

Literature, &c.

The British Magazines
FOR MAY.From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.
THE LAMETER.

AN IRISH STORY.

NUMEROUS have been the stories about Irish weddings—the heedlessness with which they are undertaken, the frolics, fights and follies with which they have been too often the occasion. I believe, however, there is room for one story more. At all events, it is one picked up in the country, and I give it pretty much in the language of the narrator, a lively middle aged lady, whom I met at a party one evening in Cork.

Last summer—proceeded the lady—when I was on a visit to the seat of my cousin, captain Johnson, in the county of Wicklow, the family was a little amused with a queer sort of wedding which took place in a small town in the neighborhood; it was the marriage of one of the servants, and we therefore took some interest in the affair. My cousin, you must know, is a great improver—none of your old set of squires, who lets things go to wreck and ruin. The estate was dreadfully encumbered when he succeeded to the inheritance, but he soon put everything to rights, and now keeps a first rate body of servants to execute all kinds of farm work. The estate is partly hilly and pastoral, so he has a cowherd to take care of the cattle. This cowherd, Garritt Byrne by name, was a rather good looking young man, with a long freize coat and capacious capes, and he usually carried a very sufficient looking cudgel, which, I daresay, he knew how to flourish in proper style.

Garritt, I found, was a kind of favourite. His mother had been a nurse to some of the family at the hall, and this gave him a claim to consideration. Whether from having been a little bit spoiled from this cause, I cannot tell, but Garritt had grown up somewhat self-conceited, and took things rather easily, even when they concerned his own welfare. But this of course is not very common among us Irish. Be this as it may, Garritt on one occasion got himself into trouble by his aisy ways.

One of the dairy maids, whose name was Judith, was the beauty of the county. She had fine black hair, handsome features, and a clear skin; but besides these personal attractions, she was a girl of some taste, and always kept herself as neat as a new pin. She was also intelligent and sprightly; her voice usually led the song in the cow-house and dairy, and much confidence was placed in her by her master and mistress.

At eighteen, Judith had many admirers, but only two aspired to her hand. It was generally believed that Judith had placed her affections on Garritt Byrne, and all other lovers had moved off in consequence, except one. This was an elderly man, not by any means good looking; a little lame, and very rich. On account of his personal infirmity he was called the Lameter—a term commonly applied in Ireland (as it is in Scotland) to a lame person. The Lameter, however, for all his limping gait, was a brisk, confident sort of man, not easily daunted; and although he was aware of Judith's preference, he still hung on perseveringly, trusting to some lucky turn in his favour.

Judith, it must be owned, acted rather coquettishly. She used to give the lameter now and then a look of encouragement, which maintained his hopes; though the truth was, all her fiftish airs were employed in order to bring Garritt to a distinct arrangement as to the marriage. But Garritt in his aisy way, looked on the encouragement of the Lameter as a piece of nonsense, and only laughed at the idea of Judith giving him up for such an insignificant rival. Garritt and Judith had been long attached to each other, explanations had been made; and for more than a year they had agreed on being married, as soon as each had gathered up what was thought sufficient.

This agreement was known in the house, and every article that was not required again or had lost its fellow, was put by for Judith. Before the year was out, Garritt made known that he had accumulated the requisite sum; but he spoke not of the wedding, except as still in prospect, and seemed as if he did not know his own mind. No woman likes to be trifled with in this kind of way. Judith's pride was concerned, and she resented the affront so far as to hint that she did not intend to wait on Garritt Byrne's pleasure much longer, not she. At last she said decidedly that Holy Eve should see her married. She was not afraid of finding a husband. Garritt laughed louder than ever at the idea of the Lameter.

Summer glided past, autumn came on, and Garritt was often away in the mountains for days at a time with his cattle. He seemed to pay little attention to Judith's coldness of manner; nor did he appear to remember her threat; yet every one else felt assured that she would put it in execution.

As Holy Eve drew nearer there were evident preparations for a wedding. A white dress was bought and made up; no one, however, knew who was to be the happy man. The Lameter was not often at the house than usual in the evenings, but he appeared more elated than was his wont, and Judith appeared sadder and more anxious. Judith was promised a house near the hall, and was to continue to be dairymaid; so that it made little difference to her master who her husband was going to be.

The morning of Holy Eve came, and Garritt

Byrne was in the mountains with the cattle, where he had been for several days previously and there appeared no sign of his return, or preparation on his part for joining in the evening's ceremony and amusements.

A large barn was cleared out, and doors laid on the floor of the lower room for dancing on. A large room on the 2nd storey, which was gained by narrow steep stairs, boarded at each side, was laid out with tea tables, where the young ladies presided. The evening drew on; the bride was dressed in her white gown and a lace cap with white ribbons; the fiddlers arrived, the tea was ready, and the company come. No doubt now remained as to who was the happy man; for the Lameter arrived in full dress, with white waistcoat and cravat, and a new suit, and looked brisker than ever. He carried a jar of whiskey and a glass, and regaled the dancers, who were setting too with might and main. Most of the female part the company were taking tea up stairs with the bride; and the Lameter and the bride's brother accordingly came up to see that all was going on rightly. Judith was dead pale, but showed no symptom of altering her determination. She received the bridegroom's awkward compliments with a smiling face, as she handed him a cup of tea. A report having spread from below that the priest was coming, for a few moments she appeared stupified; then suddenly turning to the Lameter, she said aloud 'have you a ring?'

This was an awkward question. The Lameter stammered out, 'No; I never thought of getting one.'

'Because,' said Judith, with a toss of her head, 'I will never be married with a key, a straw ring, or the priest's watch-chain; I must have a real gold ring of my own.'

If the Lameter had had wings, he would have flown to gratify fair Judith's slightest wish; but as he had none he hopped over to measure her finger, assuring her that he would buy her the handsomest ring in the town; and taking her brother along with him, he proceeded to the house of the only jeweller (otherwise watchmaker) to get one.

The priest's coming was a false alarm; for he was not thinking of stirring yet, and was sitting at a snug fire taking a tumbler of punch in his own house.

Judith became more composed; she had gained a delay which might yet be lengthened, by her finding some fault with the ring when it came. But she appeared to fear the arrival of the priest, as she knew that she must submit quietly to her own decree. But priest or bridegroom were not come yet, and no sound could be heard but of the music and dancing below stairs.

A quarter of an hour passed; Judith was anxiously listening, when suddenly the large gate in the yard was opened with violence: in a minute after, heavy quick steps were heard on the stairs, the door burst open, and there appeared Garritt Byrne in his long gray coat, covered with mud, and out of breath. His eyes were dazzled with the blaze of light; he passed his hand across them, and was soon beside Judith. He could not speak, but his arm was round her waist; a stride or two brought them to the door, and before the women recovered from their surprise, or could make any resistance, supposing them to have been willing, they were down the stairs. Garritt seized a dark cloak, which one of the dancers had hung at the door, and wrapped it round Judith, they hastily crossed the yard, passed through the gate, and took the road to the town. Not a word was spoke by either as they walked swiftly along. As they passed the jeweller's shop, Judith cast in a fearful glance, and saw her brother and late bridegroom still engaged choosing and bargaining for a ring. Judith breathed quicker, and drew closer to Garritt at the sickening sight. On they walked, until they gained the far end of the town, where the priest resided. Garritt stopped at his door, and gave one thundering knock. The priest's boy (a man of fifty), not very remarkable for brightness of intellect or sharpness of sight, opened the door, and welcomed the bride and bridegroom, as the former threw off the dark mantle on entering the priest's parlour, and displayed her white dress. His reverence was sitting at his warm fire, and was trying to prevail on himself to leave it, and make ready to attend the wedding at Squire Johnson's, and was now most happy to find that the young couple were so considerate as to come to him; and knowing that Judith was to be the bride, he did not suspect in the least that there had been a change of bridegrooms; and thought that all was right, although he might have noticed the soiled face and hands and dirty dress of Garritt. The money was paid, the boy and the cook were called in, and the ceremony was performed in a short time. Judith was not now so particular about a gold ring, when the priest took a small brass curtain ring from his pocket, and gave it to Garritt, with a knowing wink, to place on her finger. The priest gave them his blessing, and they were soon beyond pursuit, and safely housed in the mountains among Byrne's relatives, 'uncles and cousins by dozens' of the name—the whole affair reminding one of the story of the brave Lochinvar, and perhaps equally worthy of versification.

To account for Garritt's indifference, and his late, though sudden appearance, it must be told that he never believed that Judith really intended to put her threat into execution; and as he had no intention of hurrying the marriage, so he was contentedly attending to his master's cattle in the mountains, about five miles off. He had put them in their sheds, and foddered them for the night, and had just succeeded in lighting a good fire in his own hut, when his little brother disturbed his quiet by rushing in as the sun was setting, and with more energy than his brother Garritt ever possessed, he cried out as he grasped for breath 'Garritt man, what are you about sitting here, when Judith's wedding is going on? The priest is bespoke; and unless you have some life in your heels, the Lameter will have her before an hour.'

Garritt waited not to answer this astounding news; but he had life in his heels for once, for like an arrow from a bow, away shot Garritt down one hill and up the next, and never halted until he arrived at the gate: a friend awaited him there, who told him that he was not too late; he scarcely drew breath until he secured Judith. It is impossible to describe the confusion which ensued after the disappearance of the two lovers; the younger females were not sorry that Garritt had taken the bride; but the uproar was great down stairs when the men heard of it; for the noise they were making prevented them from hearing Garritt, and no one had seen him passing up or down the stairs. They first called for the Lameter, and next for Judith's brother, but both were absent. The whole party were ready for pursuit, but they had no leader, and did not know which way to take; and none of them agreed on what to do, but they all allowed that it would look very foolish to the country to have let the bride be taken off from among them. Some said they could not be blamed, when the bridegroom and the bride's brother were away, and had left her in women's care. The Lameter and his intended brother-in-law returned in the midst of confusion, and asked why the music had ceased and the dancers left. It was some time before one of the party told what had happened; the Lameter looked confounded at first, but soon rallied, and pretended to take the matter coolly. The brother was enraged, and took several young men with him to look for Judith; but, fortunately, they did not think of going to the priest's house, until it was too late to find her there. The Lameter made a speech, in which he said that although the bride was gone, yet whiskey and the fiddlers remained, and he begged of all the company to make merry. They thought that they could not do better, and the music and dancing commenced again: the lameter gave them plenty of whisky, and they were as noisy as before.

It was reported that the Lameter asked several of the handsomest young girls present that night to accept of his hand and his fortune; but they all told him that they would do no such thing as take Judith's leavings. So they all refused the honor then; but, it is certain he got a wife long before the next Holy Eve, and that she was present that night, and the prettiest girl there when Judith disappeared.

Before many days were over, Judith was attending the dairy, and Garritt the cows; just as if nothing had happened then, and Garritt proved a very kind, quiet husband, and Judith a smart, tidy little wife.

Now for my moral—said the lady in conclusion—and it is this:—I would have all young men learn not to put off their weddings too long after they have wooed, and won, and have sufficient means to marry the damsel of their choice. And I would warn all young women to beware of making rash resolutions, the keeping of which might destroy their happiness for ever.

WHERE IS THE LAND THE SPIRIT
LOVES?

Where is the land the spirit loves?

Where finds the heart its choicest treasure?

Where in a new existence proves.

Unbroken rest, unfading pleasure?

Where shall the instincts of the mind,

Those voiceless promptings, point for rest;

Or man another Eden find,

The brightest, fairest, last, and best?

Beneath the tropics fervid ray,

Where earth in rich abundance pours

Her glowing fruits—where smiles the day

On golden sands and glittering shores?

Or yonder, where the glorious lays

Of ancient bards the theme unfold—

The classic lore of other days,

The deathless memories of old?

Or far, by Jordan's sainted shore,

Or Siloam's brook, or Salem's towers,

Where Israel's chosen race once more

Shall pass the consecrated hours?

Alas the sunniest lands are stain'd

With blood in ruthless passion shed,

And richest ore has there been gained

Where slaves have toil'd and groan'd and bled,

And vainly might the poet mourn

The mouldring wrecks of elder time;

The spoilers' hand hath scathed and torn

Those treasures of a storied clime;

And Jordan's stream, but sadly flows

Where Zion's songs no more sung,

And Israel, in his wanderings, knows,

The harp is on the willows hung.

But yet a land the spirit loves

Exists in its immortal bloom!

Where life exults and pleasure moves,
Apart from time, and past the tomb.
Eye hath not seen, nor ear discerned,
Grief cannot crush, nor time destroy.
And earthly sense hath never learn'd
Its deep and mystic thrills of joy;
And poorly can we picture here,
By all as yet to morals given,
The glories of that distant sphere
Our bright'ning home—our native heaven.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

THE MORAL ALCHEMY.

A GROUP of young people, composing the family of Mr. Mansfield, were one winter's night collected in the drawing-room, around the centre table, gazing with eager curiosity upon an engraving which that gentleman had just unrolled before them. It represented an antique and spacious apartment, lighted by a single lamp, which seemed but to make 'darkness visible.' The occupant of this gloomy chamber was a spare old man, whose sunken eyes and wrinkled brow bespoke a life of mental labour. He was represented to be busily engaged with some occupation, the object of which fairly puzzled the younger children, and the heterogeneous articles which surrounded him did not tend to elucidate the mystery.

'This is an alchemist in his laboratory, making experiments in order to discover the Philosopher's Stone,' Horace Mansfield at length observed, addressing his brothers and sisters in a tone expressive of pride at his superior knowledge. 'What an absurd idea!' he added, looking somewhat contemptuously on the figure before him.

'In our enlightened days it does indeed appear so, Horace,' his father remarked; 'yet persons possessed of learning and ability engaged in the pursuit. It was the mania of the middle ages, and was not confined to men who might be supposed to have had leisure for the study, but was even pursued by princes. One of the German Electors was surnamed *The Alchemist*, of which title he is said to have been more proud than of his electoral dignity.' Mr Mansfield then proceeded to explain to the younger children the motive which had induced the alchemist to spend his days and nights in deep study and repeated experiments, and lamented that so much valuable time should have been devoted to a fruitless pursuit, whilst that which was really useful, and would have tended to promote the interests of mankind in general, had been left unexplored.

'And yet, papa,' exclaimed a thoughtful boy, who had been looking very earnestly on the picture—'and yet if gold could have been so made so easily, how much could have been done for the poor?'

'I question, my dear, whether benevolence ever instigated the pursuit,' Mr Mansfield returned. 'And had the discovery been made, it is doubtful if the same value would have been set upon this now rare metal. Such things, my children, have no intrinsic worth. The value set on them is purely artificial, on account of their scarcity. Thus you see if what is termed baser metals could be transmuted into gold by a chemical process, that mineral would not be held in the same high esteem as at present.'

'Where do you mean to put this pretty picture, papa?' asked a little fair haired girl, as she climbed to her accustomed seat on her father's knee.

'I intend, my dear, to have it hung up in the school-room,' was his reply.

'The school-room! I thought, papa, that you did not approve of pictures in the school-room?' chimed in another.

'I do not approve of such as would be likely to distract your attention from your studies; but when I have told you how, in my youth, I learned a lesson from a picture similar to the one before us, I hope you will always think of it when you see this.' The children looked up with pleased and eager glances.

'May I guess what it was, papa?' asked Horace with an air of self-importance.

'To be sure you may; but I doubt if you will succeed.'

'You wish the alchemist's incessant labour and contempt of difficulty to incite us to perseverance in our studies?'

'That would be an excellent moral to draw from the subject, Horace; but that was not the lesson I learned from it.'

'Well, then, papa, we must leave it to you to tell us what it was.'

'When I was a youth of about your age, Horace,' Mr Mansfield began, 'I had conceived a great desire to follow one of the learned professions; not that I had any particular talent for any, but I had adopted the erroneous idea that it would increase my importance. My father had, I knew, other views for me. I was his only son, and being engaged in a flourishing line of commerce, he naturally wished me to be associated with him, more especially as he was in delicate health, and had a large family of daughters to educate and provide for. I never thought of disputing my father's authority; yet my obedience was of a description which I now think of with shame, for it was anything but prompt and cheerful. I consequently commenced my new duties with a spirit altogether at variance with their proper fulfilment. As might be expected, I was always unhappy. I considered myself an injured individual, and deemed that my prospects in life were entirely blighted. Whilst my mind was in this desponding and discontented state, a relative of my mother's paid us a visit. He