

er did the woman look? To the royal blood itself perhaps, for her pride was boundless. But certainly she would have preferred not to yield her girl till conquering beauty had at least one noble name lie before her thick as autumn leaves.

Meanwhile Lady Mabel was what the shut bud is to the rose. She sat by her mother as meek as the Verginella nel Tempio of a Florentine painter; and Beauty brooded above her moonlight face like a star. It was "Yes, your Grace," or "No, my Lord," no more than that, in speech softer than silver. But it was this very exquisite promise of growth, this still maidenhood, that rapt the hearts of the two men towards her.

Her mother would have sworn that she had no preference, that the beginning of a separate will was hardly born in her. Else she might have forbidden my Lord Cashel the door. But then Wharncliffe had no rival, and the pleasure that the contest between the two was to her would have ceased.

But once as the two gentlemen sat fingering their sword knobs and making speeches with the slightest threatening of hate and jealousy beneath, and while the elder lady laughed and applauded the combat of wits, Lady Mabel bent her eyes an instant on Lord Cashel. For the minute the Duke was paying a flowery compliment to her mother, and neither was looking. It was for the merest shadow of time, but the gaze was so full of sweetness and joy in him that the man's senses reeled with the delight of it. He turned a little pale, and soon afterwards took his leave, but as he rode homeward he shouted and sang in the spring evening, and the song was an old one:

"Oh my Love, my Love is young."

Meanwhile more momentous matters than horse racing were stirring the country. In the spring of that year the leaders of the United Irishmen were arrested, and immediately the land was in the throes of premature rebellion. The enrolling in the country about Ballaghdamore had not been general, and the terror and trouble were proportionately less there than in other parts of the country. But a few arrests were made, and among the first to be taken was the Whisperer. It would seem that in his faring up and down the county on his business he had had the opportunity and had used it for purposes of organization, and it was not his fault that the countryside was not in such a blaze as was Kildare, or Wicklow, or Wexford.

He was spirited away one night at the dead of the night from his little room above the Blackbird's stable, and it was only the next morning that Lord Cashel heard what had happened. He was in the utmost despair, and sat with his head in his hands two hours by the clock. Then he sprang up, and calling for his horse, rode hard to Wharncliffe.

"Powers, the Duke was not an early riser, was just finishing his morning cup of chocolate. My Lord burst in on him, hardly waiting to be announced. "I am come to tell you," he cried, "that our match must be off."

"Not so far as I am concerned," said his Grace, coolly; "but my Pegasus is the better horse."

My Lord cursed the Duke's horse for answer. Then, he went on more quietly:

"My Blackbird's mount is in the county jail among the crows, and he will let no one else ride him."

"Ah!" said the Duke, contemplating his handsome calf in its silk stockings, "many a better man is in like case. There is poor Edward Fitzgerald, with a festering shoulder, to keep him company, in his cell. Ah, Cashel, what a man!"

"Worth many of you or me," said my Lord shortly. "But our match, Wharncliffe?"

"Ah, our match. I don't want to die till I beat you or yield to you. And they say there will be many a pair of bright eyes to wish success to the colors of one or the other of us."

"But I tell you my Blackbird will never go to the post without his mount. He would not budge an inch, or he would break his back or his riders."

"Tut!" said the Duke contemptuously. "What good is a mere peasant in this bog that it should interfere with the sport of gentlemen? Musgrave will lend him to us for the race. You'll guarantee that he'll ride your race, and not give Blackbird his head and show the law a clean pair of heels?"

"He'll ride the race," said Lord Cashel with conviction.

"Then consider the matter done."

Captain Musgrave, the Governor of the county jail, was a giant officer, more at home in the stocks than in the keeping of rebels. However, a wound in his knee had finished his soldiering for ever, and he had had to accept the veteran's lot while not much over thirty, and the government of a jail rather than fields of renown. He had but the slightest acquaintanceship with the young beauty of the county, and it was with a deep sense of gratification that he received a note from Lady Mabel the morning after the prisoners were lodged in jail.

"Would Captain Musgrave so far please a woman," it ran, "as to let her maid who bears this have speech of a friend, one Miles Keon, now lying in His Majesty's jail in Captain Musgrave's keeping?"

"I wish she had asked me something less easy," said the soldier, as he gave orders that the bearer of the note should be admitted to see the prisoner.

Miles was sitting with his head in his hands on the foot of his low pallet. Of his own danger he was not thinking at all. His thoughts were on the race that now could not be run for he knew that Blackbird would bear no other rider. The trouble of it had weighed heavily on him and a sleepless night had drawn black rings about his eyes. If it were not that he was falling his beloved master, he need care for nothing. He had neither kith nor kin, and as for Grace—it was as if something had compressed his heart tightly for an instant—Grace would never care.

There was a jangling of the big key in the lock of his cell and the door was jerked open. A warden put in his head, and withdrew it to admit a woman,

deeply veiled. Miles stood up in surprise as she came forward through the obscurity of his cell. When she had come close to him, she threw back her veil.

"Gracie!" he cried, in such a joyful voice that the warden, who had retired and was peering up and down outside the door, stopped in amazement. It was not a place where the voice of joy often sounded.

"Miles!" she answered, calling him by his name for the first time, and blushing through her tears. "Did you think I would not come?"

"Oh, Gracie Gracie," he said, "why should you come to me here except you love me? And sure I never lifted my eyes to you, as you're here."

"It wasn't my fault, then," she said, laughing, in spite of the place they were in, "you left it all to me, Miles Keon."

He read the invitation in her eyes, and answered it with his lips on hers and his arms about her. Then he put her away a little and looked at her sorrowfully.

"I shouldn't have done it, Gracie Oge Maclure, it is for another man you are and not for Miles Keon."

"Never," she said, "I gave you my heart from the beginning, and I will never look at another man."

"Gracie," he said, drawing her to his shoulder. "Do you know it's a hanging matter for me? I'll be in Kildare or Wicklow to-day, 'tis out of the branch of a tree I'd be swinging by this."

"Oh, no, no," she cried, shuddering. "Your Lord has powerful friends, and my lady will do anything for us. It is through her I am here. And she has only to say the word, and the Duke will move heaven and earth for her."

"Well, well, we will hope, avourneen. I want to live now," he said, "only God send that orders don't come to dispose of us before my lord and your lady have had time to do anything."

The orders did not come and the day of the race drew nigh. They seemed to have forgotten in Dublin Castle that a handful of peasants were lying in jail in this remote south-west corner of Munster. And meanwhile the Duke had approached Captain Musgrave on the matter of lending him Miles Keon for the race.

"But what is there to prevent him?" objected Musgrave, "when he tops the stone wall, whither my mounted men cannot follow him, from heading his horse from the Dingle Hills? Once among the mountains he might snap his fingers at all the soldiers we could send in pursuit?"

"I have spoken with the fellow, and he is honest," answered the Duke. "The nearest thing to his heart at this moment, though he has a sweetheart, I am told, is to win his master's race. I wish there were any fellow of mine for whom I could say as much."

"Ah, poor fellow," said Musgrave, "he has a sweetheart. Yes, I have seen her, a charming creature. But, your Grace, if he slips our fingers, it will be a serious matter for me."

"Do you think I am not powerful enough to cover you in such a matter, if there were need?" Then, with a change of voice, "Ah, poor devils, it can be no pleasure jailing them, Musgrave."

"You are right your Grace, it is no work for a soldier," answered Musgrave, gloomily.

The two Englishmen shook hands and parted. The day of the race came bright and beautiful. When Miles the Whisperer faced it out of the gloom of his cell, he blinked at it like an owl. He was flung upon a horse in the midst of a band of stout fellows and, hidden by a great coat to his heels, left the prison behind.

Lord Cashel had been with him, and had given him accounts of the horse. At first the Blackbird had looked for him and kept up a whinnying day and night, which told that he was not yet in despair of his friend's return. Later his mood grew vicious and sullen. He would rush at the grooms who came to feed him open-mouthed, and had torn the fittings of his loose box to pieces.

"But 'twill be all right when he sees you, Miles, said his lordship. "You are his good genius and will drive out his devil."

The horse had preceded Miles on the race course. He was in one of his most vicious moods, squeaking and trumpeting and trampling the grass of his little paddock as if it were flesh and blood under his hoofs. A fascinated crowd was watching him through the stout palings.

"'Tis the devil they ought to call him," said one, "but not the blackbird at all. Sure the blackbird's a decent little bit of a bird, an' nothing at all to do with the likes of that mad brute."

"Wirra God help the poor boy's got to cross his beak," said an old crone. "Tis myself wouldn't be puttin' my nine bones in danger for the like of that beast."

"Have done with wid your foolishness," said a man better informed. "'Tis the Whisperer that's to ride him, an' he has the power over any horse ever foaled. Let alone that you'd be a nice looking jockey to be putting your leg across the Blackbird."

The course was three miles of an undulating pastoral country. The ground on which the stand was built sloped gently so that the course lay well within view of those who were on it or about it. It was a natural racecourse, with a brook to be leaped and a rough stone wall half way from home. All the country people had turned out on foot, or driving or riding rough nags, and there were a few carriages, among them being the big yellow barouches from Shelton with Lady Mabel sitting in it, by her stately mother. It might have been noticed that she shrank less modestly than usual from the admiring glances that fell upon her, seeming, indeed, to be rapt out of herself by some unusual excitement that lit soft fires in her cheeks and in her eyes.

Pegasus, a bay-horse, was being led up and down amid an admiring throng. Through his spirit made him prance and snort so that the laughing crowds scurried before him as children do before an advancing wave, it was a very different matter from Blackbird. The large, limpid eyes of the bay were so full of kind-

ness as to invite caresses, and the difficulty of his rider was to keep a thousand hands from smooching the sleek cheeks and satin sides.

Blessings and good wishes followed Pegasus and the Duke's colors of blue and silver, whereas it seemed to be generally agreed that no luck at all could follow the Blackbird, an' sure what business had his lordship wid the like at all, riskin' people's lives for the sake of a brute of a horse that ought to have had a shot put in him long ago?

Yet the Blackbird swung into favor, and left Pegasus forgotten, a few minutes later. The horses, the race, and everything went clear out of men's minds when the Whisperer rode up amid his excited people that Miles Keon was out of prison to ride the Blackbird and cheer after cheer rent the air. The escort drew to one side, looking rather sullen, and lighting down from their horses pretended to turn the entire attention to feeding and washing them. Lord Cashel was standing by to hurry Miles into the dressing-room and away from the hand-

shakes many a one was giving him. It was noticed that, as he went in, he pricked up his ears at the whinnying of the Blackbird which all at once had succeeded the shrill, unnatural squeaking.

He came out in a few minutes so fine in his colors of green and gold that his poor Grace's heart swelled, where she stood quietly apart with love and sorrowful pride.

He went straight to the horse, and the crowd which had deserted Pegasus, tumbled helter skelter to see the color. The Whisperer sprang lightly into the saddle, and the horse came stepping forth, holding his head high and seeming to spurn the earth from his delicate feet.

A moment more and the two beautiful creatures were off. Lord Cashel watched the colors flash out of sight, and then turned and mounted the stand with a noise of armies in his ears.

For a few minutes his sight failed him, so that he could not distinguish. Then it cleared a little. He could see the two brilliant specks floating away at the end of the Ten Acres by the hazel copse. The field was crossed in a flash and the horses were coming up to the brook.

Pegasus was leading, the Blackbird a couple of lengths behind. "Miles is holding him in," Lord Cashel said, half aloud, "he will give him his head when they have taken the jump."

"'Twould be hard on us, Cashel, if your fellow were to fly now," said a voice at his side.

"Ah, Wharncliffe, I had not noticed you were my neighbor. So it would be, but Miles will not fly."

He was as pale as death, and his voice trembled. The Duke was gay and smiling.

"Well done, well done! They are over it!" he cried, thumping the rail before him with his gloved hand.

A roar had gone up from the people around and below them as the brook was crossed. A silence followed so intense that you might have fancied you heard the thunder of the horses' feet on the smooth turf a mile away, though they and their riders had dwindled to the faintest speck of color.

At the stone wall Pegasus had risen and sailed over the Blackbird balked for a second. For the second men's hearts seemed to stop, and Lord Cashel bit his lips till the blood ran down. But no, Miles had thrown himself forward on the horse's neck and backed him a little, Man and horse rose in the air, and swifter than the flight of an arrow were on the track of the bay, who, in the momentary delay, had got a dozen lengths ahead. Now Miles settled down in the saddle and gave his horse his head. With long splendid strides they gained on Pegasus and his rider. Closer and closer up. The wearer of the blue and silver glanced back uneasily and caught a glimpse of the Blackbird's staring eyeballs. He began lashing the sweating sides of the bay. Miles never lifted his ship. The heart of the horse answered too well the heart of the man. Now the horses were neck and neck, and the crowd began to moan like the surge of the sea. Hoarse inarticulate cries broke from the swaying mass. Lord Cashel heard ringing in his ears like a million bells. "The Blackbird wins! The Blackbird wins!" The green and gold were ahead now. He could see his colors flashing in the sunlight as the horses neared the winning post. A length ahead, two lengths ahead, three lengths ahead. The Blackbird shot past the post, and the first sound out of all that hubbub that reached my Lord Cashel's ears was the quiet voice

beside him: "Well won, by Jove, and well ridden. The match is yours, Cashel."

The two men went down side by side to the broad stretch of turf, where Miles still sat in his saddle looking happy and proud. He went to speak to Lord Cashel as the latter came near.

"I've won you the race, my lord," he said, "and now I'm ready to go back where I came from."

The escort, the one gloomy spot in a bright day, stood around him waiting, each man's foot ready for the stirrup. It was the Duke who waved them back. "Is the victor of the day to go without a bumper of wine?" he said, and at his gesture the mounted men retired once more.

But after they had drunk, the Duke still kept eyeing the horse as one fascinated.

"Sell him to me, Cashel," he cried at last; "you shall name your own price."

"You must buy the man, too, Duke," laughed my lord.

"And that I will if I can buy his affections from you to me. What do you say, Mr. Rebel?"

It was a strange sight to see these two fine gentlemen laughing and jostling in the sunlight with the man who had emerged from a prison grave and would return to it. Miles listened to the banter between the two with a grave smile and wistful eyes that looked far away to the hills.

Did the passionate desire of the man for freedom communicate itself to the heart of the creature that loved him? Who can say? But certain it is that suddenly the Blackbird grew restive. He began to rear and kick, and in a moment of space he had cleared himself a space with his heels. There before him was the sloping country with the hills on the horizon. Before anyone knew what was about to happen the horse was off. The crowd opened for him as if by magic. People could see that his rider had little control of him. The utmost he could do was to keep his seat and steer straight. But before the clumsy escort had one foot in its stirrups the Blackbird had gained the open and that would be a rare horse that should follow. Then the fellows were so lusted and impeded by the crowd that had opened widely to let the Blackbird pass, that more minutes were wasted in setting out than they could ever overtake.

As for the Duke, he roared with laughter to see the troopers trying to mount.

"As well follow the lightning," he said, and then, learning the Blackbird was out of sight he threw off a bumper to his safe disappearance.

"I can swear to Musgrave," he said, "that the horse ran away with the man and that would be no trick of your fellow's at all. Well, I suppose our bargain is off for the present, but if the two turn up safe and sound one of these days I shall take man and horse off your hands, if you please; aye, and shelter them from the law, too if necessary."

A few days later the Blackbird was sent home, a small boy leading him, and in a truly sweet-tempered mood. Perhaps he was conscious that the people were making ballads in his praise. But Miles did not return till the troubles were over, and then my lord's agents were enough to protect him. There were many stories where he had hidden while the mounted patrols were searching the country for him. Some said he was within the park walls of Shelton and fed with meats from the kitchen. But that, perhaps, was because he married Gracie O'Malley, the very day he had just returned, and she was a young mistress became Lady Cashel, Katharine Tynan, in The Irish Monthly.

We find in the Psalms a thousand utterances of hope and trust. Whenever we meet them let us elevate our heart to our Father in Heaven, and try to feel that if there is one thing in which we trust Him, it is in His leading us to Himself. "Thou, O my God, art my refuge! In Thee have I hoped. Let me not be confounded forever!"

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