

The House of the Secret

its sinister aspect, yet never guessing at the dreadful secret behind its barred lower-storey windows.

Godfrey Barron and his Maeve made Chapel blossom like the rose. They had not very much occasion for a town-house, so they spent their wealth and their love on the old house that had belonged to the O'Neills for many generations, in which Henrietta O'Neill had been young and glad, and had suffered greatly and died. Lying amid its rose-gardens and orchards, Nature and art alike contributing to make it beautiful, the great square house with the wings, revealing itself through an opening in the woodlands, is one of the most striking objects to the traveller by train between Dublin and Galway as he rushes through the bog at its wildest part. Beyond the house, amid its gardens and woods, stretch great golden tracts of cornfields, dappled with the emerald of rich pastures and the grey-green of meadows. Chapel has begun to draw to itself riches from the bog, acres of reclaimed land, fertile beyond the stable land, worth its weight in gold, say the conquerors of the bog.

Many a one has cause to bless the prosperity of the Barrons, because the poor neighbours are not forgotten in it, but the labourer shares in his master's well-being. And as Maeve Barron has said, pointing to Godfrey's sword unsheathed for many a day, was it not at least as glorious a thing and of immeasurably greater worth to humanity to conquer with the ploughshare and make dry land fruitful where quaking land had been?

A day may come when in the reclamation of the bog a dead man may be found who wandered into the bog in a night of great storm and was dragged down against all his efforts to save himself by the weight of the gold