

A TALE OF IRISH COURTSHIP.

BY MARY E. MOFFAT.

A slight, girlish form moved to and fro to the monotonous whirr of an old-fashioned spinning-wheel. It was a pretty picture that Eileen made, from the mass of short, dark curls crowning her small head to the tiny feet pacing across the neatly-swept floor of the humble cottage. But, the sunny smile which usually looked out of the large, deep-set blue eyes, and lurked in dimples around the delicately-cut lips was no longer there. In its place was an expression of sadness, out of keeping with the winsome young face. Now and then, with an impatient gesture, she dashed away a tear which welled up, and hung, like a drop of crystal, on her long, shadowy lashes.

But, suddenly, every thought and emotion was merged into an absorbing vision of astonishment; for, a vision had come to the open door, and paused upon its threshold, which was, surely, too beautiful and dazzling to belong to one of mortal birth. It was that of a woman—dressed in a robe of shimmering, pale-green silk, trimmed with shining lace; and upon her way, yellow hair rested a hat of the same color, dotted over with gleaming spots of gold, as was also the drooping white plume which curled over its wide brim.

After one startled, wondering glance at the apparition, Eileen made her escape from the room, scattering, in her hasty flight, the snowy piles of carded wool placed near the wheel.

The intruder looked after her for a moment, with a surprised, merry light in her bright eyes; then she entered and quietly seated herself, to await the return of the fugitive; and, soon, Eileen, not hearing any sound, stole softly to the door and peeped in, meeting, to her great dismay, a glance from the great violet eyes of the resplendent being inside, who beckoned to her to come near.

Much as the girl stood in awe of this evidently supernatural visitant—probably, (she thought) the queen of the fairy realm—she dared not disobey the call; so she came slowly forward, and stood, with bowed head, awaiting her pleasure.

"Why did you run away?" asked a sweet, ringing voice. Eileen dropped a frightened courtsey as she stammered: "I'm not used to fairy folk, your ladyship, and—"

With an amused smile, — as the cause of the girl's flight was thus made clear to her—the visitor said: "How do you know I belong to the 'good people'?"

With an awe, admiring look up into the lovely young face, and down over her rich dress, Eileen answered: "Sure it is easy to see that. None but one of that sort would wear a kirtle sprangled over with stars, and a feather on her hat whose shadow gleamed with sunshine. Though I thought before that the tallest of them was no higher than my thumb; and you are as big as I am."

"Why were you crying when I came in?" "Everything has gone wrong," answered Eileen, with a sudden quiver in her voice. "Father's sheep were bitten to death by a dog; our three cows took sick and died; and Bridget O'Connell says I shall marry Kathleen, the rich miller's daughter, — and Brian was my lover — that's why I was crying my heart out."

"If a lover is false, one is well rid of him." "But Brian's not false. He wants me to run away with him to America. But I'll not bring a curse upon him; for, disobedience to parents is a deadly sin. I'll never speak to him again unless his mother begs me to do so."

"That is the right spirit, — if you can only carry it out. I suppose you'll take up with some other fine lad, and so punish the mother by making her son unhappy?" Eileen turned one flashing, indignant look upon her questioner. Then she recollected herself, and answered, humbly: "I'd not have the heart to do that. I'd sooner lie down and die than have Brian think me false."

"How rich is the young man? Can you tell me?" "Oh, he's as rich as anything! Let me see," pausing, and counting on her fingers, until she had ascertained herself that she was right. "There are six cows and twelve goats, and no end of hens and chickens, and a patch of land. Oh! Brian is rich!" "And you—what have you?" "I've just my two hands—nothing more!" and Eileen held up the dejected members with a deprecating gesture, the rosy, dimpled palms upwards.

of little value, unless she could gratify a wish, you shall see a cow at your door to-morrow morning. But, you must do as I say, and buy the stuff for the making of a white dress, and have it all ready to put on by this time next week. I shall send you an invitation to a grand moonlight festival; and no one knows what might come of it, if you should attend. The Fairy King himself might put his powers at your service. Good-bye, and with a smile which warmed Eileen's heart, like sunshine, her unknown guest departed.

As Eileen looked after her, as she stepped lightly across the meadow, she raised her hand to her eyes to shade them from the light and satisfy herself that she saw truly. She had caught a glimpse of a snow-white palfrey, and of a tall figure dressed in dark livery, with yellow facings, decked with gilded buttons and with high boots reaching to his knees. Bending low, he offered his hand for the tiny foot of his mistress. A light spring, and the next moment horse, rider and attendant were hidden from sight by a sudden bend in the road.

As Eileen returned to her work it was not to be wondered at if, for a time, the yarn played her strange tricks of tangling and breaking. But she cared not. Her mind was too full of what she had seen and heard for her to be impatient; and after a while she succeeded in spinning a thread so fine and even it would have answered for the clocked hose of royalty.

A few miles from Eileen's home stood a fine old castle, the property of the hereditary lord of the soil, from a time dating back far into the past. It had been unoccupied for several years, the present owner being a man who loved scenes of brilliancy and splendor, and so had preferred to reside abroad, leaving his ancestral domain to the care of his steward.

Now, however, great preparations had been made to celebrate the return of the family. Carpenters, masons, and upholsters had been in force, at the "Castle," for weeks. But Eileen had been too much engaged with the trouble and trials of her own little household to have had any part in the festal preparations.

One morning, at her door appeared the same tall, grave being, in dark uniform, set off by gay facings and bright buttons, who had led up the snow-white palfrey to his mistress, and had assisted her to mount. He handed Eileen a perfumed note, with a monogram, surmounted by a coronet, stamped upon one corner, and said: "My mistress requests you to be at the castle, at five o'clock, on Wednesday."

"Is it in the morning or the evening?" asked Eileen, timidly, conquering her awe of the majestic personage. "Not holding the key to her thought that a fairy-ring meeting ought to be at the witching hour of midnight, the man gave her a wonderful stare. The girl said: "My lady would not be apt to receive company at sunrise. You are to come in the afternoon."

Eileen watched him until he was out of sight. Then she kissed the dainty note and laid it away, unopened, among her few treasures. She could neither read nor write, its delicate tracery was as unintelligible to her as so many cabalistic symbols. But the messenger's verbal invitation was clear, and her heart throbbed with almost painful excitement as she thought of it. It was truly an awesome thing to be asked to a fairy queen's festival!

She had bought and made the white dress, as commanded; and when she had concluded her simple toilet, using for a mirror a spring of clear water which had widened into a crystal pond at the rear of the cottage, she hardly recognized the graceful maiden it reflected back to herself. On her way to the castle she exchanged nods and smiles with many groups of acquaintances bound in the same direction. Many an admiring rustic cast a glance at the young lady, who had been dressed in her simple but tasteful robe of white, with no ornament save the band of white ribbon which confined her dark curls.

Brian and his mother were among the throng, and his black eyes sought her face, reproachfully, as she went on without deigning to notice him. Her sensitive pride had been too deeply wounded for her to allow the old mother's keen eyes to see a trace of the real feeling which filled her loving heart. Most to bursting, so intense was her longing to hear Brian's voice once more say, in its soft, deep tones: "Eileen, my love, I love you!" So she counterfeited but too successfully the opposite extreme, and poor Brian almost wondered if it could be the same Eileen whose rosy lips had been pressed by his own at the time of their betrothal—that happy period, now, alas! so far distant.

The guests had all come, from far and near, and were gathered in the great banqueting hall of the Castle, when a sudden murmur swelled through the assembled multitude. A stately gentleman had entered, with a young and exquisitely beautiful girl leaning on his arm. The young man, dressed in a shabby dress of azure silk, whose trailing folds swept the floor in a long train. Sparkling gems glittered from a rick necklace which clasped her round throat and scintillated from a butterfly ornament quivering in her golden hair. It was Lady Winifred, the youthful lady of the house.

Lady Winifred's heart was brimful of romance, and although her life had been spent amid the frivolities of fashionable society, she was passionately fond and proud of her native land—of "Erin's Green Isle." It was solely to gratify his only child that her father had returned to the Castle; and it was with a face flushed with innocent pleasure that the young girl listened to the enthusiastic greetings of the company.

She had dressed for the occasion with more care than if she had been going to a court-ball, with an instinctive knowledge of the admiration of the rustic class for glistening silks and gleaming jewels; and very fair and flower-like looked the refined young face, as it rose out of the cloud of pale blue, and smiled acknowledgment.

During all this time Eileen had stood as one in a maze—the truth gradually dawning on her that her fairy queen was veritable flesh and blood—even the young heiress, Lady Winifred, whom she had fancied to be far away in foreign lands. The truth was that, the very morning after Lady Winifred's arrival, that impulsive young woman had donned her rich riding habit, and accompanied by a groom, had ridden forth to obtain an idea of the country. Attracted by the picturesque look of a little shelling,—which, almost hidden by roses, stood just on the other side of a meadow—she had dismounted, giving her attendant directions to ride on to the shelter of a group of trees, and await her, while she went upon an investigating expedition to the cottage.

Eileen's mistake with regard to her identity had so well suited her romantic nature, that she had entered into the part thus allotted to her with keen enjoyment. Now, however, she had another role to enact—that of peace-maker.

During the evening, Eileen received a summons to a private interview with Lady Winifred, who received her with a beaming smile, and said: "I have invited you to my festival, according to promise; and now I am going to make your heart light by reconciling you to your lover. Come in;" and Lady Winifred went to the door connecting with another room, and motioned to a party waiting aside. It was Brian and his mother, who had entered in obedience to the order of the paramount young lady, the latter said, turning to Bridget O'Connell: "I would like to signalize my coming home to the dear old Castle by making a pair of trousers for you."

"I will give this girl as much live stock as will match what your son has; and I will furnish her house, and give her a store of linen which will cheer her the envy of every farmer's wife around. What say you? Shall they make a match?" "It's a fine offer, and worthy the pretty lips that said it. May you live long, and may your husband be worthy of you!"

Brian's eyes were fixed entrancingly upon Eileen. Her face was averted. He made an impulsive step towards her. "Eileen, my love, I love you!" he whispered, "can you forgive and forget?"

"At the sound of his dear voice blood rose and burned like a crimson rose in each cheek, but still she made no reply. Then the old mother went to her and laid one skinny hand upon her slender wrist. "Do not refuse to make my lad happy," she said, humbly. "He's after breaking his heart this many a day for a kind look from the girl he loves; and many's the time I've sorely repented the share I've had in makin' his trouble."

Then Eileen turned to her lover. "Ah," she said, with a bright smile, "if I did not love you so dearly I would make believe a little longer. But I am too glad!"

Household Notes.

PURE MILK.—The last word seems never to be said about the care needed in the purchase of milk. For cleanliness, only milk that has been run through a separator should be used. This wonderful machine, revolving 6,000 times a minute, removes several pounds of foreign matter per each 1,000 pounds of milk, even after several strainings through a cloth.

When young with but little pruning, where extraordinary precautions are taken, the amount of sediment is not so great, but the statement is true of the product of the average dairy. Milk so treated has the cream entirely separated from the milk, and both are absolutely free from dirt. The two may be re-mixed afterwards, if desired. The separator does not, of course, remove germs, which are likely to be in any milk that is not taken from absolutely healthy cows. The best milk companies exercise great care to prevent the use of ensilage—fermented green cornstalks, leaves, etc., stored in great kais and fed to the cattle. The writer, who has seen it now pretty generally asserted,

injury to the milk. It is certain that milk produced from ensilage-fed cattle has caused serious intestinal troubles in young children. A case known to the writer was that of a young child attacked with dysentery, the trouble while living on the milk of one cow, whose feeding was carefully overlooked. Rigid investigation, however, disclosed the fact that the animal had broken out of her stable and gained access to some fermented corn. The child's trouble promptly disappeared on temporary change of milk, and was not reproduced by a return, later, to the use of the milk from the same cow. Nearly six months afterwards a similar attack in the same child was traced to the carelessness of a new farm hand, who had thrown some musty, spruce-infected corn into the cow's supply of hay. The responsibility of the corn as the trouble producer seems plainly indicated.

BEEF SUET. — A correspondent contributes to an exchange some useful suggestions concerning the use of beef suet for frying. In her family the methods which she recommends have been in use for twenty-five years. In cold weather, when beef is at its best, twenty-five pounds of suet are bought, this is sliced and packed into kettles, and allowed to melt slowly. As it melts it is strained through a fine strainer into a stone jar, the amount stated as being a three-gallon crock and providing sufficient fat for a year's use. One day will finish its preparation. For frying, allow the fat to become hot enough to light a match. In this way doughnuts, fish, croquettes, etc., will be absolutely free from any fatty taste, if drained on soft paper, blotting or butchers' paper. After using the quantity of suet for frying, slice into the hot fat—a slice at a time until the surface is covered with a knife-blade. Allow the be as thin as first prepared makes. Then strain the whole through cheese-cloth or strainer-cloth, and let it stand over night. In the morning scrape the sediment from the bottom of the fat, and the suet is ready to be used again. Treated in this way after frying, the suet can be used many times. This method of clarifying is recommended for any fat. The correspondent further states that the suet as first prepared makes the best sort of pastry, and a kind, too, that a physician asserts "will not hurt a child." The pastry requires a pound of suet and a pound of a quarter of a pound of butter. The suet should stand overnight in a kitchen to soften; and in the morning, in a chopping-tray, beat the suet with a fork till it looks like beaten white of eggs. Add two or three teaspoonsful of salt, and little by little, the flour, and it is ready to be used.

NOTES FOR FARMERS.

Although pruning trees may be successfully done at any time of year, says the Ottawa "Free Press," the present month seems to be the best season, for several reasons. When the woods are frozen there is no danger of pruning, and the growth of a tree is enhanced by trimming it when in a dormant state. On the other hand, when a tree is in full foliage any interference has a weakening effect. Summer pruning causes fruit production at the expense of the wood growth and should be resorted to only in the case of large, old trees, and then great caution should be exercised. Whenever trees are cut the healing never takes place until June, and when large branches are removed there should be a portion left on the trunk, or the cut well coated with paint. All branches over an inch in diameter should be treated thus to prevent decay. Old trees should be carefully treated in this respect.

It is a fallacy to claim that pruning trees is working against nature, because there is always a surplus growth of branches that will die for want of nourishment if not lopped away. The remains of a dead limb is a great eyecore on a tree, which could be avoided by timely pruning. The best principle is to begin when the tree is young, giving it light annual pruning, which may be done by the shears. When the tree is allowed to produce large superfluous branches it suffers a great strain on its life. Trees will not form a handsome head when young with but little pruning, but when the foliage grows dense and the inside wood dies. The matter of pruning is neglected and improperly done more than anything else pertaining to fruit culture. Every kind of fruit needs a different kind of pruning. Some trees will do with an occasional heading in, while the same treatment applied to many other varieties could produce a perfect bush heap.

The Central Experimental Farm has devoted much attention to pruning. A low head, that is, allowing the trunk to be about two feet high, is found to be the best for this part of the country, although in Western Ontario fruit growers

keep their trees growing with trunks four or five feet high. Many trees at present on the farm have such trunks, but those now being propagated are made low. By this method it is thought that the trees get more protection and are able to bear the crop better and are not so much influenced by winds. This method is recommended to fruit growers, and Mr. Macoun, horticulturist, thinks it would be the best for Western Ontario. It is considered that branches growing so near the base prevents approaching the tree for cultivating, but it is not necessary to go near the tree, as the feeding roots of large trees extend far out on both sides. It has been proved at the farm that trees planted for ten years with low trunks have succeeded better than those with others.

Professor Macoun recommends March or April as the best season for pruning a tree, because the farmer has most time then. He asserts also that he believes, having the knowledge of experiments carried out in the United States and farm, that it does more harm when the pruning is done so far as the health of the tree is concerned. The great advantage of pruning in the spring or early summer is that the wound will heal more quickly than if done in autumn. If the wound is not painted or covered with some substance, rot sets in after cutting a tree which is in a dormant state. Of course, March pruning will not cause this, as growth starts soon enough after to prevent it.

An area of 21 acres, known as the forest belt, which surrounds a portion of the Central Experimental Farm, is kept under cultivation with the object of aiding and interesting the farming community of Canada. Observations are made to find out how long it takes trees to reach a certain height, the rapidity of growth of each variety, the proper distance apart to plant to get the best results, and their value for breaking the wind off crops grown in their vicinity. During each year the height of a large number of trees in this belt is taken, which data will furnish valuable information when the time arrives to re-forest Ontario, which is thought by the horticulturist to be not far distant. It has been found that much depends on the way in which trees are planted and the proportion of thick and thin foliaged kinds there are in the belts. For instance if a farmer plants a few acres of ash, expecting to reap a large crop in 25 or 30 years, it is likely he will have to expend a great amount of labor to bring them to perfection, because the ash is a thin foliaged tree. By mixing some thick foliaged trees such as box cedar, maple and other sorts, planted as a cover crop for the ground, to prevent the growth of weeds and to obtain a proper forest condition, he will be able to get the best conditions in the shortest time at the least expense.

Of late there has been inaugurated all over Canada a vigorous movement towards securing from the government protection of the forests. Prince Edward Island, which is a level province and was once covered with forest, is now suffering for want of trees to protect the crops from the destructive winds that sweep over the land. The people are agitating for such provincial legislation as is in Ontario and Quebec for the protection of trees. It is claimed that forests regulate the climate to an important degree for vegetation and also controls the moisture. When spring comes, where there are no trees, the ground is at once deprived of its moisture and the crop suffers a lack of due nourishment. The experience in European countries shows that fertile slopes become barren wastes with the disappearance of forest growth in the vicinity. The health-giving qualities of the forest is also a matter of great consideration. Before departing for Europe last summer, Professor Macoun, Dominion horticulturist, in a letter to Rev. A. E. Burk, a lecturer on the subject in Prince Edward Island, said: "Whenever and wherever you can, preach the preservation of your woods. If the protection of your forest is removed I fear that fruit growing there will not be nearly so successful as it promises to be."

It is asserted by a scientist that a full grown elm gives fifteen tons of moisture to the air, and shows its importance in agricultural districts. The apple contains 85 per cent. of water and consequently an orchard requires much moisture. At a meeting of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association it was shown by an apple grower that the never suffered an off crop in his orchard. He used a great wind mill to water his trees regularly. The same thing could be accomplished by surrounding our orchard with trees in abundance.

A WARNING TO SMOKERS.

A medical penetration in the United States thus melancholy pictures the sad results of indulgence of the weed. He says: "Tobacco, being a narcotic, has first a soothing, then a depressing effect—the very opposite to alcohol

—so that if smoking is long continued, without the use of stimulants, the deadening effect on the brain and nervous system is apparent, as the smoke is condensed and absorbed by the saliva.

Even when frequent expectoration takes place the blood is more or less poisoned, and the brain, which should, under normal conditions, be very susceptible, becomes deadened and inactive for a time, but may be partially restored by a stimulant containing phosphates.

Such stimulant is frequently taken by men at a convivial party by taking some wine or spirits, which counteract the depressing effects of the nicotine of tobacco.

I am of the opinion that the effects of tobacco and cigarette smoking are far more serious during the last thirty-five years of one's life than during any previous period, for the simple reason that the people have been deprived of their nerve and brain forming phosphates by the modern habit.

I have positive proof of the fact, in numerous instances, that where excessive smoking and drinking has been the daily habit that by the simple change from an innutritious to a more nutritious and sustaining diet the patent has gradually and almost unconsciously been enabled to reduce the number of cigars or cigarettes and the number of glasses of whiskey per day, and that without any prescription of prohibition, for the simple reason that the increased strength of body and brain enabled him to so employ his time that he forgot all about the smoking or drinking.

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