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**OUR
LITTLE
IRISH
COUSIN**

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Our Little Irish Cousin

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[Preface](#)

[Our Little Irish Cousin](#)

[CHAPTER I.](#)

[CHAPTER II.](#)

[CHAPTER III.](#)

[CHAPTER IV.](#)

[CHAPTER V.](#)

[CHAPTER VI.](#)

[CHAPTER VII.](#)

[CHAPTER VIII.](#)

INTRODUCTION

[Table of Contents](#)

WITH the home of our Irish cousins we are not very familiar, but with our Irish cousins themselves we have a better acquaintance, for many of them have come over to settle in America, and they were among the bravest of the American troops in the World War. Of the part in the war taken by their people in Ireland we do not know so intimately, but we do know that they sent many men to France to help England defeat the Germans. They took our boys to their homes, and fed and clothed them; they nursed them back to health and strength, and by so doing the people of Ireland won their way into the hearts of the people of America.

Since the end of the war the bond between the two countries has grown even closer, for, under the leadership of America, the nations of Europe began to listen to Ireland's plea for home rule. This plea was backed up by active Revolution, as was our own struggle for independence. Finally the Imperial British Government, with the interests of the Irish people at heart, granted them Home Rule, to control their own destinies within the British Empire. Unfortunately, however, even this did not prove a complete solution of Ireland's difficulties, for some of the Irish people wished to remain attached to England, and enjoy the advantages of her wise and just rule. These were the people of Northern Ireland, called Ulster. So it has been agreed that they shall remain under English rule, leaving Home Rule for Southern Ireland.

Preface

Table of Contents

You have often heard people speak of the Emerald Isle. When you have asked where it is and why it is so called, you have been told it is only another name for that small island to the northwest of the continent of Europe called Ireland.

The rains there fall so often, and the sun shines so warmly afterward, that Mother Nature is able to dress herself in the brightest and loveliest of colours. The people there are cheerful and good-natured. They are always ready to smile through their tears and see the funny side of every hardship.

And, alas! many things have happened to cause their tears to flow. They have suffered from poverty and hunger. Thousands of them have been forced to leave parents and friends, and seek a living within the kindly shores of America.

America is great, America is kind, they may think, but oh! for one look at the beautiful lakes of Killarney; oh! for a walk over the green fields and hills of the Emerald Isle. And oh! for the chance to gather a cluster of shamrock, the emblem of dear old Erin.

The little Irish cousin, who has never left her native land, may be poor, and sometimes ragged, but her heart is warm and tender, and she loves her country and her people with a love that will never change, no matter where she may travel or what fortune may befall her.

Our Little Irish Cousin

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

NORAH

"Londonderry, Cork, and Kerry,
Spell *that* to me without a K."

"CAN you do it now?" said Norah, laughing.

"Can I do it? Yes, easy enough, for I've heard the riddle before. T-h-a-t. There, Norah, you didn't catch me this time."

Molly laughed, too, as she spoke, and the little girls went on dressing their rag dolls.

They were great friends, these two children of Ireland, and, although they were ragged and dirty most of the time, and neither of them owned hats or shoes, they were happy as the day is long. And, when I say this, I mean one of the longest days of Ireland, which are very long indeed.

Norah had beautiful blue eyes and dark auburn hair. Her teeth were like pearls and her cheeks were rosy as the brightest sunset.

"She is a true daughter of Erin," thought her mother, as she looked at the child. "May God will that she grow up to be as good as she is beautiful," she said to herself, making the sign of the cross on her breast.

As for Molly, Norah's little playmate, her hair was black as night. Many other lads and lasses of Ireland have hair like that. It is because, long years ago, before even the Christ-child dwelt among men, Spaniards came to the west coast of Ireland and settled among the people there.

They gave their black hair and dark eyes to the people already in the country, most of whom were fair in face, hair, and eyes. So it happens that sometimes they now have dark hair and blue eyes, and sometimes light hair and dark eyes.

"Norah! Norah, darlint! Come and feed the pigs," called her mother. "They are that hungry they would eat the thatch off the house if they could reach it."

Norah jumped up, and running home as fast as her young feet could carry her, took the dish of mush from her mother's hands. She was instantly surrounded by a thin old mother pig and her ten little ones.

They were cunning little things when they were born, and Norah loved to hold them in her arms and pet them. But they were big enough now to root about in the mud, and the little girl held them no longer.

"Oof! oof!" grunted the mother pig. "Good! good!" was what she meant, of course, as she swallowed her supper as quickly as possible, and the ten babies followed her example.

Then Norah had to feed the ducks and chickens, and her precious goat.

"I love it. Oh, I love it, next to father and mother and the children," thought the little girl.

"How much it knows, and how gentle it is! And what should we do without the sweet, rich milk it gives us!" she said, turning to Molly, who was helping her in her work.

"It is a dear little creature" (Molly pronounced it crayther), "but I love our pet cow better. I suppose the reason is because it is ours. But, good night till ye, Norah. I must be after getting home."

Molly went running down the lane, while Norah entered the house.

House! It would hardly be fair to give it such a grand name. It was a small stone hut, not much taller than Norah's father, with a roof covered with mud and straw mixed together. Such a roof is said to be thatched.

There was only one window in the hut, and that was a small one. The door was divided across the middle, and the upper part of it stood wide open. Yet, as Norah stepped inside, the air was thick and heavy with smoke.

Over in one corner was a fireplace, and in it cakes of dried peat were slowly burning. It was the only kind of fuel Norah's mother had to burn, so it was no wonder the air of the room was smoky.

Do you know what peat is? In Norah's country there are many square miles of marshy land covered with moss and grasses. If it could speak to us, this land would tell a wonderful story.

"Ages and ages ago," it would say, "great forests of oak stood here. The trees grew large and strong. But the rain fell often and the air was very damp. This is the reason mosses and other plants gathered on the trunks and branches of the trees. They sent their roots into the moist bark and fed on the sap that should have nourished the trees.

"The great trees became weaker and weaker as the years passed away, until at last they sickened and died, and fell to the ground.

"Fir-trees began to grow in the places of the oaks. But they were treated in the same manner. Their life-giving sap was taken by a new growth of mosses. The fir-trees died,