

**THE BECKONING OF THE
WAND: SKETCHES OF A
LESSER KNOWN IRELAND**

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The Beckoning of the Wand: Sketches of a Lesser Known Ireland by Alice Dease

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ALICE DEASE

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SKETCHES OF A LESSER KNOWN IRELAND

BY ALICE DEASE

..... A piteous land,
Yet ever beckoning with enchanted wand."
—R. J. ALEXANDER.

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1908

jr

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THE BECKONING OF THE WAND



I

MY DEAR JOAN,—You ask me to pity you for having to live in Ireland. You send me a little brown-covered book called "Letters from Ireland," and you say, "I have been in this country for two years, and have seen with my own eyes much—and far more than I wish—of what is described in this book with such photographic distinctness. Although the author is an Irishman he abuses his country as it deserves, but then his eyes have been opened by living in America, and he, at least, has the

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courage of his convictions. You cannot deny that his pictures of idleness, apathy, and dirt are drawn from the life, then pity me for having to live among such people."

Now I am going to surprise you. I am going to be perfectly frank with you, and, as I do not feel that the cap fits me, I am going to ignore your insinuation that the writer of "Letters from Ireland" is unique in having the courage of his convictions, and—I am going to pity you for having to live in Ireland!

My dear, I do pity you from my heart for having lived for two years in a country where, in spite of evils I do not attempt to deny, there is so much, so very much, that is good and beautiful, yes, and deeply spiritual, to see—and not to have seen it.

You have read with evident attention the pages of the little book that you send me to-day, but, Joan dear, do you not think that a portrait is a truer likeness than a photograph, and

would you not rather have a full instead of a one-sided representation of anything, even of a nation that you do not love? You already have the photograph. All the evils which are only too painfully apparent, and blot the surface of Irish life, are faithfully portrayed in these so-called American letters. My portrait may be ill-drawn, the descriptive strokes may be feeble and blurred; yet if I can express anything of what I feel, what I know to be true, you will have to own that there is a something in the Irish character which makes them a people apart from and, in their innate spirituality, above all others.

“Letters from Ireland,” which, by the way, was obviously never penned by a man, is a most useful and—alas! that I must own it—a truthful little book. The copies of it that fall into the hands for which it is intended cannot fail to do a part at least of the good that its authoress, a practical lover of her country, wishes.

But when her readers fail to grasp that she is writing solely from a materialistic point of view, and that abuse of her own country—for which she is doing good work with tongue and pen—is not intended, then her little book needs some amplification.

That the state of things she describes and deplores, that she is working to improve, is the outcome of past oppressive laws, cannot be denied, but this is no excuse for the continuance of a state of things which, as she says, is a disgrace to a race entitled on other grounds to so high a position in the grades of nations. All lovers of Ireland should therefore welcome a book which will help to improve the material well-being of Ireland, no matter how humiliating it may be to our national pride.

It is a well known and a very true saying that Saxon and Celt might come to the under-

standing they have so long sought and always missed

"If England would remember,
And Ireland could forget."

England at last *is* remembering. In her Saxon fashion she is doing all she can to atone for the faults of the past, and Ireland *must* forget. We can only hope that with increasing educational and material advantages she will soon arrive at this desired point of forgetfulness. Otherwise the blame for our shortcomings, which for so many generations we have comfortably saddled upon England, will have to be taken on our own shoulders, and we shall have, in common honesty, to remain silent when such accusations as yours are levelled at us.

Even now we cannot deny our faults, but still there remains another and a higher side of Irish nature which must not be ignored, if, even without being merciful, we wish to be just, to

our own. I am an Irishwoman. I will admit, if you like, that I am consequently idle, apathetic, and dirty, but I do claim some redeeming points. So it is with us all, and the consciousness of these redeeming points, hidden though they often are, should help us to bear with our national failings, and nerve us to greater efforts in the cause of rational regeneration as championed in "Letters from Ireland."

The time for silence has not yet come, so bear with my garrulity, and read how personal experience has taught me to look on Ireland, her virtues, and her failings. The facts that I shall set down must speak for themselves, and the vaunted justice of the English nation will be belied, if, when you have read, you cannot spare some little admiration for the country that, from a thorough knowledge of it, I have learned to love so dearly. To love one's country, seeing nothing beyond the American photograph, would be impossible—though pity is supposed to be