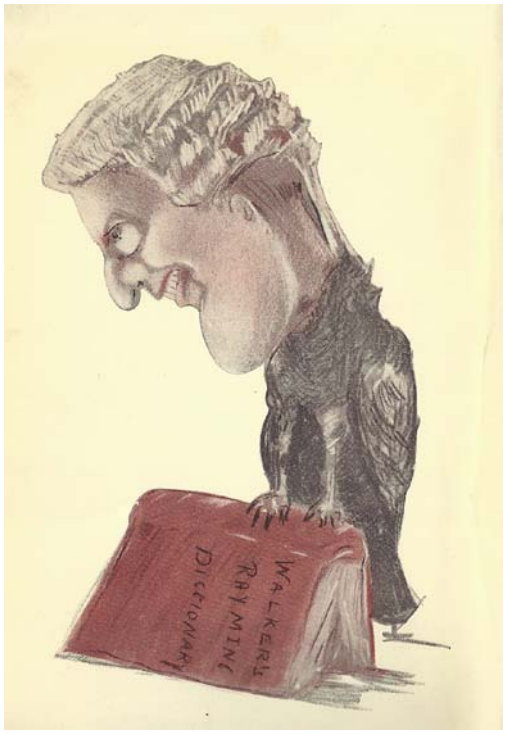
THE OLD MUNSTER CIRCUIT

A Book of Memories and Traditions

"I mean that a Corkman likes to tell a story as it should be told; the garb may be elaborated, but the body is not deformed."

I HAVE NEVER FORGOTTEN A TRIAL IN CORK, probably in March, 1905, when a little barefoot post-boy was charged with having got a girl of less than statutory age into trouble. Such cases were rare in Ireland; this one was indeed a case of true love gone too impetuously forward. I cannot remember whether there was an actual trial or whether the accused pleaded guilty; but I do know that Stephen Ronan, the Crown Prosecutor, thought it necessary to read a number of letters, which the lover had written to his lady; and one phrase burned itself into my brain, and survives to this day, although the rest which I have forgotten were all in tune with it.



BY MAURICE HEALY

Celebrated Jurist, Ireland - d. 1923

Barefooted, with no education beyond what a National School could give, this bucolic Petrarch addressed to his Laura the following lovely words:

> **"Far away from where I am now there is a little gap in the hills, and beyond it the sea; and 'tis there I do be looking the whole day long, for it's the nearest thing to yourself that I can see."**

I watched the Judge; there was a tear trickling down his nose. "Mr. Ronan," he said, "these young people seem to be very fond of one another. Why couldn't they get married?" Stephen Ronan sniggered; there was not much romance in his nature, and he had a trick of speech which made every sentence seem to begin with a sneering smile. "Heh!" he said. "Marriage is easy enough where there is money to provide for it, heh!" "I don't suppose it would cost a lot," said Billy. "Heh! More than these young people could afford!" cried Ronan. "Will the Post Office take him back if I find him over?" asked the Judge. There proved to be little difficulty about that.

"Come up here, my girl," said Billy kindly. The little girl, heavy with child came into the witness-box. "Do you love the boy?" "I do, me Lord." "Will you marry him?" "I will if he'll ax me, me Lord." "Now, prisoner, do you hear that? Will you marry her?" "There's nothing I'm more wishful for, me Lord." "There, now; that's all settled; are the girl's people there?" A little procession went into the Judge's room, where the bride was promptly endowed out of his own pocket; and I hope they all lived happily every afterwards. – **Published 1939 Michael Joseph Ltd., Bloomsbury Street, London**