

(CONTINUED FROM THIRTEEN.)

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Kate came, with a fitting blush and a sweet smile, and told Mr. Morewood, a gain, how very much obliged she felt to him, and all the rest of it.

And then Miss Vi walked off with Harry Rolleston, and left those other two together. Vi and Harry Rolleston's being together did not commend itself at all to the prudent mother-mind of Mrs. Muggleton.

Harry was no match for pretty Vi; and, certainly, it would be a thousand pities if Morewood—who was all that could be desired—should fall to the share of Kate Lisle.

Mrs. Muggleton liked Kate very much; but it wasn't natural she should like her well enough to wish her to make a better match than her own daughters.

However, if poor Mrs. Muggleton were not perfectly happy, the four pairs of young folk seemed as though they thought there was nothing left to be desired.

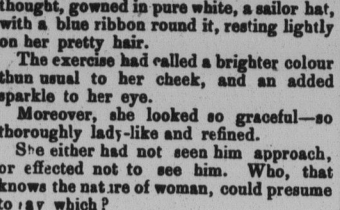
Sir Granville Grantley was in close attendance on Miss Janetta; Harry Rolleston monopolized Vi; and Morewood took care to keep in the near neighborhood of Kate Lisle.

The only other couple were Marie Muggleton and the Reverend Mr. Tiptait, who had "dropped in" at The Towers, in order to discharge those duties as a Christian and a clergyman to which he was so conscientiously alive.

Just at first these two had been afflicted with unsatisfied longings. Mr. Tiptait had thought Vi by far the most charming of the millionaire's daughters, and, consequently, the one whom he most wished to obtain; and Miss Marie had certain maiden yearnings in the direction of John Morewood and Beech Royal.

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could tell you how pleased I am to see you. "I know, me boy, I know. Ye needn't trouble to find a single word."

"And where have you dropped from—the skies? It would be just like you." "No, me boy, no. I haven't been there yet," said the Irishman, with a look of shrewd humor. "I've simply come from the old country"—landed at Holyhead last night—and thought I must run down and take a look at ye before I set out again."

"Set out! Where on earth are you going now?" "Anywhere. I'm not particular." "Well, it you want to go to a fresh place it's my belief it's not in this world you'll find it, for you must already have been to every spot on earth. I never saw such a restless, roving fellow as you, Donovan."

"Why, my dear fellow," said the Irishman, suddenly growing serious, "what can I do? I can't stay there and starve!—and he pointed westward. "At least, some people think that I oughtn't to do it. For myself, I'd about as lief die in old Ireland as live in any other place; and if I thought they'd bury this old carcass of mine anywhere else when the soul's out of it, why, be jabers! I'd never lie still in me grave. I love the old place just so; but, nevertheless, what can I do?—as I was saying just now."

"I can't bear to stay at the castle, and not keep it up as fits a Donovan. That's about the truth of it, me boy; and so I'm going on me travels again, as I've been many a time before."

And with this Sir Patrick Donovan—late Major of Her Majesty's Dragoons—threw back his head, almost fiercely, while a look of determination flashed in his blue eyes. "He was something of 'a character"—a choleric, fire-eating, devil-may-care Irishman, with a spirit as bold as a lion's, a heart as gentle as a child's.

Everybody who knew him, loved him, and, indeed, it was difficult to help loving Sir Patrick Donovan. If his spirit remained almost boyishly gay at forty-five, it was not because he had not had troubles and misfortunes enough to crush half-a-dozen men less brave than he. The Donovans were one of the oldest of the old Irish families.

Kingly blood ran in their veins; and Castle Donovan, in ancient days, has been one of the strongholds of Ireland. But they were poor—poor with no common poverty; and, rather than back-rent the few toll worn peasants who still owed, and cheerfully paid, fealty to "The Castle," Sir Patrick had gone out into the world as a soldier-of-fortune.

In earlier years he had had a brother, many years younger than himself, a fair-faced, slender stripling whom he had loved with a tender, self-sacrificing love—as, with his own mother might he have loved him. He had fallen into bad company, had contracted debts impossible for him to pay, and then, in a sudden frenzy of remorse and agonized despair, had put a bullet into his heart on me less brave than he.

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CHAPTER XVI.

LAWN TENNIS. A couple of afternoons later, Morewood made his call at The Towers, and found Mr. Muggleton alone, in the drawing-room.

"My girls are playing tennis," said the millionaire. "Prhaps you'd like to go and have a look at them?" Before Morewood could reply, Mrs. Muggleton bustled in, full of anxiety to do honour to a guest so distinguished as the master of Beech Royal.

"I'm so pleased to see you, Mr. Morewood. We were wondering when you'd give us a call. It's very kind of you, I'm sure; and now you are here, I hope you'll stay a little. My young people are having a game at ten. They look very happy over it, don't they? Just look at them, Mr. Morewood. You can see them quite well from this window."

The good lady bustled across to one of the windows, as she spoke, and Morewood followed her, thinking how pleasantly motherly she looked, with her face glowing with pride, as she pointed out her daughters.

"That is my youngest who is playing now—a very good player, I'm told she is. Mr. Morewood, I don't profess to know much about the game myself. Do you?" "Well, no. I can use a racquet without making myself look ridiculous—that's about all."

"Will you have a game now? Do, Mr. Morewood. They would be so pleased, I know." "Thank you, I think I will. At any rate, I'll go and look on, if I do nothing more. Perhaps they'll want an umpire!"

He had glanced at the six or eight people on the tennis-ground, and had seen that Miss Lisle was among them. Perhaps this was the reason he had acquiesced so readily in Mrs. Muggleton's suggestion.

The good lady herself led the way to the tennis-court; and Vi, racket in hand, came to meet him, with great animation. "Oh, Mr. Morewood, you're a perfect godsend! We were just wishing for another gentleman. How charming of you to come at the right moment!"

Morewood laughed, and made some fittingly courteous reply. Vi looked very pretty, in cool, fresh pink muslin, with her sparkling eyes daintily waving dark hair; and at another time, he would, probably, have constituted himself her partner, but to-day he felt quite willing

to resign her to Harry Rolleston, who was hovering near. His own attention was taken up with watching Kate Lisle, who was playing with much energy and skill.

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CHAPTER XVII.

SIR PATRICK DONOVAN. Sir Gerald was strolling through his own park, one sunny September afternoon, when suddenly, he gave an exclamation of delight, and hurried across the grass with both hands outstretched, in eager welcome, towards someone who was coming up the drive.

"My dear Donovan! Is it really you?" "Meself, and none other, me boy," said the new-comer, in a rich Irish brogue. But, indeed, most people would have been certain he was an Irishman before he opened his mouth to speak.

There was a dare-devil look in his dark blue eyes, a rollicking humor in his laugh, which one somehow associates instinctively with the sons of Erin.

For the rest, he was about five and-forty years of age; his fine clear skin was tanned hazel-brown with exposure to foreign suns; his teeth were splendid; his brow was scarred with a sabre cut.

His hair was grey and grizzled, and he walked slightly lame. "Well!" said Sir Gerald, as he held the other's hand in a long, tight grip. "I wish I

tried to obtain some good thing for which he can offer no suitable equivalent." There was something truly grand about the quiet, manly pride with which Sir Patrick spoke these words.

The look in his blue Irish eyes was a sight worth seeing. After a moment or two, he resumed, more soberly—'By your own showing, this young lady is well worth winning, for her own personal charms alone; and, in addition, she has a fortune of something like a million pounds. Now, what have I, a battered old soldier, to offer in exchange for all this?'

'What have you to offer? By Jove! all that any reasonable woman could desire!' exclaimed Sir Gerald. 'You would make her Lady Donovan for one thing; and an old title, like yours, isn't to be sneezed at, I can tell you. But above and beyond that, there's your yourself, a man with the sweetest temper, and the best heart that ever beat in mortal bosom. Ah, Donovan, you could make your wife the happiest woman in the world!'

'Ye think so, me boy?' said the Irishman, with a swift, warm glance, which showed how he appreciated the other's friendship. 'No; I'm sure of it. I tell you, Marie Muggleton would be a happy woman if she married you. She had to go down on her knees every night to thank Heaven for her husband.'

This time Sir Patrick made no answer. The shadow of a cloud passed over his fine countenance, and there was a far-away look in his eyes. Perhaps Sir Gerald's words had stirred some depth of his big, honest heart in which there lurked a longing for the sweet, of domestic life, the love of wife, the smiles and prattle of children.

Assuredly no man was more fitted than he for the relations of husband and father. Sir Gerald was right in that. His wife, it ever he had one, would be indeed a happy woman.

'And you know,' went on Sir Gerald, 'if you can't go in for that girl, there's plenty of others who will. You'll leave her to fall into worse hands—that's all.' 'There's a smooth-tongued parson after her at the present time. I should like to see him bowled over, for he is a sneaking humbug, if ever there was one. I love the Church, as you know, Donovan; and, on the whole, her clergy are men to be respected; but, of course, there are black sheep. And if Augustus Tiptait isn't a bit of a hypocrite, I'm a Dutchman!'

Tiptait! said Sir Patrick. 'You never mean old Gowan's nephew?' 'Yes; do you know him?' 'A bit!'

'And you don't care for him?' 'I should think not!' said Sir Patrick, laughing. 'A pink faced, simpering fool. Gowan's ashamed of him, I can tell you that. I hope he doesn't call himself an Irishman.'

'He doesn't. He's ashamed of his grandmother's country,' said Sir Gerald, dryly. 'Begorra! he is, is he, the dirty scoundrel!' exclaimed Sir Patrick, his eye blazing with excitement. 'Then let me tell ye, me boy, his grandmother's country is ashamed of him! The miserable shalpeen, to dare to say a word against old Ireland!'

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