

by *Thomas Croker*

Above all the islands in the lakes of Killarney give me Innisfallen—"sweet Innisfallen," as the melodious Moore calls it. It is, in truth, a fairy isle, although I have no fairy story to tell you about it; and if I had, these are such unbelieving times, and people of late have grown so skeptical, that they only smile at my stories, and doubt them.

However, none will doubt that a monastery once stood upon Innisfallen island, for its ruins may still be seen; neither, that within its walls dwelt certain pious and learned persons called Monks. A very pleasant set of fellows they were, I make not the smallest doubt; and I am sure of this, that they had a very pleasant spot to enjoy themselves in after dinner—the proper time, believe me, and I am no bad judge of such matters, for the enjoyment of a fine prospect.

Out of all the monks you could not pick a better fellow nor a merrier soul than Father Cuddy; he sung a good song, he told a good story, and had a jolly, comfortable-looking paunch of his own, that was a credit to any refectory table. He was distinguished above all the rest by the name of "the fat father." Now there are many that will take huff at a name; but Father Cuddy had no nonsense of that kind about him; he laughed at it—and well able he was to laugh, for his mouth nearly reached from one ear to the other: his might, in truth, be called an open countenance. As his paunch was no disgrace to his food, neither was his nose to his drink. 'Tis a doubt to me if there were not more carbuncles upon it than ever were seen at the bottom of the lake, which is said to be full of them. His eyes had a right merry twinkle in them, like moonshine dancing on the water; and his cheeks had the roundness and crimson glow of ripe arbutus berries.

"He ate, and drank, and prayed, and slept.—What then?

He ate, and drank, and prayed, and slept again!"

Such was the tenor of his simple life: but when he prayed a certain drowsiness would come upon him, which, it must be confessed, never occurred when a well-filled "blackjack" stood before him. Hence his prayers were short and his draughts were long. The world loved him, and he saw no good reason why he should not in return love its venison and usquebaugh. But, as times went, he must have been a pious man, or else what befell him never would have happened.

Spiritual affairs—for it was respecting the importation of a tun of wine into the island monastery—demanded the presence of one of the brotherhood of Innisfallen at the abbey of Irelagh, now called Mucruss. The superintendence of this important matter was committed to Father Cuddy, who felt too

deeply interested in the future welfare of any community of which he was a member, to neglect or delay such mission. With the morning's light he was seen guiding his shallop across the crimson waters of the lake towards the peninsula of Mucruss; and having moored his little bark in safety beneath the shelter of a wave-worn rock, he advanced with becoming dignity towards the abbey.

The stillness of the bright and balmy hour was broken by the heavy footsteps of the zealous father. At the sound the startled deer, shaking the dew from their sides, sprung up from their lair, and as they bounded off—"Hah!" exclaimed Cuddy, "what a noble haunch goes there!—how delicious it would look smoking upon a goodly platter!"

As he proceeded, the mountain-bee hummed his tune of gladness around the holy man, save when he buried in the foxglove bell, or revelling upon a fragrant bunch of thyme; and even then the little voice murmured out happiness in low and broken tones of voluptuous delight. Father Cuddy derived no small comfort from the sound, for it presaged a good metheglin season, and metheglin he regarded, if well manufactured, to be no bad liquor, particularly when there was no stint of usquebaugh in the brewing.

Arrived within the abbey garth, he was received with due respect by the brethren of Irelagh, and arrangements for the embarkation of the wine were completed to his entire satisfaction. "Welcome, Father Cuddy," said the prior: "grace be on you."

"Grace before meat, then," said Cuddy, "for a long walk always makes me hungry, and I am certain I have not walked less than half a mile this morning, to say nothing of crossing the water."

A pasty of choice flavour felt the truth of this assertion, as regarded Father Cuddy's appetite. After such consoling repast, it would have been a reflection on monastic hospitality to depart without partaking of the grace-cup; moreover, Father Cuddy had a particular respect for the antiquity of that custom. He liked the taste of the grace-cup well:—he tried another,—it was no less excellent; and when he had swallowed the third he found his heart expand, and put forth its fibres, willing to embrace all mankind. Surely, then, there is Christian love and charity in wine!

I said he sung a good song. Now though psalms are good songs, and in accordance with his vocation, I did not mean to imply that he was a mere psalm-singer. It was well known to the brethren, that wherever Father Cuddy was, mirth and melody were with him; mirth in his eye and melody on his tongue; and these, from experience, are equally well known to be thirsty commodities; but he took good care never to let them run dry. To please the brotherhood, whose excellent wine pleased him, he sung, and as "*in vino veritas*" his song will well become this veritable history.

CANTAT MONACHUS.

I.
Hoc erat in votis,
Et bene sufficerit totis
Si dum porto sacculum
Bonum esset ubique jentaculum!
Et si parvis
In arvis
Nullam
Invenero pullam,
Ovum gentiliter prææbebit recens
Puella decens.
Manu nec dabis invitâ
Flos vallium harum,
Decus puellarum,
Candida Marguerita!

II.
Me hora jucunda cœnæ
Dilectat bene,
Et rerum sine dubio grandium
Maxima est prandium:
Sed mihi crede,
In hâc æde,
Multo magis gaudeo,
Cum gallicantum audio,
In sinu tuo
Videns ova duo.
Oh semper me tractes ita!
Panibus de hordeo factis,
Et copiâ lactis,
Candida Margarita!

THE FRIAR'S SONG.

I.
My vows I can never fulfil,
Until I have breakfasted, one way or other;
And I freely protest,
That I never can rest
'Till I borrow or beg
An egg,
Unless I can come at the ould hen, its mother.
But Maggy, my dear,
While you're here,
I don't fear
To want eggs that have just been laid newly;
For och! you're a pearl
Of a girl,
And you're called so in Latin most truly.

II.
There is most to my mind something
that is still upper
Than supper,
Though it must be admitted I feel no way thinner
After dinner:
But soon as I hear the cock crow
In the morning,
That eggs you are bringing full surely I know,
By that warning,
While your buttermilk helps me to float
Down my throat
Those sweet cakes made of oat.
I don't envy an earl,
Sweet girl,
Och, 'tis you are a beautiful pearl.

Such was his song. Father Cuddy smacked his lips at the recollection of Margery's delicious fried eggs, which always imparted a peculiar relish to his liquor. The very idea provoked Cuddy to raise the cup to his mouth, and with one hearty pull thereat he finished its contents.

This is, and ever was a censorious world, often construing what is only a fair allowance into an excess: but I scorn to reckon up any man's drink, like an unrelenting host; therefore, I cannot tell how many brimming draughts of wine, bedecked with *the venerable Bead*, Father Cuddy emptied into his "soul-case," so he figuratively termed the body.

His respect for the goodly company of the monks of Irelagh detained him until their adjournment to vespers, when he set forward on his return to Innisfallen. Whether his mind was occupied in philosophic contemplation or wrapped in pious musings, I cannot declare, but the honest father wandered on in a different direction from that in which his shallop lay. Far be it from me to insinuate that the good liquor, which he had so commended caused him to forget his road, or that his track was irregular and unsteady. Oh no!—he carried his drink bravely, as became a decent man and a good Christian; yet somehow, he thought he could distinguish two moons. "Bless my eyes," said Father Cuddy, "every thing is changing now-a-days!—the very stars are not in the same places they used to be; I think *Camceachta* (the Plough) is driving on at a rate I never saw it before to-night; but I suppose the driver is drunk, for there are blackguards every where."

Cuddy had scarcely uttered these words, when he saw, or fancied he saw, the form of a young woman, who, holding up a bottle, beckoned him towards her. The night was extremely beautiful, and the white dress of the girl floated gracefully in the moonlight, as with gay step she tripped on before the worthy father, archly looking back upon him over her shoulder.

"Ah, Margery, merry Margery!" cried Cuddy, "you tempting little rogue!

'Flos vallium harum,
Decus puellarum,
Candida Margarita.'

"I see you, I see you and the bottle! let me but catch you, Candida Margarita!" and on he followed, panting and smiling, after this alluring apparition.

At length his feet grew weary, and his breath failed, which obliged him to give up the chase; yet such was his piety, that unwilling to rest in any attitude but that of prayer, down dropped Father Cuddy on his knees. Sleep, as usual, stole upon his devotions; and the morning was far advanced, when he awoke from dreams, in which tables groaned beneath their load of viands, and wine poured itself free and sparkling as the mountain spring.

Rubbing his eyes, he looked about him, and the more he looked the more he wondered at the alteration which appeared in the face of the country. "Bless my soul and body!" said the good father, "I saw the stars changing last night, but here is a change!"

Doubting his senses, he looked again. The hills bore the same majestic outline as on the preceding day, and the lake spread itself beneath his view in the same tranquil beauty, and studded with the same number of islands; but every smaller feature in the landscape was strangely altered. What had been naked rocks were now clothed with holly and arbutus. Whole woods had disappeared, and waste places had become cultivated fields; and, to complete the work of enchantment, the very season itself seemed changed. In the rosy dawn of a summer's morning he had left the monastery of Innisfallen, and he now felt in every sight and sound the dreariness of winter. The hard ground was covered with withered leaves; icicles depended from leafless branches; he heard the sweet low note of the robin, who familiarly approached him; and he felt his fingers numbed from the nipping frost. Father Cuddy found it rather difficult to account for such sudden transformations, and to convince himself it was not the illusion of a dream, he was about to rise, when lo! he discovered that both his knees were buried at least six inches in the solid stone; for, notwithstanding all these changes, he had never altered his devout position.

Cuddy was now wide awake, and felt, when he got up, his joints sadly cramped, which it was only natural they should be, considering the hard texture of the stone, and the depth his knees had sunk into it. But the great difficulty was to explain how, in one night, summer had become winter, whole woods had been cut down, and well-grown trees had sprouted up. The miracle, nothing else could he conclude it to be, urged him to hasten his return to Innisfallen, where he might learn some explanation of these marvellous events.

Seeing a boat moored within reach of the shore, he delayed not, in the midst of such wonders, to seek his own bark, but, seizing the oars, pulled stoutly towards the island; and here new wonders awaited him.

Father Cuddy waddled, as fast as cramped limbs could carry his rotund corporation, to the gate of the monastery, where he loudly demanded admittance.

"Holloa! whence come you, master monk, and what's your business?" demanded a stranger who occupied the porter's place.

"Business!—my business!" repeated the confounded Cuddy,—"'why, do you not know me? Has the wine arrived safely?"

"Hence, fellow!" said the porter's representative, in a surly tone; "nor think to impose on me with your monkish tales."

"Fellow!" exclaimed the father: "mercy upon us, that I should be so spoken to at the gate of my own house!—Scoundrel!" cried Cuddy, raising his voice, "do you not see my garb—my holy garb?"

"Ay, fellow," replied he of the keys—"the

garb of laziness and filthy debauchery, which has been expelled from out these walls. Know you not, idle knave, of the suppression of this nest of superstition, and that the abbey lands and possessions were granted in August last to Master Robert Collam, by our Lady Elizabeth, sovereign queen of England, and paragon of all beauty—whom God preserve!"

"Queen of England!" said Cuddy; "there never was a sovereign queen of England—this is but a piece with the rest. I saw how it was going with the stars last night—the world's turned upside down. But surely this is Innisfallen island, and I am the Father Cuddy who yesterday morning went over to the abbey of Irelagh, respecting the tun of wine. Do you not know me now?"

"Know you!—how should I know you?" said the keeper of the abbey. "Yet, true it is, that I have heard my grandmother, whose mother remembered the man, often speak of the fat Father Cuddy of Innisfallen, who made a profane and godless ballad in praise of fresh eggs, of which he and his vile crew knew more than they did of the word of God; and who, being drunk, it is said, tumbled into the lake one night, and was drowned; but that must have been a hundred, ay, more than a hundred years since."

"'Twas I who composed that song in praise of Margery's fresh eggs, which is no profane and godless ballad—no other Father Cuddy than myself ever belonged to Innisfallen," earnestly exclaimed the holy man. "A hundred years!—what was your great-grandmother's name?"

"She was a Mahony of Dunlow—Margaret ni Mahony; and my grandmother—"

"What! merry Margery of Dunlow your great-grandmother!" shouted Cuddy. "St. Brandon help me!—the wicked wench, with that tempting bottle!—why, 'twas only last night—a hundred years!—your great-grandmother, said you?—There has, indeed, been a strange torpor over me; I must have slept all this time!"

That Father Cuddy had done so, I think is sufficiently proved by the changes which occurred during his nap. A reformation, and a serious one it was for him, had taken place. Pretty Margery's fresh eggs were no longer to be had in Innisfallen; and with a heart as heavy as his footsteps, the worthy man directed his course towards Dingle, where he embarked in a vessel on the point of sailing for Malaga. The rich wine of that place had of old impressed him with a high respect for its monastic establishments, in one of which he quietly wore out the remainder of his days.

The stone impressed with the mark of Father Cuddy's knees may be seen to this day. Should any incredulous persons doubt my story, I request them to go to Killarney, where Clough na Cuddy—so is the stone called—remains in Lord Kenmare's park, an indisputable evidence of the fact. Spillane, the bugle-man, will be able to point it out to them, as he did so to me; and here is my sketch by which they may identify it.

