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THE TWO MARYS; OR, THE O'DONNELLS OF INNISMORE.

CHAPTER V.—Continued.

Mr. Montague was a bit of a philosopher in his way. In the early days of his wedded life he had tried conciliation, without success; he now adopted another plan, and endeavored to turn a deaf ear to the angry woman.

Do any of our readers know such a character as that of Mrs. Montague? Are there not too many, who, the instant the wearied partners of their fortunes, to whom they owe so much, enter the house, have some vexatious tale to tell of children, servants, anything, anything whatever that may have disturbed their own peace of mind during the day, instead of greeting with a smiling face, and cheerful converse, the often worn-out, anxious man, who, all day long, has toiled for the weak woman, and still weaker children, who cannot work either with head or hand for themselves.

Mrs. Montague wisely dried her tears, seeing that they had made no impression on her husband, and, after having sullenly gazed some time at the fire, musing over her fancied wrongs, she arose, and sought—not her children—but her favorite maid, Wilson. This woman was her confidant. She rang the bell on entering her chamber, and, of course, Wilson was not slow in noticing that her mistress was ill—as she termed it when the lady's temper was disturbed—she had a pain in her head, surely a most distressing pain, for her eyes were swollen and heavy, and so Eau de Cologne and various other things were brought to bathe the throbbing temples, and then Mrs. Montague poured into the ear of the sympathizing maid, the story of her troubles.

Wilson begged her lady to take it all patiently; such a sweet, gentle lady to be so ill-treated whenever she dared complain, it was something intolerable, but if she were in her mistress's place she would soon see if this German person (Wilson never called Fraulein, lady, she would own no such superiority, no, not she) should stay, no, not a month, leave alone the six months Mrs. Montague had so kindly mentioned.

Mrs. Montague was neither by birth nor education a lady; our readers will be quite aware that, if she had been, she never would have made a confidant of her maid. Wilson was working not without an end in view; she had ingratiated herself in the affections of her mistress, often leading the weak minded Mrs. Montague, even in instances where the latter fancied she was following the beat of her own inclinations; so artfully did this woman seek to gain her point, and with such a show of affection did she attend on her mistress, submitting to all the freaks of her capricious temper with a smile ever on her lip, swallowing down the harsh and scornful words levelled at her, not infrequently as well as others; at her side early and late; never tired, where her lady's interests were at stake; or, in the constant, nay, slavish attendance she required near her person, so that, even the latter would occasionally relent and would say to herself: 'she must be much attached to me, she is a faithful creature; she alone never seems to alter, though I do sometimes speak very harshly to her.' Then some handsome present, in the shape of a rich silk dress, a trinket, or a fire-pond note, would find its way to Wilson's possession, in order to heal up the wound caused by her mistress's selfishness and ill-humor; so that, by degrees, the services of the former were becoming a very lucrative affair to Wilson, who anxiously counted every sovereign as she put it by in a safe place, there to accumulate until she had got together a sufficient sum, for a certain purpose the crafty Abigail intended to carry out.

Now, she is all attention, and after having bathed her lady's temples, wraps a rich Indian shawl around her, and lays her on the couch as tenderly as if that selfish and intensely ill-tempered personage were some delicate girl, languishing in the last stage of a consumption.

CHAPTER VI.—IN WHICH THE READER BECOMES ACQUAINTED WITH A WORTHY LANCASHIRE FAMILY; ALSO, THE O'DONNELLS OF INNISMORE, AND A FAMILY SECRET.

It stands right away by itself in one of the prettiest villages in Lancashire, that pleasant old Manor House of Squire Mainwaring's, down a lovely vale, with a green lawn before the house sloping even to the waters of the lake; its solid walls of red brick will long bid defiance to the hand of time; beyond is a range of hills, and all around are glens and dales and smiling meadows, rendering Ashdale one of the prettiest spots Lancashire can boast of possessing. It owned, too, the worthiest people who graced the country for miles around, for the squire was the true type of an old English gentleman; his doors ever open to the poor and needy, whilst hospitality reigned supreme at Dovercourt. Many and many an old English custom, long since abolished

or gone into disuse was still in full force, and the yule log sparkled and blazed brightly on the Christmas eve; and oxen were roasted whole, and beef and ale were never wanting, if, perchance, the sorrow-stricken and suffering found their way, as they often did, to Dovercourt.

The lady of the Manor House, too, did full credit to her husband's choice, for Mistress Mainwaring was, though not without her faults, (who is I should like to know?) still, in many points, a model lady; loving dearly the young maidens—her daughters—Margaret and Bertha, and also regarding with a mother's honest pride, that tall, handsome son of her's—the rising barrister—Herbert Mainwaring. Then there was another member of the family whom we have forgotten, for he, by virtue of his holy calling, should, surely, have come before the maidens and the barrister; we mean the saintly chaplain of Dovercourt, a man whose life was without blemish; who never staid his lips with flattery;—who paid no idle compliments to those around him, for the sternness of truth was ever on his tongue; and who was the father of the poor at Ashdale. Such was Hubert de Coucy, the venerable French priest, who was chaplain at Dovercourt Manor, for its master was of the Catholic faith.

The squire and his wife had, with their son, accepted an invitation to the ball so lately held at Fairview, and, a few days later, Mrs. Mainwaring had received the Montagues at her own house. It was not in the power of Mrs. Montague to hold her peace on any subject, consequently, Mrs. Mainwaring was the unwilling recipient of her confidence. Poor Fraulein's shortcomings were unmercifully handled, and the mention of the unfeeling notice she had so promptly received, raised, to somewhat of indignation, the usually placable and quiet Mrs. Mainwaring, while her friend ended by remarking, 'I wonder for my part, how it is that you have managed so well, Miss Segrave was with you for years.'

'True,' replied the lady, in her dry, quiet way, 'and you might, doubtless, have this Fraulein Flohrberg with you for years also, as many of your former governesses might have been, if you did not look, as I am apt to think you do, for too many perfections in one person.'

'One must receive a fair return for the salary one gives,' replied Mrs. Montague, 'I am inclined to think I have merely been more unfortunate than yourself.'

Here the conversation closed, and Mrs. Mainwaring mused within herself, remembering, as she did, that this very hard dealing person had, if report spoke truly, at one time of her life been the needy and fawning slave of another, whom she lived with as companion.

It is evening at Dovercourt; a quiet family party have assembled, and a very different party they indeed are to those at Fairview, for, though there be much of good in George Montague and his younger daughter, still, the presiding genius of the place is his lady wife, and, unfortunately, one bad disposition in a family too often sways and exercises an evil influence over all.

'I have had a few moments' conversation with the German lady now at Fairview, as governess,' said the squire, on the evening to which we have alluded, 'and who think you should be her intimate friend at Coblenz, but General O'Donnell.'

'General O'Donnell! can he be any relation to Mary, papa,' chimed in two voices at the same time. 'I have heard her say her uncle was in the Austrian service; is he now at Coblenz?'

'Exactly so, my dear,' replied the squire, 'and I feel interested in the young lady on this account, and sorry that she should ever have come to Fairview,' but, he added, addressing his wife, 'was it not your intention to invite Mary here for a few months, as some return for the hospitality with which we were received at Innismore?'

'The invitation has already been sent,' replied his wife, 'but it may perhaps arrive too late, for, if all we have heard be true, it is not unlikely that Mary has already left Innismore, for the cloister in which she was educated. Poor Mary,' added the lady, with a sigh, 'with such a youth, and such memories of the past, is it possible she can ever know what we understand by the term happiness?'

'But I thought,' said her son, 'that these O'Donnells, whom I have heard speak of, were well-to-do people, and, that this Mary, with whom Bertha and Margaret became so intimate during your sojourn in Ireland, was their only daughter. What unpleasant reminiscences can she have to make her unhappy.'

'Enough, quite enough to make her miserable as long as she lives, unless she is patient and resigned; her story is a very sad one, for Mary is not the daughter of the O'Donnells, but only their adopted child.'

Herbert Mainwaring leant forwards saying, 'You have excited my curiosity, as before I bid you farewell, to return to my gloomy old cham-

bers in the Temple, I must insist on hearing all about Mary O'Donnell, as I must still call her till you tell me her real name.'

'Well, then, now for my story,' said Mrs. Mainwaring. 'When first I became known to the O'Donnells, you are well aware that they were not living on the fine old estate of Innismore, but had removed along with Mary, for a few months, to a delightful country villa some miles distance from the Cove of Cork. A lovelier place I never witnessed than the fairy-like domain, small though it was, in which they had taken up their abode. A range of hills, at the back of the villa, were abundantly stocked with trees and evergreens of various descriptions;—roses climbed luxuriantly over the white walls of the house; clematis, honey-suckle, and jasmone, creeping, amidst their branches. Mary was absent, she was spending the evening, to which I allude, in company with Bertha and Margaret, at the house of a mutual friend, and Mrs. O'Donnell and I were seated together, enjoying the sweet, balmy air, laden with the perfume of the flowers that grew around in such wild luxuriance, when suddenly, the quietude of the scene was disturbed by the soft, faint sound of a female voice, sweet, though feeble in its tones, and it warbled forth a plaintive, melancholy air, not unfamiliar to my ears. The peculiar sweetness of the voice had attracted my attention, and whilst I listened, the sound drawing nearer, yet nearer, my attention was attracted by an exclamation of alarm from Mrs. O'Donnell; even in the fastly growing twilight I observed that her countenance had become deadly pale; and ere I could speak, the crashing of branches in the garden struck upon my ear, and the next moment the half clad figure of a woman—who, squalid and haggard as was her appearance, yet bore the traces of former beauty—appeared at the French window which opened on to the lawn before the house, and, pushing hastily aside the clematis which hung over it, she rushed into the room, and I beheld her crouching on her knees before Mrs. O'Donnell, whose averted face and outstretched hands told me that this apparent beggar was no stranger.

'Have mercy on me, and let me but speak to her before I die,' exclaimed the wretched being; 'let me see the face of my own child, once more.'

'Never, never, Adele Maguire; you know not what you ask,' replied Mrs. O'Donnell. 'Does she not believe you to be dead? Has she not long borne our name, with no reproach attached to her? Call you this affection for your child, or right to me, thus to seek to break your most solemn vow? No, I will not permit this, but I will give you money to help your necessities, and I then insist on your immediately quitting this place.'

'And is it yourself, my foster sister, who is after forbidding me to see my child,' replied Adele, rising and wringing her hands. 'Ah, surely, ye never had a child of your own, and know not how strong is the love of a mother;—and as to your money,' she exclaimed, throwing from her the purse Mrs. O'Donnell had dropped in her hand, 'I want none of it; I would sooner go beg the country through, than owe it to ye, if ye keep me to my vow.'

'You will keep your promise, Adele Maguire,' replied Mrs. O'Donnell, in a tone of cool determination, 'if you really love your child, the instant that you break it, Mary returns to want, to wretchedness, and to you.'

'What sad mystery, then, was couched beneath the words I had heard! Was Mary, then the fair, accomplished, and elegant Mary, the child, not of my wealthy friend, but of the miserable, emaciated being before me?'

'I would willingly shut out from memory the remembrance of the piercing, heart-trying shriek which burst on my ear, as my friend spoke thus. The next moment the unfortunate woman had disappeared from my sight, and I beheld Mrs. O'Donnell terrified, and trembling with agitation. I felt sorry I had been present, aware, as I was, that she would feel it necessary to confide to the secret connected with the parentage of the elegant and accomplished girl we had been led to consider as her own child. We were not likely to be interrupted by the return of the young people; the evening air was delightful, it seemed a positive shame, too, to shut out the bright rays of the moon. But my friend thought otherwise; perhaps, too, she dreaded the return of her unwelcome visitor: so that as it may, she immediately rang for lights, and ordered the servants to close the shutters. Again alone, she seated herself beside me on the couch, and began by remarking—

'You, doubtless, thought me very cold and stern in my manner to that poor unfortunate, who has just left us.'

'I saw that she waited for a reply, my whole heart was with that miserable being, and I stammered out; 'doubtless you have some sufficient reason for acting as you have done; I never form an opinion hastily.'

'You have gathered, however, enough to make known to you that Mary is not our child,' she added. 'Now I will tell you her story. Adele Maguire was my foster sister, her mother being an humble friend of the late lady of Innismore; she had married a tolerably well-to-do farmer, but, my being left motherless, and her baby being about the same age as myself, she insisted on giving me that nurture of which I had been deprived, in consequence of the death of my mother. Adele grew up a bright eyed, blooming, and affectionate girl, and, as in my childhood she was constantly at the castle, we may be said to have grown up together, so in my youth we were destined not to be parted, for she was ever there as my attendant, though rather regarded in the light of an humble friend and companion, than in any other capacity. Adele was about 19 years old when she came to tell the lady of Innismore that she had promised her hand in marriage, to a young man well known to be mixed up with some of those ardent and disaffected spirits so constantly to be met with, and whose misguided efforts, in the cause of their country, so often bring down trouble on their own heads. We were aware that he was connected with a secret association, and, as my friends really had Adele's interest at heart, they earnestly prayed her to retract the promise she had given; but in vain, passion usurped the place of prudence, and she was alike deaf to the pleadings of her mother, as to the entreaties of the family at Innismore.—In an evil hour, she married him, and for a long time we saw nothing of her; but we heard that Bernard Beardon was never at his home, that for hours together Adele too was absent; till the unfortunate news at last burst on the wretched mother's ears that several of the leaders were caught, and a hot search was instituted for Adele's husband; for many weeks he lurked amidst the recesses of the mountains, a half-starved, wretched being, the military closely following up the track they had in view: the now miserable Adele, watching, perhaps the whole length of a summer's day, could, he, but through her means, allay the pangs of hunger with a dry potato, and crouching beneath the shelter of the rocks, so as not to be caught when conveying to him this poor relief, and conscious all the while that he was dying of starvation. However, to be brief, said Mrs. Mainwaring, 'for I am telling you the story almost in the words of Mrs. O'Donnell, he was at last captured, and the then distracted wife, deaf to the entreaties of her mother, watched at the gate of the jail, to which she was refused admittance, during three weary days. She then became a mother, and when the time appointed for the trial came on, the unhappy woman was in the court house with her newborn baby; sentence of death was pronounced, and the distracted wife broke through the crowd and threw herself at the feet of judge, and her child on his robe, and wildly exclaimed, 'Oh, in mercy kill me, too; the witnesses have sworn falsely, he does not deserve to die.' A scene of terrible confusion ensued, and she was carried, shrieking wildly, out of the court-house, not to her own home, to which her willfulness and folly had led her, but to a comfortable dwelling provided by her broken-hearted mother. For many weeks she hovered between life and death; but one morning whilst the unconscious babe lay nestled in her mother's bosom, the light of reason returned. She had been an undutiful daughter to her, but the poor mother had left her happy home to seek and to save her; she held the innocent babe forward to receive a kiss; and seeing that she was wishful to speak, but that no sound rose to her lips, my poor foster mother guessed what she would say, and exclaimed,—

'Praise God, Marvourneen; praise Him in yer heart—for he is not dead but transported!—

Adele spoke not, but her tears fell thick and fast, as she listened to her mother's words. When she recovered, it was her mother's earnest wish to take her home with her; but no, she could not content herself without her husband, and, in the madness of her sinful affection, she besieged and got admittance to many persons of rank and influence in the country, beseeching them to let her go out to him. From each one she got the same reply, 'none but criminals had been sent out to the colony to which her husband had been transported.' She forgot every duty, every virtue, and resolved even to become a criminal for the sake of the idol she had set up in her heart to worship. To be brief, the miserable, half-demented woman committed a crime, which forced the judge to transport her, too, and, with her babe, she left Ireland for the same penal settlement. However, when she got to the end of her journey, she found that her husband was stationed far up the country, whilst she was to remain near the town. She wrote to him, but weeks lengthened into months, and Adele received no answer. She had behaved so well that she was left much at liberty, and that liberty she made use of to further her escape, taking her child with her, and roving, like some wild animal, through a wild country, and—she found him.

'Here Mrs. O'Donnell paused. I was certain, from the difficulty she had to proceed, and from the tears that moistened her eyes, that the worst remained to be told, and that Adele's mad idolatry of the creature for whom she had abandoned her Creator, the object of the wild and ungovernable attachment which filled her heart, and for whom she had become a thief, had met with that punishment which so often awaits, even in this life, those who forsake every other duty for this insane and passionate attachment to the idol they set up in their hearts and worship as their God.

'At length my friend continued. 'Adele found her husband, as I have told you. But how? Why, as a free man; well to do, prosperous, successful in the settlement to which he had been transported, and, moreover, married to the daughter of a wealthy overseer.'

'I really do not know you,' he exclaimed, as Adele, wishful to surprise him, stole upon him unawares, in the garden that enclosed his comfortable home. Coldly and calmly had those words been said, and bursting into tears, she exclaimed,

'Am I after all, then, so much altered that you do not know me; but look, see, my Barnard, here are the lines I have carried in my bosom ever since we were after being married, and these will show I am indeed your wife.'

'Is it possible, then, that it be ye, Adele,' said the deceitful hypocrite, 'I had entirely forgotten ye; ye are so much changed after all thy trouble; but keep very quiet, and I will do ye justice. I am well off, now, and if you go into yonder shed I'll fetch you and the child some food; bless ye, my little Mary,' said he, taking the little girl in his arms and kissing it, and then turning to his wife he urged her to retire to the shed, in which she could shelter herself for the present.

'Foolish Adele, she forgot all his falsity, as she looked upon his face once more; and when, true to his promise, he visited her in the evening, she little recked the weight of the blow that was in store for her.

'Let me look once more,' said Beardon, 'at the lines ye showed me this morning, Adele, marvourneen, they'll make be after thinking of the past, and of the pleasant days we passed in old Ireland.'

'In all the simplicity and confidence of unbounded affection, Adele drew the soiled crumpled paper she had so often blistered with her tears from the receptacle in which it had been so fondly treasured through many a sad and dismal hour. But what was her horror, her indignation and surprise, on beholding him tear the paper into a thousand pieces. The distracted woman fell on her knees, and a wild imprecation trembled on her lips, but the innocent child pressed its sweet face to hers, and the already half-uttered curse was changed into a bitter, despairing cry; all power seemed to have left her; she fell prostrate on the ground, whilst he stood coldly by, offered her money to relieve her necessities, and threatened if she did not depart at once, he would send her back as a runaway convict; and then, wishing her good-night, told her he would give her till the morning to consider the proposal. Wretched, infuriated being, rightly punished, severe as was her chastisement for her blind idolatry, for, weak as she was she must needs crawl after him, to see his shadow on the grass, and then returning and praying God to direct her, mingled her tears with those of her child.

'Long and sleepless was that wretched night to both, and ere the dawn of day had well nigh broke, the mother caught the sudden inspiration of her child.

'Let us go home, mother; why do we stay here?' she whispered.

'Yes, why am I after staying here? Why do I stay here, again to meet that cold, cruel face, to listen to the harsh threats of him for whom I have sinned and brought such trouble on me?'

'Long, long, did the wretched woman toil onward through that wild and desert country, before she reached the spot she had quitted, and, said she,

'I was feared they would be hard on me, but they weren't, and, when my time was up, they would have kept me there, but I wanted to set my foot once more, on the green sod of my dear native land, and to see my mother before she died; they would have kept the little girl too, but she would not leave me.'

'And again I looked on dear old Ireland, and went up to the old home; but the mother who had loved me, only too well, had died of grief, though the grass was not yet green on her grave.'

'Yes, changes had taken place during the long period of Adele's absence; the venerated lady of Innismore had passed to her rest, leaving myself in her place; and never shall I forget the night on which my wretched foster sister again stood before me. It was in the grey twilight of