Irish Review (Dublin)

The Night Hunt

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Source: *The Irish Review (Dublin)*, Vol. 2, No. 24 (Feb., 1913), pp. 621-622

Published by: [Irish Review \(Dublin\)](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30062935>

Accessed: 10/06/2014 19:23

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THE NIGHT HUNT

By THOMAS MACDONAGH

In the morning, in the dark,
When the stars began to blunt,
By the wall of Barna Park
Dogs I heard and saw them hunt :
All the parish dogs were there,
All the dogs for miles around,
Teeming up behind a hare,
In the dark, without a sound.

How I heard I scarce can tell—
'Twas a patter in the grass—
And I did not see them well
Come across the dark and pass;
Yet I saw them and I knew
Spearman's dog and Spellman's dog
And, beside my own dog too,
Leamy's from the Island Bog.

In the morning when the sun
Burnished all the green to gorse,
I went out to take a run
Round the bog upon my horse;
And my dog that had been sleeping
In the heat beside the door
Left his yawning and went leaping
On a hundred yards before.

Through the village street we passed—
Not a dog there raised a snout—
Through the street and out at last
On the white bog road and out

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Over Barna Park full pace,
Over to the Silver Stream,
Horse and dog in happy race,
Rider between thought and dream.

By the stream, at Leamy's house,
Lay a dog—my pace I curbed—
But our coming did not rouse
Him from drowsing undisturbed;
And my dog, as unaware
Of the other, dropped beside
And went running by me there
With my horse's slackened stride.

Yet by something, by a twitch
Of the sleeper's eye, a look
From the runner, something which
Little chords of feeling shook,
I was conscious that a thought
Shuddered through the silent deep
Of a secret—I had caught
Something I had known in sleep.

Do the dogs conspire apart,
Drawn by charity of kind?—
Will they follow the free heart,
Or the fellowships that bind
Kind with kind and race with race?—
Or, by gifts that we have missed
Sleeping do they join in chase
Of a hare somnambulist?