



# *A Chapter You Can Skip*

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Irish

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*Intermediate*  
*45 min read*

This is a chapter that you can skip, if you want to. And really I should advise you to. Nothing of importance happened in the next eighteen years. Of course I am obliged to write a little something to fill in all that time, but you are not obliged to read it. That is where you have such an advantage. I think it is much better for a book to have some parts that can be skipped just as well as not, you get through it so much faster. I have often thought what a good thing it would be if somebody would write a book that we could skip the whole of. I think a good many people would like to have such a book as that. I know I should.

Then there is another reason why it will be well for you to skip a little about here. When you get farther on, if you happen to come to something that you don't understand, you can say: "Oh, this is probably all explained by something in that part that I skipped," and you can go right on. But if you had not skipped anything and then came to something that you did not understand, you would have to say: "There, now, I must have been reading carelessly and missed something," and you would have to go back and read the book all through again.

In these eighteen years Kathleen O'Brien and Terence Sullivan were growing up. I don't suppose there ever was another such child as Kathleen. And I should hope there never was another such child as Terence. Kathleen's grandmother had the most of the care of her, of course, but it was really no care at all. It would have been a pleasure for anybody to have the care of Kathleen. Even when she was a baby she was a perfect delight, and you know what babies are sometimes. At any rate, you would know, if you had known Terence. And when she got to be a few years older, say seven or eight—

Well, it is perfectly impossible for me to tell you how good and lovely Kathleen was. It is all very well to try to describe snow-capped mountains at sunrise, or a storm at sea, or moonlight at Niagara, or a prairie on fire, or anything of that sort, but nobody could tell you how good and lovely Kathleen was, so that you could understand it. I suppose she was a good deal the sort of child that you would be if you didn't put your elbows on the table, or your spoon in your mouth, or slam the doors, or cry when your hair is combed, or tease for things that you ought not to have, or whisper in company, or talk out loud when there are older persons present, or leave your playthings about when you are done with them, or get your clothes soiled when you play out of doors, or want to play at all when you ought to study your lessons, or ask to be allowed to sit up after bed-time, or bite your nails, or cut your bread, or leave your spoon in your cup instead of in your saucer, or take the biggest apple.

I don't say that Kathleen never did any of these things. I only say that she was so good that you would have to leave off every one of them or you would never catch up with her. If Kathleen had a fault, it was that she was too good. If I were going to have anything to do with her I would rather she should be a little bit worse than a single bit better. I am so glad you are skipping this part, because I shouldn't want you to try to be a bit worse than you are just for the sake of pleasing me. And I don't mean by all this that Kathleen was one of those children who are a bother all the time because they are so good. She may have done things that she ought not to do sometimes. I dare say she did. I know she did once. I will tell you all about that in the next chapter. She was just a dear, sweet little girl, as bright and merry and healthy as any little girl in the world ever was. And you would think so yourself, if you had known her and were not so jealous. If I should tell you that she was as pretty as she was good, I don't suppose you would believe me. But she was, just as surely as I am writing this book and you are reading it. I mean just as surely as I am writing it. I am not sure yet whether you are reading it or not.

But Terence! Well, the less said about him the better. Still, I suppose, I shall have to say something. He did

every one of the things that I have just mentioned. And it wasn't because he didn't know any better; he seemed to like to do them, just because he knew that they were wrong. When he was a baby he was more trouble than twins, and bad twins at that. He cried all the time, except when he was eating or sleeping, and he slept only a little of the time and ate a great deal of it. He always seemed to be just about so sick, but it never hurt his appetite and he never got any sicker. After a while Ellen got used to his being sick, and she always said that he was delicate, poor child, and that was why he was so cross and so much trouble.

"And is that why he eats so much?" Mrs. O'Brien would ask.

"I dunno about that," Ellen would answer; "I think it's the kind of sickness that's on him that makes him eat so much."

"More likely it's eating so much that gives him the kind of sickness that's on him," Mrs. O'Brien would say. "But I tell you again, it's no sickness at all he has. He's just one of the Good People, and you could be rid of him and have your own child back any time you would do any of the things I would tell you."

But not a word of this would Ellen ever heed. Terence was her own child, and he might be a bit troublesome, as any child might, but he was not really bad at all, and it was Kathleen, that was always so good, the Lord knew why, that made Mrs. O'Brien think that every child ought to be that way. But there was one strange thing about Terence, and Ellen herself had to admit it. After that very hour, when he was one day old, when Mrs. O'Brien came to see him and christened him, or tried to—she never felt sure till long afterward whether she had done it or not—he was always quiet when she was near. He would drive poor Ellen nearly crazy, in spite of all her excuses for him, when he was alone with her, but the moment that Mrs. O'Brien came into the house he would get as far away from her as he could, and then lie perfectly still and watch her, for all the world, as John said once, like a rat in a trap watching a cat. Ellen said that it was because he always remembered that it was Mrs. O'Brien who had dropped him once. To this John replied: "Then maybe he'd be making you less trouble, Ellen, if you was to drop him yourself once or twice." But Mrs. O'Brien said that it was just because he knew what she would do to him if she had the chance.

And there was another strange thing about Terence. As he grew a little older, he never could be got inside a church. Father Duffy had never even seen him, except when he came to the house while he was still a baby, and then Terence would scream and kick so, when the good priest came near him, that he never dared touch him. The first time that he came, Ellen told him about Mrs. O'Brien's christening the child, and asked him if it was

right for her to do it.

“Was the child looking sick, and as if he was likely to die?” Father Duffy asked.

“He was, father,” Ellen answered; “I couldn’t deny that.”

“Then it was right for her to christen him,” the priest answered, “and he’ll not need to be christened again. In fact, he can’t be christened again.”

But long after that, when they tried to take him to church, he would never go. If Peter and Ellen started for church with him he would run away from them. They could not even hold him. He would get away from them, and sometimes they could not tell how he did it, only he would be gone. And then the only way that they could find him was to go home again, and there he was sure to be, as safe as ever, only he had not been at church. And so, after a while, they stopped trying to make him go.

When the two children were old enough to play together, Terence never seemed to be happy except when he was with Kathleen. He did not care in the least to play with other boys. He did not seem to care in the least to play at all. All he wanted was to be with Kathleen. Kathleen never liked him, and she did not like to have him with her so much of the time. But she was too kind-hearted to hurt anybody in any way, even a boy whom she did not like, so she tried to treat him as nicely as she could, and she told nobody but her grandmother, to whom she told everything, that she was not as pleased to be with him as he was to be with her.

Terence, in his turn, did not always treat Kathleen well, any more than he did anybody else. He was ill-natured with her and he played tricks on her that were not pleasant at all, and yet he wanted to be always with her. Perhaps it was partly because she was more kind to him than anybody else, except Ellen. For nobody else liked him. And if he was bad-tempered and unkind to other people, it made other people unkind and bad-tempered to him, but nothing could make Kathleen unkind to anybody.

“It’s not fair you all are to Terence,” Ellen said once to Mrs. O’Brien, “to think bad of him the way you do. There’s things about him that don’t seem right, I know, but those things don’t show the way he really is. I dunno if I’m making you understand me. I’m his mother and I know him better nor anybody else, and I know he’s different from the way he seems to you, and even the way he seems to me sometimes. And I’ll tell you how I know that. When I’m asleep I often dream about him. And when I dream about him, he looks a little the way he does other times, but he’s taller and he’s better-looking in the face, and he looks stronger and brighter and

healthier like. And he speaks to me, and his voice is lower and pleasanter in the sound of it. And that's the way he'd be, I know, if he had his health, poor child, and if everything was right with him. And you'd all know that and you'd feel more for him, if you knew him the way I do."

This was when Terence was six or seven years old. And Ellen often spoke in this way afterward. She saw Terence in her dreams, and he was a very different Terence from the one who made her so much trouble when she was awake, and yet he was partly the same.

And there was one thing that Terence did that almost everybody liked. I might as well say everybody except Kathleen. He played the fiddle. Nobody knew how he learned. There was a neighbor of the Sullivans who came from the same county in Ireland that they did, and he played a fiddle in an orchestra at a cheap theatre. One day Peter had gone to see this man and had taken little Terence with him. The fiddle was lying on the table. The two men went into another room and left Terence by himself. They were talking busily and they forgot about him. Then they heard a soft little tune played on the fiddle. "Who's that playing my fiddle?" said the owner of it.

"Sure," said Peter, "we left nobody there but Terence."

They went quickly back into the room and found Terence hastily laying the fiddle down where he had found it. "Ah, can't I leave you alone a minute," said Peter, "but you must be meddling with things that don't belong to you? What'll I do now if you've gone and hurt the fiddle?"

"Don't be talking that way to the child," said the musician; "sure he did it no harm. But where at all did he learn to play that way? That's what I'm thinking. Have you been letting him learn all this time and never told me?"

"He never learned at all that I know of," Peter answered. "I never saw him have a fiddle in his hand till this minute."

"It's a strange thing, then," the musician said. "Anybody that can play a tune like he did that one has a right to play more and better. Where did you learn it, my boy?"

"I never learned it at all," Terence answered; "I just saw the fiddle there and I thought I'd see could I play it. But it's little I could be doing with it, I'm thinking."

Peter was surprised enough to find that Terence could play a tune on a fiddle, and so was Ellen, when she heard about it. But they did not wonder at it so much as they would have done if they had known more about such

things. They had a sort of notion that one person could play the fiddle and another could not, much as one person can move his ears and another cannot. So they thought little about it. But when Terence begged them to buy him a fiddle of his own, they saved up money a little at a time, and at last they bought him one.

Then for days Terence did nothing but play. He played simple little tunes at first, but soon he began to play harder ones. Then he got impatient with himself, as it seemed, and he began to play such music as nobody who heard him had ever heard before. Often he would not play when he was asked, but he would play for hours by himself, when he thought that no one was listening. His father brought his friend the musician to hear him, and he said that it was wonderful. He had never heard the fiddle played so well. Nobody had ever heard the fiddle played so well.

And Kathleen never cared to hear Terence play. She did hear him play, many times, of course, and she listened politely, but she told her grandmother that she did not care about it at all. She would much rather hear the poor fiddler of the little orchestra, who had come from their county in Ireland. Their neighbor the fiddler himself was as much shocked as anyone to hear Kathleen talk like this. "Did you ever hear anybody play the fiddle like Terence plays it?" he asked her, when she said something of the sort to him.

"No," Kathleen answered. "I never heard anybody play it like Terence, but I have heard some play it better than Terence. You play it better."

"Oh, child," he said, "I'd give all the money I'll be earning in the next ten years if I could play like he does. Don't you see I can't do half the things he does with it?"

"I know that," Kathleen said; "it isn't the way he plays a bit that makes everybody talk so about him; it's just the things he does. When he plays a tune it just doesn't mean anything, and when you play a tune it does."

And that was as near as Kathleen could ever come to telling why she did not care about Terence's playing. Everybody else said that it was wonderful, but she said that it didn't mean anything. And when Kathleen talked in this way they said that she was too critical. That is what people will always tell you when you can see through a fraud and they cannot.

You will suppose, without my telling you, that as soon as Kathleen was old enough to listen to them, her grandmother began telling her the old stories of Ireland. Often Terence would come and listen to them, too, for he seemed to be less afraid of Mrs. O'Brien as he grew a little older. But it never seemed to be because of the

stories that he came; he only wanted to be near Kathleen.

Mrs. O'Brien told the children stories about the Good People, and about the old heroes and kings of Ireland who had fought to save the country from its enemies. Terence never liked the stories about the Good People. "Don't be telling us about them fairies all the time," he would say. "Tell us about men; that's what I like better."

"Don't call them by that name," Mrs. O'Brien would answer. "They don't like it, and if you call them by it they may do you harm."

"I'll call them what I like," Terence would say, "and they'll do me no harm. It's a worthless lot they are, and you know that same yourself, Mrs. O'Brien, if you'd only think so. They can do no harm to you, or to any woman or man that knows how to deal with them. Why will you bother with them all the time?"

And all this made Mrs. O'Brien think the more that Terence was one of them.

One day Mrs. O'Brien happened to tell the children a ghost story. I don't know whether your mother allows you to read ghost stories. I don't see any harm in them myself, any more than Mrs. O'Brien did, but some people do, and if your mother does, then it is lucky that you are skipping this part. I think that your mother will be very glad that you skipped this part with the ghost story in it. That is, of course, she won't really be glad, because, since you are skipping it, you won't know that there is any ghost story here, and so you won't tell your mother that you skipped a ghost story, and so she won't really care whether you skipped it or not. What I mean is that if you had read it instead of skipping it, so that you could tell your mother that there was a ghost story, she would be glad that you had skipped—well, what is the use of my trying to tell you what I mean, as long as you are skipping it, anyway? I had better go on with the story.

"Once a man was coming home from a funeral," said Mrs. O'Brien. "As he was walking along the road, near a churchyard, he found the head of a man. He took it up and left it in the churchyard. Then he went on his way, and soon he met a man who looked like a gentleman.

"Where have you been?" said the gentleman.

"I was at a funeral," said the man, "and as I came back I found the head of a man, and I left it in the churchyard."

“It was well for you that you did that,’ said the gentleman. ‘That was my head, and if you had done any wrong by it, it would be the worse for you.’

“And how did you lose your head, then?’ the man asked.

“I did not lose it,’ the gentleman answered; ‘I left it on the road, where you found it, to see what you would do with it.’

“Then you must be one of the Good People,’ said the man, ‘and it’s sorry I am that I met you.’

“Don’t be afraid,’ said the gentleman. ‘I’ll do you no harm, and I may do you good.’

“I’m obliged to you,’ said the man; ‘will you come home with me to dinner?’

“They went to the man’s house, and the man told his wife to get dinner ready for them. When they had eaten dinner they played cards, and then they went to bed and slept till morning. In the morning they had breakfast, and after a while the gentleman said: ‘Come with me.’

“Where am I to come with you?’ the man asked.

“I want you to see the place where I live,’ the gentleman said.

“They went together till they came to the churchyard. The gentleman pointed to a tombstone and said: ‘Lift it up.’

“The man lifted it up, and there was a stairway underneath. They went down the stairs together till they came to a door, and it led into a kitchen. Two women were sitting by the fire. Said the gentleman to one of the women: ‘Get up and get dinner ready for us.’

“The woman got up and brought some small potatoes. ‘Are those all you have for us?’ the gentleman asked.

“Those are all I have,’ the woman answered.

“As those are all you have,’ said the gentleman, ‘keep them.’

“Then he said to the other woman: ‘Get up and get dinner ready for us.’

“The woman got up and brought some meal and husks. ‘Are those all you have?’ the gentleman asked.

“‘Those are all I have,’ the woman answered.

“‘As those are all you have,’ said the gentleman, ‘keep them.’

“He led the man up the stairs and knocked at a door. A beautiful woman opened it. She was dressed in a gown of silk, and it was all trimmed with gold and jewels. He asked her if she could give him and the stranger a dinner. Then she placed before them the finest dinner that was ever seen. And when they had eaten and drunk as much as they liked, the gentleman said: ‘Do you know why this woman was able to give us such a dinner?’

“‘I do not know,’ said the man, ‘but I should like to know, if you care to tell me.’

“‘When I was alive,’ said the gentleman, ‘I had three wives. And the first wife I had would never give anything to any poor man but little potatoes. And now she has nothing but little potatoes herself, and she can give nothing else to anyone, till the Day of Judgment. And my second wife would never give anything to the poor but meal and husks, and now she has nothing but meal and husks herself, and she can give nothing else to anyone, till the Day of Judgment. But my third wife always gave to the poor the best that she had, and so she will always have the best that there is in the world, and she can always give the best in the world to anyone, till the Day of Judgment.’

“Then the gentleman took the man about and showed him his house, and it was a palace, more beautiful than anything that he had ever seen. And while he was walking about it he heard music. And he thought that he had never heard music so beautiful. And while he was listening to the music he felt like sleeping, so he lay down and slept. And when he woke he was in his own home. He never saw the gentleman again and he could never find the place where he had been.”

“It’s all the time fairies and ghosts with you, Mrs. O’Brien,” Terence said. “Who cares what they do? It’s what men do that counts. I’ll tell you a story now.”

So Mrs. O’Brien and Kathleen listened to Terence’s story.

“There was three men,” Terence began, “that lived near together, and their names was Hudden and Dudden and Donald. Each one of them had an ox that he’d be ploughing with. Donald was a cleverer man than the others and he got on better. So the other two put their heads together to think what would they do to hurt

Donald and to ruin him entirely, so that he'd have to give up his farm and they could get it cheap. Well, after a while they thought that if they could kill his ox he couldn't plough his land, and then he'd lose the use of it and he'd have to give it up. So one night they went and killed Donald's ox.

"And to be sure, when Donald found his ox killed, he thought it was all over with him. But he wasn't the man to be thinking that way long. So he thought he'd better make the best he could of it, and he took the skin off the ox and started with it to the town to sell it. And as he was going along a magpie perched on the skin and began pecking at it, and all the time chattering, for it had been taught to talk. With that Donald put round his hand and caught the magpie and held it under his coat.

"He went on to the town and sold the skin, and then he went to an inn for a drink. He followed the landlady down into the cellar, and while she was drawing the liquor he pinched the magpie and it began chattering again. 'By the powers,' says the landlady, 'who's that talking and what's he saying at all?'

"It's a bird,' says Donald, 'that I carry around with me, and it knows a great deal and tells me many a thing that it's good for me to know. And it's after telling me just now that the liquor you're giving me is not the best you have.'

"It's the wonderful bird all out,' says the landlady, and with that she went to another cask for the liquor. Then said she: 'Will you sell that bird?'

"I wouldn't like to do that,' says Donald. 'It's a valuable bird, and then it's been my friend a long time, and I dunno what it would be thinking of me if I'd sell it.'

"Maybe I'd make it worth your while.' said the landlady.

"I'm a poor man,' says Donald.

"I'll fill your hat with silver,' says the landlady, 'if you'll leave me the bird.'

"I couldn't refuse that,' says Donald; 'you may have the bird.'

"So she filled his hat with silver, and he left her the bird and went on his way home.

"It wasn't long after he got home till he met Hudden and Dudden. 'Aha!' says he to them, 'you thought it was the bad turn you was doing me, but you couldn't have done me a better. Look what I got for the hide of my ox,

that you killed on me.’ And he showed them the hatful of silver. ‘You never saw such a demand for hides in your life,’ says he, ‘as there is in the town this present time.’

“No sooner had he said that than Hudden and Dudden went home and killed their own oxen and set off for the town to sell the hides. But when they got there they could get no more for them than the common price of hides, and they came home again vowing vengeance on Donald.

“This time they were bound there would be no mistake about it, so they went to his house and they seized him and put him into a sack and tied up the top of it. ‘Now,’ says one of them, ‘you’ll not be doing us any dirty turn this time, I’m thinking. We’re going to take you to the river and throw you in and drown you; that’s what we’re going to do and I’m telling you of it now, so that you’ll have the pleasure of thinking that all your sorrows are nearly over, as you go along.’

“Well, Donald said never a word, but he kept thinking, and those words ‘all your sorrows are nearly over’ gave him something particular to think about, and it wasn’t long till he began to see his way, if he could only get a chance to do what he was thinking of.

“They took up the sack and they carried it by turns for a time, but both of them soon began to get mighty tired and thirsty. Then they came to a tavern, and they left the sack outside, and Donald in it, and went in to get a drink. Donald knew that if they once began drinking they would stay inside for some time. Then presently he heard a great trampling sound, and he knew it must be a herd of cattle coming, and he knew there must be somebody driving them. With that he began singing, like he was the happiest man in the world.

“The man that was driving the cattle came up to him and he says: ‘Who’s inside the sack there, and what are you singing like that for?’

“‘I’m singing because I’m the happiest man alive,’ says Donald. ‘I had plenty of troubles in my life, but I’m going to heaven now, and they’re all over. There’s a blessing on this same sack, you must know, and whoever’s in it goes straight to heaven, and isn’t it myself that’s a right to be singing?’

“‘Surely you have,’ says the man, ‘and it’s glad I’d be to take your place. What would you take from me now to let me get in that sack in your place?’

“‘There’s not money enough in the world to make me do it,’ says Donald, and he began singing again.

“Ah, be reasonable!’ says the man. ‘I’ll pay you well.’

“I tell you the whole world couldn’t do it,’ says Donald. ‘It’s not every day a man gets a chance to go to heaven. Think of being over with all the sorrows and the troubles of this world, and nothing but happiness any more forever. Sure I’d be a fool if I’d give it up.’

“Oh, but think of me,’ says the man. ‘It’s me that has the sorrows on me so that I can’t bear them. There’s my wife died three months ago, and all the children was dead before her, and it was she always helped me with the farm and knew how to manage better nor myself, so that now she’s gone I can do nothing with it. And I’ve lost money on it till I can’t pay the rent, and now I’ll lose the farm itself, and here I am driving these cattle to town to sell them to get money to take another piece of land and keep the life in me, and yet I don’t want to live at all. Oh, give me your place in that sack and you’ll go to heaven in your own time, if it was only for that one good deed. Give me your place and I’ll give you these twenty fine cattle, and you’ll have better luck nor me and you’ll surely do well with them.’

“I can’t resist you,’ says Donald; ‘sure it’s you needs to go to heaven more nor me. It’s the truth I hate to do it, but I’ll give you my place.’

“So with that the man untied the sack and Donald got out of it and he got into it, and Donald tied it up again. Then Donald went away home, driving the cattle before him.

“It was not long then till Hudden and Dudden came out of the inn, and they took up the sack, thinking that Donald was still inside it, and they took it to the river and threw it into a deep place. Then they went home, and there they found Donald before them, and a herd of the finest cattle they ever saw. ‘How is this, Donald?’ they said. ‘We drowned you in the river, and here you are back home before us. And where are you after getting all these cattle?’

“Oh, sure,’ says Donald, ‘it’s myself has the bad luck all out. Here I’ve only twenty of these cattle, and if I’d only had help I could have had a hundred—aye, or five hundred. Sure in the place where you threw me in, down at the bottom of the river, there was hundreds of the finest cattle you ever saw, and plenty of gold besides. Oh, it’s the misfortunate creature that I am, not to have any help while I was down there. Just these poor twenty was all I could manage to drive away with me, and these not the best that was there.’

“Then they both swore that they would be his friends if he would only show them the place in the river where

they could get cattle like his. So he said he'd show them the place and they could drive home as many of them as they liked. Well, Hudden and Dudden was in such a hurry they couldn't get to the river soon enough, and when they were there Donald picked up a stone, and said he: 'Watch where I throw this stone, and that's where you'll find the most of the cattle.'

"Then he threw the stone into a deep part of the river, and he said: 'One of you jump in there now, and if you find more of the cattle than you can manage, just come to the top and call for help, and the other two of us will come in and help you.'

"So Hudden jumped in first and he went straight to the bottom. In a minute he came up to the top and shouted: 'Help! help!'

"'He's calling for help,' says Donald; 'wait now till I go in and help him.'

"'Stay where you are,' says Dudden; 'haven't you cattle enough already? It's my turn to have some of them now.' And in he jumped, and Hudden and Dudden was both drowned. And then Donald went home and looked after his cattle and his farm, and soon he made money enough to take the two farms that Hudden and Dudden had left, besides his own.

"And that's the way," said Terence, "to get on in this world or any world. Get the better of them that's trying to get the better of you, and don't hope for any help from fairies or ghosts."

"Terence," said Mrs. O'Brien, "there's a little that's right in what you say, and there's more that's wrong. Depend on yourself and don't look for help from Good People or ghosts. So much of what you say is right. But Donald was not honest and he got on by tricks, and I don't want you or Kathleen to be that way. You'll not get on that way; you'll only come to grief. But I want you to be kind and helpful to mortals and Good People because it's right to be so, not to get any reward. The reward you may get or you may not in this world, but it's not that I want you to work for. And I'll tell you a story now to show you what I mean.

"There was a poor little bit of a boy once, and he had a hump on his back. He made his living by plaiting rushes and straw into hats and baskets and beehives, and he could do it better than anybody else for miles around. I don't know what his right name was, but the people called him Lusmore, after the flower of that name. The flower, you know, is the one that some call fairy-cap—the Lord between us and harm!—and others call it foxglove. And they called him after it, because he would always be wearing a sprig of it in his cap. And in spite

of having a crooked back, which often makes a body sulky, he was a good-natured little fellow, and never had a bad word or a bad thought for anybody.

“One day he had been at a fair to sell some of the things that he made out of straw and rushes, and as he was coming home he felt tired with the long walk. So he sat down to rest for a little, and he leaned his back on a bank of earth, not thinking that it was a place that was said to be a rath of the Good People. He sat there for a long time, and at last he began to hear music. It was very soft at first, and he had to listen hard to catch it at all. Then it sounded clearer, and after a little he could tell that there were fiddlers and pipers. Then he thought that he could hear the feet of dancers, and finally singers, and he could hear the words of the song that they sang. And these were the words:

Da Luan, da Mort, Da Luan, da Mort, Da Luan, da Mort.

“And there were no other words but these, and these the singers sang over and over and over again. And all they mean is, ‘Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday.’ After the singers had sung these words they would make a little pause and then they would go on with them. Lusmore knew now that the music came from inside the rath, and he knew well enough that it was the Good People he was listening to. He kept very quiet and listened, and it seemed a wonderfully sweet song to him, only after a while he got tired of hearing no other words. And he thought: ‘Maybe they’d like the song better themselves if there was more of it, and I wonder couldn’t I help them with it.’

“But he knew he must not disturb the Good People, so he waited till one of the little pauses, and then he sang very softly: ‘Augus da Cadine.’

“Then he kept on singing all the words, along with the singers inside the rath, adding on his own new line every time:

Da Luan, da Mort, Da Luan, da Mort, Da Luan, da Mort, Augus da Cadine.

“And that means: ‘Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday too.’

“As he went on he sang a little louder and a little louder, till by and by the Good People in the rath began to listen to hear who or what it was that was singing their song with them, and then they caught the line that Lusmore had added. Then they were so pleased that they scarcely knew what to do, for they were more tired of the song than he was, only they did not know what to do to make it any better. And when they found it was somebody outside the rath that was singing it and was making more out of it than they ever did, they wanted

to have him inside as soon as possible.

“So all at once Lusmore saw a door open in the rath, close beside him, and a great light streaming out, and then there was the sound of wings all around him, and next he saw the forms of the Good People pouring out and flying and whirling around him like a swarm of butterflies. They caught him up and carried him inside the rath, so lightly that he could not tell what was holding him, and he felt as if he was floating in the air. He was a little frightened at first, but when they had him inside the rath they set him up above all the musicians and thanked him for mending their song, and did him all sorts of honor.

“Then he saw some of the Good People talking together in a little group, and presently they came up to him, and one of them said: ‘Lusmore, we’ve been thinking what will we do for you as a reward for mending our song, and we’ve decided to ask yourself what it is that you’d rather we’d give you. Think, now, what it is that you’d rather have than anything else in the world.’

“‘It’s obliged to you I am for your kindness, gentlemen,’ said Lusmore, ‘but if you’d do what would please me most in all the world, it’s not giving me anything you’d be, but taking something from me, and that’s this hump that I have on my back.’

“‘That’s easy done,’ said the one of them that had spoken before; ‘come on now and dance with us.’

“Well, Lusmore, being crooked the way he was, and always weak, had never danced before in his life, and he never thought he could; but when they took hold of him on both sides and led him out, he found that he was dancing with the best of them, and he felt so light and he moved so easily that it seemed to him as if he was no more than a feather that the wind was blowing about. Then one of the Good People said to him, ‘Lusmore, where is your hump now?’

“And he felt behind him for it, and it was not on his back at all. ‘Look down on the floor,’ said the one that had spoken to him, again. And he looked down, and there was his hump, lying on the floor before him.

“Then they all began dancing again and Lusmore with them, till he felt tired and then dizzy, and then he fell to the ground, and he knew nothing more till he awoke in the morning and found himself lying on the ground outside the rath, where he had sat down to rest the night before. The first thing he thought was that it was a dream that he had had, but he never had felt so well and so strong in his life as he did that minute. So he put his hand behind him, and there was no hump there. And, what was more, he had on a new suit of clothes that the

Good People had given him. Then he went home and told his neighbors what had happened to him, and they could scarcely believe it. But everyone knew that there were Good People in that rath, and there was himself, too, the same boy as before, only without the hump, and so, at long last, they had to believe the whole story.

“Well, the news of Lusmore’s wonderful cure was told all through the country, and at last it came to a place a long way off, where there was another boy lived that had a hump on his back. And a different sort of boy he was from Lusmore. His temper was as bad as his body. He was ill-natured and spiteful and lazy, and he would always rather be making trouble than saving it. So when his mother heard the way Lusmore had had the hump taken off him, she thought maybe her boy could get rid of his own in the same way.

“With that she set off with the boy and a neighbor of hers, and they came to where Lusmore lived, and asked him would he tell them all about how it was that he had the hump taken off him. And he went over it all with them and told them everything that he did and everything that happened to him. And in the end he went with them to show them the very spot where he had sat down beside the rath, and there they left the little hunchback, and told him to do everything just as Lusmore had done it.

“He sat there listening for a long time and heard nothing, and so at last he went to sleep, and then all at once he was awakened by hearing the Good People singing in the rath. And they were singing much better now than when Lusmore heard them first, for they had the song now as he had improved it for them, and they were singing:

Da Luan, da Mort, Da Luan, da Mort, Da Luan, da Mort, Augus da Cadine.

“And as soon as he heard it the little fellow, not waiting for time or tune, shouted out: ‘Augus da Hena.’ And if it was all put together right that would make it mean: ‘Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday too, and Thursday too.’ Only he didn’t trouble to put it together right, but just bawled it out any way.

“Then the music stopped all at once, and he heard the people inside the rath shouting: ‘Who is spoiling our tune? Who is spoiling our tune?’ and out they all came and caught him up and hurried him inside the rath so that the breath nearly went out of his body. And one of them shouted: ‘What shall we do to him for spoiling our tune?’ and another said: ‘Ask him what he wants us to do for him!’ and another said: ‘What do you want from us, anyway?’

“And he just found breath enough to say: ‘I want the same that Lusmore had,’ meaning by that he wanted them

to reward him the same way they did Lusmore.

“But one of the Good People shouted: ‘You’ll get what Lusmore had, then; it was a hump on the back that Lusmore had, and we took it off him, but we don’t want it and it’s easy to give it to you. Be lively there now, some of you, and hand that hump down here.’

“And then some of the Good People got Lusmore’s hump, that was hanging up under the roof, and they clapped it on his back, on the top of his own, and then they threw him out of the rath. And there his mother found him in the morning, more dead than alive and with a hump twice as big as before.”

“A fine story that is, Mrs. O’Brien,” Terence said, when the old woman had finished. “And why didn’t the one of them get the same reward as the other? Sure he did the same as the other in lengthening the song for the fairies, didn’t he?”

“He did the same in a way,” Mrs. O’Brien answered, “but not for the same reason. Lusmore helped them with the song because he thought they might be the better for his help, and that was all the reason. And he did it in a way that wouldn’t disturb them. But the other did it only to help himself, because he thought that he’d get a great reward for it, and he had no real wish to do them any kindness. Don’t you see the difference between the two of them?”

“Stuff!” said Terence.

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