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A Sore

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MARCELLA GRACE.

By ROSA MULHOLLAND.

CHAPTER XL INISHEEN.

The interior of the home at Inisheen (the little Isle), consisted of a few rooms and passages all on the same floor. The outer walls were of a great thickness, the chimneys stout and low, the windows small and square, the porch strong as a little tower, having two doors, one on each side, to be opened or shut in turn as the wind shifted. Set as it was in the middle of the wind-haunted lake, it had the look of a little fortress, and such it was to the inhabitants when they stood siege in it against the wintry elements. The three or four acres of green turf which surrounded the dwelling and sloped towards the rocks were studded with clumps of low growing trees and bushes, and a thick mat of ivy clung to every wall of the house from base to eaves. All varieties of sea birds, gulls, puffins, curlews and wild geese, came in their nests in the rocks, or came in long flights from the sea, which, though invisible from Inisheen, was not far away, and their shrill cries and pipings as they swept the lake like trails of mist gave notice when there was a storm at hand.

There were only two living-rooms at Inisheen, and the drawing room walls were two-thirds lined with books, the shelves for which had been set up by Bryan himself, when stress of circumstances drove him, with his mother, to put into the little island as a harbor. A few eastern rugs on the floor, some material of the same kind draping the short, deep-seated windows, with a pretty supply of foreign ornaments and curiosities, gave elegance and color to the little interior, where fire as well as lamps burned on that summer night as a protection from chills and damp, which, dropping down from the mountains and exhaling from the lake, might be seen any time from dark till dawn floating like wreaths upon the bosom of the waters. A harp stood in one corner of the room, and among the few pictures which the bookshelves had left space for on the walls were an engraving of Robert Emmet, speaking in his own defence upon his trial, and another of the old Irish House of Commons, containing a multitude of small figures, many of which were portraits. Marcella was sitting at a table, turning over some precious etchings; Mrs. Kilmartin was reclining on her couch, her eyes eagerly following the movements of her son, who walked about the room while the conversation turned on the future treatment of the discontented tenantry of Distresna.

Mrs. Kilmartin was a small, slight woman, looking more like a withered child than a woman who had matured and grown old. She was all white from head to foot except for her blue eyes and pink lips. Her hair was snow-white and dressed prettily on the top of her head, her face was delicately pale, and her gown and shawl were both of some soft white woollen material.

"We are not responsible for bringing her here, Bryan. Mrs. O'Kelly confided to Father Daly, and Father Daly carried her off here at once to me. We have laid no plot to influence her movements. She is twenty-one years of age and capable of managing her own affairs. And indeed she has shown aptitude for the business and some originality in striking out a course for herself. My dear, will you tell Bryan what we have already been about?"

Marcella put aside the etchings, and leaning her elbows on the table, and clasping her hands under her chin, looked towards Bryan with a frank smile. She felt instinctively that he was less likely to identify her with the Liberties girl, so long as she smiled, for she had observed that it was generally when she looked grave or sad that he turned those puzzled inquiring glances on her which conveyed to her keen apprehension that the scene of his introduction to the secret closet was present to his mind. On that eventful night of his concealment, Marcella had certainly not smiled at him. A patient courage, an uncomplaining mournfulness had been expressed then by the eyes and lips which were irradiated now with a steady gladness which was by no means assumed. For, still lost as she was in delighted surprise at the change of fortune that had transferred her to this peaceful, refined and romantic home, and placed her as a centre of interest between her hero and his mother, smiles came to her more naturally than they had ever done before in the course of her short life.

"I have been visiting my people with Father Daly," she said, "not, however, as their landlord, but only as a friend of his. I begged him to let me make their acquaintance first and try to gain their good will before announcing myself as the future receiver of their rents."

"A happy thought," said Bryan, watching eagerly all the changes of her animated face. "And how have you found them?"

"I have only visited a few as yet. Father Daly is to come for me to-morrow again. In some of the cabins the people were as sullen and reserved as they looked hungry and poverty-stricken. In other places I thought them too civil. They seemed to distrust a stranger, even though she accompanied Father Daly. But in several cases I think I made my way as a friend. Miss O'Flaherty had told me that unless I gave them presents and made them great promises they would hate me. I gave them nothing and promised them nothing, yet, I

think, I shall be welcome to some of them when I go back again."

"I do not doubt it. The free-masonry of human sympathy is hardly known to Miss Julia O'Flaherty. It is only too well understood by our poor Irish cottiers. I am glad you have made so good a beginning, Miss O'Kelly. That you should understand the people you have to deal with by personal experience rather than take them for granted through the counsels and representations of others is just what is most desirable for you. It is better for you to follow neither in my steps nor in Miss O'Flaherty's steps, but to make original footprints of your own. Not every one is capable of doing so. It requires both heart and brains, though most people think all that is needed is a rent-extracting machine. Indeed, so strained and warped from the true uses have the relations between landlord and tenant become, that even at the best a landlord's is hardly a desirable position. For my own part I have gradually withdrawn from it till I find myself now as little of a landlord as possible on the acres my forefathers owned, and for this I thank my forefathers themselves, who, as some irreverent wag said the other day, sold my birth-right for a mess of pottage, and, figuratively speaking, gave their souls for a fox hunt. Not that I am an enemy of the hunt; on the contrary; but there are more ways than one of breaking a man's neck by means of the sport. I will show you to-morrow, Miss O'Kelly, if you and Father Daly will give me a seat on his car when you are going your rounds, the house in your humble servant was born, once a jovial house, an open house, a reckless, rack-renting house as any in old Ireland. The roof is now falling in, and the chimneys extend their cold arms to heaven as if crying out against the ruin that has descended upon it. Only that I had a mother—well, you will know my mother by-and-by—who preferred a straight conscience and simple living to ancestral halls and all that kind of thing, I should at this moment be patching at that family roof tree, and sending the smoke of unholy feasts up those gaping chimneys. As it is, we have slackened rein on the necks of our tenantry, and in many instances given them the bit in their own teeth. We have here in this island sanctuary set up our few remaining household gods; and as in our case it was not too late to mend, we have enjoyed infinite peace since we ceased to hold up our heads among the great ones of the earth. Our plan has worked well, I think, though I do not pretend that in trying to do what is best for my people, I have succeeded in satisfying them all. In every community there is more or less of a sinister element which blows like a contrary wind against the prow of all well-meaning efforts. However, I have been content to struggle on in the teeth of such difficulty, remembering how the demon was first evoked in this country, and knowing how hard it is to lay a demon, once he has been evoked. Remembering, too, how early in life I myself was misled with too much ardor and cherished a delusion, and had almost descended—"

"We will not speak of that," said Mrs. Kilmartin, with a swift motion of her hand.

"No, we will not speak of that," said Bryan. "I already owe Miss O'Kelly, an apology for my egotism. My only excuse is that I have been led into it through my anxiety for her in her present position. She is placed as I was, somewhat, and is called on to act. I hope she will neither have to run the risks I have run, nor miss her opportunity of doing whatever good she may. I feel that she ought to have the benefit of every one's experience."

"I have already had several varieties," said Marcella. "First, poor Miss O'Kelly instructed me carefully from her point of view, next Miss O'Flaherty gave me a great deal of information, as did also Mr. Flaherty, during the day I spent at Mount Ramshackle. From Mrs. Kilmartin I have heard a great deal that has placed my difficulties plainly before me; and now Mr. Kilmartin—"

Bryan wondered why she smiled at him so incessantly while she spoke, and in the fascination of her smile he now almost forgot the subject of her speech. He did not know that it was to guard his secret, or rather her own secret knowledge of his secret, that she smiled, dazzling his eyes with bright glances so that he might not see behind such glamour the melancholy Marcella of the Liberties.

"She must be happy here," he thought. "She must be feeling happy with us. Would to God she could always stay!" and then almost shocked at the vehemence of this wish, which was a revelation to himself, he answered quickly:

"I hope you will use all these experiences only as so many lamps to guide your way. I have no doubt your own womanly instinct will find you a path for yourself which nobody has trod before you."

But after they had separated for the night, and all the lights were out in the house, he walked down on the rocks where there was always a murmur of music at night, a faint sweet clashing of sounds in the air, even when storms were still, a mingling of splashing water, whispering reeds, and the cries echoed from shore of wild birds, among the rocks, or riding late on the circling waves that girdle Inisheen. And as he went he thought:

"An impoverished man, one perhaps fatally marked by misfortune, to think of taking possession of the future of a creature so full of life, and freshness, and promise? No, I must not dare to dream of her."

Marcella, meanwhile, followed him with her thought, and asked herself what was that evil from which he had with difficulty been saved, of which his mother would not suffer him to speak? And holding fast the ring round her neck, she fell into a troubled sleep.

CHAPTER XLII. DISTRESNA.

He who has never ridden on an Irish jaunting car, a tidy little car with good springs and cushions, drawn by a fast trotting horse, has not travelled so along Irish hilly roads or through Irish green boroens—has missed one of the pleasantest sensations in life. No other vehicle mounts the rugged hill so boldly and easily, and rattles down again so joyously into the hollow of the capricious highway or by-way. No other vehicle affords such easy opportunity for friendly chat between two travellers who sit well back on either seat of the car, leaning towards one another with each an elbow on the "well" cushion. But it is almost as difficult to those not to the manner born to sit a jaunting car as to sit a horse. A certain almost unconscious grasp with the knee and poise of one foot is necessary to give the rider that birdlike sensation of skimming through the air at will which is so utterly unknown to people who drive in carriages.

Father Daly, Bryan and Marcella, all being to the manner born, pursued their way through the hills as lightly as the breeze blew, till, at a turn of a road, a poor woman suddenly appeared and, courtesying in the middle of the path, requested Father Daly to come with her on a sick call.

"Well, and who is ill now?"

"Oh, yer reverence, it's the ould man himself."

"Are you sure he hasn't got the toothache like the last time I went and found him bravely?"

"Oh, sorra fear, yer reverence, but he's bad this time. It's convulsed altogether he is, an' not expected since 6 this mornin'."

"Over-eat himself, I suppose," said Father Daly, in a tone that gave a pathetic meaning to the seemingly heartless words.

"That's about it, Father Daly," said the woman, understanding.

"I believe he's ready for the road, so. Poor Barney was always a good warrant to love God Almighty," said the priest, solemnly, using the idiom of the people the better to make himself understood.

"True for you, Father Daly, but ye see the terrible state of the politics has druv his prayers a bit out of his mind, an' he's off his religion this while back. An' though I don't mane rightly to say he doesn't love God, still he doesn't pay him much money to Him the way he used to, yer reverence, an' he doesn't insinuate after Him."

"Well, well, I'll go and talk to him a bit, and we'll make that all right again," said Father Daly.

"I'm going off here to a place up the mountain where the people live chiefly on air, and sometimes it disagrees with them," he added, to Marcella. "Sometimes it disagrees with them," he repeated, muttering to himself, as he slid gently down from the car, being no longer of an age to jump off.

"Do you mean that it is a case of starvation?" asked Marcella, eagerly. She knew enough of the pains of want to be quick at guessing what was meant.

"Something of that, something of that. What I would call the slow hunger if I were a doctor could invent a new disease; not a new one either, but one that belongs to Ireland, as cholera belongs to the East. There now, that will do," as Marcella took a little basket from the well of the car and handed it promptly to Pat. "And now, Bryan, my boy, take the reins yourself and finish the drive, and you can call for me at the Windy Gap when you're jogging homewards. If I'm there an hour too soon it does not matter. Sure I've my breviary in my pocket, and I couldn't read my office in the middle of fine scenery."

And the priest and Pat having set off up a footpath slanting along the face of the overhanging hill, Kilmartin and Marcella continued their journey together.

In spite of his self-warning of the night before, Bryan felt a keen delight in the chance that had given Marcella to his sole keeping for several hours. As they spun along the level roads or walked slowly up the steep hills, the thoughtful look on his face relaxed, and his eyes shone. They two were alone in the brilliant weather, among the blue mountains, breathing the freshest, most exhilarating breezes of heaven, and he found the solitary companionship surpassingly sweet.

Nothing draws two spirits, if they are already sympathetic, more closely together than to be placed side by side in some impressive solitude of nature, where under her spell all that is noblest and best in one heart rushes to meet what corresponds with it in the other. Dropping his well-grounded presentiments of coming misfortune behind him like a mantle that impeded his course, Kilmartin went forward through the sunshine with something of the feelings one would give to a soul newly and unexpectedly arrived in Paradise.

As wild, subtle and penetrating as the odor of the mountain heather on the wind that filled his nostrils was this influence which overmastered his melancholy humor with its potent delight. Yet so strong was his habit of reserve and self-control that the only sign of the new joy awakened within him lay in the swift changes in his eyes and on his mouth as he flicked with his whip and looked up the emerald hills and braes, and away into the infinite glories of sky and

highland ahead, thrillingly conscious of the nearness of the fair face half turned to him from the other side of the car, yet only allowing himself an occasional glance at it. At last on the top of a hill he stopped the car, and said:

"Now, Miss O'Kelly, if you will stand up for a few minutes, I will show you the lie of this side of Distresna with regard to the lands near it—my own and Mr. O'Flaherty's. I say my own, for though almost all that we can deserv from here has passed from my hands into those of peasant proprietors, it is the most precious of all my possessions—I look on it as the very apple of my eye. I am watching with I cannot tell what eagerness to see how the scheme will work."

"Up to the present how has it worked?" asked Marcella, who stood on the footboard of the car, holding the rail with one hand, and with the other shading her eyes from the strong sunlight as she gazed down into the variegated valley in the direction indicated by Bryan with his whip.

"Look through this," he said, giving her a fieldglass, "and your own eyes will suggest the answer. To this side, where you see white walls and new thatches, and here and there the absence of offensive heaps by the door, and the beginning of general neatness about, there are some of my small peasant proprietors. Over yonder where you see smoke coming out of the hill-side through an old broken basket—that is Distresna, and you will find many of your tenants burrowing thus in the earth, like moles."

"Why?"

"Because, they will tell you, (that is, if they have courage to speak) that the traditions of the country and all the experiences of those who within their own memory have made the trial, go to prove that any one who makes a show of decency and neatness in his dwelling has his rent raised without fail, before he has had time to reap any benefit himself from his own improvements, and only that he may be forced to clear out and make room for a richer tenant."

"But you had not—you would not have treated them so!"

"I am sorry to say that in my father's time it was done, and they naturally expected me to act like others of my family and class. I found them quite unbelieving and unmanageable on the old lines. On the new ones—well, already, the best of them look on me as their friend."

"And yet, does it not seem a pity to let the old relations of landlord and tenant quite die out?" said Marcella.

"It seems to me such a good relation if every one did his duty."

"With an 'if' what duty man do? Take the universe to pieces and rebuild it again," said Kilmartin. "Unfortunately men of doing their duty, and think more of forgotten places like every owner of a few hundred acres has been accustomed to look upon himself as a sultan. As for myself, I thought the matter out and put it thus: many men have probably had as generous thoughts in the beginning of their career as those that come to me. How do I know that later in life I shall not have become so attached to some form of selfishness or other that will show me things in a different light from that in which I see them now? I will put it out of my own power to be a persecutor of my fellow-men, even with the most plausible reasoning on my side. I confess that a hereditary liking for the position of landlord has stood in my way, and, even now, if I can possibly save the mastership of the remnant of my property, I feel that I will do it. But not unless I can by this means effect as much improvement as by the other. I will have no slaves living under my rule."

Marcella did not reply. In her heart she leaned to the side of landlordism. It seemed to her that it ought to be so easy for the rich and powerful to take care of the ignorant and poor. She, herself, in her consciousness of a state of general ignorance which she innocently thought must be very peculiar for one in her position as a lady, felt ever inclined to turn to those above her in education and rearing for example and guidance. She was aware, too, that her exceptional experience of the tribulations of the poor ought to give her (when educated, as she now hoped to be), a particular advantage in the efforts she might make to raise the condition of those over whom she had been so strangely and wonderfully placed. She felt a strong desire to try her own powers of working good before throwing the reins out of her hands that had as yet hardly grasped them.

"You do not advise me to follow your example, to turn my tenants at once into peasant proprietors?"

"I advise you to do nothing till you shall see further for yourself. For one thing, many of your people are incapable of becoming proprietors until the present state of the law of purchase is amended. You have to lend money, a certain proportion of the money (to buy your own land) to your purchasing tenant, and afterwards take a mortgage on your own land (yours no longer) as your only security for payment. In almost all cases this is what I have done, and at the present moment I find it anything but an enriching procedure. In reserving a part of my property, stopping my sales, I act under necessity, as I have no money to venture, and so feel no scruple at persisting in the role of landlord, to a certain extent. For the rest we shall see. Now, Miss O'Kelly, at which of these underground edifices do you wish to pay a visit?"

By this time they were wending up a by-road, so rutty and uneven that they had to alight, and walk, one on

either side of the horse's head, while the car jolted over stones and into hollows.

"I want to see a Mrs. Conneely who lives about here. I talked to her on the road the other day and promised to come to see her. Ah, there is the young man who was with her. This must be the place."

A shock head was protruded from the hole under the hill, and a voice said: "Sure it's the young lady herself, that's come to us. Me sowl! but I knowed she wasn't wan o' the forgettin' sort!"

At the same time the wall of an infant in pain was heard from the underground cabin.

"Is the baby not better?" asked Marcella of the owner of the shock head, who, having withdrawn it for a few moments, put it forth again.

"Musha, it's in heaven any betterment 'll be that is for it," said the lad, pulling his wild forelock as he stepped out of the hole and invited the lady in. "Only don't for yer life tell that to the mother o' it, Miss."

Marcella could at first see nothing in the cabin, for the smoke which the basket in the chimney-hole failed to carry successfully aloft, but presently she descried a woman on her knees before a kind of cradle made of a *cléede* (turf-cree), set upon two long dry sods of turf, and heard the reiterated words, half a carress, and half a moan of agony:

"*Acushla machree! Acushla machree! Acushla machree! machree!*"

TO BE CONTINUED.

A Love Letter.

He hurried up to the book-keeper as soon as he entered the hotel and inquired eagerly:

"Any letter for me?"

The clerk sorted out a package with a negligent attention that comes with practice and flipped a very small one on the bar. The traveling man took it with a curious smile. He smiled more as he read it. Then, oblivious of others present, he laid it gently against his lips and actually kissed it.

A loud laugh startled him.

"Now look here, old fellow," said a loud voice, "that won't do, you know. Too spoony for anything."

Said the traveling man, "That letter is from my best girl."

The admission was so unexpected that they did not more until they had eaten a good dinner and were seated together in a chum's room. Then they began to badger him.

"It's no use; you have got to read it to us," said one of them. "We want to know all about your best girl."

"So you shall," said the one addressed, with great coolness. "I'll give you the letter and you can read it for yourselves. There it is, and he laid it on the table."

"I