

thruated like to see if himself wants anythin' afore I get back—"

Patsy's freckled hatchet face looked out from its furze-bush of straight, bleached hair with suddenly awakened interest. "What'll ye give me if I do?" he demanded.

"Glory be!" ejected Mrs. Malone. She stood staring helplessly at the shabby young Celtic Shylock, who, with his over-grown frame bent forward, his feet in the broken boots turned toes inward, his hands thrust in his pockets, and his ragged arms akimbo, awaited her answer with ravenous expectancy. "Why—Patsy, bye—" She was fumbling at the waist of her gown. Suddenly she desisted. If she had money at the bank—or anywhere else, for the matter of that—would she be bent on her present mission? Would she be tramping these many weary blocks? Glory be!" she said again.

There really was nothing more to say. Patsy's rapacious expression became merged in a bored frown. "Mabbe it's goin' to the the-ayter ye ar. Hope ye won't be late." He cast a sharp glance at the basket. Involuntarily Mrs. Malone jerked it behind her back, but it was too big to escape notice. "I won't kape ye no longer romancin' ma'am!" With which Partisan shot young Mr. Heffernan took himself away.

Trembling, little Mrs. Malone look-



"She paused, gripping the basket."

ed after him. "Musha now, the gossoon hasn't got the heart of a herrin'! An' the way he looked at the basket. Wethen now, I wondther did he suspicion anythin'?" She bent her spare little body against the rancorous east wind and hastened on. "Sure, if I cud make up me mind to go to Thomas—but he hasn't only all his own to kape, but his wife's auld aunt as well. Then there's Nora. But she don't know the last cent's gone, an' it would scald the heart of her to think of us nadin'—shes that tindther the crathur! Malachi—he'd be free with his money—if he had enny. But 'twas never a dime he cud hould in his pocket no matter how much he airt. An' Daylia, that's cook on the North Side—" She walked less rapidly. Her head drooped meditatively. Was it possible she might let Delia know of her straits? Was it in her direction lay relief—reprieve? But as suddenly as it had come the gleam in the faded eyes flickered out. Delia had been saving to buy an automobile-coat and a feather-boa. Delia always had been stylish. And it was grand Delia looked, to be sure, when she was dressed up. No, it would never do to appeal to Delia. If only Rody were at home! Rody, the gay, loving, hard-working young fellow, who would never let her or his father suffer! But he had gone off to the Phillipines this many a month back. Was he alive or dead? Sure 'twas a sad world it was! "Arrah, 'tis nothin' of the sort!" she told herself with sudden energy. "Isn't it ashamed of yerself ye are to be paradin' along

like a hin on a rainy day—now runnin' a bit an' then shoppin' entirely? Go on wid ye!" she adjured herself sternly. "Go—" She stopped short as a massive form loomed up before her—a broad, roseate countenance beamed down upon her.

"Mrs.—Mrs. Comisky!" she murmured. She had long known Mrs. Comisky for "a dacint woman." They both belonged to the Married Ladies' Sodality. They had been neighbors when the Malones lived in a brick house. Their children had gone to the same parochial school.

"'Tis me," corroborated Mrs. Comisky. She wore a cloth skirt an a coat of electric seal plush. From a fur collarette a cataract of bushy heads and tail dangled over her capacious bosom. On her hat a long-beaked green bird perched in a grove of aspiring ostrich feathers. The vigorous hand she extended to Mrs. Malone was gorgeously draped in a glove of purple kid. "'Tis a month o' Sundays since I set eyes on you," she went on. "I heard Dennis was took rale bad some weeks back. Better, is he? That's good. You're not lookin' very well, yourself. I've been down to visit my niece Maria. 'Tis twins—an' the christenin' is to be fit for a Roosian. But where might you be goin', Mrs. Malone? Ye're not walkin' down town?"

She looked down on the miserable little creature in the scant black gown, the worn black shawl, the insufficient bit of head-covering. She noticed the empty basket. She saw, too, that the old face was ghastly—that the thin lips were quite blue—that the old eyes were blinking fast.

"I—I was goin' to—to do some shoppin'!" faltered Kitty Malone.

Now Mrs. Comisky, for all her ponderosity and apparent obtuseness, could see through a stone wall as well as any one. This was not the first time she had known a neighbor to slip timorously towards the city, carrying an empty basket. But she had not dreamed things had come to such a pass with the once "aisy" Malones.

"An awful nuisance the shoppin' one must be doin'," she remarked carelessly. She was looking over Kitty's head at some object which interested her. "I spent every last dollar Tim give me except fifty cents. I'm goin' to stop into his saloon on me way home. 'Tis lucky I met with ye if 'tis only the half dollar I got left. This long time I've been sayin' to Tim I must pay you for that hin. 'Tis on me conscience when I go to confession the first Thursday of every month." Her hearty laugh sounded pleasantly. "So here 'tis—an' wishin' it was five dollars I owed you—I do now!"

"What—what hin?" whispered Kitty Malone.

"Och, hear the woman now!" Mrs. Comisky was appealing to a striped barber's pole nearby. "The black wan, to be sure! The wan you let me have to make broth for Leo when you lived in the brick house. 'Tis like you to be forgettin' it!" She thrust the coin into Kitty's cold little claws of hands. "Take a car—do now! You'll find the shops most illegit. Good afternoon to you, ma'am!" Then Mrs. Comisky's gown was flopping after her in a way she considered stylish, and Kitty Malone was shaking her head over the money in a dazed attempt to recall the debt.

"Glory be to God! What hin? I don't mind lettin' her have enny black wan—no, nor white wan! But she never looked at the basket. Sure now, I'll stop stewin' meself about it! 'Twas the saints sent it—Glory be—" She broke off in a sudden horror, the reverential rapture with which she had accepted the miracle worked in her behalf suddenly blotted out. "It were never the saints—never! What 'ud they have to do with a woman who tould all the black lies I did this day? Three to Dinny! She checked them off on her fingers. "Wan to Patsy Heffernan—an' wan to Mrs. Comisky—oh, wirrasthrue! What kind of a pinnance won't Father Flynn be after layin' on me! Five decades maybe—wan for aich—or the stations it might be! Me poor sowl!"

Never loomed Bastille before a prisoner as frowned the grim gray

wall of the building wherein is located the County Agent's office before the shrinking gaze of Kitty Malone. Never did feet more reluctant creep up the dirty stone steps into the dreary many-angled room, with its whitewashed walls based by a deep band of slate-colored paint, its two slate-colored benches, its pillars of the same dismal hue. Never did heart sink sodden in a woman's breast as sank hers when, in obedience to a motion from the policeman on duty, to whom she had whispered her street and number, she crept to the foot of one of the waiting lines of applicants. There were three of these lines of depressed, patient people—men, women, and children. Restricting and dividing each line were rails of the universal dingy shade that emphasized the melancholy atmosphere of the place. A sign on the window to the right caught her eye:

BURIALS.

DOCTOR CALLS.

No patients sent to Dunning on Thursday.

Dunning! She shuddered at the word. Surely she and Dennis need never go there! Something would turn up! Rody might come home! But if any one were to see her here—now! What if the fact that she had applied for relief were to get abroad in "the parish"! What a voice recalled her. It was her turn at the window.

"Name?" asked the voice in a strong foreign accent.

She found herself looking up at a thin, middle-aged man with penetrating eyes, a brownish mustache, and an expression of keen intelligence. Her name! She cast a terrified look around. The applicants to the rear were paying no attention to her. The greater number carried yellow cards, more or less crumpled and dirty. The man behind the window spoke again.

"Catherine," she answered huskily—

"Catherine Malone."

"Ever receive aid from the county before?"

"No—oh, no, sir!"

"Got help from—" He rattled off the names of half a dozen philanthropic and benevolent societies.

"Never, sir."

"Married—widow—single—deserted?"

"Married this forty-nine year to Dennis Malone, sir."

"How many children? Sex—married—employed—live at home?"

"Seven—five livin' here—two above, sir. Three married, that has all they can do to care for their own. Wan workin' to kape herself. Wan in the Phillipines, sir."

Would the questions never cease? A queer blackness came in fragmentary clouds before her. She had eaten no breakfast. There had been only enough to leave for Dennis. Involuntary she put out her hand—clutched at the ledge to steady herself. Suppose she were to be taken sick here, and it was put in the paper! It would kill Dennis. It would break Nora's heart. Delia could never hold up her head again! She must keep her dreadful secret! Still questions—questions! She answered them as best she could. Her age, her husband's, their nationality, the cause of their distress.

"That's all. The man looked up from his writing. "A visitor will call to investigate. That's all now."

Then Kitty found herself outside the wooden paling. A stream of people were surging across the room to another window on the opposite side—a window behind which barrels and boxes, sacks and bundles, all containing necessities of life, rose in a mighty pile straight up to the ceiling. The portly policeman took pity on her bewilderment.

"You'll be around tomorrow," he assured her cheerfully. "Visitors will get to your place today. He'll give you a ticket. Come in tomorrow."

She did not know how she got out on Clinton Street. She was buffeting her way back, her empty basket dangling on her arm, and in her heart deep disappointment—a bitter despair. She did not know that, had she stated how immediate was their necessity for relief, she need not have waited for

help until after the formal investigation. Now her only wild desire was to get back before the visitor arrived—to make sure Dennis would not grasp the import of that humiliating visitation. Surely, surely folks were prosperous this year! Surely this was to be a grand Thanksgiving! She could not remember ever having dodged so many dangling turkeys before the doors of the butcher shops. And what pumpkins—golden as the sun sinking down a yellow disk of flame behind her own Tipperary mountains! And plump ducks, and pink-fleshed loins of pork, and chickens, and fruit, and all tempting viands. The smell from the bakeries turned her faint as she hastened on. There was hot bread in this one—there, that was ginger-bread!—and coffee—and tea. If there was but a wee pinch of tea at home! She had walked the whole way back—she was near their poor dwelling before she remembered that tightly clinched in her hand she held the fifty cents Mrs. Comisky had given her for the black hen of elusive memory.

"Glory be!" she cried, "an me to be complainin'! Me—that's got a hanful o' silver." But suddenly she knit her brows craftily—walked more slowly. It was with much deliberation that she made some purchases. Meat was one. She knew that except to the families of old soldiers no meat was furnished to the poor by the county. She took with her only two ounces of tea and a loaf of



"It was her turn at the window."

bread. She would come for the rest she said, after dark. It would not do to have forty cents' worth of food in the house when the man sent to investigate should call. The ten cents would permit her to ride on the morrow. She gripped it hard as she hastened out of the store, her precious packages under her arm. She almost brushed against a young woman who was coming towards her.

"Mary Alice Ryan," she cried, "an' how is Larry?"

A pale and woe-begone face, framed in a black shawl which was held under the chin by a bony hand, looked down on her.

"Bad, Mrs. Malone. He screams dreadful with the pain. The doctor says the kind of hip-disease he has can't be cured. It's hard—for a boy that's been as strong as any in the parish. If he had things to play with like rich boys—" The mother's voice broke there.

"An—an' ain't he?" The dime was burning Kitty Malone's palm.

"Some empty spoons—a tin can—the cover of a picture book. That's all."

It was then that a whistle rent the air—just then that a man went by.

"Gimme a red wan!" cried Mrs. Malone. "You tie that to Larry's wrist, an' let him fly it. Wisha, woman, don't ye be for bawlin'! What's the nickles for, anyways if the child-ther ain't to get the good of 'em! A bit of a b'loon, indade!"

And Kitty skurried off with a gesture of magnificent scorn for that which the master called "trash." She found the fire out and Dennis asleep. He had managed to crawl over to the bed. He was still sleeping when the man sent from the County Agent's made his