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## NORA BRADY'S VOW.

BY MRS. ANNA H. DORSEY.

### CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

"Your honor's welcome to it intirely, only it 'ud be a disgrace to see such-like rags on your shoulders, sir. And it's a narrow chance I'm afear'd your honor'll have, for the whole country's swarming with red-coats," said Dennis Byrne.

"I have friends a little lower down on the mountain. That wild son of old Sheehan's, whose life I saved some years ago, is at home. I saw him yesterday, and he has promised to get me off as soon as his vessel drops down from the north."

"And he's engaged in the free trade, sir, is he?"

"Yes. He's a smuggler," said John Halloran.

"Here's good luck to him, then, and to all that's up for their rights," said Byrne, "and may he get your honor safe away till the outcry is over."

"I'll trust him. I should not have chosen him; but I'll trust him," was the short response.

"And where is your honor going to?"

"I scarcely know. I wish to go to America; but they shall know at home, whether it be in France or the United States. I am without a shilling; and circumstances must guide me. I am like a piece of drift-wood, and God alone knows how or where I may be stranded."

"Your honor'll pardon me, an' poor Nora too," said Dennis, fumbling in his pockets, "but she sent this to your honor, with her humble service and love, and hopes it may help you, sir."

"And what is it?" said John Halloran, holding the little package neatly sewed up in brown silk in his hand, and turning it over and over with a troubled curiosity. Then he opened it, and found, neatly folded within, fifty pounds in notes and gold. "I cannot take it!" he exclaimed, while tears gushed from his eyes.

"And surely it 'ud break poor Nora's heart to think you scorned it, sir. She has no use for it surely, for we're not thinking of ourselves until the dark days are gone by, and troth she knows it's safer in your honor's hands than in her own. Anyway, I'll lave it here, sir, if you won't take it; for I wouldn't dare show my face at Glendariff if I fetched it back. Why, it 'ud never do, your honor."

"Oh, Heaven! Well," said Mr. Halloran, with deep emotion, "tell Nora I thank her for her loan. I won't think but that I can return it to her, one of these days, tenfold. But it is time for us to part, Dennis. You must hasten back with my sore heart's best love to them all. Put a kiss upon Grace's little head for me, and tell Desmond to be a man and take care of his mother and sister. Perhaps that even now my poor Mary has heard that I am killed or taken, and the shock has broken her heart. But you must get there as fast as you can, and tell them I am safe and well; and give this to my wife," said John Halloran, severing one of the thick brown curls from his forehead with his knife. "Give my love, too, to Nora, and tell her to stay by them,—that it comforts me to know she is there."

"But the gown and wallet, your honor?" said Dennis, in a choking voice, while he pretended to undo the fastenings of his beggar garb to hide his tears.

"No; I do not need it. I fear it is a disguise I could not counterfeit well. Good-by, faithful friend. I hoped a few days ago that we should deliver you and your brethren from the yoke which binds ye; but all hope is wrecked. Oh, God! O my country! when thy own sons forsake thee, and turn their eyes coldly on thy misery, what is left but despair? Oh, reverents to all sacred rights! Oh, helots, who wear your chains in inglorious rest, would that I could rouse you! would that I could kindle the flame in your cold hearts that is consuming mine, that the death-blow might be given to the oppressor! But it is vain: my wishes—my wild hopes—my prayers—all are vain. Farewell, my friend."

Dennis Byrne wrung the offered hand of the broken-hearted man. Awed by the outburst of his grief, he could not speak, but turned and walked swiftly away, to carry the poor comfort his tidings would afford to the lonely and sorrowful hearts at Glendariff.

### CHAPTER V.

"But now, too great for fetters grown,  
Too proud to bend the slavish knee,  
Loved Erin mocks the tyrant's thral,  
And firmly vows she will be free."

"But mark you treacherous, stealthy knave  
That bends beneath his country's ban:  
Shall we dash out a nation's hope,  
The anti-Irish Irishman?"

One bright sunny morning, just four weeks after Dennis Byrne left Glendariff, he returned, footsore and weary enough. Parting with John Halloran under the gloomy circumstances of their last interview had been the saddest trial which had ever wrung the stout heart of the

blacksmith of Kildare, and, almost unmanned, his tears now and then fell in torrents, sprinkling the wild rocky paths he was descending. Once he met a cowherd searching for a stray heifer, and not long after, in a narrow gorge, came abreast of two or three shy, sullen-looking men, wearing a look of terror on their countenances, who, having been into the valley to buy meal and potatoes, had heard and seen enough to make them fly back to their mountain sheelings, perfectly satisfied to forego the necessities they were in pursuit of, for the agreeable certainty of knowing that they had escaped hanging and quartering. Dennis soon discovered that their alarm was not groundless; for as he approached nearer to the lowlands he perceived detachments of English soldiers galloping in every direction over the country; he saw that they were stationed at the farm-houses and at the cross-roads, and knew that, unless the providence of God delivered him, he should have a narrow escape, if indeed he did not fall into their hands. But danger and peril always whet the edge of an Irishman's wit; his love of adventure imparts a zest to the most unequal *rencontre*, while all the chivalry and will of his nature are roused to defeat the purposes of those who would trample on him; and, when he finds that mere physical strength cannot serve him, his keen wit, like a legion, is ready to grapple with an army of difficulties. Dennis Byrne's disguise was perfect, and his limp inimitable, although it added a heavy weight to every mile; while with the vacant, simple look he assumed, and a brogue which was absolutely terrible, he succeeded in passing unharmed more than one Saxon *cordon*, who were engaged in torturing and tormenting the harmless peasantry with an abuse of authority of which the Vauds of a remoter age might have been ashamed. Whenever he spied them in the distance, he began to sing, with a voice which indicated a pair of lungs as tough and strong as his own great bellows in the smithy at Kildare, some wild Gaelic song, which, to those who were near enough to hear the words, was about as intelligible as the clatter of a mill-wheel, until they surrounded him with curses and questions not a few; when, by his half-witted answers, his rough Connaught brogue, assumed for the occasion, and his idiotic expressions of wonder, he not only secured the freedom of the road, but succeeded in learning much that he wished to know, and on several occasions absolutely received as many shillings as blows.

He learned that the principal chiefs in the late outbreak had been arrested and imprisoned; it was believed and hoped they would be hung, certainly transported. He heard John Halloran's name loaded with imprecations and curses, as one who had escaped; they feared he had got safe out of the country; if not, such means were provided for his arrest as must certainly prove effectual in his capture.

At last Dennis found himself within the Park-gate at Glendariff. As he approached the house, he saw at once how it was. Sentinels in the uniform of the 4th regiment of Highlanders were station here and there about the mansion and grounds; and if at first he felt surprised at the circumstance of no guard being placed at the lodge, he understood it now; but he thanked God fervently that the hunted fugitive was far away, and not likely to be led unwarily into this well-contrived ambuscade. As to himself, "he didn't care a snap if they took him prisoner; it was just what he wanted, unless they sent him up to Dublin, bedad! which would put another face intirely on the matter."

The shutters were all closed, and only the kitchen-door was open. Through this he saw Nora fitting around as usual; perhaps more heavily and silently, for no wild melody, trilled out with the gladness of a pure and honest heart, now kept time to the motion of her busy hands. Limping up toward the kitchen, thinking at the moment only of Nora, he was suddenly grasped by the arm on one side, while at the other a bayonet presented before him glittered in his eyes. He turned and found himself in the custody of two soldiers, who demanded the countersign.

"De what? My granny used to know all de signs o' de wedder; but I never was wise dat way," said Dennis, dropping the corners of his eyes and his mouth together.

"What be your business, and where be you from last?" asked the soldier, gruffly.

"An' surely yer honor's scaret me wits out or me intirely. I almost forgot whedder I was ever born or not," exclaimed Dennis, the picture of a fool.

"Come, ye hirplin' guberlanzie, to Captain Saunders; he's the chile that'll make ye glow'r. Hech, sirs! but ye'll tell him where ye come frae last," said the Scotchman, laying his hand on Dennis Byrne's ragged collar and leading him into John Halloran's library, where Capt. Saunders with one or two of his officers was at breakfast. He was a man past middle age, with the harsh physiognomy of his nation; his hair was crisp and gray, cut as close to his

head as a Covenanters', while his small keen gray eyes were almost hidden by the shaggy, black brows which overhung them.

"Now, I rede ye, speak the truth," whispered the sergeant to Dennis, after he had paused for an instant, bolt upright to make a military salute to his commanding officer.

"Who are you?" asked Captain Saunders, after hearing his subordinate's report.

"Only a poor innocent *baceth* man, begging here and there a crust and a bone, yer honor," replied Dennis, compeedly.

"And do you know the premises you are on?" That I could imprison you, transport you, for daring to put your foot on these grounds without authority? Oh, you are a douse kaddie, my ragged friend!" said Captain Saunders.

"Christ pardon an' save uz, an' where am I at all, thin? yer worship axes me; an' surely it's I ought to be axin' you where I be, secin' you're here an' I, a poor baceth lad, wid his staff and bag, jest from de hills of Tipperary," replied Dennis.

"The devil you are!" exclaimed the captain, excited by this piece of news; "and pray what were you after in that Gehanna?"

"Is dat a Shanghai, sir? My grannie had lots o' hins, but I never heard her minution any sich breed as dat," said Dennis, looking perfectly innocent, while the young officers, angry, but amused, endeavored to suppress a laugh.

"I say, rascal, what business had ye in Tipperary?" roared Captain Saunders.

"I dunno, yer honor. I heard I was born dare; but, being a poor orphan, I can't swear to the fact, and be rayson of me beravement. For I was a destitute orphan, I had to take de wallet on me shoulder, and ax the hospitality of me neighbors an' the country peoples; but, save us, sirs! I'm druv off me mind bate intirely by de sogering an' fighting dat's goin' on, sure. Betune de sogers an' de rebels, I bin almost murdered intirely; de sogers takin' me for a rebel, an' de rebels takin' me for a divil of an informer; an', yer honor, I was glad to get out of it intirely," said Dennis, with an emphasis and strength of brogue which was deafening even to Scotch ears.

"Gude's sake, mon, you deserve hanging for the *thud* and chaver ye make. Can't ye speak the Queen's English?" exclaimed Capt. Saunders, about the corners of whose eyes might be seen an incipient wrinkle of mirth.

"Lord's sake, sir! Can yer honor spake in de grand ould Celtic dietion, dat I bin used to all my born days? If you can do dat, sir, I'm at your service from moruin' till night: me tongue gets on de right groove den, sir, an' runs like a stame-carridge; but de English is a furrin' lingo to me, an' my tongue goes blunderin' over de brogue of it, till I don't 'zactly know what I says myself."

"No; and I'm glad I don't, you *packey*," said Captain Saunders. "Here, Joek Hazel, seach this fellow. He's more knave than fool, in my opinion."

And without ceremony they proceeded to search the person of Dennis. They tore away the shreds of lining from his ragged hat, looked under the borrowed and rusty old wig he wore, emptied his wallet, and poked carefully among the bones and crusts which were scattered on the floor. They divested him of his coat, shoes, and stockings; in fact, the inquisition extended from his head to his heels, leaving none of his tattered garments unexplored. But of course they found nothing, except the dark, glossy curl of John Halloran's hair, which Captain Saunders held carefully, yet cautiously, between his forefinger and thumb, while the investigation proceeded.—Concluding their fruitless search, they gave him permission to put on his clothes; when Capt. Saunders said,—

"I am not yet satisfied, you vagabond, but that you're a rebel."

"Me!—*allata*—*Chorp an' daon!* Me!" shouted Dennis, with a wild look of assumed terror.

"Yes; and you are my prisoner, until I am satisfied that you are a real subject of her majesty's. If you attempt to leave the grounds of this—eh—ah—Glendariff, you'll find a bullet in your head before you know what you're after."

"An' may I stay, yer honor, under yer lordship's pertiction?" exclaimed Dennis, apparently overjoyed; "an' can I have a little clane straw to slape on, an' a sup to ate? An' will yer honor be afther giving a poor, disolate orphan dat bit o' hair betune your fingers?"

"For what? Whose hair is it? I suspect, if this hair could talk it would tell tales. It is strangely like the hair of that portrait in the drawing-room, Donald," said Captain Saunders, addressing one of the officers.

"*Dher chorp agus manin!*" † exclaimed Dennis; "an' thin your honor's eyes desave you intirely; for dat hair belonged to a cousin's husband of me own, dat died wid the small-pox last Whi'suntide."

In an instant the dark curl was lying at Dennis Byrne's feet, while, halt wild with the dread of contagion, Captain Saunders vociferously ordered him out of the house, and called

\* Confused noise.  
† By my soul and body.

for brandy, camphor, and vinegar. Glad to escape, Dennis snatched up the precious hair, and again thrusting it into his bosom, was led under guard to the kitchen, where Nora, with her back to the door, was bending over some fine article of dress she was ironing.

"Mistress," said the soldier, "here's a fellow you'll be good enough to take care of: he's a sossie-looking chiel, an' nae doot he'll have your wits in a creel afore night."

Poor Dennis! This was the most anxious moment of all. Suppose Nora should turn suddenly and exhibit an emotion which would betray all? But, brave Nora, she was not one to break down in that way. She raised herself up, and looked at both; she recognized her sweetheart at a glance, but, except the quickened and joyous throbbing at her heart, she was quite calm.

"And what is it I'm to do with him?" she asked, scornfully.

"He's to be fed and housed,—that's the order, lassie. He's a prisoner," said the Scotchman, laughing.

"It's well for them that's made so many beggars to have 'em fed. It's an ould game, well understood in Ireland, robbing Peter to pay Paul. What do you want?" she said, turning her eyes full on Dennis Byrne.

"Why, ma'am," he whimpered, "I'm a poor orphan from Tipperary hills, an' 'ud like a bowl o' strabout, an' a rasher, an' a mug o' ale or whisky, an' a could fowl, if you has de likes of it by you."

"I shall have to set the table for the gentleman from Tipperary," she said, with a light, merry laugh. "Perhaps yer honor'll take a bit of venison, and some bottled sherry?"

"Anything your ladyship plazes!"

"If I was a man, I'd shake you to *smithereens*," said Nora, bustling around, while Sergeant Hazel, with a laugh, wished her good luck of the bargain he had brought her, and went away. Neither of them uttered a word until he was out of hearing; for he was too good a soldier to go out of sight.

"Nora dear!"

"Thanks be to God, Dennis Byrne, that you're back in safety."

Both spoke in Irish. "Did you see him, Dennis?"

"I did. I saw him, and think he is safe."

"Oh, thanks be to God!" exclaimed Nora, while tears flowed over her cheeks. "Now tell me about it, dear." He told her, "Oh, how glad this news will make the broken heart in here! Dennis, she's been drooping like a flower when the first bitter wind from the Reek blows on it; but, oh, Dennis Byrne, there's worse news for you to hear yet!"

"What?" he asked, while his cheek paled.

"The lady and her children are poor,—so poor,—so very poor, Dennis. You and I, with our strong arms and stout hearts, is richer than they," said Nora, with a short sob. "Glendariff is theirs no longer."

"Not theirs? Whose then, in the name of the world, is it?"

"And who but Donald Dhu More, the vile informer, that's a disgrace to his blood, his name, and his country,—who but he is master now at Glendariff? He wasn't like a hound at Mister Halloran's heels for nothing."

"I wish I could put my heel on the murdering villain's neck! for, by my soul, I'd scorn to touch him with my hand," said Dennis, bitterly.

All this time, and it was not long, Nora was getting a meal together for the beggar-man, and the soldier from his post watched them narrowly.

"When you put that plate down beside me, a *suilish nachuil agus machree*,\* take up the lock of hair I'll put down. It's his. Take it to Mrs. Halloran, and give it to her with his love, and tell her he's safe, and by this time is across the sea."

Nora did as she was directed, with great dexterity, and thrust it into her pocket just as Sergeant Hazel came into the kitchen, ostensibly for a drink of water, but in reality to see what was going on.

"An' now, you *pittoogue*," broke out Nora, "there's a dinner for a king; and if you're a good Christian you'll thank God for it. And you're welcome in His holy name. Could you stop a minit, sir?" she said to the sergeant.—"I must run up and see what Mrs. Halloran wants; may be it's a dish of tay, poor lady; she didn't ate a morsel to-day, by rayson of the headache that's racking her, laving the heart-ache out of the bargain; an' ther's heaps of silver lying about on the dressers, spoons and the like, that it would be easy to slip in a wallet like this."

Dennis Byrne's honest, handsome face flushed crimson. He could pretend to be a fool, a rebel, and a wandering beggar; but, when it came to *thief*, he could scarcely hold his peace. But he did, right manfully, and Nora, with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, ran up to cheer Mrs. Halloran with the tidings she had to impart.

She was lying on her couch,—the same low couch that her husband had left her sleeping on, the night of his departure. She was very pale and still. She had shed but few tears,

and exhibited scarcely any emotion. Father McCarthy had seen her every day; but even he could not rouse her from the passive heaviness of her grief. The delicate bloom had waned and faded entirely from her beautiful face, her eyes had grown larger and brighter, and her fingers were ever in motion, tapping on the back of a book, or writing and twisting around each other, or tearing to shreds, scraps of paper and the flowers that little Gracie brought her every day. She never spoke unless some one addressed her, but lay the live-long day, silent, prostrated, and hopeless.—Whenever the little children came in and hung carelessly around her, she would kiss them gently and send them away; and the innocent ones, awed into silence by her strange mood, would slip away with noiseless steps, glad to go from the darkened room out into the air and sunshine.

"How are you feeling now, *maive ban asthore*,—my own dear loving lady?" said Nora, kneeling down beside her, and taking up the long, slender hand to caress.

"Well,—well enough," she said, without unclenching her eyes.

"I have news,—good news," whispered Nora.

Mrs. Halloran started up, and, pushing back the long curls from her face, gazed wildly at Nora, then, letting her hand fall heavily on the girl's shoulder, whispered, "Is it real, or am I dreaming? I have had so many dreams like this."

"It is no dream, *asthore*, but awake you are; and don't for the world's sake cry out, for them that's on the watch will suspect us,—Dennis Byrne's come back. He saw *him*: he is well, and is by this time over the sea."

"Escaped! Alive! Well!" gasped Mrs. Halloran. "My God, I thank thee. But is there no message—"

"There is," said Nora, interrupting her while she took out the crisp, glossy curls of her hair. "He sent this to you with his heart's love; an' that is all I know. We watched all the time, an' it's all I could learn."

Mrs. Halloran hid the curl in the palm of her hand, and gazed fondly and dreamily on it, then pressed it to her lips, her forehead, her bosom. "Oh, John! my John! my husband!" she whispered; "my noble John!" Then a tear like a single, heavy rain-drop fell on the dark hair, where it lay like a gem.

"Yes," said Nora, who saw that tear, and hoped it was the harbinger of others; "for such a one as he to go wandering in a strange land,—may be sick, and anywise lonesome an' homeless!"

"Oh, my husband! why cannot I be with you in poverty and exile? Then tears began to flow more freely. "Where is he, Nora Brady?"

"I don't know, ma'am, only that Dennis Byrne seen him on Ballyhowry Mountain, where he came to hide."

"Hide! John Halloran, the noblest and best of God's creatures, skulking like a hunted beast!" cried Mrs. Halloran, while torrents of tears drenched her cheeks.

Nora was satisfied. "The tears will do you good, dear lady," she said, "and in a little while I will send poor Gracie and Desmond up. The children's lost their smiles and color, and goes moping around like orphans."

"Yes, send them up,—poor little ones!" said Mrs. Halloran. "But one word, Nora: where is my cousin Donald?"

"Faith, ma'am, he's been away these four days. Mrs. Shea says he has gone to Dublin; anywise, it's a good riddance."

"He's safe—my husband! my heart's own love,—safe!" said Mrs. Halloran, clasping her hands together. "Angels of God guard and guide him! This news gives me life. I defy all now, and, trusting in the providence of my Father in heaven, I, His creature, will bear all in His holy name."

Bre long the sound of little feet outside and a timid knock on the door were heard. Mrs. Halloran went with feeble steps to open it, and found the two children standing, with a half-frightened look, on the threshold. She stooped and kissed them tenderly, and, folding the little soft hands in hers, led them to the couch, where, leaning against her pillows almost exhausted, she gathered them to her bosom in a long, tender embrace. Desmond was a noble child. He was now eight years old. His eyes were large and blue, his forehead bold and broad, surmounted by a coronal of short, crisp, curling hair. His nose harmonized with his other features, while his mouth, without losing the sweetness of childhood, wore an expression of firmness truly remarkable. Gracie was five summers old. Her brown hair was smoothly braided back from her round, childish forehead; her eyes were blue, and full of thought and gentleness, and her complexion very fair and pure. But there was a deep, tranquil thoughtfulness in the child's countenance; a tender grace and a calm repose in every movement, which had gained for her throughout the demesne the *soubriquet* of "Little Lady." Her father used to call her "Little Poet," for not only would she *write* and *beautify* in nature call forth sweet responses from the child's soul; but her language often expressed

\* Light of my eyes and heart.