

18th century. Patrick Kennedy in his "Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts" wrote:

"A carman was leaving Bunclody one morning for Dublin, when what should he see but a neighbour's cat galloping along the side of the road, and crying out every moment — "Tell Moll Browne Tom Dunne is dead". The carman got tired of this and took up a stone and flung it at the cat, bidding himself and Moll Browne and Tom Dunne to go to Halifax, and not to be bothering him.

"When he got to Luke Byrne's in Francis Street, where all the Wicklow and Wexford carmen used to stop, he was taking a pot of beer in the taproom, and began to tell the queer thing that had happened on the road. There was a comfortable looking grey cat sitting by the fire and the moment he mentioned what the Bunclody cat was saying, she cried out 'That's my husband.' That's my husband.'" She made one leap out through the door and no one ever saw her at Luke Byrne's again."

Marsh's Library, the first public library in Ireland is well-known to our members. Originally the private library of Archbishop Narcissus Marsh (1638-1713) whose Palace is now the Garda Depot in Kevin Street, it still retains its old-world atmosphere.

About 50 years ago the library was said to be haunted by the ghost of its founder. He was reported to frequent the inner gallery which contained his favourite books. It was said that he moved in and out among the cases taking down some of the volumes from the shelves and occasionally throwing them down on the reader's desk as if in anger. In the morning things were always found to be in order.

The story behind this was that the Archbishop reared one of his nieces from childhood and loved her like his own daughter. The niece fell in love and eloped with a foreign sea captain whose boat was moored at the end of Winetavern Street. Before doing so, however, she wrote a note to her uncle asking his forgiveness, and placed it in one of his favourite books. The Archbishop never found it in his lifetime, and so his ghost was said to be still seeking it.

Sometime near the end of the 18th century women in Dublin reported that on the way home on dark winter evenings they had been attacked by a cloaked figure which looked like a black pig. As the reports multiplied, no woman would go home at night unescorted.

Shortly beforehand a man called Olocher was sentenced to death for an assault on a young woman which resulted in her death, and while awaiting execution was confined in the Black Dog Prison in Cornmarket. On the morning on which he was to be executed, however, he was found dead in his cell, having cut his throat, and the authorities could not understand how he got hold of the weapon.

The following night a sentry at Cook Street Steps was found in an unconscious condition. When he revived he was paralyzed on one side, and said he had been attacked by a huge black pig, and then a sentry on night duty at the Black Dog Prison disappeared from his post, and wasn't seen again. His clothes were found draped over his gun, and naturally the story got about that he had

been devoured by the black pig, now believed to be the ghost of the dead Olocher.

Sometime later a woman swore before magistrates that she had seen "The Dolocher," for by now this was what the Dublin people christened the apparition. For the next two winters the figure appeared at intervals around Christchurch, and hardly anyone would go near that area by night, and residents nearby who kept pigs were at times innocently accused of being the culprits.

After the two years the problem was suddenly and finally solved by a country blacksmith who had come to the city to transact business. Afterwards he joined some friends in a hostelry in Winetavern Street, where they engaged in a long and happy drinking session. On the way home, the smith, singing in a merry fashion made his way through Christchurch Yard (which then rejoiced in the name "Hell") when to his amazement he was attacked by a black pig.

Taken unawares the tough smith brought his huge fist down on the figure in a hammer blow which stretched the creature on the ground. "The Dolocher's" identity was then revealed. It was a man dressed in a black pig's skin, and an inquiry resulted in revealing that it was no other than the prison sentry who had mysteriously disappeared. Before he died next day from a fractured skull, he confessed that it was he who had smuggled the knife in to Olocher in prison, and then spread the rumour of the ghostly pig, before taking on the disguise himself, so as to frighten people away, while he went around at night robbing houses.

The Templeogue Inn, Co. Dublin, was once known as "The Morgue" because of the number of inquests held there on people killed at night by the old Dublin to Blessington steam tram. Malachy Horan told Dr. George Little about one such victim: "at the turn of the century a poor man was killed by the steam tram between Jobstown and Templeogue . . . soon afterwards I was at the January fair in Naas. I stopped at Carroll's Inn there until after eleven at night, then I started for home. At a part of the road that is overhung by trees a man's shoulder struck mine. I wished him 'goodnight' but he did not answer. Confounding him under my breath, I started a bit of a song. A few yards further on I was struck again.

"Can't you mind where you're going?" I asked, real angry. I got no answer. It happened again, and this time I did not speak . . . a cold sweat broke out on my head and in the small of my back. I tried to think what to do. It was as long to go on as to go back. Every now and then the thing bumped me . . . I knew it was no living man."

Eventually Malachy reached a neighbour's cottage. He hammered at the door with his stick. The neighbours opened the door. "I saw his jaws drop and his eyes stare. I looked behind for the first time. The hair pushed my old hat off my head. A fully-dressed man stood behind me, but he had no head!" The two men rushed into the cottage and barred the door. "We said a prayer for his soul", said Malachy, "and it was never seen after. Maybe the prayers found him rest."

Many times I have been in an almost empty Dublin theatre at midnight — the old Queen's, the Olympia and the Gaiety. Standing alone on the stage and gazing into the semi-darkness I almost imagined I could see phantom figures moving about. After a



performance corridors, dressing rooms and the stage itself all take on aspects of mystery.

Strangely enough there are few stories of hauntings in city theatres. In the Tivoli on Burgh Quay, later the *Irish Press* offices, a door was always found open no matter how often it was closed. It was said to be the door of a dressing room occupied by a chorus girl who had committed suicide there, after being abandoned by her lover, and finding herself pregnant.

Another story was about the old Abbey. A well-known actress told me that when she joined the company she was taking part in a dress rehearsal. During a lull she went into the auditorium and sat down in one of the seats to rest. She suddenly felt someone brushing against her. She immediately stood up to let the person pass by, but to her amazement there was no-one there!

Later she told of her experience to senior members of the company. The late Maureen Delany asked where the seat was located. On being told she said: "Sure that was where Lady Gregory used to sit, you should never sit there, child." It appears that when Lady Gregory was alive she resented anyone sitting in her favourite seat (third row from the stage, second seat in). After her death whenever any member of the company sat in this seat during rehearsals they felt a presence pushing against them, and people sitting there during a performance had similar experiences.

Another story I had heard about a theatre goes back 100 years and was told to me by a lady in Clontarf. She said: "As a child I often heard my grandfather, John Hogan, who lived from 1816 to 1898 tell us of a ghostly experience he had when apprenticed to a builder who was doing some repairs to the Fishamble Street Theatre. He was put to sleep in the Green Room, and every night at exactly 10 p.m. a knocking was heard on the wall which continued for about 15 minutes.

"My grandfather was very frightened and asked to be allowed sleep in another room, but they couldn't manage this so every night he pulled the clothes over his head until the knocking stopped. A short while before his death he showed us a paper in which it was stated that the theatre which had been pulled down, was supposed to be haunted, as every night for more than 60 years, a knocking had been heard in the Green Room from 10 to 10.15 p.m."

Messrs. Kennans, the engineering firm had taken the building over in 1868, but it was not actually pulled down until many years later. Some parts of the theatre's structure may still be seen inside and outside.

Before the new regulations for Holy Week came into being there was a custom in Dublin every Holy Thursday of visiting seven churches, and offering up prayers in each, and crowds of people were seen entering and leaving each church.

When the visits were over it was not unusual for people to go to St. Stephen's Green and stand opposite Iveagh House (now the Department of Foreign Affairs) and wait to see if a cross would appear in one of the upstairs windows. If you stood in a certain place you could clearly see what appeared to be a cross in the window concerned.

There were two versions as to why a cross was to be seen. One was that the house stood on the spot where the Archbishop of Cashel, Dr. Hurley, was martyred in 1583, the other that many

years before a servant girl in the big house who was dying was refused the consolation of seeing a priest, and when she produced a pair of rosary beads, they were thrown through the window. She died shortly afterwards, and from then on a cross was said to appear at certain times in the window.

A letter in the newspapers by a Dublin carpenter, however, gave a different angle to the story. He said the cause was due to certain reflections inside the house, in fact, that when he went inside the house to do repairs after Lord Iveagh left, he made straight for the "window". He found that it was not the window of a room, but was facing a staircase and half landing.

When the late Miss Annie M. P. Smithson, the novelist and one-time committee member of our Society was doing her maternity course in nursing she lived in the old Coombe Hospital Nurses' Home at Ardee House, Ardee Street, which was once the Earl of Meath's Town House. It was demolished about 30 years ago and only part of the gateway still remains.

"If ever a house was haunted", she wrote in her autobiography, "that was. One night, just as I was falling asleep, I was suddenly seized and violently shaken by unseen hands. I was flung back on the pillows, trembling and terrified. I found out that this had happened to others sleeping in that room. I asked to be removed to a room upstairs — the other room had been on the ground floor — and there I slept in peace. The bathroom was another haunted place, and we all dreaded it."

A law case about a haunted house took place in Dublin in 1885. A Mr. Waldron, a solicitor's clerk, sued his next-door neighbour, a Mr. Kiernan, a mate in the merchant service, to recover £500 for damages done to his house. Kiernan denied the charges, but asserted that Waldron's house was haunted. Witnesses proved that every night from August, 1884 to January, 1885, stones were thrown at the windows and doors, and extraordinary and inexplicable occurrences constantly took place.

Mrs. Waldron, wife of the plaintiff, swore that one night she saw one of the panes of glass of a certain window cut through with a diamond, and a white hand inserted through a hole. She at once took up a billhook and aimed a blow at the hand, cutting off one of the fingers. The finger could not be found, nor were any bloodstains seen.

A servant of hers, she said, was persecuted by noises and the sound of footsteps. Mr. Waldron, with the aid of detectives and policemen, endeavoured to find out the cause, but without success. The witnesses in the case were closely cross-examined, without shaking their testimony. The facts appeared to be proved, so the jury found for Kiernan, the defendant. At least 20 people had testified on oath to the fact that the house was known to be haunted.

The last person one would expect to appear in Dublin is the Czech musical composer, Dvorak, yet, according to Seymour and Neligan in their book "True Irish Ghost Stories" this happened in the home of a Mrs. G. Kelly in Rathgar. She wrote:

"About four years ago a musical friend of ours was staying in the house. He and my husband were playing and singing Dvorak's "Spectre's Bride", a work which he had studied with the composer himself. This music appealed very much to both, and they were excited and enthusiastic over it.



"Our friend was giving many personal reminiscences of Dvorak, and his method of explaining the way he wanted his work done. I was sitting by, an interested listener, for some time. On getting up at last, and going into the drawing-room, I was startled and somewhat frightened to find a man standing there in a shadowy part of the room. I saw him distinctly, and could describe his appearance accurately.

"I called out, and the two men ran in, but as the apparition only lasted for a second, they were too late. I described the man whom I had seen, whereupon our friend exclaimed: 'Why, that was Dvorak himself!'

"At that time I had never seen a picture of Dvorak, but when our friend returned to London he sent me one, which I recognised as the likeness of the man whom I had seen in our drawing-room."

The ghost of the famous racehorse owner and Tammany Hall leader, Boss Croker is said to have been seen in and around his former home Glencairn, now the British Ambassador's residence at Sandford, Co. Dublin. Apparently, the Boss was not pleased that his body was transferred from the mausoleum he had built by the lakeside in the grounds of his home, to the little churchyard of Kilgobbin about 100 yards away. Near him lies Honor Bright, the Dublin prostitute who was found murdered at Ticknock in the 1920s. Kilgobbin Castle itself is said to be haunted by a woman in chains.

One of the best ghost stories about Dublin was written by a Co. Wicklow man who was immortalised in a famous novel. He was John Francis Byrne, the friend of James Joyce, who appears as 'Cranly' in "The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man." He practised as a lawyer in the United States where he died some years back. The story is in his autobiography, "The Silent Years".

Byrne was a university student in Dublin in 1902, and as his sister, two cousins and himself were in "digs" they decided it might be cheaper to rent a house. Towards the end of the year they heard of a vacant house on Cork Hill, about 150 yards from the entrance to the Castle Yard and almost directly opposite the City Hall. The owner was Walter Butler, Dublin City Architect.

They went along to inspect it and found it in fair condition, needing minor improvements. In the top back room on the third floor they came upon a curious thing. Written in large letters over the mantelpiece was the word — "Ghosts". This did not worry them, and they decided to take the house, sublet the lower part as offices and use the top floor as living quarters.

While they were inspecting the house they heard footsteps in different parts of the building, but assumed they were other prospective buyers, viewing like themselves. When they came out they asked the young man from the auctioneers, who had come with the key, about the other people. To their amazement, he said that no-one else had gone in.

They decided to take the house, as it was a terrific bargain, and Byrne's cousin, Mary put down £60, a year's rent in advance. Mary got the keys and in the early afternoon went to check on repairs. While there she again heard the footsteps, especially loud on the stairs from the basement to the top. The noises were so real that she went down to the halldoor to see if it was closed. It was closed tight.

When she left she carefully checked to see if all windows were closed, then she locked the door carefully and as she did so a working man who was standing at the footpath came over and asked could he have a word with her. He said he was a friend of her uncle's and knew her by sight. "I want to advise you, if you're thinking of taking the house, don't do so, it's haunted," he said.

"But," says Mary, "I have already taken it and got the key."

"Well then, ma'am, all I can say is I'm terribly sorry. It was in the basement of this very house that the Invincibles used to meet before the Phoenix Park murders. I saw them here myself often and often — James Carey, young Tim Kelly, Joe Brady and the rest."

On the next day John Byrne himself went around alone to the house with a candlestick, candles and matches. He made an investigation "like Sherlock Holmes," but saw nothing except in the west wall of the back kitchen in the basement. In the wall was a recess bricked up which looked as if it had led into a tunnel. He then left the candles, and other things inside the hall-door, which he locked.

That night after leaving the National Library and carrying a stout ashplant which he had cut in Carrigmore he went back to the house at about 10.15 p.m. He lit the candle, locked and bolted the door, and once more checked the house from top to bottom. Then he went up to the top floor where he decided to keep vigil.

He put out the candle, keeping the matches handy so that no-one would know the house was occupied. Some light came in from the street lamps . . . he heard the last tram pass by for Inchicore.

At that very moment there arose from the basement a loud noise of many people tramping the kitchen floor and up the stairway into the hall. Byrne took off his overcoat, grasped his ashplant, candlesticks and matches and went out on to the lobby.

The noise downstairs continued louder, then there was a thud which seemed to shake the whole house, followed by a bumping on the stairway from the hall to the basement. After a short silence heavy footsteps started to mount the first flight of stairs. Byrne lit the candle and looked down, but couldn't see anyone. The footsteps continued. He grasped his ashplant with the intention of defending himself against the intruder. The footsteps came right beside him on the lobby, and passed through the open door into the back room. He followed — there was no-one there, and the footsteps had ceased.

This was the small room, about 13 feet square over the mantle-piece on which was written "Ghosts". He checked the house again and left. The following day they decided not to take the house and they forfeited their £60.

The sequel was that on the night of February 26/27, 1903, a couple of months later, one of the heaviest storms in Ireland for years occurred and caused untold damage. Scores of world-famous Chesterfield elms on the main roads of the Phoenix Park were uprooted and destroyed. On Cork Hill the haunted house, still unrented, stood in ruins. A chimney stack which had been blown down on its roof, had crashed down to the basement, bringing down every floor in the house with it.