

anxious to hear it from your own lips, and to tell you a great secret!"

"A secret, Cressy!"

"We never will come to live in the Castle," said Cressy, with an almost comical air of mystery about her pretty face.

"How is that, Cressy! It will be your own."

"No: we'll never enter it. I have it planned with nurse; but don't breathe a word of it, for fear he would hear it. She and I are to see ghosts there, and I'll tell papa I would die of fright if I ever entered it. Isn't it grand?" and she clapped her hands with childish glee.

"I'm afraid your papa won't think so," said Gerald with a smile. "But he would be fearfully angry if he knew of this visit of yours. Cressy, it is hard for me to say it to you, but it would be wicked of me if I did not say it—we must not meet any more."

"Oh! Gerald!" and the giddy child, plunged anew in grief, raised her tearful face half appealingly.

Gerald saw how deeply she was affected, and determined all the more that his duty lay in saving her from the consequences of her innocent affection.

"Do not grieve about it, Cressy," he continued, gently but firmly. "In any case I would be leaving this place in a few days—perhaps for ever. You may be a little lonely at first; but you will be rich, and beautiful, and good, and you will have crowds coming to play with you and love you. Believe me, Cressy you will not be long forgetting me."

"Oh! Gerald, I will never, never forget you!" cried the sobbing girl.

Never! Did woman ever estimate the meaning of that word?

It was with difficulty Gerald persuaded her against returning home by herself. To the blank amazement of the servants, he had a horse put to a light carriage, and jumped in himself after the cloaked and muffled stranger.

"The Lord be praised! 'tis a queer night altogether," remarked the shuddering groom, as he rejoined the frightened circle round the fire.

In their drive through the blinding storm Gerald O'Dwyer had time to appreciate the perils which the timid creature at his side overcame in order to see him. He wondered now when every roar of the tempest made her cling to his side, how she had ever dared its worst fury by herself. And the wonder strengthened his satisfaction in thinking he was not too late to check an affection that might

bring a multitude of miseries, if suffered to even deepen a little longer.

Leaving the carriage on the road, Gerald and Cressy stole noiselessly through a copse that led up to Ashenfield garden-gate. Cressy had provided herself with a key, with which she unlocked this, and then the pair traversed the garden cautiously to its furthest end, on which Cressy's bedroom opened.

Just as they reached it, the barking of a large mastiff in the yard filled them both with consternation.

"Go, dear Gerald, go; quick," she whispered in a terrified tone.

"Good-bye, dear Cressy: good-bye," and their lips met passionately in a parting embrace.

Ashenfield House was built in the style of French villas, only one story high. So that Cressy had little trouble in clambering up to her own window, which was but a few feet from the ground, and which she had, of course, left open.

Once safe within, and all the sustaining excitement over, the poor little lover threw herself on her pretty white bed, and cried till she could cry no longer, and, when that period came, did what little lovers sometimes will do—fell sound asleep until morning.

CHAPTER XI.

FATHER JOHN.

O'Dwyer Gary was buried as for many generations had been buried his smouldering predecessors in the old vault at Kileary—ushered into their awful company with a last flourish of earthly grandeur's trumpet. His funeral was the funeral of more than his poor clay. It was as if all the historic glory of his house—all the heritage of centuries—were dead with him, and the mourners came to see the last of its vanishing lustre.

Gerald O'Dwyer never before recognized so acutely the charm which primitive generosity had for his father—the fascination which led him gaily to his ruin—as when his eye traversed the huge retinue who carried their allegiance to him to the grave. He could fancy he noted in every stricken face, in the silence even as in the murmurs of men and the wails of women, the hieroglyphs of one sacred tongue which they all spoke—which issuing from pure heart-regions where no sound of a selfish world's war is heard, discoursed of sympathy and chivalry that might be bliss in heaven. There was that proud elevation of heart over brain—of impulse above calculation—which has been a re-