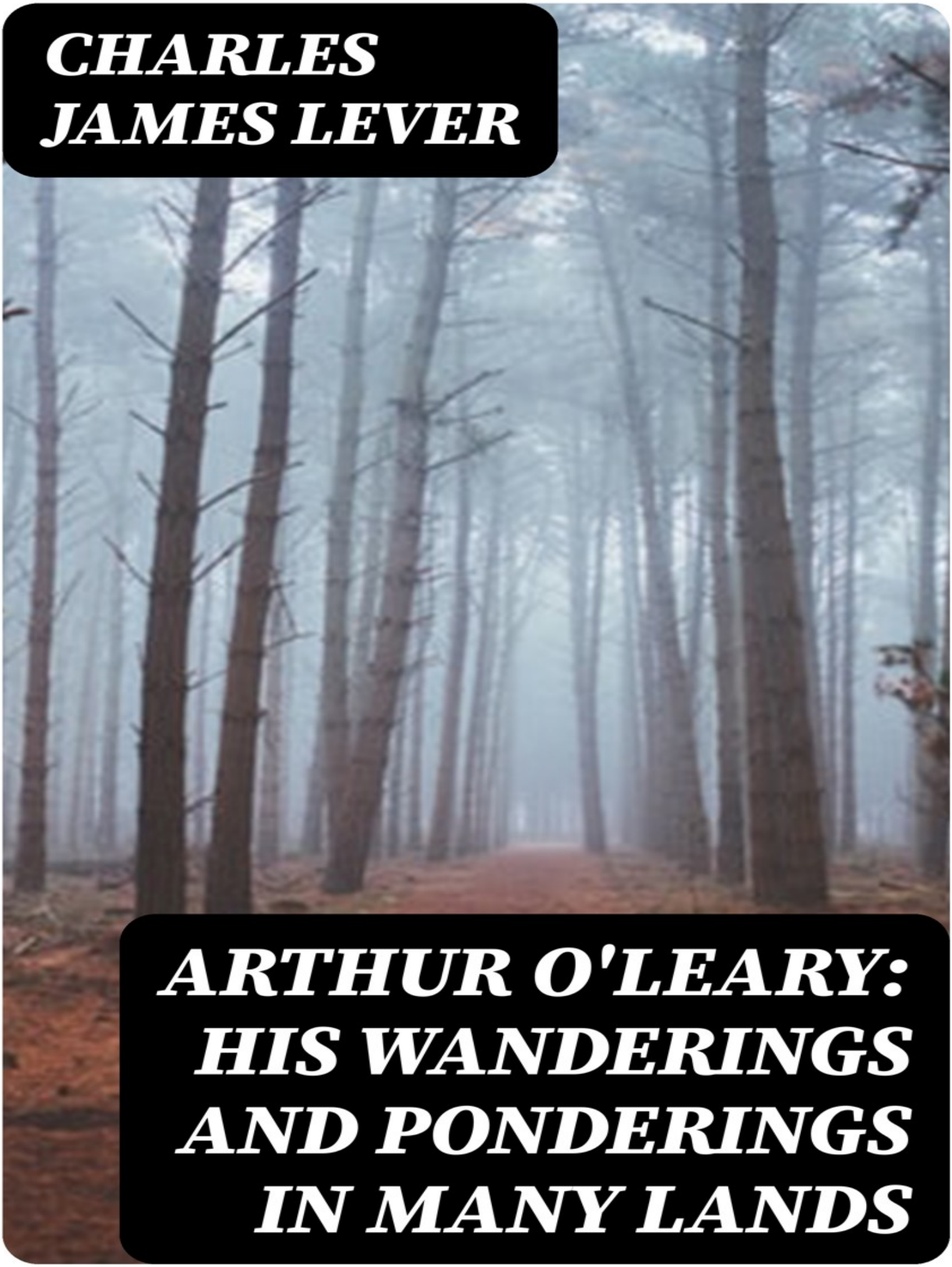
CHARLES JAMES LEVER
ARTHUR O'LEARY: HIS WANDERINGS AND PONDERINGS IN MANY LANDS

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Arthur O'Leary: His Wanderings And Ponderings In Many Lands

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Table of Contents

NOTICE, PRELIMINARY AND EXPLANATORY,

Table of Contents

BY THE EDITOR.

Table of Contents

When some years ago we took the liberty, in a volume of our so-called “Confessions,” to introduce to our reader’s acquaintance the gentleman whose name figures in the title page, we subjoined a brief notice, by himself, intimating the intention he entertained of one day giving to the world a farther insight into his life and opinions, under the title of “Loiterings of Arthur O’Leary.”

It is more than probable that the garbled statement and incorrect expression of which we ourselves were guilty respecting our friend had piqued him into this declaration, which, on mature consideration, he thought fit to abandon. For, from that hour to the present one, nothing of the kind ever transpired, nor could we ascertain, by the strictest inquiry, that such a proposition of publication had ever been entertained in the West-End, or heard of in the “Row.”

The worthy traveller had wandered away to “pastures new,” heaven knows where! and, notwithstanding repeated little paragraphs in the second advertizing column of the “Times” newspaper, assuring, “A. O’L. that if he would inform his friends where a letter would reach, all would be forgiven,” &c. the mystery of his whereabouts remained unsolved, save by the chance mention of a north-west

passage traveller, who speaks of a Mr. O’Leary as having presided at a grand bottle-nosed whale dinner in Behring’s Straits, some time in the autumn of 1840; and an allusion, in the second volume of the Chevalier de Bertonville’s Discoveries in Central Africa, to an “Irlandais bien original,” who acted as sponsor to the son and heir of King Bullanullaboo, in the Chieckhow territory. That either, or indeed, both, these individuals resolved themselves into our respected friend, we entertained no doubt whatever; nor did the information cause us any surprise, far less unquestionably, than had we heard of his ordering his boots from Hoby, or his coat from Stultz.

Meanwhile time rolled on—and whether Mr. O’Leary had died of the whale feast, or been eaten himself by his godson, no one could conjecture, and his name had probably been lost amid the rust of ages, if certain booksellers, in remote districts, had not chanced upon the announcement of his volume, and their “country orders” kept dropping in for these same “Loiterings,” of which the publishers were obliged to confess they knew nothing whatever.

Now, the season was a dull one; nothing stirring in the literary world; people had turned from books, to newspapers; a gloomy depression reigned over the land. The India news was depressing; the China worse; the French were more insolent than ever; the prices were falling under the new tariff; pigs looked down, and “Repealers” looked up. The only interesting news, was the frauds in pork, which turned out to be pickled negroes and potted squaws. What was to be done? A literary speculation at such a moment was preposterous; for although in an age of temperance, nothing prospered but “Punch.”

It occurred to us, “then pondering,” as Lord Brougham would say, that as these same “Loiterings” had been asked for more than once, and an actual order for two copies had

been seen in the handwriting of a solvent individual, there was no reason why we should not write them ourselves. There would be little difficulty in imagining what a man like O’Leary would say, think, or do, in any-given situation. The peculiarities of his character might, perhaps, give point to what dramatic people call “situations,” but yet were not of such a nature as to make their portraiture a matter of any difficulty.

We confess the thing savoured a good deal of book-making. What of that? We remember once in a row in Dublin, when the military were called out, that a sentinel happened to have an altercation with, an old woman of that class, for which the Irish metropolis used to have a patent, in all that regards street eloquence and repartee. The soldier, provoked beyond endurance, declared at last with an oath, “that if she didn’t go away, he’d drive his bayonet through her.” “Oh, then, the devil thank you for that same,” responded the hag, “sure, isn’t it your trade?” Make the application, dear reader, and forgive us for our authorship to order.

Besides, had we not before us the example of Alexandre Dumas, in France, whose practice it is to amuse the world by certain Souvenirs de “Voyage,” which he has never made, not even in imagination but which are only the dressed-up skeletons of other men’s rambles, and which he buys, exactly as the Jews do old uniforms and court suits, for exportation to the colonies. And thus while thousands of his readers are sympathizing with the suffering of the aforesaid Alexandre, in his perilous passage of the great desert, or his fearful encounter with Norwegian wolves, little know they that their hero is snugly established in his “entresol” of the “Rue d’Alger,” lying full length on a spring-cushioned sofa, with a Manilla weed on his lip, and George Sand’s last bulletin of wickedness, half cut before him. These “Souvenirs de Voyage” being nothing more than the

adventures and incidents of Messrs. John Doe and Richard Doe, paragraphed, witticized, and spiced for public taste, by Alexandre Dumas, pretty much as cheap taverns give “gravy” and “ox-tail”—the smallest modicum of meat, to the most high-seasoned and hot-flavoured condiments.

If, then, we had scruples, here was a precedent to relieve our minds—here a case perfectly in point, at least so far as the legitimacy of the practice demanded. But, unhappily, it ended there: for although it may be, and indeed is, very practicable for Monsieur Dumas, by the perfection of *his “cuisine,”* to make the meat itself a secondary part of the matter; yet do we grievously fear that a tureen full of “O’Leary,” might not be an acceptable dish, because there was a bone of “Harry Lorrequer” in the bottom.

With all these *pros* and *cons* our vain-glorious boast to write the work in question stared us suddenly in the face; and, really, we felt as much shame as can reasonably be supposed to visit a man, whose countenance has been hawked about the streets, and sold in shilling numbers. What was to be done? There was the public, too; but, like Tony Lumpkin, we felt we might disappoint the company at the Three Jolly Pigeons—but could we disappoint ourselves?

Alas! there were some excellent reasons against such a consummation. So, respected reader, whatever liberties we might take with you, we had to look nearer home, and bethink us of ourselves. *After all*—and what a glorious charge to the jury of one’s conscience is your after all!—what a plenary indulgence against all your sins of commission and omission!—what a makepeace to self-accusation, and what a salve to heartfelt repinings!—after all, we did know a great deal about O’Leary: his life and opinions, his habits and haunts, his prejudices, pleasures, and predilections: and although we never performed Boz to his Johnson, still had we ample knowledge of him for all purposes of book-writing; and there was no reason why we

should not assume his mantle, or rather his Macintosh, if the weather required it.

Having in some sort allayed our scruples in this fashion, and having satisfied our conscience by the resolve, that if we were not about to record the actual *res gesto* of Mr. O'Leary, neither would we set down anything which *might not* have been one of his adventures, nor put into his mouth any imaginary conversations which *he might not* have sustained; so that, in short, should the volume ever come under the eyes of the respected gentleman himself, considerable mystification would exist, as to whether he did not say, do, and think, exactly as we made him, and much doubt lie on his mind that he was not the author himself.

We wish particularly to lay stress on the honesty of these our intentions—the more, as subsequent events have interfered with their accomplishment; and we can only assure the world of what we would have done, had we been permitted. And here let us observe, *en passant*, that if other literary characters had been actuated by similarly honourable views, we should have been spared those very absurd speeches which Sallust attributes to his characters in the Catiline conspiracy; and another historian, with still greater daring, assumes the Prince of Orange *ought* to have spoken, at various epochs in the late Belgian revolution.

With such prospective hopes, then, did we engage in the mystery of these same "Loiterings," and with a pleasure such as only men of the pen can appreciate, did we watch the bulky pile of MS. that was growing up before us, while the interest of the work had already taken hold of us; and whether we moved our puppets to the slow figure of a minuet, or rattled them along at the slap-dash, hurry-scurry, devil-may-care pace, for which our critics habitually give us credit, we felt that our foot beat time responsively to the measure, and that we actually began to enjoy the performance.

In this position stood matters, when early one morning in December the post brought us an ominous-looking epistle, which, even as we glanced our eye on the outside, conveyed an impression of fear and misgiving to our minds. If there are men in whose countenances, as Pitt remarked, “villany is so impressed, it were impiety not to believe it,” so are there certain letters whose very shape and colour, fold, seal, and superscription have something gloomy and threatening—something of menace and mischief about them. This was one of these: the paper was a greenish sickly-white, a kind of dyspeptic foolscap; the very mill that fabricated it might have had the shaking ague. The seal was of bottle-wax, the impression, a heavy thumb. The address ran, “To H. L.” The writing, a species of rustic paling, curiously interwoven and gnarled, to which the thickness of the ink lent a needless obscurity, giving to the whole the appearance of something like a child’s effort to draw a series of beetles and cockroaches with a blunt stick; but what most of all struck terror to our souls, was an abortive effort at the words “Arthur O’Leary” scrawled in the corner.

What! had he really then escaped the perils of blubber and black men? Was he alive, and had he come back to catch us, *in delicto*—in the very fact of editing him, of raising our exhausted exchequer at his cost, and replenishing our empty coffers under his credit? Our suspicions were but too true. We broke the seal and spelled as follows—

“Sir—A lately-arrived traveller in these parts brings me intelligence, that a work is announced for publication by you, under the title of ‘The Loiterings of Arthur O’Leary,’ containing his opinions, notions, dreamings, and doings during several years of his life, and in various countries. Now this must mean me, and I should like to know what are a man’s own, if his adventures are not? His ongoings, his ‘begebenheiten,’ as the Germans call them, are they not as

much his, as his—what shall I say; his flannel waistcoat or his tobacco-pipe?

“If I have spent many years, and many pounds (of tobacco) in my explorings of other lands, is it for you to reap the benefit? If I have walked, smoked, laughed, and fattened from Trolhatten to Tehran, was it that you should have the profit? Was I to exhibit in ludicrous situations and extravagant incidents, with ‘illustrations by Phiz,’ because I happened to be fat, and fond of rambling? Or was it my name only that you pirated, so that Arthur O’Leary should be a type of something ludicrous, wherever he appeared in company? Or worse still, was it an attempt to extort money from me, as I understand you once before tried, by assuming for one of your heroes the name of a most respectable gentleman in private life? To which of these counts do you plead guilty?

“Whatever is your plan, here is mine: I have given instructions to my man of law to obtain an injunction from the Chancellor, restraining you or any other from publishing these ‘Loiterings.’ Yes; an order of the court will soon put an end to this most unwarrantable invasion of private rights. Let us see then if you’ll dare to persist in this nefarious scheme.

“The Swan-river for you, and the stocks for your publisher, may, perhaps, moderate your literary and publishing ardour—eh! Master Harry? Or do you contemplate adding your own adventures beyond seas to the volume, and then make something of your ‘Confessions of a Convict,’ I must conclude at once: in my indignation this half hour, I have been swallowing all the smoke of my meerschaum, and I feel myself turning round and round like a smoke-jack. Once for all—stop! recall your announcement, burn your MS., and prostrate yourself in abject humility at my feet, and with many sighs, and two pounds of shag (to be had at No. 8,

Francis-street, two doors from the lane), you may haply be forgiven by yours, in wrath,

“Arthur O’Leary.

“Address a line, if in penitence, to me here, where the lovely scenery, and the society remind me much of Siberia—

“Edenderry, ‘The Pig and Pot-hooks.’”

Having carefully read and re-read this letter, and having laid it before those whose interests, like our own, were deeply involved, we really for a time became thoroughly nonplussed. To disclaim any or all of the intentions attributed to us in Mr. O’Leary’s letter, would have been perfectly useless, so long as we held to our project of publishing anything under his name. Of no avail to assure him that our “Loiterings of Arthur O’Leary” were not his—that our hero was not himself. To little purpose should we adduce that our Alter Ego was the hero of a book by the Prebend of Lichfield, and “Charles Lever” given to the world as a socialist. He cared for nothing of all this; *tenax propositi*, he would listen to no explanation—unconditional, absolute, Chinese submission were his only terms, and with these we were obliged to comply. And yet how very ridiculous was the power he assumed. Was any thing more common in practice than to write the lives of distinguished men, even before their death, and who ever heard of the individual seeking legal redress against his biographer except for libel? “Come, come, Arthur,” said we to ourselves, “this threat affrights us not. Here we begin Chap. XIV.—”

Just then we turned our eyes mechanically towards the pile of manuscript at our elbow, and could not help admiring the philosophy with which *he* spoke of condemning to the flames the fruit of *our* labour. Still it was evident, that Mr. O’Leary’s was no *brutem fulmen*, but very respectable and downright thunder; and that in fact we should soon be,

where, however interesting it may make a young lady, it by no means suits an elderly gentleman to be, viz.—in Chancery.

“What’s to be done?” was the question, which like a tennis-ball we pitched at each other. “We have it,” said we. “We’ll start at once for Edenderry, and bring this with us,” pointing to our manuscript. “We’ll show O’Leary how near immortality he was, and may still be, if not loaded with obstinacy: We’ll read him a bit of our droll, and some snatches of our pathetic passages. Well show him how the ‘Immortal George’ intends to represent him. In a word, we’ll enchant him with the fascinating position to which we mean to exalt him and before the evening ends, obtain his special permission to deal with him, as before now we have done with his betters, and—print him.”

Our mind made up, no time was to be lost. We took our place in the Grand Canal passage-boat for Edenderry; and wrapping ourselves up in our virtue, and another thin garment they call a Zephyr, began our journey.

We should have liked well, had our object permitted it, to have made some brief notes of our own “Loiterings.” But the goal of our wanderings, as well as of our thoughts, was ever before us, and we spent the day imagining to ourselves the various modes by which we should make our advances to the enemy, with most hope of success. Whether the company themselves did not afford any thing very remarkable, or our own preoccupation prevented our noticing it, certes, we jogged on, without any consciousness that we were not perfectly alone, and this for some twenty miles of the way. At last, however, the cabin became intolerably hot. Something like twenty-four souls were imprisoned in a space ten feet by three, which the humanity of the company of directors kindly limits to forty-eight, a number which no human ingenuity could pack into it, if living. The majority of the passengers were what by

courtesy are called ‘small farmers,’ namely, individuals weighing from eighteen to six-and-twenty stone; priests, with backs like the gable of a chapel; and a sprinkling of elderly ladies from the bog towns along the bank, who actually resembled turf clamps in their proportions. We made an effort to reach the door, and having at length succeeded, found to our sorrow that the rain was falling heavily. Notwithstanding this, we remained without, as long as we could venture, the oppressive heat within being far more intolerable than even the rain. At length, however, wet through and cold, we squeezed ourselves into a small corner near the door, and sat down. But what a change had our unpropitious presence evoked. We left our fellow-travellers, a noisy, jolly, semi-riotous party, disputing over the markets, censuring Sir Robert, abusing the poor-rates, and discussing various matters of foreign and domestic policy, from Shah Shoojah to subsoil ploughs. A dirty pack of cards, and even punch, were adding their fascinations to while away the tedious hours; but now the company sat in solemn silence. The ladies looked straight before them, without a muscle of their faces moving; the farmers had lifted the collars of their frieze coats, and concealed their hands within their sleeves, so as to be perfectly invisible; and the reverend fathers, putting on dark and dangerous looks, spoke only in monosyllables, no longer sipped their liquor in comfort, but rang the bell from time to time, and ordered “another beverage,” a curious smoking compound, that to our un-Matthewed senses, savoured suspiciously of whiskey.

It was a dark night when we reached the “Pig and Pot-hooks,” the hostelry whence Mr. O’Leary had addressed us; and although not yet eight o’clock, no appearance of light, nor any stir, announced that the family were about. After some little delay, our summons was answered by a bare-legged handmaiden, who, to our question if Mr. O’Leary stopped there, without further hesitation opened a small

door to the left, and introduced us bodily into his august presence.

Our travelled friend was seated, “*more suo*,” with his legs supported on two chairs, while he himself in chief occupied a third, his wig being on the arm of that one on which he reposed; a very imposing tankard, with a floating toast, smoked on the table, and a large collection of pipes of every grade, from the haughty hubble bubble, to the humble dudeen, hung around on the walls.

“Ha!” said he, as we closed the door behind us, and advanced into the room, “and so you are penitent. Well, Hal, I forgive you. It was a scurvy trick, though; but I remember it no longer. Here, take a pull at the pewter, and tell us all the Dublin news.”

It is not our intention, dear reader, to indulge in the same mystification with you, that we practised on our friend Mr. O’Leary—or, in other words, to invent for your edification, as we confess to have done for his, all the events and circumstances which might have, but did not, take place in Dublin for the preceding month. It is enough to say that about eleven o’clock Mr. O’Leary was in the seventh heaven of conversational contentment, and in the ninth flagon of purl.

“Open it—let me see it. Come, Hal, divulge at once,” said he, kicking the carpet-bag that contained our manuscript. We undid the lock, and emptied our papers before him. His eyes sparkled as the heavy folds fell over each other on the table, his mouth twitched with a movement of convulsive pleasure. “Ring the bell, my lad,” said he; “the string is beside you. Send the master, Mary,” continued he, as the maiden entered.

Peter Mahoon soon made his appearance, rather startled at being summoned from his bed, and evidencing in his toilette somewhat more of zeal than dandyism.

“Is the house insured, Peter?” said Mr. O’Leary.

“No, sir,” rejoined he, with a searching look around the room, and a sniff of his nose, to discover if he could detect the smell of fire.

“What’s the premises worth, Peter?”

“Sorrow one of me knows right, sir. Maybe a hundred and fifty, or it might bring two hundred pounds.”

“All right,” said O’Leary briskly, as seizing my manuscript with both hands he hurled it on the blazing turf fire; and then grasping the poker, stood guard over it, exclaiming as he did so—“Touch it, and by the beard of the Prophet I’ll brain you. Now, there it goes, blazing up the chimney. Look how it floats up there! I never expected to travel like that anyhow. Eh, Hal? Your work is a brilliant affair, isn’t it?—and as well puffed as if you entertained every newspaper editor in the kingdom? And see,” cried he, as he stamped his foot upon the blaze, “the whole edition is exhausted already—not a copy to be had for any money.”

We threw ourselves back in our chair, and covered our face with our hands. The toil of many a long night, of many a bright hour of sun and wind, was lost to us for ever, and we may be pardoned if our grief was heavy.

“Cheer up, old fellow,” said he, as the last flicker of the burning paper expired. “You know the thing was bad: it couldn’t be other. That d——d fly-away harum-scarum style of yours is no more adapted to a work of real merit, than a Will-o’-the-wisp would be for a light-house. Another jug, Peter—bring two. The truth is, Hal, I was not so averse to the publication of my life as to the infernal mess you’d have made of it. You have no pathos, no tenderness—damn the bit.”

“Come, come,” said we: “it is enough to burn our manuscript, but, really, as to playing the critic in this fashion ——”

“Then,” continued he, “all that confounded folly you deal in, laughing at the priests—Lord bless you, man! they have more fun, those fellows, than you, and a score like you. There’s one Father Dolan here would tell two stories for your one; ay, better than ever you told.”

“We really have no ambition to enter the lists with your friend.”

“So much the better—you’d get the worst of it; and as to knowledge of character, see now, Peter Mahoon there would teach you human nature; and if I liked myself to appear in print—”

“Well,” said we, bursting out into a fit of laughter, “that would certainly be amusing.”

“And so it would, whether you jest or no. There’s in that drawer there, the materials of as fine a work as ever appeared since Sir John Carr’s Travels; and the style is a happy union of Goldsmith and Jean Paul—simple yet aphoristic—profound and pleasing—sparkling like the can before me, but pungent and racy in its bitterness. Hand me that oak box, Hal. Which is the key? At this hour one’s sight becomes always defective. Ah, here it is look there!”

We obeyed the command, and truly our amazement was great, though possibly not for the reason that Mr. O’Leary could have desired; for instead of anything like a regular manuscript, we beheld a mass of small scraps of paper, backs of letters, newspapers, magazines, fly-leaves of books, old prints, &c., scrawled on, in the most uncouth fashion; and purporting from the numbers appended to be a continued narration of one kind or other.

“What’s all this?” said we.

“These,” said he, “are really ‘The Loiterings of Arthur O’Leary.’ Listen to this. Here’s a bit of Goldsmith for you—

“‘I was born of poor but respectable parents in the county ———.’ What are you laughing at? Is it because I did’nt open

with—‘The sun was setting, on the 25th of June, in the year 1763, as two travellers were seen,’ &c., &c,? Eh? That’s your way, not mine. A London fellow told me that my papers were worth five hundred pounds. Come, that’s what I call something. Now I’ll go over to the ‘Row.’ ”

“Stop a bit. Here seems something strange about the King of Holland.”

“You mustn’t read them, though. No, no. That’ll never do—no, Hal; no plagiarism. But, after all, I have been a little hasty with you, Perhaps I ought not to have burned that thing; you were not to know it was bad.”

“Eh! how?”

“Why, I say, you might not see how absurd it was; so here’s your health, Hal: either that tankard has been drugged, or a strange change has come over my feelings. Harry Lorrequer, I’ll make your fortune, or rather your son’s, for you are a wasteful creature, and will spend the proceeds as fast as you get them; but the everlastingly-called-for new editions will keep him in cash all his life. I’ll give you that box and its contents; yes, I repeat it, it is yours. I see you are overpowered; there, taste the pewter and you’ll get better presently. In that you’ll find—a little irregular and carelessly-written perhaps—the sum of my experience and knowledge of life—all my correspondence, all my private notes, my opinions on literature, fine arts, politics, and the drama.”

But we will not follow our friend into the soaring realms of his imaginative flight, for it was quite evident that the tankard and the tobacco were alone responsible for the lofty promises of his production. In plain English, Mr. O’Leary was fuddled, and the only intelligible part of his discourse was, an assurance that his papers were entirely at our service; and that, as in some three weeks time, he hoped to be in Africa, having promised to spend the Christmas with Abd-el-

Kader, we were left his sole literary executor, with full power to edit him in any shape it might please us, lopping, cutting, omitting—anything, even to adding, or interpolating.

Such were his last orders, and having given them, Mr. O’Leary refilled his pipe, closed his eyes, stretched out his legs to their fullest extent, and although he continued at long intervals to evolve a blue curl of smoke from the corner of his mouth, it was evident he was lost in the land of dreams.

In two hours afterwards we were on our way back to Dublin, bearing with us the oaken box, which, however, it is but justice to ourselves to say, we felt as a sad exchange for our own carefully-written manuscript. On reaching home, our first care was to examine these papers, and see if anything could be made of them, which might prove readable; unfortunately, however, the mass consisted of brief memoranda, setting forth how many miles Mr. O’Leary had walked on a certain day in the November of 1803, and how he had supped on camel’s milk with an amiable family of Bedouins, who had just robbed a caravan in the desert. His correspondence, was for the most part an angry one with washerwomen and hotel-keepers, and some rather curious hieroglyphic replies to dinner invitations from certain people of rank in the Sandwich Islands. Occasionally, however, we chanced on little bits of narrative, fragments of stories, some of which his fellow-travellers had contributed, and brief sketches of places and people that were rather amusing; but so disjointed, broken up, and unconnected were they all, it was almost impossible to give them anything like an arrangement, much less anything like consecutive interest.

All that lay in our power was to select from the whole, certain portions, which, from their length, promised more of care than the mere fragments about them, and present them to our readers with this brief notice of the mode in

which we obtained them—our only excuse for a most irregular and unprecedented liberty in the practice of literature. With this apology for the incompleteness and abruptness of “the O’Leary Papers”—which happily we are enabled to make freely, as our friend Arthur has taken his departure—we offer them to our readers, only adding, that in proof of their genuine origin, the manuscript can be seen by any one so desiring it, on application to our publishers; while, for all their follies, faults, and inaccuracies, we desire to plead our irresponsibility, as freely, as we wish to attribute any favour the world may show them, to their real author: and with this last assurance, we beg to remain, your ever devoted and obedient servant,

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ARTHUR O’LEARY.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I. THE “ATTWOOD.”

Table of Contents

Old Woodcock says, that if Providence had not made him a Justice of the Peace, he’d have been a vagabond himself. No such kind interference prevailed in my case. I was a vagabond from my cradle. I never could be sent to school, alone, like other children—they always had to see me there safe, and fetch me back again. The rambling bump monopolized my whole head. I’m sure my god-father must have been the wandering Jew, or a king’s messenger. Here I am again, *en route*, and sorely puzzled to know whither? There’s the fellow for my trunk.

“What packet, sir?”

“Eh? What packet? The vessel at the Tower stairs?”

“Yes, sir; there are two with the steam up, the Rotterdam and the Hamburgh.”

“Which goes first?”

“Why, I think the Attwood, sir.”

“Well, then, shove aboard the Attwood. Where is she for?”

“She’s for Rotterdam.——He’s a queer cove too,” said the fellow under his teeth, as he moved out of the room, “and don’t seem to care where he goes.”

A capital lesson in life may be learned from the few moments preceding departure from an inn. The surly waiter that always said “coming” when he was leaving the room, and never came, now grown smiling and smirking; the landlord expressing a hope to see you again, while he watches your upthrown eyebrows at the exorbitancy of his bill: the boots attentively looking from your feet to your face, and back again; the housemaid passing and repassing

a dozen times, on her way, no where, with a look half saucy, half shy; the landlord’s son, an abortion of two feet high, a kind of family chief remembrancer, that sits on a high stool in the bar, and always detects something you have had, that was not “put down in the bill”—two shillings for a cab, or a “brandy and water;” a curse upon them all; this poll-tax upon travellers is utter ruin; your bill, compared to its dependencies, is but Falstaffs “pennyworth of bread,” to all the score for sack.

Well, here I am at last. “Take care I say! you’ll upset us. Shove off, Bill; ship your oar,” splash, splash. “Bear a hand. What a noise, they make,” bang, crash, buzz; what a crowd of men in pilot coats and caps; women in plaid shawls and big reticules, band-boxes, bags, and babies, and what higgling for sixpences with the wherrymen.

All the places round the companion are taken by pale ladies in black silk, with a thin man in spectacles beside them; the deck is littered with luggage, and little groups seated thereon; some very strange young gentlemen with many-coloured waistcoats are going to Greenwich, and one as far as Margate; a widow and daughters, rather prettyish girls, for Herne Bay; a thin, bilious-looking man of about fifty, with four outside coats, and a bearskin round his legs, reading beside the wheel, occasionally taking a sly look at the new arrivals.—I’ve seen him before; he is the Secretary of Embassy at Constantinople; and here’s a jolly-looking, rosy-cheeked fellow, with a fat florid face, and two dashing-looking girls in black velvet. Eh! who’s this? Sir Peter, the steward calls him; a London Alderman going up the Rhine for two months—he’s got his courier, and a strong carriage, with the springs well corded for the *pavé*;—but they come too fast for counting: so now I’ll have a look after my berth.

Alas! the cabin has been crowded all the while by some fifty others, wrangling, scolding, laughing, joking, complaining, and threatening, and not a berth to be had.

“You’ve put me next the tiller,” said one; “I’m over the boiler,” screamed another.

“I have the pleasure of speaking to Sir Willoughby Steward,” said the captain, to a tall, gray-headed, soldier-like figure, with a closely-buttoned blue, frock. “Sir Willoughby, your berth is No. 8.”

“Eh! that’s the way they come it,” whispers a Cockney to his friend. “That ere chap gets a berth before us all.”

“I beg your pardon, sir,” says the baronet mildly, “I took mine three days ago.”

“Oh! I didn’t mean anything,” stammers out the other, and sneaks off.

“Laura-Mariar—where’s Laurar?” calls out a shrill voice from the aft-cabin.

“Here, Ma,” replies a pretty girl, who is arranging her ringlets at a glass, much to the satisfaction of a young fellow in a braided frock, that stands gazing at her in the mirror with something very like a smile on his lip.

There’s no mistaking that pair of dark-eyed fellows with aquiline noses and black ill-shaven beards—Hamburgh or Dutch Jews, dealers in smuggled lace, cigars, and Geneva watches, and occasionally small money-lenders. How they scan the company, as if calculating the profit they might turn them to! The very smile they wear seems to say, ‘*Comment c’est doux de tromper les Chrétiens*.’ But, holloa! there was a splash! we are moving, and the river is now more amusing than the passengers.

I should like to see the man that ever saw London from the Thames; or any part of it, save the big dome of St. Paul’s, the top of the Monument, or the gable of the great black wharf inscribed with “Hodson’s Pale Ale.” What a devil of a row they do make. I thought we were into that fellow. See, here’s a wherry actually under our bow; where is she now? are they all lost already? No! there they go

bobbing up and down, and looking after us, as if asking, why we didn’t sail over them. Ay! there comes an Indiaman, and that little black slug that ‘s towing her up against the stream, is one of the Tug Company’s craft; and see how all the others at anchor keep tossing and pitching about, as we pass by, like an awkward room full of company, rising at each new arrival.

There’s Greenwich! a fine thing Greenwich. I like the old fellows that the first lord always makes stand in front, without legs or arms; a cheery sight: and there’s a hulk, or an hospital ship, or something of that kind.

“That’s the Hexcellent,” saith a shrill voice behind me.

“Ah! I know her, she’s a revenue cruizer.”

Lord, what liars are the Cockneys! The plot thickens every moment; here come little bright green and gold things, shooting past, like dragon-flies skimming the water, steaming down to Gravesend. What a mob of parasols cover the deck, and what kissing of hands and waving of handkerchiefs to anonymous acquaintances nowhere. More steamers—here’s the “Boulogne boat,” followed by the Ostender, and there, rounding the reach, comes the Ramsgate; and a white funnel, they say, is the Cork packet; and yonder, with her steam escaping, is the Edinburgh, her deck crowded with soldiers.

“Port—port it is—steady there—steady.”

“Do you dine, sir!” quoth the steward to the pale gentleman. A faint “Yes,” “And the ladies too?” A more audible “No.”

“I say, steward,” cries Sir Peter, “what’s the hour for dinner?”

“Four o’clock, sir, after we pass Gravesend.”

“Bring me some brandy and water and a biscuit, then.”

“Lud, Pa!”

“To be sure, dear, we shall be sick in the pool. They say there’s a head wind.”

How crowded they are on the fore-part of the vessel! six carriages and eight horses; the latter belong to a Dutch dealer, who, by-the-by, seems a shrewd fellow, who, well knowing the extreme sympathy between horses and asses, leaves the care of his, to some Cockneys, who come down every half hour to look after the tarpaulins, inspect the coverings, see the knee-caps safe, find ask if they want “‘ay;” and all this, that to some others on board, they may appear as sporting characters, well versed in turf affairs, and quite up to stable management.

When the life and animation of the crowded river is passed, how vexatious it is to hear for the thousandth time the dissertation’s on English habits, customs, and constitution, delivered by some ill-informed, underbred fellow or other, to some eager German—a Frenchman happily is too self-sufficient ever to listen—who greedily swallows the farrago of absurdity, which, according to the politics of his informant, represents the nation in a plethora of prosperity, or the last stage of inevitable ruin. I scarcely know which I detest the more: the insane toryism of the one, is about as sickening as the rabid radicalism of the other. The absurd misapprehensions foreigners entertain about us, are, in nine cases out of ten, communicated by our own people; and in this way, I have always remarked a far greater degree of ignorance about England and the English, to prevail among those who have passed some weeks in the country, than, among such, as had never visited our shores. With the former the Thames Tunnel is our national boast; raw beef and boxing our national predilections; the public sale of our wives a national practice.

“But what’s this? our paddles are backed. Anything wrong, steward?”

“No, sir, only another passenger coming aboard.” “How they pull, and there’s a stiff sea tunning too. A queer figure that is in the stern sheets; what a beard he has!”

I had just time for the observation, when a tall, athletic man, wrapped in a wide blue cloak, sprang on the deck—his eyes were shaded by large green spectacles and the broad brim of a very projecting hat; a black beard, a rabbi might have envied, descended from his chin, and hung down upon his bosom; he chucked a crown-piece to the boatman as he leaned over the bulwark, and then turning to the steward, called out—“Eh, Jem! all right?”

“Yes, sir, all right,” said the man, touching his hat respectfully! The tall figure immediately disappeared down the companion-ladder, leaving me in the most puzzling state of doubt as to what manner of man he could possibly be. Had the problem been more easy of solution I should scarcely have resolved it when he again emerged—but how changed! The broad beaver had given place to a blue cloth foraging cap with a gold band around it; the beard had disappeared totally, and left no successor save a well-rounded chin; the spectacles also had vanished, and a pair of sharp, intelligent, grey eyes, with a most uncommon degree of knowingness in their expression, shone forth; and a thin and most accurately-curled moustache graced his upper lip and gave a character of Vandykism to his features, which were really handsome. In person he was some six feet two, gracefully but strongly built; his costume, without anything approaching conceit, was the perfection of fashionable attire—even to his gloves there was nothing which D’Orsay could have criticised; while his walk was the very type of that mode of progression which is only learned thoroughly by a daily stroll down St. James Street, and the frequent practice of passing to and from Crockford’s, at all hours of the day and night.

The expression of his features was something so striking, I cannot help noting it: there was a jauntiness, an ease, no smirking, half-bred, self-satisfied look, such as a London linendraper might wear on his trip to Margate; but a consummate sense of his own personal attractions and great natural advantages, had given a character to his features which seemed to say—it's quite clear there's no coming up to *me*; don't try it—*nascitur non fit*. His very voice implied it. The veriest commonplace fell from him with a look, a smile, a gesture, a something or other that made it tell; and men repeated his sayings without knowing, that his was a liquor, that was lost in decanting. The way he scanned the passengers, and it was done in a second, was the practised observance of one, who reads character at a glance. Over the Cockneys, and they were numerous, his eyes merely passed without bestowing any portion of attention; while to the lady part of the company his look was one of triumphant satisfaction, such as Louis XIV. might have bestowed when he gazed at the thousands in the garden of Versailles, and exclaimed, "*Oui! ces sont mes sujets*." Such was the Honourable Jack Smallbranes, younger son of a peer, ex-captain in the Life Guards, winner of the Derby, but now the cleared-out man of fashion flying to the Continent to escape from the Fleet, and cautiously coming aboard in disguise below Gravesend, to escape the bore of a bailiff, and what he called the horror of bills "detested."

We read a great deal about Cincinnatus cultivating his cabbages, and we hear of Washington's retirement when the active period of his career had passed over, and a hundred similar instances are quoted for our admiration, of men, who could throw themselves at once from all the whirlwind excitement of great events, and seek, in the humblest and least obtrusive position, an occupation and an enjoyment. But I doubt very much if your ex-man of fashion,

your *ci-devant* winner of the Derby—the adored of Almack's—the *enfant chéri* of Crockford's and the Clarendon, whose equipage was a model, whose plate was perfection, for whom life seemed too short for all the fascinations wealth spread around him, and each day brought the one embarrassment how to enjoy enough. I repeat it, I doubt much if he, when the hour of his abdication arrives—and that it will arrive sooner or later not even himself entertains a doubt—when Holditch protests, and Bevan proceeds; when steeds are sold at Tattersall's, and pictures at Christie's; when the hounds pass over to the next new victim, and the favourite for the St. Léger, backed with mighty odds, is now entered under another name; when in lieu of the bright eyes and honied words that make life a fairy tale, his genii are black-whiskered bailiffs and auctioneers' appraisers—if he, when the tide of fortune sets in so strong against him, can not only sustain himself for a while against it, and when too powerful at last, can lie upon the current and float as gaily down, as ever he did joyously, up, the stream—then, say I, all your ancient and modern instances are far below him: all your warriors and statesmen are but poor pretenders compared to him, they have retired like rich shopkeepers, to live on the interest of their fortune, which is fame; while he, deprived of all the accessories which gave him rank, place, and power, must seek within his own resources for all the future springs of his pleasure, and be satisfied to stand spectator of the game, where he was once the principal player. A most admirable specimen of this philosophy was presented by our new passenger, who, as he lounged against the binnacle, and took a deliberate survey of his fellow-travellers, seemed the very ideal of unbroken ease and undisturbed enjoyment: he knew he was ruined; he knew he had neither house in town, or country; neither a steed, nor a yacht, nor a preserve; he was fully aware, that Storr and Mortimer, who would have given him a mountain of silver but yesterday, would not trust him

with a mustard-pot today; that even the “legs” would laugh at him if he offered the odds on the Derby; and yet if you were bound on oath to select the happiest fellow on board, by the testimony of your eyes, the choice would not have taken you five minutes. His attitude was ease itself: his legs slightly crossed, perhaps the better to exhibit a very well-rounded instep, which shone forth in all the splendour of French varnish: his travelling cap jauntily thrown on one side, so as to display to better advantage his perfumed locks, that floated in a graceful manner somewhat lengthily on his neck; the shawl around his neck had so much of negligence, as to show that the splendid enamel pin that fastened it, was a thing of little moment to the wearer: all were in keeping with the *nonchalant* ease, and self-satisfaction of his look, as with half-drooping lids he surveyed the deck, caressing with his jewelled fingers the silky line of his moustache, and evidently enjoying in his inmost soul the triumphant scene of conquest his very appearance excited. Indeed, a less practised observer than himself could not fail to remark the unequivocal evidences the lady portion of the community bore to his success: the old ones looked boldly at him with that fearless intrepidity that characterizes conscious security—their property was insured, and they cared not how near the fire came to them; the very young participated in the sentiment from an opposite reason—theirs was the unconsciousness of danger; but there was a middle term, what Balzac calls, “*la femme de trente ans*,” and she either looked over the bulwarks, or at the funnel, or on her book, any where in short but at our friend, who appeared to watch this studied denial on her part, with the same kind of enjoyment the captain of a frigate would contemplate the destruction his broadsides were making on his enemy’s rigging—and perhaps the latter never deemed his conquest more assured by the hauling down of he enemy’s colours, than did the “Honourable