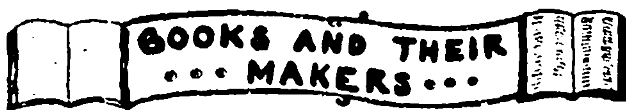

Two Volumes of Irish Stories.

SCOTCH character and dialect had their fling a couple of years ago; but this is the day of the Irish, from Sir Thomas Lipton down to Mr. Dooley, or vice versa, as the reader may prefer; and the Irish short story, unlike the Irish yacht, is taking its place in the lead of all competitors. This is all very well for Irishmen, as the success of "Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush," and "ithers o' thot ilk," was for Scotchmen. But, while the general reading public may hail with delight an occasional contribution to the literature of provincialism, provided it has decided merit and is not couched in a too barbarous jargon, it is devoutly to be wished that we are not to witness a permanent revival of that abomination, the dialect story, which so sadly disfigured our magazines and tried our patience a few years ago.

I have before me two volumes of Irish short stories—one "Through the Turf Smoke," by Seumas MacManus (Morang); and the other "The Auld Meetin' Hoose Green," sketches of rural Ulster, by Archibald McIlroy (Revell). Each of these books contains some interesting yarns, cleverly told, but neither is uniform in merit throughout, nor is either a work likely to be as widely read as "Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush." Seumas McManus paints the humorous and ludicrous side of Irish life, often in strong colors, that are manifestly laid on somewhat thickly. His exaggerated situations and characters are in the nature of caricature, and it is on this element throughout that he depends mainly for his effects. "The Auld Meetin' Hoose Green" is more restrained and delicate. If its atmosphere in general is graver, its humor is much more refined and keen. It touches the broad humanities in a way that the MacManus stories do not. In parts it is decidedly pathetic.

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I CANNOT better illustrate the character of the two books and their differences than by giving an incident from each. In "Through the Turf Smoke," there is a story of the Prince of Wales' Donegal Militia, in which is described the attempt of Colonel Bloodanfire to bring off a sham fight for the edification of a number of friends, to whom he had boasted of the efficiency of his corps. The first attempt was unsuccessful, because, just as the charge was well under way, the dinner gong sounded, and both attackers and attacked rushed precipitately to the barrack-yard for refreshments; the second attempt was equally unfortunate, owing to the defending party losing their courage and retreating in disorder at the critical moment—only one valiant private, Donal McGlanaghy, standing his ground; the third attempt ended in a free fight between attackers and attacked. The day after these incidents Colonel Bloodanfire reviews and reprimands his regiment, and finally calls up private McGlanaghy to recognize his good conduct. Asked what he would wish in reward, McGlanaghy replies, "Well, yer honor, Colonel, I'm thinkin' maybe ye'd be afther givin' me the Viethory Crass. I b'lieve it's given in reward for such actions."

"What! the Victoria Cross!" said the Colonel, taken aback. "The Victoria Cross. Oh, but you know, my good man, that is an honor only given as the very highest and greatest reward for the most daring and valiant action a British soldier could perform. The Victoria Cross! Oh, no, no, my good man, that is far beyond my power. You will have to ask for something else, something more moderate, something more in reason."

"Well, then, Colonel, yer honor," said Donal, touching his cap again and standing erect, "if ye couldn't give me the Viethory Crass, maybe, Colonel, yer honor, ye could give me an ould, half-worn pair o' trousers ye'd have no more use for!"

AND now for the sample of Mr. McIlroy's Ulster humor. Scobes, a "natural," is asked by a Salvation Army officer to buy a War Cry. "What'n a war's gan' on noo'," said Scobes. "The great war between the world and the devil." "A niver hard o't. Hoo long have they been fechtin'?" "Many thousands of years—since the beginning of time." "Dear man, they mun a' bin weel matched."

One would take this for a Scotch story, and, indeed, the dialect of "The Auld Meetin' Hoose Green" throughout smacks much of Scotland, but I am told that the people of a large portion of Ulster speak quite like their cousins across the Irish Channel. CAXTON.

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Turgenev's Volume of Short Stories.

THOSE who delight in the story in which the hero and heroine marry and "live happily ever afterwards," will scarcely enjoy Ivan Turgenev's "Diary of a Superfluous Man, and other stories." (Macmillan). If one is to take this book as an exposition of the author's opinion of romantic love, the harvest of evil produced by this widely scattered seed is enormous. M. Turgenev surely believes that edifying and ennobling love between the sexes is possible; but, in these stories one gets no warrant for such a supposition—the object of the writer evidently being to drive home the one idea that, what most of us would call "sentimentality," in the relations of men and women, is both a symptom and a cause of moral disease, boding ill for all concerned. Therefore, he makes his heroes, with one or two exceptions, extreme types of love-sick youth, only to drag them onward and downward through a slough of despond, to satiety, discontent, and moral ossification. The dark groundwork of the stories is relieved here and there by strong and wholesome characters, but these are always more or less insensible to the tender passion. Turgenev's view is extreme, and, like all extreme views, is only a half-view after all. The common experience and observation of mankind will not bear out his conclusion that romantic love is so universally disastrous in its consequences. P.V.N.

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Literary Chit-Chat.

DR. CONAN DOYLE tells a story about himself which is amusing if somewhat embroidered for fun's sake. He declares that when he left school his master called him into his study and solemnly said: "Doyle, I have known you now for seven years, and I know you thoroughly. I am going to say something that you will remember in after life. Doyle, you will never come to any good."

Mr. Whiteing's novel, "No. 5, John Street," is in its fourteenth edition in England. The book is in process of translation into German.

A well-known English writer on natural history explains the present extraordinary popularity of books on that subject thus: "I think the great reason is that people cooped up in cities have an instinctive desire towards the country. They can only gratify it by an occasional trip or a bicycle ride, but in books they find a continuous substitute."

For many years, Palmer Cox, the Canadian artist-poet and originator of the Brownies, has had his studio in an upper loft of an office building in Broadway, New York, in what was once the centre of the book-publishers' region. The book business is now rapidly moving up town, and one large firm will shortly move far above Madison Square, in what was farm land when the elder Scribner and the original Harpers were laying the foundations of their fortunes. Mr. Cox's studio bore a close resemblance, externally, to the offices of the commercial men who shared his building. There was one marked difference, however, between his room and theirs. They were usually in their offices; he was seldom in his. The artist spends a large part of his time out of town or in his pleasant home, and the visitor who hopes to find him in his office must first make an appointment.