

stroke, and, for us, the years are gone : yet was a monstrous history indeed the fruit of their slow travail in Kilsheelan !

We revisit the village of a calm summer evening, and are first apprised that the years have not been unproductive by finding that three-fourths of the vulgar hovels we used to know long ago have been pushed out of the world to make room for some half-a-dozen brand-new stone-cottages, with real slates on the roofs, positive brick chimneys to leave out the smoke, and never a *caubeen* in the windows. We stumble across a fresh wonder in the person of a gorgeous German dragoon, in moustache and sabre, who is making elephantine love to the girl of the bright-lighted, red-green-and-yellow-bottled whisky shop, which has dimmed the glories of the *shebeen house* round the corner ; and pursuing our investigations, we find said gorgeous dragoon has a local habitation at the far end of the village, where, in a live barrack-yard, we come on a score or more reproductions of his moustache and sabre.

Nobody sits outside the cottage-doors enjoying the *dolce far niente* as they used to do in the summer evenings long ago. The urchins do not roll in the gutter and make the woods ring with their glee : the few that are without doors at all are strangers to us, precious children with clean faces and straight features, who play as other children say their lessons, with the paternal rod for ever suspended, Damocles-wise, over their little heads.

None of the old people ! Not here ; in the civilized street ; but yonder group of hovels, still clinging desparately together in their misery, may give some account of them. Ha ! that should be Mat Hannigan's forge : only such a wreck ! A sooty piece of canvas serves to cover a wide rent in the roof ; the walls are settling into all manner of bulges and fissures ; the door is patched and pieced beyond numbering ; and the windows are windows no longer, if they ever have been.

It is within this dingy temple of decay, away from the sun, circling round the smouldering forge-fire, we discern dimly the villagers we use to know. Many a face has disappeared from the assembly ; many a grim care has set its mark on those that remain. The same picture : only night has closed over it. They huddle together, as if in common fear ; and, though there is no cold in the summer air, none especially in the close and heated forge, they shiver betimes, and speak in whispers, and scan every dark corner of the forge, as if a prying enemy

lurked in the decrepit ploughshares and wheel-bands. The very children—red-cheeked, ragged dirty cherubs—have to make the dung-hill in the back-yard their melancholy play-ground—there is no longer a Common for their barbarous pleasure, but, where it used to be, a high-fenced field where the process-server feeds his cows.

Peep closer into the assembly of the elders. The blacksmith sits on the anvil still with as small show of emotion as ever ; and, for all we know, the years have been minutes, only that they have thickened the congealed forge dust on his iron cap, and blackened the *dudheen* till they could blacken it no blacker, and dug deeper trenches in the granite face.

His pretty daughter is there, too, with a little treasure at her besom that lightens her share of the prevailing misery, as only a mother's love can : and where the little treasure is, there, of course, Tade Ryan is also, much of the old fiery spirit tamed by care's inexorable scourge, much of it also sobered into the anxiety of the husband and the father.

Divers other eminent of the ancients are in the gloomy company. The knowledgeable woman squats in philosophic reverie on the warmest corner of the hob, her long, bony arms supporting her chin, and a short black pipe stuck pensively between her teeth. The blind fiddler, who has forgotten everything but his prayers, tells his beads shiveringly, with his bare feet poked literally into the red cinders, as if even the agony were a relief. The fiddle-bag still clings mechanically to his back : but the dust is eating into the fiddle's soul, and its strings are rotting fast as neglect can rot them. Even " the oldest inhabitant " has lived, God knows how, to see his world turned upside down, and a strange one grow out of its ruins—one where, for him, the daily round of existence is—want, cold, and sorrow—sorrow, cold, and want.

We miss a few from the circle—the old gentleman who used to sell the candy-balls is gone to the land, *par excellence*, of candy-balls ; and Mr. Jer Murphy, erstwhile boot-maker, doctrinaire, and generally great man has exchanged the last and the revolution for one of those pretty white cottages we have been admiring, where, in Christian reconciliation to property and society, he rejoices in the style and title of rent-warner on the estates of the great Sir Albin Artslade.

Their talk is of the eternal theme—" The good old times "—so true is it (of the Irish race, at least) despite Dante's words, that the