The Queen of the Claddagh.

"Good-bye, Maureen avourneen, and blessings go with you across the blue water. The West for you and the South for me—you to Newfoundland and I to France. But, God favoring us, the whole world is not wide enough to keep us long apart. For me only two years with the colors, and until then—"

"Until then, Fergus, I will wait for you—ay, and ten times longer, my soldier, if need be—and no one else shall put this ring on my finger." And the Queen of the Claddagh proudly displayed the hereditary wedding ring, distinguishing and cherished heirloom of the old local families. The device on the circlet of gold was two hands supporting a crowned heart love and fidelity, sovereign and unconquerable, was the worthy idea aimed at by the long-forgotten artificer who designed it.

The scene was on the quay of the Claddagh, a celebrated fishing village on the Bay of Galway, in the west of Ireland, and the time about the middle of the eighteenth century.

The village adjoins the City of the Tribes, as the town of Galway is called. So ancient is the Claddagh that Saint Enda, who established his famous monastery on the great island breakwater of Arran of the Saints, at the entrance to the bay, well knew the place, where he was hospitably entertained with his freres and regaled on fish; and that was away back in the sixth century. Over a thousand years had brought but small change to the Claddagh. There lay the aggregation of little thatched and whitewashed cabins, nestling on the shore, with here and there nets, creels, oars, grappling poles and other implements of the hardy, manly, weather-tanned toilers who reap the finny harvest of the sea. There were huge heaps of shells, the accumulations of ages, and a pervading tingling odor of tar and brine. The Claddaghites, simple, peaceful, industrious, exclusive, but not inhospitable, were "a people unto themselves," with a king of their own, "de facto" if not "de jure," and but little use had they for lawyers.

On this particular day about the entire population of the village crowded the quay. Sunburnt, white-haired veterans discussed the prospects of the opening fishing season; old dames hobbled about in their white caps, plaid kerchiefs and red petticoats, young boys, who were going to make their first visit to the fishing grounds, looked important and delighted; Claddagh maidens, tall and graceful, with the distinguishing local combination of blue eyes and dark hair, moved about on light and nimble feet. There was a general air of excited preparation, tinged with regret. For there was a double event afoot, clashing in its nature—the opening of the fishing season and the departure of Mihaul, or Michael, Bannon, King of the Claddagh, with his daughter Mary, or Maureen, since the death of her mother acknowledged queen, with Jack Lynch and Con O'Toole, old fisher friends of Mihaul's, for America.

"Never mind, boys," cheerfully said his majesty to the loving subjects that thronged around him shaking his hand; "a year or two over there may give us all we want of it, and then ye'll have us back among ye again."

"And a hundred thousand Claddah welcomes we'll give you, Mihaul aroon," they assured him.

The good brig St. Patrick, George Tobin master, that was to bear Claddagh royalty into exile, was already slowly moving out the bay. But the king was to lead the procession of fishing boats, it might be for the last time. So when the horn for departure boomed, he took his place, in company with the attendant friar, in the leading hooker, and in line the little fleet glided out over the blue water, while Queen Maureen long waved her kerchief in farewell, her signalling being most frantically responded to by one particular male figure on the disappearing quay, said figure being that of her sweetheart, Sergeant Daly, now sadly but hopefully closing his furlough and his visit home—Sergeant Fergus Daly, of the famed Irish Brigade in the service of France.

Out on the fishing grounds, far beyond the towering cliffs of Arran of the Saints, crested with the great stone fortresses of the ancient Fircolgs, halt was made, and the fleet formed a semi-circle. Then the white-robed Dominican donned his stole, opened his book, blessed the sea and the boats and the boatmen, and prayed that the poor toilers might win abundant harvest from the deep.

Then came a solemn, hushed interval of parting, as with moist eyes the fisher-folk saw their old leaders and king transferred with his daughter and other companions to the brig which had accompanied the fleet.

"Wirra, wirra," murmured a veteran, "sure 'tis a grief to see them leaving us, but who can blame them? 'Tis five bad years we've had with the fishing, and another one would ruin us entirely."

"Please God," said a hoary optimist, "the white friar's blessing will bring back the fish and maybe bring back King Mihaul."

The waiting silence was soon followed by cheer upon cheer, as the St. Patrick shook out snowy sail after sail and glided away into the mysterious ocean, the ocean furrowed of yore by the vessels of Condla the Beautiful and of Saint Brendan, in respective quest of the "Plain of Honey" and the "Land of Promise"—away towards the dim sea horizon where is seen, glistening in the golden mirage under the crimson draperies of evening, the temples and towers of the fairyland of olden King Breasail—away over a deep sea route afterwards strewn whitely with the bones of an oppressed and hard-driven race, "sweeping westward, wild and woeful."

In Ireland, before the departure of our little party, the penal laws against Catholics had been abated, thanks to the signal victory of Fontenoy, mainly won through the Irish Brigade. The celebration of Mass was—semi-privately—tolerated.

But in cheerless and intolerant Newfoundland. "What—more of you, in defiance of our laws for the good of the country! Well, you must each pay an annual tax here as long as you remain Papists, and heavy shall you feel the hand of the law if you attempt any Papist practices. No Mass remember!" So said the Government official to those new arrivals.

Upon which King Mihaul and his companions — hardened, seasoned, trained lawbreakers in such matters—looked at one another knowingly and chuckled: veterans who, in the determined practice of their religion, had outwitted and baffled the wily priest-hunters in Ireland were scarcely to be intimidated by swaggering, wooden-headed officials in this semi-barbarous country across the ocean.

"He can't frighten us, 'ma bouchals, can he?" laughed Mihaul.

"He'll want to take lessons," said Jack Lynch.

"Och, we had much worse than he is in Galway," said Con O'Toole.

But they got strong reason to change their views on that point the very evening of their arrival, when, seeing some houses and fishing stages bursting into flames, they hurried to help stop the conflagration. They were shoved back by the armed soldiers who stood around on guard and informed that by sentence of law the property was being destroyed of some Catholics who had had Mass said in their houses, the said Catholics being further punished with fines ranging from £50 or $200, downwards, and ordered to be expelled by a certain date from the island of Newfoundland!

"I never saw as bad as that done in Ireland," remarked Michael Bannon.

"And I don't believe it is done in any other country on God's earth that calls itself Christian," declared Jack Lynch.

Neither it was. For decades, with the lurid light of burning homes, gloomy Newfoundland, waved in the shocked face of the world the torch of religious persecution.

"Out of a cooling frying pan into a very hot fire," commented the king. "But, boys, there's no turning back for us for the present. So let us turn in and make the best of it."

Make the best of it they did. Having satisfied the gross extortions of the "admirals," as the agents of the English fishing corporations were called, they secured sites on the shore, where they built their homes, flakes—that is hurdles for the drying of fish—storehouses and fishing stages. They bought and owned in common a fishing boat which they christened "The Claddagh Rambler."

Soon and cheerily, Maureen Bannon accommodated herself to her new surroundings. She kept house for her father in a neat cottage by the sea.

"Galway Maureen" they called her in their ruggedly familiar way, that is, the common fisher folk of the outlandish place, but the members of the rather limited "upper class" of the community, the "fishing admirals" and magistrates and revenue collectors, on meeting her bowed low with the profound fashionable courtesy of that periwigged period and respectfully addressed her as "Miss Bannon." Being bright and good-looking, with a scintillating wit, she served them as an acceptable model on which to practice their society manners. For, beyond the governor's wife and one or two others in their brief periodical visits a "fine lady" was a "rara avis" in the colony, where, indeed, females of every kind were greatly in the minority, as they ought to be; that rough, uncouth young town of a few thousand people, housed mainly in wooden shanties, was scarce a proper place for womankind.

Colony? Nay, fishing camp would be a better term for St. John's at that time The British Government, swayed and influenced by the merchants and shipowners of the west of England, who equipped,, manned and sent out fleets of fishing vessels every year to reap the rich harvest of those teeming seas, did not intend or desire such a thing as a regular colony to exist or grow there, on what they preferred to call the "desolate island." The aim was to have a mere port of accommodation for the English fishing fleet on its jealousy and clashing between the annual business visit Hence the "fishing admirals," representing the corporations, and the settlers, or rather squatters—for the Government in pursuance of its policy, refused as a rule to make grants of land, and most of the shacks and shanties in the grimy town had been covertly thrown up by their occupants without any authority save their own. Forts and barracks were built, however, and a garrison established for England and France had been contending about a hundred years for the possession of the place, on account of the valuable fishing. Therefore the red ensign of England waved, in this summer of 1762, over the fort on Signal Hill, one of the two heights commanding the entrance to St. John's Harbor, and red-coated soldiers paced sentry-go and others strolled about and watched the scaly fishermen at work on their takes amid surroundings slippery with offal.

And so, for our good people from the Claddagh of Galway, some long years went by, and at length came St. John's Day, 1762.

It is a very successful fishing season. The toilers of the sea are making noble hauls. Every boat that comes into the secure harbor of St. John's lies deep in water beneath the silvery, glittering, scaly cargo.

With a splendid take in the hold of the "Claddagh Rambler," Mihaul Bannon and his partners, Lynch and O'Toole, are returning successful and jubilant from what they have decided shall be their last fishing voyage ere their return to old homes and friends among the comfortable little cottages of the Claddagh.

That is why there is sunshine in Maureen Bannon's heart and joy beaming in her blue eyes as she sits at the door of the shanty which has been her home for some years past, but which she never could come to regard as home, decorate it though she might with humble pictures and ornaments, with flaring bows and curious shells and the unwonted local splendors of white-frilled window curtains and glowing scarlet geraniums. The thoughts of the dreary Newfoundland winters, the ice-bound coast, the seaward fogs, the weird lonesomeness, came to her with a shudder that intensified her sense of thankfulness at her coming release. Only last evening, ere their departure, had she joyously learned of the intention of her father and his mates. To-day she must keep it a secret. To-morrow they would go and say good-bye to the friends they had made, and then—ho, for a western breeze, the cliffs of Arran of the Saints, the green hills of Ireland! The call of the Claddagh was in her heart.

Then came another thought, one of uneasiness, disquiet. She took from her bosom a letter and read it, as she had done many times since its receipt.

"Poor Fergus! it will be a pity and a shame, but how can I help it? What can I do? Says his time is nearly up in the army and that he will find me if he has to search the world over, first trying Newfoundland. This is St. John's Day; last night they lighted the bonfires in Ireland; it is two months since he wrote. Fergus avourneen, I fear it is too late to stop you and that you will be making a long and weary journey all on account of this foolish colleen from the Claddagh."

No matter—start early and come in haste, gallant Sergeant Fergus Daly of Dillon's famous regiment of the Irish Brigade, in the service of King Louis. It is a long cry from the flats of Flanders to the fogs of Newfoundland, but the bonny bride to be is well worth the journey.

"Father le Mercier."

"My daughter."

The elderly little man who issued quietly from the house looked in appearance, with his yellow oilskins and glazed sou'wester, very unlike an ecclesiastic. That is, he was dressed in accordance with the critical exigencies of the place and the hour.

"Can you tell me, Father, any early chance I may have of sending a letter to France?"

"Some brigs sail two days hence from Torbay."

"Thank you. 'Ou allez vous, mon pere'?" she asked, in quick anxiety, as her keen perception made her conscious of an approaching figure, unpleasantly, sinisterly familiar.

"To Deadman Bay, to see one of our poor sick people."

"Don't turn your head, Father le Mercier. Go your way; do not look back. Yes, Dan McCarthy," she said, raising her voice, "you will find the nets you want down at Synnott's fishing stage." And, as the devoted old clergyman hobbled away on his errand of comfort and mercy, she sang snatches of a song endeared to Irish maidens of the period, an air of Celtic yearning and pathos, one which had special significance for herself:

"I'll sell my rock, I'll sell my reel,
My flax is spun, I'll sell my wheel
To buy my love a sword of steel—
Your health, my darling one.

"But now my love has gone to France
To try his fortune to advance,
If he e'er returp 'tis but a chance—
Your health, my darling one."

"Good-day, Maureen, my beauty. That air is a sad one, and the words are silly and wrong; your love has not gone to France by any manner of means, nor has he any idea of so doing; he is here beside you, loyal and true. But a fig for the air and the words; your voice sounds beautiful, especially at some distance."

"That is surely the best way for you to hear it, Master Burnett," she said, "the best, and most comfortable way, for both you and me."

It was Nat Burnett, the dandy of the town, also one of its chief officials and the constant menace and scourge of its Catholic inhabitants as collector of penal taxes, also as spy, blackmailer and prime persecutor. He was the only son of old Burnett of Harbor Main, who owned and worked numerous fishing outfits along the shore, and had also waxed fat in the ruthless administration of the penal laws. Nat Burnett, fastidious in his powdered hair, gold-laced clothes, elegant lace ruffles and silver-hilted sword, had a discerning eye for female beauty, an overpowering desire for possession. For over a year he had been seriously and persistently seeking Maureen's hand in marriage, and as steadily had she declined what might have been of much local honor and advantage, but declined it with softness, tact, delicacy, seeing in him a dreadful power for evil. He was not of her kind, of her people.

But at length he had grown impatient, exasperated, threatening, as he now showed in his quickly altered manner.

"Maureen, my girl," he said, "for the last time I have come for my answer, and I must have it here and now."

"Have common sense, Master Burnett; you have had my answer many many times already. It is a fine lady you want, even if you must cross the water to get her, and not a poor girl like me. Besides, I would not spend any more winters in your lonesome fogs for all the fish in the sea."

He arose with an oath. "You shall say 'yes,' I tell you, you silly obstinate fool, and you shall say it now, or bitterly shall you and your folks repent your refusal."

She, too, arose, regarding him with fearless eyes blazing with scorn. His attentions, which at first had somewhat pleased and flattered her, had long since become unto her tiresome and obnoxious. His boorish abuse and threats, now that she stood elate on the threshold of release, were intolerable.

"Go away from here, you mean coward," she cried. "No ring of yours will ever go on this finger of mine, I will wear, please heaven, the good old ring of the Claddagh brides, with the two hands holding the crowned heart. I would not take your dirty hand for all the blood-money that ever went into it. Begone and do your worst, you miserable spy. I despise and defy you."

He stood amazed at her outburst, grew red and white under her denunciation.

"You Irish vixen," he gasped, "what a lucky escape I've had! You my wife! But hark you, my lady. Our sweet parting will come this very day. Know you not that your father and some of his Papaist friends have been called to court for having Mass said in this house one week ago?"

"Bah! that is all right, that is settled, you poisonous snake," she said. "A good friend of the governor's has settled it for us; I saw my father pay him the money."

"Yes, it has been settled," he yelled exultingly; "it has been settled, but not in the way you think. The go-between and the money never got to the governor. You heard the saluting guns from Signal Hill this morning as the vessel bound for England passed out the Narrows. Governor Graves is far at sea, having left behind him a special order to enforce the tax on the Papists, so there may be a tidy sum waiting him on his return. To-day the order of the court was passed against your father and the other defendants. That order is in my possession.

"You know what that means, my sweet-tempered angel? It means that before many hours these buildings shall be lying in embers and ashes, that your father and brother and Lynch and O'Toole shall be in jail, that heavy fines shall be levied, that you shall be chased out of here, outcasts, reptiles, paupers! I can prevent it—but I won't; on the contrary, I'll rather enjoy it. And so, my proud but punished Galway Maureen, 'au revoir.'"

Raising his three-cornered hat, Burnett bowed low in mockery and went his way.

Maureen was a girl of action and resource. Her first idea was to hage her father and his friend notified by having some friendly sishermen meet and head them off on their return from the fishing grounds directing them to avoid the port of St. John and to make for some place of comparative safety up or down the coast, where later she would join them.

On her way to the waterside she met two estimable acquaintances, well known local characters. One was sturdy Captain George Tobin, master of the St. Patrick brig, now well known from its frequent trips to the harbor of St. John's. The other was Donough MacNamara, the Red, schoolmaster and poet from the county Clare, who penned his yearning verses for the "Fair Hills of Eire," amidst the gray fogs of Newfoundland. A messenger was soon procured and despatched with instructions to intercept if possible the fishing boat of Mihaul Bannon and his companions.

"Now, my good friends, let us hurry back to the house; we may be able to remove a few things and maybe to take a last meal there before that serpent Burnett comes with the redcoats."

Some cherished household gods were hastily removed to neighbors' houses, after which the meat sizzled over the fire in the Bannons' shanty for the last time, and a comfortable meal was partaken of. But heavy and pervading was the sense of gloom and uneasiness.

"Sad and dark with trouble are the days and the land we live in," said Red Donough. And he feelingly recited some verses of his celebrated poem—thus done into English by James Clarence Mangan:

"The dewdrops lie bright on the grass and yellow corn
On the fair hills of Eire, O!
The sweet-scented apples blush redly in the morn
On the fair hills of Eire, O!
The water-cress and sorrel fill the vale below,
The streamlets are hushed, till the evening breezes blow,
While the waves of the Suir, noble river, ever flow
By the fair hills of Eire, O!

"A fruitful clime is Erin's—the valley, meadow, plain,
And the fair land of Eire, O!
The very bread of life is in the golden grain
On the fair hills of Eire, O!
Far dearer to me than the tones music yields
Is the lowing of the kine and the calves in the fields
And the sunlight that shone long ago on the shields
Of the Gaels on the fair hills of Eire, O!"

There came a sudden peremptory knocking at the door. It was opened, and Nat Burnett, who held a legal-looking paper in his hand, stepped in, followed by a military officer.

"In the name of the law, I command you to get outside before we set fire to this house," said Burnett.

"But first you will allow the furniture to be removed," said Captain Tobin.

"The order of Captain Chetwynd the deputy, says nothing about it," growled the tax collector.

"The order of Captain Tobin, the sailor, says something about it, you shark," thundered George. An altercation ensued, but on the intervention of the military officer, who seemed very much ashamed of the part he had to perform and even blushed like a boy when he met the gaze of Maureen, the removal of the furniture was permitted. Outside, storehouses and other buildings were already blazing, the flames rapidly licking their tarred roofs and sides. The lightsome midsummer night had fallen, and the brilliant light of the burning shone on a multitude of upturned faces grave with sympathy, also on the scarlet uniforms, white-cross-belts and glittering bayonets of the soldiers of King George.

Some men came hurrying from the waterside and burst anxiously through the hedge of spectators. At sight of their faces Maureen Bannon uttered a cry of despair; it was her father and his companions; the messenger had failed to intercept them, she murmured.

"Oh, we are lost now in earnest!" she murmured.

"What are you about, Mr. Burnett? What in the world are you doing this for, man alive?" inquired Mihaul Bannon.

"Ha, my lawbreaker, are you there?" vindictively retorted Burnett. "I am burning your property in accordance with the just sentence of the court, passed upon you and these other fellows, your companions in crime, to-day."

"Sentence of the court? Heaven save us, we thought that thing was all settled. But, Mr. Burnett, man dear, this isn't our property at all that you're burning; it's your own property—your father's, I mean—and when I say it's your father's I mean it's as good as your own."

Burnett turned in bewilderment.

"What in perdition do you mean, you old idiot?"

"Not a bit of an idiot, Mr. Burnett. I mean that two days ago we sold all this property to your good father, over at Main Harbor."

"Ay, faith, and a good price he paid me for it," added Con O'Toole.

"Every penny it was worth, in-

(Continued on Page 7.)

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I am still obliged to say Mass and give Benediction in a mean upper room. Yet, such as it is, this is the sole outpost of Catholicism in a division of the County of Norfolk measuring 35 x 20 miles.

The weekly offerings of the congregation are necessarily small. We must have outside help for the present, or haul down the Flag.

The generosity of the Catholic Public has enabled us to secure a valuable site for Church and Presbytery. We have money in hand towards the cost of building, but the Bishop will not allow us to go into debt.

I am most grateful to those who have helped us, and trust they will continue their charity.

To those who have not helped I would say—"For the sake of the Cause give something, if only a little". It is easier and more pleasant to give than to beg. Speed the glad hour when I need no longer plead for a permanent Home for the Blessed Sacrament.

FATHER H. W. GRAY,
Catholic Mission, Fakenham, Norfolk, Eng'd.

P. S.—I will gratefully and promptly acknowledge the smallest donation, and send with my acknowledgment a beautiful picture of the Sacred Heart and St. Anthony.

(EPISCOPAL AUTHORIZATION)

Dear Father Grey,

You have duly accounted for the alms which you have received, and you have placed them securely in the names of Diocesan Trustees. Your efforts have gone far towards providing what is necessary for the establishment of a permanent Mission at Fakenham. I authorise you to continue to solicit alms for this object until, in my judgment, it has been fully attained.

Yours faithfully in Christ,
† F. W. KEATING,
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