

lord; and won't accept them—such an Irishman exists in the imagination of those who take their ideas of the nation from mythical descriptions.

Ned stood six feet two inches in his "stocking feet." If his figure had a fault it was its remarkable slightness but the agility, the grace, I had almost said the elegance of his movements, more than compensated for any deficiency of bulk.

He was Edward Elmsdale's foster brother, and at one time the tie of attachment between them had been very strong. Lady Elmsdale had nearly lost her life at the birth of her eldest son, and Ned's mother, then gate-keeper's wife, had taken the infant and nursed him with her own boy.

In his young days Ned had worshipped the little lord, as he called his young master, with an almost adoring fondness. When Edward went to a public school, the boy lost his spirits for weeks, and nearly lost his health forever. When Edward returned home with his large experience of the world, and new ideas on the subject of pleasure, Ned received his first lesson in the vanity of human attachments. He submitted without a murmur, but the wound rankled, and when he found, at a later period, that Edward had worse faults than ingratitude, he was neither troubled nor surprised. The breach was now widened hopelessly.

It has been said that visitors were expected from England to spend the Christmas at Elmsdale Castle. They were to arrive by the Liverpool packet, and might be expected a few hours after midnight. They might not come for some hours later. In this uncertainty, everything had been prepared for their reception should they make their appearance even earlier than had been anticipated. The heads of the family had retired to rest, as Miss Elmsdale, who was with the travellers, would be able to act as hostess. It was supposed they would prefer retiring to rest as speedily as possible, to exchanging civilities in all the discomfort which must follow a sea voyage at such a season. The upper housemaid had been charged to remain up and look after the fire, and Edward Elmsdale was in quest of her when he entered the dining-room and there found his mother and brothers. He was look-

ing for her now. He was taking a mean advantage of an unfortunate girl—and he knew it.

Ellie McCarthy was still young, though she held a responsible position in the household. Her aunt was the housekeeper, and when her mother died she was taken into service in the Castle. Her manner and appearance were so attractive that Lady Elmsdale would have had her trained as her own maid if she had not already possessed a treasure in that capacity—one who was almost as much friend as servant. It was settled, then, that she should be taught the duties of housemaid, and she became upper housemaid, through the marriage of two fellow servants, before she had reached her twentieth year.

I have described Ned, and I suppose something must be said about Ellie, but I confess considerable difficulty in the task. I do not claim for all Irish girls her rare gifts of mind and person; but they have very frequently an indelible purity of look, tone and manner to which no words can do justice—which must be seen and felt to be understood.

There was a fawn-like shyness and brightness in her eye, an exceeding sweetness in her smile, and a timidity which was at once trustful and hesitating in its expression.

She had gone from one room to another tending the fires, pausing awhile in each, and singing to herself some snatches of the Christmas carols which she had been taught in her early days at the Convent school, and which were loved for the sake of those who taught her as well as for their holy words. She was now in the dining-room, removing the remains of the boys' supper, and putting things, as she would have expressed it, "to rights." It was a very large apartment, and she stood with her back to the double doors which opened into it from the great hall. These doors were covered with baize, studded with large brass nails, and there was besides a swinging door which she had fastened ajar.

Edward came in so quietly that she did not notice his entrance until he came against a chair, which he threw down involuntarily, for his object was to attract her to his presence by some quiet movement. The girl gave an exclamation.