

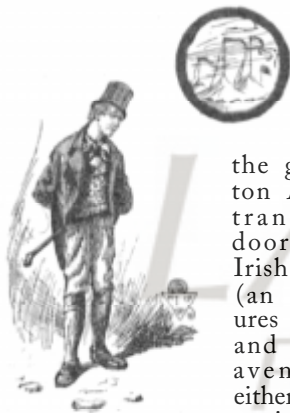
THROUGH  
ERIN  
AWHEEL.

BY GRACE E. DENISON.

III.



KILKENNY CATHEDRAL.



IN leaving Carysfort we made a side track, which one can obtain leave to enjoy, through

the grounds of Shelton Abbey, from entrance gate to hall door two and a half Irish miles in length. (an Irish mile measures an American mile and a quarter.) This avenue is lined on either side with a succession of tine rhododendrons,

which, on that June day, were in full and perfect bloom, crimson, white and pink, looking very grand and showy from the higher road to the north. After lunch it behooved us to make a very determined start for the south—Gorey, Ferns and Enniscorthy, which latter town I had a desire to explore for the sake of "Vinegar Hill," Strongbow's Castle, and a certain curiosity regarding a certain family of whom I had heard pleasant things. An easy road, lovely sunshine and the rest we had perforce taken at Arklow soon drove away even the memory of yesterday's drenching; an occasional muscle kinked, and an added crease appeared in the blue serge gown, but "Theodore" was safely rolled on Tim's luggage car-

rier, and in cycling past troubles are wonderfully soon forgotten.

At evening, just twenty-four hours behind time, we made our way into Enniscorthy, and had not gone many yards before an extra long and crooked hill, in the midst of the town, landed us on our feet.

Immediately a brisk little woman stepped in front of my wheel and told me who I was, who she was, and that our supper was ready in a certain cozy home near by, where was more Irish hospitality, some faint scoldings for our delay, and intimation that the Enniscorthy Club had ridden out as far as Ferns to fetch us in with honor the previous evening. After tea we had our fill of Vinegar Hill, Cromwell and the rebels; gory tales were related of piking and such warlike pleasantries. We circled curiously round the tower on the summit of the hill, and anon retracing our way into the town, chanting the well-known Irish song, "Enniscorthy," were informed that the Miss Murphy mentioned therein was at that same time running a milliner's shop in New York. We looked respectfully at Strongbow's Castle, grim and impregnable in hoary stone, and heard how he had received it from the King of Waterford on his marriage with the King's daughter Eva; then we were escorted back to the cozy home, which is known as Woodview, and stands at the base of Vinegar Hill,

and I was talked to by an Irish cyclist, who knows more about the interior of a bicycle than I shall ever learn, or indeed care to; and he talked until I should never have forgiven him for exposing my ignorance, only that he took away my wheel and had a piratical-looking canvas chain-guard put on it, which enabled me to ride more gracefully and in a less cramped position than I had attained to, while my skirt, perforce, had hung all on one side for fear of the unguarded chain. Tim was up very early next morning, and had a swim and a tramp and a grand time in the market, for it was market-day at Enniscorthy—piles of poultry, as costly as five shillings the pair; small kids tied by the legs and bleating unceasingly, carts full of ducks (it seemed as if every feathered creature in the country-side must be on hand); buyers for Dublin and larger cities farther away; old men and women; donkeys by the score—all chaffering, pushing, laughing, squawking, in bedlam double distilled!

We left them with many a smile and hand-shake from the dear people at Woodview, and with our route pleasantly mapped out as far as Kilkenny, where we needs must stop for a night at the palace of a certain bishop, from whom I anticipated great things in the way of folk-lore and fun. A dainty luncheon hung on each handle-bar, and, as we had to pass through the Gap of Scullogue, and would climb pretty high to do so, mountain spring water would no doubt be on tap. An enthusiastic cyclist accompanied us for five or six miles, and to him we are indebted for many useful hints. He evidently approved highly of my choice of a country to explore on a wheel, and departed in due time to his business in Enniscorthy, with many wishes for our success and happiness. When I look back upon such a ride as we had that fair, clear morning, I am tempted to say that if we had only taken one such ride, it would have been well worth going to Ireland for the sake of getting it. The tender beauty of the distant mountains, that are high and grand, but neither hard nor stern; the silver tinkle of some concealed stream; the delicious scent of some honey-heavy, upland clover meadow; the clean, good road; the light mountain air—ah, me! with all these things who would not be happy?

Now and then we got off and stretched ourselves on the turf under some tree or hedge, and talked lazily of Enniscorthy, of Arklow, of Glen-da-lough, and when we talked of Kilkenny we scrambled up and regained our wheels in sudden remembrance of the ride before us. But distances had begun to lose their significance; under a smiling sky such



"OH, THAT COAST DOWN HILL!" (p. 238.)

as we gazed at, a few miles more was only so much more pleasure, and then the delicious twilight, stretching far into the night, is all gain to the cyclist. On one of our halts I chatted with a wee girlie of about eight, who came straying along, poking her bare little toes into the pebbles and humming a weird, un-tuneful ditty. "I minds the goats," she informed me. "I live down there.

There's six of us. No, I don't go to school, nor I can't read. I just minds the goats!" "Do you know what that is?" "I do," phlegmatically; "'tis a penny. Thank you kindly," and she slipped it into her pocket with a quick courtesy that made her look as if her knees had suddenly broken under her. "How far is it to Bagnallstown?" said Tim, quizzically. "I don't know!" said the small girl, carelessly. "Is it a mile?" "I don't know." "Were you ever there?" "Me mother was—I minds the goats!" And so grew up in our private vocabulary a sentence expressive of our indifference to, or utter ignorance of, any questions under consideration. "I minds the goats" was all that was needful to explain our attitude. We lunched at a convenient corner, where a mountain stream trickled cool and clear, and presently, as we rode on in the midday sun, I began to develop a capacity for drink which surprised me. Every time we passed a tidy cottage or an interesting-looking residence, I wanted a drink and halted to get it. Milk, sherry and whisky were offered instead of water, and Tim regarded me with a patient and long-suffering air as I hobnobbed with peasant, grannie, farmer or small boy, all interesting to me and bores to him. We encountered one old lady who presented us with quart bowls of rich, creamy milk, and was distressed because, try as I would, I could not drink a quart! "Would ye constrain the young gentleman to take it, thin?" she urged, but Tim declined to be constrained, and after setting the old dame completely wild by the bestowal of a four-penny silver bit, he calmly informed me that she was an undoubted lunatic, and that we had best get away. This was one of Tim's Irishisms. But the day was shortening (though, indeed, it was the longest day in the year), and, in spite of many drinks, I was ravenously hungry, as only cyclists can be; so we made time to Bagnallstown, where we intended dining. Oh, that coast down-hill to Bagnallstown! Mile after mile, over a limestone road that shone white and clean, round curves, past toiling harvesters, who tossed up their hats and yelled in delight as we fled by. Open-mouthed and rough-haired, disheveled in skirt and short in breath, I careered on until the slant grew gentler and

gentler, cars hove in sight, children lingered gaping on the roadside, and we rode into the town shouting at one another: "*Wasn't it glorious!*"

I think it was our best coast, and I don't think I shall forget it for many a moon; but "after sunshine comes a cloud," and this time the cloud was on the brow of the waiter of the inn, where we arrived breathless, laughing, excited and starving. "Could we have dinner?" "What did we want?" "Potatoes and meat." "The potatoes were bad. There was meat on the table in the coffee-room." I got suddenly enraged, and risked my dinner for the relief of giving the crabbed old wretch a scolding. To my surprise he took not the least notice of my outspoken opinion, except by shrugging his shoulders and remarking: "The potatoes are bad; what else do you want?" Then I discovered that he was almost stone deaf, and was glad Tim had retreated to "look after the wheels." I contented myself by shouting: "Chops, ham and eggs, bread and butter, jam and *tea!*" He repeated the order to insure correctness, turned a deaf ear to my shouted "Hurry up!" and slowly scuffled out to the kitchen. I rated Tim for laughing, and waited, with small patience and a large piece of bread and butter, for the provender, which was served by a comely creature in a neat gown and a very friendly smile. "It wasn't long," she said, soothingly, having doubtless benefited by my eloquence down-stairs, "And it's crame you'll be having for your tay, and fresh butter, just in; and the eggs for the gentleman, and the ham." So she purred on and spread the feast, while we waited hungrily, but slightly appeased by her simple soft-sawder. Tim fell into tantrums over the ham, which was rank, but the deaf man calmed him with some delicious marmalade and a good chop, and, as usual, a prime cup of tea so roused my conscience that I presented the surly waiter with a sixpence when I paid the bill.

A shower and a rainbow had blessed the outer world while we supped, and Tim faintly suggested taking the train to Kilkenny, which I opposed with quite unnecessary force, while he tranquilly remarked: "All right, old lady," and went down to fetch out the wheels. It was seven o'clock, and as sweet and fresh an evening as ever you saw, when we left

the usual knot of interested natives and skimmed out of Bagnallstown. Just after we left we heard the smart trot of a horse on the road behind us. Tim, who had forgotten the ham, and was doing finely on the marmalade, glanced back. "We are pursued!" he said, pretending to tremble. "It's a royal Irish constabulary inspector and his orderly! Did you pay the bill? Did you pocket the spoons? Confess, and all will be forgiven."

"I gave the waiter sixpence," I said, conclusively. "Don't let them get ahead. *Come on!*" and forthwith a race began. It was hot. I was melting. Tim laughed and shouted: "There be fleet steeds that follow. Go it, old lady; more power to you. Oh, I know they'll be harder on us than if we surrendered at once. They'll transport us—whoop!" and we flew on, finally getting a good lead, and hearing the trot, trot grow fainter in the distance. Then I got off in a bath of perspiration. "It was that last cup of tea. I am stewing! Let us rest under the tree and see them go by!" I gasped, and Tim acquiesced willingly. They went by, the grim inspector as grave as a judge, the handsome young constable pulling his mustache and grinning; and after a moment we mounted (dreading that *bête noir* of cyclists—a chill), and rode on, only to come upon the dog-cart and the men ambling leisurely along at the foot of the next hill.

For a little way we plodded behind them, then the pace grew too trying, and the impulse to get ahead too strong. "Let's pass them," suggested Tim. "Ring your bell."

And just now happened the only happening that I am ashamed of, showing conclusively that too much larking is not safe on a wheel. Our rule of the road is exactly reversed in Ireland—one passes on the right and meets on the left. I had schooled myself to be careful, and had never made a mistake so far; but whether it was the fun, or the pace, or the last cup of tea I know not. Certainly this time I did forget, and made a rush at the lessening space on the left (for the good inspector was carefully giving us lots of room on the proper side). There was a shout from Tim and a prance of the spirited horse, a wobble of the wheel, a lurch and a crash, and I and the wheel in a tangled

mass on a cruel heap of broken stones. "I've killed the lady!" shouted the inspector, scrambling down, while the orderly ran to the horse's head and Tim wheeled back. They lifted me out, and then Tim dragged up the wheel. Such a wheel! Any one who has seen a pneumatic wheel wrecked can understand how it looked, and how I laughed! We were two miles from Kilkenny, so the inspector took me up beside him, and the orderly let down the back seat, and Tim carefully handed him up the unfortunate wheel, wavy in the tire and crazy in the spokes—a veritable "drunk and disorderly" in charge of the police!

The inspector did not laugh—he was very solemn. "I really thought I had killed you," he said, seriously, and was evidently distressed at the idea of having been so undignified as to lark about the country with a pair of wandering cyclists.

"Well, you did not hurt me a bit, and it was all my own stupidity," I said, warmly. "But, really, inspector, I don't think I can drive up to the palace with that wheel. Couldn't you leave it somewhere?" "At Kelly's, sir," put in the young orderly. And Kelly, turning out to be the bicycle agent, to Kelly's we went. Mrs. Kelly received the wheel and promised it for the morrow, and we proceeded through the town of Kilkenny, much to the curiosity of the inhabitants, who gaped and grinned and wondered, no doubt, how I had got into the clutches of the law. Had I known that my hat was on one side and my face rather dusty on the same, I should have remedied these little matters; but ignorance is bliss, and I drove along to the palace door, looking rather rakish and disorderly. In an hour or so I began to feel hurt, and was glad to go under a hot-water cure for the myriad cruel little dints and bruises I had found on the broken stones. And I put in rather a bad twelve hours in the miter-room of the palace—too sore to toss and too nervous to lie still, longing for day, and when day came obliged to confess that I could not get up, and was very angry with myself indeed.

A sweet, young Episcopal maiden came and perched on my bed and chatted, and was good to me, and by degrees the idea that some one had put me through a sausage mill, and that I was an idiot, and that my tour was ended

and my cycling done, faded into a tired, thankful feeling that it was no worse; and I slept like a thoroughly worn-out woman. Next morning Mr. Kelly sent my wheel, as trim as ever, and I paid him four shillings, much wondering how he had done it up so well. As to the kindness and brightness and alertness and wisdom and folk-lore and fun of the bishop in whose home I rested and recovered myself, are they not written in the hearts of the people among whom he has lived for seventy-two years, and to whom the name of "Packenham-Walshe," as they affectionately call him, means all that is good and kind and lovable? He showed me wondrous old books, and a wee thumb Bible, just the size of his thumb, and he told me yarns so funny and so characteristic, and with such a quiet twinkle of his merry eyes; and he led me up and down St. Canice's Cathedral, which he loves and is proud of, and he burglarized the sanctum of his favorite canon for our entertainment, that I would be cold indeed were he not to me a dear and delightful prelate, this Bishop of Ferns and Ossary.

There is, says the wise man, a time for everything, and the time for a small rest had intervened in our ride, while the wheel was in hospital with Mr. Kelly, of Kilkenny. Tim played tennis with the boys and girls who called my charming bishop "father," and I, bone-sore and self-accusing, reposed in the miter-room and conjured up ghosts of long-dead

bishops and lords of the soil whose pranks and sayings formed the theme of many a rich tale told in the gloaming by the bright and legend-loving Bishop of Ferns and Ossary—not the tarradiddles of Killarney guides, nor yet the fantastic ghost-lore of the northwest, nor even the sparkling storyettes of Dublin town, but authentic yarns of defunct Ormond-Butlers (or *vice versa*), whose castle rose ivy-crowned and beautiful just a five minutes' walk from the palace, and whose monuments, in the rich, black Kilkenny marble, lay thick adown the aisle and nooks and corners of St. Canice's Cathedral. One reaches the bishop's palace in a devious and undignified prowl through high-walled, narrow alley-ways, and just inside the old hall-door one stumbles on the first old-time tale of the place. Here died a former Lord Bishop, coming from his court as lord of the soil, magistrate, judge, or whatever he pleased to call himself—after sentencing a guilty man to imprisonment. The prisoner, who was, by the way, a bigamist, shot his judge (or stabbed him, more properly, as it was very long ago) just as the bishop passed under this particular arch, and his life-blood dyed this particular stone of the floor. There are secret passages, queer old rooms, immensely thick walls—all the old-time peculiarities which we young American people have to remember were the style long, long before our country was discovered.

To be continued.



KILKENNY CASTLE.