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THE TWO MARYS; OR, THE O'DONNELLS OF INNISMORE.

CHAPTER VI.—Continued.

'All in good time,' replied my friend, with a smile, 'I doubt much whether the extreme sensitiveness of poor Ailey's disposition would ever have brought her to Innismore in her rage and wretchedness, but that the future of this child preyed so heavily upon her heart. Her mother had left her a little property, but not enough for their support, and she told me that all she had attempted to put her hand to had failed, that a ban was on her exertions in consequence of her unadulterated conduct to her mother, and the crime she had committed to further her return to the idol she had so wickedly set up in her heart to worship, and that this ban would descend to her innocent child, that in fact what she desired was, that I would take her child, and bring it up in any way I pleased.'

'I at once saw a thousand difficulties in the way. Ailey had fallen so low in our estimation, her crime had been one of no ordinary nature, added to which, all her misfortunes were the fruits of her own wilful obstinacy. I refused, therefore, to undertake the charge, saying—'It is morally impossible, Ailey, after all that has passed, that you can ever come to Innismore again, but I will place the child in some school, where she shall be well looked after, educated, and then apprenticed to some respectable business, and, in the course of time, be able to help you.'

'But, lady dear,' exclaimed Ailey, 'if ye will but take my desolate girl to your own heart, I will promise anything, however hard the trouble, even if it be never to see her sweet face again, even this I'll promise if ye will but take her. Hear me, now, Alana Macree,' she continued, clasping her hands together, and raising her streaming eyes to heaven; 'hear me thin, may I never see the blessed light of glory, if I break my word, and look on the sweet face of my child more, if ye will but let me send her to ye.'

'It cannot be done,' I replied, shaking my head incredulously, 'your daughter is no longer a mere child, she will pine after you, besides, the memories of how she has been brought up, Ailey, will cling to her like some darksome shadow; it is, almost an impossible thing, too, to suppose that her mind has not suffered contamination from contact with those into whose company she has been thrown; I can make you no further promise, Ailey.'

'I was, in truth, getting wearied of the pertinacity with which the unfortunate being followed up her point, when she exclaimed, 'Shure, and ye need not be afther thinking the child will trouble you about me, its myself who'll spirit her away, and a friend of mine shall write, telling ye that I am dead.'

'I can be party to no such deception, Ailey,' I replied, but at that moment a well-known step sounded on my ear, and to my surprise, my husband, whom I thought several leagues from Innismore, stood before me. He had entered the adjoining room with a stealthy step, wishing to surprise and please me with his unexpected return, and had thus overheard the greater part of my conversation with Ailey, with some portion of whose sad history he was already well acquainted, and now advancing to me with a smile at my start of surprise, he said,

'Take the child, my love, it is an act of charity, we will trust in God that she will reflect no discredit upon our care; but Ailey,' he added, 'you will once for all understand that you have no further connection with her; these are the conditions you have yourself named, on no others can your child be received.'

'Oh! may the heavens be your bed, sir,' exclaimed poor Ailey, 'for it's the happy and blithe heart ye have given me; I'll bring my darling to the castle to-morrow, and ye will see how lovely she is, and beyond all, how grateful and how good; and shure has it not been all my trouble lest she should be led away, and sin as I have sinned, that thought makes me willing never to look on her sweet face again, and so farewell to ye, honored sir, and gentle foster-sister,' said Ailey, 'and the blessing of a lone woman's heart be on ye for all your kindness to me.'

the waist of a lovely little girl, of some ten or eleven years of age, its laughing blue eyes were raised to its mother's face, and it kissed away the tears which now burst forth.'

'And you will be good to the kind lady who is now going to take care of you, and remember, it won't be very long, Avourneen, before I come back,' said Ailey.

'Yes, I will be so good, mother darling,' replied the child; 'and your Colleen will be counting all the months till ye come back again, to live so happy with all the money ye are going to earn in England, and—'

'I broke through the trees which had concealed me, as the child spoke, resolved to put a stop to a dialogue, I clearly saw, was becoming very painful to poor Ailey, and, advancing with a smiling face, I said,

'This, then, is the little girl, my good Ailey, who is to stay with me, and be my little nurse and companion, till you return.'

'Ah, boney, darlint,' replied the mother, drying her tears, 'this is my own little Mary, my sweet Colleen, who has promised me to be very good till I come back, and never to give trouble to those who are aither taking care of her.'

'Sweet trusting confidence of childhood, to hear was to believe, and Mary, shy, and half afraid, passed from her mother's side to mine, put up her pouting lips for a kiss, and then returning, tried to dry away her mother's tears.'

'I shall leave you here, Ailey, and Mary and I will go and make acquaintance with some of my pet pigeons,' I said, at the same time signing to her that I wished her not to prolong her stay. I saw how her heart was ready to burst, in spite of herself. How she strained her child to her bosom, as it naught on earth should separate her from this one only tie; that it was the devotedness of a mother's love which alone overruled her with courage to make this sacrifice, and I thought it wise in mercy to herself to hasten the dreaded moment.'

'The whole heart and soul of the mother had spoken in that agonising embrace, and now advancing, I passed my arm around the child's waist, gaily exclaiming, 'come along then, Mary, and let us go and see all the fine things which mother saw when she was as little as Mary is now; so good bye, Ailey; I must go alone, unless Mary hastens after me,' I added, turning away. The poor child had indeed only waited for one more kiss, and bounded along over the hills, far outstripping myself in quickness of step. I had lingered, too, for one moment, to whisper courage and comfort to the heart of the desolate mother, to force upon her acceptance a well-filled purse, to bid her remember that she had at least acted wisely, and then to cast a look on the desolate and heart-stricken wayfarer. When I had gained the summit of a hill she had made but little way, shading her eyes with her hand, vainly hoping to catch one more glimpse of the child, whom I had sent onwards with a message to the castle gates.'

'I never beheld Ailey from that morning till she appeared before us to night, nine years having passed away, though I have often heard from her, as of one leading a wandering, wretched way of life, with no fixed purpose in view. Until now, she has, to the letter, carried out her vow, and even caused news of her death to be conveyed to Mary, a few months after her voluntary separation from her, and it was long before the acuteness of grief the poor girl felt, passed away.'

'As to Mary,' continued Mrs. O'Donnell, at the close of her long story, 'you know her, and of her I need only say that, to know is to love her; you now know, too, that she has so wound herself around our hearts, that we have formally adopted her, giving her our own name from the moment she returned from the Carmelites who educated her. Every sweet and gentle virtue that can adorn a woman, graces her character. My sharpest, keenest sorrow being the knowledge that we shall one day lose her.—Deeply seated at her heart is the remembrance of her father's wickedness; and, along with her love for her mother, comes, too, the remembrance of that mother's sins. She will never marry; she has often declared that she will never give her hand to any one, as having a right by birth to our time-honored name; or, with such cause to blush for her parentage, bring reproach upon herself and her children. Her desire is to enter a cloister, at no very distant period. I now fear, lest her usually peaceful frame of mind should be damped by the sudden and unwelcome appearance of a mother, whom she has long been led to consider as dead, nay, I may own the truth to you, I had even encouraged a hope that she really had ceased to exist, as more than three years had elapsed, after the report circulated, and I heard nothing from her, till one day a letter, begging for assistance was brought to me, in her well-remembered handwriting.'

'Such was, almost, in her own words, the narrative of Mrs. O'Donnell,' said Mrs. Main-

waring, 'and you will soon have an opportunity of judging of Mary, yourselves; you will see in her, an elegant and accomplished Irish girl: one of those blue-eyed, golden haired beauties whom we not unfrequently meet with, and whose countenance nature has also endowed with a regularity of feature, and sweetness of expression rarely seen; you will notice, too, lively as is her character, a shade of sadness often steal over her countenance, the result, I imagine of past sorrows, and when she is not speaking to you she will sit for awhile gazing into vacancy, her thoughts far away, perhaps, in that distant land where her brutal father sojourns, calling back to her mind the day which beheld at once his recognition and abandonment of her as his child.'

'Are you tired of my story, now,' enquired Mrs. Mainwaring, gazing around on the happy little circle; 'you have listened very patiently, so I hope I have not been prolix.'

'Tired,' exclaimed the young barrister, 'I only wish to see, ere my return to the Temple, the young lady who is the heroine of such a romantic tale; of course, the sisters, Margaret and Bertha, were not tired, for young damsels are generally voracious of news. And we also hope, dear reader, we have not wearied you in thus narrating the early history of one of our 'Two Marys.'

CHAPTER VII.—THE TWO MARYS BECOME ACQUAINTED. MARY O'DONNELL, A YOUNG LADY OF THE RIGHT SORT, CONSEQUENTLY NO FAVORITE WITH THE MISTRESS OF FAIRVIEW. A FEW HINTS TO ACCOMPLISHED YOUNG LADIES OF THE PRESENT DAY.

Dreadfully enough did time roll on at Fairview for the poor Maria Flohrberg. There is nothing more offensive than the affected politeness of a vulgar woman; and, since the quarrel with her husband, Mrs. Montague has been scrupulously polite to the poor German, the latter being fully conscious, that this outward civility was only assumed as a mask. The gentle little girl, who was her younger pupil, was still tractable as ever, but her sister was insufferable in her conceit;—looking down in the pride of her wealth and her beauty on the poor, plain Fraulein, and would fly off into a temper of rage if the timid little governess perchance attempted to pluck up a little courage, and exert the authority she was well aware she ought to possess.

One fine May evening, when the birds seemed to sing more cheerily than usual, and the white and pink hawthorn filled the hedges with its fragrance, the young ladies having joined their parents at dessert, poor Fraulein, with a heart unusually heavy, turned her steps to the adjoining village; she had had to encounter that day, from the determined opposition of her elder pupil, and the open impertinence of Wilson; and with spirits thoroughly depressed she seated herself on the trunk of a tree, and opened her sketch book; but no, it was all in vain; Fraulein could not sketch, that night; hot tears fell down her face, and blistered the drawing paper, for she was thinking of dear Coblenz, of the good Frau, of the old veteran, her father, and then of the O'Donnells; but girlish voices are near her; she felt, rather than saw, that some person was peering over her shoulder and endeavoring to catch a glimpse of her sketch book, and the next moment Bertha Mainwaring's merry laugh awakened an echo in the field, and she exclaimed,

'Look up, Fraulein Flohrberg, and thank me for bringing an O'Donnell to see you.'

And Maria raised her eyes, still wet with the tears she had shed, and gazed on a lovely face, shaded by a wealth of golden curls.

'We were coming to Fairview on purpose to see you, Fraulein, though not sorry to have met you by the way,' said Margaret Mainwaring;—'we have heard you speak with such warmth of General O'Donnell, and are quite sure you will be glad to see a member of his family.'

Fraulein sprang to her feet as Margaret spoke, fixed her large, honest eyes on the face of Mary—and then burst into a passionate fit of tears.

'It is all so foolish, quite silly of me,' said the poor Fraulein, after a few moments silent weeping, 'but you know, kind words melt me so to the very heart; and I hear very few of them in this England of yours; Mr. Montague is kind, and so is Miss Alice, but so one else in that large house, and I was just thinking of my poor father, he is so ill, and I felt so low spirited, when you good young ladies came to me.'

'Well then, you naughty Fraulein, you see we are not all savages, we English, and Bertha and I will stroll on to Fairview, and you and Miss O'Donnell shall enjoy a little chat together.'

Good Maria Flohrberg look with undisguised admiration on the tall, elegant girl, who passed her arm so familiarly within her own, and heaped upon her question after question, about the General and his lady, and gazed long and earnestly on a small miniature of the General's wife, which Maria took from her neck and examined.

'Oh, that you could see Innismore, Fraulein, with the hills and mountains frowning down so grandly on that dear old castle; and then, low down in a peaceful valley, in dear old Ireland, rises that noble edifice of the O'Donnells; its wall overgrown with ivy, and shaded over by trees centuries in their growth.'

'But poor people cannot go to other countries except to seek their bread *meine liebe*,' said Fraulein. 'But you are very happy, you know not what it is to be poor. Rich people can be happy.'

'Happy!' ejaculated Mary in an accent of surprise. 'Alas, no; there never was a greater mistake than to suppose that wealth is sure to bring happiness. I happy,' she murmured to herself, and had Fraulein's large grey eyes been raised to the girl's face, she would have seen two big drops gathering on the eyelids. But they have been talking of Coblenz as well as of Innismore, and were really quite sorry when they entered the hall at Fairview, 'for,' whispered Fraulein, 'I must say farewell now, I am asked but very rarely to meet the family in the library.'

'I shall tell Mrs. Montague I came to see you,' said Mary; 'you will not be long alone, Fraulein, so only good bye for the present.'

The next moment the young ladies were ushered into the library, in which the family were seated, and Mrs. Montague advanced to meet the stranger, but Mary started and uttered involuntarily an exclamation of surprise, for there before her, in the person of the wealthy Mrs. Montague, appeared the counterpart, as to feature, of all she yet remembered of her poor, distracted, miserable mother.

Mary hastened to account for her surprise, by remarking that Mrs. Montague had struck her as being extremely like a person she had formerly known, and, then requested to be shown the way to Fraulein's room, as she wished to talk with her of mutual friends at Coblenz.

'A strange young person that,' muttered Mrs. Montague, as Mary left the room. 'What on earth can she, an Irish girl, by birth, have to say or do with this governess of ours.'

'Oh, you forget,' replied the elder daughter, 'that General O'Donnell, to whom Fraulein referred you, is the uncle of this young lady; of course we may expect that they will become very intimate friends.'

'Miss O'Donnell makes her choice then and keeps to it whichever it may be,' replied her mother, 'let that choice be either to visit us or the governess, one or the other; but I don't approve of this sort of behaviour.'

The young lady walked to the window as her mother spoke, but a hand was gently placed on her mother's shoulder, and a voice exclaimed,—

'Catherine, Catherine, remember when I married you, and raised you to a position of opulence and luxury, you held a place in society inferior to that occupied by this poor German, whom you seek to humiliate.'

'Thank you, sir,' replied the angry wife, 'you are never so well pleased as when taunting me with the past, of course I owe you a great many thanks, I can't tell how many, for releasing me from the slavery in which I lived, when companion to Miss Stubbs; but I cannot for my part imagine why you are so interested about this German lady; you have always been bad enough where governesses are concerned, but more annoying about this person than any who have preceded her.'

It is doubtful how the altercation would have ended, had not Mary at that moment entered the room, and advancing to Mrs. Montague, enquired, in the name of Mrs. Mainwaring, if they would all spend the next evening at Dovercourt, and bring Fraulein with them.

Mrs. Montague immediately declined the invitation, and had she not been kept in awe by her husband's presence, would, undoubtedly, have found some cause why Maria Flohrberg could not attend.

On the following evening then, the worthy lady was left by her lord to mope away her ill humor by herself, and Mr. Montague undertook to escort his eldest daughter and Fraulein to Squire Mainwaring's residence.

I wonder what was the secret which had already drew so closely together these two Marys for their dispositions were so very dissimilar that one scarcely could imagine they would become bosom friends; Mary O'Donnell, full of life, daring, and impetuous, yet came and clear-headed. Maria Flohrberg, reserved and grave, a little phlegmatic if you will, timid and nervous; they were as opposite in character, as they were unlike in person; the one possessing the dangerous gift of beauty, the other—shall we not own it?—plain and homely enough, a true German countenance, but far from ugly, for there was a sweet expression in our friend Flohrberg's countenance, which made you forget how wanting she was in those charms which her sex are apt to prize so far above their worth.

The evening wore away pleasantly enough, the Mainwarings, pleased with Fraulein, and above all the young barrister, who drew her out of her reserve, talked pleasantly to her of Coblenz, and would not let her speak French, merely because he liked to hear what he called her pretty broken English. Ah, Herbert Mainwaring, you little thought how far you would, ere long, be implicated in behalf of this poor harmless Maria.

And before Mr. Montague left Dovercourt, it was arranged that his friend and his family should dine with him the following week at his town residence, in Harley Street; Squire Mainwaring also having decided on spending the following two months in the metropolis.

The time that intervened might have passed away pleasantly enough for Fraulein, for she had learned to regard, almost with indifference, the supercilious morning visits of the ill-educated Mrs. Montague, but she not unfrequently winced under the flying shafts of Miss Millicent, who, tolerably well read, and a clever girl into the bargain soon found out poor Fraulein's weak points, in the matter of general information, and never failed to let her know in what they consisted evincing a malignant pleasure when she saw that pale cheek become flushed, or, perhaps, the eyes fill with tears, as the knowledge of her own shortcomings was thus cruelly placed before her.

On one of these mornings that she had been thus subjected to the torture, because Miss Millicent had found her guilty of an error in English geography, the poor harassed Maria, at the first favorable opportunity sought Mr. Montague when alone, and thus opened the conversation, in her broken English.

'I wish to see you, Mein herr, to tell you that I must go away to Coblenz at once.'

'At once, Fraulein, I hope not. What is the matter?'

'Mein herr, your daughter has corrected me of one mistake in your English geography; see now, I made a great mistake as to where is placed one of your towns; this is serious,' added Maria, holding out both hands as she spoke; 'except music, and drawing, and my own language, I fear I am of no use here; and I would wish to go.'

'But you will not go, Fraulein, for I wish you to stop. You fulfil your duties truly and conscientiously, and I like you the better for the candor with which you have now acted. Never mind English studies at all, Fraulein; and make yourself quite comfortable. Your case resembles that of most of the ladies who come here as foreign governesses; you cannot be expected to know the geography of this country as well as your own, so good bye, Fraulein, think no more of it, it is of no consequence; the education of my eldest daughter is already nearly finished.'

As he spoke thus he warmly grasped poor Fraulein's hand, and the good natured gentleman left Fairview on his way to the mill, and as he wandered on he said to himself.

'The fault rests only with such as us; if we will have German and French superior to that which our own ladies can impart to our children, it must be at the cost of general information, as far as regards our own country; we have no right, nor is it possible to expect that the two things can go together.'

But his kind words had not served to calm the poor Fraulein, she felt inexpressibly mortified that the unamiable Miss Millicent had witnessed her error, and yet, poor soul, with what a good will had she pored over those English books; how had she over loaded her poor memory with the names of towns and counties, and traced them on the map, and studied that hard English grammar, quite as hard to her, poor thing, as her guttural difficult German is to any of us, and how had midnight often found her studying still, and she had then sought her pillow with a throbbing head, and sometimes eyes suffused with tears; and how that spiteful Wilson had told her mistress that 'it was to be hoped that person wouldn't set the house on fire any night, she kept monstrous late hours, it was a shame to burn the candles that late, that is what it was.'

And Mrs. Montague agreed that it was, and glad Wilson had seen the light beneath the crevice of the door; and before very long she should tell Fraulein to go to bed at earlier hours indeed.

And so the loss of a few inches of candle at luxurious Fairview was a matter of consideration in the mind of its capacious mistress.

But to return to Maria Flohrberg: all these wakeful nights, all her late hours, all her mental struggles, were almost useless, if she were to be thus cruelly mortified and—oh, what she would give to pillow her throbbing head on the breast of that dear old Frau, to talk to her poor sick father, to be away at Coblenz, and yet,—

'I am very selfish,' she murmurs to herself, 'for of how great use was the twelve pounds I sent them last quarter; what would they have done without it? and I had still a little left for my own use.' And this thought, you see, com-