

As they came opposite Mrs. Miller's cottage, Mamie proposed that they should ask Mary to join them.

"She'll be awfully glad to come, I'm sure," said the laughing Nellie with an arch glance at Frank.

He did not see it, and even if he did, it would have spoken no meaning to him. But he was rather abstracted this evening.

By no means disinclined to yield to his merry cousins, he turned the boat's head towards the bank. Mamie landed and soon returned with Mary, who looked fresh and sweet as the rose which she wore on her breast.

Now the silence was broken, and putting aside his own reflections, which had brought a tinge of melancholy to his face, Frank joined in the talk and laughter. Soon Mary was asked to sing. She did so, but instead of the lively ballad requested, sang a simple little hymn to the Blessed Virgin. Never had her voice sounded sweeter to Frank, for it harmonized perfectly with his present strain of thought. Her beauty seemed etherealized, and it was as though an angel sang.

What gave Frank such exquisite pleasure had an opposite and depressing influence on his young lady cousins. They were full of fun and high spirits, and "this kind of thing was too slow for them." Mentally voting Frank and Mary "too awfully tiresome for anything," they soon requested to be put ashore.

As Frank rowed Mary home, but few words passed between them. He intended to tell her to-night that he was going away. She would be sorry, he supposed, in sisterly fashion. He would also speak to her of Stanley McKenzie.

They stepped from the boat and walked towards the house in silence.

"Where is my mother?" Mary inquired of the servant who brought them lights in the parlor.

"Gone out, Miss, to Mrs. Byrne's," was the reply.

"Won't you sit down, Frank?"

"Thank you," leaning against the mantel, "I think I can talk better standing."

He plunged at once into his subject. "I am going away next week." Mary appeared to be nervous and ill at ease.

"So soon, she said in a low tone, "I

thought you would remain at home this winter."

"I should like to very much, but, 'when duty calls we must obey,'" said Frank trying to seem cheerful. "Shall you be sorry?"

She could only murmur, "Of course."

"But before I go, I must speak of something that concerns me very nearly, and that affects you as well."

Why should her hands tremble so, he wondered, could she guess what was coming?

He paused a moment before continuing, "Mary, Stanley McKenzie loves you."

Her right hand was nervously twisting the bracelet on her left wrist. Why would she not look at him? Was she angry that he should speak to her of this?

At length she said very shortly. "Did he ask you to tell me this?"

"No, but I guessed his secret, and charged him with it."

"He has a noble heart, Mary," he went on, feelingly, "He is worthy of you. Can you not make him some return?"

With agitation that could no longer be concealed, Mary rose and moved towards the door.

Dazed as is a blind man when he first beholds the light of day was Frank Byrne, as the truth at last flashed upon his mind.

"She loves *me*!" There was exultation in the thought.

Advancing towards her with outstretched arms. "Mary, dearest Mary!" he exclaimed, "I have distressed you. Forgive me!"

What mad words he might have uttered he knew not but she spoke again and in a tone which was firm and icily cold.

"I do not love Stanley McKenzie, nor can I ever love him"—but here her voice broke into a wail of sorrow.

"O Frank! how could you be so blind—"

Her tears were falling fast, and Frank, darting forward, would have clasped her in his arms, but she was gone.

Mechanically, like one in a dream, he left the house and walked to his boat. It was not till he had pulled into the middle of the stream, that he could begin to think. The bitterness of his reflections may readily be imagined.

"Fool, madman that I was, not to see