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NORA BRADY'S VOW.

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CHAPTER VI.

"I'm biddin' you a long farewell,
My Mary kind and true;
But I'll not forget you, darling,
In the land I'm going to.
They say there's bread and work for all,
And the sun shines always there;
But I'll not forget Old Ireland,
Were it fifty times as fair."

The next day a police-constable, attended by four subordinate officials, made his appearance at Glendariff. "He had been sent down from Dublin," he informed Captain Saunders, "by Donald More, Esq., to protect the property, and see that nothing but Mrs. Halloran's personal effects were removed from the house."

"You've come on a brow errand," said Captain Saunders, with bitter irony, "an' one veel suited to such a hoodie-craw. There na mickle to fear for yer thrapple, as there's only a desolate ladye and twa bairnies to spend yer valor on. Yes, yes, your documents are all correct. You will have perfect indemnity for any audacity you may commit; but, I rede ye, no insult to the ladye. None of us," and a burning spot glowed on the cheeks of the honest old Scotchman,—"none of us were sent here to interfere with her."

The brutal countenance of the man expressed merely a blank and passing look of amazement and annoyance. He evidently had not expected such a reception, and could he have understood the meaning of what the old officer said, he would have sent up to Dublin no favorable report of his loyalty. As it was, the cool irony of his tone, and the unceremonious reception he gave him, stung him in such a manner that, had he been with his equals or his inferiors, he would have given vent to the rage which he now thought it most prudent to suppress.

"It's the law, captain; it's not me, sir.—It's the law. They might all go to the devil, sir, headlong, if the law'd let 'em, and I'd not put a jack-saw in their way," he replied, sullenly. "But somebody must see this Mistress Halloran, and read these documents to her."

"Come with me," said the old soldier, rising from his chair, and striding through the hall towards the drawing-room, which he had seen Mrs. Halloran enter, with her children, a short time before. He tapped lightly on the door, which was opened by Desmond, who sprang back, and stood scowling, at him, while the veins in his forehead swelled out, and his clinched fists were extended forward. Captain Saunders laid his large, branny hand gently on the boy's head, and passed in. Mrs. Halloran arose, with her accustomed grace and courtesy, to receive him, although the appearance of a stranger with him evidently agitated her. She was every instant expecting news from her husband, and if this was the messenger who had come to tell her he was taken, she must die.—So she thought; and Captain Saunders, who read her fears in her pale, anxious countenance, hastened to relieve them, by saying—

"Do not be alarmed, madam. This gentleman, who is of the law, has only come down from Dublin on a mere legal formula, which, I believe, is usual on such occasions; and I, thinking, perhaps, as you have—no, ahem—no friend near ye, took the liberty of breaking the business to you."

"Thank you, from my soul, sir," replied Mrs. Halloran, with a grateful look, and inexpressibly relieved. "What is your business with me, sir?"

"I was sent down, ma'am, from Dublin, by Donald More, Esq."

"To drive me from the shelter of my own roof," she said, in a calm but bitter tone. "It were a needless precaution, however. I shall leave, as I intended, in the morning. It being his, even though unjustly, would be sufficient to drive me from it, if I had no other shelter than those ruins below us, or the fastnesses of the hills."

"Madam, this relates to the graith and effects belonging to yourself. Look over the in—the precious document: hand it to Mrs. Halloran, sir," said Captain Saunders.

"I don't know that it will be strictly according to law, sir."

"It will, Mrs. Halloran, glance over it.—It's nae a flattering document, I'll admit; but may-be the sooner it's over the better," said Captain Saunders, passing the unfolded parchment from the constable's hands to hers.

Her eyes ran rapidly over it. A red spot was soon kindled on each pale cheek, her lips were firmly compressed, and he saw, by the fluttering of the lace on her bosom, how wildly her heart was throbbing, and knew how sharp and deep the blow had struck home. He pitied her. He thought of his own fair daughters in the quiet vale of Kinloch; and had he dared, could he have done it without disloyalty, he would have made her wrongs his own. After she had read it to the last word, she refolded the parchment, handed it back to the man, and, turning to Captain Saunders, said—

"The treachery of friends and kinsmen is harder to bear than injuries received from

strangers. My personal effects are not numerous, and, if my necessities were not so great I would make Donald More a free gift of them, along with the rest. I brought John Halloran, still the noblest and best of men, though now outlawed and called rebel, for that which, had it been successful, would have ranked him among the world's best heroes. I brought him but little, except my love and an undying trust in the purity of his character. That no tyranny can rob me of. Have no fears, therefore, for yourself and your employer. I shall give you a list of the effects belonging to me; he will know whether it is correct, and if I am entitled to them. When you receive his reply they can be forwarded to me."

"But see here, madam; look at this clause. It will save you trouble, and me time," said the official. "Here: it reads, 'Mrs. Halloran knows what articles to remove, and will retain only such articles as she is entitled to by possession prior to her marriage with John Halloran.'"

"That is clear enough, madam; and, if an old soldier made advise you, take advantage of it, without giving yourself mair trouble."

"Thank you. That will do," she said, bowing to the police-constable. Then her face dropped down in her long, slender hand, and she was silent and lost in thought. The official left the drawing-room, and the closing door roused her. "Pardon me," she said to the old officer, who had been regarding her with deep interest; "these things come on me like tempests to an unweaned bird. I have had but few cares, and but little to think of except my own happiness, since my marriage with John Halloran. But there is one question I must ask, Captain Saunders. I presume, sir, on your goodness and unexpected friendship, to beg you, as a last favor, to tell me if any news has come of the—of—John Halloran, my husband."

"Madam, I do not know," said Captain Saunders, speaking with the broad accent which made his phraseology almost unintelligible whenever he was excited by any unusual emotion, "that what I have to tell will involve any principle of duty, under existing circumstances. Rumor has made public all I know, and, as our plans are all frustrated regarding him, it will do no harm for you to know that he is either in France or on his way to America."

"Thank God!" she exclaimed, fervently; "thank God! Oh, sir, if you knew John Halloran, you would not grudge him his liberty."

"Madam, whatever I may feel for you, I have no sympathy with rebels," outspoke the Scotchman.

"That's what he called me! that's what he called me, mamma! How dare you call my father a rebel, you base English soldier? He's a thousand times better than you are; and if he was here, he'd thrash you away from Glendariff," most unexpectedly shouted Desmond.

"Desmond, my boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Halloran, drawing him, flushed and struggling, to her bosom.

"You are a bold little rebel," said Captain Saunders, laughing and trying to lay his hand on the brown, curly head, which still lifted itself defiantly towards him. It would be safe to get you out of the country, before you begin to give out gracious queen trouble. Madam, I must leave you. I wish you well; and if my presence at Glendariff has in any way inconvenienced or distressed you, I hope that the fact of its being involuntary on my part will excuse me."

Mrs. Halloran frankly held out her hand, saying, "I only thank the kind Providence that led you hither. You have been a friend and protector in these sore trials. Had another person been sent to Glendariff, my misery might have been aggravated. But I must say farewell. In the morning I shall leave this place forever."

It did not require much time and labor to select and pack the effects Mrs. Halloran intended to have removed to Fada-Brae Abbey. Some antique pieces of furniture, beds, and household linen, a few odd old silver vessels of the time of Cormac, her husband's portrait, and three or four copper utensils for kitchen use, all of which had belonged to her mother, or herself before her marriage, and most of which had descended through many generations to her possession, she took. Her jewels and rich clothing, which she never expected to adorn herself with again, she reserved for such contingencies as poverty might disclose, to turn, as occasion might require, into the available means of living. The rest, those rich and beautiful things which the exquisite and elegant taste of John Halloran had gathered around her, and which were, every one, consecrated by some cherished association, she left, or rather abandoned, because in the ruined place she was going to she knew there was scarcely a habitable room, and that everything superfluous would embarrass and inconvenience her. "He will scarcely sell or send them away," she thought, as she wandered through the house that night, lingering beside each precious memento of brighter days: "here they are safe, and I shall love to come in fancy, and people these rooms again with the familiar

faces which have always been here, and think of everything being as he left it and as I saw it last."

Mrs. Shea, as Nora had predicted, remained at Glendariff, and it was difficult to discover whether it was from motives of self-interest or really, as she said, "to keep her eyes on her master's property, that that thief of the world, Donald Dhu, had got his clutch on, but would not hold it long, if *divines* was to be believed. So cheer up, Mistress Halloran, honey, and don't let a cold thought of me come into yer gentle heart. God knows, I'd rayther go; but if I do, who'll take care of yer own till ye come back again?"

Mrs. Shea wept abundantly, and exhibited the most genuine emotions of grief, which were quite satisfactory to all except Nora Brady, who said nothing, but looked sideways, and turned the end of her pretty *retousse* nose a little more towards, the zenith than nature intended. The black man, with his snuff-colored wig and ragged garments, had suddenly disappeared; and when the ears came up from Kildare to take Mrs. Halloran's effects to the distant glen of Agerlow, one of them was driven by a stout, handsome young fellow, whom Nora called "Cousin Dennis," and who was recognized by Captain Saunders's orderly as the blacksmith who had shod his horse a few weeks before.

It is no wonder they did not recognize him as the lame beggar who had been limping so many days about Glendariff, whose barbarous phraseology and idiotic speeches made them entirely unsuspecting of his being any other than just what he appeared, a harmless simpleton.—It would be impossible to convey in mere words the bitter anguish that surged through Mary Halloran's soul when she saw the last glimpse of her home. It had been her Eden, but now, driven by inexorable circumstances beyond its gates, the world appeared to her, as it had done to our common mother, Eve, ages ago, when, driven from Paradise, she went forth to a pilgrimage of bitterness and tears. In that hour of farewell, in that little space of time, more earth-ties were broken and torn asunder than sometimes happen in a long lifetime. The weight of years had seemed to fall suddenly on her, and the world stood revealed in its bare mockery to her gaze. *Immunia hopes* had been dashed like frail crystal vases to the earth, and broken; human joys had sung their brief summer song, and fled. And it is well, O merciful God, when the bleak tempests of life tear away from this mortal existence its illusory charms; for even when the shadow is darkest, when we falter and tumble in the gloom, we can see, through the clouds above us, glimpses of that light which never fades, and which is Hope's beacon, smiling and luring us to the land of eternal repose.

She said but little as they journeyed along. The struggle was a silent and bitter one; but gradually the recollection of a merciful and overruling Providence, the tender love of the Holy Virgin, and thoughts of these sorrows being, like life, transitory, soothed her mind.—Then came back the memory of her little ones, and the devotion of Nora, to cheer her. These were deathless: such love and such principles flowed only from God, and she felt that, even in her desolation, there were rills of gladness, and a staff on which her weakness might lean, which would blossom like the prophet's rod.—And the mourner lifted up her head, not rejoicing, but peaceful, and resigned to the will of her Father in heaven.

Situated on a beautiful and picturesque hillside which overhung the glen of Agerlow, the ruins of the old feudal castle and abbey of Fada-Brae presented an imposing spectacle from a distance. Had it been on the Rhine, painters, tourists, and poets would have immortalized it; but here it was scarcely known beyond the obscurity of the valley it overlooked, and the sketch-books of a few antiquarians who had visited it more by chance than intention. And yet its architectural beauties, some of which remain intact, were wonderful, and vindicated eloquently the civilization and perfection of science in the early ages of Ireland. There were the graceful arches, the crusted marbles, the stupendous buttresses, the fantastic gargoyles, the stained glass, which are only imitated in this our day, the splendid architecture, the massive pillars, the groined roof, the rich sculpture,—which time had mildewed, but not erased,—had broken and made ruins of, but not destroyed the fragments, each one of which told a proud tale of other days. And now to the ruined halls of their ancestors the last descendants of the princely McCarthy Mores had come, seeking refuge and shelter. The fox had made his hole, and the cony his burrow, and the owl her nest, in the long-deserted ruins. There was scarcely a portion of them sheltered from the weather. But in the old cloisters, once the holy retreat of saintly men, some small apartments were discovered by Nora and Dennis, which in a short time were rendered habitable, and in a few days Mrs. Halloran was comfortably situated, and things around her began to wear a home-like and pleasant aspect. Dennis exchanged some old silver for a cow and a few necessary farming implements, while Nora, after attending to

Mrs. Halloran's comfort, arranged her kitchen with the same faultless neatness that had always reigned in the one at Glendariff, and privately instructed Ellen, the children's nurse, in the mystery of cooking and getting up linen. As Nora was beginning to prepare for her flight beyond the sea in her search after John Halloran, she was impatient, in the single devotion of her honest heart, to commence her toils in the far-off land she was going to, for which she would receive gold that would purchase comforts, and perhaps a home, for those she loved. One day Dennis Byrne came up from the market town with a letter for Mrs. Halloran. It was a thick, heavy letter, but the direction was in Father McCarthy's handwriting. Nora saw that, but filled with a strange hope, she laid down her work and ran in with it to Mrs. Halloran, who tore off the envelope, and found within a note from Father McCarthy, and a letter from her husband. With a cry of joy, she opened and read it. It was from Boston. He had arrived there in safety, and, except that he was fatigued with the voyage, he was well, and expected to obtain employment, which would enable him to provide a home, in the land of his exile, for his family; but his movements were undecided, and he besought her to remain in quiet and hope until she heard from him again. And then followed an account of his adventures after Dennis Byrne had left him on Ballyhowny Mountain; how, in the disguise of an old woman, he had got on board the smuggler's craft, and had narrowly escaped an English cruiser in the Channel, and been almost shipwrecked on the coast of France, after which his progress was comparatively unobstructed by dangers or delays until he reached in safety the shores of America. Then came a thousand expressions of endearment and anxious solicitude; questions, and words of undying love, and messages of affection to all, especially to his "little dove," Gracie, whom, he said, he would give all the world just to fold one moment to his bosom. He thought of Desmond, he said, as of a young eaglet, who would protect the nestlings at home, who would be a brave, good boy until his father came back. He was ever before him, with his flashing eyes and proud bearing, and it comforted him to know that the boy had in him all the elements of strength necessary to the formation of a great and good character. Nora and Dennis were named with affection, and many were the grateful messages that came to them; then followed words of cheer and full of hope. John Halloran was throughout the letter. His goodness, his nobleness of soul, his kind thoughts for all, were perceptible in every word, until the family at Fada-Brae thought almost that he had been in their midst.

Father McCarthy's note informed Mrs. Halloran of his increasing infirmities, and of a bad cold, which had confined him to his bed. Her sorrows weighed heavily on him in his old age, but he trusted the letter he sent her would cheer and comfort her. As soon as he could get about, she would see him; and any letters she might wish to send to her husband she could inclose to him.

That night, as Mrs. Halloran was sitting alone by her sleeping children, Nora came in quietly, and said she would like to speak to her, if it would not interrupt her. Since the change in Mrs. Halloran's fortunes, instead of behaving with greater familiarity, Nora had treated her with almost scrupulous ceremony, and had impressed it on the minds of Dennis and Ellen that they must never show, by word, or look, or act, their consciousness of the downfall of the family, but must make up by their respect what was wanting in the rest of the world toward her.

"To be sure, Nora dear," replied Mrs. Halloran. "Come in. I feel almost happy to-night. Oh, Nora, God has been very good to me," said she, holding out her hand, while her eyes filled with tears. Nora took the hand and folded it to her bosom, then kissed it, and laid it tenderly down where it was resting when she came in.

"Sit down, dear Nora; sit here, and tell me all you have to say."

"This will do, *suillish machree*," she said, kneeling beside Mrs. Halloran, and laying her hand on hers. "I feel easier so: for I can look right into the face of you."

"Well, as you please. *Yours* is like sunshine to me, Nora, always. But what is the matter?—what do you wish?" said Mrs. Halloran, smoothing her hand over the glossy black braids on Nora's forehead.

"Well, alanna! I'm thinking, now, that, if you can spare me, I'd better go."

"Go! Nora Brady! Would you leave me?" exclaimed Mrs. Halloran.

"Let me tell you, *maivourneen*, how it is.—It's not for myself or my own interests that I'd be goin', but then as Misther Halloran is gone over the seas to Amerikey, an' they say, he can never come back again, and as the fine old property's gone out of the family, and although this is a grand and ancient place, it is poor, and will not support the wants of a lady and two childer, that are high-born like yersel', I thought, as I'm young an' strong, I'd better cross over to Amerikey too, and airn enough to

bring you there, where, please God, we'll all be together once more; an' if we never see Ould Ireland again, we can be true to her in our hearts, and pray for them that's left in it." Here tears gathered and flashed in Nora's fine black eyes, while Mrs. Halloran, comprehending at once all her unselfish devotion, fell forward on her neck weeping.

"How can I spare you, Nora? Yet how to refuse you I cannot tell," at last said Mrs. Halloran.

"Spare me, madam! Why, there's Ellen I've been drilling an' tseling until she bates myself out entirely, and a faithful good, *quite* girl she is, and handy at everything; an' Dennis—why, Dennis can do anything he sets his hands to, sure, an' willing enough he is now for me to go. Then madam, there's Misther Halloran, he might want some better friend by him than strangers if he's sick or in trouble, an' I know I could do many a thing for him, if so be he hasn't got a start yet—God save him."

Mary Halloran was silent and thoughtful.—Nora's last argument had almost persuaded her. Still she felt so dependent on her, and had been so accustomed to seeing her about her, that, in view of the great uncertainty of the success of her plan, she could not at once consent to it.

"America is a country of great extent, Nora. Suppose my husband should have left Boston: you'd find yourself in a strange country, friendless and unprotected," she suggested.

"Surely, ma'am, you ought to know by this time that I've a tongue in my head and wits sharp enough to find him," said Nora, quickly.

"But it takes money!"

"Troth an' I know that; an' it's enough I've got to take me there, an' a little over," she said.

"Nora, dear, you undertake a great deal. Do not let your affection for me and mine mislead you. I confess, it would comfort me to know that you were near my husband; but to send you forth into the wide, cold world—across the perilous ocean—away from the shelter of my home, and from one who loves the earth you tread on,—I cannot do it, Nora, even for John Halloran's sake."

"Then, ma'am, I must go without your consent, because I know, an' God knows, that it will be well in the end. I am ready to go away in the morning."

"Oh, Nora! oh, Nora Brady! can I ever requite your love?" said Mrs. Halloran, in a broken voice. "Since you will, may Heaven bless you; may good angels guide and guard you. Go, and should you find my husband, give my heart's best love to him. But I must write; there are some jewels I must send him to purchase comforts with. Oh that I might go with you!"

That day week, Nora Brady was on her way, in the fine packet-ship "Fidella," to Boston.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Her heart with love teeming her eyes with smiles
beaming,
What mortal could injure a blossom so rare?
Oh, Nora—dear Nora—the pride of Kildare!"

Notwithstanding Nora's noble purpose,—the principle of right which governed her, and the strong will which animated her impulses and actions,—notwithstanding the bright and almost romantic hopes which had impelled her to brave the perils of the deep and unknown trials in a strange land, there were times when her heart almost failed her,—when memory led her back to the sweet glen and the sunny braes of Agerlow, to deserted Glendariff, and the fond hearts she had left behind her, and tears fell fast and warm. At such times a decade of her rosary was her best comfort; her next was to go among the poor emigrants who crowded the steerage of the "Fidella," many of whom were old and white-haired, to whom it had been a grievous trial to leave the sod where their fathers slept in hope, to go away to die and be laid among strangers. There were little children, also, who were sick and pining for fresh air and nutritious food, to whom the pent-up atmosphere of the steerage was a slow poison, and the undulating motion of the ship incomprehensible and terrifying. Nora Brady was not one to stand idle in such scenes as these wasting time and energies over the inevitable past and in vague fears for the future.—Her stores were abundant, and had they been less so, she would have shares them with those who needed aid. In the effort to cheer, and strengthen others, she often scattered the clouds which were gathering over her own heart, and filled it with sunshine. She inspired the desponding with courage; she brought smiles to the countenances of the old emigrants by singing the sweet, merry songs of "home" to them. Her busy hands were never idle. She cleaned the sleeping-places of the sick, and prepared food for those who were unable to prepare it for themselves. The little ones hailed her coming with outstretched hands or clamorous shouts; and in all that band of poor, heart-weary exiles there was not one whom Nora Brady had not, in some way, served.—And yet, if any one had told her that her conduct was extraordinary, that she was performing great and meritorious acts, she would have wondered how the performance of apparent