

UNCLE DINNY'S MATCH

Easter Monday, as I stared from the back of the church at the pretty bride and groom that were eagerly accepting the bonds of marriage at the altar rails, my mind went back to the courtship days of my Uncle Dinny.

Dinny was "as airy as the stonechat"--to use a Gaelic simile. There was scarcely a sporting fixture of any sort, whether it be a race meeting, bowling contest, or country dance in which he wouldn't be an active participant--and he was seldom without a ring of admirers around him, laughing good-humoredly at the rippling jokes that bespoke his clean, carefree heart.

Dinny was held with something far exceeding a neighbourly interest by the young women of his district and, indeed, their interest was not without reciprocation for he had, what the Irish call "a great eye for the girls" and he didn't dislike this interest in the least!

The days went by for my uncle with beguiling swiftness and then life for him took a serious turn when his father proposed making a match for him. In this matter, his father's proposition was more than a passing whim. He avowedly declared that my uncle was only wasting his time and, indeed, his money "galivanting about with silly little gabsters" who had neither money, nor means, nor the capacity to milk a cow--even if they had one!

Poor Uncle Dinny! All the spirit seemed to go out of him when he heard that a match was really being made for him, but, like a dose of medicine, he decided that there was no alternative but to go through with it.

The big day had come and they were all sitting in the snug of Murphy's Bar in Bandon--his father, mother, a couple of his aunts and uncles and some other relatives, waiting for the arrival of the woman who was to be his wife. Nobody talked very much but wore the kind of demure expression one has when he is about to face some challenging and, perhaps, unpleasant situation. My uncle remained silent. He was back in fancy with Peg, the girl to whom he had given his heart, but whom his father had refused to even consider as a daughter-in-law.

Dinny reflected on Peg's natural beauty, a beauty which aroused jealousy in his rivals that he should be the one whom this Irish Helen should lavish all her glances; but what was the use when his father had sagely declared: "Beauty never boiled the pt." Oh, yes, it was pleasant to be with Peg. Dinny almost laughed aloud recalling the fright he had given Mike, the river bailiff one night when Mike thought he heard fairies talking at the gate of the graveyard--but it was only Dinny and Peg saying to each other those meaningful little nothings that speed the hours all too quickly when lovers meet. Uncle Dinny recalled--

Suddenly, his reverie was shattered when somebody announced grimly: "They're coming."

They came into the snug --the girl's father and mother, relatives on the maternal and paternal side, a motley lot of friends and neighbours and--the girl herself.

Good Heavens! What a cloud descended on my uncle when he beheld for the