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THE LOVE STORY OF ALISON BARNARD

BY KATHARINE TYNAN

CHAPTER VII—Continued.

"Tis Kitty," said Mrs. Donegan, but she spoke to the empty house.

The change in her amazed Alison. There had always been something a little wild about Kitty, something of the startled fawn in her air, her attitude, which was a part of the attraction her looks had for critics of a higher station of life than her own.

"I think she has to go, Mrs. Donegan," she said in response to the look of eager expectation on the face of the half-blind woman.

"I am sure she will come back-beated," said Alison; and then was quiet in her seat by the window so that she should not disturb them.

"You will let them know, Father, that the information is not to be used against my opponent," said Sir Gerard Molyneux.

"I know you'd say it," said the priest half-regretfully. "Still it would be a grand handle against him. He wouldn't be able to show his face in Erris. You know what he said about you at the fair of Coolmore?"

"The boys will be terribly disappointed. They were getting out placards. They'd amuse you."

"Please let them know that they are not to be used."

"Well, well! Well, well!" said the priest, with good-humored resignation. "I knew what you'd say. It's magnificent, but it isn't war. I shouldn't be surprised if Lindsay beat you after all. The people will lose heart over this."

"I had rather be beaten than win with those weapons."

"Father Tracy sighed and smiled. Alison, saying nothing, remembered a speech of the priest's to her about Sir Gerard Molyneux."

"Men love a woman for various reasons," he had said. "They love a man for being straight. He is the straightest man I have ever known, and the most unselfish."

"And Alison's heart had leapt up at the praise."

CHAPTER VIII.

Summer Lightning.

Mr. Paul Posanquet had misunderstood his chief's telegram, or rather the transmitter, a pretty, elderly spinster with a nervous hand and eye, had.

"Come to Castle Barnard for lunch at one," was the telegram as dictated by Sir Gerard Molyneux.

"Come to Castle Barnard for lunch at once," was the telegram as it reached Paul Bosanquet where he sat in the library at Killynoe surrounded by letter-baskets and waste-paper baskets and correspondence of all kinds.

It was half-past ten and he had just finished Sir Gerard's pressing correspondence for the day, handing it over to a subordinate to be dealt with at length.

While he had worked he had not so much as glanced at the long windows which stood open beyond the darkness of velvety lawns beyond the spreading boughs of chestnut and sycamore, the deer, seen through a gap in the trees, feeding in the park. The famous woods massed themselves upon the horizon. A summer wind straying into the library lighter than a butterfly touched the secretary's closely-cropped rippled head. Somewhere at the back of his mind he had been conscious all the time that the day was heavenly and the wind her invitation.

Now as he read the telegram he could hardly refrain from a school-boy shout.

"It was lucky I started early with a thought of fishing," he said to himself. "And luckier that I hadn't set out to fish. I wouldn't have got a rise; the day's too bright. And Castle Barnard of all places! I suppose they must be going to have lunch in the Glen of Silver Birches about which Molyneux was talking yesterday, or why this early summons?"

He put a rose in his coat before he ordered his horse. His mood was rose-like festival. He was going to see that pretty bronzed-headed child who had captivated his imagination yesterday. Miss Barnard of Castle Barnard was a goddess.

"Oh, dove of tenderness, Swan of slenderness,"

Was that what Mrs. Lang had sung last night with such simple passion? Miss Barnard of Castle Barnard was a swan of slenderness. Her young cousin,—he had been interested in Irish matters since he had met and loved Gerard Molyneux, and had read

whatever of Irish he could lay his hands upon,—her young cousin was a cluster of nuts, a little nut-brown maid.

"For me?" he asked. "For you," she said shyly. "Because you are going to tell me that I must go back to Killynoe, and wait till it is a proper hour to appear?"

"I never thought of that," said Tessa in a startled way. "Why it is quite four miles to Killynoe by the road. So Cousin Alison told me only this morning."

"Then why were you sorry for me? Or perhaps it was for yourself?"

"Not for myself," said Tessa, shocked out of her shyness.

"Well then, if you are going to let me wait here till lunch-time, Miss Barnard, I assure you I do not feel at all sorry for myself."

"Something of ardour in his voice and manner brought the blood flying to Tessa's cheek. Again he had a fear that he might startle her to flight.

"May I put down my hat?" he asked hastily. "It makes me feel so ceremonious sitting here like this. I have been thinking what a beautiful place Castle Barnard is. What a place to have for one's own! Is that a boat-house I see down there near the bridge? Do you row?"

"A little," said Tessa, eagerly. "It is the one good thing about Killynoe that it has the river. Just where it flows through the town it is polluted with all manner of things from the factories. But higher up it is beautiful, with water-lilies and all kinds of water-birds, and woods going down to the edge of it full of blue-bells. At least the blue-bells were there last time I was up the river. And I heard the cuckoo for the first time."

She blushed suddenly, vividly. She had remembered how the party had landed with a lunch-basket, and hearing the first cuckoo, which none else of the party noticed, she had surreptitiously studied the ground at her feet to discover a hair which should be the color of her lover's hair.

"You liked that day?" he asked, with a coldness in his voice.

"One couldn't help being happy on such a day," she answered humbly, feeling that she had somehow offended him. "I was with papa and mamma and my sisters and their friends. And nobody minded when I strayed with Jane, an old servant, whom we had brought with us, to boil the kettle and get the tea ready. And after they had all gone away, Jane, who is always kind to me, let me go in the wood by myself. I found a little glade with a stream in it that had come straight down from the mountains. It was the color of peat but so clear. And I saw little trout in it; and after a time, since I sat so still, the birds hopped about me, and the squirrels went running up and down the boughs quite near me, and the rabbits came out of their holes and sat washing their faces. It was heavenly!"

"It will only be give an order about the carriage being sent for Mrs. Lang and then I shall be ready."

(To be Continued.)

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