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THE LOVE STORY OF ALISON BARNARD

BY KATHARINE TYNAN

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

Plainly Alison heard the old men gasp without knowing the meaning of it. Had they been so taken by surprise, then? And were they not prepared to lose their boy just yet? Alison remembered that there might be difficulties with the George Barnards, who were Low Church people with a leaning to dissent...

CHAPTER XX.

The Father.

Alison rode Mavourneen over next day to Ballycushla, hoping to find Mrs. George alone. She might have found her presiding over a nursery dinner of boiled mutton and suet pudding, only that Miss Barnard of Castle Barnard was much too important a person to be introduced to anything so homely...

phone clerk, and had herself put into communication with her husband. Yes, he was there. What did she want? Any more kitchen chimneys? The note of impatience seemed to vibrate on the wire and strike an answering thrill in Alison's breast.

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Kylinoe with Captain Denham, and of course there were Tessa and Paul; and Maurice Tyrrell had spoken to Mrs. Lang's younger sister, Frederika, usually called Freddy, who was as leggy as a colt, and as wild and beautiful as Alison's young thoroughbred, the brother to Mavourneen, and had been accepted.

"Why should she look lonely?" he asked. "Isn't young Downe always at her heels? It would be a fine match, even for Alison, and the cousinship is not inconveniently near."

"She would never look at a boy like Downe, not in that way," said Mrs. Lang. "And she is, lonely. What is that man, Molyneux, about? I confess I have no patience with him."

"Only making an effort to settle the Irish question," my dear," the Archdeacon answered, cutting the pages of a monthly review in which was a heterodox article, brilliant and generous, which greatly interested him.

"Don't try to be satirical," said Mrs. Lang. "It's a bad habit for anyone who must live in Ballycushla. You know they always take you literally and that means getting into trouble. You men are odd creatures. I'd rather on the whole that Alison were happy than that the Irish question was settled."

"It's a good thing for men that we haven't. When any of us does possess it she gets shockingly satirical. If we had a sense of the abstract we never could make such a fuss about the things that belong to us, the husbands and children, and the little nests of boxes like a set of pigeon holes that we set up on the earth and call home."

"I never said that it wasn't a dispensation of Providence that women have minds only for the concrete," said the Archdeacon, mildly.

"Sir Gerard Molyneux had not yet made his appearance at Kylinoe. It was indeed unlikely that he would do so till the very eve of Christmas. Lord Downe and his aunt, Miss Rodney, had been at Castle Barnard from the middle of December."

"Miss Rodney was a delightful person, quite unlike her nephew, who was a plain-faced, faxen-haired, blue-eyed boy, quite a distinguished looking, despite his plainness and his freckles. She was a white-haired elderly lady with bright eyes of youth, and a rosy, handsome face, and she poked tender fun at Archie, the Earl, who was liberal minded, and nothing like so clever as his aunt. The delight of friendship between the aunt and nephew and the most perfect good fellowship."

"Miss Rodney made no secret of her desire that Alison should look favorably on Lord Downe. 'I brought him up myself,' she said to Mrs. Lang, 'and I'm proud of him. He won't set the Thames on fire with any showy kind of ability, but he'll fulfil the duties of his state in life, and he'll never do anything dishonorable. His heart is as sound as a nut; he's a clean, high-minded, kind boy, with fantastic ideas of honor. I've steered him safely through I don't know how many shoals beset by matrimony. When we looked up our Irish cousins last year, and I laid eyes on Alison, I felt she was the woman for whom I had been saving Archie.'"

"Mrs. Tyrrell and Mrs. Lang talked it over afterwards, and were rather offended with Miss Rodney, whom it was impossible not to like personally. 'She seems so sure that Alison has been waiting,' grumbled Mrs. Lang. 'I wonder how it is she supposed that the beauty of the countryside has gone unwid to her twenty-seventh year. She might have known that there was a man in the case.'"

"It's nearly seven years ago since Alison and Gerard Molyneux met in my drawing room," said Mrs. Tyrrell. "I meant them for each other from the beginning. They were made for each other surely. I little thought that Alison would still be an unpugged girl seven years later."

"If I wasn't so fond of Sir Gerard I'd say that it served him right if Alison slipped through his fingers," said Mrs. Lang, in her soft wailing voice.

"I hope he won't wake up one day and find that he has lost her," she answered. "I'm glad that Alison is not a Papistical person. If she were I should be alarmed about these visits to the Convent of which we hear so much."

"Alison would never become a nun, even if she were a Papistical person," Mrs. Lang responded. "And as for Convents, why I've felt the fascination of them myself—not here, of course—I wouldn't dare cross a Convent door here—but at home in Kildare when I was a girl, and after I was married in Dublin. People are not so narrow-minded in those regions."

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"I grow fonder of Freddy every day," said Mrs. Tyrrell, to whose heart Mrs. Lang's younger sister had transferred herself for an indefinite visit. Mrs. Tyrrell did not suppose that she would be able to do without Freddy; once Maurice had left her for that business training which was to precede his taking up his new duties. The young people were not to marry till Maurice was ipso facto a business man with an income of his own.

"I know," said Mrs. Lang. "She's a dear thing. I'm so glad mother is letting me have Billy. Wait till you see Billy. She's as tall as I am, and has just let down her frocks and put up her hair. I'm going to be very busy for a week or so making Billy some decent frocks for the Christmas parties. It's lucky Janet is so clever. Janet was Mrs. Lang's nurse—and that I've quite a French taste in dressmaking. No one will see Billy till she's fit to be seen. Nor myself either for the matter of that."

(To be Continued.) In every creature, however small, we may see a striking image of the Divine Wisdom, Power, and Goodness.