

reefed topsail, which, in the finest weather, was necessary to rein in the brigantine to their dull speed. Nor had he any fancy for a delay of six weeks after his cargo was aboard, and he himself ready for sea; and all for the chance of meeting some improbable Frenchman, his superior both in speed and metal. And so, before sunset that evening, he was hove short upon a single anchor, waiting but the turning of the tide.

Well, waiting something else, perhaps. Something that set him ashore once again, but this time lower down, and outside the furthest verge of shipping. The creek, into which the gig ran so noiselessly that evening, as scarce to startle the ducks upon their nests there, has lost its course since then. The Quaker's Field, upon which the boat's crew left him—a solitary speck on the wide dreary expanse of marsh—are fields no longer. And the ships that ride in the floating docks, occupying the site, are of a length poor Garrett could not have credited, making voyages to lands of which he had never heard, and ports trebly greater than his own; but which had not sprung into existence until two generations from that day.

I said that Garrett's was a lonely figure, standing on the marsh and in the twilight. As he moved upwards towards the distant road, another came down the path to meet him. I said that the belles of his city styled him handsome, and set value on his smiles. The figure was of her of whom the statement was truest and most exhaustively descriptive. I said that he had left the Lodge-room with a sense of fresh difficulties and perplexities to absorb him. The girl, who held her face to kiss him in the gloaming, was responsible for them all.

Dark eyes and bright golden hair are responsible, wherever we are lucky enough to find them, for a good deal of mischief in the world. So are *petite*, plump figures, a soft musical laugh, a bright half-conscious half-involuntary archness, and the firm gliding step that tells surely of a shapely ankle. This combination of characteristics happily for the peace of the world—is not very commonly encountered through it, but is probably met with more frequently in the South-West of Ireland than any other quarter. There, there has been for many hundred years, a marvellous intermingling of native Saxon, Norman and Spanish blood, which occasionally astonishes us by the glory of its amalgamation. And, if ever the result of such amalgamation were a thing of beauty for which to be unaffectedly thankful—as for a ray of sunshine sent in straight from heaven—it stood there in the Quaker's Field that evening impersonated in Alice Creagh. Who these Quakers were, or why they should have Fields, I never could distinctly learn, but had there been any of their sternest to steal a glance at the trim hat and feather, the short brocaded petticoat, the tight-fitting dark cloth jacket above, and the gay poplin opening and looped up over it—I doubt very much if Friend Tabitha's coal-scuttle, or Sister Kerenhappuch's snuff-colour would mingle in his decorous dreams with quite the regularity of theretofore.

Alice was the only child of old Michael Creagh of Ellen Street, one of the wealthiest burgesses of the city. An heiress and a beauty, and of a family whose Milesian lineage was unmistakable, she possessed, it may be, even more than her fair complement of admirers, and might, it was said, have

married Hugh Hamon Massy himself, had she desired it. But to be mistress of Clarina Park or Hermitage was not so great an ambition in her unsophisticated regard, as it would probably seem to-day, in that of her co-equals inhabiting the Violated City. She simply said to herself that she loved Garrett, and that no other man who lived could ever fill his place for her. For in the stupid old eighteenth century "Establishments" were less thought of than with us, and the romance of life appeared less childishly ridiculous than since it has been whisked away by the locomotive, or flashed out of existence along the telegraph wire.

She had betrothed herself to her lover with the full consent of her father, to whom his sterling worth and energy and integrity were no less object of attraction than were his lighter graces to the girl. Old Michael had had many a venture on board the *Thetis*, brought to a safe issue by the daring and judgment of her Commander alone. And he had heartily welcomed the latter to the old house under the grey shadow of the old walls upon each return to the Shannon, and put no other obstacle in way of the marriage than his old-fashioned prudence must needs suggest, in the shape of the delay once deemed so necessary towards proving the devotion and fidelity of the suitor, and the reality of the attachment which each professed for the other. Because long ago it was not the practice to hurry boys and girls into an indissoluble matrimony, upon the strength of a passing shallow fancy, such as, in six months of probation, would have evaporated in the good-humored acknowledgment of a mutual error.

How then came it that these two might not make their farewells decorously at home, in place of at this lonely tryst upon the dreary moor? And now was it that the *Thetis* should have cleared without a single bill of lading signed for by one of her most constant freighters? Some words there spoken by each, will give a clue to the apparent mystery.

They were sad words, for they spoke of separation; and Alice's eyes were very full, and her voice very tremulous as she urged.

"Garrett, darling, you know what is right and best; but if you *could* only wait. It is but for a month, and I should have the certainty of your safety. And, now that I cannot dare to speak of you to papa while you are away, the suspense and the terror will be doubly horrible. Besides, there would be another chance for your reconciliation, and everything might be again as it used to be before the convoy sailed."

Those pleading eyes and that tender loving voice it was not easy to gainsay. But men were men then—even though they were lovers too; and Fitzgerald's determination had been taken after long reflection, and should be adhered to finally at the cost of any casual pain. And so he answered cheerily and bravely:

"My love, the danger is nothing while the little *Thetis* can outsail the fastest corvette in France. And to make two trips in half the time of one, is more likely to gain the good graces of your father than idling round the quays here, while bolder men are out at sea, reaping the fortune I have been afraid to venture for." "Besides," he added gravely, "it would be but to subject you to the continued risk of these furtive meetings, and of all the great