

NORAH CLARY'S WISE THOUGHT.

By Mrs S. C. Hall, Author of "Sketches of Irish Character."

"We may as well give it up, Morris Donovan; look, 'twould be as easy to twist the top off the great Hill of Howth, as make father and mother agree about any one thing. They've been playing the rule of contrary these twenty years; and it's not likely they'll take a turn now."

"It's mighty hard, so it is," replied handsome Morris, "that married people can't draw together. Norah, darlint! that would not be the way with us. Sure, it's *one* we'd be in heart and sowl, and an example of love and—"

"Folly," interrupted the maiden, laughing. "Morris, Morris, we've quarrelled a score o' times already; and, to my thinking, a bit of a breeze makes life all the pleasanter. Shall I talk about the merry jig I danced with Phil Kennely, or repeat what Mark Doolen said of me to Mary Grey?—eh, Morris?"

The long black lashes of Norah Clary's bright brown eyes almost touched her low, but delicately pencilled brows, as she looked archly up at her lover; her lip curled with a half-playful, half-malicious smile; but the glance was soon withdrawn, and the maiden's cheek glowed with a deep and eloquent blush, when the young man passed his arm round her waist, and, pushing the clustering curls from her forehead, gazed upon her with a loving but mournful look.

"Leave joking, now, Norry; God only knows how I love you," he said, in a voice deep and broken by emotion. "I'm ye'r equal, as far as money goes, and no young farmer in the country can tell a better stock to his share than mine; yet I don't pretend to deserve *you*, for all that; only, I can't help saying, that when we love each other, (now, don't go to contradict me, Norry, because ye've as good as owned it over and over again,) and ye'r father agreeable, and all, to think that ye'r moiher, just out of *divilment*, should be putting betwixt us, for no reason upon earth, only to 'spite' her lawful husband, is what sets me mad entirely, and shows her to be a good-for—"

"Stop, Mister Morris," exclaimed Norah, laying her hand upon his mouth, so as effectually to prevent a sound escaping; "it's *my* mother ye'r talking of, and it would be ill-blood, as well as ill-bred, to hear a word said against an own parent. Is that the pattern of ye'r manners, sir, or did ye ever hear me turn my tongue against one belonging to you?"

"I ax ye'r pardon, my own Norah," he replied meekly, as in duty bound; "for the sake o' the lamb, we spare the sheep. Why not; and I'm not going to gainsay—but ye'r mother—"

"The least said's the soonest mended!" again interrupted the impatient girl. "Good even, Morris, and God bless ye; they'll be after missing me within, and it's little mother thinks where I am."

"Norah, 'bove all the girls at wake or pattern, I've been true to you. We have grown together, and, since ye were the height of a rose-bush, ye have been dearer to

me than any thing else on earth. Do, Norah, for the sake of our young hearts' love, do think if there's no way to win ye'r mother over. If ye'd take me without her leave, sure it's nothing I'd care for the loss o' thousands, let alone what ye've got. Dearest Norah, think, since you'll do nothing without her consent, do think—for once be serious, and don't laugh."

It is a fact, equally known and credited in the good barony of Bargy, that Morris Donovan really possessed an honest, sincere, and affectionate heart,—brave as a lion, and gentle as a dove. He was, moreover, the priest's nephew,—understood Latin as well as the priest himself; and, better even than that, he was the Beau, the Magnus Apollo of the parish;—a fine, noble-looking fellow, that all the girls (from the housekeeper's lovely English niece at Lord Gort's, down to a little deaf Bess Mortican, the lame dress-maker) were regularly and desperately in love with;—still, I must confess, (perfection certainly was never found in *man*.) Morris was at times a little—the least bit in the world—stupid; not exactly stupid either, but slow of invention,—would *fight* his way out of a thousand scrapes, but could never get *peaceably* out of one. No wonder then, that, where fighting was out of the question, he was puzzled, and looked to the ready wit of the merry Norah for assistance. It was not very extraordinary that he loved the fairy creature—the sweetest, gayest of all Irish girls;—light of heart, light of foot, light of eye,—now weeping like a child over a dead chicken or a plundered nest, then dancing on the top of a hay-rick to the music of her own cheering voice;—now coaxing her termagant mother, and anon comforting her hen-pecked father. Do not let my respected readers imagine that Mr and Mrs Clary were contemptible Irish *bog-trotters*, with only a plot of *pratees*, a pig, and a one-roomed cabin. No such thing; they rented an hundred good acres of bright meadowland, and their comfortable, though somewhat slovenly farm-yard, told of abundance and to spare. Norah was their only child; and had it not been for the most ungentle temperament of Mistress Clary they would have been the happiest as well as the richest family in the district.

"I am not going to laugh, Morris," replied the little maid at last, after a very long pause; "I've got a wise thought in my head for once. His reverence your uncle, you say, spoke to father—to speak to mother about it? I wonder (and he a priest) that he had'n't more sense. Sure mother was the man;—but I've got a wise thought—Good night, dear Morris; good night."

The lass sprang lightly over the fence into her own garden, leaving her lover *perdu* at the other side, without possessing an idea of what her "Wise Thought" might be.—When she entered the kitchen, matters were going on as usual—her mother bustling in glorious style, and as cross (her husband muttered) "as a bag of weazles."

"Ye'r a pair of lazy hussies!" she exclaimed to two fat, red-armed, stockingless handmaids; "d'ye think I can keep ye in idleness? Ten cuts to the dozen!—why that wouldn't keep ye in *pratees*, let alone salt—and such illigint flax too! Barney

Leary, ye dirty ne'er-do-good, can ye find no better employment this blessed night than kicking the turf-ashes in the cat's face? Oh! ye'll be *mate* for the ravens yet, that's one comfort! "Jack Clary," addressing herself to her husband, who sat quietly in the chimney corner smoking his *doodeen*, "it's well ye've got a wife that knows what's what! God help me, I've little good of a husband, *barring* the name! Are you sure Black Nell's in the stable?" (The spouse nodded.) "The cow and the calf, had they fresh straw?" (Another nod.) "Bad cess to ye, man alive, can't ye use ye'r tongue, and answer a civil question!" continued the lady.

"My dear," he replied, "sure one like you has enough talk for ten."

This very just observation was, like most truths, so disagreeable, that a severe storm would have followed, had not Norah stepped up to her father, and whispered in his ear, "I don't think the stable-door *is* fastened."—Mrs Clary caught the sound, and in no gentle terms ordered her husband to attend to the comforts of Black Nell. "I'll go with father myself and see," said Norah. "That's like my own child, always careful," observed the mother, as father and daughter closed the door.

"Dear father," began Norah, "it isn't altogether about the stable I want ye—but—but—the priest said something to ye to-day about—Morris Donovan."

"Yes, darling, and about yourself, my sweet Norry."

"Did ye speak to mother about it?"

"No, darling, she's been so cross all day. Sure, I go through a dale for pace and quietness. If I were like other men, and got drunk and wasted, it might be in rason—but that's neither here nor there. As to Morris, she was very fond of the boy 'till she found that *I* liked him; and then, my jewel, she turned like sour milk all in a minute—I'm afraid even the priest 'ill get no good of her."

"Father, dear father," said Norah, "Suppose ye were to say nothing about it, good or bad, and just pretend to take a sudden dislike to Morris, and let the priest speak to her himself, she'd come round."

"Out of opposition to me, eh?"

"Yes."

"And let her gain the day, then?—that would be cowardly," replied the farmer, drawing himself up—"No, I won't."

"Father, dear, you don't understand," said the cunning lass. "Sure, ye're for Morris; and when we are—that is, if—I mean—suppose—father, you know what I mean," she continued, and luckily the deepening twilight concealed her blushes—"if that took place, it's *you* that would have ye'r own way."

"True for ye, Norry my girl, true for ye; I never thought of that before!" And, pleased with the idea of tricking his wife, the old man fairly capered for joy. "But stay a while—stay, asy," he recommenced; "how am I to manage? Sure, the priest himself will be here to-morrow morning early, nad he's out upon a station now; so there's no speaking with him;—he's no way quick