

His First-Best Friend.

The following touching verses from the Dublin Freeman—wonderfully pathetic in their simple fidelity to one of the noblest relations and emotions in human nature—represent an Irish mother's message to her emigrant son in America, by another emigrant just about to sail, and will find appreciative echoes in all kind hearts.

THE WIDOW TO HER SON. Remember Denis, all I bade you say; Tell him we're well and happy, thank the Lord; But of our troubles since he went away You'll mind, avick, and never say a word. Of cares and troubles, sure, we've all our share; The finest summer isn't always fair.

Be sure you tell him how the neighbors came And out the corn and stored it in the barn; 'T would be as well to mention them by name— Pat Murphy, Ned McCabe, and Shamus Carr.

And big Tim Daly from behind the hill; And say, agrá—Oh, say I miss him still.

They came with ready hands our toil to share; 'T was then I missed him most—my own right hand; I felt, although kind hearts were round me there.

The kindest heart beat in a foreign land, Strong hand! brave heart!—I've never so far from me.

By many a weary league of shore and sea, And tell him she was with us—he'll know who.

Maximilian, hasn't she the winsome eyes? The darkest, deepest, brightest, mostest blue I ever saw, except in summer skies.

And such black hair—it is the blackest hair That ever rippled over neck so fair.

Tell him old Fincher trotted many a day, And moped, poor dog! 't was well he didn't die; Crouched by the roadside, how he watched the way.

And sniffed the travelers as they passed him by— I'll take no sunshine, sure 't was all the same; He listened for the foot that never came.

Tell him the house is lonesome-like and cold; The fire itself seems robbed of half its light; But may be 'tis my eyes are growing old.

And things look dim before my falling sight; For all that, tell him 't was myself that spun The shirts you bring, and stitched them every one.

Give him my blessing; morning, noon, and night; Tell him my prayers are offered for his good; That he may keep his Maker still in sight.

And firmly stand as his brave father stood— True to his name, his country, and his God; Faithful at home, and steadfast still abroad.

THE TWO BRIDES.

BY REV. BERNARD O'BRIEN, L.D.

One morning as he slumbered sweetly, Rose was practising with her sisters in the distant music-room. But the windows were open to admit the balmy air and the soft sunshine, and on the stillness came floating the delightful notes of Tenyson's "Brook," the melody rippling in liquid drops as Rose's glorious voice poured out each note with marvelous distinctness. It was like the music of the stream sparkling and singing down her native dells up yonder among the mountains. And so Mr. D'Arcy listened, entranced. At length, when the last notes had died away, he rang the bell, and Rose was by his side in an instant.

"Oh, my darling!" he said, "I must go out into the garden with you to-day. I want you to sing me 'The Brook' down where the little river comes bounding into the lake. I think I am strong enough, and this good news from Washington has made me ten years younger."

Good news had indeed reached Mortlake the day before, which was related further on. So, Rose, delighted beyond measure that her father was in such buoyant spirits, immediately summoned Joe Porter, and left him to dress his beloved master.

Meanwhile Rose busied herself in preparing a little rural feast for him at one of his favorite resorts near the head of the lake, where the stream, protected in its entire course from the hill by a dense growth of oak, came tumbling from cascade to cascade into the silvery expanse beneath. The overseer, Elen Jamieson, had his cottage, a large and pretty wooden structure, almost on the river bank, where the rushing water made music the whole year round; and there Rose determined the whole family should picnic. Into her plan Mrs. De Beaumont and Fanny entered most heartily. Elen Jamieson had a capacious tent reserved for such occasions, and that was put up beneath a clump of oak, chestnut, hickory, and magnolia, on the margin of the principal cascade, where there was a splendid prospect of the rich undulating country below, with the little lake nearest enclosed in a luxuriant growth of lily trees. It was the spot on which Francis D'Arcy used to reside while they were building the Mortlake mansion, and laying out the grounds. The noble-souled father wished to make of the place a paradise for his oldest and favorite daughter, and so succeeded that Mrs. De Beaumont and her son never felt happy away from this beautiful abode.

The spirit of the venerable man seemed to haunt it still, so dearly and so constantly was he remembered, not only by his own children and grandchildren, but by every one of the servants. And no wonder these cherished his memory; for he had made their lot so happy, and had attended so unremittently to their religious instruction and moral training, that they were the envy of their class throughout the country.

It was, therefore, with a feeling of intense enjoyment that Louise D'Arcy noddled himself seated, during the sultry noontide, on the spot where his dear father had spent so many pleasant hours. Little Mary, with Fanny De Beaumont's two youngest children, girls of Mary's own age, gave the invalid exquisite pleasure by their innocent prattle and a thousand devices for his amusement. Mary, in her half-mourning dress of white and purple, was seated at his feet, reading favorite scenes from Racine's *Iphigene*, with a purity of accent and a spirit that showed the careful culture received from her dear mother as well as from Rose. Mrs. De Beaumont, Fanny and her daughter, and some of the favorite servants, formed the audience, the latter on the seats on campstools, the latter on the mossy earth, kept ever green in this spot by the spray from the neighboring cascade and the over-hanging trees. Rose, Elen Jamieson, and Joe Porter, were quickly

preparing everything for a delicious mid-day meal in the tent. And so Mary's musical young voice was almost singing the inspired lines of the great French poet,—"The dashing of the waters only forcing her to use her fullest tones and most distinct emphasis,—when the attention of the group was attracted by a startled "Oh! Oh!" from Rose.

Two gentlemen, accompanied by one of the servants, were advancing up the steep path by the side of the river, one of ordinary stature, with wavy hair and ruddy countenance, in whom Mr. D'Arcy and the ladies recognized our former acquaintance Mr. Ashton; the other, much taller, with a proud military bearing, a bronzed complexion, and a young and graceful figure, was evidently the cause of Rose's exclamation.

She had been coming from the tent towards her father's seat, when her attention was drawn to the two strangers on the path beneath by her seeing the servants gazing in that direction. And there Rose stood, pale and motionless, with her eyes fixed on the advancing strangers, and her hands clasped on her bosom, half in fear, half in joy.

"It is surely Diego de Lebrija," said Mr. D'Arcy, rising and making a few steps towards his friends. "Rose, my love, come here to me," he continued, "and take my arm."

This roused the girl from her half-trance, and enabled her to gain her self-possession, as she stood by her father's side and put her within his. But Mand and Viva had no sooner beheld their old friends of Ronda, than down they bounded to meet them.

"You see, I bring you back an old acquaintance," Mr. Ashton said, as he took Mrs. De Beaumont's hand. "Ah, my dear D'Arcy, have you been in the war?" he asked, looking with concern on Mr. D'Arcy's emaciated countenance.

"We thank you heartily, Ashton," was the answer, spoken most earnestly and affectionately, "for this great favor. Diego, my dear boy, how changed you are from the stripling of four years ago! And how glad I am to see you here!" he said, embracing the young man, who was evidently touched by the heartiness of his welcome. While Ashton had been shaking Mr. D'Arcy's hand, Diego was affectionately greeted by Mrs. De Beaumont and her daughter-in-law, both of whom had known him well in Spain. Then turning to Rose, he had kissed her hand again.

"At last!" she could only stammer, and "God be praised that you are safe!" "I am safe," he said, looking into the deep eyes with a love full of reverence, "thanks to Him whose protection I know you have been beseeching on me."

"We have all been praying for you, my dear Diego," Mr. D'Arcy said. "But you will tell us how this has come to pass, and what happy train of events has brought you to us, when you are refreshed and have rested."

"Have I not been most privileged," Diego said, "in having so generous a guide and protector from New Orleans hither?"

"Ah, you forget, my dear Count," Mr. Ashton replied, "that I was only paying you an old debt."

"You have repaid it a hundred-fold," said the other, "and left me forever your debtor."

"Lanchon is ready, my lady," said Elen, addressing Mrs. De Beaumont. "And ready at the right moment," said the lady, "Louis, my child, will you take Fanny in? Count, we shall trust Rose to you," she added, with a bright smile, while Rose, with a look of graceful happiness, gave her arm to Diego.

"And, as they sat down beneath the grateful shade of the table so dimly set out by Rose's hand for her dear father, he spoke out of the dear ones whom death and war had taken away from the loving family circle. Thankful for the blessings of the present hour and the brightening prospects of the future before them, they made their French guests happy by the show of genuine affection much more than by their cordial hospitality, and were in return deeply gratified by the story told them by Mr. Ashton and his companion.

"You see, my dear sir, that I am not so brave as I have believed myself," said Diego to Mr. D'Arcy.

"I am delighted that you should have proved your courage by braving the perils of so long a journey," the latter said, "rather than by confronting the uncertain friendship of hostile Mexican factions, or the certain revenge of their French foes. But where and why did you turn back in your proposed journey to the capital?"

"I did not journey far beyond Oposura," Diego replied, "when my Sonora friends convinced me, beyond the possibility of a doubt that my life was not safe so long as I remained in Mexico. They urged me to seek the nearest and safest road to the frontier of the United States, accompanied me with two brave and trusty Opatá guides, and only left me when I was within your territory. Thanks to the letters I had from them, to the precise instructions they had given me about the route I was to follow, and to the friends to whom they had recommended me, I have been able to reach New Orleans without any serious difficulty."

"Not without serious fatigue and suffering, however," said Mr. Ashton. "When the Count arrived at our house, he was so exhausted, so ill, indeed, that it took my wife a couple of weeks to set him on his feet again."

"I can never forget or repay the motherly kindness of Mrs. Ashton," said Diego, "as well as that of her accomplished daughters."

"Do not be jealous, Miss Rose," said the jolly old gentleman. "My daughters, as well as my wife, were only thinking how happy they would make you."

"Rose never ceases to praise Mrs. Ashton and her daughters," Mr. D'Arcy said, coming to the relief of his blushing child. "And she and her whole family thank you and yours for what you have done, as much as if Gaston D'Arcy had been the object of your generous hospitality."

"Ah, my dear D'Arcy," replied Ashton, "if Gaston had been two weeks sick in my house, I doubt if my wife and daughters had been as willing to part with him. You see, our friend, the Count here, was ever sighing for Fairy Dell and Mortlake; and both my daughters, as well as my wife, were so anxious to get rid of him and send him safe to you, that they encouraged me to come with him."

"There was but one man living two years ago," said Mr. D'Arcy, "whose face I could look on with more pleasure than on your own, Ashton. Now, there is no living man more welcome than you."

"Thank you, my dear and best friend," said Mr. Ashton, with emotion. "And you know how dear to me was he who had not his equal among living men, though he does live in his son."

There was much to tell of the fortunes of the war as it raged along both sides of the Mississippi, away to the frontier of Mexico on the one hand, and down to the Potomac on the other. The fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson had been a sad blow to the hopes of the Confederates in the South, the gigantic struggle of Gettysburg and its fatal issue had dispelled all their dreams of a successful invasion of the Northern States. And now Lincoln, with his indomitable faith in the final triumph of the Union cause, was concentrating all the military resources of the government, and all the efforts of his countrymen, towards putting an end to the dreadful conflict.

To both Mr. D'Arcy and Mr. Ashton the victory of the North had never been a matter of doubt. Belonging, as we have seen, to the political party before the war, they differed in this, that Mr. Ashton had given his allegiance to the Confederacy, without believing in its chances of triumphing, while Mr. D'Arcy had continued faithful to the Union through all its darkest days, never for a moment wavering in his allegiance to the constitution, nor in his belief that it would survive the protracted storm.

Of these things the two old gentlemen only spoke when they were alone or had only Mr. De Beaumont and Fanny as listeners. Ashton knew how deep a joy he was causing his friend—his friend's cost so much fatigue and pain, the Count de Lebrija, of Gaston's having joined the Confederate army, or of what had befallen him at Gettysburg, he had heard nothing, and was therefore shocked and pained beyond measure to learn his own affliction.

Diego, too, when he had learned all the details of Gaston's wounding,—those of Francis D'Arcy's murder he had learned while in New Orleans,—was deeply grieved; and he yearned for an opportunity to express his sentiments of filial sympathy to Mr. D'Arcy.

When the party returned to the house in the afternoon, Rose was left to find her way home with Diego. Her aunt had encouraged her to do so, and so had her father. This was a kindness to both. For she, with a true woman's instinct, felt that she owed it to him to honor him with this open mark of her confidence; and he was most grateful for so early an opportunity to open his whole heart to the lady of his love.

"I wish I could go to Washington," he said to Rose, after the first expression of sorrow at the death of her grandfather and her brother's cruel misfortune. "I would be such a happiness to me to begin by paying to your dear brother that I know how to do a brother's part by him."

"That would be like yourself," Rose said warmly. "And I know how grateful you would be, without speaking of myself or the other members of the family."

"Are they not almost my own family already?" he said, looking down at the blushing face of his companion. "Indeed, you can see they do not look upon you as a foreign stranger," Rose replied, without raising her eyes. "I intend to propose it to your father this very night," Diego said.

"But you need rest, and must have it," Rose said. "Besides, it is not easy to get to Washington from here."

"Oh, I am a foreigner and a diplomat," he replied, "and shall manage to find my way through red tape and army lines."

"I had hoped to go myself, but papa's second illness prevented me. Indeed, I should go now if I could," she added.

"You were not given me the right to go to Washington as a foreigner and a diplomat," he replied, "and shall manage to find my way through red tape and army lines."

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you together reminds me of Ronda. Only you, Sir Count, could not touch with us then, but you are now a prisoner in the Confederacy."

"You are unwell, darling," Mrs. De Beaumont said, as she rose and kissed her niece, whose vivid blush had given place to a deathly pallor. "Come, walk on with me," she continued, putting her arm round the girl's waist.

"It is nothing, dear Aunt Louise," the other said. "I could not refuse any longer to accept him."

"That would have been wrong in every way," her aunt replied. "He is worthy of you, dearest, and has nobly won your acceptance. This will make your father very happy. Yes, he was just expressing the hope there should be no further delay, when you came on us. And now, my own dearest and best, let me give you your mother's kiss as well as my own to congratulate you, said the warm-hearted old lady, as she folded Rose to her heart, kissing her again and again.

"I hope dear mamma will bless me from heaven," the girl said, as the tears softly down her cheeks, "as well as my darling grandpapa."

"You may be sure of that; and now, dear, let us put away all sad thoughts, and do our best to make our two guests happy."

At this time they had overtaken Fanny and the girls, who had happened, Fanny, who loved Rose with a true sisterly devotion, kissed her while pouring into her ear the fondest expressions of joy and tenderness. And Genevieve and Maid went blither tears at the thought of their darling's possible separation from them.

They were a most happy household that night. Mr. D'Arcy loaded his eldest daughter with marks of the most tender love. His happiness, he said, would be complete, were his two noble boys present to receive their new betrothal, and to congratulate their worshipful sisters on this consummation of all their wishes.

And so, for a few days, we leave Rose Diego to the delicious enjoyment of each other's society among the peaceful solitudes of Mortlake far away from every echo of the frightful tumult of civil war, as its fires lit up the distant horizon on every side.

While Rose and her betrothed were thus wandering hand in hand, through what seemed to both an earthly Elysium, a messenger from General De Beaumont brought to Mortlake most welcome letters from the seat of war, and the Potomac, and among them was the following from Lucy to her friend:

BETTER THOUGHTS. Be wise—prefer the person before money, virtue before beauty, the mind before the body; then hasten out in a wife a friend, a companion, who will bear an equal share in all thy toil and affliction.

Charity does not consist in an acquiescence in all things as we find them, nor in blinking at wrong doing. We are all bound in duty—to reprove, to condemn, to inflict penalties, frequently, in all charity. Hence charity is a universal virtue, yet, if we see men going to perdition it is not charity to keep quiet and let them go for fear of offending them.

It is dangerous to defer those momentous reformations which the conscience is solemnly preaching to the heart. If they are neglected the difficulty and indisposition increases daily. The mind recedes after degrees, from the warm and hopeful one, until at last it enters the Arctic circle, and becomes fixed in relentless and eternal ice.

The scribbles of earth try to efface Jesus' name from this world's page, but it underlies every line of history; it is spelled out in the inevitable characters of His own blood. The five letters of His adorable name unfold the memory of the five glorious wounds of His risen humanity. Jesus Christ is not a cipher, a zero in this world; He is a living, active principle, containing all known and unknown quantities. His indwelling presence in our soul is the surest ratio of our perfection.

Compassion is an emotion which we ought never to be ashamed. Ever grateful, particularly in youth, it is the star of sympathy, and noble is the heart that melts at the tale of woe. We should not permit ease and indulgence to contract our affections, and wrap us up in selfish enjoyment; but we should be ever ready to think of the distresses of human life, of the solitary sufferer, the sick couch, and with tender hands and voice alleviate, as far as we may, the ills and sorrows of our common humanity.

A beautiful story comes to us from Madrid, speaking volumes for the piety of the newly married couple. King Alfonso and his young queen, while driving through the streets of the Spanish capital, when they met a poor priest plodding on his way, carrying the Blessed Sacrament as viaticum to a dying person. The king and queen descended from their carriage and insisted that the priest should bear the King of Kings should enter it; they went to the altar. This touching episode takes us back to the days of good King Wenceslaus.

Pride causes many persons to lose all social cast. By the disregard for expenses or means, in trying to appear well before their world, they invariably become unhappy by living at the cost of their neighbors. Hence the many business men brought to ruin by the extravagance of families in living beyond their means. This pride, this selfishness, this desire to appear what one cannot be, is the source of all the unhappiness which is little thought of by those who once a year or so examine their conscience. How happy all would be were charity's precept followed.

The Church has never discouraged the beautiful, the enjoyable in life. Her most fervent children are the most bright and cheerful inhabitants of this vale of tears, for what sorrow can touch them? What can hide from them the smile of God? She does not ask her children to be gloomy; she asks them to be pure. It was Protestantism that first made religion seem stern and severe. In the grandest of our churches we imitate the forms of the trees of the forest and our choirs resound with the echo of the music of the birds, the sea, and the winds. All things are pressed into the service of God; and every little act not sinful in itself, may be offered "to the greater glory of God."



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