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### A T-shirt from Dublin by Roger Starkey

'In what college sport did Oscar Wilde participate?' the tour guide asked. The question was directed to a man from Nottingham, England and me. We were the finalists in the Dublin Literary Pub Crawl trivia contest. Whoever answered this question correctly took home a free t-shirt.

It wasn't the first time this question had been posed to me. I was living in Dublin at the time and had taken the tour a few weeks prior when another friend had visited. I almost felt guilty competing in a trivia contest for which I had all of the answers ahead of time but my friend wanted the t-shirt as a gift for her father and I wanted to help her. Yes, I was cheating, but it was for a good cause.

If my friend hadn't so coveted the prize, I still may have been competing in the contest. A day of tourism that consisted of visiting alcohol producers and drinking establishments, sampling the local products at every stop, had mostly silenced my inner voice of ethics. At that point, he, my conscience, was only in the game for major decisions. Playing outside the generally accepted rules of competition was not a decision in which he was going to trouble voicing an opinion.

My friend's two-day tour of Dublin had been inadvertently planned such that each of the activities became increasingly hedonistic. Day one's tourist stops began with church visits and ended with a shopping trip on Grafton Street. A prison visit started day two and a pub-crawl drew it to its fitting conclusion.

St. Patrick's Cathedral is not a Catholic Cathedral. The revelation that it is, instead, Anglican was so shocking to my Catholic friend that she couldn't stop speaking of it for the remainder of her visit. The fact that the most famous cathedral in predominately Catholic Ireland belonged to a different denomination impaired her ability to enjoy the soaring archways, the towering spires and the beautifully maintained grounds. That Jonathon Swift, who was Dean of St. Patrick's from 1713 to 1745, had most likely written 'Gulliver's Travels' on those very grounds was of little comfort to her. She reluctantly made her donation and we scurried up the street toward Christchurch Cathedral. I didn't have the heart to tell her, before we arrived, that it also belonged to the Church of Ireland.

I allowed my friend to appreciate the remarkable architecture both outside and inside the cathedral, to admire the tomb of the great warrior Strongbow (not daring to tell her the original was destroyed in 1562 when the roof collapsed) and to wander freely about the intriguing crypt before breaking the bad news to her. How the country could be ninety-five percent Catholic, and own neither of its two most famous cathedrals dismayed her.

The church visits finished for the day, we strode slowly downhill to the remarkably dirty River Liffey where we made a dual crossing.

The first crossing was accomplished using 'The Millennium Bridge.' The new pedestrian bridge, opened in the year 2000, was constructed to relieve the heavy burden of the more famous Ha' Penny Bridge. The Ha' Penny, the site of our second crossing, is Dublin's oldest and most famous pedestrian river crossing. It was built in 1816 as the Wellington Bridge but was quickly dubbed the 'Ha' Penny' because that was the cost of the toll exacted on its users until 1919.

The walk did little to relieve my friend's agitation over the denomination of the cathedrals. She needed an outlet for her stress; she needed to shop.

She unleashed the majority of her frustrations on the trendy shops of Grafton Street, home of Dublin's most famous shopping, while I watched the bevy of buskers plying their trade and collecting the tourist's coins. Any dissatisfaction that hadn't been purged by the shopping binge was long forgotten by the time we finished our sinfully good Indian/Nepalese meal at a restaurant near the Irish Film Centre.

The following day, the day of the pub-crawl, had started at Noon when we boarded the tourist bus on our way to Kilmainham Gaol. The appalling lack of public transportation in Dublin makes the tourist bus the easiest, fastest and most economical means of visiting the city's tourist attractions. The abundance of quality pubs and discos in Temple Bar, a number of which we had sampled the previous night, made mounting the tourist bus before Noon an impossibility.

Kilmainham Gaol is famous as the largest uninhabited prison in Europe, the location for the filming of the movie, 'In the Name of the Father' and as the home to most of the prisoners from the 1798, 1803, 1848, 1867 and 1916 Irish uprisings against British rule. The tour of the facility provided a nice glimpse into Irish history and the former prisoner's living conditions.

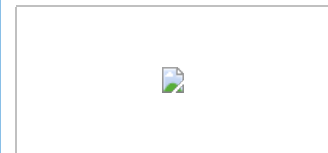
The tour didn't provide relief for our sub-par physical conditions, which had been brought on by the previous night's revelry. The cure for our ailing bodies, we diagnosed, could be found at the bottom of a creamy pint of stout. For that prescription, we would go to the source, St. James' Gate.

The new Guinness Storehouse, which opened in December 2000, is entertaining, informative about the brewing process, provides a brief history of the world famous stout and acknowledges the brilliant Guinness marketing campaigns without dwelling on them. In short, it is everything the previous Guinness Brewery tour was not. The culmination of the tour is a free pint of Guinness served in the rooftop bar that affords the undeniably best view of Dublin. The view was so nice that we decided to stay for more than just the complimentary pint.

We departed St. James Gate in better form than we had arrived but still hadn't returned to our peak physical and mental conditions. We reasoned that a complete return to health could only be achieved by visiting Dr. Jameson.

The Old Jameson Distillery is located at the original sight of the Jameson Whiskey Distillery. The world famous Jameson's whiskey is no longer brewed at the location but a well-organized and entertaining tour is available through a miniature re-creation of the original. At the end of the tour everyone is given a complimentary Jameson drink. A competition is also held where several brave souls volunteer to drink from three shots of whiskey with the directive to distinguish between Irish, Scotch and American whiskey. None of the contestants correctly identified all three whiskeys but they all appeared to enjoy trying.

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The office visit to Dr. Jameson had provided us with the healing ointment we desired but hunger had set in with the return of our health. Dinner in a 'chipper' (as the locals call the Fish-n-Chip restaurants) eased the hunger pangs and, by the time we arrived for the pub-crawl, our bodies had made a complete recovery from the previous night's festivities.

The Dublin Literary Pub Crawl combines Ireland's two greatest passions, the drink and literature. The walking tour is a wonderful combination of the city's history and anecdotes about some of Ireland's well known, and not-so-well known, authors. The guides are local actors who take their craft seriously. They don't simply recite facts, they tell stories, very entertaining stories. The tour stops into a number of pubs that play prominent roles in the stories. Each pub call lasts twenty minutes, just enough time to enjoy a pint or a half-pint. The trivia contest completes the tour.

I hadn't answered every trivia question for fear of being recognized as the cheater that I was. Now, as the final question was being posed, I wondered why I had allowed this guy from Nottingham to get so close to winning. I was afraid that I wouldn't get the words out fast enough and he would be taking the shirt with him across the Irish Sea. He would probably wear it around the house every night and bore his children with his bragging about how he had won the soon-to-be infamous t-shirt. It's not everyone who can have all of the answers in advance and still lose. I was on the verge of accomplishing just such a feat.

I was also afraid of my friend if I blew this for her. She had already been let down by the Catholic Church on this visit, I didn't want to contribute to her growing skepticism of the world.

'In what college sport did Oscar Wilde partic...?' the tour guide began, but, before he could finish the last word, I had shouted my answer. 'He was a boxer,' I said. The British guy hadn't even had time to digest the question before I had pounced. The tour guide paused. My mind began to work feverishly. I was sure that he was a boxer. I thought I was sure. It had only been a couple of weeks. How could I have forgotten? But the guide was an actor; maybe he was pausing for dramatic effect.

'The guy from St. Louis wins the t-shirt,' the tour guide finally announced. As we walked away, my little voice made a short visit. He asked me if I was happy. I was, I told him. We didn't speak for the remainder of the night.

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