

QUAINT IRISH STORIES.

INTERESTING RECOLLECTIONS OF
AUBREY DE VERE.

**A Clever Toast to Bloody Castlereagh—
A Captain of Five Years of Age who
was "Disbanded" by a Hard-hearted
British General—How a Stroke of
Wit Saved a Human Life.**

Aubrey de Vere, the Irish poet, has written a series of recollections, which will be published in two parts in the Century. The first portion, dealing with his childhood and boyhood, is printed in the September number, and is full of quaint stories of the olden days in Ireland. Mr. de Vere says:

"My earliest recollections are of our Irish home, Curragh Chase, and I always see it bathed in summer sunshine. It was not once however as it is now. At the bottom of the lawn there now spreads a lake but at that time it was rich meadow-land, divided by a slender stream, with fair green hills beyond. The pleasure ground now blends insensibly with the lawns and woods, but it had then a wall around it, which, as my father's old friend and schoolfellow, Sir Thomas Acland, said on visiting us, when both had left youth behind, gave it a look of monastic seclusion. It was then divided into four grassy spaces, as smooth as velvet, and bright with many a flower-bed. I can still see the deer park and the deer bounding from break to break of low spreading oak and birch; the gathering of the poor on Sunday evenings at the gates of the long ash avenue for their rural dance; and the gay, though half bashful confidence with which some rosy, pretty peasant girl would advance, and drop a graceful curtsy before one of our party, or some visitor at the "big house," that courtesy being an invitation to dance. There was also a little opening in the woods in which the neighbours danced; nor have I yet forgotten the vexation with which I found myself once snatched up and carried home to bed by one of those "merry maids whose tresses tossed in light," and who lost little time in returning to the revel.

THE OLD GRANDMOTHER.

It was a time at which opposites of all sorts oddly combined. The country gentlemen were then looked up to as so many little princes, and the poor would have gladly adopted them as chiefs, like those of old, had they cared to accept that position; yet there was a great familiarity in the intercourse of classes, it was all strangely mixed with simplicity of life. My grandmother drove about the park with her four grays and an outrider, while my father, with whom she lived, had his four blacks and an outrider; yet dinner, which was at 5 o'clock, would have been far from satisfactory to a diner-out of the present day. What a stranger would have thought ostentation was often a necessity, for the roads were generally carried over high hills. I well remember my grandmother's beautiful, but melancholy black eyes: her ways at once authoritative and affectionate, and the reverence with which she was regarded by all. Nor have I forgotten her goodnight to us children: "God bless you child, and make a good man of you;" nor the loud laugh once when the youngest of us, not to be out-done in civility, responded; "God bless you grandmother, and make a good woman of you."

My grandfather had no taste for duels. At a great public dinner amongst the "healths" proposed was that of Lord Castlereagh, to whom my grandfather, then a member of the Irish Parliament, was known to have a special aversion. All looked toward his seat wondering how he would meet the dilemma, for the refusal to drink to a toast could then be expiated only by a duel. The glasses filled he was the first to rise; he lifted his own, and said: "Here's to the health of my Lord Castlereagh!" adding with a significant expression of face, "the Lord be troublesome to him!"

A GOOD SPECULATION.

My grandfather always gave the sagest advice to a friend, but generally acted himself from whim. Once, when walking in a London street, he passed a room in which an auction was going on, and, attracted by the noise, he entered it.

The property set up for auction was the island of Lundy in the Bristol Channel. He knew nothing whatever about it, but when the auctioneer proclaimed that it had never paid either tax or tithe, that acknowledged neither king nor parliament, nor law civil or ecclesiastical, and that its proprietor was pope and emperor at once in his own scanty domain, he made a bid, and the island was knocked down to him.

It turned out a good speculation. It paid its cost by the sale of rabbits; and whenever its purchaser chanced to pick a quarrel with England and Ireland at the same time, it was a hermitage to which he could always retire and meditate. He planted there a small Irish colony, and drew up for them a very compendious code, including a quaint law of divorce in case of matrimonial disputes. In money matters he was adventurous and unlucky. He lost about £15,000 by cards and then renounced them. He is said to have lost about half the family property through some trivial offense given to his father. During the war he raised two regiments consisting of the sons of farmers, his own tenants, and those of his neighbors, and bestowed a captain's commission on his only son, then a boy of five.

THE LITTLE CAPTAIN.

I remember my father describing the pride with which he strutted about in his scarlet uniform when the general rode out to review these regiments. "But where is the captain?" exclaimed the veteran. "Here I am," shouted the child. "But, my little man, you are too young to fight!" "Not at all," was the answer, "let the French land, and"—waving his sword in the air—"I will cut off their heads!" Alas! the hardhearted Englishman "disbanded the captain," as the poor people described his act, and the youthful warrior lost forever the opportunity of humbling that "Corsican adventurer" who had called England a "nation of shopkeepers," and affirmed that the lions on her standards were only leopards.

My grandfather was the most popular of our country gentlemen, because he had a great love for the poor, and always helped them at a pinch. A very old tenant once told me many stories illustrating this side of his character. Here is one of them. A young man was tried for murder, having killed a member of a rival faction in a fight. The judge, reluctant to sentence him to death on account of his youth, turned to him and said: "Is there anyone in court who could speak as to your character?" The youth looked around the court, and then said sadly: There is no man here, my lord, that I know." At that my grandfather chanced to walk into the grand jury gallery. He saw at once how matters stood. He called out: "You are a queer boy that don't know a friend when you see one!" The boy was quick witted; he answered: "Oh, then, 'tis myself that was proud to see your honor here this day!" "Well," said the judge, "Sir

Vere, since you know that boy, will you tell us what you know about him?" "I will, my lord," said my grandfather; "and what I can tell you is this—that the very first day that ever I saw him to this minute, I never knew anything of him that was not very good." The old old tenant ended his tale by striking his hands together and exclaiming: "And he never to have clapped his eye upon the boy until that minute!" The boy escaped being hanged. Such traits made a man popular in Ireland; and it is said that at his funeral the keening (funeral wail) for many a mile was such as has rarely been heard. Not long ago I came upon a letter from an English minister of the day, informing him that the patent for his peerage, an English one, was ready. It seems, however, that at the last moment he changed his mind and declined it. Possibly there was some one to whom "he would not give so much satisfaction" as that of seeing him take a peerage.—*Catholic Universe.*



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