



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 4.5 \ Chapters 31-39

Introductory Remarks

In his acclaimed study, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (Harvard University Press, 1995), **Declan Kiberd** devotes a chapter to Somerville and Ross's *The Real Charlotte* (1894; hereafter, *TRC*). In his opening discussion of the cousins' **in-between-ness as members of the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy** (i.e. their being regarded by many as neither Irish enough nor English enough), Kiberd quotes Somerville's claim to Irish identity: "My family has eaten Irish food and shared Irish life for **nearly three hundred years**." Kiberd's chapter offers much useful information, such as the biographical fact that Violet



Martin "[knew] almost as much about the middle class of Dublin as she did about the Anglo-Irish gentry in their country houses" (Kiberd, p. 71). The explanation is that, from 1872, she and her mother lived in **bourgeois circumstances on the capital city's northside**, a result of the Martin family's inability to maintain its County Galway Big House (called Ross House). Like Martin, Somerville found the expanding Irish middle class worthy of attention. In a letter to her cousin-collaborator, she complained that members of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy were too narrowly prescriptive in their literary tastes, "car[ing] for **nothing but belted earls or romantic peasants**." "My feeling," she asserted, "is that any character is interesting if treated realistically." ¶¶ Kiberd avers that, "while the form [of *TRC*] is jaunty with the ironies of good social comedy, the content is a tragic tale of the **collapse of big house culture**" (Kiberd, p. 72). He argues that had Christopher Dysart exhibited in everyday life the focus he manifested when **recusing Francie (and Roddy) during the capsizing of the *Daphne***, then Francie might have

accepted his offer of marriage, an outcome with the potential to revitalize the Big House culture at Bruff, whose "stasis ... amounts to torpor"; that torpor is represented by **Lady Dysart's planting of chickweeds "in the mistaken belief that they are asters"** (Kiberd, p. 75). Kiberd sees Francie as uniquely positioned to float among various classes in Irish society, whether the setting be rural, urban, or suburban: "Because Francie can move so easily from place to place, or from one social setting to another, the reader builds up something approaching a **total portrait of a society**, observing the amusing differences between one code and another, as she moves through its different layers" (Kiberd, pp. 76-77). ¶¶ We have already emphasized the all-female nature of the dispensation at Tally Ho Lodge, and Kiberd reveals that Edith

Somerville’s sometime suitor, Herbert Greene, had difficulty in acknowledging that women of her class should want to work. He complained that her dedication to the labor of writing novels meant her non-appearance at social gatherings, such as tennis parties.

Chapters 31-34 • Francie Continues in Lismoyle

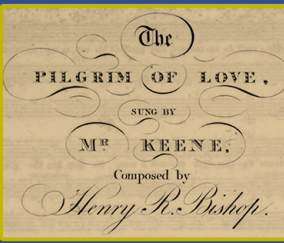
Chapter 31 \ Desperate due to the prospect of homelessness, Julia Duffy encounters Sir Benjamin Dysart “in his [wheel/Bath] chair” (p. 216) in the Bruff House gardens. He misinterprets her entreaty to remain in Gurthnamuckla as indicating that his elder son and heir, Christopher, has attempted some kind of intervention and, thus, exhibited “insolence” (p. 218) towards him as patriarch. We witness bullying hostility, a kind of “Caesar”-like response (p. 218), in Sir Benjamin’s treatment of Julia — and, indeed, in his attitude towards Christopher. If it is Sir Benjamin’s default, that quality may account for Christopher’s having developed into such an introspective and placid 27-year-old man, even though (as the *Daphne* incident demonstrates) he has the capacity for decisive action. Overheated and almost “unconscious” (p. 219) — a “spectacle of miserable middle-aged drunkenness” (p. 221) — the defeated, angry Julia espies, while heading home, an apparently romantic tableau: Francie Fitzgerald’s being read to by Christopher Dysart, outdoors at Tally Ho. He enunciates the second and third stanzas of “The Staff and Scrip,” a fairly long, pseudo-medieval romantic ballad from early in the verse-writing career of the Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The water motif in the stanzas (e.g., “like the water’s noise \ Her plaintive voice”) effectively reiterates TRC’s association of Francie with that natural element. Realizing that she cannot understand the intricate, allusive poem, whose protagonist (Christopher explains) is a pilgrim, Francie makes reference to a popular, light-opera song titled “The Pilgrim of Love” (see image below). Francie experiences Julia as “very queer” (p. 221). When Christopher fails to engage with Julia’s plight beyond, first, asking her to “[w]rite to me” and, then, promising that “I’ll see you get fair play,” she — feeling slighted and full of vindictive bitterness — reveals that his courting of Francie does not derive from independent thoughts or actions on his part, but rather from Charlotte’s having, deliberately

and stealthily, manipulated him into the relationship. Were he to marry Francie, he would (Julia mockingly claims) be “under her [Charlotte’s] foot” (p. 222).

Chapter 32 \ The chapter opens by furthering the bourgeois consumerist discourse discussed in an earlier lecture. At “Miss Greely’s wareroom” or drapery in the town of Lismoyle, the so-called turkey-hen Lucy Lambert — wearing a “[dolman]” or fashionable, Turkish-inspired coat — finds “exhilarating” the progress being made on her order of “a new dress for church”; then, at Mrs. Barret’s bakery, while purchasing a “tea-cake,” she concurs with the

Chapter 31

Sir Henry Rowley Bishop was author of "Home! Sweet Home!" (also known as "There's No Place like Home") and multiple other popular songs — including "The Pilgrim of Love," invoked by Francie. Readers of TRC in the 1890s might have drawn a comparison between Francie's flirting and the fact that Bishop's wife, Anna, a famous opera singer, abandoned him and their three children, running off with her lover and accompanist

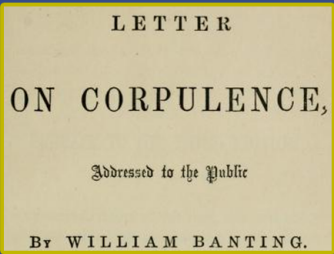


I know a lovely song called "The Pilgrim of Love," said Francie [to Christopher] timidly

Chapter 32

"I or breakfast, I take four or five ounces of beef, mutton, kidneys, broiled fish, bacon, or cold meat of any kind except pork; a large cup of tea (without milk or sugar), a little biscuit, or one ounce of dry toast."

Extract from William Banting's 1863 text, *Letter on Corpulence, Addressed to the Public*, outlining the first meal of the day per his slimming diet. Lucy Lambert contemplates trying this regime



proprietary opinion that a brand of “three-and-sixpenny” tea (i.e. tea costing three shillings and six pence per pound) is superior to “the one and threepenny from the Stores” (p. 223). By “the Stores,” the

narrator means retail establishments connected with Ireland's nascent **cooperative system**, which Somerville and Ross supported, becoming friends with its leading advocate, **Horace Plunkett**. During the 1890s, the movement grew rapidly, primarily by means of **cooperative creameries**, which allowed dairy farmers to increase their incomes by processing raw milk it into higher-value products, such as butter and cheese. When *TRC* was in draft form, the greater movement's focus was less on launching agricultural cooperatives than on establishing stores or **consumer cooperatives** (also known as **distributive cooperation**), an initiative that had achieved considerable success in England. In 1888, Plunkett authored an essay, **"Cooperative Stores for Ireland,"** and the phrase **"co-operative stores"** appears in Chapter 33 of *TRC*. Incidentally, after Plunkett founded an umbrella entity, the **Irish Agricultural Organization Society** (IAOS), in 1894, Violet Martin (Martin Ross) contributed what she called "a little dull article" to its journal, *The Irish Homestead*, edited by George Russell. (That publication printed several short stories by James Joyce that would later feature in his collection *Dubliners*.) ¶¶ Note the supremacy of **women as shopkeepers** in the passage we have been discussing. Note also that Lucy's over-consumption of goods has manifested itself in near-obesity — her **"pu[ting] up so much flesh"** — a condition that Roddy recommends treating by means of her being **"put on Banting"** (p. 224). The well-known and fairly popular Banting diet was first outlined in an 1863 booklet, ***Letter on Corpulence, Addressed to the Public*** (1863), by the British royal family's London-based **funeral director**, William Banting. A guiding principal was limiting one's intake of **starchy and sugary carbohydrates** — such as tea-cake! ¶¶ Lucy's store-bought tea-cake is for hosting Charlotte at Rosemount, an encounter that builds on what the novel established in Chapter 28, when, in almost identical circumstances, Lucy became overwrought as she divulged to Charlotte Roddy's habit of talking to and about Francie in his sleep. In Chapter 32, the two women begin by discussing Julia Duffy; Charlotte explains that, having discovered her **"lying on the road."** Dr. Rattray placed her in the **"infirmary"** or local hospital, where he diagnosed **"inflammation of the brain"** (p. 224) — what present-day medical professionals call **encephalitis**. We get an insight into the late-nineteenth-century healthcare system: Charlotte relates that if the sale of Julia's possessions fails to generate sufficient funds to pay for in-home care (**"some one to look after her"**), her only option will be **"go[ing] into the county asylum"** (p. 224). The reference is to a government-authorized public institution for the **"lunatic poor,"** properly termed a **district asylum**. By 1900 (six years after the publication of *TRC*) there were 22 such asylums in Ireland, the originating legislation having been passed in 1817. In Chapter 35, we learn Julia's ultimate fate: incarceration in **"Ballinasloe Asylum,"** after **"a board of J.P.'s [Justices of the Peace] and M.D.'s [medical doctors] sat [in a deliberative session] upon her [case]"** (p. 260). The **Connaught District Lunatic Asylum** opened in 1833, built on the **panoptic** or general-surveillance plan. In 1850, its service area was reduced from the province of Connaught to just two of the province's counties (Galway and Roscommon); thus, it was renamed the Ballinasloe District Asylum. ¶¶ As their conversation progresses, Charlotte learns that Roddy has quashed Lucy's anxieties about a possible affair between him and Francie by claiming that his multiple recent visits to Tally Ho Lodge have been **"to talk business with you [Charlotte] ... about Gurthnamuckla and money and things like that"** (p. 225). The fact that "to

Extract from "Agricultural Cooperation in Ireland," a piece by T.A. Finlay (Vice-President of the Irish Agricultural Organization Society), published in the June 1896 edition of the British publication, *The Economic Journal* • The "he" in the first sentence in Horace Plunkett (pictured on the right)



About twenty years ago he founded, in the neighbourhood of his own residence in Co. Meath, a **co-operative store** on the English model. It stands by the roadside, in a thinly populated district of a very thinly populated county, in a site most unpromising to the eye of the business man. Thanks to the care of its founder, and to the **patronage of the few 'big houses'** of the neighbourhood, it has succeeded. Its 'turn-over' is about £10,000 per annum. But its success is not likely to stimulate imitation in districts where there is no gentleman of influence and leisure to repeat Mr. Plunkett's experiment under the same conditions.

"Mrs. Lambert, a customer whom neither co-operative stores or eighteen-penny teas had been able to turn"

Chapter 33

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save himself,” Roddy has revealed to the “despised creature” (p. 225) Lucy her desire for — and her machinations to obtain — Julia’s house and farm incenses Charlotte. The “torrent of bullying fury” that arises within her prompts the unidentified, third-person narrator to declare, “The real Charlotte had seldom been nearer the surface than at this moment” (p. 226; emphasis added). Charlotte manipulates Lucy into opening Roddy’s “old dispatch-box” by using her husband’s key on the box’s “Bramah lock” (p. 228) — an English brand famed for proof against picking. Letters from and photographs of Francie neatly stored in the receptacle make Charlotte’s case for her, and the shock of seeing and reading such hard evidence causes Lucy to undergo a fatal collapse — likely, cardiac arrest. Significantly, the narrator closes the chapter by commenting on the dead Lucy vis-à-vis elements of her bourgeois-materialist persona: “gold” jewelry that is “instinct with the vulgarities of life” (p. 232).

Chapter 33 \ Echoing her breakdown on the *Serpolette* (described in Chapter 15), Charlotte draws maximum dramatic attention to herself at Lucy’s funeral (held, perhaps appropriately, on “the Lismoyle market-day”) by “depositing hysterically a wreath” upon the coffin “in the acute moment” of its being



Portion of “The Day Dream” (1880; oil on canvas) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

Christopher reads one of Rossetti’s poems to Francie, and it is likely that his conception of the young Dublin woman derives in large part from paintings such as this one, whose sitter (Rossetti’s secret lover) holds honeysuckle, a symbol of bonds of love

lowered into the grave (p. 233). When, earlier, that coffin had passed through the town’s central business district, “[m]ost of the better class of shops had [put] their shutters up” (in other words, had temporarily closed) as a mark of respect to the memory of a valued customer. Soon enough, Charlotte appears fully recovered, for she engages in a verbal marketplace altercation with Mary Norris, a local “beggar-woman” who does occasional turns as a fishmonger; Christopher overhears the mistress of Tally Ho attack the vendor as a “drunken fish-fag, that’ll be begging for crusts at my hall-door to-morrow” (p. 237). Upon noticing the heir to Bruff, Charlotte “wishes that the earth would open and swallow her up” (p. 237) — rather as, recently, it had received Lucy — for she knows that he knows, as a result of his encounter with Julia Duffy, about her attempts to engineer nuptials between him and Francie. Christopher has acknowledged to himself that Charlotte considers him to be the “quarry” (p. 233) or the “prize” in her “coarse scheming” (p. 234); however, he has determined to treat Francie as her own person, irrespective of Charlotte’s maneuverings. Thus, with Charlotte engaged in shopping and bargaining, he visits Francie at Tally Ho. ☞ Christopher’s Pre-Raphaelite sensibility is such that he cannot straightforwardly make a proposal of marriage; instead he addresses Francie in words and phrases whose “delicate shades of manner and meaning” she has difficulty

fathoming. He is radically different from other men of her acquaintance who “made love to her” like “trees walking” (p. 240) — that is, they declared their romantic interest in her in an unrefined but clear enough fashion. (The simile derives from Chapter 8 of Mark’s Gospel, when, at Bethsaida, Jesus spits on a blind man’s eyes to begin the process of restoring his sight.) The closest that Christopher can get to a marriage proposal seems to be the pair of questions, “Do you really trust me? Would you promise always to trust me?” (p. 241). Even as Francie imagines herself as the future Lady Dysart, “dwelling at Bruff in purple and fine linen,” she experiences a vision of “Hawkins’ laughing face, his voice, his touch, his kiss” (p. 242). Francie’s infatuation with the English subaltern (i.e. trainee or junior officer) becomes clear to Christopher when, in the act of extracting her handkerchief to wipe away tears of confusion, she lets fall to the floor an object whose significance Christopher’s passion for photography positions him well able to assess. That object is a snapshot of Hawkins “done at Hythe” (p. 239), which lands “face uppermost at his feet” and which he “pick[s] up” (p. 243) — no more hiding (or Hythe-ing)! Hawkins, it turns out, has extended his sojourn in England by leaving Hythe for a visit to the Yorkshire home of his fiancée, Miss

Coppard, where he can participate in “**cubbing**” (p. 239) — that is, the hunting of fox cubs by hounds as a means of **training the dogs** for the regular fox-hunting season. Another activity of which he informs Francie by letter is “**golf**” with Yorkshire “**girls**” who are “**nailers** [exceptionally talented] **at it**” (p. 247).


Chapter 34 \ Domestic activity abounds in the Tally Ho kitchen, as evidenced by: “**dirty rubbers [tea-towels]**” (p. 244); left-over food items suitable for re-purposing as “[a] **curry**” (a mark of British colonialism in the Orient); and clothes rolled up for “**sprinkl[ing]**” with water, “**preparatory to ironing**” (p. 245). Amid this diurnal industry, Charlotte learns from the servants, especially Norry the Boat Kelly, that, on the prior afternoon, Francie ended up “**cryin’ always**” (p. 246) after receiving what amounted to a marriage proposal from Christopher Dysart. ¶¶ With the ostensible purpose of chastising Francie for using too many eggs in “**sponge-cakes**” made for entertaining, Charlotte approaches her cousin, who is darning socks next to the dining-room window. As Francie’s temporary “**guardian**,” her real mission is to ascertain — using, if necessary, “**the terror of her personality**” (p. 250) — whether the young woman rebuffed Christopher’s recent advances. She inquires, “**Did he make an offer [of marriage] or did he not?**” (p. 250). When Francie answers that no clear offer transpired, Charlotte reframes the question by asking, “**[D]o ye [i.e. you, singular] mean to marry him?**” (p. 251). Francie’s negative response amounts to the stymying of Charlotte’s scheme to merge the houses of Mullen and Dysart (represented by Francie and Christopher, respectively). Exasperatedly, she posits that Francie refused Christopher due to an underlying goal of petitioning Roddy “**to make ye Number Two [i.e. to become his second wife], and to pay your debts [with money inherited from Lucy’s estate]**” (p. 252). Francie is astute enough to have spotted Charlotte’s deep erotic hankering for Roddy, so to quiet the older woman she doesn’t just state that hankering’s existence but does so as if to suggest that its fulfilment is in her gift: “**I’ll not deprive you of him**” (p. 252). Only the surprise arrival of Susan the tomcat prevents Charlotte from physically assaulting Francie and, thus, initiating a cat-fight between the two women. Being the homeowner, Charlotte has, of course, a critical card to play, and she ends the exchange with Francie by pronouncing, “**Ye can go out of this house tomorrow**” (p. 252).

Chapters 35–39 • Francie in Bray

Chapter 35 \ Having wrapped up the tourist season, several of Lismoyle’s bourgeois citizens choose to depart from the town for late-September vacations. By contrast, Hawkins returns to the Lismoyle military barracks from Yorkshire (in anticipation of the September 20 start of the **Irish partridge-hunting season**). His stay in Ireland will be short, however, for he has “**first leave**” (p. 267) due to him from the middle of October until the end of December. For her part, Charlotte assists Roddy with divesting Rosemount of the late Lucy’s apparel and other effects via the “**ransacking of boxes and wardrobes**” (p. 257) — an effort lubricated by recurring “**half glass[es] of ... excellent brown sherry**” (p. 263). We learn that Mr. Baker, the Protestant banker, has taken his family from its Lismoyle villa “**to drink the waters at Lisdoonvara**” (p. 253), a **spa town in the Burren region of County Clare** that became commodified in the nineteenth century as a tourist destination, especially for Ireland’s arriviste Catholic middle class — but also for foreigners. In the August 7, 1897, edition of the London-based magazine, *Black and White: A Weekly Illustrated Record and Review*, the company called Irish Railways listed “Galway, Lisdoonvarna, Cliffs of Moher” among “the many charming and interesting places” for British tourists to visit on a trip to Ireland. ¶¶ Attired in “**new ... black and glossy and well made**” (p. 257) clothes (to tempt the recently widowed Roddy), Charlotte discerns charm and betrays interest in Lucy’s “**sealskin**” (probably a jacket) and other sartorial artifacts, which she deems “**too good to be given to servants**” (p. 259); thus, she guides her discourse with Roddy so that he ends up gifting them to her. As their dialog develops, Roddy reveals that he will not receive the entirety of Lucy’s financial assets, which are in a **managed trust**, but instead only — for the remainder of his life — the **yearly interest** that those assets generate. This intelligence causes Charlotte to muse on her £300 loan to Roddy, as well as the “**fine crop**” of other debts that she knows he

must “[settle]” (p. 262). The chapter ends with Roddy’s briefly broaching the subject of Francie, from whom he has (unbeknownst to Charlotte) received correspondence, written in Albatross Villa, Uncle George and Aunt Tish’s **rented home in Bray**, County Wicklow, a coastal settlement about 14 miles south of downtown Dublin that developed both as a bedroom-commuter town and as a leisure resort for the capital once the railway was extended to it from the city center in 1854. Of importance to later elements in *TRC*, we should know that:

- (1) on the Dublin-Bray railway line is a significant town, **Kingstown** (now known exclusively by its Gaelic name Dún Laoghaire [pronounced *Dun Leery*]), the historic terminus of the **mail- and passenger-ferry service that connected Ireland to London** (specifically, via a sailing to the port of **Holyhead, Wales**, followed by a rail journey, aboard the **Irish Mail train**, to Euston Station, London);
- (2) the Dublin-Bray railway line facilitated a variety of **“day tours from Bray,”** such as those described in George Rennie Powell’s *Official Railway Handbook to Bray, Kingstown, the Coast, and the County of Wicklow* (1860); among other venues in the Bray hinterland suitable for **“pic-nic parties,”** Powell invokes **“the Waterfall”** on the Big House estate of Lord Powerscourt and **“the Lover’s Leap,”** a “huge rock” overlooking the “solemn depths of the ravine” through which the **Dargle river** flows.




Savy
THE PARIS STUDIO
CORK

Chapter 39

“**As she [Charlotte] lifted her head ... her eyes met those of a large cabinet photograph of [Roddy] Lambert that stared brilliantly at her**”

Cabinet card from around 1885, taken by the Paris Photographic Studio in the city of Cork, Ireland, whose owner, the Paris-born Adam Savy, also operated a premises in Dublin




Visitors “drink[ing] the waters” (page 253) at the Twin Well, Lisdoonvarna (c. 1900)

Chapter 37

“**They [Francie and Roddy] left their car at the gate of the glen to which the Dargle river has given its name, and strolled together along the private road that runs from end to end of it**”

From G.R. Powell’s *Official Railway Handbook to Bray, Kingstown, the Coast, and the County of Wicklow* (1860), an illustration titled “The Dargle, from Summit of Cliff”

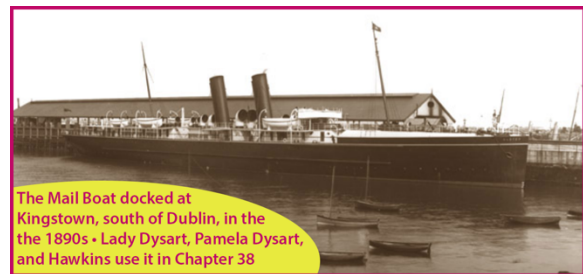


Chapter 36 \ This chapter rehearses Francie’s having to labor hard and endure privations under the scheme of **“domestic economy”** (p. 265) enforced in the **“crowded, carpetless”** (p. 266) Albatross Villa, Bray, a residence **“just saved from the artisan [working-class] level”** by its **aspirational name** and **“by a tiny bow [curved] window on either side of the hall door”** (p. 264) — and perhaps, too, by the presence there of a (booze-imbibing) maid, Bridget. Although Francie’s Fitzpatrick relatives are going down in the world, Aunt Tish’s middle-class anxiety over social appearances is such that she will **skimp on adequate food and fuel**, rather than have her daughter’s hats be **“less ornate than those of their neighbors”** (p. 265). From Albatross Villa, Francie — who possesses a **“hardy, supple nature”** (p. 274) — writes to Hawkins, explaining that her ouster from Tally Ho resulted from her **“[having] refused — or as good as refused — Mr. Dysart for his ... sake”** (p. 266). Hawkins’s failure to respond meaningfully to this letter causes Francie not only to seriously reassess him as her chief romantic interest but also (and much more significantly) to suffer a **loss of “belief in herself”** (p. 270). While she contemplates composing conciliatory missives to Christopher and even Charlotte, she finds herself capable of corresponding with only one member of her erstwhile Irish circle in Lismoyle: Roddy Lambert, a man with whom she has **“always” been “entirely at her ease”** (p. 276). 🍷 Occasionally, Francie receives in Bray visits from such Dublin friends

as “the still enamored Tommy Whitty [now a **law-office clerk**]” and “Fanny Hemphill and her **two medical student brothers**” (p. 272); however, they cannot remedy her “**dispirited**” condition, which is exacerbated by a written demand from “a **Dublin shop, containing more than a hint of legal proceedings**” (p. 274) over unpaid clothing invoices. To claim some alone time, she attends an **evening church service on Christmas Day**, which concludes with Roddy’s presenting himself to her in person, for he has taken a room “**for a week**” (p. 275) at **Breslin’s Hotel**, described in a May 1869 piece in the London-based *Fraser’s Magazine* as **one of the two “pre-eminent” hotels in Bray** — a building “on the Esplanade [seaside walkway], facing the sea ... beautifully situated for a view of the bay and the counties of Dublin and Wicklow.”

Chapter 37 \ The cramped conditions and familial scrutiny at Albatross Villa render desirable a day trip for Roddy and Francie: a “**drive to the Dargle** [river-valley]” (p. 275), near Bray, undertaken on the day after Christmas Day, known in Ireland as **St. Stephen’s Day** in recognition of the **first Christian martyr**. Charlotte’s uncle and aunt approve of what appears to be courtship on Roddy’s part, despite the recentness of Lucy’s death. The “**day prove[s] to be one of the softest and sunniest of the winter,**” and the “**winding beauty of the** [River Dargle’s] **ravine,**” along which Roddy and Francie take a stroll, is **almost unsullied by “holiday-makers ... tempted down from Dublin”** (pp. 276-277). In addition to sharing his opinion that Francie “**made a mistake in fighting with Charlotte,**” Roddy imparts the news of Charlotte’s having “**moved into Gurthnamuckla**” (p. 278) and of Christopher’s having accepted an “**unpaid**” British diplomatic appointment as an “**attaché** [member of an ambassador’s staff] **... at Copenhagen**” (p. 279). ¶ On **New Year’s Eve**, the day prior to Roddy’s scheduled return to Lismoyle, he and Francie take the train from Bray for a “**Sunday afternoon walk on Kingstown pier**” (p. 281), which, to this day, remains a popular spot for a leisurely perambulation. (In 1893, New Year’s Eve fell on a Sunday.) While on the pier, they encounter Tommy Whitty, whose presence interferes with Roddy’s courtship design. Roddy announces an intention to host Francie to “**tea at the Marine Hotel**” in Kingstown, having determined (in his own mind) that the strategy will “**[shake] off**” Whitty, a “**damned presuming counter-jumper**” (p. 283).

Chapter 38 \ After concluding their tea, Roddy and Francie just miss “**the five o’clock train**” (p. 285) from Kingstown to Bray, and while awaiting the next one they observe the arrival, in the winter darkness, of the ferry from Holyhead, which in addition to “**mail bags**” (p. 287) is carrying Lady Isabel Dysart and Pamela Dysart, coming back home after “**staying with her people**” (p. 279) in London, and Lieutenant Gerald Hawkins, returning to duty from his October-December military first-leave. All the parties converge on the railway platform because the Dysarts intend to catch a train into central Dublin to overnight before journeying on to Lismoyle. Lady Dysart’s continuing “**disapprobation of Francie**” is patently evident, an attitude reinforced by the fact of the young woman’s “**going about alone**” (p. 288) in Kingstown with Roddy, the Bruff estate’s land-agent. For his part, Hawkins visits “**commonplace neglect**” upon Francie, which causes “**[t]he romance that always clung to him even in her angriest thoughts, [to be] slaughtered**” in the way that a “**schoolboy**” might stamp out with his heel “**some helpless atom of animal life**” (p. 289).



The Mail Boat docked at Kingstown, south of Dublin, in the 1890s • Lady Dysart, Pamela Dysart, and Hawkins use it in Chapter 38

Chapter 39 \ The action has advanced from New Year’s Eve to mid-March, and while the narrator does not mention **St. Patrick’s Day**, the reader may think of that festival upon encountering Charlotte as a “**landed proprietor,**” not just managing the “**dairy, pigs, and poultry**” at her new domicile, Gurthnamuckla (which means “field of the pigs”), but doing so in a manner that makes her “**well satisfied**” with her “**account books**” (p. 290). She envisions developing the property into a kind of **minor Big House**, and to that end she has employed a pair of men to “**[spread] gravel on the reclaimed avenue**” (p. 290) —

a class of roadway often associated with country mansions. In addition, she chooses to interpret “**the cawing of the [nest-] building rooks**” in the Gurthnamuckla trees as presenting “**a pleasant manorial sound**” (p. 290). Replete with self-satisfaction, Charlotte allows her inner musings to embrace the possibility of unambiguous romance with Roddy, one of whose **colts** (part of recently acquired set of four) she observes “**cutting capers** [i.e. cavorting]” (p. 291) across Gurthnamuckla’s lime-rich grass. This romantic “**aspect**” or characteristic of the generally inscrutable or “**amphibious**” Charlotte seems to surprise the narrator, who can otherwise identify only the following among her traits: “**humorous rough and readiness ... literary culture, proved business capacity, and ... dreaded temper**” (p. 291). A little later, the narrator also reveals that Charlotte has engaged in the occult practices of “**table-turning and spirit-writing**,” which “[have] expanded for her the boundaries of the possible” while also rendering her “**more accessible to terror of the supernatural**” (p. 292). ¶¶ As we discovered in an earlier lecture, Edith Somerville participated in séances before ever meeting Martin Ross (Violet Martin), and after Ross’s death she continued to publish under the “Somerville and Ross” brand by means of supernaturally receiving input from her late cousin via **automatic writing, also known as spirit-writing**. Increasingly displaced and uneasy due to the socioeconomic and political strengthening of the Catholic middle class, coteries within Ireland’s Anglo-Irish Protestant community developed, over the course of the nineteenth century, a peculiar interest in the **mystical and uncanny**. Consider, for example, such Gothic literary products by Irish Protestants as: **Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*** (1820); **Sheridan LeFanu’s lesbian-vampire classic *Camilla*** (1872); and **Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*** (1897). ¶¶ As Chapter 39 of *TRC* draws to its conclusion, Norry the Boat seems to undergo a supernatural experience in that “**her eyes ... [commune] with a familiar spirit at the other end of the [Gurthnamuckla] kitchen**” (p. 297). In fact, she sees the beggar, Billy Grainy, who has (in a manner of speaking) haunted Gurthnamuckla since Julia Duffy’s time as mistress there. He carries the mail, which, it transpires, contains news that induces a kind of terror in Charlotte. A carefully drafted letter from Roddy to Charlotte indicates that he intends to expand the boundaries of the possible by **marrying Francie**. While Charlotte may have histrionically feigned emotional breakdowns on the *Serpolette* and at Lucy’s graveside, her distraught reaction now is real. She indulges in “**an animal want of self-control**,” shredding (vampire-like?) Roddy’s letter **with her teeth**, whose rehabilitation she had earlier traveled to Dublin to effect. In one phase of the scene, we discern evidence of Roddy’s tactical awareness that, at some future juncture, he might need to **exploit Charlotte’s erotic lust for him** (probably due to the money he owes her). His strategy, it turns out, has been to supply her with a “**large,**” recently executed “**cabinet photograph**” (also known as a **cabinet card**) of himself. When, in her rage, Charlotte catches sight of the portrait, she extracts it from its frame and burns it, prior to consuming a “**long gulp**” (p. 301) of brandy, straight of the bottle. (FYI: The standard size for the stiff cardboard pieces on which photographs were mounted for cabinet cards was 6.5 inches high by 4.25 inches wide.) ¶¶ The revelation of losing Roddy to Francie leaves Charlotte emotionally isolated, but for her principal servant, Norry the Boat Kelly, **geographic isolation** — being miles from Lismoyle — constitutes Gurthnamuckla’s major downside. She welcomes, therefore, a visit from Mary Holloran, who lives in the **gate lodge or gatehouse at the entrance to Rosemount** and, so, collects Roddy’s mail if he is away. Mary’s conversation with Norry reveals an important value in Irish society: the generous provision of food and drink by the family of a deceased person to neighbors who visit the homeplace or “**corp’-house** [corpse house]” (p.



Illustration of a gate lodge (or gatehouse) at the entrance to an Irish Big House estate • Ireland once had around 10,000 such buildings

“Why, Mary Holloran, what brings you here?” said Charlotte, recognizing the woman who lived in the Rosemount gate lodge”

294) to wake that individual. Discussion of a recent wake sets up Mary’s revelation that, although only seven months have passed since Roddy “**berrid** [buried]” Lucy, he has become absorbed by regular, mail-based contact with Francie that includes “**little boxeens [mini-boxes] and rejestered envelopes**” (p. 296; emphasis original). The entire chapter could devolve into a double indictment of Roddy (by Charlotte Mullen and by Mary Holloran); however, Somerville and Ross do not settle for the **villain convention**, such as one might find in novels serialized in mass-circulation magazines. While in developing her exposé about

the Roddy-Francis relationship, Mary at one point “[brakes] off” for dramatic effect, as if delivering “a number [i.e. installment] of a serial story” (p. 297) — a meta-literary moment — she earlier had praised a key quality in Roddy, namely, his fairness as a Justice of the Peace, that is, a citizen with the right to deliver legally binding decisions in petty cases. Mary shares with Norry how Roddy successfully advocated on behalf of her elderly, physically diminished mother in an action brought against her by a certain John Kenealy. Norry agrees that “[Roddy] Lambert’s a fine arbithrator” (p. 295). How — or, indeed, if — Roddy will arbitrate (i.e. settle) matters between Charlotte and Francis remains to be seen.

