

**RING O' RUSHES**

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Ring o' Rushes by Shan F. Bullock

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**SHAN F. BULLOCK**

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BY

SHAN F. BULLOCK



NEW YORK

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TO  
MY BROTHERS IN CHICAGO



## RING O' RUSHES.

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### PROLOGUE.

*I*F you enter Lismahee town by way of the ferry road, you pass the church, standing high beyond the graveyard wall among its yews and tombstones; then have a glimpse of the massive walls and shining windows of the poorhouse (the very walls which once heard the ramblings of Debbie Chance, and below which Solomon Gray used to take his weekly turn at the pump wheel); presently come to a filthy, ill-conditioned alley, through which you pass, and at once strike Lismahee in its very vitals.

*This way and that, the long wide street — which, as in most Irish towns, is Lismahee itself — runs straight and level; a post car rattles over the stones; children sport on the sidewalks; shop keepers sit smoking on their window-sills; here and there a cart stands in the gutter, with a horse dozing between the shafts; from*



*the gardens and yards comes the sound of voices, the clatter of cans, the clutter of fowls; the sunlight dances on the high white walls, drowsiness is in the air, the reek of peat smoke (how wholesomely pungent it comes!) hangs heavy: behind the iron rails over there is the market yard, higher up is the bank, lower down the town pump, facing it the police barracks, beyond that the town hall (before which, one day, Phelim cried to Heaven for pity as he stood by his battered caubeen); thence your way lies over a ragged sidewalk, past limewashed houses, dingy shops, the pillared porch of an inglorious hotel, the elegant mansions (withdrawn somewhat from the vulgar eye of the street) of the town magnates; then, all at once, hedges, ditches, the open country, and, in a little while, the pointed doorway of the railway station.*

*Irish trains are delightfully easy-going; they tarry long by platforms, and dally along the track; so that, as you make the ten miles or so which lies between Lismahee and Clogheen, you have ample opportunity, right and left, to spy out the beauties of the land. And a beautiful country it is just there: broad, fresh, cheerful, huddled with hills, dotted with cottages, cut into the semblance of some huge patch-work coverlet by the tall thick hedges; here a clump of stunted trees with*

*the grey rock shining out from the underwood, there a stretch of heathered bog with its mud-house and sparkling pools, and piles of black wet peat; on this side a very prairie (beyond which, say three miles away, lies the village of Knock), on that a sudden view of hazy mountains; presently, a grove of firs, a house on the hill, a smiling valley, and, just beyond, the spires and roofs of Clogheen.*

*Clogheen stands on a hill, and is a town of streets. Commissioners watch its interests; round one of the finest diamonds in Ulster stand the houses of the citizens; in the advertisement columns of the county newspapers its shops appear as Emporiums; its church, chapel, town hall, hotels, are buildings worthy of its greatness: but if you want to see Clogheen in its glory, walk through its surging streets on fair or market day. Then — Ah me!*

*Along the fair green runs the high road to Bunn; but, if you can spare an hour, resist the blandishments of the station car drivers, linger awhile on the platform — admiring the book-stall, the brawny corduroyed porters, the pigs and cattle in the vans, picturing to yourself, maybe, Mary the emigrant standing there weeping by her old yellow trunk; and presently take a seat with me in the afternoon train for Glann.*

*Ah! now we are on familiar ground; now recollections come crowding. How often past those hills and hedges has one come glorying and gone sorrowing; how many that one knew, sons and daughters of Ring o' Rushes, have sobbed good-bye, good-bye, to every field out there, as, homesick and heartbroken, they passed them for the last time! See, there is Caroo House, to which Herseif came one day in tears; there, among the trees, is Bartley French's old home; the land is fair, you see, well-watered, full of trees and hills, ringed with mountains; there is Ballyhob Junction; there at last the flashing roofs of Bunn.*

*Bunn! the town of towns, the El Dorado of one's youth, how can child of yours (disillusioned now, and how little the happier!) look upon your battered streets and ragged houses without tears? What happenings one has seen from these market-house steps; what memories every stone of you holds; how the old familiar faces come pressing through the blue haze of your peat smoke! There the emigrants go skirling down the brae towards the station; up to God's acre our friends go silently; down from God's house the flower-crowned pairs come joyfully; there is Shan Grogan dusting his hat on the sidewalk; from the post office Tim Kerin comes shuffling over the stones, and wagging his old*