

ty to-and-fro with her apron at her eyes; and the father, though he tried hard to conceal his emotion, could not restrain the big tears from rolling down his weather-beaten face. "Och, wo is the day," said he, "that ever we let him go from us. Such a darent lad, and belonging to a family that never did a dishonest action. And sure all hearts were upon him, and we all so proud out of him."

"Father," said the weeping Nora, "I know the heart of him better nor any of you does; and I know he never had intition to do anything that would bring to the blush the mother that bore him, and the sister that slept in his arms, when we were weany things. I'll go to Ameriky, and find out all about it, and write you word."

"You go to Ameriky!" exclaimed her mother. "Sure you're crazed with the big grief that's upon you, *coleen machree*, or you'd aiver spake thim words."

"And wouldn't he follow me to the ends of the earth, if the black trouble was on me?" replied Nora, with passionate earnestness. "There was always kindness in him for all human crathurs; but he loved me better nor all the world. Never a one had a bad word agin him, but nobody knew the heart of him as I did. Proud was I out of him, and I know some is my heart widout him. And is it I will lave him alone wid his trouble? Troth, dot if there was ten oceans atween us."

This vehemence subsided after awhile, and they talked more calmly of how they should hide their disgrace from the neighbourhood. That their hearts were sad they could not conceal. Day after day, their frugal meals were rebvnd almost unaltered, and every one stepped about silently, as after a funeral. The very cows, came slowly and disconsolately, as if they heard grief in the voice of their young mistress, when she called them to be milked. And the good old mother no longer crooned at her spinning-wheel the song she had sung over the cradle of her darling boy. Nora at first persisted in her plan of crossing the Atlantic; but her father forbade it, and she said no more. But her heart grew more and more impatient. She spoke less and less of James, but she sighed heavily at her work, and her eyes were often red with weeping. At last, she resolved to depart unknown to any one. She rose stealthily at midnight tied up a small bundle of clothing, placed a little bag of money in her bosom, paused and gazed lovingly on her sleeping parents, hastily brushed away the gathering tears, and stepped out into the moonlight. She stood for a few moments and gazed on the old familiar hills and fields, on the potato patch, where she and James had worked together many a day, on the old well, by the side of which the Maygowsans grew, and on the clear white cabin, where the dear old ones slept. She passed into the little shed, that served as a stable for the animals, and threw her arms around the donkey's neck, and kissed the cow, that knew her voice as well as her own mother did. She came forth weeping, and gazed on the old home-stead, as she would gaze on the face of a dying friend. The clustering memories were too much for her loving heart. Drooping on her knees, she prayed, in agony of sorrow, "If it be a sin to go away from the good, old father and mother, perhaps never to see them agin, till the judgment day, than, oh! Father in heaven will forgive me, for thou shalt I can not lave him alone wid his great trouble."

Then crossing herself, and looking toward the beloved home of her childhood, she said, in a stifled voice, "The blessing of God be wid ye, and bless and keep ye all."

Half blinded with tears she wended her way over the moon-lighted hills, and when her favourite cow called, as usual for her milking pail, in

* Oyl of my heart.

the first blush of the morning, she was already far on her way to Dublin.

And had James been criminal? In the eye of the law he had been, but his sister was right, when she said he had no intention to do a wicked thing. No long after his arrival in America, he was one day walking along the street, in a respectable suit of Sunday clothes, when a stranger came up, and entered into conversation with him. After asking some indifferent questions, he inquired what his coat cost.

"Sixteen dollars," was the answer. "I will give you twenty for it," said the stranger, "for I am going away in a hurry, and have no time to get one made."

James was as unsuspecting as a child. He thought this was an excellent opportunity to make four dollars, to send to his darling sister, so he readily agreed to the bargain.

"I want a watch, too," said the stranger, "but perhaps you would not be willing to sell yours for ten dollars?"

James frankly confessed that it was two dollars more than he gave for it, and very willingly consented to the transfer. Some weeks after, when he attempted to pass the money the stranger had given him, he found, to his dismay, that it was counterfeit. After brooding over his disappointment for some time, he came to a conclusion at which better educated men than himself have sometimes arrived. He thought to himself—"It is hard for a poor man to lose so much, by no fault of his own. Since it was put off upon me, I will just put it off upon somebody else. Maybe it will keep going the rounds, or somebody will lose it that can better afford it than I can."

It certainly was a wrong conclusion, but it was a bewilderment of the reasoning powers in the mind of an ignorant man, and did not involve wickedness of intention. He passed the money, and was soon after arrested for forgery. He told his story plainly, but, as no admittance that he knew the money was counterfeit when he passed it, the legal construction of his crime was forgery in the second degree. He had passed three bills, and had the penalty of the law been enforced with its utmost rigour, he might have been sentenced to the state prison for fifteen years; but appearances were so much in his favour, that the court sentenced him but for five years.

Five years taken away from the young life of a labouring man, spent in silent toil, in shame and sorrow for a slight reputation, was, indeed, a heavy penalty for confused notions of right and wrong, concerning bits of paper, stamped with a nominal value. But law, in its wisest and kindest administration, cannot always make nice distinctions between thoughtless errors and willful crimes.

It is possible James never felt the degree of compunction, that it is supposed every convict ought to feel; for the idea was ever with him, that if he signed against government, he did not mean to sin against God. That he had disgraced himself, he knew full well and felt keenly. The thoughts of what Nora and his good mother would suffer, if they could see him driven to hard labour with thieves and murderers, tore his soul with anguish. He could not bring his mind to write to them, or send them any tidings of his fate. He thought it better that they should suppose him dead, than know of his disgrace. Thus the weary months passed silently away. The laugh of his eye and the bound of his step were gone. Day by day he grew more disconsolate and stupid.

He had been in prison about four years, when one of the keepers told him that a young woman had come to visit him, and he had received permission to see her. He followed silently, wondering who it could be; a moment after, he was locked in his sister's arms. For some time, nothing but sobs were audible. They looked mournfully in each other's faces, then fell on each other's necks, and wept again.

"And so you know me, *marounneen*?" said Nora, at last, trying to smile through her tears.

"Know you!" he replied, folding her more closely to his breast. "A *coosla machree*," and wouldn't I know your shadow on the wall, in the darkest cellar they could put me in! But who came wid you, *marounneen*?"

"Troth, and it was alone I come. I ran away; in the night I hope it wasn't wrong to lave the good father and mother, when they had spoke agin my coming. I wouldn't like to do anything displeasing to God. But Jimmy, *machree*, my heart was breakin' widout you, and I couldn't lave you alone wid your great trouble. Sure it's long ago I would have been wid you, if you had let us know of your misfortune."

The poor fellow wept afresh at these assurances of his sister's affection. When he was calmer, he told her circumstantially how the great trouble had come upon him.

"God be praised for the words you spake," replied Nora. "It will take a load off of hearts at home, when they hear of the same. I always said there was no sin in your heart, for who should know that better nor me, who slept in the same cradle? A blessing be wid you, *marounneen*.—The music's in my heart to hear the sound of your voice agin. And proud will I be out of you, as I used to be when all eyes, young and old, brightened on you in warm old Ireland."

But Nora, *dearest*, the disgrace is on me," said the young man, looking down. "They will say I am a convict."

"Sorra a fig I care what they say," replied the warm hearted girl. "Don't I know the heart that is in you? Didn't I say there was no sin in your intentions, though you was shut up in this bad place? And if there had been—if the black murder had been wid you, is it Nora would be atter laving you alone wid your sin and your shame? Troth, I would weary the saints in heaven with prayers, till they made you a better man, for the sake of your sister's love. But there was no sin in your heart; and proud I am out of you *suilsh-machree*; and be luck to the rogue that brought you into this trouble."

The keeper reminded them that the time allowed for their interview was nearly spent.

"You will come agin?" said James, imploringly. "You will come to me agin, *coosla machree*?"

"I had to be hard to see you once," replied Nora. "They said it was agin the rules. But when I told them how I came alone across the big ocean to be wid you in your trouble, because I knew the heart that was in you, they said I might come in. It is a heavy sorrow that we cannot spake together. But it will be a comfort, *marounneen*, to be where I can look on these stone walls. The kind man here they call the chaplain says I may stay wid his family; and sure not an hour in the day but I will think of you, a *crilish*. The same moon shines here, that used to shine on us when we had our May dances on the green, in dear old Ireland; and when they let you get a glimpse of her bright face, you can think maybe Nora is looking up at it, as she used to do when she was your own weeny darling, wid the shamrock and gowan in her hair. I will work; and lay by money for you; and when you come out of this bad place, it's Nora will stand by you; and proud will I be out of you, a *suilsh machree*."

The young man smiled as he had not smiled for years. He kissed his sister tenderly, as he answered. "Ah, Nora, *marounneen*, it's yourself that was always too good to me. God's blessing be wid you, *coosla machree*. It will go hard wid me but I will make mine return for such goodness."

"And sure it's no goodness at all," replied Nora. "Is it yourself would be after leaving me alone, and I in the great trouble? Hut, hut, Jimmy avick. Sure it's nothing at all. Anybody would do it. You're as dacent and clever a lad as iver you was. Sing that to your heart, *marounneen*. It's Nora will stand by you, all the world over."

With a smile that she meant should be a brave one, but with eyes streaming with tears, she bade her beloved brother farewell. He embraced her,

* Pulse of my heart. † Light of my heart. ‡ Dear.