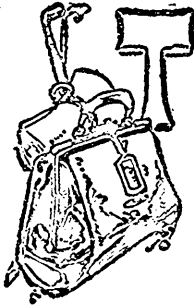


Written for The Review.

An Odd Incident.

E. P. STANTON.



THE "Up" Bianconi coach was late. A fierce gale, accompanied with a heavy flurry of snow had detained it on the Moneymore hill some three miles from the starting point in the good old "city of the tribes" and about five from the nearest stage ahead, where several additional passengers including a trio of students from the Druska college on their way home for the Christmas holidays and a portentous-looking solicitor from Ennis, were waiting for the blocked coach. The interval was agreeably occupied in a brisk by-play of conversation in which jest and repartee were intermingled, and the interchange of stories, of which an unfailing fund is ever (or used to be) on hand for the traveller at Irish stopping places before the advent of the "iron horse," which drove both coach and coach-inn off the highway. Not only was the problem of passing the time without the ordinary tedium of waiting made easy for him by entertaining conversation with his fellow-travellers, but it was practically solved without effort of his own by the contribution to his enjoyment made by certain curious villagers who would "drop in" one by one until the waiting room (which was generally a capacious kitchen) of the post house was fairly filled "to pass the time of day" or, to be strictly accurate, "the time of night" with the chance wayfarer. An occasion such as the one now referred to was sure to be marked by what the newspaper reporter would term an attendance larger than usual. The blocking of the mail-coach for an indefinite interval was somewhat out of the ordinary, and lent itself to develop that vein of the marvellous so prolific of story and legend round an Irish fireside on a winter night.

The excitement attendant upon the arrival of the mail guard, sent forward for an extra span of horses and to apprise the waiting passengers of the cause of their detention gave, when it spent itself, a zest to the comfort of the wide hearth, now warm and radiant with the glowing