TUMBLING IN THE HAY

A NOVEL BY

Oliver St. John Gogarty

The lark, that tirra-lirra chants,
With heigh! with heigh! the thrush and the jay,
Are summer songs for me and my aunts,
While we lie tumbling in the hay.

SHAKESPEARE

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TUMBLING IN THE HAY

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In form the latest Gogarty book is an autobiographical novel, dealing mainly with medical student days at Trinity College, Dublin. But it is hard to pin Oliver Gogarty down to any stock literary form. As I Was Going Down Sackville Street was technically a book of reminiscence. But it was so crammed with gusty humor and wayward charm that many critics welcomed it as a form of life rather than literature, and stamped it Gogartian.

So, too, with Tumbling in the Hay. It obeys few laws of the novel. The center of focus is forever shifting and darting. One is inclined to say that the real hero is "dear, dirty Dublin" itself, with its theaters and brothels and saloons, its stately Georgian houses and terrible slums, and especially its Hay Hotel—a rowdy hostelry so-called because one of its windows was stuffed with hay for weary cab-horses. The young "medical" took active part in this teeming Dublin life of thirty years ago.

And what a life it was! There were bicycle races to be run on the smooth turf of Stephen's Green, and Olympian quantities of stout to be consumed, and bawdy limericks to be tossed off. There were the routine of hospital life, the mastering of the technique of the dissecting room, the episodic agony of examinations. With the sure touch of a master writer, it all comes to life.

Certain scenes stand out with special brilliance. The farcical session in the Dublin Court of law when the authentic Gogarty wit flashes at its satirical best, for one. The uproarious scene in the time-honored establishment of Mrs. Mack, for another. But underlying the Falstaffian foolery of the book is a warm tolerance, a mellow worldliness. It is alive with shrewd comment on many subjects—on men and medicine and manners and the world in general. It is in short, Gogartian. And that is all that needs be said.
## Contents

1. Manners Makyth Man  
2. In College Park  
3. The Finding of the Elixir  
4. Back to the Boys  
5. I Do Well in Astronomy  
6. The Benign Doctor  
7. Baccalaureus in Artibus  
8. An Stad  
9. Crowner's Quest  
10. Barney Takes Honours  
11. Good Luck up North  
12. A Hold-up  
13. A Consultation with Counsel  
14. Lumen Curiae  
15. "Oh, Mon!"  

1  
18  
33  
42  
57  
67  
82  
91  
98  
103  
114  
134  
141  
149  
158
x • Contents

16. Good Beer and a Catholic Church 166
17. Midwifery 181
18. Supper with the Gods 195
19. Counsel Saves the Coroner 222
20. Surgery 226
21. Medicine 237
22. Old Manners Gone 250
23. Tumbling in the Hay 271
24. Golly Consults the Faculty 282
25. Transition 291