

All Ireland Review

The Lost Land

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Source: *All Ireland Review*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (Feb. 10, 1900), p. 6

Published by: [All Ireland Review](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20544513>

Accessed: 21/06/2014 22:16

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said Wolff, with difficulty concealing his disgust at the above arrangement.

"Oh, she's going to sing a song I taught her—'Mid the hush of the corn.'" "One of Temple's, too," groaned Wolff. "Lady Trevennan, you might have spared me this. I know Temple, and I will not sit to hear that song murdered. It's one of the prettiest."

"Then stand, dear boy, and hear it sung," said her gay ladyship. "Old bear, before the night is over you will be begging me to entreat Nora O'Connor to join your Opera Company. I know a voice when I hear one."

"And so do I," said Wolff, as he followed her into the schoolroom.

It was packed. Lady Trevennan's concerts were usually successful. She was popular, so country people and peasantry came alike. The former, to see what new surprise Lady Trevennan was going to spring on them, the latter, to hear "that little slip o' a Norah O'Connor" sing for the first time before the quality.

She did not come on till the second part of the programme. Lady Trevennan had got through her frothy and sparkling chansonette. Herr Wolff accompanied her sulkily enough, still in perfect sympathy with the singer, bringing out all her good points. There was a vigorous encore. Then it was Norah's turn.

In the badly lighted waiting room behind the stage Lady Trevennan led Herr Wolff up to a tall, slight young figure in white, whose sole ornament was a cluster of vivid scarlet poppies lying against the white of her dress, and another knot in the masses of her golden hair.

"This is Miss O'Connor," said her ladyship, briskly, "you have acted the good Samaritan for me, do likewise for Miss O'Connor."

"In plain English, you wish me to play this young lady's accompaniment," said Wolff, with no great alacrity.

"If you will, sir," said Norah, raising for the first time her wondrous Irish eyes.

Herr Wolff bowed to the peasant girl as he would have done to Lady Trevennan.

"I am at your service," said he, quietly, and, raising the curtain, he followed Norah on the stage.

Softly, plaintively, the full rich notes floated out. Norah had seen Brian among the audience at the back end, and she was moved for supreme effort. "He will know at last," murmured she. "how I would scorn to settle down to a country life."

The audience listened breathlessly, unwilling to lose one of those full ringing notes, one turn of that naturally exquisitely modulated voice. Ah, what would not training make of a voice like that!

Brian's heart was strangely stirred. Could this be Norah O'Connor, his equal and neighbour—this white-robed girl, with tragic eyes aglow and the scarlet field poppies lying on her breast. Softly, sweetly, clearly, the last words rang out:—

"We shall greet, with the old love changeless,

As once in that far-off dawn,

In the glow of a summer morning,

'Mid the hush of the golden corn."

"'Mid the hush of the golden corn," he echoed.

Then, as the last sound died away, there was applause which put Lady Trevennan's vociferous encore quite in the shade.

Brian lingered round the door of the school-house till all the performers came out, among them Norah, with a scarlet shawl over her golden hair, her eyes still aglow.

"I waited to walk home with you, old Sober Sides," cried she, gaily, to Brian. "I want ye to be the first tae hear my gran' news."

"An' what may it be, asthore?"

"Sure the gentleman they call Herr Wolff, him that played for me, has offered tae take me tae Dublin, train my voice, an' help me tae make my fortune."

"Is't the thruth yer tellin', Norah O'Connor?"

"True for me, Brian. Him an' Lady Trevennan settled it. I am tae live with a lady she knows, an' have singin' lessons every day. In two years time, he says, I shall sing "'Mid the Hush of the Corn" in a way that will make people cry. It's gran' tae hear him, but I maun work hard."

"An' yer ould Grannie an' Pat?" Brian asks. Then, in a softer tone, he whispers, "An' me?"

In the silvery moonlight he could see pretty Norah toss her head.

"Grannie jist eatin' out her heart till Pat marries Mary Doyle, of the farm, an' as for ye, Brian, the markets will soon drive giddy Norah O'Connor out o' yer head. Maybe ye'll bring yer wife up tae Dublin tae hear me sing, some day?"

O'er the hazy, mystic moon-lit fields Brian's gaze wandered, ere he replied.

"Norah, my colleen, I'll never forget ye, an' may God grant ye one day tae know the worth o' a true heart."

"Whisht, Brian," whispered the girl, at last awed by his earnestness. "I'm not worthy of sich love."

"Ye'r worthy of the whole world, darlint, could I only give it; and yet I wouldn't ask ye tae give up going. Ye'll be a gran' lady, but if ever Brian can serve ye rely on him."

"I'll come back, Brian."

"Maybe, but no' the same, Norah. Ye'll niver be able tae live here after Dublin."

"I shall come back tae see ye. Maybe glad tae get back," interrupted the girl, saucily. "'We shall meet again,' Brian, as the song says,

'In the light of a summer morn,

'Mid the hush of the golden corn.'

"God grant it," cried Bryan, with all the fervour of his untutored loving heart.

Five years had slipped away since Norah O'Connor went to Dublin to make her fortune. The inhabitants of the little village of Glenmore still pursued the even tenor of their way.

Some had gone to America, some tilled their poor holdings as their forefathers had done before them, and, like them, loved beautiful, poverty-stricken Ireland with a love naught could change.

Others, after "life's fitful fever," rested in the little hill-side grave-yard, so lonely, yet with a wierd beauty born of loneliness.

Brian Kavanagh still worked on. By the neighbours now he was looked upon as a well-gathered man. Certainly, everything he touched had prospered. The cabin Norah had spoken of so saucily was replaced by a carefully-finished neat stone house, and it was rumoured that Brian had a still neater banking account at a city bank.

[To be Continued.]

"THE LOST LAND."

"Gentle Annie," by S. C. Foster, is one of the sweetest of the old Christy Minstrel songs. I have been especially interested in the "Lost Land," because I live in a Cromwellian settlement. Well! that term might apply to three-fourths of the "Kingdom of Ireland," but this place has continued in "one stay" longer than any other I know of. It appears to me—in a criticism—that Miss Lynch mixes dates and manners, etc., too much. I confess I am not clear as to the locality or period of her story. To what generation, from the conquest of Ireland by Cromwell, did those children belong? Many generations have come and gone since, say, 1660. But the writing is much above the average of the present-day authoresses. Please respect the secret history of these townlands. I have lived here more or less since childhood, and never knew the facts until 18 months ago, and was then told, as a secret, which had been kept for 200 years, that a pay-chest belonging to a troop or company of Cromwell's lies in a deep hole in our river, and I never could persuade more than one or two of our workmen to come and look for it. They said it was "cursed." I endorse every line of the "Great Enchantment."—F. W.

COMPLAINANTS.

Complaints arrive from Dublin that the "A.I.R." cannot be got at the newsagents sooner than Tuesdays. Well, in the case of a paper "not up to date," a charge frequently urged, does this much matter? Moreover, the remedy is in the hands of the complainants. They may become postal subscribers, and get their paper comfortably on Sunday mornings. "But, the extra halfpennies for postage?" Yes, but all those halfpennies go to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, her share in the "A.I.R." Is there no loyalty left in this "Lost Land?"—Ed.