

seeking either apology or glory; it is only that I do desire that we shall look more justly on these episodes, which some regard, without much sense of perspective, as I think, as grave blows on our national pride — blots on our 'scutcheon. I do not desire that we shall be boastful, but I do desire that we shall

not despair of ourselves, out of all proportion, as a decadent people. We have not won the polo, — I am not sure about the golf, — or the cricket, or the lawn tennis; but the main reason why we have not won them is not, after all, a very bad one: it is because we have won the war.

AN ULSTER BOYHOOD

BY LYNN DOYLE

From The Manchester Guardian, July 2
(RADICAL LIBERAL DAILY)

THOUGH I do not remember that life in the Ulster of my childhood was dull, looking back, I can see that the range of our amusements was very limited. Cricket was almost our only outdoor sport, and even cricket could hardly be said to flourish. When a man has followed a plough or a harrow all day, or mowed hay, or pulled flax, his desire for open-air exercise has generally been satisfied. Then, time was an important factor. It was well on to half-past seven before the country cricketer could take the field, which restricted his season to about eight weeks; and even in that period he finished most of his games in blind-man's holiday. I have known us play till the bowler could hardly discern the wicket at which he was aiming, and remember Hughey Dixon splitting his bat with a mighty drive he made at a round stone rolled up by our humorist, Dick Murray.

Dancing was a good deal practised among the humbler folk, mostly in an impromptu way, after a wedding or a harvest-home, on which occasions a barn or a hayloft would be the ballroom.

Sometimes on a fine summer evening the 'boys' and 'girls' would issue from the cottage where they had gathered to 'kailie' and foot it in the yard or green before the house. Waltzes and lancers were then scarcely known among our country dancers, the fox-trot as yet undreamed of. The 'sets,' as the quadrilles were called, were our only dance. Nor were we too particular about music. In the deficiency of a fiddler, — and fiddlers were rare, — a flutter from the local Orange or Nationalist band put mettle in our heels. Failing a flute, a melodeon did duty, and sometimes we sank as low as a Jew's harp, and even plain whistling. Dick Murray was a famous whistler on such occasions. I have known him whistle the 'sets' twice through, with no further assistance than a tin of buttermilk, though he was understood to do much better on porter.

But in farmers' houses there was little or no dancing, partly because the rooms in a middling farmer's house were too small to dance in, partly because dancing had not yet passed out of the category of frivolous amuse-

ments. And while the laborer might take a hand of spoiled-five on a ditch-side, or even at his own hearth, there was no card-playing to lighten the tedium of a farmer's party. In most houses cards were looked upon with horror. To my aunt, I knew, they were still 'the devil's picture-books.' She used to boast that she did not know one card from the other, and thought I was as ignorant as herself, until one dreadful day when I spoke of the emblem of love on a valentine as the ace of hearts. After a searching inquisition (for I knew the greatness of my offending), she wrung from me that our cricket players sometimes took a hand of spoiled-five in the nearest ditch after light began to fail, after which discovery I never again batted in a bad light, but went to bed betimes.

On the whole I think the farmer's chief pleasure was the attending of funerals. At funerals alone he could spend a day in idleness and feel his conscience ungalled. They were his club. There he and his more distant cronies foregathered and unbent their minds in reminiscence and story, as the long procession of vehicles jogged along with loose rein and trailing whip. Genealogies — ever a favorite subject in the country, where a family's past is impossible of concealment — were much discussed on these occasions. The association of ideas was a natural one. It was in such weather, or it was not, that the dead man's father had been buried, some of the elders would remember. He was married *on* (it is a Northern idiom) a Miss So-and-so of such a place, who was related to the So-and-so's of Bally-somewhere-else. That would leave such a family third or fourth cousins of the So-and-so's. Ay, there was a great change in *their* position in the country from what it used to be. *Their* pride had had a fall. It was wonderful the ups and downs in this life. They minded

the dead man there when he was only a lump of a boy. And now he was gone. It was a solemn and yet a comfortable reflection.

Then there was an unearned increment of gloves, and hatbands, and 'weepers' to be considered. We had not yet reached the stage of civilization when these barbarities are discarded. Our sorrow was not less; but we demanded a symbol. The hearse was ponderous with mortuary carvings; long black tassels hung from the horses' bridles, the drivers wore deep black hatbands with long tails; the clergyman was swathed in a sash of black and white linen as thick as a window-curtain. The chief mourners also wore hatbands; and anybody who was anybody was presented with a pair of black kid gloves. They were of cheap kid and burst readily on agricultural hands. But a pair of gloves is a pair of gloves, and nobody ever refused them. The prudent did not put them on, but laid them aside for Sundays, and for the humbler sort of funerals where no gloves were presented; and sometimes for their own. I once heard Long James B——, a prudent man, and known as a 'gatherer,' confide to my Uncle Joseph that he had saved enough gloves to bury himself.

The refreshments contributed a share of the day's pleasure. Whiskey and biscuits were the recognized convention. I have never known anyone buried without them. Not even teetotallers had the hardihood to flout the custom. Big Robert M——, an elder of the kirk and a bigoted teetotaller, ordered a gallon of whiskey, it is said, for the burial of his wife. It went a little against the grain with him, no doubt; but he had discussed the matter with Mrs. Robert when it became clear that she could not recover; she had expressed a wish to be 'buried decently'; and Robert, as a dutiful husband, gave way. Her wish went far to make the funeral a success.

Most of the mourners had gone with misgiving. Even I had my little portion in the general depression. I knew it was expected to be a 'dry' funeral; and if there was to be no whiskey, I had little hope that there would be any biscuits.

I remember standing with a small group of mourners at the gable of Robert's house. The hour for 'lifting' drew near; but, contrary to custom, none of the group entered the house. At last an elderly farmer motioned his companions toward the door, remarking disconsolately that 'he supposed they might as well have a look at her, anyway,' and we all followed.

Big Robert could not bring himself to dispense the poison himself; but when his brother-in-law and deputy asked our leader if he would 'have a little of something,' the deeper shade of gloom that instantly fell on the faces of our party was merely the masking of a deep inward satisfaction. From the remark of William D——, as he set down his glass, that 'Robert had n't made little of her,' I gathered that, though ignorant of whiskey himself, Robert had left the selection of it to a practised hand. The quantity was about the ordinary for a large funeral; but he gives twice who gives unexpectedly. It was the most cheerful funeral I ever attended.

THE SKELETON: A STUDY IN KARMA

BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

From *Kölnische Zeitung*, July 2

(CONSERVATIVE DAILY, BRITISH OCCUPIED TERRITORY)

A HUMAN skeleton hung in the chamber where we boys used to sleep. At night, the wind blowing through the open window would sometimes make the bones rattle. In the day-time we would rattle them ourselves. We took lessons in osteology from a medical student, because our guardian was anxious that we should know something of every science. It is unnecessary to tell our acquaintances, and embarrassing to tell strangers, how incompletely his wishes were carried out.

Several years have since passed, and the skeleton has disappeared from that chamber and the osteology from our heads — neither leaving a trace behind.

Recently our house was crowded with guests, and I had to pass the night in

that old chamber. Sleep refused to come, in my unaccustomed surroundings; and while I was tossing restlessly, I heard the bell in a neighboring church tower strike one hour after another. The flame of the night-lamp in the corner grew dimmer and dimmer, and finally flickered out.

We had recently lost several members of our family, so the extinction of the lamp naturally diverted my mind to thoughts of death. I pondered that it was much the same thing in the great realm of nature whether a lamp went out, or whether it was the tiny light of a human life that was extinguished.

These thoughts led me to recall the skeleton. While I was trying to imagine how the body which once had en-