



IN THE SKIRT O' THE WIND.

Una Morrin was sighing as she tidied up the kitchen for the evening after the meal. She sighed as she piled high the turf on the fire. She sighed as she raked the embers under the Dutch oven which held the cake for she brushed back the ashes of the hearth, and she heaved a mournful "Mhuire a's trugh!" as she drew out the stool and sat down to card some wool. And it was a bad sign for Una Morrin to be sighing like that, because she was always the light-hearted girl, was Una Morrin.

to be wishin', but I cannot stop the cryin' of my heart after what I cannot find in Inisail nor in the other villages nigh. There be's times when I look bevent the empty sea that I have a notion o' how 't would be to clear out an' leave it all. Over there it would not matter a ha'porth if the weather is bad or the storm is on the sea for there's no need of the men to go out for the fish an' there's other work to be had over there. Oh, then, it must be grand not to be frettin' an' botherin' about the weather!"

Though she possessed the thrift—and all the need of it that often drives the inhabitants of Ireland's coast country from their homes—to-night the "cards" lay idle in her hands, while she gazed, wide-eyed and long, through the chinks of red glow which the loosely heaped turf made upon the coals beneath. Faith, there was a weary look on the face of Seon Ban's daughter, as if she were thinking long for the voice of some one. And it was not her prayers that kept her silent.

"Ay, it's lonely I am, Granny, an' wishful for the ones beyant. An' why shouldn't I be, wid all belongin' to me over there save you, Granny! Whin I sit on the beach on an evening, an' the little waves come creepin' in an' breakin' themselves against the rocks below, my heart is breakin' wid them, an' I can hear whisperrin' o' voices in them, their voices, Ned's an' Dominic's an' Moira's, an' the "bin" voice of Norway. D'ye mind the voice of our Norway, Granny?"

Starting from her reverie, Una Morrin arose to light the candle. The noise of the stool on the grating upon the earthen floor aroused old Moira from her doze.

"There was silence broken only by the clicking of the old woman's beads against one another. Una looked up from the fire at her grandmother's face. There were tears, too, in Granny's eyes.

"I d'know, I d'know, at all. Only I thought be the gleam of his eyes that day that he was vexed wid the actin' ye had wid Jamsie McElin."

"'Tis a wild night on the water," she murmured. "I wonder if he's in the curragh yet?"

Granny offered no argument against this; but there was a shrewd look in her old eyes as she studied the face of her granddaughter. The girl had turned from the window where she had placed the candle, and was pushing back the rush-seated arm-chair into the shadowy corner, where it might offer comfortable seating to the spirits of its former possessors.

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"Granny, I'm going to America," interrupted the girl, now coming down to the fire with a letter in her hand.

"'Twas Jamsie McElin's. But, faith, we do not know whether or no he's drowned at all. We did not miss him until we turned Billy's Rock, an' into the bay, for the darkness was upon us in a jiffy, an' 'twas all we cud do to save our currahs from the rocks."

"An' what are we put here for, almas, if it is not for that?" Una poked the tongs into the fire with a viciousness that suggested her resentment towards granny's philosophy.

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The young fisherman was silent. Una looked from one to the other of the men about her. They, too, were silent.

wild ways and her teasing of the lads, Una Morrin was the finest girl. And none could tell it better than they.

But Una Morrin came of a proud race, and neither Niall Murtagh nor Jamsie McElin was brother or husband to her. The eyes that looked into those of Michael O'Gallagher were clear, even hard, as she asked with steady, reproachful voice: "Did anny o' ye at all go wid him?"

A young girl, with hair flying, came running down the path from the house of Paudheen Gill.

"He told me to give this to you, if he did not come back." Michael O'Gallagher whispered in her ear, as if they could be heard on the storm-swept beach.

Down at the Gap a fierce struggle was taking place. Through the mist the young priest could discern a dark mass of men swaying back and forth, now heaving the boat at the water's edge, now crushing back the gigantic form of a rugged old fisherman.

"Do you think, Michael—is there anny chance at all?" The young fisherman shook his head, but with the faith of an Irish heart answered: "Who knows but God will bring them both back safe?"

Even as the priest came upon them a cry arose: "Hold her, hold her! She's gone without him!"

"'Tis the will o' God, and He knows best, acushla, an' sure, agradh, I'll soon be going home, an' then—"

And she was. For giving up all hope of going out to the rescue when she saw the white habit of the Dominican rising out of the mist, she made one desperate leap into the boat, and pushing out from the shore was threading her way through the small rocks when they saw her.

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soul. "An' it was surely his voice I heard. Oh! Father Edward, why did you not let me go?"

Down on the Black Steps the priest and people were still at prayer. It was the last decade of the rosary, and some of the women were weeping. But the voice of the priest, rose, firm and strong, above the noise of the storm, which was now abating.

"I hear singin' out there," said a little boy, whom his father had not been able to drive home.

"Pray for us at the hour of our death."

"I tell ye, I hear singin'! Can't ye build yer whist?"

"Send that child home," Father Edward ordered. And with a "clout" over the head as an inducement, the boy's father was obeying.

But Kathie O'Gallagher had run down to the water's edge and was listening. Suddenly she threw her arms up in the air, and falling on her knees she cried: "May God and His Holy Mother be praised—I hear the voice of Niall O'G."

A hush fell on the kneeling crowd. Yes, with the drifting wind and mist there came through the ocean's roar the clear tones of "Hail, Queen of Heaven, the Ocean Star," and the voice was that of Niall Murtagh. He sang as cheerily as if it were on the calmest of seas. It was a way that Niall Murtagh had in moments of danger.

Granny had gone to bed "up" in the room, for since Dominic had gone to America, and "made his way" there, the cottage of the Morrins boasted of a room "up" from the fire. And Granny with the weariness of saddened years, was sleeping soundly, while her granddaughter wept alone.

She had closed the door, lest any of the villagers would intrude on her in her grief, for she had the pride of the pure-blooded Erse, had Una Morrin; and now she scarcely heard the shout which arose at the sound of Niall Murtagh's voice. Nor did she move when the crowd went surging past. A feeling of resentment had only half formed within her heart at their quick forgetfulness of the tragedy when suddenly the door was thrown open and Niall Murtagh's form entered.

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