

JERRY DONOVAN'S MIDNIGHT MASS.

Lough Iney is situated in one of the wildest valleys in the West of Ireland. The Law Life Assurance Company have erected a lodge by the edge of the lake, for the convenience of the disciples of old Isaac, but for some reason best known to that distinguished guild, the internal arrangements have never been completed, and it stands, virtually a bleak house, resembling that stereotyped dead sea fruit, the rottenness of the core of which is so often made capital of by simile-loving litterateurs.

I was fishing Lough Iney—the month was August, the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-three. It was a melting day, with murky clouds overhead, and just a chance of a breeze later on. My rod lay bobbing at his own reflection from out the end of the boat, and I was smoking the calumet of peace, and engaged—Micawber-wise—waiting for something to turn up. At the bow sat Jerry Donovan, my guide, philosopher, and friend, in the act of “reddyin” his dhuddeen, or little black pipe. Jerry's eye was as bright as a glass bead, and twinkled like a dissipated star. He was Myles na Coopalleen, except that he was a trifle more ragged—the complicated patchwork upon his small-clothes would have puzzled the Haverport Brothers. Jerry and I were upon terms of the easiest familiarity, which I cautiously cemented by occasional “golligues,” as he invariably called them, from out a leathern flask which hung suspended to my waist, and the giving of which generally evoked from the recipient a thoroughly Irish sentiment, or a fragment of song.

Jerry had lighted his pipe, and I had re-filled, when he suddenly asked—

“De ye ever hear tell o’ Martin Hannegan’s aas, sir?”

I responded in the negative.

“He was a quare sort av a baste. He dhrank whin he was dhry.”

“That’s a broad hint, Jerry.”

“Beggara, I’m as dhry as a cuckoo.”

Having poured him out a “golligue” he held the vessel in his hand whilst he delivered himself of this flourishing sentiment:

“May yer days be as bright as the bades on this sperrits, an may yer heart be always as sthrong.”

“There’s no chance of a fish, Jerry?”

“Divil a wan, yer anner.”

“Any chance of a story, Jerry?”

“Troth thin there is, bekase ye’ve thrated me dacent, and I’ll tell ye what happened me in regard av sarvin mass, in the little Chapel of Ballynacluskeen, over the hill beyant,” pointing, as he spoke, in the direction of a mountain, known as Honnamondoul, towering right over us. Having carefully taken three or four vigorous pulls at his pipe, he removed it from his mouth, and commenced as follows:—

“Well, sir, I was a lump av a gossoon about, thoht its a long time ago, sure enough—and divil resave the buke I’d read, or sum I’d do, but it’s after the rabbits I was, and ketchin fish, and divartin meself intirely, whin wan mornin’, night Christmas, up comes Father Myles Macmanus—may he be sayin’ the rosary in beatificaytion this blessed minit, amin.” And Jerry reverently removed his hat. “Up he kem to where me poor mother was sittin’ foreinat the fire, an I says he: ‘Missis Kinsella,’ says he, ‘why the blazes!’ here Jerry coughed violently, ‘thim’s not his riverince’s exact words, sir, but, ye see, he was riz.’ ‘Missis Kinsella,’ says he, ‘have ye no regard at all at all, for to be in glory whin ye shored off this mortal coil,’ says he.

“‘Oh yer riverince,’ says she, ‘why wud ye utter thim hard words agin me,’ beginnin’ for to cry.

“‘Bekase man,’ says he, a little softened, ‘Ye’re not doin’ yer dhuty.’

“‘Oh Father Myles, what is it I done wrong,’ says she, roarin’ till ye’d think her heart wud splitt.

“‘Why don’t ye sind that gossoon,’ pointing his finger at me, ‘to attind me mass,’ says he. ‘I was bet up entirely a Sunday for some wan to attind last mass, and I was wudout me brequest till it was time for to go to me dinner,’ says he, ‘an I’m not over sthrong,’ says he, ‘be raisen av my heart that’s wrong.’

“‘He’d only spile yer mass, yer riverince,’ says me poor mother, thryin for to get me off.

“‘Sind him to me on Christmas Eve,’ says Father Mac, ‘an I’ll larn him how for to do it—for he must attind the midnight mass,’ says he.

“So, for to make a long story short, yer anner, he got the soft side o’ me poor mother, an I was sint wud a sore heart over the hills to that little chapel, foreinat ye, on Christmas Eve, for to larn for to sarve the midnight mass.

“Well, sir, Father Myles was the broth av a priest. He never thought av nothin but the souls av the faithful departed, an av the sinful meanderin av some av his flock; an in regard of dhriok he was cruel hard. Av he got the taste av a smell o’ sperrits off av a boy, he was at him like a cock to a blackberry. He’d pick, an pick, an pick, at him, until he wouldn’t leave a fitter on him, an ye’d do all sorts to get out av his claws.

“I went up to the chapel, an he fairly bothered me wud et cum sperrit-tew tew oh, till I kem away wud an ass’s load av Latin in my head, but all rowled up like a plate av strabout, so that whin I had a ‘Downinny’ all right, av I was to be sint to Botany for it, I couldn’t bowl out the vobiscum.

“Blur an ages (says I), what’ll I do at all at all. I must only thry and bother him wud the bell.

Jerry paused, threw a sheep’s eye at my flask, which I pretended not to perceive, and taking a prolonged pull at his dhuddeen, continued—

“Divil sich night ever kem av the sky, for sknow. It bet all ye ever heard tell av. The flakes was as big as hin’s eggs, and there was a wind blowin that wud tie the sthrings av yer brogues.

“Yer not goin for to sind the gossoon out sich a hard night,” says me poor father.

“There’s no help for it,” says me mother.

“He’ll be smothered wud the cowl. Be led be me, and let him stay where he is.”

“He must sarve midnight mass,” says me mother.

“There’ll be no wan to hear it,” says me father, a little rough.

“But Father Macmanus must say it,” says me mother. She got the better av him, av course, an I was sint out to crass that very hill, for wor livin’ below there in the bog.”

“That must have been a damp spot, Jerry,” I interposed.

“Damp, avic! It is better nor half the year another wather

an the very snipes has the newralgy. It’s only fit for a say gull, or a diapirary d jethor.”

A more dreary looking region I never beheld. Even in the bright summer sunlight it looked a dismal swamp.

“I had four good mile to put undher me,” Jerry resumed, “four good mile, as bad as thin, for it was all up hill, an I only I knew the short cuts on me road as well as a crow, be me song I was mulvadh-red, an’ it’s in the bottom av the lake here among the salmin—had cess to thim, why won’t they take the illigant flies that yer honor is timpting thim wud—I’d be as shure as there’s a bill on a crow.”

“It was tough work, yer anner, sthrugglin agin’ win’ an snow, and I goin entirely agin me likin, an not a word av what Father Myles had discorsed to me in the mornin but was clane bet out o’ me hawl. More nor twice I was goin for to turn back, but somethin tould me to go on. There was a wake at Phil Dimpsey’s, an a dance at a sheebien beyant Glendalough, but somethin sed, go on Jerry, yer wanted, an on I went wud snow-balls as hard as marvels stickin’ to me brogues.”

“By jove, Jerry, if I had been in your place, I’d have left Father Macmanus in the lurch,” said I.

“So ye wud, and that’s just yer ignorance,” retorted Jerry, in an offended tone. “Av ye hear me out, ye’ll see that I was in the right in purshuin’ the path, but folly yer own way. Av ye don’t like the story, ye can leave it, sir.”

A golligue restored mutual confidence, and he resumed—

“Whin I got up to the chapel, there wasn’t a stim av light, and I crept round to the vesthry doore, and knocked respectfully like, but no answer. I knocked agin, no answer. I riz the latch, and pushed the doore, the last sod was burnin’ out, an’ there wasn’t a handful o’ fire.

“‘He hasn’t come yet,’ says I to meself, ‘so I’ll humour the fire,’ and I went for to stir it, whin I felt me heart drop into me brogues, and me hair fly up to the ceilin’ for foremost me stud Father Myles Macmanus, as white as if he was bein’ waked, and lookin’ quare an mournful. He was in his vestmints reddy for his mass.

“I cudn’t spake. Me tongue was that dhry in me throat, that ye cud have grated a lump av sugar on it. I commenced for to shake like a dog that’s too long in the wather, and I was that afear’d that me stomik was say sick.

“He never sed a word, but kept lookin’ at me, quare and mournful.

“I sthruggled wud a patther and avvy; it gev me courage, for, sez I, after a little, ‘it’s a terrible night, yer riverince.’

“‘Are ye reddy to sarve me mass?’ says he, in a voice that med me shiver, for it was as if it kem out av a nailed coffin.

“‘I’m reddy, yer riverince,’ says I, ‘but there’s not a crature stirrin.’ I kem up the bareen, and there wasn’t a thrack.”

“‘Are ye reddy to sarve me mass?’ says he, agin, in the same awful voice.

“‘Will I light the althar, yer riverince,’ says I. He sed nothin’ to this, but waved me wud his hand for to go before him. Me knees was rattlin together, like pays in a mug, but I lurch’d before him, out into the dark chapel, and it was as dark as the velvet on yer anner’s collar, barrin’ one little light in th’ althar, that med the place look like the bottom av the lake. An now kem the fear on me that I cudn’t ansur right, an that I was av no more use nor that could ram that’s nibblin’ over in th’ island there; but it’s truth I’m tellin’ ye, from the minit he commenced, the whole av the responsis kem to me as if they wor wrote in letters av light on the wall, an I sarved his mass as well as if I’d been in Maynooth Collidge for a quarther.

“Yer not a Catholic, Mither Bowles, an mebbe ye never heard a mass, or was in a chapel nayther?”

This was put interrogatively.

“I am not a Catholic, Jerry, but I have been in a Catholic church, and have heard mass more than once,” I replied.

“I’m glad of it, for ye’ll undherstand what I’m goin’ to tell ye, sir. At the ind av the mass, when all is over, the priest comes down the step av th’ althar, and commences wud the *Day L’rolundis* or prayer for the dead. Well, sir, I was reddy wud me responsis, whin he turns to me, and he sez—oh murder, how I shake whin I ponder on thim words—sez he, ‘Pray!’ sez he, ‘pray for the soul av a dead man. Pray!’ sez he, ‘pray as ye hope to be saved. Let yer prayer be as white as the snow that’s fallin’ from heaven this blessed night.’

“I threw meself on the steps av th’ althar, and prayed my best. I was found there the next mornin’ by Tim O’Shaughnessy, who kem up to reddy the chapel for first mass.

“‘What the mischief are ye doin there, ye young imp,’ says he.

“‘I tould him how I sarved Father Macmanus’s midnight mass.’

“‘Sarved what?’ says he.

“‘Father Myles Macmanus’s midnight mass,’ an’ I up an tould him all about it.

“‘He looked very frightened, and quare, and sez he—

“‘Ye hadn’t a sup in.’

“‘Sorra a wan,’ sez I, ‘and I wudn’t tell a lie in this holy place for the goold av Arabia.’

“‘Well,’ says he, ‘it’s awful to think of, for Father Myles Macmanus died yesterday, at four o’clock.’”

Jerry Donovan, when he concluded, wiped the perspiration from his brow, and seemed as though engaged in prayer, then suddenly resuming his wonted nonchalance, he exclaimed—

“Here’s the breeze, yer anner. Take the rod in the heel av yer dist, an ye’ll be into a ten pounder afore long.”

A NEW OPERA BOUFFE.

After more than four hundred representations, not once interrupted, “La Fille de Madame Angot,” at the Folies-Dramatiques in Paris, has though still continuing to attract large houses, been withdrawn, and its place is now taken—it is impossible to say filled—by “La Belle Bourbonnaise,” an opera bouffe in three acts. The words are written by MM. Dubreuil and Chabrilat to the music of M. Coles, and though the new piece labours under the disadvantage of succeeding one which had created such a *furor* as “La Fille de Madame

Angot,” it nevertheless promises to obtain a fair measure of popularity. The plot is founded upon the generally accepted legend of a Bourbonnaise peasant girl having taken advantage of her striking resemblance to Madame du Barry to pass herself off as the royal favourite. In the new piece, Manon, the peasant-girl, is seen by the adherents of the Duc de Choiseul, who, being at war with Madame du Barry, conceive the idea of bringing her to Court as a rival for their powerful enemy. Madame du Barry, having got wind of their intentions and having, as we know from contemporary history, “la police bien faite,” despatches two agents in search of Manon, who is brought by one of them to Versailles, where Madame du Barry determines to profit by the resemblance which does exist between them to take vengeance upon the Duc de Choiseul. While she herself goes to see the King dressed in the village costume of “la belle Bourbonnaise,” Manon, attired in great splendour, remains at Trianon to receive the gentlemen and ladies of the Court. Such is the idea, considerably developed with no little ingenuity, which sustains the interest during the last two acts. In the second, Manon’s parents and her betrothed, the latter of whom, in despair at her loss, had enlisted in the French Guards, take her for Madame du Barry, and as such treat her with the most profound respect; while in the third they mistake the real Madame du Barry for her, and so bestow upon her most affectionate caresses. All is well that ends well. The influence of Madame du Barry remains unshaken, she obtains the Royal pardon for Manon’s betrothed, who had deserted from his regiment, and gives a dowry to “la belle Bourbonnaise” upon the condition, readily acceded to, that she shall henceforth dwell among her own people. Without possessing any elements of great dramatic interest, the plot contains many situations which have been utilized by the composer to interpolate some very bright, crisp music; and it is probable that the overture, with the popular air of “La Belle Bourbonnaise,” and the *finale* of the first act, which is similar to the village feast scene in “Faust,” will have a good deal of success. There is also a song in the second act, commencing “La du Barry, tu chanteras, tu sauteras,” which seems to have excited the admiration of the public, if not of the critics.

THE PROPOSER OF CREMATION IN ENGLAND.

The London correspondent of the Cincinnati *Commercial* writes: “Cremation, which may now be regarded as one of the established agitations of England, was first proposed in this country by a woman—Mrs. Rose M. Crawshaw. This lady comes of an old family of Oxfordshire, where her ancestors have long enjoyed magisterial position. She is the wife of the famous Iron King of Wales, Robert Crawshaw, Esq., who recently sold his iron establishment at Merthyr Tydfil for one and a quarter millions sterling. His wealth may now be estimated at about three millions sterling. Mrs. Crawshaw therefore occupies a position of some advantage for the aid of movements in which she is interested. She resides in a magnificent castle which has long been known for its grand hospitality to men of advanced opinions. There have been entertained the Lyells, Groves, Huxleys, and other scientific notabilities, and when Mr. Emerson was in this country he was entertained there. Mrs. Crawshaw is an active heretic in religious matters, and a sore trouble to the bishops, rectors and vicars of her region by reason of her fondness for writing and printing telling pamphlets calculated to unsettle people’s minds on important subjects. Moreover she is the President of the School Board of Merthyr, and joins with the Unitarian preacher there (elected by her influence) in successfully resisting the efforts of the clergy to carry their educational schemes. It was this extraordinary lady who began the agitation in favor of “euthanasia,” and it is she, as I have said, who started the later discussion by putting out, more than a year ago, a pamphlet in favour of burning the bodies of the dead. Having met Sir Henry Thompson at a dinner in London where she resides with her family for a part of every season, she interested him in the subject, and the result was the celebrated paper in the *Contemporary Review*, which has been translated into all European languages. A society to promote “cremation” has now been formed, in which Sir Henry Thompson and Mrs. Crawshaw are the leading officers, and which is gaining new and able adherents every day.”

GEORGE SAND IN 1847.

Margaret Fuller describes her first meeting with George Sand as follows: “The servant who admitted me was in the picturesque costume of a peasant, and, as Madame Sand afterward told me, her god-daughter, whom she had brought from her province. She announced me as ‘Madame Salari,’ and returned into the anteroom to tell me, ‘Madame says she does not know you.’ I began to think that I was doomed to a rebuff, among the crowd who deserve it. However, to make assurance sure, I said, ‘Ask if she has not received a letter from me.’ As I spoke, Madame S. opened the door, and stood looking at me an instant. Our eyes met. I never shall forget her look at that moment. The doorway made a frame for her figure; she is large, but well-formed. She was dressed in a robe of dark violet silk, with a black mantle on her shoulders, her beautiful hair dressed with the greatest taste, her whole appearance and attitude, in its simple and ladylike dignity, presenting an almost ludicrous contrast to the vulgar caricature idea of George Sand. Her face is a very little like the portraits, but much finer; the upper part of the forehead and eyes are beautiful, the lower, strong and masculine, expressive of a hardy temperament and strong passions, but not in the least coarse; the complexion olive, and the air of the whole head Spanish (as, indeed, she was born at Madrid, and is only on one side of French blood). All these details I saw at a glance; but what fixed my attention was the expression of goodness, nobleness, and power that pervaded the whole—the truly human heart and nature that shone in the eyes. As our eyes met, she said, *C’est vous*, and held out her hand. I took it, and went into her little study; we sat down a moment, then I said *Il me fait du bien de vous voir*, and I am sure I said it with my whole heart, for it made me very happy to see such a woman, so large and so developed a character, and everything that is good in it so really good. I loved, shall always love her.”