

**THE WAY  
OF A MAID**

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The Way of a Maid by Katharine Tynan

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**KATHARINE TYNAN**

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OF A MAID**



# THE WAY OF A MAID

BY  
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# THE WAY OF A MAID.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A TOWN AND A HOUSEHOLD.

COOLEVARA is a typical Irish country town. A river flows in the midst of it, and the houses climb each side steeply. On one side are the hills—first a blue wall of rock, behind which lies an exquisite valley; beyond that, range after range, Slieve-Columb overtopping them, with a ragged mantle of clouds about his shoulders, and his face hidden. The other side of the river, which is spanned by one long light bridge, the lanes and streets wind up, corkscrew fashion, to a high plateau, airy as a moorland. You can stand on the edge of it and look down into Coolevara chimney-pots: it would be an admirable point of vantage for the Devil on Two Sticks. The church spires seem to shoot up at your feet, and, looking down at the river, you will see it, most evenings,

like a roadway of heaven—all broken gold and jewels, or a strange, rose-red river out of fairy-land. Coolevara scarcely ever pauses amid its leisurely occupations to look at the sunset. In Ireland you can have magnificent sunsets any night of the year without going out of your way to applaud them.

Coolevara seems, to the visitor from more stirring climes, a dull place and a stagnant, but it has its own interests for those who live in it. The population is nearly altogether Catholic—sturdy, independent folk, they are, for they have, most of them, a black drop in their veins from one of Cromwell's Ironsides. Those unconquerable warriors settled down in various parts of the fertile Irish country, and, in days of peace, had to ground arms before the violet-eyed daughters of the mere Irish. In course of time they or their sons renegaded to the Scarlet Woman, and became as sturdy on her side as they had been on the other in their psalm-singing days. Admirable results these marriages have had. The men are great, brawny, square-shouldered giants, with a close black thatch on their big heads, and an infinite humour about the lines of their close-shaven lips. They affect not the "glibbe," which, in



Spenser's time, was so pestilential a mark of the rebelly Irish, and go clean-shaven. They are darkly ruddy, and in anger turn darker, so that you see the black drop of the Cromwellian in them. They are hard-working, clever, thrifty people, as quick with a kiss as a blow, and so deeply attached to this country of hills and streams, this gentle-bosomed mother, that 'tis little they'll thank you if you refer to that Cromwellian drop, which is rather a sore subject in Coolevara.

The cleavage between Protestants and Catholics in Coolevara, as elsewhere in Ireland, is incredibly great. There is no common ground for these adherents of the different religions to meet. The Protestants are not many: a handful of shopkeepers, Mr. Lacy the lawyer, Mr. Oliver, Lord Westsea's agent and himself a landowner, and the rector and his family. On Sundays the rector's congregation is swelled by the country folk who drive in in their waggonettes and on their outside cars; but the great cold building, with its glimmering funeral tablets set in the walls, is deserted beside the Catholic chapel, with its throngs of devout worshippers reaching out beyond the porch. Catholics in Ireland have not

yet got so far away from penal days as to speak of their "churches." They are "chapels," for all the world as if they were bare Dissenting meeting-houses, and if you call them churches you are suspected of affectation and aping the English manner.

On the whole, the Catholics in Coolevara have the best of it. For all the seeming sluggishness, the townspeople and the surrounding farmers manage to amuse themselves. There are frequent race-meetings, at which the good Coolevara folk turn out, with well-filled hampers in "the well" of their side-cars, whereon to picnic themselves and their friends. The men bet a little, the women gamble at sweepstakes. Every farmer pretty well about Coolevara has had, at one time or another, a little mare or colt in his stable for racing purposes, and the young fellows ride their own horses at the spring and autumn meetings. Then they visit much at each other's houses, and have their games of Nap and Spoil Five for those not inclined for dancing. Weddings and christenings are the occasions of feasting; and as for courting, it is a general amusement and ever in season, though there are not always enough young men to go round.

The Protestants look on at this jiggling of their Catholic neighbours with some scandal. They live in the most decorous dulness, so far as the women-folk are concerned. They are intensely Low Church, and keep the Protestant Sabbath in its most rigorous form. The girls play the piano on week-days and do crewel-work; for literature they have the dangerous delights of the *Quiver* and the *Sunday at Home*; sometimes in summer they attend one or two frigid garden-parties. There is no parish work, such as there would be in England, no visiting of their poorer neighbours, for the poor about Coolevara are all Catholics. They fill their little money-boxes for the conversion of the Gold Coast, or some such unlikely mission, and are very blameless, very narrow, and—poor things!—very dreary. As a rule, if they succeed in escaping to a freer atmosphere, after a little preliminary fluttering, they become quite emancipated. They have even been known to return to Coolevara High Church-women.

Scarcely any of these remarks apply to the Olivers, who were the only Protestant gentry residing within the precincts of Coolevara. The Olivers had a big, square, old-fashioned house,