upstairs, more echoing empty rooms, fallen ceilings, rotting floors, wind shrieking through broken panes, and outside the fret and turmoil of the wild, wonderful sea.

They camped us out when I stayed there where the roof still held. My mattress was stuffed with straw and so was my pillow ; but, having pity on us, we were only three, they gave us dinner out of the ghostly dining hall, in a small room, with the tide, when it was high, flinging spray almost to the windows, across the stone terrace.

A ghostly terrace, with moss-grown flags, its parapet crumbling away, with broken steps leading to the rocks ; a mere narrow strip divides the gaunt old shell from the sea.

In winter the spray hides the mournful, tattered wreck, and great waves come tearing up to smash what is left of the glass ; it is crumbling away daily.

People used to stay there once, faint effort being made then to keep it patched, but when

heat rose up the smells in the rocks it bred typhoid, and the place was gradually deserted.

Some day soon it will slip and crumble to complete ruin, and the waves leap over the terrace to give the poor grey house ghost burial.

Here again, a great golden-sanded bay, a wild and glorious sea, endless expeditions to be made ; the breath of life itself in the tearing keen west wind, and just a little money would have made the place habitable and profitable, for it is within easy motor drive of Limerick and Ennis.

I remember our train breaking down at Maryborough once, and, going to the hotel there, where a long-haired poetical looking waiter offered us all that man might wish for our dinner, as he smiled a welcome.

“ Mutton, beef, soup, fish—why not ? ” We had two hungry men with us. Two were English and were impressed and hopeful.

Later he returned to say that “ beef was not, that, unless there’d be the chance of a dead sheep in the shop, mutton was not, that a tin of soup *might* be found, an’ sure he’d give us a real grand dish of bacon and eggs.”

But it was clean and comfortable, and the bacon and eggs of the best of their kind.

The little hunting hotels where men and horses had to go on to for distant meets, and where one ate heavy teas in the evenings, have been stamped out by the motors. They are no more ; cheery,

primitive little places, homes of eggs and buttered toast.

One other hotel is stamped upon my memory. It stands—well, somewhere by the sea in the west. Its prospectus is as of the Ritz and the Castle rolled into one.

“Hotel motor, Frenchman cook, magnificent rooms, baths.”

I went there from Dublin, for some fishing and was duly met by the hotel motor, driven by a discontented chauffeur.

The upstairs servants appeared to have left in a body, and the hotel was full. Wandering in a small, dusty room I rang for hot water. After half an hour I left to seek for it and command its arrival. Presently a large brown hand held a jug round the door.

“Hot wather, miss,” said the boots, “the bell doesn’t clap at all. The battery is off these many days.”

That boots did everything; he swept the rooms; I believe—in the late afternoons—that he made the beds; he was always willing to do everything, except before dinner when one heard that he was helping the “chief” in the kitchen.

I might at least have slept soundly there, if six chickens had not used my window-sill as their roost, and started their opinion of the weather at four a.m., to be knocked off squawking by a maddened guest.

Dinner was a wondrous affair, a monument of man's misplaced skill. Tinned soup, salmon and trout disguised in a variety of ways—one night I remember it was in mayonnaise, really fine mayonnaise, besprinkled with all kinds of ornaments, but the big trout reposed on a green bed of cabbage, because there was no lettuce grown in the neglected garden.

Entrées, wondrous to behold. An apologetic interlude of plain mutton or chicken flanked by tinned vegetables and be-sauced, and then a masterpiece of spun sugar, glittering and wonderful, or some frosted cake all whip and jam.

There was a bathroom, but the water did not heat there, and it was evidently not good form to expect it to or to try to have a bath.

I remember that when faithful boots had brought the jug of water and one bathed somehow in a basin, how, like man Friday, wet feet left deep imprints on the varnished floor, but here it was in dust and not in sand.

“They are getting in a girl off the bog to give a whip around,” confided boots to me. “There's three housemaids gone away in three weeks.”

And there were two elegantly dressed daughters of the house who might have done housemaid's work themselves.

One waited hungrily for breakfast in the big chill dining-room with its comfortless linoleumed floor.

Another beautiful spot, with lovely scenery, sea and lakes, but three days of it sent me away. For fishing I have been to the prettiest hotel in Ireland, Recess.

Pretty is scarcely the word to describe the gabled home standing in its garden full of flowers, with Glendalough rippling grey before the windows and the Connemara Hills flinging themselves up against the sky.

I say purposely "home" because there is a charm as of home in its bright cheeriness and quiet comfort. No tinned vegetables and no "chief," but a happy fishing party with often no room for the many who want to spend only a night or two there. The best fishing in Ireland is close to it. Expensive, as all good things are, but we had many splendid days on the hotel lakes, especially on the big one we liked best—Oned.

My friend, Miss McCarthy, makes Recess a truly happy place to go.

I have spent a pleasant week too at Leenane, where the hotel crouches at the foot of great hills, with the calm waters of the big Killary lapping almost to its door, and where nothing seems to be a trouble for a visitor. The wonderful drive by the sea to Westport is from Leenane.

Two girl friends of mine once stayed at a tiny hotel in Connemara, years ago. It was plain, but clean, the only other visitor a soldier fishing there.

They slept in one room, and in the morning

demanded a bath. Mary, the maid, a comely Connemara girl, promising it immediately.

But the day brightened, and it did not come. The old tassel bell was hauled. Mary came smiling.

“It would be here now—this verra minnit.”

It came not. One of the girls dashed out in to the passage to find Mary on her knees looking unashamed through a keyhole.

“One minnit, miss, one minnit,” Mary turned a happy face. “Ye will have it this verra minnit whatever, the Captain is just steppin’ oot of it.”

I often wonder if the Captain wondered why two blameless young tourists should have become stricken with suppressed laughter when he met them at breakfast.

Two soldier friends of mine, quartered here in the nineties, had a wondrous experience seeking for a lodging, though it was not in an hotel.

They had gone down the sleepy grey old Shannon, with its shimmering mud shores, to shoot duck, were caught in a violent storm and forced to run for shelter late at night to the clan side.

Leaving the man to secure the boat, they tramped towards a house which showed light and knocked at the door, to ask for chairs to sit in for the night; bed they hardly hoped for.

They had been out for two days; they were unshaven and muddy, clad in old shooting clothes.

A respectable young woman opened the door, looked, and banged it in their faces.

On renewed knocking she informed them that she knew a moonlighter when she saw one, and they could go to their likes.

Two officers in Her Majesty's pay, out on a bitter autumn night, with no other house near, and taken for moonlighters—they abounded there—it was too much!

One of the two, a big man, simplified the matter by walking in, sitting down, and refusing to move.

The other nervously explained his station in life, to be calmly disbelieved.

“Officers, where are ye, a gran' pair of officers, an' out ye go. Matty, let ye put thim out.”

But the big man would not go. The son of the house, ordered to remove them, looked dubious and evaporated in search of the police. The old man ranted threats. Mamma, refusing any variety of refreshment, was the most difficult to deal with, as she thrashed them with the term “moonlighter.”

“Nayther bacon nor eggs, no bread nor tay. Moonlighters! getting dacent people into trouble, dockin' cattle. Moonlighters!”

At this point the boatman appeared, and of course knew the family. All Irish people within a radius of forty miles or so know each other, and are generally cousins by marriage.

“Moonlighters!” he wailed—“A Captain and

Lefftenant—that he'd brought down the river to be trated like this."

They were fed then, royally. The best bedroom aired and made ready, tea and bacon and porter, all produced, and in the middle of the meal two members of the R.I.C. arrived, very wet, to arrest them.

Defrauded of captives, they had tea. Dying now of sleep in the hot room, remorseful hospitality baulked it, for the hostess sent for the village doctor, who arrived with a filthy pack of cards, and played 'spoil five' with them and the police until midnight. Pennies smelling of porter massing in the pool; until the doctor had won ten shillings, and declared irately that someone owed him three-halfpence more.

At—well, never mind—it is a well-known health resort—a lady who lives here, on a driving tour years ago, arrived to stay the night, and pulled up at Rafferty's Hotel, only that is not quite the name. The place was very full, still, the obliging proprietor said that one Mr. Dayley from Dublin had left that very afternoon and his room was vacant—still he looked dubious.

"Was it a good room?"

"It was so . . . but——"

"Big?"

"Oh, big entirely, but——"

They went up; they sniffed and asked questions.

"Well, it was this way: Mr. Dayley from

Dublin had meant to leave three days ago, and he went around the country buyin' turkeys. Six he had in a basket. An' he did not leave until this blessed day, so the turkeys was above, since. . . . But sure Mary Anne would wash the flure an' welcome, so there wouldn't be the taste of a smhell . . . it was hours to the night."

Turkeys unfortunately possess other things besides smells. Small things which creep.

The two fled hurriedly and prayed for rooms, any rooms, at another over-full hotel, but where they did not store turkeys in the bedrooms of Mr. Dayleys from Dublin.

I went in to luncheon the year before last, after a very long hunt which finished about one o'clock near a village ; the hotel is an excellent one, but still we had a laugh there.

I do not eat luncheon, but had to wait for my car, so said I would watch the others.

My host, distressed, saw an omelette on the menu and asked if I would take some of that.

" Yes, if it's a savoury omelette."

" Mary," he hailed the maid. " Is there an omelette all right ?—There may not be one," he confided.

" There is, Major."

" Bring some to this lady. Is it a savoury omelette, Mary ? "

" It is, Major."

But he knew the place better than I did.

“ Is there jam in it ? ” he asked sweetly.

“ There is, Major—raspberry jam.”

A man I know here went down to Dingle for the week-end, where he insisted on finding an hotel for himself, though he was warned that it would be crowded.

He bargained for a room for himself, went out happily with his party, and came back to slumber, the others were at a bigger hotel.

His landlady met him smilingly to tell him they were full entirely, an' she was sure he would have no objection to sharin' his bed with a respectable solicitor from Tralee.

He had, and left.

CHAPTER VIII

IRISH SERVANTS

WHERE has Bridget got to? Why is there no tea?" Several peals of the bell and Bridget scurries in to say she had to help Patsy take out the pony, 'he bein' apt to make a rush before the sthraps is off him.'

Every Irish servant will do everyone else's work cheerfully, the men come in to help the maids to polish floors and shoes, and the maids are quite willing to feed the horses if all the men are out, to get the bran mashes ready by the kitchen fire or to put by dinner for the pot of flaxseed.

Their own work they are not anxious about. That is done—after a fashion.

The first servant I remember was the boy who used to waste his time attending to me when I rode Donna Inez the donkey. His name was Peter, he was big and fat and full of ambition.

Farm work had no charms for him, he was unsettled by loping about most of the day shrieking "Gan out of that," to Inez, or picking me up with "God save us, Miss Dora, is it kilt ye are

an' they'll be blamin' me," when I rolled off. When the boys came home from school he expressed a wish to be allowed to valet them.

Polished and shining he looked after the things with a new air of dignity upon him. I remember quite well the shrieks of laughter one morning, when the bath having to be mended he had to take baths to their room.

One asked for a cold bath and one for a hot one, and Peter went forth obediently to return with one large bath-can which he dumped upon the floor, with a "Here it's for ye now, Masther Frank and Masther Arthur, hot an' cowl'd in the wan jug."

He had carefully filled half from each tap.

One brother used brilliantine for his hair, and it was Peter, cast into gloom by suspicion of taking it for his own use, who nearly drove the kitchen maid into an asylum.

For Peter suspecting her, conceived the brilliant idea of filling the bottle with copal varnish, and the varnished maiden behind her wails and tears took some three weeks to become unstiffened.

It was Peter, who when the housemaid picked up a loaded revolver, left at full cock by my criminally careless elder brother . . . and it went off—the bullet grazing the old nurse's ear in the next room, Peter remarked, he happened to be going up with boots—

"She has the gun let off. I towlt her there was

bullets in it. She'll be apt to get a fright now." He laid down the boots thoughtfully.

"Would ye say now it was old nurse or herself that is dead?" he asked. "They are both bawlin' strongly."

Everyone else rushed to the fortunately bloodless scene, where Anne the housemaid was screaming as maiden never screamed before, and old nurse having recovered her courage and also found her temper was thundering vengeance at the door.

Peter went to America, Ireland was too small for him, and I believe he made a fortune.

He actually once got on a bough to saw it off sitting on the outside beyond the place he was cutting it and was raked down just as he had a "gran cut med," as he said regretfully.

Following Peter came the English trainer who taught me to ride. He was a little mad I should think but full of quaint expressions.

'A round of beef on a wren' he called a certain stout lady who hunted on a light-weight bay. And 'a wren on a round of beef' his expression for me on the big horses.

The old coachman who taught my brothers to ride possessed a great contempt for military horsemanship.

I remember shrieks of laughter one day when he grunted out—

"Sit still, Masther Frank, sit still. Don't be

rowlin' about in ye're saddle for all the wurruld like an infanthry major on horseback."

Poor old John Meade, he used to hide me in the oats bin when nurse in her black dress and black cap with violet ribbons came flying out to put me to bed.

"No, nurse, I do not see her. She was here this minnit. Hid she is somewhere, maybe. Hid Childther is all alike, the craythurs."

Old nurse off round the yard, she never found out our delinquencies, and John Meade releasing me to step into the house.

I can only barely remember this old servant, but I know he used to call my father Masther Johnny, and tell him to be "aisy, Masther Johnny, aisy," if he was fussed by his master. "Children and chickens is always pickin'," was another expression of his.

We had no one particularly amusing after that until a really genuine Handy Andy parlourmaid, caught wild somewhere and foisted upon us here. We had champagne for dinner one night and Kate, having been given a bucket with ice in it, was discovered wrestling with the wire to pour the champagne into the tub.

"And ye afther tellin' me to put it in the ice," she said indignantly.

My mother told her to hand sherry round at soup time, which she apparently did, but the

gulping choke of one of the 3rd Hussars who was dining did not look as if it was good.

“ Neat whisky ! ” he gasped, wiping away some tears.

“ The same shade of colour on it,” said Kate indignantly next day, “ an’ indeed, Miss, he should be ashamed, a soldier an’ all, that he couldn’t take it without the tears. Me own father’d take three glasses without a wink, God rest him.”

Kate said she thought she could never plaze the quality, and she went to America. She was really completely wild in her ways and speeches.

Baths completely puzzled her. “ A natheral dip in the say she’d howld with but hated water to chill ye for the day every mornin’. . . . God save the rich in their foolishness.”

“ I often took dips meself, a great swimmer I am, Miss,” she told me. “ Meself an’ all the other little bys ’d be out up till the time I was seven ; an’ thin I was taken to the Sthrand with the gerrils.”

We had a very quietly witty soldier servant at Kilkenny. We went out to the ice one day and a very small boy came on with his skates.

He was dressed in very grown-up clothes, with a man’s tie and garters, and he began to tell us all about skating and how to do it and how he had skated abroad and so on.

Then “ Put on my skates, please,” in lordly tones.

Our man picked up a huge pair of man’s skates and knelt down.

"Not those. Mine. Hi, mine are here," the small boy held out his own tiny wooden things.

"Ah, ye take the small size, sir, but the big ones 'd match ye the best," said the man very gravely.

We took another Irish soldier servant to England and tried to teach him to wait.

His waiting consisted of standing bashfully at the sideboard drumming at it with his fingers and going to attention with a shiver of nervousness when "Cox" was called out.

He arrived bashfully, as he did all things, in the drawing-room when I had been out all day, with some cards grouped in his hands.

These he held out obliquely, he never did anything straight.

"There was four gintlemen called, ma'am, and they left these tickets."

He ended by losing his heart to Ellen, my cook, whom I had brought from the North of Ireland, and was quite the ugliest woman I have ever seen.

My first cook in England was also Irish, I got her from Cork. I had rather a tall house joined to another at Colchester, it was my first experience of town life, and apparently Mary, the lady sent by the registry office had lived her life in small villas.

She was a thin wiry little person with an evil eye, and she got out of the cab to poise herself at the garden gate as one completely disgusted.

“Casstles,” she said, disconsolately, “Casstles, no less. Mrs. O’Soolivan said no word ’twould be casstles, an’ I takin’ the place.”

The impression lived with her. The preparation of dishes for those who lived in casstles was quite beyond her, and after a flurried three days she was despatched on her homeward road. She considered me far too young to mind any house, though I was well over twenty.

“Young missuses that couldn’t be knowin’ things,” she said, “ordering fliffs and fluffs that I niver heard tell of.”

I had one English maid at Colchester, she wore spectacles and was commonly called the Professor, but she was completely delightful.

Mehalah would do more work than my three Irish put together, and she wept when I could not take her away with me. She was the daughter of an Ipswich tradesman who had failed.

I had quite forgotten my sojourn in the North of Ireland. I sent all my Kilkenny servants up there before and arrived to find them bewildered from the 12th July, which was celebrated the day after their arrival.

We had a big grimly ugly house there, far too big for us, and I found my maid panting with excitement waiting on the doorstep.

“Well, Mary, how do you like this place?”

“Oh, ma’am, it’s awful. They’re all bad people here. They’re *all Protestants*.”

My own religion was completely forgotten. But they had really been terrified. A miller who lived at the gate was a Catholic and had had his house attacked and his old mother of seventy nearly killed.

My three had closed doors and shutters and prayed for the south again.

They were quite happy there once the memory of the 12th died out, though the north country cook who afterwards was their dearest friend once rushed up to say she "could na bide five meenits longer in the house wi griven images, an' Bessy had twa be her bedside."

Bessy following her in, they engaged in a theological discussion of some heat in which one vilified anything that was called a saint, and the other quite held her own by affirming that the poor ignorant Northerners were never likely to know of anything so blessed, when all the religion they knew of was once a year with guns and banners.

A severe scolding sent both away in bitter tears, resolved one never to endure the other, but as I presently heard Ellen calling out to Bessy to come "ta tea an' there was dreepin' toast, an' wud she carry in a hot cup if Bessy had a headache," I presumed that all was well.

My own habit of invariably beginning to hum an Orange tune in the town troubled me greatly. I could not help it.

I shall never forget the smell of the flax tree

when it was washing time. A stream ran by our lawn and distributed perhaps the most sickening odour in the world. We got hold of a dear old Northerner, dour and solid, but with the kindest trouble in his eyes, one William, who toiled in the huge wilderness of garden, was southern in his heart if not in his manner.

From Colchester I went on to Guernsey, where I lighted on a landlady, Mrs. Wolfram, who made lodgings a delight. I wonder if she is still alive? Guernsey I did not love. I always felt as if you could only go a few miles without walking over the edge of the world. It was so full of trippers and char-à-bancs and glass houses, and a horse would have had to be a good glass jumper to get on there.

The coast was glorious, and in winter and spring when every rock was not dotted with a tripper, I used to love to wander by the sea there and see the green and brown lights in the water. I came to Guernsey three days after the *Stella* disaster. There were dead people still in the sea when we thrashed over in a raging storm, and there were two other wrecks while I was there.

Some of the old houses covered with pink geraniums are quite lovely. The Guernsey country people are supposed to be descendants of the fairies, who killed all the men folk and came to inhabit the island. I tried to learn the patois, with scant success ; the people are charming.

Directly I got a house I meant to import Irish servants again, but in the lodgings I got a German maid who did not know a word of English, nor I many words of German. *Wie heisst es*, was about my stock. I had tried before this to pick up a little from a German governess of a friend of mine, but she knew too much English. I remember one cold day she told us that she did "not like your English fire. He make you hot before and cold be'ind!"

So Anna got off the boat dumb to my language. I wanted her to teach the children when they came across, and my stock of her tongue was very limited.

But in those days I was blundering along in German and she had only got hold of day and night, and table and chair, and she generally got them wrong.

In a week she improved a little and I left her sitting at the dining-room window working.

With beaming face she rushed out to meet me when I came in.

"*Ach gnädige Frau*. Eenglish. Eenglish learn, gud Eenglish. Man pass. I hear, Damn fool, damn fool. New English. *Gnädige Frau*."

Off she went to the post office after that and demanded a pennee sthamp and a half-past stamp and was quite offended when she did not get the latter.

"Stupid official," she declared in German.

Another day, quite unable to ask for a darning needle, she picked up her dress, and calmly made the motion of darning her stocking to the pink-cheeked confusion of the shopman.

Anna was the merriest of servants, but she did not like Ireland at all when I brought her over. The easy-going ways of the people were beyond her, so she went off to England to teach a child there.

The two Irish servants whom I imported to Guernsey were a droll and worthy pair, one a groom, whom I had had before, the other a cook.

Both were excellent, but not amusing.

I left Guernsey when the war began and came back to Ireland for good, taking soon after my arrival, the man who has been with me ever since. He is probably one of the best grooms you would find. His horses are fit and big and blooming, but how they arrive at it I have never quite realised, for his methods are strange.

“You should niver be clanin’ a horse an’ he cowl’d,” is one, probably an excellent, maxim, “Rub him *afther* work, that’s when it do him good. Isn’t it as bad as to be takin’ a bath out of doors to strip a poor horse in the mornin’ an’ be at him an’ he shiverin’.” But strange things have to be contended with and looked after. A remedy used for one thing is supposed to be efficacious for the next.

A hunter gave himself a slight strain, the ever

useful Elliman being applied to cure it. I then went away for a week, and came back to find the trap mare with a red-hot foot limping round the stable. She had run a nail right up into her foot.

“What did you do for it?” was the frantic enquiry.

“Sure I rubbed a taste of Elliman’s to it, ma’am, the same as we did to Jerry.”

The shoe off and a poultice saved disaster, but he was with difficulty restrained from poulticing the next strained leg in the stable.

He has the most extraordinary influence over horses, the worst tempered brute growing quiet with him. “Woa, you little fairy,” is the only answer to a vicious kick or bite, and after a month no horse will touch him.

I have one here now that was a demon in the stable.

“Cherry Boy, ma’am, is after kicking me agin,” he said cheerfully one morning as he limped across the yard.

“Has he hurt you, Cuthbert?”

“No, ma’am, sure he had no bad maning in it.”

Blackie, my treasured old black, was a confirmed buckjumper and threw Cuthbert at his leisure.

“That fairy of a Blackie is afther throwin’ me agin,” I would hear. “He med a ball of himself in the field.”

There was never a reproach or a blow. Cuthbert

cannot bear to hit a horse, and when the old fellow was fresh he used to play it as a game. He used to throw Cuthbert and stand placidly to be climbed on to again.

Cuthbert is now quite a judge, but when he came his taste was singular.

“ There is a man abroad, ma’am, with a nice breedy sort of a horse that ’d match ye well, ma’am.”

A large bay or brown cart-horse, whose weight would be useful to his followers in the wall country, would wait at the door.

He’s a cart-horse !

“ Well, he has a breedy eye on him I’d say anyways. Run him down there for the missis to see.”

The large beast would either fling its legs up spasmodically, or shuffle so that our old coachman used to say,—“ He’d kick a sixpence from here to Limerick.”

“ Gran’ action, ma’am, see the way he can throw them foremosht legs,” or if it was the six-penny variety, “ Isn’t that the true ways of a breedy one, low down to the earth.”

Now nothing but thoroughbreds please him, and he knows the right sort to get too.

His speeches, if one could remember them, would make a book by themselves. We were out in the stone-wall country one day and I stopped hunting at Dromore. Hounds were going on to Clorane, four miles on. Cuthbert was passed on

his way home by some of the people who had tried this last draw.

“Did you hear what they got there?” I asked him.

“The only thing they got there, ma’am, was the jog they had to it,” he said contemptuously. He had advised me to come home.

He has a tremendous faith in Mr. Delmege, and some years ago hounds got away from Ballycahane and ran very fast into Kilpeacon, leaving most of the field behind. They put to ground at Kilpeacon, where Cuthbert was out watching. One very hard rider, not knowing they were to ground, naturally galloped for all he was worth to pick up. Cuthbert noted and made comment.

“That little Captain ——, he hasn’t a sthim of sinse,” he told me, “he batin’ the sowl out of his mare an’ the fox to earth in the covert before him.”

“But,” I said mildly, “he didn’t know that.”

“If he ruz his eyes couldn’t he see Misther Delmege on the white horse standin’ cool an’ aisy, an’ shouldn’t that be enough for him.”

Anyone who does not go very hard is a shy, or a terrible shy man to hounds.

“There’s nothin’ troublin’ him now but the turns,” is a rather apt expression of his for the man who has taken to the roads.

This reminds me of a good and true story which does not relate to servants, of a meeting held by a certain County Council to stop an unpopular member of a neighbouring hunt.

He was to be stopped at once, why not.

But one old man shook his head. "Ye cannot sthop him," he said placidly.

"Why not? They could stop anyone they chose. What did Mither Dempsey mean?"

"I tell ye ye cannot sthop *him*."

A perfect chorus now and a wrathful one.

"And why can we not sthop him?"

A pause. "Ye cannot. . . . Because ye have no conthrol over the King's high road."

The County Council gasped as they remembered that the gentlemen in question never jumped a fence.

Concerning second horses I often believe that the good people must help Cuthbert. I tell him one covert or cross-roads. We run out of that country and find ourselves somewhere five miles away and there is Cuthbert. He has seen the crows circlin', or the neighbours runnin' over the hill. He never makes a mistake.

Other people's second horses may never be found. Mine never fail me.

The grooms all watched the hunt from the railway bridge at Bruree and Cuthbert tells me gravely that "if ye do not hurry on at the commencement ye will not be there to hurry at the tail of it," which is quite true.

"I could see Sandy goin' away and he spinnin' with the pace." This is my fretful little chestnut, whom it would take a cleverer person than I am to stop, "hurryin' in the commincement."

I am not fond of hunting in frost, but I have been ruthlessly sent out when it was far too hard to be pleasant.

“There is a gran’ softness outside,” Cuthbert announces at the dining-room door, “an’ the frost meltin’ like buther. There is nothin’ to sthop the hunt.”

So I go out either to slip or slide, or riding in a squelchy slippery thaw and perhaps forget it all when we have a hunt.

“When me heel went into the ground without hittin’ me elbow, didn’t I know it was right,” Cuthbert announces triumphantly in the evening.

This is a free description of the ground not jarring him.

He loves dogs as much as horses and is as patient with them.

“These little fairies of hunt puppies, they haven’t left me a sponge or a rubber,” he says patiently. “Ah, ye little vilyins,” and he detaches the remnants of a stable rubber from sharp teeth, merely patting a soft little head. He never forgets anything, according to himself.

“Did you give that mare her dose, Cuthbert, or burn the tar?” this when some horse has a cough.

“Wasn’t it better not be worryin’ her an’ she improvin’.”

“*Why* didn’t you do it?” knowing now he had not.

“Someone whipped the owld bucket from me that I puts the tar in.”

“ You forgot it.”

“ I did not forget it, ma'am,” with dignity,
“ but it went out of me head this mornin'.”

He gardens in summer, in a manner as strange and successful as his ‘ caring of hunters.’

Only yesterday he was looking at the tomato house where the fruit was ripening well, and he told me confidently that sure that was the showery weather that heartened them.

I looked at the glass roof and suggested the showers did not come through.

“ Well I was towlt it was good,” said Cuthbert blandly and still of his own opinion.

When he fills a box of delicate seedlings and they get the pip and turn over in battalions, you find that he has gathered some very hot manure for the bottom of the box so as to “ hearten the bits of plants.”

My horses are his horses, and always spoken of as such. Three years ago I lent two to a lady who came to stay here who was short.

Any tips are always confided to me immediately, and as I got into the trap at the end of the day and waited while he put a man's saddle on one horse I thought he looked very much put out, so enquired delicately.

“ I would ask her to give me a penny,” he burst out, “ an' she did it, but she never even said thank you for me two horses.”

The next morning I guessed that I should be

solemnly told that another ride by that lady and my horses' backs would be hurt. "The queer little class of a saddle she had," said Cuthbert, "that was only med for ponies."

That "Lady Roche had married the master" is still talked of with fervent enthusiasm, for she got the brush riding old Blackie when she had a ride on him.

Cuthbert regrets deeply that she never wants a horse now, having many of her own, for she was the lady he liked to lend his horses to. "The one that could ride thim."

I have got another man now who came for a month and will probably stay for ever. He is learning to garden and absolutely joys in it, but the names of the flowers are quite beyond him.

A pellarbegona is a geranium at present, a bellagonea a begonia. Astrums he says proudly, and thim daisies, an' carnations, pinks and other things. Nothing which does not flower interests him. He looked at his raspberry square about a month ago and asked me what kind of flower grew on thim.

"No flower, fruit," was explained.

"Good fruit, ma'am?"

"Yes."

A pause. "It should be good then with the gran' corner of the haggart that's taken up with them."

Poor ground he calls hungry. Yesterday there

was a rumour that the German fleet was off Berehaven and all the available regiments had dashed down there.

Seeing Cloghessy in the garden I told him.

“What war?” he said magnificently. “I never mixes meself up in thim things, ma’am, at all.”

Later when I had persuaded him that we might all starve he was faintly impressed, but not much.

“With two sacks of flour in and a pair of bonhams¹ below in the house, what could war mather to anyone,” he decided at last.

I had an understrapper some years ago who was very dark and never looked trim going out with the horses, so I directed Cuthbert to see to it.

“Is it Michael, ma’am?” said Cuthbert. “Sure you might be washin’ him an’ washin’ him an’ he’d be the same colour still.”

My cousin once had an extraordinary groom whom we always remember as the cheerful man.

We were all at dinner with a flood of melody to be heard from the kitchen regions whenever the door was opened, so she told the maid to ask Birmingham to be more silent.

After dinner a note was brought in. She opened it. From Birmingham . . . what has happened?

“Madam,

I regret that my desire to be cheerful should have offended you. Through life I have been of a cheerful nature, pleasing all those around me by it.

¹ Young pigs.

I whistles an' sings wherever I am, so with deep regret, Madam, I must find another place."

If he heard the absolute yells of laughter which greeted this epistle he would not have accused all of us of being gloomy.

He left to go some distance to an aristocratic family and wrote to tell my cousin how he got on. He was, I fear, quite mad.

"Regretting my place with you, Madam, for the lady housekeeper here no one could agree with. There is four horses what I has to have lookin' well, but Mrs. — she won't give the oats. The Countess she wants style but would give me the oats, but Mrs. — she says style an' no oats, so I cannot see what is to be done between them."

The cheerful man has faded from our sight and my cousin's horses, fortunately for themselves, know him no more.

Quite a short time ago we were coming out of Limerick and discussing the war. Someone mentioned Marshal Foch.

"Great fellow," was the comment.

A local magnate leant across gripping the speaker's arm.

"Great!" he said. "*Haven't I called my greyhound pup after him?*"

Higher praise was impossible.

Another story I must tell of a well-known sportsman, one time M.F.H., and a lover of practical jokes. He and a party were asked to stay

for a meet with a rabid teetotaller who had just come to the county. They went ; temperate men, but liking something, and lemonade, ginger beer and soda water was all they were given. Mr. — showed nothing, he asked the T.T. to stay with him at K—— for a meet. The stranger came. At dinner sherry, Hock, champagne, port went round. Unfortunately the water supply had given out, and the soda water had failed to arrive. Milk, none until the next day. Black coffee laced with brandy. The unfortunate's flight to his room revealed his bed-room jug filled with whisky.

A sad teetotaller took it well, waited parched for his morning tea, and asking them all back allowed them to have alcohol in his house.

CHAPTER IX

SOME GOOD HORSES AND SOME FRAUDS

FROM two-legged servants to four ; to the collection of horses which I have ridden in my time.

From Topsy the black pony, a little beast which could carry twelve stone to hounds, to the present stud which may be carried off to go to the war.

Following Topsy was a grey jennet, it had no shoulder and no middle, an extra girth had to be put far back to keep the saddle on. It kicked like a fury and had no mouth, but also no fence could stop it. I have seen it on grass with its wicked head just over the top of a five-barred gate, simply hop over if anyone came to catch it. It cleared five feet with me once, a wall which we neither of us could see over.

My mounts in my schoolgirl days were anything which I could climb on to or borrow, we had no horses then. A trapper which checked at every fence with an air of astonishment ; oftenest of all a yellow pony belonging to Harty the trainer, which I used to run down for on the morning of a hunt. A twelve-mile drive the day before, and the bitter certainty of another that night may have

improved the yellow pony's wind but not his courage. Anything he could not climb over he dived into, to be pulled to his legs by an undaunted girl in a bundled-up habit, and urged on . . . as far as he would go. . . . It was never far, and big fences he simply ate grass off, so I ran no particular danger on him.

My first real hunter was a blue roan called Dandy, perhaps one of the best and most evil-tempered beasts in Ireland.

He was a great raking three-cornered horse with a narrow chest, baker-kneed, and with wide ragged hips and he reared and fell back for his own amusement. He had to be ridden in a rearing bit to the meets, with his evil eye set sullenly as he recognised defeat, but once hounds went away he took his own time and was fast as a race-horse. I was a passenger. He was really no horse for a seventeen-year-old girl, and when he had crashed back with me three times my nerve went.

I sold him to Mr. Donovan of Cork and he changed hands four times, eventually for four hundred; he must have been almost in the book and was up to fourteen stone.

With my capital I bought a brown mare on the common side, a lady with curbs, sold to me as quite quiet, but as it turned out a well-known runaway. The first day she saw hounds it was with Thady Cooney's deer dogs. She bolted, narrowly escaped crashing into a high brick wall

and ended her career by flying over a drop on to the road and dropping me into oblivion. She struck the foot-path at the opposite side of the wide main road, turned upside down and got up unhurt. But she never ran away again. She was the gentlest of ride afterwards, slow but a wonderful fencer.

Following her I had two four year olds, not my own. Mr. White lent them to me—one a perfectly wonderful animal and the other fast and free, but a horse who never failed to hit his walls and fly his banks and yet was so active that he never actually fell. He crossed to England, where having nothing to make up his mind about—he was never certain in his own eager heart here—he went splendidly. Poor little Sparks. If you had turned him at an iron front gate he would have tried it, but until he rose he would not have been quite certain whether it was a fence to charge or not. We find something to like in every willing horse when we ride it, despite its faults.

After this I had nothing until the Little Witch was given to me. She was a compact bay, fast, and did not know how to fall, very gentle and light-mouthed, in fact, almost faultless, and too good for me to keep, so she went to Mrs. Kavanagh of Borus. With her I had a grey cob which I raked from a baker's cart at the door, thus delaying the delivery of the day's bread.

She was a mat of white hair and I bought her

for £19, but she clipped out a typical Arab, and a beauty. I rode in a non-safety habit then, and I can remember the agony of being hung up when once Nelly Grey fell. My head was swinging against her rather ready heels and I called to her to stand still.

Mr. Langrishe was quick to stop anyone jumping the fence, and came over on his feet to help me, but I never rode in a non-safety again.

Victory my next purchase was a big weight carrier, a good fencer, but in her later years given to refusing. She only died last year, a very old mare, kept on clover in her old age by the cousin who bought her from me. With her I bought a trap mare, Sally, a bay without a single good point, which my husband looked at and said dryly that at least we could not teach that thing to jump. He referred to my groom and myself, as so far all the trappers had become hunters, and there was never anything to drive.

Sally could trot her fourteen easily, she had a mouth of lead and a vivacious spirit and she did her first hunt in two months.

No one could hold her and no fence could put her down. She was as fast as a thoroughbred and stayed for ever. I had her in Limerick for one season, and when I was not 'circling round fields' trying to avoid killing someone, I was brilliantly carried. We tried every bit made, vainly; nothing

could hold her. She lived to twenty-two, given a home to do light work by a friend.

The days of screws was with me then. I had Jerry, a little thoroughbred with a broken bone in his hock which had mended, with no forelegs but an undaunted heart. He came from England and flew every bank he conveniently could unless the weight of years stopped him. He never came down, and he was very seldom quite on his feet over any fence, but he was fourteen when I got him and gave out in two seasons. Nothing but pace took his weak hock over a fence, and a jump was flash and a thanksgiving as he staggered to the far side.

My dear mother had always promised me a horse when she came into some money which she expected. It came, and I got fifty to buy something young and good.

With my fifty I bought a very handsome bay, a slight whistler, a raking very well-bred horse but . . . I think a greater brute never looked through a bridle. He galloped with his head on the ground, and he never took one single fence right from the day I first rode him. He got over somehow until he gave me an absolutely crushing fall just outside Fedamore gorse because he would not look where he was going to at a tiny little ditch. Then in his flurry he rolled over me three times, and if the mud had not been soft I should not be here. As it was he crushed the bone of my

elbow out through the flesh before he got clear—the third roll the horn of my saddle grazed my nose, and I could not stir to get away.

I was dreadfully shaken, but out again in about three weeks in the stone-wall country, where the brute kicked back at a double stone wall, missed it and turned over. This was an easy fall apparently, but he hit my head against an ant-heap and after I had got up, I fell off again unconscious with bad concussion.

That bay hunter broke my nerve completely. He was always on his head or his side, always floundering until he made me hate to ride at a fence. I lost interest in hounds. I was always wondering when the next fence would come. Fortunately I sold him before the next season, and I believe he did quite well in England over a small fly country and won two point-to-points.

I bought the horse of my life then, old Blackie. You can see his picture. He crossed his legs as he galloped and no one would buy him, also he was a savage in the stable and a notorious buckjumper.

Poor old man. I hired him for a day and then for a month, and paid twenty-seven pounds for him. Up to fourteen seven, the fastest cocktail I have ever ridden and after a year absolutely gentle and perfect mannered. Always on his toes after the longest hunt, and falls were not part of his world. High or blind it was all the same to the old man. He used to bite us all in the stable at

first. I remember once when I rode in early from hunting and the men were out I got him his mash and drink, the cook coming with me. He allowed me to take off his saddle and rug him, and to bring in his tea, then he cleared us out with his teeth bared.

Afterwards he would whinny for me and try to prevent me leaving his stable, and run to me like a dog when he came in from grass.

There will never be another Blackie, with his accuracy and power and generosity, and, referring to that, a very curious thing happened once. I dreamt that we found in Ballybricken, ran out west and came to a very high dry bank in a corner which we jumped. Blackie was killed, and I was badly hurt. I told this of course to Cuthbert and several other people, for we were to draw Ballybricken next day.

We ran out the line of my dream, which I had forgotten all about, then we came to the high bank.

Out went Blackie's forelegs, a horse who never refused in his life. Jump! not if I killed him. It was high but perfectly easy, and he would *not* go. I remember Mrs. Wyndham sweeping past me; a dozen horses. I lost my temper and broke my hunting crop over the old man's neck. No . . . not he.

As I sat panting I remembered the dream, hounds were swinging for Grange. I turned away.

The black stretched out well with his powerful stride, hopped me over a ragged ditch, took a horrible stone-faced place with his ears up . . . and . . . it was his first and last refusal.

Believers in dreams may see something in it. My old horse got laminitis, hunting became a pain to him, but I could not bear to shoot him, so he is doing very gentle work for Mr. Arthur White, and showed the old Adam was not dead by jumping the high palings last winter at Fort Etna.

Ten seasons without a fall, with only one mishap when he caught his foreleg in a root and I had to jump off . . . and he was on offer here for twenty pounds and no one would buy him.

“He'd take off from a bramble bush and he'd clear the Shannon in flood,” Cuthbert used to say.

Never sick or tired, ready to hack out sixteen miles if he was wanted, doing long days. I had no second horses then. With Blackie in his later days—good and bad things always' come together—I had Miss Magner, a bay mare bought from Con Magner, a very hard riding farmer. She was another screw, supposed to be a whistler, but really quite sound, and carried me for eight seasons without a fall. A very hot mare, taking her fences fast, and she could give you the ride of your life, and as bad a one as you could think of if her temper was put out. She has made mistakes with me at five fences running—never falling—but if you came to a really bad fence, she was

wonderful. No stone wall was too big, she had a mouth of silk and could be twisted like a pony. It was Con who said he got no prices for his horses, never a price, and who grunted out when I told him he did not trim them up.

“Don't I thrim thim up to hounds?” he said.

I saw Miss Magner once refuse, hurl herself against her banks, buck like a fiend and really do her best to break her own neck. Major Sweetman was riding her. We both missed the hunt and were trying to make up, but she was too dangerous to go on.

That evening I found that the stuffing of his saddle had come together in the middle, and taken a clean piece out of her back. She was a very fidgety mare and would not go if she had anything wrong with her. She is pensioned now, though only thirteen. She got enlarged hind fetlocks, and though she went her hunts last year, she had lost her dash and fire, and suffered terribly when she came in. And a fall over wire with the Black and Tans with Major Sweetman finished her. He loved her and once pounded a whole field on her.

Little Barry was another very good horse, fourteen or fifteen now, and as lively as ever.

A few real frauds I must mention, and queer-tempered ones.

Beggorman, a seventeen-hand brown not trained until he was six, who in his first experiences always

lay down in it when he saw water in a ditch. I tried to keep him from the stone-wall country. He could jump any height, but even there one finds water. It was pure nervousness. Everyone somewhat naturally whacked and spurred him from his bath, until one day near Russ I was left with a watery trench between me and the pack. Beggarman went to ground promptly, but I only petted him and he came out shaking his head, went in again, was soothed, came out, jumped, and there was never a better hunter. We ran along under Knock Fierna when he scorned a dozen trenches, and in the evening we crossed a nasty country near Tory Hill, and he carried Mr. Osborne faultlessly. He went to a man in the Rifle Brigade, who told me he was delighted with him.

Quadroon, a black, was the handsomest horse I have ever had and the greatest fraud. He was a real Napoleon the great, but he would stand as the picture of a fourteen-stone blood hunter. (He won several cups in English shows.) He would stride across the first field, a perfect mover, and then . . . he would die. I never knew what it was, as well hope to see a hunt on a good donkey. Plod, plod, slower and slower and always jumping gloriously. I whacked him one day until he galloped so that I really believe he could have gone on if he liked to. I had a curious experience on him once. I used to take his valuable and

beautiful person to the stone-wall country because I could get on somehow there, and he bolted with me. He could go faster than I wanted to. He scuttered and stepped across sheets of crags before I stopped him. Later on he repeated the amusement and carried me down a steep place, not into the sea, but a bog from which I emerged wrathfully and went home. This amazing development required explanation, and Mr. John Ryan who had ridden the horse told me to look at the horse's teeth, that horses will bolt if they have toothache.

We found a back tooth hopelessly decayed and pulled it out next day, and he never went so fast again.

A broken-hearted horse is a sad thing to ride, and I have had two, both almost thoroughbred; one a mare, Vixen, who was overridden as a three year old and could never get beyond a mile when she would absolutely stand still, the other a bay which was quite broken-hearted. He would kick you off when you landed in the saddle if he could, but that was from an old sore back and then, poor beast, he could not go, he would drop from canter to trot and from trot to walk in the most hopeless way.

A runaway is an unpleasant species of fraud. I had a perfectly magnificent-looking bay, which indulged in this amusement. Cuthbert says he used to "swally his bits and make off." He used to do it at the oddest times, on roads, with hounds

he was a puller but quite rideable and simply went along as he chose. He was a glorious hunter and went to what the farmers call a brave young officer, Colonel Gabbett, who managed him and won races with him.

A determined refuser is another of the worst of the frauds. Out go the forelegs, back go the ears, the hunt melts away as snow before the sun, one whips, whacks; country people arise from nowhere and whip and whack until hot and worn out one gets across one fence and waits with set teeth, waits bitterly for the next stop.

I bought one black brute called Handy Andy, because he was so handy with his heels in the stable, a big very good-looking black full of quality. He jumped amiably enough in the ropes and would always take stone walls if rattled at them later on, but I took him to Ballygarry one day and plumbed the depths of his currishness.

Hounds of course crossed the valley that day, I could have scrambled along on the hills. Mr. Handy Andy took two banks with a zeal which led me to think that I was on a hunter. Then we came to a small ditch. No power of whip could get him over. He used to look down and I believe he grinned. A very small boy who rode a pony in that country also refused, but from discretion. As I rested worn out from whacking he hailed me.

“This is too big,” he said, “for the likes of us, if ye folly me on I will show ye a way round.”

Meekly I "follyed him on" to pick up the hounds on the next road and discovered that Handy Andy as a hunter was a thing to abandon.

He went quite well afterwards in the stone-wall country, but he was sold to go between shafts and not to "folly on" little boys through gaps.

Some horses, on the other hand, will not jump in the ropes and yet go brilliantly to hounds. This was the case with King James, a big chestnut now happily carrying a pretty girl here. Nothing would get him over a fence and nothing stops him now if the pace is not too fast. He is the boldest of hunters if a little on, what Mr. Browning calls, the agricultural side, a very clever description of a commoner.

One horse, or rather pony, not my own, I must mention. His picture with his gallant little rider up is in the book. He is little Majorie Watt's Blackbird, thirteen hands, ridden here this season (1914-15). He is a fifteen-stone blood hunter in miniature and no fence is too big for him. I saw him get right on to a bank near Ballinacura which was too high for some powerful hunters; and his little owner, who was only twelve and stood five stone, could walk him under timber and then ride him back over it. She followed her father, who has been stationed here with the South Irish Horse, and is one of the best-known men with the Meath. I asked for Blackbird's photograph, he is so extraordinary. Little Miss Majorie herself knew

as little fear as the pony and saw every good hunt she came in for this year. Amongst other jumps the pony cleared a river which everyone was walking in and out of.¹

Of the dozens of horses which have come and gone, only one has proved unrideable, a light-weight thoroughbred, Torpedo, which so frightened my grooms that I had to give him up and he broke his back, poor beast, racing.

I come down to my present stud of four, two of which are going—to Sandy my chestnut, so called because he is always straying, a funny excitable little horse, taking infinite patience to ride him, yet without an ounce of real temper and a perfect ride when hounds are going. No one could stand his fidgety nonsense until he came to me, and he used to pull. Now he pretends to. . . . He hunts two half-days a week regularly and when he fell with me (he was in too great a hurry to notice that a lane was not a ditch and tried to clear it), he put his nose down and whinnied and regularly picked me up. Poor Sandy, he has no forelegs, and only one hind one, but he scuttles along as if they were all iron and never carries anyone except myself. Personally I believe that horses think things out. My little niece used to come up to exercise horses and both the quiet ones had been out. There was only Sandy, who will carry Cuthbert sometimes

¹ Since writing this little Miss Watt has died, regretted by everyone who knew the gallant child.

with dubious quietness, but always ready for a plunge and a gallop.

The child was bitterly put out. I looked at Sandy, and said he might try with the man at his head.

For an hour and a half she trotted and cantered and walked the little monkey, and he never stirred with her.

“Auntie, he’s lovely,” was all I heard as I circled round terrified, for he never loves strangers.

Cherry Boy, another eccentric, is my second joy now, a big bay weight carrier, once a very hard puller and with a will of his own, now the most good-humoured of rides and the best hunter, next to Blackie, I have ever had.

Sandy flashes to the end of a hunt, accurately or inaccurately as it pleases him. Cherry Boy very seldom puts a foot wrong, and now he has a bit he likes, a child could ride him. But he has his ideas. He took a friend of mine through a twelve-mile hunt and he declares he never got a pull until they killed. He was also a demon in the stable and is still to strangers. He has got an extraordinary unsoundness, a stoppage I imagine in the nostrils, because he neither whistles nor roars but makes a noise at a trot, blowing absolutely clear directly he is extended. But for that I should not have him as he was twice sold for high prices and spun.

My big brown mare is going off for a charger,

but there is so little prospect of hunting as I write with all Europe in a blaze that I do not want to keep many of them.

They said they might even take my pets. The man who chased enemies on Sandy might find himself in their camp before he could stop.

One four-legged servant, not my own, was almost a personality. His master, Major Sweetman, lies in Mesopotamia now. Past fifty, there was no finer man to hounds, enjoying his hunt with a schoolboy's zest and absolutely fearless. He hunted here with me for nine seasons, and he would fight when the war came. Nothing else would content him. Wounded once in France, he went out again to lose his life leading his men hopelessly at Ctestiphon, where there was never hope of winning through.

His old horse, Loco, a low powerful brown, was his favourite for years. A weird beast, always fidgeting: when hounds went the best hunter in the world, with a curious habit of propping on each bank and looking down before he got off, but if Loco thought that he was being jumped unnecessary and *away* from hounds I have seen him fall quite deliberately. Once he did it under Garryfine when he was right and his rider wrong and there was no hurry to jump out of the field. He simply folded himself up on the bank.

Another time was near Athlacca. Hounds crossed the river and Loco thought that he could follow. I was watching them when I heard a

crescendo of enraged language and looked. There was Loco quite deliberately falling over a two-foot stick of timber, slowly decanting Major Sweetman into a muddy gap. This something something horse. He didn't want to go—was almost a wail.

But he always saw the humour of old Loco's falls. I had many rides on the horse. He never dreamt of pulling me down wherever I took him, but he took complete charge of me and went exactly as he chose, over wire sometimes I am afraid. It was a regular outing for the old fellow and he took advantage of it. He had a mouth of iron.

There is no habit so fatal for a poor person as keeping on old hunters until they are past their work, but I am so hard to please that when I get one I like he remains until the hobble and cripple of old age set in. Two old friends have gone this year, Blackie and Miss Magner.

About forty in all have come and gone, I have their list, and I have ridden perhaps thirty others, mounts given me. I used to like riding youngsters and have even been rash enough to take out things which had never jumped—but only in the wall country.

Clumsy was one of these. I remember his hurling himself across country absolutely loving it all, and being bought on the strength of that hunt. Another, an enormous grey up to seventeen

stone which I used to jump some banks on in fear and trembling.

One word of advice to womenkind beginning to hunt. Don't let the saddlers persuade them into a small saddle, it looks smart and weighs light, but a few pounds is nothing to a horse's comfort. Have big saddles and leather girths, I myself always use a leather saddle-cloth, and sore backs are unknown; also don't girth tightly. Grooms love to pull up the girths of a side-saddle until a poor horse is squeezed in two.

My saddles are very big and fit any horse; they are Owens. A very long girl on a little saddle, even if she rides five pounds lighter, never looks well and her horse can never be comfortable. A woman has such light hands that I believe in double bridles, but I never use a curb chain; there is nothing more annoying than crashing into people at a gap or being dragged at all through a hunt.

And another word of advice. Beat a kicker. Hold him and thrash him. Horses are quite clever enough to know what they are being punished for. I think I can almost say I have never had one, but then I've rated them as youngsters if they did lash out. Only this season with horses all fresh on the road I got badly kicked and the owner merely remarked, "Oh, she'll kick if you gallop into her," without even scolding the mare.

I was so far away that it meant a fortnight's rest before my horse came out again.

Take the silly old cavalry drill as a motto with the gallant friends who struggle through deep going and face blind places and never fall if they can help it. Make much of your 'osses, with or without the three inane pats accompanying the words.

Horses go quite differently for people they are in sympathy with, and a word of encouragement goes farther than a spur. Personally if I had a horse which needed one of the spikes some women use, he would be someone else's horse in a very short time.

CHAPTER X

HOW SOME PEOPLE BUY THEIR HORSES AND HOW SOME ARE SOLD

“The ways of a man with a maid be strange,
But simple and tame
Compared to the ways of a man with a horse,
When buying or selling the same.”

“**T**HERE is a horse outside, miss, waitin’
on ye. I’d say he’d match ye well.”
An equine treasure stands at the door.

Someone young and foolish not aware then that
the man who has to sell has many things to say,
rushes to see it.

A big brown mare, upstanding, and on the
common side—we rode commoners in those days;
it was my first purchase—with two raw places in
her hocks.

Curbs of course were dimly known of then. I
was seventeen.

“What’s the matter with her hocks, Ryan?—
fearfully, because I wanted the mare so badly.”

“She skelped them, miss, agin a bare board in
the stable.”

Prompt purchase of the brown. She was the
runaway which I spoke of, and the clever dealer

had laid two healthy curbs open there so as to look as if they were cuts, but she was a good slow hunter.

A friend at Adare who sold me another bay with sidebones only ten years ago too, when I ought to have known better, was foolish enough to warrant his goods and to tell me them bumps were nothin' when I noticed them. I had never encountered sidebones.

This led to litigation, the hardest of swearing, and the sale of the horse in dispute for about fifteen pounds. There are so many tricks in the trade that almost the best one can do is to tell the seller if he is at all straightforward that you are going to take his word, for even the best of veterinary surgeons can be hoodwinked.

Only this year a dealer I know of gummed hair on a horse's knee so cleverly that it was not noticed. When the horse went home and the gum wore out there was quite a conversation on the subject.

Go into a dealer's yard. They are all treasures and all sound. One is galloped past you very fast. . . . Listen to that one and suggest gently that it should be cantered and come closer.

Then the whish of the sharp intake of the whistler is too apparent.

"Whistler. Not at all. A touch of a cold he has. Take him in, Mike; that horse is the soundest horse of his breed in Ireland, but he was coughin'

only last night. Rub something on his throat, Mike."

Mike knows that something will be put, not on, but into the beast's throat shortly.

Treacle mixed with his oats will, they tell me, pass a mild whistler for a day or two, or gunpowder and butter. What effect it can have I cannot think, but it is a common remedy.

Worse than that there is a certain concoction of arsenic known as *The bottle*, which will really get them sound for some weeks. The secret of this is very jealously guarded, though its effects are well known. It has, however, the effect of making a horse dreadfully thin and poor, with his coat staring, so that if a whistler which has been spun and is now offered as sound looks badly, men who know shake their heads wisely, and it is just as well to avoid that animal. I bought a very good-looking youngster myself last year which passed an examination, and was roaring in six weeks. What happened there I shall never know.

If a certain leading dealer's wife clasps her hands and says smiling, "In the name of God now, Mr. Vet., I hope you'll find this one sound, for there isn't a thing wrong with him," that vet. knows that he is going to look at something very wrong indeed and smiles softly.

He is a man who would spin his best friend's horse if he thought it was wrong in any way.

A hard riding farmer friend of mine has a keen eye for the defects of other people's horses but none for his own.

"Is he sound," we'll call him, "Dan?"

"Sound as a bell, Major, sound as a bell."

"What's that on his hock, Dan?" as an aggressive curb or spavin catches the eye.

"A little knock he got out hunting, Meejor, last week, an' we beltin' over the crags."

"High up to get a knock, Dan," this sweetly and with tact.

Reproach in the eyes meeting the Major's. "He slid down on his hindmost legs, Meejor. God's thruth is it. Mick here could show ye the place, but if he doesn't match ye, well an' good."

You go to look at a horse belonging to the same man, one you have not seen out hunting, but have been counselled to look at at home.

It comes out on three legs.

"Lame, Dan."

"I declare there's no luck about that horse. To catch his leg lasht night on a hook in the sthable, so he did. He that was never lame . . . never. Let ye take him a hunt and see now. Haven't ye seen him sound many a day?"

True, but when he was warm. This is best not to mention.

Dan's horses never whistle. They make "quare soorts of nises from their noses," but take his word for it they are not wrong.

He had a very good little mare some years ago, a brilliant huntress, but always just gone out if you went to see her at home.

Eventually her jumping tempted someone, who took her home and found that she was a complete crock, taking an hour to warm up, and also a vile feeder.

A heaver, one of those horses which make a double heave in the stable, was passed off into a friend of mine's stud the year before last.

I helped to buy it, but we only saw it out, it was a fine mover, and foolishly taken without an opinion. He fed the hounds eventually.

"Good morning," the dealers say if a horse is lame in front, and "Good night," if lame behind.

It is a simple way of preventing the torrent of denial which would pour out if they called the animal lame.

A farming friend of mine who deals a little himself and is somewhat crudely honest, told me a tale of a horse at a town in the west of the country.

"I seen a gran'-lookin' horse an' he with two stranger felleys, an' they but axin' twenty-five pound for him.

"Up I lepped on him an' I likes him well and, says I, 'I'll give ye twenty,' says I, 'if he matches me.' But says I, I biginned to think thin. 'How is it,' says I, half to myself and half to thim, 'that the Daylys wasn't at him?' says I.

“So I trotted on an’ he did it well, but the thoughts was at me.

“‘No one seen him but yerself,’ says wan, ‘We is only jusht in, we are from Listowel.’

“So I canthered him an’ he did it well, but I seen they were eager to sell, and the thoughts was at me. Thin I clapped me eye down the sthreet and I saw the door of the Daylys’ yard, ‘an’ I will throt him agin,’ says I—an’ I did, apasht it. With that he med a whip at his bits to turn in. ‘An’ good day to ye,’ says I, ‘with ye’re rough coat an’ ye’re strangers,’ says I, ‘for now I knows where ye come from,’ so back I pasted, ‘an’ here’s he for ye,’ says I. ‘I’m glad to think,’ says I, ‘that the poor craythur will not have such a great walk back,’ says I, ‘to where he is used to being sthabled.’ An’ I left them there an’ they cursin’ me.”

“Somethin’ nice and wrong with him,” said Johnny, contemptuously, “to be out of that yard an’ two sthrangers wid him to sell him.”

“That is a curious class of a swellin’ he got an’ he to dhraw the leg an’ he clearin’ Andy Cassidy’s gate,” I heard a man say when a bog spavin was pointed out to him.

They are all clever enough to pull a horse’s head over to them if he is lame so that he will go crooked and it will not be noticed.

“Loose his head, will you?”

“Glory be to the hivins, isn’t it trailin’ on him?” pulling the bridle closer as they speak.

“Well, I will not tell you a lie in it.”—This when a horse roars, or is on three legs and something must be explained. “He does blow a little loud, he does surely, but as ye huntin’ ye’d never notice it, with the barkin’ of the dogs an’ all ye’d overlook it entirely.” Or “He is a bit short.” Or “Devil a lie in it. He got a touch of roomatissm an’ me an’ he out in the rain last month the day Marty Dayly was buried.”

In all innocence I asked my aforesaid friend Johnny, why all the horses belonging to one man carried their tails so beautifully.

“If ye was to say ginger nuts to him ye’d see the eye he’d throw on ye,” explained Johnny dryly.

I did not say ginger nuts to the dealer, but I felt more resigned to my own horse’s less banner-like tail.

The man who might not like to speak of these biscuits was one of the prettiest horsemen I have ever seen. He could buy a perfect brute, something you have known as a brute, and shave it, every hair of it, and trim it, talk of ginger nuts to it; give it condition stuffs and bring it out so perfectly handled that he almost persuaded you it was not a brute. He could adjust a saddle so as to make any horse look as if it had a shoulder. I have seen him on hackneys and real flat catchers, beasts

without bone or middle piece and a certain spurious quality, principally due to their shaving, yet he made them look so well that men who ought to know better have bought them, to reflect bitterly when the commoners did their high actioned best for three or four miles, and then either rested in a ditch or died away to a wide and crumbling canter. Also the surprise of being regularly hunted is a shock to those fattened up beasts.

From another man I know you may get something unsound, but it will have been ridden hard to hounds. You will see this dealer dashing along three hundred pounds' worth as if twenty-five compassed its value. Flash over gates, wire, anything to be with hounds.

We have an old dealer here who has bought and sold more horses than perhaps any man in the country. Ill luck has dogged him, and he is a poor man now, ruined by taking to racing, but in his day he has seen some big deals.

He has got a particularly gentle low voice and is deaf when it pleases him.

Down at Listowel Fair one day he saw an old gaunt horse dozing drearily in a doorway. "How much?" Jim queried.

"Five pound."

The old beast had points. "I'll give ye two."

"I wouldn't wake him for that," growled the owner proudly.

At Puck Fair he spied a perfect skeleton coming

along and eyed it sweetly. The owner, scenting a purchase, stopped.

“Hum,” said Jim. “Hum. How much?”

“Twenty pound.”

“Hum. Have ye a licence?” he asked.

“A licence . . . for what?” ejaculated the owner in astonishment.

“For the sale of spirits,” murmured Jim very sweetly as he strolled off.

Another very thin beast attracted him, and after some parley with the owner he got to the far side of the horse and stooped down, leaning against its hoop-like ribs.

“Come close up,” he said. “Close. There. Can ye see me now?”

He took a lot of cabbers to London in the days when the trade was a flourishing one and was leading some of them through Tottenham Court Road when one broke loose and charged straight through a jeweller’s window. Jim and his assistant saw the brute vanish with a splattering flash of silver and light jewellery. He did not stop but hurried on with the other six, as hard as he could.

“Leave him there,” he whispered. “He is not worth fifteen pound, and seventy would not pay for that windy. Leave him. He has no halther, an’ the Lord might sind they cannot thrack him.”

That horse was never heard of again. Whether he put rings on his fingers and bells on his toes, or

was cut to pieces and made into sausages we never heard.

I have a soft spot in my heart for the old man, for when only seventeen I went to his yard and saw there a lovely grey mare, for which he asked me twenty-five.

As it happened I had the money and bought her, immediately put her in as wheeler in my tandem, and drew her out to a picnic. She went quietly though uneasily and when we got out everyone admired her. Fifty to sixty, good judges told me she was worth.

Next morning there was no grey mare in my stable—the old man came, murmuring apology. He had found out that she was a demon and sent her off to cab—though I begged to be allowed to try her.

If “a pedigree,” as one of my friends says, “is but a twisht of the tongue,” if you buy a horse by a certain sire and like it, everything in the stable you took it from will be the same breeding for years.

“I have another gran’ horse be Tipperary Boy or Cherrystones as the case may be. Come out and see it at onst.”

A lame groom is worth a fortune to a clever horse dealer ; as he runs limping, the horse’s limp probably passes unnoticed.

“Back and quarters are a necessity. Shoulders are a luxury.” Tom Donovan, the well-known

Irish horse dealer has said to me, "but they'll go in all shapes. 'No 'ocks no 'unter,' Jorrocks says, and there I am with him, but myself I do like a middle piece. No tummy, no stayer, would be my verdict. When I get off one horse and have to pull up the girths three or four holes on the next, I am not inclined to buy."

There are fell diseases which are little known. One is weed, when the hind legs fill and swell until the horse can hardly move.

I was walking down Limerick one fair day when a very smart cob trotted by, up to fifteen and sixteen stone, and Donovan hailed the man. The cob belonged to a man who smilingly averred it a good hunter and quite sound for hunting. It was blemished on the off fore. The price was low and Donovan said he would take it, stopping me to ask me if I would stable it for the night.

It came up, but next morning could not move and had to be almost pushed to the train. Five hours' exercise must have been necessary to get the leg down to do an astute dealer.

But the man who treats you fairly is the man you go back to, so it really pays in the end for a man to be moderately honest, except in a fair where the buying world is fair game.

A very common trick is to mention a fictitious fault to take off the real one. A friend of mine always bought horses which had a fault, hard

pullers and so forth, as he could not afford the perfect and made conveyance.

He went to see a very good black, reported to be too flippant and the hardest of pullers. In galloping and trying he was taken up thinking of the horse's mouth, but the black proved to be a temperate and a fine hunter . . . but the worst ankle wiper in the world. He beat his legs into a species of jelly when out.

Only a short time ago I went out to look at some horses for a friend and wanted one myself if I saw anything I liked. We saw several and one was brought out just to be seen, but the dealer sighed.

She pulled, was difficult to mount, was worth two hundred only for her tricks.

"She might go quiet for Mrs. Connors if she wanted a horse."

The other people bought. I have a foolish idea that I can manage pullers, and I knew that Cuthbert would get her quiet mounting, so I 'bit' immediately.

The price was very low. I tried her. She did pull, more than a little, but was quite quiet. Followed by her owner warning me that she was really bad-tempered, I forgot all about possible unsoundness and took her home, to find her the most sweet-tempered and generous of hunters, and with a perfect mouth in a double bridle. Very fast too—I sold her at the end of the season,

to find when she was examined that she was hopelessly unsound.

This was quite clever.

To go to an Irish horse fair is a joy. Extraordinary beasts are being pounded at a gallop up and down the streets, groups of men are gathered round some wretched beast while buyers and sellers haggle for five shillings.

“Split the difference. No. I will not. Good-bye to ye then. Split it, Andy. Don’t make a liar of me.”

“Put it there.” A hand held out for the ratification of the bargain. “Put it there now. Nineteen ten an’ five shillin’ back for luck. No, I could not give twenty. Twenty pound I give meself, Devil a lie in, an’ I at a loss with him now. . . . Put it there, sir.” Smack! the hands meet. The horse joins a string for the train and the seller proceeds to disburse the luck penny and more in drinks.

Someone in wondrous check breeches rides something with a head and tail, no middle and no legs, up the street. A large rusty “curb” bit marks that this is a hunter.

“Trot him down—nodding,” whispers the dealer. “Lame is it. May be he skid on one of them rocks the Corporation scathers. Lame. He niver wint a lame step in his life. Lep is it. The grandest hunther ever looked through a bridle. He’d blind any horse in the fair. And I afther

ridin' him from Fynes,¹ and I never to touch macadam till I near the town."

'Fynes' is *only* eight and twenty mile from Limerick, with, amongst other obstacles, a creek from the Shannon, a tidal river, and a collection of unjumpable bog trenches. It was a fine statement. Someone would buy the leggy, useless beast, fatten him up, and show him littered to his hocks to some guileless youth as a fine stamp of Irish hunter.

Rings of dejected hairy beasts began to congregate near the public-houses, there is little sale nowadays of the 'twenty pounders.' Good-looking, loose-limbed two and three year olds pace wearily by, the best hunters are not out in the fair but standing in the yards. Something worth looking at walks up, compact, powerful, well bred.

"Trot him down"—He roars sibilantly.

Another, a lashing big mare. "How much?" "A hundred and fifty." A look, the mare has curbs and sidebones.

"Hi, Mister, I'd take less. Thim is two cuts she got on her hindmost legs agin a bar, and thim in front, that's ploughin', no less. I'd take a bit off, sir." He knows he will be lucky to get twenty-five for the mare. The ploughing is not altogether wrong as horses get enlargements resembling sidebones from going so close in the plough, and stepping on the sides of their own feet at the turns.

¹ Foynes.

Small corky ponies dodge in and out of the crowd. Everyone hopes to sell. The dealers, with the cryptically reserved look without which no dealer is complete, stroll up and closer looking for good horses, or for bad ones which they can make look good. It is quite a common thing to see a horse sold on from dealer to dealer in a fair going perhaps from sixty to a hundred and twenty before he goes off to be sold on privately at another big profit.

The amount of flat catchers which are bought and sold makes one wonder where they go to. The animal which had not touched macadam from here to Foynes would not get far over Bruree country.

Limerick takes a big hunter and a well-bred one, there are so many places where a horse must stretch himself. Some little horses will do it, but they are not, as a rule, much use here. Some horses jump quite naturally. I bought one, Little Barry, and understood it had been hunted, so took him out. We had a fast hunt from Kilpeacon in which he cheerfully ran away but fenced perfectly. I found out that he had never seen a hound or worked out of a turnip cart until he came to Limerick.

The self-satisfied man who comes over here believing that he knows exactly what will go across a country often goes away sadly. "Little light horses," I heard one soldier say, "only thing for

any country." When his hat bill had reached a sum which he had never considered, he began sulkily to mutter that he'd better get rid of the brutes. The ponies used to try to get over by pace and if they did not quite do it the fall was what the men call *laa-mentable*.

Everyone has a real good horse to sell you when you come to a strange country, which for some reason they do not just want at the moment.

One of the best hunters I have ever seen was bought at Bartemley Fair by Mr. J. Barry for fifteen pounds. He was something like a centipede, 16.3, with 'two great ends' on him, as his purchaser told me. His rider was clamped somewhere in the middle of his hollow back and pounded to a jelly by his action, but he could gallop and stay and jump and became his next owner's most precious possession. If I could have endured the hammering of his action I should never have parted with him.

Never judge a shoulder until you get on to a horse, the lumpiest looking may give you a perfect ride and a horse which looks perfection may use himself all wrong. A touch of hackney blood gives a shoulder which looks just right but which just fails you at the first mistake. A horse with a bad shoulder turns over like a shot rabbit. The one who uses himself really well "will be fallin' till he knows where he's fallin' to," as Cuthbert says. I hate sitting on a horse's ears, and would

never buy a horse short in front, but I've seen a pony with no front at all carrying a thirteen-stone man absolutely top of the Hunt, and never making a mistake. I won't buy spavins, but I like curbs. I only buy screws with a big "if" in them, as the stamp of thing I like is worth what I could never give, so I try to get the stamp, very much post-marked by fate. Slight whistlers I find often come right or never get worse, it depends on whether they improve when they gallop on. Never buy a whistler which begins to choke after a mile or two. Pullers almost all have their bits, a very long double bridle and no curb chain is my patent. I find the curb chain frets horses, and is useless.

You may buy an affable-looking beast in a fair and find that it folds up like a hammock chair when it is tired of going on, and only fire will stir it. Johnny had a mare of this description.

"Black mare gone, Johnny?" I asked.

"She is so. A young gintleman bought her at Cahermee, the craythur. Sure she might be tired of sleepin' now." The 'craythur's' owner was probably even then collecting furze bushes to make Colleen get up.

Another playfully rubs your legs against walls. We had one like that at home, Nancy, she nearly ground me to powder once. The horse which crosses its legs on the flat is to be avoided if you can find it out, before it kills you.

“The property of the late Captain So-and-so or of Captain So-and-so who is laid up by an accident” tells you nothing in a catalogue, nor if Johnny or his kind has the sale, neither does that “Captain Green owned him, he rode him reg’lar. He sent him in he bein’ dead.” I have known very good-looking frauds which had this hopeless trick.

Bridle lameness is a variety of disease which I have never fathomed the meaning of. Some horses are supposed to go sound in the ropes and lame when they are bitted. I have heard that they do, but I would rather let someone else put bits in their mouths. I have never seen a crib biter or a weaver, and wind sucking seems to be defeated now with this new French strap, it even cures it if regularly worn.

A friend of mine sent a crib biter to a fair, telling his boy not to warrant it any way, but the desire to sell was too deep for the groom, he pronounced his beast sound, and it cost him sixty pounds. There was a splendid-looking horse here offered to me by his owner for ten pounds.

“Because if you put him into a stable you’ll have to knock it down to get him out,” he said gloomily. But the intrepid hotel-keeper at Croom chanced the demolition of buildings and made a hunter of the horse. He was bought from his original owner for eight pounds and sold for a fortune.

“ I could sell him twenty times over, but an’ a sthranger gettin’ up he’d make a squeak an’ a kick,” I heard one man say disconsolately.

“ He doesn’t do it with you, I suppose? ”

“ No, but a groan he makes thin,” still gloomily.

I don’t believe that terror will permanently cure a vicious horse, and I also believe that the system of breaking by tying up too tightly and flicking whips ruins many young horses’ tempers. They don’t know why they are suddenly put to pain and beaten if they do not twist and turn directly the bit presses on their sore mouths. The country people’s youngsters take their burden without a tremor, someone jumps up barebacked and rides them carelessly across the yard. I have a dear horse here now which would not let people up and we found it was only if you held him. No one at his head and he stands like a lamb.

That it is not good to quarrel with a vet. is a sound axiom. A lady who deals rather largely soundly reproached one of the best known vets. for spinning a horse of hers for whistling.

“ He’s absolutely sound,” she said angrily.

Now the horse was not sound and got worse. He went to a Horse Show in the South soon afterwards, where he took first prize. Examining for prize-taking is generally more or less an easy affair, but to the lady owner’s horror she saw her horse sent on a stretching gallop and kept going on.

"Gallop him on, boy, gallop him on."

"I say, there." The whistle was only too apparent now. She ran to the veterinary surgeon. "Stop him, everyone will hear."

"Ah, yes," very sweetly, "gallop on, boy. You said I was mistaken before. I must be *really* sure now. Make no mistake. Gallop on, boy, gallop on."

The unsound pipe deepened almost to a roar as the distressed beast galloped on.

But I saw a mare of my own spin as *roarer* by a vet.—She pulled hard—and passed next day by Phelan of Cork, and afterwards by two other big vets. She was absolutely sound—but I think she frightened the old man here and fought as he tried to hold her.

The best of veterinary surgeons make mistakes. The soundest horse may go wrong in a week. I am happier now that a couple of long hunts is my trial, and the only unsoundness I am afraid of is one which may stop a horse's work.

My handsome black who ran so much would have passed a dozen vets., but every horse out hunting could pass him also.

One word of the man who hunts in every county, of some of the types which are to be seen at every meet.

First there is the covert side thruster. He generally wears smart ratcatcher or sombre black. He sits easily on a commonish flat catcher, turned

out to perfection, and his voice rings above the din.

Low voices discuss the possible line as hounds crash through the gorse with a bloodthirsty chorus echoing gloriously, "If he crosses the road, we'll all get stuck in that beastly bog, there's one awful ditch there."

"Hoic! Hoic! Hoic!" the Master's neck pivots slowly. The covert side thruster flings shame in the face of him who thinks of such bare things as obstacles.

"Ride at it, man. What's a trench if there's a hunt? Throw your heart over. This horse of mine will enjoy it."

Hs'sh . . . a little red thing peers over the bank and drops back swiftly.

"Hope to goodness it won't be that line to Ballinagarde, all wire——"

"I tell you I jumped wire in the Black and Tan country, it was the only way to keep with 'em."

Strangers listen impressed. The fox slips away over a good line and when the first rush is over where is our booming friend?

In a slow hunt he is there, talking loudly, scoffing at those who are picking places in the next fences.

"Ride at 'em!" he says.

But somehow he melts away, galloping in full evidence for a field or two, and then unseen again until the always over-loud voice is heard telling someone too meek to reply, how So-and-so funkcd

the big bank in the bottoms, and how he himself riding too wide, had been wired up.

His intense belief in himself makes many people believe in him for a time, though all his thrusting is done while hounds are in covert or hunting slowly. There are two or three of him as a rule in every hunt.

Comes another loud-voiced type, the man of excuses. He generally comes out in pink, and almost always on a big common horse, one of that old-fashioned sort which can jump but must not be pressed. It is a worthy type missing few days, an honest supporter of fox-hunting, and very often a man who once went well. He jostles you horribly—if you go near him—at the first gap, he rides like a demon up the first field and he is gone, gone until at a check or at the end he turns up blown and cheerful and tells everyone what happened.

Gad, he was fairly away and hounds swung from him. Or he met that cursed strand of wire on to the road and had to go back and round. A someone fell just under his nose and there was his hunt finished and over.

He too believes in himself. Believes, or perhaps only tries to believe, that he means to ride every hunt and only bad fortune holds him back. At home he enlarges on it, his grooms listen respectfully to the oft-repeated tale, or to the happier accounts when hounds run slowly, and the man of

excuses can nick and skirt and yet be there, pulling his horse into a stand at each fence ; why does failing nerve bear so hard on the bridle and not seek rather to get over quickly ? Once clean keen courage is finished with you may notice how men will jump big places, but from a stand.

When the man of excuses rides along a road with the wordy thruster they are worth listening to.

Then there is the man who drops into a hunt from nowhere, too few of him, but still one or two in each hunt.

Silent at the covert side. Silent, his keen eyes alert, eager. Silent as people speak to him and he watches hounds dash out. No sign of him in the first mad jostle, unseen as the hard riders fan out looking for a start, no word of reproach ever upon him for pressing hounds. And then . . . there he is, quite part of his well-bred little horse. He is generally a light weight, out right or left quite alone, his eyes on hounds, his face alight now, his hand moving slightly sometimes as hounds swing. In a slow hunt he is a thing unseen, picking an unambitious way somewhere to one side, just near enough to be ready, taking the easiest places, sometimes earning loud-voiced comment from the talkative thruster to the effect that "he never could see anything wonderful about So-and-so."

Last type best known, and we may hope after this awful war many of him will still be seen. The fearless keen young thruster. The boy who

wants his gallop, who goes gloriously for the blackest place, who has not learnt to watch hounds yet loves them because they give him his sport. With joy shining on his keen face, with clean courage in his eyes, bang over everything and the bigger the better. He must have blood horses between his knees, no commoner would see him out. Many, too many of him, have dashed to death with the same joyous courage out there in France or on desert sands, but when fox-hunting is for hunting once again with the gloom and fear of loss gone from the field, a new generation of him must be there to bring a smile back to sad lips as one watches the fearless thruster sit down to ride.

CHAPTER XI

SOME HUNTING STORIES

WITHOUT mentioning names I must tell a few tales which happened when hunting with different packs.

At one time we had a man hunting here who made the answer at the moment which other people would possibly think of next morning in bed and wonder "why I didn't say that."

In a jostly checking hunt, with spurts of pace which excited ambition, an over-anxious stranger collided with our ready friend—riding at his picked place in a fence.

It is a close thorny country there with only a few open places in each fence. The first whack was endured in silence, but at the very next fence, hounds dwelt in the middle of the field, the stranger repeated the offence. Some language ensued and when at the very next place the stranger did it again even a milder man would have given way.

Hounds checked, and a storm fell upon the stranger, who, coming from a county where perhaps one took a place where one could, looked bewildered.

“Why the . . . Where the . . . etc. etc. Taking my place, sir . . . three times . . . manners . . . etc.”

The worm turned.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, sir,” he roared out, belligerent now himself.

“Don’t suppose you do, sir. I was talking about fox-hunting,” and away elbows up as hounds hit off the line.

Another reply to an M.F.H. who was unnecessarily rude was almost too ready.

This Master, having lost his fox, was in the peppery mood of a thwarted man when the ready one galloped up to say that he had just seen the fox and pointed to the left. Now the Master had made up his mind that his fox had gone in the opposite direction.

He thundered out bitterly that he did not wish to be instructed how to hunt his fox by—well, clever men were not his words . . . and went his own way.

Pat came the answer.

“Well, you’ve been at it for seven years and not learnt how. High time somebody taught you! . . .” and the adviser rode away with the honours of the verbal tussle.

I was once among the most disconcerted group who ever abused a Master.

Wrongful blame had fallen on one sportsman, who sat gloomily thoughtful; the Master was

making a circular cast. . . . Finally he broke out stormily.

“He is light in his head,” he said loudly. “Light in his head. If I didn’t knock the wall into the field he was in, another would have done it, an’ so why would he be blamin’ me for the row I made. Light in his head he is.”

The maligned head, crowned with a hunting cap, and with two flaming eyes fixed on the grumbler, rose slowly above the wall. Our Master had ridden along on the far side and was within three yards of us.

Without a word he jumped over the double wall, stones falling thunderously as his horse charged ; with a quiet glance he passed on, but for the rest of the day all that group came in for it wherever they were.

“If I sthayed behind the last man in the hunt he’d cast backwards so as to say I overrode them,” remarked the chief offender philosophically before he went home.

A keen young soldier and hard ridden made a delightful excuse to one of our M.F.H.’s. Hounds got away with the keen one close to them. The Master knew him as a bad offender, one who would be in the middle of hounds at the first check, so he galloped hard to pick up. Just as he got within hail, hounds threw up their heads on the far side of a low stone wall.

The man who had got the start looked back, hesitated and jumped slap into them.

The thunder of language which rumbled across the green fields reduced him to quiet at the time, but evidently he thought it over, for next day a letter came to the Master. Of course he was very sorry and all that, but he really did not think that he deserved so much abuse for . . . must acknowledge that when a fellow got away alone like that and hounds threw up their heads it was *hang hard luck!*

Wrongdoing out hunting is almost inwardly followed by a check and retribution; it is only once in a lifetime that one sneaks away with two couple and they go on. Out of Russ in the stone-wall country, two and a half couple streaked for Adare and two men streaked after them; their glory was short-lived. In three fields heads were up and the two looked for covert. As close to a high wall as they could, but a head peered over it and a remorseless silky voice spoke to them.

“Now, gentlemen, if you’ve quite finished making your cast, perhaps you’d kindly tell me where my fox has gone to.”

One tells it as a good joke against himself, the other was hurt and offended.

The most eloquently patient look I ever saw on a Master’s face was some years ago, when a very young girl and he reached a wired fence at

the same time, and he asked her to hold his horse for him while he cut the wire.

She did so proudly, but directly it was cut, she let the reins go and drove her hunter at the bank, leaving the Master horseless and murmuring thank you as she left.

“*Dear me,*” was the only remark he made, as he watched the girl gallop on.

I went away too soon myself at Knockeyne one year, galloping on with a division without even seeing if hounds were out. The whip waiting quietly, soon stopped us.

Some of them got back before I did, but of course I met the Master.

“Have you seen the hounds?” was his only comment, as I fled to hide myself. The tone was enough.

And the man who rode beside me thought that we were not being scolded and said, “That’s all right, he asked us if we’d seen them.”

Masters have many things to put up with. Once hounds disappeared into covert and seemed very busy about the centre; they did not work at all through it.

The Master wondered what had happened, no tongue had been thrown.

“He should be there anyways,” said the grinning owner, “for I put a *sheep that died in there last night.*”

The hounds, full of mutton, were gradually

got out and taken home; fortunately it was late in the day.

Another sportsman had been given fox cubs to put down and made a pet of one. It came to his whistle, poor little beast.

When hounds came for the first time he basely whistled to poor Panza or Sancho and saw him chopped without a tremor.

“They killed little Sancho but they wouldn’t eat him,” was his only comment.

Mr. Browning’s man had a pet fox which he called Micky, it used to feed with the terriers, but Micky was the hero of many hunts.

I don’t know what the name was changed to when in the spring Micky had a litter of cubs.

Some of the claims which come in to the men who keep their respective bits of countries are curious things.

In the western part one old lady declaiming and protesting, swore that if justice was not immediately done, she would pison and trap and I know not what.

“Bodies, the sorra a body for they whipped those on her, but she had all the feathers that they left an’ they wrastlin’ for their poor lives.”

She was paid twice for many chickens, the man responsible glancing irritably at the feathers and deciding that it was better to capitulate than risk mischief.

Mrs. Keane’s house was, so to speak, “off the

thrack of the foxes," and a covert keeper calling about some fencing saw her trotting off with her money, and wrinkled his nose thoughtfully. Then he gave soft advice.

A fortnight later Mrs. Keane lost another complete flock of hens and chickens. "Roonayted she was." The bodies? No, but here were the feathers off them an' more at home, thrown around the border of the hunt's path. The investigator took them up this time. "Sleeping well, Mary?" he asked gently. He smelt the feathers hard.

Mrs. Keane wished to know if his honour the Captain was funnin'. It was hard to sleep an' she trubbled.

"Put them back in your bed, Mary Keane," he said genially, "and your good night's rest will make up for the foxes. And get fresh ones next time for me."

A sniff had revealed that the feathers were even musty and too clearly reft from the lady's feather bed.

One man writing to our cheery secretary here Mr. Power, put in his letter :

"Bring the black mare for the yellow islands, for the country is very deep and you will need an' ondipindant horse." The black mare was well known.

Another asks for "Compsation for my 11 hins. Even old Mrs. Bennet thats is moldring in her

grave now often asked did ye evir compstate me for me hens an' the answer no, it trobbled her very much as it is she who brings me the breed an' they are not ornery hens so I trust you will give me beyond the ornery rates of comensation."

Mrs. John —.

P.S.—Hoping you will be kind enough to attend to me and my wants."

Another writes to say that she will have no more of it. "Didn't Mr. —, the M.F.H., cause her the loss of sixteen geese killed by him." Later on she remarks that "foxes they are continually here, or persued by neighbours."

The keeper of the country replied courteously that perhaps dogs and not the Master of the Fox-Hounds accounted for her sixteen geese.

Another spells well.

"I'm destroyed entirely by your foxes. Since November up to the present day 1—hins 2. guise. an' three doocks. an' gazelings. 5!!"

Some of them write angrily, as one lady who remarking that she had been paid no attention to goes on to say that the "geneelmen of County Hunt Club cannot blame her for to take another coarse, for I will not feed these vermine of the woods for the pleasure of any. An' so if not comensated will give the cubs a safe covert for the season where no horn will disturb their rest." A certain old lady who lives near a gorse here

lying not far away from one of the chain of hills which cuts across our flat country made matters very hot for the keeper of that portion of the country. He was a wise man and knew that he was being cheated, but against this Mrs. Cassidy's farm was just by the covert, she threatened poison and it was a delicate matter.

She was a very stout old lady, with a fiery complexion and a determined mouth.

Claims which commenced mildly with one or two hens, leaped to hugeness. Geese, goslings, and then worse still. Apparently she commenced to keep prize fowl and her demands became enormous and impossible to cope with.

It came to this as the harassed man said, "if I go on paying the old villain, everyone else will want as much and the hunt may as well shut up shop."

At this point up rolled Mrs. Cassidy in a jennet's trap and her Sunday bonnet, demanding one pound for a Rolling Red cock purchased by her for one pound five, but she was letting the hunt down aisy.

His corpse was inside in the trap.

For once the payee stood firm. He would not do it, not even for this free translation of a Rhode Island Red. "Why if I did," he almost wailed coming in to get away from her, "every woman in the place would be keeping Rolling Reds and Howdangs an' Orpinntons, buying the eggs and

hatching them out and coming up for a pound or so for their freshly killed bodies."

He offered five shillings to adjust matters. Mrs. Cassidy lost her not too seraphic temper. Her voice rose as the waves backed by wind and tide. There was item, the Rolling Red¹ cock, and items, a variety of prize birds with combs roasting off them ready to lay; there were the colds which she had caught leaping from her warm bed to stop the devil's vilyin, the fox from whipping more of her poultry yard.

It was all for nothing, five shillings she had no use for. A lone widdy woman had driven six mile to explain things thoroughly, and, her voice dropped as she delivered her ultimatum, "if she was not to be paid maybe the Hunt Club would find more dead in the covert than innocent hins."

Firmness had to be kept up, but with a sinking heart. The gorse was close to other good coverts. Worse still! what if the direst thing which can wring a good Master's heart were to occur. . . . If *hounds* picked up anything and fell writhing and tormented because of this. Threats could not be given in to—but . . .

It did not give rest to an uneasy mind to drive over the covert, root out the covert keeper and be told by him that "the wickedness in that loud one would nearly pison the foxes of itself."

"Didn't her poor man an' he dyin' whisper to

¹ Rhode Island Reds.

Father Pat not to be too anxious to get him quit of purthatory if it was there that herself was sure of goin' sthaight to Hivin."

The old covert keeper had other things to say, one of them that Mrs. Cassidy was sure to purchase the stuff in the local village close by, because she had a running account there and the owner of the shop would not dare to refuse her.

This hint brought an idea as brilliant as a diamond into the unhappy country magnate's head. The man who would sell Mrs. Mary Cassidy the poison, hunted himself whenever he could get out, was a well-known friend to fox-hunting and an obliging man.

Mrs. Cassidy did not receive a cheque for one pound. Mrs. Cassidy rolled into the little shop demanding "strycneen to pisin rots with." Her expression a truculent one. She was served quite readily. A paper package labelled poison was handed to her very quickly, and full directions given.

"Sprinkle it on tastes of mate, etc.—anything she had——"

The now odoriferous corpse of the Rolling Reds and some scraps of bacon were easily found as bait.

Mrs. Cassidy, carefully watched by the covert keeper, was seen to leave her home in the dusk and march towards the gorse. She really meant it.

A watcher heard her grunting as she failed to undo the gate and had to scramble over a bank.

He saw her engulfed in the sea of prickly green, and then he went home, slowly and unhappily . . . to go early in the morning to give warning.

But next day the Hunt came to the gorse. It was a lovely day, a pale blue sky, cloud-flecked, with a sun making the country look too clearly cut for the fine weather to last.

Old Mrs. Cassidy had again left her house. She did not wait with the rest of the onlookers close to the gorse, but had poised her unwieldy self on a stumpy green bank, which was generally the first fence to be jumped out of the covert.

Absolutely sure that there could be no hunt, she waited for the yell of some poor beast in torture or the carrying out of the stiffened corpse of her enemy the fox and the subsequent excitement.

The Master eyed the old lady and swallowed what he meant to say to her at a whisper from a man close by.

A whimper rose from the gorse. Mrs. Cassidy stood up well pleased. It deepened, was echoed and confirmed. Came the chorus of hounds close on a fox, and glimpses of pied heads as they leaped through the close furze.

A big dog fox slipped out, eyed Mrs. Cassidy with complete contempt, and loped past her over the bank . . . one note on the horn scarcely needed, and hounds simply poured out, dwelt for a moment and were away on a red-hot scent.

Yow ya yap. They charged the bank.

Mrs. Cassidy was old and stout, she was not at peace with her god. She saw the hounds charge, and her yells almost drowned the bloodthirsty chorus.

Hounds were bad enough—but they flitted by and were gone. It was the horse's turn.

The man who kept the country has whispered a little more. Now even to a brave and active person a horse's head coming straight at you is a terrifying sight. This was half the field, and their coming was emphasised with thudding hoofs, galloping hard.

Out came Mrs. Cassidy's beads, down she flopped on her knees, with "Holy Mary protect me," and prayers offered to the gods who protect foxes; also oblations of any poultry they might select. Thud and whack on and off went the horses, the riders merely telling her to sit still.

Past her a dream of death, flitted the man who had refused her the pound, and he called out :

"I knew you were too big a sportswoman," quite pleasantly though his boot almost brushed her as she crouched and yelled.

At last a scarred bank marked the track of the hunt and a stout old woman tottered homewards her face clay colour.

We had a fine hunt that day, and were beaten by the hen-fed fox ten miles on. The man who had quarrelled with Mrs. Cassidy rode home past her house and pulled up to offer her . . . five shillings.

She took it meekly. She made some remark concerning magic and foxes and she went in, merely turning to say that she'd thought better of any mischief.

It was quite some time afterwards before the shop-keeper in the little town showed his books to a favoured few.

One item runs :

Dec. 18th : Mrs. Mary Cassidy. 1 lb. Epsom salts, labelled poison, as per order Mr. ——.

“Great things to put a fox in wind,” said the man who had thought of the plan.

Real poisoners existed here long ago in Mr. Nugent Humble's time, and I have seen the horror of hounds staggering and dropping down, but it was all traced to one man and stopped by the gentle expedient of sending him to jail for something which he was possibly innocent of.

How many weary watches the man who thought of the Epsom salts spent trying to catch this hound murderer. Vigils in wind and rain on a bleak hillside, but never successful. Someone always spied and gave the poor watcher away.

A Master of Harriers here gave me this letter which he received when he began to hunt.

“DEAR SIR,

“You may require some drafts on account of next season and I write to say I have hounds to dispose of.

Challenger 6 yrs, pedigree inside.

Flighty 6 yrs. Beauty 6 yrs. Handsome 2 yrs.

Leader 3 yrs.

Never hunted anything except a fox or hare.

Leader is one of the best hounds in the world if a bit small. He strains back to Pytchely Forager.

Challenger always leader up to end of last season. May be a bit slow now for a racing burst but trust everything to his nose. I paid four guineas for him and with a broken toe.

Flighty and Beauty are *nailers*. Handsome hangs about the huntsman's heels a bit, but he has a great nose.

Now this is the honest truth from sportsman to sportsman. They are all sound. Terms £7 17s. for the lot. You to send me back their bodies, carriage paid, and they dead, for I want to bury them with their relations and myself. An early reply will oblige.

Yours truly,

MICHAEL D——."

There is an absolutely true story of a pack of what the country people call foot dogs here, which I have partly told before.

These are the Ballingary Foot Dogs, which board out at a variety of hospitable houses, and have families not altogether of hound lineage, but which possess the most extraordinary noses and will hunt all day.

Now Major Wise had a bye day on St. Stephen's Day when he drew Knock Fierna, otherwise known as the Black Hill. It is a straggling place, taking hours to draw thoroughly.

Here just as he found, he came across the Ballingary Foot Dogs, also out on the holiday for their day's sport. It was a bleak grey day with a piercing wind and scarcely any scent.

The foot dogs joined joyously in the chase and there was nothing to be said.

Our hounds would hold it on the heather, but when scent seemed absolutely to die away crossing one of the bare tracks which run along the hill, or on a road as they hunted round and round, one of the foot dogs would straggle out, and presently the long yow ow ow of the beagle or harrier would proclaim, "Here it is. Come along. I've got it."

After an hour's twisting and turning they killed their fox, the bleak stony old hill ringing to shouts and the twang of the horn.

Then the Master of the foot dogs stepped forward.

"And now, Major," he said, "if you will go to the wesht side of that thorn hedge and blow ye're bugle, and I'll blow mine here, an' we'll divide the dogs."

These same hounds put a fox on foot this year on Black Hill, trailed off after him despite laudable attempts to stop them. They were out for hares and finally killed that fox alone at Dromard,

ten miles as they ran, not a soul anywhere near them to give them help after the first mile.

An irate and astounded covert keeper came out just in time to see Beauty and Spinster Doatie and others pull down a tired out fox.

They would hunt on for a day at their own pace.

I went to what might be termed a "notable" Patrick's Day hunt once—in the stone-wall country—where a sporting farmer had started a pack of deer hounds.

We waited two hours at the fixture before the deer arrived in a bread-cart, the delay having been caused by the unreasonable baker, who "must deliver his bread if ye plaze, an' I tellin' him ye were all waitin'."

Hounds, being a little wild, were immured in two pigsties in which they yowled dismally.

I had brought down Miss Wagner to do honour to the chase over the stone walls.

Presently the Master whispered to me to ride to a certain spot for he must blind most of the field by making a pretence of letting off the deer, and not doing it, otherwise they'd be after him and give the dogs no chance.

So the favoured few went to the top of a hill, and the confiding many followed the cart until it was suddenly driven through a gate which was shut and locked and the deer enlarged close to us.

He trotted out of sight and was given ten minutes, subsequently made into twenty by the

determined onslaught of the pack in the wrong direction, where they made life hideous to an active black Kerry cow.

We whipped them off and got them to the hill and away they went, but just as we were settling down we met the deer looking for the baker's cart and quite determined to get to it. With whips and scorn he was again driven out, to trot along for a mile or so, but this particular Benicia Boy had no idea of exerting himself, so merely trotted round once again and made for sanctuary.

Denounced as the "Divil's pup" he was once more interned in the baker's cart and the Master had to consider the question of amusing his field.

We, having travelled down by train to hunt with him, were very much upon his conscience.

A drag was promptly proposed, but the general factotum and whipper-in had forgotten what he called "the thrail." Something was tied up and directions given to go to the nearest house and steep it in "ile."

After a further period of waiting, the man left his horse as "dangersome to jump on when he'd be alone" and started off at a trot telling us to give him "twinty minnits."

"He will take over fearsome sphots," we were informed disconsolately, "because where he can tear and scramble isn't where we can lep."

Then hounds were laid on, vainly. Not a whimper from them. One got away and chased a

calf, but they finally sat down quite declining to think of hunting.

The Master remarked bitterly that we might as well be after Patsy, so we went, to find him just getting through a barbed wire entanglement on his hands and knees.

He replied hotly to recrimination.

He had the rag dipped in ile, he'd take his oath to it. Paraffin ile wos it? It was not, but from a can of linseed they had for the calves.

A mild chase and pursuit of a hare was the wind up of this particular Patrick's Day hunt.

The pack were shortly afterwards given up as too expensive.

A great many years ago a young soldier quartered here used to tell the story of his first day with the Limerick hounds.

Possessed of more pluck than experience he went to a local horse dealer, from whom he hired a horse, a small, poor, but not ill-shaped bay.

This little beast he rode out gaily to the meet which was twelve miles off, and miscalculating the time to do the distance in, had to hammer it along as the fast trappers of those pre-motor days flashed past him. The hireling had probably seen oats for a fortnight, the ominous click of forging was already sounding when he got to Croom.

Here they had an indifferent morning, but finally found at Croom Gorse and ran past to Dohora and on to Liskennit.

The going was deep, the little hireling was tired when he started. He died away across the deep holding fields and almost gave out up the hill into Dohora, though only two miles. Leaving this he gathered pace again down the first hill, sufficient to bump heavily into a man whose horse was dwelling on a bank, and the result was both horses and one man in the ditch.

The young soldier, quite blissfully unaware of cause of offence was up in a second, pulled out his horse, saw the other still in the ditch with an angry man with an eyeglass dancing on the bank, and fled on, glad to get away from the heated language.

The hireling now flew, caught up hounds, breasted the ascent to Liskennit, and was full of running as they hunted slowly back towards Croom Gorse.

But what worried the soldier was a very beautiful woman on a brown horse, who stared at him and at a check came up to ask in flurried tones "How on earth he had got her husband's horse?"

The soldier said that he had hired it, and hounds went on. He was surprised to find that the whiskered little man whom he had interviewed in the back streets of Limerick could possess such a wife, but then he was new to Ireland.

Hounds checked again. The lady, now irate, rode up to remark furiously that he *had* got her husband's horse. And the young soldier said that

he certainly had, and found it a very good horse and was surprised that she was not soothed.

“Where then is your husband?” that he could not tell her. He supposed in Limerick.

To a wail “Have they driven into a doctor?” he made no reply, but rode on again now rather worried by Irish people.

At this point Mr. Delmege was appealed to and came up.

“The lady says, sir, you’re on her husband’s horse,” he said.

The reply was that no doubt he was and meant to finish the day on it, even if it was a stolen horse or no matter what was wrong. He had hired the horse, a very good one. Hounds went on. Mr. Delmege followed and caught him. Explanation rained—the lady, Mrs. Wyndham Gabbett, declared that she knew the horse to be hers, a thoroughbred, and where, where was her husband! She could not understand.

The young soldier declaimed. He had hired the horse, ridden it, a fall had greatly improved it. He denied the accusation, he grew angry and then he happened to look down.

His fiery flush of righteous indignation faded to a sickly pallor.

“My—My—saddle had no flask on,” he gasped.

He had got up by mistake on Mr. Gabbett’s horse and been very well carried indeed.

At that moment Mr. Gabbett himself on the

now staggering hireling arrived, thirsting for the blood of the unknown thief who had got off piteously tendering the horse to anyone who would take it and let him run away and hide.

It is needless to say that they rode back to Croom together and had tea there, and that the incident made a friendship which lasted longer than the young soldier's stay in Limerick.

CHAPTER XII

SOME IRISH CUSTOMS

MARRIAGE among the country people is simply an affair of bargaining. So many cows, sheep, so much 'dry money' among the better classes, down to hens and geese and feather beds among the poorer.

They are the most faithful wives and husbands, even if anything but sad lovers beforehand.

Mr. Crowe, who was then agent to the late Lord Leconfield, often told us of one of the tenants who told him he was about to be married. Mr. Crowe was round collecting rents.

The bride to be was a pretty young girl, a farmer's daughter, and everything appeared to be settled. But six months later when the agent came in, he was surprised to see a stout elderly woman working away in Pat's house.

Leading the tenant outside the agent asked for explanation and what had become of Mary Dundon.

But without lowering his voice Pat gave his reasons calmly.

"It was near to be settled surely, but whin it came [to the pint, Mary, she had but one cow, an' Kate here she had two cows. An' sure your honour

well knows there isn't the differ of a cow betune any two women in Ireland."

Another old fellow had been married three times, and Wainwright Crowe chanced to be there at the time of the third wife's funeral.

They had all had fortunes.

"You must be a rich man now," he said, "with all your wives and their money."

The old fellow scratched his head and thought it out—"Well I 'dunno, yer honour," he said after a pause. "Betune the bringin' them in an' the puttin' them out, there isn't much to be made on thim."

I remember a pretty housemaid at home who engaged herself to a stable boy, and then went off leaving a careless note to the effect he would never see her again.

I came into the kitchen to find Bridget the cook raving with rage over Patsy's wrongs.

"That poor innocent bye," she said. "An' he to buy her a little thraither of a watch no bigger than the top of me thumb, an' to pay thirty shillin' for a muff for her neck."

"Where is he, the craythur? Bite no sup he won't take but he is outside in the scullery tearin' up Mary's aprons."

What consolation Patsy derived from this I cannot say, but there he was, rending aprons with the raw sound of parting linen and weeping bitterly.

“A fine cannisther of a girl,” I heard a farmer say of a big girl who came to hunt here. The same lady whom I heard objected to for wearing a man’s spur and only ticklin’ the poor horse on one side.

I heard my groom describing a thoroughly pleasant party to one of his friends.

“The grandest and quietest ever you saw,” he said, “great atin’ an’ drinkin’ an’ not so much as a ‘you lie’ passed for the evenin’.”

A curious belated romance, if romance there ever can be among the peasantry, happened here near Lough Gur and the ending was due to the agent.

Tom Doolan then had been promised to a Mollie Dayly, everything was arranged, but Tom wanted his old mother to live with them, and Mollie could not move without hers, so they quarrelled and parted.

Neither married—Tom grew old and grey and Mollie old and fat. The mothers died and the old cabins were pulled down, and the one-time lovers found themselves installed in two labourers’ cottages opposite each other.

Tom shuffled out each morning to work; he was weary and rheumatic, his clothes patched. An old cousin of his late mother housekeeping for him, and robbing him.

Mollie had saved money and only went out twice a day to milk.

They would pass each other on the road scorn-

fully, and would have gone on doing so had not Tom's cow broken into Mollie's garden and eaten all her cabbages.

Then began a wordy feud and threats of the law. A summons was issued. Tom hung his head with shame. Mr. —, the agent of the place, heard of it and tried to patch it up, vainly.

Finally he came again and smilingly announced a solution—what was it?

“Marry the woman, Tom. Then she'll mind her own cow. I'll go across and tell her. It's time it came off.”

Before the astounded man could speak he was over to cross fat Mollie with the same brisk proposal.

“It's the only way to keep the cow, Mollie,” he said, “and the law is nonsense. And both your mothers dead now. Tom, come over here. It's all settled.”

“His honour says——” the man shuffled across sheepishly, bewildered.

“Let ye sthay to tea anyways. Ye've hens an' ye pig, all disgraces to a dacent house.”

They were married in three weeks, were strangely happy, going hand in hand through the twilight of life and dying within a month of each other.

It will often take a month or more before the details are arranged, and everything may hang in abeyance, or even be broken off for one flicht of

bacon, or a five-pound note which the parents do not want to get out of the bank.

Death is looked on as mere and unavoidable event, followed by a subdued excitement which atones for the loss. I have heard them openly discuss a girl's death before her, when she was dying of decline, poor child, in a tiny room with a window which did not open, with three other children packed into her bed at night.

But never grumbling, quite happy to go.

A local undertaker at Nenagh one day came out to see a cart rattle up to his door drawn by a farm hand, greatly bustled to take back a coffin at once to his master who had "died suddint that morning."

A shell was produced and driven off, but about five that evening back clattered the cart with the coffin on it.

"Back again," the man said cheerily. "An' not required. He was surely gone, but what should I find whin I wint back but me brave corpse sittin' up in his bed atin' pig's head an' drinkin' milk."

Fair days are great things in Ireland. Especially those which graduate from the hour of the baggy-breeched long-coated dealer with a cryptic expression and a stick in his hands, and the innumerable deals, to the thronged cattle fair next morning, with muddy-booted farmers buying and selling in the grey dawn.

Cattle have often far to travel and must be sold early. The public-houses are thick with damp, muddy men, and the small hotels reap a harvest. A friend of mine who had some business the day of a fair, told me he watched a very superior returned American stand treat to a stout little cattle dealer there.

Whisky was not good enough. It was only eleven a.m., so wine was called for, as more expensive and genteel.

“A bottle of clar’t, the best in the house, miss.”

A bottle of dark sour liquid was produced and a brimming glassful poured out for the dealer.

“There’s wine now for ye, Thady. What d’ye think of that?”

The dealer sipped gratefully but dubiously.

“It is like ink,” he said cautiously. “But it wouldn’t be so bad if ye ran a glass of whisky through it,” he added brightening up.

I have unfortunately lost a truly wonderful bill sent in for the costs of an election of olden times.

I remember the items ran :

“To takin’ Tom Magee an’ Dan O’Brien an’ makin’ them as drunk as I was able. Four pounds.

To cups of tay in the mornin’ for the min. Three pound—(bacon and eggs included).

To satisfy the baker’s man after I bate him till he promised he’d vote for yourself. Five pounds.”

The total mounted to sixty odd pounds and the items principally consisted of tea and whisky and batings. At Newcastle West down here, one of the country people worked a truly clever trick on a grasping landlady. She was well known in the village as a "hard woman," one who must see her money before she parted with anything, and helped her income by letting lodgings to the men who tramped through.

Her charge was a shilling for bed and tea and breakfast, ninepence for bed and tea alone.

One bitter night a travelling tailor, white and worn out came to ask for lodgings. Eightpence was all he could produce, so Mrs. —— refused him any butter for his tea and warned him plainly that there would be no breakfast for him in the morning if he could not pay.

The neighbours expostulated, one woman paying a penny, so that the weasel-faced weary little man might have his butter.

This he kept and ate dry bread, his hard-faced landlady looking on unmoved.

He then spent the penny on a candle and went to his room, a tidy little attic looking out on the village street.

In the morning he came down, and unstrapped his pack. No, he did not want to offer any pieces of stuff but he had a couple of women's things he'd bought cheap, and he was hungry, they might pay for a breakfast.

Mrs. ——— jumped at the chance of a good bargain. A hungry man is easily dealt with. She whispered this proudly to Anastasia her daughter, and to her husband.

She would get the things for the “valley.”

There was a petticoat of homespun woollen stuff, a waistcoat of the same and some stout and serviceable skirts, trimmed with excellent crochet.

Mrs. ——— fingered and sniffed, she bargained and beat down.

She got the things for a breakfast and a shilling over, produced in pennies from various mugs and cups and given unwillingly.

The little tailor gulped down a cup of tea, he had bargained for two eggs, but these he put in his pocket together with half a loaf of bread, and he said he must get on to catch some train, so moved off at his shuffling trot.

A little later a piercing shriek rang from the room which he had slept in.

The blankets were snipped and slashed into pieces, the sheets gone. A pin-cushion trimmed with crochet done at her convent by Anastasia, lay upon the floor now a bare red lump.

The little tailor had sat up all night converting his landlady's goods into the garments which he had sold to her and so paid two reckonings, that of a hungry man and a guest.

The police searched for him—half-heartedly.

The old lady was too well known and he was never seen again.

Still about the country people, here are a few stories of their ideas of royalty when at rare intervals it flashes before their eyes.

Long ago two women down here were waiting to see Queen Victoria pass.

It was evident that they fully expected her to wear a golden crown and red velvet and ermine, but presently a little homely figure in black was hailed as the Queen.

A gasp of sheer disappointment ; a look at each other.

“She . . . isn't she very . . .” a gulp . . . “respectable looking?” said one at length, determined to utter praise of some sort.

When the present King and Queen were over in Dublin two women were waiting near the corner of Grafton Street, one wildly expectant ; the other clearly bored, or pretending to be, and looking down, as if the procession did not interest her.

“Biddy, I hear thim. Did *ye* see the Queen of England yet ? My heart is wove for a look at her.”

“I don't care to see any Queen but the Queen of Heaven, Kate.”

“An' ye'll see her, ma'am, sooner than even you expect, if you don't stand back,” uttered a big member of the Dublin Metropolitan as the

cavalry rode down on them, and he hanked the religious lady out of danger.

For all her anxiety, Biddy stood back with a shriek.

I was at Punchestown the year that King Edward was over.

The royalties slipped off rather quietly, just a few people lining up to see them leave the vice-regal stand.

Behind me were two well-dressed elderly women, with sour expressions and complete Dublin accents.

The Queen looking lovely, passed down, the King strolling along in front, burly and impressive.

“There now! I suppose those are some of the smart set,” said one lady acidly. “A queer lot. I wouldn’t care to be in with them, Miss Hanratty, I declare I would not.”

When Lord Dudley was Viceroy he came down here to hunt, and had various local celebrities presented to him, among them a well-known little padre, a particularly amusing little man.

But spoken to about grave things he remained almost mute, with a doleful “Yes, Your Excellency,” “No, Your Excellency.”

Someone had said the priest sang. Lord Dudley tried that subject, wondering why he had been introduced.

The little padre suddenly brightened up; he lost his dull look and leant forward, woken up at last.

“ Ah, music,” he said, “ talking of music, I have a little whistling mare that Your Excellency ought to buy. I ran her at Rathkeale last October, with top weight, giving two stone to the winner, and she was only beat on the post by the black of Your Excellency’s thumbnail.”

Most people looked round taking a sudden interest in the finding of a fox, and the viceroy wondered no longer.

I remember our local paper, determined to be military, reported that His Excellency appeared at a meet of the hounds, riding a magnificent chestnut “ charger.”

I also remember a conversation between two farmers who saw him take a fall.

“ His lordship the King went into the big ditch behind there, an’ he ridin’ great.”

“ Did ye delay to pull him out, Patsy ? ”

“ Meself is it ? What was the chap with the belt at the meet for but to peel it off so that it could be cot howld of. Why would I be obthrudin’ meself ? ”

CHAPTER XIII

KERRY, CONNEMARA, AND CLARE

KERRY with its wondrous hues of brown and grey, its misty distances and surf-beaten golden sands seems to hold a duller race than we have here, and in Connemara and Clare.

The softest beauty of all Ireland is held in Kerry, Killarney when the mountains are like chocolate soufflés, soft and brown and yet light, Glenbeigh with its mist-capped hills and the great reaches of wild coast, and the clear air blowing so softly. The weird railway running from Tralee to Dingle is a little truant among railway lines, scuttling along the high road, diving off and losing itself among the mountains and bogs when it gets ashamed of frightening cows and horses, coming out, almost with a laugh, on to the high road again. The steep descent into Tralee was too much for it once and it ran away and killed its cargo of pigs, but nothing else. Now it is obliged to stop every five minutes on this descent and think it over and decide not to go racing down the hills and forgetting its duty of getting safely to Tralee,

without reckless pace-breaking, at ten miles an hour.

From Kerry to Connemara is to go from soft beauty to splendid tumbled grandness. The air blows softly, but here the peaks are flung up rocky and bold, a jumble of jagged mountain tops, reaches of heather all pink and red and cream in August ; wide loneliness of brown bog, ripple of lakes, little and big, and tumble of rock frothed streams.

The Connemara people are a piece of old Ireland, still left untouched. Irish is their own language—talked with a softness which must be heard to know its music. Here men still wear homespun and the women red petticoats, and you will see them riding two on a horse, the woman on a pillion. They have old-fashioned fairs there, patterns¹ they call them ; and they firmly believe in the fairies. If you walk yourself at night on the Connemara hills, with the lakes whispering close by, the bog pools gleaming, and nothing about but the little sheep on the great crags above you one can almost imagine little people coming out to dance among the heather bells, or grouping on the rocks close to the brown waters of the lake.

We have a favourite boatman there, a man of sixty, sun tanned, as active as if half his years had never passed, and his stories are things never to

¹ So called from the word Patron—"Patron Saint"—each fair is held in honour of some saint.

tire of. "Ah, yes, surely now," in the soft Connemara drawl. "It was a great feesh surely." He will show you the quaint old churchyard at Salruck where the headstones are broken oars and bits of ships, and until it was stopped by the priests, pipes were left for the lonely dead to smoke in their solitude. Also the pass through the mountains with the huge cairns of stones. All Salruck was evicted long ago and went out across the Killary to live as best it could, but they came back with their dead and wherever the coffin had to be put down to rest the bearers, every mourner picked up a stone and laid it as a rest made for the heavy burden.

Tom can tell you of the famine. There are old men alive there who remember it, when men died like flies of want and then fever, and grew too hopeless even to try to take shellfish to live on; or went out recklessly stealing sheep until they were caught.

"They just sat down an' died, an' died," Tom's voice would say drearily.

He knows stories of the Great Martin as they call him there—he was virtually the King of Connemara. The Martins kept open house, every stranger who passed the gates had to come in to eat and drink with them.

One story of how the great man worsted a shopkeeper in Westport is typical of his wit and the danger of his enmity. This man had vexed

Colonel Martin, been slow with an order and rude about some account. In Tom's words :—

“ This Mortimer had a grate hotel (their word for shop) where ye wud get all ye cud want, but he had angered the Colonel an' the Colonel driven in to Westport, was down to the quay, as he had to meet a sailor from Galway that had waited so long in the calm that was on the say that he had lost all his money and had none to buy a few things he wanted before he'd stharta—nor even enough food—an' he up an' told the Colonel of what ailed him.

“ So the Colonel thought, an' he laffed.

“ ‘ An' I will tell ye how to get money,' says Colonel Martin verra soft. ‘ If ye weel do all that I say.' So he told the sailor to make in to Mortimer's Hotel an' he towlt him what to be sayin'. An' the sailor med in an' he studd lukkin' arround arround in the grate hotel.

“ ‘ An' what do ye want?' says Mortimer comin' out.

“ ‘ I am lukkin' for somethin' for me ship,' says the sailor, verra disappointed like. ‘ Somethin' I cannot see here.'

“ ‘ There is nothin' ye ard want for a ship that I have not,' says Mortimer an' he offended for his was a grate hotel. ‘ Nothin',’ says he. ‘ Look agin,' says he, ‘ agin, an' tell me what it is.'

“ The sailor but shuk his head. ‘ Ye have *not* what I want,' says he, ‘ though they did tell me

ye had a fine sthore,' he says. 'Ye cannot give me what I want,' and he went out.

"He came back in an hour an' he lukked and lukked, poked at sails an' nets an' bolts, an' shakin' his head.

" 'It is but a poor hotel,' he says.

" 'Then,' says Mortimer, verra vexed, 'I will bet,' he says, 'that there is nothing here that a man cud want for his ship that I have not, an' I will bet ye, sthranger,' he says, 'what ye like,' an' he swore out with the anger.

"Then in came Colonel Martin in his fine clothes an' he listened verra careful, an' he smiled whin he heard—sneerin' like at Mortimer.

" 'What will ye bet?' says the sailor. 'For ye have not what I luke for. Will ye bet me a hundred pound?'

" 'I will bet ye a hundred pound,' roars Mortimer, verra angered, an' bein' sure the sailor cud not put down the bet.

" 'I will bet ye,' says the sailor, pullin' out the goold. 'An' his honour here is witness,' says he. Then he waits . . . 'I am lukkin' for a wind,' he says, 'to sail me ship home to Galway an' ye have not got it here,' he says verra gintle.

"Faix the man had to pay, with Colonel Martin laughin' soft an' Mortimer known now that it was a plot on him. But that was the sort the great Martin was that he'd never forgive till he paid out an enemy."

Once again he had his sweet revenge on a barber at Bath.

Great dandy and beau he went to be shaved to a barber who had been bribed by Martin's merry enemies and friends. A joke was to be played on the great Colonel Martin, he was to come out into the streets of Bath with one cheek smooth and bare and one blue with the night's growth.

One cheek was shaven clear, the Barber pretended to be taken ill and was kindly excused.

But half Bath seemed to be gathered outside, one of the great men of the day had to pass fair ladies who giggled and muttered as they saw the mortified dandy. Men smiled and joked, until Colonel Martin, striding wrathfully to another barber, knew that it had been planned.

So he but smiled and joked back, Tom told us. "But he waited a week an' then he stayed at hoame for two days an' when he came out he was dressed as a common sailor an' none would know him. An' he went to the same barber's.

"There was a fine gentleman waiting there, one of the Colonel's friends. 'I have come for a sha-ave,' the Colonel says, humble like, 'an' what will ye charge me, sir, to sha-ave me an' my mate?' he says. 'So much,' the barber says, 'so much will I cha-arge.' 'An' that is a bargain,' says Colonel Martin, 'on your word,' he says, 'that ye will shave him now before anyone else.'

"So the barber shaved Colonel Martin, 'An'

now for the second,' he says, happy like for he had been well paid for his trick.

“‘My ma-ate is at the door,’ says Colonel Martin, going out. An’ there was a brown ass with long woolly hair on her. ‘There is me ma-ate,’ says the Colonel, ‘An’ I am Colonel Martin,’ he roars out, ‘that ye have made a promise to before a friend. An’ if ye do not shave me mate I’ll break ye,’ he says, ‘an’ send ye to prison.’

“Tearin’ an’ ragin’ the barber used a scissors an’ there he was at the brown ass till he was laffing sthock for the city an’ men wudn’t go to him. But when the Colonel had him rooned he set him up again for that was the gra-ate Martin’s way.”

Out off Innestaygle with the seals sucking and crooning on the brown rocks and the boat full of mackerel and codling of plaice and gurnet, and pollock, “coal feesh,” we used to hear these stories. Then to see Tom’s wrath when he pulled in a squirming evil dog “feesh” and cut off its head with a penknife, sawing placidly with comments of “there’s for ye now. You will not ate me baits again, I tell ye.”

We came chasing home before a rising storm one night in the patched elderly coracle, with all the sea leaping with white froth and its hungry lips round us, with the crash and suck of the huge rollers on the islands thundering out through the spray-wet gloom ; we were glad to be in the shelter

of the little Killary that night ; the sea knows how to rise outside the harbour.

The Connemara people are softly naturally witty, without the peculiar phrasing which makes them so delightful up here. Long English words are a great trouble to them, they speak Irish so much ; one old woman and her husband went to Dublin where the old man was run over by a motor and taken to hospital.

Someone who knew the old woman met her next day looking sad and asked for old Pat's symptoms.

" He was punctured in his destinies, ma'am," the old Connemara woman repeated slowly, as one who has got something off by heart at last. " An' the dochter said he would succumb . . ." Here she brightened into the confidence of the one who knows best, " but he did not, ma'am. He died."

It was extremely difficult to sympathise with a straight face once one had got intestines for destinies.

The Connemara people tell you a tale of how the Mortimers came to Westport. In Cromwell's day one of his generals sent a messenger across for a boatload of brogues, his men's being worn out. The man who received the letter read it as a boatload of rogues, so gathered up all the Mortimers he could find and sent them across. So the old people tell you with contempt for the English name.

The Clare folk are a wild race, pure Irish, ready for anything. There is a story that all the Irish were put across the Shannon long ago and that here we have a mixed race of Irish and Dane and old Saxon. I know there were Normans and Cliffords and Kennedys all round Fedamore.

Fishing in Connemara is something to dream of out on the lakes with the hills towering stonily round you, with the scent of heather and peat and salt sea as the wind changes, with the lake rippled by a steady breeze and no cap of mist on the hills. Days when one hopes for a good catch, for the drift will be at a steady pace, the hills are whimpering tears still, their hours of wild sobbing when all the little rills were torrents is past, there is fresh water to the fish, with the little heather-crowned islets to drift past, the brown water whispering and splashing off their stony sides.

These days when the Jock Scot and claret and Connemara black are thrown with careful hope, with tense waiting for the boil of a "beeg feesh," the whir of the wheel, the blasphemous joy of the boatman; the anxiety until the white trout is in the net.

Then there are days when the black squalls rush across the waters, dark and ominous, when one's line flies out wildly and the boatmen keep anxious watch for the fierce rush of the storms. You will see the lakes whipped to miniature sea with waves white crested, flinging spume of wrath, with cakes

of foam at the river's mouth and rain fierce as the wind scurrying up with it.

"But a fine day for a saamon surely," so there is hope as the boat rocks and swings, as the rowers hang at their oars for the row up and the roar of the far-away surf rises thunderously.

It is not a place for those who fear rain. One may sit out drenched through and through, resting a thoroughly soaked back when the boat is turned; no mackintosh will keep out Connemara rain. One may fish when the world is a blur of wet and the hills are lost in the swirl and all the air is full of the sound of waters, to go in soaked but happy, see a bundle of wet garments carried off and grow warm and dry by the glow of a turf fire with the noise of the storm outside growing louder.

"Fine rain" is all you say joyously.

But there are the hopeless days when the mists cap the mountains, when there is a deadness in the air and heaviness even in the light wind. Warm and steamy days when even the brownies will sulk, nip at a fly and drop off with a fishy grin.

Ourig, the top of the Recess chain of lakes, was a great favourite of mine, a big lake with big fish in it and wonderfully good on a wild day, but two lakes, Muck and Fee near the coast, I know most of, were good, wonderfully good some years ago. Our last year we hardly saw a fish except a few red salmon which take some catch-

ing. The poachers were clever or the weather hopeless.

We used to take a dear little cottage there, at Salruck, right on Lough Muck and Lough Fee and I fished with one of the best men to throw a line in Ireland, and one of the keenest, Major Sweetman. Out at eight and in at nine was his idea of a day's fishing. I do not suppose I shall ever go to Salruck again now and see the red salmon which would not be caught jumping in the still evenings.

We fished that first year with perhaps one of the worst boatmen in Ireland.

The only thing to do with him was to haul a fish straight in murderously and trust to your tackle, for the man grew so excited that he would let you drift in on your fish, or if you swore hard enough he would then row too hard and finally drop his oars and dive for the fish when he was still full of go.

It was a glorious life down there, twenty miles from a town, twelve from a village. No post until one; the lap of the lake rippling just below. The huge hills towering over our little house, and the garden blazing with flowers. Great scarlet gladioli, purple irises, white phloxes, masses of Lady Gay roses. The little lonely road at the bottom of the lawn and the air all tang of salt and bog and mountain. Sometimes the world seemed all one sweep of water splashing off the hills,

pouring down the brown streams, and that was what we wanted selfishly, though the others liked to see the clear days and go out fishing on the sea. Just a mile away it nosed up the little valley, with old Mwyl Rhea keeping splendid guard, his peak mist crowned, and looking down on the sheltered harbour and the wild golden stretch of the Mayo sands.

Even with our boatman and the parrot which wished Mary to get up about five and wished it loudly; who was really only too keen, it was pure happiness there, whether on dark sulky Muck or out for the day on lovely Fee, with its islands and rough waters.

He lost me a fine salmon once, dropping the oars. We look at the fish. If there was a rock in the lake he found and hit it, though he had been on it for years. Are we over it yet? we used to say, coming down the big lake.

“ I am not sure. Begor we are *not!* ” and whack the boat would hit the same rock every time.

“ Och, saamon,” was his pet cry, any fish you got into.

I took him out with me one very stormy day on to the big lake and at least I gave some cause for excitement. It was a hopeless evening, cold and bright, I had only gone for brownies, but as we rowed across I cast and felt á fish.

“ Where ”—out went my line like a rocket, Patsy, we’ll call him Patsy, yelled “ Och, saa-

mon." Two men on the shore and a land commissioner who was taking measurements, rushed down to watch, for Patsy was now yelling saamon loudly.

Knowing Patsy I waited. "Row, will you, row," very bitterly, tried to get up caught in my mackintosh and went down on my knees, quite bewildered, for my line was still going out.

The land commissioner bellowed *row*, the fishermen on shore begged Patsy for once not to be a something fool and my scattered wits returned. I began to reel in. Alas, what had gone so quickly came as fast. The voices began to calm and with what dignity I could I got hold of a six-ounce brownie hooked in the back.

We rowed on somewhat silently; equally silently, the excited land commissioner made his way to his motor while the fishermen commented audibly on Patsy as a man of sense.

Connemara with her jumble of stony peaks ranged as though in array of battle, defiant, nosing into the mist, as mountain battalions marching and countermarching, spurning the boggy lands at their feet, standing proud guard over the brown-hued lakes, bare and rugged and calm in sunlight, and seeming merely to endure the clinging mist clouds which fall on their summits, weeping wildly, stormily in rainfall, with little rills spouting down yellow-hued waters to feed the lakes, whimpering eerily on still nights when

the rain has just stopped. Connemara is a strange wild land, one once known never forgotten. With her wondrous reaches of golden sands, miles of it, with nothing to be seen on the beaches but the black polly cows dotted about when they come down to the sea ; the sea birds circling down and occasionally a child or two picking driftwood at high-water mark. Súch a great clear sea with its depths of pure green water creeping on over the sands, it calls you to bathe in it when it runs deep in the creeks between rocks with the floor of sand below.

Where the weeds grow at low tide, you can look down on calm days to see the tangle garden of the deep. Great bands of rubber weed in rolls and twinings of reddish brown ; strange bands of other growth poised on their wrist stems, reaching up as if lost merman struggled for the thick grove of sea jungle. The drowning weed drying on the rocks floating out as coarse mermaid's hair might to the touch of the rising tide. Anemones, huge blobs of pink and green and red, enormous things waving their feelers ; great pink sea urchins. Here and there a crab sidling evilly. There is no wickedness in the Connemara sea, it can rise in majesty, and storm white crested, but on fine days it is calm in its splendid beauty, a sea you may boat on in safety and bathe in happily.

I have gone to bathe on the Miltown bay and felt

the sand sucked away from my staggering feet until it was dangerous to go knee deep. I have run for land and been caught by a following wave and been rolled over choked and blinded.

On the Clare and Galway coast you get a strain of Spanish blood, dating from when the Armada came crashing on to the jagged Clare and Galway rocks. And sometimes you see a girl with Spanish colouring and narrow arched feet and the carriage which is so typical of Spain.

There are some rotting skeletons of houses beyond Spanish Point, Fraye they call the place; it was once a fishing village, the skeletons look on a quiet little bay, sheltered by low cliffs, but one rock, a low brown thing, lurks at the side of the bay close to the calm channel through which the canoes must come to land. It slips up seal-like, bared by a passing wave, it is gone, only marked by a dimple of current, and next moment it is bare again; and on it every man in that village was drowned, until the widowed women left, and the old houses are only marked now by the walls.

There is Carig A'Dandy, now nothing, next moment with a huge breaker rising up, crashing down in thunderous weight of water.

There are no soft lights at Miltown, but grey strength in the world, a wind which seldom drops, a sea which vaunts itself your splendid enemy. Connemara is a friendly coast. Drive from Westport to Leenane by the cliff road and see the

lights on Crew Bay, the islands dotted on the sea, and inland the hills and the brown stretch of bog, and then wooded and beautiful the Killary crouches before you in the sheltered valley and the wildness of the coast is left behind.

I came across a sea garden out off Innestaygle. It was spring tide with the waters sucked back off rocks seldom uncovered. It lurked beneath two seaweed-hung boulders, a mermaid's garden of violet and red and green, set with little pink anemones, and great crimson anemones further back, all open, these fringed the sea flowers. Above the rock was hung with fern fronds of delicate weed, little silvery shells formed borders in the water. The colouring kept me there until an angry wave sougled at my feet, jealous of the sea treasure which I had seen. One could think of the sea people coming up to tend that garden of theirs and glory in its wealth of colour—its wondrous beauty . . . sheltered under the beetling rock.

On the way back from wild Innestaygle with the sea thrashing at its shelves of limpet-covered rocks, and the sound of waters everywhere there is an island where white heather grows in quantities. No one lives on it, there are only little nervous black-faced sheep huddling on the brows of the steep cliffs, but the lucky pure white bells are everywhere.

They have a legend there that the white heather was once a fairy princess, who escaped some

witch's power, by lurking in the heather bells, and all she touched turned pure white.

On the Clare coast it seems to be a wicked sea, a lurking treacherous ocean looking for victims. With its shifting sands beneath unwary feet, its suck of undertow; its wild rollers which rise suddenly and lean over with crash and pound and screaming wrath. It is another world there, where the sea fights against you, an evil, subtle, powerful thing, swelling up so suddenly when the tide turns that one must go quickly to get to safety. One moment far away from you, the next a torrent of waters upon you, trying to carry you away.

Kerry and Connemara might join hands and step a dance together, one merrily, one splendidly and graciously and the Clare coast stand aside a watcher, peering behind a mask of mystery and threat.

At Miltown there is a curious superstition that the sea calls for a victim.

"The say is callin'," they whisper fearfully, as on a calm night a curious low moan comes from the bay, a groaning mutter of sound.

It is really the noise of the quicksands shifting, but the sea is so dangerous at this time that it has made its own fulfilment—the victim generally goes. They tell you there too that if you take from the sea it will take from you. It is unwise to save a drowning person. Their sea is a monster

they fear. A great beast, always at war with them.

Once long ago some girls were bathing near the hotel when one found she could not come in, the sands were shifting and the deadly undertow at work.

She was neck deep, she stood in calm water, being slowly taken out. The other girls shirked trying to help her, afraid to go deep, when they saw a man pass and called to him.

He went on hurriedly. Two hours later he saw the girl carried in, dead, and it was *his own sister* whom he had been afraid to take from the sea.

Poule Na Quirka at Spanish Point is the embodiment of lurking fear by the sea. A long narrow inlet with the huge breakers crashing and spuming outside, and in the inlet suck of sullen dark green waters against polished barren cliffs. Once down one must drown in the sullen deep or swim long enough to be carried into the turmoil at the mouth. A cave there, almost hidden, sucks and gurgles as though some unseen beast drowned is gasping behind the cowering water.

A wonderful coast though, the coast of Clare. From the Moher Cliffs, which are worth a long journey to see, to the great thrashing sea at Kilkee where the Atlantic pounds its might of foam-topped translucent green at the piled-up rocks and towering cliffs.

There is another part of the coast which must

be seen to realise it. I say coast, but the strangest of the Burren country is inland on the way to Ballybunnion. Plateaux and tiers and ledges of grey rock, stretching for miles and miles. Here a hill, tier upon tier of absolutely nothing but stone ; there fields with a few nut trees breaking through the grey.

It is said of the Burren country that there is not a tree to be found there to hang a man on, water enough to drown him, or earth to bury him in. It is wildly curiously grand, despite its grey bleakness, and full of old ruins and the scene in bygone days of struggles between Irish chieftains.

At one point rises the Eagle's Cliff, a towering oasis of green above the shimmer of the endless grey, and on the way to it is the road of the dishes. Here by the cliff lived Coleman, a well-known saint with his servant, Dhuar, who, less saintlike than his master, grew weary of living on nuts and berries, with perhaps an occasional wild bird. So he gave notice that he must go elsewhere.

Coleman objected, he would miss his servant. So he promised that next day a really good dinner should be forthcoming if the servant would stay on. Next day King Guaire of Kinvarra was sitting down ready to enjoy a dinner of meats baked and boiled when, lo ! up rose the dishes, carefully preserving their right sides up, and flitted off across the crags. King Guaire roared for his

horses, he mounted with his men, tearing recklessly after the receding dishes.

For some time they kept them in sight, and only missed them close to the Eagle's Cliff. Spurring the horses they rode even more furiously to find the saint and his servant sitting before the dishes which were now resting on the rocks, and enjoying their contents immensely.

Weapons were out to punish the witchcraft when a fresh surprise occurred. The saint was the king's cousin.

You may go up the road of the dishes now, in this century of hard common sense and see the print of dishes marked quite plainly on the smooth grey stones. Also the print of horses' hoofs.

The king made Coleman his cousin Bishop of Kilmacdragh, and built the abbey of Kilmacdragh for him, which is still to be seen with its wonderful round tower beside it. The Burren country in spring is well worth seeing with the gentian blue between the crevices of the never-ending crags, and the little rock roses budding. Rare wild flowers abound in the stony waterless waste.

Even the lakes cannot manage to stay on the surface up there, and one, Bunny Loch, has dived underground for good.

North from Lisdoonvarna stands a crumbling little ruin called Kilmoon. Close to St. Moga's well and altar, stand the round "cursing stones"

which are one of the most curious superstitions of Ireland. You turn the stones and wish for some evil to fall upon an enemy and I regret to say that the stones are worn and polished even now from constant fingering.

Quite a few years ago a man beat and hurt an old woman who threatened to "turn the stones of Kilmoon on him." The case was tried at Petty Sessions, and it was brought up as evidence and proved to the satisfaction of the Court, that by saying a certain prayer, the going round the altar and turning the stones "against the sun" the face of the cursed person could be twisted, and the belief in it all was so real that the assault was looked upon as justified and a mere act of self-defence.

It is a strange sight to look across the sea of stone when it is all shimmering with heat. Endless waves of grey, with here and there a break of one field of green and rising from it great mountain rollers, grey again to their grey-crested summits, the heat haze making a veil which dances across the sun-baked stones. You turn from the stone sea to look to the real sea outside and see the resemblance in them, save that one moves and one is still.

On the road back to Limerick not far from Lisdoonvarna—at which resort one can become acquainted with sulphur springs and bitter winds—stands Lemina Castle, a gaunt bleak ruin of no

great age, but celebrated as the one-time stronghold, once home of Moya Rue (red Mary).

Here she was besieged and her husband captured one morning; the now confident besiegers at once asked for the surrender of the castle, or they would hang the captured husband before the eyes of the garrison.

They little knew whom they had to deal with.

“Hang him,” she said composedly, “Moya O’Brien can easily get another husband but she could never get another castle.”

Hanged he was, and the besiegers presently routed and dispersed, but Moya Rue’s second husband was not a success.

Writing so much of the sea reminds me of a man who went for the first time to Kilkee last year and was taken out to bathe. He went with a very well-known swimmer down there, but of course the surf and shallow water was all he could manage and his friend went with him. Down he ducked to each wave; seeing that, James the friend, gravely ducked also, in about three feet of water. Presently a wave larger than the rest could be seen rolling in right across the bay.

“Lave me this one now. Lave me this one for myself,” screamed the novice, who evidently thought he was being cheated of something if the whole Atlantic was not left to him for his duck.

I cannot leave out this postcard written by a sweep to his employer.

“MADAM,

I can't come Monday but I will cum Wens-day to do the chimbly if it will 'soot' you.

Yrs. faithfully.

Etc.”

The sea reminds me of a bridge story, because this happened at a well-known seaside hotel.

It was before the days of Auction Bridge, and a very good player strolled into the hall one wet evening with a look of complete bewilderment on his face.

“Funny Bridge you play down here,” he said softly.

A good lady player was instantly up in arms—asking why.

“Oh, it was only a game I watched in the drawing-room. Four ladies playing. The dealer went no trumps, dummy put down five spades to the king and ace of diamonds, and nothing else of note. First player led a diamond. Dealer took it with the ace, led five spades out of dummy and discarded five clubs to them, then she put herself into her own hand with the ace of clubs and led five spades from it. And—the only remark one of the opponents made was—*How very funny, they have all the black cards and we have all the red ones!*”

CHAPTER XIV

SUPERSTITIONS AND STRANGE HAUNTINGS

SUPERSTITION is part of the Irish nature. It flourishes on every side. Dying out no doubt now in the towns, but still rampant in country places.

I should never dream of passing a single magpie on the way to a meet without extending two fingers at him. If the car skids on a very greasy bit when my hand is off the wheel, it's the magpie's fault, and no one else's of course. If a tyre goes pop afterwards blame Mr. Magpie. A hare is far worse. Our old coachman at home if a hare crossed our road when we were going out hunting would go home if he could find an excuse.

"It isn't right," is the great expression. Deep in their hearts most of the country folk believe in the Little People. All the old men and women at home were firm believers. If anything tapped in the distance, "Did ye not hear the Leprechaun?" they would say.

The Leprechaun is the Fairies' cobbler, always mending boots, and if you happen to catch him and keep your eyes fixed on him, he must take you to a crock of buried gold, but if for one moment

you cease to look at him he is gone. A little man in red, with a green cap and plausibly polite.

Old James Corbett used to tell us quite seriously how his wife's cousin be marriage chanced on the Leprechaun and cot and held him.

“ ‘Let ye show me some goold now,’ says me cousin, ‘or I will not let ye go.’

“ ‘With the greatest pleasure in life,’ says the Leprechaun, says he, tuckin’ away his boot. ‘Just oberight ye there is some be the withered three. *Is that the withered three though?*’ says he, thoughtful like. ‘Me eyes is bad.’

“ ‘Have done,’ says me cousin, ‘I will look for nothin’,’ says he, ‘but watch yourself, ye an’ ye’re threes an’ bushes,’ says he.

“ ‘I see ye are too clever for me,’ says the fairy man, laffin. ‘Well come along,’ says he, ‘for the quicker I give ye the goold, the quicker ye will let me to me work,’ says he.

“So they went across the field, the Leprechaun as merry as ye’d fancy and he chatterin’ aisy and pleasant.

“ ‘I like to oblige a fine boy like yourself,’ says he, as they came anear the bank where he said the goold was. ‘An’ how Nora Daly,’ says he, ‘can be sittin’ on the bank there with Pat Magee,’ says he, ‘an’ she promised to yerself,’ an’ he shook his head.

“ ‘Sittin’ where?’ roars me cousin, lookin’ away. But then his hands were empty an’ all he

heard was a little laff an' the tap-tap of the hammer on the boot—the cobbler was gone. An' he raged away to Nora's to find her churnin' and then he had to laff himself knowin' how he was tricked."

If the cows gave no milk at home in the morning the fairies had been at them in the night. There was always a branch of mountain ash nailed over the dairy door so that the good people could not "gine and make off with the crame." What a lovely thing the dairy was before the days of separators; with the rows of brown pans topped by ripening wrinkling cream. If the butter did not come something mysterious had to be done with holy water.

There were endless old fairy Forths round Fedamore, and how we were warned never to be alone near them in the dusk or we might see the King ride out and be fairy struck and pine away until the Little People came for us.

With what delightful fear I used to creep down to the nearest one for primroses and listen for the Leprechaun, or go flying home if a bird stirred among the whitethorn bushes.

A person getting suddenly ill was fairy struck, had stayed out too late and seen the fairies.

It is only twenty years ago since there was the case in Tipperary—I was at Kilkenny at the time, and we rode by the place one day with the Tipperaries—of the poor woman who declared she saw the King and his white horse ride out of

the Forth and whom her own people *roasted alive* to get the fairy spirit out of her.

They held her in her nightdress over a red-hot fire crying "Up she go. Up she go," believing the fairy spirit would go up the chimney and leave the woman whole and sound. Every crack of door and window was secured. They believed, really believed, that they were wrestling for the woman's soul; that she was fairy struck, and that the fairy would go and her own spirit come back. She could say her prayers and cry for pain, but that did not convince them. She died of burns and pain and exhaustion and the whole case was in the papers.

My groom whom I have now, a very intelligent man, believes that the idiots one sees in the cottages are changelings, the fairies having whipped the "rale child for themselves and left that. And if the mother was to burn it anear the fire an' it young to make it cry sorrowful enough, it would be off up the chimbley in a ball of fire and she'd find her own in the cradle."

The idiots are "thim wans" not right, rejected fairy children sent to earth.

You must never admire a child or an animal without saying "God bless it," or the fairies have a chance of slipping in and making it pine away.

"The fine child she is. God bless her or him." They never forget that. "Bollo Yerrib. God bless the work," and a very pretty custom as you

cross the threshold of a house, "God bless all here."

The custom of saying "God bless us" when they sneeze comes from the legend of an old witch at Carrig O Gunell (The Rock of the Light); the ruins of the old castle are close to Elmpark and just off the road to Foynes from Limerick.

She sat there—any wayfarer who passed by with his marketing was her prey. They fell sick of the sneezing disease and sneezed until they died, the old witch taking all their belongings. Too many people were lost, and one young fellow whose sweetheart had to pass that way to get to the town, went off to a holy man to ask for advice.

The holy man told him to go boldly past the castle and sneeze he would, but if he could get out De'ellen, God bless us, before the third sneeze the witch's power would be broken for ever. If not, he would die as the rest, miserably. It is not easy sometimes to say anything, holy or otherwise before your third sneeze, but the young fellow set out past the castle. He went in the dusk so that he would see the light burning. Directly he saw it . . . Atishoo . . . a struggle. Atishoo . . . he deemed himself lost, then, De'ellen, he gulped out and heard a crash and screams, and stood amazed. For now there was no light, and no castle but a windowless roofless ruin, grey against an opal evening sky.

But old nurse would always scream out "God

bless us" at us, if we forgot it ourselves, lest the old sneezing disease might send us tishooing from her sight.

The ghostly hunt is a Limerick legend. There is one house through which it is suffered to go twice a year and no servant would stay there. People used to take the place but it was quickly empty again, a cloud of misfortune hanging over it.

This hunt runs far, for it ends up through the Deer Park at Adare and on into Graigue Wood.

A carter bringing the hay about two at night and putting up there to shelter from a storm of rain, swears that he heard the hounds in full cry, stayed listening wondering what hounds they could be, and suddenly saw the fox hop over the high Deer Park wall. A fox, but a fox with a terror-stricken tortured human face, while following close on his heels came a pack of hounds. Hounds with no wistful lean foxhound heads, but the faces of fiends.

The story of this phantom hunt is firmly credited in the country. Some people tell you they hear the hounds cry in the air, and the hunt sweep by overhead them.

When a bad misfortune happens such as your best horse dying a philosophical groom remarks that it was a "fright, surely, but maybe it was all for the best, to let the bad luck of the year go with it."

To return to the house from which the phantom hunt is supposed to start. It is occupied now, but first—two priests lived in it last year before anyone would stay there, and said masses in every room.

The man in the pink hunting coat is said to trouble it no more, before that he had been seen by not one but several very sceptical people.

“It might be as lucky.” It is the stable word here. Luck and ill-luck rule the world.

I found ivy to-day growing through the plaster of my very old porch and called someone to cut it away.

But they say “it’s lucky, ma’am, for it to grow into a house like that.”

To put the ill wish on you they thoroughly believe in. The person or animal ill wished dies away gradually.

To be overlooked is another phase of it. If anyone tells you how well you are looking, or that they’ve never seen you as happy, there is grave danger of being ‘overlooked,’ especially with children. I think at the back of their minds there is some idea of calling the attention of the Fates to too much prosperity, which, if their elbows are not jogged, they might never see.

My mother who had the happiest of expressions, was just starting home from Limerick, when a friend hailing her, asked her chaffingly, if she ever had had a trouble.

When in a short time my father died and she

had very little but trouble in the world the coachman solemnly blamed the friend who had 'overlooked the missus.'

"Wasn't misfortin' sure to come affther what he said, without ever a God save ye from it on his tongue."

Bees hold an important place in the catalogue of Irish superstitions. If a stray swarm comes into the place it is the greatest of good luck. If the bees rise and go death or great trouble is near. For some unknown reason I have twice seen the bees leave a place when the head of the house was dying. After death the bees must be carefully put into mourning, or they will give you no honey all that year.

If a cat strays into the house blessings and holy water must be used to counteract its evil visitation, but a stray dog means the best of luck, and it must not be hunted away.;

The most unlucky insect you can meet is the Thorra Dheoul, the devil's coach horse.

The warnings which come before death are endless and varied.

Some houses merely have the dead coach, which rumbles up to the door. The house of an old family who lived near Croom has this for their warning, and four people have assured me that they ran twice to the door believing that the doctor was coming when the last of the race was dying there.

Corpse candles, strange flickering lights haunt other families and fling up their pale flames before the windows as the dusk falls. The Banshee is another warning, a woman who cries pitifully before the death of one of the family.

For the heads of the house she will come to where they lie and make her moan. One belongs to my father's family, and I can make no explanation, but some unseen unknown woman wept bitterly round the house for two days after his death. I heard it and scarcely noticed it, but strangers who came out went to one of my uncles whispering that the woman who was crying so loudly in the wood should be sent home for she must disturb us all.

There was no one in the wood.

There is a curious story of our Banshee perhaps worth telling as this is a chapter which sceptics may laugh at at their leisure—or skip.

Castle Fergus in Clare, was my grandfather's old place, where Banshees and superstition flourished in his time. One of my father's sisters who had consumption, had gone to Queenstown and was getting better there.

In these days there were no trains, letters came up by coach, and a man used to go down to the bridge across the Fergus on the road to Ennis to get the mail.

One summer's evening he went as usual, to return running wildly, fly past my uncles who

had to stop him, and drop down in a dead faint in the kitchen.

When he was brought to he stammered out a story of how, as he came along the banks of the river, he saw a woman in white sitting on the bank crying aloud and wringing her hands.

Believing it to be one of the maids come out to frighten him, he stole to a stack for a sod of turf, crept on and threw it. It passed through the figure which disappeared.

“An’ Miss Anne is dead,” he wailed, “for it was the Banshee. God forgive me for cruising her.”

The letters which he had brought said that Miss Anne was so much better that she had gone for a long drive.

But—two days later—came different news. My Aunt Anne had died at eight o’clock on the evening when the man had been frightened and just at the hour when he had seen the woman sitting by the river.

There is a more curious and more incredible story of Castle Fergus. One of a hare.

As in all old Irish yards an archway for washing carriages under leads to the outer yards and in this two of my uncles and James Conlon, one of the men, were standing one morning when a hare came dashing into it. The place was full of hares so they only turned to see which of the dogs was in pursuit, but instead of running back she seemed

so paralysed with fear that she crouched and my youngest uncle, then quite a boy, caught her.

James Conlon, when he used to tell the story, declares that he immediately said the hare was not right. My uncle Bill, with a boy's love of stray animals decided to keep the hare, which lay in his arms without a struggle. He carried her to one of the attics, a long low room, which had then two little squat windows looking out on to the yard. Here he put her with bran and cabbages and doubtless other foods dear to hares and left her. The windows were shut and he locked the door. He slept in the room underneath, and going in there with my father, the two remarked that the hare was very restless as they could hear her patter-patter up and down.

Towards evening they were both out in the yard and suddenly my father called out and pointed up to the hare which was sitting *outside* the window on the sill. Up flew my uncle to find her crouched safely in the room and the windows shut as he had left them.

No more was thought of it until next morning when the two boys and Conlon were again in the yards, talking of their mistake. "I tell ye she is not right," said Conlon. "God save us, look agin."

The three of them saw it. Missis Hare crouched on the window-sill. This time they were startled. Telling the other two to watch outside my uncle

flew upstairs, unlocked the door and dashed in. There was no hare there now. The windows were shut ; they poked up the chimney, but never saw her again. Whether Jim Conlon let her out surreptitiously, whether she went up the chimney, no one will ever know. But be all that explained she was supposed to be seen so often that the window was bricked up and the room was called the Hare room for all time. As you pass the place in the train from Limerick to Ennis, just after Ardsollus, you can see the old house, empty and falling into ruin now, with the bricked-up window on the top story. And certainly it may have been rats, but something used to patter up and down on that floor all night long.

There are Banshees in variety. One is a red-headed woman who lifts up the windows of the lower rooms and pokes her head in just before the death of one of the house. Another is a little crooked old woman who walks across the lawn. These are Banshees of high standing, haunting very well-known Irish families.

The most curious of all are *foxes*, at a big place in Kildare ; they come in droves before one of the house dies. Foxes are always there, but at this time they multiply too strangely. Foxes that know no fear, but come close to the house itself and stand watching on the lawn.

“God help us, thim is not right,” as Cuthbert would say. You may not get away from curses

and superstitions over here. They are part of the land.

At Lord ——'s house near Dublin—I do not know if the present man keeps up the custom—an extra place was always laid. A friend of mine staying there asked why.

It appeared that a beggar coming to ask for charity was rudely refused and laid her curse on the Family, that if a —— sat down to eat without a place laid for any beggar who should come to sit at, or closed the hall door during meals, so surely should some misfortune fall on the family.

Misfortunes did fall too thickly, until a man not afraid of trying the remedy laid the place, and had the door kept open, and up to fourteen years ago or less it was still carried out.

Priests' curses, the last words of the poor men who were hanged in Cromwell's time are absolutely believed and have worked out in strange ways.

They hanged a young fellow at Mount Shannon when the Fitzgibbons were mimic kings in their big place, and never dreamt of misfortune coming to them.

“ You think yourselves very fine now, Earls of Clare,” he said, solemnly as he watched the rope which was to hang him put up, “ but the day will come shortly when the owls and the bats will fly in and out of your windows and your family be scattered and dead.”

And *sic transit*. . . . Now there are no Lord Clares,

and until Mount Shannon was purchased and done up a few years ago it stood a melancholy battered house, with glassless windows open for owls and bats or anything else to fly through.

“Sure there’s a curse on it,” someone will tell you. There is one big place not far from here, belonging to what the country people in old days called ‘Great Folk.’ Rich, hard drinkers, hard riders, proud men who looked up to no one. One succeeded who was called the wicked—even in these days, and the place was cursed. The old men used to tell you that the Devil goes into the house once every hundred years to be sure that his influence wouldn’t be dying out.

I do not know quite how long ago it is now since his last visit when there was a meet on the lawn. They met at nine in these days and a stranger on a black horse rode up waiting outside.

They found at once, a fox which ran as if the Devil was at his heels, flying over the hills as far as Caherconlish and then circling round for home.

The Limerick men were noted for hard riding, but try as they would the stranger was always a field ahead, going easily. Gallop as they would, spur cruelly, yet hounds and the stranger beat them. He was alone when the fox was killed on the lawn in front of the house they had started from. He accepted congratulations gracefully. Now that it was over the hunting men could only find unqualified praise for any man and horse

which they could not catch in a hunt. He must come in to breakfast. Hounds could do no more. A countryman held the black horse, the stranger went in to eat and drink. A toast . . . the health of the finest rider who had ever come to Limerick.

He rose, speaking quiet thanks. On his part he drank to the health of—the Family—and somehow it came with a sinister hiss.

Where was he then? No one had seen him go out. The countryman was looking around for the bridle, which he declared was whipped out of his hand.

Whether His Majesty will eat again there, or has done so in the guise of a politician acting for the good of his country . . . I cannot say. This story was sworn to by the old men when I was a child, and none of the family will live in their own house. Strangers have taken it but not stayed there for any time.

I know nothing of what ghosts may be or if there really are such things, but I have stayed in a house where we all heard footsteps and voices night after night and when the master of the house used to firmly chase the footsteps, brandishing a loaded revolver and declaring that he would shoot. One cannot reasonably shoot at nothing. A fearless and sceptical little retired soldier, he used to come back explaining it all away airily.

The Psychological Society came to call on this ghost and failed to do any business with him. He was an

evil spirit, for misfortunes without end fell on anyone who took the place.

The first family left having lost two of their members from sudden deaths. The second, whom I stayed with, cousins of my own, were absolutely dogged by ill-luck there. Their horses died ; a very valuable prize dog hanged itself by its collar on a spike. My cousin's health broke down from nervous strain, and the fear of the unaccountable ghostly footsteps, the voices talking aloud and the screams of laughter.

Dogs, the Irish say, are peculiarly sensitive to anything supernatural. My first experience of listening to these noises was when the dog I had in my room woke me by running whining on to my bed.

We took some fishing some years ago in Mayo. Going to a curious old house buried in trees and looking out on a dull backwater from the sea. At full tide a lake of only salt water crossed by faint currents ; at low a stretch of shimmering mud. Across it one could see Knock Patrick towering boldly up against the soft grey sky, and behind it ran a bluff nosing down to the sea itself. The charm of its wildness lay upon it, the rambling old house was comfortable, the fishing in another year must have been good, but we fell on an August when the sun blazed brassily all day in a cloudless sky, drawing a shimmer of ghostly steam from the mud when it was bare ; weather in which no

trout would take. Now the drawing-room there had a particularly cranky old door which would not open easily but had to be shoved hard after you turned the handle. We had three dogs with us, and two of them were left to sleep on rugs on the sofa. But by two o'clock they were always out and upstairs. I could never get in or out of that door without a shove or a kick ; we used to shut the door carefully, yet someone let our dogs out. Twice I heard a man's step in the passage and thought someone was moving about, but next morning they all said they had not stirred. Then we went to dine with our landlord, in a most exquisite old house full of treasures, with an old spiral staircase twisting out of the hall. The owners belong to one of the oldest families in Ireland.

Quite placidly they asked me if we had heard their ghost. Our house was the dower house of the family.

We were then shown Sir Con's picture, a painting of an extraordinary handsome man with the saddest eyes I have ever seen. He was killed in a duel, and was supposed not to rest.

That night both my dogs woke up to whine and whimper and someone opened my door and came in.

What, I shall never be able to say for I told it firmly that I did not mean to look as I was far too frightened and I asked it to go away.

But all I *can* say is that it was bitterly cold until it went and the dogs whined on.

I think the most extraordinary ghost story which I have ever heard was told me by an old friend of mine who lived near Adare. They sent a man one evening in summer down to a farm to fetch some milk, theirs had run short. He had to walk about half a mile, and come up across an open field passing an old rock which the country people said was haunted.

He took some time, as Irishmen generally do on a message, so that my friend and his daughter went out to see if he was coming.

It was a clear summer's evening and at that moment Dan appeared strolling leisurely across the field, but as he passed the rock two nuns came out and walked one on each side, one tall and one short. They wore white robes and came quietly across the field.

Dan with his can of milk did not appear to be speaking to them. Where on earth had those nuns come from? The man came on, there were no trees or cover. My friend looked away and when he looked back Dan was alone.

"Dan, where did the nuns come from?" they called out directly he got near.

"It was not any nuns delayed me," said Dan, scenting reproach, "but the spotty cow that upset the first pail. Nuns! Sorra the nun I seen, yer honour."

He was completely bewildered. He had seen nothing, and my friends felt very much as the three old wine-bibbers did here in the Club, when the pantry boy's white rabbit strayed into the smoking-room, and they each left stealthily and two taking vows of abstinence believing that they had got it at last. The one man in the room who knew that it was a real rabbit took care to apparently see nothing as he watched the old sinners' glances of agony towards Mr. Bun, who was brushing his nose in the corner.

In Kerry they have stranger superstitions than we have in Limerick. When any one of the country people dies the curtains are pinned back. All the beds in the house are stripped and the mattresses taken off. The chairs are all turned upside down while the poor body is laid on a bare table, surrounded by holy emblems.

All this precaution is taken so that the evil spirits, who would love to come in, shall find no place to sit down or rest and will go away speedily.

The oaths of the Irish people are many and they delight in taking them . . . with variations as to truth.

"Be the five crasses" is an apparently solemn one which has now practically died out. It sounded very imposing but as the man who made it crossed his fingers and thumbs as he spoke, it meant nothing to him. "Be the piper that played before Moses," is a very common affirmation.

When it comes to cursing no nation on earth beat the Irish. "The curse of Cromwell on ye," is one of the bitterest, meaning that the speaker hopes you will suffer as Cromwell made his countrymen suffer.

"A short coorse to you." "The divil's own luck to ye." "May ye never die till you see ye're own funeral," meant in the old days "may you be hanged." When you would see all your own funeral in the crowd attending your demise. "May ye die with a caper in ye're heel" meant the same pleasant thing, or "May ye're last dance be in the air."

"May the grass grow before ye're dour," was a solemn curse and horribly graphic with its hint of decay and desolation.

"May ye melt off the earth like the snhow," is another.

"Sweep ye," which they use very often, is an abbreviation of the "Divil swheep ye from the wurruld," and "Choke ye," a memory of "May the Devil choke ye."

"Bad cess (success) to ye" is a mere friendly curse, used as we might say "Bother." "Bad scan to ye" is another.

"The Devil and sixpence go wid ye, an' ye'll want neither money nor company," is another full of quiet wit and once very common.

A very quick reply which they use is if one man growls out "Bad luck to ye," the cursed one

shoots back, "Good luck to yerself, then, but may neither of them happen."

"The curse of the Crows" is an old Irish curse. If you disturb a rookery your home will be broken up and go to strangers, and the black birds will curse you.

"The curse of the Crows on you"¹ is almost the worst thing which can be said to you.

Here again I give a story, without comment, when my uncle, a barrister in Dublin, dreaded to give up work and come to live at his own home in Clare; he plunged into farming with the zeal of the novice and one of his crazes was clearing out trees.

The rooks had had a home for generations in a plantation which he wished to clear away.

Old men prayed to him to let it be, but he knew no superstition and down went the rookery, in spring, with the bewildered birds circling and lamenting overhead.

"The curse of the crows will fall on the Counsellor," everyone said. "The craythurs that was lookin' to nesht."

I really cannot say what the crows had to do with it, but in two years my uncle died and in some way had lost all his money. No one ever found out how. There was nothing for his eldest son to keep up and alter the old place on. It is old and gone, and falling to ruin rapidly.

¹ This curse is said to have originated from a crow or raven on the flag of the Danes

Another thing which you may not do is to dig up a fairy forth. The curse which falls upon the man who puts the first spade in is the loss of a limb or his wits.

I had a cousin in Clare who did not believe in fairies, and wished to level a forth on his land. Not a labourer he had would begin it for him.

Calling them a great many names he offered a pair of new boots to the man who would brave the folly of the superstition and at the same time he called for a spade himself. Once the red earth was turned the onus was off, the rest worked on busily, if uneasily. Before one bank was down the man from Ennis who had been promised the boots was moaning over a crushed foot, a big rock had fallen on to it. One boot was all he ever wore for the rest of his days. Whether someone was determined to see that superstition must be attended to and rolled the stone down I cannot say. But when a few years later my cousin himself went mad the fairy forths in County Clare stood a good chance of being left alone.

You must not use anything which comes from a church. This brings the most dreadful misfortune. Now here again a case of coincidence. About ten years ago a woman brought up a pair of particularly handsome brass candlesticks which I bought. But my housemaid promptly warned me that they were off the "Holy Althar," and that I must return them at once.

An Englishman who was staying here scoffed loudly and insisted despite all warnings on taking the candlesticks.

He lost his appointment, a big one, and even his pension two years afterwards, through various faults of his own. My housemaid says through "The holy candlesticks, that no one but a hay-then would keep in their house. An' he warned an' all."

If a cow calves a woollen thread must be wound round their tails to prevent their being elf shot by the good people.

Crickets are very unlucky in some counties and always bring misfortune. A little holy water is sprinkled about when they chirrup.

"This day's Thursday (or whatever day it may be), God betwixt us and harm," is supposed to be a safeguard against the good people.

Anything which went wrong with the milk or the grass at home when I was a child was always put down quite gravely to the fairies.

There were pishogues which I quite forgot to prevent them getting into the "bane" at night when the cows were out. Whenever you saw anything which was the first of its year to you, you must always say in Irish—I know it, but I can't spell it, it sounds like—*Mirre me bhuan Nuom Sherrish*. "May I live till I see the same next year," or the fairies, if "thim wans" were about, would take you before the year was out.

They used to show us a rock by the river at Ardsollus with the print of a horse-shoe marked in it; they said the king of the fairies' horse had lighted on the rock and made the mark.

People may think I am writing of superstitions which have died out, but they have not. Some of the more exaggerated, such as the old Connemara legend of the Shee, which perched itself on some-one's back and could only be got rid of by the inflicted one persuading some stranger to drink from a bottle which they carried—when the Shee obligingly transferred its lodgings—are gone. But now every May Eve the people go with mountain ash round their haggards to prevent the fairies taking the crops, and on St. John's Eve burn bonfires and scatter the ashes round the fields.

Within three miles of Limerick there is a farmer who declares that the milk of his cows was for two years taken by the fairies.

And another who threw a stone at a hare in his yard and heard a muffled squeak and saw no hare but a little old neighbour outside his gate hurrying home holding a bruised arm, and that year he lost all his oats. He tells it as a fact.

There are always old women with strange powers to be found. They can dry up your wells at their will, stepping out at night with a bucket and taking a few drops, and the well dries.

One farmer near Newport had offended an old

wise woman and dreading her visitation to his well lay out at night to watch it. About four o'clock when the night was growing old and grey they saw her coming. The bucket was taken away and she was told she could not steal a drop of water.

Then she stood mumbling at them, then flop she went into the well and took enough water on *her clothes*. The well was dry in a week.

There is no necessity to give money to a beggar, but you must not let them leave hungry if they will take bread, or you may shortly want it yourself.

I have often heard my father speak of the Whisperer, Sullivan, who was a power in the horsy world many years ago. Horses were roughly broken in those days and consequently many were vicious. To them the Whisperer would come.

The wickedest and worst of beasts would come out of their stables in a lather of sweat, but quiet, and quiet for the rest of their lives.

My father remembered when he was a boy, a brown mare which could not be ridden or groomed, a beautiful animal but a fiend. She would burst her girths, lie down, roll on her rider, and in the end she was left in her stable unconquered. The Whisperer was somewhat reluctantly sent for.

No one ever saw his process. He shut the doors

and stuffed up the windows, but this time a stable boy lay in the loft covered in hay where he could peep down.

He saw Sullivan close the doors, the windows had had bags put over them, and walk quietly up to the mare, put his arms round her neck and draw her head down. She broke out all over her glossy coat, turning black, but she stood trembling and quiet. The Whisperer held her head down, his face close to her ear. He crossed over repeating this at the far side. Then he handled her gently, rubbing her wet neck, lifting her feet, and then held her head again. The light was dim, but the boy saw all this.

After about half an hour, Sullivan opened the door and called for a bridle, led the mare out. She was still sweating and trembling. She was saddled, ridden, going quite quietly, and she never showed temper again. The Whisperer was well known, it is so long ago that he is almost forgotten, but a few days ago I heard another similar story, except that no one watched him.

He would tell you with a little smile that he knew what the horses talked about and that they understood him. No one ever learnt the secret of his power.

A man in County Limerick who died lately had a cure for farcy, the secret of which he kept to himself; the well-known mare Molly Morgan of the Adare stud was cured by him, among hundreds

of others. As in Sullivan's case, he let no one see how he worked.

"Ye'll sup sorrow for this," is a common expression.

If everything goes wrong all day the old people will tell you, "Ye got out of bed with ye're left foot foremosht," which is a most unlucky thing to do.

In Connemara if you meet a red-headed woman when you are going out fishing the boatman would just as soon go home for the day.

Bad scran to Maggie or Katie as the case may be, that she should be out with the fine drop of rain to stir the wather, now no chance of a feesh.

Hares in Connemara are often said to be fairy men who take off their skins when they get back to their huts on the mountains.

"Thim ones" you can only kill with a silver bullet, they tell you.

Superstition will take a long time to die out in Ireland, if it ever does. The towns may kill it, but in the lonely places where the mountain peaks toss themselves up into the mist, and all the world whispers after rain with the voices of babbling falling streams, where the heather is pink and crimson against brown rock and bog, or where the pasture lands stretch green and wide with the old forths rising from them, the children will listen still for the tap of the fairy cobbler when the grey dusk falls. They will still run past the

fairy forths where the thorns hide mystery beneath their prickly branches, and if the cow is short, the fairies come to it in the night and say :

“This day’s Thursday, God betwixt us and harm.”

Some of the strangest stories in Ireland are told of disappearances. They are firmly believed in. He or she was took by the fairies—or worse, by the Devil.

There is an eerie tale told of a very old family, one well known, not far from Kilkenny, and its wicked heir. It is written, they tell me, in old accounts of the family, and no explanation has ever been forthcoming.

This heir lived in the old hill fair days of drinking and hard living. And even then shocked everyone about him by his wildness.

One day he fell ill, and was in his bed when a ring came to the hall door.

The butler opened it to admit a foreign-looking man who asked for the eldest son.

“ Ill? It did not matter, he would go upstairs.”

He went up the stairs, the butler remembered afterwards that he did not ask to be shown the way, and about ten minutes afterwards a piercing shriek rang through the old house.

It came from the sick boy’s room. Everyone who heard it ran up, to find the boy lying unconscious, with a look of terror stamped on his white face.

When he spoke it was to rave in fever but

he recovered and gave orders that on no excuse was the man who had come that day ever to be let into the house again, especially if he himself was ill and helpless.

The heir, reformed for a space, and then weary of good works grew wilder and wickeder than ever, until he again fell ill.

He was lying in the same room and again someone rang. The butler seeing the foreign-looking man waiting outside, tried to shut the door and call his mistress.

The man pushed past him and ran upstairs.

It took a few minutes to find anyone, and this time all was quiet, no shriek arose.

No shriek, but the boy's bed was empty. He was not there. He had disappeared and was never seen again.

There were no trains in those days either to bring the stranger down or take the two away.

The heir was never seen again and the country people point to the house and say :

“ One of thim was carried off be the Divil.”

Whether there was murder in it and the boy was hidden by his people no one will ever know. If you ask one of them they will tell you there was no explanation.

About ten years ago a woman disappeared— I think it was in Galway.

It was snowy weather. She went to the well for a bucket of water and was never seen again.

Her footprints going down to the well were plainly visible, there were none coming back.

This was in the papers, the police tried to trace her but nothing was ever heard again. It was a small shallow well.

They have beautiful superstitions too, the Irish. I never knew why, when anyone dies, some of their clothes must be given away at once. And I asked a little while ago.

Because if nothing was given away the spirit must go unclothed, shivering until the kindly act gave it the right to be warm.

Down in Connemara it is almost difficult not to believe in the Little People, when you walk alone on the hills you feel as if they must be peeping out of the heather, hiding behind great cairns of stone, waiting until you are gone to come out dancing, leaping from tussock to tussock, swinging on the pink bells, falling over the scarlet mosses.

In Salruck churchyard, when first I went down there, there were pipes for the dead to smoke laid by the crossed oars which made the fishermen's tombstones. Now these are forbidden as heathenish.

Superstition is part of Irish natures; it will never be rooted out. Belief in the Little People will gradually be swept away to the wild places, but the gods of good and bad luck will be ever in evidence, believed in and feared.

CHAPTER XV

IRELAND STILL UNCHANGED AT THE LAST

I HAVE seen hunting now pass through the phase of the war. At first we talked of Christmas. We kept their horses fit. Then with numb hearts we saw the spring creep round and spoke of "next season." And who realised then how many seasons were to come and go, and how many saddles would never be filled again? They were strange things those meets during the first year of war. Newspapers were sent for before we started to see how it was going. Good news to-day!—They will be back before the season ends. We believed it then. . . .

So through the endless summer with the loneliness brightened by letters, with every day a strain; and to the next year, when the fields were so small one realised, and one no longer hoped. I have seen a meet of three people not including the Master and hunt servants, and even they changed, for two went out to fight.

Good horses grew scarce, anything was worth charger price, and it no longer paid the dealers to train a hunter, as a sound valuable horse was worth no more than a medium one.

There were the fevered days of leave, counting each hour as it passed, and the partings worse each time.

I think the first meets after peace had come were stranger still, one felt as if the lost thrusters who had ridden here, and would ride no more, were there beside us, phantoms in pink back in their beloved bank country.

In 1915 the rebellion stirred us. Easter Monday, I remember, was a soaking day, and I first heard the news on the telephone. Dublin was cut off. A message had come through—its last words, “The Sinn Feiners are in the office,” and then silence.

Friends of mine in Dublin, up for the races, went through it, getting away with difficulty. We really only saw the serio-comic side. . . . All telephones were cut off. . . . Barricades were erected on the bridges, and frenzied housewives rushed about laying in provisions.

The barrier on the Wellesley Bridge was most imposing, and I remember rushing down to see it and upsetting a neat stack of bayonets, but no one minded. An irate old lady in an ass cart was trying to pass out just as I got there. Wheeled traffic had to go round by another bridge.

“Young man,” she hailed the sentry. “Young man, let me pass if ye plaze.”

The sentry explained matters pleasantly. "Go around be Thomond Bridge."

"No, young man. Young man, let me pass. Young man, I have three young pigs hungry at home, an' the male in the car. God save us, will you call an officer?"

After a prolonged wait she lost her temper, backed the cart into a sentry box, and drove off, declaring "she'd have the law on the military."

Then there were the pessimists who had news that armed forces were marching on Limerick, but it fizzled out, leaving everything unchanged. Ireland is too great a child to remember.

Last year I went through the experience of a raid for arms by fifteen polite men in masks. They put revolvers to my head. I feel sure they were not loaded; the men listened quite meekly as I abused them soundly, and one of them offered me a match to light my cigarette with. No one but an Irish raider *could* have done this. They got no arms except some old spears which they carried off triumphantly. I was alone in the house but for two maids who were quite calm though frightened.

It is getting towards autumn now. The leaves are darkening. We have seen young cubs in the place, and another season is near us. As Con Magner told me, "Ye cannot go on much longer,"

but I hope to as long as nerve lasts, and to see Ireland again forgetting her troubles with the great sport of kings cutting up her fields, knocking down patient men's fences, but always welcome. As my first toast on my first page was fox-hunting, let it be, as the Irish say, my "second last," and one more, "Fox-hunters past, present, and to come!"

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