LORNA DOONE

B. R. D. BLACKMORE.

CHAPTER XXVI

JOHN IS DRAINED AND CAST ASIDE

His lordship was busy with some letters, and did not look up for a minute or two, although he knew that I was there. Meanwhile I stood waiting to make my bow, afraid to begin upon him, and wondering at his great bull-head. Then he closed his letters, well pleased with their import, and fixed his bold broad stare on me, as if I were an oyster opened, and he would know how fresh I was.

"May it please your worship," I said, "here I am according to order, awaiting your good pleasure."

"Thou art made to weight, John, more than order. How much dost thou tip the scales to?"

"Only twelve-score pounds, my lord, when I be in wrestling trim. And sure I must have lost weight here, fretting so long in London."

"Ha ha! Much fret is there in thee! Hath His Majesty seen thee?"

"Yes, my lord, twice or even thrice; and he made some jest concerning me."

"A very bad one, I doubt. His humor is not so dainty as mine, but apt to be coarse and unmannerly. Now, John or Jack, by the look of thee, thou art more used to be called."

'Yes, your worship, when I am with old Molly and Betty Muxworthy."

"Peace, thou forward varlet! There is a deal too much of thee. We shall have to try short commons with thee, and thou art a very long common. Ha, ha! Where is that rogue Spank? Spank must hear that by-and-by. It is beyond thy great thick head, Jack."

"Not so, my lord; I have been at school, and had very bad jokes made upon me."

"Ha ha! It hath hit thee hard. And faith, it would be hard to miss thee, even with harpoon. And thou lookest like to blubber, now. Capital, in faith! I have thee on every side, Jack, and thy sides are manifold; manyfolded at any rate. Thou shalt have double expenses, Jack, for the wit thou hast provoked in me."

"Heavy goods lack heavy payment, is a proverb down our way, my lord."

"Ah, I hurt thee, I hurt thee, Jack. The harpoon hath no tickle for thee. Now, Jack Whale having hauled thee hard, we will proceed to examine thee." Here all his manner was changed, and he looked with his heavy brows bent upon me, as if he had never laughed in his life, and would allow none else to do so.

"I am ready to answer my lord," I replied, "if he asks me naught beyond my knowledge or beyond my honor."

"Hadst better answer me everything, lump. What hast thou to do with honor? Now, is there in thy neighborhood a certain nest of robbers, miscreants, and outlaws, whom all men fear to handle?"

"Yes, my lord. At least I believe some of them be robbers; and all of them are outlaws."

"And what is your high-sheriff about, that he doth not hang them all? Or send them up for me to hang, without more to do about them?"

"I reckon that he is afraid, my lord; it is not safe to meddle with them. They are of good birth, and reckless, and their place is very strong.

"Good birth! What was Lord Russell of, Lord Essex, and this Sydney? 'Tis the surest heirship to the block to be the chip of the old one. What is the name of this pestilent race, and how many of them are there?"

"They are the Doones of Bagworthy forest, may it please your worship. And we reckon there be about forty of them, besides the women and children."

"Forty Doones, all forty thieves! and women and children!" Thunder of God! How long have they been there, then?"

"They may have been there thirty years my lord; and, indeed they may have been forty. Before the great war broke out they came, longer back than I can remember."

"Ay, long before thou was born, John. Good, thou speakest plainly. Woe betide a liar when so I get hold of him. Ye want me on the Western Circuit; by God, and ye shall have me, when London traitors are spun and swung. There is a family called De Whichehalse living very nigh thee, John?"

This he said in a sudden manner, as if to take me off my guard, and fixed his great thick eyes on me. And in truth I was much astonished.

"Yes, my lord, there is. At least, not so very far from us. Baron de Whichehalse, of Ley Manor."

"Baron, ha! of the Exchequer—eh, lad? And taketh dues instead of His Majesty. Somewhat which halts there ought to come a little farther, I trow. It shall be seen to, as well as the witch which makes it so to halt. Riotous knaves in West England, drunken outlaws, you shall dance, if ever I play pipe for you. John Ridd, I will come to Oare parish, and rout out the Oare of Babylon."

"Although your worship is so learned," I answered, seeing that now he was beginning to make things uneasy; "your worship, though being Chief-justice, does little justice to us. We are downright good and loyal folk; and I have not seen, since here I came to this great town of London, any who may better us, or even come anigh us, in honesty, and goodness, and duty to our neighbors. For we are very quiet folk, not prating our own virtues——"

"Enough, good John, enough! Knowest thou not that modesty is the maidenhood of virtue, lost even by her own approval? Now hast thou ever heard or thought that De Whichehalse is in league with the Doones of Bagworthy?"

Saying these words rather slowly, he skewered his great eyes into mine, so that I could not think at all, neither look at him nor yet away. The idea was so new to me, that it set my wits all wandering; and looking into me, he saw that I was groping for the truth.

"John Ridd, thine eyes are enough for me. I see thou hast never dreamed of it. Now hast thou ever seen a man whose name is Thomas Faggus?"

"Yes, sir, many and many a time. He is my own worthy cousin; and I fear that he hath intentions——" Here I stopped, having no right there to speak about Annie.

"Tom Faggus is a good man," he said, and his great square face had a smile which showed me he had met my cousin; "Master Faggus hath made mistakes as to the title to property, as lawyers oftentimes may do; but take him all for all, he is a thoroughly straightforward man; presents his bill, and has it paid, and makes no charge for drawing it. Nevertheless, we must tax his costs, as of any other solicitor."

"To be sure, to be sure, my lord!" was all that I could say, not understanding what all this meant.

"I fear he will come to the gallows," said the Lord Chief-justice, sinking his voice below the echees; "tell him this from me, Jack. He shall never be condemned before me; but I cannot be everywhere; and some of our Justices may keep short memory of his dinners. Tell him to change his name, turn parson or do something else, to make it wrong to hang him. Parson is the best thing; he hath such command of features, and he might take his tithes on horseback. Now a few more things, John Ridd, and for the present I have done with thee."

All my heart leaped up at this, to get away from London so: and yet I could hardly trust to it.

"Is there any sound round your way of disaffection to His Majesty, His most gracious Majesty?"

"No, my lord; no sign whatever. We pray for him in church, perhaps; and we talk about him afterward, hoping it may do him good, as it is intended. But after that we have naught to say, not knowing much about him—at least till I get home again."

"That is as it should be, John. And the less you say the better. But I have heard of things in Taunton, and even nearer to you in Dulverton, and even higher still upon Exmoor; things which are of the pillory kind, and even more of the gallows. I see that you know naught of them. Nevertheless, it will not be long before all England hears of them. Now, John, I have taken a liking to thee; for never man told me the truth, without fear or favor, more thoroughly and truly than thou hast done. Keep thou clear of this, my son. It will come to nothing; yet many shall swing high for it! Even I could not save thee, John Ridd, if thou wert mixed in this affair. Keep from the Doones, keep from De Whichehalse, keep from everthing which leads beyond the sight of thy knowledge. I meant to use thee as my tool; but I see thou art too honest and simple. I will send a sharper down; but never let me find thee, John, either a tool for the other side, or a tube for my words to pass through.

Here the Lord-justice gave me such a glare, that I wished myself well rid of him, though thankful for his warnings; and seeing how he had made upon me a long abiding mark of fear, he smiled again in a jocular manner, and said:

"Now get thee gone, Jack. I shall remember thee; and I trow, thou wilt'st not for many a day forget me."

"My lord, I was never so glad to go; for the hay must be in, and the ricks unthatched, and none of them can make spars like me, and two men to twist every hay-rope, and mother thinking it all right, and listening right and left to lies, and cheated at every pig she kills, and even the skins of the sheep to go—"

"John Ridd, I thought none could come nigh your folk in honesty, and duty to their neighbors!"

"Sure enough, my lord; but by our folk I mean ourselves, not the men nor women neither—"

"That will do, John. Go thy way. Not men, nor women neither, are better than they need be."

I wished to set this matter right; but his worship would not hear me; and only drove me out of the court, saying that men were thieves and liars no more in one place than another, but all alike all over the world, and women not far behind them. It was not for me to dispute this point (though I was not yet persuaded of it), both because my lord was a judge, and must know more about it, and also that, being a man myself, I might seem to be defending myself in an unbecoming manner. Therefore I made a low bow and went, in doubt as to which had the right of it.

But though he had so far dismissed me, I was not yet quite free to go, inasmuch as I had not money enough to take me all the way to Oare, unless indeed I should go afoot, and beg my sustenance by the way, which seemed to be below me. Therefore I got my few clothes packed, and my few debts paid, all ready to start in half an hour, if only they would give me enough to set out upon the road with. For I doubted not, being young and strong, that I could walk from London to Oare in ten days, or in twelve at most, which was not much longer than horse-work; only I had been a fool, as you will say when you hear it. For after receiving from Master Spank the amount of the bill which I had delivered—less indeed by fifty shillings than the money my mother had given me, for I had spent fifty shillings and more in seeing the town and treating people, which I could not charge to His Majesty—I had first paid all my debts thereout, which were not very many; and then supposing myself to be an established creditor of the Treasury for my coming needs, and already scenting the country air, and forseeing the joy of my mother, what had I done but spent half my balance, ay, and more than three-quarters of it, upon presents for mother, and Annie, and Lizzie, John Fry, and his wife, and Betty Muxworthy, Bill Dadds, Jim Slocombe, and in a word, half of the rest of the people at Oare, including all the Snowe family, who must have things good and handsome? And if I must, while I am about it, hide nothing from those who read me, I had actually bought for Lorna a thing the price of which quite frightened me, till the shop-keeper said it was nothing at all, and that no young man, with a lady to love him, could dare to offer her rubbish such as the Jew sold across the way. Now the mere idea of beautiful Lorna ever loving me, which he talked about as patly (though of course I never mentioned her) as if it were a settled thing, and he knew all about it, that mere idea so drove me abroad, that, if he had asked three times as much, I could never have counted the money.

Now in all this I was a fool, of course—not for remembering my friends and neighbors, which a man has a right to do, and indeed is bound to do, when he comes from London—but for not being certified first what cash I had to go on with. And to my great amazement, when I went with another bill for the victuals of only three days more, and a week's expense on the homeward road reckoned very narrowly, Master Spank not only refused to grant me any interview, but sent me out a piece of blue paper; looking like a butcher's ticket, and bearing these words and no more, "John Ridd, go to the devil. He who will not when he may, when he will, he shall have nay." From this I concluded that I had lost favor in the sight of Chief-justice Jeffreys. Perhaps because my evidence had not proved of any value; perhaps because he meant to let the matter lie till cast on him.

Anyhow, it was a reason of much grief, and some anger to me, and very great anxiety, disappointment, and suspense. For here was the time of the hay gone past, and the harvest of small corn coming on, and the trout now rising at the yellow Sally, and the blackbirds eating our white-heart cherries (I was sure, though I could not see them), and who was to do any good for mother, or stop her from weeping continually? And more than this, what was to become of Lorna? Perhaps she had cast me away altogether, as a flouter and a changeling; perhaps she had drowned herself in the black well; perhaps (and that was worst of all) she was even married, child as she was, to that vile Carver Doone, if the Doones ever cared about marrying. That last thought sent me down at once to watch for Mr. Spank again, resolved that if I could catch him, spank him I would to a pretty good tune, although sixteen in family.

However, there was no such thing as to find him; and the usher vowed (having orders, I doubt) that he was gone to the sea for the good of his health, having sadly overworked himself; and that none but a poor devil like himself, who never had handling of money, would stay in London this foul, hot weather; which was likely to bring the plague with it. Here was another new terror for me, who had heard of the plagues of London, and the horrible things that happened; and so going back to my lodgings at once, I opened my clothes and sought for spots, especially as being so long at a hairy fell-monger's; but finding none, I fell down and thanked God for that same, and vowed to start for Oare to-morrow, with my carbine loaded, come weal come woe, come sun come shower; though all the parish should laugh at me for begging my way home again, after the brave things said of my going, as if I had been the king's cousin.

But I was saved in some degree from this lowering of my pride, and what mattered more, of mother's; for going to buy with my last crown-piece (after all demands were paid) a little shot and powder, more needful on the road almost than even shoes or victuals, at the corner of the street I met my good friend Jeremy Stickles, newly come in search of me. I took him back to my little room—mine at least till to-morrow morning—and told him all my story, and how much I felt aggrieved by it. But he surprised me very much, by showing no surprise at all.

"It is the way of the world, Jack. They have gotten all they can from thee, and why should they feed thee further? We feed not a dead pig, I trow, but baste him well with brine and rue. Nay, we do not victual him upon the day of killing; which they have done to thee. Thou art a lucky man, John; thou hast gotten one day's wages, or at any rate half a day, after thy work was rendered. God have mercy on me, John! The things I see are manifold; and so is my regard of them. What use to insist on this, or make a special point of that, or hold by something said of old, when a different mood was on? I tell thee, Jack, all men are liars; and he is the least one who presses not too hard on them for lying."

This was all quite dark to me, for I never looked at things like that, and never would own myself a liar, not at least to other people, nor even to myself, although I might to God sometimes, when trouble was upon me. And if it comes to that, no man has any right to be called a "liar" for smoothing over things unwitting, through duty to his neighbor.

"Five pounds thou shalt have, Jack," said Jeremy Stickles suddenly, while I was all abroad with myself as to being a liar or not; "five pounds, and I will take my chance of wringing it from that great rogue Spank. Ten I would have made it, John, but for bad luck lately. Put back your bits of paper, lad; I will have no acknowledgment. John Ridd, no nonsense with me!"

For I was ready to kiss his hand, to think that any man in London (the meanest and most suspicious place upon all God's earth) should trust me with five pounds without even a receipt for it. It overcame me so that I sobbed; for after all, though big in body, I am but a child at heart. It was not the five pounds which moved me, but the way of giving it; and, after so much bitter talk, the great trust in my goodness.

CHAPTER XXVII

HOME AGAIN AT LAST

It was the beginning of wheat-harvest when I came to Dunster town, having walked all the way from London, and being somewhat foot-sore. For though five pounds was enough to keep me in food and lodging upon the road, and leave me many a shilling to give to far poorer travelers, it would have been nothing for horse hire, as I knew too well by the prices Jeremy Stickles had paid upon our way to London. Now, I never saw a prettier town that Dunster looked that evening; for sooth to say, I had almost lost all hope of reaching it that night, although the castle was long in view. But being once there, my troubles were gone, at least as regarded wayfaring; for mother's cousin, the worthy tanner (with whom we had slept on the way to London) was in such indignation at the plight in which I came back to him, afoot, and weary, and almost shoeless—not to speak of upper things—that he swore then, by the mercy of God, that if the schemes a-brewing round him against those bloody Papists should come to any head or shape, and show good chance of succeeding he would risk a thousand pounds as though it were a penny.

I told him not to do it, because I had heard otherwise, but was not at liberty to tell one-tenth of what I knew, and, indeed, had seen in London town. But of this he took no heed, because I only nodded at him; and he could not make it out. For it takes an old man, or at least a middle-aged one, to nod and wink with any power on the brains of other men. However, I think I made him know that the bad state in which I came to his town, and the great shame I had wrought for him among the folk round the card table at the "Lutrell Arms," was not to be, even there, attributed to King Charles the Second, nor even to his counselors, but to my own speed of traveling, which had beat post-horses. For being much distraught in mind, and desperate in body, I had made all the way from London to Dunster in six days, and no more. It may be one hundred and seventy miles. I cannot tell to a furlong or two, especially as I lost my way more than a dozen times; but at any rate there in six days I was, and most kindly they received me. The tanner had some excellent daughters, I forget how many; very pretty damsels, and well set up, and able to make good tanner's pie. But though they asked me many questions, and made a sort of lord of me, and offered to darn my stockings (which, in truth required it), I fell asleep in the midst of them, although I would not acknowlecge it; and they said, "Poor Cousin! he is weary;" and led me to a blessed bed, and kissed me all round like swan's down.

In the morning all the Exmoor hills the thoughts of which had frightened me at the end of each day's travel, seemed no more than bushels to me, as I looked forth the bedroom window, and thanked God for the sight of them. And even so, I had not to climb them, at least by my own labor. For my most worthy uncle (as we often call a parent's cousin), finding it impossible to keep me for the day, and owning, indeed, that I was right in hastening to my mother, vowed that walk I should not, even though he lost his Saturday hides from Minehead and from Watchett. Accordingly, he sent me forth on the very strongest nag he had, and the maidens came to wish me Godspeed, and kissed their hands at the door-way. It made me proud and glad to think that after seeing so much of the world, and having held my own with it, I was come once more among my own people, and found them kinder, and more warmhearted, ay, and better looking, too, than almost any I had happened upon in the mighty city of London.

But how shall I tell you the things I felt, and the swelling of my heart within me, as I drew nearer, and more near, to the place of all I loved and owned, to the haunt of every warm remembrance, the nest of all the fledgeling hopes—in a word, to home? The first sheep I beheld on the moor with a great red J. R. on his side (for mother would have them marked with my name, instead of her own, as they should have been), I do assure you my spirit leaped, and all my sight came to my eyes. I shouted out, "Jem, boy!"—for that was his name, and a rare hand he was at fighting—and he knew me in spite of the stranger horse; and I leaned over and stroked his head, and swore he should never be mutton. And when I was passed, he set off at full gallop, to call all the rest of the J. R's together, and tell them young master was come home at last.

But bless your heart, and my own as well, it would take me all the afternoon to lay before you one-tenth of the things which came home to me in that one half hour, as the sun was sinking in the real way he ought to sink. I touched my horse with no spur nor whip, feeling that my slow wits would go, if the sights came too fast over them. Here was the pool where we washed the sheep, and there was the hollow that oozed away, where I had shot three wild ducks. Here was the peat-rick that bid my dinner, when I could not go home for it, and there was the bush with the thyme growing round it, where Annie had found a great swarm of our bees. And now was the corner of the dry stone-wall, where the moor gave over in earnest, and the partridges whisked it into the corner lands, and called that their supper was ready, and looked at our house and the ricks as they ran, and would wait for that comfort till winter.

And there I saw—but let me go—Annie was too much for me. She nearly pulled me off my horse, and kissed the very mouth of the carbine.

"I knew you would come. Oh John! oh John! I have waited here every Saturday night; and I saw you for the last mile or more, but I would not come round the corner for fear that I should cry, John; and then not cry when I got you. Now I may cry as I like, and you need not try to stop me, John, because I am so happy. But you mustn't cry yourself, John; what will mother think of you? She will be so jealous of me."

What mother thought I can not tell; and indeed I doubt if she thought at all for more than half an hour, but only managed to hold me tight, and cry, and thank God now and then; but with some fear of His taking me, if she should be too grateful. Moreover, she thought it was my own doing, and I ought to have the credit of it; and she even came down very sharply upon John's wife, Mrs. Fry, for saying that we must not be too proud, for all of it was the Lord's doing. However, dear mother was ashamed of that afterward, and asked Mrs. Fry's humble pardon; and perhaps I ought not to have mentioned it.

Old Smiler had told them that I was coming—all the rest I mean except Annie—for having escaped from his halter-ring, he was come out to graze in the lane a bit; when what should he see but a strange horse coming, with young master and mistress upon him, for Annie must needs get up behind me, there being only sheep to look at her? Then Smiler gave us a stare and a neigh, with his tail quite stiff with amazement, and then (whether in joy or through indignation) he flung up his hind feet, and galloped straight home, and set every dog wild with barking.

Now methinks quite enough has been said concerning this mighty return of the young John Ridd (which was known up at Cosgate that evening); and feeling that I cannot describe it, how can I hope that any one else will labor to imagine it, even of the few who are able? For very few can have traveled so far, unless indeed they whose trade it is, or very unsettled people. And even of those who have done so, not one in a hundred can have such a home as I had to come home to.

Mother wept again, with grief and some wrath, and so did Annie also, and even little Eliza; and all were unsettled in loyalty, and talked about a republic, when I told them how I had been left without money for traveling homeward, and expected to have to beg my way, which Farmer Snowe would have heard of. And though I could see they were disappointed at my failure of any promotion, they all declared how glad they were, and how much better they liked me to be no more than what they were accustomed to. At least, my mother and Annie said so, without waiting to hear any more; but Lizzie did not answer to it until I had opened my bag and shown the beautiful present I had for her. And then she kissed me almost like Annie, and vowed that she thought very little of captains.

For Lizzie's present was the best of all, I mean, of course, except Lorna's (which I carried in my breast all the way, hoping that it might make her love me, from having lain so long close to my heart.) For I had brought Lizzie something dear, and a precious heavy book it was, and much beyond my understanding: whereas I knew well that to both the others my gifts would be dear, for mine own sake. And happier people could not be found than the whole of us were that evening.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A LOVE STORY OF THE ARAN ISLES

(From the Irish of Una O'Farrelly

She was a pretty girl, in the bloom and flower of youth. She was humming a song as she tripped down the school-house road at Innismeahon. There was a basket on her back, and she carried a wooden vessel in her hand.

'Twas an evening in August. The sun was setting behind the northern island.

The colors of the rainbow were to be seen on the calm ocean, and Maura Connelly stopped to gaze on the beautiful sight out before her eyes.

Curly Maura they called her on the island on account of the curly head of black hair that was on her. The boys called her Maura Bawn, because of her fair complexion.

"It's of yourself, Maura, that Raftery was thinking when he put that love song together," Long Peter would say to her as he pointed to the black locks that were always falling over her eyes.

It's about that same Peter that she was thinking as she wended her way through the flag-shaped rocks. She raised her head and shook back one of the ringlets that was interrupting her vision. And with that shake she let fall a tear that was in her eye. She noticed it falling on the back of her hand.

"Ain't I a fool of a girl," said she, out loud; and she sped along singing another sad verse. She stopped suddenly, whipped the basket off her back, laid down the pail on a bare rock near-hand. She sat down, buried her face in her hands, and began to weep and sob. "Ah, Peter aroon! must I leave you behind, or what'll I do when I'll be far from you? What'll I do, and not to see you from Monday to Sunday? Oh, God, have pity on us. What will I do at all?

For a long time the poor girl was like one demented; prayer after prayer she put up to heaven, and she never noticed the time slipping by. She paid no heed to the rising wind, and the moaning of the waves under the cliffs, a sign the old people didn't like for the sake of the fishermen that go out from Aran of a night. The sun had set, and the sea was turning black, and the colors had left the sky; but to all this the sorrow-stricken colleen paid no heed.

Not far distant there was a huge rock, and in its shelter there was an old man smoking his pipe at his ease. An ugly, unkempt old man he was, with white hair, covering his neck, and a long, wispy beard that hadn't been trimmed for many a long day. He was a thin, long-haired, swivel-eyed individual, and 'tis no wonder the children would be running from him with fear. Kenavera, or rogue, is the name he went by on the island; but they'd call him Shemus when they'd be talking to him. Nobody knew where he came from, or what his name, nor anything about him, except that he came to Aran from the mainland the year of the famine, and that he lived in a little house by himself from that out. When the old man heard the voice of the weeping colleen, he stood up, and came round the rock to see what it was. Pampooties, or skin-boots, he wore like his neighbors, and Mary never noticed him approaching.

He looked at her, and listened to her for a start, his pipe in his hand, and his squint eyes wide open. He said not a word, but at last turned on his heel, and went down the slippery flagstone rocks towards the sea.

He took his pipe from his mouth, at last, and faced towards the west.

"America again," said he, looking out over the great waves. "America—my seven thousand curses on you for a New Island."

The New Island is what all Irish speakers call America.

He shoved his pipe back into his mouth, and went back towards the harbor.

The Kenavera wasn't long gone when Maura got up from her knees. Her face was wet and swollen from weeping, and had a distracted air.

She saw the basket and the wooden vessel near, and she endeavored to come to herself again. In a short time she succeeded, and 'twasn't long 'till she was going down the flagstone rocks and through the haggarts looking for the cow.

On regaining the height she saw the Kenavera down from her, and he making for the harbor.

"It's a great shame for me to be crying like this," she said to herself. "Leaving out that that poor fellow has a bit of money, isn't there more care of the world on him than there is on me? Besides, he's a lonely old man, without one of his own near him. Forgive me, O my God, for being grumbling and complaining."

She reached the field at last, and drew up to the cow that was there.

Without knowing why, her peace of mind forsook her when she heard the lowing of the poor, senseless beast.

"'Twon't be long now, avourneen," says she, kissing the cow on the neck, "till it's someone else will be minding you besides me."

Maura stooped down, milking the cow into the little vessel in her hand, and every now and then she'd empty it into the pail close by, humming a song to herself the while, as was her custom. All of a sudden the cow upset the milk, and she looked round, and a fine, strong boy stood before her. "I m not surprised," says she, "that the poor, dumb creature was frightened, and you to come out before her of a jump," just as if there was great anger on her. "Is it humbugging me you are, you scoundrel of the world?"

"No, indeed," replied the young man laughing. "Didn't you ever hear 'The Moddereen rua?'"

"I did, an' often; but I don't see what spilt milk has to do with the likes."

"Don't mind that asthoreen. It's only that I heard it sung, yesterday, like that in County Clare, an' I doing the pilgrimage to St. Brigid's well."

"Ara, Peter, tell me, had you a fine time out there?"

Curiosity was preying so much on Maura that she forgot her anger.

"Middling," says he.

"Were there many people in it out of Aran More?"

"There weren't; nor out of Innismeahon, either, but there was a lot from Inishere, and they up to fun and amusement like always."

"Was Kate Connolly in it?"

"She was an' she looking very nice."

"Indeed?" And Peter noticed that her anger was returning again.

"Here's a ribbon I got for you, asthoreen," and he took a paper from his pocket, and showed her the broad, speckled ribbon.

Maura knew quite well that a red ribbon like that didn't become her at all but she was too mannerly to let Peter know.

"O, Peter, I forgive you. 'Tisn't the ribbon that I mind, but you to be thinking of me out in the mainland, and plenty of colleens there—and ones far prettier than myself."

He tied the ribbon on her, and stood back and admired the effect.

"It's yourself is the pearl of women, Maura acree," says he. "I'd like to see a gown of silk on you. I'd like you to have nothing to do from Monday to Monday only to be a queen, and the women of the world waiting on you!"

"I know that, Peter, asthore. I know it." And this brought back her sorrow to her. "Look out on the ocean, Peter," says she, "that'll soon be between us—I over there and you here."

Peter remained silent. He was disturbed in mind. With speaking to Maura and going over everything that had happened, he was so happy that it's little but he forgot the separation that was destined for them.

Now, in an instant, the pain lay on his heart, an ugly pain, without cure, or hope to all appearance.

"Oc, Maura," says he at last, "isn't that a sad word of yours? What sort of me-aw is on us all, that we have to put the sea between us?"

"It's the will of God is in it, Peter."

"It's not the will of God, Maura; but the will of a person. It's my father is responsible for it, and I fear that your will, too, is helping him in the same way."

"Yes, and no. I'd rather a thousand times to stay with you in Innismeahon if I had a bit of money; but you know I wouldn't like to go into you without means, without fortune, nor worth a new dress, as you'd say, to put on my back. I wouldn't like to leave it to the neighbors to say that I'd do the likes o' that to you, and I wouldn't like it to be in your father's power to say that, nor your brother's, either."

"You're too proud, Maura. Isn't it all equal to you what they'd say if we were together, and able to give help to one another?"

'It isn't all equal to me by any means; may be I'm superstitious; but I wouldn't be willing to stay at home always, and only having these two hands to knock out my living with."

"And what'd you have in that country beyond, besides your two hands? You'll have to earn your living there in the same way, and often in harder ways, too."

"No fear that I will: there doesn't be any slavery in America like there is in this place. They do have only light work to do in the cities, washing or cooking or housework. It's many a long day you'd be there till you'd have to carry a kish of seaweed or a load of fish on your back up from the strand, or tramp out on the flagstone rocks of a winter's morning to milk a cow."

"Musha, the blessing of God on you, Maura, acree. Isn't it foolish and innocent you are. I heard the other day from Michael Shawn Mike, that there isn't slavery in the world like that of the servant girl in the big cities. She does be always on her feet running here and there as her mistress likes. It's fresh the air is you have here, whatever you have you've plenty to eat and drink, and, what's more, you have your friends and your relations near you. If there's any trouble on you, they'll be at your side ready to assist you."

"'Tis easy to see that, Peter. How do you know? Michael has hopes of me, and he'd like that I wouldn't go at all."

"I didn't think of that. Musha, the somacawn! He'd like it indeed. They're all running after my own girl. But—" and he lowered his voice saying it—"it's little good for them, avourneen."

"I don't know that." Maura shook her head in the manner of the colleen who'd say, "Don't be too certain about it yet."

"I'm so certain of it, Maura," said he, as he took her hand, "that I wouldn't believe anything against it, even from your own mouth."

"Well, you may be certain of it, too," said she, and the tears in her eyes; "for it's not right for me to be joking, and we so soon to separate."

"Maura, Maura," said he, "I beg of you not to go from me. Think of the long summer days and winter nights, and you in America and I here, and no cure for our loneliness but patience. Think, too, of the years going by after each other, and our hair growing white, and our hearts inside growing cold. After that you'd come home if you lived long enough. You'd come home; and eighty, or maybe a hundred pounds, put aside, and a big box of clothes with you. You'd come home with neither strength nor energy, and you out of your health. Maybe I'd be ready to marry you then. Maybe I'd have a boat of my own, and a piece of land. But, Maura, a cuid, what kind of a home could we have after spending the bloom of youth and years putting by money for the rainy day? I'm sure God's blessing wouldn't be on such people as would be so avaricious."

This was the biggest piece of talk he ever gave from him in his life, but he was deeply moved, and he put his soul and his mind into it.

Maura was confused, and didn't know well what to say; but she faced the difficulty.

"We know," says she, "that the mountains that are far from us are beautiful; but anyway, Peter, you know that your father wouldn't be satisfied for me to marry you. He must get forty pounds from the girl that'll come into the house to him. He wants the money for a fortune for your sister Kate, and it isn't myself that'll come between her and fortune, musha."

Peter began to whistle. He was displeased, and had no answer ready. He loved his father dearly, and there was never a word between them until Peter got fond of Maura, the oldest girl of the Widow Connolly, who lived near the cliff, with a houseful of children; and the world knew that she hadn't a red penny of fortune to give to Maura.

Maura was a steady girl, and the old people used be saying that there wasn't the likes of her as a "woman of the house" in the three islands put together.

But when a man would have only one son and he wanting to marry him well, and when he'd have a piece of land, wouldn't he want to get a bit of a fortune to give his daughter? There are two sides to every story.

Maura reflected for a while, and then says she: "Peter, I'll go. There's no use to be preventing me. I'll have to go. A week from to-day I'll be on the sea, with God and Mary's help, whatever comes out of it."

Peter turned away and said nothing. He drove the cow into another field, and filled up the gap with a few big stones. Maura then put the pail of milk into the kish, and lifted it on her back.

There was soon an American wake at the Widow Connolly's house. Maura and three or four other girls were to go to America, and there's no fear but it's a heavy heart her mother had on the head of it, but at the same time she was welcoming the neighbors who were calling in.

"Cead failte to you, Michael; it's young you're getting, musha. An' it's yourself is in it, Margaret? Isn't it yourself that has the courage and the nature to come out in the night to see us. Sit up in the corner. I'll be with you now when I have the kettle hung up over the fire!"

"Oc, then, welcome to you, Shemus." This latter was the "Kenavera," and as he entered all looked towards him, for they were all surprised. Although he had been years and years among them, he had never put his foot on the floor of any house on the island the whole time. The small children ran away from him into the corner and behind the door. They looked on him as they would on a wild man, his white hair falling down his face, and a long coat down to his heels. The widow put a stool near the fire for him, and he sat down on it without a word.

He looked round on the neighbors, and says he to the mother, "Where's Maura?"

"She's gone down to the fisherman's wife for a taste of butter for the tea, and she'll be back in the wink of an eye," said the widow.

"That's the way 'tis always," said he—"Maura here and Maura there, and the house full of ye taking it easy. No wonder she'd be going."

No one minded what he said, for they knew he was a contrary individual.

They soon settled down to dancing, and the music they had was a man whistling, and there's no fear that he'd stop before the reel or the step dance would be over.

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