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A TALE OF CASHEL.

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CHAPTER XXI.—PHIL MORAN TRIES HIS LUCK.

That same night when the stars were in the sky, and the shadows deep and dark on the earth...

'So you came,' said she, 'well, stay where you are—there's death and poverty inside, and may be the fever too—so don't come in.'

'Well, now, Vanithee,' said the lawyer dropping his voice to a whisper, 'what have you got to say to me—or was it to me you spoke when you said 'come to my place this evening?'

'Foolish, magh,' said the hag sharply, 'may be you'll not think it so when you hear what I have to tell you, and it's only a word or two.'

'In the name of God, what is it, then?' 'Put down your head here, an' I'll whisper it in your ear. You don't know who may be listening.'

Smiling to himself at the absurdity of his position, and rather by way of humoring the old woman than anything else, the young man bent his head to a level with her face, and she whispered something in his ear, then drew back and fixed her keen eyes on his face through the gloom of the summer night as if to mark the effect of her words.

And the effect was like magic. Moran started, gasped for breath, and caught the hag by the arm with a force that made her reel.

'Say that again!' he exclaimed in a thrilling whisper, 'or did I hear you right?'

'You did—an' I'll not say it again—I said it onst, an' that's enough.'

'But how—when—where—I mean how do you know that?'

'No matter to you how I know it! If you don't find it true never believe me again—that's all. You put in a word for me this evenin' at the Lodge below, an' I thought I'd do you a good turn. Away wid you now from here, an' see if you don't find my words come true. If they do, I know you'll be thankful to the old Vanithee, an' I hope you'll do what you can for that poor boy of mine.'

'In any case, my good woman! I will do that—but have no fears for him—with God's help there is no fear but his innocence will be established.'

'God bless you for that word, anyhow!' And dashing away the tears that were falling from her eyes, the old woman hobbled back into the hut, leaving Moran to retrace his steps down the hill in a state of mind very different from that in which he ascended it.

Whether it was accident or design that led his steps to the old house in Friar street, it is not for me to say, but it so happened that some twenty minutes after, Attorney Moran plied the heavy old fashioned knocker on Dr. Hennessy's door with such good effect that admission was almost instantaneous, and our friend was ushered into the parlor where, as luck would have it, he used afterwards to say, Mary Hennessy sat alone with a volume of Lingard's 'England' in her hand, and a cloud of some kind shading the sunny brightness of her features.

Very natural was the inquiry 'Where is Maurice?' and no less natural was the answer—'Gone to Kiltbrae, or somewhere there on professional business.' But not so natural was the pause that followed, a pause which seemed rather embarrassing to both, though why it should be so perhaps neither could tell.

At last Moran spoke—'Perhaps I ought to apologize, Mary—Miss Hennessy, I mean, for interrupting your studies. May I ask what you were reading?'

'A very sad story,' said Mary, drawing a long breath as if much relieved, 'the story of that unhappy wife and most admirable woman, Catherine of Arragon. What a strange fate it was that gave her to that inhuman monster, Henry the Eighth!'

'Very strange, indeed!' said Moran, so absently that Mary smiled, but the greater his abstraction the more rapidly she talked on, gliding from one subject to another, in the vain hope of drawing him into conversation on some ordinary topic. The piano stood open, and all at once Moran said—

'It's a long time now since I heard you play, Miss Hennessy,—won't you play something now pending Maurice's return?'

'Certainly, Mr. Moran!' was the cheerful answer, though the round rich voice trembled a very line. Several pieces were played—noisy, showy pieces, too, and then Mary turned with an arch smile on her face and asked—'How do you like that, Mr. Moran?'

'I don't like it at all, Miss Sauce-box,' said Moran laughing, 'and you know that as well as I do. Why not play some of my old favorites, and keep those show-off affairs for those who like them?'

'True enough, Mr. Moran, if I only could only remember your favorites—what are they?—oh! now I have one!' and she started off at the full speed of her nimble fingers with 'I'm the boy for Bewitching Them!' at which Moran laughed heartily and said, 'I wish I was the boy for bewitching them—I know one I'd bewitch anyhow!'

'Is it possible?'

'It is possible, Miss Prim! and I have just made up my mind to try my luck this very night, and know for certain what I have to expect.'

'As how?'

'As how? oh? the pretty innocent! Mary Hennessy can't possibly guess who it is that has stolen the heart out of Phil Moran! Now seriously, Mary, and he drew his chair nearer to the music-stool on which she sat, 'now seriously,—how long is this to go on? You know as well as I do that I love you better than I do myself, and yet you continue to appear as innocent of the fact as—well, no matter what. But human patience—even Phil Moran's patience—can't possibly last for ever, and I'm determined to know the worst, or the best, before I leave this house to-night.'

Mary laughed, but she blushed, too, and, besides, her laugh was not the light, careless, ringing laugh that was wont to come straight from her merry heart.

'By Jove!' said Phil to himself, 'the hag may be right after all,' and his eye brightened and his fresh cheek grew ruddier still.

'Mary,' said he, 'I know you'll not deceive me, but give me a straight answer to a straight question.'

'I'm entirely obliged to you for your good opinion, Mr. Moran,' archly said Mary, and she began twisting the handkerchief in her hand into various comical shapes.

'You are, eh?—well, I hope you'll prove yourself worthy of it. Now answer me this little question—What do you think of Phil Moran?'

'Why, of course, I think very well of him,' laughed Mary. 'He's a good fellow enough in his way—for an Irishman—and as a limb of the law.'

'But what would you think of him for a husband?' and Phil shut one eye inquisitively, and turned his head to one side.

'Oh, a husband? that is quite a different thing! Having never seen the gentleman in that capacity, I am not prepared to give an opinion.'

'Well, but badinage apart, Mary, I wish to know what I am to expect at your hands. It is for you to make me the happiest, or the most miserable of men. Will you share my fortunes for good or ill? Can you love me?'

The color came up brighter than ever in Mary's face, and she cast her eyes down to hide the moisture that began to suffuse them.

'Mr. Moran,' she said, 'if you come to speak so seriously, I suppose I must answer you as seriously—I do not think I can love you in the sense to which you allude—but be content with friendship and I will love you—yes! as a brother.'

'Friendship!' quoth Phil in huge disdain, 'who cares for friendship in the sense to which you allude—ahem? But I'll tell you what I'll do—no, confound it, I can't tell it—but I'll make Tom Moore tell it for me! and forthwith he began singing in a voice that was pleasant to Mary's ear, from the many pleasant association connected with its rich liquid tones—

'A Temple to Friendship' said Laura enchanted, 'I'll build in a garden, the thought is divine, The Temple was built, and she now only wanted An image of Friendship to place on the shrine.'

'Just like you, Mary!'

'She flew to a sculptor who sat down before her A Friendship the fairest his art could invent, But so cold and so dull, that the youthful adorer Saw plainly this was not the god that she meant.'

'Just like you, Mary?'

'A novel refrain you are adding, surely,' said Mary with a smile bright as a Hour's.

'Never mind, it suits my purpose—

'The bargain was struck, with the little god laden She joyfully flew to her shrine in the grove,— Farewell!' said the sculptor, 'you're not the first maiden Who came but for Friendship and took away Love!'

'Now what if the image you have enshrined should turn out, after all, to be the sly 'little god upon roses reclining,' instead of the other 'whose looks are so joyless and dim'—eh, Mary? Suppose you look into the shrine in the grove, and by the light of my burning heart examine the features of the image aforesaid?'

Mary laughed again at the oddity of the conceit; she paused a moment—looked down on the floor—colored violently—tapped with her little foot on the carpet—and at last looked up in Moran's face with the brightest smile in the world.

'Well?' said Phil, smiling too, and managing to get possession of her hand—

'Well, I've been to the shrine you speak of—

'And there you saw—

'No, I didn't. There's knowledge for you! Be good enough to convey yourself home, now, Phil Moran, for another word I sha'n't speak to you to-night—except two—Good night—au revoir!'

And before Moran had recovered from the bewildering effect of her words, and still more of her looks and gestures, she had bounded off like an antelope, leaving the delighted lawyer to compose his thoughts at leisure, and bless his stars and the fairy-woman to his heart's content. He was too happy then for ordinary conversation, so leaving a message for Maurice that he would see him some time next day, he retired to indulge the thick-coming fancies which the newly awakened hope of happiness will conjure up at eight-and-twenty. A happy man was Phil Moran that night, and as his eye scanned the uncertain future, not one cloud could be detected on his life's horizon. All was fair and bright and glad as the image that smiled over all.

That same evening, about the same hour, Harriet Markham and Lady Pemberton were walking to and fro in the verandah of Lord Effingham's study, engaged in that desultory sort of conversation common between persons whose minds have but small affinity one to the other. A sort of intimacy had sprung up since the Earl's departure, between the two ladies, notwithstanding the ten or twelve years of seniority on the part of the noble widow. Her ladyship seemed to have taken a fancy to her brother's governess, especially since she found that the Markhams were not unknown to heraldry and had quarterings on their shield from the peerage itself.

Lady Pemberton had been speaking of her brother's late wife, and she said—'View the matter as I may, I cannot see how Fergus ever came to marry her. It is true, my father had arranged the affair for him when he was still a minor, and I suppose he had not the courage to resist, for my father was a man who ruled all around him if not with a rod of iron, at least with a strong hand. Poor Priscilla was a dismal creature, pretty and gentle, but a dreadful bore on account of the confirmed hypochondria that had taken possession of her. To tell you the truth my dear, we were all glad—that is, myself and the other members of the family, when Priscilla, Countess of Effingham, was consigned to the tomb of the Capulets, piously hoping of course, that the poor, dear soul had found beyond the grave the rest and peace which her own dreary temperament denied her here. As for my brother no one knew how he felt, for he kept his thoughts and feelings to himself. I hope sincerely that neither of the children will resemble their mother, though I sometimes think that Emma looks like her, and has some of her odd ways as far as such a mere child can have them.'

'Well! of course I cannot say,' observed Harriet, as if to fill up the pause, 'what resemblance Lady Emma bears to her mother, but I think her on the whole, an amiable child, though more shy and sensitive than her sister.'

'The worst of it is, however,' resumed Lady Pemberton, 'that there seems to be as little chance for happiness, as far as my brother is concerned, in the alliance he is forming himself as there was in the one over the forming of which he had little or no control.'

'Does your ladyship really think so? I sincerely hope you will find yourself mistaken.'

'Possibly I may, but I fear—oh! I very much fear. It is true Lady Jane de Montford (they're an old Norman family, that of the Marquis—) is a beauty and somewhat of a wit—no very great recommendation, I think, for a woman—I believe she loves my brother as much as she can love any one, but—but—I fear she is not the woman to make him happy—in the finer qualities of mind and heart I believe her sadly wanting. However, time will tell—there is no help for it, now,' she added in a melancholy tone.

There was a long pause; then Harriet said with some hesitation: 'Did I understand your ladyship to say that Lord Effingham's name is Fergus?'

'Certainly, my dear, that is his name. Why do you ask?'

'Because the name—excuse me, Lady Pemberton—is so very Irish, so peculiarly Irish, indeed I might say.'

'Oh,' said lady Pemberton with a careless laugh, 'you do not know, then, that our mother was Irish, yes, and very Irish, too—descended, I believe, from some old Milesian family, and very proud, I assure you, of her ancient lineage—Fergus was her father's name, and had been a favorite name in the family since the Deluge, for aught I know, and, truth to tell, my very dear and right noble brother has not his name for nothing. With some of the more amiable traits of my father's sternly commanding nature—the old Danish Norman-English type—he has in him many of the most prominent characteristics of the Celtic people—so my father used to say, when he meant anything but flattery. For me, I never gave much attention to the distinctive traits of one people or the other, but I know that the very qualities my father complained of in his heir were precisely those that endeared Fergus to all our circle—wider than that it is now.'

As if the last words had awoke in her mind a train of saddening thought, Lady Pemberton lapsed into silence, and Harriet, equally thoughtful, made an effort to resume the conversation. The night began to wax chill, and the stars twinkled brighter through the clear, cool air, so after a few turns up and down the verandah, Lady Pemberton proposed to return to the drawing-room, where they had left Mrs. Pakenham and the chaplain hotly contesting the honors of the chess-board, to the great amusement of a young clergyman, whose first sermon, delivered in Cashel Cathedral on the previous Sunday, had quite won Mrs. Pakenham's heart, and the hearts of ever so many other dowagers. A clerical *petit-maitre*, he was one of those pulpit orators so happily described by the trenchant satire of Cowper's verse—

'First we stroke An eyebrow, next compose a straggling lock; Then, with an air most gracefully perform'd, Fall back into our seat, extend an arm, And lay it at its ease with gentle care, With handkerchief in hand depending low.'

Whether this delicate pillar of the Church by law established was or was not aware of Miss Markham's being a Catholic, he seemed well inclined to cultivate her acquaintance, but Harriet with the perversity natural to her wayward sex, slung the super-elegant minister in the same proportion that he sought her. It is probable that with Cowper, in the passage before cited, she thought to herself—

'In man or woman, but far most in man, And most of all in man that ministers And serves the altar, in my soul I loathe All affectation. 'Tis my perfect scorn; Object of my implacable disgust.'

But whatever she thought, she certainly bade Lady Pemberton good night at the drawing-room door, and sought in the quiet of her chamber the more congenial company of her own thoughts.

Long she sat in pensive musing, her head leaning on her hand, whilst many a troubled thought flitted over the fair surface of her face, like shadows from the summer clouds falling on the hills and valleys of some lovely landscape.—Once or twice a pearly tear stole from under her closed eyelids and rolled unheeded down her cheeks, but all at once she raised her head, and pushing back from her damp brow the rich tresses of her braided hair, she cast her eyes upwards, and remained a moment absorbed in mental prayer, then rose and going to the window gazed out upon the night where only the stars and the dark canopy they studied were visible. The solemn night was before her, in the majesty of darkness and of silence, and her finely-attuned nature quickly rose above the transitory things of earth in the awful presence of the dread unseen. Alone with the mysterious presence which pervades the Universe, self was forgotten, only heaven and its interests remembered, peace like the balcyon descended on her soul, and a strange, undefinable hope diffused a softened light over the deep recess of her pure and gentle heart.

She was roused from her calm and soothing reverie by a low tap at the chamber door, which hastening to open, she found the nursery-maid, Ellen Mulquin, with another young female wrapped in a light shawl.

'I hope you'll excuse me, Miss Markham!' said Ellen, dropping a curtsey, 'but this poor sister of mine wouldn't be aisy, at all, till she'd get spaking to you the night, and I know you're so good and so kind that you'll not be angry with us for coming, for, indeed, Miss, it's in the height of trouble poor Celia is.'

'Angry! why should I be angry?' said Har-

riet very gently, 'come in, girls, and let me hear what your trouble is.'

'Oh, not me, Miss Markham; I can't stay,' said Ellen, 'I have got something to do for the young ladies, and I must be off. Celia can tell you herself all about it. Go in, anna, and don't be afeard to open your mind to Miss Markham.'

The timidity that at another time would have deterred Celia from opening her mind to a 'rude lady like Miss Markham' now ranshed quite in the presence of the sore trouble that was tearing her very heart.

'Oh Miss Markham dear,' said she, before Harriet could speak a word, 'can't you do anything at all for poor Jerry? Sure the peeters took him at last, and he's in jail, and I'm sure they'll hang him, for all he's as innocent of what they lay to his charge as the child unborn. Can't you do anything for him! I'm sure you can, if you'll only try, and if you do, you'll have my blessing and the blessing of God every day you rise!'

So eager and so rapid was poor Celia's utterance that Miss Markham could not put in a word till the girl's voice failed her for want of breath.

'Why, my poor girl,' hastened to reply, 'this is, indeed, bad news. But tell me how did it happen? How and where was Jerry arrested? Or are you sure he was arrested?'

'Sure! Miss Markham, sure!—oyeh, it's me that is sure—doesn't the whole country know it?—and wasn't I at the jail myself trying to see him, and the hard-hearted villains wouldn't let me get one sight of him. O wirra, wirra! what will I do, at all, at all, at all? And the tears gushed in torrents from her eyes, and she wrung her hands in all the wildness of despair.

'Do try and compose yourself, poor girl!' said Miss Markham, her own eyes full of sympathetic tears; 'you have not told me when and where Jerry was arrested?'

'Oh, sure, that's the queerest thing of all,' said Celia, restraining her emotion with wonderful quickness, 'sure he wasn't arrested at all, he arrested himself!'

'Arrested himself—what do you mean?'

'Why, Miss, he went to Rose Lodge, his own four bones, an' gave himself up, an' tould the ould gentleman an' the rest o' the quality all about how it happened!'

'Well! that is very strange,' said the young lady thoughtfully, 'that would lead one to suppose that he might not be guilty, after all!'

'An' sure he isn't guilty, Miss Markham!' cried Celia eagerly, 'sure I knew that long ago!'

'You did?—an' pray how did you know it?'

Celia's face was scarlet in a moment, and casting her eyes bashfully down, she began pulling at the fringe of her shawl with great industry and perseverance. 'Well! you see, Miss,' she stammered out, 'he came to see me when he was on his keepin'—a couple o' nights after it happened.'

'Oh! he did, eh?' and Harriet smiled pleasantly.

'Well! he did, Miss, in regard to a few words that had passed between us—he came to give me back my promise—thinkin' I'd be sorry I ever gave it.'

'And did you take it back?'

'Is it me Miss Markham?—is it me take it back?—oh vo! that 'd be too hard on poor Jerry, an' somethin' t'ellin' me all the while that maybe he wasn't so bad, after all?—oh no Miss, I tould him that it I wasn't his wife, I'd never be any other one's!'

'And you believed him, of course, when he told you he was not guilty?'

'I did, Miss,' and Celia raised her head, and looking the young lady full in the face; 'I did believe him, for the reason that I never knew him to tell me a lie—an' the way he said it made me surer again that it was the truth—' here she stopped—blushed deeper than ever—and again cast down her eyes.

'Why, how did he say it, Celia?'

'Well! you see, Miss,' the voice fell to a broken murmur, 'it was the first time he ever made so free as to kiss me—an'—he kissed me then for the first and last time, as he thought, an' says he, 'Celia! that's not the kiss of a murderer,' an' sure myself knew well he wouldn't say that only it was true, an' ohone! but them words took the heavy load off o' my heart, an' from that forrid I thought I could bear the worst—but sure I can't—sure I can't, I see now, for ever since I heard of him bein' in jail, my poor heart is flutterin' like a bird, an' I've no more strength in me than a little baby. Oh Miss Markham—dear! she cried with passionate eagerness, 'do you think they'd have the heart to hang him?—do you think they would?'

'My poor girl,' said Harriet with the tenderest compassion, 'the law has no heart—knows no pity—if he were found guilty of such a crime, there would be small chance of mercy for him in this world. But do not despair, Celia! I have great hopes from his giving himself up, that he is