

## Love-making in Ireland

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Cork, 4th Month 27th, 1825.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

**J** FULLY intended to have written thee last evening to fulfil a promise which I made thee some time ago of writing as soon as I should take the momentous step of asking for a wife, but I found it almost impossible to do it in any reasonable time and really my mind was in such a state of agitation when I got home near 12 o'clock that I found it quite necessary to endeavour if not to quiet it by sleep at least to try what effect bed would have on me. I regret the disappointment less than I otherwise would as I have now thy very acceptable letter per Geo. B. to acknowledge receipt of, but let me commence by detailing the adventures of yesterday (the result of which may either tend greatly to increase my happiness or on the contrary to produce many uneasy feelings, I will not say *ruin my peace of mind*, perhaps that would be going too far, but tho' my expressions may not be of a very ardent nature, still I believe I should feel a refusal almost as much as many others).

Thou must know that I have had it in view to ask for Miss A., but Joshua's daughter's illness and death and afterwards Sally's illness made me not like to trouble him much on the subject, however I was determined before Tommy (who is gone to Dublin and likely to be away some weeks) left home to bring it to some conclusion. On his, Joshua's and my consulting together we fixed to bring the matter so far as asking to a close; Joshua would have gone with me as *Spokesman* only for Sally's being so very poorly, and his just having buried little Debby; Tommy would have done it gladly if I would be satisfied to wait till his return but I thought it a pity to be losing so many weeks, so we fixed on asking Reuben Harvey to accompany me who readily consented and he mentioned to William on 1st day our intention of going down and wished to know what day

would suit their convenience. William said he would consult his Mother that evening and call on R.H. next day, he accordingly did so and appointed yesterday morning for us to go down. R.H. breakfasted with me and we set off at once after and arrived at the Cottage (which is a sweet spot) about  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 10. The Mother and William were ready to receive us and R.H. soon told his story. I was by but did not think it necessary to open my lips on the subject, nor indeed were there many words expressed by any of the party except R.H.'s tale. The Mother said it would require some consideration and the matter ended; we soon talked on indifferent subjects, walked about the garden, etc. I was expecting to get an opportunity of telling *my* story to S. but her *ladyship* did not think proper to make her appearance, altho' I ventured to ask her Mother for her. This discouraged me at the time, but from what R.H. told me on our return as well as many other persons I have heard speak on the subject, I am inclined not to look at it in such an unfavourable light, had we been intimate and I in the habit of visiting at the house then indeed her non-appearance would be an unfavourable symptom, but in this case I understand it is to be viewed in a different light. *However, at the time* it disconcerted me a little, tho' the reception I met with from both the Mother and William (particularly the latter) was more favourable than I had anticipated, indeed they seemed after a little while almost as free with me as ever, and from what they told R.H. who took an opportunity of speaking separately after the joint interview, I have reason to believe the matter will be almost entirely left to herself.

Some of the other branches of the family I have reason to think are favourable to it—Mary Ann and Eliza I believe are, and Paul told me last evening when I called on him that I had his most hearty concurrence and that he expected in future he would not have to be going to the Cottage on 1st days without company. He told me what I was rather surprised at that he had never spoken to herself nor she to him on the subject (the only one of the family which spoke to him about it was Mary Ann who I understood has always been favourable to me), so thou sees what a *close creature she is*. I ought to tell thee that yesterday morning week I went to Paul's to buy something (knowing S. was there as one of them take week about with him while Francis is

away) who asked me to stay to breakfast and I did so. She came to the shop not knowing I was there, and when she saw me first she started a little and blushed deeply, but after a while became herself again. I was *tête à tête* with her for some time before Paul could come into the parlour, and we got pretty free and had a deal of conversation.

Last evening I called on the Uncle Tommy to mention my visit to the Cottage, who received me *kindly, praised his niece for a good girl*, told me if she had no objection that he had none, which was quite as much as I expected from him—and this evening I rode down to wait on the Uncle Paul, who also received me kindly, told me he had not heard anything of it before, supposed it would be left pretty much to herself and that he was not unfriendly to me, and he would be glad if I rode down to breakfast with him some morning, etc., etc. All this was as favourable as I could have expected from him. I did not see his wife as she was ill in bed.

I must tell thee of another task I had to perform to complete the business on my part, and which was to write to her Aunts R. and M. to Dublin. I just mentioned that being precluded by distance from the *pleasure* of a personal *interview* I took that mode of informing them of *my doings* and hoped they would meet with their approbation. I enclosed the . . . letters of John Doyle to whom I also mentioned it, requesting he would deliver them to his Aunts, and also to mention the matter to his Mother, so thou sees what etiquette is considered necessary in these refined times. I did all with R.H.'s and Joshua's advice, and I expect it will *at least do no harm*.

Now for a meeting with herself. In this I must go by R.H.'s advice. He told me he would send a note to the Mother to say I had a wish to pay them a visit and see S. and hoped it would not be disagreeable to the family. If a favourable answer, or no answer at all, which may be looked on in the same light, come, I suppose I shall go down either to-morrow evening or the next, and after a visit or two I shall probably be able to give some guess whether my fate will be fortunate or otherwise, and if thou answer this soon I intend writing thee again on the subject, when I may have more leisure as well as inclination to answer some parts of thy letter which I think require a little explanation. With respect to the

request about destroying thy letters, I cannot make any objection after the way *thou hast treated mine*, without even mentioning it to me, *which was certainly rather more than I expected* and more than Jenny did to me, altho' I fancy the letters which she has of mine contain as many or perhaps more secrets than those thou had, but she still holds them altho' she has requested my leave to commit them to the flames, which after a little while I intend giving her. But I will not now say all I intended on this subject, but I cannot help saying I was surprised when I heard from M.I. *for the first time* that they had been burnt, and additionally so when I found by thy letters the only sensation it created was that of an amusing kind. This consideration will certainly make me think less of the act of destroying thine than I otherwise would. Count Rochefecault says all our actions proceed from selfish motives, and really I am half-inclined to be of his opinion.

I must conclude as I have not time to enlarge.

Thy very affectionate cousin,

JAMES CARROLL.

*Taken from a typed copy of the original, kindly lent by Ernest H. Bennis, of Limerick, Ireland, grandson of the writer.*

Ernest H. Bennis writes, 26 3. 23 :

" *Re* my grandfather's wooing. He was accepted, and married about 1826. He had five children, one of whom was my mother. It was a very happy marriage and he was a most devoted husband. His wife—Susannah, daughter of William Abbott—died in 1844; he lived till 1874, dying at the age of seventy-nine, so must have been born in 1795.

" James Carroll was a brother to Edward Carroll [for whom see *Jnl.* xiv, xv]; 'Tommy' was a cousin; Thomas Carroll, a member of a well-known firm of land agents in Cork—Joseph Carroll & Sons; 'Mary Ann,' 'Eliza' and 'Paul' were Abbotts; 'Joshua' and 'Sally' were Joshua and Susan Lawe, who lived near the Abbotts at Glanmire, near Cork, and had a large flour mill there, driven by water."