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A GIANT'S DEVICES.

AMONG the most celebrated characters of antiquity there is not one whose fame is more widely spread throughout Ireland than that of the "Gobawn Saer," whose skill as an architect was only equalled by the lessons of wisdom which dropped from his lips, many of which are to this day current among the peasantry through the length and breadth of the land.

"Once upon a time," says a writer in *Notes and Queries*, "as the Gobawn and his son were on their travels, they came to a place where there was a palace in progress of erection for the king of the country, and they turned aside to inspect the work. At the moment of their arrival, the workmen were engaged in putting up the beams which were joined together by pegs from the 'couples' of the roof: this, from the height and size of the building, happened to be a most laborious and dangerous task. The Gobawn, having looked on at their ill-planned efforts for some time, took up an axe, and, putting his glove down as a block, quickly fashioned a number of pegs; then, flinging them up one by one to the places already pierced in the couples for their reception, he threw the hatchet at each, and drove it home with unerring aim; then, taking up his glove uninjured, proceeded quietly on his way, leaving the workmen lost in amazement."

"The king came in presently, and, having been told of the wonderful exploit, immediately declared that no one but the Gobawn Saer could have done this, and instantly despatched messengers to bring him back, and offer him any remuneration he might require to complete the building. The Gobawn, after some entreaty, returned with the messengers, and he and his son soon built a palace such as no king had hitherto possessed."

"Now it happened, some time before they set out on their journey, the Gobawn thought it desirable that his son should take a wife; and as he preferred a woman who possessed sound sense and ready wit rather than the factitious distinctions of birth or fortune, he took the following method of obtaining such a daughter-in-law as he wished for. Having killed a sheep, he desired his son to take the skin to the next town and sell it, charging him to bring back the skin and the price of it. To hear was to obey; but the young man wandered in vain through the town, seeking a purchaser on the strange terms required. At last, weary and disheartened, he was returning home towards evening, when he saw some girls washing clothes in the river outside the town. An Irishman never passes any persons at work without the salutation of 'God bless the work.' One of the girls, when answering his good wish, observed his wearied appearance, and soon drew from him the cause. After a moment's thought she at once agreed to purchase the skin on the proposed terms, and, having brought him to her house, she took it, stripped off the wool, and returned the bare hide with the price stipulated. When the young man returned to his father, and presented him with 'the skin and the price of it,' he immediately sent him to ask the young woman in marriage, and in a few days she was installed mistress of Rath Gobawn. Now that her husband and his father were setting on a journey, she gave the former two sage counsels for his guidance and protection; first, she desired him, when his father was tired, to 'shorten the road'; secondly, 'not to sleep a third night in any house without having secured the favour of one of the females resident in it.'

"The elder Gobawn having become weary with the length of his journey, his son would gladly have 'shortened the road' for him, but did not know how, until his father, to whom he mentioned the conjugal precept, desired him to begin some legend or romance, and so by the interest of the story beguile the tediousness of the journey. In obedience to the second precept of his wife, before they had been two days at the king's palace, the young man contrived to interest the king's daughter in his favour; and on his informing his father of the fact, the cautious old man desired him, as a means of discovering whether her attachment was a mere caprice of passion, or founded on a more firm basis, to sprinkle a few drops of water in her face when the basin was carried round to wash the

when he had come to Coalsby on purpose to astonish—possibly to aggravate—Mr. Jonathan Lovett, of Castle Lovett.

There was one more pause, and then he dashed into his subject without preface or apology, and in the clear, resonant voice that Mary Smith knew so well. In less than ten minutes the people had forgotten his affliction, and were applauding and laughing and cheering a man gifted with a marvellous power of oratory, a keen sense of humour, a facility of description, and of setting people and places before an audience in graphic, admirably chosen sentences. The sense of power and of ease had not left him, and the subject he had chosen was stirring all men's hearts. Here was a man risen from the dead to tell them of his hardships, his ill-luck, his captivity, and his escape; who had heard the roar of the battle and seen how English blood could be wasted in a miserable, unprofitable, and inglorious enterprise; who had stepped back, as it were, out of his grave to speak his mind freely, forcibly, and with all the inborn eloquence which he naturally possessed.

Abel Smith, a judge of the English language, sat spell-bound. When he was sure that his daughter was as self-possessed as he was, he whispered to her quietly—

"I did not think he was a man like this, Mary."

"Did you not?"

"It is an honour to know such a man," he murmured; and, to his astonishment, Mary answered, "Thank you," as though she took the compliment to herself, and considered herself justified in returning thanks for the individual whom her parent had thus eulogised.

Mr. Lovett remained quiet and passive throughout; he kept his round eyes fixed on the lecturer when he was not looking askance at Mary Smith, and his was a face that seemed to gather to itself much intensity of sadness as he sat and listened. He had been touched by the reappearance of Ambrose Chinery, whose words had also held him spell-bound, but when a flash of humour darted like fire from the lips of the lecturer, Mary Smith noticed that he did not smile with the rest of the audience, but remained as grave as she was. She could not laugh with the crowd. Ambrose Chinery's happy jesting—even his natural jesting, as it might be, and yet in which she did not believe—only deepened the intensity of her expression.

And yet it was like him and his old manner. There had been always a mocking vein in him—a subdued scepticism, a laughing outlook at the world, and a doubt of the goodness or virtues left in it in these latter days. For this man had seen the world, and suffered in it, and proved its hollowness and want of faith—and would have been a better man had that world been a little better in itself. There was only one he cared for in it, this strange man had told her within an hour or two of his first acquaintance with her, and Mary Smith had let that one slip through her hands, adding a fresh stab to his heart.

Towards the conclusion of his lecture, he spoke for the first time of his affliction. He had told all his story then—of being left for dead in the desert, of being found the next day, and of the manner in which he was nursed back to life in his captivity, proving that even the Soudanese are not quite so black as they are painted. The story had been told, and he implied then that it might be for the last time; perfect repose and freedom from excitement having been recommended, even enforced upon him. He was blind—he trusted not permanently; but it would take some time, and much patience, before he would be able to peer out from the darkness into the light again. He had come from the hospital to Coalsby to keep his word with his audience. He was going back to the hospital again—if they would take him in, that was, after so flagrant a disregard of their rules and regulations—even a defiance of their instructions. "But," he added, in conclusion, "if Coalsby would forgive him, he was content. He had been touched by his welcome back to Lancashire, and he would lay their greeting of him to his heart for ever."

That was the end of the lecture, and the beginning of renewed cheering and the waving of the hats and handkerchiefs, of which he could not catch a glimpse, and then, with a friendly hand