

solved the difficulty ; and it was quite evident afterwards that he put himself into a course of training, for when he wanted to damn anything he would simply say "grand-mother it," and, if he felt exceedingly angry, why he gave full vent to his feelings by *great-grand-mothering* the thing or man that offended him. Until he had entirely mastered this euphemism, it was very amusing, if one were travelling with him in the carriage and a twinge of rheumatism, to which he was a martyr, came on with unusual severity to hear him break out with "D—, oh! no—the grandmothered rheumatism." He had an exceedingly strong desire to attend all auctions; and when at breakfast in the morning the *British Palladium* was laid before him, the first thing he did was to look at the column where auctions were advertised. If an auction were advertised for the following morning, for instance, if it were twenty miles off he would at once ring the bell and tell the girl that answered it to send the coachman, or, as we say, the driver, to the door. By and by the coachman would come to the door of the breakfast parlour, bowing, with hat in hand, with the reverence that is, I understand, falling into disuetude in Ireland, to receive his master's commands. His name was not "Pat" or "Mickey," and the old gentleman would say: "Have the side-car ready to-morrow at nine o'clock," or "have the dog-cart ready to-morrow at nine o'clock," or "have the covered carriage ready to-morrow at nine o'clock." Well, in the evening of the following day, to the despair of his wife, home he would bring some useless utensil purchased at an exorbitant price. In his eyes, however, it was always a bargain, and he always contended that it was sure to turn out useful. One day he brought home, to the amazement of his wife and to the infinite delight of the children, a pair of angels with branches attached to their arms for holding candles. When she asked "What on earth do you want these things for?" he said they would be very useful in the hall. "But," she said, "there is a lamp there already." "Oh, well," said the old gentleman, "this will give more light." "But," said she, "there will hardly be room." He, however, contended there would be room.

As I remember the hall, it was not a narrow one. There was a mahogany bench for the outside servants and their humble friends when they came to visit, or on business. There were some antlers and a miniature man-of-war; the master of the house had been a captain in the Royal Navy. There anyway the angels were placed. I remember they looked dilapidated; the sockets for candlesticks were all right; but, as to the angels, time had told on their eternal cheeks, and more than their cheeks. There was in the village a priest of the old school, who had been educated in France, the Father Mac—to whom we have referred. He always moved about booted; put on his vestments booted; was scarcely ever off his horse; and was a constant diner with the old gentleman of whom I have spoken, though that old gentleman was an Orangeman. In the same way Parson E—, whose church was, of course, in the village, charmingly embowered in trees. Adjoining it was an old graveyard full of village history, aye, and of the whole neighbourhood. The parson lived at a little distance in a seaside valley. He, also, was a constant diner at that hospitable board. When it was not a set affair, nobody took the trouble of dressing for dinner; and, unless there was a considerable number of guests, the children sat down. When the cloth was removed, the decanters were placed upon the table, the punch brewed, and the first thing done was to ladle out some into a wine glass, which was passed to the lady of the house, then wine glass after wine glass was filled until all the ladies and all the children were supplied, then the rummers of punch were filled for the gentlemen. With the ideas of the present day, I am inclined to think that the old gentleman, the priest, his neighbour Mr. Morrow and his neighbour Mr. Ewingham—who may, without impropriety, be mentioned, for they have all passed away—used to drink more of this whiskey punch than was good for them; but great good humour prevailed; jokes were made, though it is impossible for me to say now whether they were brilliant or not; but there was much innocent amusement, and no scandal was ever discussed over that table. The host himself was full of fun, and his wife had not only humour, but a certain epigrammatic wit which all her religion did not prevent scintilling on those occasions. In that simple country home, unless on state occasions, the dinner was at four o'clock, the habits of the house being early to bed and early to rise. Well, on the twelfthnight eve I am trying to recall, after I do not know how many bowls of punch had been made, but certainly after several tumblers had been drunk by each of the gentlemen, and we had all been laughing at stories, the very ghosts of which I could not recall, the old gentleman said:—

"Well, Miss Mary Brown, how is Miss — (the little girl approaching eight) getting on under your charge?"

Mary Brown: "She's very bright, sir."

"Yes," said H—, "and papa, I am not to call 'Derby'—"

"Hush, Miss," said Mary Brown.

"O yes, I know," said H—, "he's a rooster."

"And a 'male chick,'" said her brother.

"But," replied the little girl, "that's only when he's on top of a rooster of hay."

Shall I ever forget the laughter in which I joined without knowing why? Down the parson's cheeks, down the rosy visage of the priest, down the host's face—flowed the streams of merriment, and the lady of the house laughed with all her might. In fact, the table was in a roar—only Mary Brown sat smileless—a virginal pyra-

mid. The next day she said she must leave. She could not live in a family so wanting in refinement. Father Mac— rose about nine o'clock to go. He said he had to go early. He had a few miles' ride before him. The storm indeed was up, in the pauses of which the family banshee was heard—(N.B.—a few years afterwards the writer investigated this banshee and found she consisted of a choir of tom cats)—and he had to celebrate mass in the morning at six o'clock. All the guests rose. When they had taken their leave their host attended them into the hall, followed by the children. As Father Mac— folded his comforters round him he said to my step-father:—

"I think, Mr. —, you ought to give me these angels for the altar in my church."

"By —," cried the old gentleman, when he caught his wife's eye. "By my great-grand-mother I will, if you will baptize them in whiskey-punch."

"I will do it," said the priest.

"Then let us have another bowl of punch, my dear," said the old gentleman, beckoning to his wife, who was so filled with laughter at this idea that she was leaning against the wall, giving full vent to her sense of mirth. With more alacrity than on any other occasion she might have displayed, she went and brewed another bowl of punch, and out into the hall it was brought where parson, priest, the two other gentlemen, children and all were laughing. Glasses were also brought out on a tray, and the three gentlemen filled their glasses, leaving enough, however, in the bowl for the baptism that was to take place. In due time Father Mac— took the punch, sprinkled the angels, and read the solemn ritual appropriate to the occasion. To my surprise, now, looking back, the lady of the house was in roars of laughter, and it may be that a certain puritan element that was in her was gratified. Of one thing I am certain, she was glad to get rid of the angels. The next day orders were given to have them sent over to Father Mac—.

At the time this occurred, although I laughed in unison with those who laughed around me, as a fact there appeared to me to be nothing strange in the whole proceedings. Nor was it one whit odder than a hundred things that weekly happened. But many years after the place had passed completely out of the hands of that family, after I had myself passed through many years of life, I went to visit the scenes of my boyhood, and then this thing came back upon my mind, and I thought I must have dreamt it. So I told the man who was driving me to drive me to the Catholic Church, or, as it is called there, the Catholic Chapel. We could not get in, so I enquired of a passer-by, who would enable me to pay a visit to the church. He said the key was at the national school. I went to the national school and was courteously shown into the church, where, on each end of the altar, I saw the angels, well gilded now, and wearing, as they should, an appearance of eternal youth. I turned away—not the fun of that night did I recall. In the neighbouring graveyard near the English Church the parson and host of that far off night were sleeping. In the graveyard round the chapel a stone marks the spot where the priest reposes. Ireland has perhaps advanced since then, but the old courtesy is gone; the priest of the type of Father Mac— is no more, and the old Irish squire, frank, brave, kind, who had probably spent his youth in arms, who would fight to the death for a point of honour, will soon be searched for in vain.

NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN.

SONNETS TO THE LARK—I.

ALTHOUGH the lark is the typical early bird of poetry, he does not make his appearance in sonnet literature until late, as becomes a distinguished guest. When he arrives, all the other birds of poetic importance have long assembled; the nightingale having come over night in the dark of English verse, determined to secure the best place. From numerous reference to "the cheerful lark," "the silly lark," "the merry lark," "the gentle lark," "the busy lark," and other unscientific species in early poems, one is led to expect a burst of Petrarchan enthusiasm from some of the seventy or eighty Elizabethan sonneteers, but one is disappointed. The bird had probably soared too high in the dawn of our literature, and the sonnet-mirror flashed in vain to entrap him. He was not caught until about the beginning of this century, although his reflections were seen earlier. Opposed to the nightingale in the poet's aviary stands, or rather soars, the lark, for the top of that bird-cage is heaven. The lark in verse usually means the skylark—the *alauda mulcens æthera cantu* of the Latin poet, and the *alauda arvensis* in the Latin terminology of the professional ornithologist. The Latin word itself is a gallicism, and occurs late in the language. It is Italianized as *alodola*, the French form being *alouette*, as every Canadian knows who sings a *chanson populaire*. Like with many names, there is an affinity in the forms used in various languages. Compare the following: Anglo-Saxon, *lāwerc*; German, *lerche*; Danish, *lerke*; Dutch, *leeuwerick*; Scottish, *lawerock*. Throughout these variations there is something decidedly larkly, suggesting a common origin in the song of the bird, the "*tirra lilla*" chant which Shakespeare speaks of in his "Winter's Tale," or the "*tire-lire*" mentioned by Ronsard in "L'Alouette." In this poem Ronsard writes:—

Ainsi tu roules, alouette,
Ma doucelette mignonnète,

Qui plus qu'un rossignol me plaît,
Qui chante en un bocage espais.

It is likely, however, that he wrote these lines for poetical effect and with due regard to the feelings of the bird he was addressing, for, as a matter of fact, the song of the skylark is one to which distance lends enchantment, whereas the nightingale's voice is melodiously sweet, even at a few yards. The caged lark sings just as well as his happier brother at heaven's gate; but, in the latter instance, it is St. Peter who gets the full benefit of that sibillant harshness which rather spoils his song, whereas we, who listen admiringly below, only hear that quick succession of falling sounds which, "from its presence showers—a rain of melody." This Shelleyan image is very fine, much better than that of Ronsard in these lines:—

Quand ton chant t'a bien amusée,
De l'air tu tombes en fusée.

Sainte Beuve commented thus on this passage: "La descente de l'alouette, comparée à la chute de la fusée, offre une image aussi fidèle que gracieuse." The idea of a showering rain of melody seems more natural and of a higher order of imagination than the coruscations of a sky rocket.

Spencer in a sonnet says:—

The gentle bird feels no captivity
Within her cage, but sings and feeds her fill.

This may be true of other birds, but it will not apply to the skylark, which is constantly seized with a desire to soar, so that its cage has to be specially constructed and padded to prevent any injury resulting from the attempt to reach beyond the sky. It will be noticed Spencer makes the hen bird sing. The captive lark is a loud and early singer, and a bird fancier of Club Row once told the writer that he had to cover up his larks' cages because the birds always commenced to sing when he was going to bed in the morning.

By special request of the poets, the lark officiates daily as a valet to Phœbus, and once a year he is employed as a master of ceremonies to the month of May. Indeed, if through any vermicious surfeit the herald of morn should oversleep himself on the night of the last day of April, a double catastrophe would likely ensue: Phœbus might not 'gin to rise, and the merry May-day morn would be in serious danger of being left out of the calendar. Happily, however, the skylark is an actual as well as a rhymed success in the matter of regular early rising. Chaucer tells us

Altho' it were not day by hours two,
Yet sang the lark,

and other poets have noted the fact that he sings before the dawn. It would seem that the lark takes up the solo when the nightingale leaves off, and before the chorus of the day commences. But the lyric of the lark is not specially addressed to the sun or directed to the drowsy ploughman; it is simply the spontaneous outburst of natural instinct. If a reason must be given for the song before the dawn, Charles Tennyson Turner offers the best possible one in a sonnet to "An April Day":—

The lark sang loud; the music at his heart
Had called him early, upward straight he went
And bore in nature's quire the merriest part.

The simple truth however is not sufficient for all poets. There are occasions when invention is better than fact, and William Habington in a sonnet "To Castara, complaining her absence in the Country" (A.D. 1634), writes thus:—

The early Larke, preferring 'fore soft rest
Obsequious duty, leaves his downy nest,
And doth to the harmonious tribute pay;
Expecting from thy eyes the breake of day.

Habington lived in the age of Italianated conceits and, though his poetry is not so far-fetched as much of the period, yet he often unreins his imagination. In another sonnet he presents himself as having been turned into a fountain that he could number every moment with a tear during his Castara's absence, and says:—

The Larke here practiseth a sweeter straine,
Aurora's early blush to entertaine,
And having too deepe tasted of these streams,
He loves, and amorously courts her faines.

The quaint unfolding of Habington's love in his "Castara" with its simple diction, easy couplets, and honest expression is, in contrast with the Euphuistic language of his time, like a refreshing draught of crystal water after a surfeit of Italian wine. A. H. Hallam has remarked of the book that it is "one of those works which make us proud of living in the same land, and inheriting the same associations, with its true-hearted and simple-minded author."

The poet, by constantly harping on the lark's habit of early rising, has gained a similar reputation for himself, for he must have been up to know that the lark has been. This is more doubtful of the rhymers than the rustic; it is probably true that "the merry larks are ploughmen's clocks"; though, if not, the ploughmen would certainly become the birds' alarms, for they nest in meadows and cornlands. Poets hold the lark up as an example and make his song a reproach to sluggards. Ronsard commenced a charming old sonnet to one of his many loves—Marie—thus:—

Marie, levez-vous ma jeune paresseuse
La la gaye Alouette au ciel a fredonné,

and Robert Herrick addressing his "sweet slug-a-bed" remarks in a tone of gentle admonition—

Nay! not so much as out of bed,
When all the birds have matins said,
And sung their thankful hymns; 'tis sin,
Nay, profanation to keep in,
When as a thousand virgins on this day
Spring sooner then the lark to fetch in May.