



Edith Somerville & Martin Ross

The Real Charlotte

The Real Charlotte (1894)

a novel by **Edith Somerville** (1858-1949)

and her cousin **Martin Ross** (1862-1915; pen name of Violet Martin)

Lecture 1.5 \ Chapter 1 through end of Chapter 8

Twilight of Big-House Ireland

Published in 1894, *The Real Charlotte* (hereafter: *TRC*) is perhaps the greatest **realist novel** to appear in nineteenth-century Ireland — the Irish equivalent, arguably, of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. The critic Julian Moynahan (who died in 2014) opined that it may be Ireland's best novel up to James Joyce's creation of *Ulysses*, which debuted in 1922. As early as 1920, just over a quarter-century into its existence, Stephen Gwynn deemed the work "one of the **most powerful novels of Irish life** ever written." Its initial working title was *A Welsh Aunt* (a term for the **female first cousin of one's father or mother**), and its co-authors were **second cousins**, members of the Protestant (Church of Ireland or Anglican) **Anglo-Irish Ascendancy**, a coterie associated with the **rural Big House**. ¶¶ Edith Anna (Enone Somerville)'s home was **Drishane House** in **County Cork** (in Ireland's southern province, **Munster**); Martin Ross's (i.e. **Violet Florence Martin**'s) was **Ross House** in the Connemara region of **County Galway** (in the western province, **Connaught**). After



Somerville's mother's death in 1906, Ross moved to Drishane House, where Somerville's sister (**Hildegarde**) would manage the estate's large farm and Somerville herself would establish a dairy operation. A talented **painter, illustrator, musician** (singer; keyboard player), and **horswoman** (from 1903, the first ever female **Master of the West Carberry Fox Hounds**), Somerville began her writing life under a male pseudonym: **Geilles Herring**. During the early 1880s, she had formal training in painting in Düsseldorf, Germany, and Paris, France. ¶¶ As the nineteenth century progressed, the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy faced increasing challenges, among which we can count the following four: (1) the **Great Hunger** or potato famine of the 1840s (which financially ruined Ross's father); (2) the growth in numbers — and in socioeconomic and political power — of the **Catholic middle classes**; (3) **encumbered** (i.e. **indebted**) landed estates; and (4) demands for **tenants' rights**. While Ross died in 1915,

Somerville lived until 1949, long enough to witness the disappearance of all but a very few functioning Big House regimes. ¶¶ One of *TRC*'s leading plots concerns a **Big House family**, the **Dysarts** of **Bruff House**, whose patriarch, Sir Benjamin Dysart is "thirty years older" (p. 53) than his wife, Lady Isabel, an "Englishwoman" who abhors "dullness" (p. 13). From oldest to youngest their three children are: **Christopher** (aged 27), **Pamela**, and **Garrett** ("Garry"). During the course of the action, the wheelchair-bound Sir Benjamin dies; thus, his eldest son inherits his status as a **baronet**, becoming Sir Christopher

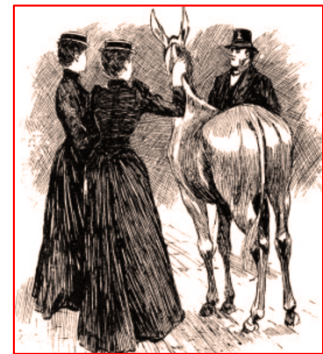
Dysart. Christopher had attempted a career in the **West Indies** (i.e. the Caribbean); and one notes that in 1888 Somerville published a series of her watercolors, *A Mule Ride in Trinidad* (a West Indies island), in *The Graphic*, a magazine. Being “near-sighted,” the mustache-less Christopher wears an “eyeglass,” and he “[speaks] with a hesitation” that is less than a “stammer” (p. 17) but that Roddy Lambert mockingly imitates: “Th—thanks—I don’t c—care” (p. 32). ¶¶¶ To manage his landed estate — by a large lake, near a country town named **Lismoyle** in the **West of Ireland** (probably based on Oughterard, County Galway) — Sir Benjamin Dysart employs as “agent” Roderick (“Roddy”) Lambert, who will abuse his position by committing acts of embezzlement. A “J.P.” (p. 35) or Justice of the Peace (i.e. a citizen permitted to volunteer, under the supervision of a **Resident Magistrate**, to adjudicate minor offences at a **petty [court] session**), Roddy was preceded in the role of agent by the late father of the novel’s title character, Charlotte Mullen. ¶¶¶ Charlotte is a middle-aged, middle-class, unmarried Protestant, who harbors sexual desire for Roddy. At one point, not only does “her face” gain “**more color than usual**” as a reaction to Roddy’s presence, but, in addition, her typically gruff and combative “manner” changes to “more nearly ... **that of ordinary womankind** than was its wont” (p. 75). Charlotte may have cultivated the erotic aspect of her being from books. A “great and insatiable reader,” she is rumored to have “**startlingly advanced**” “works of **fiction**” on her bedroom bookshelves — “many of them **French**” (p. 24)! As regards making progress with Roddy, two major challenges emerge for the **40-year-old** Charlotte: one is his having married (largely for financial reasons) **Lucy Galvin**, whom Charlotte calls “the **turkey hen**”; the other is his becoming infatuated with the 19-year-old **Frances (“Francie”) Fitzpatrick**, Charlotte’s “**first cousin once removed**” (p. 15), who, being in receipt of just £25/year (p. 46) by way of income, relocates to the Lismoyle area from her native Dublin to live, at least temporarily, with Charlotte. Roddy is **15 or 16 years older** than Francie. ¶¶¶ Hoping to render the **ingénue** Francie and



Christopher Dysart a couple, Charlotte eventually manages to get Lady Dysart to accept the young woman as a house-guest at Bruff, a strategy that Lucy Lambert anticipates (p. 31). Christopher considers Francie to be “**chocolate-boxey**” (p. 55): that is, her appearance resembles an illustration that one might find on a commercial box of chocolates (such as the one in the image to the left of this paragraph).

Literary Partnership

The English poets Wordsworth and Coleridge constitute a **literary collaboration**, but the Irish fiction writers Somerville and Ross outstrip them — and most other such partnerships — for longevity and variety. (Whether their relationship was ever sexual remains an open question; some label the dynamic a “**romantic friendship**.”) In an essay, “**Two of a Trade**,” written late in her life, Somerville reflected that Ross’s special gifts as a writer included her ability to inscribe “**subtle and recondite**” adjectives and “**knife-edged slice[s] of sarcasm**.” Their first joint effort was a novel, the appropriately titled *An Irish Cousin* (1889), begun in 1887, the year after their initial meeting. Its working title was *The Shocker*. The two went on to produce literature across multiple genres. Consider, for example, **book-length travelogues** (focused on Denmark, Wales, and the West of Ireland) and volumes of short stories. Of the latter, the **three volumes centered on “the Irish R.M.”** (Resident Magistrate) — published in 1899, 1908, and 1915 (the year of Ross’s premature death) — enjoyed huge popular success. (Indeed, Somerville and Ross took a lawsuit against a couple of authors for **plagiarizing content** from their “Irish R.M.” texts.) In 1918, the final year of the Great War (World War I), Somerville sold one of the original manuscripts from the “Irish R.M.” series to benefit a Red Cross fund dedicated to assisting sick and wounded veterans of the conflict. ¶¶¶ The cousins’ West-of-Ireland travel book, *Through Connemara in a Governess Cart* (1893), emerged out of a commission from a women’s magazine, *The Ladies’ Pictorial*. To the right of this paragraph, please see one of Somerville’s illustrations for the work, which contains such data as: “An Irish mile is, roughly speaking, a **mile and a**



quarter English.” Some other accounts of travel, penned by the cousins, did not appear in book form; however, they did feature in magazines. An important instance of the latter resulted from their 1895 tour of the Gaelic-speaking (i.e. Irish-speaking) **Aran Islands**, off the coast of County Galway. Published in 1906, the piece was titled “An Outpost of Ireland,” and it describes the native islanders as having “about them **an air of a foreign race and of an earlier century.**” ¶¶ It’s perhaps ironic that so closely knit a professional duo as Somerville and Ross managed to create in Charlotte Mullen of *TRC* (1894) **one of the most emotionally isolated, self-protecting female characters** in all of Irish fiction. During Ross’s life, the cousins published 16 volumes of co-written works, “**evolv[ing] [their literary] characters,**” Ross claimed, “**equally.**” (Somerville used a different term: “**conversationally.**”) After Ross’s demise, some 14 new “Somerville and Ross” works appeared across many years, perhaps the most important being the 1925 novel, *The Big House of Inver*. Somerville maintained that the production of those texts resulted from her **communicating almost daily with her deceased literary partner**, initially with help from the **occult medium J.E.M. Barlow**. According to Somerville, she received “messages” from Ross by means of **automatic writing**. In the late 1870s, Somerville and her brother (Cameron Somerville) had served as mediums in séances organized by their uncle, Kendal Coghill. In *TRC*, likely set in the early 1890s, Lady Dysart expresses an interest in “spiritualism” as a “current topic” (p. 13). ¶¶ Ross could count another key Irish writer, **Lady Augusta Gregory** — a founder of the Abbey, Ireland’s National Theater — as a cousin. As did Gregory, Somerville



and Ross engaged in recording, in notebooks, the ways in which the Irish spoke English: the **dialects and idioms known collectively as Hiberno-English**. In this enterprise, they were functioning as anthropologists or **ethnographers** of a sort. (In 1897, Somerville turned down an offer from **Douglas Hyde** [who would later become the first President of Ireland] to collect — and, if necessary, translate from Gaelic into English — local folk tales from the region around her home, Drishane House.) *TRC* presents several working-class individuals who use Hiberno-English, one of whom is Norry (“the Boat”) Kelly, the top servant in Charlotte’s home, **Tally Ho Lodge**. At a certain juncture, Norry praises the Dysarts, deploying syntax and expressions readily identifiable as Hiberno-Irish in nature: “[T]hey was always and ever a fine family, and thim [the people] that they takes in their hands **has the luck o’ God!**” (p. 213). Elsewhere, she orders

Tally Ho’s under-servant, **Bid Sal**, to “**make down** [revive] the fire and bile a dhrop of wather” (p. 294) for some fresh tea. For her part, Charlotte uses different “tones of voice” or styles of speaking, depending on the context; addressing Lady Dysart at a Bruff House tennis party, she “**affect[s] a vigorous brogue**” (p. 13) — that is, an Irish accent. ¶¶ In 1933, the University of Dublin (Trinity College) conferred an **honorary doctorate** on Somerville in recognition of her literary achievements. Upon her death in 1949, Somerville was buried next to Ross in the graveyard of **St. Barrahan’s Church of Ireland church**, Castletownshend (the County Cork village nearest Drishane House). The image to the left of this paragraph, by Somerville, shows her and Ross together during their tour of Denmark.

Beginnings: Dublin’s North Side and Mrs. Mullen’s Deathbed

Although it’s a rural novel, *TRC* opens in Dublin, Ireland’s capital, at “nearly four o’clock” in the afternoon of an “August Sunday” (p. 1). This first chapter serves as **a kind of prologue, being set around a half-decade before** the rest of the story. On the “**north side**” (the less well-to-do side) of Dublin’s city center, the reader encounters “the excellent Mrs. [Tish] Fitzpatrick of ... **Mountjoy Square** ... in mountainous repose on the sofa in her dining-room” (pp. 1-2). She is awaiting the return — from a **Church of Ireland (Protestant) Sunday-school class** (taught by a Miss Bewley) — of her four children and her husband’s 14-year-old, **blue-eyed, golden-haired** niece, Francie Fitzpatrick, who (we learn later) likes to “**see and be seen**” (p. 47). As they walk home, in company with the 16-year-old **Tommy Whitty**, Francie teases that boy, indicating that she’ll not return to him a “**silver ring**” he’d given her as a love token. **Know how a milkman and his milkcart feature in this early “escapade” in *TRC*.** Into this adolescent mini-drama steps the brown-eyed “Mr. Roderick Lambert,” who is confident concerning “his **good looks,**” and who is identified by Francie via his “**long black mustash**” (p. 5). The Fitzpatrick children, Francie’s first cousins, regard Roddy as a

“magnificent grown-up man,” and he is knowledgeable about their middle-class parents (Tish and Robert Fitzpatrick) and Francie’s father Johnny or “Nosey Fitzpatrick” (p. 5). Later in the novel, we learn about Robert’s becoming hurt financially by “bad business,” an outcome that obliges him to quit the Mountjoy Square domicile and “take [i.e. rent]” a “little house” (p. 31), Albatross Villa, for his family in Bray, a coastal commuter town not far south of Dublin. We assume that because Robert manages Francie’s trust fund of £500 (her not yet having come of age) — and because she lives with Tish and Robert — that Francie must be an orphan, although the text never explicitly says so. ¶¶ The next (second) chapter shifts the action forward five years, when Francie is 19. The initial locus is the kitchen and its neighboring scullery (dish- and clothes-washing room) in Charlotte Mullen’s home, Tally Ho Lodge, on the outskirts of the “country town” (p. 6) of Lismoyle. Invoking in its first paragraph a wind “howling ... inconsolably” around “two o’clock” on a “November night” (p. 6), the chapter exploits certain conventions of the Gothic genre of literature. The dark-and-stormy night causes Charlotte’s chief domestic servant — the “greyish-red” (p. 7) -haired Norry the Boat, daughter of a ferryman — to “[think] gruesomely of the Banshee” (p. 6), a term that translates as “woman of the fairy barrow [mound]” and refers to the supernatural being whose keening (lamenting) and shrieking herald death in a family. Some sources claim that the Banshee will only visit families of ancient Gaelic (also known as Milesian) lineage. ¶¶ Various pet animals occupy the kitchen-scullery space alongside Norry: cats and a cockatoo, or at least the “ghostly sleeping form of a cockatoo” (p. 6). Charlotte summons Norry to demand that one of the cats, a “large grey” (p. 9) male named Susan (or Sue), be carried upstairs. Specifically, the destination is a “little shabby bedroom” (p. 7) with an “illuminated text” (presumably, a Bible verse) pinned to one of its walls. The individual desirous of interacting with Susan is an “old dying woman” (p. 8): Mrs. Mullen, Charlotte’s aunt — and Francie’s great-aunt. Charlotte places Mrs. Mullen’s “right hand” on Susan’s back, where it rests until she dies; the passing causes Norry to “howl,” a sound that, in its turn, causes Susan to “[leap]” away (p. 10). One might argue that Mrs. Mullen’s spirit passes into Susan, a process called metempsychosis: the transmigration of souls, including from one species to another. Prior to her end, the aunt expresses to Charlotte concern for Francie: “[W]e ought to have done more for her. You [Charlotte] promised me [Mrs. Mullen] that if you got the money [Mrs. Mullen’s savings, to be bequeathed via her will] you’d look after her” (p. 9). [Know whether Francie Fitzpatrick is present at Tally Ho Lodge when her great-aunt, Mrs. Mullen, passes away in that house.](#) By the way: Another elderly soul at Tally Ho Lodge is Mrs. Tommy: the “great-great-grandmother of all [Charlotte’s] cats” (p. 18).

Meet the Dysarts of Bruff House

The action in the third chapter (a “lawn-tennis party” at Bruff house [p. 11]) and all the novel’s remaining occurrences seem to be set in the early 1890s. Chapter 3 opens by implying the social change — the rise of the middle class (or embourgeoisment) — occurring in Ireland at that time, around 40 years after the end of the Great Hunger, a catastrophe that disproportionately affected the peasantry. The unidentified, third-person narrator highlights the middle-class consumer capitalism then establishing itself across Ireland, even in rural locales, such as the “small ... country town” (p. 11) of Lismoyle, “three miles” (p. 12) from Bruff House. Specifically, the narrator invokes the leisure goods (“straw hats, tennis shoes,” and more) on display in local “shop windows,” (p. 11), as well as the area’s summertime tourist economy, dependent on the lake as a visitor attraction. The lake may be based on Lough Corrib in County Galway, a nineteenth-century



engraving of which is pictured to the left of this paragraph. ¶¶ TRC contains multiple references to the middle classes and their commercial and consumerist activities. We learn that, in anticipation of her move to from Dublin to Lismoyle, Francie Fitzpatrick made a £6 (six-pound) purchase on credit to obtain a new horse-riding costume or “habit” (p. 35). We also learn that Roddy Lambert’s wife, Lucy, inherited her “eight thousand pounds” from the commercial (as opposed to the aristocratic) sector: “her late father’s mills [factories]” (p. 27). As for Charlotte, who writes in a “commercially clear hand” (p. 23): Her family background underscores middle-class emergence from humble origins (which still manifest themselves in Charlotte’s occasional choice to

pepper her speech with “peasant jestings” [p. 34].) While her maternal grandmother was (reputedly) “a bare-footed country girl,” her mother was a professional woman: “a national [i.e. elementary, state-sector] schoolmistress” (p. 13). As already stated, Charlotte’s father’s career had been as the land agent for the Dysarts of Bruff House, but one of that man’s brothers had become an “attorney” and the other a medical “doctor” (p. 21). ¶¶ For Ireland’s rural bourgeoisie — so-called strong farmers and the merchants dependent on them (e.g., Lismoyle’s tennis-shoe vendors) — a major issue since the Great Hunger had been a campaign to render tenants more secure on the farms they rented from Big House landlords, such as the Dysarts. This effort was known as the Land Campaign or even the Land War, although it was primarily political combat: a war of rhetoric. One phase of it was the Plan of Campaign (begun in 1886), and we will address the matter in more detail in a later lecture. For now, we should just note that the entity central to the greater Land Campaign was the Land League, which receives mention on p. 14 of *TRC*. (The image to the right of this paragraph shows a Land League membership card from the early 1880s; its printed content includes the phrases, “Ireland for the Irish” and “Down with Landlordism.”) ¶¶ A major cause of the rise in tenant farmers’ incomes and, thus, their desire for more autonomy was the co-called corn-to-horn transition, whereby the growing of cattle (pastoral or ranch farming) eclipsed the growing of crops (arable farming). *TRC* reflects the change via such images as: “a land of pasture and sleek cattle”; and “fat cows” on “comfortable farms” (p. 39). Sometimes, small details convey this important reality; for example, when Roddy Lambert gazes from his dining-room window late on a midsummer evening, he notices “cattle ... browsing and breathing audibly ... and some children ... laughing and shorting” (p. 32). It is as if Ireland’s youth can anticipate a happy future thanks to the shift to a cattle-dominated economy. ¶¶ While “five and forty women” (p. 12) — six of them the Beattie sisters — attend Lady Dysart’s tennis party, only a few men do. Charlotte’s first engagement at the event is with “trio” of those men: Major Waller, a “country gentleman”; an “archdeacon” or middle-rank Church of Ireland vicar; and Roddy Lambert, now somewhere north of 35 years old (p. 14). In that company, Charlotte boasts about having gotten the better of “Tom Casey, the land-leaguing plumber” (p. 14) — in other words, about tamping down the power that farmers, the shopocracy, tradespeople, and other individuals associated with the Land League believed they and their organization were acquiring in late-nineteenth-century Ireland. The key index of that increasing power was success at pressuring the British parliament to pass land acts: legislation that reduced the landlords’ clout by providing tenants with better rental terms and (in some instances) pathways to purchase the land that they rented. As the third chapter ends, Christopher Dysart comments that “if anyone could understand the [most recent] Land Act” (p. 18) it would be Charlotte. Know the maritime activity that, in Chapter 3, Christopher Dysart identifies as occupying very many of his waking hours.



Meet the Denizens of: Tally Ho Lodge; Rosemount; Gurthnamuckla

The fourth chapter sees the Dubliner Francie Fitzpatrick become a resident of Tally Ho Lodge, joining its female community. The Lodge’s Protestant (Church of Ireland) mistress, Charlotte Mullen, has resided there for 15 years; and she commands three servants:

“Norry the Boat, daughter of Shuanapickeen, the ferryman ... and of Carroty Peg” (p. 19-20) • Roman Catholic
“Bid Sal, Norry’s own special kitchen-slut” (p. 19) • Roman Catholic
“Louisa ... house and parlor-maid” (p. 19) • distinguished by having a “red head [i.e. red hair]” (p. 120), she is “a small and sullen Protestant orphan” (p. 19) of “fourteen” (p. 22)

One speculates about whether this fundamentally female dispensation obliges at least some of its members to assume what the contemporary society would have deemed masculine roles. It’s notable that, soon after she moves into Tally Ho Lodge, Francie presents herself in a tight-fitting, “olive-green” (p. 34), Dublin-made costume that causes Norry to characterize her as “be[ing] dhressed like a man” (p. 33). (Of course,

the incident could also seek to highlight how ideas about the **New Woman**, a term introduced around the 1880s, were beginning to penetrate into rural locales from the metropolis.) **Know the term that, according to Chapter 4, folks in Charlotte’s locality apply to the kind of vehicle in which Francie’s luggage arrives at Tally Ho Lodge.** ¶¶ For its part, the fifth chapter reveals Roddy Lambert’s domestic circumstances. He and his wife, Lucy, reside, upon “two acres” (p. 36) of land, in **Rosemount** “a **new house** at least a mile from [Lismoyle] town, built under his own [Roddy’s] direction” (p. 26) but funded by Sir Benjamin Dysart. Each has a coping mechanism: Roddy spends (too much) money on **boy-toys**, such as “horses and traps,” while the **false-teeth-wearing** Lucy, who has been married once before, takes “**patent medicines**” (i.e. approved pharmaceutical drugs), including a daily “**postprandial [after-dinner] pill**” (pp. 27-28). Not having children and confronting “the sloughs of middle-age” (p. 36), she dotes on her **Maltese terrier** (p. 26), a toy breed sometimes **depicted, in Classical art, as a child’s dog.** **Know the specific cause, revealed in Chapter 5, of an alteration in Roddy’s face-color; the matter has to do with Charlotte, although he spotlights it when conversing with his wife, Lucy. Also: know the principal reason, revealed in Chapter 6, for a past trip to Ireland’s capital by Roddy and Lucy, one that included their attending a performance of a comic opera by Arthur Sullivan and William S. Gilbert. (Subtitled *The Lass That Loved a Sailor*, it debuted in 1878.)** ¶¶ The sixth chapter introduces and the seventh chapter elaborates on **Gurthnamuckla** (“field of the pigs”), a “**two-storied white house**” that anchors a farm of “dark-green pastures,” separated from other properties by a zone of “**limestone**” notable for its barrenness — and for how its “grey” color can acquire a certain “**blueness**” from the sky (p. 39). One assumes that the limestone dips under Gurthnamuckla’s pastures, allowing their grass to absorb calcium. Such grass is ideal for raising race-horses, which require strong bones. Roddy Lambert covets the property, declaring that “[t]here’s no better grass for young horses anywhere” (p. 44). Effectively guarding the “farm-house” are a “repulsive-looking **old man**” (p. 40), **Billy Grainy**, and his dog, **Sailor**, a collie-greyhound mix. ¶¶ A homestead in disrepair, well past its “palmy days” (p. 41), Gurthnamuckla gains seminal importance in *TRC*. Falling under the Dysart family’s Bruff House estate, it has historically been rented by the Duffy family (whose land-agent Roddy Lambert is); however, not just Roddy but Charlotte, too, desires the house and the “twenty acres” (p. 42) that still attach to it, the remnant of a once larger farm. (Note that the narrator refers to Duffy “**ownership of the farm**” [p. 42] at Gurthnamuckla, even though the legal fact is rental under terms stipulated in a lease document.) The local large lake has a shoreline at Gurthnamuckla, just as it does at Bruff House. ¶¶ The current Duffy tenant is **Julia Duffy**, the dowry-less and, thus, unmarried daughter of what, in Ireland, was referred to as a “**mixed marriage**.” Julia’s late father, John, “had been a **hard-drinking Protestant**”; he married outside his religion and his class, choosing for a wife “his ... dairy-woman, a **Roman Catholic, dirty, thriftless**, and a cousin of Norry the Boat” (p. 41). The social prejudice against such mixed marriages was strong; the Protestant William Butler Yeats’s last play, *Purgatory* (1938), highlights how the marriage between a “**groom** in a [horse-] training stable” — by implication, a Catholic — and the Protestant daughter of a Big House caused the **moral destruction** of her aristocratic line, plus the literal destruction of the house. The thin, hook-nosed Julia Duffy, a woman of around “sixty years,” identifies socially as “**an Irish Protestant**,” although rather than attend church in Lismoyle she functions as a kind of **shamanistic healer**: a “[folk] doctor and wise woman” of “**pagan habits**” and “**occult powers**,” versed in “the **culture of herbs**” as a means of unlocking “the mysteries of medicine” (p. 42). ¶¶ Julia’s slovenly ways have resulted in a degraded farm of “mossy, deteriorated fields” (p. 42). For a while, she took advantage of the Land League’s defense of tenant farmers to avoid paying (via Roddy Lambert) the rent due to the Dysart family; and she attempts to capitalize on the corn-to-horn transition by sub-letting the land “to a **Lismoyle [-based] grazier** [pastoral farmer]” for use as “grazing” for his cattle (p. 42). Julia supplies rent erratically, claiming a kind of immunity from prosecution or eviction due to a promise alleged made by Sir Benjamin Dysart “that **she should never be disturbed** in her father’s farm” (p. 43). When younger, might Julia and Sir Benjamin have been lovers? **Know the object that attracts Francie’s attention as she gazes over the lake in Chapter 7 while waiting for Roddy to conclude his business meeting with Julia Duffy, tenant of Gurthnamuckla.**

More about Christopher Dysart; Meet Hope-Drummond and Canavan

Tongue-in-cheek, the eighth chapter compares several members of the Dysart family, in the garden at Bruff House, to “the Fairchild Family” (p. 53): characters in the bestselling and influential three-volume children’s literature series, *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1818-1847), written by the prolific English author **Mary Martha Sherwood**. The works were didactic, designed to convey lessons about acting morally on earth in accord with divine precepts. The chapter also provides more information about Christopher Dysart — an “enigma” (p. 55) to his mother. We learn that (despite his Irish birth and home) he is an **Old Wykehamist**: that is, a graduate of England’s first private school, **Winchester College**, where the students’ common work area is called the “**mugging hall**,” from the sense of the noun *mug* that means **to work** (hence, perhaps, J.K. Rowling’s term *Muggles* in her Harry Potter novels). The school was established as the feeder for **New College**, one of the colleges that make up the University of Oxford, from which Christopher earned an undergraduate degree. Mrs. Baker — resident in a **villa**; and the “**mouthpiece of Lismoyle opinion**” (p. 27) — displays casual racism in declaring that Christopher’s social stiffness derives in part from “all the blacks [having bowed] down to him” during his period as a colonial “**secretary**” (or assistant to a government administrator) in the West Indies — specifically, “**those Barbadoes**” (p. 50). ¶¶ As a young man of leisure during the summer at Lismoyle, Christopher’s hobbies include sailing “his three-ton **cutter**,” a yacht built for speed, and — after the fashion of an **anthropologist** — taking **photographs** of folk-life, such as “groups of old women and donkeys” (p. 51). Photographs of **evictions** (tenants being ejected from their farm cottages or houses, often for non-payment of rent) became a key tool for the Land League in its **propaganda campaign**. (In 1888, shortly before the likely time setting of *TRC*, the American inventor and entrepreneur **George Eastman** introduced the first camera to use roll film: the **Kodak**.) ¶¶ Introduced in Chapter 8 are: (1) **Evelyn Hope-Drummond**, a first-time English visitor to Ireland, staying at Bruff, the Dysart family’s Big House; (2) Sir Benjamin Dysart, who is pushed around in a **bath-chair** (a kind of wheelchair, named after the **city of Bath**, England; see the image to the right of this paragraph); and (3) **James Canavan**, Sir Benjamin’s valet, one of whose tasks is pushing the bath-chair. Later, addressing Francie, Christopher offers a mini-bio of Canavan (a name meaning “**white head**”): “He began by being a sort of **hedge-schoolmaster** [instructor with no formal schoolhouse or classroom], but he was **too mad** to stick to it. Anyhow, my father took him up, and put him into the agency office, and now he’s his valet, and **teaches Garry arithmetic** when he’s at home [i.e. not away at boarding school], and **writes poems and plays**” (p. 142). Father-son tension is manifest in Sir Benjamin’s condition, for the “tenants’ rejoicings” in response to Christopher’s “coming of age” (i.e. twenty-first birthday party) excited Sir Benjamin to “such a paroxysm of apoplectic jealousy” that he experienced a disabling “stroke” (p. 54). [Know what gardening mistake Lady Dysart makes in Chapter 8.](#)



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