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The Interloper.

CHAPTER I.
Sheela Molloy had the enviable
reputation of being the prettiest girl
in all Lisnamore. The daughter of
a small and struggling farmer, her
face was her only fortune. Yet there
were dozens of men to envy Jack
Dwyer when Sheela consented to be
his wife. Jack was a fairly prosper
ous farmer, and the sole support of
his widowed mother. Young, hand
some and athletic, he was as much
admired by the girls of the parish
as Sheela was by the boys. 'Tis a
good girl he's gettin', the ancient
gossips would say, 'and well he
deserves her; like his father and his
grandfather before him, he is kind
hearted and neighborly.'

Jack's farm bordered on Molloy's
and he had many chances of meet
ing his sweetheart. Often in the
pleasant days of summer would he
fling down his spade or scythe and
jump the boundary ditch with a
hearty 'Good speed ye, Sheela,' to
the blushing girl, who, more by de
sign than accident, had wandered
there while in search of a wayward
duck or goose. And the bird would
be forgotten for hours, while the
young farmer whispered to his fair
companion the old sweet story of
love that should never end.

It is an old proverb, and perhaps
a wise one, that hasty marriages en
tail leisurely repentance. But cer
tain it is that if Jack had only acted
contrary to it the melancholy
events I have to narrate would not
have taken place.

He and Sheela had been engaged
about six months, and were soon to
be married, when Bellow Moore ap
peared—or reappeared—on the scene.
Moore was the only son of the vil
lage schoolmaster. Being rather de
licate as a child, his parents petted
and spoiled him. At school he had
no friends; his vanity and overbear
ing ways found no favor with the
simple peasant lads. The boy had
one redeeming quality—he was an
apt pupil. In a few seconds he could
master a problem that would puzzle
his mates for an hour. As a conse
quence, he was often at the top of
the class—and that did not tend to
lessen his unpopularity.

In his early teens Bellow Moore
showed signs of literary ability. He
took to writing topical verse, and it
found its way into the 'Poet's Cor
ner' of the local weekly. Old stories
that were told by the fireside he
licked into shape; and they, too, ap
peared in all the glory of print.
Publicity fanned the flame of his
vanity. His egotism grew intolerable,
and his acquaintances, although they
appreciated his writings, never
praised them in his presence. At
eighteen—chiefly through good luck,
and partly through his knowledge of
short-hand—he obtained a berth in
the office of a Liverpool daily.

In the letters to his father he
boasted of the fame and fortune he
was winning in England, and the
old gentleman proudly lent them to
the literate and read them to the
illiterate. When the news went
round that he was about to publish
his works in book form, the Lisna
more folk were agreeably excite
Writing stories and poetry for the
papers was an ordinary affair—half
a dozen youths and maidens in the
parish were doing it—but being
the author of a book was a great
and unusual distinction. The little
volume arrived in due course. It
received a favorable review in the
local paper, and was eagerly read
by old and young. Those who had
before withheld their praise openly
boasted of the fact that Bellow Moore
was a fellow-townsmen, and hoped
he would soon revisit home, so that
they might make amends for their
former apathy. Bellow, however, had
little love for his native country, and
was in no hurry to see it again. Four
annual holidays were spent in Lon
don, and it was only after an ab
sence of five years that he honored
Lisnamore.

Lisnamore rose to the occasion. A
bonfire blazed on the fair-green, and
the inhabitants turned out in their
hundreds to welcome their noted
townsman. Bellow, of course, had
never been lionized like that before,
but he took it as if it were an ev
eryday occurrence. His superior air
and condescending smile were simply
sublime.

He had changed considerably. The
brogue was gone. He spoke with
that strange, mongrel accent that
only the Irishman who is ashamed
of being an Irishman speaks. He
was much taller, and assumed a
scholarly stoop. The rustic ruddiness
had left his cheek. But he still re
tained most of his early good looks,
and had been less vain and effem
inate, no girl could have been
blamed for falling in love with him
at first sight.

Festivities were held in his honor.
After a sumptuous 'spread' at the
largest hostelry, the crowd repaired
to the neighboring crossroads for a
dance. The first partner chosen by
the hero of the hour was Sheela
Molloy. Perhaps it was because she
was by far the prettiest girl there.
It was a high honor, and Sheela was
fully conscious of it. There was a
flush of pride on her face as she
sailed around in the arms of the young
author. Jack Dwyer was present,
and he, too, felt pleased and hono
red. No pang of jealousy disturbed
his honest heart. He was never lea
sulous—he trusted his sweetheart, and
was glad when others paid a tribute
to her beauty.

The first dance over, Bellow
Moore complained of fatigue, and led
Sheela to a mossy bank, a short dis
tance from the crowd. The girl was

troubled with misgivings. Jack
would be wanting her for the next
dance. But, no! She could see him
over there talking to the fiddler and
laughing heartily.

Her companion began coaxing her
into conversation, but at first she
let him do nearly all the talking—
of displaying her ignorance. The
magn at her side was acquainted
with the ways of the world. She
wasn't. He was a great scholar. She
could barely write her name. His
speech was fluent and refined. Her's
was clumsy and ungrammatical.

After a while she felt more at
ease. The great man had come
down from his pedestal. He was
interested in little matters she had
thought to be far beneath his notice.
She found her tongue, and talked
about herself and her own affairs;
and Bellow Moore was an attentive
listener. She didn't feel the time
passing and was astonished when
Jack Dwyer came over and laugh
ingly informed them that the last dance
was commencing. She danced with
Jack, and then he escorted her home.
He thought her unusually quiet, but
said nothing—the excitement had up
set her, he decided. At the gate he
kissed her 'Good night' and wish
ed her pleasant dreams. His wish
was not realized. All night long she
lay awake with strange thoughts
running through her mind.

Bellow Moore had received many
invitations—some from well-to-do
people; yet on the second day of
his visit he went, uninvited, to Mi
chael Molloy's humble cabin.

Michael and his wife, poor souls,
were overwhelmed with embarrass
ment. If they had only known he
was coming they would have killed
and cooked a couple of chickens and
sent Sheela to the village for some
dainties. But Bellow set them at
ease by saying he disliked dainties
and luxuries of every description and
by flattering the frugal fare they
they placed before him.

He inquired for Sheela, and was
informed she was milking the cows.
Although warned that his patent
leather boots would be 'ruined en
tirely,' he betook himself to the
byre and helped to carry home the
flowing pails. He remained till
nearly midnight; and Sheela, at
least, imagined that no evening had
ever passed so quickly before.

After that he was a constant call
er at Molloy's cabin. His affability
endeared him to the old couple and
as for Sheela, she neglected her
fiance and devoted all her time and
attention to the new-comer.

Jack Dwyer, however, was loath
to complain. Moore's holidays
would soon expire, and Sheela was
merely trying to make things pleas
ant for him while he was amongst
them. That was Jack's opinion. Some
of the neighbors took a different
view, and warned Jack that
Moore was a dangerous rival; that
he was endeavoring to win Sheela's
affection, and seemed to be succeed
ing. But he was not to be convinc
ed of that. He trusted Sheela, and
would continue to trust her. So he
declared, time after time.

He soon discovered his mistake.
Having occasion to cross his neigh
bor's farm one evening after night
fall he, quite unexpectedly, came
across Moore and Sheela engaged in
earnest conversation. Their backs
were turned towards him, and they
seemed unaware of his presence. Not
wishing to play the part of eaves
dropper, he would have turned
away but that he heard his own
name mentioned. It was Moore who
was speaking. 'What a fool you'd
be, Sheela, to marry a man like
Jack Dwyer. A girl with your beau
ty and ability was never meant to
be the wife of a clod-hopper.' Jack
could listen to no more.

'You cur,' he said, and made a
rush towards his rival.

But Sheela threw herself between
them. 'Oh, Jack, you mustn't harm
him,' she said.

'Sheela,' said Jack, hoarse
'who is to be your husband—him or
me?'

Her eyes fell to the ground.
'I'm sorry, Jack, she said. 'I'm
going to marry Bellow Moore.'

CHAPTER II.
Father Brophy could scarcely be
lieve his ears.

'Has Sheela really consented to
marry you?' he asked.

'Certainly she has,' Bellow Moore
replied. 'Surely you don't think
I'm jesting, Father?'

'Oh, no. But it's strange—very
strange. She was engaged to Jack
Dwyer. Is he a party to this?'

'Sheela told him that she no
longer loved him and he released her
from her promise,' the young man
said.

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Rev. Father Morriscy

Jack Dwyer himself seemed the
least concerned of all. The blow
had fallen heavily upon him, but he
was dazed, and he did not realize
its full significance. 'She says
she loves him—why then should I
interfere?' he would say to the
neighbors when they expressed their
pity.

On the day of the ceremony the
little church was nearly empty, and
not a cheer was raised when the
happy pair set out on their long
journey to England.

It was not until Sheela had gone
away—the wife of another—that
Jack's sorrow really started. He
was a proud, sensitive man, and
disliked words of sympathy. For
that reason he tried to conceal his
grief. But his acquaintances could
not help noticing how changed he
was. Before his misfortune he had
attended all the social gather
ings in the neighborhood, and was
always the gayest of the gay. Now
he kept at home at night, and in
quisitive callers found him sitting
dejectedly by the fire, and some
times with traces of tears in his
eyes. In the fields he used to sing
as blithely as a blackbird. Now he
was sullen and silent, and had only
a nod for the passer-by instead of
the usual friendly banter.

Nobody sympathized more deeply
with Jack than Michael Molloy. Be
ing next-door neighbors, they fre
quently met; but for many months
after the marriage Sheela's name
was never mentioned. The old farm
er had tact enough not to rake up
so painful a topic. But one Sunday
morning, on their way to Mass,
Jack, with assumed indifference, in
quired: 'Any word from Sheela lately?'

'We get a long letter from her ev
ery week,' was the reply.

'Is she well—and happy?' Jack
asked.

'She is, thank God,' said the old
man fervently. 'She finds the city
a bit strange, but is getting used to
it.'

The next time Jack made inquiries
the answers were different.

'It's over a month since we had
a letter,' Michael said, sadly. 'I
hope there is nothing wrong with
the colleen.'

Every day Michael walked to the
post office, but the wished-for letter
was not there.

'It was a black day when Bellow
Moore took her away from us,' he
would say with a sob.

People began to whisper that Shee
la's married life was unhappy, that
her husband was treating her badly
and her ominous silence lent col
or to the rumor.

Had Jack been sure that his best
love was contented, he might have
overcome his disappointment. But
the fear that she was unhappy kept
his wound unhealed. It haunted him
night and day. He seemed to
see her in every dream, and her face
was always pale and sorrowful. At
work he could think only of her,
and the crops and cattle suffered in
consequence.

Finally, he sought forgetfulness in
alcohol. While under the influence
of liquor he went into company, and
was as gay and careless as ever.

The neighbors, although glad to
have him out amongst them again,
greatly regretted his dissipation. To
be an anchorite was bad, but to be
a drunkard was ten times worse.

'Tis a terrible pity,' they would
say, 'to see him takin' to the drink
—him that was always so sober and
hard-workin'.'

Had Sheela returned after an ab
sence of twelve months she would
scarcely have recognized her former
lover. Young as he was in years,
the bloom and vigor of youth had
vanished, and the grey hairs were
making their appearance. Like its
owner, the farm had altered for the
worse. Jack had been noted for his
industry and was looked upon as a
model farmer. Now he seemed to
take no interest in his work. The
crops were left in the ground till the
frosts of early winter ruined them.
The cattle were neglected, and in
stead of getting the highest prices
at the fair—as he often did—he had
to content himself with the lowest.

For the first time he found it neces
sary to pay the landlord with bor
rowed money, and the gossips of
the parish shook their heads sadly,
and predicted that Jack Dwyer
would soon lose the farm that had
been occupied by his family from
time immemorial.

CHAPTER III.
It was a pleasant evening in April
and the birds were singing sweetly
in the budding trees.

Half a dozen men, with light bun
dles slung over their shoulders, were
walking briskly along the road that
led from Lisnamore to the county
town. They were harvesters setting

hope of attaining it he will willingly de
nied himself every luxury.

CHAPTER IV.
At last the longed-for day arrived
when Jack and his companions in
toil were free to return home. It
had been a prosperous season to
Farmer Brown, and that gentleman
was in a cheery mood as he handed
each worker his hard-earned hire.

Owing to his strict economy, Jack
had as much as twenty pounds to
draw. He felt elated. The little
heap of shining sovereigns that he
had carefully wrapped in his hand
kerchief would give him a new start
in life. As he partook of his dinner
for the last time in the gloomy
'Paddy-house' he had hardly a word
to say—he was busy drawing up
plans for the future. He resolved to
work as hard on his own farm as he
had done on Brown's, and to trans
form it from a wilderness to a verita
ble Eden. The little white-walled
house should be renovated, and he
would have a neat flower garden be
side the door, same as all the Eng
lish cottiers had. Never again
would he touch the drink under any
circumstances. He had shunned it
now for six months, and felt young
er and stronger in consequence.

His pleasant musing was cut
short by a call from Brown. He hur
ried out, and met his late employer
in the yard.

'Look here, Dwyer,' the old farm
er said, 'I'm willing to give you a
permanent job. I want a reliable
man to look after the cattle during
the winter. You won't need to
work so hard as in summer, and,
besides, I'll provide you with com
fortable diggings in my own 'ouse.'

Jack politely declined to accept
his offer, and explained the reason
for doing so.

'Oh! I wasn't aware you had a
farm of your own,' Brown said,
'I hope you'll get over your diffi
culty, and succeed as well as you
expect. If you don't, come straight
to me. I'll give you a constant
tack any time.'

Having thanked him, Jack joined
his waiting comrades, and, with
light hearts, they set out on their
homeward journey. On reaching Li
verpool, they found they had a few
hours to spend before the boat sail
ed. Jack arranged to meet his mates
at the pier at eight o'clock, and
then went off with the intention of
taking a ramble through the city.

As he quitted Exchange Station his
heart was beating wildly. At any
moment he might meet Sheela. He
did not wish to speak to her; he
merely longed to see her; to know
if she looked happy or miserable.

For an hour he walked up and
down the bright, fashionable streets
eagerly scanning the faces of the
well-dressed folks who hurried along.

He glanced through the window of
every passing carriage, half expect
ing to catch a glimpse of Sheela and
her husband. But every face was
unfamiliar. Feeling fatigued, he took
to the by-streets, where he could
stroll leisurely, without being jostled
by a selfish throng. He reached
a third-rate music hall, and paused
to watch the long queue of people
patiently waiting for the doors to
be opened. Half a dozen young
women were improving the shining
hour by hawking fruit and cakes.

'Three oranges a penny—only a
penny,' one of them called out.
Jack started. There was something
very familiar about that voice.

He could detect the melodious roll
of the Munster brogue. With his
head awhirl, he crossed the street,
and looked at the orange girl's coun
tenance. His heart gave a great
bound—it was Sheela!

He staggered against the wall and
rubbed his eyes. Surely he must
be dreaming. He had expected to
see her in a carriage, dressed in fine
clothes. Could it be possible that
she was really earning her livelihood
in the gutter?

It was Sheela, undoubtedly, but
how different from the girl he had
loved and lost long years before. Her
face was still beautiful, but it looked
bold and cunning, and there was
a strange light in her big blue eyes.

For fully five minutes Jack stood
in the shadow of a doorway, with
his eyes on the girl who had al
most ruined his life. Had he found
her as he expected to find her—

(Continued on page 6.)