

The Basket-Woman's Son

A wee dark woman was Betty. Not much to look at, maybe. No physical beauty. If you never gazed into her eyes—wonderful pools of purple fire—watched her face when she was moved, you could not realize that other self of hers.

"Betty, the basket-woman," the villagers called her. For she was a hawker of knickknacks. Combs and sweets and rows of pins and curls of blacking and holy pictures were stowed away in those wonderful baskets. Even now, after all the years, in my mind's eye I can see her waddling up the whin-edged lane.

News she carried from all arts and parts. In one end of the parish she related what was taking place in the other. The men and boys, the girls and the women loved her. And the work ever so pressing, they could always find time to listen to her yarns. She picked up everything that was going, from the contents of an American letter to the speechifying of "Willie" O'Brien in the London "Parliament."

Sometimes they would kee her talking to them until night overtook her, and the half of her journey only over. For she had certain appointed "walks" or "rounds" for every day, and great indeed would be the disappointment if she failed to come.

In these circumstances the boys or the men or the callins would volunteer to leave her a bit o' the road. They would help her carry her baskets to the next halting-place. And so on, from place to place, she went repeating her "story" over and over again.

She had a special graun for the boys. Three colored sweets apeece she gave them, but to the girls she only gave one. On this account it was a mark of special distinction to be allowed to carry Betty's baskets—

with the reward of an extra sweet thrown in at the journey's end. Some of us, indeed, to forestall the rest, used—meanly—to hide behind the hedges, in order to have the first opportunity of proffering our services.

Ah me, those dark days! And Betty, poor Betty!

Betty was the widow of a fisherman. One night his boat went down in Inver Bay. It was the memorable night of the Big Storm. After that she had to live somehow—herself and the boy, Phelimy. Thus she took her baskets and went around the countryside with a brave, cheerful face, in wind and rain, hail and storm. When I hear other women, with comfortable homes and little to do, complain of trials, I think of the basket-woman who found the secret of all joy in trudging the roads.

It was only at night when the fire burned brightly in her own little cabin by the edge of the bogs, and the purple darkness lay in the corners, that a dark shade passed across the cheerful face. Then only did the reaction come. There was no good fetching one's troubles to other people's door.

Then she would take the boy, Phelimy, in her lap and kissed him. For in the heart of her she was a dreamer, and, oh, so lonely. Some folks there be who go through the world hungering not for food or gear, but just understanding. To be misunderstood is to be forgotten.

Like all dreamers, Betty was full of old stories. And always they were stories of the lonely heart. Stories with a great sob in the core of them. She went on telling the boy these old legends until strange shadows filled his mind. Of the sad fate of Deirdre, of the love of Diarmuid and Graine, of Owen Roe O'Neill and the great day at Benburb when his men drove back those foreign hordes. Of the defence of Limerick and Atheneo. And always she spoke in glowing exaggerated words.

She filled the boy's head full of the old stories of Granuaile and her wrongs. The tears came into his eyes. Oh, that he had been a man that he might be in the thick of the fight! To have come face to face with glorious Sarsfield! And he was only a little boy, and he talked thus.

Betty smiled.

"Wan day I'll be dyin' for her," The tears were still in his eyes, his hands were clasped.

"Aye, that would be good, boy," she said, "the people that die for their country are never forgotten."

Poor foolish little Betty! If she could only have foreseen to what sorrow all this would lead.

A dreamer she made of the boy, too. Queer, fanciful dreams. The wind rustling in the trees was the piping of fairy flutes to him, and when a leaf fluttered across the road it was one of the Good People on some errand of mercy.

Like all dreamers, he forgot other things; how the food that he ate came, and the clothes that he wore. He accustomed himself to no work. He lounged by the fireside from one end of the year to the other. Work in abundance he could have had with any of the farmers around, but he turned the cold shoulder to it.

"God help the misfortunate out! craythur that reared the like of him," the folks would say, compassionately. "A big, lazy scrawgragh, no good for anything." A silly omadhaun with all his nonsense talk.

And so he grew up thriftless and idle. Sometimes, once in a while for

shame, he would do a few days' work. But he would very soon grow tired, and back with him to his lounging and dreaming again.

Betty never uttered a word of reproach. She idolized him. She idolized his nonsense. He would do a great deed for Granuaile one day, and it is she was the proud woman at the prospect. It was a great joy just to work for him. His "quare" talk in the evenings by the fireside amply compensated her for all the tramping in rain and wind. And one day sure he would perform the great feat. And people would talk of him and idolize him as she did now, and the fame and name of Phelimy (aye, her Phelimy) would be fresh to the end of days in the land.

And one evening, as he lay in the corner whistling and beating time upon the upturned bottom of a cornsieve, Shauna-Stawka came in. Shaun was a scapegrace, fit for anything. He had a newspaper in his pocket.

"Well, Shaun, what's the news?" "News," the other exclaimed, pulling out the paper, "great news, man. The big war in South Africa has broke out, and there's need for sojers."

"Sojers!" The light sprang into the other's eyes; he dropped the cornsieve on the flags and straightened himself up. He was thinking of Athlone and the broken bridge, and the men who walked, knowingly, into a death for the sake of the cause they loved.

"I was over to Derry the other day and the people's all wild. Gentlemen are volunteerin' their services, but what they want is rals: sojers! So I enlisted."

"You did?" "I'll be great. Phelimy. With hands beatin' and bugles callin' we'll be marchin' off in a week's time to the fiel' of battle."

The other sat in silence for a minute or two. He was now reviewing that lifelong dream of his—to do a great deed for Granuaile.

"Will you not come? Do you remember how you talked and talked to me long ago about goin' to be a sojer of Irelan'. And this is an Irish brigade."

"An Irish brigade! Then I'll go, Shaun. I was afraid it was an English wan. And I don't like that class; they broke faith with Sarsfield at Limerick." It was little, oh, so very little, that this dreamer fellow from the mountains knew of the affairs of nations.

"You needn't tell her—she might be angry. That's the way with women. They're always afraid of fightin'—if it's only a ruction in a fair. But when you come back with all your honors, it's herself that'll be proud of you."

"Well and good, Shaun, I won't tell her. She'd be making a row anyway an' cryin'."

And so, when Betty came home late that evening, tired and weary, no light greeted her from the little cabin as she entered the narrow lane. No light! She stood still. In all the years the like had never happened before. She came on. The door was shut. She peered in through the window, and saw that the fire upon the hearth was dead.

"Worra! Worra!" she exclaimed. "What has happened?"

She laid down the baskets and, unlatching the door, entered. At her heel came wee Nabla McCollion. Out, in childish fashion, she blurted the story. Phelimy had gone away over the hills to the big war. He told the girlsagh to say that he had left his mother his best love; that he would never forget her; that one day he would come back to her with all his honors; that she would be proud of him yet.

Down by the side wall the little bent form of the hawker-woman sat. Darkness about her and within her, and sorrow. She would never hum old airs along the roads again, never more could she present the smiling face to the people. All joy had come to an end for her.

And all because of her old stories! It was she who put the thoughts of battles into the boy's head. But in her mind it was to be for Granuaile. Now—now—he had gone off to do battle—but never for Grania.

She sobbed silently by the side wall.

The days drifted by, long, weary days for Betty.

The newspapers began to find their way into the mountain hamlet. Full of the war they were, of fights, of marches across a wild country, of defeats, of routs, of victory.

Betty went about on her daily rounds as usual. Asking, asking all the time of this one and that how fared the day with the two armies. No longer did she carry the news. Only always on the lookout for tidings of Phelimy. To every list of the killed and wounded she listened with beating heart, fearing that the next name would be that of her son—her shate of the world.

The sympathy of the people was all with the defenders. Brave men defending their homes and country. Every word they said stabbed her to the heart. If these people won, what would come of Phelimy? If they got victory it would be over her son's lifeless body.

And yet, and yet.

"Ah, why did I put them foolish stories into his head?" she would exclaim to herself. "War's only a shewolf that drinks the heart-blood of every mother's best-loved."

Yet she waited on and on, hoping and praying. To have him back alive—even maimed and without any honors—would be enough for her. To see him in the chimney corner opposite her, to listen to his dreamy low voice, to see the light flash and then die out of his lovely eyes. That were all she asked.

She had aged ten years in the months that passed since he went away.

And one evening as she sat over the fire, dreaming and hoping, somebody came to the door and peered in.

"Good luck to you, Betty," he said, leaning his arms on the doorposts.

LIVER COMPLAINT.

The liver is the largest gland in the body; its office is to take from the blood the poisons which form bile. When the liver is torpid and inflamed it cannot furnish bile to the bowels, causing them to become bound and constive. The symptoms are a feeling of fulness or weight in the right side, and shooting pains in the same region, pains between the shoulders, yellowness of the skin and eyes, bowels irregular, coated tongue, bad taste in the morning, etc.

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She looked at him closely. His arm was in a sling; he wore a suit of blue and looked tired. "You—are you—you are you at all?"

"Where's Phelimy? Is he comin' too? Where did you leave him?" He hung down his head; no word came.

She caught him by the shoulders and shook him violently. "Is he comin', man? Speak out at once. Tell me, tell me about the boy."

"It was a great fight," he replied, as if beginning a story, "and Phelimy covered himself with glory. He was a hero."

She interrupted him. "Where is he—is he comin' back to me?" Still he ignored her. "We were in a valley; on the hill above us the enemy were posted. The colonel wanted to know how many there were. If there was only a hundred or so, we could charge. To go up there meant instant death. It would be the end of the man who went. But it was the only way. So he axed who would volunteer to give their life."

A silence came over them all; it's wan thing to die in the fight; it's another to walk slowly to wan's death. Nobody spoke. Then out from the ranks stepped Phelimy and said, 'I'll go!' he sez.

"The colonel shook him by the hand and said he was a hero. And then he toul' him what he wanted; that he would have to crouch on hands and knees to the top of the hill. If the enemy observed him before he could get back he was to give the signal—advance or retire—on the flag that he carried."

"Away he went, lightly and carelessly, as if to a dance over in the hills there. Oh, he was the heart's blood of a man. 'A hero,' the colonel said. We lay still. The colonel stood with his glass to his eyes. For a long hour we heard nothin', seen nothin'. Then—then—"

"Boys," the colonel shouted, 'I see the flag—advance!'"

"With a mad rush we charged the height. We took the hill. But—" he looked at the floor again.

"But what, man? Is Phelimy dead? Speak out, for God's sake. Tell me, tell me."

"We found him dyin'. He was shot through the shoulders. But before he died the general, in the name of the sovereign, pinned a bronze medal of honor on his shoulder."

She turned away from him.

"Oh, God!" she exclaimed, putting her hands together, "that it should come to this!"

"Shame on ye, woman. Your son was a hero."

She turned on him angrily. "Don't mention that to me. I hate your wars and your generals and your flag. I hate that army o' the country. I hate that war; it's the devil's work, that's what it is."

"Woman—"

She rocked herself to and fro. "Oh, worra! worra! Why did I tell him them out' stories?"

"The army'll be writin' you wan of these days and sendin' you money."

"Money, is it? Niver, niver! It would be like the price of his life. It's blood-money. Naw, naw, I'll niver take a pice or penny. Only I'll always hate them, and cry." She wrung her hands and cried out in a wailful way that was terrifying. In her eyes shone a strange light.

He had to leave her. There was no good trying to reason with her.

When the neighbors came in next morning to console her they found her seated by the dead fire singing merrily; her long black hair hung in masses over her face, giving her a wild, weird appearance.

"Betty, dear, what's wrong with you?" they asked, kindly.

"Nothin' at all, then. I'm singin' because Phelimy's comin' home with honors and grandeur. Did you not hear that he did a great deed for Granuaile? I must get the house in order for him."

The people looked at each other and shook their heads. Betty had lost her reason.

And every day from that forth they came in evening and morning to see her. Little things they fetched

They Advertise Themselves.—Immediately they were offered to the public, Parmelee's Vegetable Pills became popular because of the good report they made for themselves. That reputation has grown, and they now rank among the first medicines for use in attacks of dyspepsia and biliousness, complaints of the liver and kidneys, rheumatism, fever and ague and the innumerable complications to which these ailments give rise.

her, bread and butter and eggs and potatoes. They let her want for nothing. Every one fetched something.

Always when they came, whatever time they found her putting the little cabin in order, "for the home-coming of Phelimy." And whenever they passed the song could be heard, the song of the men who fought and died at Limerick.

At length one morning there was no song, for Betty had taken suddenly unwell. "Fever! it was," said the doctor; "death!" said the neighbors.

Her thoughts even then were of the boy. "Rid up the house there, a'll ye, and clean the delph. Phelimy must not 'atch me like this." After a while a change came. "Maybe they are keeping him to give him all them honors he won that day. Well!" (the voice sank lower and lower), "if he doesn't come to me I'll—make ready and go to him."

And in the dusk of the day her spirit passed out to meet his.—Cahir Healy in the Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

A WORK OF ART

Last week there appeared in the columns of the Catholic Register a good illustration of the Catholic Church at La Salette, Ont., and the following will give our readers some idea of the beautiful church which was decorated by the Metal Shingle and Siding Co., Preston, Ont.

La Salette, Ont. The Preston Metal Shingle and Siding Co., Preston, Ont.

Dear Sirs,—The work is completed, and most satisfactory. It is strictly first class and has surpassed the expectations of the most optimistic. I would be pleased to have you call to see it, as it is well worth seeing.

Please find cheque enclosed in payment for balance on work. Also accept our most sincere thanks for the splendid work you have done for us, and for the satisfactory manner in which you have accomplished the same.

I remain, Yours very truly, J. J. GNAM.

(Extract of letter to Mr. —) The Catholic Church at La Salette, Ont., is without doubt the most imposing edifice situated along the M. C.R. lines running through Canada.

It is a handsome structure of large proportions in Gothic and Renaissance design, and is built in red brick with stone trimmings. An elaborately designed slate roof, seen for miles, covers the building. Like many of our churches, the tower was left unfinished. Numerous were the designs proffered, but none seemed to meet the desired end. The difficulty lay in the production of a design that would furnish a belfry and still be in keeping with the architectural portions of the building. Years in search were spent in vain. The introduction of Metallic work for church-steeple purposes finally solved the problem.

An elaborate design as shown in the cut, was draughted by Mr. W. Holmes of Toronto, an artist who has reached the pinnacle of church architecture in Ontario. His plans were immediately accepted and the contracts let.

To Messrs. Quance Bros. of Delph was allotted the wood-work. The Metallic portion was awarded to the Preston Metal Shingle and Siding Company. Though comparatively young, this firm has put a finish on this tower which, in beauty of design and workmanship, will challenge anything produced of its kind by the big American firms. The tower is to day the finest and best proportioned in Ontario. Surmounted by four golden crosses, it presents an imposing appearance to travellers whose attention is irresistibly attracted with the most favorable comments. Special attention was given to the building of these crosses. This part of the work was entrusted to Mr. Huber, an expert painter of Berlin, Ont., who, before applying the gold leaf, treated the metal to some secret process, ridding it of all acids and salts. Following this treatment, gold leaf will adhere to metal for years.

Those contemplating the completion of half finished towers should not proceed before examining the splendid work accomplished by the Preston Metal Shingle and Siding Company and the satisfaction they give in every detail. We, therefore, highly recommend this firm as most responsible and satisfactory in their dealings and their work as most artistic and durable.

REV. J. J. GNAM, Pastor.

March 24, 1906.

JIM'S EASTER SONG

Jim stood on the street corner, de-liberating. The cold wind tore round the corner and threatened to snatch the cap from his head. Jim did not mind the wind. He had an unusual streak of good luck this afternoon, and sold off all his papers early, and now stood jingling several coins in his pocket; coins which meant for him a good hot supper and a night's lodging.

He turned and sauntered along, crossing street after street, till he wandered into a section of the city where he very rarely came—a most prosperous section, judging from the fine broad avenue.

Jim was cold by this time, and thought he would retrace his steps, when his attention was attracted by the sound of music. It came from a church close by, the door of which stood invitingly open. It looked nice and warm inside; there was no one in sight, and Jim softly stepped in and sat down at the back of the church, which was in semi-darkness.

The other lights were away down at the other end, where were gathered a group of boys about Jim's age, and a man seated at an organ. Soon the man began to play and the boys to sing. Now one would hardly have

guessed on seeing Jim that he was a musician himself, but he had a great reputation among his friends, who were sure that not one of the famous singers of the day had a voice that could compare in sweetness with Jim's.

Jim was interested at once when he heard music in the church. Oh, the beautiful music! He had never heard anything like it in his life. It made him almost unhappy at one moment, and he would rise to go, only it held him so he could not.

But the boys! His astonishment rose as he heard and watched them. The man was evidently trying to teach them something; but some were careless and could not learn. Finally the boys became so restless that the man rose and, closing the organ, told them all to come the next afternoon; and immediately there was a wild scramble for the door.

That night Jim would neither play nor whistle for his friends, to their great surprise; but the grand, uplifting strains which he had heard that afternoon still lingered in his ears.

The next afternoon as soon as his papers were sold, Jim started again for the church, and the next, and the next as well. Every afternoon found him a quiet, unnoticed listener at the back of the great church.

The master went over and over the strains, slowly, carefully and patiently, while the boys blundered and hesitated. Jim had learned the whole thing by the second afternoon, and could have sung every note of it.

Jim was completely out of patience with one boy. He had a beautiful part to sing alone, evidently the climax of the whole piece, and he had a voice like a skylark, so pure and clear; but it was such a task to teach him anything!

What he apparently learned one day was forgotten the next, and Jim fidgeted and muttered to himself in disgust at the bungling work which he made of it.

They were getting ready for Easter, as Jim learned from the conversation, and he made up his mind that he would be there on that day himself. He had attended so many of the rehearsals by this time that he felt quite at home in the church; but it seemed a very different place to him in the light of the bright spring morning when Jim walked up to the door on Easter Day.

The many carriages, the throngs of gayly dressed people so abashed him that he hardly dared go in, but he finally found an opportunity to do so unobserved, and slipped quietly into his accustomed seat. The church quickly filled, even to the corner where Jim sat.

After a while there was a sound of distant singing, and soon the chancel choir came walking in procession, singing the music that Jim had heard them learning.

In their choir garments they looked little like the rough, careless boys of the day before. He did not know that the boy with the beautiful voice, who was to have sung the solo part, had suddenly been taken ill, and that the organist, in despair, had been obliged to substitute in his place one of the other boys, who was not capable of filling it, but was the best that the organist could find on such short notice.

So Jim did not know what to make of it when he saw the boy evidently preparing to sing alone. Jim knew each boy's capabilities in a musical way by this time as well as the organist himself did, and he knew that this boy could not sing the music properly. The organist began to play; the boy looked frightened. It

was time for him to begin; he hesitated and choked. The organist turned partly round. The next instant a voice of wonderful strength and sweetness filled the church.

After a single start the organist played steadily on. He did not know from where or whom the heavenly voice proceeded, but it was God-sent. Through to the end, without fear or faltering, glowing and thrilling with joy and love and devotion, Jim poured out his soul.

When the last pure tones had died away, and he realized what he had done, he would have rushed off if possible, but kindly hands gently detained him till the service was over and the surprise and wonder of the people could find expression.

Of course that was the beginning of a great change in Jim's life. The nightingale in his throat could no longer be hidden; it had brought to him friends and fortune. But in the future years people liked to tell the story of his first public appearance, when he sang because his bursting heart could not contain its wealth of melody.

CANCER OF THE BOWELS. Stott & Jury, Bowmanville, Ont., will gladly send you the names of Canadians who have tried their painless home treatment for cancer in all parts of the body. Some of the cures are simply marvellous.

In Brief

The pupils of a certain school were asked to write original compositions on "Kings."

The prize was carried off by a youth who handed in the following: The most powerful king on earth is War-king; the laziest, Shirk-king; one of the worst kings, Smo-king; the wittiest, Jo-king; the quietest, Think-king; the thirstiest, Drink-king; the slyest, Win-king; the noisiest, Talk-king.

Catholics at Cambridge

Among the Catholics who have distinguished themselves this year at the English Universities are Mr. Jerome Farrell, who has just won a Classical Fellowship at Cambridge, worth £200 a year for six years with board and residence; and Mr. Valentine O'Connell Miley, who has gained a Mathematical Scholarship worth £80 a year at Oxford. Mr. Farrell is the first Catholic Fellow of Cambridge since the Reformation.

Table for the month of May (31 days) with columns for Day of Month, Day of Week, Color of Vestment, and the day's liturgical readings.

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