

AN IRISH HEROINE

[BY VIRGIL G. EATON, IN THE CELTIC MIRROR.]

UNDER the salmon dawn of a day in mid-June, a slip of a girl passed down the rolling road leading from Athy, by Barrowside, on to the heathery summit of Wolf Hill. She had been up since purple bands barred the east over the hills of Wicklow, and had run most of this distance; and now she had come to the sharp ascents of Laggercurran. She was climbing between the hedges in little graceful leaps that were neither running nor walking. The south wind, blown over Carlow from summer seas which lap the shores of Kilkenny, beat against her face, dropping big freckles on her nose and neck, and dragging her long melon-like candy-colored hair far out over her left shoulder until it streamed away, like a pennon glowing and flashing through the misty light.

"If I can get there in time," she panted, "in time to tell them, perhaps the miners may escape." Again she leaned over and started to run, bending far forward and skimming along the road like a swallow.

"Morna! Morna!" a voice called from the hedge-side, "where away so early?" It was Father Kelley, the parish priest; and the girl, with a gesture half impatient, stopped amid street, looking down and digging her bare pink toes in the dust viciously.

"It is a sin to go," she said vexedly, and coloring until her freckles were bathed in red; "and more's the sin to stay, I'm thinking." Speaking thus she turned and fled up the hill a red deer.

"Morna!" commanded the priest; "Morna, for the love of God, I ask it! stop and tell me."

"If you must know then," panted the girl, "the breaker on Wolf Hill is all on fire—I saw it from my window in the cottage by the church—and I go to save the miners who helped to drive me from home. May God forgive me, if I sin; but I would not see them roasted like potatoes."

"Go, and may God help you," replied the priest, hastening to his stable to mount a horse and follow.

Wolf Hill coal mine, which was abandoned at the time of the O'Connell uprising, had but lately started up—owing to a very sudden advance in the price of coal—and the new machinery was working day and night to supply the local market with fuel.

Sometime during the night shift, when the day crew was asleep, guarded by the constabulary of the Barrack, a fire had begun in the frame of the breaker, and would soon spread to the shaft, thus cutting off all chance of escape. Morna, who was the orphaned child of a tenant killed during the Lansdowne evictions in the winter of 1887, had seen this flame start up among a heap of culm as she peered out from the little hut, which the league had provided; and knowing that all were asleep in the Barrack—the men from labor and the constabulary from too much malt—had determined to run and give warning of danger, unwilling that even her enemies should perish in mortal sin.

She did not forget the scenes of six months before. As in a glass she saw these very miry—soarse boors from Cornwall and black-faced dwarfs from Wales—she saw them drag her paralytic father from the hut in which he was born, and heard them swear as they beat him and told him to walk. After this, when the moon came up and touched the black spruce, and turned the dim forest to a grand cathedral, she gazed upon her father lying back among heaps of straw and bedding under the cold trees, and heard him ask her to forgive them, to hold no malice for the injury to him; but rather to use them well and win them by kindness. Then the League physician came, followed by Father Kelley; and when they went away she knew that her father had died from exposure, and she was alone.

Deep among sad memories she hurried on, and was soon shaking the hostler in the mine stables to wake him from a half-drunken sleep.

"Bring a pair of your best horses to the north shaft at once," she commanded, pointing to the stalls near by. "The breaker frame over the middle shaft is all ablaze, and no man can get out and live. I will go down and call the men. Be ready with your horses to hoist away as soon as I shall give the word. Say not a word to anybody, but hurry."

She was away among furies and broken stones, hurrying on until the north shaft was gained, when reaching out with the action of one who knew the place well, she launched the bucket over the chasm, and taking the leading rope in both hands, jumped into the dusty tub and plunged through the black hole to the yawning depths below.

The rope spun through her hands until the palms were blistered and bleeding. In spite of pain she allowed the line to pay out, plunging her into deeper darkness until a blue, star-studded space overhead, no bigger than the head of a barrel, was all the light she could see. Around and below the air was black as ink, and so heavy with foul gases that she fancied she could hear the waves sputter as she dipped among them. At last, after what seemed to her an age of travel, the tub dropped forcefully upon the ledgy bottom of the shaft, and Morna was hurled against a pile of baled hay, which had been brought down to feed the mules that hauled coal in the mine.

"Mike!" she called pleasantly. "Mike! Jerry! Where are you? Come quick." "Here I am," said a tall man emerging from a side gallery bearing a pale lamp in his cap. "Here I am. What's wanted? Eh, Morna, is it you I see?"

"O Mike, hurry!" cried the girl, pleased to see a face she knew. "Hurry, but don't scare anybody. The boss wants you all up. He sent me down to get you and send you up by the north shaft. Bring six men here quick, that's a good boy." She smiled as if it were a pleasure excursion she was sending them on, and held her hands behind her so he could not see their condition.

"What's the boss after doing with us now?" asked John McConnell, who had

come up in time to hear a part of the talk. "Sure 'tis not six o'clock for an hour yet." "Get along with you and find out," replied Morna, hustling them into the bucket, and crying out, "Lift away" to the teamster above. The tub shot out of sight, came down, was filled and went up again, and kept doing so very rapidly until Mike and two other men helped Morna into the bucket and getting in themselves, the last person was drawn out.

Five minutes later, when the besotted day crew had been aroused and was standing around in a dazed condition watching the fire, the breaker tower swayed and crumbled into the main shaft, carrying blazing timbers to the bottom of the mine.

"Stand back all," shouted the boss. "Run for your lives. She's gone sure." As he spoke a giant brush of flame, tipped with blackness and fringed in smoke, burst up from all three of the shafts at once. Wolf Hill quaked and rocked as when an earthquake goes along, and the clouds rained coal dust and cinders for nearly half an hour.

When the foreman heard the story of how the men were rescued and went to look for Morna she was gone. As he was a stranger in the place, and did not know about the late evictions, he sent a messenger to her old home, and finding it deserted, with the sheriff's seal upon the door, he sat down and wrote a letter to the president of the company.

Those of the evicted tenants who had not been driven to America or Australia, were living in little board houses on parochial land between the church and the parish cemetery. The noble marquis, who had turned them out, owned all the other land, so the tenants were forced to find shelter on church ground or flee from the country. These buildings were of matched boards, and were about twelve feet wide by thirty feet long, affording scant room for five or six persons. The National League had put them up to keep the tenants from perishing. Though small and cheap they were the best the League could afford, and should be always held in tender remembrance, because these buildings represent the first systematic effort that was made to keep Irish tenants at home, instead of allowing them to drift across seas where the sorrows of their kindred would soon be forgotten.

Two weeks after the explosion at Wolf Hill, Father Kelley was making his daily calls among the homeless tenants; and stopping at the board cottage where Morna lived, he handed her two letters, saying:

"It is famous you're getting since the fire, my girl. See, here are two letters I have for you. One is from London, and the other comes from the Kildare Street Club of Dublin. Who'd have thought it?"

Morna tore the wrapping from the Dublin letter and read:

Kildare Street Club, Dublin, June 28, 1887.

MISS MORNA O'LEARY, Athy, Queen's Co., Ireland. My Dear Miss:—

In behalf of the Wolf Hill Coal Company, Limited, let me thank you for your heroism in saving the lives of the men in the mine on the morning of June 15. I am also requested by the President and Directors to send you the enclosed check. Please acknowledge the receipt of the same, and let me know if the company can forward your interests in any way.

Very respectfully yours, CUTHBERT PONSONEY, Sup't. Wolf Hill Coal Co.

Inside of this letter was a cheque for £50, drawn on "Baring Brothers, Limited," of Dublin.

The size of the present caused everybody to gaze in astonishment. Morna was no longer a poor orphan, but a capitalist with an annuity at Barings, so big that she could emigrate and join her aunt in America any day she chose. As for Morna she deliberately opened the second letter, which read as follows:

Marlborough House, London, June 27, 1887.

MISS MORNA O'LEARY, Athy, Ireland.

His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, hearing of your bravery at the Wolf Hill mine on the morning of June 15, begs you to accept the enclosed present as a partial recognition of a noble act.

His Royal Highness has forwarded your name to the Queen at Windsor Castle with the recommendation that you receive a Royal Medal, such as is given to those who save lives. These medals will be sent out early in September.

With kindly wishes I subscribe myself in behalf of His Highness, Respectfully yours, SIR FRANCIS KNOLLYS, Kt., Secretary to H.R.H.

"God bless the Prince of Wales," murmured the pious priest, picking up a ten pound note on the Bank of England from the floor and restoring it to Morna. "He has a heart, after all, though I fear it beats for Ireland too seldom for the public good."

"God save Ireland," cried Morna, shaking her riches aloft; "and here are sixty pounds to help save it. I did the deed for the love of Ireland, and every farthing must go to help the cause."

From that little scene among the rich grazing lands of mid-Ireland started a repressive movement, which has since spread all over the island, and resulted in crippling the landlords and discouraging the Tories more than all the shouting and rioting that were carried on during the past century.

How it was done it is easy to tell. About twenty years ago when Parnell was using his marvellous forces to obstruct legislation in Parliament, the landlords who owned estates in Ireland met in London and made a plan to tax the Irish peasantry so severely that they would be forced to submit from poverty. Rents were to be raised and raised again until every penny earned by the tenants must go to the agent. Those who could not pay were to have notices served on them, which at the end of six months could be enforced by the sheriff, who was empowered to collect the rent in full or put the tenant out of his holding. Then followed the years of gloom, during which Mr. Gladstone—naturally an aristocrat and something of a bully too—became

disgusted with his associates and championed the cause of Ireland when her need was the sorest. Even his powerful aid was not enough; and in 1887, when Salisbury and his famous Force Bill passed, one-third of the tenants were either evicted or else waiting for the emergency men to come and turn them out.

At this crisis, when ne'er-do-wells from the cities were coming to the country and taking rents that had been in the name of one family since the days of Cromwell, John Dillon and William O'Brien, two of the most brainy men in Ireland, laid out the Plan of Campaign. This was to keep the evicted farmers near their old homes, and if needs be to support them, while they traveled about, warning would-be tenants away, and encouraging their friends who still held farms to stand out against oppressive rents. The landlords might turn the tenants from their holdings, but if the Plan of Campaign worked, they could not compel them to quit Ireland. At the same time it was believed that few strangers would come to take farms when they knew that public sentiment was against them. For this cause America, Australia, and even the workmen in England sent many thousands of dollars. It was not a success, because the Parnell scandals were sent out at a time that was perilous for Ireland, and the break in the ranks of the Irish Parliamentary party caused dissensions that have not healed to-day. Still, the Plan of Campaign, adopted in 1887, has done more to cripple landlordism in Ireland than all other forms of agitation that have been tried during the past century.

Morna was true to her pledge and put every penny of her \$300 into the cause. When I saw her in August, 1887, she was dressed in a neat calico gown that came just below her knees. Her head and feet were bare and her neck was blistered by the sun. She showed me a letter she had lately received from her aunt in the United States. It begged Morna to cross the Atlantic at once and "leave poor Ireland to its sorrow."

"Will I go?" answered Morna, repeating my question. "Will I start the procession of failures that can never end if it once begins? Will I run away and leave these people who need me? To one and all of these questions I say 'No.' I was born in Ireland; and if I die to-morrow, or fifty years from now, I mean to die in Ireland. There is no other way."

Since then Ireland has made a great deal of history, and at last caused the landlords to adopt other means. Many of them have reduced their rents and given up the battle entirely. Not a few have sold their estates to the tenants on long terms of easy payment. The ones who are wealthy and hold valuable lands are still evicting tenants and pulling down the empty houses. The farm lands, which formerly grew all kinds of crops and gave a living employment to many families, are now turned into pastures where bullocks are fattened for the London and Liverpool markets. Among those who have adopted the last method are Mr. Herbert and the Earl of Kenmare in Kildare and the Marquis of Lansdowne in Queen's county. On all of these estates the houses have been wrecked and fat cattle graze where men have toiled for 500 years.

In 1891, when Morna was eighteen years of age, I heard from her through a friend in Dublin. She was working in a milliner's shop in Athy, and still kept up her faith in the Plan of Campaign. Though poor and not over-strong she said she would not go away under any consideration.

"She says," writes the Dublin correspondent, "that England will make a game preserve of Scotland and a cow pasture of Ireland, all for the sake of a few rich men in London; but while she can live she will work for her people, and when she can live no longer, she will die cheering them on."

The above story is but one among many which I know are true. Ireland is full of Morna O'Learys, and will hold them and honor them while Irishmen and Irishwomen live.

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CATHOLIC CONGRESS.

FORMATION OF A BRITISH COMMITTEE.

Unbelievers in the True Church not unfrequently falsely assert that that Church is an enemy of science. Moreover, they maintain that many of the truths of holy religion are at variance with recent discoveries. When an appeal is made to the weapons of science by the propagandists of irreligion and unbelief, it is not becoming that Catholics should not be prepared to meet them in open and fair fight and give a reason for the faith that is in them, and show again and again to the world that the Church to which they belong is the bulwark of science, and that neither invention nor discovery has militated, or ever can militate, against or disprove the logic of its teachings. Happily there is a well-timed move in this direction to-day, and there is a universal feeling among Catholic savants that it is meet that they should periodically assemble in council and discuss scientific questions of importance affecting their common interests. Since the last Catholic Congress in Brussels, in 1894, the organization has spread with amazing rapidity; branches have been established in the chief European cities, as well as in America, and the general support which has been given by distinguished ecclesiastics and laymen prove its necessity and recognized utility.

Owing to the fact that no English committee was formed anterior to the Brussels Congress, there was an absence of English and Irish representation at that important assembly, but happily since then steps have been taken with the result that the British committee consists of Bishops, distinguished priests and eminent scientists representing the learned professions. The hon. presidents are: His Eminence Cardinal Logue,

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The president (the Marquis de Mashanagass) has received a letter from Cardinal Rampolla, which evidences the interest which the Holy Father takes in the movement, and especially in its extension to England and Ireland. The following is an extract from the Cardinal's communication:—"The respectful address which your Lordship has been well pleased to place at the feet of his Holiness was received by his Holiness with a lively satisfaction, not only on account of the sentiments which you express, but by reason of the announcement of the foundation in England and Ireland of a national committee for the work of the International Scientific Congress of Catholics. The august Pontiff believes that the new committee will achieve for religion and science the same excellent results which have been obtained in other places. Wherefore, he thanks the committee for its devotedness, and, with great pleasure and from his heart, grants the Apostolic Benediction which you have asked."

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IRELAND'S OLDEST WOMAN.

The oldest woman in Ireland has seen more years than her name would indicate. She is in the Union Hospital in Strokestown, Co. Roscommon, Ireland. Just now she is in her 112th year and is known still as Kitty Reynolds.

There is no doubt of her age. A couple of giddy young things who are also in the hospital, and who are 90 and 95 years old, respectively, remember distinctly that Kitty Reynolds was a fully matured woman when they were mere infants. Kitty, as she is called by everyone, remembers clearly many incidents of the rebellion of '98, which she tells with considerable power of description.

Her brain is still active and her intellect unimpaired. She can't hear quite so well as she used to half a century or so ago, but her eyes are still as quick and keen as ever. She is proud of the fact that she can thread a needle quicker than herding of 50.

Many years ago, when Father Mathew began his crusade for temperance, she became one of his disciples, and since that time has never tasted alcohol in any form. So firm was she in that determination that only a short time ago, when in a precarious condition because of an attack of influenza, she refused to take stimulants when ordered to do so by her physician.

A BIG EGG.

The following story is told of an Eastern farmer who went into a store somewhere near Munchausenville, and exhibited an egg which he vowed had been laid by one of his hens. He had it packed in cotton, and wouldn't allow anyone to handle it for fear of breaking it. The grocer examined it and said: "Pshaw! I have got something that will beat that." "I'll bet you a dollar you haven't," said the countryman. "Right," replied the grocer, and going behind the counter he brought out an egg-beater. "There's something that will beat it, I guess," said he, reaching over for the stakes. "Hold on there," said the farmer; "let's see you beat it," and he handed it to the grocer. The latter held out his hand for it, but dropped it in surprise on the counter, where it broke two soup plates. It was solid iron painted white. "Some folks think they are darnation cute," muttered the farmer, as he pocketed the stakes and cleared; "but 'tain't no use buckin' against the solid facts."

IRISH SCHOOL GRANT.

In an important letter, published in the daily press, His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin wrote as follows:—"The intervention of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, in last night's debate in the House of Commons on the Irish School Grant has introduced a new and somewhat encouraging element into the consideration of the question. His speech makes it plain that, up to the present, at all events, the real responsibility for the iniquitous withholding of the money that ought long since to have been paid to Ireland rests, not with him, but with some of his subordinate officials.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, as the official head of the Treasury, is, no doubt, technically responsible for the persistent refusal of that department to pay the money. But, as his speech conclusively shows, he has been, not merely kept in the dark, but positively misled, by his subordinates as to more than one fact of vital importance in this case. It yet remains to be seen what decision Sir Michael Hicks-Beach may come to when he has learned how the case really stands. For my part, I cannot at all believe that he has yet said his last word upon it."

The Archbishop proceeded to point out that to throw upon the National Education Board the blame for the underpayment is merely a neat way of endeavoring to evade the real point of the case. Even if the National Education Board was in default in not claiming payment of money, Dr. Walsh very pertinently enquires if that would be any reason why Ireland should be robbed? Speaking of the grant made for the year 1894-5, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach said the amount that Ireland received was the amount asked for by the National Board. Applications for the payment of the proper amount was made, His Grace says, before he became a member of the Board in 1892, and the answer was an unqualified refusal to allow a supplemental estimate to be presented.

"THE SCHOLAR IN POLITICS."

In an address delivered by Secretary J. Sterling Morton before the faculty and students of the Tennessee University at Knoxville, he emphasized moral courage "as the essential element of usefulness to be developed and exercised by the scholar in politics."

"In the presence of frenzied and clamorous ignorance demanding that government shall run railroads, telegraphs, farms, and warehouses, or, controlled by combined and arrogant

avarice, commanding that taxes shall be laid upon all to make incomes for a few, the patriotic scholar must, with unruffled equanimity and unwavering courage, stand firmly defiant in defense of the limitations of powers which our Constitution provides.

"And though a majority of millions declaim for a debased circulating medium, and declare the government capable of creating value by a mere fiat, it is nevertheless the duty of the rightly educated citizen to firmly stand for the solid and established truth that governments can create time and memory and reason, suspend the law of gravitation and abolish eternity by statute, just as successfully as they can, by mere edict, create a coinage which the commerce of modern civilization will accept at a mint valuation which is more than twice its commodity valuation in the very country which emits it.

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