

The Rosary in Ireland.

It is an October evening in an Irish country parish. There is a « long, gold, pillowy sweep of sky » in the west, where the sun has gone down and the fields are brown and bare. In snug haggards that surround the farmhouse their produce has been gathered, and now there is nothing to be done but to dig out the potatoes before « coming November rains. » In the dim light one can see the women and girls leaving the scenes of their labors and hurrying homeward, « to make ready, » as they phrase it, for « the Rosary. »

The bell of the little church proclaims that it is 6.30 o'clock ; groups of people begin to appear from deep boreens and meadows ways. They move on past the churchyard, where the cypress and yew and weeping willow cast fanciful shadows on the grave-mounds, and where the last shivering leaves on the aspens quiver. The headstones and crosses have a ghostly look, and the little river that runs close by seems to be chanting a plaintive requiem for the dead that lie so near. Many prayers and petitions will be offered up for the fathers and mothers and husbands and wives and friends that sleep here in these last days of October.

Up to the church steps the people throng, and passing to the little chapel — a church among the Northern Irish generally means the buildings where Episcopalians pray — and we can see the congregation plainly. The men have come in their everyday fustians, and the women and girls wear no headgear in the shape of hats and bonnets. They are wrapped in shawls, and not a few of the elder women wear the heavy blue cloaks that were so fashionable in the days of our grandmothers ; they are not an elegantly attired congregation, sure enough, but there can be no question as to their devotion. You can judge that by the murmur of voices, rising and falling as they make the responses when the priest recites the Rosary or Litany, and when Benediction is given one recalls Aubrey De Vere's beautiful lines :

« The low wave yearns along the coast,
With sob suppressed, like that which thrills,
When o'er the altar mounts the Host,
Some chapel' mid the Irish hills. »

But now the Angelus is said, and the people slowly disperse. The moon has mounted higher, and the sky is of a deeper blue, its clouds