

The Mystery of Killard.

PART II.—THE WHIMS OF PLUTUS.

CHAPTER III.

CHESTNUT HAIR.

In the lapse of years Cahill had grown stout and redder than of old. He had passed the period since his visit to Killard with Mr. Heywood in his former desultory manner. By this time people had unanimously come to the conclusion that his father must have found the office of bailiff to Lord Clonmore more profitable than any one could have supposed. A large sum of money, and left his son to Christopher. If the popular estimate of the man had altered, it had altered for the better. He paid his way, offended no one, and if he had vices, who has not? and there were others as had as he in the town. He was friendly and cordial to all, and all were more or less friendly in manner to him, but few regarded him with cordiality.

Up to a certain point no one could be more communicative than he; beyond that point it was impossible to make him utter another word. He spoke much and well of his neighbors, and rarely allowed their reputations to be assailed without raising a protest. He discussed general topics with freedom, and a species of dull common sense. But somehow he seemed to take only an assumed interest in most of the people and affairs around him, and rarely sought companionship or was eager to hear news or gossip. It was his reluctance and want of active interest that kept him remote from the hearts of others.

Another circumstance added depth to this feeling of estrangement. Frequently he would disappear for two or three days. On his return he never, to a soul, would breathe the name of the place where he had been. He would say, in reply to questions, that he "had gone" of town on business. Not another word could be extracted from him.

On one subject alone he could be thoroughly roused into active interest. No mention, however slight, of either the Bishop's Island or the Lane's failed to stir him. At times when either was alluded to, his wandering eyes would, for a moment, fix themselves on the speaker; he would question without commenting or expressing an opinion of any kind. In the interval between Mr. Heywood's first visit to the village and his consent to go a second time, in company with Cahill, no fact of any interest had come to light about David Lane. The solitary man dwelt on his island, holding less intercourse than ever with the mainland, and but seldom receiving visits from his only friend, Tom the Fool. Since the explosion of the boy a slight diminution of good feeling appeared to have arisen in the heart of the deaf mute towards Tom; and although the latter spoke of his friend in the old loyal, enthusiastic manner, David Lane appeared less anxious for the society of his companion.

The evening before Cahill intended setting out for Killard, he returned to his lodgings earlier than usual. As a rule he did not get home till eleven, or later; this evening he lit his candle, and found a note pinned to the door. He had reading to do before going to bed, and although no great student of literature he was anxious to be at work.

The room was a moderately comfortable one, and served him as a sitting and bed room. It contained a comfortable fashioned sofa, painted wooden post bedstead, a small square table, and a few chairs. The carpet did not cover all the floor; the bare places were clean. Altogether, the apartment seemed much better than a person seeing Cahill in the streets of Clonmore would fancy for him. The most curious eye could not, however, discover a book or newspaper. Manuscript was his delight.

When he had looked through the papers of the cabinet and produced a small leather writing-case. This he opened, and from an interior pocket of it took a large envelope, sealed with red wax, stamped with an irregular row of indentations, forming a rough scribble. He looked at the seal with great care, and appearing satisfied, tore open the envelope.

The envelope contained a long strip of paper, made up of several sheets of ordinary old-fashioned letter-paper, gummed together one below the other, so as to make a strip three or four feet in length. The document was worked from top to bottom with close writing, and signed "William Cahill." This was Christopher Cahill's favorite manuscript, in fact his only one. He had read it at least a hundred times, but as he was going over to Killard in the morning, and the matter of the manuscript concerned that neighborly household, he thought he would refresh his memory by reading it once more. It took quite two hours to get through it, for often he paused and leaned his head on his hand until the clear flame of the feeble candle grew dull and red, and toiled languidly over a huge black canopy of snuff. Yet there appeared nothing abstruse or intricate in the writing. It was no more than an account of the purchase of the Bishop's Island by the older David Lane, and a few remarks of "William Cahill" thereupon.

The narrative did not differ in any material point from that of Mrs. Catherine told to young Martin. There was some additional detail as to the manner in which old Lane wrought upon the former Lord Clonmore to sell him the rock, but for all practical purposes, the two accounts were identical. The brief comment attached by William Cahill occupied no more than a few lines and was as follows:

"I never could make it clear to myself why the old man got about the house, (Island, hawking, hawking, wood, waver, an over-wise rights, and in, and he found a note on the island, which would account for his wanting to buy it, and other things besides."

This was, however, the passage which had fascinated young Cahill. He had often heard the story from his father's lips, and never unaccompanied by this suggestion. Hence his interest in this suggestion, and their hand properly.

During the lifetime of William Cahill a

great number of farms on Lord Clonmore's estate had fallen out of lease, and in the tenants' desire for renewals old Cahill had profited a good deal in the way of gifts of conciliation. He had acquired enough money to leave his son independent, and the son had retained his independence by living like a gentleman. Into this life had entered one consuming curiosity and one desire. He would have parted from half the savings of his father to learn the true history of Lane's desire to purchase the rock; he would have given all his money for the rock itself, and as far as active hope could enter into one of his sluggish nature, it possessed him to own the Bishop's Island, with right to all that was on it, under it, around it, and above it. To attain this he would have faced almost anything, for, added to the dim notion of masses of shining metal, to his mind there hung a mysterious, oceanic air of superhuman power around the island, and him who did or might possess it; and although outwardly he smiled at the idea of his own having dealings with Darkness, inwardly he wondered how matters really stood between the Lanes and the Invisible.

If he would have risked all his fortune to possess that barren rock, he would not have shirked the contemplation of still vaster stakes, supposing he only knew the game and the wager on the other side.

In his dull, sullen soul there lay a dim vision of vulgar grandeur, and to gratify the vague yearnings of a nebulous imagination he would not have recoiled before the demand for any stake that might be demanded, and that he had the power to lay.

When he had finished his reading he placed the manuscript in a new envelope, of size similar to the former one, and closed down the fold. Then he took a piece of sealing-wax, melted it deliberately, and put a large patch, the circumference of half a crown, over the top of the envelope. When this was cool, but still soft, he bent the envelope and made a deep indentation in the wax with his upper teeth. Having replaced the paper in the interior pocket of the writing-case, he undressed, and retired to himself.

"That's the seal the like of which I have never seen," said he to himself, "and 'tis easy to be sure it's unbroken, for I can try if the seal fits it. I have any suspicion."

Next morning he awoke dull and somnolent. As the two gentlemen of Clonmore went on their way to Killard, a heavy leaden sky hung over the dry, brown downs. Not a breath of wind stirred the brittle, short grass. Not a leaf sang in the heavens. A depressing warmth stagnated between the clouds and the earth.

"It looks and feels like thunder," remarked the younger man, regarding the sky with dissatisfaction.

"There are symptoms of the presence of electric fluid in large quantities, and of imminent disturbance," returned Mr. Heywood, looking at the clouds as though he knew too much about them to hold them in good esteem.

"Somehow, neither the philosopher nor his companion seemed proof against the depressing influence of the atmosphere, and the journey was accomplished almost in silence."

It was late in the forenoon when they arrived. They drove straight to Casey's, and Cahill dismissed the car, as the date of their return was uncertain.

Having taken some refreshment, Cahill proposed they should walk up the village towards the southern downs. The ascent was steep, and the old man noticed so that it took a little while, even though it did not aid of his aid.

Edward Martin's house was the most southerly of the village. It craned the southern crest of the downs, and no other house was near; but from it all the village could be plainly seen, spreading out in our long street with narrow lanes, reaching inland like tattered fringes on a pole. From the porch, facing inland, the parish church of fine limestone was visible on the summit of a hill which rose on a remote tip of the valley. The church was at least a mile distant from Martin's house. By its side, in a large, back yard, stood Father Muntagh's dwelling—a cold, cheerless, four-roomed cottage, the most pretentious residence within view.

The landscape inland was an uninteresting plain of yellow grass. Looking from the shore, the eye passed, some what giddily, from tangles of prodigious columns shattered and confounded, yawning chasms of treacherous gloom, and narrow dells between gigantic cliffs, where the yellow waters ground the rocks mercilessly, to the broad, gray expanse of ocean and the lowering sky that, resting heavily on the horizon, made the line where sky and water touched seem like the lips of the Universe compressed and stern, restraining a voice which would shake the heavens from their pillared heights and fling the waters from their voiceless depths into the abysses of above.

The two men continued to mount slowly. Mr. Heywood was much distressed. His breath came short, and he leaned heavily on his companion. At length it became obvious to Cahill the old man could get no further without resting. By the wayside lay the mainmast of a ship wrecked on the rocky bar ten years ago. Cahill pointed to it and said:

"Let us take a rest, sir; the road is very steep, and there's something in the air that makes my blood feel like lead."

"Ah!" the philosopher sighed, in reply, as he sat down trembling and panting. When he had recovered a little breath, he spoke: "A person ignorant of sea-sickness might attribute our exhaustion to fatigue, but such is not the real cause. We are neither of us old or infirm enough to be able to afford, without the assistance of some present inconvenience, to ascend from the pure sea air rapidly ascending the hill, burning out the elements of oxygen as the chemist calls it, and leaving us of that most useful and life-giving fluid. When I come from the island to the sea they live to see."

"Fool!" Mr. Heywood, there isn't much chance of any one living too fast in Killard; you couldn't find a single public house in it from end to end," said Cahill gravely.

"My dear friend," replied the philoso-

pher, in the calm tone of infallibility, "we can live too fast without the aid of alcohol. There is a certain gas called oxygen, and if you were placed in a chamber full of it you would burn yourself to death in a short time."

"Between us and all harm," ejaculated the listener, somewhat dubiously. "Of course, I know no one could live in the place they keep the gas for Clonmore, but no one is likely to want to live there, except a fool."

"The two fluids are quite different; but let that pass. You raise an interesting question by your indirect suggestion that a person of unsound mind is more likely than a person in sound mental health to run a risk. You would find it hard to prove that."

"Maybe so, maybe so," assented Cahill heedlessly. Then suddenly he seemed to take a lively interest in the question for he asked, with animation, "Tell me, Mr. Heywood, would you think a man a fool supposing he was willing to run a great risk to satisfy his mind about a thing that was a trouble to him?"

"Certainly not. Men of science run every conceivable risk to solve questions that have arisen to them, or to prove their theories, or to make discoveries."

"And it is only men of science do such things?" Cahill's attention was now fully roused. He looked at the impassive, care-worn face of the old philosopher with anxiety.

"Well, I don't know." He had never thought it possible to stir the depths of curiosity in the human breast with anything but science. The idea was novel, and he could not make up his mind off hand.

Cahill now fully fronted his companion. He sat above him, and, consequently, his face looked towards Killard. Mr. Heywood's eyes were turned towards him, but no light shone in them. They were dull, lacked lustre, and from a mere habit, looked introspective; but time had bedimmed the interior view, and to judge by the expression on the old man's face, the inward glance met only a melancholy waste, a Memphis of the mind, a tattered parchment of which the illumination and the writing had nearly faded away.

All at once intelligence returned to the face. The eyes became gleamed with a strange, startled light. The mouth opened, the hands felt nervously to the side, the body stooped forward.

In his desire to push the conversation, Cahill saw nothing of all this, or attributed it to a kind of leaped ecstasy. He repeated his unanswered question, adding, "When men are very curious about anything but science; when, as people say, they are in love, and want, suppose, to find out where the girl is, suppose some one stole her away from home and friends, would they run great risks to find out about her?"

He had taxed his imagination prodigiously to create this hypothesis.

"A little girl?" muttered the old man, as though he were alone, and had put part of Cahill's question to himself.

Except while uttering the words, his face and manner did not alter, and having spoken, the mouth remained open once more.

"Yes, suppose a little girl," agreed Cahill, desirous of captivating the other's wandering attention.

"Yes, one would risk much." These words came like the former ones.

(To be Continued.)

POLLIES IN THE LOWER PROVINCES.

OTTAWA, February 25.—A despatch received here, says that James Yeo, for eighteen years the Grit member for Prince county, Prince Edward Island, yesterday at a large public meeting with-

drew from the Grit party, stating that his leaders were traitors and schemers, and announced his intention of running as an independent supporter of Sir John Macdonald and the Conservative policy. Mr. Yeo is the second son of the late Hon. James Yeo, of Parthill, P.E.I., who came from Devonshire, England, in 1837, and held a seat in the Provincial assembly for a period of thirty years. Mr. Yeo is a very prominent Prince Edward Island merchant, ship builder and ship owner. He sat in the Prince Edward Island Legislature from 1872 until the union with Canada, and also held a seat in the Executive Council. He was first elected to the House of Commons on the Island, entering the Dominion in September, 1872. He was re-elected at the general election of 1883, 1878, 1882, and 1887—always as a Liberal.

It is utterly impossible, a New Brunswick despatch states, to count the number of Liberals who have been panic-stricken by the defection of Silas Alward, the Miramichi Advance and the Fredericton Gleaner. Word comes from all parts of Grit defection. The latest and most prominent is that of Senator Glazier, one of the biggest lumber merchants of Sudbury. Not only the Senator, but his son Arthur, ex-M. L. A., and Parker Glazier, another son, have thrown over their life-long allegiance to the Liberal party and have come out unreservedly and enthusiastically for Sir John and his policy. They, yesterday, addressed big Conservative meetings in favor of Mr. Wilnot, and the electors are following them in flocks.

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