



A Sleepy Morning in Dublin, New Hampshire

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THE SUN RISES ON Dublin Lake, illuminating the western shore. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is already awake.

Throughout Dublin there are stirrings of the sleepyheads, their linens now tangled in untidy heaps. On the south shore of the lake, the cold and damp air has roused the family of Abbott Thayer, artist, naturalist, ornithologist. A strong believer in fresh air and toughening of the person, Abbott requires that his family and any guests sleep in open-sided huts, even in the winter. Paintings adorn his studio and bird skins carefully set by pins lie in ordered trays on the bench.

Along the shore, at Loon Point, where the land juts into the lake, among his carefully crafted Italianate and oriental gardens, through his Moon Gate, Joseph Lindon Smith, artist, archaeologist, imagines his next literary piece to be acted in Teatro Bambino, a theatre he has created among the trees.

Knollwood, the estate of Franklin MacVeagh, Secretary of the Treasury, sighs beneath the weight of government. The Cabinet meets in the Cape Cod across the lawn from the main house. His nephew Charles, and Charles’s family, are staying for the summer.

Across the lake on the north side at Beech Hill, Amy Lowell, the poetess, stirs her large frame. She will not be rising for some hours yet: she works all night and sleeps all day. Her pack of cigars lie open and welcoming by her side. Here she writes her poems of Dublin. It is said that she sleeps on a custom-made bed with exactly sixteen pillows. Later in life she will say of Keats: “The stigma of oddness is the price a myopic world always exacts of genius.”

Abbott Thayer — whom we have just met — is a bit of a recluse, but his friend George de Forest Brush is not. George the acclaimed painter, his daughters Nancy and Mary, guest Margaret Sanger, and maybe more tucked away in this sociable family, will come down to breakfast on time at Brush Farm so as not to keep mother and cook waiting.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is staying on the Parsons’ estate, on the east side of the lake, near Knollwood and Brush Farm. The Parsons have three houses: Stonehenge, Tynny-maes, fondly called Tiny May, and Day-Spring, the double-gabled three-story “cottage” with Doric columns, which Agnes Parsons has readied for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. From one side of the balcony is a wide view across the fields and on the other can be seen the mountain ranges disappearing into the distance. This morning he will walk in the “bird cage,” a grove of trees where the birds feed, cool and quiet, with the smell of pine beneath his feet.

It is here, in Dublin, that the rich and famous from Boston and Washington spend their summers. But they do not entertain in grand and glittering style as would those who live near the Vanderbilts in Newport, Rhode Island. The Dubliners spend their evenings around open fires discussing politics, literature, music, and art.

Agnes Parsons wants to keep ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s arrival a secret so he can rest. She will succeed for twenty-four hours. Then the continuous stream of visitors will begin.

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FOOTNOTE / ENDNOTE:

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