PRETTY MISS NEVILLE

BY B. M. CROKER CHAPTER XXXIX

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE "To be, or not to be, that is the question."
Whether 'tis nob er in the mind to suffer.
The slngs and arrows of outrageous for Or to take arms against a sea of troubles.
And, by opposing, end them? '— Hamlet.

For some time after Mrs. Vane's departure I missed her dreadfully; I had no one to whom I could open my heart, and my mind was in a state of miserable confusion. What had possessed me to accept Major Percival? was a question I was asking myself by night and by day. What infatuation had seized upon me? Was it right to marry a man that I did not love—nay, that I could barely tolerate? Would it not be the truest kindness to break off the match before too late? (lending my. self readily enough now to Miss Gib views on a similar occasion. bon's views on a similar occasion.)

I had hinted to auntie, and hinted in vain; at the very faintest suspicion of my drift she had become ice. There was no hope to be had from her, nor from uncle. My fickleness was notorious; it would be all the same to whoever I was engaged; I had gained a reputation as a flirt that was positively unique. The Globe trotter, Major Dillon, poor Dicky Campbell, and Maurice, and Major Percival was to share their fate, and go by the board as

With my aunt's sanction-never ! This match was for my good, and although I appeared indifferent to my own interests she was not. It was for my happiness; and when people they have your welfare in view how firm they can be! Auntie was adamant. I turned to uncle; he was pitiless as Fate. As a last resource applied to Major Percival, feeling way with a few vague little gener my way with a few vague little gener-alities and distant allusions, then broad hints; but all were alike in effectual. I might just as well have been hinting to one of the elephants in the heavy battery for all the effect I produced. It never dawned on his mind that any poor girl in her senses wish to revoke her could possibly engagement with him. Nothing reained for me but to put the matter nakedly before him, and many and many an hour I lay awake turning over in my mind how I was to break -rehearsing what I would say-what he would say-and, grand ale, what every one would say. I had little or no moral courage; vainly-vainly did I make good resolutions; but at last one day a splendid opportunity forced itself before me, and I felt bound not to let it escape We were alone in the plant-house flance and myself. plant house was a large, circular contruction, built of bamboos, with lofty, pointed roof,—the "Zulu house," Maurice used to call it; inside was a splendid collection of cool-looking green plants. A picturesque fernery occupied the center, and the sides were banks of rock. covered with ferns, caladiums, foliage plants-large leaved and shady. afforded a most delightful contrast to the yellow glare of the sun on the sand outside. Major Percival, clad (even to his boots) in spotless white, save for an easy-looking buff silk out of the breast pocket of which peeped an exquisite handkerchief redolent of white rose. Even at this early hour his appearance was evidently the result of the most studied care. Eye glasses in eye he was condescendingly visiting plant after plant, dusting off minute insects and atoms of dust with his aristocratic fingers. I felt that the moment had come, as, with a violent effort, I brought up my courage to the sticking point. "You must and the sticking point. "You must and shall speak," I said to myself with unwonted determination, drawing off my magnificent diamond and sapphire ring and holding it in the hol low of a cold and trembling hand. Suddenly my companion jerked his

fronted me. You are looking uncommonly well this morning, Nora," he said gazing as me approvingly. "Nothing suits you so well as white. In your white gown, with this green back ground, you look—like—let me seelike one of those lilies we used to see up in the hills. You are paler than you used to be," he added, reflectively, rolling a cigarette hetween

eye glass out of his eye, straightened

his back, and turned round and con-

his fore finger and thumb.
"Am I?—Major Percival, I want to know how to say it; but I must speak," I said, in a hurried, husky voice. "I wish—to put an end to our engagement."

A long and appalling silence. I glanced at him timidly; his face was as black as thunder.
"Are you mad?" he asked at last,

with indignant incredulity.
"No, not mad," I faltered, turning away my face, and holding my hand over my eyes to keep back the starting tears; "only very, very miser able. We are not suited to each other," I went on, with a courage that surprised myself. "I do not love you as I should: I made a great mistake, and I am very, very sorry. Forgive me," I added, in a broken voice, tendering my engagement ring with trembling fingers, "and release

Another terrible silence ensued. I absolutely dared not look at Major Percival. At length he said, in his

"Now, who has been putting these ridiculous ideas into your head?that interfering, impertinent little woman, Mrs. Vane. or your cousin, the good-looking aide-de-camp, eh?" I made no reply.

"Your aunt and uncle are not aware that you wish to jilt me?
You have not their sanction?" I shook my head; my tongue re-

fused its office.
"Now listen to me, Nora, while I put the matter clearly before you."
I cannot recollect all he said; but
this I know, that, within five minutes' time, my "ridiculous reasons" were scattered to the four winds ; he was an accomplished rhetorician, and disposed of them with ludicrous facility.

I had never professed to love him;

with a warm liking he was satisfied.
We were just as suitable to each other as we had been eight months previously. The news of our engagement had gone far and wide. His friends were delighted to think he was going to marry at last. My diamonds and carriages were in preparation, my relations had given their hearty sanction; we had gone too far to go back.

Once Mrs. Percival—the possessor of his entire devotion, of every indulgence and luxury money taste could procure, the envied of all world. Thus Major Percival. Taking my hand in his, "Why, what's this?" he cried. discoveries, what's enfolded in my palm; "come, come, put it on again, and don't let us have any more nonsense, eh. Nora ?" slipping it once more on my nerveless

finger.
"I cannot think why you wish to marry me?" I asked in a tearful tone, rolling a pebble to and fro with my shoe. "What can be your induce-

ment ?' "That is easy answered," he re plied, possessing himself of both my hands. "You are young, you are hands. "You are young, you are charming, you are good tempered"

—was I?—"you are without comparison the prettiest girl in India, the destroying angel,' as you are called, and I have made up my mind that you shall be my wife." There was no more to be said; Major Percival and the force of circumstances combined were far too strong for me. see what it is," he proceeded, drop-ping my hands, gravely polishing his eye glass, and surveying me dispassionately by its assistance; "you are not yourself. You are — ah — nervous. You want tone. The sudden ous. You want tone. The sudden heat of the weather is telling on you. You must drink claret, and I will speak to your aunt about a good sound tonic. Yes, a tonic is what you require; that will make you all right, and we will hear no more of these nervous fancies. I suppose I had better not mention your foolish proposal in-doors?" he added, nodimpressively towards the

'On no account, " I made answer, with nervous haste and a sinking heart.

"Then, really, I think, Nora, you ought to give me a kiss for my silence," approaching an arm to my shrinking waist. "Oh, hang him." to a mallee, who, most propitiously for me, at that moment made a third in the plant house, watering pot in 'However, you will give it to me another time. There is the bell," he continued, putting his hand affectionately inside my arm, and leaning on me with unwonted familiarity. "Come, my destroying angel; my Neilgherry lily; my fanciful Nora! Come to breakfast!" and as we left the fernery, arm in arm, it seemed to me, that, far from regaining my freedom, I had gone out of the frying-pan into the fire.

My efforts to free myself were unavailing, no better than those of a fluttering bird in the strong, firm grasp of a man. Things had gone far. As Major Percival had said, circumstances were too strong for was preposterous. My trousseau and wedding cake were already ordered we had received presents and con gratulations from numerous mutual friends, the bridesmaids were be our engagement and inminent wedding a solidly established fact, I could not break it off and give myself up to universal opprobrium especially when my fatal notoriety was taken into consideration. I halted between two opinions. I dared not put an end to my engagement, and yet I dreaded unspeakabt the other alternative. What was to do? Sometimes swayed one way and sometimes another, my brain was in a perfect fever. Little did my friends and relatives guess at the terrible conflict that was going on in my mind. The mind, we all know, has a very considerable effect on the body, and my wakeful nights soon told a tale in pale, hollow cheek and sunken eyes. Major Percival noted the change in my looks with considerable irritation, and was grievously anxious about my sharp ened features and lost roses, and hanks to his suggestion, an unutter-

no less than twice a day. Nellie Fox, too, remarked my altered appearance with affectionate anxiety. What is the matter with you Nora? Why are you so thin and so pale and so miserably out of spirits? she asked, surveying me thought

ably nauseous tonic was duly admin

istered to me by auntie's own hands

" I am perfectly well, I assure you, Nellie ; the last few days have been a little warm, that's all. I never was a blooming beauty, you know," I replied, with assumed cheerfulness

You are not the same girl that you were six months ago," she returned with an air of resolute conviction. Then suddenly taking my hand in hers, she added, in a lower voice: "I believe this marriage is with t preying on your mind—I am sure it mas!"

is; I don't believe you care two straws for Major Percival, and if you don't love him, don't marry him. Even at the foot of the altar it would be better to change your mind than give your hand without your heart. will think me a sentimental noodle, but just listen to me, Nors You know what my home is, not a very happy one, not like yours; I am palpably de trop, and my mother is most desirous to see me settled, as she calls it; well, I had an excellent offer, as you may have heard, a very desirable parti in many ways, but as I did not care about the man I would not marry him; I had actually the hardihood to return home single, to brave all my relations, and to eat quantities of humble pie. Yet I have never; I still never repented itpossess my own self-respect and my independence. I am still Nellie Fox, spinster, aged twenty-four, and bidding fair to be an old maid. Nevertheless, I would rather go out washing or charing than marry a man I did not love, and I would have thought

with a hysterical laugh; "you are full of ridiculous fancies." Then, suddenly leaning my head on her shoulder, my long pent up feelings found vent in hot tears. Slipping own on the floor, I buried my face in her lap, and wept as if my heart would break. After a while I made a beroic effort and composed myself, drying my eyes and endeavoring to stifle my long drawn sobs. "You are my friend, Nellie," I said, taking her hands in mine; "never, never speak of this folly of mine-never, as you love me; it means nothing. I dare say every one feels a little low and depressed when they are going to be married," I concluded, with a watery smile, as I hurried away to bathe my tell tale cheeks.

that you would have shared my sen

timents. Confide in me, Nora; tell

TO BE CONTINUED

ONE CHRISTMPS EVE

"Don't come with me, Sister. You would only embarass me," Mrs. Wilkinson exclaimed playfully, but more than half in earnest. "But do tell me what to say to them. I haven't idea" She looked down at the little French nun with an anxious

The Sister shrugged her shoulders laughingly. "Oh, it is your heart must tell you that, Mrs. Wilkinson, She laughed again and assing on, disappeared into one of the many rooms that opened off the long corridor, leaving Mrs. Wilkinson standing alone at the entrance of a ward crowded with men, many of whom were crippled, most of whom were old and decrepit, and all of

whom were penniless.

For a minute or two she looked about her slyly, at a loss how or where to begin. She had never be-fore done more than send an offering of money and small gifts, but that year she felt that it would be a good thing to distribute her Christmas presents herself, accompanying each with a kind word. She had reckoned without taking her excessive timidity

into account.

So she stood in the doorway, irresolute, embarrassed and sorely tempted to turn and run away. Miserably conscious of some twenty pairs of eyes, she would probably have done so had she not looked for relief at the one man who was paying no heed to her. His beads had and my father and I came to New been slipping slowly through his stiff, horny angers and as she glanced at been here ever since. My only him he reverently kissed the Crucifix me. I could not run away for a and laid them aside. Then he too, second time in my life. The idea looked at her but without much show "Dear of interest.

Mrs. Wilkinson stepped to his side and gave him a pipe and several packages of tobacco. "I hope that packages of tobacco. you will have a happy Christmas,"

she said sweetly.
"Thank you, ma'am," he answered and opening one of the sacks of to-bacco with feverish haste he proceeded to fill his old pipe—a strange uninviting looking one which, to it was not to be thought of, and yet lit was not to be thought of, and yet lit halted between two opinions. I been an heirloom in Noah's family. He paid no further heed to Mrs. Wil-

After an instant's hesitation she bassed on to the next bed, beside which a man, so old and feeble that ne was bent almost double, sat mumbling to himself. '10 him she gave another pipe and his quota of tobacco with a cherry "Merry Christmas!"

He took his share of the simple gifts eagerly enough but without saying a word.

Mrs. Wilkinson was perplexed. am not getting on very well," she thought. "I once overheard Miss Flynn tell some one to treat the poor like friends if she wished to do them any good or to make them happy.' I must try to do that."

The next man in line was sitting with his back turned toward her. He seemed to be younger than his comanions though a few of them were nore broken or looked mere despond-The truth was that he deeply humiliated at being in a charitable institution and did not wish to As soon as she spoke to him e seen. Mrs. Wilkinson real zed his state of mind but in her ardent desire to be friendly, she would take no rebuff. At a glance she saw too that the man was more refined than his associates. and she heard, in the first words he uttered, the accent and language of an educated gentleman.
She gave him the best of her pipes

and a double share of tobacco, and with them a fervent "Happy Christ-

"Thank you very much," he said, and as she lingered he rose with dif-ficulty and offered her his chair—the only one at his disposal. She saw then that one of his legs had been

cut off above the knee.

Mrs. Wilkinson took the chair though she did not understand the look of shame on his face and knew that he would far rather be left alone But she felt that he needed help and that if she could win his confidence she might, out of her abundance, find a way to give him a fresh start without wounding his self respect. At least she could out of the kindness of her tender woman's heart, offer him the encouragement and sympathy which he needed even more

With the help of a crutch the man crossed the room for a second chair and while he was gone Mrs. Wilkinson picked up the book which he had laid down when she spoke to him. She hoped that it might furnish an opening for their conversation. What was her astonishment when she saw that, instead of the light novel she had expected to find it, it was a well bound copy of Milton with a marker slipped between the leaves at the Hymn to the Nativity. "I see that you are fond of the very best. This s magnificent, isn't it?" she exclaimed when he returned; and in her enthusiasm she quite forgot that

she was trying to make talk.
"Yes," he assented eagerly. first part is particularly fine. I used to—" He stepped short, suddenly remembering that a love of the classics must seem strangely out of place

in one in his position.

Mrs. Wilkinson understood and she had sufficient tact to talk on as if it were the most natural thing in the world. "It makes very fitting reading for to day. And Crashaw's too-I love it. But how few people care for these things now-a-days. mas has come to be such a busy day here in America that we have almost lost sight of the meaning of the fes-

Just at this juncture a bright-faced richly dressed child about seven years of age peered in at the door of the ward, and catching sight of Mrs. Wilkinson, ran toward her laughing gleefully.
"Why, Eileen! I told you to wait

quietly for me in the parlor."
"Yes, I know, Mamma," the child answered a little crestfallen at not being welcomed more cordially, you stayed very long and I got very tired, and the Sister told me to come up here because the cross sick people didn't like to hear me running up

and down the hall." The man woke up at the sight of the little girl. His thin, sad, sensitive face brightened and he smiled at her almost tenderly. "Eileen," he choed. "A real Irish name and a pretty one. I have a little sister named Eileen—at least she was but a child not much older than this one when I saw her last. But that was many many years ago. I came to America and she remained in Cork with my parents. She is a woman wonder if she ever thinks

He did not attempt to finish his sentence so Mrs. Wilkinson took up the thread of conversation, drawing the little girl close to her side as she did so. "Oh, then you, too, were born in Ireland. I was only ten years old when I was brought to America so I do not remember a great deal about the old country but I love it as truly as if I did." She paused but the man said nothing so she added a little more to her own history hoping thereby to prevail on emigrated

"Dear old Ireland," her companion ejaculated; then with a sad, wan smile he murmured more to himself than to Mrs. Wilkinson, "Truly there is no place like home, no place like His head sank forward unhome. til it rested on his hands and he sat motionless, evidently completely lost to his surroundings in his vivid recollections of other days and dear long. ost faces.

Mrs. Wilkinson watched him not knowing what to say or do. She was accomplishing nothing; still she was loath to go away and leave him to his sorrow. She noted with pity how white was his hair and how thin and worn his body though she judged him to be under fifty years of He looked as if during long years he might have felt the pinch of poverty so great that hunger and cold were familiar enemies, and she wondered what were the details of the tragic story he could tell if he

would. Suddenly Eileen put her lips close to her mother's ear. "He looks like Grandpa now," she said in a stage

whisper. The man paid no heed. Appar ently he had not heard the child. Mrs. Wilkinson looked at him again and saw that Eileen was right. He was sitting in a position that was characteristic of her father when ever he was low spirited or disheart

A torrent of seemingly inconnec-ted thoughts and recollections poured into her mind, and like a flash she saw a gleam of light. She did not hesitate an instant to act upon it. Very gently she laid her small gloved hand on the man's arm. He looked up startled for a moment and surprised, on her fair face a look which was not an effort at a sort of impersonal kindness, but was all eagerness and sympathy and tender, yearning

'Pat." she said, softly. For one instant the man stared her in amazement, then the light which shone in har face was reflected in his.

stacy of joy, but suddenly shrank back into his old chair and burying

his face in his trembling hands sobbed convulsively.

Meanwhile the other men in the ward burning with curiosity and friendly interest, watched the trio closely and strained their ears to coverhear their conversation.

overhear their conversation.

Mrs. Wilkinson was unconscious of everyone except her poor unfortunate brother whom she and her father had followed to America twenty years before and had vainly tried to trace ever since. She put her arms about him, sobbing with him, as she tried to comfort him. Oh Pat, we have searched for you for years! Every morning we have hoped that before evening you would come, and every night we to bed disappointed. We have been so unhappy about you Pat, dear, dear

Pat!—Eileen, speak to your uncle."
He took her little hand in his and she eyed him curiously. "I didn't know that you were Uncle Pat or I would have called you that at first. You don't look like the picture Grand pa carries in his watch. He told me it was Uncle Pat but its much prettier." All at once she smiled radi-antly. "Mamma, I won't have to say antly. that long prayer about finding Uncle Pat any more mornings, will I?

Wilkinson interrupted her "Oh Pat, why didn't you prattle. come to us? You could have found us so easily." muttered something about be

ing a failure and ashamed and afraid of not being welcome.
"But, Pat, you know that it wa to be with you that we came to America—and then we couldn't find What difference could it have you.

making money?"
Pat did not answer at once but when he did he looked her squarely in the face. "If I had succeeded, Eileen, I would have written, but I would have gone to see you if I

made to us whether or not you were

"We knew but too well that if you felt that you would be a help to us you would have come to share your good fortune with us. That only made it harder. We were certain that you were suffering somewhereperhaps were even hungry and cold and friendless. We have grown richer and richer but how could we enjoy the money without you?"

Pat was smiling happily. "You see Eileen, I lost my leg in a railway accident fifteen years ago. That handicapped me in the racehad not been a swift runner at best. The smile had died from his face and his voice trembled over the last words. Before his sister had time to say anything he asked haltingly as if half afraid to hear her answer, Father-is he-is he with you still, Eileen?"

'Yes, yes, Pat. You must come home with me now. What a merry, merry Christmas he will have after all these years of waiting and and watching for you!"—Florence

A LEGEND OF CHRISTMAS EVE

ST. BRIGID'S WELL

I never pass Cragane Castle an ts holy well but I think of its legends and its ghost; yet, though I've gone by late and early, I have never seen the unquiet spirit of its repentant squire.

In Cromwell's reign of terror the owner of the castle abandoned his faith in order to save his estates, and in those days all the marsh and swamp ground that one now sees trailing along the Atlantic shore to the village of Seafield, held fair meadows smiling in their rich green and gold, filled as they were with buttercups, daisies and poppies; and fertile fields on which grazed numer-

ous cattle and sheep.
Old Squire Gerald had a great dowry with his wife-one of the Tatts, who, years before, had left the country and gone to Austria, and their descendants are there to this day-who, when she discovered that her husband had given up his religion, would have gone back to her own people with her children. But this the squire would not permit and neither would he suffer priests to come to the castle. His serving men and women were all adherents of the new creed, and on them he imposed the task of watching their mistress and her children. The lady herself seemed to be al-

vays bright and contented, though the squire would not allow her to go unattended beyond the castle ground But almost daily she and her chil dren took their midday meal at the seashore; and from there she would send the servants back, and bid them not return until a certain heur. And each day a saintly priest who lived -like many another in those wild times—concealed in a neighboring cave, came and instructed the children, and gave to their mother the consolations of her faith. The viands they brought with them sufficed not only for their own meal, but for the necessities of the holy hermit. And before each dawn many of the neigh boring peasants put off in their coracles, and came to the sea girth room where the poor, deveted priest said Mass at the risk of his life; and where by his ministrations he helped them to keep their faith, and to bear the hardships and troubles put upon

Christmas was approaching and

"It is little Eileen!" he cried. "Oh her children receive their first Holy Eileen!" He kissed her in an ec-Communion. There was one of the Communion. There was one of the servants in the household who was himself a Catholic, unknown to the master, and it was he who would row them to the cave.

The squire had invited many guests

to the castle, and in those days the festivities were kept up until the 6th of Jan. The lady told the servant that she, too, expected a guesta royal one—on Christmas eve, and that upon the stroke of 12 the gates and the main door of the castle should be thrown open in anticipation of his coming; that all the candles should be lighted, and that the ministrels should play.

Great was the excitement prevail-

ing throughout the household that day. Many visitors were arriving, but the servants were awaiting the coming of the mistress' guest. The children, too, were eager for the ap-pointed hour, but for a different reason. And yet their joy was some what dashed with sadness, for they considered they had nothing to bring to the Holy Infant that could be accounted a worthy gift. They were consoled by their mother, who told them of the poor shepherdess of Nazareth, Morelai, who seeing the wise kings giving their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh, wept because she had nothing. And God pitying her sent His angels to tell her to look in the snow, and there she found growing the pure and white flower, fringed with a delicate pink, known as Helibore; and plucking it she entered the stable and gave it to the Christ Child. This is only flower that blows through the snow of Christmastide, and it is called the Christmas rose. It is said that it blooms only for the twelve days.

So the children gathered sea ane mones and beautiful weeds, to lay at the feet of the Baby-King. The holy night arrived, and the

lady's orders were carried out to the letter, but still the Royal guest tar-The squire, impatient for sup ried. have been no good—no good. I per, asked from one of the servants always hoped to get a start at last the cause of the delay, and having been informed sent for his wife to explain for whom she waited. But, to his dismay, neither wife nor children could be found. The castle was searced, high and low, and the seek ers had all but given up the quest when the lady and her children en tered. Their cloaks were powdered with snow and it was evident that they had been out of doors. The lady's face was radiant with happiness, and as she apologized to her guests she openly declared that she and her children had been at midnight Mass, and that they had re-

ceived Holy Communion.

Terror was on all the guests' faces when her husband all but roared. We are not papists, madame, an yet you are liable to severe punishment if any of my servants choose to speak of your superstitious practi-

His anger knew no bounds. Who is the guest," he asked, " for whom the gates were thrown open, and who has not thought it worth his while to come?"

"He came," she answered, " for, as well you know, it has been an ancient custom ever since Christianity came to Erin's shores, to open wide the doors on Christmas morn to welcome the Son of God and at least to offer

Him shelter."
"Madam," he thundered, "I'll have no such customs here. I curse your creed, its practices and its priests Where were you at Mass—at the Dripping Well, I'll be bound. (He knew nothing of the cave). I'll have no papistical practices on my estate, and

daybreak." After supper he called his steward, and gave orders that all the sweep-ings of the stables were to be thrown alized indeed. into the well at dawn-that weird

hour when all Nature is astir. His orders were only too willingly executed; but a few hours afterwards when the pale winter sun had risen over the snow clad land, lo! the fields of yesterday were changed to marshy swamps, and his cattle all lay dead in their byres. And the Holy which had been consecrated to St. Brigid, dripped, dripped, dripped, on the virgin snow, but at the other side of the highroad, and there it drips to this day.

Years went by, but the squire's pride, would not allow him to follow the promptings of his heart to return to his old fa th and give up all else He had become more lenient to his wife, and allowed her to visit the adopted country of her people, and even consented to his children being educated in Austria. His only son became a monk, and his wife and daughters made many pious pilgrimages, and were unceasing in their

prayers for his conversion In the fullness of time Lady Gerald died, exhorting her children to guard their faith and to return to their father.

Back once more in Ireland, they were pained to notice how miserable the old squire had become. the solace of sleep was denied him, and he was utterly wretched. In the gray dawn of a chill Novem-

ber merning, some time after his wife's death, he heard a noise which he thought proceeded from her room. He rose, went out and stood irreso-lutely in the corridor with his hand on the door-knob, but dreaded to purgatery" at St. Brigid's Holy Well. —Sydney Catholic Press. He had a superstitious fear that her spirit, in some visible form, would meet his gaze if he should open the door. The old courage that he strove to call to his aid had vanished, and he stood, afraid to stir, in the shadowy corrider. Suddenly he saw small, the weather bad, but it hearthis daughters move no selessly down ily as unto the Lord I do the best I the stairs at the farther end, and at can and look not back, but keep right Lady Gerald was filled with anxiety the stairs at the farther end, and at to hear the midnight Mass, and see once the sense of human companion-

ship broke the spell. He followed them at a safe distance, and from the great window on the landing, saw them hasten across the park, and take a path that led to the

Then he remembered that it was the anniversary of his wife's death and he shrewdly guessed that his daughters had been secretly attending Mass somewhere in the neighborhood During the following week, though he watched morning after morning, they never left the castle.

But Christmas was approaching, and he was convinced that if the op-portunity occurred they would attend midnight Mass on Christmas Rve. So when that night came he slipped unobserved from the castle, and made his way to the beach. The meen had not yet risen and as he had yet some time to wait, he sought shelter in a little cave. Warmly clad as he was the numbing celdness soon brought on a feeling of drowsiness, and the squire fell asleep.

He was awakened from his slumber by the sound of oars, and through the mist he saw numerous coracles glid-ing across the bay toward Seafield One was moored near his feet, and casting off the rope, he took up the oars and followed them. Just round the headland he saw a brilliantly lighted cave, and to it all the coracles steered. Leaving their little boats on the beach the people silently entered the cave, and the squire went with them. Within a priest was saying Mass, and the squire was impelled to kneel in the rocky foor and join in adoration with his fellow worshippers—a vast, silent crown seemingly far too numerous for the little chapel. Gradually he became aware that those about him had been long dead. There were the friends of his children and youth; and there, in the farthest corner, were his father and mother, kneeling absorbed in devotion.

As the Mass proceeded contrition overwhelmed him, and piety and faith came back to him. At the, "domine non sum dignus" he struck his breast with the earnestness of the publican of old, and cried, God, be merciful to me a sinner."

They all received Holy Communion but him, and then they knelt in reverent thanksgiving. As the priest left the altar Gerald moved across to speak to his parents, when suddenly the light went out, and he was left groping in total darkness. Even the entrance to the cave was invisible to him, though he could hear the noise of the water as it broke in ripples on the strand.
Suddenly his hand touched some

thing warm and soft, that meved He hastily struck a light, and there before him was Lady Gerald's friend

God save you my man; and what brings you here?" said the holy her-

"Father." said the squire, "did you not say Mass just now.' "No; for it is not yet the hour for my poor friends to come to welcome

the infant Jesus in this humble

"Then, Father," he said, "I have been guided here by the holyspirits."
He then related all he had seen, and made his confession. He was still deep in prayer when his daughters arrived, and after them of the neighboring people. No one noticed him until the Communion, when he arose and knelt beside his children to receive the Holy Et. harist. They started as if he had been an apparition. They could scarcely believe it was he after all those years of heresy. But their Christmas joy l give a welcome to your guest at was complete. The peasants' wish 'A Christmas without sorrow to ye,' which would greet them on all sides

> The squire would have been quite prepared to sacrifice land and wealth, if need be, for the faith he had so long forsaken; but the persecution was less keen, and the renunciation

He became most devout and was often seen making the rounds on his pare knees at the Well of St. Brigid. He had a Calvary erected there, with seven resting places on each side for the Way of the Cross, and a large crucifix over the well. And his whole life pecame one of repentance, piety and

One morning he was found kneeling at the foot of the cross with his beads in his hands, and his head pent low, as if kissing the crucifix, but his spirit had flown to its maker.

St. Brigid's Well is still one of the most beautiful of the lovely dripping wells in Ireland. It is situated on the wild, majestic west coast, and is a sanctuary of holy peace and devo-tion for the hush is only broken by the rejoicing of nature—the song of the thrush, the linnet and the blackbird; the drone of the bees, the chirping of the cricket, the musical mono tone of the little brown frog that sounds like the D string on a violing the rustling of the trees, stirred by the breeze from the sea; the echo of the surf as it tumbles on the sands; the scent of the lilac, the woodbine and the briar; and the drip, drip, drip of the crystal water as it falls on its bed of green moss.

And the peasantry far and near declare that Squire Gerald's spirit is seen still praying and still "doing his

on, I am no failure.