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AN ORIGINAL STORY.

(From the Dublin Weekly Freeman)

CHAPTER I.

"Come back to Erin, Mavourneen, Mavourneen," Kate Vero, softly, sadly sang, as she looked out over the Dover Esplanade at the restless, changing sea beyond. But that restless sea, for ever varying, was not at the present moment more unquiet, than the girl, who stood at an open window, watching the tossing waves. The bright April sun shone warmly, and the merry voices of children at play flouted to Kate's ears, but the play was unnoticed, and unheeded by her. "Still at that Irish wail, Katie," said Eda Hamilton, her cousin, as she laid her hand on Kate's shoulder. "I do verily believe you are tired of us already, I know you want to be back in Ireland, you are weary of England, and actually pining to see Patland again. For my part, I wish we could either go off at once, or that you would cheer up. Indeed, Katie, when I hear you singing that song I feel it is the echoing thought of all your disconsolate relations. It is too bad, for I've done my best to be as agreeable as possible. Now hav'nt I, darling?" "Agreeable, my wee birdie, that you have been," replied Kate, as she kissed the fair little face which Eda held up to her. "But you know, dear; I have now been with you more than a month, and you must remember, aunt is very lonely without me; Oakfield is a dull place when we are all away. Uncle is constantly laid up with the gout; Mark is from home on a visit; and Harry, you know, is at sea; therefore, poor aunt has no one now to keep her company. Is it kind, Eda, to leave her all alone? She is a good mother to me, dear, and I must be a grateful daughter to her. I think, little one, I must ask Colonel Hamilton to-night if he can spare us his birdie. Eh, pet! wouldn't you like to come back to see us all, and to see my beautiful country for yourself?" "Very well, then, Kate," answered Eda, "ask Colonel Hamilton by all means. Colonel Hamilton!" she repeated, "Kate, will you never call papa uncle? It is so stiff the way you bring out your 'Colonel Hamilton'; but never fear, I shall retaliate some day by calling your uncle Sir Stuart Bindon, and won't it sound delightful to say—'How is your gout this morning, Sir Stuart Bindon?' Papa is just as much your uncle as Sir Stuart. Your mother, my mother, and Aunt Bindon were all sisters, so you are papa's niece, although a very hot-headed Paddy."

with gratitude and affection of her uncle and aunt. Ever since she was brought as a motherless infant to Oakfield Sir Stuart and Lady Bindon had always treated her with far more apparent fondness than either of their sons. Notwithstanding many a passionate outburst the good old baronet thought his violet-eyed Katie perfection; and from the time she had climbed upon his knee, and stoutly asserted "that was her place," no one had ever crossed the firm will and daring spirit which, even at that early age, was plainly visible. Kate Vero had a spirit which laughed to scorn restraint of every kind, and had she not always been under loving and judicious guidance it is more than probable that all those fine qualities which made her so beloved would have been warped, and the whole force of her nature misdirected. A hard disposition to manage, and a temper only curbed by a rod of iron, was the opinion formed of Kate by many a sage guest at Oakfield. But Lady Bindon knew that sensitive shyness, or the mere impetuosity of childhood is often mistaken for bad temper by those who lay down a pet theory for the management of children—wiseacres, whose theoretical results are often slyness and deceit. At all events, no matter what Lady Bindon's theory may have been, Kate was a shining example of what kindness and potent love can do. No wonder was it, then, that she regarded her gentle aunt with a feeling akin to devotion. No wonder, that she wished on this bright April day to be back in her own green isle, with those she loved so dearly. All the attractions which fashionable life in England could present were powerless to overcome that truly Irish trait—love for country, friends, and old associations. In Kate's opinion, all the gaiety so essential to the happiness of those who live in a whirl of society was worthless compared to the freedom she enjoyed in her home at Oakfield. Thus after a month's visit to Dover, she became tired of that circle where her beauty and originality gained her genuine admiration. A contrast in every way to Kate was her cousin, Eda Hamilton, a fair-haired little creature, the very sunlight of her father's home. Every one loved her, every one felt the charm of her winning, loving manner and her sweet childish ways. Not that Eda was one of those "child-women" who never draw upon their own common sense to aid them in the discharge of daily duties. But, considering the luxury and wealth by which she had always been surrounded, scope had not yet been given for the development of these qualities which necessity alone calls forth. The hard truths and bitter lessons of this world are learned soon enough, and Colonel Hamilton fondly hoped to shield his petted darling from every shadow which might darken her path. Until the period at which our story opens, Eda had lived in Berlin with her mother's dearest friend, a German lady. Colonel Hamilton's wishes regarding the education of his only child had been well carried out by Frau Von Voegt, who cherished the little one, first for her mother's sake, then loved her dearly for her own. When Eda was eighteen she returned to Dover, where her father's regiment was then stationed, and very proud he was of his beautiful daughter, who playfully declared herself "quite capable to manage all his household affairs." No sooner had Eda become settled than she wrote for her Cousin Kate, reminding her of her promise to pay them a visit in England. Kate had now been five weeks in Dover, and her return to Ireland, accompanied by Eda, had been postponed from day to day, until she almost feared Colonel Hamilton could never be persuaded to part with his pet. The new friends and the old hung in the balance, and the old outweighed the new. Still Kate Vero wished to bring back to her Irish home the little fair-haired one who had twined herself with a thousand winning ways around her heart, but she feared selfish love would oppose her wishes, therefore sadly and softly on that April morning Kate Vero sang—"Come back to Erin."

CHAPTER II.

Lady Bindon stood on the hearth-rug, before a blazing fire in Oakfield drawing-room, watching the hands of the clock as they slowly travelled round the dial. "Are they coming Neva? Eh, doggie, do you hear them yet?" she said, stooping down to caress a beautiful Pomeranian dog which lay at her feet. "Your mistress is coming back, Neva—Katie is coming home, doggie." "What, my dear, what did you say?" cried the Baronet, from the depths of his easy chair; where he was comfortably ensconced, taking his evening nap. "Has Katie come? have the girls arrived?" "No, not yet, although it is past the time. I suppose the mail-boat was late this evening; however, they have Mark to take care of them—so I am not anxious." "What o'clock is it, then, Fannie?" "Just eight," she replied. "Eight o'clock on the 3rd May, 1866."

Lady Bindon walked over to the window and drew up the blind, letting the bright light shine cheerily far down the broad avenue of chestnut trees, so that long before the travellers had reached the domain gates Kate saw the thoughtful beacon of welcome streaming o'er the meadows and glancing through the leaves. "Aunt is watching for me, Eda," she gaily cried, "and has drawn up the blind, to show us she is watching." Yes, Kate, in your home at Oakfield the star of love is shining, and nothing can dim the lustre of that faithful planet which sheds its radiance through the dusk and gloom. Lady Bindon was not a beautiful woman, some might even call her plain, but in her repose of manner lay a charm which never failed to inspire confidence. An aquiline nose, delicately cut features, and large eyes, though often considered marks of loveliness, win not the same love and trust as a pair of faithful eyes, be they black, blue, or grey. A gentle, loving woman needs not a dainty casket for her charms, for the mild will shine forth, illuminating the face with a beauty time can never quench. Such a woman was Lady Bindon. "Welcome, welcome home my child," exclaimed her aunt, as she folded Kate in a warm embrace. "When you were away, I wished you had never come to me, I was so lonely without you;" and she once more kissed the flushing face, all radiant with its glow of happiness. "But where is Eda? has she not come?" "Here she is, mother," cried Mark, as he half lifted his little cousin from the carriage. "Here I am, auntie," echoed Eda, advancing into the hall; "we had great coaxing with papa, but in the end Kate gained the day and carried me off." "You are very, very welcome to Oakfield, my darling; you have been too long a stranger to us all." "Father wants to know," said Mark, laughing heartily as he returned to the hall; "if you mean to stay here all night; he is impatient to see Eda, for Kate has already nearly choked him with her demonstrative hug." "Your uncle is quite a prisoner, Eda, or he would have come out to greet you," Lady Bindon remarked, as she led the way to the spacious drawing-room opening off the hall. A regular country mansion was Oakfield, with all those combinations of comfort and refinement which render a residence in the country so thoroughly enjoyable. "So this is Helen's golden-haired child. Come, my darling, and let me look at you," was the loving greeting Sir Stuart gave to Eda. "She is a little sprite, Fannie," he continued, "and a very pretty, blue-eyed fairy into the bargain. Well, my dear, I hope you will like us; mind, enjoy yourself, child. Kate must not let you be lonely, after all your Dover gaieties." "Indeed I will enjoy myself, uncle; I am not hard to amuse, and nothing could have given me greater pleasure than coming over to Ireland, for I have always wanted to know my Irish relations." "Stiff English," murmured Mark to himself, but loud enough to be heard by Kate, standing near him. "Stiff English, and very school-missish, in spite of her sunny face and foreign education." "Mark, how can you be so severe? how can you judge so harshly?" hastily whispered Kate an angry flash gleaming from her violet eyes. "The poor child is very young and very timid; remember, Mark, Uncle Hamilton has tried to instil all his own prejudices into her mind. Is it any wonder, then, if she is half frightened of the 'Wild Irish'?" "I presume Miss Hamilton has been taught the geographical position of Ireland; otherwise one would suppose, from her scared looks, that it was one of the Andamans," retorted Mark. "I have no doubt she quite wondered at not seeing me arrayed in a blue swallow-tailed coat with brass buttons, knee breeches, worn stockings, and a half-crowned felt hat—in a short, a theatrical Hibernian. In point of fact, she reflects her father's opinion, and thinks it quite a condescension to visit the barbarian's land. Eda Hamilton is Colonel Hamilton's daughter. He is a determined martinet, who would gladly see Ireland take a header in the Atlantic, and rise without a Paddy." "Well, Mark, eradicate her false ideas by giving her a specimen of an Irish gentleman. Already she thinks me hot-headed. Don't let her find you a cynic." "If she judges me so it is on your showing, Kate." "Not so, Mark. I know your failings, but I am always loyal and true, I ask you to love our cousin. She has her faults—we all have—but Mark, here is an untrained nature; her heart is pure and true. She wishes to love us all; deal gently with her foibles, remembering that she has had no one to be a mother to her, as aunt has been to me. For my sake, Mark,

she added in a pleading tone, as she looked at the stern face of her cousin. For a moment he hesitated, the hot blood mounting to his brow, but the curving mouth relaxed, and when he turned, his truthful brown eyes met her earnest gaze. "I will love her, Kate; she shall be my sister for your sake," he whispered. Quickly the weeks flew by in Oakfield, passed in the pursuit of every amusement which Mark and Kate could devise for the enjoyment of their little visitor, who speedily became the pet of the whole household. Kate, indeed, often laughingly declared her own reign was over, and a new sovereign had come to usurp her dominion over the hearts of the Bindon family. But in fun only did she thus speak, for the mind of Kate Vero was too generous to admit of any baneful whisper which envy might suggest to less fine natures. Mark's promise to Kate, on the evening of her arrival, had been well fulfilled, for a true brother he seemed to Eda Hamilton, who was now a fast friend of the stern cousin of whom she had such a dread at first. This fear she long afterwards confessed to Kate, when heartily blaming herself for her petulant judgment. Poor, enthusiastic Eda, with her winsome ways and sunny face, had her little foibles, and though truthful in the spirit, would often, like many other people, form a false estimate of the character, sayings, and doings of those whom she came in contact with. How much remorse and misery might be spared if opinions were not uttered in a moment, to be regretted for years! How many lives have been blighted by careless words; how many fine natures completely ruined by the spreading of lightly considered opinions! How many tender hearts have been wounded, beyond healing, by a trifling sarcasm; how often do those who have, perhaps, unwittingly offended delay their hesitating atonement, until the languishing eye of the injured grows too dim to look forgiveness, and the faltering voice can frame no word of pardon, before the life-spark flickers and dies away. Then for the mourner comes the stillness, darkness, and numbness of sorrow, while the veil of remorse clings gloomily around them. But all the bitterness of repentance cannot woo the departed from their deathly repose, nor disperse from the heart of the living that anguish which is the offspring of hasty words. Mark was passionately fond of music, in which accomplishment, both instrumental and vocal, Eda excelled. This alone was a bond strong enough to reconcile their different qualities.—Impassioned and impulsive, all the fanciful beauties gleaming through the pages of the Teutonic bards roused the dormant passion of her sensitive nature, and her feelings found vent through the best of all interpreters, music. So in the spring evenings, while the birds offered up their even-song of praise to the One who ever watches, Eda's clear soprano would soar and float heavenwards in the dreamy Volkslied, making the hot tears start, and lulling those murmurs which are never stilled in the minds of mortals, who are always yearning towards the indistinct shadows of the future. Then again, and the fitful cloud of sadness would pass away, and Eda's carol of joy and mirth, unshadowed by joy or care, would ring out, dispelling Mark's half trance. Well, indeed, did she merit the title of Birdie, for those songs, so weird and wild, were only untrained heart chords. By-and-by there will come a harmoniser, when the beauty of that innocent mind will develop, like the fragrant mignonette. By-and-by Eda will find that bias which rules the world and guides the destiny of each.

CHAPTER III.

"Poor little soul," sighed Sir Stuart, as he sat one evening in his easy chair listening to Eda singing her favorite, 'Mutter, mutter, gib mir deinen Segen.' "Poor little soul. Is she lonely, Fanny? I don't like those dreary songs. They may be very grand, but I would rather hear Kate's simple Irish melodies. Maybe, Fannie, if we gave a rattling dance she would stop that dreadful wail." "I do not think she is melancholy, Stuart, but you know she could not sing that sad song in as lively a style as Harry would sing 'The Rocky Road to Dublin,' or 'Lanigan's Ball.' However, I think a little gaiety would be good for the girls, though it is rather warm at present for dancing." "Well, my dear, let those who won't dance talk, that is really the aim of all gatherings. I am really so old-fashioned that I cannot understand why people can't dance and amuse themselves in summer as well as winter." "Do you not think, Stuart, a croquet-party would be better?" "Croquet, Fannie, is a very selfish amusement. Two generals and six soldiers start out in battle array; a great deal of science is displayed; a little temper lost, and after various evolutions the game is ended, but seldom in the same spirit in which it is begun. While eight persons monopolise the pleasure of the day

thirty or more walk through the grounds unamused, and most likely disconcerted. Oh! no, Fannie, we will have a dance, and let the young people be bythe. Had it been possible I would have suggested a picnic, but that is out of the question. "And so, Kate, we are to have a dance; oh, dear, I am so glad;" and as she spoke, Eda clapped her tiny hands, while executing little pirouettes round Kate, who had just brought the glad tidings from the study, where she announced aunt and uncle were sitting in solemn council over the arrangements for the contemplated ball. "Is that what aunt and uncle were plotting last night? and when is the dance to be, Kate? I hope soon, for I am dying to have a good gallop. Not that I think Oakfield languid, but I do long to see some Paddies trotted out in review. Will there be many Fenians here, Kate?" and Eda's blue eyes opened wide as she paused for the answer. "Fenians, my dear! what extraordinary notions you have. Do you really fancy that every Irishman is a Fenian? I can assure you uncle would send for a constable and file of constabulary if he thought a rebel's foot crossed the threshold. So don't hope to see a Fenian lionizing here. Uncle is too great an upholder of Church and State to sympathise with any one who would presume to interfere with those excellent British institutions; therefore, take care, Eda, not to tread on uncle's most particular political corn." "Oh, dear me, then, I won't see any of those desperate characters, papa says will ruin Ireland, by inviting over American hordes. Well, I suppose I must be content with a dance, minus a Fenian partner who wears a gaiter like a Yankee, and leaves his wide-awake hat in the hall." "So Eda," laughed Kate, "a Fenian in constituted by his beard and hat." "Oh, yes, and square toed boots." "Yet," mused Kate, "there are brave hearts in the Fenian band, which beat warmly with a devotion that would honor a better cause." "When will the party come off, Kate? I hope soon; but you do not look a bit glad.—Now do be sensible and reasonable, for I declare you look as grim as a hundred thousand dragoons. Queen Kate, do relax and say with me, I am longing for a dance." "What an erratic birdie, in spite of your English blood! You are regular fire and tow. This minute your feet are tingling to fly off in a mad gallop," chimed in Mark, who for the last few minutes had listened unobserved to Eda's merry prattle. "I did not think the Irish air would so soon melt your English solidity." "Ah! Mark," retorted Eda, an arch expression playing round her mobile features. "Ve-suvius looks quiet until there is an eruption." "Bravo! you have corrected an error of judgment. Now in token of forgiveness you must let me claim you for the first waltz." "What! does Mark the stately, dance?" "Yes, when I can find a good partner, although I think the weather too warm for such violent exercise. Adieu, however, for the present, as I have an appointment to meet Courtenay in town." Mark raised his hat, and the beeze lifted the rings of chestnut hair and rippled the golden-brown beard. Very handsome Mark Bindon looked, as he leaned against the open French window, so Eda must have thought as she met his steady eye, which reflected nothing but the truth of a noble mind and honest heart. Kate stood at the window, where a minute before Mark had leaned, playing idly with the shadowy sprays of lilac, watching the retreating figure sauntering down the shrubbery. She stood near the purple-scented lilac, emblematic of that emotion shining undimmed in the faithful eyes of Kate Vero. "Good, good news, girls," and Lady Bindon entered the room, her face beaming with joy. "Good news, auntie, and what is it? About the party?" cried Eda. "Wrong for once, Eda," replied her aunt, as she fondly smoothed the glossy golden hair. "I have better news than that, my child.—Guess, Katie," and she held up a letter addressed in a bold, dashing hand. "It's from Harry!" Kate joyfully exclaimed, "Oh, aunt, is he coming? Is Harry really coming home?" "He will be here to-morrow evening, so, Birdie, after all you will see our wild Harry. How fortunate, he will be in time for the party. I should not like my poor boy to miss all the fun." "But, auntie dear," said Eda, looking very wise and demure, "why do you call cousin Harry a boy? I heard you say he was five years older than Kate, and at twenty-five I should say he was a man." "My child, in Ireland all men are boys until they are married. In fact, I have known bachelors of seventy to be still termed boys. It's a thorough Irishism."