

"Oh! 'tis our birthday," said Mike, springing up with an exclamation of delight.

"I say, mother, has Uncle Edward come?" and with a start and a look of alarm, "Mother, where's Ted?"

For Ted's little cot was empty.

"Your uncle has come, my boy," said his mother, laying her gentle, restraining hand upon him; "he is downstairs, and—Mike, should you like to go with him after breakfast, instead of waiting until this evening?"

"Oh, yes, mother, 'twould be awfully jolly. Why, has Ted gone and dressed himself? Is he down with uncle, mother?"

"Mike, my dear, dear boy, I have sad news for you; your little brother is not well, you must go alone to Glengariff."

Mike sat down on the edge of his bed and gazed at his mother.

"I—must—go—alone—I—must—go—alone," he repeated slowly, and in a vacant manner.

In an instant over the rebellious young heart came back the old love for Ted, the old longing for Ted.

The mail car, the hotel, the fishing, the boats, would be nothing without Ted.

"I won't go this mornin'," he said at last, speaking decidedly; "I'll wait till the evenin', mother; may be Ted's little cold." (Mike's only experience of illness was in this mild form) "May be Ted's little cold will be better then. I say," with a sudden longing to make it up at once with his brother, "where is he? I have something I want to say to him."

"Mike, darling, you cannot go to him. He is ill, and must not be disturbed."

"But, mother," with a surprised look at her, "I won't disturb Ted. What a ridiculous notion!" he continued, laughing; "why, I can tread as soft—as soft, and if he's asleep I won't say a word, I'll sit by till he wakes."

"No, my poor little fellow, you cannot see him to day, Mike."

"O mother!" looking at her with a volume of reproach in his expressive face, "that isn't like you, and on our own, own birthday, mother."

"My boy, I have a wise and good reason for this. Please God when he gets well you shall see him, and I will take him now any message you like."

But Mike would send no message.

"Just for an instant, just to give him a kiss, quite softly, even if he is asleep," he begged.

But when even this was refused, he asked for nothing more, and suffered himself to be washed and dressed in silence.

His mind was completely taken up with the supposed injustice of his mother to him, so much so that for the time he forgot all about his sin against God, and his quarrel with Ted.

One thing he was quite resolved about, he would not go to Glengariff without his brother. Nor, when his father and mother, and his uncle—who was waiting for him downstairs—saw he was resolved, did they press the point.

"I shall stay here for a few days," said Uncle Edward, who was a doctor, "then perhaps Mike will come with me."

But Mike shook his head. With Ted he would go, without Ted he would not stir a step.

How much this little boy had planned and hoped for his birthday! and yet when that birthday came how sad a day it was to him! He had told a lie, he had quarreled with Ted to enjoy an excursion, which, now that the day for it had come, he felt would be worse than useless to him without his brother.

After breakfast his father, mother, and uncle went upstairs to see Ted, and poor Mike wandered disconsolately into the garden.

It was some slight pleasure to him to feed Ted's pets, and he amused himself for some time with the pigeons, and then ran off to cut his own greenest, freshest lettuce, as a birthday treat for Fluffy.

He opened the door of the hutch.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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