

Five O'Clock Tea at the Dargle

Harp, long disused and out of tune!
Assist us to remember
This sunny, breezy afternoon,
This second of September,
Nineteen-nought-one, when two fair dames,
An old man and a younger,
First having satisfied the claims
Of Nature's noontide hunger,
We issue from the postern-gate
Of sylvan Villa Nova,
Sweet haunt of song, yet rhyming mate
it hath not, save Jehovah!
We speed on nimble jaunting-car
Through sunshine and no showers
Towards where the Sugar-loaf afar
O'er Wicklow valleys towers;
Past Linden when the sun is high,
Past Leopardstown, Stillorgan -
For city smoke the bright blue sky,
The birds for barrel-organ.

By quiet rural roads we glide
Past Stepside, Kilgobbin,
'Twixt hedges tall and thick that hide
The home of many a robin.
In purest air, no dust, no glare,
We four, sedately merry,
Whirl through the Scalp, that tiny Alp.
And skirt fair Enniskerry.

Alighting soon, we leave the road
For forest-shaded byway;
Our car will find again its load
By driving round the highway,
While *we* pursue our grassy way
Through glorious maze of greenery.
Oh! could I worthy tribute pay
To such enchanting scenery!
A mighty fissure's rugged sides
Are oft austere, unsightly -
Rich verdure here all harshness hides,
Wild flowers from clefts gleam brightly.
Far down in leafy depths below,
Winds noisily the Dargle,
In whose pure wave the linnets lave,
Their throats the thrushes gargle.

And can it be yon slender stream
Has scooped this magic valley?
But, though 'twere sweet to gaze and dream,
We must no longer dally.
Nature for some refreshment calls:
Lo ! yonder stands old Mustard
Beside his whitewashed cottage walls
With roses thickly clustered.
Between the porch and hedge is spread
A white-naped wooden table,
Whereon is served no common bread
But fairy feast of fable:

Hot scones, delicious jam, hot tea,
And dainty pats of yellow -
Could cream more like to nectar be?
Could butter taste more mellow?

We home return another way,
Like to the Eastern Magi,
While I of our grand Dargle "tay"
This monument *exegi*.
Would that my strain were half as sweet,
As is my theme so bonnie!
With love I lay it at the feet
Of my grandnephew, Johnnie.

Alice Furlong
1901