

Epilogue

“Are you going to listen to what I am telling you about the Leprecaun?” said the Thin Woman.

“I am not,” said the Philosopher. “It has been suggested that we go to sleep at night because it is then too dark to do anything else; but owls, who are a venerably sagacious folk, do not sleep in the nighttime. Bats, also, are a very clear-minded race; they sleep in the broadest day, and they do it in a charming manner. They clutch the branch of a tree with their toes and hang head downwards—a position which I consider singularly happy, for the rush of blood to the head consequent on this inverted position should engender a drowsiness and a certain imbecility of mind which must either sleep or explode.”

“Will you never be done talking?” shouted the Thin Woman passionately.

“I will not,” said the Philosopher. “In certain ways sleep is useful. It is an excellent way of listening to an opera or seeing pictures on a bioscope. As a medium for day-dreams I know of nothing that can equal it. As an accomplishment it is graceful, but as a means of spending a night it is intolerably ridiculous. If you were going to say anything, my love, please say it now, but you should always remember to think before you speak. A woman should be seen seldom but never heard. Quietness is the beginning of virtue. To be silent is to be beautiful. Stars do not make a noise. Children should always be in bed. These are serious truths, which cannot be controverted; therefore, silence is fitting as regards them.”

“Your stirabout is on the hob,” said the Thin Woman. “You can get it for yourself. I would not move the breadth of my nail if you were dying of hunger. I hope there’s lumps in it. A Leprecaun from Gort na Cloca Mora was here to-day. They’ll give it to you for robbing their pot of gold. You old thief, you! you lob-eared, crock-kneed fat-eye!”

The Thin Woman whizzed suddenly from where she stood and leaped into bed. From beneath the blanket she turned a vivid, furious eye on her husband. She was trying to give him rheumatism and toothache and lockjaw all at once. If she had been satisfied to concentrate all her attention on one only of these torments she might have succeeded in afflicting her husband according to her wish, but she was not able to do that.

“Finality is death. Perfection is finality. Nothing is perfect. There are lumps in it,” said the Philosopher.

James Stephens
The Crock of Gold