

Anecdote

The McGillicuddy of the Reeks defied accurate transcription in Russell's recorded story of his visit to County Kerry in Ireland. This 'anecdote' is one of many impromptu reminiscences taped during sessions between July and September 1959, and published after Russell's death in 1970.

At one time when I was on a walking tour in County Kerry, I visited Henry Butcher, who was well known as one of the translators of the Odyssey. He told me a rather curious story about the Maglicurry who was the great chieftain of that region, and held the distinction of having a whole mountain range called after him. It appeared that the Maglicurry on one occasion was travelling on the Continent. He was at a bookstall thinking what he should buy, when a young American lady came up and mistook him for the bookstall attendant, and asked for a book. He was very haughty and refused to answer at all to what she said. However, on looking round he saw that she was very charming, so he observed which carriage she got into in the train and he got in too. He tried to get into conversation, but this time she was haughty. She was travelling with her parents, and he discovered that her Christian name was Mary. Her surname was still unknown to him. Presently the parents wanted the window closed, but it was very stiff and wouldn't close. So he got hold of the strap and pulled very hard, and the strap came off, and he was deposited full length on the floor of the carriage. After this it was impossible to keep up any kind of haughtiness and they began to converse. Presently the time came when the young lady and her parents were getting out of the carriage, having reached the end of their journey. As they got out, he turned to her and he said, 'Miss Mary, someday you shall be my wife.' She was rather surprised. He didn't know where she lived or what her name was. And he didn't say, 'Someday I hope ...'; but 'Someday you shall be my wife.' However, he found out what hotel they were staying at, and ingratiated himself with them and explained that he was an Irish Chieftain of very ancient lineage and very grand altogether. And so at last the lady accepted him. He took her back to his home, which was not nearly as grand as she had expected and after some time he became a Mohammedan. They had one son, and the religious education of the son consisted solely of one precept. He said, 'My boy, remember this: God is a perfect gentleman.' That I believe was all the boy ever learnt of religion.

*The Collected Stories of Bertrand Russell
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