

SALLY CAVANAGH,

Or, The Untenanted Graves.

A TALE OF TIPPERARY.

BY CHARLES J. KICKHAM.

CHAPTER XVIII—Continued.

"Come, Fanny," said her uncle, one week is not much, and when I catch you down in the country, I'm determined to make you my housekeeper for a while. "Just to give you a little practice," added Father Paul, with an expressive twinkle of his gray eyes.

"Oh, then you'll find her an adept. I can tell you," Aunt Sarah observed. "She has done nothing but learn housekeeping for some months back." We suspect, after all, that Fanny had been only deluding herself with regard to that heroic resolution to which reference has been made at the beginning of this chapter.

"Play that old tune for me, Fanny, before I go to bed. I can't meet any one able to do it justice but yourself and Josh Reddy."

"Oh, how is Josh? and has he the same white hat still?"

"To be sure he has. Who ever could think of Josh Reddy without that old hat? And do you know I think we'll have Josh married this Shrove-tide. He's after softening the heart of Kitty McGrath, Dr. Forbis' housekeeper, who has had quite a little fortune left to her by her old aunt. I was wondering why she was remaining with the doctor after getting the legacy, till I found out that Josh Reddy's music possessed such a charm for her. Of course, you know our two votaries of Apollo, the doctor and the fiddler, are near neighbors?"

"Oh, yes; I know the little house very well. Just near the doctor's gate."

"Exactly. And now for 'Paddy's Resource.'"

Brian opened the piano, and Fanny played the tune in a manner quite worthy of her instructor; for it was Josh Reddy himself who taught her to play all Father Paul's favorite airs, during her visit to Ballycorrig.

Brian Purcell spent some of the happiest days he had known for a long time with his friends in Dublin. He particularly enjoyed a drive to Killiney Hill with Fanny and Miss Conway; and thought he did think of Knockclough, the thought brought on no symptom of a relapse now. He felt he had a real friend in Miss Conway. What a treasure the friendship of an intellectual woman with a heart is. Brian Purcell knew how to appreciate it.

Short as he away, Brian felt his heart beat quicker when his eye rested on the old mountain under whose shadow he was born.

"No place like home," he thought.

The pleasure he felt in approaching his home lost nothing by the reflection that he would soon welcome his dear little friend, Fanny O'Gorman, to it.

Mrs. Purcell had climbed up a stile in the paddock every five minutes, for two hours or so before his arrival, and looked along the road. Kate and his father had asked him a number of questions before his mother could leave the milking women, who were "setting" the tubs. At last she walked slowly toward them.

"Welcome home, Brian," said she, giving him her hand in the coldest manner possible. But as she pressed her snowy can with the other, Brian saw the tears well into her eyes. So he only looked away, and pressed his mother's hand without speaking.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was a fine day in February. The little cottage, half hid in evergreens, was a pleasant sight to look at. Mrs. Hazlitt sat on her heels in the garden, after "setting" a ridge or two of early potatoes, which Matt was trenching.

The little rustic gate opened, and on looking round, Mrs. Hazlitt beheld the queenly form of Miss Evans gliding up the graveled walk. She hurried to welcome the young lady, who, by the way, had been a rather frequent visitor to "the dear old cottage" of late. She used to sit in the little parlor and talk for hours about old times. Sometimes she preferred to sit there and not talk at all. The discontinuance of Captain Dawson's visits to Moorview House and his cold politeness when they chanced to meet may have had something to do with this. But even if Captain Dawson had been as devoted an admirer as ever, we believe Miss Evans would have thought of old times now and then notwithstanding.

One day Miss Evans looked over the privet hedge, and expressed great admiration of the young lambs in the field outside. Mrs. Hazlitt proposed a walk in the field, and, with a look of innocent enthusiasm, the young lady said:

"Oh, yes; by all means, it will be so pleasant."

The walk in the field became almost a matter of course whenever Miss Evans called at the cottage. And as Mr. Purcell was from home there was no harm in extending the walk as far as the house. On one occasion she accepted the housekeeper's invitation to look at the quaint old furniture in the parlor. The invitation was suggested by the interest Miss Evans appeared to take in a high-backed mahogany chair which happened to be outside the hall door. She was charmed with everything in the house, and participated in the housekeeper's regret that a particular little room was locked, as there was "no show but all the books he had in it." Miss Evans gave the housekeeper half a crown, and forgot one of her gloves, which she had laid on the chimney-piece while giving a little twist to one of her curls before the oval looking-glass.

"He's as good a young man, miss," said Mrs. Hazlitt, "as there is within the walls of the world."

"I hate good young men."

Mrs. Hazlitt looked astonished.

"I mean," added the young lady, "that young men are intolerable bores. That is, your serious, solemn characters. And now isn't Mr. Purcell rather sad and gloomy generally?"

"Well, no, miss. I always see him pleasant and cheerful."

Miss Evans would rather have heard that he was sad and gloomy.

"I wouldn't say but he's after coming home," Mrs. Hazlitt remarked. "There are his greyhounds at the door."

Miss Evans started slightly; but seeming not to have heard these remarks, she walked over to where the greyhounds lay in the sun and patted Gazelle's head with her gloved hand. Gazelle thrust her paw into Miss Evans' muff, and Miss Evans playfully pushed the muff over Gazelle's slender head. The bound, feeling uneasy in this downy collar, ran into the house, and the lady ran laughing after her. She raised her eyes and appeared quite bewildered with surprise when the muff was presented to her by Brian Purcell.

"I beg your pardon," said she, stooping her head and covering her face with her hands. "Mrs. Hazlitt told me you were from home."

"I have only returned here this morning," said Brian.

She remained standing so long with her hands over her face, that Brian began to feel at a loss how to act. She rested her hand on the back of the chair as if she required support.

"Sit down, Miss Evans."

She sat down, resting one arm on the table, and dropping the other gracefully over Gazelle's neck. We must not omit that in dropping the arm over the dog's neck, she (accidentally of course) gave the skirt of her dress a slight pull, the effect of which was to reveal an instep, the symmetry of which is seldom seen except in marble.

Brian Purcell was an admirer of the beautiful in art and nature, and he mentally acknowledged that so perfect a type of womanly beauty as that before him he had never seen.

"Brian," she murmured, "what harm would it do you to be commonly civil to me?"

"Surely I have never been uncivil?"

"You know what I mean."

"No, Miss Evans, I do not know what you mean."

"You are so unforgiving."

"On the contrary," he replied, "I never felt any resentment towards you."

"That is worse," said she, "for have I not treated you badly?"

"Well, 'tis all over now."

"Yes; 'tis all over with you. But with me"—She uttered these words in a tone that thrilled through and through him. He looked into her face, and—could he trust his senses? Yes, there could be no mistake about it: tears were falling from Jane Evans' eyes, and these tears were for him.

Brian Purcell was only a man. He took her hand in his, and was in the act of raising it to his lips, when she snatched it from him with a start, and pushed back her chair from the window. He

followed the direction of her eyes, and saw Captain Dawson coming toward the house.

Brian Purcell drew a long breath.

Jane Evans looked at him in a half-frightened way. She saw by his cold smile that he understood her. It was not the mere breach of etiquette—much less any fear her character might suffer—that made her start. It was not even that she cared what Captain Dawson might think. In fact Miss Evans was not superior to the dread of losing caste, which so clings to people who find themselves perched on a round of the social ladder which had been above their heads at one time. She saw that Brian read her thoughts.

"I'll bring Captain Dawson round to the garden," said he, "and you can easily rejoin Mrs. Hazlitt, whom you see waiting for you without being seen."

He went out and entered into conversation with Captain Dawson.

Miss Evans clenched her hand, as was her wont when vexed with herself, or any one else.

Now what was this young lady driving at? Did she love Brian Purcell? She would not have answered the question, even to her own heart. If she did love him, she certainly did not love anybody else. She wished to leave the question an open one. Time enough to decide upon when he should be at her feet again. And now she saw him escape from her at the moment when her victory was certain, had it not been for her own cowardice—meanness she called it, as she clenched her hand.

She looked out at these two men, the only two in whom she felt the slightest interest.

Captain Dawson was tall, broad shouldered and well made, with singularly regular features, and a clear, fresh complexion. But there was neither soul nor intellect in his handsome, sleepy, good-natured eyes. And this woman felt could bow only to mind. She wished it were otherwise; but there was no use wishing. She could not "sympathize with clay."

Her eyes turned from the captain, and rested on her old lover. He was far from being so handsome a man as the other. But his forehead was high and broad; his eyes full of expression—they suggested the idea of a fiery, sensitive soul, calmed down by reason and softened by sorrow; and his mouth, though not small like the captain's, was such as a woman might love all day long. So thought Miss Evans as she fixed her penetrating look upon her old love and her new.

Miss Evans had a will of her own. She generally did what she made up her mind to do. It was this decision of character that kept her mother in such constant dread. She now astonished both the gentlemen outside, by walking towards them, and giving her hand to Captain Dawson with a smile. Then turning to Brian Purcell, she said, shaking hands with him too:

"Good morning. And I trust you duly appreciate the honor Mrs. Hazlitt and I have conferred on you."

"You see, Captain," she went on, "I do not stand upon ceremony with old friends. It is not every lady would have the courage to venture into a bachelor's den,—even he if happens to be something of a philosopher," she added, with a playful glance at Brian. "Come, Mr. Hazlitt, I am waiting for you." And bowing to the gentlemen with inimitable grace, she gathered up the skirt of her gown, and stepped across the lawn like a goddess. Brian and the captain gazed after, but both shrank from making any allusion to her.

Brian had written to Captain Dawson, asking him to call at Coolbawn, as of course it would not do for him to call at Grindem Hall.

"I was just remarking," said Brian, resuming the conversation, "that your evident desire to avoid meeting me for some time back was a puzzle to me till I found out the cause."

The captain became as red as a turkey cock.

"But, of course, you are not to blame at all."

The captain looked surprised.

"If your uncle treats my father harshly or unjustly, how can you help it?"

"Oh, yes," said Captain Dawson, evidently relieved.

"And now," Brian continued, "what I want to know is, could you induce him to deal fairly, or anything like it, with my father? His heart is set on keeping the farm, and he is ready to pay even more than it is worth."

"Devil a use in talking to him, just now, at all events, for he is in one of his drinking fits. My aunt has sent for Dr. Forbis to-day. I shouldn't wonder if he is in *delirium tremens* already."

"By the way," said Brian, "here is the doctor himself."

The doctor rode up on his remarkable mare.

"Well, doctor, how is your patient?" the captain asked.

"We'll pull him through," replied the doctor. "Particularly as Miss Grindem is gone to work *vi et armis*." (The old lady had just flung a jar of whiskey out of the window). "Tim Croak is after being put in charge of him, so I expect to have him all right in a few days."

"He has been going it devilish hard for the last month," Captain Dawson observed.

"Come in, doctor," said Brian.

"No, thank you; I had lunch at the Hall."

"Well, but a glass of grog will do you no harm. Come in, captain."

The doctor dismounted, and he and Captain Dawson followed Brian into the house.

Miss Evans's reflections on her way home were to this effect:

"I trust I have recovered the lost ground by that last move. How dumb-founded the captain was. Poor George! 'tis a pity he hasn't brains. How malapropos his appearance was. Brian has been in Dublin. Of course he met that foolish little creature. Yet," added Miss Evans, softening as she recalled Fanny's tearful eyes and shrinking timidity "yet the poor child loves him."

Miss Evans took the roundabout way to Moorview House, much to the annoyance of the old coachman. "But does he love her?" she thought. "He did not love her that night, at all events." She was just passing the Finger-post. "And I am much mistaken if Brian Purcell ever could love such a mere baby. Time will tell." She said this with a smile of conscious superiority. Your clever ladies are apt to forget that a woman's heart counts for more with a man like Brian Purcell than her head.

And what were his thoughts when he found himself alone? Whatever they were, he thought it best to fly from them. He called Mick Dampy, and busied himself about the affairs of the farm for an hour or two. Standing on Knockclough, he folded his arms and looked around the domain over which Mr. Oliver Grindem held sway. He saw hundreds of acres along the mountain foot which were a rocky waste till the persevering toil of the poor tenants reclaimed them. The poor people were robbed of the fruits of their labor. And where were they now? God knows.

"No wonder," said Brian Purcell, "the strength of the old land is wasting away, and her children are wanderers and outcasts all over the world."

(To be continued.)

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