

Tapping's the tallow-chandler's—where you got tallow candles and dips, as well as composites; for in those days they still chandled tallow—didn't have a single customer in for ten whole minutes by the clock. In that interval Mrs. Tapping seized the opportunity to come out in the street and breathe the air. So did Mrs. Riley next door, and they stood conversing on the topics of the day, looking at the sunset over the roofs of the *cul-de-sac* this story has reference to. For Mrs. Tapping's shop was in the main road, opposite to where the embankment operations were in hand.

"Ye never will be tellin' me now, Mrs. Tapping, that ye've not hur-r-rd thim calling 'Fire!' in the sthrate behind? Fy-urr, fy-urr, fy-urr!" This is hard to write as Mrs. Riley spoke it, so great was her command of the letter *r*.

"Now you name it, Mrs. Riley, deny it I can't. But to the point of taking notice to hear in mind—why no! It was on my ears, but only to be let slip that minute. Small amounts and accommodations frequent, owing to reductions on quantity took, distract attention. I was a-sayin' to my stepdaughter only the other day that hearin' is one thing and listenin' is another. And she says to me, she says, I was talking like a book, she says. Her very expression and far from respectful! So I says to her, not to be put upon, 'Lethear,' I says, 'books ain't similar all through hut to seleck from, and I go accord-in'. . . ." Mrs. Tapping, whose system was always to turn the conversation to some incident in which she had been prominent, might have developed this one further, hut Mrs. Riley interrupted her with Celtic *naïveté*.

"D'ye mane to say, me dyurr, that ye can't hearr 'em now? Kape your tongue silent and listen!" A good, full brogue permits speech that would offend in colourless Saxon; and Mrs. Tapping made no protest, hut listened. Sure enough the rousing, maddening "Fire, fire, fire, fire, fire!" was on its way at speed somewhere close at hand. It grew and lessened and died. And Mrs. Riley was triumphant. "That's a larrudge fire, shure!" said she, transposing her impression of the enthusiasm of the engine to the area of the conflagration. Cold logic perceives that an engine may be just as keen to pump on a cottage as on a palace, before it knows which. Mrs. Riley had come from Tipperary, and had brought a sympathetic imagination with her, leaving any logic she possessed behind.

A few minutes before the lamplighter passed—saying to the old watchman:—"Goin' to hed, Sam?" and on receiving the reply.