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THE LOVE STORY OF ALISON BARNARD

BY KATHARINE TYNAN

(Author of "The Handsome Strangers," &c.)

CHAPTER XXI.—Continued.

Notwithstanding Mrs. Lang's assurances, someone, however, did see Billy, and that a rather important person, to wit the Earl of Downe, who by a happy chance was her fellow-passenger from Dublin and was able to rescue her from a very awkward position. He had noticed at a junction where he had alighted to get refreshments, an unusually tall young girl, with large violet eyes, milky skin and softly curling hair making desperate efforts to secure a cup of tea for herself at a buffet where an inadequate number of barmaids were trying to supply the wants of a jostling crowd of travellers with ten minutes' time for refreshments.

Despite Billy's commanding height she was quite unable to get attended to. She was wearing a horrible waterproof of the pre-historic period, and her sailor hat was shabby and out of season. As he stood helplessly just outside the throng Lord Downe noticed that the gloves clasped upon a tiny reticule were darned at the finger-tips. He had heard her ask in a voice that hardly reached the nearest ears for "Some tea, please," and had watched her for a second caught into the crowd before she disengaged herself.

He went to her side quickly. "If you will sit down here," he said, indicating a spotty marble-topped table with a chair by it, "I will get you your tea."

She looked at him with shy gratitude and did as he told her. When he brought the tea and some thick slices of bread and butter, she took out a shabby little purse and with trembling fingers extracted a coin to pay for it. Downe knew better than to refuse the money.

"Papa told me not to leave the train," she said, lifting her eyes to him for a second; "but I was so hungry; I left Kilbeggan so early and had hardly any breakfast." "You have eight minutes still for your tea," said Lord Downe, lifting his hat as he turned to go.

He kept his eye on the refreshment room door. Presently the bell clanged, and a mob of people came rushing out, amongst them, tossed to and fro as some slender thing in the waves of the sea, the young girl he had befriended.

He saw her carried forward by the rush of the crowd. Presently she came back looking more piteous than ever, hurrying along breathlessly, peering into carriage windows as she passed. She had an air of wringing her hands.

Downe, who was nothing if not chivalrous, was out of his carriage in an instant. "I can't find my carriage," she said with the helplessness of a child. "And the guard is waving his flag. There is no help for it. You must come in here and I shall help you to find your carriage at the next stopping place."

As he handed her in the train began to throb with movement. He jumped in after her, and a running porter slammed the door.

"Oh," she said, in a quaking voice. "This is first-class, and I have only a third-class ticket. What am I to do if an inspector comes?" Lord Downe smiled reassuringly.

"If one should come, you can leave that quite safely to me," he said. "And I left a puppy and a kitten in the charge of a kind woman in the other carriage. They will think I have deserted them."

"They won't think about it before you regain them," he said consolingly. It spoke volumes for the young fellow's standard of honorable conduct that for nearly the rest of the journey he let Billy alone having provided her with a bundle of magazines and papers and a very thrilling mystery novel of the type which he himself particularly affected.

Nearly for at a certain point outside the next stopping-place, the unexpected happened and an inspector entered the carriage. He looked at Lord Downe's ticket.

"This lady," began Lord Downe—"The inspector looked at the little corner of blue ticket which Billy was extending to him with a shaking hand. It was a morose person and did not look beyond the hand and the ticket."

"Third-class," he said. "There is an excess to pay of—"

He mentioned ten times the amount in Billy's little purse. "There is a penalty of five pounds attaching," he said. "If fancy you've travelled in this way before, I don't think I ought to overlook it. The Company—"

"The lady lost her carriage at the Junction where she had alighted for refreshments," put in Lord Downe. "At the last moment, seeing she was about to be left behind, I made her get into this carriage. Here is my card. She ought not to pay any excess, and I am sure she has never travelled before."

The man looked at the card. "If your lordship will answer for the lady," he said with an access of civility.

of travelling like that when I've never left home before." "Indeed then, he must be a great omnibus to say it or think it," said the old lady. "Anyone could see you're no traveller. And when I thought you were lost I took blame to myself that I hadn't gone along with you, only that since I grew so stout it takes three or four porters to help me in, so I was afraid I'd be more of a hindrance than a help. As for charging you they'd never do such a thing!"

"I don't suppose I shall ever see him again," said Billy in her hidden heart as she sat fondling the terrier and the kitten. "I wonder who she is and where she is going to," said Lord Downe on his part; and then wondered again why he had had that temptation to travel in Billy's carriage seeing that all his heart and thoughts were given to Alison.

CHAPTER XXII.

Dark Rosaleen.

Sir Gerard had arrived in time for Christmas Day, when the Castle Barnard people migrated to Killymore for the proverbial roast turkey and plum pudding dinner, and afterwards sat about the fire and sang carols and played charades and round games suitable to the season.

Some of the games introduced by Lady Rose were just a little bit rowdy. One had to be very unself-conscious and very young to enjoy them, although to be sure Mr. Peter and Mr. John Bosanquet joined in them in the heartiest manner. It was true that Lady Rose's peals of laughter were apt to be contagious and to make people forget their shyness in playing at such tomboyish games.

Alison had not joined. Somehow even Lady Rose did not expect Alison to join, and invited her apparently as a matter of form.

"It would be a thousand pities," she said, "to get candle-grease on that frock."

They were playing at a game in which skillful manipulation of a lighted candle was necessary in order to escape a shower of wax. And Alison was looking very beautiful in a gown of heliotrope velvet, with old lace and fur for trimming.

When the merriment was at its height Sir Gerard came and stood by Alison. "Come and talk to me," he said. "I shall have only a few days; and I have some months of arrears to make up."

He withdrew her a little from the others into a deep window embrasure, whither a jealous glance from a pair of blue eyes followed them.

"I wish I could have come sooner," he said, standing beside her and drawing back a linen casement curtain to let the moon look through. The dark ground outside was lightly powdered with snow and the stars were frosty.

"You could not get away," Alison said, looking up at him from the window seat. "I am so glad you were able to come now. Christmas would not have been Christmas without you."

"How fair, how pure, how frank she was!" he thought, looking down at her face which the moonlight silvered, lighting mysterious radiance in the depths of her eyes. What a woman to have won for a friend!

"I am less and less my own man," he said. "Till the Bill passes I cannot breathe freely. There is still only to ensure that the Bill shall pass but there is to prepare our people for the freedom the Bill will bring. What with my own work, and the additional work which will come upon my hands will be full."

"You will not let it break you down?" Her voice was full of solicitude, and it was exquisite to him. He who had had no love-passages with women, who had neither sister nor aunt nor cousin to make much of him, felt the comfort of her thought for him like a tangible warmth.

"It will not break me down," he said joyfully. "You know I am a glutton for work! Nothing would break me down except failure, and even that I should recover from in time, I trust."

"There is no failure for such as you," she said, proudly. "No ultimate failure. But who is to say that there will not be reverses?" "I could bear them—with you to help me, Alison."

She put out her hand and he held it for an instant in a warm clasp. "Are you going to marry Downe, Alison?" he asked, so suddenly that she started.

"My young cousin? Nothing could be further from my thoughts." "Will it ever be nearest?" "Never."

A shade of relief came into his voice. "He is in love with you, poor boy," he said. "He ought not to have lifted his eyes so high."

"He is only a boy. A dear boy, and I am proud of him. He will go over it. I doubt that real love is ever given without return."

"Ah! I have no knowledge of such things." His voice had a shade of envy. "Mine is an exacting service. Dark Rosaleen takes all from her children, even although she gives them failure and death in return."

"You are full of talk of failure to-night," she said. "Yet I follow you so far that I believe none has ever failed in her cause, nor in any great cause for the matter of that. It is only the coward, the supine, the indifferent that fail."

The silver moonlight was on her hair, and the aureole that was gold by day was of white light. In her shadowed face the moonlight eyes showed pale altar-fires.

"You are a noble woman, Alison," he said. "I wish I might give myself to work as you do," she answered.

"Why that is impossible, I'm afraid, for a woman. You help me loyally, and the thought of you Godspeeds me wherever I go."

He looked at her in silence for an instant. Then a wave of tender compunction took him. "I am an exacting fellow," he said. "I ask too much of you, Alison. One day you will shut that door in my face when some man who is worthy comes along and claims all you have to give."

"He could not claim that," she answered. "And you will never find any door of mine shut in your face."

"Al" well, I am glad it is not Downe. I confess the lad annoys me since he watches and follows you, though he is a good lad, I have no doubt. You must promise me, Alison, that if such a thing should come about you will prepare me for it. It would be cruel to spring a lover on me."

"I promise readily," she answered. "I see no immediate necessity, I must say. As for Downe, I must find him a sweetheart worthy of him."

"Tell me now," he went on, with another thought. "What was the clue about Castle Barnard and the lost heirs? You never told me more than that you had come upon a clue."

"It was broken off short in my hand," she told him of the children's gardens at the Carmelites, and the woman's grave under the ivied wall, where scarlet japonica was growing now about the iron cross.

"Sister Clare could tell me nothing," she said. "Nothing except that the lady had died there and the two little boys had been taken away shortly afterwards by relatives. There is nothing in the convent archives. Being a novice at the time they had told her nothing."

"So it has broken off where it began," he said thoughtfully, "and the end of the clue we hold is sixty years old. I should have no hope of re-uniting it myself, Alison."

"The children must have been taken out of the country, I suppose," she said. "The Robert Barnard would have found them. It was long before he gave up the search."

"It had slackened doubtless before the lady died. How strange that she should have breathed the same air with him while he searched for her, and that he should never have thought of the Convent!"

"Doubtless at the time he knew nothing of the Convent. They were hurried away till the Emancipation Act gave them leave to come out and breathe. His second wife had reason to thank that seclusion."

"I should give up the search, Alison. Be happy with Castle Barnard!"

"Somehow it fails to make me happy. Since I have come upon the clue I am restless. Almost for the first time I realize that my poor grandfather was led on to that inquiry by his love for the house, at least that has come into the forefront of my mind. It has given me an uneasy feeling about it. I should be happier if I could give it up, and retire to a cottage of my own."

"I cannot imagine you in a cottage. Why, your hair would brush the low eaves; there would not be room for your train. Your white hands are the hands of a great lady."

"I live up to Castle Barnard," she said with a little sigh, looking at her hands. "And presently you will have it to yourself once more, since Tessa is going to leave you. Why shouldn't they have a long courtship? They are too young to marry."

"The time is her father's idea. I begin to understand and respect George Barnard. Not but what I always liked him; but now my heart calls cousins with him."

"Because he thinks Tessa too young?" "Because he suffers from jealousy of the youth who has come to take her from him, and puts it aside for her sake."

"I can understand the feeling—the jealousy, I mean. If I had a daughter I should want to take my bow and arrow and shoot at the youngster who wanted to carry her off from me. It is a feeling that has not been commemorated, yet I dare say it is nearly as common as the jealousy of women about their sons."

"I did not suppose that you thought of such things," she said, wondering. "My life has had room for many thoughts. It has been a lonely life. I can hardly remember the time that I have not been thinking."

"If I do marry," said Alison, suddenly, "the reversion of Castle Barnard will go to Tessa."

"Surely not; they know their friend at last." "I have grown dependent on their good will. In the old struggling days I had no idea of what it was to have their faith; of what more than human sweetness there is in having a great crowd gazing at you as though you were the sun in all their skies. Perhaps praise has demoralized me as blame would never have done."

"You have been overtaxing yourself; that is all. If the blame were to come you would bear it." "With you to bind up my wounds." "Glorious wounds!"

"Perhaps I should never have had the heart in the old days, but for you." "You had a higher inspiration than I could supply."

"Dark Rosaleen's revenge," he said smilingly. "The Molyneux made war upon her. The foster-mother is dearer than the mother."

"There was a movement of breaking-up in the group about the fire. "Good-night, Alison," he said, and lifted her hand to his lips while they were yet in the shadow of the window.

"You will not stay in the smoke-room?" she said with the solicitude that was sweet to him. "You will go to bed and sleep?" "I shall go to bed and sleep," he answered. "The smoke-room will not claim me for long."

"At home in your emerald bowers From morning's dawn to even flow, My pray for me, my flower or flower."

My dark Rosaleen, My own Rosaleen, You'll pray for me through daylight hours, My virgin saint, my flower of flowers, My dark Rosaleen."

The words floated in his half-waking thoughts and were confused with thoughts of Alison. (To be Continued.)

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Archbishop Ryan's Birthplace A Thurlow correspondent of The Dublin Freeman's Journal goes into particulars concerning the birth-place of Archbishop Ryan, of Philadelphia, to correct a former presentation of the matter. He says: The Archbishop's joke that "his mother wasn't at home when he was born" arose out of the circumstance that she had come to Thurles from her home in Cloneyharp, near Cashel, to visit her father, Mr. Twohy, and that during that visit young Ryan was born. That Thurlow, "with its peaceful convents and long-loved homes," was the Archbishop's early environment is beyond all doubt. He pointed out to the late scholarly and saintly Brother Hyland the desk in the Thurlow Christian Brothers' Schools in which he sat as a boy, and he is as well known and remembered by contemporaries and the old inhabitants of Thurles as if he were never out of the town.

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