

tion mingled with disappointment. Anna bathed his head, and Joseph fanned him with the handle of his gun. The policemen winked their eyes and laughed at one another, while Rebecca, who was the cause of the commotion, went on quietly taking the cheese out of the mouse-trap, and when she had finished, she told them Anna had set the trap in there to catch mice, saying that the place was overrun with them; and now she, on hearing them squeal, was in the habit of letting the poor things loose again. And that night she had come there for that purpose, when she heard the burglars outside the store-room door and Murphy threatening to shoot them.

CHAPTER II.

Murphy was making money. He had been saving ever since last April in order to marry Anna.

He had bought a little property in the country, consisting of a house and lot which he rented for a term to John Haslit; but, after he was married, he and Anna would spend their summers there. He went to the country once a week partly to have an eye on his property, and partly because he liked the place. The country roads winding in and out, and leading on, on, to no one knew where, seemed a mystery to Murphy, and they were hedged in on either side by trees, bushes and flowers; beyond were the green fields, and above the broad sky that Murphy had such difficulty in seeing when he was in the city, for as sure as he looked into it, just so sure was he of tripping over somebody who got in his way. This part of the country had a charm for Murphy; it reminded him of County Limerick wherein he was born and bred. The house that he had bought was situated near the top of a hill in a lonely spot far in from the road; on one side was a group of trees, which leaned towards the south, for the rough north wind had blown through them for so many years that they were bent that way. There were flower beds full of flowers, and behind the house were fields where cattle grazed. The house was a low, long, white stone house, with a wide verandah and wide steps leading to it; there were three large chimneys that warmed Murphy's heart whenever he looked at them, and these chimneys went a long way in influencing Murphy to give double the price that the property was worth. This house reminded him of his own home in Limerick, and when he drove upon the road where it stood, as he invariably did, he would stop his horse that he might take a long look, for the place to him seemed full of memories; he saw faces in the windows, familiar figures upon the verandah and he heard voices that he recognized in every breath of wind that passed him by. Of these strange feelings he spoke to no one but Rebecca, for she so seldom talked that he knew his confidence would be safe with her. During the summer months he got up many picnics to Warburton. He named the place after his own homestead in Limerick, for he found that it helped his imagination.

Joseph and Mrs. Lace, Anna, Rebecca and Murphy would go out to Warburton for the day and take sandwiches, cake and cold tea with them. Murphy never tired of picnics; for, as he told Anna, he would like to live a life like Robinson Crusoe in the open air night and day. It would be so pleasant to ramble about forever, regardless of time, or place, or food, with the sky for a roof and the soft grass for a bed, for it was all so genuine, so real and true, year

after year the same. Anna looked so disgusted that Murphy, having a kind heart and thinking he had offended her by his hint at bachelor life, added, "No, not Robinson Crusoe; I mean Paul;" and the very next time he spoke to Anna, by mistake he called her Virginia.

In thinking it over, he said to himself, "that it was just as well he had made the mistake, for it sort of paved the way to matrimony, and when the time came to ask Anna to become his wife, the proposal of marriage would not be such a shock to her nerves." And Anna, in talking it all over afterwards to Rebecca, said: "Persons who would like an open-air enjoyment, such as Murphy spoke of, had a very degraded taste; they must have savage blood in them, and would sooner or later return to their wild and native habits." Rebecca did not agree with her, but Rebecca always did take Murphy's part when Anna found fault with him. And then again, Anna was a clever housekeeper, and must have a house, for in an open-air existence she would have nothing to do. While Rebecca did not like housework, she spent her time in the garden sitting among the weeds. She pretended to pull them up by the roots, but she really did not touch them, for she admired them as much as the flowers among which they grew and would not lift a finger to hurt them. Mrs. Lace, Joseph Lace and Anna wondered that the weeds increased in spite of poor Rebecca's days of hard work; but then it was a way Rebecca had of doing everything. So when they grew tired they stopped wondering.

The cold winds began to blow; then winter came.

With the beginning of the new year Murphy became interested in politics. He knew all the country people living around Warburton, and he stirred them up to such a pitch with his enthusiasm that when the day of the elections came, they decided to go into the city and vote; so Murphy hired a large waggonette and two horses and at the public-house it was filled with men. They had to sit double file, and even then there was not room enough for them all. They were going off with Murphy to vote for Mulqueene. Such a waggonful of men was never seen before in the village, nor such a crowd collected to see them off, nor a happier man than Murphy as he drove them away. The horses he had hired were tired and thin, and old; they were like the horses that rag men use when they want to go slowly from house to house. But Murphy called out so loud, shouted their names and waved the whip through the air in such a way that everyone thought they were running away, and Murphy pretended they were.

When they had reached the city limits Murphy's interest in the horses ceased, for every one of the eight feet was lame. He then listened to the conversation, for there was a hot argument going on; all against one and that one was a Mulqueene; and he was in the under file so had little chance to distinguish himself.

Murphy, in his astonishment allowed the eight lame feet to stand still upon the road.

"Faith and do you mean to tell me that you're all, except one man, going down at my expense to vote for Davies?"

There was silence until the one man in a muffled voice called out from beneath Lawson,

"Mulqueene, Mulqueene forever." And then a laugh went round which became

louler and heartier until Murphy jumped out of the waggonette and danced an Irish jig, raging in the middle of the hard frozen road; and he beat his shillaah upon the waggon wheel, flourishing his whip in the air in a manner which frightened the poor Davies' men, who walked the remainder of the road to the polls.

Murphy drove with one man and voted for Mulqueene. And Mulqueene got in; "because he was an Irishman," Murphy said afterwards.

One evening in the early spring Murphy was seated on his three-legged stool in front of a table, drawing; some pencils, a rubber, pen and ink, a pipe and four coppers lay upon the table. The table-cloth was rumpled and half off the table, one of the four corners was entangled in Murphy's foot, and as he moved he pulled the cloth further from the table.

Rebecca's cat lay curled upon a soft cushion in the corner of the sofa. It was the cat and one of the four coppers that did the mischief and changed Murphy's plans all about in such a way that he hardly recognized them; and he never got over it in all the days of his life.

He was drawing the outline of a bank that was to be erected, and was so interested in his work that in spite of the deepening twilight he went on with it until he drew a crooked line, and then he stopped. Lighting his pipe he began to smoke and think. There was a movement in the corner of the sofa; Murphy turned his head and looked at Rebecca's cat; and then he thought of Rebecca as the woman he loved and was about to discard for the woman that he was going to marry. He gave a sigh, laid down his pipe and picked up his pencil to resume work. Then he remembered that it was too dark he could not see to make a straight line; so he began to think again.

"Faith," said Murphy aloud, for there was no one in the room to hear him and he was fond of talking to himself—like the other Irishman who did it because he liked to talk to a sensible person, and he liked to hear a sensible person talk.

"Faith, and love matches always end unhappily; one expects too much from the other; they look for perfection and do not get it. They see one ideal fall flat down on the ground and become human, which is a terrible misfortune to happen to a man. And then comes fault-finding, and lastly indifference, which is the worst of all. Marriage should be a sort of platonic friendship and then everything would go smoothly. A marriage of reason, of mind, would bring no misgivings, no disappointments, for neither expected much in the beginning and they would gradually find in each other more than they expected. There would be spirit and imagination in one case, which is a bad thing for happiness; good common sense in the other—and that was why he was going to marry Anna."

Murphy had argued it out. He felt satisfied and fell asleep; but when he awoke he was not so well satisfied, and he thought it all over again aloud, and then grew still more dissatisfied.

"Faith, and I'll just toss up," said Murphy, "that will settle it." He stood up and taking one of the four coppers from the table, threw it into the air.

"Heads, Rebecca; tails, Anna." There was a light, rapid step in the hall; the door opened and he and Rebecca stood face to face; he felt happier than he had felt all the evening.

"Well?" said Murphy rather gruffly.