

The Little Good People

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Irish

Intermediate

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There was a good deal of commotion that night in the rath near where the O'Briens and the Sullivans lived. Do you know what a rath is? I suppose not. It is hard work to tell stories to you, you are so ignorant. I will tell you what a rath is. First I will tell you what it looks like. It looks like a mound of earth, in the shape of a ring, covered with turf, and perhaps with bushes. They are found all over Ireland. Some people, who have studied so much that they have lost all track of what they know and of what they don't know, say that these raths were made by the people who lived in Ireland many hundreds of years ago, and that they were strongholds to guard themselves and their sheep and their cattle from their enemies or from wild beasts. But people who know as much as Mrs. O'Brien, know that they are the places where the fairies live, or the Good People, as she would call them.

On this night that I have been telling you about, the Good People inside the rath were eating and drinking and dancing and making merry generally, as they do, you know, the most of the time. Perhaps you would like to have me tell you how the inside of the rath looked too. I will do the best I can. In the first place, the walls were all of silver and the floor was all of gold. Perhaps you don't know—no, I suppose you don't know—still you may happen to have heard of this before: the fairies know just where to find pretty much all the gold and silver and precious stones that there are in the world, if they happen to want them. They don't want much of them, of course—only just enough to make the walls and the roofs and the floors of their houses of, and to put all over

their clothes and to make all their furniture and dishes of, and all their carriages and their boats, and a few other things—but they know where to find plenty of gold and silver, if they want it.

Now I think that I had better give you a little science. I believe that a book which children are to read, always ought to teach something, so I mean to teach you as much as I can. You must know, then, that gold is one of the heaviest things in the world. Now you know that the earth is always whirling round and round, so that the things that it is made of naturally get shaken up more or less. Besides that, it was once a good deal softer than it is now, so that the things that it is made of could move about more than they can now. And so the most of the gold, being, as I said, one of the heaviest things, got sifted down toward the bottom—that is, toward the centre of the earth. Only a little of it was left near the top, compared with what went to the bottom. It would not be at all surprising if the middle of the earth were a solid lump of gold, a thousand miles thick. But we poor men cannot dig down very deep into the earth. We can only scratch a little dirt off the top, and if we happen to grub up a few pounds of gold we think that we are rich, and the rest of the world thinks so too.

But the fairies laugh at us. They know how to go as deep into the earth as they choose, and so any fairy who chooses can give away gold all his life, and still have more of it in his dust-bin all the time than all the kings in the world have in their treasuries. And the other fairies don't call him rich.

But now we will go back to the rath. Of course it was all under the ground, so that there was no daylight. At the time we are talking about, there would not have been any anyway, for it was night. The place was lighted up with thousands of diamonds and rubies and emeralds, which were set all over the ceiling and shone like lamps. Now I won't call you ignorant just because you say that you don't understand how diamonds could light up anything, for I don't understand it myself. Let us talk about it together and try to decide. Suppose you try the experiment. Some night, after dark, take all the diamonds you have—every one of them—and carry them into a dark room and spread them out, and see if they light up the room at all. I am sure that you will find that they do not. On the contrary, if you let go of them, you will have to go and get a light to hunt for them by. But I suppose the fairies have some other kind of diamonds than ours, or else they know some other way of using the same kind. Sometimes they use fireflies, caught in spider-web nets, but these are generally for out of doors. To light up their houses they almost always use diamonds.

There were two tiny bits of turf fire in the rath. One of them was at one end of the hall, where the King sat, for

the King to light his pipe by, and the other was at the other end, for the other fairy men to light their pipes by. Fairies do not like fire, as a rule, and they would never have any more of it about than they could help. But I know that they must have had some, for I know that Irish fairies smoke pipes, and how could they light them unless they kept a little fire on hand?

Now, I know what you will say to that. You will say: "If they could light a room with diamonds, why couldn't they light pipes with them?" Well, that is not very easy to answer, but I feel sure that even a fairy would never think of lighting a pipe with a diamond. I have owned up already that I don't know exactly how they light rooms with them, but it is easier for me to imagine a diamond giving light than giving heat. Isn't it for you? Now, be honest about it.

At one end of the hall sat the King and the Queen, on their thrones. Near them were half a dozen fairy men who were playing on pipes and fiddles. All over the floor there were dozens and scores of fairies, men and women, dancing to the music. All around the walls stood or sat many more of them, looking at the dancers, and now and then applauding and shouting at particular ones, or talking together, or simply smoking their pipes.

Suddenly two fairies rushed into the hall, with a little sound like the noise of a humming-bird's wings when it passes close to you. From the lower end of the hall, where they came in, they went straight through the crowd to where the King and Queen sat. They dropped on their knees before them for an instant, and then rose and spoke to them. In a moment the King clapped his hands, with a sign for the pipers and the fiddlers to stop playing. The instant that they stopped, everybody in the hall was still.

The King stood up and said to them: "Will ye be still now and listen, all of ye, to the news that's come to me this minute, and then will ye help me to think what we're to do about it at all? Here's these two that's just come in, and they're just afther tellin' me that they've been at the O'Briens' house this evenin', and there they heard talk betune the O'Briens and the Sullivans, and it's all decided that both the O'Briens and the Sullivans is goin' to the States. And it's sorry I'll be to see the O'Briens lavin' the counthry. I don't care so much for the Sullivans."

"It was the O'Briens," said the Queen, "that always put the bit and sup outside the door for us, and what we'll be doin' widout the milk and the pertaties and the fresh wather, I dunno."

"Ye needn't be throubled about that," the King answered; "haven't we always enough to eat and drink of our

own, whatever happens?”

“Thru for you,” said the Queen, “we have our own food and drink, but it’s not the same that we get from human people. Ye know that same yourself, and it’s you as much as any that’ll be missin’ them things when the O’Briens is gone.”

“That’s the thru word too,” said the King; “it’ll be the bad day for us all out, when they go. What for are they lavin’ the counthry at all?”

“If ye plase, Your Majesty,” said one of the fairies who had brought the news, “we heard all that too. It’s the hard times that’s in it. It’s that makes them all want to go, and then, more than that, it’s the bother the Sullivans are put to all the time, wid the cow givin’ no milk and the pig not gettin’ fat, and all that, and they’re bound that they’ll go away and stand it no longer.”

“Is that it?” said the King. “It’s that divil Naggeneen that’s in it. I told him he could bother them a little if he liked, but not to bother them too much, and now he’s drivin’ them and their neighbors out of the counthry, and we all have to suffer for it. He’ll make it up to us in some way, if they go, or I’ll take it out of him. Come here, Naggeneen! What are ye doin’ down there by yourself? Come up here and stand forninst me, till I give ye a piece of me mind. Now, what’s all this about the O’Briens and the Sullivans lavin’ the counthry? What have ye been about wid them?”

A fairy who had not been in the hall before had just come in at the far end from the King, who had caught sight of him. He was smoking a pipe. He had his hands in the pockets of his little green breeches, he wore a red jacket, and on his head was a red cap. He came slowly up the hall, when the King called him, and stood before the throne. “Take off your cap, ye worthless vagabone,” said the King, “when you speak to me.”

“I wasn’t spakin’ to you,” said Naggeneen; “it was you that spoke to me. You called me, and here I am to the fore, though I don’t belong to your pitiful little thribe, and I needn’t come when you call, if I don’t like.”

“Oh, needn’t ye?” said the King. “Take off your cap now, or it’ll be taken off for ye.”

Naggeneen took off his cap.

“Now,” said the King, “what have ye been doin’ to the Sullivans, that they’re lavin’ the counthry and persuadin’

the O'Briens to go wid them?"

"I've been doin' nothin'," said Naggeneen, "but what you said I might do."

"Oh, haven't ye?" said the King. "And what was that?"

"Oh," said Naggeneen, "I just took all the cream and the most of the milk from their cow, and you yourself had a share of it, as you know well; and I put a charm on their pig, so that it wouldn't get fat, no matter how much it 'uld be atin'; and then I druv the smoke of their fire down the chimney, and I threw the dishes and the pans around in the night, just so they wouldn't get lazy wid restin' too well, and a few more little things like that."

"Was that all ye did?" said the King. "And how long have ye been at it that way?"

"Ever since the day that Mrs. Sullivan threw the dirty wather on me, as I was passin' the house. But I'm not the only one that's in it. Some of your own people here have helped me, and good they are at divilment too."

"And those things was all you did, was they?" said the King. "And didn't I tell ye ye could bother them a little, but not too much? What would ye have done if I had told ye to do what ye liked wid them?"

"What would I have done then? Oh, I'd have shown ye the real fun then. What would I have done then? I'd have pinched them and stuck pins in them all day and all night. I'd have put charms on themselves, so that they'd grow thinner than the pig. I'd have took the pertaties out of the creel when they were put to drain at the door. If they went away from home I'd make them think that they saw their house burning up, and so I'd scare them to death. What would I do if you gave me leave? What wouldn't I do?"

"Well, you've done enough as it is," said the King, "to get the whole of us into throuble, and now let's hear what you're goin' to do to get us out of it. Here they are lavin' the counthry and takin' the O'Briens wid them, that was always the good neighbors to us, and they themselves were sometimes useful in their own way, in spite of themselves. And now I ask ye, Naggeneen, what are ye goin' to do to get us out of the throuble ye've got us into?"

"I'm in no throuble meself," Naggeneen answered, "and I dunno what I have to do wid any throuble that you may be in."

“You’re in no throuble yourself? Haven’t ye been as good as livin’ on the Sullivans all this time? And now what are ye goin’ to do widout them?”

“I’m goin’ to do nothin’ widout them; I’m goin’ wid them.”

“Goin’ wid them! Goin’ wid them!”

“Them was me words; you and your silly little thribe can do what ye like; I’m goin’ wid them. It’s a stuffy little place, this rath of yours, and I’ve a notion thravellin’ would be good for me health, any way.”

“But how can ye go wid them?”

“It’s not hard at all,” said Naggeneen, “and it’s been done before this. I was near doin’ it meself once. I don’t suppose ye remember me old friend MacCarthy.”

“MacCarthy of Ballinacarth?” the King asked.

“The same,” said Naggeneen, “and it was he was the good friend to mortal or fairy. It was he kept the good house and the good table and the good cellar—more especially the good cellar. That was not so many years ago—a hundred and odd, maybe. A fine man he was; we don’t see his like now. I lived wid him the most of the time—in the cellar. And the strange thing about him was that, though nobody ever had a bad word for him, though all his servants said that he was the kindest and the best masher that ever stepped, he could get nobody to stay in the place of butler. It was all well enough wid the rest—cooks, maids, hostlers, stable boys—but the first time ever a new butler went into that beautiful wine cellar for wine, back he’ld come in a hurry and say that he’ld lave his place the next day, and nothing on earth would keep him in it. Now, wasn’t that strange?”

“Did you say you lived in that cellar?” the King asked.

“The most of the time,” said Naggeneen.

“Then it was not strange,” said the King.

“Any way, strange or not strange,” Naggeneen went on, “it was the truth. Never a butler could he keep in his

service. A new butler would come and he'd think he was a made man, old MacCarthy was that well known and that well liked all over the counthry. He'd wait once at dinner and then down he'd go to the cellar for wine. Sometimes he'd come back wid the wine and oftener he'd come back widout it, but every time he'd say: 'Mr. MacCarthy, sir, it's much obliged to you I am for all your kindness, but I'll have to be lavin' your service to-morrow.' And nobody could see the why of it.

"And at long last there was young Jack Leary, that had been all his life in old MacCarthy's stable, and he knew how the old man was bad off for a butler, and he made bold to ask for the place. 'If I make ye me butler,' says the old man, 'will ye go into the cellar and bring the wine when I ask ye, and make no throuble about it?'

"'Is that all?' says Jack; 'sure, yer honor, I'd be glad to spend all me time, day and night, in the cellar, only ye might be wantin' me somewhere else now and then.'

"'Then look sharp,' says old MacCarthy, 'for there's gintlemin comin' to dinner to-day. Wait on the table the best ye know how, and at the end of it, when I ring the bell three times, do ye go to the cellar and bring plenty of wine, and let's have no more nonsinse about it.'

"'Niver say it twice,' says Jack; 'yer honor can depind on me.'

"'Well, ye may belave I was listenin' to all this, for I wasn't in the cellar all the time. 'His honor may say it twice,' says I to meself, 'or as many times as he likes, but you'll never go into that cellar twice, Jack, me fine boy.'

"So Jack went about his work, and the dinner went all well enough, till late in the evenin', when old MacCarthy rang the bell three times, and off started Jack for the cellar, wid a basket to bring back the wine. 'It's the silly lot they war,' says he to himself, 'thim butlers, that they'd be afraid to go to the cellar and bring back a bit of a basket full of wine. The only thing I don't like about it is that I can't bring it back in me skin instead of in the basket.'

"He was thinkin' like this in his mind as he went down the long, dark stairs wid his candle, and you may depend I was ready for him, by the time he got to the bottom. So no sooner did he touch the key to the lock than I give him a sort of a laugh and a scream that set the empty wine bottles that stood outside the door a-dancin' together. Jack was a good bold boy, sure enough, and he got the key into the lock and turned it. Wid that I swung the door open for him, so hard that it crashed against the wall and near shook the house down.

And then me fine boy saw all the casks and the hogsheads in the cellar a-swingin' and a-rockin' and a-whirlin' around, as if all the wine had been in him instead of in them.

"You may be sure he didn't wait long afther that, but he just dropped his basket and fell all the way up the stairs and into the room where the gintlemin was waitin' for their wine. Well, it was then that old MacCarthy was in the towerin' rage. Never a word could Jack say to tell where he'd been or how he came back, or why.

"Gintlemin,' says MacCarthy, 'ye'll get your wine, if I have to go to the cellar for it meself. But this I tell ye: I'll live no longer in this house, where I can't get servants to serve me. I'll be lavin' it to-morrow, and no later. The next time ye find me at home, ye'll find me in a place where I can keep a butler and have him do his work.'

"Wid that he took the lantern and started for the cellar himself. Ye'll guess that I was in the dining-room as soon as Jack and heard all this, and I was back in the cellar, too, before MacCarthy got there. I was sittin' on a cask of port, when he came in and saw me be the light of the lantern. I was sittin' there, wid a spiggot over me shoulder. 'Are ye there?' says MacCarthy. 'Who are ye, anyway, and what are ye doin' there?'

"Sure, your honor,' says I, 'a'n't we goin' to move to-morrow, and it's not the likes of a kind man like you that would be wishin' to lave poor little Naggeneen behind.'

"Is that the way of it?" says MacCarthy. 'Well, if you're agoin' to move wid us, I see no use in movin' at all. If I'm to have you in me cellar, wherever it is, it may as well be at Ballinacarthu as anywhere.'

"And from that day till the day of his death me and old MacCarthy was the best of friends. And he always brought all his wine from the cellar himself."

"And what has all that to do wid us?" said the King.

"What has it to do wid ye?" said Naggeneen. "It has nothin' to do wid ye, unless ye want to make it, and never a care I care whether ye do or not. But it has a good deal to do wid me. It shows, doesn't it, that I was ready to go wid old MacCarthy, and him runnin' away from me; and just so I'm ready to go wid the Sullivans, now that they're runnin' away from me. I've given ye a good hint. Ye can do as ye plase."

"It's glad I'd be," said the Queen, "if we could be rid of the Sullivans and Naggeneen both at once, but I dunno what we'll do at all if the O'Briens go away."

"I'm not over-fond of Naggeneen meself," said the King, "but it's a sharp bit of a boy he is, and I'm thinkin' he may not be far from right this time. It might be that a new counthry would be as good for us as for the O'Briens or the Sullivans, and, anyway, we'd still be near to them."

"Do ye mean," the Queen said, "that ye think we might all go to the States along wid the O'Briens and the Sullivans and Naggeneen?"

"If Naggeneen goes," the King replied, "he'll go along wid us; we'll not go wid him; but it was just that same that I was thinkin'. And yet we couldn't do a thing like that widout the lave of the King of All Ireland."

When the King spoke of the King of All Ireland, of course he meant the King of all the fairies in Ireland. He was himself only the King of this rath. Of course you know that the people of Ireland have no kings of their own any more.

"Naggeneen, me boy," said the King, "just take your fut in your hand and go to the King of All Ireland. Give him me compliments and ask him would he think there was anything against the whole of us goin' to the States."

"Is it me that would be runnin' arrants to the King of All Ireland," Naggeneen answered: "me, that don't belong to your thribe at all, and forty lazy spalpeens around here wearin' their legs off wid dancin' or rustin' them off wid doin' nothin' at all?"

"It's thru you don't belong to me thribe," said the King, "and glad I am of that same. But while ye stay in me rath ye'll do what I bid ye. Why would I kape a dog and bark meself? Go on, now, and do what I tell ye, or ye know what I'll do to ye. Be off now!"

Naggeneen was off.

Now, while Naggeneen is gone with his message to the King of All Ireland, I will just take a minute to say something that I have felt like saying for quite a little while. He will not be gone much more than a minute. What I have to say is this: Nearly all the people in this story, mortals and fairies, too, had the way of speaking

that most Irish people have, which we call a brogue. Mrs. O'Brien had only a little of it—just the bit of a soft brogue that comes from Dublin, where she had lived for a long time. The most of the others had a good deal more. But as I go on with the story from here, I see no use in trying to write the brogue. It is hard to spell and confusing to read. If you do not know what a good Irish brogue is, you would never learn from any attempt of mine to spell it out for you; and if you do know what it is, you can put it in for yourself. I may have to try to write a little of it now and then, for there is some Irish that does not look like Irish when it is written in English, but I shall use as little of it after this as I can. Naggeneen is back by this time.

Naggeneen sauntered into the hall where the King and the Queen and all the company were waiting for him, with his hands in his pockets, quite as if he had been out for a quiet stroll and had come back because he was tired of it. “Well,” said the King, “did you see the King of All Ireland?”

“I saw him with my good-looking eyes,” Naggeneen answered.

“And what did he say?”

“He said he'd come here and talk to you himself, and, by the look of him, I think it's a pleasant time he'll be giving you.”

“Then why is he not here as soon as you?” the King asked.

“Oh, nothing would do for him,” said Naggeneen, “but that he and his men must come on horseback. They can come no faster that way, but they think it's due to their dignity. They had to wait for the horses to be ready, and so I beat them.”

Naggeneen had scarcely said this when the door flew open at the end of the hall, and, with a rush and a whirl, in came a great troupe of fairies on horseback—the King of All Ireland and his men. They all leaped down from their horses, and instantly every horse turned into a green rush, such as grows beside the bogs. The King of All Ireland walked quickly up to the King of the rath and stood before him, with an awful frown on his face. The King of the rath was plainly nervous. “Will you have a light for your pipe, Your Majesty?” he asked.

“Never mind my pipe now,” said the King of All Ireland. “Tell me first of all, who is this messenger that you sent to me?” The King of All Ireland had only a little bit of brogue—the Dublin kind.

“Sure,” said the King of the rath, “that’s only poor Naggeneen.”

“Only poor Naggeneen!” cried the King of All Ireland. “And what are you doing with him? Do you see the red jacket he has on? Why doesn’t he wear a green jacket, like your people? You know what his red jacket means as well as I. He belongs to the fairies who live by themselves, not to those who live together honestly in a rath. Why do you have him with your honest green jackets?”

“Sure, Your Majesty,” said the King of the rath, “I thought it was no harm. He said he was tired of being by himself, and you know how handy he is with the fiddle or the pipes. If he’d been a fir darrig, that’s always playing tricks and making trouble everywhere, why, then, of course—but he was only a poor cluricaun—”

“Yes,” the King of All Ireland interrupted, “only a poor cluricaun, that does nothing but rob gentlemen’s wine cellars and keep himself so drunk that he’s of no use when he’s wanted for any good. And hasn’t he made you as much trouble as any fir darrig could do?”

“I was a lepracaun, too, once, Your Majesty,” Naggeneen said.

“A lepracaun, were you? What did you do then? And when was it and how did it happen that a lazy lump like you was ever a lepracaun?”

“It was a long time ago,” said Naggeneen, ready enough to talk about anything to draw the King’s thoughts away from the trouble that he had made. “After old MacCarthy, of Ballinacorthy, died, those that came after him did not keep up his cellar well, and I felt lonely and sad, and I didn’t care to drink any more—”

“Lonely and sad you must have been,” said the King of All Ireland; “but you did drink still, did you not, though you didn’t care for it?”

“True for you, Your Majesty,” said Naggeneen, “I did a little, just for my health. But I was so lonely and so falling to pieces with idleness—”

“Falling to pieces with idleness!” the King interrupted again. “If idleness could make you fall to pieces, there

wouldn't have been a piece of you left big enough to make trouble in a fly's eye, these last seven hundred years."

"As you say, Your Majesty," Naggeneen went on, "but, anyway, I was a lepracaun, and I did what any other lepracaun does: I sat in the field or under a tree and made brogues. But it was sorry work and people was always trying to catch me, to make me show them the gold they thought I had. And one time a great brute of a spalpeen did catch me, and he nearly broke me in two with the squeeze he gave me, so that I wouldn't get away till I'd showed him the gold. And I nearly had to show it to him, but I made him look away for a second, and then of course I was off. And after that my friend the King here let me come and live in the rath, just for company—not that I belong to his little tribe at all."

"And now you see," said the King of All Ireland, turning from Naggeneen to the King of the rath, "what trouble comes to you from taking those into your rath that have no right there. He's sending people out of Ireland that might be of use to you and to all of us. He wants to go with them, and that is no loss, but you want to go, too and to take all your people. That might be a loss, though I don't know that it would."

"We think it's best that we should go, Your Majesty," the King of the rath answered, meekly, "if you see no reason why not."

"I see reasons enough why not," said the King of All Ireland. "You don't know where you are going, nor what you'll find there. You don't know how you're to live, nor whether it'll be any fit place to live. You don't know whether the people there will help you or hinder you."

"Wherever the O'Briens go, they'll help us," the King of the rath answered. "We don't like to have them leave us here."

"You've gone contrary to the law enough already," said the King of All Ireland, "in taking in this fellow with the red coat. Now you may take all the consequences of it and go where you like. I don't care where you go and I think nobody cares, only I think it may be best for all the Good People in Ireland to have you out of it. Mount your horses," he shouted to his men, "and we'll be off out of this!"

He took one of the little green rushes from the floor and sat astride it, as a little boy rides on his father's cane. "Borram, borram, borram!" he said, and instantly the rush was a beautiful white horse. Every one of his men did the same. Each one took one of the rushes and sat astride of it and said, "Borram, borram, borram!" and

every one of the rushes grew into a horse. There was a little whirring sound, like that of a swarm of bees, and they were all gone.

Everybody in the rath was silent for a few minutes. The King and the Queen looked at each other and were much troubled. Naggeneen, without making a bit of noise, scuttled down to the farthest corner of the hall. The others seemed not to know where to look or what to do or to think. Then the King turned toward them and said; "It's all over; we couldn't stay here now. Wherever has Naggeneen got to?"

The fairies who were nearest to Naggeneen hustled him forward and he stood before the King again.

"Naggeneen," said the King, "it's trouble enough you've made for all of us, and it's ballyragging enough you and all the rest of us have got for it, and we don't know, as His Majesty said, what more is to come. So now do the only thing you was ever good for and give us a tune out of the fiddle."

It was the only thing that Naggeneen was good for, and the only thing that was not mischief that he liked to do. He took a fiddle from one of the fairies who had been playing for the dancing before all the confusion began. He held the fiddle under his chin for a moment, while everybody waited, and then he began to play.

He played first some old tunes that every fairy in Ireland knows well. But not every fairy in Ireland can play them as Naggeneen did. They were tunes which everybody listening in that rath had known for hundreds of years. There were wild and strange airs that made them remember days when Ireland was a strange country, even to them; then the music was full of wonder and mystery, like the spells of the old Druids; then it was strong and free and fierce, and they thought of Finn McCool and the Fenians, and the days when Erin had heroes to guard her from her foes. The fiddle was telling them the story of their own lives and of all that they had ever seen and known. Now it was a strange music, which they could not understand—which the player could understand as little as the rest—but it was soft and sweet, and yet deep and bold, and the fairies trembled as they remembered the holy Patrick and a mighty power in the worlds of the seen and of the unseen. This passed away and the music came with the stir and the swing of marching men, and the fairies were again in the days of King Brian Boru, with Ireland free and brave and strong. It grew sad; it gushed out like sobs from a broken heart; then it was quieter, but still full of a softer sorrow; now it was merry and reckless. It made the fairies remember all that they had ever seen in the lives of the people whom they had known so long—the cruel hardship, war, sickness, hunger, and then, besides, the faith, the kindness, the light-heartedness that had

saved them through it all. There were tunes that every man and woman in Ireland knows—tunes that you know—old airs that every Irish fiddler or piper or singer learns from the older ones, that the oldest ones of all learned, they say, from the fairies. And under all the music, whether grave or gay, there went a strain of grief, sometimes almost harsh and sometimes scarcely heard, and as the fairies listened to it they grew pale at the thought that now they were to go away from all that they had known, to find something which they did not know. While they were thinking of this the music changed again. It was a soft murmur, like the sound of the sea that is kept forever in a sea-shell. Then it grew loud and rough, with the rush of winds and the crash of waves. The fairies were filled with fright, and before they knew that they were afraid, the music was singing a song of hope, and then, all at once, it grew as merry as if there had never been a sad thought in the world.

For a moment the fairies listened to it and all their feet began to stir restlessly on the floor. One of the fairy men caught the hand of a fairy girl—a fairy girl with cheeks like the tiny petals in the heart of a rose, with a white gown like a mist, and hair like fine sunbeams falling on the mist; he threw his arm about her waist, and they danced away down the hall. In an instant all the rest were dancing, too, alone, in pairs, and in rings. Naggeneen looked on and laughed till he could scarcely play. All this time his music had moved him less than anybody else who heard it. He did not feel what he had made the others feel, but he knew how to pour it all out of his fiddle.

The King made a sign for him to stop. All the dancers were still in an instant. The lights in the hall went out. The next minute, if you had been outside the rath and had laid your ear down on the turf which covered it, you would have heard nothing more than you might hear under the turf at any other time or in any other place.

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