

sliding gently forward, I reached the stone, pressed my lips to it, and the deed was done—I HAD KISSED THE "BLARNEY STONE."

"And did ye kiss it, sir?" said the old lady, as I met her again at the gateway, where she stood, evidently expecting a gratuity. "Did ye kiss the stone, sir?" "I did, n'am," I replied, dropping a douceur into her hand, "and I don't mind telling you there are many things in this world I'd much rather kiss than the Blarney stone." There was a bevy of beauties close by as I spoke, and they audibly tittered as I expressed this opinion. The old lady, too, seemed tickled with the idea, for she smiled somewhat wickedly and said, "And that's very true, I dare say, sir."

It was "very true," and looking back upon the event I have recorded, I am still of opinion that the so-called difficulty in kissing the Blarney stone is about the greatest piece of blarney going—in fact, that, as *Sir Charles Coldstream* observes, in the well known comedy, "There's nothing in it." And although I should be sorry to damp the ardour of any enthusiastic tourist who, believing in Father Prout, thinks that having kissed the stone he may obtain Parliamentary or other distinction, truth compels me to express the belief that its virtues and difficulties are alike exaggerated.

Upon returning to my car, I found the driver had fulfilled his promise about not wasting the beer; but there was not much the matter; he only "He'd, he'd a little louder to his horse, and I got back to the "Imperial" in time to find that the *table d'hôte* was, as my friend had said, excellent; and that the other arrangements of the hotel were well worthy the commendation he had bestowed upon them.

RICHARD WILSON, R.A.

THE story of the life of a man of genius is always interesting; but it too often happens that it is of a melancholy character: the subject of it struggling hard to gain a scanty living. The life of Richard Wilson presents us with a melancholy example.

He was the son of a clergyman in Montgomeryshire, and was born in the year 1713. The family from which he was descended was of good standing, his mother being one of the Wynns of Lwysdold.

It is said that his first rude essays were made with a burnt stick, upon the walls of his father's house; and in common with many others, who afterwards became eminent artists, in quite early life he evinced many proofs of genius.

It is not known in what manner Wilson gained the notice of his relative, Sir George Wynn, but under his patronage he set out for London. Having arrived in the great Metropolis, he was placed as a pupil with an artist named Wright. His progress under this master was not marked, and we soon find him settled down as a commonplace portrait painter, struggling, like a host of others, for his daily bread. In 1749, he managed to go to Italy, where he continued his practice of portrait painting. It is said that his portraits were not above the common run. One critic, however, asserts that he was not surpassed by any of his contemporaries in the drawing of a head—that his style was bold and masterly, and his colouring like that of Rembrandt; but this critic, Mr. Edwards, stands alone as to this matter. In Italy he had every prospect before him of gaining riches and fame; but an apparently trifling incident turned the whole course of his life.

Having waited till he grew weary, one day, for the coming of Zucarelli, the Italian artist, he amused himself by painting the landscape upon which the window of his friend looked. This being done with considerable skill, attracted the notice of Zucarelli, who, strongly recommended Wilson to follow that branch of Painting only. This encomium from his friend, and a subsequent one from Vernet, the French artist, when at Rome, had their effect, and he accordingly commenced landscape painting.

After having remained in Italy six years, he returned to England, and hired a house in Covent

Garden. He assisted in founding the Royal Academy of Arts, was elected a Royal Academician, (one of the highest honors that can be conferred on an artist, in England), and on the death of Francis Hayman, R.A., succeeded to the post of librarian. The emoluments resulting from his office were but small, but his poverty rendered them acceptable, as the taste for landscape painting was by no means general. English art had received a heavy blow and great discouragement from the Reformation. This great revolution, so full of blessings and advantages in other respects, was the cause of one great evil, the utter repudiation of all ornament and decoration in places devoted to public worship. The love of the Roman Catholic Church for gorgeous decoration had been, during the middle ages, the nurse of art. Under its fostering hand the greatest painters and sculptors the world has ever seen rose into fame. They drew their inspiration from its doctrines and festivities, and were rewarded by its munificence. The Holy Family, the Adoration of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt, the Transfiguration, and the Crucifixion, are all subjects upon which the great masters have lavished all the resources of their art.

But the very fact that the Roman Catholic Church delighted in these representations of great events in the history of a faith, on the great principles of which all were agreed, was sufficient to make good Protestants look upon painting itself with suspicion and dislike. Under the Stuarts the arts began to flourish again in England, but when the Puritans triumphed in 1640 painting was set down as a device of the devil, and all love for luxury, ornament, or forms of beauty considered as so many evidences of an unregenerate state. Paintings, whether on canvas or glass, were destroyed, not only without scruple, but with as hearty a good will as if they had been unclean idols, whose presence polluted the sanctuary. The restoration again procured protection for the arts, but it could not wholly revive them. The degenerate nobility, who wrangled about party cries, intrigued, gambled, and talked scandal during the reigns of Anne and the two first Georges, had little taste for anything that did not gratify their personal vanity. Hence, portrait painting, stiff and lifeless though it was, brought many a man fame and fortune for a long series of years. About the year 1780, it was the only way in which an artist could make a livelihood. Reynolds brought it to perfection, but to Wilson's lot it fell to create and foster a taste for the faithful delineations of the great scenes of nature—the shifting panorama of the clouds, the gorgeous hues of the sky at the rising and setting of the sun, the thousand tints that clothe the fields, and vary in their beauty with every change of the seasons, the rugged grandeur of the mountain, and the solemn peace of the valley.

But the love for that particular branch in which Wilson shone so brightly, spread very slowly—so slowly, that after he had sold a few of his pictures to the most distinguished connoisseurs, he could find no market for his works. While his beautiful paintings remained unsold and were totally unappreciated, the inferior productions of his contemporaries, Barrett and Smith, were quickly purchased. This, however, may in some degree be owing to the fact, that he had to contend against the jealousy and intrigue of some of the most distinguished artists of the day, among whom was Sir J. Reynolds, who, on no occasion, lost an opportunity of indulging in a sneer at his works. The whole world seemed leagued against him. A kind friend who had purchased many of his productions, when asked to buy another, took the poor artist up to his garret, and pointing to a lot of landscapes, said, "Look, Dick, there are all the pictures you have been selling me these three years."

Disappointed and cast down, he became exceedingly coarse and repulsive in his manners; he could now no longer strut about in the usual gay attire in which he used to visit the Academy in St. Martin's Lane. It is even said, that he painted two of his best pictures for the remains of a stilton cheese and a mug of porter.

His favorite drinks were porter and ale. Zoffani, in his picture of the Royal Academicians, painted Wilson with his favorite pot beside him. The latter made sure of a stout stick, and swore he would give the caricaturist a sound beating; but Zoffani prudently painted out the offensive part.

As he grew older he became still more depressed in circumstances, his fine house being exchanged for a miserable hovel in Tottenham-court-yard, "where an easel and a brush—a chair and a table—a hard bed, with a few clothes—a scanty meal, and the favourite pot of porter, were all that he could call his own."

He would doubtless, have come to a pauper's death, had it not been that a small estate was left him by his deceased brother. This piece of good fortune relieved London from witnessing the melancholy close of his life. He took an affectionate farewell of Sir William Beechey, who was always a particular friend, and set out for his native place. He arrived in safety in Denbighshire, where he took up his abode with a relative. One day he was missed from home, his favorite dog which had accompanied him returned alone showing every sign of uneasiness. Seeing the movements of the dog, his friend ordered a search to be made. They found Wilson sunk upon the ground in a very exhausted state. He was taken home, and after lingering for some time, he ended his life of turmoil, trouble and disappointment, in the merry month of May, 1782, in the 69th year of his age.

The following are the names of a few of Wilson's best pictures: Phæton; View of Rome; The Death of Niobe; Morning; Celadon and Amelia; Temple of Bacchus; Bridge of Rimini; The Tiber, near Rome; View on the River Po; Apollo and the Seasons; Melenger and Atalanta; Tomb of Horatius and Curatius. The last named picture was sold a short time since for 300 guineas. We will close our notice of Wilson, with what has been said of him by a few celebrated men.

Allan Cunningham says: "To paint the varied aspect of inanimate nature, to clothe the pastoral hills with flocks, to give wild fowl to the lakes, ring-doves to the woods, blossoms to the trees, verdure to the earth, and sunshine to the sky, is to paint landscape, it is true; but it is to paint it like a district surveyor, instead of grouping its picturesque beauties, and inspiring them with what the skilful in art call the sentiment of the scene. Wilson had a poet's feeling and a poet's eye,—selected his scenes with judgment, and spread them out in beauty, and in all the fresh luxury of nature. He did for landscape what Reynolds did for faces—with equal genius, but far different fortune. A fine scene, rendered still more lovely by the pencil of the artist, did not reward its flatterer with any of its productions, either of corn, or oil, or cattle; as Kneller found dead men indifferent paymasters,—so inanimate nature proved but a cold patroness to Wilson."

John Opie says: "Of Wilson, who, though second to no name of any school or country in classical or heroic landscape, succeeded with difficulty, by pawing some of his works, at the age of sixty-nine, in procuring ten guineas, to carry him to die in unhonored and unnoticed obscurity in Wales."

And Fusellisays: "Wilson's taste was so exquisite, and his eye so chaste, that whatever came from his easel bore the stamp of elegance and truth. The subjects he chose were such as did credit to his judgment; they were the selections of taste and whether the simple, the elegant, or the sublime, they were treated with an equal felicity. Indeed, he possessed that versatility of power, as to be one minute as an eagle sweeping the heavens, and the next a wren twittering a simple note on the humble thorn." ARTIST.

Montreal, December, 1865.

If it be perilous to disappoint friends in their just demands, it is ten times more dangerous to encourage enemies by endeavouring to conciliate them by any sacrifice of principle.

The small things of life are often of more importance than the great; the slow than the quick; the still than the noisy.