

VII

THE LAST DAY OF SHRAFT

It was not many days after the Keohane and Brickley trial that my wife's elderly step-brother, Maxwell Bruce, wrote to us to say that he was engaged in a tour through the Irish-speaking counties, and would look us up on his way from Kerry. The letter began "*O Bean uasal,*" and broke into eruptions of Erse at various points, but the excerpts from Bradshaw were, fortunately, in the vernacular.

Philippa assured me she could read it all. During the previous winter she had had five lessons and a half in the Irish language from the National Schoolmaster, and believed herself to be one of the props of the Celtic movement. My own attitude with regard to the Celtic movement was sympathetic, but a brief inspection of the grammar convinced me that my sympathies would not survive the strain of triphthongs, eclipsed consonants, and synthetic verbs, and that I should do well to refrain from embittering my declining years by an impotent and humiliating pursuit of

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the most elusive of pronunciations. Philippa had attained to the height of being able to greet the schoolmaster in Irish, and, if the day happened to be fine, she was capable of stating the fact; other aspects of the weather, however remarkable, she epitomised in a brilliant smile, and the schoolmaster was generally considerate enough not to press the matter.

My step-brother-in-law neither hunted, shot, nor fished, yet as a guest he never gave me a moment's anxiety. He possessed the attribute, priceless in guests, a good portable hobby, involving no machinery, accessories, or paraphernalia of any kind. It did not even involve the personal attendance of his host. His mornings were spent in proffering Irish phrases to bewildered beggars at the hall door, or to the respectfully bored Peter Cadogan in the harness-room. He held *conversazioni* in the servants' hall after dinner, while I slept balmily in front of the drawing-room fire. When not thus engaged, he sat in his room making notes, and writing letters to the Archimandrites of his faith. Truly an ideal visitor, one to whom neglect was a kindness, and entertainments an abomination; certainly not a person to take to Hare Island to shoot ducks with Flurry Knox.

But it was otherwise ordained by Philippa.

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Hare Island was, she said, and the schoolmaster



HIS MORNINGS WERE SPENT IN PROFFERING IRISH PHRASES

said, a place where the Irish language was still

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spoken with a purity worthy of the Isles of Aran. Its folk-lore was an unworked mine, and it was moreover the home of one Shemus Ruadth, a singer and poet (and, I may add, a smuggler of tobacco) of high local renown: Maxwell should on no account miss such a chance. I mentioned that Hare Island was at present going through the measles phase of its usual rotation of epidemics. My wife wavered, in a manner that showed me that I had been on the verge of a family picnic, and I said I had heard that there was whooping-cough there too. The children had had neither. The picnic expired without a sound, but my step-brother-in-law had made up his mind.

It was a grey and bitter February morn
when Maxwell and I, accompanied by Peter Cadogan, stood waiting on the beach at Yokahn for Flurry to arrive. Maria, as was her wont, was nosing my gun as if she expected to see a woodcock fly out of it; that Minx was beside her was due to the peculiar inveteracy of Minx. How she had achieved it is of no consequence; the distressing fact remained that she was there, seated, shuddering, upon a space of wet stone no larger than a sixpence, and had to be accepted as one of the party. It struck me that Mr. Cadogan had rather overdressed the part of dog-boy and bag-bearer, being attired in a striped blue flannel suit

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that had once been mine, a gaudy new cap, and yellow boots. The social possibilities of Hare Island had faded from my mind; I merely experienced the usual humiliation of perceiving how discarded garments can, in a lower sphere, renew their youth and blossom as the rose. I was even formulating a system of putting my old clothes out at grass, as it were, with Peter Cadogan, when a messenger arrived with a note from Flurry Kncx in which he informed me, with many regrets, that he was kept at home on unexpected business, but he had arranged that we should find a boat ready to take us to the island, and Con Brickley would look after us when we got there. The boat was even now nearing the beach, rowed by two men, who, in beautiful accord with our "binding to the Peace," proved to be the Widower, Jer Keohane, and his late antagonist, the one-legged Con Brickley. In view of this millennial state of affairs it seemed alarmingly probable that the boat which had come for us was that on which, as on a pivot, the late battle had turned. A witness had said, on oath, that "if it wasn't for the weeds that's holding her together she'd bursht up in the deep." I inspected her narrowly, and was relieved to see that the weeds still held their ground.

A mile of slátey water tumbled between us

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and the island, and an undue proportion of it, highly flavoured by fish, flowed in uneasy tides in the bottom of the boat, with a final disposition towards the well-laden stern. There were no bottom boards, and, judging by the depth of the flood over the keel, her draught appeared to be equal to that of a racing yacht. We sat precariously upon strips of nine-inch plank, our feet propped against the tarred sides just out of the wash; the boat climbed and wallowed with a three-cornered roll, the dogs panted in mingled nausea and agitation, and the narrow blades of the oars dipped their frayed edges in the waves in short and untiring jerks.

My brother-in-law, with a countenance leaden as magenta from cold, struggled with the whirling leaves of a phrase book. He was tall and thin, of the famished vegetarian type of looks, with unpractical, prominent eyes, and a complexion that on the hottest day in summer imparted a chill to the beholder; in this raw November wind it was a positive suffering even to think of his nose, and my eyes rested, in unconscious craving for warmth, upon the changeless, impartial red of Con Brickley's monkey face.

We landed with a rush on the steep shingle of a sheltered cove. The island boasted a pier, built with "Relief" money, but it was two miles from

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the lake where I was to shoot, and this small triangle of beach, tucked away in a notch of the cliff, was within ten minutes' walk of it. At the innermost angle of the cove, where the notch ended in a tortuous fissure, there was a path that zigzagged to the top of the cliff, a remarkably excellent path, and a well-worn one, with steps here and there. I commented on it to Mr. Brickley.

"Why, thin, it was in this same place that I losht the owld leg, sir," he replied in his sombre voice. "I took a shlip on a dark night and me landlord was that much sorry for me that he made a good pat in it." He was pitching himself up the steps on his crutches as he spoke, an object of compassion of the most obvious and silencing sort. Why, then, should Peter Cadogan smile furtively at the Widower?

At the top of the fissure, where it melted into a hollow between low, grassy hills, stood the Brickleys' cottage, long, low, and whitewashed, deep in shelter, with big stones, hung in halters of hay-rope, lying on its thatch, to keep the roof on in the Atlantic gales. A thick fuchsia hedge surrounded it; from its open door proceeded sounds of furious altercation; apparently a man and woman hurling invective and personalities at each other in Irish, at the tops of their voices.

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Con Brickley sprang forward on his crutch, a girl at the door vanished into the house, and a sudden silence fell. With scarcely a perceptible interval, Mrs. Brickley appeared in the doorway, a red shawl tied over her rippling grey hair, her manner an inimitable blend of deference and hospitality.

"Your Honour's welcome, Major Yeates," she said with a curtsy. A door banged at the back of the cottage. "That was a poor man from across the water that came apologisin' to me for dhravin' me name down in a little disagreement that he had about a settin' o' goose eggs."

I suppose that it was contrition that caused the apologist to stumble heavily as he came round the corner of the house, and departed at a tangent through an opening in the fuchsia hedge. Feeling that comment on the incident was too delicate a matter for my capacities, I introduced Maxwell and his aspirations to the lady of the house. Any qualms that I might have had as to how to dispose of him while I was shooting were set at rest by Mrs. Brickley's instant grasp of the situation. I regret to say that I can neither transcribe nor translate the rolling periods in which my brother-in-law addressed himself to her. I have reason to believe that he apostrophised her as "O worthy woman of cows!" invoking upon her

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and her household a comprehensive and classic blessing, dating from the time of Cuchulain.

Mrs. Brickley received it without a perceptible stagger, and in the course of the next few minutes, Miss Bridget Brickley (who, it may be remembered, had but recently renounced the office of kitchenmaid in my house) emerged, beautifully dressed, from the cottage, and was despatched, at full speed, to summon Shemus Ruadh, the poet, as well as one or two of "the neighbours" reputed to speak Irish of the purest kind. If to make a guest feel himself to be the one person in the world whose welfare is of any importance is the aim of hostesses, they can study the art in its perfection under the smoky rafters of Irish cabins. If it is insincere, it is equally to be respected; it is often amiable to be insincere.

My own share of the day's enjoyment opened plausibly enough, though not, possibly, as cloudlessly as Maxwell's. Attended by Maria, Peter Cadogan, and the Widower, and by a smell of whisky that floated to me on the chill breeze when the Widower was to windward, I set forth, having—as I fatuously imagined—disposed of Minx and of her intention to join the shooting-party, by tying a stout piece of cord to her collar, and placing its other end in my brother-in-law's hand I had, by Flurry's advice, postponed the shooting

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of the lake till the last thing before leaving the island, and turning my back upon it, I tramped inland along half-thawed marshes in search of snipe, and crept behind walls after plover, whose elusive whistling was always two fields ahead. After an unfruitful hour or so the entertainment began to drag, and another plan of campaign seemed advisable: I made a *cache* of my retinue behind a rock, one of the many rocks that stood like fossilised mammoths upon the ragged hill slopes, and, with Maria at my heels, accomplished a long and laborious *détour*. At length, through the crannies of a wall, I perceived, just within shot, a stand of plover, hopping, gobbling, squealing, quite unaware of my proximity. I cautiously laid my gun on the top of the wall. As I cocked it, a white form appeared on a fence behind the birds, poised itself for an instant with elf-like ears spread wide, then, volleying barks, the intolerable Minx burst like a firework into the heart of the plover. In lightning response to her comrade's tally-ho Maria rocketted over the wall; the plover rose as one man, and, as I missed with both barrels, swirled out of range and sight. By way, I suppose, of rounding off the jest effectively, Maria rushed in scientific zigzags through the field, in search of the bird that she well knew I had not shot, deaf as the dead to words of command,

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while Minx, stark mad with excitement, circled and shrieked round Maria. To take off Maria's collar and thrash her heavily with the buckle end of it was futile, except as a personal gratification, but I did it. To thrash Minx was not only absurd but impossible; one might as well have tried to thrash a grasshopper.

I whistled for Peter and the Widower without avail, and finally, in just indignation, went back to look for them. They were gone. Not a soul was in sight. I concluded that they had gone on towards the lake, and having sacrificed a sandwich to the capture of Minx I coupled her to Maria by means of the cord that still trailed from her collar, and again set forth. The island was a large one, three or four miles long by nearly as many wide; I had opened my campaign along its western shores, where heather struggled with bog, and stones, big and little, bestrewed any patch sound enough to carry them. Here and there were places where turf had been cut for fuel, leaving a drop like a sunk fence with black water at its foot, a matter requiring a hearty jump on to what might or might not be sound landing. When two maniacs are unequally yoked together by their necks, heartiness and activity are of less importance than unanimity, and it was in unanimity that Maria and Minx chiefly failed. At

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such moments, profoundly as I detested Minx, my sympathies reluctantly were hers. Conscious, as are all little dogs, of her superior astuteness, she yet had to submit to Maria's choice of pace, to Maria's professional quarterings and questings of obviously barren tracts of bogland. In bursts of squealing fury she hung from Maria's ear, she tore mouthfuls of brown wool from her neck, she jibbed with all her claws stuck into the ground; none the less she was swept across the ditches, and lugged over the walls, in seeming oneness of purpose, in total and preposterous absurdity. At one juncture a snipe, who must, I think, have been deaf, remained long enough within their sphere of action for me to shoot him. The couple, unanimous for once, charged down upon the remains; the corpse was secured by Maria, but was torn piecemeal from her jaws by Minx. They then galloped emulously back to me for applause, still bitterly contesting every inch of the snipe, and, having grudgingly relinquished the fragments, waited wild-eyed and panting, with tongues hanging like aprons to their knees.

It was towards the close of the incident that I was aware of a sibilant whispering near me, and found that I was being observed from the rear with almost passionate interest, by two little girls and a pair of goats. I addressed the party with

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an enquiry as to whether they had seen Jer Keohane.

The biggest little girl said that she had not seen him, but, in a *non sequitur* full of intelligence, added that she had seen Peter Cadogan 'a while ago, sitting down under a wall, himself and Pidge.

"What's Pidge?" said I cautiously. "Is it a dog?"

"Oh Christians!" said the smaller child, swiftly covering her mouth with her pinafore.

The elder, with an untrammelled grin, explained that "Pidge" was the name by which my late kitchenmaid was known in the home circle.

I postponed comment till Peter should be delivered into my hand, then, rightly concluding that the tendance of Hare Island goats would ensure the qualities necessary for dealing with even Maria and Minx, I engaged the pair as dog-boys.

My progress from this point to the lake might have been taken from the Old Testament, or the Swiss Family Robinson. In front of me paced the goats, who had sociably declined to be left out of the expedition; behind me strove the dogs, with the wiry and scarlet fingers of their attendants knotted in Mrs. Brickley's invaluable piece of string. It proved to be a thoroughly successful working arrangement; I even shot a plover,

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which was retrieved *en masse* by all except the goats.

In complete amity we reached the lake, a reedy strip of water that twisted in and out between low hills, its indeterminate shores cloaked with reeds. It was now past three o'clock, and the cold grey afternoon was already heaping into the west the pile of dark clouds that was to be its equivalent for sunset. I crept warily forward round the flank of the nearest hill, leaving the dogs and their keepers in death grapple, and the goats snatching mouthfuls of grass beside them, in the petulant, fractious manner of goats, that so ill assorts with their Presbyterian grey beards.

The frost had been preceded by a flood, and the swamp bordering the lake was very bad going; the tussocks were rotten, the holes were delusively covered with lids of white ice, and to traverse these in the attitude of a man with acute lumbago was no light matter. But the ducks were there. I could hear them quacking and splashing beyond the screen of reeds, and, straightening my back for an observation, caught sight of four or five swimming in a line, well within range. There was not an instant to lose; balancing precariously on a tussock, I flung up my gun and fired. Terrific quacking followed, interspersed by distant and heartrending yells from the dogs, but the in-



MARIA'S PERFORMANCE WAS FAULTLESS

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explicable feature of the case was that the ducks did not rise from the water. Had I slain the whole crowd? There was a sound as if the marsh behind me was being slashed with a flail; a brown body whizzed past me, closely followed by a white one. "From his mountain home King James had rushing come," in other words, my retrievers had hurled themselves upon their prey.

Maria's performance was faultless; in half a minute she had laid a bird at my feet, a very large pale drake, quite unlike any wild drake that I had ever——

Out of the silence that followed came a thin, shrill voice from the hill:

"Thim's Mrs. Brickley's ducks!"

In confirmation of this appalling statement I perceived the survivors already landing on the far side of the lake, and hurrying homeward up the hill with direful clamours, while a wedge-shaped ripple in the grey water with a white speck at its apex, told of Minx in an ecstasy of pursuit.

"Stop the dog!" I shouted to my maid-of-honour, "run round and catch her!"

Maria here, in irrepressible appropriation of the mission, bolted between my legs, and sent me staggering backwards into a very considerable boghole.

I will not labour the details. After some

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flounderings I achieved safety and the awe-stricken comments of the maids-of-honour, as wet as I have ever been in my life, and about five times as cold. One of my young ladies captured Minx in the act of getting ashore; the other collected the slaughtered drake and shrouded him in her pinafore, with a grasp of the position that did credit to both heart and head, and they finally informed me that Mrs. Brickley's house was only a small pieceen away.

I had left Mrs. Brickley's house a well-equipped sportsman, creditably escorted by Peter Cadogan and the Widower. I returned to it a muddy and dripping outcast, attended by two little girls, two goats, and her own eight ducks, whom my hand had widowed. My sodden clothes clung clammily about me; the wind, as it pierced them, carried with it all the iciness of the boghole. I walked at top speed to get up some semblance of a circulation; I should have run were it not for the confusion that such a proceeding would have caused to my cortège. As it was; the ducks fled before me in waddling panic, with occasional help from their wings, and panting and pattering in the rear told that the maids-of-honour, the goats, and the dogs were maintaining with difficulty their due places in the procession. As I neared the cottage I saw a boy go quickly into it and shut the door;

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I passed into the yard within the fuchsia hedge and heard some one inside howling and droning a song in Irish, and as I knocked, with frozen knuckles, the house gave the indefinable feeling of being full of people. There was no response; I lifted the latch. The door opened into the frieze-covered backs of several men, and an evenly blended smell of whisky, turf smoke, and crowded humanity steamed forth.

The company made way for me, awkwardly; I noticed a tendency amongst them to hold on to each other, and there was a hilarious light in Mrs. Brickley's eye as she hustled forward to meet me. My brother-in-law was sitting at a table by the window writing in a notebook by the last light of the waning day; he gave me a glance laden with affairs to which I was superfluous. A red-eyed, red-headed man, evidently the singer, was standing in the middle of the room; it must have been in conformity with some irresistible law of nature that his hair stood out round his head in the orthodox poetic aureole.

In spite of the painful publicity of the moment there was but one course open to me. I tendered to my hostess the corpse of the drake, with abject apologies and explanations. To say that Mrs. Brickley accepted them favourably is quite inadequate. She heaped insults upon the drake, for

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his age, for his ugliness, for his temerity in getting in my way ; she, in fact, accepted his slaughter in the light of a personal favour and an excellent jest combined, and passed rapidly on to explain that the company consisted of a few of the neighbours that was gathered to talk to the gentleman, and to be singing "them owld songs" for him ; their number and their zeal being entirely due to the deep personal regard entertained for me by Hare Island. She further mentioned that it was Shrove Tuesday, and that people should "jolly themselves" before Lent. I was hurriedly conveyed to what is known as "Back in the room," a blend of best parlour and bedroom, with an immense bed in the corner. A fire was lighted, by the simple method of importing most of the kitchen fire, bodily, in a bucket, and placing it on the hearth, and I was conjured to "sthrip" and to put on a new suit of clothes belonging to my host while my own were being dried. He himself valeted me, inaugurating the ceremony with a tumbler of hot whisky and water. The suit of new clothes was of the thickest blue cloth, stiff as boards, and they smelt horribly of stale turf smoke. The discovery that the trousers consisted of but a leg and a half was startling ; I had forgotten this aspect of the case, but now, in the proprietor's presence, it was impossible to withdraw from the loan. I could,

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at all events, remain *perdu*. Through all these preparations I was aware of highly incensed and fruitless callings for "Pidge"; of Peter Cadogan no tidings were forthcoming, and although a conventional sense of honour withheld me from disclosing the information I might have given about the young lady, it did not deter me from mentally preparing a warm reception for her squire.

I sat by the fire in regal seclusion, with my clothes steaming on a chair opposite to me, and the strong glow of the red turf scorching the shin that was unprotected. Maria and Minx, also steaming, sat in exquisite serenity in front of the blaze, retiring every now and then to fling themselves, panting, on a cold space of floor. The hot whisky and water sent its vulgar and entirely acceptable consolations into the frozen recesses of my being, a feeling of sociability stole upon me; I felt magnanimously pleased at the thought that Maxwell, at least, had had a perfectly successful day; I glowed with gratitude towards Cón Brickley and his wife.

Judged by the usual test of hostesses, that is to say, noise, the *conversazione* in Maxwell's honour was a high success. Gabble and hum, harangue and argument, and, through all, Maxwell's unemotional educated voice in discussion with the poet. Scraps of English here and there presently told

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me that the talk had centred itself upon the tragedy of the drake. I had the gratification of hearing Mrs. Brickley inform her friends that "if that owld dhrake was shot, itself, he was in the want of it, and divil mend him, going parading there till he had the Major put asthray! Sure that's the gintleman that's like a child! and Pidge could tell ye the same."

"Faith and throe for ye," said another apologist, also female, "and ye wouldn't blame him if he didn't leave duck nor dhrake livin' afther him, with the annoyance he got from thim that should be tinding him, and he bloated with the walk and all!"

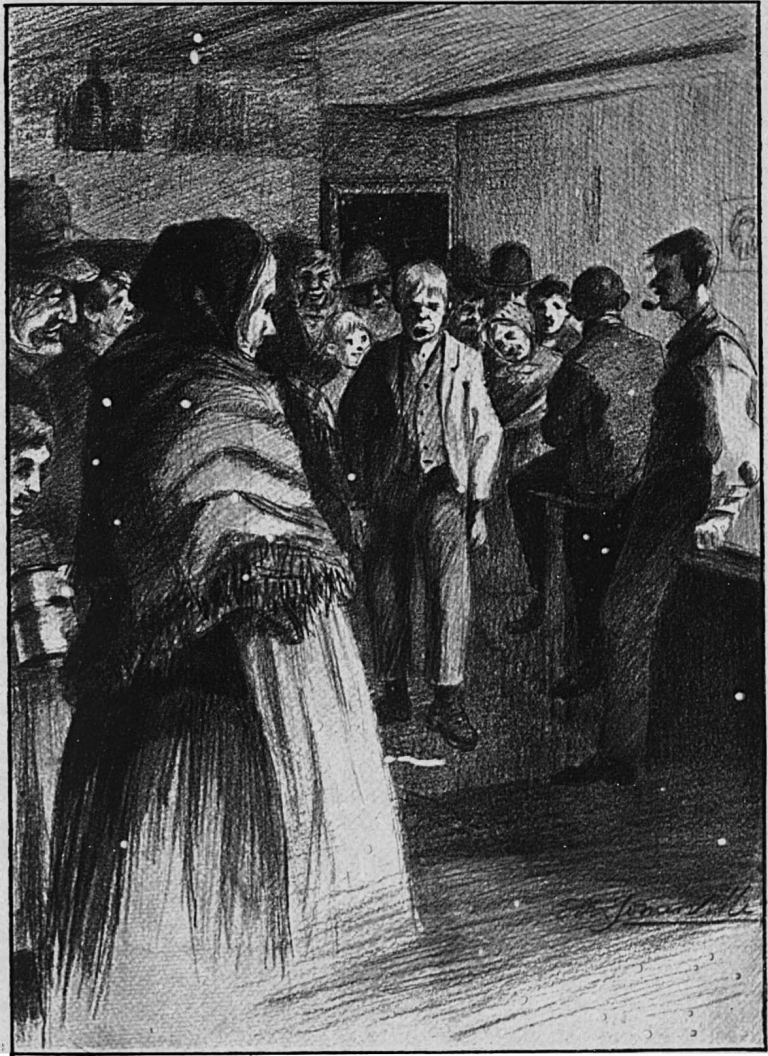
(I may, in my own interest, explain that this unattractive description merely implied that I was heated from excessive exercise.)

"And as for the same Pidge," broke in Mrs. Brickley with sudden fire, "when I ketch her it isn't to bate her I'll go, no! but to dhrag her by the hair o' the head round the kitchen."

These agreeable anticipations were interrupted by other voices. Some one named Paddy was called upon to sing the song about Ned Flaherty's drake.

"Sing up, Paddy boy, for the gentleman! Arrah, what ails ye, Paddy! Don't be ashamed at all!"

"'Tis a lovely song, your honour, sir!" (this to my brother-in-law).



THE MODULATOR OPENED WITH A LONG-DRAWN AND NASAL CADENZA

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"Is it an ancient song?" I heard Maxwell enquire with serious eagerness.

"It is, your honour; 'twas himself made it up lašt year, and he sings it beautiful! Oh! Paddy's a perfect modulator!"

With curiosity stimulated by this mysterious encomium I rose softly and half opened the door in order to obtain a view of the Modulator. A lamp with a glaring tin reflector was on the table beside Maxwell; it illumined Paddy, the Modulator, an incredibly freckled youth, standing in front of my brother-in-law, with eyes fixed on the ground and arms hanging limply at his sides, like a prisoner awaiting sentence. It illumined also the artistic contempt on the elder Poet's countenance, and further revealed to me the fact that from twenty-five to thirty men and women were packed into the small kitchen.

The Modulator opened with a long-drawn and nasal cadenza, suggestive of the droning preliminary canter of a bagpipe, which merged into the statement that

The poor little fella',
His legs they were yella',
His bosom was blue, he could swim like a hake;
But some wicked savage,
To grease his white cabbage,
Murdered Néd Flaherty's beautiful dhrake!

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Riotous applause followed on this startlingly appropriate requiem. Maxwell coldly laid down his stylograph with the manner of a reporter during an unimportant speech; the Poet took a clay pipe out of his pocket and examined its contents with an air of detachment; Paddy, with a countenance of undiminished gloom, prepared the way for the next verse with some half-dozen jig-steps, ending with a sledge-hammer stamp on the earthen floor. Fresh thunders of approval greeted the effort. It seemed to me that Con Brickley's hospitality had been a trifle excessive; I even meditated a hint to that effect, but neither my host nor my hostess was visible. They were apparently holding an overflow meeting in a room at the other end of the house, and I noticed that although there was a steady flow of passers in and out between it and the kitchen, the door was carefully closed after each opening.

Suddenly the lamp on Maxwell's table flared up smokily as the door of the house was burst open. The second verse of the drake's elegy ceased at its first line. A woman whom I recognised as Kate Keohane, sister of the Widower, drove her way into the kitchen, sweeping back the people on either side of her with her arms, as though she were swimming. Her face was scarlet.

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"Is Jer Keohane within here?" she shouted.

"He is not!" replied several voices.

Instantly the door of the inner room flew open, and like a stag (or a tom-cat, either simile would serve), answering the challenge of a rival, Mrs. Brickley came forth.

"Is it yer brother you're wantin', ma'am?" she said with lofty politeness. "Ye can search out the house for him if ye like. It's little he troubles my house or myself now, thanks be to God, and to the Magistrates that took my part before all that was in the Coort-house! Me that he had goin' in dhread o' me life, with him afther me always in me thrack like a lap-dog!"

"And who has him enticed now but your own daughther?" shrieked Miss Keohane with lightning rapidity. "Isn't Ellen, the Chapel-woman, afther tellin' me she seen herself and himself shneakin' down behindside the chapel, like they'd be goin' aisht to the far sthrand, and she dhressed out, and the coat she stole from Mrs. Yeates on her and a bundle in her hand! Sure doesn't the world know she has her passage paid to Ameriky this two months!"

"Ye lie!" panted Mrs. Brickley, catching her antagonist by the arm, not in attack, but in the awful truce of mutual panic.

Miss Keohane flung her off, only the better to

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gather force for the prolonged and direful howl of which she delivered herself.

"If she didn't come here with him it's to Ameriky she's taken him! Look in yer box an' ye'll see where she got the passage money! She has the boat's share taken from ye in spite of yer teeth!" Miss Keohane here dropped upon her knees. "An' I pray," she continued, lyrically, "that the divil may melt her, the same as ye'd melt the froth off porther——"

Groans, hoots, and drunken laughter overwhelmed the close of this aspiration. Oblivious of my costume, I stepped forward, with the intention of attracting Maxwell's attention, and withdrawing him and myself as swiftly and unobtrusively as possible from a position that threatened to become too hot to hold us.

Even as I did so, I saw in the dark blue space of the open door a face that was strangely familiar, a face at once civilised and martial, whose gaze was set incredulously upon me.

"Here's the Polis!" squeaked a little girl.

The poet blew out the lamp. The house was in an instant full of the voiceless and strenuous shoving and trampling of people trying to escape. I heard the table go over with a crash, and could only suppose that Maxwell had gone with it, and Maria and Minx, convinced that a cat-hunt was

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at the root of the matter, barked deafeningly and unceasingly.

In a blinding flash of insight I realised that my brother-in-law and I had been taken red-handed in a "Shebeen," that is to say, a house in which drink is illicitly sold without a license.

The Police Sergeant was egregiously tactful. During the conversation that I held with him in the inner room he did not permit his eye to descend lower than the top button of Mr. Brickley's coat, a consideration that but served to make me more conscious of the humiliating deficiency below, nor did it deviate towards the empty tumbler, with the incriminating spoon in it, that stood on the table.

He explained to me and to Maxwell, whose presence I felt to be my sole link with respectability, that the raid had been planned in consequence of information received after the trial.

"I was going to you, sir, to sign the warrant, but Mr. Knox and Dr. Hickey signed it for us. It was Mr. Knox advised us to come here to-day. We've found three half-barrels of porter under the bed in the room over there, and about two gallons of potheen hid under fishing nets. I'll have about thirty summonses out of it."

The Sergeant's manner was distressingly

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apologetic. I said nothing, but my heart burned within me as I recognised the hand of Flurry Knox.



THE SERGEANT'S MANNER WAS
DISTRESSINGLY APOLOGETIC

"In case you might be looking for your man Cado-gan, sir," went on the Sergeant, "we seen him in a boat, with two other parties, a man and a woman, going to the mainland when we were coming over. The man that was pulling the other oar had the appearance of having drink taken."

A second flash, less blinding than the first, but equally illuminative, revealed to me that the brown boots, the flannel suit, had been a wedding garment, the pre-determined attire of the Best Man, and a third recalled the fact that Shrove Tuesday was the last day between

this and Easter on which a marriage could take place.

Maxwell and I went back with the police, and Maxwell explained to me at some length the

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origin of the word shebeen. As I neared the mainland, which to-morrow would ring with Flurry's artistic version of the day's events, the future held but one bright spot, the thought of putting Peter Cadogan to fire and sword.

But even that was denied to me. It must have been at the identical moment that my cook, Mrs. Cadogan (aunt of the missing Peter), was placing her wedding ring in the Shrove Tuesday pancakes that evening, that my establishment was felled as one man by tidings that still remain preëminent among the sensations of Shreelane. They reached me, irrepressibly, with the coffee.

Hard on the heels of the flushed parlour-maid followed the flat and heavy tread of Mrs. Cadogan, who, like the avenging deities, was habitually shod with felt.

"And now, sir, what do ye say to Pether Cadogan!" she began, launching the enigma into space from the obscurity of the deep doorway. "What do ye say to him now? The raving scamp!"

I replied that I had a great deal to say to him, and that if I might so far trespass on his leisure as to request his presence in the hall, I would say it.

"Hall is it!" echoed Peter's aunt in bitter wrath. "It's my heart's grief that he ever stood

Further Experiences of an Irish R.M.

in Shreelane hall to draw disgrace on me and on yer Honour! God forgive me, when I heard it I had to spit! Himself and Bridget Brickley got married in Skebawn this evenin', and the two o' them is gone to Ameriky on the thrain to-night, and it's all I'll say for her, whatever sort of a thrash she is, she's good enough for him!" There was a pause while one might pant twice.

"I'll tell ye no lie. If I had a gun in me hand, I'd shoot him like a bird! I'd down the brat!"

The avenging deity retired.

What part the Widower proposed to play in the day's proceedings will never be clearly known. He was picked up next day in Hare Island Sound, drifting seaward in the boat whose "share" had formed the marriage portion of Mrs. Peter Cadogan. Both oars were gone; there remained to him an empty bottle of "potheen," and a bucket. He was rowing the boat with the bucket.