

She was of a world too prone to give  
Saddest fate to fairest flowers.  
A rose, she lived as the roses live  
Through a few bright morning hours.

Rose Kavanagh was born at Killadroy, in Co. Tyrone, on St. John's Night, June 24, 1859. It is pleasant to learn that two diocese have contended for the honor of her birth. As a fact, Killadroy is in the parish of Beragh, diocese of Armagh, which is separated there from Clogher by the Avonban ("white river"), a noisy stream which thus carries its Scotch *alias*, the Routing Burn. When Rose was eleven years old, her family crossed this boundary line and settled at Mullaghmore, near Augher,\* in Co. Tyrone, beside the Blackwater, whose praises she was to sing, as Thomas Davis had done before her, though the Ulster river is much less beautiful no doubt than its more famous namesake in the south. Knockmany, a fine bold mountain which rises not far away to the west, keeps guard over the plain. It inspired Rose Kavanagh's first poem in the *Irish Monthly*, as it had inspired one of the two poems left by William Carleton, who was born in its shadow, as was also a very different man, Archbishop Hughes, of New York, a cousin of Rose Kavanagh's mother. After her early training at home, Rose was educated chiefly at Loretto Convent, Omagh; but, as is the case with most of us, her main education was her love of reading. She was passionately fond of books from the earliest years that it was possible for a bright child to read them. Her first aspiration was to be a painter, and her twentieth year found her studying in Dublin, in the Metropolitan School of Art. She gradually, however, transferred her allegiance from art to literature, like Thackeray and many another; and she soon became a contributor, and even a paid contributor, to several journals and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic. She was introduced to the American public by John Boyle O'Reilly in the *Boston Pilot*, and by Mr. Alfred Williams in the *Providence Journal*. The latter was an American who, with a quiet, reticent manner, possessed an earnest and generous nature. He was enthusiastically devoted to Ireland, and he proved his devotion practically by helping Irish writers and writing about Irish literature. Speaking of her after her death, he says: "Miss Kavanagh was remarkably endowed in her personality, her face and form being of a singularly refined beauty and grace, and her untimely death recalls to those who knew her the magic lines of Walter Savage Landor:

Ah, what avails the sceptred race,  
And what the form divine?  
What every virtue, every grace?  
Rose Aylmer, all were thine.

Rose Kavanagh was one of the best and loveliest creatures I ever knew."

In one of the poems in the present collection there is mention of "the cornerake's low nest with its brown downy brood." She refers to this in one of her letters to me at the time:

"It is not alone that I liked the cornerake; its song used to have a soothing effect on me. So had another very dissimilar thing—to drive very hard through a bog on a frosty moonlight night; and yet another thing which was strongest of all—to think I should some day succeed in literature or art, and get rich enough to go to Italy and sail through Venice in a gondola. But I am not coming much speed on that road, since, instead of being away in London with all my armor on in the struggle for success, it is sitting here in the sunshine I am, nursing my little old cough. Thanks be to God for the same sunshine, however. I believe, if it lasts some time longer, I shall be just as well as ever. Such a good harvest time has not been for years, they say: nearly all the corn is stacked already, and then it is so dry! What a wonderful stillness there is among the hills in September! After all, September is a lovely month, too. I wish it had a poet as devoted as Denis Florence MacCarthy was to May. Perhaps you will tell me the meaning of the title 'Underglimpses' in Mr. Mac-

\* Even its own people will be surprised to hear that Augher returned two members to the Irish Parliament. Fifteen thousand pounds were given to the Marquis of Abercorn to console him for the loss of this pocket borough at the time of the Union.

Carthy's book. Does it mean glimpses under the surface of life, or nature, or what? But it must be nature, I think. I like his 'Irish Emigrant's Mother' greatly—it always brought the tears into my mother's eyes. 'The Foray of Con O'Donnell' always rises in my mind as the Foray of Dan O'Connell. Dublin ought to be pretty hot now, with the asphalt soft and springy under one's feet. I miss the National Library a good bit, but one can't have everything. And here I have my own people, and the sun, and the birds, and such landscape-pictures every day as make little of the best of painting."

When another Ulster poet, who is known to the reading world only as "Magdalen Rock," read this letter long afterwards in *The Irish Monthly*, her gratitude went back to the sunbeams that had cheered her young sister-poet on that bygone day—somewhat in the manner that Lancelotti bids us feel grateful to the unknown person who had the charity to tell our Blessed Lord one day that His Mother was anxious to speak to Him, as St. Matthew records towards the end of his twelfth chapter. Her gratitude was expressed in these simple lines:—

Thank God for the happy sunbeams  
Mellowing glen and brae.  
Thank God for the light and sweetness  
Of that September day,  
When yet your eyes had vision  
On earth God's things to view,  
Although in dreams elysian  
Your spirit heav'nward flew.  
Thank God for the heart He gave you,  
Tender, yet pure and bold,  
For the sufferings that cleansed it,  
As fire does rough, red gold.  
Thank God your words can reach us,  
Though years away have flown,  
Brave lessons still to teach us,  
White Rose of green Tyrone!

The last of these lines, which we have printed elsewhere, forestalled the discarded title of our book. But we have ourselves forestalled in some measure the end of our little story, which might be summed up in the burden of Richard Dalton Williams's pathetic poem:

Consumption has no pity  
For blue eyes and golden hair.

It was with Rose Kavanagh as with Canning's son—her "lingering life" was, at least in its last years, "one long disease." Her brave spirit, however, enabled her to get through a large amount of work. She was an ardent patriot, and was by no means an idle spectator during the stormiest days of the Land League. She for several years, with great energy and ability, conducted the youthful confederacy or club that had a department of its own in *The Irish Fireside* (whose name it adopted), and afterwards in the *Weekly Freeman*, where it is still flourishing under the gentle but potent sway of Uncle Remus II. I am not sure that it was Rose Kavanagh who chose that venerable name, borrowed from Mr. Joel Chandler Harris,\* the immortaliser of Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit. Under this name and title Rose Kavanagh wielded a far-reaching sceptre. When she was gone, Father Richard O'Kennedy, writing of her under this name, said in *The Irish Monthly*:

"When I spoke to little children, and told them that I knew Uncle Remus, who wrote such dear things for them in those late years, they would say—'Oh, what kind of person is he?' And when urged to guess what kind, they would picture an old man, with white hair, a stoop and a staff. Great was the children's amazement when told it was not a *he*, but a *she*; that it was not a wrinkled old man, but quite a young woman. And sometimes they blurted out their exclamations in their childish, yet emphatic, way, and their curiosity was roused; and, I think, had Uncle Remus been announced to appear at any town or village, the children would have flocked from all the countryside. And not children alone, but the children's mothers, and the

\* He died July 3, 1908, at Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A., and he died in the Catholic faith.