

## THE CROCK OF GOLD.

(AN IRISH STORY.)

### FOR GOLD SEEKERS.

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I watched him stealing away amid the ruins, and then sat down on a bench of soft green moss to recall the story my old friend Sally had told me, in my childish days, about the old man I had seen so unexpectedly for the first time, but of whom I had so often heard.

"Never," she said, "build your hopes of future well-doing upon chance, but rather upon industry, whether of the head or of the hands; both have it in their power to win independence, though they do it in a different way. My uncle knew two young men in the gentleman's county—the county Kilkenny—of the name of Whelan, Roger and Michael. They were left a large tract of land by their father, which was divided equally between them. It was in parts wild and uncultivated, but it was all he had to give, except his blessing; and the blessing of a parent gladdens a good child's heart. Roger, the eldest, was a wild, dreamy fellow; and instead of setting steadily to work to mend matters and improve his farm, he was always talking of the 'luck' some people had, and how hard it was to be obliged to labour on bad land. It was in vain that Michael told him it was worse to have no land to labour on; he idled and complained. His brother worked night and day, at first with little success, but time helps industry; and what was really owing to industry, Roger said was owing to luck. 'If,' said Roger to Michael one sunny Sunday evening, when, after walking round and round and through and about the old ruins of Jerpoint Abbey, 'if I could only find a crock of gold, I'd be a made man. I'd have as fine a hunter as Squire Nixon, and such lashings of whiskey and fresh cod and oysters for every Friday in and out of Lent. Abel Ryan found one, and why shouldn't I?' While he spoke, he kept poking, poking with his stick among the stones of the mouldering archway, beneath which they, the brothers, stood; and as he did so, it chanced that he dislodged a stone, and in a crevice, a sort of hole between the stones, he discovered several old silver coins. This astonished one brother, and elated the other, whose wish that he *might* find a crock of gold was fast strengthening into the idea that he *should* find one. It was in vain that Michael reasoned with Roger, and urged him to take the new-found treasure to the landlord, whose property, according to the law of the land, it most undoubtedly was. Roger laughed at his scruples, and kept the coin; but though he had the money, he did not exactly know how to dispose of it. The sum was far too small to take him abroad, and he feared to show it at home, for the news would have flown like wildfire, and the castle be either rooted up or thrown down by those who would have expected to be as fortunate as Roger Whelan. Soon after this occurred, the time arrived for planting seed potatoes. Michael had got his ready, and hinted to his brother that the season was passing, and his ground remained unoccupied.

'How do you think,' was the treasure-seeker's reply, 'that I can be able to spend my time digging thick clay, when I am, as you, and you only, know, night after night, through and through the ruins of ould Jerpoint.

Don't I know the red gold *is* in it? And how do I think I can give my mind to such work as *that*, when I know what's before me?' It was no use talking the infatuated man. 'Give me,' he continued, 'the and the sup, and a good coat to my back, a new spade and pick-axe; suffer me to go and to come, and give you my share of the land, the dirty barren soil that it is: stockings and croppings, just as it is, take it, welcome.'

'Well,' answered Michael, 'I will manage it, Roger, till you come to your senses; and then, I'm think you'll be glad enough to get it back.'

"Roger Whelan," continued my friend, "was a handsome fellow, tall and comely, and was at the time very much in love with a very pretty girl, who had a good deal of money; but her parents found out that Roger was always out at nights. The country was not generally so, in an unquiet state; and despite Michael's assurances to the contrary, Mary Morgan's people believed that Roger was in some way connected with the disturbers of the public peace, at the very time when, to do him justice, he disturbed nought but the wild rabbits, the bats, owls, rooks, and wild birds that sheltered amid the ruins of Jerpoint. Neither Roger nor Michael would tell why Roger was from home at nights; and after some hesitation, and a few tears, Mary relinquished her handsome lover for a steady, little husband, who lived to be a rich citizen of the city of Waterford. 'Never mind,' said the discarded lover; 'she'll be sorry for it yet, when she hears of Mister Roger Whelan, Esq., talked of, and hears of his bay of my hounds on the hills, and sees my cart overrunning all the pigs on the quay of Waterford. Then, may be, she'll be sorry for changing her mind. The forgetfulness of his fair one, however, preyed upon his spirits; and having gone into Kilkenny, he was tempted to change one or two of his precious coins, and after having drunk the worth of his money in whiskey, he was imprudent enough to boast that he had more of the same 'curiosities' at home. The landlord, seeing that the coins were unlike any he had ever seen before, took them to a 'knowing man,' a little crabbed body who lived near the church gate of Saint Xaviers, and was as near an approach to a dealer in curiosities as could be supposed to exist in an Irish country town. Where the great of those days spent more than their spare money in show and claret, and the small had none any money to spare. Still the old man existed; and when he purchased the coins from the whiskey dealer, something seemed to occur to him, which he did not communicate to any one; but finding it was still early in the day, he set out to walk to a gentleman who resided about five miles from Kilkenny, on the Ross road. To him he showed the coins; and much to poor Michael's horror, Roger Whelan was arrested at the end of the week, on the accusation of having stolen the coins from that very gentleman's house. About a fortnight before the unfortunate treasure-seeker found the coins among the stones of Jerpoint Abbey, the house had been beset by some Whitefeet, or Peep-of-day boys, or whatever they choose to call themselves, seeking for arms and professing to take nothing else—a profession they generally adhered to. But one of them had doubtless been tempted by the glitter of a drawer of coins and medals in a bureau, which they had broken open to get at some curious Spanish pistols the gentleman was known to possess. After having obtained possession