

lived—he would soon be safe. But as he neared the door he paused—for a brief second only—then made towards the sea; the cliffs between, precipitous and frowning, ran abruptly down till they terminated beyond measure. Nan staggered her pace yet more, urged on by the fearful certainty that a fall from those dizzy heights meant instant death, tragic and horrible.

She saw him lift his arms, clutching at the air, as if in pursuit of some eerie phantom.

Long before had her veil been caught by some thorny bush; her dress, too, was torn, but she heeded none of this. Her legs were shaking, her breath was gone; "Father, father," she tried to call, but the words clung to her dry throat.

Then—it was but an instant later, her heart stood still, he had reached the edge of the craggy rocks; one moment more, and he would be hurled headlong down, down, from point to point.

She clasped her hands and shut her eyes not daring to behold that awful leap.

But he had tarried, and when she looked again, he was standing on a clod of turf, his arms still outstretched, his eyes fixed, gazing straight before him.

A yawn scudding along, ploughed its way through the waters, leaving a long wake behind; he seemed to follow its every movement.

"Father," Nan almost whispered; she could bear the suspense no longer, yet dreaded to surprise him.

"Nan," he answered, his face still averted; his voice filled her with awe, for he spoke with a strange dignity and emotion; "Mavourneen, the boat is leavin', leavin' forever!"

There was more in the meaning than in the mere words, yet Nan failed to expound it.

He pointed to the distant ocean, dim in the morning haze; "So it is, acushla, stop it!" he shouted imploringly; the craft had tacked, and a strong land breeze was driving it farther away, into the open sea beyond.

Tim too late, he gasped, watching it intently, "an ye might have saved it, Nan, ye might have brought it back."

Attracted by this unusual scene, the villagers, one by one, had gathered round; scarce, indeed, they felt as they beheld that lonely figure halt on the jutting crag, and, as his voice rang out in language shrill and wild, they shivered as they heard him cry, while Nan, powerless to act, crouched on the ground.

The minutes passed. Tim spoke no more, but strained his eyes in earnest as the yawl sped ever onwards. Those about him marked its progress anxiously; it neared the harbor's mouth, it became a mere speck, and round the rocks it sailed, a white flutter, and it had disappeared from view. Tim shrieked as he saw it vanish, "This gone," he wailed, and there was an infinite pathos in his voice, "the blessing of Doonennis has gone for aye."

He flung up his hands with a despairing gesture, his body swayed to and fro, and he fell backwards, with a thud on the ground.

With one impulse the neighbors crowded round the prostrate form, while Nan, in broken accents, called him in edifying terms. As they raised him from the ground, a bent figure thrust herself among the foremost; it was Nereh Quinn, who still told for Nan.

Sickness was no unfamiliar sight to her, and how many in Doonennis were the eyes she closed in death. A single glance sufficed to tell her that human aid was vain; mournfully she shook her head, crossed herself, and, "God rest his soul!" they heard her murmur low.

The words seemed to reach Nan, as a far-off echo, a dismal scene in one long nightmare; would she not soon awaken to find it all a hideous dream, and brightness only of her wedding day to greet her?

As in a vision and with eyes dimmed, she saw her father borne aloft; two men were carrying him away from her, but she did not strive to follow in their path; her limbs seemed void of action, her tongue of speech; her eyes alone were capable of serving her; it was little they conveyed to her torpid brain. A confused sound of many voices reached her, indeed, but she distinguished no words, save three alone, "He is dead, he is dead."

As they rang in her ears and sounded deep within her heart, a hand fell upon her shoulder, a hand she thought she heard the voice of Roger, "Nan, Nan dear!" it called.

"Who is dead?" she asked dreamily, without turning her face away. Naught else was of concern to her while she gazed upon that poor still form, the grey head resting wearily on its bearer's breast, the arms limply hanging at its side; she must watch it till out of sight.

Thus, almost mechanically, she reiterated, "Who is dead?"

The answer came—it sounded cruelly abrupt; "Your father, poor man," was the sole response. Then, and only then, did the real truth dawn on Nan, and the stupor seemed to pass away; her eyes fell suddenly, and her head sank low. She was weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER III.

"Come, Nan dear, come," Roger expostulated gently, and he slipped his hand into hers.

She was standing over her father's grave, as it lay open before her—standing vacantly into its depths—her arm still raised, as when one of the first she had cast a clod of earth upon the coffin. Hearing it strike upon the wood below, she had shivered slightly, but quickly regained her composure. The wind blew sharply over the hill, the group of sympathizers gradually dispersed, the older ones, who lingered behind, in the end hurrying home, as a shower of rain caught them unawares; but Nan, caring little for the inclement weather, stood, with an aching heart over the earthly remains of Tim Dougherty.

Again Roger urged her: "My darling, you must come," he repeated authoritatively, when at last she heard him obeyed. Together they left

the cemetery, Nan not daring to look back: from afar she had seen the old grave-digger who, spade in hand, was impatient to begin his lugubrious task; soon would the dust of earth conceal its own, and another mound be raised to mark the swelling number of the dead.

It was Nan who first spoke: "Roger, ashore," she murmured in a sad voice, as they passed out of the swinging gate, "ye are the only one I have now, the only one to love an' care for me."

"My sweet Nan," he answered, closing her shawl more tightly round her, "I'll be kind and good to you always."

"I know it, I know it," was her reply, "how could it be otherwise?" and tenderly she lifted her grey eyes to his.

"Dear heart," he rejoined, and bending down kissed her upturned face.

In the months that followed, Nan almost ceased to remember those former days of grief; remorse, indeed, she felt at times; poor father had suffered much, she knew it well, but present happiness helped to chase away the gloomy thoughts that sometimes would arise, and before the anniversary of Tim's death drew near the dreamy look had vanished from her eyes, the wrinkles from her brow.

"My husband is so kind," she would say, as some old crony, hobbling by would drop in to rest her stiff limbs awhile, "niver a bit will he let me do for myself, tis the unselfish and good man that he always is; and her face absolutely beamed with honest pride and joy. All day long, too, she would sing about the house, gaily scrub the floors, or with undaunted energy, dig in seed-potatoes; nothing was hard for the power of love, it gilded both hours of toil and rest.

Her bliss, however, was shadowed by one cloud; but for its presence she would have been the happiest woman in Doonennis Bay; she had not yet won Roger to the Faith. It had seemed so easy in theory, a compliant ideal: some prayers, a few talks, and all would be accomplished.

But she had not reckoned with her host, and it was only by degrees she learnt the power of the foes she had to deal with: deep-rooted antagonism, bigotry, and, as time wore on, open hostility; these met her at every turn, and when successfully she had disposed of some, others would rise to menace her hopes.

At first Roger put her off with a light laugh: "You'll never win me over, little woman," he would say, "so, please me, let us talk of other things," and opening a paper, he would discuss the topic of the day with unabated ardor.

But it pained Nan to feel that, with interests akin in all else, they were divided in religion: one in love and in toil, in the great mainstay of life they were not united. She could not bear to think that for her, should never learn to pray, she should never have named a prayer to the Mother of God, while it touched her to the quick to contemplate his soul, unwashed perhaps, never absolved, and alas! his eyes, so prompt to perceive her slightest want, were blind to the Sacrament of Love.

Seeing her words, however, bore no effect, she abstained from controversy; instead, her own fervor and increased her devotions. This seemed to irritate Roger: it's your duty to stray at home," he complained, when, one day, Nan had stolen a leisure moment to pray in church, "you should darn my clothes or be cleaning the pots, but off you go to the chapel and pray, and I am to attend to inside."

Not even a stern reproof grieved Nan more than she cared to show, or even acknowledgment to herself, but trusting for better times, she bravely hid her distress beneath a smile.

The next day, again, her patience was destined to be sorely tried; she was busily plying her needle, she began to sing, according to custom, she fell the words of a familiar hymn. Nan had always had a pretty voice, soft and true, and often had Roger leant a ready ear to its pleasing notes: from the adjoining room he could hear her now, but his face grew dark as he listened; he was somewhat tired, he felt angry, he was a fit subject upon a sudden, his humor. Nan's melody was suddenly dour, a note was noisily flung down and Roger appeared in the doorway: "I have listened to that song once too often," he growled, stamping his shoeless foot upon the tiled floor, "and I tell you, I'll not have it again," whereat he turned up on his heel, leaving Nan to her own sad thoughts.

Thus were paved the stepping stones of greater sorrows still to come, the first drops of her bitter chalice, which, forsooth, she must drink to the dregs.

Another trial presently awaited her, a trial of a different nature, but nevertheless one hard to bear: Doonennis Bay soon her place no more, for Roger, a hired hand, had accepted a new post, and with his wife, returned to the boat and the looked behind, to bid farewell to friends and native shores, a tender yearning leapt into her soul, and, when the many landmarks became mere specks and shapeless dots upon the granite rocks, she strained her eyes to catch the last of the well-known hills: never so nameless fear told her she would never see them again.

Arrived at their destination she looked about her; there was not a station on Cornwall's rugged coasts, nor yet on a Kentish headland, but low built on the eastern shores of Britain, by the inroads of the sea an island at high tide; rushes and coarse grass around, with here and there a hillock of grey sand. What a poor substitute for the frowning, stately cliffs guarding her old home!

A small row of neat, white cottages, the white ensign flapping in the evening breeze; these, indeed, struck a tender chord of recollection in Nan's weary mind, but they only seemed to make the contrast more telling, when she turned to the flat and sandy wastes before her.

Thus three days passed; with an

aching heart she longed to tell her woe to God, to seek guidance, strength and peace, and she asked the way to church.

"How on earth should I know?" Roger somewhat roughly answered, mounting a chair as he spoke to mend a broken blind, and she continued her washing in silence.

One after another she inquired of the neighbors scattered round, but either her brogue evoked a rude stare and grin, or her question a cross reply of "I do not know."

At length, however, an old woman whom she had asked some days before came late one evening, and rapping with bony knuckles on the door, grimly announced that the Papist chapel, the nearest anywhere about, lay "a good eight miles and more, on the road beyond the ferry and the flats."

"Eight mile an' more," repeated Nan as she thought of the church at home with just a field to separate it from their cottage-door, and she sighed deeply; but recalling the ten, nay, even fifteen miles that many had to cover across the Galway hills to hear their Sunday Mass, she turned to thank the woman with a grateful smile. "An' if you could William Dennis did it, why not I?" was her comment, added low.

And she did it, though it was only by dint of preserving haste that she managed to return in time to cook their mid-day meal.

The ensuing week saw heavy rains, and swollen roads in consequence, but the following Sunday, nothing daunted, she again tramped over the flats. On her way back, however, she had long to wait at the ferry, the punt having drifted into some flooded meadow land close by.

Conveyed across at last, she pushed on with all speed, but the ground, sodden and sticky, sucked in her weary feet, and it was late before the sea was reached.

"Here I am, waiting for my dinner," Roger called out in angry tones, as, tired and breathless, Nan crossed the threshold. He was sitting by the fire, moodily smoking, his legs stretched out to the chimney, and he had been waiting for her for some time, as he pointed to the clock.

"It's just upon 2," he growled, "and there's nothing on the table."

"I'll be ready at once, sure 'tis all here in the cupboard, an' the stew on the hob," Nan pleaded, as with one hand she cast away her shawl and with the other set forth the dishes.

But Roger was not so easily appeased. "I'll not have you go there again," he muttered, and seeing Nan about to speak, hastily added, "It's not a bit of use your talking; I've ade up my mind, and I tell you I shan't change it in a hurry."

There was no more to be said, and though Nan, a few days later, begged him to alter his decision, he remained obdurate, telling her that he would not have his Christmas Day he would not think otherwise, "the beef wouldn't be here, nor the pudding neither."

But the matter did not stop there; henceforth he began to take objection to each Catholic practice, closely watching Nan, as faithfully she fulfilled them; fish on Friday she vowed she should not have, and when she refused to eat the meat he bought, he renewed, and she, feelingly, he locked away all the other foods; he would not be served with a sneer, not so for Nan went hungry to bed. Holy images sacred pictures and rosaries, all underwent his scathing remarks; there was nothing he did not hold up to ridicule, nor too small to escape his notice.

It was in vain Nan expostulated, and this harsh rebuff, she had words, "Then put 'em away yourself," was his sole remark.

They had been in England a year, when a baby boy was born to them; weekly and delicate he seemed and, Nan, for fear he should die, implored Roger to take him to the church for baptism.

"Much too young," he would reply at first, and more gently than was his wont, for Nan was very ill.

Some days elapsed and she reiterated her request. "I'll not take him, much less call in one of your priests," was his gruff retort.

"Oh! but if he was to die," she cried, glancing at the tiny puckered face, at her side, "what should I do, what could I say, to the Almighty when my child is dead?" and the mother's gaze at her husband's stalwart form in the doorway; but he had turned his head away and vowed no reply.

Each day she pleaded, each day he refused, till one morning when she was about to renew her solicitations, he pushed back, as he sat at breakfast: "Give him to me then, I'll take him to be christened," he muttered shortly, and Nan, with a thankful heart, yet much astonished, watched him charge his coat and pull on his polished boots.

Carefully she wrapped the child around. "Indeed, Roger, ye are good," she would exclaim at intervals, while a smile lit up her pale wan face.

"It's heedful ye'll be now, won't ye?" she murmured happily, as he held out his arms for their little son: "take the first turn to the left, and keep right on till—"

"Oh! enough, enough," he broke in hastily, "haven't you been bothering your life out of me these two weeks past, without having more of it now?" He spoke so crossly Nan looked up in surprise. "Tis sorry I am, Roger, I've vexed ye, but I thought mebbe, ye didn't know the way so well as I."

"A good deal better," he laconically answered. The door lay open and two hours later, Nan heard familiar steps draw near, the gravel crunched beneath them, the boots, kicked against the scraper, were freed from mud, and to her amazement, the door swung noisily back—Roger had returned. She stared at the clock, and from the clock to Roger; sixteen miles in two hours—it was incredible, the distance could not be covered in that time; doubtless then, he had repented of his purpose.

"Ye've not had him baptized after all?" she queried faintly, and there was a break in her voice, she had felt

so happy five minutes ago, picturing her child a Christian by then; its little soul washed pure and white, and perchance, she had thought so, the priest might talk to Roger, open his mind to the truth, banish objections and defeat his prejudices. Now how cruel the illusion and pitiable the empty hopes.

"He's been christened well enough," Roger retorted, "so take him, you, I'm tired, and he's been screaming all the way."

"How, how could it be?" Nan rejoined, as she clasped the baby in her arms, laid aside its shawl, and sought to hush its plaintive cries.

Ah! an idea struck her, why had it not occurred to her before? "Tis meself the great general," impatiently she muttered, angry at having doubted his word. "Sure, he got a lift on the way?" was her enquiring comment, and though Roger made no reply, she softly said, "an' I felt sorry she had judged him so hastily."

"Forgive me, Roger ashore," she gently entreated, as he leant sullenly over the fire, "tis not ye who would disappoint me so."

Roger fidgetted uneasily in his chair, but Nan, anxious to make amends for her rash distrust, did not observe it, she laid her confidently on his, and said, "Tell me now, did our little one cry much when he bit the salt?"

"Who would give him salt?" responded Roger sulkily. "What question you ask, to be sure and none that I can answer."

"It's forgetful ye are, Roger dear," she smilingly remarked, adding, after a pause, "Ye dried his head careful when the water had poured over it, didn't ye now?" and she passed her fingers over the tiny brow, as if to assure herself it was not damp still.

"Oh, as for that," Roger answered, with a careless laugh, "I can vouch for that; that's the salt on the forehead of the instant Nan stared at Roger incredulously, then her face grew white and drawn, as if in sudden pain had struck her heart; her voice too sounded strange and low, yet she tried to steady it, as she spoke: "Twas yours the Protestant church, thin, ye took him to?"

But he craved no pardon for his fraud, neither did her silent grief move him to make amends; instead, his obstinacy perhaps grew even harder, his remarks more poignant still. Another fortnight saw little change in that gloomy household; the child, a month old now, had not grown much since his birth; his weak, incessant cries denoted frailty, stirring some cruel, one dark, November noon, listened with anxiety to his labored breathing.

She certainly looked ill herself, the gray eyes had lost their lustre, deep lines lay beneath them, and her cheeks were unnaturally hollow; little wonder, too, for trials, harsh and constant, were her daily portion.

Of a sudden the spoon fell from her hands, and she threw herself on the knees beside the cot; a spasm crossed the baby's face, the limbs contracted violently.

"Ah, blessed mother of God," she cried aloud as she placed him on her lap, "save him, keep him till he's purged, he must not die just yet." Her hot water was close by, hastily she poured some into a tub, felt it with her hand, and in it laid him tenderly. To no avail, however—stiff he remained, dying apparently; baptism he must have, and that at once. Quickly she drove him, and wrapping him in flannels placed the tiny bundle near the fire, while, trembling, she rose to fetch some hot water, hidden far away from Roger's eyes, in a cupboard's recess.

On her return, however, she breathed a prayer of thanks; the arms had relaxed, the face, till then so black and rigid, wore a better look, and he was crying feebly.

"But I cannot wait another day," she exclaimed, "the risk would be too great, an' 'twould be meself I'd blame." It was past four, the way was remote and hard, but no obstacles could deter her now; she had waited long enough, too long, she thought, and to delay further would be sinful. Warmly she clad her child, threw a shawl about her shoulders and stepped outside.

The wind was rising, and in short gusts blew a flake or two of snow across her path, but she did not hesitate. "Now or never, death or life," she kept repeating to herself, and she hurried on. Night had long fallen when, crossing the ferry, she made her way along the marshy ground before her. Many a time she slipped, but the snow-covered ground gave a light to her falling steps, and though weary and foot-sore, she never lingered to rest.

Three hours she had battled against the elements, before she was greeted by the twinkling lights of Gradley, as she plunged through the snow, her face white with cold and exhaustion. But snow, forgotten in that happy moment, when before her Lord, she paused awhile in prayer. A spotless soul was in her arms, and peace within her heart.

"Stay the night in the village," the kindly priest urged, "any of my flock would give you a warm welcome, and a shelter, too, I know."

But Nan refused. "Tis but a few scribbled words I left behind me," was her answer, "and I would be atead."

However, the motherly old housekeeper would not let her depart till she had brewed her cup of tea. "You'll be wanting a deal of strength, my dear, to cross the flats on such a night as this," she argued, and Nan, worn out in mind and body, gratefully accepted the good creature's hospitality. Faint, too, would she have lingered longer, but hurriedly she swallowed the tea, and with many a word of thanks to her friendly hostess, passed into the darkness of the night.

The snow had ceased falling, but the heavy clouds above gave warning of more to come; it lay thick upon the ground, as Nan made her way along the street, she oftentimes would sink into a

drift, little seen and undreamt of.

But if it were difficult to walk in the open road, tenfold were her trials when she left the highway and turned into the fields. Even with the double advantage of daylight and fair weather, the landmarks were unfamiliar to her; now, they were hidden in blackest night and a cloak of snow; how was it possible, then, to avoid so many pitfalls?

More than once she stumbled into a ditch, deep and boggy, and feebly she clambered out; often, too, she wandered from the path and, in attempting to regain it, struck against some tree or thorny hedge.

Her feet were sore indeed, her skirts muddily and sodden, as she reached the flats. Open to every gale that blew, it was here that Nan seemed doomed to fall in her brave venture. The wind, bitter even in the vale, now grew pitilessly cruel, crushed her beneath its force, she was but a plying in its mighty power.

Her back was aching painfully, the child, a mere feather weight, grew insupportably heavy, and for a few moments she sat upon a stone close by; not for long however—a faint cry beneath her shawl urged her ever onwards.

Where the paths crossed she tarried for in the pauses of the gale, she caught in the sound of approaching feet. From the gloom emerged a figure, a woman, and with deli-hi, she hailed a well known neighbor.

"Here! give me the baby, Mrs. Harding," the other ejaculated, bearing in short Nan's tale; she was a person of few words, but beneath a rough exterior, sound good nature lay concealed. Gladly did Nan relinquish her burden; the child, sleeping peacefully, leant warmly in the arms of her new nurse, and without more ado they tramped on, Mrs. Swaine leading the way.

"The snow, cold and damp, in part revives Nan, and striving to gain a foothold on the slippery ground, she drags herself forward with an effort. "Oh, luvvie maecore," she whispers in her heart, as her thoughts revert to the child again; she is dreary now, her body numb, her heart chilled. All at once her voice rises shrilly, ever vying with the tempest around her: "Och! och! ochancee! 'tis a Protestant 'he'll be," and the wind catches the word, whistling sadly in her ears. "No, no, Roger, he must not; 'tis a Catholic baptized, he must not!" Higher and higher she calls, ending in a loud wail of sorrow, which even Mrs. Swaine hears from afar.

And now she has fallen on her knees. Death, she knows, is very near. "Oh! God have mercy on my poor soul," she prays. It is her requiem, the only one she will ever have.

The snow below receives her lifeless body, the snow above soon forms her pall, and from the ferry Mrs. Swaine loudly calls her name.

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