

During the story Desmond's face had registered many emotions, and had finally set in one of frozen anger. "Is this Lord Ashley still alive?" he asked.

The girl nodded. "He lives in Claggan Manor," she replied. "Did he ever marry?" Desmond pursued.

"He married when young, but his wife had to leave him on account of the violent fits of temper to which he was subject. They had one child, a girl, which the mother took with her when she left; but neither mother nor child have ever been heard of since. But, by the way, Mr. Walsh, whereabouts are you staying during your visit?" "Since you remind me of it, I have no fixed residence yet. But you mentioned that you had been adopted by the O'Neills. Miss McVeigh, I hope you don't think I wished to intrude in your private affairs when I asked you for the story. I had no idea you were so intimately—"

Maureen waved aside his embarrassment. "Make yourself perfectly at ease, Mr. Walsh. A friend of the O'Neills cannot intrude in my affairs. But I forgot to tell you that when George went to America he made provision for me to be raised at a Sisters' school. I have been there ever since, but I come to this valley every year for my vacation. And now, Mr. Walsh, since you have no definite place to stay—perhaps I was going to suggest that you board with us till you find some place. I stay with an old couple down by the cross-roads."

Desmond caught her hand. "Why, Maureen—" And Desmond stayed with the old couple at the cross-roads.

Desmond could scarcely have found a better guide than Maureen to the places of interest, and the hearts of the people. He found that she was highly educated, but her accomplishments were far different from those of an American girl of the same standing in education; she knew no more about stenography or business than did Erasmus himself, but Desmond found out that she knew the classics from Ovid to Homer.

As they went or came on their long rambles and fishing trips, Desmond and Maureen often saw Lord Ashley. He was generally pottering around some part of his demesne. He was a gray-haired, broken man, though still in his forties. People said he had changed greatly during the last ten years. Once he had spent only his summers in Ireland, and the rest of the time in England or on the Continent. But about the time the O'Neills sold their farm, people said he had changed. Much though he had gloated over their holding while they were there, it was noticed that never once had he visited it since they had gone. The park seemed to be a dream of the past. Soon the English visitors dropped off, and Lord Ashley became better known to his tenants. People said he was repenting for his treatment of his young wife, and his cruelty towards his people. His household knew that he was a broken old man, addicted to morphine.

Once or twice Maureen and Desmond had come upon him suddenly, and a short conversation had generally ensued. Desmond was reticent but the landlord did not seem to notice it, and kept up a conversation with Maureen. He seemed to like her.

"You are fond of fishing, I see," he had said on one occasion. "I have noticed you almost every summer, but your friend here is a stranger to me." Desmond bowed: "Just an acquaintance from America," he replied.

"Indeed, well, any time you are passing you are welcome to my grounds either to see the place or fish in the pond here; I think you will find it good for trout."

The head gamekeeper on the Ashley estate remarked to his wife one night that of late his lordship had taken to rambling a lot around the old farmsteads at the head of the valley, and that he seemed to spend a lot of time at the O'Neill place.

"Perhaps he may be thinking of starting the park at last," she ventured. "It will mean a lot more work for you, Sandy." "I hardly think so, Kate; I don't believe it's that he's thinking about. He seems to wander up the river-side and through the old farmsteads, and when he gets as far as the Pool of the Shadows he just sits down and mopes by the hour. Others, besides the gamekeeper, were beginning to notice Lord Ashley's behavior."

The summer had winged its way across the mountains and woodland. The heather on the hill-side had shed its purple bloom. The trees had long since taken on a self-sufficient look, as dowager-looking they stood in their hoop-dress through the park. The wild flowers were beginning to look a trifle dusty and tired. All the larger trout were gone to the deeper pools. Maureen and Desmond were going back home on the morrow. Desmond had made some very definite plans, and he was waiting for a favorable opportunity to submit them for consideration.

"For our last trip we shall go up through the Fairies' Glen, cross over the Crooked Bridge that leads into Lord Ashley's demesne, take the path that leads through the Raparees' Hollow, and return over the mountain by the Pool of the Shadows," Maureen announced on

the morning of their last day. Desmond merely nodded his head. Somehow he felt in the way every time he had come near Maureen that morning. To make matters worse for him, Maureen seemed absolutely unconscious of his attempts to be super-serious. She laughed and chatted gaily with the old couple.

"It's the lonesome house it will be with the pair of ye gone from us," the old woman said as she handed Maureen the sandwiches; Desmond having gone to the shop for something.

"The pair of us," Maureen echoed. "Why join us up that way, Mrs. Curran?" "Sure, the pair of ye. And whisp'er, Acushla, I'm thinking it will be the last summer you'll be spending with us; sure, its to Boshton he'll be takin' ye. There now, Alanna." And the old woman's wet cheek was pressed against Maureen's flushed face.

"Don't you be getting dotin' in your old age, Mary," and Maureen shook a warning finger at the old woman, "or I'll tell John about it." As Maureen and Desmond crossed the old moss-grown foot-bridge that led out of the Fairies' Glen into Lord Ashley's demesne, they met the old landlord. He was carrying a small bag slung on his shoulders, and seemed to be setting out for a tramp through the mountains. There was a tired, harassed look on his face.

They stopped to say good-bye to him. During the summer Desmond had thawed out somewhat towards him. The old lord had seemed interested in the young American.

Maureen held out her hand: "I must be saying good-bye to you, Lord Ashley. I return to town tomorrow."

The old man's face fell, and a shadow of pain seemed to cross it. A wave of pity for him swept over the girl's soul.

"Well, I suppose," he said, "we must all attend to our duties in life, Maureen," he continued after a moment's silence. "I will miss you. You always reminded me of—of—well, it doesn't matter. See that you have a good day, Maureen, and you, too, Sir." And the old man—for he was old, though his long years were not so heavy—passed across the old broken bridge and turned up the stream.

Psychologists tell us that the mind can occupy itself with only one idea at a time. That would be a philosophic reason why Desmond Walsh was so unresponsive to the charm of the wild beauties through which he passed. He had marked off eight different places—the next one always after he had passed the last—where he would put his hopes to the test, and ask her.

Never had Maureen appeared so beautiful. She wore the very dress in which he had first seen her. All that was good and pure and true seemed to be embodied in the figure by his side that plucked the wild-flowers growing by the path up which they climbed. Oh, for someone like this to understand when all the rest of the world would be unfeeling and cold! There was just one place left where the stage would match the drama—he would have to ask her at the Pool of the Shadows.

"Desmond, shall you ever forget it? Shall you ever forget this view? This country, our beautiful hill-country of sunlight and shadow! Our poor Ireland! No wonder the poets sang about her, and that heroes died for her. She is our land of smiles and tears, of pathos and humor and beauty!"

They were standing on the summit of the mountain overlooking the Braid Valley. Like emerald patches joined together with threads of silver, the fields and streams lay below under the evening haze. Desmond looked from the scenery to the queen standing beside him—no, he would never forget it.

"Maureen," he began, but evidently she did not hear. "Come, Desmond, let us go to the Pool of the Shadows."

And so they came to the Pool of the Shadows, down the old, old trail. The sun was sinking behind the ridge when they reached the floor of the valley. Long shadows were creeping out from the peaks and laying their fingers on the little fields and cottages, as they had crept out and caught them in their laddowy hands, for nobody knows how long the birds were sending out their sleepy "good-nights" across the glades of the woodland. The trail ended at the old Cherry Tree near the head of the Pool. They were at the edge of the stream before they noticed him. He lay on his back beside the willow bush. A small jeweled revolver lay beside him. Desmond sprang from Maureen's side and bent over the motionless form of Lord Ashley.

"Quick, Maureen, give me a handkerchief; the wound is in the neck. He is bleeding slowly. Perhaps if we can staunch the blood he may return to consciousness long enough to tell us something about himself. Though Desmond succeeded in stopping the flow of blood somewhat, it soon became clear that the man was dying.

"Maureen, Desmond asked, "could you go to the Manor and warn them? Tell them to get a doctor, though I don't think human aid can save him. I shall stay here, and if by chance he does return to consciousness I'll try to make him realize that death is upon him."

Neither had noticed another shadow that had suddenly been thrown on the pool. The stranger had crossed the stream; he stood for a few minutes gazing on the young man and on the girl, and on the other figure lying beside the willow bush. Then he spoke.

"What is the matter, Desmond?" Desmond dropped the body and sprang to his feet. A violent terror seized him for a moment, and left him weak and nauseated. "Father O'Neill," he gasped. For a moment the other did not answer. Desmond caught his hand in his own shaking ones. "For God's sake, speak Father."

"It's all right, Desmond, I'm no ghost, but—"

Maureen flew to the priest's side and clutched his arm. "And you, Maureen. Why I would scarcely call you a ghost."

"Oh, Father," she gasped, "can you do anything for him?" And she pointed to the bleeding form on the grass. "It is Lord Ashley, and he has committed suicide."

The priest passed a weary hand across his brow—and then he knelt beside the dying man.

"Soon the priest stood up again. "He won't die for a few hours," he said. "But we must warn the Manor. Can you two go and tell them? I shall stay here. Perhaps I may be able to do some good."

As the two were starting away the priest suddenly called them back. "Maureen," he said, and his throat sounded kind of dry, "it is only my duty to tell you. I know you would never forgive me in after life were I to let false sympathy keep me from telling you the truth. Were I not the only living person who knows about it, I might bolster up my conscience and remain silent, but as it is—"

"For God's sake, Father!" Maureen had turned again and flown to the priest's side. Her face was drawn with anguish, for a horrible thought had flashed through her mind. "Father, you didn't shoot him?"

The priest started. "May God forbid! No, Maureen. How did you ever think such a thing?" For reply, the girl took the priest's hand and tenderly kissed it. "Forgive me, Father, she sobbed. Father O'Neill put his hand on the girl's arm. "Maureen," he said, "it is this: You are Lord Ashley's only child."

For a moment the girl swayed, and Desmond caught her in his arms.

"I am telling you this," the priest continued, "because it is my duty. When your mother left the Manor on the night she parted from your father, she brought you, a little baby, to my mother, and asked her to take care of you till she would return. Your mother was a good woman, Maureen, and only death kept her from coming back for you. You were raised as a niece of ours, and even Lord Ashley never suspected that his child was so near him."

The girl covered her face with her hands. "And, Father, you knew, then, you have known all these years since, that it was my father that killed your brother, caused your mother's death, and scattered your home; and you never threw me out to die on the road-side." Maureen had thrown herself at the priest's feet, but he stooped and raised her up. "Now, Maureen, I have a favor to ask of you." The girl looked at him questioningly. "It is this Maureen, I want you to forgive your father."

She led her over beside the bleeding figure, and slowly the girl stooped and kissed the ashen face. As she did so the eyelids fluttered slightly, and the priest stooped and drew the girl away. "Better for you to go with Desmond now, Maureen. Your father cannot possibly live, and there is no use confusing his last few seconds in case he does regain consciousness. The past is buried, save only as far as what is absolutely necessary he should know. Now, Desmond, please take Maureen away."

Three hours later the party arrived from the Manor. The priest was sitting beneath the old Cherry Tree, and beside him lay a corpse. The moon's light was breaking like rays of grace through the branches. And there was a look of happiness on the dead man's face. Father O'Neill drew Desmond and Maureen aside. "He regained consciousness for about an hour," he said, "and his mind was quite clear. I told him of his daughter, and where she had been raised. It seems, Maureen, that he had gotten to know you, and was even speaking to you this morning. He had made no will, but it was his express wish that you be reinstated, Maureen, at the Manor. I promised to prove your claim, for your mother, when she left you with us, left her marriage and your birth certificates. And now, Desmond, I guess you are surprised to see me here." But Maureen broke in: "What about my father's soul, Father? Did you do anything for that?"

"I baptized your father, Maureen, just five minutes before he died. And now, Desmond, take Maureen home. I want to see the old home-stead once more."

And the young man and the girl watched the gray-haired priest stop a moment by the hollow spot beneath the old Cherry Tree, and then they watched him cross the stream and start down the moonlit meadow toward the old ruins in which his cradle had stood. And then Desmond turned to the girl. "My God,

what a man, Maureen! And what a home-coming!" And Maureen slipped her hand into Desmond's and led him down the old, old trail.

THE STORY OF CHRIST

BY GIOVANNI PAPINI
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BARABBAS
"I find in him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover. Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?"

Taken by surprise, the people did not know what to answer. Until then there had been but one name, one victim, one punishment asked for; everything was as clear as the sky on that mid-April morning. But now, in order, to save that scandal-maker, this impertinent pagan brought into question another name which confused the whole matter. Pilate wanted to free Him; instead of crucifying Him; and now he wanted to crucify another delinquent in His place. By good fortune the Elders, Scribes and Priests were still there and they had no intention of letting Jesus escape. In a flash they suggested the right reply. So that when Pilate asked them a second time which of the two they wished him to free, they answered with one voice, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!"

He was an ordinary delinquent, the man whom the Procurator offered as blood-ransom to those men with such a morbid relish for crucifixions. The common tradition has preserved his memory as a street ruffian, a criminal by profession. But his surname Barabbas, which means Son of Rab, or rather disciple of the Master, since the scholars of the Rabbis were called their sons—shows us that through birth or through study he belonged to the caste of Doctors of Law. Mark and Luke say expressly that he was accused of having committed murder during a sedition, hence a political assassin.

Jesus Barabbas, a student in the school of the Scribes, lamenting over the loss of the Jewish Kingdom, and hating Judea's pagan masters, was probably a Zealot and had been captured in one of the unsuccessful revolts, so common at that time. Was it likely that such an absurd bargain would satisfy the Sadducee and Pharisee assembly which shared the sentiments of the Zealots, even if for reasons of state they hid them, or out of weakness of soul forgot them?

Barabbas, although an assassin, and indeed precisely because he was an assassin—was a patriot, a martyr, persecuted by the foreigners. Jesus, on the other hand, although He had never killed any one, had wished to overturn the law of Moses, and to ruin the Temple. The first, in short, was a sort of national hero, the other an enemy of the nation; there could be no doubt about their choice. "Free Barabbas! Let this man die!" Once more Pontius Pilate had failed to save Christ or himself. He ought to have realized before this, that the leaders of the Jews would not loose their hold on the flesh into which they had already set their teeth, the only flesh which could stay their hunger. Their need for it that day was like their need for bread and air. They would not have left that spot, not even to eat, until they had seen that Bastard Messiah fastened with four nails upon two beams.

Pontius Pilate was cowardly. He was afraid that he was committing an injustice; he was afraid of displeasing his wife; he was afraid of giving satisfaction to his enemies; but at the same time he was afraid to put Jesus in a place of safety; he was afraid to have his soldiers disperse that sullen, arrogant crowd; he was afraid to decide with a clear-cut act of authority that Jesus, the innocent man, should be released, and not Barabbas, the assassin. A real Roman, a Roman of antiquity, of the true Roman stock, would either at once have satisfied the demands of that turbulent crowd and would not have wasted a moment in defending an obscure visionary; or would at once have decreed, from the beginning, that this man was innocent and was under the august protection of the Empire.

By his stratagems, half-measures, indolent questionings, hesitations and partially executed maneuvers Pilate found himself slowly pushed towards a decision he did not wish to make. The fact that he had not at once decided the question with a yes or no had increased the insolence of the High Priests and the excitement of the people. Now there were only two alternatives: either to give in shamefully after resisting so long, or to risk starting a tumult which on those days, when Jerusalem included almost a third of the population of Judea, might become a perilous uprising.

Undone by his cowardly wavering, deafened by the yells, the only thing that came into his mind was to ask once more the advice of men to whom he should have issued orders.

What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? "Crucify him, let him be crucified!"

"Why, what evil hath he done?" "Crucify him! Crucify him!" "What affair is it of this odious foreigner if Jesus had done evil or

not? According to our faith He is an impostor, a blasphemer, an enemy of the people and deserves death. Even if He has done no evil He deserves death because His words are more dangerous than any wicked actions.

"Crucify him! Crucify him!" "Take ye him and crucify him," cried Pilate, "for I find no fault in him."

"We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

The silence of Jesus was more potent than this bestial outcry. They were fighting for the possession of His body, and He seemed scarcely to be aware of it. He knew that from the beginning of time His destiny was sealed and that this was His day. The battle was so uneven! On one side a Gentle, who knew nothing and understood nothing of Him, who did not defend Him through love but through Hate, who did not defend Him openly but with tricks and quibbles, who was more afraid of a revolt than of an injustice, who was stubborn through punctilio and not because of his certainty of Christ's innocence. On the other hand, a threatened clergy, a vindictive bourgeoisie, a crowd, like all crowds, easily incited to evil deeds. It was easy enough to foresee the outcome.

But Pontius Pilate would not yield the point. He would restore Barabbas to his accomplices, but he would not give up Jesus. His first idea came into his head again: to have Him scourged; perhaps when they saw the bruises and the blood dripping from His back they would be satisfied with that punishment and would leave in peace the innocent man who looked with equal pity on the cowardly shepherd and the unruly wolves.

The Procurator had said that he found no fault with Him, and yet he was to have Him scourged with rods. This contradiction, this half-justice, this compromise, is characteristic of Pilate. But it was to be of no avail; like his other efforts, it was merely to add one more shame to his final defeat.

"Let him be crucified!" But Pilate went back into his house and gave Jesus over to the Roman soldiers to be flogged.

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