

CONCERNING THE NEARNESS TOGETHER OF HEAVEN, EARTH, AND PURGATORY

In Ireland this world and the world we go to after death are not far apart. I have heard of a ghost that was many years in a tree and many years in the archway of a bridge, and my old Mayo woman says, "There is a bush up at my own place, and the people do be saying that there are two souls doing their penance under it. When the wind blows one way the one has shelter, and when it blows from the north the other has the shelter. It is twisted over with the way they be rooting under it for shelter. I don't believe it, but there is many a one would not pass by it at night." Indeed there are times when the worlds are so near together that it seems as if our earthly chattels were no more than the shadows of things beyond. A lady I knew once saw a village child running about with a long trailing petticoat upon her, and asked the creature why she did not have it cut short. "It was my grandmother's," said the child; "would you have her going about yonder with her petticoat up to her knees, and she dead but four days?" I have read a story of a woman whose ghost haunted her people because they had made her grave-clothes so short that the fires of purgatory burned her knees. The peasantry expect to have beyond the grave houses much like their earthly homes, only there the thatch will never grow leaky, nor the white walls lose their lustre, nor shall the dairy be at any time empty of good milk and butter. But now and then a landlord or an agent or a gauger will go by begging his bread, to show how God divides the righteous from the unrighteous.

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