

## THE CATHOLIC RECORD.

## GIENANNAAR

A STORY OF IRISH LIFE

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DELMERGE," "UNDER THE CEDARS  
AND THE STARS," "LOST ANGEL  
OF A RUINED PARADISE," ETC.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## A WEDDING AND A WARNING.

The lights that he saw in his delirium were the lanterns of the rescuing party, who had been sent forward to search for him, after their unavailing quest for Nodlag in the mountains; and the voices were the voices of his brother Owen and the men-servants. When he awoke from his stupor and delirium he found himself lying on the hard settle in the kitchen, propped by pillows; and as the cells of memory began to awaken, and he wandered over the events of the night, he turned suddenly, and said:

"Nodlag?"

"Thanks be to the great God," said his mother, coming over, "your're yourself again."

"Nodlag?" he said, impatiently.

"Where is Nodlag?"

"She's all right. She's in bed; and nothing the worse for her so-called."

He relaxed into silence. They gave him some drinks of milk and whiskey. But for a long time he could not catch on to what had occurred; and the dream of his delirium was yet haunting him. Then he asked:

"Who saved us?" Where were we?"

"We were near enough," said his sister, "in the ditch at the end of the church-field. But a miss is as good as a mile. You must change, and be a good boy now, for you were never so near your end before."

"Was it so bad?" he asked.

"Twas, and worse. You were talking all the rainwater in the world."

"I felt my mind wandering before I fell," he said. "It was the quare thing out and out, altogether."

"Better get on to bed, now," said his mother. "Tis time for us all to be there."

"What time is it?" said Donal.

"Just four o'clock!" said his mother.

"And the boys must be up at five."

The next day he was all right, except for the intense muscular pains in his back and shoulders. His father said nothing; but looked at him with his keen, kind glance, and gripped his hand with a fervor that was more than eloquence. Little Nodlag lay unwell in the inner room. The child had brought on a slight attack of pneumonia; and when Donal entered she looked very ill and feverish. But she fixed her great shining eyes upon him, and said not a word. The strong man shook with emotion. The very sense that he had saved her intensified the great love newly born in that night and on that drift where he had found her.

"We lost the lamb, Nodlag," he said. "He went down the river. I found him dead in your arms, when I pulled you from the snow."

"He was dead?" she gasped.

"Was, and cold, and hard as a stone. But I'll give you another, when you're up and around."

"This is the second time Donal saved you, Nodlag," said his mother, coming in. "Bogor, you'll have to marry him now, whether you like him or no."

"She doesn't want me," said Donal, in a bantering tone; "tis Owen she wants. She wouldn't believe it was I, if I told her."

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like a big snowball for all the world."

"How is the night?" said the old man, anxious to change the conversation. "Do you think ye'll have everythin' in for the weddin', Bess?" he said to his wife. "How many gallons of sperrits did ye order?"

"We ordered thirty," said the landlady. "But sure we can get more."

"An' the rounds of beef?"

"They're all right!"

"An' the hams?"

"They're all right," said the wife, impatiently. "Can't you lave them things to ourselves; and not be interfering with our work? Did you settle wid the priest yourself?"

"I did, God bless him!" said her husband, "an' 'twas aisy settlin'."

"He'll have twenty weddins' that day, and more cummin' in; but he'll be here at 3 o'clock to the minit, he says; so that we can have nine hours' rale Keel, before Ash Winesday breaks upon us!"

And they had—real, downright, tumultuous, Irish fun and frolic. From North, South, East, West, the friends came, as heedless of the snow that lay caked upon the ground, and the drifts that were piled in the ditches and furrows, as a Canadian with his horse and sleds. There was the honest that night—with its small square windows glowing merrily under the fierce fires upon the hearth; and afar off, clearly outlined against the white pall on the ground, were the dark figures of the guests who had gathered to do honor to a family on which no shadow of a shade of dishonor had ever rested.

And they feasted, and drank, and danced; and, late at night, the old people gathered around the fire in the kitchen, and told stories, whilst the youngsters, to the sound of bagpipes and fiddles, danced themselves into a fever in the decorated and festooned barn. And Donal led out Nodlag, and insisted on dancing an Irish reel with her, much to the disgust of his intended bride, who watched the child with no other eye than that of a miser.

Glenannar, far out that wail and foundling should go, and seek a home elsewhere. But no shadow crossed the mind of the child, now thoroughly recovered from her illness; but she danced, and danced with Donal, and Owen, and Jerry; and some old people shook their heads, and said 'twas the fairies brought her and left her, and that somehow there was something uncanny about it all.

At last 12 o'clock rang out from the kitchen timepiece—an old grandfather's clock, an heirloom in the family for generations—and Lent broke solemnly on the festivities of the night. Some of the youngsters, a little heated, insisted on keeping up the fun till morning, and quoted as an excuse for additional revels the old distich:

Long life and success to the Council of Trinity,  
That put fast upon mate, but not upon drink!

But the elders were inexorable. This was the day of ashes and humiliation, the first day of penance, and all should yield to the Church's behests in this grave and solemn matter. So, in the moonlight of that March night, the great crowd dispersed with many a good wish for the happiness of the young people who commenced to carry the burden of life together that solemn night.

As they said goodbye to after many a *dhuca-dhuirrus*, young Burke, the bridegroom, whispered to Donal:

"Light your pipe, and walk down a bit of the road with us!"

Donal did so. Burke and he had been always close friends, even before they assumed this new relationship. They allowed the cars to go on before them with their female relatives, and trudged along the hardened snow, smoking leisurely.

"Twas a pleasant night enough!" said Donal, not wishing to make too much of their profuse hospitality.

"Nothin' could be grander," said Burke. "It bade every weddin' in the parish."

He went on, smoking silently.

"I hope you'll be good to Joan," said Donal; "there isn't, and 'tisn't because I say it, a better girl nor a cleaner housekeeper in this country."

"Do you doubt me?" said his companion, half offended.

"Divil a doubt," said Donal, "but we were fond of Joan, an' we'll miss her."

Burke was again silent.

"You've somethin' on your mind to tell me," said Donal. "Wasn't everythin' right, marriage money an' all?"

His companion gave him a rude shove.

"Thin you have somethin' to say," cried Donal. "Out wid it, man! What have you to be afeared of?"

"I'm afeared of nothin' for myself," said Burke. "But I'm afeared for ye."

Then suddenly turning, he asked fiercely:

"Who's that girl ye have up at the house?"

"Girl? What girl? We've no girl there but Noddy and Peggy!"

"I don't mane them. We all know who thin are. But who's that young thucka ye danced with to-night?"

"I danced with many a one," said Donal, on his guard. "With your sisters, and your cousin, Kate Heaphy, and Lucy Kelly, and—"

"I don't mane them neither," said Burke. "I mane that youngster whom ye tuk into yer house, and who's been wid ye since."

"Oh! Nodlag!" said Donal, waking up.

"That's her! Who is she? Where did she come from? Who're her belongings?"

"Ask me somethin' aisy," said Donal, fencing and parrying the question.

"Do ye mane to say, Donal Connors, that nether you, nor your father, nor your mother, know who the devil's breed it is ye are keepin' on a flure that was wanst daunted enough?"

"You've taken a little dhrap too much to-night," said Donal, "altho' ye seldom do it, and 'tis a good man's case. All that I can tell you is, that no sign or token has come to us to tell us who the girl is, since the night I

found her meself amongst the cows."

Burke walked on in silence, till they came to the large just at the crossroads above the bridge where old Edmond Connors had interviewed Nodlag and her mother. Here he stood still, and hailed the cars that were beneath them in the hollow where the bridge was sunk. He held out his hand.

"I see ye don't know it, nor suspect it," he said in a hollow voice, "tho' it is the talk of the country side, and is spoke of where you wouldn't like to hear. *Thygin thu!* Well, I'm your brother-in-law now; and wanst of the family. So I put you on your guard. If the boys," he whispered, hoarsely, looking around cautiously at the time, "and out that what they suspect is true, there'll be a bonfire at Glenannar before St. John's Eve."

"Yerra, what is it all about?" asked Donal, affecting great ignorance and alarm. "What do they suspect? Or, what harm can a poor little girl, like Nodlag, be to any man? If they want to do mischief, haven't they Bond Lowe and his likes?"

"There are worse than Bond Lowe," said Burke, meaningly. "The traitor within dures is worse than the iminy without."

And swinging his hands loosely, he passed on, and overtook the cars that held his young bride and the members of his own family.

Donal stood still for a moment, shocked at the unexpected revelation of his father's secret. Then, when he thought of all he had suffered for Nodlag that night, three weeks gone, when he rescued her from the snow, and the winning ways of the child, and her utter helplessness, he muttered between his teeth:

"Why the d—! I can't they keep their selves quiet? There's always some blackguard and ruffianism brooding about it. What's it to him, Nodlag is, or where she kum from? But, be the powers—"

"Fine night, Donal Connors," said the cheery voice of the blacksmith, Redmond Casey, or, as he was popularly known, "Red" Casey, partly as an abbreviation of his name, and partly explanatory of a red shock of hair which was always victoriously engaged in a deadly struggle against the black dyes and had taken over the business on his father's death a few years previously. His aged mother was his housekeeper; and his smithy was, as is usual in Ireland, club and newshop and House of Parliament for half the country-side. Here, in the fierce light of the mighty fire, fanned by the large bellows, and to the music of the clang of sledge and anvil, were all subjects of parochial, national, political, and ecclesiastical affairs discussed—the only silent man being the smith himself, who pared and cut, and measured and nailed, drinking in every kind of information, but saying nothing. He stood this night of the wedding, calmly smoking at the door of his forge. He had been kept busy up to the last moment, "frothing" the clang of the hammers, and had borne the merry crowd to and from the wedding.

"Tis a fine night, Red," said Donal, coming over. "I'm sorry you couldn't be with us."

"So was I; but there was no help for it. Ye broke up airly."

"We did. The old people would have no more dancin' nor sportin' after 12 o'clock. An' now we have to face the black day in the darkness."

"Well, but ye'll be havin' your own wedding soon," said Red. "An' I hope ye'll have a rale night of it."

"I hope so," said Donal, moving homeward.

"I say, Donal," said Red, as if suddenly recollecting himself.

"Well, Red, what is it?" said Donal.

"Tis a family business, an' I suppose I shouldn't interfere," said Red, blushing in the darkness. "But they say you're intendin', Donal, don't want Nodlag on the same flure wid her, an' the old woman here does be lonesome sometimes—"

"You mane you'll like to have her here?" said Donal.

"That is, av, there's no room for her at Glenannar," said Red.

"So long as there's a bit, bite and sup yonder," said Donal, solemnly. "Nodlag will have her place at our table, no matter who comes in."

"Oh, I mane no offence," said Red. "An' I take none," said Donal.

"An' at last, it is somethin' to know that she has a friend in you, Red, if all fails her."

"That she has, and some day I may have the chance to prove it," said Red. "Good-night!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

## A MIDNIGHT SYND.

It was in an old gray keep, one of the square frontier fortresses, built in Queen Elizabeth's time, that the midnight synd was held. The castle rose from a little swell, or knoll, which probably was in ancient days the moraine of some mighty glacier that had slid down from the mountain valleys and pushed the detritus of sand and earth before it. It was built of gray limestone, and stood full square to all the winds that blow.

Here, in past ages, were entrenched the mail-clad warriors, who held the whole country side against the raparrees; and here this moonlit, frosty night, with the snow still glittering all around, were gathered the descendants of these same raparrees, as fierce, as generous, and as vindictive as their sires of three hundred years gone by. Some sat on the stone steps that led to the upper stories of the old castle; and two or three were on the summit, hidden behind the parapets, sentinels against the approach of strangers or enemies. They were all young men, of the farming and laboring class. A few were still members of the White Boy vendetta. All had worn the white shirt in their time. Two were the sons of the Dan Lynch who was executed at the same sazies at which Edmond Connors had been acquitted. Years had wrought no change in their hearts, although time and trouble had laid

heavy hands upon them. The smouldering fires of hatred were newly lighted by the startling report that had gone far and wide over the country. These boys, too, were first cousins to Nano Hegarty, Donal's future bride.

There were few syndical prayers. At least, there were no syndical prayers.

"Boys," said young Lynch, "ye know what ye're here for. It has gone round the country that the seed and breed of that infernal ruffian, Cloumper Daly, is in our midst, left here by her father and mother. And the question is, what's to be done?"

"Is that what we're summoned for?" said a young farmer, no great friend of the Lynches.

"Tis, and isn't it enough?" hotly replied Lynch. "Do ye mane to say that we're goin' to stand by, and see that hellspaw amongst decent people, who never had shame, altho' they had their fill of sorrow at their dures?"

"Tis a quare thing, though," said the former speaker, "that we should be called upon to make war upon a slip of a child that never did nobody harm. How can she help those from whom she was got?"

"Tis aisy for you to talk, Connor Brien," said Lynch, "but if you knew what it was to rise in the mornin', and think of your father swung by the throat by them Sassanachs in Cork; and he, before the High God, innocent—"

Here the poor fellow's emotion smothered him; and he could not proceed. But it had the effect of the most deadly eloquence upon his audience.

"Thine for you, Dan," said a great, burly fellow, rising. "Tis only when it comes home to our own dures, that we feel for other's troubles."

"If I thought," said another, "that the spawn of that sarpit was amongst us, be the Holy Moses, 'twould soon go down the river, or up the sky in smoke."

"We're all of wane mind in that matter," said a peace maker. "But, before ye go farther, wouldn't it be well to know what 'tis all about?"

"What the devil, man," said young Lynch. "Don't we all know what 'tis about? Are our heads growin' under our oxen that we haven't hard what everyone is sayin'?"

"Aisy now, aisy now, Murty," said the peace maker. "De an' any man mane to tell me, that Edmond Connors woud give food and shelter to any wane of that seed, breed, and generation?"

"They say he don't know it," replied the other. "All he knows is, that he picked up the child on a Christ mas night, and kep' her out of charity. That's all."

"An' how can anny man prove she's Cloumper Daly's child?" asked another who was for peace, and who was tired enough of violence.

"There's no proof if you come to that," said Murty Lynch. "But Cloumper Daly's wife went to America without her child; and the child at Connors' was found about the same time."

"Yerra, what proof is that?" asked the pleader. "And was there anny more unlikely place on the face of the airth for Cloumper Daly, or his wife, to put their child than at the dure of the man whose life they wor swearin' away?"

"Bogor, that clinches the matter, Dan," said a young fellow, who had been hitherto silent. "Sure, in the whole wuruld there c-uld'n't find a worse spot than Glenannar. Ould Ned Connors would have pitched her straight to the divil."

"But sure, man, I tell you he didn't know it; nor does he know it till this day. Thin, ye heard what Dansecombe said to his wood-ranger, just before the great snow fell?"

"No! I no! What's that?" said many voices, whilst all faces were turned up expectant.

"Is it Linehan you mane?" said one, to make quite sure of the personality.

"Ye, Thade Linehan—"

"The divil a much I'd give for what that ruffian and rint-winner would say," cried a boy, who had been prosecuted by Linehan for poaching. "He's not much better than an informer himself."

"No matter for that!" said Murty Lynch, angrily, as he felt the tide of opinion setting against him, "the divil himself will tell the truth when it suits his purpose."

"Well! well! what did Dansecombe say? Let us hear it!" cried a dozen voices.

"What did he say?" repeated Murty, to emphasize the answer. "He said he made an offer to ould Ned Connors about that child, which he'd be sorry for not takin'."

"What was the offer?" cried the incredulous ones. "It must have been a shape bargain that Dansecombe offered for."

"He offered to take the child, and do for her, and rarer up a lady—"

"An' make a souper of her?"

"He didn't say that."

"Well, I see ye're all agin me," said Dan Lynch. "But, be this and that, I'll take the thing into me own hands, as ye haven't the heart of a hare—"

"Yerra, now, aisy, Dan," cried the great big giant. "You know us as well as any wane—"

"I know you, Dinny; an' I know you're a man, an' a man's son."

"You know well, Dan," said the giant, soothed by the flattery, "that I'd face all the landlords, an' agents, an' bailiffs in Munster; an' if it come to this thin thin I'd think of spearin' a salmon in the close season. But 'tis different altogether, when it comes to talkin' of doin' away wid a little slip of a colleen, that never did no harm to no wane."

"An' who the divil talked of doin' away wid her?" said Lynch, angrily.

"I never mentioned it, av ye did."

"Hollo! me bounchal, it's that ye're after?"

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that none of ye, nor of thin belongin' to ye, ever swung for yere creed or country."

"Bogor, you're right, Dan," said one of the "boys," passing his finger inside his collar. "Taat's a cravat that must be cut to be loosened. None of us ever wore it."

"Tisn't too late a yet," said Lynch, moving away. "High hangin' and movin' away. 'High hangin' and movin' away' is what some of ye will see before ye die. Come, Murty! Come, Darby! All the sperrits is died out of the country!"

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