

THE FORTUNES OF A BRIDE

There was a grey pool where the fields met the bog. It was not bog water was in it though, but clear springs that leaped up out of the rocks under the ground and fed it all ways and ever. The bog water was brown as amber, but this you could see through, as if it were polished glass.

It was thither that little Bride drove her father's kine at morn and eve. The father was always Pedhar O'Neill, he was one of those O'Neills that travelled the island and came to the South. He had cattle and wealth and a fine farm of well-craided land on the slope of a green hill.

"That would be a good settlement for a young boy," said every mother in the townland who had a family of sons growing up. But little Bride was not in the way of marrying for a long time yet.

She was but twelve years old, an had no sweetheart except the small, sweet mother. People often wondered where the big, tough Pedhar got his fine taste for such a rarely delicate woman. She was for all the world like to a bit of violet, with her purple-black hair making shadow about that brow of snow, and those sapphire jewels of eyes she had. Old Pedhar, when he spoke with her softened his voice that was so fierce and rough that it put terror into every one's every other, that is, but little Bride, the daughter.

She stood in fear of neither man nor mortal. She would go dancing past the moonlit path with a song in her mouth when other folk passed it with a prayer to Mary against the wiles of the Gentle People. She never shivered by the fire, as her mother did, when the demons of the air went crying in the dark winds of night. She only lifted her brown head and listened, well pleased, while the door rattled against the post, and the window shook in the frame, and the red sparks flew out of the turf and up the wide black mouth of the chimney. She had the stout heart of a big man in her child's body.

It was on the brink of the summer. Young birds were opening their yellow beaks in the nests. The lambs in the green pastures had grown large and strong. One evening there was a red streak of sunset and a rosy cloud, up high in the sky.

Briden, the child, slipped from her father's knee. "Daddy, my man, it's time the cattle was driven to their drinkin'," said she.

"Aye, that indeed," answered "Daddy, my man."

The child swung her brown curls over her shoulder and started off with herself. To make the offer of your company would have been putting an insult upon her. It is company in the broad day-light—and for a child that wore her holy Agnus Dei upon her white bosom!

"Don't make too much delay, lanna shu," said the delicate mother from her spinning-wheel in the dim glow of the hearth. "There's th' white mist creepin' up the bog." She could see it through the open door—the grassy fall of the land, and then the broad sweep of dusky purple, with a sprinkling of light upon it where a splash of water lay shimmering to the sky. The red streak of the sunset was beyond all.

The child went singing to her work. She drove the kine down the slope where the lambs were lying. She reached the margin of the pool. The flags by its brink stood high in the blade. They were pointed at the top, and shot like long green flames, and little water-lilies lapped against them with a soft, watery sound, and broke the netted bubbles that were gathered about the surface of the pond and under the leaves of the yellow water lilies. The swallows skimmed here and there, with blue wings that swept the silence.

the pool. Far out in the summer twilight the blue swallows swept the silence.

"Come up to the house with me," said the farmer's little daughter to the poor sad boy. "My mother will let ye rest a spell, an' she'll bathe that sore foot for you. She put herbs an' nice clean linen about my feet when I cut it by walkin' on a spike o' glass last spring." She did not say much as look upon the unkind woman. But she smiled on the boy. He was not like his mother, but was short and thick. He had a great crop of red hair falling over his eyes; but these were honest blue and the forehead above them rose up as straight as a wall. Little Bride liked the appearance upon him.

The big woman dropped a slavish curtsy to the farmer's daughter. "Troth, an' he'll be more nor glad to go with ye, my fine girl," said she. "Sure, we're oman an' another of us tired with thrampin' th' hard roads this day." She gave the boy a push to make him rise and follow the little girl.

The three went up the hill together, after the cattle. The beasts were sent abroad in their own pasture. The dew was falling and freshening the scene in the new grass and the clover. The white mist was thin and wide upon the bog. In heaven the little golden heads of the stars began to peep out.

"Mother," cried the child, as she went under the lintel, "here's a piece of my foot. Won't ye do somethin' for him?"

Big Pedhar and his wife looked up, and they saw the brown, bright face of their child and the ruddy-locked boy behind her, limping. That was a good sight enough for their eyes; but they had no welcome to give the dark woman pressing behind the two. Her thieving eyes went roaming over the things of the house, and they felt she was counting up their value in her greedy mind.

"Aye, good people," said she, still pressing in behind the children, "my boy an' me is tired goin' th' highway since morn. Maybe ye wouldn't be refusin' us a shelter this night. Ye've did, when the demons of the air went crying in the dark winds of night. She only lifted her brown head and listened, well pleased, while the door rattled against the post, and the window shook in the frame, and the red sparks flew out of the turf and up the wide black mouth of the chimney. She had the stout heart of a big man in her child's body.

"But, daddy, my man, I want to have this little boy to play with me here now," said she, in her own grave, innocent fashion. The farmer took notice of the boy for a few minutes.

"I'm sure I've no objection to that, said he then. But he gave the hard look at the big-boned woman, meaning her to understand that her room was more welcome than her company.

The red-haired boy nudged her with his elbow. He felt sore and ashamed that she should have the bad bravery to sit there and she not wanted.

"We'd best be gettin' to th' barn, mammy, agra," said he.

When the farmer's woman went to feed her fowl that morning she was two short. "That's a bad payment for kindness," said she, with a shake of her head. "But, sure, God has His own rewards in His hand."

The years passed. Seven times the tall lilies unloosed their golden hair over the pool, and the little blue swallows came sweeping the meadows and the water. Pedhar slept sound under a green quilt. Bride O'Neill was of a marriageable age, and many of the suitors sought her hand. The handsome girl in the townland, with her noble demeanor and fine-featured countenance.

"It would please me well that you'd take a husband," said the mother. She knew her own steps were bent for the graveyard. She was wearying for big Pedhar O'Neill. But the lone colleen was a trouble to her mind.

"Have ye two make company enough for each other?" said Bride. "A homestead without a man is like a lone country where there's never a wind to blow th' grasses out of their sleep," said the mother. "Mayrren O'Driscoll has a good-lookin' boy, an' he's in the want of a wife."

Bride let her eyes droop. A flutter of rare color came running into that soft face she had.

"An' who's in your heart, daughter, aushla, that ye blush like a rose?" asked the little mother, who was longing to be away in heaven with her own good man.

"Th' only one I ever saw that I'd care to wed with, mother dear," answered the girl, and her voice was steady and low.

"An' who might he be, lanna shu?" questioned the anxious mother.

"Why, then?" answered handsome Bride, "he's no other than that red-haired gossoon, with th' mother that stole our fowl's way with her."

"Ah, wirrathrath!" cried the poor woman that was the girl's mother. "An' is it the son of a thief you'd be takin' up with?" The young girl kept silence. Her flushed face was bent again. "But, sure, he's not for you, Briden, dear," the mother said.

"For never an eye will I set upon ye him again. An' 'twas but once that ye saw him before. An' th' lovin' of a heart is beyond all understandin', so it is!"



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THROWING STONES

The factory had not been occupied for months. It stood at a distance from any other building; there was nobody to guard it, and the long stretches of unshuttered windows appealed to the boy irresistibly. Other boys had found them equally inviting. There was hardly a whole pane of glass in the north side, where the windows were most numerous.

But, yes—there was one. That was the one Ray Lewis was trying for, choosing his stones with due regard to size and weight, calculating distance with an anxious eye and chuckling whenever he shattered glass, even though it was not the glass.

He was so absorbed in this fascinating enterprise that the sudden interruption of it brought on a sort of paralysis. An old gentleman, standing very near, was watching him! He was absolutely too startled to run. The stone fell from his hand. He stood staring and trembling—until the spectator spoke.

"Used to do that myself," the old gentleman said, amiably. "Pretty good shot, aren't you?"

Ray plucked up courage. It was evident that this old fellow had nothing to say about the factory. "Yes, sir, I guess so," he answered, modestly enough.

"Think you could hit that little boy down the road there?"

"Course I could! Want to see me?" Ray picked up the stone he had dropped. But just as he was about to make the throw the stranger laid a hand on his arm.

"No, never mind," the old gentleman said. "I'll take your word for it. I suppose, anyway, you'd rather stone grown people and unoccupied houses than babies and empty buildings, wouldn't you?"

Ray eyed him wonderingly. That was a funny question! Yet it seemed to be asked in all seriousness. "I don't believe I would," the boy replied.

"You wouldn't? Oh, I see, the grown people would defend themselves, and the little people can't. If you broke glass in that house over on the hill you'd be caught and your father would have to pay, but when you break the windows in this factory there's nobody to tell on you. Is that about the size of it?"

Ray nodded.

"Seems kind of cowardly when you put it into words, doesn't it?" the old gentleman suggested. "A friend of mine used to say every stone thrower isn't a coward, but every coward is a stone thrower."

Ray flushed, but he did not speak. The old gentleman gave him no time to do so.

"I wouldn't have thought of that when I was your age," he went on, steadily. "But I've wondered since what I thought I was doing when I was throwing stones. I wasn't playing soldier or Indian either, because they don't fight that way. Only city hoodlums use bricks and paving stones on each other, and I wasn't trying to imitate them for I was a country boy and didn't know about them."

"I couldn't have had any serious idea of training my hand and eye by stone throwing, because if I had I should have set up a target down in the field and practised where I wouldn't be getting property or run the risk of putting out somebody's eyes—or taking his life. And yet I can't admit that I threw stones because I wanted to smash things and hurt people. Put it to yourself. You wouldn't like to think you were that kind of boy, would you?"

Ray shook his head. He did not raise it.

"Of course not," the old gentleman said, briskly. "I don't believe I was that kind of boy, either. But you're better off than I was. There are base ball clubs now, and a boy can learn to throw straight without being ashamed when he grows up of the way he learned. Since I've owned property in this factory—for instance—it has been very easy for me to realize what a mean trick I was guilty of when I used to break windows."

Once more Ray wanted to run. But the old gentleman clapped a hand on his shoulder in a friendly way, compelling fashion.

"But I'm glad the boys who didn't think have practised on my windows,

she used to drive the kine to the pool. The grass was very green and bright in the light of the mellow hours; the raindrops hung sapphire and diamonds from every blade. The sunset was shining down in the water, under the lilies. The girl stood by the pool. She was looking down into the water that quivered under the passage of the wind, when she saw a flash of red, and of white, down below. She lifted her eyes to the brown bog and its winding track.

"Ah!" said she, "who have I in it?" Her heart began to beat loud in her bosom.

Beyond the clear water, travelling the wet bog track, she saw a man driving a dun cow and a white. He was a prosperous looking young man, well clad and well shod; sturdy of build, straight and hardy. He had pushed his cauback upon his head. His hair fell, ruddy-locked, upon his forehead. It was bold and brave, rising straight as a wall over his eyes. It did not take two looks from Bride O'Neill before she knew him.

But, nevertheless, she did not speak one word beyond those spoken with herself. The man drove the cattle round the pool, exactly by that way he himself had come limping in the red evening so long ago. When the animal drew near that spot among the reeds and lilies where the lonely young woman stood, they splashed in amongst them, and bent their muzzles, and began to suck up the cool, sweet water with breathings of content.

"The youth looked into the violet eyes of the girl, and he said: "I've come to repay you for a loss."

She put her hands together upon her bosom.

"My losses are many," said she. The yellow lilies out there in the pool nodded their heads. A lone swallow swept the water.

"I'm not without that knowledge," said the man with the ruddy locks on his forehead. He fixed his blue eyes fast upon her. He pointed towards the town that lay on the outer side of the uplands, hidden away in the green hollows. They told me there."

He stopped a moment, then: "And of your brave loneliness," said he, slowly. "Why do you not marry?"

Her cheeks, that had not known color for many a day, grew scarlet red. She leaned her face downward. The little water-lilies were lapping the sedges. The dun cow and the white splashed the drops among the tall green flaggers. There was the lone blue swallow flitting by; Oh, so lone it was!

The young man spoke again. She had made no answer to his question, yet he seemed to think she had.

"I have been waiting, too," said he. There was a kind of still passion in his voice, like that light burning so low and so red down in the water. "Do you think that I didn't count the days and the months and the years?"

The scarlet blush was brighter on her cheek. There was the dull darkness of patience in her eyes. She had been waiting long.

After that winter there came a bad summer. That was worst of all. The hay rotted on the ground. The corn shot up a second growth, green and rank, before the first growth was ripe for the sickle. On the Lammas Day the soul of Pedhar O'Neill's little gentle wife went to heaven.

It was a fine evening a month after the burying. The rain went eastward. The last flecks of cloud in the west burned golden and purple and rosy red. The broad brown bog was lit with warm sunset colors. The little pools trembled and shook their dancing lights. There was the clear, glassy pond on the rim of the upland shining under the yellow lilies.

"I'm going out for a short ramble," said Bride O'Neill to the comrade who had returned with her from the burying, to keep company with her loneliness.

"Aye, child, a breath of air will refresh ye," said the woman. She was some sort of a relation to big Pedhar's. Bride was glad to have her chatting by the fire of the long rainy evenings when the fogs were ghostly outside. She had the full of a book of old tales and ballads. "Maybe, God is goin' to send the fine weather to us," said she, standing in the doorway under the eaves of the thatch. Swallows had built their mud cabins there, and flashed their purple wings in and out, bringing the food to the young. But that was in the pearly-nighted days of April and the spring. The nest was deserted now.

Bride went down the fields by which



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instead of on smaller boys and girls," the old gentleman added, cheerily. "I'm glad that practice has made some of us perfect, too. You and me, for instance. We've graduated sure shots. We don't need to throw any more stones, and I don't think we will. Shake hands on it!"

Ray shook hands on it. Then he gasped and stammered and tried to speak a word or two. Failing, he fled down the road. But the old gentleman sent a smile after him and nodded his head with a satisfied air. He knew one boy who would throw no more stones.—Youth's Companion.

BE JOYOUS IN SPRINGTIME.

Of course, this is a wicked old world, a troubled old world, and always will be, but in it there is more unhappiness than there need be, more joylessness, such stupid, lazy unappreciation and joylessness. If people would only open their eyes, cultivate their senses, use the gifts at hand, instead of repining, envying, sleeping life away. Are you rich and careworn? Well, that is too bad, and no light trouble either; but you can help yourself. Each day take, by fair means or foul, an hour or two to yourself. Get away somewhere, go from under the roof that covers you, velvet, silken, glass and silver responsibilities; away from guests, from children, from gossamer, from butler and maid, from dressmaker and shopman, from all the cares wealth piles on your back. And when you go, on foot, leave behind coachman and horses. Be free as the barefoot girl at the seaside, the barefoot boy in the country lane. Walk, walk, miles up and down. "If it be singing weather," find some secluded spot, on soft green grass or warm sands by the water. lie flat on your back, stretch out to your full extent, and take in long, deep breaths. Virtue will enter into you from mother earth. Your tingling nerves will gradually quiet down; little by little the lines on your face soften, and by and by your whole being will relax and mayhap you will probably talk come you, if you have left your guests at home, the birds above will probably talk you over softly, laugh at your tired face, and congratulate themselves that they don't have such a hard time getting a living; but you won't understand them, and their chatter will be but part of their dream. And by and by you will go home rested, better, tenderer, kinder, wiser.

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