

particularly the last. He's still absurdly, I grant you, but it's wearing off day by day. When I'm grown old Frank, and wrinkled (though I'd sooner die first) he'll be grateful, and understand what care I've taken of him, and what a sad fate might have befallen him, but for me! Isn't there something in Doctor Watts, or somebody,

Regardless of their doom,
The little victims play.

Frank! I don't believe you're listening!"

"Oh yes, I am," answers Frank, whose thoughts have wandered to Skindle's, Richmond, Newmarket—who knows where? "What you say is very true, my dear—very true—and nobody understands these things better than yourself. Good gracious! is that clock right? I had no idea it was so late! I must be off at once, and—let me see—I'll get back to dinner if I can; but don't wait."

So *exit* Mr. Lushington on his own devices, and enter a footman with tea, closely followed by the butler ushering in "Soldier Bill."

"Talk of somebody," says the lady, graciously extending her hand, "and, we are told, he is sure to appear. How odd, I was abusing you not five minutes ago to Frank—you must have met him as you came in,—and, behold, here you are—not having been near me for a month!"

"A week, answered her visitor, who always stuck to facts. "You told me yourself one ought never to call again at the same house till after a decent interval. A week is decent surely! It seems a deuced long time, I know."

"You don't suppose I've missed you?" said she, pouring out the tea. It's all for your own good I have you here. You'd get back to savage life again, if I neglected you for a fortnight; and it is provoking to see all one's time and trouble thrown away! Now put your hat down, have some tea, make yourself agreeable, and you may stay here for exactly three-quarters of an hour!"

To "make himself agreeable" at short notice, and to order, is a difficult task for any man. For Bill it was simply impossible. He sipped, gulped hot tea, and began to feel shy. She had considerable tact, however, and no little experience in the ways of young men. She neither laughed at him nor took notice of the blush he tried to keep down, but bade him throw the window open, and while he obeyed, continued carelessly, though kindly—

"In the first place, tell me all about yourself. How's Catamount?"

She knew every one of his horses by name, and even some of the men in his troop, leading him to talk on such congenial topics with considerable ingenuity. It was this tact of hers that rendered Mrs. Lushington such a pleasant member of society, enabling her to keep her head above water deep enough to have drowned a lady with less *savoir-faire*, and consequently fewer friends.

His face brightened. "As fresh as paint!" he replied. "I beg your pardon; I mean as well as can be expected. I rode him two-and-twenty miles to-day in an hour and a half, and I give you my word, when I got off him he looked as if he'd never been out of the stable."

"I should pity you more than your horse," she replied, with a commendable air of interest; "only I know you are never so happy as when you are trying to break your neck. You've had the grace to dress since, I see, and not badly, for once, only that handkerchief is too light a shade of blue. Now, confess! Where does she live? and is she worth riding eleven miles, there and back, to see?"

"I never know whether you're chaffing or not!" responded Bill. "You cannot believe I would gallop Catamount twenty-two miles on a hard road for any lady in the world. I didn't suppose he'd take me if I wanted to go. She, indeed! There's no she in the matter!"

"You might have made one exception in common politeness," said Mrs. Lushington, laughing. "But I'm not satisfied yet. You and Catamount are a very slight pair. I still think there's a lady in the case."

"A lady in boots and spurs, then," he answered; "six foot high, with grey moustaches and a lame leg from a sabre-cut—a lady who has been thirty years soldiering, and never

provingly—and a good boy. There! that's a great deal for me to say. Now tell me where the poor fellow is gone."

"You won't breathe it to a soul," said honest Bill—"not even to Mr. Lushington?"

"Not even to Mr. Lushington!" she protested, greatly amused.

"He gave her the address with profound gravity, and an implicit reliance on her secrecy."

"A hill-farmer in Roscommon!" she exclaimed. "I know the man. His name is Denis; I saw him at Punchestown."

"You know everything," he said, in a tone of admiration. "It must be very jolly to be clever, and that."

"It's much jollier to be 'rich and that,'" was her answer. "Money is what we all seem to want—especially poor Daisy. Now, how much do you suppose it would take to set him straight?"

He was not the man to trust any one by halves. "Three thousand," he declared, frankly; "and where he is to get it beats me altogether. Of course he can't hide for ever. After a time he must come back to do duty; then there'll be a show up, and he'll have to leave the regiment."

"And you will get your troop," said Mrs. Lushington. "You see I know all about that too."

His own promotion, however, as has been said, afforded this kind-hearted young gentleman no sort of consolation.

"I hope it won't come to that," was his comment on the military knowledge of his hostess. "I've great faith in luck. When things are at their worst they mend. Never say die till you're dead, Mrs. Lushington. Take your 'crowners' good-humoredly. Stick to your horse; and don't let go of the bridle!"

"You've been here more than your three-quarters of an hour," said Mrs. Lushington, "and you're beginning to talk slang, so you'd better depart. But you're improving, I think and you may come again. Let me see, the day after to-morrow, if the Colonel don't object, and if you can find another handkerchief with a deeper shade of blue."

So Bill took his leave, and proceeded to "The Rag," where he meant to dine in company with other choice spirits, wondering whether it would ever be his lot to marry a woman like Mrs. Lushington—younger, of course, and perhaps, though he hardly ventured to tell himself so, with a little less chaff—doubting the while if he could consent so entirely to change his condition and his daily, or perhaps rather his nightly, habits of life. He need not give up the regiment, he reflected, and could keep Catamount, though the stud might have to be reduced. But what would become of Benjamin? Was it possible any lady would permit the badger to occupy a bottom drawer in her wardrobe? This seemed a difficult question. Pending its solution, perhaps he had better he had better remain as he was!

CHAPTER XIX.

"THE RIVER'S BRIM."

Daisy was sick of the Channel. He had crossed and recrossed it so often of late as to loathe its dancing waters, yawning in the face of Welsh and Wicklow mountains alike, wearied even of the lovely scenery that adorns the coast on either side.

He voted himself so tired in body and mind that he must stay a day or two in Dublin to refresh.

A man who balances on the verge of ruin always has plenty of money in his pocket for immediate necessities. The expiring flame leaps up with a flash; the end of the bottle bubbles out with a gush; and the ebbing tide of wealth leaves, here and there, a handful of loose cash on the deserted shore.

Daisy drove to the most expensive hotel in Dublin, where he ordered a capital breakfast and a comfortable room. The future seemed very uncertain. In obedience to an instinct of humanity that bids men pause and daily with any crisis of their fate, he determined to enjoy to-day, and let to-morrow take care of itself.

He was of various qualities, good, bad, and indifferent. Here, after flying for an hour or two over the adjoining fields and fences, Daisy, with considerable difficulty, resisted the purchase (on credit) of a worn-out black, a roan with heavy shoulders, and a three-year old engaged in the following autumn at the Curragh, but afforded their owner perfect satisfaction by the encomiums he passed on their merits, no less than by the masterly manner in which he handled them, at the formidable fences that bordered Mr. Sullivan's domain.

"An' ye'll take nothing away with ye but a fishing-rod" said the latter, pressing on his visitor the refreshment of whiskey, with or without water. "Ye're welcome to't, anny how—more by token that ye'll bring it back again when ye done with it, Captain, and proud I'll be to get another visit from ye, when ye're travelling the country, to or from Dublin, at any time. Maybe in the back end of the year I'll have wan to show ye in them boxes that ye niver seen the likes of him for lepracin'. Whisper now. He's bet the Black Baron in a trial, and for Shaneen him that wan the race off your mare at Punchestown—wait till I tell ye,—at even weights, he'd go and lose little Shaneen in two miles!"

Promising to return at a future time for inspection of this paragon, and disposing the borrowed fishing-rod carefully on an outside car he had chartered for his expedition, Daisy returned to Dublin, ate a good dinner, drank a bottle of champagne, and went to sleep in the comfortable bed-room of his comfortable hotel, as if he had not a care nor a debt in the world.

Towards morning his lighter slumbers may have been visited by dreams, and if so it is probable that fancy clothed her visions in a similitude of Norah Macormac. Certainly his first thought on waking was for that young lady, as his opening eyes rested on the fishing-rod, which he had borrowed chiefly on her account.

In truth, Daisy felt inclined to put off as long as possible the exile—or he could think of it in no more favorable light—that he had brought on himself in the Roscommon mountains.

Mr. Sullivan, when the sport of fly-fishing came in his way, was no mean disciple of the gentle art. Observing a salmon-rod in that worthy's sitting-room, of which apartment, indeed, with two foxes' brushes and a barometer it constituted the principal furniture, Daisy bethought him that on one of his visits to Cernac's-town its hospitable owner had given him leave and license to fish the Dabble whenever he pleased, whether staying at the Castle or not. The skies were cloudy—as usual in Ireland, there was no lack of rain—surely this would be a propitious occasion to take advantage of Macormac's kindness, protract his stay in Dublin, and run down daily by the train to fish, so long as favorable weather lasted and his own funds held out.

We are mostly self-deceivers, though there exists something within each of us that is not to be hood-winked nor imposed upon by the most specious of fallacies.

It is probable Daisy never confessed to himself how the fish he really wanted to angle for was already more than half-looked: how it was less the attraction of a salmon than a mermaid that drew him to the margin of the Dabble; and how he cared very little that the sun shone bright or the river waned so as he might but hear the light step of Norah Macormac on the shingle, look in the fair face that turned so pale and sad when he went away, that would smile and blush its welcome so kindly when he came again.

He must have loved her without knowing it; and perhaps such insensible attachments, waxing stronger day by day, strike the deepest root, and boast the longest existence: hardy plants that live and flourish through the frowns of many winters, contrasting nobly with more brilliant and ephemeral poises, forced by circumstances to sudden maturity and rapid decay—

"As flowers that first in spring-time burst,
The earliest wither too."

Nevertheless, for both sexes,

"Tis all but a dream at the best;"

at light, turning fondly to his wife, would declare—

"She'll be the pick of the family now, mamma, when all's said and done! They're a fair-looking lot, even the boys. Devil thank them, then, on the mother's side! But it's Norah that's likest yourself, my dear, when we were young, only not quite so stout, maybe, and a thought less color in her cheek."

Disturbed at the suggestion, while gratified by the compliment, Lady Mary, in a fuss of increased anxiety, felt fonder than ever of her child. In Norah's habits also there came an alteration, as in her countenance. She sat much in the library, with a book on her knee, of which she seldom turned a page; played long solos on the pianoforte, usually while the others were out; went to bed early, but lay awake for hours; rode very little, and walked a great deal, though the walks were often solitary, and almost invariably in the direction of a certain waterfall, to which she had formerly conducted Miss Douglas, while showing off to her new friend the romantic beauties of the Dabble.

The first day Mr. Walters put his borrowed rod together on the banks of this pretty stream, it rained persistently in a misty drizzle, borne on the soft south wind. He killed an eight pound fish, yet returned to Dublin in an unaccountable state of disappointment, not to say disgust. He got better after dinner, and, with another bottle of dry champagne, determined to try again.

The following morning rose in unclouded splendor—clear blue sky, blazing sun, and not a breath of wind. A more propitious day could scarcely be imagined for a cricket-match, an archery-meeting, or a picnic; but in such weather the crafty angler leaves rod and basket at home. Daisy felt a little ashamed of these paraphernalia in the train, but proceeded to the water-side, nevertheless, and prepared deliberately for his task, looking up and down the stream meanwhile with considerable anxiety.

All at once he felt his heart beating fast, and began to flog the waters with ludicrous assiduity.

It is difficult to explain the gentleman's perturbation (for why was he there at all?), though the lady's astonishment can easily be accounted for, when Norah, thinking of him every moment, and visiting this particular spot only because it reminded her of his presence, found herself, at a turn in the river, not ten paces from the man whom, a moment before, she feared she was never to see again!

Yet did she remain outwardly the more composed of the two, and was first to speak.

"Daisy!" she exclaimed—"Captain Walters—I never thought you were still in Ireland. 'You'll be coming to the Castle to dinner, anyhow.'"

He blushed, he stammered, he looked like a fool (though Norah didn't think so), he got out with difficulty certain incoherent sentences about "fishing," and "flies," and "liberty from your father," and lastly, recovering a little, "the ten-pounder I rose and you landed, by the black stump there, under the willow."

As he regained his confidence, she lost hers—almost wishing she hadn't come, or had put her veil down, or, she didn't exactly know what. In a trembling voice, and twining her fingers nervously together, she propounded the pertinent question:—

"How—how did you find your brother-officers when you got back to the regiment?"

Its absurdity struck them both. Simultaneously, they burst out laughing; their reserve vanished from that moment. He took both her hands in his, and the rod lay neglected on the shingle, while he exclaimed—

"I am so pleased to see you again! Miss Macormac—Norah! I fished here all yesterday, hoping you'd come. I'm glad though you didn't; you'd have got such a wetting."

"Did you, now?" was the answer, while the beautiful grey eyes deepened, and the blood mantled in her cheek. "Indeed, then, it's for little I'd have counted the wetting, if I'd only known. But how was I to know, Captain Walters—well, Daisy, then—that you'd be shooting up the river, like a young salmon, only to see me? And sup-

pose nothing wrong nor disgraceful as yet."

"I knew it!" she exclaimed; "I'd have sworn it on the Book! I told mamma so. He's a gentleman, I said, and that's enough for me!"

"Thank you, dear," answered Daisy, in a failing voice. "I'm glad you didn't turn against me. It's bad enough without that."

"But what has happened," she asked, drawing closer to his side. "Couldn't any of us help you? Couldn't papa advise you what to do?"

"This has happened, Norah," he answered gravely; "I am completely ruined. I have got nothing left in the world. Worse still, I am afraid I can scarce pay up all I've lost."

The spirit of her ancestors came into her eyes and bearing. Ruin to these, like personal danger, had never seemed a matter of great moment, so long as, at any sacrifice, honor might be preserved. She raised her head proudly, and looked straight in his face.

"The last must be done," said she. "Must be done, I'm telling you, Daisy, and shall be, if we sell the boots, you and me, off our very feet! How near can you get to what you owe for wages and things? Of course they'll have to be paid the first."

"If everything goes, I don't see my way to pay up all," he answered.

"However, they must give me a little time. Where I'm to go, though, or what to do, is more than I can tell. But Norah, dear Norah! what I mind most is, that I mustn't hope to see you again!"

Her tears were falling fast. Her hands were busy with a locket she wore round her neck, the only article of value Norah possessed in the world. But the poor fingers trembled so they failed to undo the strip of velvet on which it hung. At last she got it loose, and pressed it into his hand. "Take it, Daisy," said she, smiling with her wet eyes; "I don't value it a morsel. It was old Aunt Macormac gave it to me on my birth-day. There's diamonds in it—not Irish, dear—and it's worth something, anyway, though not much. Ah, Daisy! now, if ye won't take it, I'll think ye never cared for me one bit!"

But Daisy stoutly refused to despoil her of this keepsake, though he begged hard, of course, for the velvet ribbon to which it was attached; and those who have ever found themselves in a like situation will understand that he did not ask in vain.

So Miss Macormac returned to the Castle, and the maternal wing, too late for luncheon; but thus far engaged to her ruined admirer that, while he vowed to come back the very moment his prospects brightened, and the "something" turned up—which we all expect, but so few of us experience, she promised, on her part, "never to marry (how could you think it now, Daisy!) nor so much as look at anybody else till she saw him again, if it wasn't for a hundred years!"

I am concerned to add that Mr. Sullivan's rod remained forgotten on the shingle, where it was eventually picked up by one of Mr. Macormac's keepers, but handled by its rightful owner no more. There was nothing to keep Daisy in Dublin now, and his funds were getting low. In less than twenty-four hours from his parting with Norah Macormac he found himself crossing that wild district of Roscommon where he had bought the famous black mare that had so influenced his fortunes. Toiling on an outside car, up the long ascent that led to the farmer's house, he could scarcely believe so short a time had elapsed since he visited the same place in the flush of youth and hope. He felt quite old and broken by comparison. Years count for little compared to events; and age is more a question of experience than of time. He had one consolation, however, and it lay in the shape of a narrow velvet ribbon next to his heart.

Ere he had clasped the farmer's hand, at his own gate, and heard his cherry hospitable greeting, he wondered how he could feel so happy.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A Chicago paper contends that men can learn to shoot with both eyes open. It's easier to shut both eyes up about the time the gun is ready to kick.