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FAITHFUL AND BRAVE.

AN ORIGINAL STORY.

(From the Dublin Weekly Freeman)

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

Kate envied the simple peasants. As she passed their doors she would have been glad of a seat; her weary limbs almost refused to move. "What if I faint," she thought with a shudder, "Will any one pick me up I wonder?" and her brain began to swim. Since three o'clock that morning she had been walking, with but slight intervals of rest. She had not slept, she had not tasted food since the preceding evening. Again the thought struck her, "If I should faint from hunger." She was then passing an humble little shop, where bread and sugar-sticks were exposed for sale. She bought a penny bun, and began to eat it, although it was stale and unappetising. "Will you give me a cup of water?" she asked of the woman who sold her the bread. Honor to kindly Irish hearts—not the cup of water, but a flowing bowl of milk, was given to the thirsty woman, who simply begged a draught of water. "You need not thank me, allanna," she said, as Kate offered her payment for both bread and milk; "keep your penny, poor soul; you're welcome to both bite and sup; I am glad I had it for you." Kate Vero, the brilliant queen of many a ball-room, felt her eyes brim, and her heart throb at the genuine, unaffected kindness which, to serve no selfish purpose, cheered the lonely Biddy Kelch on her dangerous errand. Contrary to her intention of taking the train at Milltown, she determined upon pushing on to Dundrum. It was not much further and it would pass time better. Accordingly, refreshed in body and cheered in spirit, she crossed the little bridge which spans the Dodder. The drizzling rain soaked through her thin shawl; her feet were sadly blistered and ached sorely; but her hope was high and her heart brave; so she stoutly trudged without thinking of her manifold discomforts. A nice little station is Dundrum. So Kate thought, as, after taking her ticket, she seated herself on the sheltered wooden bench to wait for the next train. The last had just gone, so she had plenty of time before her to rest and make her observations upon those whom the chances of travel had brought in her way. A sony, good-natured-looking old country-woman, with cheeks as red as rosy apples, and surrounded by an army of bundles—market baskets and hand boxes—sat at the extremity of the bench. Like her kind in general, she knew little of the ineffable dignity of English reserve, and soon entered into conversation with Biddy Kelch. "Moist weather, ma'am." "In troth, it is bad weather for them as is travellers," answered Biddy, feeling it absolutely necessary to practise the brogue, and test her capabilities for the part she intended playing. "Going to Dublin?" was the next inquiry, and the sony woman nodded up the line in the Dublin direction, as if bowing to the importance of the city for whose market she was bound. "Faix, no, my bisness is down the ine," replied Biddy.

"Eh! What line did you say, agra? I'm a leetle hard o' hearin'," and then the bundles, band-boxes, market baskets were moved down close to Kate, and their owner, with a deep sigh of relief, re-seated herself, quite to her own satisfaction. "As I was sayin', I'm a leetle hard o' hearin', but now we are close together its not so bad. What line of bisness did ye say?" "The railway line I said," answered Biddy, while she tried to repress the laugh, which nearly choked her. "Oh, the railway line! I ax your pardon; thought you meant your thrade; no offence, ma'am, but I thought you might be in the egg and butter thrade. That's me ma'am, and I'm just going to the city wid as lovely a lot as ye'd find in a day's walk." Poor Kate, to be mistaken for an egg and butter vendor! At all events she reflected, "My dress and brogue must be perfect, as Biddy would say, they can pass muster;" and again her inborn spirit of fun and mischief nearly frothed over. "I would like to give my inquisitive questioner something to think over," and her eye twinkled with irrepressible glee. The whistle of the approaching train sounded; up went the signals, porters moved briskly about, ladies came out of the waiting room, and Biddy, rising from her seat, said, "My thrain is in view, and I'll bid you good morning, ma'am." "Och! the top of the mornin' to ye; give us a shake iv the fist, agra;" exclaimed the sony woman, extending her honest hand; then added in a whisper, "I didn't mane to offend ye, about the thrade; you know I never was nor will be a meddler, that's me." "In thruth you don't look it," interrupted Kate, trying to keep her eyes from dancing with fun; "its meself knows you're a decent woman by the sight iv ye. I'm not angry; I wouldn't demane meself by the likes of anger." "Dundhrum," shouted one porter; "take your seats," shouted another. "I'll tell ye my bisness," whispered Biddy, as she squeezed the sony woman's hand; "I'll tell ye my bisness." "Quick, or the thrain 'ill be off," gasped her companion. "I rowl the resayver of congou" was the answer. "Eh! What!" cried the astonished woman. "What! eh!" but Kate was whirling down to Bray in a third-class carriage, beyond the reach of further questioning. "She rowls the resayver of congou; what did she mean, at all at all? that's her thrade it seems, and faith it bangs Banagher;" and the member of the egg and butter trade looked upwards, as if she could solve the mystery by staring at the dark clouds. But her gaze was soon arrested by something far brighter than murky clouds. A flaming red and blue advertisement of groceries hung opposite, and she walked over to inspect it. "Souchong 2s 8d," she slowly read, "Congou 2s 10d," "Assam 3s." "Och! murder and Irish!" its meself as is the fool entirely. "Och! faith! its not Assam, but ass you are, Norah Treacy. She was a wise woman (fortune teller) afther all! thrue for her, she rowled the resayver of congou whin she tossed the tay cup. Worse luck for me; and there she could have told me, if Patey was iver coming back again from Ingy."

CHAPTER IX.

"Faith that's awful!" No wonder that Nurse Kavanagh recoiled in horror as a fiery flash rent the heavens, and blazed over the white-crested waves. A deafening peal of thunder shook the house, till it rocked to its very foundations; the glass rattled in the diamond-shaped panes, and the rafters cracked, as if yielding to the fury of the tempest. The angry sea cast volumes of spray upwards, while huge breakers crashed on the pebbly beach with a sullen boom. The sea-birds' cry was weird and piercing, as they wheeled madly in the air. "Saints and angels! that's an awful storm. God help all on sea." Down Nurse Kavanagh went on her knees, repeating every prayer which terror had not driven from her mind. So one woman prayed while another woman, not many yards off, tried to gain some little shelter beneath a fishing boat, hauled up on the strand. There Kate crouched, quailing while the elements raged around her. There, with a terrified heart, she sat trying to shield her eyes from the blinding flashes, which seemed to scorch her very sight, trying not to fear the crested waves, which bounded like startled war-horses to within a few yards of her feet. Her parched lips endeavored to frame a prayer. It seemed as if she could never live through that awful scene. Her restless, never slumbering memory was busy too; her feverish anxiety, her wilful pride, her hot temper, and her absorbing love were all in turns torturing thoughts to her. Yes, true to her woman's nature in that moment of suspense and dread, her unutterable love was her chief reflection. "If

Mark knew he would despise and shun me; then my life would be more desolate than Eda's; she has others to love her, while I could never love again. I would judge everyone by Mark's standard, and where could I find anyone half as good, honourable, or upright as he is." Kate rose from the ground, cramped and drenched through, "I will die if I can't get shelter. I must only try and gain entrance into Nurse Kavanagh's. I will give the uniform now, no police or anyone else will stir to-day. I am positive Aylmer is in that cottage." Nurse Kavanagh rose from her knees when she heard the gentle tap, and having gunbolted the door, she saw a poor woman, who begged admittance until the fury of the storm abated. "I am kilt," Biddy pleaded, "wid the cold and rain. I sheltered beyant, as long as I could, in the ould boat, but I can't stay there any longer, for I am dreeping wet. In pity let me sit inside your door." "I would not turn a dog out on a day like this, much less a Christian, so sit down," was the answer, though the woman looked uneasily round, and carefully fastened a little door, opening into the other only room of which the cabin boasted. That accomplished, she looked more content to offer hospitality, and turning to her visitor, bade her come near the fire. Upon the hearth-stone lay a brown earthenware tea-pot. Nurse Kavanagh like all the Irish peasantry was extremely fond of tea. She filled out a cup of the beverage and handed it to Biddy, while she herself sat down on a three-legged stool to partake of a similar dose. "I'm thankful to you," said Biddy, as she meekly accepted the offered cup of tea, and sipped it with great apparent relish. A wonderful thing is tay, ma'am, both to rise the spirits and tell fortunes." "Whisht, whisht," said the other with a frightened glance at the door. "Whisht, avick; spake low, if you please; there's a sick person within, and I'd not like to disturb them, but go on asthore; spake low, spake low." Biddy took the cup, and gave it the same scientific twirl, which gained her such applause at Castle—where Miss Vero performed the part of the Irish fortune teller. Long Biddy pondered, very wise she looked before confiding the result of her investigations, to her anxious companion. "Och; my poor soul ye are in trouble. Musha thin, is'nt that a rowl of thunder?" "Never mind the thunder, asthore; what's the fortune for me?" and the credulous nurse twisted her fingers nervously through her apron strings, while she urged on the wily fortune teller. "Och! it's trouble you're in about your sick friend, maybe." Nurse shuffled uneasily as Biddy nodded towards the door, before she continued. "Yet, ma'am, there is no sickness there, but a deal of trouble. Wait till I see, ye have a son in trouble. Be aisy and I'll tell ye all about him." "Spake low, will you?" the nurse hoarsely whispered, and there was something in her look which convinced Kate she was right in suspecting Courtenay was there. "He is in trouble, and it's his trouble that's yours." The nurse sprang from her seat, and, trying to snatch away the cup, into which she steadfastly peered. "Ma'am, ye may bar your shreet door, for there's those outside as want to be inside." "Begorra thin, I wish I hadn't let you in, you ould witch o' the world." "Keep a civil tongue," continued the unabashed Biddy, "an' I will tell you more; there's quare truth in this tay-cup; it tells me ye have a bird in that room which hasn't got the power to fly. It's a noble bird—not one of our kind. It's like the soaring eagle, that loves liberty not life." "Whisht, will ye keep aisy?" again implored the startled nurse, as she grasped Biddy by the hand. But the fortune-teller would not be silenced and, rising to her full height, her voice rang clear as a bell, through the cabin. "He'll hear you," sobbed the dismayed nurse, as she rocked herself to and fro, in an agony of apprehension. "I know he will hear me," cried Biddy, and her voice seemed to raise above the storm. "I know the son of Ireland, who loves liberty will hear me. It is better so, let him hear the voice of warning, which though weak, would fail be strong. Hark ye," she continued, as she towered above the affrighted woman, "there's danger in the wild foaming wave, there's danger in the street, there's danger in the tempest cloud, and yet I am here. I came when the sea was raging, I came in the tempest and storm, to save the boy you nursed, for I am Faithful and Brave to the end." Kate's natural voice rang through the cabin, as she stood gazing fixedly upon the little door. A weird scene truly. Thunder rolling and the lightning illuminating the faces of the two women who confronted each other. It played

in vivid flashes on the smoke-stained wall, it glistened on the tin vessels ranged neatly on the shelves, and it lit up the face of the man who stood in the doorway. "Miss Vero!" Aylmer Courtenay stood before her. "Who can depict that scene? Who can tell of his wonder and gratitude when the uniform was produced. Who can tell of the frantic excitement of the foster-mother when she realized that her dearly loved foster-son would soon be past all pursuit. For a long time Courtenay was too much overpowered to speak. He could hardly believe in the reality of the whole affair. How Miss Vero had achieved such an exploit, how she came to know of his trouble, how she knew of his whereabouts, and above all, why she did it, were mysteries to him." Kate Vero was by no means a girl to let him be in doubt as to her motive, therefore rapidly and clearly she told him of the newspaper article, of Eda's grief, of Eda's wish to send him the means of escape. She did not make anything of her own assistance. She told the story exactly as it had happened, and concluded with the blunt words—"Mr. Courtenay, you need not thank me, for though I esteem you as a friend, I would not have acted as I have but for Eda's sake. Then, in a softened tone she told of Eda, while Courtenay sat at the little deal table, his proud head bowed on his arms. There the strong man shook and quivered with the force of his emotions. Kate had never seen a man in grief before, and she quailed as she witnessed it now. No need of shame had he, because hot tears seem to sear his very brain. His reputation blighted, his hope dead, and above all, the love he dare not acknowledge burning into his very heart. Kate could not bear the sight of his agony. Her soul was wrung with pity. She laid her hand on his shoulder, and tried to whisper words of consolation, but for once words failed her in the presence of this strong man's anguish. She tried to whisper of hope to him, but he interrupted her. "Miss Vero, there is no need of trying to patch up sorrow with false hope. Hope, I have none, my hope is dead. My love is madness. I have nothing before me but ambition, and what is ambition either, of what value will its proceeds be to me now. Once—you may well think me presumptuous—I thought I could carve a name in the world, and win your cousin." "My little Eda," he whispered to himself. "I knew everything was against me. I knew she was an heiress, while I am a beggar of a writer. Had she been poor I would have told her of my love, but I held my tongue and suffered on. Still the faint, flickering hope was ever before me that eventually I would succeed and be worthy of her. But now, he added with a slight bitter laugh, I am branded as a rebel, and were I to astonish the world by genius, eloquence, or bravery, Colonel Hamilton would never admit a man, who was ever suspected of disloyalty." "Miss Vero, I shall tell you why I am suspected of treason. You may have heard Mark speak of a young fellow named Alexander Jones, Pendulum Alco, we used to call him, for he had such a habit of swinging his arms. He was exceedingly poor, but clever, smart rather I should have said, with an amount of tact and cunning by which he excited the sympathy of those from whom he wished assistance, pecuniary or otherwise. Some of the fellows thought him a sneak, others pitied him. Mark, I know, often gave him money; as for me I gave him leave to come to my rooms and study there. With many professions of gratitude he availed himself of my generosity, as he termed it. Sometimes he read my books, sometimes he wrote squibs for the—, and I was always glad when he turned an honest penny." "During the time I was at Oakfield, I believe Jones actually lived in my rooms. You remember Mark made me stay the night of the ball, and, as I had no idea of not returning home, I left my rooms in confusion, with all my papers lying about. In an open drawer lay a series of articles almost ready for publication. They were certainly political, but very far removed from being treasonable. It seems Jones found them, and, after interlining them and altering them to suit the views of the—, sent them to that paper in my name. They were immediately accepted, although I had never written for that publication in my life. The day I left Oakfield I received a telegram, saying I must go down to Galway at once, and, while I was there, a search was made in my rooms and many treasonable papers found, of course all written by Jones. My writing happens to be very much like his—who knows, perhaps he copied mine?—at all events, not all the water in the ocean could clear me now, as Jones has absconded, it is supposed to America, and my absence in Galway at the time of the police investigation is taken as proof positive of my guilt. Knowing I must leave the country, I

came here, and, for the last few days have been seeking for an opportunity to escape. The want of a disguise has alone hindered me. However, now, I have no doubt I shall be able to evade all suspicion." "Miss Vero, to you I am indebted for what is as much as life to a man, namely, liberty, I cannot thank you; any words of mine could never express the depth of my gratitude. Yet I ask you to do me one more kindness. Will you give this little gold pencil case to your cousin, Eda, and tell her I have used it since I was a boy, but you may also tell her, Miss Vero, it has never traced a disloyal word. I have loved my country well, too well to seek its ruin by rebellion. As to this, Miss Vero," he resumed, as he lifted the little packet Kate had placed beside him, "bring it back to Eda, and tell her I would forget my pride and accept her gift if I required it, but I do not want money." Kate took the pencil case from his hand, and as she did so her bitter tears fell on it. Poor Kate! a few days since, and she was Harry's advocate: now she served his rival. Verily her heart was torn between the two. She shed bitter tears for the patriot exile, as well as for the lover to whom her little cousin's heart was given. "The storm is almost over," she said, in a low, weary tone as she looked out of the window. "Now, Mr. Courtenay, I think I will try and go; I would like to be home at dusk." A few more warnings, a few more injunctions to be in time for the mail boat, and Kate was ready for starting. Nurse Kavanagh who had kept out of ear-shot, now drew near to Kate and humbly asked "Miss Vero, I know—Mather Aylmer says—you are young and beautiful, I take his word for it, though I don't see it. But I know myself that you have a brave heart and that you are a rule lady. Would you think it a great liberty if I ask you to shake hands with Margaret Kavanagh?" "Decidedly, if it makes you one inch happier," Kate heartily responded, as she grasped the outstretched hand of Aylmer Courtenay's foster-mother. Slowly and sadly as to one who was dying, as to one she would never meet this side of the grave, Kate Vero bade Aylmer Courtenay good-bye. Their ways now lay apart. She was returning to luxury, wealth and refinement; he was going out upon his way to combat hardship, poverty and want. She could remain in the land of her birth, he must wander as an exile. In silence they parted, in silence was the last hand-shake given, but in that silence was heart appealing eloquence. Then out in the rain passed Kate, and as she drew her shawl more tightly round her she wondered how she could ever re-enter Oakfield without observation. Little did Kate Vero dream of the strange events which had taken place during her absence that day. "Gone to breakfast with Mrs. Hastings!—Is Kate mad," was Lady Bindon's comment, when Eda came to her dressing-room and gave the message. "Eda, dear, do you why she went? If it was a fine day, I should not wonder, but on such a morning as this to go out, I cannot understand it." Poor Eda, her little heart fluttered like a bird's as she took her seat at the breakfast table and heard them all remarking on Kate's non-appearance. "Where is Kate?" inquired the baronet.—"Fanny, my dear, is Kate ill?" "Not ill, but surely mad," replied Lady Bindon in a most chilling tone. That aristocratic lady could be very chilling sometimes, and on the present occasion Eda experienced something like the feeling of a lump of ice being laid between her shoulders. She has gone to breakfast at Manor-lands," resumed Lady Bindon. "And brought Mrs. Hastings some freshwater fish she caught on the road for breakfast," muttered Harry to Eda. Poor child, it was only the ghost of a smile with which she noticed his pleasantry? "How could she go to Manor-lands when —" but Mark hastily checked himself, when he saw the startled look on Eda's face. Her deadly paleness, her flushed brow, all told tales, and Mark determined in his own mind Kate had not gone to breakfast with Mrs. Hastings, and further more that Eda knew where she really was. Although he knew he had no right to control Kate's actions, still some presentiment told him that while the family party sat round the luxuriously spread table, his proud Kate was under the drenching rain, incurring danger in some way, and he winced at the bare idea. Her spirit seemed to be calling out to him for aid, for help. After breakfast his restless became unendurable. He went into the smoking-room with Harry, but no number of Manilas was powerful enough to allay the thought, where is Kate? Then he wandered into the study, but after a time he dashed down the book with the excla-