

IRISH CHARACTER SKETCHES.

The Village Weaver.

He is standing with his eyes leaning on the half door, and his legs leaning on the old roomy chair before him. He is a very small man, with a broad, smiling mouth, and the eyes, large and sensitive, are shaded by blue spectacles. The shoulders are stooped and the fall hat, brown and creased, with age and usage, rests on the back of the head and neck. As you gaze at him you feel instinctively that the figure leaning there is a mild and timorous man and you would be right, for Peter Toole the weaver is the mildest and most timid man I have ever known. The smallest child in the village has more courage and I verily believe that if you gave Peter all the wealth of the world, you could not induce him to go out alone on a dark night at the witching hour when garrulous yawa. He was a firm believer in spooks and fairies, and to him the old rattle and graveyards were objects of the utmost dread, but most dreaded of all was the lone bush that stood sentry as it were upon the high road just outside the village. Tradition had it that three men were hanged there in the troublesome times of 1798, and Peter firmly believed in all the blood-curdling tales that were told about that harmless old tree. His one topic when the neighbors called into his house at night to have a smoke and friendly chat with him, was leprechauns, spooks and fairies. Sitting on an old-fashioned chair in the corner close to the fire with his shaven pate on his knees, and his pipe in his mouth, he discoursed on these subjects, and if you were at all timorous, well, his talk would impart to your composition the shivers. Many a night have I sat at Phil's humble fireside and listened to his stories, and I will remember the feelings of dread that ran through me as that old man peeped each old wick and fort and graveyard with occupants of the spirit world, and ah, when he came to the most tragic part of his story, his voice would fall to a whisper and his head would turn to the door with a timorous look, which as much as said, "I would not wonder if these spirits were outside the door now." When the time came for me to leave Peter's house, I would have given a great deal to be at my own fireside for the night, after such tales did not look inviting to say the least, and I think that my sprits of these 100 yards that separated Peter's house from mine nearly broke the record. I flew, that's what I did, with a cold shivering of dread all over me, and I was not standing on an end. Peter never went outside his own door after dark, and he covered the land since the eventful night on which he paid a visit to Phil Maguire, the tailor's house, which was about a quarter of a mile away. Phil Maguire gave a party to a few old cronies to celebrate the battle of Bunker. Every year Phil celebrated the overthrow of the English under Mulroon on that historic field. "Me ancestors fought there wud the grate Owen Roe O'Neil, an' tonight we'll drink to their immortal memories around a humble board," Phil would say, "I would to God an' grate Saint James that the words of the song wor true of him today."

Latest Irish News

Owen Roe O'Neil, our own O'Neil. He reads once more our land. The sword in his hand is of Spanish steel. And Phil, as he looked above, would exclaim around the kitchen in his excitement and, clapping the weaver on the back, he would say: "Yis, Peter, iv the general wor back he'd make me next in command, and Peter, I'd make yeh me aide-de-camp an' wud rout the Saxons, horse-foot an' artillery." Peter Toole was one of the tailor's guests on this eventful night that I speak of, and whether it was the speeches or the good old Irish potent that kept him beyond his usual hour of departure, I do not know, but when he did arise to go and opened the door and saw the darkness he drew back and whistled. "Jim, avic, it's as dark as Erebus, an' wud yeh mind having me at home?" Phil Maguire heard Toole's whisper and, rising from his seat, addressed the latter thus: "Oh, yeh unworthy dependent by the grate O'Toole, I'd blush for yeh, iv I had a blush. Yeh're a potroom, that's what yeh are, an' Ireland wants none ov yeh sort in this hour ov her tribulation. It shall never be said me house sheltered a coward. Go home now, wud yeh, Peter Toole, an' never darken me dure agin," and Phil Maguire kicked down the chair on which he was sitting in his indignation. "Aye now, wud yeh, Phil Maguire, yeh're indignant, but what yeh are, an' don't understand a human nature, but I can read it as plain as I'd swallow a pint ov beer," and Jim Scully knocked the seat from his pipe and arose from his seat with: "I'll accompany yeh home, Peter Toole, bud afore I go, I assure this honorable assembly that the spirit never yet walked that cud frighten me noble friend Toole. An' I not speaking in truth, Peter Toole," as Scully gave the latter a rousing slap on the back. "I'm not afraid ov sperts, Jim," and poor Peter looked shiveringly to the window pane. "No, I'm not, bud in the dark I might miss yeh in the night," and Peter Toole, ov course we believe yeh, an' now I'll go wud yeh an' iv we meet any sperts we'll settle them between the froth an' the water." Jim said, Peter departed, having wished their friends goodnight, and when they were well on their way, Scully said: "Toole, I never liked to pass the lone bush since the night I saw the three men hanging there. I'm not nervous, I tell yeh, bud yet I feel a little afraid, so when we're passin' we won't look at it, bud I'll grasp yeh hand for courage." "I'd like to grasp it now, Jim, iv yeh do not mind, I feel a little wike," and the shivering Peter drew near to Scully. "We're near it now, Peter; aye, avic, we'll steal by on our tippy-toes, ah," and Scully sneezed out: "There they are, an' Toole, they're comin' down from off the branches. Oh, all yeh angels an' saints, prassave me, bud I'm a lost man," and Scully runs away as if the devil himself was after him. Poor Toole utters a piercing shriek, that resounds through the village, and runs up the road in the direction of his house as fast as his trembling limbs can carry him. It happened that Cluth Mulroady's donkey was lying in the middle of the road, thoroughly impervious to men, sperts or anything else, and poor Peter, screaming and praying for aid he was worth, fell right across the donkey. The donkey, roused so unexpectedly from his slumber, gives vent to an ear-splitting bray, and rushes up through the village, and poor Peter lies where he has fallen in a dead faint. Some of the neighbors hearing the

PAY-DAY INCIDENTS.

Three Deaths Are Recorded—The Humors of the Aged.

Many patriotic, amusing, and in one or two cases tragic, incidents occurred in connection with the distribution of the pensions. A sad event occurred in Kilkenny. An old lady of 80, who was eagerly awaiting her pension, died rather suddenly in the morning. At Newtownbutler a man named Tammon, after receiving his order book, died a few hours after. An ex-gunner of the Royal artillery, named Cleary, died suddenly at Bishop's Stratford, after signing his pension papers with a cross. An old lady named Thompson fell dead at Honecastle while proceeding home to fetch her old age pension. The first person to receive a pension in Dublin was a very old lady who arrived at Prince's street shortly after 8 a. m. and presented her "check" for 5 shillings. A bright crown was handed to her when the formalities were completed, and she left the building in high spirits. Then a regular stream of old ladies of their own age, displaying the blue-covered orders books—evidence that they had been declared entitled to the maximum pension under the act. An old lady of 82, accompanied by two grandchildren, called early at Dublin head office, and having got her 5 shillings, proceeded to gladden the hearts of the little ones by presenting each with a bright crown. In the year's gift of her newly-acquired wealth, the look of pleasure on the lady's face was reflected in the joyous countenances of the youngsters. In one of the Dublin sub-offices a pensioner, evidently imbued with a supreme idea of thrift, "banked" his 5 shillings immediately after receiving it. A merry old couple, each close on 90 years of age, called at Dame street office in the best of spirits. "It's the welcomest New Year's gift I ever got," said the old lady, and she would have danced for joy but for the "rheumatism." Both she and her old man left the office blessing the postmistress, the government and the world in general. When an old lady at Summer hill who was unable to sign her name was told she would be unable to procure a witness, she was much perturbed. "Glory be to God, we won't get paid at all," she said, anxiously, but a passing friend witnessed the paper for her, and she was handed her pension. More than one old lady exhibited a fair knowledge of the procedure. One was surprised to be asked for a witness to her mark. "I didn't read anything about that in the paper," she said, but the official assured her it was necessary, and she believed him. The first arrival at Amiens street office was an old lady who drove up to the door in a cab. She was unable to alight conveniently, and the courteous postmaster very kindly went out and took her signature and gave her the amount of her installment while she remained seated in the cab. At Ringsend two claimants, both 90 years of age, made personal application for their pensions. The head postman at Kingstown, who has forty years' service, and is said to know almost everyone in the township, was on duty all day at the counter of the principal office, filling in the orders for the majority of the holders, who, it appears, were unable to write. The Gort postoffice became so overcrowded with pensioners at one period of the day that police had to be requisitioned to maintain order. The James Maguire and Letterbrock, and his wife, whose joint ages are 170 years, walked five miles to Enniskillen office, and were the first in that district to receive their pensions. From some rural district of Roscommon, kindly neighbors conveyed old women in carts to the postoffices. Having received their pensions, they were driven home again, leaving behind them many blessings and "Happy New Years" to the courteous officials. A blind man conducted by his dog was paid in one office in Dublin. In Galway an old man so wanted to know if he would get his back time, and was disappointed at a negative reply. In Derry a feature of the morning's work was the inability of thousands of pensioners to write, not 10 per cent being able to sign their names. A centenarian in the Newbliss district, a man named Michael Delghan, who gave his age as 109, was unable to go to the office at Lattinard, and had to get his pension by an agent. At Castlebar one of the big rooms of the court house was thronged with pensioners, some of whom we over 100 years. One old woman aged 99 walked three miles to the courthouse, while a venerable looking man aged 104 walked two miles to the same place. As a book was created much laughter by telling him that she would meet him in heaven. The pensioners afterward repaired to the postoffice for their money. Wm. Ford, an old but agile lady, was the first pensioner at Galway central postoffice, arriving some minutes before the doors opened. There is a dispute as to whether she or a man named Fleming, from college road, got their pension order cashed first. It is believed in Galway that the distribution of the pensions will tax the resources of the officials to a much greater degree than was at first anticipated, and will require an investment in the public business. In the summer time when tourists bring increased work on the officials at the country offices, it will be absolutely necessary that special and separate provision shall be made for the pensioners. "If I take the 5s from you now, must my son join the army?" one old pensioner was heard to ask at Galway postoffice yesterday. It has been stated very persistently locally that the king has offered the pension as a bribe, and that those who accept it are committed to send their sons to the army. Many of the old people actually believe this absurd statement, and it is only on the emphatic assurance of the sympathetic postal officials that they accept the silver crowns wherewith their just claims are discharged.

IRISH CHURCH IN ROME.

Building of the Irish National Church of St. Patrick Resumed. (Catholic Sun.) We are very glad indeed to be able to announce that the building of the Irish National church of St. Patrick in Rome has been resumed with the special blessing of the Holy Father. It is to be in Italian thirteenth century style and is to have three principal altars, one to St. Patrick, a second to the Sacred Heart to which Ireland is dedicated, and a third to Mary Mother of God. The interior will be so disposed as to afford scope for painting in the best art a comprehensive history of Ireland's attachment to the Holy See since Patrick first preached the Gospel. This subject will be divided into two

parts: the first showing Ireland in communion with Rome before the penal times, and the second illustrating her miraculous steadfastness to the faith under persecution and her final triumph by planting the faith again not only in every corner of Ireland, but in the most remote parts of the world. In this latter part of his subject the artist will be asked to take his inspiration from the words of Isaiah: "Arise, shine, for thy Light is come and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold darkness hath covered the earth and gross darkness the people, but the Lord is risen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light. Lift up thine eyes round about and see. As they gather themselves together, they come to thee." All this is to be done in the very best art which the beginning of this twentieth century is capable of producing, and those who visit the new temple in the heart of christendom will be shown vividly with what heroism and constancy Ireland has kept the faith, and spread it over the world, thus fulfilling her great mission among the nations of the earth. The work is entrusted to the architect, Cav. Aristide Leonori, under Leo XIII, earned a great reputation by his restoration of "the mother and mistress of all the churches," the Basilica of St. John Lateran. He is well known in Australia, American and Canada, where he has at present several important works on hand. He is also at present engaged in the building of a cathedral at Cairo, Nearer home he has left his mark as the designer of the pulpit of Westminster cathedral and as director of the decorations of Armagh cathedral. He is a specialist in Celtic designs and these are to be used profusely in Ireland's National church in the Eternal City.

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