

## "MELODIOUS MAT," THE IRISH DROVER.

(From the Friendly Visitor.)

In the days when no railway company in the kingdom stated on their "time table," as they generally do now, that third-class carriages are attached to all their trains, I had occasion to travel late at night from Chester to Holyhead on my way to Dublin. It was winter, and the weather was cold and boisterous, so that on issuing from the ancient city, our place of departure, the train plunged into a region of darkness and storm. This, however, caused no fear or uneasiness in any of the passengers. All who have travelled by the Irish "Limited" Mail will understand us when we say there was rather excited in our breasts a kind of elation and triumph. The piston-beat of the locomotive, rapid as thought, and the steady rush of the wheels upon the iron road, indicated a force and appliance that seemed superior to all the threatening aspects of the outer world.

In the compartment of the second-class carriage into which I had entered there were six passengers, including myself, all of the ruder sex. Four of us occupied one side, and a huge, unwashed, and unshaven man, half asleep, dressed in frieze, and stretched along the seat, and a boy, the other. The little fellow could only sit in a very uncomfortable position, for the feet of the reclining giant kept him half-way off the seat of the carriage.

Neither my fellow-travellers nor myself felt much congratulation at the society into which we had introduced ourselves, and unfortunately there was left no method of withdrawal, for the train had started at once when we got seated, and there would be no stoppage until reaching Holyhead, now distant about eighty miles. But the question arose, how had this mountain of flesh, rough and uncultivated, gained admission to the mail train, whose fares were "express"? Before the night was over we obtained this explanation. It appeared that the cattle steamers from the North Wall, Dublin, and the mail steamers from Kingstown Harbor to Holyhead, belonged to the same company. Drovers attended the animals, destined for slaughter, across the Channel, and on to the markets in Liverpool and Manchester. It was of importance for these



THE UNWELCOME PASSENGER.

men to return as quickly as possible, after sale of their stock, back to the fairs in Ireland, and hence at the period before us, the Railway Company, to the discomfort certainly of the general public, occasionally favored the drovers, when they missed their proper train, with a pass in the mail for their homeward journey.

But whatever little vexation we felt at the somewhat unsavory companion that had thus been thrust upon us, I think each on my side of the carriage resolved to make, under the circumstances, the best of an untoward fellowship. Most of us were ourselves Irishmen, and we hoped that our compatriot, though having a giant's strength, would not use it as a giant—that, though he had monopolized more than his fair share of room, he would at least be content with it—and that half asleep he would probably feel indisposed to indulge in any habits, which might be germane, indeed, to his occupation and culture, but the practice of which in a closed-up "compartment" would be intolerable.

We were soon undeceived, however, as to the truth of any such calculation, and found we had made a very inadequate allowance for the force of a savage nature and a vicious training; for after a few minutes of progress in our journey, the big man, suddenly awaking, began to kick and curse aloud the boy, his son, at his feet, for incommoding him; and then proceeded with the greatest coolness, without consulting any of us, to light his pipe and smoke the most noxious tobacco.

The fumes were most offensive. Too timid to speak for himself, one of my fellow-travellers whispered in my ear the most earnest entreaty to interfere on his behalf, and to get an end put to the self-indulgence of the giant, which was causing to him what almost amounted to agony.

To my gentle enquiry as to whether he was aware the rules of the Company forbade smoking in their carriages, the formidable transgressor replied, that he did not care whether they did or not, that he was a third-class passen-

ger put by the Company to suit themselves, into a second-class carriage, that he had no idea of sacrificing his own comfort to any one's squeamishness, and that whether we liked it or not he would continue to smoke as long as he pleased, which perhaps would be until the end of the journey. To our further remonstrance, that having paid for our seats we had a right to enjoy them without annoyance from any one, he replied, that for one pound we paid the Company he had paid hundreds, and that they would consequently stand by him and condemn us; and then when threatened with a report against him at the next station, with a grin he bid us do our worst, and then puffed three-fold denser clouds of smoke right in our faces.

Seldom were persons placed in more unpleasant circumstances; we were distressed and indignant. Yet what could be done?—the train would not come to a halt for more than an hour and a half. It is true we were four to one, but a physical encounter was not to be thought of, and even if it were,

our gigantic opponent looked quite a match for four, at least, in the narrow bounds of a railway carriage. Nothing remained, therefore, but to nurse our patience, as we best could, and sit the season of torture out, with the expressed determination, however, of charging him with his conduct before the officials at the end of the journey.

But a sooner opportunity of doing this was unexpectedly afforded. Half an hour had not elapsed from the declaration of our purpose when we were startled by the wild screams of the steam-whistle, and the train gradually came to a halt. There was some obstruction in the way—a thing most unusual when "the Mail" was on the line—and advance was not possible until it was removed. We were brought to a stand at a small station, and the station-master and the guard passed along the platform in hurried and earnest conversation, and it was evident we had escaped some great peril. But not only so, here was likewise an unlooked-