

Andrew and Mary were proud of their Irish heritage. Their grandparents never grew tired of telling them stories of the 'old country.' This was fortunate because the twins never tired of hearing the tales. One of the stories Andrew especially liked was about the great fortress on the west coast of Ireland. The castle had once been a thriving center of the community. Even after the centuries had toppled its tallest towers, it was still the largest and most impressive building for miles around. It was built of dark stones, roughly squared off so they would stack on top of one another, but still quite jagged on the outer edge. High up on the walls, narrow slits had been made so that defenders could hide in the safety of the castle walls and shoot arrows at enemy invaders. Grandfather used to make up wonderful stories about the people who had once lived there.

Although Mary loved to hear the stories of the castle, she loved even more to hear about the fine horses that were raised in the town where her grandparents had grown up. The town was located in the center of Ireland, famous for its racehorses and show jumpers. Mary had always loved horses, so for her these stories were always the most interesting. Her grandmother told her about a horse named Steam Roller who had won the Irish Derby three years in a row, something no other horse had ever done before.

Whenever their grandparents started talking about their homeland, the children would draw close. They would sit on the floor, or draw chairs up to be nearby. And as the stories were told, Andrew and Mary would smile at each other and dream of the day they would be able to travel to Ireland and explore the place for themselves.