

CHAPTER III

A NEW FRIEND

THE last mile or so of the journey had been particularly lonely. Houses had become less and less frequent. There was here and there a ruined cabin, its gaunt, unroofed walls and hollow window-spaces desolate against the illimitable sky. Now and again a house stood among trees on a patch of reclaimed bog-land. The road, set higher than the bog, and with a sort of moat to either side of it, trailed away through miles and miles of red-brown and green bog-land. The day was a still, grey day of autumn, and the silence was only broken by the lonely call of the snipe and the plover. They passed two or three ancient ruined churches, mere gables standing up behind stone walls. Peering above one Maeve saw the serried ranks of the grave-stones thrusting a head and shoulders above the coarse grasses.

Presently they left the bog behind for a bit, and for a quarter of a mile or so they drove under overhanging trees. They passed through a ragged collection of cabins with one or two larger buildings, which Pat Cosgrove informed her was the village of Meelin.

"'Tis nearin' the end of your journey you are now," he said. "Unless you'd be changin' your mind and comin' back with me. 'Twould be a pleasure to drive ye. If 'twas me own car I'd do it for nothin', for the