



A Tale Told by an Idiot

N. C. C. McGowan

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In this quasi-French farce masquerading as a novel, we meet Courtney Farquhar Tremayne, one hundred years young in the year 2000 and writing his memoirs about his ten odd (and you can believe that they were exceedingly odd) years touring with a second-rate vaudeville troupe (from approximately 1926 to 1936). Meet all of the interesting characters he knew from that magical medium now long departed. There are Bud and Boz, a dog act (Bud is the trainer and Boz the dogs, although it was said that some were loathe to tell the difference). Then, there is one of the strangest acts ever to be seen on the vaudeville state, Nick Knack Paddywack and his Knockabout Kids, a family acrobatic and comedy act. Meet Malachi and Alewyn Malarkey, Ireland's version of George Burns and Gracie Allen. Also on board is Charles "Mammy" Kaufman, a blackface minstrel singer (a type of act no longer seen on any stage) whose not-so-secret secret is that he is, contrary to the convention of the day for these "mammy" singers, actually black. There, there is Kelfer Milius, the pompous "star" actor of the show. And, lastly, there is the beautiful and alluring (to Courtney, anyway) Prudence Bernadette, the show's "star" actress. Follow them and all of these other vaudeville misfits on their ten-year excursion throughout countless Midwestern cow towns and backwater hamlets, where they ply their trade and, more often than not, find themselves in sometimes precarious, yet always comic, circumstances beyond their control.

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