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The Mystery of Killard.

PART I.—THE RACE OF LANE.

CHAPTER XI. A NEW FATHER.

The little band of fishermen, led by Tom the Fool and Edward Martin, reached the prostrate form on the cliff.

"He's not dead, Edward Martin!" demanded Tom in quavering accents. "No, not dead; I feel his heart beating. Is there any blood on the clothes?"

While Martin was undoing the boy's collar and rubbing his hands, the men examined the child carefully. "We can't see any blood," replied Maurice Heffernan, son of Kitty Heffernan, a slender, tall, dark haired, ragged, unshorn man of forty; "and, as far as I can make out, there are no bones broken."

"The part of the down on which they had found the boy was about a quarter of a mile from the Bishop's." "Rub him well. Has any one whiskey?"

"Here!" cried Nat Barron, holding up a bottle in his blistered hand. Many of the boats carried small bottles of whiskey when they fished by night, to counteract the injurious morning chills.

Whiskey was scarce in the village, as there was no public-house. It had to be brought from Clonmore. It was seldom abused in Killard, and was regarded as medicine. But sometimes, when the men went to Clonmore, they indulged freely.

Martin poured some out of the bottle down the throat of the boy, and then watched him carefully. "He's coming to," whispered Heffernan, and, as he spoke, a shiver passed through the boy's limbs, and he looked up into Martin's face. Instantly he closed his eyes.

The Fool uttered a cry of joy, and, throwing himself on his knees, wrapped his arms around him. For this child the world had hitherto been that lonely island; the universe, the sun and moon and stars as they passed over his head; mankind, his father and the Fool, with—in the dim chambers of his early memory—the shadow of his mother. He had no knowledge, no idea of anything beyond. Sometimes he had seen men in boats beneath the cliffs, now and then the people had passed by the Bishop's, and stood a while to look at him.

But those in the boats and those on the cliffs were, like his mother, insubstantial phantoms crossing before his eyes to depart for ever. "He had a clear memory of Tom and his father carrying his mother away while he was desired to remain in the hut. His mother had never returned, and he was told she never should. They were even less substantial than his mother, for he could recall touching her, and she had been tangible and warm like himself. But those passing by were mere spectres without material existence, utterly irrelevant to him.

Now, who were those that bent over him? Other fathers; for they were not like his mother. Were there really other people material and warm to touch like his father? Would these people spurn him and send him away from them? What strange noises they were making, like and unlike the gulls and the curlews? Tom sometimes made such noises when sitting before the fire in the hut.

"Edward Martin," said Tom, after a pause, during which the breathing of the boy became more strong and his eyes remained closed; "are you going to stay here all day, or is anyone going to the Bishop's to see what is wrong there?" "Do you go on to the island and see. Let whoever likes go with you, the child is all right."

"But what will you do with my friend Lane's boy?" "Could he come ashore without his father's knowledge?" "No; the boy could not make the bridge. It takes a strong arm like Lane's to do that. You have a strong arm, Edward Martin, but you couldn't do it, for it wants a sure aim as well. You won't leave the boy here for that old shewolf?"

stand his new position. To be thus cared for and carried by some one he had never seen before filled his unformed mind with wonderment. "Was this a second father, with whom his future days were to be spent? His father of the island had banished him for ever. He was never to return. The sun was to rise and set, rise over the downs and set over the ocean, but never more was he to be on the island.

Had this strange man an island and a hut and hand-lines, and would he make awful noises in the hut, and then send him forth again? Then he began to wonder and regret. Why had he not clung to Tom? Tom would let no one strike him. Tom brought him sweet things now and then. Why had he not appealed to Tom? The Fool had gone away. At night how should it be?"

His thoughts now took another turn. But this man who carried him was as kind as Tom or his father, only he did not press him in his arms or kiss him. Maybe this man, after all, was to be a second father. His first father told him he could never return. He did not remember going to the island first. Perhaps to-morrow, when he awoke, he should find himself on another island with this man for a father; and, perhaps, he should never be able to recall how he came to that second island.

Edward Martin stopped a moment, shifted his burden, and with his hand drew the hair off the child's face as he resumed his way. The boy opened his eyes and looked up. Martin smiled, and patted the child's cheek with his hand. The little fellow smiled back, and, putting his arm round the pillar-like neck of his bearer, pressed him to him.

Martin stooped and kissed the boy's forehead, and then strode on with a lighter heart. This then was the new father. He had kissed him as the old one used long ago. Should he forget all when he awoke on this man's island to-morrow? That was now the only question.

When the fisherman reached his home he walked straight in. Mrs. Martin was busily engaged getting breakfast. She had just come back, after seeing the fish safely brought to Pat Casey's. She turned as he entered, and asked quickly: "Well, Edward, what was the matter? Anything wrong?"

"We don't know yet. We found the boy in a faint on the downs. I carried him over; here he is," setting him down. The woman recoiled slightly and grew a little pale. "David Lane's boy?" she cried, in tone out of which she strove to keep her shrinking dislike. "Is he hurt?" she asked, keeping her eyes fixed on the uncouth child, as he stood dazed by all he saw.

"I don't think he is." "But—but what are you going to do with him? Wouldn't Casey's be the best place for him until the men come back? You may get into trouble over the child."

In spite of herself, her dislike was now manifest. "This is the best place for him. No harm can come to any one for befriending an outcast that is without blame. In his godfather, and no one in the village has so good a right to do a turn for him."

The man was impressive and stern. He knew the doubts and fears which were filling his wife's mind. "But, Edward, don't you think—don't you believe there's something in what every one says about the Lanes?" she asked in a pleading voice.

"I don't know what everybody says," he replied with determination and a slight knitting of the brows. "I mean—I mean what they say in the village. You know there's something amiss with the Lanes."

Her voice trembled slightly. It was not often that Mrs. Martin expostulated with her husband, and now her manner was obviously one of expostulation. "What they say in the village will break no bones and does no harm, except to those themselves who speak ill of their neighbors. The boy is to stop here until the men come back with news; then we'll see what is to be done with him. Take the boy and wash him; he wants it badly, poor little fellow. After that we'll have breakfast. I am worn out by the night and this morning."

"Wash him!" she cried, starting farther back. "Wash him! Oh! Edward, how could you tell me to do such a thing? Think of our own child!" The man frowned heavily. He was slow to lose his temper. If his wife had never seen him in a rage in all her life, but something told her his anger would be terrible. He now looked as though the limit of his self-restraint had been almost reached. He struck the table a violent blow with his clenched hand, and fixed his dark eyes upon her.

"I am thinking of how I should feel if because of any foolish stories about you or me people treated our child worse than it she was a wild beast. Take the boy and remember that you are a mother, and that if God sent us our child, He could take her from us. Woman! you will make me angry if you stand there longer. Take the boy and treat him as if he were one of God's people, not a serpent."

There was a lott magnanimity in the man's indignation, and the woman was cowed and humbled. Catching Lane's son by the hand, she led him into her own room. When Tom and the fisherman came back, they found Martin, his wife, and little Lane at breakfast. The Fool had not been on the island, but he had attracted Lane's attention, and exchanged signals with him from the mainland.

To Tom's questions the dumb man's answer had been that he had cast off his son forever, and come what might the boy was never more to set foot on the Bishop's island. Farther he would tell nothing.

goodness to me. This was the house I knocked at, and my wife was then a young girl. This boy has been cast off by his father, and he is even more helpless than I was then, for his youth is in his way. I am the boy's godfather. I stood godfather to him the day he was born, and Father Murtagh called him John, after the favorite disciple. I will not let this house be less to him than it has been to me. I'll take the boy and do for him. From this out John Lane shall be as though he were my son. Sit you down, men; you are worn out. Sit down and have some breakfast with us."

He placed the boy on his knee, and offered him food. Suddenly, as the man raised a mug of milk to the child's lips, a thought struck the latter. He glided from his perch, and thrusting his hand into his pocket, discovered his clasp-knife was gone. He no longer felt any doubt. This was his new father. To-morrow morning he should awake on this new father's island, and, forgetful of all the past, bait his hooks and gaze at the sea, and weave patterns on the darkness with glowing figments. In time he should get a clasp-knife exactly such as he had lost, and when many seasons had passed he should come to love this new mother too, as he had loved the old; but for to-day he should think only of the old father, and how bitter it was to be sent away.

When all this flowed upon the child's mind, he covered his face and wept. CHAPTER XII. HIEROGLYPHICS.

The noon of that day was very warm; not a cloud floated between earth and heaven. The faint blue sky spread like a vast silver mist over the dreary road from Clonmore to Killard. The road was dry and sandy, few trees grew in the shallow soil, and sheep found scanty food in the short, brittle grass. Low, stone fences divided vast expanses of dull green pasturage, and as far as the eye could reach no hill broke the bald monotony of the landscape.

Mr. James Heywood and Christopher Cahill, on different sides of an outside car, had passed the tenth milestone, and were drawing near the village. They had been silent for a long time; at last Cahill spoke: "It's very hot, Mr. Heywood, but a day like this does one good." He was trying to extract some consoling reflection from the midst of his sufferings.

"Yes, a warm day does one good; the heat opens the pores, and thus the oxygenation of the blood is facilitated." "Is that it?" asked Cahill, who seemed to think that opening the pores might be very agreeable to those who knew all about them and the blood; but that for ignorant men it was best to have them closed, in a cooler atmosphere.

"And," continued the philosopher, "when the blood is oxygenated, the spirits improve, and the fancy is quickened." "Ah!" breathed the young man, turning anxious eyes in the direction of the village. "I wish we were there."

"Nature is the wisest of mistresses; she sends the heat in summer, when the air is dry. If we had this heat in winter we should all suffer horribly." "I'd leave the country, for one. But that can never happen?" "I'm not sure of that. You see, it all depends on the sun and axes. So long as things remain as they are, we are safe. But of late they are discovering, with those new powerful telescopes, such a number of new planets that the orbit of the earth may ultimately be blocked up, and we may be driven to travel by another way and at another angle."

"Then why don't the Government forbid them finding out more planets? It seems to me like daring Providence, to be always striving to get at the works by spying into the heavens at night." "Government could do nothing, and discovery must go on until the end." "But with this steam they ought to be able to do anything. I'm told this steam is a wonderful thing. I never saw any of it, but I heard accounts of it."

"Steam is a most wonderful thing, but quite powerless in this case. You, no doubt, believe the application of steam to be a modern invention. Nothing of the kind. It was well known to the ancient Egyptians." "Ah how?" "Yes, they were the most enlightened race at one time, and knew many things long since lost; for instance, the hieroglyphics? I dare say some one or other will get hold of them some day, if they only live to see it, which I hope we may."

Mr. Hill was straining a point to keep the philosopher in good humor. "They have got a key to them." "And maybe they're the Gipsies, between them and all their charms?" "Oh, dear, no! you are confounding the hieroglyphics with the lost tribes. That is a dangerous error, against which you cannot be too guarded. The hieroglyphics were a form of secret writing—writing by pictures. When a man wanted to write down the idea sun, he made a circle."

"And when he wanted to write down the idea of a roasting sun like this, what did he do, Mr. Heywood?" "To be continued."

A Shocking Story. The Edmonton, Man., Bulletin gives an account of the finding of a skeleton of an Indian boy, eight years of age, who last June went with his father, named Bluehorn, on a hunting expedition to Beaver Hills, near Fort Saskatchewan. The skeleton was in a standing position, with arms stretched out and the wrists tied to two trees. From the circumstances surrounding the affair, it is supposed the child, who one day was sent to camp by his father and never reached there, had been offered up as a sacrifice to secure good luck in hunting by some Indians in the locality, as they are in the habit of leaving pieces of cloth or trinkets as an offering to secure favors of their gods.

Miss Hyslop—"I was encored three times, wasn't I?" Mmc. Logee—"Yes; the company seemed to recognize that you needed practice."

She—"You tell your sister I meant to write her a note, but didn't." He—"Thanks. She'll be glad to hear it."

CATHOLIC CULLINGS. The greatest homage we can pay to truth is to use it. He has riches sufficient who has enough to be charitable. The man who keeps his word has no trouble in keeping his countenance. With most men life is made up of going into debt, and struggling to get out. God has two dwellings—one in heaven, and the other in a meek and thankful heart. The genius of a man is admitted more readily after he is rich than it is when he is poor. Do not watch for extraordinary opportunities of good action, but make use of common situations. To an honest mind the best prerequisites of a place are the advantages it gives a man of doing good. The average man takes up so much of his time talking about his ambition that he never has time to realize it. Sense be held in Jesus of Nazareth a man; intellect, a man endowed with supernatural powers; faith, the Word made flesh. As the thermometer tells the measure of heat or cold, so our sanctification goes on forward or backward, just in proportion as we mortify ourselves. It would make us all fervent if, when we go to the altar, we were to say, "This may be my Last Communion" or, in our confession, "This may be my Last Absolution."

The Council of Trent teaches that God never forsakes any one who does not forsake Him first; secondly, that if we forsake Him it is our own free act; and thirdly, that our own act is by our own free will, so that if we fail of eternal life it is by our own willful fault. Those that love God can never imagine for Him any perfection of love and tenderness which goes beyond the truth, or even reaches towards the exceeding depth of His compassion to those who love Him! God is a perpetual Object of loving contemplation; and as He is contemplated, He is more and more perfectly known with the knowledge which comes by the heart.

A father of the desert was one day asked in vision whether he would desire to see a soul more perfect than himself. He was carried to a poor home, where he saw a mother toiling for her children. It was a humble likeness of the Holy House, and under the roof were cares, anxieties, weariness, privations, labor, self-denials, glad submission of will, tenderness of affection, pity and service and filial piety to God. These things are a discipline of perfection, which subdue the heart and keep it humble before God and man.

It seems to me that some writers are disposed to lay undue stress on the amiable and tender qualities of Mary and of holy Christian women without dwelling sufficiently on the strong and robust points of their character. The Holy Scripture in one place pronounces a lengthened eulogy on woman. What does the Holy Ghost especially admire in her? Not her sweet and amiable temper or her gentle disposition, though of course she possessed these qualities, for no woman is perfect without them. No; He admires her valor, courage, fortitude, and the sturdy virtue of self-reliance. He does not say, "Who shall find a gentle woman?" but rather, "Who shall find a valiant woman? As things brought from afar and from the uttermost coast is the price of her." It is only heroic virtues, or virtues practised in a heroic degree, that the Church canonizes.—Cardinal Gibbons.

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