

Aristotle's Bellows

BY LADY GREGORY

PERSONS

The Mother.

Celia (HER DAUGHTER).

Conan (HER STEPSON).

Timothy (HER SERVING MAN).

Rock (A NEIGHBOUR).

Flannery (HIS HERD).

Two Cats.

ACT I

ACT I

Scene: A Room in an old half-ruined castle.

Mother: Look out the door, Celia, and see if your uncle coming.

Celia: (*Who is lying on the ground, a bunch of ribbons in her hand, and playing with a pigeon, looks towards door without getting up.*) I see no sign of him.

Mother: What time were you telling me it was a while ago?

Celia: It is not five minutes hardly since I was telling you it was ten o'clock by the sun.

Mother: So you did, if I could but have kept it in mind. What at all ails him that he does not come in to the breakfast?

Celia: He went out last night and the full moon shining. It is likely he passed the whole night abroad, drowsing or rummaging, whatever he does be looking for in the rath.

Mother: I'm in dread he'll go crazy with digging in it.

Celia: He was crazy with crossness before that.

Mother: If he is it's on account of his learning. Them that have too much of it are seven times crosser than them that never saw a book.

Celia: It is better to be tied to any thorny bush than to be with a cross man. He to know the seventy-two languages he couldn't be more crabbed than what he is.

Mother: It is natural to people do be so clever to be fiery a little, and not have a long patience.

Celia: It's a pity he wouldn't stop in that school he had down in the North, and not to come back here in the latter end of life.

Mother: Ah, he was maybe tired with enlightening his scholars and he took a notion to acquaint ourselves with knowledge and learning. I was trying to reckon a while ago the number of the years he was away, according to the buttons of my gown (*fingers bodice*), but they went astray on me at the gathers of the neck.

Celia: If the hour would come he'd go out of this, I'd sing, I'd play on all the melodeons that ever was known! (*Sings.*) (*Air, "Shule Aroon."*)

"I would not wish him any ill, But were he swept to some far hill It's then I'd laugh and laugh my fill, Coo, Coo, my birdeen bán astore.

"I wish I was a linnet free To rock and rustle on the tree With none to haste or hustle me, Coo, Coo, my birdeen bán astore!"

Mother: Did you make ready now what will please him for his breakfast?

Celia: (Laughing.) I'm doing every whole thing, but you know well to please him is not possible.

Mother: It is going astray on me what sort of egg best suits him, a pullet's egg or the egg of a duck.

Celia: I'd go search out if it would satisfy him the egg of an eagle having eyes as big as the moon, and feathers of pure gold.

Mother: Look out again would you see him.

Celia: (Sitting up reluctantly.) I wonder will the rosy ribbon or the pale put the best appearance on my party dress to-night? *(Looks out.)* He is coming down the path from the rath, and he having his little old book in his hand, that he gives out fell down before him from the skies.

Mother: So there is a little book, whatever language he does be wording out of it.

Celia: If you listen you'll hear it now, or hear his own talk, for he's mouthing and muttering as he travels the path.

Conan: (Comes in: the book in his hand open, he is not looking at it.) "Life is the flame of the heart ...that heat is of the nature of the stars." ...It is Aristotle had knowledge to turn that flame here and there.... What way now did he do that?

Mother: Ah, I'm well pleased to see you coming in, Conan. I was getting uneasy thinking you were gone astray on us.

Conan: (Dropping his book and picking it up again.) I never knew the like of you, Maryanne, under the canopy of heaven. To be questioning me with your talk, and I striving to keep my mind upon all the wisdom of the ancient world. *(Sits down beside fire.)*

Mother: So you would be too. It is well able you are to do that.

Conan: (To *Celia*.) Have you e'er a meal to leave down to me?

Celia: It will be ready within three minutes of time.

Conan: Wasting the morning on me! What good are you if you cannot so much as boil the breakfast? Hurry on now.

Celia: Ah, hurry didn't save the hare. (*Sings ironically as she prepares breakfast.*) (*Air, "Mo Bhuachailin Buidhe."*)

"Come in the evening or come in the morning, Come when you're looked for or come without warning; Kisses and welcome you'll find here before you And the oftner you come here the more I'll adore you."

Conan: Give me up the tea-pot.

Celia: Best leave it on the coals awhile.

Conan: Give me up those eggs so. (*Seizes them.*)

Celia: You can take the tea-pot too if you are calling for it. (*Goes on singing mischievously as she turns a cake.*)

"I'll pull you sweet flowers to wear if you'll choose them, Or after you've kissed them they'll lie on my bosom."

Conan: (*Breaking eggs.*) They're raw and running!

Celia: There's no one can say which is best, hurry or delay.

Conan: You had them boiled in cold water!

Celia: That's where you're wrong.

Conan: The young people that's in the world now, if you had book truth they wouldn't believe it. (*Flings eggs into the fire and pours out tea.*)

Mother: I hope now that is pleasing to you?

Conan: (*Threatening Celia with spoon.*) My seven curses on yourself and your fair-haired tea. (*Puts back tea-pot.*)

Celia: (*Laughing.*) It was hurry left it so weak on you!

Mother: Ah, don't be putting reproaches on him. Crossness is a thing born with us. It do run in the blood. Strive now to let him have a quiet life.

Conan: I am not asking a quiet life! But to come live with your own family you might as well take your coffin on your back!

Celia: (*Sings.*)

"We'll look on the stars and we'll list to the river 'Till you ask of your darling what gift you can give her."

Conan: That girl is a disgrace sitting on the floor the way she is! If I had her for a while I'd put betterment on her. No one that was under me ever grew slack!

Celia: *You* would never be satisfied and you to see me working from dark to dark as hard as a pismire in the tufts.

Mother: Leave her now, she's a quiet little girl and comely.

Conan: Comely! I'd sooner her to be like the ugliest sod of turf that is pockmarked in the bog, and a handy housekeeper, and her pigeon doing something for the world if it was but scaring its comrades on a stick in a barley garden!

Celia: Ah, do you hear him! (*Stroking pigeon.*) (*Sings.*)

"But when your friend is forced to flee You'll spread your white wings on the sea And fly and follow after me-- Go-dé tu Mavourneen slân!"

Mother: I wonder you to be going into the rath the way you do, Conan. It is a very haunted place.

Conan: Don't be bothering me. I have my reason for that.

Mother: I often heard there is many a one lost his wits in it.

Conan: It's likely they hadn't much to lose. Without the education anyone is no good.

Mother: Ah, indeed you were always a tip-top scholar. I didn't ever know how good you were till I had my memory lost.

Conan: Indeed, it is a strange thing any wits at all to be found in *this* family.

Mother: Ah, sure we are as is allotted to us at the time God made the world.

Conan: Now *I* to make the world--

Mother: You are not saying you would make a better hand of it?

Conan: I am certain sure I could.

Mother: Ah, don't be talking that way!

Conan: I'd make changes you'd wonder at.

Celia: It's likely you'd make the world in one day in place of six.

Mother: It's best make changes little by little the same as you'd put clothes upon a growing child, and to knock every day out of what God will give you, and to live as long as we can, and die when we can't help it.

Conan: And the first thing I'd do would be to give you back your memory and your sense. (*Sings.*) (*Air, "The Bells of Shandon."*)

"My brain grows rusty, my mind is dusty, The time I'm dwelling with the likes of ye, While my spirit ranges through all the changes Could turn the world to felicity! When Aristotle..."

Mother: It is like a dream to me I heard that name. Aristotle of the books.

Conan: (*Eagerly.*) What did you hear about him?

Mother: I don't know was it about him or was it some other one. My memory to be as good as it is bad I might maybe bring it to mind.

Conan: Hurry on now and remember!

Mother: Ah, it's hard remember anything and the weather so uncertain as what it is.

Conan: Is it of late you heard it?

Mother: It was maybe ere yesterday or some day of the sort; I don't know. Since the age tampered with me the thing I'd hear to-day I wouldn't think of to-morrow.

Conan: Try now and tell me was it that Aristotle, the time he walked Ireland, had come to this place.

Mother: It might be that, unless it might be some other thing.

Conan: And that he left some great treasure hid--it might be in the rath without.

Mother: And what good would it do you a pot of gold to be hid in the rath where you would never come near to it, it being guarded by enchanted cats and they having fiery eyes?

Conan: Did I say anything about a pot of gold? This was better again than gold. This was an enchantment would raise you up if you were gasping from death. Give attention now ... Aristotle.

Mother: It's Harry he used to be called.

Conan: Listen now. (*Sings.*) (*Air, "Bells of Shandon."*)

"Once Aristotle hid in a bottle Or some other vessel of security A spell had power bring sweet from sour Or bring blossoms blooming on the blasted tree."

Mother: (Repeating last line.) "Or bring blossoms blooming on the blasted tree."

Conan: Is that now what you heard ...that Aristotle has hid some secret spell?

Mother: I won't say what I don't know. My memory is too weak for me to be telling lies.

Conan: You could strengthen it if you took it in hand, putting a knot in the corner of your shawl to keep such and such a thing in mind.

Mother: If I did I should put another knot in the other corner to remember what was the first one for.

Conan: You'd remember it well enough if it was a pound of tea!

Mother: Ah, maybe it's best be as I am and not to be running carrying lies here and there, putting trouble on people's mind.

Conan: Isn't it terrible to be seeing all this folly around me and not to have a way to better it!

Mother: Ah, dear, it's best leave the time under the mercy of the Man that is over us all.

Conan: (Jumping up furious.) Where's the use of old people being in the world at all if they cannot keep a memory of things gone by!
(Sings.) (Air, "O the time I've lost in wooing.")

"O the time I've lost pursuing And feeling nothing doing, The lure that led me from my bed Has left me sad and rueing! Success seemed very near me! High hope was there to cheer me! I asked my book where would I look And all it did was fleer me!"

Mother: What is it ails you?

Conan: That secret to be in the world, and I all to have laid my hand on it, and it to have gone astray on me!

Mother: So it would go too.

Conan: A secret that could change the world! I'd make it as good a world to live in as it was in the time of the Greeks. I don't see much goodness in the trace of the people in it now. To change everything to its contrary the way the book said it would! There would be great satisfaction doing that. Was there ever in the world a family was so little use to a man? (*Sings in dejection.*) (*Air, "My Molly O."*)

"There is a rose in Ireland, I thought it would be mine
But now that it is hid from me I must forever pine.
Till death shall come and comfort me for to the grave I'll go
And all for the sake of Aristotle's secret O!"

Celia: I wonder you wouldn't ask Timothy that is older again than what my mother is.

Conan: Timothy! He has the hearing lost.

Celia: Well there is no harm to try him.

Conan: (*Going to door.*) Timothy!... There, he's as deaf as a beetle.

Mother: It might be best for him. The thing the ear will not hear will not put trouble on the heart.

Celia: (*Who has gone out comes pushing him in.*) Here he is now for you.

Conan: Did ever you hear of Aristotle?

Timothy: Aye?

Conan: Aristotle!

Timothy: Ere a bottle? I might ...

Conan: Aristotle.... That had some power?

Timothy: I never seen no flower.

Conan: Something he hid near this place.

Timothy: I never went near no race.

Conan: Has the whole world its mind made up to annoy me!

Celia: Raise your voice into his ear.

Conan: (*Chanting.*)

"Aristotle in the hour He left Ireland left a power In a gift Eolus gave
Could all Ireland change and save!"

Timothy: Would it now?

Conan: You said you had heard of a bottle.

Timothy: A charmed bottle. It is Bidly Early put a cure in it and
bestowed it in her will to her son.

Conan: Aristotle that left one in the same way.

Timothy: It is what I am thinking that my old generations used to be
talking about a bellows.

Conan: A bellows! There's no sense in that!

Timothy: Have it your own way so, and give me leave to go feeding
the little chickens and the hens, for if I cannot hear what they say and
they cannot understand what I say, they put no reproach on me after,
no more than I would put it on themselves. (*Goes.*)

Celia: Let you be satisfied now and not torment yourself, for if you
got the world wide you couldn't discover it. You might as well think
to throw your hat to hit the stars.

Conan: You have me tormented among the whole of ye. To be without ye would be no harm at all. (*Sits down and weeps.*) Of all the families anyone would wish to live away from I am full sure my family is the worst.

Mother: Ah, dear, you're worn out and contrary with the want of sleep. Come now into the room and stretch yourself on the bed. To go sleeping out in the grass has no right rest in it at all! (*Takes his arm.*)

Conan: Where's the use of lying on my bed where it is convenient to the yard, that I'd be afflicted by the turkeys yelping and the pullets praising themselves after laying an egg! and the cackling and hissing of the geese.

Mother: Lie down so on the settle, and I'll let no one disturb you. You're destroyed, avic, with the want of sleep.

Conan: There'll be no peace in this kitchen no more than on the common highway with the people running in and out.

Mother: I'll go sit in the little gap without, and the whole place will be as quiet as St. Colman's wilderness of stones.

Conan: The boards are too hard.

Mother: I'll put a pillow in under you.

Conan: Now it's too narrow. Leave me now it'll be best.

Mother: Sleep and good dreams to you. (*Goes singing sleepy song.*)

Conan: The most troublesome family ever I knew in all my born days! Why is that people cannot have behaviour now the same as in ancient Greece. (*Sits up.*) I'll not give them the satisfaction of going asleep. I'll drink a sup of the tea that is black with standing and with strength. (*Drinks and lies down.*) I'll engage that'll keep me waking. (*Music heard.*) Is it to annoy me they are playing tunes of music? I'll let on to be asleep! (*Shuts eyes.*)

(*Two large Cats with fiery eyes look over top of settle.*)

1st Cat:

See the fool that crossed our path Rummaging within the rath.

Coveting a spell is bound Agelong in our haunted ground.

Hid that none disturb its peace By a Druid out from Greece.

Spies and robbers have no call Rooting in our ancient wall.

Man or mortal what is he Matched against the mighty Sidhe?

2nd Cat:

Bid our riders of the night Daze and craze him with affright,

Leave him fainting and forlorn Hanging on the moon's young horn.

Let the death-bands turn him pale Through the venom of our tail.

Let him learn to love our law With the sharpness of our claw.

Let our King-cat's fiery flash Turn him to a heap of ash.

1st Cat:

Punishment enough he'll find In his cross and cranky mind.

Ha, ha, ha, and ho, ho, ho, He'd a sharper penance know,

We'd have better sport to-day If he got his will and way,

Found the spell that lies unknown Underneath his own hearthstone.

(They disappear saying together:)

Men and mortals what are ye Matched against the mighty Sidhe?

Conan: (Looking out timidly.) Are they gone? Here, Puss, puss! Come hither now poor Puss! They're not in it.... Here now! here's milk for ye. And a drop of cream.... *(Gets up, peeps under settle and around.)* They are gone! And that they may never come back! I wouldn't wish to be brought riding a thorny bush in the night time into the cold that is behind the sun! What now did they say? Or is it dreaming I was? Oh, it was not! They spoke clear and plain. The hidden spell that I was seeking, they said it to be in the hiding hole under the hearth. *(Pokes, sneezes.)* Bad cess to Celia leaving that much ashes to be choking me. Well, the luck has come to me at last!

(Sings as he searches.)

"Proudly the note of the trumpet is sounding, Loudly the war cries rise on the gale; Fleetly the steed by Lough Swilly is bounding To join the thick squadrons in Saimear's green vale. On every mountaineer, strangers to flight and fear; Rush to the standard of dauntless Red Hugh Bonnaught and gallowglass, throng from each mountain pass. On for old Erin, O'Donnall Abu."

(Pokes at hearthstone.) Sure enough, it's loose! It's moving! Wait till I'll get a wedge under it!

(Takes fork from table.) It's coming!

(Door suddenly opens and he drops fork and springs back.)

Mother: (Coming in with Rock and Flannery.) Here now, come in the two of ye. Here now, Conan, is two of the neighbours, James Rock of Lis Crohan and Fardy Flannery the rambling herd, that are come to get a light for the pipe and they walking the road from the Fair.

Conan: That's the way you make a fool of me promising me peace and quiet for to sleep!

Mother: Ah, so I believe I did. But it slipped away from me, and I listening to the blackbird on the bush.

Conan: (To Rock.) I wonder, James Rock, that you wouldn't have on you so much as a halfpenny box of matches!

Rock: (Trying to get to hearth.) So I have matches. But why would I spend one when I can get for nothing a light from a sod?

Flannery: Sure, I could give you a match I have this long time, waiting till I'll get as much tobacco as will fill a pipe.

Mother: It's the poor man does be generous. It's gone from my mind, Fardy, what was it brought you to be a servant of poverty?

Flannery: Since the day I lost on the road my forty pound that I had to stock my little farm of land, all has wore away from me and left me bare owning nothing unless daylight and the run of water. It was that put me on the Shaughrann.

(Sings "The Bard of Armagh.")

"Oh, list to the lay of a poor Irish harper, And scorn not the strains of his old withered hand, But remember the fingers could once move sharper To raise the merry strains of his dear native land; It was long before the shamrock our dear isle's loved emblem. Was crushed in its beauty 'neath the Saxon Lion's paw I was called by the colleens of the village and valley Bold Phelim Brady, the bard of Armagh."

Rock: Bad management! Look what I brought from the Fair through minding my own property--£20 for a milch cow, and thirty for a score of lambs!

Mother: £20 for a cow! Isn't that terrible money!

Conan: Let you whist now! You are putting a headache on me with all your little newses and country chat!

(Mother goes, the others are following.)

Rock: (Turning from door.) It might be better for yourself, Conan Creevey, if you had minded business would bring profit to your hand in place of your foreign learning, that never put a penny piece in anyone's pocket that ever I heard. No earthly profit unless to addle the brain and leave the pocket empty.

Conan: You think yourself a great sort! Let me tell you that my learning has power to do more than that!

Rock: It's an empty mouth that has big talk.

Conan: What would you say hearing I had power put in my hand that could change the entire world? And that's what you never will have power to do.

Rock: What power is that?

Conan:

Aristotle in the hour He left Ireland left a power....

Rock: Foolishness! I never would believe in poetry or in dreams or images, but in ready money down. (*Jingles bag.*)

Conan: I tell you you'll see me getting the victory over all Ireland!

Rock: You have but a cracked headpiece thinking that will come to you.

Conan: I tell you it will! No end at all in the world to what I am about to bring in!

Rock: It's easy praise yourself!

Conan: And so I am praising myself, and so will you all be praising me when you will see all that I will do!

Rock: It is what I think you got demented in the head and in the mind.

Conan: It is soon the wheel will be turned and the whole of the nation will be changed for the best. (*Sings.*)

"Dear Harp of my country, in darkness I found thee, The cold chain of silence had hung o'er thee long, When proudly, my own Irish Harp, I unbound thee, And gave all thy chords to light, freedom and song,

The warm lay of love and the light note of gladness Have waken'd thy fondest, thy liveliest thrill; But so oft hast thou echo'd the deep sigh of sadness, That ev'n in thy mirth it will steal from thee still."

Flannery: That's a great thought, if it is but a vanity or a dream.

Rock: (*Sneeringly*.) Well now and what would *you* do?

Flannery: I would wish a great lake of milk, the same as blessed St. Bridget, to be sharing with the family of Heaven. I would wish vessels full of alms that would save every sorrowful man. Do that now, Conan, and you'll have the world of prayers down on you!

Rock: It's what I'd do, to turn the whole of Galway Bay to dry land, and I to have it for myself, the red land, the green land, the fallow and the lea! The want of land is a great stoppage to a man having means to lay out in stock.

(*Sings*.) (*Air*, "*I wish I had the shepherd's lamb*."

"I wish I had both mill and kiln, I wish I had of land my fill; I wish I had both mill and kiln, And all would follow after!"

Flannery: Ah, the land, the land, the rotten land, and what will you have in the end but the breadth of your back of it? Let you now soften the heart in that one (*points to Rock*) till he would restore to me the thing he is aware of.

Conan: It was not for that the spell was promised, to be changing a few neighbours or a thing of the kind, or to be doing wonders in this broken little place. A town of dead factions! To change any of the dwellers in this place would be to make it better, for it would be impossible to make it worse. The time you wouldn't be meddling with them you wouldn't know them to be bad, but the time you'd have to do business with them that's the time you'd know it!

Rock: I suppose it is what you are asking to do, to make yourself rich?

Conan: I do not! I would be loth take any profit, and Aristotle after laying down that *to* pleasure or *to* profit every wealthy man is a slave!

Flannery: What would you do, so?

Conan: I will change all into the similitude of ancient Greece! There is no man at all can understand argument but it is from Greece he is. I know well what I'm doing. I'm not like a potato having eyes this way and that. People were harmless long ago and why wouldn't they be made harmless again? Aristotle said, "Fair play is more beautiful than the morning and the evening star!"

"Be friendly with one another," he said, "and let the lawyers starve!" I'll turn the captains of soldiers to be as peaceable as children picking strawberries in the grass. I've a mind to change the tongue of the people to the language of the Greeks, that no farmer will be grumbling over a halfpenny Independent, but be following the plough in full content, giving out Homer and the praises of the ancient world!

Flannery: If you make the farmers content you will make the world content.

Rock: You will, when you'll bring the sun from Greece to ripen our little lock of oats!

Conan: So I will drag Ireland from its moorings till I'll bring it to the middling sea that has no ebb or flood!

Rock: You will do well to put a change on the college that harboured you, and that left you so much of folly.

Conan: I'll do that! I'll be in College Green before the dawn is white-- no but before the night is grey! It is to Dublin I will bring my spell, for I ever and always heard it said what Dublin will do to-day Ireland will do to-morrow! (*Sings.*)

"Let Erin remember the days of old Ere her faithless sons betrayed her-- When Malachy wore the collar of gold Which he won from her proud invader-- When her kings with standards of green unfurl'd, Led the Red-Branch knights to danger; Ere the emerald gem of the western world Was set in the crown of a stranger."

Rock: And maybe you'll tell us now by what means you will do all this?

Conan: Go out of the house and I will tell you in the by and bye.

Rock: That is what I was thinking. You are talking nothing but lies.

Conan: I tell you that power is not far from where you stand! But I will let no one see it only myself.

Flannery: There might be some truth in it. There are some say enchantments never went out of Ireland.

Conan: It is a spell, I say, that will change anything to its contrary. To turn it upon a snail, there is hardly a greyhound but it would overtake; but a hare it would turn to be the slowest thing in the universe; too slow to go to a funeral.

Rock: I'll believe it when I'll see it.

Conan: You could see it if I let you look in this hiding-hole.

Rock: Good-morrow to you!

Conan: Then you will see it, for I'll raise up the stone. (*Kneels.*)

Rock: It to be anything it is likely a pot of sovereigns.

Flannery: It might be the harp of Angus.

Rock: I see no trace of it.

Conan: There is something hard! It should likely be a silver trumpet or a hunting-horn of gold!

Rock: Give me a hold of it.

Conan: Leave go! (*Lifts out bellows.*)

Rock: Ha! Ha! Ha! after all your chat, nothing but a little old bellows!...

Conan: There is seven rings on it.... They should signify the seven blasts....

Rock: If there was seventy times seven what use would it be but to redden the coals?

Conan: Every one of these blasts has power to make some change.

Rock: Make one so, and I'll plough the world for you.

Conan: Is it that I would spend one of my seven blasts convincing the like of ye?

Rock: It is likely the case there is no power in it at all.

Conan: I'm very sure there is surely. The world will be a new world before to-morrow's Angelus bell.

Flannery: I never could believe in a bellows.

Rock: Here now is a fair offer. I'll loan you this bag of notes to pay your charges to Dublin if you will change that little pigeon in the crib into a crow.

Conan: I will do no such folly.

Rock: You wouldn't because you'd be afeared to try.

Conan: Hold it up to me. I'll show you am I afeared!

Rock: There it is now. (*Holds up cage.*)

Conan: Have a care! (*Blows.*)

Rock: (*Dropping it with a shriek.*) It has me bit with its hard beak, it is turned to be an old black crow.

Flannery: As black as the bottom of the pot.

Crow: Caw! Caw! Caw!

(Cats reappear and look over back of settle.)

(Music from behind.) ("O'Donnall Abu.")

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

Conan alone holding up bellows, singing:

Conan:

"And doth not a meeting like this make amends For all the long years
I've been wandering away Deceived for a moment it's now in my
hands-- breathe the fresh air of life's morning again!"

Celia: (Comes in having listened amused at door; claps hands.) Very good! It is you yourself should be going to the dance house to-night in place of myself. It is long since I heard you rise so happy a tune!

Conan: (Putting bellows behind him.) What brings you here? Is there no work for you out in the garden--the cabbages to be cutting for the cow....

Celia: I wouldn't wish to roughen my hands before evening. Music there will be for the dancing!

(She lilts Miss McLeod's Reel.)

Conan: Let you go ready yourself for it so.

Celia: Is it at this time of the day? You should be forgetting the hours of the clock the same as the poor mother.

Conan: It is a strange thing since I came to this house I never can get one minute's ease and quiet to myself.

Celia: It was hearing you singing brought me in.

Conan: I'd sooner have you without! Be going now.

Celia: I will and welcome. It is to bring out my little pigeon I will, where there is a few grains of barley fell from a car going the road.

Conan: Hurry on so!

Celia: *(Taking up cage.)* He is not in his crib. *(Looking here and there.)* Where now can he have gone?

Conan: He should have gone out the door.

Celia: He did not. He could not have come out unknown to me. Coo, coo,--coo--coo.

Conan: Never mind him now. You are putting my mind astray with your Coo, coo--

Celia: He might be in under the settle. *(Stoops.)* Where are you, my little bird. *(Sings.) (Air, "Shule Aroon.")*

"But now my love has gone to France His own fair fortune to advance; If he comes back again 'tis but a chance; Os go dé tu Mavourneen slân!"

Conan: *(Putting her away.)* What way would he be in it? Let you put a stop to that humming. *(Seizes her.)* Come here to the light ...is it you sewed this button on my coat?

Celia: It was not. It is likely it was some tailor down in the North.

Conan: It is getting loose on the sleeve.

Celia: Ah, it will last a good while yet. Coo, coo!

Conan: (*Getting before her.*) It would be no great load on you to get a needle and put a stitch would tighten it.

Celia: I'll do it in the by and bye. There, I twisted the thread around it. That'll hold good enough for a while.

Conan: "Anything worth doing at all is worth doing well."

Celia: Aren't you getting very dainty in your dress?

Conan: Any man would like to have a decent appearance on his suit.

Celia: Isn't it the same to-day as it was yesterday?

Conan: Have you ne'er a needle?

Celia: I don't know where is it gone.

Conan: You haven't a stim of sense. Can't you keep in mind "Everything in its right place."

Celia: Sure, there's no hurry--the day is long.

Conan: Anything has to be done, the quickest to do it is the best.

Celia: I'm not working by the hour or the day.

Conan: Look now at Penelope of the Greeks, and all her riches, and her man not at hand to urge her, how well she sat at the loom from morn till night till she'd have the makings of a suit of frieze.

Celia: Ah, that was in the ancient days, when you wouldn't buy it made and ready in the shops.

Conan: Will you so much as go to find a towel would take the dust off of the panes of glass?

Celia: I wonder at you craving to disturb the spider and it after making its web.

Conan: Well, go sit idle outside. I wouldn't wish to be looking at you! Aristotle that said a lazy body is all one with a lazy mind. You'll be begging your bread through the world's streets before your poll will be grey.

(Sings.)

"You'll dye your petticoat, you'll dye it red, And through the world you'll beg your bread; And you not hearkening to e'er a word I said, It's then you'll know it to be true!"

Celia: (Sings.)

"Come here my little birdeen! Coo!"

Conan: (Putting his hand on her mouth.) Be going out now in place of calling that bird that is as lazy and as useless as yourself.

Celia: My little dove! Where are you at all!

Conan: A cat to have ate it would be no great loss!

Celia: Did you yourself do away with him?

Conan: I did not.

Celia: (Wildly breaking free throws herself down.) There is no place for him to be only in under the settle!

Conan: (Dragging at her.) It is not there.

Celia: (Who has put in her hand.) O what is that? It has hurt me!

Conan: A nail sticking up out of the floor.

Celia: (Jumping up with a cry.) It's a crow! A great big wicked black crow!

Conan: If it is let you leave it there.

Celia: (*Weeping.*) I'm certain sure it has my pigeon killed and ate!

Conan: To be so doleful after a pigeon! You haven't a stim of sense!

Celia: It was you gave it leave to do that!

Conan: Stop your whimpering and blubbering! What way can I settle the world and I being harassed and hampered with such a contrary class! I give you my word I have a mind to change myself into a ravenous beast will kill and devour ye all! That much would be no sin when it would be according to my nature. (*Sings or chants.*)

"On Clontarf he like a lion fell, Thousands plunged in their own gore;
I to be such a lion now I'd ask for nothing more!"

Celia: (*Sitting down miserable.*) You are a very wicked man!

Conan: Get up out of that or I'll make you!

Celia: I will not! I'm certain you did this cruel thing!

Conan: (*Taking up bellows.*) I'd hardly begrudge one of my six blasts to be quit of your slowness and your sluggish ways! Rise up now before I'll make you that you'll want shoes that will never wear out, you being ever on the trot and on the run from morning to the fall of night! Start up now! I'm on the bounds of doing it!

Celia: What are you raving about?

Conan: To get quit of you I cannot, but to change your nature I might!
I give you warning ...one, two, three!

(*Blows.*) (*Sings: "With a chirrup."*) (*Air, "Garryowen."*)

"Let you rise and go light like a bird of the air That goes high in its
flight ever seeking its share; Let you never go easy or pine for a rest
Till you'll be a world's wonder and work with the best!"

With a chirrup, a chirrup, a chirrup, A chirrup, a chirrup, a chirrup, A chirrup, a chirrup, a chirrup, a chirrup, A chirrup, a chirrup, a chirrup, a chirrup!"

Celia: (Staring and standing up.) What is that? Is it the wind or is it a wisp of flame that is going athrough my bones!

(Rock and Flannery come in.)

(Celia rushes out.)

Rock: (Out of breath.) We went looking for a car to bring you to the train!

Flannery: There was not one to be found.

Rock: But those that are too costly!

Flannery: Till we went to the Doctor of the Union.

Rock: For to ask a lift for you on the ambulance....

Flannery: But when he heard what we had to tell--

Rock: He said he would bring you and glad to do it on his own car, and no need to hansel him.

Flannery: And welcome, if it was as far as the grave!

Rock: All he is sorry for he hasn't a horse that would rise you up through the sky--

Conan: Let him give me the lift so--it will be a help to me. It wasn't only with his own hand Alexander won the world!

Flannery: Unless you might give him, he was saying, a blast of the bellows, that would change his dispensary into a racing stable, and all that come to be cured into jockeys and into grooms!

Conan: What chatterers ye are! I gave ye no leave to speak of that.

Rock: Ah, it costs nothing to be giving out newses.

Flannery: The world and all will be coming to the door to throw up their hats for you, and you making your start, cars and ass cars, jennets and traps. (*Sings.*)

"O Bay of Dublin, how my heart your troublin', Your beauty haunts me like a fever dream; Like frozen fountains that the sun set bubblin' My heart's blood warms when I but hear your name!"

Conan: It's my death I'll come to in Dublin. That news to get there ahead of me I'll be pressed in the throng as thin as a griddle.

Flannery: So you might be, too. All I have that might protect you I offer free, and that's this good umbrella that was given to me in a rainstorm by a priest. (*Holds it out.*)

Rock: And what do you say to me giving you the loan of your charges for the road?

Conan: Come in here, Maryanne! and give a glass to these honest men till they'll wish me good luck upon my journey, as it's much I'll need it, with the weight of all I have to do.

Mother: (*Coming in.*) So I will, so I will and welcome ...but that I disremember where did I put the key of the chest.

Conan: I'll engage you do! There it is before you in the lock since ere yesterday. (*Mother puts bottle and glasses on table.*)

Flannery: (*Lifting glass.*) That you may bring great good to Ireland and to the world!

Rock: Here's your good health!

Conan: I'm obliged to you!

Rock and Flannery: (*Sing.*) (*Air, "The Cruiskeen lán."*)

"Gramachree ma cruiskeen Slainte geal mavourneen, Gramachree a cool-in bawn, bawn, bawn, bân-bán-bán, Oh, Gra-ma-chree a cool-in bawn."

(They nod as they finish and take out their pipes and sit down. A banging is heard.)

Conan: What disturbance is that?

(Celia comes in, her hair screwed up tight, skirt tucked up, is carrying a pail, brush, cloth, etc., lets them drop and proceeds to fasten up skirt.)

Mother: Ah, Celia, what is on you? I never saw you that way before.

Conan: Ha! Very good! I think that you will say there is a great change come upon her, and a right change.

Celia: Look now at the floor the way it is.

Mother: I see no other way but the way it is always.

Celia: There's a bit of soot after falling down the chimney. *(Picks up tongs.)*

Mother: Ah, leave it now, dear, a while.

Celia: Anything has to be done, the quickest way to do it is the best. *(Having taken up soot, flings down tongs.)*

Conan: Listen to that! Now am I able to work wonders?

Rock: It is that you have spent on her a blast?

Conan: If I did it was well spent.

Flannery: I'm in dread you have been robbing the poor.

Rock: It is myself you have robbed doing that. You have no call to be using those blasts for your own profit!

Conan: I have every right to bring order in my own dwelling before I can do any other thing!

Celia: All the dust of the world's roads is gathered in this kitchen. The whole place ate with filth and dirt.

(Begins to sweep.)

Conan: Ah, you needn't hardly go as far as that.

Celia: Anything that is worth doing is worth doing well. *(To Rock.)* Look now at the marks of your boots upon the ground. Get up out of that till I'll bustle it with the broom!

Rock: *(Getting up.)* There is a change indeed and a queer change. Where she used to be singing she is screeching the same as a slate where you'd be casting sums!

Celia: *(To Flannery.)* What's that I see in under your chair? Rise up. *(He gets up.)* It's a pin! *(Sticks it in her dress.)* Everything in its right place! *(Goes on flicking at the furniture.)*

Mother: Leave now knocking the furniture to flitters.

Celia: I will not, till I'll free it from the dust and dander of the year.

Mother: That'll do now. I see no dust.

Celia: You'll see it presently. *(Sweeps up a cloud.)*

Mother: Let you speak to her, Conan.

Conan: Leave now buzzing and banging about the room the same as a fly without a head!

Celia: Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day.

Conan: I tell you I have things to settle and to say before the car will come that is to bring me on my road to Dublin.

Celia: (*Stopping short.*) Is it that you are going to Dublin?

Conan: I am, and within the hour.

Celia: Pull off those boots from your feet!

Conan: I will not! Let you leave my boots alone!

Celia: You are not going out of the house with that slovenly appearance on you! To have it said out in Dublin that you are a class of man never has clean boots but of a Sunday!

Conan: They'll do well enough without you meddling!

Celia: Clean them yourself so! (*Gives him a rag and blacking and goes on dusting.*)

(*Sings.*) (*Air, "City of Sligo."*)

"We may tramp the earth For all that we're worth, But what odds where you and I go, We never shall meet A spot so sweet As the beautiful city of Sligo."

Conan: What ailed me that I didn't leave her as she was before.

Celia: (*Stopping work.*) What way are they now?

Conan: (*Having cleaned his boots, putting them on hurriedly.*) They're very good. (*Wipes his brow, drawing hand across leaving mark of blacking.*)

Celia: The time I told you to put black on your shoes I didn't bid you rub it upon your brow!

Conan: I didn't put it in any wrong place.

Celia: I ask the whole of you, is it black his face is or white?

All: It is black indeed.

Celia: Would you put a reproach on the whole of the barony, going up among big citizens with a face on you the like of that?

Conan: I'll do well enough. There will be the black of the smoke from the engine on it any way, and I after journeying in the train.

Celia: You will not go be a disgrace to me.

Conan: If it is black it is yourself forced me to it.

Celia: If I did I'll make up for it, putting a clean face upon you now.
(*Dips towel in pail and sings "With a fillip"--air, "Garryowen"--as she washes him.*)

"Bring to mind how the thrush gathers twigs for his nest
And the honey bee toils without ever a rest
And the fishes swim ever to keep themselves clean,
And you'll praise me for making you fit to be seen!
With a fillip, a fillip, a fillip. A fillip, a fillip, a fillip.
A fillip, a fillip, a fillip, a fillip, a fillip, a fillip!
A fillip, a fillip, a fillip, a fillip, a fillip, a fillip!"

Conan: Let me go, will you! Let you stop! The soap that is going into my eye!

Celia: My grief you are! Let you be willing to suffer, so long as you will be tasty and decent and be a credit to ourselves.

Conan: The suds are in my mouth!

Celia: One minute now and you'll be as clean as a bishop!

Conan: Let me go, can't you!

Celia: Only one thing wanting now.

Conan: I'm good enough, I tell you!

Celia: To cut the wisp from the back of your poll.

Conan: You will not cut it!

Celia: And you'll go into the grandeurs of Dublin and you being as neat as an egg.

Conan: *(With a roar.)* Leave meddling with my hair. I that can change the world with one turn of my hand!

Celia: Wait till I'll find the scissors! That's not the way to be going showing off in the town, if you were all the saints and Druids of the universe!

Conan: *(Breaking free and rushing out.)* My seven thousand curses on the minute when I didn't leave you as you were. *(Goes.)*

Celia: *(Looking at Mother.)* There's meal on your dress from the cake you're after putting in the oven--where now did that bellows fall from? *(Taking up bellows.)* It comes as handy as a gimlet. There *(blows the meal off)*, that now will make a big difference in you.

Rock: *(Seizing bellows.)* Leave now that down out of your hand. Let you go looking for a scissors!

(Celia goes off singing "The Beautiful City of Sligo.")

Mother: *(Sitting down.)* I'm thinking it's seven years to-day, James Rock, since you took a lend of my clock.

Rock: You're raving! What call would I have to ask a lend of your clock?

Mother: The way you would rise in time for the fair of Feakle in the morning.

Rock: Did I now?

Mother: You did, and that's my truth. I was standing here, and you were standing there, and Celia that was but ten years was sucking the

sugar off a spoon I was after putting in a bag that had come from the shop, for to put a grain into my tea.

Rock: (Sneering.) Well now, didn't your memory get very sharp!

Mother: You thought I had it forgot, but I remember it as clear as pictures. The time it stood at was seven minutes after four o'clock, and I never saw it from that day till now. This very day of the month it was, the year of the black sheep having twins.

Rock: It was but an old clock anyway.

Mother: If it was it is seven years older since I laid an eye on it. And it's kind father for you robbing me, where it's often you robbed your own mother, and you stealing away to go cardplaying the half crowns she had hid in the churn.

Rock: Didn't you get very wicked and hurtful, you that was a nice class of a woman without no harm!

Flannery: Ah, Ma'am, you that was easy-minded, it is not kind for you to be a scold.

Mother: And another thing, it was the same day where Michael Flannery (*turns to him*) came in an' told me of you being grown so covetous you had made away with your dog, by reason you begrudged it its diet.

Rock: (To Flannery.) You had a great deal to say about me!

Mother: And more than that again, he said you had it buried secretly, and had it personated, creeping around the haggard in the half dark and you barking, the way the neighbours would think it to be living yet and as wicked as it was before.

Rock: (To Flannery.) I'll bring you into the Courts for telling lies!

Mother: (Coming near Rock and speaking into his ear.) And there's another thing I know, and that I made a promise to her that was your wife not to tell, but death has that promise broke.

Rock: Stop, can't you!

Mother: I know by sure witness that it was you found the forty pound *he (points to Flannery, who nods)* lost on the road, and kept it for your own profit. Bring me now, I dare you, into the Courts!

Rock: (Fearfully.) That one would remember the world! It is as if she went to the grinding young!

(Conan's voice heard. Singing: "Let me be merry" in a melancholy voice.)

"If sadly thinking with spirits sinking
Could more than drinking my
cares compose, A cure for to-morrow
from sighs I'd borrow, And
hope to-morrow would end my woes.

But as in wailing there's nought availing,
And Death unfailing will
strike the blow, Then for that reason
and for a season, Let us be merry
before we go!"

Mother: It is Conan will near lose his wits with joy when he knows what is come back to me!

Conan: (Peeping in.) Is Celia gone?

Flannery: She is, Conan.

Conan: It's a queer thing with women. If you'll turn them from one road it's likely they'll go into another that is worse again.

Rock: That is so indeed. There is Celia's mother that is running telling lies, and leaving a heavy word upon a neighbour.

Mother: I'll give my promise not to tell it out in Court if he will give to poor Michael Flannery what is due to him, and that is the whole of what he has in his bag!

Conan: (Laughing scornfully.) Sure *she* has no memory at all. It fails her to remember that two and two makes four.

Mother: You think that? Well, listen now to me. Two and two is it? No, nine times two that is eighteen and nine times three twenty-seven, nine times four thirty-six, nine times five forty-five, nine times six fifty-four, nine times seven sixty-three, nine times eight seventy-two, nine times nine eighty-one.... Yes, and eleven times, and any times that you will put before me!

Conan: That's enough, that's enough!

Mother: Ha, ha! You giving out that I can keep no knowledge in mind and no learning, when I should sit on the chapel roof to have enough of slates for all I can cast up of sums! Multiplication, Addition, subtraction, and the rule of three!

Conan: Whist your tongue!

Mother: Is it the verses of Raftery's talk into the Bush you would wish me to give out, or the three hundred and sixty-nine verses of the Contention of the Bards--(*Repeats verse of "The Talk with the Bush" in Irish.*)

"Céad agus míle roiámh am na h-Airce Tús agus crothugadh m'aois agus mo dhata Thá me o shoin im' shuidhe san áit so Agus is iomdha sgéal a bhféadain trácht air."

Or I'll English it if that will please you:

"A hundred years and a thousand before the time of the Ark Was the beginning and creation of my age and my date; I am from that time sitting in this place, And it's many a story I am able to give news of."

Conan: (*Putting hands to ears and walking away.*) I am thinking your mind got unsettled with the weight of years.

Mother: (*Following him.*) No, but your own that got scattered from the time you ran barefoot carrying worms in a tin can for that Professor of a Collegian that went fishing in the stream, and that you followed after till you got to think yourself a lamp of light for the universe!

Conan: Will you stop deafening the whole world with your babble!

Mother: There was always a bad drop in you that attached to you out of the grandfather. What did your languages do for you but to sharpen your tongue, till the scrape of it would take the skin off, the same as a cat! My blessing on you, Conan, but my curse upon your mouth!

Conan: Oh, will you stop your chat!

Mother: Every word you speak having in it the sting of a bee that was made out of the curses of a saint!

Conan: Stop your gibberish!

Mother: Are you satisfied now?

Conan: I'm not satisfied!

Mother: And never will be, for you were ever and always a fault-finder and full of crossness from the day that you were small suited.

Conan: You remember that, too?

Mother: I do well!

Conan: Where is the bellows? Was it you (*to Flannery*) that blew a blast on her?

Flannery: It was not.

Conan: Or you?

Rock: It's long sorry I'd be to do such a thing!

Conan: It is certain someone did it on her. Where now is it?

Mother: (*Seizing him.*) And I remember the day you threw out your mug of milk into the street, by reason, says you, you didn't like the colour of the cow that gave it!

Conan: Will you stop ripping up little annoyances, till I'll find the bellows!

Rock: It's what I'm thinking, her memory will soon be back at the far side of Solomon's Temple.

Mother: (Repeats in Irish.) Agus is iomdha sgéal a bhféadain traácht air!

Conan: (Shouting.) Is it that you'll drive the seven senses out of me!

Mother: Is it that you begrudge me my recollection? Ha! I have it in spite of you. *(Sings.)*

"Oft in the stilly night Ere slumber's chain hath bound me Fond
memory brings the light Of other days around me. The smiles, the
tears, of childhood's years, The words of love then spoken-- The eyes
that shone, now dimmed and gone, The cheerful hearts now broken.

"Thus in the stilly night--ere slumber's chain hath bound me Fond
memory brings the light Of other days around me!"

Celia: (Bursting in.) Where is Conan?

Conan: What do you want of me?

Celia: I have got the hair brush.

Conan: Let you not come near me!

Celia: And the comb!

Conan: Get away from me!

Celia: And the scissors.

Conan: Will you drive me out of the house or will I drive you out of it!

Celia: Ah, be easy!

Conan: I will not be easy!

Celia: (*Pushing him back in a chair.*) It will delight the world to see the way I'll send you out!

Conan: Is the universe gone distracted mad!

Celia: Be quiet now!

Conan: Leave your hold of me!

Celia: One stir, and the scissors will run into you!

(*Sings "With a snippet, a snippet, a snippet."*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

ACT III

The two Cats are looking over the settle.

Music behind scene: "O Johnny, I hardly knew you!"

1st Cat: We did well leaving the bellows for that foolish Human to see what he can do. There is great sport before us and behind.

2nd Cat: The best I ever saw since the Jesters went out from Tara.

1st Cat: They to be giving themselves high notions and to be looking down on Cats!

2nd Cat: Ha, Ha, Ha, the folly and the craziness of men! To see him changing them from one thing to the next, as if they wouldn't be a two-legged laughing stock whatever way they would change.

1st Cat: There's apt to be more changes yet till they will hardly know one another, or every other one, to be himself! (*Sings.*)

"Where are your eyes that looked so mild, Hurroo! Hurroo! Where are your eyes that looked so mild When my poor heart you first beguiled, Why did you run from me and the child? O Johnny, I hardly knew you!

"With drums and guns and guns and drums, The enemy nearly slew you! My darling dear you look so queer, O Johnny, I hardly knew you!

"Where are the legs with which you run, When you went to carry a gun. Indeed your dancing days are done, O Johnny, I hardly knew you!"

(Timothy and Mother come in from opposite doors. Cats disappear-- music still heard faintly.)

Mother: (*Looking at little bellows in her hand.*) Do you know *That* what it is, Timothy?

Timothy: Is it now a hand-bellows? It's long since I seen the like of that.

Mother: It is, but *what* bellows?

Timothy: Not a bellows? I'd nearly say it to be one.

Mother: There has strange things come to pass.

Timothy: That's what we've all been praying for this long time!

Mother: Ah, can't you give attention and strive to listen to me. It is all coming back to my mind. All the things I am remembering have my mind tattered and tossed.

Timothy: (*Who has been trying to hear the music, sings a verse.*)

"You haven't an arm and you haven't a leg, Hurroo! Hurroo! You're a yellow noseless chickenless egg, You'll have to put up with a bowl to beg. O Johnny, I hardly knew you!

(Music ceases.)

Mother: Will you give attention, I say! It will be worth while for you to go chat with me now I can be telling you all that happened in my years gone by. What was it Conan was questioning me about a while ago? What was it now....

"Aristotle in the hour He left Ireland left a power!"...

Timothy: That now is a very nice sort of a little prayer.

Mother: (Calling out.) That's it! Aristotle's Bellows! I know now what has happened. This that is in my hand has in it the power to make changes. Changes! Didn't great changes come in the house to-day! *(Shouts.)* Did you see any great change in Celia?

Timothy: Why wouldn't I, and she at this minute fighting and barging at some poor travelling man, saying he laid a finger mark of bacon-grease upon the lintel of the door. Driving him off with a broken-toothed rake she is, she that was so gentle that she wouldn't hardly pluck the feathers of a dead duck!

Mother: It was surely a blast of this worked that change in her, as the blast she blew upon me worked a change in myself. O! all the thoughts and memories that are thronging in my mind and in my head! Rushing up within me the same as chaff from the flail! Songs and stories and the newses I heard through the whole course of my lifetime! And I having no person to tell them out to! Do you hear me what I'm saying, Timothy? *(Shouts in his ear.)* What is come back to me is what I lost so long ago, my MEMORY.

Timothy: So it is a very good song.

(Sings.)

"By Memory inspired, and love of glory fired, The deeds of men I love to dwell upon, And the sympathetic glow of my spirit must bestow On the memory of Mitchell that is gone, boys, gone-- The memory of Mitchell that is gone!"

Mother: Thoughts crowding on one another, mixing themselves up with one another for the want of sifting and settling! They'll have me distracted and I not able to speak them out to some person! Conan as surly as a bramble bush, and Celia wrapped up in her bucket and her broom! And yourself not able to hear one word I say. (*Sobs, and bellows falls from her hands.*)

Timothy: I'll lay it down now out of your way, ma'am, the way you can cry your fill whatever ails you.

Mother: (*Snatching it back.*) Stop! I'll not part with it! I know now what I can do! Now! (*Points it at him.*) I'll make a companion to be listening to me through the long winter nights and the long summer days, and the world to be without any end at all, no more than the round of the full moon! You that have no hearing, this will bring back your hearing, the way you'll be a listener and a benefit to myself for ever. I wouldn't feel the weeks long that time!

(*Blows. Timothy turns away and gropes toward wall.*)

(*She sings: Air, "Eileen Aroon."*)

"What if the days go wrong, When you can hear! What if the evening's long, You being near, I'll tell my troubles out, Put darkness to the rout And to the roundabout! Having your ear!"

(*Rock at door: sneezes. Mother drops bellows and goes. Timothy gives a cry, claps hands to ears and rushes out as if terrified.*)

Rock: (*Coming in seizes bellows.*) Well now, didn't this turn to be very lucky and very good! The very thing I came looking for to be left there under my hands! (*Puts it hurriedly under coat.*)

Flannery: (*Coming in.*) What are you doing here, James Rock?

Rock: What are you doing yourself?

Flannery: What is that in under your coat?

Rock: What's that to you?

Flannery: I'll know that when I see it.

Rock: What call have you to be questioning me?

Flannery: Open now your coat!

Rock: Stand out of my way!

Flannery: (*Suddenly tearing open coat and seizing bellows.*) Did you think it was unknownst to me you stole the bellows?

Rock: Ah, what steal?

Flannery: Put it back in the place it was!

Rock: I will within three minutes.

Flannery: You'll put it back here and now.

Rock: (*Coaxingly.*) Look at here now, Michael Flannery, we'll make a league between us. Did you ever see such folly as we're after seeing to-day? Sitting there for an hour and a half till that one settled the world upside down!

Flannery: If I did see folly, what I see now is treachery.

Rock: Didn't you take notice of the way that foolish old man is wasting and losing what was given him for to benefit mankind? A blast he has lost turning a pigeon to a crow, as if there wasn't enough in it before of that tribe picking the spuds out of the ridges. And another blast he has lost turning poor Celia, that was harmless, to be a holy terror of cleanness and a scold.

Flannery: Indeed, he'd as well have left her as she was. There was something very pleasing in her little sleepy ways.

(Sings.)

"But sad it is to see you so And to think of you now as an object of woe; Your Peggy'll still keep an eye on her beau. O Johnny, I hardly knew you!"

Rock: Bringing back to the memory of his mother every old grief and rancour. She that has a right to be making her peace with the grave!

Flannery: Indeed it seems he doesn't mind what he'll get so long as it's something that he wants.

Rock: Three blasts gone! And the world didn't begin to be cured.

Flannery: Sure enough he gave the bellows no fair play.

Rock: He has us made a fool of. He using it the way he did, he has us robbed.

Flannery: There's power in the four blasts left would bring peace and piety and prosperity and plenty to every one of the four provinces of Ireland.

Rock: That's it. There's no doubt but I'll make a better use of it than him, because I am a better man than himself.

Flannery: I don't know. You might not get so much respect in Dublin.

Rock: Dublin, where are you! What would I'd do going to Dublin? Did you never hear said the skin to be nearer than the shirt?

Flannery: What do you mean saying that?

Rock: The first one I have to do good to is myself.

Flannery: Is it that you would grab the benefit of the bellows?

Rock: In troth I will. I've got a hold of it, and by cripes I'll knock a good turn out of it.

Flannery: To rob the country and the poor for your own profit? You are a class of man that is gathering all for himself.

Rock: It is not worth while we to fall out of friendship. I will use but the one blast.

Flannery: You have no right or call to meddle with it.

Rock: The first thing I will meddle with is my own rick of turf. And I'll give you leave to go do the same with your own umbrella, or whatever property you may own.

Flannery: Sooner than be covetous like yourself I'd live and die in a ditch, and be buried from the Poorhouse!

Rock: Turf being black and light in the hand, and gold being shiny and weighty, there will be no delay in turning every sod into a solid brick of gold. I give you leave to do the same thing, and we'll be two rich men inside a half an hour!

Flannery: You are no less than a thief! (*Snatches at bellows.*)

Rock: Thief yourself. Leave your hand off it!

Flannery: Give it up here for the man that owns it!

Rock: You may set your coffin making for I'll beat you to the ground.

Flannery: (*As he clutches.*) Ah, you have given it a shove. It has blown a blast on yourself!

Rock: Yourself that blew it on me! Bad cess to you! But I'll do the same bad turn upon you! (*Blows.*)

Flannery: There is some footstep without. Heave it in under the ashes.

Rock: Whist your tongue! (*Flings bellows behind hearth.*)

(Conan comes in.)

Conan: With all the chattering of women I have the train near lost.
The car is coming for me and I'll make no delay now but to set out.

(Sings.)

"Oh the French are on the sea, Says the Sean Van Vocht, Oh the
French are on the sea, Says the Sean Van Vocht,

Oh the French are in the bay, They'll be here without delay, And the
Orange will decay, Says the Sean Van Vocht!"

Here now is my little pack. You were saying, Thomas Flannery, you
would be lending me the loan of your umbrella.

Flannery: Ah, what umbrella? There's no fear of rain.

Conan: *(Taking it.)* You to have proffered it I would not refuse it.

Flannery: *(Seizing it.)* I don't know. I have to mind my own property.
It might not serve it to be loaning it to this one and that. It might leave
the ribs of it bare.

Conan: That's the way with the whole of ye. I to give you my heart's
blood you'd turn me upside down for a pint of porter!

Flannery: I see no sense or charity in lending to another anything that
might be of profit to myself.

Conan: Let you keep it so! That your ribs may be as bare as its own
ribs that are bursting out through the cloth!

Rock: Do not give heed to him, Conan. There is in this bag *(takes it
out)* what will bring you every whole thing you might be wanting in
the town. *(Takes out notes and gold and gives them.)*

Conan: It is only a small share I'll ask the lend of.

Rock: The lend of! No, but a free gift!

Conan: Well now, aren't you turned to be very kind? (*Takes notes.*)

Rock: Put that back in the bag. Here it is, the whole of it. Five and fifty pounds. Take it and welcome! It is yourself will make a good use of it laying it out upon the needy and the poor. Changing all for their benefit and their good! Oh, since St. Bridget spread her cloak upon the Curragh this is the most day and the happiest day ever came to Ireland.

Conan: (*Giving bag to Flannery.*) Take it you, as is your due by what the mother said a while ago about the robbery he did on you in the time past.

Flannery: Give it here to me. I'll engage I'll keep a good grip on it from this out. It's long before any other one will get a one look at it!

Conan: There would seem to be a great change--and a sudden change come upon the two of ye. ...(*With a roar.*) Where now is the bellows?

Flannery: (*Sulkily.*) What way would I know?

Conan: (*Shaking him.*) I know well what happened! It is ye have stolen two of my blasts! Putting changes on yourselves ye would--much good may it do ye--. Thieving with your covetousness the last two nearly I had left!

Rock: (*Sulkily.*) Leave your hand off me! I never stole no blast!

Conan: There's a bad class going through the world. The most people you will give to will be the first to cry you down. This was a wrong out of measure! Thieves ye are and pickpockets! Ye that were not worth changing from one to another, no more than you'd change a pinch of dust off the road into a puff of ashes. Stealing away my lovely blasts, bad luck to ye, the same as Prometheus stole the makings of a fire from the ancient gods!

Flannery: That is enough of keening and lamenting after a few blasts of barren wind--I'll be going where I have my own business to attend.

Conan: Where, so, is the bellows?

Flannery: How would I know?

Conan: The two of ye won't quit this till I'll find it! There is another two blasts in it that will bring sense and knowledge into Ireland yet!

Rock: Indeed they might bring comfort yet to many a sore heart!

Conan: (*Searching.*) Where now is it? I couldn't find it if the earth rose up and swallowed it. Where now did I lay it down?

Rock: There's too much changes in this place for me to know where anything is gone.

Conan: (*At door.*) Where are you, Maryanne! Celia! Timothy! Let ye come hither and search out my little bellows!

(*Timothy comes in, followed by Mother.*)

Conan: Hearken now, Timothy!

Timothy: (*Stopping his ears.*) Speak easy, speak easy!

Conan: Take down now your fingers from your ears the way you will hear my voice!

Timothy: Have a care now with your screeching would you split the drum of my ear?

Conan: Is it that you have got your hearing?

Timothy: My hearing is it? As good as that I can hear a lie, and it forming in the mind.

Conan: Is that the truth you're saying?

Timothy: Hear, is it! I can hear every whisper in this parish and the seven parishes are nearest. And the little midges roaring in the air.-- Let ye whist now with your sneezing in the draught!

Conan: This is surely the work of the bellows. Another blast gone!

Rock: So it would be too. Mostly the whole of them gone and spent. It's hard know in the morning what way will it be with you at night.
(*Sings.*)

"I saw from the beach when the morning was shining A bark o'er the waters move gloriously on-- came when the sun o'er the beach was declining, The bark was still there, but the waters were gone."

Timothy: It is yourself brought the misfortune on me, calling your Druid spells into the house.

Conan: It is not upon you I ever turned it.

Timothy: You have a great wrong done to me!

Mother: It is glad you should be and happy.

Timothy: Happy, is it? Give me a hareskin cap for to put over my ears, having wool in it very thick! (*Sings.*)

"Silent, O Moyle, be the roar of thy water, Break not ye breezes your chain of repose, While murmuring mournfully Lir's lonely daughter Tells to the night-star her tale of woes.

"When shall the swan, her death-note singing, Sleep with wings in darkness furl'd? When will heaven its sweet bells ringing Call my spirit from this stormy world?"

Mother: Come with me now and I'll be chatting to you.

Timothy: Why would I be listening to your blather when I have the voices of the four winds to be listening to? The night wind, the east wind, the black wind and the wind from the south!

Conan: Such a thing I never saw before in all my natural life.

Timothy: To be hearing, without understanding it, the language of the tribes of the birds! (*Puts hands over ears again.*) There's too many sounds in the world! The sounds of the earth are terrible! The roots squeezing and jostling one another through the clefts, and the crashing of the acorn from the oak. The cry of the little birdeen in under the silence of the hawk!

Conan: (*To Mother.*) As it you let it loose upon him, let you bring him away to some hole or cave of the earth.

Timothy: It is my desire to go cast myself in the ocean where there'll be but one sound of its waves, the fishes in its meadows being dumb! (*Goes to corner and hides his head in a sack.*)

Mother: Even so there might likely be a mermaid playing reels on her silver comb, and yourself craving after the world you left. (*Sings: Air, "Spailpin Fanach."*)

"You think to go from every woe to peace in the wide ocean, But you will find your foolish mind repent its foolish notion. When dog-fish dash and mermaids splash their finny tails to find you, I'll make a bet that you'll regret the world you left behind you!"

Celia: (*Clattering in with broom, etc.*) What are ye doing, coming in this room again after I having it settled so nice? I'll allow no one in the place again, only carriage company that will have no speck of dust upon the sole of their shoe!

Mother: Oh, Celia, there has strange things happened!

Celia: What I see strange is that some person has meddled with that hill of ashes on the hearth and set it flying athrough the air. Is it hens ye are wishful to be, that would be searching and scratching in the dust for grains? And this thrown down in the midst! (*Holds up bellows.*)

Conan: Give me my bellows!

Mother: No, but give it to me!

Rock and Flannery: Give it to myself!

Timothy: (*Looking up, with hands on ears.*) My curse upon it and its work. Little I care if it goes up with the clouds.

Celia: What in the world wide makes the whole of ye so eager to get hold of such a thing?

Conan: It has but the one blast left! (*Sings.*)

"'Tis the last Rose of Summer Left blooming alone, All her lovely companions Are faded and gone. No flower of her kindred, No rosebud is nigh, To reflect back her blushes Or give sigh for sigh!"

Celia: What are you fretting about blasts and about roses?

Rock: It has a charm on it--

Flannery: To change the world--

Mother: That chedang myself--

Conan: For the worse--

Mother: And Timothy--

Conan: For the worse--

Rock: Myself and Flannery--

Conan: For the worse, for the worse--

Mother: Conan that changed yourself with it--

Conan: For the very worst!

Celia: (*To Conan.*) Is it riddles, or is it that you put a spell and a change upon me?

Conan: If I did, it was for your own good!

Celia: Do you call it for my good to set me running till I have my toes going through my shoes? (*Holds them out.*)

Conan: I didn't think to go that length.

Celia: To roughen my hands with soap and scalding water till they're near as knotted and as ugly as your own!

Conan: Ah, leave me alone! I tell you it is not by my own fault. My plan and my purpose that went astray and that broke down.

Celia: I will not leave you till you'll change me back to what I was. What way can these hands go to the dance house to-night? Change me back, I say!

Rock: And me--

Timothy: And myself, that I'll have quiet in my head again.

Conan: I cannot undo what has been done. There is no back way.

Timothy: Is there no way at all to come out of it safe and sane?

Conan: (*Shakes head.*) Let ye make the best of it.

Flannery: (*Sings.*) (*Air, "I saw from the Beach."*)

"Ne'er tell me of glories serenely adorning
The close of our day, the calm eve of our night.
Give me back, give me back the wild freshness
of morning, Her clouds and her tears are worth evening's best light."

Mother: (*Who has bellows in her hand.*) Stop! Stop--my mind is travelling backward ...so far I can hardly reach to it ...but I'll come to it ...the way I'll be changed to what I was before, and the town and the country wishing me well, I having got my enough of unfriendly looks and hard words!

Timothy: Hurry on, Ma'am, and remember, and take the spell off the whole of us.

Mother: I am going back, back, to the longest thing that is in my mind and my memory!... I myself a child in my mother's arms the very day I was christened....

Conan: Ah, stop your raving!

Mother: Songs and storytelling, and my old generations laying down news of this spell that is now come to pass....

Rock: Did they tell what way to undo the charm?

Mother: You have but to turn the bellows the same as the smith would turn the anvil, or St. Patrick turned the stone for fine weather ... and to blow a blast ...and a twist will come inside in it and the charm will fall off with that blast, and undo the work that has been done!

All: Turn it so! (*Cats look over, playing on fiddles "O Johnny, I hardly knew you," while mother blows on each.*)

Timothy: Ha! (*Takes hands from ears and puts one behind his ear.*)

Rock: Ha! Where now is my bag? (*Turns out his pockets, unhappy to find them empty.*)

Flannery: Ha! (*Smiles and holds out umbrella to Conan, who takes it.*)

Mother: (*To Celia.*) Let you blow a blast on me. (*Celia does so.*) Now it's much if I can remember to blow a blast backward upon yourself!

Celia: Stop a minute! Leave what is in me of life and of courage till I will blow the last blast is in the bellows upon Conan.

Conan: Stop that! Do you think to change and to crow over me. You will not or I'll lay my curse upon you, unless you would change me into an eagle would be turning his back upon the whole of ye, and facing to his perch upon the right hand of the master of the gods!

NOTE TO ARISTOTLE'S BELLOWS

I had begun to put down some notes for this play when in the autumn of 1919 I was suddenly obliged (through the illness and death of the writer who had undertaken it) to take in hand the writing of the "Life and Achievement" of my nephew Hugh Lane, and this filled my mind and kept me hard at work for a year.

When the proofs were out of my hands I turned with but a vague recollection to these notes, and was surprised to find them fuller than they had appeared in my memory, so that the idea was rekindled and the writing was soon begun. And I found a certain rest and ease of mind in having turned from a long struggle (in which, alas, I had been too often worsted) for exactitude in dates and names and in the setting down of facts, to the escape into a world of fantasy where I could create my own. And so before the winter was over the play was put in rehearsal at the Abbey Theatre, and its first performance was on St. Patrick's Day, 1921.

I have been looking at its first scenario, made according to my habit in rough pen and ink sketches, coloured with a pencil blue and red, and the changes from that early idea do not seem to have been very great, except that in the scene where Conan now hears the secret of the hiding-place of the Spell from the talk of the cats, the Bellows had been at that time left beside him by a dwarf from the rath, in his sleep. The cats work better, and I owe their success to the genius of our Stage Carpenter, Mr. Sean Barlow, whose head of the Dragon from my play of that name had been such a masterpiece that I longed to see these other enchanted heads from his hand.

The name of the play in that first scenario was "The Fault-Finder," but my cranky Conan broke from that narrowness. If the play has a moral it is given in the words of the Mother, "It's best make changes little by little, the same as you'd put clothes upon a growing child." The restlessness of the time may have found its way into Conan's mind, or as some critic wrote, "He thinks of the Bellows as Mr. Wilson thought of the League of Nations," and so his disappointment comes. As A.E. writes in "The National Being," "I am sympathetic with idealists in a

hurry, but I do not think the world can be changed suddenly by some heavenly alchemy, as St. Paul was smitten by a light from the overworld. Though the heart in us cries out continually, 'Oh, hurry, hurry to the Golden Age,' though we think of revolutions, we know that the patient marshalling of human forces is wisdom.... Not by revolutions can humanity be perfected. I might quote from an old oracle, 'The gods are never so turned away from man as when he ascends to them by disorderly methods.' Our spirits may live in the Golden Age but our bodily life moves on slow feet, and needs the lantern on the path and the staff struck carefully into the darkness before us to see that the path beyond is not a morass, and the light not a will o' the wisp." (But this may not refer to our own Revolution, seeing that has been making a step now and again towards what many judged to be a will o' the wisp through over seven hundred years.)

As to the machinery of the play, the spell was first to have been worked by a harp hung up by some wandering magician, and that was to work its change according to the wind, as it blew from north or south, east or west. But that would have been troublesome in practice, and the Bellows having once entered my mind, brought there I think by some scribbling of the pencil that showed Conan protecting himself with an umbrella, seemed to have every necessary quality, economy, efficiency, convenience.

As to Aristotle, his name is a part of our folklore. The old wife of one of our labourers told me one day, as a bee buzzed through the open door: "Aristotle of the Books was very wise but the bees got the better of him in the end. He wanted to know how did they pack the comb, and he wasted the best part of a fortnight watching them, and he could not see them doing it. Then he made a hive with a glass cover on it and put it over them, and he thought to watch them. But when he went to put his eye to the glass, they had it all covered with wax so that it was as black as the pot, and he was as blind as before. He said he was never rightly killed till then. The bees had him beat that time surely." And Douglas Hyde brought home one day a story from Kilmacduagh bog, in which Aristotle took the place of Solomon, the Wise Man in our tales as well as in those of the East. And he said that as the story grew and the teller became more familiar, the name of Aristotle was shortened to that of Harry.

As to the songs they are all sung to the old Irish airs I give at the end.

A. GREGORY.

August 18, 1921.