

THE MAN FROM AMERICA

(Alice L. Milligan in Donahoe's.)

Very many had gone away from Meenagortin, but in the memory of living people Michael Gormley was the first to come back after he had made his pile with a view to spending it in the old country and ending his days there.

"I made me tired to look at you," he said, as he stood at the gap in the hedge watching Ned Curran at work with a reaping hook in his rugged little field of oats, and in a burst of eloquence he described reaping machines crossing mile after mile of corland, with golden grain falling like waves before the prow of a ship.

Old Ned wiped the sweat from his sun-brown brow and reaching for the whetstone to sharpen the edge of his hook spat contemptuously right and left, and then answered sulkily, "A pity but you stayed there, Michael Gormley! What brought you home out of it all, at all?"

"I came," said Michael, "just to show you how. I guess I'll make things go brisker in Meenagortin before I'm many months older." And he proceeded on his way with a jaunty swagger, gazed on by a group of boys who met him, commented on after his passing in terms like these:

"There's Michael Gormley, old Patrick Gormley's Michael, home out of Ameriky. He has sacks of gold they say, and doesn't know what to do with it."

"Yet he's openin' up a shop, to take the bread from them that has more need."

"Shure the shop's only for an occupation and diversion to keep him from rustin' with idleness. He needn't do a hand's turn from this on, except he wants to."

"Faith, he's a smart man Michael, but 'tis a wonder to me that he can stand the air of Ireland, after what he was used to in Ameriky."

So spoke the critical neighbors. Nor did any one dream, or dare to suggest, that it was a sentiment, a sort of homesick longing for boglands and stone walls, and the ways he was used to that had led the wanderer home, a desire to make sure that his dust would mingle with that of old Patrick and his kindred in the weedy grave under the ruined Abbey wall in the Meenagortin chapel-yard.

and all like him, under an act of Parliament. "Protected faith!" said Michael, laughing and rubbing his hands. "The old stone has looked after itself this thousand years and more, and is fitter to protect itself than he is. My bit of a bill will wash off with the rain. All the same, this newspaper talk will do no harm. It will serve as an advertisement."

Sometimes his son Peter felt it necessary to remonstrate and say that too much was going in paper and print, but he laughed such remonstrances away and said: "Enterprise, my boy, is everything in this world. I didn't come home here out of the States to rust and must, and there's no enterprise where there's no advertisement."

The people of the town and county when they got used to his ways liked Michael Gormley well enough. The mere fact that he had come home to them out of prosperity and splendor in America was sufficient reason to make him popular. His shop was never empty, purchasers were always coming and going, or rather coming, and not going for a long time. They liked to linger and hear the cheery talk of the smart, bustling man behind the counter, and to hear him say, "But if purchasers were many, alas their purchases were small. If it was a matter of nails, or tin tacks, or pig-ribs, or maybe a needle or reaping hook or any small inexpensive article, custom was given to Michael, but if anyone had to lay out a considerable sum, he felt that it would be a sin and a shame to let the money go the way of a man who had made his fortune twice over, and who could afford to indulge in vagaries, and spend his time in keeping shop, not from necessity, but just as it were for fun."

The end of it was that before the second year was out, the walls and gate-posts on the roads leading into Meenagortin were adorned with bills announcing "a great clearance sale." Michael Gormley, formerly of Kansas City, was selling out and retiring from business, intending, as the people said, just to live like a gentleman on his money, out on old Peter's hitherto despised and neglected farm.

It was at this period that young Peter Gormley began to keep company with Alec McCrossan's Rosie. He was growing up into a fine, handsome young man by now. His slight vicer of American speech and manner had worn almost away. Enough only remained to keep him a little different from the other country boys, and therefore more interesting in the eyes of the girls, who looked admiringly on him among the crowd lingering to gossip at the cross-roads after Mass.

Michael Gormley's Peter was as handsome as the best of them, and besides, was he not the eldest and heir, if all went well, to the most and best of his father's fabled wealth. "Sacks of gold he has banked somewhere, or put into railways out in America. Our Rosie will travel far before she does better," said Alec McCrossan to his wife. And so the young people were marked out for one another. It had not come to any definite matchmaking yet.

The Irish way of courting in those days, and in quiet country places even to the present day, was, and is, very different to that style of thing which makes the subject of many finely-painted romances. There were no stolen interviews, no twilight walks, no thought of kisses or even hand-clasps, in short, no love-making whatever. But if they were at reaping or hay-making, Peter took his place next to Rosie, helped to tie the sheaves, and when his work was done, and at noon-day took his share of soda cake and his draught of milk from her hands.

Then in the quiet evenings when the work was done, and the evening meal was over, Peter would rise and look out of the door and say to his father or sisters, "Tis a fine night. I think I'll go for a bit of a stroll." And the bit of a stroll inevitably ended on the narrow path through the whitewashed up to the stile, over which it was but three steps into Alec McCrossan's haggard, and then across to where the freight shone welcoming through an open door.

Around the fire, the family circle was widened to make room for him, as a matter of course. Maybe he took a draw at the pipe, and maybe he didn't. Anyhow, he would sit there quiet and contented for long enough, talking all the time to McCrossan or the neighbor man, but with quiet, happy eyes, watching Rosie, the loved and chosen one, as she sat in the flickering light or moved about the room. And there was a gleam in her eyes and a smile on her lips, which told him he was welcome, and bade him stay long and come again soon, and in his heart was a firm resolve as soon as ever he saw his way to marrying, that he would have Rosie and no other.

This in spite of all that is written in story books and silly romances, or shown on the stage, is the recognized and seemly Irish way of courting.

Father John Duffy was the first to gain in the estimation of the countryside during the progress of the calamity. He had suffered at the outset of his curacy by perpetual comparison with his predecessor, the Rev. Tom O'Kane, who had died young and deeply lamented, with a halo of glory for learning and piety illumining his memory.

The most people could say for Father Duffy was "He means well, the curate, and he does his best—but he can't hold a candle to poor Father O'Kane." But when the famine days came it was found that the shy curate who lacked self-confidence in the pulpit was the very man for an emergency. It was he who took counsel as to the measures of relief, who rode night and day over the parish amongst those who had suffered least, urging them for God's sake and for the common weal to stand by those who were on starvation's verge. By his wise precautions a fever outbreak was averted. He provided for the due isolation and careful nursing of those first stricken. In short he emerged out of the trying time a popular hero, and Meenagortin suffered less than richer districts.

It was in Father John's company that Alec McCrossan went one October night up the length of Michael Gormley's to ask him to put his name down for something substantial on the relief subscription list. What exactly happened was only rumored, for Father John, as they went away after the fulfilment of their errand, entreated his companion to exercise charity and keep silence. The returned American, after some talk, as if he was about to lose half of his income, had handed out no more than five shillings.

"Five pounds, you mean," said Alec. "Sure Father John here is down for twenty, and has spent as much again and no note made of it. Five pounds, Michael, is what we want from you, though well able ye are by all accounts to make it fifty."

Then it was that Michael has burst forth into a furious denunciation of the thriftless, lazy, home-staying Irish; the senseless rascals that had not laid by for the rainy day, but had spent and squandered, and then came whining to the hard-working, industrious men like him to pull them through. Let them go to the States and learn to slave and save as he had done. He put his five shillings in his pocket and turned his back on his visitors.

Alec McCrossan was scarlet in the face with rage and indignation. Hard words were on his lips, but the young priest's restraining hand was on his arm. "No use pleading here. May God soften his heart. Come, Alec, we have far to travel," and they went together out into the night.

But there was no restraining influence at hand when Alec came at last and alone to his own threshold, and pausing to shake the rain off his coat saw young Peter Gormley facing his own Rosie across the hearth. His pent-up rage burst suddenly as a thunder-clap, scattering the fireside group in trembling dismay.

"Go!" he shouted. "Begone out of my house this minute and never cross the door-stone. And hear this Rosie—never pass word with him this side the grave, but thank God to be rid of one of his black miserly breed. My eyes have been opened this night."

Surprised and shame-faced poor Peter heard the story of his father's misdeeds, and hanging his head went away with just one backward, pathetic look towards the girl of his love, but her face was hidden in her apron and she was crying as if to break her heart.

The long frost came on then and the question of fuel was as much of a problem as that of food. Little turf had been saved; bog-wood was scanty, coal out of the question. For economy's sake Father John recommended that fires should not be lit in every house. On the separate selfish system each would only have a spark of a fire on the hearth. The stock of fuel was laid in central houses, all being free to come and go and bring their pots and kettles to sit at the heat by night. There was a good store of turf at Alec McCrossan's piled to the top of his cartshed. Part of it was his own saving, part purchased by the relief money gathered in by Father John. There was great cooking at nights in his big, roomy kitchen, and singing and dancing and story-telling went on more gaily than usual, to keep up the hearts and spirits of the company. But Rosie, who had been the sweetest singer in the townland never gave as much as a verse of a song now, and when dancing was set afoot she made it a custom to slip away on some excuse.

Alec in a peremptory tone, seeing at a glance that this was some one in need of a hot brand, and bowed and hid his face. "Stand up, man, and never mind. You're welcome to it, welcome, for the askin', or without the askin'. Come, I'll help you to fill a creel of it."

He commenced to pitch down the turf and bog for gathering. "Alec, man," said a husky, broken voice that he knew, but had not heard for months back. "Alec man—ye might have known if I had had money to give that night ye would have had it."

"Alec stopped as if thunderstruck. "Michael—Michael Gormley, is this the way of it? Was it in need ye were all the time—but putting the bold face on you? Why did you ever—sure ye should have known; poverty's no disgrace in Ireland, and miserliness in times like this is the blackest shame."

He rushed forward and raised the stricken figure. A wan, hunger-stricken face was turned to his. It was indeed the man from America, who had been counted so rich. The sorrowful story of his struggles. The five shillings he had offered to the priest and which had been so scornfully refused was more than he could afford, for he was ever then in need. Peter had been away since in Glasgow, sometimes in help and sending a little money, which was all the rest of the family had to depend on, but oftener out of it, and then the outlook was dark indeed.

"And all the time," said Alec, "your pride kept you away from us. As why need it, when your boy was as a son to me, being Rosie's sweetheart? Her husband he will be when we pull through this black winter and can take time to arrange the wedding. 'Tis frettin' her heart out the child is any way. And as for a share for Peter—give him a bit of the land and I'll stock it for her fortune, and they'll make a fair start. The American ways were too big for the little farm at home, but it'll prosper yet if ye take my advice and farm it on the old-fashioned plan that you used to laugh at."

"My laughin' days are over," said Michael Gormley solemnly, but there was something like a smile round his lips and a light in his eye as he spoke and that was because he had had a peep at Rosie, who was listening from behind a door and could be heard sobbing for joy on her mother's breast.

Counsel for Young Women

The wealthiest girl in the world can afford to learn some special branch of trade. How much more important is it for those who are not so well off? Take the case of many girls with an ordinary school training. Unless she takes up some field like stenography, bookkeeping, or the like, the chances are she stays home and does nothing. Her over-careful parents would not think of risking their innocent charge in the whirl of the world. They cannot think of sending her to work in factories for fear they will lose that virtue and innocence that is their chief characteristic. Years pass on in this way, and suddenly the father, the support of the family, fails in health. Probably he dies.

The girl is helpless. She is forced into the world with no special training, with nothing that will make her more valuable to an employer than a thousand other girls. She is like an undressed child out in the cold, damp winter air, buffeted by storm, until, battered by her experiences on every side, she is ready to give up. The sewing that she prided herself upon she finds others can do. The cooking which she thought a wonderful achievement while at home, she sees equalled upon all sides. Only now she has been prepared for whatever she thought she had learned how to do one special thing, and do it well.

Or take the case of the woman who marries. Her marriage was a happy one; her life most pleasant. Suddenly her husband is rendered incapable of further duty. What is more pitiable than the mother being forced to go and find a job, and then to have a reception planned for her, to find some means of earning enough to support herself and her children? Rejected on every side, she can plead no special skill. Unable to do one thing better than any one else, she finds that every one can do everything that she can do. Her misery is beyond realization to those who have not felt it. How different her lot would have been were she prepared for such a contingency? Some few years ago a bright young woman in one of the Eastern States, a principal in a grammar school, was married to a prominent Western man. After a life of complete happiness the husband was suddenly taken ill, lingered a while and then passed away. After his death the widow was informed by the man's brokers that shortly before his death he had sunk a fortune in a speculation that did not pan out. The poor woman was penniless, left without a crumb to give her strength in the battle before her, the support of her children. But instead of crying over her misfortune, she packed her belongings together, disposed of what little she had left, and with her children, started for her former home in New York State. There she went to work again. Her training as a teacher stood her in need. Her services were sought. She met no opposition, because there were few so gifted as she. An appointment was received and she is now in a fair way to a second principality with the salary which that position means.

Do not choose a profession that you will not respect, and above all, do not choose a profession because you think it is more respectable than another, in which you know you can accomplish more. Above all, regard your trade as something upon which you depend. Look at it as a means of defence against privation. Act carefully while at home and take time in making a choice, and there is no reason why you ought to regret having learned how to be self-supporting. There is never a rush to get a girl out of her home. There she can bide her time and choose her profession.

Willie on Classic Fiction

(Charles Noel Douglas in the September St. Nicholas.) I suppose that Aunt Clarissa thought she'd done a powerful lot. When she brought me this old novel by that teller Walter Scott, and another one by Dickens or some funny name like that; and father says to read them, and has laid his law down flat. And that all my dear old story-books forever I must quit. So here I'm teaching "Ivanhoe," and don't like it a bit. For though I'm at the thirteenth page, to my intense regret, there's not a sign of Indians, and no one's killed as yet.

Father's told me quite a lot about this "Ivanhoe." And says the whole thing's simply grand—but oh, it's dreadful slow. He said that Richard "Cur" de Lion was handy in a fight, but with Pounce Jim and Buckskin Bill he wouldn't be a bite; and as for Mr. Robin Hood and that old six-foot bow, why, with Buckskin William's Winchester he wouldn't have a show. So, Mr. Scott and Dickens, if Willie's heart you'd wish, just rewrite all your stories and put lots of Indians in.

But Johnny Jones he tells me (and he's read an awful lot) that in some of those old stories by Dickens and by Scott he says they make one murder do to last clean through the book (and when young Johnny told me, oh! I laughed until I shook). So I've started to investigate, not an Indian have I met yet. For here I am at Chapter Two and no one's killed as yet.

Well, I don't know how it happened, but I've read through "Ivanhoe." And first the thing seemed dull old stuff, but in an hour or so my eyes were glued close to the book—I didn't skip a page, and my 'I had the greatest treat I've had for quite an age. And my 'I stood straight up on end! I must have looked a fright when father walked right in and said: "Not going to bed to-night? You cut your dinner short, but now don't rob yourself of sleep." I tell you, it was hard to stop. I was cross enough to weep.

Well, I never would have thought it, but that Richard Lion-Hearted Beats Buckskin Bill all hollow and can give 'em all a start. He didn't hide behind some rocks and shoot a mile away, and there, sir, he would stay. And while a tiny hole is made by a modern rifle-ball, this Richard sliced 'em clean in halves, head, body, legs and all. He didn't kill many, 'p'raps, as if he'd had a gun. But he hit 'em twice as hard a whack and he'd had more fun.

I tell you, this old fellow Scott can hold a chap in thrall. And the way that Mr. Dickens does jest makes the rest look small. And when of Fagin, Nancy and that villain Sikes I read Pa said my eyes looked just as if they'd jump right out of my head. I found that Dickens simply steals the heart right out of you, and he doesn't need to murder folks to thrill a fellow through. Ah! he makes them Indian-fighters an' tomahawks look tame; I don't know how he does it, but he does it just the same. It's strange, but he seems to know by just the way I look. The very part I've got to in reading through the book I guess my eyes at supper-time was lookin' awful red, for pa he winked at aunt and says: "I see that Nancy's dead."

Now, Mr. Scott and Dickens, if you ever pass this way, you're invited round to Willie's house and right there you can stay. And tell me stories by the year, and never stop for breath—'cept when I have to hoo awhile about poor Nancy's death. And when a boy forgets his lunch for stories, you can state that Scott and Dickens beat the world, and—my, but ain't they great!

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The life and light of a nation are inseparable. History is but the enrolled scroll of prophecy. Be it for more than the thing you are now doing. If you are not too large for the place you are too small for it. Liberties can be safe only when suffrage is illuminated by education. What the arts are to the world of matter, literature is to the world of mind. Great ideas travel slowly and for a time uselessly, as the gods whose feet were shod with wood. It matters little what may be the forms of national institution if the life, freedom, and growth of society are secured.

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