

SKETCH OF THE POET, TOM MOORE.

WHEN I entered Trinity College, sometime about the year 1830, an apartment was taken for me in a quiet street on the north side of Dublin, in order that I might pursue my studies uninterrupted by any contact with those fine joyous bacchanalian spirits who had rooms within the sacred precincts of the University. I am afraid this system of seclusion did not answer the purpose; but I used to meet frequently on the stairs, as I passed my chamber *au quatrieme*, an elderly lady of most benign aspect, but in stature one of the very smallest personages I ever saw. Frequent meeting in this way led at last to an acquaintance. I learned she was Miss Ellen Moore, a sister of the famous Thomas; and great I remember was my gratification when I received one evening an invitation to drink tea with her. It was the drawing-room entertaining the attie, and I was much pleased by the compliment. It was a *the pur et simple*, not a *the daint*; but many handsome young ladies—and Dublin in those days abounded in beauty—used to congregate round the table in that little drawing-room. I became a frequent guest; for although I then abhorred their politeness, the company was mightily to my taste. Upon a certain evening I observed preparations being carried on for an entertainment of a more pretentious character; and I learned that Mr. Thomas Moore, having arrived that morning in Dublin, was expected to join our company. A large party was assembled to meet him. I must own to feeling great astonishment at his appearance, as, his sister was small, he was smaller still—that is, for a man. He was what Charles Dickens would call a "mite." He came into the room on tiptoe, at a sort of run, with his head thrown back; and first he kissed his sister Ellen affectionately, then he kissed nearly every other pretty girl he could get at. He was soon surrounded, and he sat there chirping and chattering, and turning his head about like a pet bird. His manner was delightfully frank, genial, and winning. He was full of the gossip of the day, and looked like a well-to-do little gentleman who had no other occupation except amusing himself. His head was nearly bald, and there was just a fringe of slightly-grizzled hair round the back and the temples. His nose was retreousse (cocked). His complexion resembled the colour of a certain apple, with which a schoolboy I was over-familiar, called a russet brown, with a good tinge of healthy red in it. A suspicion of the same colour was visible on the end of the little man's nose; but his head, which he carried in a slanting direction, was very good, and his eye was large, liquid, lustrous, and full of intelligence.

He had a large double gold eye-glass, which he carried suspended round his neck by a black ribbon, and made frequent use of. I cannot remember how he was dressed; but when I met him, as I did, on many subsequent occasions, his attire was peculiar. He wore a long olive-green surtout coat, a blue neckcloth, and a white hat set very much back upon his head. In society it was almost impossible to get at him: for he was generally the centre of a perfect galaxy of petticoats. All the prettiest women seemed to fondle and caress him, and treat him much as they would a large wax doll; but when he sang, as he did on that particular evening, two of his famous melodies, the "Last Rose of Summer," and "Oft in the Stilly Night," there was a vibration, a flutter, and a tendency to hysterical emotion instantly perceptible, such as I have never observed in any other audience except that of Mr. Robertson in his chapel, at Brighton. I cannot attempt to describe either the singing or its electrical effect; but I could perfectly well understand the meaning of a story which I remember reading in "Memoirs of Sir Jonah Barrington," of how a certain lady of quality, hearing the little man warbling one of his love ditties, laid her hand upon his arm, and said: "For heaven's sake, Moore, stop, stop! this is not for the good of my soul!" Earl Russell, in his "Memoirs," says Moore was the most brilliant man he ever met. I suppose he was right; but his brilliancy was concealed by a manner which, if you did not know who he was, would have led to an entirely different conclusion. He was slippant, restless, and seemed never at ease except when he was the centre of observation. Looking at him, I could not for the life of me bring myself to believe that this was the individual who had inspired Byron with the favourite lines:—

"My boat is on the shore,
And my bark is on the sea;
But before I go Tom Moore,
Here's a double health to thee."

Yet there he was hopping about, whispering pretty nothings into the ears of Hibernian beauties, and comporting himself much like a little boy by let loose from school. I could no longer wonder at the Prince Regent's proposal, at one of the Carlton House banquets, to put him into a bunch-bowl, which secured the poet's lasting resentment; but I did wonder how he contrived to inspire so many great men with such an affectionate interest and regard. He was in prodigious request at that time, I remember, in Dublin. The Marchioness of Normanby used to send her carriage to fetch him out for airings in the Phoenix Park, and he was continually receiving invitations to dine with the Lord Lieutenant, or Lord Morpeth, then the Secretary. A covered car, which is a species of conveyance peculiar to Dublin, used to fetch him to these entertainments, about which he was constantly making mistakes; for instance, going to dine with the Chief Secretary when he had been invited to dine with the Lord Lieutenant, forgetting the date of the invitation, dropping in on a day when he was not expected, and making all sorts of strange blunders. In all the relations of private life Mr. Moore's conduct was unexceptionable; a better husband, a kinder father never existed; and he allowed his only sister, at whose house I made his acquaintance, out of his own slender income, sufficient for her comfortable support. But in his children he was peculiarly unfortunate. His eldest son—for whom, by dint of great sacrifices, he purchased a company in the English army—lost his commission through extravagance, and died at Algeria in the French service. The second lost his health in India, and came home to Sloperston to die. His only daughter, while in the act of kissing her hand to him as he was going out to dine at Lord Lansdowne's, fell over the balusters and was killed. Thus perished all his hopes,

and he died at last in his own house in the arms of his faithful wife, having outlived even his own brilliant intellect.

The visitors to Dublin may see the little grocer's shop where Moore was born; it is on the right hand side of Augier street, and is, I believe, a grocer's shop to this day. He will see also a statue of the poet, which I cannot think does him justice, within the closure in front of Trinity College. He may read his voluminous prose writings, and his many poems; but no one who has not heard the poet sing them can get the remotest conception of the charm of those wonderful melodies, which, as long as music married to immortal verse has power over the mind, must continue to enchant and delight the world. They have been translated into every different language. Scrope Davis, Byron's friend, wrote thus about them:—

"They say, dear Moore, your songs are sung—
Can this be true, you lucky man!
At midnight, in the Persian tongue,
Along the streets of Ispahan."

The writer of this paper in his early life thought those songs perfectly matchless. Age and a tolerably wide experience have not altered that opinion. He asked the poet to write him one in his own hand. Mr. Moore asked which of them he would prefer, and, on being told the "Minstrel Boy," wrote it immediately on a sheet of letter-paper, saying at the time, "Well, I think it is about the best of them."

Moore's hands were singularly beautiful, and he was so extremely careful about their preservation from any kind of stain, that he always wore a pair of kid gloves when he was writing. In the throes of composition it was his habit to nibble at the end of these until the tip of each finger was bitten quite through. These trophies were preserved by his sister Ellen with affectionate solicitude, and became the object of immense competition among the numerous circle of her lady friends. The last time I ever saw the poet he was going into a hatter's shop—Locke's, I think—at the foot of St. James' street. I followed him to see if he would remember me, and I found him in the act of having his white hat brushed by the shopman. He turned round as he went out at the door; pointing westwards, "They are all gone," he said, "every friend I had in the world; I am like a stranger now in a strange land." Those were the last words I ever heard him speak, and as he uttered them the tears came into his eyes. He had a dazed appearance at the time, as if his intellectual faculties had begun to give way—which indeed, I learned afterwards, was really the case.

PERCY BOYD, in *Belgravia*.

IRISH PATRIOTS.

A DOCUMENT has just fallen into my hands which is specially interesting at the present juncture, when John Mitchell's election for Tipperary has recalled to the English people the discontent which still reigns in Ireland. During the stormy times of 1848, the enthusiasm of the members of the Irish Confederation was raised to such an extraordinary pitch that the following pledge was signed by parties whose names are given below:—"We, the undersigned, members of Council of the Irish Confederation, pledge ourselves in face of our country to refrain from the use of all intoxicating drinks from this day till the legislative independence of Ireland is established.—Charles Gavan Duffy, John Mitchell, Charles Taaffe, T. Devin, Reilly, John Martin, R. D. Williams, P. J. Smyth, Thomas Dungan, Patrick John Barry, John Byrne, James Dayle (or Doyle), junior, John de Conroy Young, Thomas M. Halpin, secretary; J. Cartreel, Patrick A. Byrne, James P. Costello, John Brockelby Watson, James A. Condon, John Williams, John Kavanagh. Wednesday, 6th April, 1848."

The preliminary few lines were written by Mr (now Sir) C. Gavan Duffy, who was one of the principal members of the Irish Confederation, and it was first intended to abstain from the use of "all spiritous liquors from this day till the union with England shall cease," but the text was ultimately altered as given above. Mr Patrick John Barry was not content with the declaration, and in the enthusiasm of the moment he added the words "for ever" after his name. This determination to remain a teetotaler during the whole course of his life he afterwards rescinded, and the "for ever" was conveniently erased from the original document. It is unnecessary to add that since the above pledge was taken, Mr Duffy (who left Ireland in 1856) has filled offices of distinction in Victoria, and was knighted during the Premiership of Mr Gladstone. Mr John Martin and P. J. Smyth are at present members of the House of Commons, and Mr Mitchell has also been elected a member.—*Dublin Correspondent of Times*.

TEA DRINKING IN RUSSIA.—A correspondent of the London 'Daily News' writing from Nijni Novgorod, says "Tea drinking, I have said, is one of the greatest institutions in Russia; the outward and visible symbol of this institution is the somovar. There is something almost sacred about the somovar in Russia. I scarcely like to talk about it amongst profane things. It ranks with the gilt images of Greek saints which are found in the corners of every room in Russia, and before which the pious believer is never tired of crossing himself. In the same way, not a household, however poor, is without a somovar. To make tea in the vulgar fashion of pouring boiling water into the teapot, would be to rob it of all its cheering grace, and to profane the institution. The somovar is essential to the orthodox practice of tea drinking, and as the first word you learn in Russia is 'chai,' so the first thing which will strike your eye on arriving there is the somovar. The somovar is a large urn made of bronze or brass, with a tube running through the centre, into which charcoal is placed. When the tea-hour arrives (and every hour is tea-hour in Russia) the charcoal is lighted, rather should I say, like the sacred fire of the Zoroastrians, is never quenched. There it burns in its brazen tube, and the water boils audibly, and the little china teapot is placed simmering at the top of the charcoal—although this last is really a heterodox practice which has crept into the pure religion of tea—and in this way cup after cup of the Russian nectar is supplied."