

**AN IRISH
COUSIN. [1903]**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649557233

An Irish Cousin. [1903] by E. C. Somerville & Martin Ross

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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An Irish Cousin

By

E. C. Somerville and Martin Ross

Authors of "Some Experiences of An Irish R.M.," etc.

New and Revised Edition

Longmans, Green, and Co.

39 Paternoster Row, London

New York and Bombay

1903

This book was originally published by Messrs. Bentley & Son in 1889, as by "Geilles Herring" and "Martin Ross," and has been out of print for several years.

AN IRISH COUSIN.

CHAPTER I.

THERE had been several days of thick, murky weather ; dull, uncomplaining days, that bore their burden of fog and rain in monotonous endurance. Six of such I had lived through ; a passive existence, parcelled out to me by the uncomprehended clanging of bells, and the, to me, still more incomprehensible clatter which, recurring at regular intervals, told that a hungry multitude were plying their knives and forks in the saloon.

But a change had come at last ; and on Saturday morning, instead of heaving ridges of grey water, I saw through the port-hole the broken green glitter of sun-lit waves. The S.S. *Alaska's* lurching plunge had subsided into a smooth unimpeded rushing through the water, and for the first time since I had left New York, the desire for food and human companionship awoke in me.

It was early when I came on deck. The sun was still low in the south-east, and was spreading a long road of rays towards us, up which the big steamer was hurrying, dividing the radiancy into shining lines, that writhed backwards from her bows till they were lost in the foaming turmoil astern.

A light north wind was blowing from a low-lying coast on our left, bringing some faint suggestions of fields and woods. I walked across the snowy deck, to where a sailor was engaged in a sailor's seemingly invariable occupation of coiling a rope in a neat circle.

"I suppose that is Ireland?" I said, pointing to the land.

"Yes, miss; that's the county Cork right enough. We'll be into Queenstown in a matter of three hours now."

"Three hours more!" I said to myself, while I watched the headlands slowly changing their shapes as we steamed past. This new phase of life that had once seemed impossible was now inevitable. My future was no longer in my own control, and its secret was, perhaps, hidden among those blue Irish hills, which were waiting for me to come and prove what they had in store for me.

"First breakfast just ready, miss," said one of the

innumerable ship-stewards, scurrying past me with cups of tea on a tray.

I paid no attention to the suggestion, and made my way to a deck chair just eagerly vacated by a hungry old gentleman. I could not bring myself to go below. The fresh kind wind, the seagulls glancing against the blue sky, the sunshine that gleamed broadly from the water and made a dazzling mimic sun of each knob and point of brasswork about the ship,—to exchange these for the fumes of bacon and eggs, and the undesired conversation of a fellow-passenger, seemed out of the question.

The sight of the land had given new life to expectations and hopes from which most of the glory had departed during the ignominious misery of the last six days. I lay in my deck chair, watching the black river of smoke that streamed back from the funnels, and for the first time found a certain dubious enjoyment in the motion of the vessel, as she progressed with that slight roll in her gait which the sea confers upon its *habitués*.

Most people appear to think that sea-sickness, if spoken of at all, should be treated as an involuntarily comic episode, to be dealt with in a facetious manner. But for me it has only two aspects—the pathetic and the revolting; the former being the point of view from which I regard my own sufferings, and the latter

having reference to those of others. In the dark hours spent in my state-room, I had had abundant opportunity to formulate and verify this theory, and I have never since then seen any reason to depart from it.