

making the gloom more gloomy and the silence darkly eloquent. Footfalls echoed and echoed till they seemed to die in the mortal atmosphere. The gaunt furniture shaped itself into bony gnomes, that stared at each other and nodded like solemn councillors. The very air seemed to be stagnant in superstitious awe.

By and by, the rain came down in torrents, and a strong wind from the north-east swept the mountain side, making the woods shriek in agony, and chasing the dense rain in broken columns all over the valley. The trees in the Park moaned and quivered; the great mountain behind rumbled; the castle walls seemed to totter like an aged man: the windows rattled, and through every ancient chamber the wind went singing its dirge.

The frightened servants huddled around the turf fire in the kitchen, heard through the raging storm, the low, thrilling wail of the *Banshee*; and as he sat by his father's death-bed, Gerald O'Dwyer could almost credit the superstition, so wild and plaintive a song sang the wind round Kilsheelan.

It was at such a time that a servant came on tiptoe into the room, and whispered in Gerald's ear that there was a woman below who asked to speak to him for a moment.

"A woman! And at such an hour! Who is she? What can she want?"

"I dunno that, sir. She wouldn't take her cloak off for the world, an' her voice isn't a bit like an ould woman's. She's very strange intirely, sir," said the servant, with a perceptible shudder.

Perplexed by the extraordinary nature of the visit, Gerald descended to the entrance hall, shrinking in a dark corner of which he found his mysterious visitor.

He was about to speak when the woman caught him gently by the arm, at the same time drawing aside the heavy hood which concealed her face.

"Cressy!" "Gerald!" passed from one to the other in low, startled tones.

In utter bewilderment, Gerald drew the frightened girl into an adjoining room, where she almost fainted away in his arms.

Tenderly he bathed the pale, frightened little face, and pressed the rain out of the bright golden tresses. He had not seen her for above a year, and he found her wonderfully changed from his little playmate—so changed that, but for his amazement at seeing her, he might have felt how deep into his soul were the wakening glances of her pretty blue eyes.

"Cressy, in God's name, what has brought you here at such an hour, and in such a storm?"

"Oh! Gerald, will you forgive me? It was very wrong of me, but indeed I could not help it," and the white face flushed crimson with confusion. "I could not bear to think you were in trouble and alone without coming to tell you how I pity you."

So earnest and artless was her tone, Gerald could not forbear kissing the lips raised trustfully to his, as he used to do in the olden time.

"Dear Cress! But what could have tempted you to choose such an hour?"

She hung her head confusedly.

"I knew papa would not let me go during the day, so I had only to borrow this old cloak from nurse, and when I went to my room for the night, I let myself down into the garden and slipped away down the road."

"But such a frightful night. Were you not afraid?"

"I was afraid—very, very much," said she shuddering. "I thought I would die of fright; but the thought of you dear Gerald, made me brave again. I hope you arn't angry with me, Gerald, are you?"

Angry with her! The words brought him back to instant recollection of his dead father, and of him whose persecution broke his heart. And this was his enemy's daughter! Gerald O'Dwyer had no personal resentment against Mr. Arslade; but he felt there was an impassable barrier between them. On Cressy's own account, he saw how necessary it was to end their intimacy.

It was not without a pang he tore his fond little comforter from his side; but he knew it was his duty.

"Why should I be angry with you, Cressy?" he said gently. "I am always happy when you are with me, and I wish dearly we could still be to one another what we used to be. But you must have heard that in a few days your father will be the owner of Kilsheelan, and I a homeless outcast—"

"Oh, I have heard it all!" she said, crying bitterly. "I know you ought to hate us very much—'twas so cruel—"

"Do not speak that way, dear child," said Gerald gravely. "I am not a bit angry with your father, and least of all with you, Cressy—"

"I know it!" she cried, her light spirit instantly recovering its buoyancy. "I knew you would not blame me, Gerald; but I was so