

The sick man nodded assent. The priest took out his brown beads and fingered it nervously. He then lifted the cross to his lips. He was going to win out this time.

"I am not going to preach to you to-night, my dear," he said. "But I would like to tell you a little story."

He waited, but there was no word of negation or assent from the bed.

"It was many years ago," began the priest, "in a plain thatched cottage nestling among the green valleys of Ireland. It was that most beautiful of all months in that land of haunting beauty — Mary's own sweet month of May. It was evening. The birds chirped drowsily in the hedge rows. The flowers veiled their faces and went to sleep. The warm summer breeze, heavy, with the scent of the hawthorn, lingered by the open door. For it had a duty to perform, this May-evening breeze in holy Ireland. Beyond the door, in the shadowy light of the turf-fire, several figure knelt upon the earthen floor."

The sick man stirred convulsively. He fixed his devouring gaze upon the priest. And the priest went on:

"They held, each one of them, a brown beads between their fingers," and as he spoke the priest held up his own, "for they were saying the rosary. 'Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art Thou amongst women. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death.' So they prayed on until the rosary was completed. It was for this that the May-breeze waited by the door. And when, at last, it went its way, it still bore with it the perfume of the hawthorn, only now it had, in addition, the incense of many Aves to offer at Mary's throne."

The listener was apparently ill at ease. He drew his hand across his forehead, as if to ward off some haunting memory. And still the priest went on:

"Years passed by, and once again it was May-time in Ireland. And once again the evening breeze waited beyond the door to receive its tribute for Mary. And this time, somehow, it waited a little longer. It seemed to be looking for something it could not find, and when at last it went its way, it did not croon joyfully as of yore.