

The Mystery of Killard.

PART II.—THE WHIMS OF PLUTUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOST MARY.

"Ah, yes! Ah, yes! It is a good while ago. Let me see; let me see. How long? Was it not the year I came to Clonmore?"

"Yes, sir; the very year. You may remember we were crossing over the bridge and found you standing here, and we had a talk about the matter, and you told me a lot of learned things about what water might do to the human mind."

"Did I?" in a tone indicating pleasure at the thought of finding his past learned self confirmed by history. "It was not easy to see the features of either clearly, for it was a heavy summer night. Below the bridge of Clonmore the plain lay wrapped in dim, warm mist; overhead the stars blazed in the moist air; and from the abutments of the bridge and the shores of the river rose this murmur of whispering, the half voices of the world, which had no name.

"All right, and remember we walked home together, and saw lame and the Fool, and the next day we went over and you met David Lane and Tom, and I gave the dummy the paper I found on the road."

"Right, quite right. I remember it all." Yet there was something in his voice seemed to indicate that he preferred to have it reflected for him. The memory of the philosopher had begun to fail. His voice was not querulous, but just a little unsteady, as though his weakness of memory, and his desire to remain in ardent prolixity, had led him only in a way to forgetfulness.

"You may recollect you could make nothing out of the dummy, and leave him to the world again. There is a man in thought. When the affliction was removed from his race there seems to have rushed in a wild and mad longing to do something, to prove himself, to win back his lost place in the world. He had been guided by justice under religion?"

"To which Martin would reply quickly, 'We must only hope for the best, and do our best for God,' and this saved the philosopher a speech for want of tact. Prolixity was rather than reticence in his voice, so much so that he preferred to have it reflected for him. The memory of the philosopher had begun to fail. His voice was not querulous, but just a little unsteady, as though his weakness of memory, and his desire to remain in ardent prolixity, had led him only in a way to forgetfulness.

"I don't say you said those words exactly."

"No, I do think I could not have used language so closely even then."

The tone of triumph had increased, and, to judge by his voice, the old man's face must have been flushed with the effort the emphatic nod and exclamation.

"I ask your pardon sir, if I have done amiss. I had no harm in what I said. I thought that learning could do almost anything, and a simple man could learn like a fool. 'Less than nothing' is a poor man's motto, and that one of your son's knowledge could talk of it well. I must have forgotten your words."

"Do not trouble yourself further about the matter, my dear Mr. Cahill; we will never forget you right or wrong point; we will never forget anything. We must now review a part of our past, but we cannot forget it. The fact is stored up somewhere in the mind."

"Ah, now!"

"Yes, stored up somewhere in the mind."

He paused. His voice had grown low and tender as it had been, still readily recalling something to his memory, and he turned his head, so his accents trembled, and something bright like a star sparkled on either cheek in the faint silver light.

"Do you think I could ever forget I once had a daughter?"

"Your daughter," cried Cahill, in a moment, turning towards his companion. "Why, I did not know you were ever married, Mr. Heywood."

"She was not exactly my own daughter, but the orphan of my only sister. When my sister died, she left me to review all that is now a long time ago, my beloved little girl."

He hesitated, and leaned against the parapet, or the bridge.

Cahill drew near.

"Is she long dead?"

"Yes, a long while—years before I left Limerick. She was a modest, sweet and intelligent girl. Whenever she came to stay with me, I found she knew not a word of any language but her own—I mean English; and I assure you better than a year ago she had acquired a very respectable, if not perfect, knowledge of French, the rudiments of natural philosophy, and she was about to enter on theology and metaphysics, when—when I left her!"

He waited, and steady his voice, which had become most unphilosophical, as it is with all children, she needed correction now, and then and when she did anything displeasing to me, I always chid her in Greek. That put my conscience at rest, and never disturbed her gravity or studies."

"And what did she die?"

There was a touch of human sympathy in Cahill's voice.

"The doctor killed her. She fell ill of a disease which it is necessary to particularize, for you are not likely to hear of it elsewhere. You will hardly disregard a favorite study. In the pages of my 'Galen' you may have seen a thousand references respecting this complaint. Well, no sooner were the doctors in the house than they would not budge from my study, nor treat my child, nor give up their efforts to find a cure for the malady, nor would they go to the apothecaries to the next town, but they forbade me to administer it; it turned me from the place, and would not allow me to re-enter. Then week my child was dead."

"Oh, the villain!"

"Yes, I was angry with them, and I was angry with all children, she needed correction now, and then and when she did anything displeasing to me, I always chid her in Greek. That put my conscience at rest, and never disturbed her gravity or studies."

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