

THE EARLY OWL.

An Owl once lived in a hollow tree. And he was as wise as could be. The branch of Learning he didn't know could scarce on the tree of knowledge grow.

He knew the tree from branch to root, And an Owl like that can afford to hoot. And he hooted—until, alas! one day He chanced to hear, in a casual way, An insignificant little bird.

He searched the country for miles around But the early worm was not to be found. So he went to bed in the dawning light, And again and again, and again and again, He sought and he sought, but all in vain.

For the early worm, in the twilight gray, At last in despair he gave up the search, And was heard to remark, as he sat on his perch By the side of his nest in the hollow tree.

THE DOCTOR'S LOVE STORY.

Dr. O'Flynn's practice stretched from his surgery in Little Endell street round and about as far as Gordon Square on the north and half down Drury Lane on the south. It was a mixed practice, and though the surgery was frankly a converted shop and though his work took him to slums like those in Sardinia street, he had a few good patients, such, for instance, as the Burkes of Gordon Square, and the Hon. Miss Corkran, of Cunningham Mansions, all Irish and Catholics, like himself.

O'Flynn was of the peasant stock that supplies such good recruits to the priest-hood and the medical profession; 50 and over, fresh-faced, with a twinkle in his eye, a humorous tongue and a careless manner. He was friends with all men and women. Careless in dress and manner, he sometimes contravened the strict dictates governing the rules of medical procedure; acting generally on the impulse of his heart, he sometimes even transgressed the laws of ordinary life, doing things that no English professional man would ever dream of doing—like, for instance, the thing I am going to tell you about presently.

Norah, 58, from Kerry, cook, housemaid and general factotum, made up, with Billy, the surgery boy, the whole of the doctor's menage. Billy would arrive every morning at 8, departing at 5. Norah rarely went out, except to mass; she had no holding with the "old trash" of English people round about; acting always to be back in Tralee, she led the life of a prisoner in the Bastille, bound by the chains of household duties and barred from escape by her absolute, unfinching, almost incredible devotion to the doctor.

For the sake of O'Flynn she even permitted children to play on the house doorstep. You must understand, and this is an important part of the geography of my story, that the shop door was the way of ingress for patients; the house door, with its night bell and speaking tube, was sacred to the doctor and private callers. Children, never being driven away from it, haunted it, urged by the passion for doorsteps that seems part of a child mind's make-up.

tinctor from the race of London people who still inhabit houses.

O'Flynn went up the stone stairs, knocked at the door, and was admitted by Margaret. Margaret was County Dublin pure and simple, a stout, matronly woman with chestnut-colored hair worn flat on the forehead, and a Dublin accent which is to the accent of Kerry as cockney to West Somerset.

"Is Miss Julia in?" asked the doctor. "In," said Margaret, "faith, where else would she be? She hasn't set foot to the ground since here you were last, achin' and pinin' on the sofa and me near driven distracted with her."

She took his hat and, leading him down the passage, ushered him into a sitting room filled with twilight and the pleasant flickering of a fire, the perfume of violets and the fragrance of China tea.

By the couch stood a table with tea things for one, and near the table a chair with a cushion on which had once reposed the dog. Miss Corkran, on the entrance of the physician, laid down the book that she had been reading. It is a thing to be read by twilight or frelight, and this super-refined sensualist had evidently been trying to do both. She held out a ringless, attenuated hand to the other, but she did not offer tea.

The Corkrans of Castle Corkran were a very old Irish family and the O'Flynn's were just the O'Flynn's; perhaps that was the reason she did not offer tea even to this tried friend, or perhaps it was because, being bound up in herself, she didn't think. He took his seat beside her with a few words and picked up a book that had fallen from the couch to the floor. He noted the title as he placed it on the table by the tea things, "Have Animals Souls? Yes!"

"And now let's look at your tongue," said he. On that order, given to the commonality, a mouth flies open like a trapdoor and a tongue protrudes itself even to the roots.

But the Corkrans are different; moving and moistening her lips, wiping them with a lace-edged handkerchief, she presented a tongue on a salver, so to speak, a tongue fresh and innocent as the tongue of a child. "H'm," said O'Flynn. He took her pulse, a pulse soft as a 6-year-old's, even and full of vitality if not of robustness.

"Bad," said O'Flynn. "You haven't been doing as I told you. Oh, there's no use in talking of neuralgia when you won't listen to me advice. Here you've been lying ever since I saw you last."

"Oh, no, I haven't," cut in the patient. "I've been up and about—"

"Up and about! It's up and out I told you to be. It's not your body, it's your mind that you want to take out for a walk; I told you that last time and I won't tell you again; there now, you have it plain."

Miss Corkran sighed. "I can't bear people," said Miss Corkran. "I know it's wicked and all that, but I've tried it—ever since—no matter."

She plaited her handkerchief, and to O'Flynn there came the suggestion, and not for the first time, that Julia Corkran, in the years before he had been her doctor and friend, had experienced a cross in her affections. "Maybe you never tried the right people," said he. "I come to you for money for the poor souls down in Sardinia street or Drury lane, and out leaps your purse; never a friend of the poor better than you. Well, get into a cab and come and see them; the salt of the earth they are, and the welcome of God they'll give you."

match he struck revealed also that its face was dirty.

Beside this living bundle was a small tin of salmon, tucked close up to it, almost hidden by the shawl. O'Flynn flung the match away and looked up and down the street. Not a soul, nothing but the bell of a muffin man, unseen in the mist, and the far murmur of traffic from the streets beyond.

He bent down and picked the bundle up, kicked the tin of salmon on to the pavement, and opened the door with his latchkey. Upstairs in the sitting room, with the bundle on Norah's lap before the fire, unwrapping produced not only a fat child of 1 and a bit, but just rousing from sleep and winding itself up to cry, but a feeding bottle with a long unhygienic rubber tube and nipple.

Norah popped the nipple in its mouth and after a second's indecision it chose the better part and sucked. The doctor, standing with his back to the fire, watched it as it sat, its black, beady eyes taking in the points of this new environment as it fed. It was a boy, a baby boy of the slums. Now, people in the slums do not desert their babies. They do all sorts of other things, but they don't do that, and O'Flynn must have been blind, absolutely blind for the moment, to have been led astray as he was. Blind, or anyhow half-blinded, by the great new idea that had suddenly seized him.

Here was a creature that God had put in his hands, a human life in the bud, a fine, strong boy that might live to be a university man or a captain of armies, or might live to be an outcast brought up by the parish and ending, maybe, as a laborer or jailbird. It all depended on his decision.

"Norah," said he, "fetch me down that old tin bath in the attic and bring up a can of hot water and a towel. I'll hold the child. After that you can fetch me the little old soft blanket you'll find in the chest in me bedroom. Don't be asking questions, and while you're giving him his bath, I'll nip down to the surgery and polish off the patients."

Two hours later a taxi drove up to Cunningham Mansions, and O'Flynn, a bundle under his arm, knocked at the door of the Corkran flat. Margaret opened to him. "Here's your dog," said he, "left at me door by the Holy Virgin herself. Not a word out of you. Take it in to her and tell her you found it on the door mat. I've given it three drops of soothing stuff and it'll sleep till the morning, and the Lord have mercy on your souls if you don't treat it like a Christian."

There is nothing like decision when you are dealing with women. Had O'Flynn been a weak man or a man not of the order to which he belonged he might have been arguing with Margaret still, and this story would never have been written. As it was, he left her bludgeoned, with the baby in her arms and an order to let him know "how she takes to it."

He had got into bed that night with the satisfied feeling that comes of a day's work well done, and he was congratulating himself on the last stroke. It was one of those things that rarely come to a man's hand. The woman wanted that which all women want, consciously or unconsciously—a child. Just as a hen will take a porcelain egg, she had taken to a dog; this was the real thing if she would only, so to speak, sit on it. His knowledge of women and life told him that most probably she would.

Oh, it was a curious and grand business entirely; he ran it all over in his mind as he lay there in the dark before closing his eyes—and then, and not till then, came the small worry that had been waiting to trip him.

Funny thing, that tin of salmon. What did the unfortunate creature who had left the baby mean by leaving a tin of salmon with it? Holy Mike! it couldn't be that she'd left them both to be come back for! Nonsense, where was the sense in a thing like that?

Carter's, the shop next door, sold salmon. The poor round about had three grand passions in the way of food, salmon, sardines and fried fish and chips. Could she have been in Carter's, bought the salmon, and then left the baby and it while she went off for something else? Nonsense, there was no other shop nearby, and even if there was, no woman in her senses would do a thing like that. And if she had she would surely have knocked at the door to ask, or the police would. Well, there was no use in bothering over an insoluble problem and, like a sensible man, he turned the worry down and went to sleep.

O'Flynn never read the papers, or only the Freeman's Journal, sent him every week by an aunt in Dublin, so he did not see a paragraph in next morning's Daily Mail relative to a baby lost by Mrs. McGinnis, of Conway street, W. said baby having been taken out by Norah, an elder sister, from whom it had been snatched by a tall man with a long black beard. Norah, being a child of 10 years, and her memory and tale confused and contradictory.

O'Flynn saw nothing of all this and heard nothing of it, for his rapid cash and panel practice brought no gossipers to his consulting room. The only report that reached him was a scrawl from Margaret received next evening, four words in pencil on a half sheet of notepaper: "She's took to it."

poor Mrs. McGinnis, says she, 'never a word or whisper she's heard yet of her baby.' 'What baby?' says I. 'Why, the baby she lost,' says she, 'that was snatched from young Noreen by a big man with a black beard, bad cess to him, and a tin of salmon the creature had bought and was fetchin' home to her mother—sure, where have you been that you haven't heard talk of it?'

"Mindin' me own business," says I, "and two more potatoes in the pan, please, to turn the scale." She and her goggle eyes, talkin' to distract me with her short weights—and back I came hotfoot to tell you."

O'Flynn scratched his head. Somehow or another he was scarcely surprised; a subconscious buffer had been building itself up to take the shock.

"Conway street," said he, reviewing that Irish quarter, more Irish even than Sardinia street or Tamplin place. "Well, I'll be down that way this afternoon and I'll have a look. Maybe she's right and maybe she's wrong, but don't breathe a word to any one till I see what's doing."

There was a Mary McGinnis in his case book and, sure enough, an hour or so later when he turned into Conway street, a place disgraceful to civilization, humanity and the century we live in, he found it was the mother of the lost one. A big woman, pounding clothes in a washtub and surrounded by her tribe, happy to all appearances, vigorous, scolding, but breaking into a fresher of tears at the mention of the tragedy—whose other name was Pat.

He gave her half a crown as a contribution to her sorrow and then, singling out and attracting to himself Noreen, took her by the hand to the little corner shop to buy her some sweets.

Noreen, black-haired and violet-eyed, and in old burly boots that belonged to an elder sister, had lied steadfastly if not consistently, to all and sundry over this business, but she did not lie to O'Flynn. He had the way with him where women and children were concerned, and he had the whole story in two minutes under promise of secrecy.

She had been that fateful evening to Carter's to buy a tin of salmon, carrying Pat. She had planned to visit Naylor's front window in the street beyond to have a glimpse at the Christmas tree which was being exhibited, though it was nearly a month before Christmas, which she had seen once already and which she proposed to see every evening, if possible, just as people go again and again to see a play. But Carter's had kept her waiting a terribly long time—so long that only by running as hard as she could pell could she do the business in hand and get back without the chance of skelping.

But she couldn't run with Pat, so she stuck him in the doorway where she had played so often and which seemed quite safe—him and the salmon—and she hadn't been more than a minute looking into the window before she ran back to find Pat gone.

O'Flynn asked for no more, not even the genesis of the supposititious big man with the black beard. He knew. She had not dared to confess her crime.

He left her happy with two ounces of licorice balls and a scarcely relieved mind, for she had come almost to believe in her own story. Then he turned north toward Cunningham Mansions. Pat had got to be returned. There were no two ways about that. You can't knowingly rob a mother of a child, even though the mother is a Mrs. McGinnis and her habitat Conway street, W.

He arrived at Cunningham Mansions in a distinctly gruff mood. Margaret let him in. She was all smiles. She showed him in without a word—a wonderful fact where she was concerned—showed him into the sitting room, where Julia Corkran, her legs off the sofa, to use his expression, was seated in an armchair by the fire stitching.

The fact that she looked better was nothing. What checked him was the fact that she looked younger, more material, more "full of blood."

He listened to her wonderful story of the poor mite that had been left at the door, scarce heeding, he knew the story so well; scarce listening, occupied almost entirely with the change in her, a change of which she herself seemed absolutely unconscious. Then he followed her into her bedroom, where there was a fire and where by her bedside stood a bed-fitted cot, in which his majesty, Pat, filled with the finest of milk, was sleeping the sleep of the just. A new hygienic feeding bottle was on the dainty dressing table; things were warming by the fire.

McGinnis. She did not want a future that she could not visualize for the child. She wanted Pat.

No. There was only one way out—restoration; and, arrived home, he called Norah down, closed the door of the sitting room, and opened his mind.

Norah had to do the business—it was a woman's business, anyhow. She could see Margaret and have a talk with her and between them they could break it to the poor creature.

Norah did not like the thing a bit, but she assented. She never said a word to show her feelings. She was like that sort.

"I'll go, when I've done me cookin'," said Norah. And she went. She was back just before O'Flynn had returned from his evening round, back and sitting in the kitchen with a shawl over her head.

"I couldn't find it in me heart to do it," wailed Norah before he spoke a word. "I couldn't find it in me heart to do it. It's the life and all he is to her, and she wid her beautiful face like the Blessed Virgin hangin' over him. Sure, what's Mrs. McGinnis, lettin' him run wild about the streets that girl? Hasn't she enough childer not to be botherin' about the cratur? You told me yourself the place was like a warren wid them. Childer or not, she can stick. Hand nor foot will I lift for her to fetch him back."

"Then," said the doctor, "I'll just have to fetch him myself."

"Not you," said Norah, suddenly divesting herself of the shawl and furiously addressing herself to the peeling of some potatoes waiting in a bowl.

She was right in a way. As things were standing, O'Flynn would never have had the heart to do the business. But things were not going to stand like that.

It was next day at noon that he received a note from Margaret, the gist of which ran:

For the Lord's sake come at once. Her aunt, Miss Hancock, has called and won't believe her. She's here now, and I'm keepin' her till you come though maybe she won't believe you either.

Margaret Driscoll. O'Flynn whistled. In their simple-mindedness neither he, Margaret nor Julia had ever thought of this. He knew what it was that Miss Hancock wouldn't believe, and he had seen the lady once. High-nosed, antique, aristocratic, rather flighty in manner, and with that slight crack in her that seems to run through all Ireland in its people, making them so charming yet not making, somehow, for charity of vision and temperate views in the cracked ones.

If she wouldn't believe Julia and Margaret, she certainly would not believe him. He said this to himself as he got into his overcoat and put on his hat. Then, feeling like a man who holds the ace and queen and knows the king is out, he got into a cab and drove to fetch Mrs. McGinnis.

The routing of Miss Hancock, though a most satisfactory business, was spoiled for the visitors by the conduct of their ally. Mrs. McGinnis, despite O'Flynn's fine words and promises and despite Julia's fears, refused to part with Pat. She took him away with her, wrapped in a blanket. She showered blessing on all and sundry from the angels down, but to the suggestion that he should be "left for a bit" she was deaf and to Julia's tears she was blind. She was, in fact, in the mental condition of a cat who has just recovered a kitten. Her one instinct was to carry him off—and she did.

FARM NOTES.

potatoes. The spray should be applied when the first injury is noticed. —With shingles, as with anything else, it's false economy to use an inferior grade.

—The 4-4-50 bordeaux mixture applied as a wet spray is an effective control for tipburn or hopperburn of —Time and material spent in building a suitable poultry house, or remodeling or refurbishing the old, will draw good dividends.

—Disease among dairy cattle may be held in check largely through the application of the principles of hygiene and sanitation in and around the dairy barn.

—Pick pears when they are hard-ripe as they are liable to core-rot if left to ripen on the trees. After picking put them in a cool place to ripen if for a home market.

—One of the best investments a dairyman can make is to put drinking cups in his barn. Water is the cheapest of feeds and should be supplied in liberal quantities.

—Dogs now may be immunized against rabies. Ask your local veterinarian and insure the peace of mind of yourself and your neighbors as well as prevent "mad-dog" scares.

—Loafing hens in the farm flock eat up the profits that the busy diaries make. The successful poultryman keeps the loafer just long enough to get her ready for the butcher.

—Showing livestock and farm products at fairs is a good, effective way of advertising. It puts the real product right up in front of the thousands that daily pass through the turnstiles of the many popular fairs.

—It is undesirable to close too quickly the furrows where asparagus roots have been planted this year. Allow the asparagus to get well started and then fill in the trench only gradually when cultivating.

—Splitting of apples on trees is due to excessive moisture as a result of the recent long rainy spell. The sudden influx of water and decreased transpiration from the leaves result in a pressure which the cellular structure of the apples cannot withstand.

—Sweet corn growers can help to eradicate the European corn borer by destroying the stalks within two weeks after the ears have been picked. This may be done by cutting the stalks close to the ground and running them through the silo or by feeding or burning them.

—Nine of every ten house flies breed in manure piles. Hauling the manure directly from stable to field removes the source and thus saves the energy devoted to fly-swarming for something more worth while. Incidentally, the fertility of the soil is improved by getting the manure on early.

—Lawns will require some attention this month. Dig out all weeds before they go to seed. Bonemeal makes an excellent fertilizer to apply this month. Apply lightly before a rain. Mow the lawn regularly but adjust the knives so that they do not cut too closely. If you water the grass at all be sure to give it a good soaking.