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THE BANKS OF THE BORO.

By Patrick Kennedy.

BOOK I—THE PLACE AND THE PEOPLE.

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

'After a lapse of what seemed two hours, but which, I suppose, did not exceed twenty minutes, I was blessed by the sight of my darling hastening to me. How lovely seemed her flushed face, how graceful her figure, and how dear was the grasp of that hand, not pressed for four long weeks. Our conversation for the ten or fifteen minutes that her mistress and the fates allowed, consisted of broken sentences, but how much did it exceed the most eloquent language that ever fell from the lips of orator. One thing, however, was resolved on; to live much longer apart was simply intolerable. So when the next two months came to an end, Eliza would proceed to the old town of Gougue to visit a young girl who was now living in the same house with her, but was about leaving, with whom she had formed a tender friendship.

'It was settled that on a certain day we should meet at 'The Iron Forge,' and proceed together till I should see her safe with her friend, with or near whom she was to live openly as a Catholic for a twelvemonth; and then we could be married without perilling the safety of the officiating clergyman. So the awful engagement was made. We could see nothing in the future but enduring love and fidelity; and objections of parents, fear of poverty, disagreement, all vanished from the enchanted circle in which we existed for the time. In speaking this way of mutual feeling, I can, of course, only be certain of my own, but still I am thoroughly confident that my love is truly shared and returned. As she could not well prolong her stay without risk of discovery and blame, we strove to give each other that courage which neither of us felt, and at last parted with very heavy hearts.

'Ah! how dreary seemed the homeward road after the pleasurable excitement of the first half-hour!—that road now rendered more dreary by the drizzling rain that fell on me unrelentingly for fifteen miles. I was soon soaked to the shirt, and my feet were in an uncomfortable state from wet and mire. How I pity a pin maker or a handicraftsman who has but a mere mechanical process to occupy his hands, while his mind is insensible to any healthy action of any kind.—While performing that weary and monotonous journey, I felt some, but only some of that mental dreaminess, for my mind rested with pleasure at intervals on the late interview, and anticipated the happiness of the coming fine long day, when we could enjoy each other's society without fear or doubt.

'Still the rain beat on my face, and my powers were diminishing, and every mile seemed increasing in length. I left behind me in succession, Enniscorthy, which I passed through after nightfall, the Daphney, Scobie, the steep hill of Moneyhore, the furzy valley and mill of Dranagh, the village of Courtnacuddy, with the sparkles flashing from the door of Jem Behan's forge, through the soft, heavy rain. Nothing was now left to overcome but the level strip of road to Rathphelim, and the remaining short trip; and welcome was the light shining through our kitchen window, when I was near home. I fear I made a very indifferent return to the warm reception given me by my mother and Theresa.—I strove to say a motley of my accustomed prayers, and got into bed at once, leaving my wet clothes to the care of the women. A deep sleep fell on me the moment I was at rest, but I was roused very unwillingly from it in about a half an hour to take a slight supper. I got through the operation half asleep, and was again wrapped in forgetfulness, which endured for nine hours. On awaking I experienced the feeling of one who finds himself aroused after a sleep of three weeks, and feels that a wide chasm has separated him in the interim from human interest. I was conscious of having passed through a state of mental anxiety and bodily fatigue, but all distinct memory of the incidents of the past day was for a moment beyond my grasp. By degrees consciousness returned, and with it a deep feeling of depression.'

CHAPTER V.—A SOCIAL EVENING MEAL.

We were now upon Castleboro bridge, looking down upon the troubled and rocky course of the river, the fir-covered hill, down which we had come, being on our right, and on the other side of the stream the mill and comfortable dwelling house of Mr. Grabam, steward of the estate. One road here went westwards, parallel to the Boro (a young wood lying on the slope between road and river) till it joined the Bunclody and Ross high road. On the other side of the bridge the way stretched eastwards through Courtnacuddy to Enniscorthy. A landscape painter had the materials of a good picture here if he took

his stand a field or so up from the bridge, with his foreground of *inch* and stream and browsing cattle, light warm mass of stone and earthy bank in and about the bridge, and the lawney scarp cutting, where the grove towers above the road, relieved by the dark green and brown of the firs, and these again so well contrasted with the sotted looking foliage of the ash-trees on the mill-side of the river.

Here I would have parted from my friends, but Bryan insisted on Edward and myself spending the evening at his father's; and Charles Redmond, just then passing homewards to Courtnacuddy, was obliged to be my companion, a young boy who accompanied him undertaking to satisfy our parents as to our whereabouts.

We accordingly proceeded to Bryan's, the conversation becoming general. And now the considerate reader is called on to excuse any further map-making on this occasion for something like the reason given in a song composed by one of the Cloughbawn students. Alluding to the abode of the heroine, he thus concluded his lay:—

'It is not my intention her honored name to mention,

For fear many suitors might come
To supplicate her favor, and view her habitation,
Like Penelope, both morning and noon,
From the top of Mount Leinster her mansion you might see,

Between the river Boro and the lofty bill of Brie;
Were I to gain her favor, from all trouble I'd be free,
And expire in yon valley so green.'

My old schoolfellow has nearly strained his poetic license in this instance to the very point of tearing. From the relative positions of the mountain and plain, I would defy even a poet, unless aided by a special good telescope, to discover the lady's abode. There would be some shadow of probability if he had substituted Brie itself, or Eabeenahoun, or Vinegar-hill, or Cooliah, or even Blackstairs, but then the poetry would suffer. So let my friend obtain indulgence; he did not intend to instruct little boys and girls in geography.

I will only add that the farm steading was of the usual country fashion. Built on a slope, a browsing stream ran below, and a bushy hill rose on the opposite side. A snug little orchard and cabbage garden and haggard lay at the rear of the dwelling, the barn, the cow house, and stable, which inclosed three sides of the spacious lawn—the fourth being bounded by a low wall, with a gate in the centre.

In the circle of my country acquaintance, Mr Roche, senior, was the gentlest, the most equable, and the most really pious character I had ever the good fortune to know. He bore but a very moderate share in the evening conversation round his hearth, being often absorbed in mental prayer. His face was the index of the calm and peaceable soul within. I have never been able to imagine how he and his robust, sturdy, well-looking wife, came to put their necks under the same yoke. It may, however, be supposed that youth, and the natural wish to please, and the inevitable ignorance of wives and ways of the other sex, from which young courtiers suffer, had some influence in the matter.—We knew them not till several years after marriage, when character and manner had assumed a confirmed form and direction.

The house was furnished with what would be called in town the first floor, or attic, there being but one such flat over the good level clay floor; but in our little world it was 'the loft.' It was approached by a flight of stairs in the corner of the kitchen, and the recess under the same stairs was found very convenient for the stowing of pots, keelers, and other utensils.

We were ushered into the parlor on our arrival, and welcomed by the hearty and hospitable mistress, and found assembled Mr. Roche senior, the juniors of the two families, and Mrs. O'Brien and Theresa, to whom our stout-built school fellow was so tenderly attached. Edward, and Charley, and myself were hopeful of his affection being returned; but the lady was of reserved habits, and though we were certain of her firmness and constancy to any resolution once made, we were also aware of her caution in forming such resolution.

I would be glad to give my readers a lively picture of her as she then appeared to me, with the serious character of her sweet features enlivened by the sight of her true-hearted lover; but it is now many years since I saw her, and the hints and outlines of her countenance have become dim on the tablet of my memory. I can only present her as having her abundant dark brown hair tied at the back of her graceful head in the mode of antique Greek statues and Irish country girls; her forehead smooth and round; her eyebrows and eyelashes dark and finely formed; her eyes large, and with a serious and tender expression; her cheeks with oval contour and slight tinge of color; nose straight; mouth and chin such as you, my young friend

would wish to see gracing your betrothed, voice low, demeanor gentle and reserved, and dress, that of the farmers' daughters of our province.

I have been looking out for some time for a face among my Dublin acquaintance that might enable me to put some living touches to this picture, but have not succeeded. I have also examined some portraits, and lost my labor.—Coming lately through Westmoreland street, I stooped to look at the 'Nymph of the Ocean Wave,' 'The Wild Wood-rose,' 'The Hourie of the Harvest Home,' and other delicately featured beauties gracing the fronts of music pieces; but felt assured that these well colored sketches bore no resemblance to any individual beauty that ever breathed. So I console myself with this reflection, that were I to paint Theresa's countenance in words, with the most patient exactness, neither Smith, Hayes, Lover, Rothwell, nor Burton would depict her likeness on canvas, ivory, or paper from my labored and futile efforts. Some years since, indeed, I saw in the Hibernian Academy a nameless portrait by Catterton Smith; I wish I was the owner of it. I would get it engraved for a frontispiece to this book, and omit my washy verbal likeness. There was the same combination of sweet features, and the mild and almost melancholy expression of the whole countenance; but Theresa's face was not always sedate, and was seldom melancholy. On occasions when some well meant effort of Bryan to give her pleasure, produced only a ridiculous result or when some piece of waggery was executed by Redmond, how silvery was the laugh, or how sweet the smile dimpling over the lovely features, just like the ripple on clear waters.—My own private opinion, which I will not enforce on my gentle readers, in this matter is, that when voice and countenance correspond, the laugh of a beautiful woman is the sweetest music in the world.

I felt certain of my friend's good fortune if (as I hoped) her heart was interested in his favor. I was aware of her good qualities as daughter and sister, of her unassuming manners, true piety, and goodness of heart; and was ready to guess at her constancy and depth of affection where it would be bestowed, and her power of enduring the ordinary trials of life with patience and submission. The greeting between my big school mate and Mrs. O'Brien was very cordial; but he approached Theresa with diffidence, and the ordinary salutation and shaking of hands was accomplished with some awkwardness on both sides, in the proportion of four parts to the gentleman's account, and one to the lady's.

Though it was harvest time, there was a fire in the grate, as the season was partially wet, and as the room was not in daily use, and the floor was clay. A heavy, round oak table occupied the middle of the parlor, and it was soon charged with plates heaped with fresh, hot wheat cakes split in the middle, and the insides well provisioned with butter. There was no opportunity for that dreadful state of weariness in which, as I have read in novels, great people are enveloped during the short period that precedes dinner, for Mrs. Roche and her maid were occupied in fitting out the tea table; Mrs. O'Brien was lending a helping hand; Theresa was requested to preside over the tea pot, and Bryan and Edward were quite ready for the office of handing round the plates and tea-cups. Ah, what a shock some grand ladies would receive could they but 'let into their delicate imaginations' the quantity of cream and sugar that was consumed.

Now, as all of our company were better used to good strabot, and potatoes and milk, for their ordinary daily fare, they enjoyed the present festival as much as a Dublin citizen does his occasional roast wild-fowl, real turtle soup, and champagne; or as fine ladies and gentlemen do a breakfast at an open-air party, with their admirers by their sides. If any subject of discourse was started, or story begun to be told, there was no end to the interruptions, arising from cordial pressing on the one side, and modest excuses on the other, or exhortations to the young men to be more alive to their duties—exhortations very needless, indeed, as far as Bryan was concerned.

Mr. Roche, senior, having known H. W.'s relatives of Coolcut, with whom he abode while he and his two comrades were practising 'book-keeping' and 'prison bars' in Shanowel, was enquiring about themselves and their affairs, and information was given about them in a very fragmentary style, somewhat in this fashion.

CHAPTER V.—A UNITED FAMILY.

H. W.—So the two brothers Murphy were married to my father's first cousins, Peggy and Polly K., and all lived together in the old manor house at Coolcut, as you go from Taghmon to Goff's Bridge. In process of time—

Mrs. Roche—I think it is time for the tea to be drawn. Bryan, will you lay the tea-pot before Theresa, and fill it, and don't spill any of the boiling water on her gown or your own shoes if you can help it.

Bryan runs in a fluster to execute the wel-

come order, and, by good fortune, does not scald any one.

H. W.—An increase coming in the two families, and the laborers and servants being many, they built up a partition, and pretended to live apart. Ah, what a loving pair of families they were. Things were not at the worst till the marriages of the grown up children, for then they had to remove, one to the south fence of the orchard, the other to the west end of the great barn. Now, one of the brides being from the barony of Forth, and a thrifty dame by right of Barony she was, and the very reverse of her new connections in disposition. She did not at all understand how her husband could coolly walk into the 'big house' after his day's work and dawdle there for an hour, while herself and her two little children seemed clean and clear forgotten. Often and often had she to send across the orchard for Denis when her patience was too far tried.

Mrs. R.—How often have I to ask you, Edward, to make yourself at home, and take your tea and cake as if you were welcome?

Edward (in a reverie).—'Deed, ma'am, I was just then thinking of Scollagh Gap—(recollecting himself)—I mean I was thinking of an old hospitable Duffrey woman. When the potatoes were putting down to boil, she would always cry out, 'put more in the pot; maybe some one is coming down Scollagh this minute as hungry as a hunter.' This was pretence; the reader will know to due course the train of ideas that had conveyed him to that locality.

H. W.—Often would Peggy say, 'Oh dear, was there ever such a man! Instead of being glad to get home to his wife and children after his day's ploughing, off he makes to his mother, and brothers, and cousins, that he ought to be tired of long since, I'm sure.' All was useless; the evening gatherings went on as usual, till after several threatenings, she really left the house at last, and went home to her mother's, where she would never return, unless Denis reformed his sauntering habits, and gave his own family more of his company. What was her vexation next evening, when driven back by the strong feelings of wife and mother, to find Denis pleasantly rocking one child that had been lately weaned, and singing 'Tie Colleen Bawn' to the other, who was sitting on his knee, and nestling in his bosom; especially as he exhibited neither pleasure nor displeasure at the return of his life's partner. 'Ah, you unfeeling man!' said she, with tears coming down fast, 'you hadn't even the good-nature to your children to follow me and bring me back to them.' 'By the life, Peggy,' said he, 'I was getting quite comfortably into the knack of house keeping. I think if you had staid for a day or two more you might have kept away altogether. She had thought that she was badly off before, but this completed the measure of her wroongs. She had a terrible struggle with her resentful feelings, but love for husband and children prevailed; and she afterwards quietly submitted to her fate. Well, it was not a lot to be despised after all. Denis never said a cross word, nor did an actual unkindness to her; he was inattentive on occasions, that's all, but he always valued her good-nature and thrifty qualities. If she had entered more into the circle of family affections, and endeavored to take an interest in their traditions, he would have valued her much more.

Mrs. Roche.—What a poor creature your Mrs. Peggy was! if I had been in her place for one week without teaching Mr. Denis his duty to his wedded wife, I'd never ask to show my face at fair or market while I lived!

Some of the company here took a passing glance at the lady's helpmate, but the unruflled face showed that his feelings had received no shock. Indeed, while he left his mistress full rule over her own department, and a little beyond it, there were points on which his word was law; and if a case of morality or religion was in question he was firm as a tower.

Theresa—Bryan, will you please to hand over your father's tea cup?

Mr. Roche.—First tell me how many I have taken; I forgot to count them. 'Two small ones only.' Oh, in that case you may give me another. While Harry was telling us of my old friends the Murphys, I was reflecting how we ought, in our transactions, to take our neighbor's feelings and interest into account as well as our own.

Margaret Roche (a child of ten)—Oh! I wish the wheat would be matty every year; how sweet it makes the bread taste.

Edward—I can sympathize with you, Peggy. I remember when Bryan and myself were looking out for your grandfather's death, to have the glory, pleasure, and excitement of a wake.

Mrs. O'Brien—That reminds me of poor Shan Eagrreen, that is 'taken very bad,' and lying at Pether Mor's; he can't hold out long. I'll engage there are some notes and guineas quilted in his old clothes, whoever has the courage to handle them after his death!

Redmond—Shan was eating his breakfast in Father Roger's kitchen in Tomaneary one morning, while the Priest was reading his office by the aid of his spectacles at a little table. 'Ah, then, Sir, honey,' said Shan, 'what is the use of them glasses?' 'Don't you know well enough, Shan, that they make the letters look big?'—'Musba, then, maybe you'd lend them to a body if your Reverence please.' 'And what could you do with them, Shan, if I did?' 'Ah, then, sir, wouldn't I make these pyaties look as big as I could, for they're mortal small as it is.' So the poor priest was defeated, and something more acceptable to Shan than the small potatoes, was ordered for his repast.

Mr. Roche—Poor Shan! he has suffered as much from cold, and hunger, and trouble to put by this board, as saints and martyrs to secure their salvation; and now, unless for God's mercy, his dying thoughts will be occupied with this useless dirt, and none can be spared for the safety of his poor soul. May he avail himself of God's goodness, which never deserts us to the latest moment of our lives; and may we all learn to value worldly things at their proper worth.

The attention of the simple, devout man now seemed for about half a minute as abstracted from the company and the conversation, as if he was completely alone; for owing to the constant exercise of mental prayer, it was a matter of the most ordinary occurrence with him to have some passage in the life of our Saviour, or a vision of heaven, or death, our judgment, so present to his imagination, as to render him insensible to the presence of the surrounding persons or objects.

CHAPTER VI.—MASTERS AND WORKMEN.

Redmond—I suppose that if a part of school business lay in the education of our consciences, there would be fewer injuries done, and more indulgence shown to other people's feelings.—Mrs. O'Brien, if I only knew where Sleevreen, your cottier man, and his friends, Murthen Coal and Shemus Fadh, went to school in their youth, I'd take care not to send my own children (when I happen to have any) to their schoolmaster's son. Ah, if you had been in the big kitchen at the castle, one cold day last winter, when the three were called in to clear out the ash pit! They were so delighted with the ease of the task and the agreeable warmth of the place, and the opportunity of talking to the servants as they passed to and fro, that I am sure the owner of the castle was not half so happy for the time. When a shovelful of the dry ashes was to be raised, they first took a lazy hold of the shovel, and then sloped in after a due pause to a proper angle with the floor, and rested it on the edge of the pit. A vigorous push sent sunk the blade half way in the dry heap, and the operator took a glance round the many-sided room, and indulged in some sly jest, or paid a compliment to pretty Biddy Foran.

'Recalled to the business on hands, the shovel at the next stage was driven home, and after some ingenious manoeuvres, was at last transferred full of ashes to the basket. Ah, the thieves! I'll never forget the office they forced on me last winter, and the way I got, or properly speaking, was pulled out of it. Mr. Larkin gave me in charge to settle the boundary walk in the old castle lawn, the work being near the Col-laght road, and in full view of the castle, looking across the lake. The three heroes I was speaking of were placed under my command, after they had stuffed themselves with the finest black potatoes, roasted at the big fire in the old garden, and the best of new milk which they had cajoled out of the dairy girls. Well, the gravel was there in heaps, and the implements ready, and I requested the three old boys to commence like Trojans. 'Talk is cheap, my fine fellow,' says Sleevreen. 'How could any one preserve his health if he went to work so soon after his meals? If them thoughtless girls had even put out some water into that fat milk they gave us, we'd be the lighter for business, but it can't be helped now; and if we were to go labor hard we'd maybe get a fit of sickness, and not be able to do our duty to 'the master' for many a long day! long life to him! You need not look so contankerous, you little jackanapes. If you know when you are well get up in that tree, where you'll have a full view of the castle.—You'll see when the old gentleman gets on the pony to go his morning rounds, and then you may waken us up. Be the laws, if you don't make more haste we'll give you a cobbing, and I think you know how pleasant that is.'

Mrs. Roche—Pray, Charley, how do they cob an offender?

Charley—They draw the trousers very tight round the thick part of the thigh, and then slap the swelled muscles with all their force. Mrs. Roche, your arms are none of the puniest. [The lady appealed to exhibited part of a well rounded white arm, which fully bore out Charley's encomium.] If Bryan ever takes it into his head to despise any neighbour's child that you know to be good enough for him, and offer to go a court-