

PALMS

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CHAPTER XV.—CONTINUED. NEMESIUS MEETS POPE STEPHEN—VALERIAN'S DIABOLICAL INGENUITY, AND HOW HE WAS RAFFLED.

The miracle opened the way—made straight the path for grace to enter the mind of Nemesius, who received the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, nothing doubting; and, kneeling at the feet of the Pontiff, he asked for instruction in the Christian faith, and then for Baptism, which, it may be stated here, he received a few days after, in the same place.

The child saw the crucifix, and the sweet face of *Advocata nostra*; she knew them not, but both were idly impressed upon her mind, and were not strangers to her when, a little later, she heard the wonderful story of Redemption. Glints of sunshine through the ivy that mantled the windows filled her with innocent delight, and the thought of all the beautiful things she was to behold so transported her heart that she ran and knelt at the feet of the Pontiff, exclaiming, with sweet simplicity:

"Oh! sir, will you thank Him for me Who has given me sight? But tell me His name, that I too may thank Him in my thoughts every moment of my life."

"I will, my sweet child. Jesus Christ is the name of Him Who by His divine power removed thy blindness; keep His name in thy heart, and thank Him and love Him without ceasing. Thou art now His little neophyte; by and by thou wilt know Him, and the Father Who sent Him. He has given thee a new name in Baptism, by which He will know thee among His little ones—the name of Lucilla, (Little Light) meaning light."

The words of the holy Pontiff impressed themselves indelibly upon the little Claudia, especially the Holy Name of Jesus, which became at once a glowing spark in the very centre of her innocent heart. It seemed, too, altogether fitting that with the new life so wonderfully opened upon her she should have a new name, and that it should signify light—the light that had dispelled the darkness.

Claudia wondered what had become of the One in shining raiment, who had touched her eyes when the baptismal water was poured on her head, at the moment she received her sight; but she did not ask; she could comprehend nothing yet, except that she had been blind all her life and could now see, and that her heart was glowing with love towards Him Whose name was enshrined therein. Raising her eyes, sparkling with joy, she gazed on the Pontiff's saintly face, and said, with simple trust:

"Oh! sir, I would thank thee for opening my blind eyes if I know how; but tell me who thou art, and thy name, that I may kneel to in my heart with the Holy Name thou hast taught me."

"I am Stephen, a priest of the Living God, my child," he replied, laying his hand on her head; "and I now bless thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Go in peace; faith has been given thee; knowledge will presently follow, with the fulfiling of heavenly gifts."

Obedient a swift impulse, she knelt at his feet, kissed his hand, and laid her cheek for an instant upon it; he raised her gently, and she stood, happy to wait, near him.

"Thou wilt soon," he said to Nemesius, as he touched his gleaming corselet, "put on the armor of Christ for the overthrow of idolatry, and the establishment of His kingdom upon earth." The Pontiff spoke with emotion, for the winning of this noble soul to God filled him with unspeakable joy. "I would not delay thy Baptism. On the morrow, when the cypriote shows the hour of noon, seek me here, and we will confer together before the rite. The wife of Tertullus will guide this little lamb into the green pastures of the one true Fold, of which Christ is the Shepherd. Now go in peace, giving thanks to the Almighty Father of all, for the grace of faith."

On their way home, the blue skies, the golden sunlight, the green, flowery stretches of the landscape, over which cloud-shadows were skimming; the beautiful mountains, trees, flowers, butterflies, men and animals—all seen now for the first time—filled the child's mind with wonder and inexpressible delight.

"Oh! but for Him Whose name is in my heart I had never seen all this of thee, my father!" she said, her voice tremulous with excess of happiness. "Oh! how I love Him!—but tell me, who is God?"

"He is the Creator of all things—the heavens, the earth, and all who live and abide in Him there is none other. He is the one, holy, Supreme Being, while the gods we have worshipped are false deities, who delude men to their destruction. Henceforth, my child, we will adore and love and serve the one Supreme God, by Whose power thy blindness has been removed, and the darkness of my understanding enlightened," he answered with emotion, she listening, with her eyes fixed on the face of the saintly Pontiff, believing, yet not comprehending what his words conveyed.

When they reached the villa and Nemesius drew rein in front of the portico, Zilla was waiting under the trees to receive her blind charge, to lead her in, watchful of every step, and to perform for her all those services of attention which her faithful heart was ever ready to bestow—to be eyes and hands for her at every turn, and anticipate every want. But when she saw her spring unaided from the chariot, and come running to meet her, the woman stopped as if spellbound; while the child, radiant with happiness, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks glowing, threw herself into her arms, exclaiming:

"Oh! Zilla—my good mother! I can see! I can see! Let me look into thy dear face."

"See? Have the gods at last opened thy eyes, my child?" said Zilla, who grew instantly white, and was almost unable to speak, the suddenness of the news was so overwhelming. "The gods? No! Listen, my Zilla! There are no gods. Hast thou ever heard of Him called the *Christus*? He gave me my sight in an instant; my blindness is gone, and, oh! I can see! Is it not good news?" cried the child, her voice ringing with gladness.

But Zilla could not reply; she staggered from Claudia's embrace, and stood as if turned to stone, her countenance wearing an expression of pain and horror. All that she had longed and prayed for had come at last; the blind eyes of the only being she loved in the world had sight given them—but how? Rather had she remained blind all her days than to have her sight on such conditions! To be a Christian—that was what it all meant! And now—now—when it was death to deny the gods!

Zilla's first impulse was to go away, and be alone to look this terrible misfortune in the face; she tried to move, but her trembling limbs refused to bear her, and she would have fallen to the earth, had not one of the female slaves, who was passing at the moment on some domestic errand, sprang forward, and caught her in her strong arms. She was not unconscious, but dazed, prostrated, and bewildered, like one in a nightmare.

Frightened, Claudia ran in, through the atrium—she did not know where—in search of someone who would get her wine for Zilla; and, in a well-lighted corridor, she almost ran against Synphronius; startled, she stopped and gazed steadily in his eyes. It was an old, wrinkled face, with a fringe of white hair and beard around it; his great black eyes protruded, his nose was so large that it gave a grotesque character to his countenance, and his complexion was like parchment. He stood a moment aghast.

"What has happened, and how is it that thou art running about all alone, my little lady?" he gasped.

"Now I know thee by thy voice," she said, not yet recovered from her astonishment at so strange-looking an apparition: "thou art Synphronius, the steward. I am no longer blind, and I was looking for thee to get some wine for Zilla, who is ill."

"Not blind? When—thou wert blind a few hours ago, my little lady!" he ejaculated.

"I was, but now I see," she sweetly answered. The old steward felt as if the leathern pipe of one of the aqueducts had been suddenly turned down his back; for the news, although so joyful, gave him a shock that staggered him; and, not knowing what to say, he leaned against the wall, and made the Sign of the Cross.

The child had seen the Pontiff Stephen make that sign when he pronounced the Holy Names; he had made it on her forehead, and again when he blessed her; and she was conscious it was the sign of Him Whom her heart knew and loved.

"It was He Who made me see—the *Christus*," she said sweetly. "Oh! it is the color of some one here who knows Him!"

"I am His unworthy servant," said the old man, with quivering voice; "but I cannot speak for joy; I can only lift up my hands, and give thanks to Him Who has brought salvation to this house. Rest here, dear little lady, while I get wine for Zilla."

"I will come with thee," she said, taking his trembling hand as he turned to go to the wine-closet; "and presently, when Zilla is better, other good tidings await thee. Give me the wine; I will run back with it."

He gave her a flask of rich red wine and a crystal cup, then stood watching her in speechless emotion as she ran swiftly down the corridor. "Truly, truly," he at last whispered, bowing his head and crossing his hands reverently upon his breast, "the Lord God is a mighty God, and merciful in His ways."

When Claudia—as we will still call her—reached the atrium, she saw her father leading Zilla in, her face as white as a snowdrift, her eyes half closed, and her steps lagging and uncertain; he led her to a couch, and gave her the wine; she felt the child's soft lips upon her hands, her caressing arms about her neck, and heard the loving accents of her voice, which had always been as sweetest music to her ears. She opened her eyes and gazed for an instant into those so lately blind, now full of life and intelligence, shadowed by a half-wondering look of distress; then the woman whispered: "Leave me a little while, dear child, until I am better."

"It is her voice—but can it be Zilla? I thought she would be glad—so glad when she heard I could see!" she mused, as, obedient to a look from her father, she left them, and wandered out under the trees, where, with wonder sweetened and brightened by faith, she gazed with delight on the beautiful things of nature.

The sweet child felt, without formulating it, how good it was that sight and knowledge should have come together, and how much less complete one would have been without the other. The thought of Zilla troubled her; it was all so different from what she had expected; it was the first drop of bitterness in her brimful cup of happiness, and disturbed her, until she whispered the Holy Name that was enshrined in her heart—the Name which so uttered is an appeal for help, which brings swift response, in strength to bear it not to heal. Her Christian life was only a few hours old; the mysteries of divine grace were yet unopened to her; but, although given in measure proportionate to her littleness, in their effects they were the same in kind as in those further advanced in supernatural knowledge.

When Zilla recovered somewhat, heathen-like, she was ashamed of her weakness, and by a strong effort of her will arose to leave the presence of Nemesius; but he detained her by requesting her to resume her seat; he

wished her to learn from his own lips the wonderful things that had taken place that day, and to understand that he and the child were no longer worshippers of the gods, but Christians.

The woman knew him too well to indulge the faintest hope of his faltering in the fatal course he had adopted, and his language was too lucid and coherent to afford a doubt of his sanity. She listened in silence, the iron entering deeper into her soul with every word he uttered, while the consequences of his apostasy gathered in frightful array before her. It was terrible; but Zilla was a woman whose maternal instincts had been fostered into unusual tenderness by the helplessness of the charge which, under peculiarly sad circumstances, had devolved upon her, and she presently found how distressed her love was, and how it would at last triumph over herself. And, now that he had told her all, Nemesius added:

"It will be difficult, I fear, for thee to remain longer with us; for thou art still a worshipper of the *dæmons* known as gods; for thy own happiness, then, it may be better for thee to return to the *thessalia*, before the storm breaks. Thou shalt be provided with ample means and a safe guide—may, do not decide too hastily. Later, I may not have power to serve thee, for we both know that to become a Christian means death."

"I care not for death, but for her, my child, I would plunge this stiletto into my heart; and, as I have said, I will never leave her."—She had snatched the gleaming, keen-edged thing from her hair, which fell in a dark, waving mass nearly to her feet.

"I know of no other way than the one I was born to—no other belief; but gods or no gods, I will never be faithless to the promise I made to the dying," she said, in hard, bitter tones. "It is such the choice, thy idolatrous belief must be kept in thine own heart, nor ever referred to in her hearing. It would be better to part, unless thou wilt open thy mind to receive the Truth—which is the highest good I can wish for thee," replied Nemesius, in his firm, even voice.

"Nemesius! thou who didst worship the gods, and with loyal mind didst punish their enemies with fire and sword! It seems too incredible for belief that thou shouldst all at once abandon the religion of thy virtuous and pious ancestors for a delusion!" she exclaimed.

"I have abandoned a delusion, by the grace of God, for the eternal Truth. My child's blind eyes and the blind eyes of my spirit were opened at the same moment, by the grace and power of God; henceforth we are Christians!" answered the noble soldier.

"But, alas! hast thou considered her?" she wailed; "thy delicate, lovely one, whom no rough wind, whose fate has ever blown, who has been sheltered on my breast and in my arms from every ill my watchful care could avert! Ah, pity her! Is her tender flesh fit for the rack or the teeth of panthers? Ah, gods! what madness! And art thou ready to give up fortune, fame, life?"

"Everything!" was his firm, low-voiced reply, as he turned away and walked out of the atrium, his nature stung in the tenderest spot, but his resolve and faith unshaken.

The woman felt as if the crowning woe of her life had come. She would as soon have expected the sky to fall, as for that to happen which had happened this day. With her head bowed down, her face covered with her hands, her hair fallen like a sombre veil around her, she sat there benumbed, without the power or wish to move, until soft arms stole around her, and the voice most dear to her said, in tones of tender entreaty:

"Wilt thou not raise up thy head, Zilla, and let me look upon thee? Hast thou forgotten that I can now see thee, and does it not make thee glad?" Zilla's hands fell; she raised her face, and tried to smile into the bright, beautiful eyes that scrutinized her countenance, and beheld in its grief-stricken lines, in stern white aspect, a first glimpse of human sorrow; bright, as the child's new eyes, saying: "Speak, that I may know if thou art Zilla!"

Claudia's movement and her sweet words pierced Zilla's heart; her old passionate love for the child asserted itself, strengthened and intensified by a sense of the deadly perils which would befall her, if she were instant about her; and roused with it an impulse, as fierce as that of a lioness when danger threatens her young, to save her from the evil consequences of the insane delusion under which, by the arts of the Christians, she and her father had fallen.

Fondly the old nurse looked into the quivering, saddened face; the glow of her grief softened; tender, familiar words fell from her lips; and when she saw how brightly her darling's eyes beamed upon her, illuminating the child's lovely face with an inexpressible charm, an emotion of joy usurped the tumult of Zilla's grief, and, drawing the golden head to her bosom, she laid her cheek upon it in the old, caressing way, holding her close to her throbbing heart, as if to shield her from the vengeance of fate.

"Now, now do I know it is thou, my own good mother!" exclaimed the happy child, releasing herself, but still holding Zilla's hand. "Let us go to the gardens—go to the old, beautiful places, which I have not yet seen, where I will tell thee of Him Who has given me sight, and Whose name is in my heart; for thou lovest me, and wilt also love Him for being so good to me; wilt thou not?"

Zilla yielded to the sweet constraint of her hand, without speaking; for what could she answer to an appeal so confident? But Claudia did not notice; her innocent heart was in such a divine glow with the new joy which had that day entered it, and her eyes were so ravished by the beauties of nature, over which it seemed to shed a light "not seen of men," that there was no place left for shadows or anxious thought.

As they crossed the beautiful level spaces that lay between the villa and

the gardens,—spaces checked by a thousand flickering golden shadows—Claudia caught sight of her father going in the direction of the stables, and, asking Zilla to wait a moment, she ran towards him; he saw her coming and stopped, watching her approach, his heart full of an indescribable emotion. Oh! how brightly shone the eyes but a few hours ago blind! What a depth of love beamed from them as they met his! He leaned down and kissed her head.

"O, my father!" she said, "hast thou seen Synphronius? No? Go, then, and make glad his heart by telling him all that is in thine; for he too knows and loves Him Who opened my blind eyes."

"My old Synphronius too!" exclaimed Nemesius, while tears filled his eyes. "I will go at once;" and turning, he went back, while the child tripped away to her nurse, catching at the butterflies as they fluttered overhead, or pausing an instant to smell and touch with her dainty fingers some glowing flower beside her path, until her hand was once more in the clasp of Zilla's and their steps turned towards the cascade.

After his interview with the old steward, Nemesius rode out to his camp, where, after attending to military details, and reviewing certain evolutions in some newly adopted tactics, he returned to the villa, to find a messenger from the Emperor awaiting him, with a letter written in his own almost illegible hand, requesting his presence at the palace that evening—a request which, coming from him, meant a command.

Arriving at the palace, Nemesius found the rich and spacious apartments thronged with such of the nobles as the Emperor had invited to his summer home on the Latician coast, or gone to their mountain villas; also military personages, orators, wits and scholars; for Valerian, emperor affected to be a patron of literature and learning. Among the guests were many beautiful women, whose sparkling eyes and rich garments gave brightness and variety to the scene.

On entering he was met by one of the Emperor's pages, who informed him that his imperial master had retired to his cabinet and awaited his presence. It had been some weeks since the handsome commander of the Imperial Legion had shown himself at the palace, and he found his progress impeded by many who, imagining he was there of his own pleasure, thronged around him with friendly greeting and pleasant words.

Gravely courteous, a whispered word of his being on his way to the Emperor, released him from their well-intentioned importunities, and, anticipating no further interruptions, he passed on, looking neither to the right nor the left, until when near the draped entrance through which he was to pass into the anti-room of the imperial obit, he heard a sweet, low voice, meant for his ear only, saying: "Not a word or a look for a friend?" Turning quickly, he confronted Laodice, who, attired in soft, gold-colored Eastern silks, set off by draperies of scarlet and Syrian gauze, spangled with gold, and jewels rare and sparkling, looked dazzlingly beautiful. As the glance of Nemesius rested for a moment on her, the color deepened in her cheeks, and her eyes shone under their long, black fringes with half-veiled splendor.

"My friends forgive my inattention as soon as they hear that the Emperor has sent for me, and that I am on my way to his presence," he replied, in gravely courteous tones; and the Roman gentleman would have passed on without further parley, but, advancing nearer to him, she said:

"Spare me just a moment! I would hear something of thy lovely child, and news of the dear Princess, (Vivia). So near had she come that some of her fringes and gauze drapings had caught and got tangled about the hilt of his sword, which he, intent only on the object for which he was there, did not at first perceive.

"Claudia is well and happy to be at home among her flowers. Fabian is the correspondent of the Princess; but he is hunting somewhere in Umbria, so that I have really heard nothing from her since her departure," he answered, and would have gone on, but discovered his awkward dilemma, and made an effort to disentangle his sword, but, manlike, only tore the flimsy gauze, which seemed to elude his grasp, and made matters worse.

While thus busied, the full of apologies his hand came in contact with her little cool fingers, which, under the pretense of assisting to separate the mischievous tangle, contrived to make it more inextricable. She felt that he had started, and drew back from her touch as if an asp struck him, and, as he turned to look at her, she said: "Why always cold only to me, Nemesius?"

He seemed not to hear her, but, making a step backward, slipped the scabbard from his sword, which remained dangling to her fringes and skirt; then, with a grave bow, he left her with the trophy she had so unfairly won, and a few minutes later entered the Emperor's cabinet, with a shadow of annoyance on his countenance, showing how intolerable the incident had made itself felt.

Valerian, always impatient and irascible, scowled and gave him cold greeting; but when the delay was explained, the situation struck his sense of the ridiculous, and a low rumble of laughter, which threatened to end in apoplexy, told that he was appeased.

"By the gods!" he exclaimed, as soon as he recovered breath, "it was a cunning trick Cupid played thee, my grave commander; and, since he has caught thy sword in his net, it is to be supposed thy heart will be the next to surrender."

"My heart, great Emperor, had already made its choice and complete surrender before this awkward accident occurred," answered Nemesius, whose words had a significance of deeper import than his behavior dreamed of.

"By Apollo! that is news I am glad to hear; but it does not surprise me; for it is the cold, silent ones who are not only sly, my Nemesius, but like snow-mantled volcanoes, that burst into flame at unexpected moments, and just

when people begin to think they are frozen," said Valerian, in his throaty, rumbling tones, evidently well pleased at his own wit; "but," he continued, "there are matters of more importance of which I desire to inform thee, knowing how zealous that art for the glory and honor of Rome. Information comes that the army of the Persian monarch has fallen back from his frontier, and that he has dispatched an envoy hither with proposals which will not be known until he arrives. Sapor is a crafty fellow, and, although I have no faith in him, I shall humor his mood to a certain extent, until some expected treasures are enabled to carry on the war with more destructive effect. Thou hast heard—nothing else has been talked of in Rome—about a Christian named Lawrence, and his sorceries at the house of Hippolytus, and all that happened?"

Nemesius had, indeed, heard, but simply bowed in the affirmative, and held his peace by a mighty effort, but from no craven impulse, as may be imagined.

"Under dread of torture, this blasphemer of the gods has promised to reveal where the treasures of the Christians are concealed. They are reported to be immense. After I possess myself of them I will reward both him and Hippolytus—yes, by the infernal gods! such reward as will astonish them and delight Rome. Listen! I have been reading some of the Greek classics, and found not only new ideas, but certain novel methods; and I have also some splendid unbroken horses from the plains of Northern Asia, to illustrate an exciting episode. I have thought, too, of a new feast for the gods—a roast unprepared in the culinary art, the fumes of which will be as incense sweeter than the nard of Assyria, and the cinnamon and spices of Arabia. We will propitiate the divinities with more Christian blood, until the earth smokes with it; then, all being ready, we will plant the Roman eagles on the hills of Persia, and bring Sapor in chains to Rome, to grace our triumph."

And so the tyrant boasted until his face grew purple, and his eyes glared with such diabolical fury that he failed to observe the countenance of Nemesius which was bent upon him with a stern expression of prophetic warning, whilst his lips could scarcely keep back the words that would declare him a Christian. But the time had not yet come for this, and the Spirit of Love that had led him into the very vestibule of Truth restrained him for a more perfect and glorious testimony.

When at last he was permitted to leave the imperial presence, and had got outside the palace, he found a slave of Laodice—the Cypriote—in waiting with his sword, which he presented with profound obeisance, and with it a letter; then instantly and without a word, withdrew, gliding away somewhere in the darkness like a shadow.

That night before he slept, Nemesius, assisted by the old steward, removed and destroyed the shrine in his apartment, before which he had for many years offered idolatrous worship to the god whose image in gold stood thereon—the god in whose honor he had daily poured the morning libation of wine mixed with frankincense, and at even-tide burnt costly Arabian gums and spices. The image, plate, small brazier and cup, all of gold, and fine workmanship, he banded together into a shapeless mass, and directed Synphronius, who from henceforth was the confidential agent of his charities—to sell the metal, and give the price to the poor.

He commanded further that before the sunset of another day all the images of the Lares and Penates, and every vestige of idolatry, should be removed to the cellar, and there broken, and afterwards cast into a pit to be burnt for lime.

Then commending his soul to God, and invoking the Holy Name of His divine Son, he retired to rest, after a day into which had been crowded an eternity.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE SKIRL OF IRISH PIPES.

All morning midst the maddening din of a great city it had been ringing in my ears—the skirl of Irish pipes, with their waves of plaintive melody. Touched by a master hand, it runs through the gamut of human emotion; now faintly clear, like the far-off voices of happy children; anon sad, like a mother in pain; then again passionately tender with love's own pleading, I rise and go hastily to my window to convince myself that I am not dreaming, and pierce eagerly the maze of a Broadway crowd to find the player. Alas! there is none; it is merely an hallucination of memory, and the cause of it is a box of shamrock lying on my table in all their vivid greenness.

My hot tears fall and wither the delicate petals, and through a mist I see the home of my youth gleaming shadow-like through the vapor of Slimeish. It is early morning, and the quiet fields are dew-dappled; the knee are browned on the hillside; the Slimeish is slowly rising phantom-like from the white mists. In another hour it will be sunrise, and the young god will adorn her with dazzling raiment, hiding all her ruggedness, and transforming every dark tar, into diamonds of flame, and every cornfield into rivers of gold. I see it all. O God! I see it all; and a miser clings to his treasure, and clings to my memories, fearing that, like all transitory things, they may flee and leave me desolate. . . .

Again I hear the sweet, clarion-like music keeping time to the marching feet of my mountain lover. My Donal Bawn, with eyes of dawn and hair like ripened corn, had already made his choice and complete surrender before this awkward accident occurred," answered Nemesius, whose words had a significance of deeper import than his behavior dreamed of.

"By Apollo! that is news I am glad to hear; but it does not surprise me; for it is the cold, silent ones who are not only sly, my Nemesius, but like snow-mantled volcanoes, that burst into flame at unexpected moments, and just

I remember the day my Donal came with a look of care in his eyes, which he strove to hide, but which, with love's keen instincts, I quickly noticed. "Pulse of my heart," he murmured, "I have bad news. My uncle is dying, and my mother insists on my going to him. You know I am the heir; besides," he added, "the poor old fellow is fond of me."

"Who would not be?" was my thought, as I looked at his lithe form in the fullness of early manhood, and the frank, open countenance, with the eyes sparkling wells of truth and the clear, firm-cut lips. Perhaps, O God! I was too fond of him, clinging to him with a vague presentiment of danger. "Don't go," I cried, shaking like a leaf.

"But I must, Mary," he said, looking down at me from his great height. He was over six feet, and I was a little, dark thing, scarcely reaching to his shoulder, with a pale face and masses of shaggy hair, possessing nothing that he should have chosen me as his pearl amongst womanhood. His "White Rose," he called me. "You are just as high as my heart," he used to quote. "And your eyes are dark pools of unknown depths into which I would never tire gazing."

"Take care lest you fall in!" was my merry retort. "Your warning comes too late, little one. I lost my head at the first glance, and tumbled in body and soul; and now I am down in the magical depths, I find it is so delightful I care not to leave it."

"But must you go, Donal?" was my selfish cry. "Duty is duty, dearest; would you have me shrink it?"

"No," I answer, dabbly taught in my secret heart I wish duty at the bottom of the sea. "Besides," he adds cheerfully, "it is only for a few weeks. It will soon pass. You are going to have a visitor. My mother wishes me to see her son's 'White Rose,'" he said fondly. "I told her all this morning."

"I hope she will like me," I murmur. "Sometimes I am a bit prickly." "You are sure to like each other, he said earnestly. "But I am not her choice," I answer weakly. "Wasn't there some one else? I am only a poor little girl with fifty pounds a year, and scarcely a friend in the world."

"Enough," he added, a trifle sternly, placing his hand over my lips. "I shall finish the sentence for you. You call yourself a poor little girl. And what am I? A great big, hulking fellow, not fit to tie your shoe-lace; knowing you have me a man of me. As for the money, thank God, for your sake, I have plenty. It goes to my heart to see you, day in, day out, teaching—teaching. But that will soon cease."

We are sitting on a rock at the top of Slimeish. At our feet nestles the fertile valley of the Braid, its young fields decked in tenderest green, its hedgerows pink with the promise of spring. Further a way lies the town, the faint blue smoke from the houses ascending spiral-like into the soft gray haze below the amethyst and rose of the sunshine. To the west, through the changing chaos of drifting vapor, I see a cloud—small, black and ominous—rapidly advancing, gathering strength from the gray and white forces until it becomes a compact mass, and like a great army threatens to destroy the golden palace of the sun-god. I watch it in fascinated silence. Is it an omen of the future? I shiver involuntarily. Donal slips his hand into mine.

"White Rose," he whispers, "why so sorrowful? Shall I play you some of our favorite airs? Behold in me the rival of the lark!" And he cast a laughing, look towards his beloved pipes. After all my trouble, and braving the ridicule of the villagers to gratify your whim of listening to my poor music on the top of Slimeish at sunrise! Was there ever such an ungrateful maid?"

"O Donal," I answer penitently, "forgive me. But play, play! I reiterate, wildly. Perhaps it will drive away my sad thoughts. Who knows when I shall see you again?" "Now, little woman, no more of that," he says, gently but firmly. "I shall be back in a month at the latest—and then—" He opens his arms with an involuntary gesture, whilst a look of ineffable love streams over his face. I turn away my head. My poor, weak affection seems so cold beside the lava of his burning passion. Tears of joy well in my eyes, and a silent prayer rises from my heart in thanksgiving for this most precious of all gifts—a good man's love.

Surely the world never listened to such music as that which my Donal played that early spring morning on the top of Slimeish. Old Gaelic airs of surpassing beauty that seemed to have imbibed the very spirit of the mountain. Now glad, like the sunrise, with all its magic colors woven into exquisite harmonies and rippling over with laughter, like the stream tumbling down the hillside; now sad, with the weird loneliness of the mountain and the solemn rustling of the leaves in autumn; now stormily, like the wind in a hurricane tearing up young saplings in its fury; yet wistful strangely sweet. I listen with a pleasure which in its intensity almost amounts to pain.

"Donal," I ask, huskily, "play 'Savourneen Deelish.'" A shade passes over his pleasant face. "Too sad," he murmurs. "But, if you wish, I will play 'The Lass of Slimeish.' With his whimsical saying he commences. The plaintive, wild agony of the air is too much for me; the tears run down my face like rain, and sob after sob relieves the tension of my overcharged feelings.

"Mary, Mary!" A pair of loving arms enfold me. "You must not give way. Think of the future—the bright, beautiful future." "I can think of nothing but your going," I answer, weakly. "But it is for such a short time," he urges, cheerily. A wet drop falls on my face. I look up startled. All the golden glory of the sun has vanished, the sky has become gray, and there is a moaning

sound of wind which piece of young larch men before were borrowed loveliness. A keen sense of me. Again the awomen? "Come, Mary, turning to rain, and Donal says, 'tender a change,' and his horizon anxiously, hillside, but before down the storm to and the air is a rattle of thunder. flash of lightning, and grandeur of the Terrified, I clutch my remonstrance spite and puts it in form, for the rain torrents. At last, at last, we reach the cottage—beside the call home. As ceases suddenly, from the blue of the sun, and the smiles of the hills. "A good omen, bends his handsome meets mine. The look, and I am alone weariness of the The everlasting was helped to fill. These, without wailing bolt from the sky. The third day after I was sitting among them with an eagerness myself, when a doorway, and the presence stood before my eyes, but where his were all as I met her gaze. "You are Donal, rising. "I am the mother she answers for with you in presence of the child. "Yes," I murmur, my pupils in hand lead the way which intervenes and the school spoken by either little sitting room eyes scan me up destroys the ca. "He has not been andibly. I felt the hot at the cool insouciance. "Girl, this consent. "I totally not that could not like a dumb thing. "Speak," she what you mean satisfy you?" The course through the a miltren lead, a leaving any. I could ment, but quickly. "Mad speaking to you. I saw the pro-broken by the on the mantel-bing heart. "Madam!" voice, so ho-sonds—"I before God passed, and until you com and ask me. I add with have yet to erect and eye the door, the passes silent-looking. "What ha-again and ag- has passed. happiness, an woman's trans mother's feel the serpent paradise of "No," I "nor will be in my resig-broad seas return. Oh, were too long bitterly. "Before the under an to an aut, and we to live with so weak and of the stee- lie prostrate brain fever face girl with window and skirl of Iris. Can it be only three the sun of years of the length of misery of forgotten. Love over-dreadly soon! I aloud in sound jars and leaves. My brain a little th-restle thin-shackles creeps over loving him and note cate trepa- parenchyma Slimeish, cools by that I turn face of my and worn, had never great love stands to stretched. "Mary